



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

DEPARTMENTAL STATEMENT

on

**LIVING WITH WATER IN BELFAST -
AN INTEGRATED PLAN FOR DRAINAGE AND WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT IN GREATER
BELFAST**

1.1 HABITATS ASSESSMENT – APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

- 1.1.1 Following completion of a stage 1 ‘Screening for Appropriate Assessment’, a stage 2 ‘Assessment of Implications on European sites’ was prepared. Both the stage 1 and stage 2 appraisals are set out in the Habitats Regulations Assessment (“HRA”) report¹ for Living With Water in Belfast – An Integrated Plan for Drainage and Wastewater Management in Greater Belfast.
- 1.1.2 This report was prepared by the RPS on behalf of the Department for Infrastructure in accordance with relevant European Commission and UK guidance and the assessment of implications of plans and projects on European sites to assist the Department in fulfilling its duties in accordance with Regulation 43(1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), which transposes certain aspects of Article 6(3) of Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- 1.1.3 The HRA report was prepared on behalf of the Department to assess the likely significant effects in the first instance of the Living With Water in Belfast Plan on the following European sites as part of a stage 1 screening for appropriate assessment:
- North Channel SAC
 - Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC
 - Strangford Lough SAC
 - The Maidens SAC

 - Belfast Lough Open Water SPA
 - Belfast Lough SPA
 - East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine proposed SPA
 - Larne Lough SPA
 - Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA
 - Outer Ards SPA
 - Strangford Lough SPA

 - Belfast Lough Ramsar site
 - Larne Lough Ramsar site
 - Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar site
 - Strangford Lough Ramsar site
 - Outer Ards Ramsar site
- 1.1.4 From the findings of the screening exercise, the possibility of likely significant effects upon these European sites could not be excluded for a number of potential projects, in light of their Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objectives.
- 1.1.5 The possibility of likely significant effects could be discounted for a small number of potential projects. For the majority of potential projects that could come forward under the Living With Water in Belfast Plan, likely significant effects of the following types could not be excluded on the European sites listed above:
- Habitat loss or deterioration;
 - Diminution of water quality and habitat deterioration; and
 - Disturbance or displacement of species.
- 1.1.6 A precautionary approach has been adopted to the Appropriate Assessment process, as required by EU law, and account has been taken of the view of the Court of Justice of the European Union, that where an Appropriate Assessment is required, adoption of the Plan

¹ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/infrastructure/lwwp-sdip-habitats-regulation-assessment.pdf>

should only proceed if it is certain that the Plan would not, alone or in combination with other projects, have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site.

1.1.7

In light of the stage 2 appraisal for appropriate assessment contained in the HRA report and the incorporation of mitigation measures as appropriate into the finalised Living With Water in Belfast Plan, the Department (as the Competent Authority) is content that the adoption of the Plan would not, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, adversely affect the integrity of the following European sites, or any site included in the UK national site network, or their ability to meet their conservation objectives, and no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects:

- North Channel SAC
- Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC
- Strangford Lough SAC
- The Maidens SAC

- Belfast Lough Open Water SPA
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- East Coast (Northern Ireland) Marine proposed SPA
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