

# **DRAFT SCREENING MATRIX (IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 6(3) OF THE HABITATS REGULATIONS) FOR THE:**

**Draft 3rd Cycle River Basin  
Management Plan for the North  
Western, Neagh Bann and North  
Eastern River Basin Districts (2021  
– 2027)**

*Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Purpose of screening matrix

This screening matrix contains a record of the screening required by Regulation 43(1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) which transposed the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) and Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in Northern Ireland law.

**Undertaken by:** The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

**Undertaken on behalf of:** DAERA.

**Undertaken in respect of:** The Draft 3rd Cycle River Basin Management Plan for the North Western, Neagh Bann and North Eastern River Basin Districts River Basin (2021 – 2027). (The Plan).

### 1.2. The Habitat Regulations Assessment Process

The methodology follows an initial 'screening stage' in which the potential impact by the implementation of the Plan are identified upon any site within the UK national site network. The Plan is also described and a Test of Likely Significance (TOLS) has been carried out to determine if there are any likely significant effects of the proposals on the conservation objectives of any site within the UK national site network.

If any likely significant effects are found, or if it cannot be objectively shown that adverse effects will not occur, the second stage of the process will be entered and the Plans subjected to an 'Appropriate Assessment' against the conservation objectives of the UK national site network site.

If it is determined that there are no likely significant effects on the designated sites, a Statement of 'Finding of No Significant Effects' will be prepared to explain how the overall conclusion was arrived at.

## 2.1. Background

### Water Framework Directive

The Water (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 ensure that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) (as transposed) and the various supporting pieces of water legislation continue to operate in Northern Ireland after 1 January 2021. The Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs is required to coordinate the implementation of the Directive. Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), an agency within the Department, is the lead body on the technical work required for implementation and delivery of the WFD.

An Inter-departmental Board has been established to oversee and coordinate strategic implementation of the Directive. The Board has established an Implementation Working Group to coordinate the activities of government departments and agencies that will be delivering the requirements of the Directive.

WFD is implemented through River Basin Planning which introduces a six-yearly cycle of planning, action and review. Every six years a River Basin Management Plan will be produced to cover each River Basin District within Northern Ireland.

The first planning cycle covers the period from December 2009 - December 2015, with the second continuing from December 2015 - December 2021 and the final third cycle covering December 2021 – December 2027.

### **Information about the Plans**

In December 2009, the Department of Environment (the Department) published three River Basin Management Plans as required by the WFD. The Plans are being delivered by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in conjunction with a number of Northern Ireland Executive Departments.

The Plans identify where our water environment is in a good or excellent condition and set out objectives for the improvement or the prevention of deterioration of individual river, lake, marine and groundwaters for the next three river basin planning cycles to 2015, 2021 and 2027. A Programme of Measures were published as part of the Plan setting out actions required to meet the objectives to improve the status of all water bodies. Interim updates on the measures were published in 2012 and 2018.

As a precursor to this draft update, DAERA undertook a consultation on Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) in December 2019. The synopsis of responses received to that consultation will be available on the website and has been fully considered for this update.

The first Plans in 2009 were designed to be rolling plans that evolve over time. The second cycle plans were modifications and changes made to the first set developed in 2009. The third cycle plans will continue with this process and outline changes that have taken place during the second cycle and what is proposed for the third cycle.

A strategic environmental assessment under the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive was conducted for the first set of plans in 2009. This identified and assessed the wider environmental impacts of the plans and programmes. A Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment was carried out in parallel with the SEA process and the findings of the habitats assessment used to guide the development of the alternatives considered as part of the SEA.

The Habitats assessment process on the 2009 Plans has ensured that any potentially significant environmental impacts of the Plans on Natura 2000/Ramsar sites (now the UK national site network) have been identified and a set of alternatives to the measures identified, and subsumed in to the 2009 Plans. However, the nature of the measures mean that there is potential for direct or indirect impacts on sites, and as a result the requirement for the screening for effects or indeed appropriate assessment itself has been identified where appropriate. The implementation of the Programme Of measures (POMs) are overall highly desirable in order to protect, improve or maintain the current conservation status of many of Northern Ireland's UK national site network sites, and the consequences of not implementing the measures to achieve 'good status' under the WFD would have a far more significant effect on these sites, and in particular on sensitive sites (e.g. Freshwater Pearl Mussel sites).

While there are potential effects which could accrue from other Policies, Plans and Programmes, it was identified in the 2009 HRA that these cannot be assessed in combination with the 2009 Plans as the specific implementation details of the Plans and these other Policies, Plans and Programmes at the water body level, are as yet undefined. It was therefore the recommendation of the assessment that screening for potential impacts under the Habitats Directive Article 6 process is put in place once the details of the implementation of the POMs under the 2009 Plans are known, so as to ensure no 'in combination' effects with other Plans and Programmes at the time of implementation. The need for screening for

impacts was identified, and developed in consultation with NIEA, to offer guidance to those responsible for future implementation of plans/programmes, however at all times, the appropriate consultation be carried out with NIEA to determine when Appropriate Assessment is necessary.

Following on from this assessment, draft updates to the River Basin Management Plan have now been published and it outlines the proposed changes and the modifications to measures for the third river basin planning cycle 2021-2027.

A Test of Likely Significance (TOLS) has been carried out to determine if there are any likely significant effects of the modifications contained in the new Plan on the conservation objectives of designated UK national site network sites.

### **2.2. Identification of the Sites which could potentially be impacted**

As the Plan covers the whole of Northern Ireland it could potentially impact any of the designated UK national site network sites within Northern Ireland; Details of all the sites, including names, locations and reasons for designation, are available on the Department's website.

As the Plan may potentially affect any of the designated UK national site network sites in Northern Ireland, a spreadsheet for the screening matrix was developed to establish whether the Plans would have a significant impact on the conservation objectives for any features which have been the basis for designation in any of the SPAs and SACs, i.e.:

- SAC habitat features
- SAC species features
- SPA species features

Factors likely to have a detrimental effect are considered for each feature and compared against any likely effect of the Plans. On the basis of this, each feature was then screened in or out for likelihood of the Plan having a significant environmental effect.

The spreadsheet can be found on our consultation website. The results of this screening exercise indicate that the Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects on any of the UK national site network sites. The reasoning for this is explained further in Sections 2.3 to 2.6 below.

### **2.3. Description of individual elements of the Plans (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) which may give rise to impacts on the UK national site network site (formerly Natura 2000)**

The modifications to measures within the Plans which are considered as potentially having an effect on the UK national site network sites that fall in the following categories:

- Modifications related to the review of statutory regulatory powers, licensing and the introduction of controls;
- Modifications which relate to the implementation of actions detailed in other Strategy documents, action plans, schemes or programmes;
- Modifications related to evidence gathering, monitoring, research and identification of source pressures measures;
- Modifications which require partnership working;
- Modifications related to education and awareness measures;

The modifications proposed as part of the Plan will make valuable contributions to the integration of environmental considerations and sustainable development within the context of the measures assessed as part of the 2009/15 Plans. While the 2009/15 measures and the draft 2021-27 modifications in combination will potentially have a significant positive environmental effect, in particular with regard to water quality, the modifications taken in isolation would not be regarded as having the potential to have a significant environmental effect.

### **2.4. Description of any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plan (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the UK national site network**

The Habitats assessment process on the 2009 Plans has ensured that any potentially significant environmental impacts of the Plans on Natura 2000 sites (now the UK national site network) have been identified and a set of alternatives to the measures identified, and subsumed in to the 2009 Plans. However, the nature of the 2009 measures mean that there is potential for direct or indirect impacts on sites, and as a result the requirement for the screening for effects or indeed appropriate assessment itself has been identified where appropriate. The implementation of the 2009 POMs were identified as being overall highly

desirable in order to protect, improve or maintain the current conservation status of many of Northern Ireland's UK national site network sites, and the consequences of not implementing the measures to achieve 'good status' under the WFD would have a far more significant effect on these sites, and in particular on sensitive sites (e.g. Freshwater Pearl Mussel sites). While there are potential effects which could accrue from other Policies, Plans and Programmes, these cannot be assessed in combination with the 2009 Plans as the specific implementation details of the Plans and these other Policies, Plans and Programmes at the water body level, are as yet undefined.

For example, as identified in the 2009 assessment, adverse effects may occur as a result of the implementation of specific actions resulting from POM's or other policies, plans and programmes, such as, the construction of waste water treatment infrastructure and measures to improve the treatment capability at WWTW and reduce intermittent discharges from sewerage networks. The latter may reduce numbers of certain bird species as a result of less primary productivity and therefore a reduced food source, although this effect is uncertain.

However, as the specific details of the implementation of the POM's is not known at this stage e.g. location of new infrastructure, the efficacy of new or upgraded waste water treatment or even if funds will be available to implement such actions, it is not possible to do an appropriate assessment on individual POM's at this stage.

It was therefore the recommendation of the 2009 assessment that screening for potential impacts under the Habitats Directive Article 6 process is put in place once the details of the implementation of the POMs under the 2009 Plans are known, so as to ensure no 'in combination' effects with other Plans and Programmes at the time of implementation. This recommendation is still valid and is extended to include the 2009/15 POM's and their draft 2021 modifications.

The need for screening for impacts was identified, and developed in consultation with NIEA, to offer guidance to those responsible for future implementation of plans/programmes, however at all times, the appropriate consultation should be carried out with NIEA to determine when Appropriate Assessment is necessary. This conclusion of the 2009 TOLS is still applicable and is also applicable to the 2009/15 measures and their modifications, where relevant, as proposed in the draft 2021 Plan.



The screening spreadsheet indicates that SAC sites, and the features identified in their designation, will not be adversely affected by the Plans, and therefore, no adverse impact would be likely at these sites.

However, for SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect has been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.

For sites containing features which may be affected by the Plan, any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plan (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) are considered below for the groups of modifications outlined in Section 2.3.

### **2.4.1. Modifications related to the review of statutory regulatory powers, licensing and the introduction of controls;**

Modifications of measures related to the review of statutory regulatory powers, licensing and the introduction of controls will result in overall positive impacts to the environment. However specific modifications may result in impacts on the industries affected and may have potential negative impacts on economic development. Indirect negative impacts are also possible for other environmental receptors dependent upon the required changes e.g. new infrastructure which would impact upon biodiversity and soils or changes to existing practices that could impact upon air quality or climate from transport or alternate treatment and disposal.

At the Plan level the details of such changes is not yet known or the locations that they may be utilised. Therefore it is only possible to assess such measures generally. This level of assessment was carried out as part of the 2009 SEA Environmental Report and TOLS.

The modifications would be expected to have overall positive effects on UK national site network, in particular with regard to water quality.

Consideration of the TOLS spreadsheet (which can be found on our consultation webpage) indicates that there are no likely detrimental impacts of these modifications on UK national site network.

### **2.4.2. Modifications which relate to the implementation of actions detailed in other Strategy documents, action plans, schemes or programmes;**



Modifications of measures which relate to the implementation of actions detailed in other Strategy documents, action plans, schemes or programmes are assumed to have been environmentally assessed, where appropriate, under the processes and procedures which resulted in their creation.

For those strategies, plans etc. not yet created, it is not possible to have them assessed as the details are not yet known. However, as recommended in the 2009 SEA and TOLS they should be subject to the requisite assessment in due course.

Consideration of the TOLS spreadsheet (which can be found on our consultation webpage) indicates that there are no likely detrimental impacts of these modifications on UK national site network.

### **2.4.3. Modifications related to evidence gathering, monitoring, research and identification of source pressures measures;**

Modifications of measures related to evidence gathering, monitoring, research and identification of source pressures measures continue to build understanding of the baseline environment begun during the Article 5 characterisation process. These modifications are concerned with information gathering rather than the taking of any concrete actions and as such are not suitable for environmental assessment. Therefore such measures and actions were not deemed appropriate for SEA or HRA. Where an implementation stage is included in the measure the absence of specific details on the actions required will necessitate project level environmental assessment commensurate with the scale, location and intent of the planned project.

Consideration of the TOLS spreadsheet (which can be found on our consultation webpage) indicates that there are no likely detrimental impacts of these modifications on UK national site network.

### **2.4.4. Modifications which require partnership working;**

Modifications related to measures which require partnership working are intangible in nature and not suitable for environmental assessment. Therefore such measures and action are not deemed appropriate for SEA or HRA but the outcomes of such working arrangements may require project level assessments commensurate with their scale, location and intent.

Consideration of the TOLS spreadsheet (which can be found on our consultation webpage) indicates that there are no likely detrimental impacts of these modifications on UK national site network.

#### **2.4.5. Modifications related to education and awareness measures;**

Modifications of measures related to education and awareness measures are intangible in nature and not suitable for environmental assessment. Therefore such measures and action were not deemed appropriate for SEA or HRA.

The modifications would be expected to have positive effects on the UK national site network sites, in particular with regard to water quality.

Consideration of the TOLS spreadsheet (which can be found on our consultation webpage) indicates that there are no likely detrimental impacts of these modifications on UK national site network.

### **2.5. Description of any likely changes to the UK national site network sites.**

As discussed in Section 2.4, for the UK national site network sites containing features which may be affected by the Plan, no likely significant detrimental effects on the sites have been identified, at this stage. Hence, the most likely change resulting from implementation of the Plan modifications, in conjunction with the 2009 measures, is improvement in water quality, for example, through reduction in diffuse and point source pollution of surface waters and groundwaters.

However, for SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect has been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.

### **2.6 Description of any likely significant effects to the UK national site network sites as whole sites**

As discussed in Section 2.3, the screening spreadsheet indicates that no UK national site network sites, and the features identified in their designation, will be adversely affected by the Plan at this stage, and therefore, no detrimental impact would be likely at these sites.

However, for SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect has been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.

For sites containing features which may be affected by the Plan, any impact resulting from implementation of the Plan is likely to be beneficial to those features, and the site as a whole; i.e. improvement in water quality, e.g. through reduction in diffuse and point source pollution of surface waters and groundwaters.

### **2.7. Findings and Conclusion of the Test of Likely Significance**

The findings of this screening exercise indicate that the modifications proposed for inclusion in the Plans are unlikely to have any significant [detrimental] effects (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the UK national site network, at this stage, subject to the recommendation of further screening and assessment, where required, when POM implementation details become known at a site specific level. This mitigation measure along with EU guidance on 'Links between the Water Framework Directive and Nature Directives' which states: "where artificially changed or created conditions have favoured species but where those environmental conditions represent less than good ecological status of the WFD, in principle, restoration towards good ecological status prevails (WFD objectives)" will ensure no likely effect of the RBMP modifications.

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS STATEMENT

In accordance with Regulation 43(1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) (Northern Ireland), DAERA has considered whether the draft 2021 – 2027 River Basin Management Plan are likely to have a significant effect on the UK national site network in Northern Ireland.

As part of that consideration, DAERA has:-

- (a) taken into account any mitigation measures contained in the Plans, along with all legally enforceable obligations designed to avoid environmental effects; and
- (b) applied the precautionary approach set out in Commission Guidance: Managing Natura 2000 Sites and as required by the European Court of Justice in C-127/02 (Waddenzee).

### Test of Likely Significance

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| <b>Name of project or plan.</b>   | Draft 3rd Cycle River Basin Management Plan for the North Western, Neagh Bann and North Eastern River Basin Districts River Basin (2021 – 2027).   |
| <b>Name, location and description of UK national site network sites (formerly Natura 2000 sites)</b>  | All Northern Ireland sites within the UK national site network.  |
| <b>Brief description of the project or plan<br/>Size and scale;<br/>Land-take;<br/>Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;<br/>Resource requirements (water abstraction etc);<br/>Emission (disposal to land, water or air);<br/>Excavation requirements;</b> | <p>In December 2009, the Department of Environment (the Department) published three River Basin Management Plans as required by the WFD. The Plans are being delivered by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in conjunction with a number of Northern Ireland Executive Departments.</p> <p>The Plans identify where our water environment is in a good or excellent condition and set out objectives for the improvement or the prevention of deterioration of individual river, lake, marine and groundwaters for the next three river basin planning cycles to 2015, 2021 and 2027. A Programme of Measures was published as part of the Plan setting out</p> |

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| <p><b>Transportation requirements; Duration of construction, operation, de-commissioning etc; Other.</b></p>  | <p>actions required to meet the objectives to improve the status of all water bodies. An interim update on the measures was published in 2018.</p> <p>As a precursor to this draft update, DAERA undertook a consultation on Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) for Northern Ireland in December 2019. The synopsis of responses received to that consultation is available on the website and has been fully considered for this update.</p> <p>The WFD requires that the Plan is reviewed and updated every 6 years.</p> <p>The first Plans in 2009 were designed to be rolling plans that evolve over time. The second cycle plans were modifications and changes made to the first set developed in 2009. The third cycle plans will continue with this process and outline changes that have taken place during the second cycle and what is proposed for the third cycle.</p> <p>A strategic environmental assessment under the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive and a Habitats Regulations Assessment was conducted for the first set of plans in 2009. These identified and assessed the wider environmental impacts of the plans and programmes and their specific effects on Natura 2000/ Ramsar sites (now the UK national site network).</p> <p>Draft updates to the River Basin Management Plans have now been published and they outline the proposed changes and the modifications to measures for the third river basin planning cycle 2021-2027.</p> |
| <p><b>Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)? If yes proceed no further.</b></p> | <p>No, however the modifications proposed as part of the Plans will make valuable contributions to the integration of environmental considerations and sustainable development within the context of the measures assessed as part of the 2009 Plans. While the 2009/15 measures and the draft 2021 modifications in combination will potentially have a significant positive environmental effect, in particular with regard to water quality, the modifications taken in isolation would not be regarded as having the potential to have a significant environmental effect, at this stage of plan implementation.</p>  |

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| <p><b>Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?</b></p> | <p>The Habitats assessment process on the 2009 Plans has ensured that any potentially significant environmental impacts of the Plans on Natura 2000/Ramsar sites (now the UK national site network) have been identified and a set of alternatives to the measures identified, and subsumed in to the 2009 Plans. However, the nature of the measures mean that there is potential for direct or indirect impacts on sites, and as a result the requirement for the screening for effects or indeed appropriate assessment itself has been identified where appropriate.</p> <p>The implementation of the POMs are overall highly desirable in order to protect, improve or maintain the current conservation status of many of the Northern Irish sites within the UK national site network, and the consequences of not implementing the measures to achieve 'good status' under the WFD would have a far more significant effect on these sites, and in particular on sensitive sites (e.g. Freshwater Pearl Mussel sites). While there are potential effects which could accrue from other Policies, Plans and Programmes, these cannot be assessed in combination with the 2009 Plans as the specific implementation details of the Plans and these other Policies, Plans and Programmes at the water body level, are as yet undefined. It was therefore the recommendation of the assessment that screening for potential impacts under the Habitats Directive Article 6 process is put in place once the details of the implementation of the POMs under the 2009 Plans are known, so as to ensure no 'in combination' effects with other Plans and Programmes at the time of implementation. The need for screening for impacts was identified, and developed in consultation with NIEA, to offer guidance to those responsible for future implementation of plans/programmes, however at all times, the appropriate consultation should be carried out with NIEA to determine when Appropriate Assessment is necessary. This conclusion of the 2009 TOLS is still applicable and is also applicable to the 2009/15 measures and their modifications, where relevant, as proposed in the draft 2021 Plan.</p> |
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|   | <p>The screening spreadsheet (which can be found on our consultation website<sup>1</sup>) indicates that no site within the UK national site network, and the features identified in their designation, will be adversely affected by the Plans at this stage, and therefore, no impact would be likely at these sites.</p> <p>However, for SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect has been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.</p> <p>For sites containing features which may be affected by the Plan, any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plan (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) are considered below for the groups of modifications outlined in Section 2.3.</p> |
| <p><b>Describe the individual elements of the project or plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to effects on the UK national network site.</b></p> | <p>The modifications to measures within the Plan which are considered as potentially having an effect on sites within the UK national site network fall in the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modifications related to the review of statutory regulatory powers, licensing and the introduction of controls;</li> <li>• Modifications which relate to the implementation of actions detailed in other Strategy documents, action plans, schemes or programmes;</li> <li>• Modifications related to evidence gathering, monitoring, research and identification of source pressures measures;</li> <li>• Modifications which require partnership working;</li> <li>• Modifications related to education and awareness measures;</li> </ul> <p>Full details of these modifications can be found in the draft Plan.</p>   |



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|  | <p>The modifications proposed as part of the Plan will make valuable contributions to the integration of environmental considerations and sustainable development within the context of the measures assessed as part of the 2009 Plans. As previously discussed, while the 2009/15 measures and the draft 2021 modifications in combination will potentially have a significant positive environmental effect, in particular with regard to water quality, the modifications taken in isolation would not be regarded as having the potential to have a significant positive environmental effect, at this stage.</p> |
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**Describe any likely changes/effects on the UK national site network site features arising as a result of: reduction of habitat area; disturbance to key species; habitat or species fragmentation; reduction in species density; changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc).**

| UK national network site Feature/ sensitive interest: | Describe any potential direct, indirect or secondary effects of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects): | Finding of Screening Matrix:<br>*Impact considered significant/non-significant  |
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| SAC habitat features                                  | Reduction in diffuse and point source water pollution and an improvement in surface water and groundwater quality.                         | <p>Plan modifications will have no effect on SAC habitat features. However Plan modifications in combination with the measures detailed and assessed in the 2009 Plans are likely to have beneficial impacts. Therefore no significant adverse effects are likely.</p> <p><i>Please see Section 2.4 of the screening matrix and the associated spreadsheet which can be found on our consultation website</i></p> |
| SAC species features                                  | The potential positive effects on some habitats (see   | Plan modifications will have no effect on SAC species features. However Plan  |

## Draft Screening matrix for the HRA for the draft RBMP

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|                             | <p>above) should be beneficial for species features associated with those habitats.</p>   | <p>modifications in combination with the measures detailed and assessed in the 2009 Plans are likely to have beneficial impacts. Therefore no significant adverse effects are likely.</p> <p><i>Please see Section 2.4 of the screening matrix and the associated spreadsheet which can be found on our consultation website</i></p>   |
| <p>SPA species features</p> | <p>For SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect has been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability for bird species. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.</p> | <p>The implementation of the 2009 POMs were identified in the 2009 assessment as being overall highly desirable in order to protect, improve or maintain the current conservation status of SPA sites, and the consequences of not implementing the measures and their 2021 modifications to achieve 'good status' under the WFD would have a far more significant effect on these sites overall. While there are potential effects which could accrue from the POM's and other Policies, Plans and Programmes, on SPA species features these cannot as yet be assessed as the specific implementation details of the POM's and these other Policies, Plans and Programmes at the water body level, are as yet undefined. Therefore no significant adverse effects are likely at this stage</p> <p><i>Please see Section 2.4 of the screening matrix and the associated spreadsheet which can be found on our consultation website</i></p> |

*\*Only mitigation measures proposed within application can be considered at this stage.*

**Describe any potential effects on the UK national site network site as a whole in terms of interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site.**

| <p><b>Describe any potential effects on the UK national site network as whole sites in terms of interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the sites</b></p>   | <p><b>*Effects considered significant/non-significant: Finding of Screening Matrix</b></p>   |
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| <p>As discussed in Section 2.3 of the screening matrix, the screening spreadsheet (which can be found on our consultation website) indicates that the site within the UK national site network, and the features identified in their designation, will not be adversely affected by the Plan modifications, and therefore, no negative effects would be expected at these sites, at this stage. For sites containing features which may be affected by the Plan modifications in combination with the 2009 measures, any impact resulting from implementation of the Plans is likely to be beneficial to those features, and the site as a whole; e.g. improvement in water quality through reduction in diffuse and point source pollution of surface waters and groundwaters and potential reduction in ammonia emissions leading to nitrogen deposition and nutrient enrichment of sensitive habitats due to controls on slurry storage and methods of slurry application. However, for SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect has been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.</p> | <p>Plan modifications will have no effect on SAC habitat features. However Plan modifications in combination with the measures detailed and assessed in the 2009 Plans are likely to have beneficial impacts. Therefore no significant adverse effects are likely at this stage, subject to the recommendation of further screening and assessment, where required, when POM implementation details become known at a site specific level.</p> |

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| <b>Is the potential scale or magnitude of any effect likely to be significant?</b>   |   |
| <b>Alone?</b>  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>In-combination with other projects or plans?</b>  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Conclusion: Is the proposal likely to have a significant effect on N2K sites?</b>   | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <p><b>IF IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE PROPOSAL WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT, ASSESSMENT IS COMPLETED. IF ANY PART OF THE PROPOSAL IS LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT AN APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT WILL BE REQUIRED – STAGE 2 AA</b></p>                      |   |
| <p>From the consideration of all the potential effects above it can be objectively concluded that there are not likely to be any significant adverse effects on the UK national site network, at this stage, and no further assessment is required, at this stage.</p> |   |

**Data collected to carry out the assessment**

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| <b>Who carried out the assessment?</b>  |
| Neil McAllister (NIEA, DAERA)   |
| <b>Sources of data</b>  |
| <p><u>Documents:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft 3rd Cycle River Basin Management Plan for the North Western, Neagh Bann and North Eastern River Basin Districts River Basin (2021 – 2027)</li> <li>• Water Framework Directive River Basin Management plans and programme of Measures Neagh Bann IRBD Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment;</li> <li>• Water Framework Directive River Basin Management plans and programme of Measures North East RBD Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment;</li> <li>• Water Framework Directive River Basin Management plans and programme of Measures North West IRBD Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment;</li> </ul> <p><u>Websites:</u><br/> <a href="http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/">www.daera-ni.gov.uk/</a><br/> <a href="http://jncc.defra.gov.uk">http://jncc.defra.gov.uk</a><br/> <a href="http://www.habitats.org.uk/">www.habitats.org.uk/</a><br/> <a href="http://www.birdlife.org">www.birdlife.org</a><br/> <a href="http://www.apis.ac.uk">www.apis.ac.uk</a><br/> <a href="http://www.iwdg.ie">www.iwdg.ie</a><br/> <a href="http://www.pinnipeds.org/">www.pinnipeds.org/</a></p> |
| <b>Level of assessment completed</b>  |
| Level 1 Screening Matrix  |
| <b>Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed?</b>   |

For further information please contact:

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