

# **Carlingford Lough Special Protection Area**

## **Proposed boundary extension**

### **Information supporting the proposal together with Frequently Asked Questions relating to Special Protection Areas**

**November 2015**



An Agency within the Department of the  
**Environment**  
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## Carlingford Lough Special Protection Area – proposed boundary extension

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Area name:	<b>Carlingford Lough, County Down</b>
Administrative areas:	<b>Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</b>
Component ASSI:	<b>Inter-tidal area within Carlingford Lough, together with the offshore islands fall within Carlingford Lough ASSI. The boundary extension covers the marine area as indicated.</b>

### 1. Introduction

This document is part of a suite of materials which explain the rationale for the proposed designation of a marine extension to the Carlingford Lough Special Protection Area (SPA). This document sets out the drivers behind the designation of Special Protection Areas, how the designation process works, the reasons behind the selection of this site as a Special Protection Area and the implications for people and organisations with an interest in this area. It will introduce some of the key concepts and terminology and includes a Frequently Asked Questions section to try to expand on some of the typical questions that may arise.

### 2. Background to the amendment to Carlingford Lough Special Protection Area

This proposal is to extend the existing Carlingford Lough SPA through a marine extension. An area called Carlingford Lough (Site Code UK9020161) has already been designated as a Special Protection Area since 1998. The existing Carlingford Lough SPA includes significant populations of breeding Sandwich Tern and Common Tern, and a non-breeding wintering population of Light-bellied Brent Geese.

The area already designated as a SPA is exclusively terrestrial habitat consisting principally of inter-tidal mudflats and saltmarsh on Carlingford Lough's northern shore and includes the offshore islands of Green Island and Blockhouse and associated islets in the area.

The current proposal concerns the intention to extend the SPA to the 'mid-line' of the Lough, and also a marine area of the Irish Sea off the County Down coast. The proposed extension of Carlingford Lough SPA is to recognise the contribution made by the wider coastal and marine area to the needs of the birds from a breeding Tern colony in the mouth of Carlingford Lough, in the area already designated as Carlingford Lough SPA.

### 3. Drivers behind the designation of Special Protection Areas

#### 3a. Special Protection Areas

A Special Protection Area is an area of land or sea which has been designated by a European Union (EU) Member State to ensure the strict protection of a site for the conservation of wild birds. The EU Directive on the Conservation of Wildbirds (hereafter referred to as the Birds

Directive) (European Commission, 2015) requires Member States to designate areas as Special Protection Areas.

The Birds Directive 2009/147/EC (codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC) in conjunction with the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC provide the framework for the conservation of nature and wild birds within Europe. These legislative measures provide for a network of protected sites across Europe called Natura 2000 sites. The Natura 2000 network comprises sites designated as SPAs, and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The main objective for all Natura 2000 sites is the maintenance (or restoration) to ‘favourable conservation status’ of its habitats and species.

Article 4 of the Birds Directive requires Member States to designate (or classify) the most suitable territories in number and size as Special Protection Areas for the conservation of certain wild bird species. These are the areas of the most important habitats or territories of certain rare, vulnerable, and migratory bird species. More specifically, Article 4 of the Directive requires Member states to classify sites as SPAs;

- *for rare or vulnerable bird species (as listed in Annex I) (Article 4.1); and also*
- *for regularly occurring migratory species (Article 4.2).*

*Member States are also asked (in Article 4.2) to pay particular attention to the protection of wetlands and particularly to wetlands of international importance.*

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), an agency of the Department of the Environment (DOE) is responsible for the selection, designation and assessment of Special Protection Areas in Northern Ireland. ‘The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995’ (as amended) provides for the designation, protection and management of European Sites (SPAs and SACs), the protection of ‘European Protected Species’, and the adaption of planning and other controls for the protection of the European Sites.

Sites are selected which hold important populations of certain rare, vulnerable, and migratory bird species. The criteria used to select sites is done to identify the most suitable territories in number and size. The decision to then designate a site as a SPA is made only on the basis of sound scientific evidence.

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), working in conjunction with the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and the Devolved Administrations, produced guidelines for use in selecting SPAs in the UK (JNCC, 2013). Further information on this guidance can be accessed on the JNCC website (JNCC, 2010).

The relevant data supporting the SPA proposals, together with wider population data to provide a context in which to assess site significance, are collated by JNCC from a number of sources. Other site survey data, scientific publications and reports are also used to compile a full understanding of the site.

NIEA identify sites as candidate SPAs according to the selection guidelines noted above. As part of the SPA classification process, a number of formal documents are prepared. These are

a citation document, a Natura 2000 Standard Data Form, derived from the citation document and in the standard format in which data is sent to the European Commission (JNCC, 2013). The area to be classified is identified on an accompanying map.

### **3b. Review of the UK SPA network**

The UK Government asked the JNCC and UK conservation agencies to review the SPA network across the UK. This process resulted in the publication of the ‘SPA Review’ in 2001. This review gave a greater understanding of the UK’s SPA network in terms of number of sites selected, and the species that qualified within these sites. The SPA Review noted that a review of the UK’s SPA network in the marine environment was required (JNCC, 2013).

Most of the sites originally designated as SPAs in Northern Ireland and indeed all of the UK, were wholly terrestrial sites. The Birds Directive requires that sites be classified for the conservation of bird species in the ‘geographical sea and land area’ where the Directive applies. It is now recognised by all of the UK conservation agencies that work is required to help create a UK SPA marine network to give protection to the wider ecological needs of the breeding and wintering seabirds, and wintering waterbirds who use the marine environment.

### **3c. Marine SPAs**

The JNCC has led on work in the UK to highlight areas used by marine birds as suitable for selection as marine SPAs. For many years the JNCC together with the UK nature conservation agencies have undertaken extensive survey work and collected data on marine birds in UK waters. Data analysis performed on this information has helped to identify the most important aggregations suitable for consideration as part of a network of marine SPAs.

In order to facilitate analysis across the many different ecologies of 44 different bird species (rare or vulnerable (Annex I of the Birds Directive) or regularly occurring migratory birds) for which the JNCC have undertaken surveys and analysis, 7 main strands of survey and analysis were used to capture the most important seasons for these species (JNCC, 2015a). To find out more about the methods, and reports please visit the JNCC website (JNCC, 2015a).

The Department of the Environment, including the NIEA, has been fully engaged with this process to ascertain suitable areas for selection as marine SPAs.

It is then the responsibility of the UK statutory nature conservation bodies (for inshore waters up to 12 nautical miles from the coast), or the JNCC (for offshore waters from 12-200 nautical miles) to select areas for possible classification as marine SPAs. Areas that are found suitable for classification are subject to a public consultation (JNCC, 2015b).

## **4. Description of the Carlingford Lough SPA and proposed marine extension**

Carlingford Lough is a narrow sea lough or glacial fjord on the east coast of Ireland. It is the estuary of the Newry River which flows from Newry into the Lough. It is surrounded by mountains, on its northern shore by the Mourne Mountains in County Down in Northern Ireland, and on its southern shore by the Cooley Mountains in County Louth in the Republic of Ireland.

On the northern shore of Carlingford Lough there are significant areas of mudflats and an area of saltmarsh, while the mouth of the Lough has several small rock and shingle islands which provide suitable habitat for breeding Terns.

A ‘mid-line’ boundary along the central axis of Carlingford Lough has been agreed for the purposes of nature conservation responsibilities with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), who are the Irish Government’s conservation body in the Republic of Ireland.

The current SPA of Carlingford Lough lies between Killowen Point and Soldiers Point, includes significant areas of inter-tidal mudflats and an area of saltmarsh on the Lough’s northern shore, and also includes the offshore islands of Green Island and Blockhouse and their associated islets. The current extent of the SPA is 827 hectares. The inter-tidal mudflats and saltmarsh provide habitat for wintering Light-bellied Brent Geese, while the offshore islands of Green Island and Blockhouse and their associated islets provide nesting habitat for breeding Terns.

Carlingford Lough was originally classified as a Special Protection Area in 1998. The site qualified as an SPA under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive due to its important breeding populations of migratory Tern species, namely; Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*), and Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*). Both species are listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive as rare or vulnerable species. The site also qualified as a SPA under Article 4.2 of the Birds Directive due to its internationally important non-breeding population of Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*).

The landward boundary is partially coincident with that of the Carlingford Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). The current SPA includes all lands and intertidal areas. Marine areas below the mean low water mark are not included in the boundary. The area of the existing SPA is also entirely coincident with that of the Carlingford Lough Ramsar site. Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.

Along the southern shore of Carlingford Lough a section between Carlingford Harbour and Ballagan Point has also been designated as a SPA by the Republic of Ireland. Carlingford Lough SPA (Site Code 4078) is designated for a significant non-breeding population of Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) (NPWS, 2014).

## **5. Proposed marine extension to Carlingford Lough SPA**

The current proposal consists of extending the site boundary of Carlingford Lough SPA to include marine areas in Carlingford Lough and the Irish Sea as shown in Figure 1. The Carlingford Lough SPA has a total area of 11,143 hectares.

The marine extension has been identified from analysis and reports undertaken by the JNCC on foraging areas for the larger species of Terns breeding in Carlingford Lough SPA. Further information on the survey and statistical methods employed to define the marine areas can be found on JNCC website (2015a).

## 6. Reasons for proposed boundary extension

This notice concerns the proposal to re-classify Carlingford Lough SPA with an extension to its site boundary. No additional feature species are being added to the original SPA designation. The proposal is to extend the current SPA boundary further south to the Carlingford Lough 'mid-line', east, and north along the County Down coast, to include a marine area of the Irish Sea.

The extension of the Carlingford Lough SPA boundary will ensure that as well as the protection of the shoreline and inter-tidal mudflat habitats, and the islands in the existing SPA, the nearby marine areas are also afforded the same protection under designation as a SPA. This will safeguard the habitats and ecological needs of the breeding Tern species that nest in Carlingford Lough and forage in the nearby Irish Sea, as well as the wintering flocks of Light-bellied Brent geese on Carlingford Lough, in addition to the other birds which are not part of the SPA qualifying criteria.

## 7. Conservation Objectives

A conservation objective is a statement of the desired ecological quality of a feature (habitat, species or geological) for which a SPA is designated. The conservation objective establishes whether the feature condition meets the desired state and should be maintained, or falls below the desired state and should be recovered to favourable condition.

Carlingford Lough SPA and proposed marine extension seeks to contribute to the protection of the selection features noted below.

The overall conservation objective for the Carlingford Lough SPA and proposed marine extension will be: (for complete information, the site conservation objectives should be read)

**to maintain the associated feature populations in favourable condition (to achieve stable or increasing populations with reference made to these populations at time of designation) together with the habitats on which they depend.**

Further information on activities which may adversely impact (or positively benefit) the proposed SPA, can be found in the accompanying Regulatory Impact Assessment for Marine Special Protection Areas in the Northern Ireland inshore region.

## 8. Further information supporting Carlingford Lough SPA and the proposed marine extension

The following tables provide further information on the species involved and the significance of their populations on an all-Ireland (Annex I species) and biogeographical context (regularly occurring migratory species).

### Qualifying species:

At the time of classification in 1998 the site qualified for the following species:

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) by supporting internationally important populations of the following species:

<b>Annex I species</b>	<b>Count and Season</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>% of population</b>
Sandwich Tern <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	575 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (1993 – 1997)	13.1 % of the all-Ireland population
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	339 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (1993 – 1997)	10.9 % of the all-Ireland population

Data from annual site monitoring by RSPB and national seabird surveys coordinated by JNCC

The site selection threshold for Annex I species in Northern Ireland is 1% of the all-Ireland population

The site also qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) by supporting internationally important populations of the following species:

<b>Species relevant to Article 4.2</b>	<b>Count and Season</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>% of population</b>
Light-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	319 individuals Non-breeding	5yr peak mean 1990/01 – 1994/95	1.6 % of the international biogeographical population

Waterbird data from annual WeBS programme coordinated by BTO

The site selection threshold for regularly occurring migratory species is 1% of the relevant bio-geographical population

More recently the populations of the above species have been as follows:

<b>Species</b>	<b>Count and Season</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>% of population</b>
Sandwich Tern <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	51 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (2010–2014)	1.4 % of the all-Ireland population
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	117 pairs Breeding	5 year mean (2010–2014)	2.8 % of the all-Ireland population
Light-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	435 individuals Non-breeding	5yr peak mean 2007/08 – 2011/12	1.1 % of the international biogeographical population

Seabird data from annual site monitoring by RSPB and national seabird surveys coordinated by JNCC

Waterbird data from annual WeBS programme coordinated by BTO

### **Further detail on the qualifying species:**

#### ***Species in Annex I of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)***

##### **Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*)**

Sandwich Tern breed in a Tern colony in Carlingford Lough. They are migratory visitors feeding on a range of small fish in the nearby waters, with sand-eel an important part of their diet.

The original designation of the Carlingford Lough SPA did not include the foraging range of marine area of the Irish Sea used by the Sandwich Tern within its designated site boundary. This proposed extension of the SPA boundary is to now include the foraging area used by the Sandwich Tern.

**Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)**

Common Tern also breed in the Tern colony in Carlingford Lough. They are also migratory visitors feeding on a range of small fish in the nearby waters, with sand-eel an important part of their diet.

The original designation of the Carlingford Lough SPA did not include the foraging range of marine area of the Irish Sea used by the Common Tern within its designated site boundary. This proposed extension of the SPA boundary is to now include the foraging area used by the Common Tern.

***Species relevant to Article 4.2 of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) -regularly occurring migratory species***

**Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*)**

A non-breeding wintering population of Light-bellied Brent Geese use Carlingford Lough during the autumn and winter to feed on the inter-tidal swards of eel-grass and other grasses and algae. The geese migrate to Ireland each winter from their breeding grounds in north-east Canada, stopping enroute to Ireland in Greenland and Iceland, and then return to their breeding grounds in spring.

The whole island of Ireland is an extremely important wintering site for Light-bellied Brent Geese as almost all of the world's breeding population winter on coastal sites such as Carlingford Lough.

**9. SPAs and people**

Carlingford Lough has a wide range of both commercial and recreational users. The Carlingford Lough area has been a popular tourist destination for many years. There are many businesses, industry, shipping, commercial fishing, and shellfish production all taking place along this coast and in Carlingford Lough. There are marinas at Carlingford and Warrenpoint and many tour vessels which operate from Carlingford, Omeath and Warrenpoint. There are also land and water based recreational activities.

The proposed SPA extension means that any new projects, developments, or other significant activities within or beyond the site will be assessed to ensure that they will have no direct or indirect impact on the birds and the habitats which support them. This already applies to the current Carlingford Lough SPA.

The objective for all interests is that commercial and recreational uses can take place in Carlingford Lough without having a detrimental impact on the habitat which supports the ecological needs of the breeding Tern species, and the wintering Light-bellied Brent Geese. Commercial and recreational uses must go hand in hand with all the environmental objectives for Carlingford Lough.



## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **General background**

#### *What is a Special Protection Area?*

A Special Protection Area (SPA) is an area designated under the European Union's Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (generally referred to as the Birds Directive) (79/409/EEC), to protect nationally and internationally important populations of wild birds. Member States are required to designate (or classify) the most important areas on land or sea as SPAs to ensure the conservation of rare, vulnerable and migratory birds. The Birds Directive is transposed into Northern Ireland legislation by 'The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)'. This piece of legislation requires the Department of the Environment to designate areas as SPAs.

#### *How many SPAs are there currently in Northern Ireland, and where can I find further information on these?*

There are currently 16 sites designated as SPAs in Northern Ireland. If you wish to see further information on the sites designated as SPAs please visit;

<https://www.doeni.gov.uk/topics/land-and-landscapes/special-protection-areas>

#### *What is a Natura 2000 (or N2K) site?*

A Natura 2000 site is an area which has been designated by European Union (EU) Member States as a Special Protection Area (SPA) or a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). These sites make up the Natura 2000 network which refers to the network of nature conservation sites designated under the EU Birds and Habitat Directives. SACs are sites which are designated under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

### **Designation of SPAs**

#### *What is the purpose of SPA site designation?*

SPA site designation is intended to protect key species of birds together with the habitat on which they depend. The Birds Directive focus's on the needs of rare, vulnerable and migratory birds which occur in an area. The Birds Directive was introduced in response to increasing concerns over declines in wild bird populations due to impacts from pollution, loss of habitats, and unsustainable exploitation. The designation of sites as SPAs is intended to contribute to a network of protected sites across Europe to provide protection to birds from habitat loss and degradation.

If you wish to read the full text of the latest codified version of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and see the list of species please visit;

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:020:0007:0025:EN:PDF>

*What birds will be protected by the proposed SPAs?*

A broad range of different bird species are listed in the Birds Directive as requiring protection in SPAs. To see a list of the qualifying bird species in the currently proposed SPA please refer to Section 8.

*Why do these birds require protection?*

These birds have been specified in the Birds Directive as requiring protection because they are rare, vulnerable or migratory species. These are the birds in Europe that are the most vulnerable on an international scale, or require international cooperation to protect them.

Article 4 of the Directive requires EU Member States to classify sites as SPAs for rare or vulnerable bird species which are listed in Annex I (Article 4.1), and also, for regularly occurring migratory species (Article 4.2).

*How will SPA designation afford protection to the birds, and how will they benefit?*

SPA designation will help to contribute to the conservation of the bird species which are the qualifying features of that designated land or sea area. The site will have been selected on a number of factors including population size, frequency of use, and in comparison with other sites.

Bodies tasked with maintaining the SPAs condition must implement measures and provide guidance to ensure that the habitats used by the bird species do not suffer from unsuitable disturbance, loss, or deterioration of habitat. Development plans or projects, or changes to existing activities, within or near these sites will have to be assessed to ensure that they do not impact on the bird populations.

The designation of a site as a SPA will also promote greater awareness of that site, and the bird species which it holds, on a local, national, and European scale. This provides obvious positive benefits for the promotion of the maintenance of biodiversity in that area and its wider hinterland.

*How can a SPA designation benefit those people that live or work in an area?*

The designation of an area of land or sea as a SPA can have many benefits to the people that live or work in that area and surrounding area. SPAs highlight some of the best sites in Northern Ireland for bird life and give recognition of that on a European scale. SPA site designation can attract visitors to an area, which has the potential to provide opportunities for social and economic benefits. Visitors could be attracted by the opportunity of possibly seeing a particular bird species in its natural habitat, and also knowing that species is afforded appropriate recognition and protection by the competent authorities.

*Who decides that an area should be a SPA and how does that process take place?*

The methodology used to select SPAs is done to identify the ‘most suitable territories in number and size’ as required by the Birds Directive. The decision to designate a site as a SPA is made on the basis of sound scientific evidence.

*Are these birds not already protected under legislation?*

Yes, ‘The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985’ makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, or take any wild bird or their eggs or nests. ‘The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011’ amended the Wildlife Order by giving protection to a wider range of plants, animals and birds, and providing additional enforcement powers and increased penalties for wildlife related offences. The designation of a site as a SPA however, can ensure a greater level of protection for a population of birds and critically, the habitats on which they depend.

*Why do we need to designate more sites as SPAs?*

Firstly, it is an obligation under EU law that Northern Ireland complies with the Birds Directive to designate our most important bird habitats as SPAs. Many sites are already designated as SPAs across Northern Ireland, but as more is known about the areas used by the rare, vulnerable or migratory birds in Northern Ireland, we need to designate more areas to protect the habitats used by these birds to prevent loss or degradation of these habitats. It is recognised in particular, that we need to designate more SPAs in our marine areas to reflect the importance of the marine environment for the conservation of the birds that use the marine areas off Northern Ireland’s coast.

*Why can’t the existing boundary of a SPA provide protection for the species?*

If a site is currently designated as a SPA or close to a SPA, it may now be the case with new scientific understanding, that the area of land or sea already designated may not provide adequate protection for the full ecological needs of that species. For instance, greater understanding of where Tern species forage in UK marine waters has meant that the UK conservation agencies have had to review the current extent of their marine SPA network.

## **Management of the SPAs**

*Who is responsible for the management of SPA sites?*

No one organisation is responsible for the management of an SPA. There can be several land owners, businesses, and competent authorities involved. Authorities with a remit for planning control and the regulation of activities in an area will have to ensure that development and activities do not have a detrimental impact on the birds and their habitat.

*Who assesses the condition of the SPA sites?*

The Department of the Environment’s Northern Ireland Environment Agency is responsible for assessing the condition of the SPA sites in Northern Ireland. The objective as set out in the legislation is to make sure the populations of the birds and their habitats are in a ‘favourable conservation status’. Individual conservation objectives are prepared to document the conservation requirements for each SPA and the feature species.

*Who monitors a SPA to check that the birds are maintaining their population?*

The SPA will need to be monitored to assess how the population of birds for which the site is designated, are maintaining their population. This will be to check that the populations are in a good condition, and that the site is being used and managed in a way that is favourable to the bird population. The Birds Directive requires that regular reports on the conservation status of all Annex I and regularly occurring migratory species listed in the Directive, are sent to the European Commission. The monitoring information will come from a variety of sources such as the WeBS (Wetland Bird Survey) coordinated by the British Trust for Ornithology, and seabird monitoring coordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). Monitoring is typically undertaken annually as part of wider standard bird survey programmes.

*What activities could affect the birds on a SPA site?*

Many different types of activities could affect the population of birds on a SPA. These activities could result in;

- injuring or killing of the birds;
- the deterioration or destruction of their habitat;
- a reduction or displacement of their prey; and
- noise or visual disturbance of the birds.

On a coastal or marine SPA these activities or pressures could be due to; oil pollution, seabed habitat damage and/or fish prey removal either directly or indirectly through fishing activities, collision with, or displacement caused by renewable energy or other structures, and seabed habitat damage due to aggregate extraction.

Other specific pressures in a coastal or marine environment could include; shipping, commercial and recreational boating, dredging, coastal defence schemes, development along the coast or in the marine area, discharges of industrial or sewage effluent, disposal of waste, changes in land management, aquaculture (including ‘bait-digging’), predation at breeding bird sites, scientific research activities, and general disturbance by recreational activities.

Further information on activities which may adversely impact (or positively benefit) the proposed SPA, can be found in the accompanying Regulatory Impact Assessment for Marine Special Protection Areas in the Northern Ireland inshore region.

*How will my current activity be affected by the designation of a SPA?*

It is likely that your current activity in the area of a SPA will notice little change with designation. The SPA sites already designated in Northern Ireland have a variety of different users and these uses have been managed for more than 15 years now to ensure that they do not cause a detrimental effect on the sites, without much change for the parties involved.

If you have queries on how the designation of a SPA could affect your activity, or you intend to make changes to your current activity, please use the contact details at the end of this document to discuss these with NIEA.

*How will new activities, or new developments be affected by the designation of a SPA?*

The designation of an area as a SPA does not automatically mean a prohibition on new activities or development in that land or sea area. The competent authorities will have to carefully consider any plans or projects that could affect the SPA. This will include the requirement for a Habitats Regulations Assessment to be undertaken to assess whether the development will adversely affect the SPA. This is likely to be informed by the need for additional survey and/or research as necessary and will then ensure that the proposed development will not conflict with the conservation objectives for the SPA.

Our overall aim is achieve the conservation objectives for the SPA with the least possible impact on activities in the areas.

**Next steps**

The cover letter issued with the documents gives further detail on the next stages of this consultation on the proposed SPAs.

*How does the consultation process work?*

The Conservation (Nature Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 places a statutory obligation on the Department of the Environment in relation to the classification of SPAs. Regulation 8A requires the issue of a notice of the proposed classification to every landowner or occupier so affected, and this will specify the time within which representations with respect to the proposal may be made to the Department.

*How will my views be considered?*

The consultation provides the opportunity for your views to be taken into account on the proposed SPAs. It provides the opportunity to ask questions about the proposals and to understand the implications of SPA site designation.

*How do I submit comments on this proposal?*

The cover letter issued as part of the consultation documents will advise on how, and who to write to with views.

*Where can I find further information?*

Northern Ireland Environment Agency  
Conservation Designations and Protection  
Klondyke Building  
Cromac Avenue  
Gasworks Business Park  
Malone Lower  
Belfast  
BT7 2JA  
Telephone: 028 9056 9548  
Email: [cdp@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:cdp@doeni.gov.uk)

Website: <https://www.doeni.gov.uk/topics/land-and-landscapes/protected-areas>

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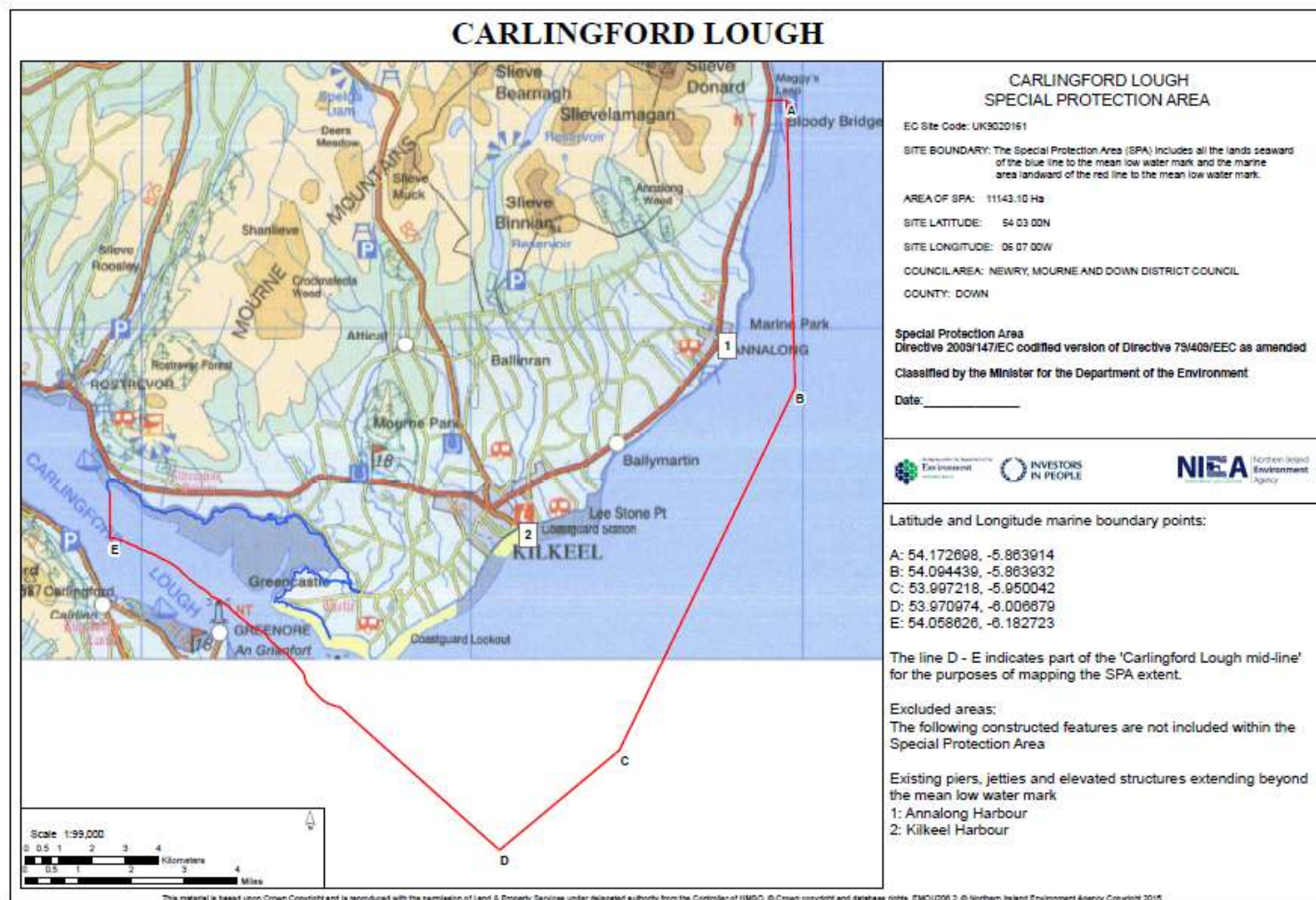


Figure 1: Carlingford Lough SPA (seaward of blue line to mean low water mark) and proposed marine extension (landward of red line to mean low water mark)