



CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT SECOND CYCLE RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS IN THE NORTH WESTERN, NORTH EASTERN AND NEAGH BANN RIVER BASIN DISTRICTS

SYNOPSIS OF RESPONSES

Department of the Environment

October 2015

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1. Introduction

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires an integrated approach to managing water quality on a river basin basis; with the aim of maintaining and improving water quality. River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) are the key tool for implementing the WFD and in December 2009, the Department, through the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), published the first three RBMPs in Northern Ireland for the North Eastern River Basin District (RBD) that lies solely within Northern Ireland and two international RBDs, the North Western and the Neagh Bann.

In line with the requirements of the WFD and as part of the process in developing the final second cycle RBMPs by December 2015, the Department, through NIEA, published draft RBMPs for the Neagh Bann, North Western and North Eastern River Basin Districts in December 2014 for public consultation. The draft RBMPs build upon the work undertaken as part of the significant water management issues consultation exercise in 2013/2014 by setting out the pressures impacting on the water environment and an updated programme of measures to address these pressures. As well as seeking general comments on the draft RBMPs, specific comments were also sought on the following consultation questions:-

- Do you agree with the proposed changes to water body boundaries and Heavily Modified Water Bodies within the North Eastern/North Western/Neagh Bann River Basin District?
- Do you agree with the proposed objectives and level of improvement set for the North Eastern/North Western/Neagh Bann RBD water environment?
- Have we taken the right approach to help us achieve those objectives?
- Should our priority be maximising the number of water bodies at good status or improving the worst water bodies? What would you do first?
- Can you identify any new or existing measures, projects or initiatives that you or your organisation can help deliver?
- Do you have any suggestions to enhance partnership working to implement the Plan at a local level?

2. Consultation

Consultation on the draft second cycle RBMPs opened in December 2014 and lasted for six months, closing on 22 June 2015.

The public consultation gave stakeholders the chance to give their views on the draft second cycle RBMPs for the North Eastern, Neagh Bann and North Western River Basin Districts. The draft second cycle RBMPs contain detail on the state of the water environment and the current classification of water bodies, the proposed new water body boundaries, the proposed objectives for water bodies in the second cycle and the additional measures which the Department is proposing to take forward in the second cycle in order to achieve the desired improvements in the water environment in the second WFD cycle. Feedback from the consultation will help in developing the final second cycle RBMPs, which the Department, through NIEA, will publish at the end of 2015.

3. Engagement with stakeholders

The consultation was launched on 22 December 2014 and details of it were highlighted at meetings of the WFD Stakeholder Forum and the nine Catchment Stakeholder Groups. These groups provide a forum for anyone interested in local water issues to raise their concerns with and have them addressed by both statutory agencies and NGOs at a local level and include representatives from agriculture, business, environmental organisations and other water users.

The consultation was also advertised in the main local newspapers and on the Department's website.

4. Responses to consultation

A total of 22 responses were received of which 1 provided nil comment and 21 provided substantive comment. Of those who provided comment, six responses were from individuals, eight were from non-governmental organisations, six from government agencies/bodies, one from a statutory advisory body to the Department and one from a government owned company. The following sections provide discussion on the key issues highlighted by respondents in respect of each of the consultation questions and the Department's response. As the majority of comments received were applicable to all three river basin districts, the summary of the issues and comments received has been drafted on this basis.

Further detail of specific comments raised in respect of each consultation question and the Department's response to those comments are set out in **Annex A**. A list of all respondents who provided comment is attached in **Annex B**.

4a. Water Body Boundaries

Three respondents agreed with the proposed changes to the water body boundaries.

Two respondents expressed concerns at the lack of available information with regards to the reduction of the number of water bodies with one of these respondents expressing the view that the information on surface water bodies was confusing and unclear.

Departmental Response

As highlighted in the consultation document, changes to the water body boundaries have been made as a result of having a better understanding of catchment characteristics and increased knowledge through river walks, routine monitoring and targeted LMA investigation work. The water body sets have been improved as a result of this work in the first cycle. The approach, in terms of the proposed new water body boundaries, is consistent with the rest of the UK, Ireland and other Member States in which changes to the water body boundaries have also been

made. Further Information will be made available through supporting documents and on the web mapper for the final second cycle RBMPs.

4b. Objectives and Level of Improvement

Two respondents felt that the objectives are unclear and confusing, with no explanation on how the target figures, in terms of the number of water bodies at good status, will be achieved.

Three respondents felt that the targets are over ambitious, unrealistic and unachievable and dependent on funding levels.

Departmental Response

The objectives set out in the draft RBMPs were established on the basis of a review undertaken by the Department, in which the results of monitoring and an analysis of the pressures impacting on water bodies and the effect that the Programme of Measures may have in terms of mitigating these pressures were considered. The Department has carried out further work and analysis in terms of looking at the objectives for specific water bodies during and following the consultation period and as a result of this work, the objectives for some water bodies have been updated. Details on the final objectives for water bodies will be published in the final second cycle RBMPs and on the Department's website.

The Department acknowledges that, in the current economic climate, there is no certainty at this stage around future funding and budgets that will be available throughout the lifetime of this plan. However, the Department will, in collaboration with other departments and agencies, continue to make a strong case for additional funding through the standard government bidding processes.

An important element in the development of the final second cycle RBMPs will be identifying cost effective measures which will have the most significant impact in terms of improving water quality. The Department is taking steps to improve the economic assessment of the measures proposed in the draft second cycle RBMPs and the benefits that would accrue from improving ecosystem services as a result of

the implementation of the proposed measures. This process is ongoing and will continue as the second cycle RBMPs are finalised. This prioritisation should help to ensure that Departmental resources are used effectively and efficiently.

4c. Approach to achieving objectives

Three respondents felt that it was difficult to assess whether the correct approach is being taken to achieving objectives as the information was unclear, particularly around the costing of the measures and the impact that the current funding cuts and staff restructuring will have on the ability of Departments to carry out many of the proposed measures. Two respondents further highlighted that the key to delivery of the 2021 objectives will be the funding provided and the programmes put in place to implement the most cost effective multi-benefit measures.

Three respondents indicated that they believe the proposed new measures to be fair and proportionate and the approach being taken is appropriate, however, one respondent expressed concern that too many measures included in the plan are already existing mechanisms.

Three respondents expressed disappointment that there is no mention of SuDS in the RBMPs and at the lack of progress in developing SuDS in Northern Ireland.

Three respondents expressed concerns that the proposed RBMPs do not contain any information on ecological flows.

Two respondents felt that the agriculture measures are not ambitious enough and will not help NI meet GES. The respondents also noted that the EFS scheme is voluntary and it is only a 'measure' if people take it up.

Departmental Response

The Department recognises the importance of both the existing measures and the additional measures in helping it to achieve its objectives during the second cycle. Existing measures form the core of the basic measures required under the Directive and will have a significant impact on ensuring that the quality of water bodies either improves or does not deteriorate. While existing measures haven't resulted in wide

scale improvements in overall status during the first cycle, they have led to significant improvements at the water body element level. It is also recognised that in some circumstances ecological recovery times may mask underlying improvements in water quality. The Department acknowledges that existing measures alone will not be enough to achieve the objectives set out for the second WFD cycle and believes that the additional measures identified will help to bridge the gap between what will be achievable based on existing measures alone.

As part of the process of developing the final second cycle RBMPs, the Department has undertaken an exercise to identify the costs and benefits of the proposed measures in the draft RBMPs. A range of options are being considered on the basis of which measures may be affordable and cost effective given current financial constraints. Details of this economic analysis will be published alongside the final second cycle RBMPs and will also be used as a basis for seeking additional funding to take forward measures during the second cycle. While the Department acknowledges the uncertainty around budgets and funding, as well as the impacts of Departmental reorganisations, meeting the objectives of the WFD remains a key target and the Department will continue to try and obtain funding through the standard bidding processes as well as looking at opportunities to avail of European funding.

With regard to SuDs, revised PPS 15 'Planning and Flood Risk' encourages the use of SuDS as the preferred drainage solution for new developments and provides guidance. This policy position is also strategically reflected in the Department's draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS). The cross Departmental Stormwater Management Group (SMG) have been working on developing policy and increasing awareness to ensure that stormwater management and the use of sustainable drainage becomes the norm in Northern Ireland. One of the outcomes flowing from the pilot project developed by the SMG assessing Ballyclare town and satellite communities is now influencing a stormwater separation strategy for greater Belfast, in order to mitigate diffuse pollution, reduce 'out of sewer' and CSO events and reduce flood risk. An important outcome of this retro fitting action will be financial savings. The SMG is currently considering how to promote the more widespread use of SuDs and will be engaging with planners and

local government to ensure that opportunities for its promotion are maximised following the reform of local government and planning as well as taking the impact of the forthcoming Departmental reorganisations into consideration. The promotion of SuDs also features strongly in the Department for Regional Development's Long Term Water Strategy which will be published in the autumn of 2015.

With regard to the agricultural measures, it is considered that these will continue to have a positive impact on farming practice and on reducing nutrient enrichment in water bodies caused by agricultural sources. The Nitrates Action Programme and Phosphorus Regulations are mandatory measures to improve water quality and nutrient management. These are mandatory measures which apply to all farms in NI. In addition, there are a range of schemes and support proposed under the NI Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) 2014-2020 which will contribute to Water Framework objectives. These include the Environmental Farming Scheme, advisory support for nutrient management and funding for Natura 2000 Management Plans. In relation to meeting WFD objectives, the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) will include measures for riparian buffers, riverbank fencing and slurry spreading by low emission equipment. These measures will help to address nutrient and sediment input to rivers caused agricultural activity. The EFS has objectives to improve biodiversity and habitats, water quality and carbon sequestration. The NIRDP will provide capital grant support for low emission slurry spreading equipment, constructed farm wetlands to treat effluent and other items which will contribute to improved water quality. Training and support for Nutrient Management Planning and Land Management will also be provided under Knowledge Transfer measures.

Other measures and initiatives which are in place or will be in place in the second cycle to encourage a positive impact for water quality include:-

- Ongoing provision of training and advice on nitrates and nutrient management planning.*
- The maintenance and development of the five Farm Nutrient Calculators under a nutrient management technology project.*
- Support for the DARD soil analysis service.*

- *Co-ordination of FAS News which nearly always has a relevant nitrates related article and goes to all Basic Payment Scheme applicants.*
- *Ongoing press articles as required to support the derogation, training and other important issues.*

With regards to ecological flows, the Department is aware of the CIS guidance on Ecological flows and the UK has been represented on the associated European working group. The E-Flows guidance document states that “Member States are encouraged to make best use of the shared understanding of E-flows in all steps of the WFD process.” The Department is represented on the UKTAG Water Resources Task Team and a review of the current UKTAG environmental flow standards will be undertaken during the second RBP cycle. This review will consider recommendations that have come out of the recent CIS E-flow guidance. Any changes in standards will be consulted on to enable stakeholders to represent their views.

4d. Priority - Maximising Water Bodies at Good Status or Improving Worst water bodies

Six respondents felt that it was important to economically appraise measures in order to ensure that those selected have a positive cost/benefit ratio and provide multiple benefits.

One respondent commented that the key priority should be to ensure no deterioration of any waters, with the secondary priority being to deliver improvement towards agreed objectives for the maximum number of water bodies, within prevailing budgetary constraints.

One respondent felt that the measures which will take longer to show improvement in monitoring results should be started early so that the benefits can be realised further down the line.

Departmental Response

In line with the Directive, the Department's policy is to try to ensure that no deterioration of any water bodies takes place.

The Department, as part of the objective setting process, has identified a number of water bodies which it believes can move from moderate to good status during the second cycle. A number of these water bodies have seen improvements at individual element level and it is considered that the impact of the second cycle measures will result in the water bodies overall status class improving. The Department will also continue to implement measures and consider approaches for improving failing elements in water bodies at poor status. However, it is accepted that, because of natural conditions, it takes time for some changes on the ground to be reflected in monitoring results and the recovery time and timescale for some of these water bodies to improve will take longer than others - this is particularly true in respect of some of our lakes which have been impacted by eutrophication. This is partly due to lag times in the recovery of plant and animal communities and partly because classification results are based on combining and averaging monitoring results collected over a number of years.

As highlighted earlier, the Department has undertaken an exercise to identify the costs and benefits of the proposed measures in the draft second cycle RBMPs and is considering a range of options (in terms of measures that will be taken forward) on the basis of which measures may be affordable and cost effective given current financial constraints.

4e. New/Existing Measures that organisations can help deliver

Two respondents expressed a willingness to participate in the development and delivery of the RBMPs.

Six respondents highlighted some examples of initiatives or projects with water quality benefits in which they have been, or are, involved in.

A further respondent indicated that there should be close working relationships with farmers and fishermen to take forward and negate any issues with respect to water quality.

Departmental Response

The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of the WFD. During the implementation of the second cycle RBMPs it is considered that the relationships, initiatives and partnerships involving stakeholders, government agencies and departments and local communities, developed during the first cycle will be strengthened.

The Department recognises the importance and value of many of the projects and initiatives which stakeholders have been, and will continue to be, involved in with regard to improving water quality in the second WFD cycle. The best way to protect and improve the water environment is by everyone being actively involved, and the Department is committed to working in partnership with local stakeholders in catchments and has developed a number of initiatives to encourage partnership working. The second cycle RBMPs will build on the positive work already being carried out.

4f. Partnership working

Six respondents indicated that there should be closer working with groups such as farmers, fishermen, NGOs, and all other stakeholders. These respondents highlighted the importance of trying to improve communication and promoting education and awareness campaigns. One of these respondents also expressed the view that a more advisory approach to achieving compliance in the agricultural sector would be a more effective way to deliver a better environment.

Two respondents suggested that more liaison with the new super councils was important and that water protection and enhancement measures should be an integral part of all new planning applications.

Two respondents highlighted the need for a clear timetable to be in place so that stakeholders are aware of when a review of progress will take place and when action will be scaled up from voluntary to mandatory measures.

Departmental Response

As previously highlighted, the Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of the WFD.

The Department has engaged with local fishermen and angling clubs to assist in the delivery of positive environmental outcomes through the development of Rivers Trust and Riverfly Partnerships. There are now seven Rivers Trusts and they include a broad range of stakeholders with an interest in the water environment. The Riverfly Partnerships monitor river stretches using trained anglers and other volunteers to monitor local aquatic insect populations which assist with the early identification of changes in water quality and potential pollution issues. Partnership groups are active in the Enler, Lagan, Six Mile Water, Derg, Faughan and Roe rivers.

In line with the requirements of the Directive, the Department will be conducting a review of progress in terms of the implementation of measures by the end of 2018. The Department will also continue to make a case for additional funding during the second cycle and, where additional funding becomes available, identify and implement further measures that may improve water quality.

The Department acknowledges and recognises the key role of the Councils going forward, in particular with respect to the processing of planning applications and ensuring that environmental and water quality objectives are a key consideration. This engagement will take place at various levels. While the majority of planning functions have transferred to local government, the key principles and policies on which planning decisions are made remain consistent with the current approach and NIEA will continue to provide input, advice and guidance in respect of the environmental aspects and impacts of any proposals.

Councils in their statutory role as plan-maker will also be responsible for preparing Local Development Plans (LDPs) for their areas. In preparing their LDPs, councils must take account of the strategic policy contained within the SPPS (once published). It will enable councils to bring forward bespoke local planning policy tailored to the specific circumstances of their area. This process will also involve public consultation and stakeholder engagement which will provide opportunities to liaise and address issues such as water protection and enhancement measures.

In terms of adopting a more advisory approach with farmers and the agricultural sector in order to achieve positive environmental outcomes, the Department has been engaging with a range of stakeholders including NGOs and the Ulster Farmers' Union and the farming community to promote partnership working between NIEA and the agricultural sector.

4g. Other comments

Two respondents raised the importance of securing water quality at Carlingford Lough and Narrow Waters on the Newry River. One of the respondents felt that water quality at Carlingford Lough has been deteriorating, resulting in the shellfish being recently downgraded to Class C with no measures within the draft RBMPs to prevent the water quality from deteriorating further. They also felt that it is unclear which jurisdiction has responsibility for the water quality within Carlingford Lough. A further respondent indicated that the Narrow Waters on the Newry River is important to maintain the commercial mussel fishery.

Two respondents raised concerns regarding oil and gas exploration, noting that it must not be considered in protected areas, especially those linked to the supply of drinking water, and expressed the view that with the current funding problems the Department will be unable to monitor the effects of oil and gas exploration while also recommending that any proposal for a NI Groundwater Protection Strategy should include proposals to prevent pollution from oil and gas exploration.

Three respondents expressed the view that there has been no systemic review of the existing strategies and programmes and are concerned with the low level of

ambition in the draft RBMPs and feel there needs to be integration with other plans and programmes.

Departmental Response

Within Carlingford Lough, in 2015 there are nine shellfish harvesting areas classified by the FSA in NI that sit within the Shellfish Water Protected Area (SWPA). This area is protected under the WFD by the Department. Each of these harvesting areas receives an annual classification (Class A, B or C) from the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland (FSA in NI) based upon levels of E. coli detected within the shellfish flesh. Since 2011, all shellfish harvesting areas have been classified as either Class A or Class B. At two sites (AFFNI 39-C7 and AFFNI 39-C9) there has been an improvement in Class from Class B (up until 2011) to Class A (provisional) in 2012, 2013 and 2014 and Class A in 2015.

At Narrow Water, there is a wild shellfishery which does not sit within the SWPA. It has typically been a Class B or Class B (provisional) since 2005. In June 2015 it was reclassified by the FSA in NI as Class B (seasonal) from 1 July to 31 October 2015 and Class C (seasonal) from 1 November 2015 to 30 June 2016 to provide greater clarity for the industry. Narrow Water wild shellfishery was not included within the SWPA at the last review and consultation carried out by the Department in 2011. This was mainly due to lack of production data to satisfy the criteria for designation. A further review is being carried out at present, however, due to the current FSA classification and a number of recent exceedences in chemical contaminants at this location it is unlikely that Narrow Water Wild shellfishery will be proposed for designation as a SWPA under the WFD.

All cross-border catchments are managed as shared waters by authorities in both Northern Ireland and ROI. In Northern Ireland, the Department is responsible for regulating point and diffuse sources of pollution. Responsibility for the licensing of aquaculture in these waters will, on commencement of the necessary provisions of the Foyle and Carlingford Fisheries (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (and parallel legislation in the south of Ireland) transfer to the Loughs Agency of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission. Discussions are ongoing.

With regard to oil and gas exploration, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement, published by the Minister in September 2015, states that in relation to unconventional hydrocarbon extraction there should be a presumption against its exploitation until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts.

Conventional oil and gas projects and their associated activities should be assessed on a case by case basis. Exploitation may be permitted in areas where it is likely to have the least environmental and amenity impacts. Projects within or in close proximity to an area that has been designated (or is proposed for designation) will not normally be granted permission where this would prejudice the rationale for its designation.

In terms of the level of ambition for the second cycle RBMPs and the objectives set for water bodies, this compares favourably with the rest of the UK and the targets are considered to be challenging. As part of the objective setting process and the development of the draft Programme of Measures for the second cycle, the Department analysed progress during the first cycle in order to identify gaps and areas where more focus and work is required in order to try and reduce the impacts of certain pressures and bring about improvements in water quality. The Department has also worked alongside other Departments to identify synergies and shared objectives with e.g. Flood Risk Management Plans, Long Term Water Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Climate Change Adaptation programme in order to facilitate integration and joined up working.

5. Next Steps

The Department will be working alongside, and engaging with, stakeholders and other government Departments to develop the key suggestions from the consultation and integrate them into the final second cycle RBMPs. These improvements will help to enhance engagement as the second cycle RBMPs are developed and implemented. The final second cycle RBMPs will be published at the end of 2015.

ANNEX A

Summary of Comments on Consultation and Departmental Response

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
1. Do you agree with the proposed changes to water body boundaries and Heavily Modified Water Bodies within the North Eastern, North Western and Neagh Bann River Basin Districts?		
Angus McRobert	This respondent highlighted an issue over maps showing large areas of the North Eastern RBD that are not included in any surface waterbody. The respondent was concerned that these areas are not managed to the level of the adjacent identified surface water bodies.	The Department would highlight that, as per the requirements of the WFD, it is required to protect and try and improve the water quality of all inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater (as defined by the Directive). The boundary changes will affect the reporting and management units but the total area covered by the RBMPs has not changed. Areas outwith designated waterbodies are still required to meet the requirements of Water Framework Directive, although not formally reported.
Rivers Agency NIW	Both these respondents agree with the proposed changes.	The Department notes these comments.
Six Mile Water Trust	This respondent does not agree with the proposed changes and feels that HMWBs must be taken into the overall assessment.	The status of HMWBs is assessed in line with the requirements of the Directive. The approach to classifying HMWBs has not changed. Further details will be published as part of supporting information with the final second cycle RBMPs.
Freshwater Taskforce UAF	These respondents felt that the information on the reduction in the number of surface water bodies was confusing and unclear.	<p>As highlighted in the consultation document, changes to the water body boundaries have been made as a result of having a better understanding of catchment characteristics and increased knowledge through river walks, routine monitoring and targeted LMA investigation work.</p> <p>Some anomalies were also found in the original digitisation process which had resulted in the creation of a number of water bodies <10km² which is below the WFD size threshold. In addition, further realignment was necessary in some cross-border regions as the RoI Environmental Protection Agency was undergoing a similar exercise. The water body sets have been improved as a result of this work in</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
		<p>the first cycle. The approach in terms of the proposed new water body boundaries is consistent with the rest of the UK and other Member States in which changes to the water body boundaries have also been made. Further detail on all of the boundary changes is available on the NIEA website.</p>
Alvin Wilson	<p>This respondent believes the changes in the environmental standards and the methodologies, that have taken place in element assessments, should deliver a more stable assessment and are welcome. The respondent also believes that the changes in water body areas, in general, seem sensible. However, the respondent expressed concerns that there is no clear indication as to how the plans will interact with the RoI RBMPs.</p>	<p>The Department notes the comments in respect of the changes in the environmental standards and methodologies.</p> <p>In terms of the interaction with the RoI RBMPs, for a number of reasons Ireland is behind schedule in terms of the production of the relevant documents and consultations as required by the Directive in the lead up to the second WFD cycle. It is envisaged that the final second cycle RBMPs will be approved and published in RoI in the second half of 2017. It is not anticipated that this will have any negative impacts on cross-border co-ordination on the IBRDs and indeed it is expected that it will better support implementation and improve administrative efficiencies, particularly when the regionalised administrative structures are in place in RoI.</p> <p>The Department has been invited to attend two groups set up in ROI, the National Implementation Group for Water Framework Directive and the EPA's Catchment Management Network which will provide a forum for cross border interactions going forward. At an operational level, the North South Rivers and Lakes Group continues to meet to discuss issues such as intercalibration and ECOSTAT, Rivers and Lakes Hydromorphology, fish monitoring and classification, characterisation, research projects and priority substances.</p>
AFBI	<p>This respondent does not agree with the reclassification of the Strangford Lough water body boundaries, and feels it would be a retrograde step. The respondent also commented that the new water body boundaries do not reflect the general distribution of the water quality metrics or the more recent seabed mapping outputs for Strangford Lough and are not in line with the outputs from the SMILE model. The respondent feels that more investigation/consideration is required before any changes to the water body boundaries of Strangford Lough are</p>	<p>The Department notes the comments in respect of the changes in the proposed change to the water body boundaries of Strangford Lough.</p> <p>There is currently one proposed change which would see the removal of the boundary between the Strangford Lough South water body and that of the Strangford Lough Narrows water body. All other boundaries remain as before. Examination of the data from the first cycle surveillance programme showed that there was little to distinguish the water quality in the Strangford Narrows water body from the adjacent coastal waters of Ards Peninsula water body and</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
	implemented	this reflects the obvious tidal connection between the Narrows and the wider Irish Sea. Given this, it was considered that resource effort would be better utilised in monitoring the expanded Strangford South water body as proposed in the draft second cycle RBMPs. The initial boundaries separating the Strangford North and Strangford South water bodies were drawn on the best available evidence during the early stages of the implementation of the Directive. If, however, the respondent has further evidence which it is prepared to share with the Department which would better inform the debate on the current boundaries then the Department would be keen to engage and carefully consider.
2. Do you agree with the proposed objectives and level of improvement set for the North Eastern, North Western and Neagh Bann River Basin Districts water environment?		
Rivers Agency	This respondent questioned whether the proposed targets are realistic and what will happen if they are not achieved.	The objectives set out in the draft RBMPs were established on the basis of a review undertaken by the Department, in which the results of monitoring and an analysis of the pressures impacting on water bodies and the effect that the Programme of Measures may have in terms of mitigating these pressures were considered. The Department has carried out further work and analysis in terms of looking at the objectives for specific water bodies and as a result of this work, the objectives for some water bodies have been updated. Details on the final objectives for water bodies will be published in the final second cycle RBMPs. As part of the ongoing requirements of the WFD, the Department will review progress against targets
Six Mile Water Trust	This respondent feels that the objectives are unclear.	Section 5 of the draft second cycle RBMPs provides text, tables and maps outlining the proposed objectives in terms of the % of water bodies meeting good status by 2021 and 2027. As previously highlighted, further analysis and work has been undertaken in respect of the objectives for water bodies and the revised position in terms of objectives will be set out in the final second cycle RBMPs.
UAF	This respondent noted that information is confusing and unclear, with no explanation on how the target figures in terms of the number of water bodies at good status will be achieved.	Section 5 of the draft second cycle RBMPs provides text, tables and maps outlining the proposed objectives in terms of the % of water bodies meeting good status by 2021 and 2027. As previously highlighted, further analysis and work has been undertaken in respect of the objectives for water bodies and the revised position in

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
		<p>terms of objectives will be set out in the final second cycle RBMPs.</p> <p>The Department considers that the proposed objectives will be achieved through the implementation of the Programme of Measures.</p>
UFU	<p>This respondent agrees with the objectives set for the majority of NI water bodies but expressed concerns about the objectives for Lough Neagh, highlighting that it will take many years for water quality to improve in it. The respondent, therefore, further expressed concerns that over ambitious objectives could result in unnecessary stringent measures and recommended that time be given to feel the impact of agricultural measures introduced in recent years before revising or imposing additional requirements.</p>	<p>The Department acknowledges that because of natural conditions, it takes time for some changes on the ground to be reflected in monitoring results and the recovery time and timescale for some of these water bodies to improve will take longer than others - this is particularly true in respect of some of our lakes such as Lough Neagh which have been impacted by eutrophication. The Department is currently reviewing the objective for Lough Neagh on this basis for the final second cycle RBMPs.</p>
Freshwater Taskforce UAF	<p>These respondents believe that the level of reported improvement in unachievable due to budgetary pressures and mix of measures proposed. One of the respondents also believes that NIEA should be more ambitious with regard to meeting conservation objectives and putting deadlines in place for sites that are not meeting conservation targets. The respondent further believes that it is important to ensure synergy between the WFD and the proposed MCZs.</p>	<p>The objectives set out in the draft RBMPs were on the basis of a review undertaken by the Department, in which the results of monitoring and an analysis of the pressures impacting on water bodies and the effect that the Programme of Measures may have in terms of mitigating these pressures were considered. The Department has carried out further work and analysis in terms of looking at the objectives for specific water bodies and as a result of this work the objectives, for some water bodies, have been updated. Details on the final objectives for water bodies will be published in the final second cycle RBMPs. This review has taken account of the site specific requirements of conservation objectives where status of the freshwater environment is a contributing factor to the overall condition of sites.</p> <p>Where an MCZ is designated within a WFD water body and there are water related pressures that are impacting on the designated feature, the Programme of Measures will contribute towards the achievement of the conservation objective.</p>
NIW	<p>This respondent agreed with the actions assigned to it as, while the level of outputs and performance for the next six years will depend on the funding available, NIW will strive to continue to meet its environmental obligations during</p>	<p>The Department notes these comments.</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
DRD Water Policy	<p>the second cycle River Basin plans.</p> <p>This respondent noted that a number of measures within the plans involve NI Water and highlighted that if PC15 is not fully funded it would affect NI Water's ability to deliver these measures.</p> <p>This respondent also highlighted that DRD is preparing a Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040), with a key principle of environmental improvement and compliance, which aims to deliver a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland. The respondent further expressed the view that aligning some actions of the Long-Term Water Strategy with the RBMPs will help achieve the environmental requirements of the WFD in a sustainable manner.</p>	The Department notes these comments.
3. Have we taken the right approach to help us achieve those objectives?		
Farmers For Action	This respondent questioned the need to change from the current approach taken, as it may add further cost to the taxpayer.	The proposed approach is consistent with that undertaken during the first WFD cycle.
Rivers Agency	This respondent indicated that more focus should be on multi-benefit measures, from a cost beneficial aspect with diffuse pollution and nutrient enrichment being the key issues to be dealt with.	<p>The Department acknowledges the importance of implementing measures which have benefits not just for the purposes of the WFD but also for the wider environment and meeting the objectives of other Directives. Many of the measures in the Programme of Measures will have multiple benefits.</p> <p>The Department is aware that diffuse pollution and nutrient enrichment are key issues to be tackled and the focus of the majority of the POM is on trying to reduce nutrient levels and diffuse pollution. As previously highlighted the Department will be taking forward groups of measures which it considers to be affordable and cost beneficial. It will also co-ordinate implementation of measures on a catchment basis to deliver multiple benefits.</p>
Six Mile Water Trust	This respondent felt that it is difficult to answer this question as the information given is unclear.	The Department considers that the proposed objectives will be achieved through the implementation of the Programme of Measures.

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
UAF	<p>This respondent commented that there is no costing of the measures and no indication of what impact the current funding cuts and staff restructuring will have on the ability to carry out many of the proposed measures.</p> <p>The respondent also raised concerns in the following areas:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of barriers. • Agriculture – the EFS scheme currently being on hold. • Urban Catchment – how will the prioritisation list be achieved on misconnections? • Chemicals – how will further development of drinking water protected areas and establishment of safeguard zones to improve and maintain water quality with drinking water catchments be achieved. 	<p>As part of the process of developing the final second cycle RBMPs, the Department has undertaken an exercise to identify the costs and benefits of the proposed measures in the draft second cycle RBMPs. A range of options are being considered on the basis of which measures may be affordable and cost effective given current financial constraints. Details of this economic analysis will be published alongside the final second cycle RBMPs and will also be used as a basis for seeking additional funding to take forward measures during the second cycle. While the Department acknowledges the uncertainty around budgets and funding, as well as the impacts of Departmental reorganisations, meeting the objectives of the WFD remains a key target and DOE will continue to try and obtain funding through the standard bidding processes as well as looking at opportunities to avail of European funding.</p> <p>The Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) is due to commence mid-2016. The EFS will include measures for riparian buffers, riverbank fencing and slurry spreading by low emission equipment. These measures will help to address nutrient and sediment input to rivers caused agricultural activity. The EFS has objectives to improve biodiversity and habitats, water quality and carbon sequestration.</p> <p>With regard to fish barriers the Department, through NIEA, has set up an inter-agency River Restoration and Continuity Group, one of the aims of which is to develop plans to address barriers. It is acknowledged that the Department has been unable to undertake major barrier removal projects so far but there is now a co-ordinated approach to the issue, although resources will always be a constraint.</p> <p>The Drinking Water Protected Area management plan will ensure the close co-ordination of NI Water, NIEA and the Drinking Water Inspectorate. This will ensure that relevant information can be quickly communicated and acted on where necessary. As part of this it will also help to target monitoring programmes.</p> <p>In respect of misconnections, the prioritisation list has been jointly</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
		developed by NI Water and NIEA based on a similar approach to that adopted by the Environment Agency in England. A scoring system is used which takes account of the visible impact of the misconnection, the aesthetics at the outfall, how accessible the outfall is to the public, the WFD status of the waterway and the impact on designated and sensitive areas.
UFU	This respondent indicated that they believed the proposed new measures to be fair and proportionate although also felt that NIEA should take a more advisory approach when dealing with farmers. The respondent expressed support for many of the proposed additional measures being supported by the NI Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.	<p>The Department notes the support for the additional measures being proposed as part of the NI Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.</p> <p>In terms of adopting a more advisory approach with farmers and the agricultural sector in order to achieve positive environmental outcomes, the Department has been engaging with a range of stakeholders including NGOs and the Ulster Farmers' Union and the farming community to promote partnership working between NIEA and the agricultural sector.</p>
Freshwater Taskforce UAF	<p>These respondents believe that the architecture and ambition is good, however, are concerned that too many measures included in the plan are already existing mechanisms. The respondents also commented that the plan is not transparent around feasibility of measures and lacks a cost/benefit analysis, making it difficult to make an informed judgement on the balance between effort and feasibility. A view was further expressed that the WFD should be funded strategically by the NI Executive.</p> <p>One of the respondents also felt that the agriculture measures are not ambitious enough and will not help NI meet GES. The respondent also noted that the EFS scheme is voluntary and it is only a 'measure' if people take it up.</p>	<p>As part of the process of developing the final second cycle RBMPs, the Department has undertaken an exercise to identify the costs and benefits of the proposed measures in the draft RBMPs. A range of options are being considered on the basis of which measures may be affordable and cost effective given current financial constraints. Details of this economic analysis will be published alongside the final second cycle RBMPs and will also be used as a basis for seeking additional funding to take forward measures during the second cycle. While the Department acknowledges the uncertainty around budgets and funding, as well as the impacts of Departmental reorganisations, meeting the objectives of the WFD remains a key target and the Department will continue to try and obtain funding through the standard bidding processes as well as looking at opportunities to avail of European funding.</p> <p>The Nitrates Action Programme and Phosphorus Regulations are mandatory measures to improve water quality and nutrient management. These are mandatory measures which apply to all farms in NI. In addition, there are a range of schemes and support</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
		proposed under the NIRDP 2014-2020 which will contribute to Water Framework objectives. These include the Environmental Farming Scheme, advisory support for nutrient management and funding for Natura 2000 Management Plans.
Freshwater Taskforce UAF Alvin Wilson	These respondents expressed disappointment that there was no mention of SuDS in the draft RBMPs and that there has been a lack of progress in developing SuDS in NI.	With regard to SuDS, revised PPS 15 encourages the use of SuDS as the preferred drainage solution for new developments and provides guidance. This policy position is also strategically reflected in the Department's draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS). The cross Departmental Stormwater Management Group (SMG) have been working on developing policy and increasing awareness to ensure that stormwater management and the use of sustainable drainage becomes the norm in Northern Ireland. One of the outcomes flowing from the pilot project developed by the SMG assessing Ballyclare town and satellite communities is now influencing a stormwater separation strategy for greater Belfast, in order to mitigate diffuse pollution, reduce 'out of sewer' and CSO events and reduce flood risk. An important outcome of this retro fitting action will be financial savings. The SMG is currently considering how to promote the more widespread use of SuDS and will be engaging with planners and local government to ensure that opportunities for its promotion are maximised following the reform of local government and planning as well and considering the forthcoming Departmental reorganisations.
Freshwater Taskforce UAF CNCC	These respondents expressed concerns that the proposed second cycle plans contain no information on ecological flows.	With regards to ecological flows, the Department is aware of the CIS guidance on Ecological flows and the UK has been represented on the European working group. The E-Flows guidance document states that " <i>Member States are encouraged to make best use of the shared understanding of E flows in all steps of the WFD process.</i> " The Department is represented on the UKTAG Water Resources Task Team and a review of the current UKTAG environmental flow standards will be undertaken during the next RBP cycle. This review will consider recommendations that have come out of the recent CIS E-flow guidance.
NIW	This respondent believes that the approach being taken to achieving the objectives is appropriate, based on the significant water management issues.	The Department notes these comments.
Alvin Wilson	This respondent believes that the key to the delivery of the	The Department notes these comments.

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
	2021 objectives will be the programme of measures and the funding and programmes that are provided to implement the most effective measures to deliver the objectives.	
4. Should our priority be maximising the number of water bodies at good status or improving the worst water bodies? What would you do first?		
Angus McRobert	<p>This respondent objected to the choice of management priorities and commented that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the primary management priority should be to ensure no deterioration of any waters, whether inside or outside a water body; and • the secondary priority should be to deliver improvement towards agreed objectives for the maximum number of water bodies, within prevailing budgetary constraints. 	<p>In line with the Directive, the Department's policy is to try to ensure that no deterioration of any water bodies takes place.</p> <p>The Department, as part of the objective setting process, has identified a number of water bodies which it believes can move from moderate to good status during the second cycle. A number of these water bodies have seen improvements at individual element level and it is considered that the impact of the second cycle measures will result in the water bodies overall status class improving. The Department will also continue to implement measures and consider approaches for improving failing elements in water bodies at poor status. However, it is accepted that, because of natural conditions, it takes time for some changes on the ground to be reflected in monitoring results and the recovery time and timescale for some of these water bodies to improve will take longer than others - this is particularly true in respect of some of our lakes which have been impacted by eutrophication.</p>
Farmers For Action	This respondent feels that technical ability should be used to ensure what is already in place is working properly.	The Department notes these comments.
Rivers Agency	This respondent indicated that both should be tackled simultaneously with initial focus being on quick and easy wins.	The Department, as part of the objective setting process, has identified a number of water bodies which it believes can move from moderate to good status during the second cycle. A number of these water bodies have seen improvements at individual element level and it is considered that the impact of the second cycle measures will result in the water bodies overall status class improving. The Department will also continue to implement measures and consider approaches for improving failing elements in water bodies at poor status. However, it is accepted that, because of natural conditions, it takes time for some changes on the ground to be reflected in

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
		<p>monitoring results and the recovery time and timescale for some of these water bodies to improve will take longer than others. This is partly due to lag times in the recovery of plant and animal communities and partly because classification results are based on combining and averaging monitoring results collected over a number of years.</p>
Six Mile Water Trust	<p>This respondent indicated that, with the current financial constraints, it would be better to target those areas that will have the greatest cost/benefit ratio.</p>	<p>The Department acknowledges the importance of implementing measures which have benefits not just for the purposes of the WFD but also for the wider environment and meeting the objectives of other Directives. Many of the measures in the Programme of Measures will have multiple benefits. As previously highlighted the Department will be taking forward groups of measures which it considers to be affordable and cost beneficial. It will also co-ordinate implementation of measures on a catchment basis to deliver multiple benefits.</p>
CNCC	<p>This respondent highlighted that resourcing is a vital component of achieving EU targets, but felt that the level of detail in the draft RBMPs made it difficult to judge how likely success will be. The respondent also highlighted that more information about the criteria used to determine feasibility, as well as some form of cost/benefit analysis about the contribution of a healthy freshwater environment to the regional economy. Greater clarity on the budget resources would enable more informed comment on the feasibility of the proposals. The respondent is supportive of the DOE case for additional funding and seeking to make use of any potential EU funding.</p>	<p>As part of the process of developing the final second cycle RBMPs, the Department has undertaken an exercise to identify the costs and benefits of the proposed measures in the draft RBMPs. A range of options are being considered on the basis of which measures may be affordable and cost effective given current financial constraints. Details of this economic analysis will be published alongside the final RBMPs and will also be used as a basis for seeking additional funding to take forward measures during the second cycle. While the Department acknowledges the uncertainty around budgets and funding, as well as the impacts of Departmental reorganisations, meeting the objectives of the WFD remains a key target and the Department will continue to try and obtain funding through the standard bidding processes as well as looking at opportunities to avail of European funding.</p>
UAF	<p>This respondent felt that an important element of the river basin planning process will be identifying cost effective measures which will have the most significant impact in terms of improving water quality.</p>	<p>The Department acknowledges the importance of implementing measures which have benefits not just for the purposes of the WFD but also for the wider environment and meeting the objectives of other Directives. Many of the measures in the Programme of Measures will have multiple benefits. As previously highlighted the Department will be taking forward groups of measures which it considers to be affordable and cost beneficial. It will also co-ordinate implementation of measures on a catchment basis to deliver multiple</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
		benefits.
UFU Alvin Wilson	These respondents felt that this question was too simplistic and that water bodies need to be looked at individually to see what the pressures are and how they can be improved. The respondent also recommended that the focus should be on how to deliver the most benefit using the most cost effective measures for farmers, householders, other industries and NIEA. The respondent further indicated that NIEA must work in partnership with stakeholders and other organisations to maximise the benefits of measures.	The Department, as part of the objective setting process, has identified a number of water bodies which it believes can move from moderate to good status during the second cycle. A number of these water bodies have seen improvements at individual element level and it is considered that the impact of the second cycle measures will result in the water bodies overall status class improving. The Department will also continue to implement measures and consider approaches for improving failing elements in water bodies at poor status. The Department acknowledges the importance of implementing measures which have benefits not just for the purposes of the WFD but also for the wider environment and meeting the objectives of other Directives. Many of the measures in the Programme of Measures will have multiple benefits. As previously highlighted the Department will be taking forward groups of measures which it considers to be affordable and cost beneficial. It will also co-ordinate implementation of measures on a catchment basis to deliver multiple benefits.
Freshwater Taskforce UAF	These respondents believe that priorities must be economically appraised to ensure priorities are based on the principles of sustainable development to ensure maximum benefit for the economy, society and the environment.	The Department acknowledges the importance of implementing measures which have benefits not just for the purposes of the WFD but also for the wider environment and meeting the objectives of other Directives. Many of the measures in the Programme of Measures will have multiple benefits. As previously highlighted the Department will be taking forward groups of measures which it considers to be affordable and cost beneficial. It will also co-ordinate implementation of measures on a catchment basis to deliver multiple benefits.
NIW	This respondent commented that it would seem logical to work towards maximising the number of water bodies at good status at the end of each RBMP cycle. However, it is recognised that some interventions take longer to show improvement in monitoring results and these projects/interventions should be started early, so that the benefits can be realised further down the line.	The Department acknowledges that some water benefits will take longer to show improvement in monitoring results.

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
5. Can you identify any new or existing measures, projects or initiatives that you or your organisation can help deliver?		
Farmers For Action	This respondent indicated that there should be close working relations with farmers and fishermen to take water issues forward.	<p>The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of the WFD.</p> <p>During the implementation of the final second cycle RBMPs it is considered that the relationships, initiatives and partnerships involving stakeholders, government agencies and departments and local communities developed during the first cycle will be strengthened.</p> <p>The Department recognises the importance and value of many of the projects and initiatives which stakeholders have been and will continue to be involved in with regard to improving water quality in the second WFD cycle. The best way to protect and improve the water environment is by everyone being actively involved, and the Department is committed to working in partnership with local stakeholders in catchments and has developed a number of initiatives to encourage partnership working. The final second cycle RBMPs will build on the positive work already being carried out.</p>
Rivers Agency	This respondent indicated a willingness to be involved in any catchment management groups. The respondent feels that seeking of opportunities on the back of other works, eg, road schemes and scope for catchment officers to work with planners, could be enhanced using the Lodge Burn at the Causeway Coast Hospital and the IDB site near Corr's Corner as examples.	<p>The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of the WFD.</p> <p>During the implementation of the final second cycle RBMPs it is considered that the relationships, initiatives and partnerships involving stakeholders, government agencies and departments and local communities developed during the first cycle will be strengthened.</p>
Six Mile Water Trust	This respondent indicated that it continually identifies measures that would improve the catchment, eg, buffer zones on river banks and strict controls of new development with a zero tolerance on river impact.	The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of the WFD.

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
UFU	<p>This respondent expressed a willingness to participate at all levels in the development and delivery of the RBMPs as long as all sectors and organisations work together in a positive manner. This respondent further highlighted examples of some of the initiatives and engagement undertaken by agricultural groups which have led to improved biodiversity and water quality, such as the Voluntary Initiative.</p>	<p>The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of the WFD.</p> <p>The Department recognises the importance and value of many of the projects and initiatives which stakeholders have been and will continue to be involved in with regard to improving water quality in the second WFD cycle. The best way to protect and improve the water environment is by everyone being actively involved, and the Department is committed to working in partnership with local stakeholders in catchments and has developed a number of initiatives to encourage partnership working. The final second cycle RBMPs will build on the positive work already being carried out.</p>
Freshwater Taskforce UAF	<p>This respondent highlighted some projects in which FWTF are involved:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garron Plateau • Lough Begg • Lough Erne • Restore project • Ballinderry River <p>The respondent also highlighted that INTERREG IVC funding should not be used to fund work that should be paid for through core government funds.</p>	<p>The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of the WFD.</p> <p>During the implementation of the final second cycle RBMPs it is considered that the relationships, initiatives and partnerships involving stakeholders, government agencies and departments and local communities developed during the first cycle will be strengthened.</p> <p>The Department recognises the importance and value of many of the projects and initiatives which stakeholders have been and will continue to be involved in with regard to improving water quality in the second WFD cycle. The best way to protect and improve the water environment is by everyone being actively involved, and the Department is committed to working in partnership with local stakeholders in catchments and has developed a number of initiatives to encourage partnership working. The second cycle RBMPs will build on the positive work already being carried out.</p>
NIW	<p>This respondent has embarked on a pilot catchment investigation study to determine the source apportionment of pollutant load discharging to a designated shellfish</p>	<p>The Department notes these comments.</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
	water and sees merit in working with NIEA/Marine Division to attain a better understanding of the root source of any failure.	
6. Do you have any suggestions to enhance partnership working to implement the Plan at a local level?		
Angus McRobert	This respondent commented that more open discussion should be encouraged at Catchment Stakeholder Group Meetings as this is often the most productive way of understanding stakeholder opinion and exposing possible conflicts as well as possible partnership.	<p>Although the Catchment Stakeholder Groups have fulfilled an important function in the development of the RBMP's it is now time to review the continued usefulness and value for money obtained through this format of stakeholder engagement. In some areas there are only a small number of stakeholders who actually attend the CSG meetings, indeed for the last round in Spring 2015 many CSG's only had one or two members of the public attending. CSG's in their current format take a lot of staff time to organise and run and in the current economic climate of budget constraints and staff recruitment issues (including the Voluntary Exit Scheme) the Department is looking for more effective ways to engage and still be able to achieve the desired outcome from these events.</p> <p>At the recent round of CSG meetings some options were discussed as to the future format of the meetings. For those who were not present, the Department proposed changing the frequency of the meetings to once annually and possibly holding a more conference style event, maybe on alternate years. This would have presentations/workshops on the morning of the conference with a possible site visit to a water quality improvement project in the afternoon. There would not be a charge to attend this conference as it would be seen as part of the Stakeholder Engagement mechanism.</p> <p>A questionnaire was circulated via the survey monkey website to those people who normally receive invitations to the CSG meetings along with a short note explaining the options we were suggesting and also giving opportunity for alternative suggestions from stakeholders. A total of 56 completed replies were received plus six incomplete replies which were excluded from the analysis due to no information being given on future format of the events. The suggested options were:-</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
		<p><u>Options and Results from Survey Money questionnaire</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A single meeting annually per River basin District – six respondents chose this option. 2. An annual conference style event – five respondents chose this option. 3. A combination of the two above suggestions – 36 respondents chose this option. 4. Other, with a comment box for elaboration of the suggestion – nine respondents chose this option. <p>From the nine respondents who chose “Other” the majority wanted to keep the present format of two meetings per year. One respondent wanted the frequency increased to three meetings per year. Of those wanting to keep the current format the reasons cited were a desire to continue to have the level of feedback on issues raised by the stakeholders at the meetings. Some respondents appeared not to know that Catchment Officers were available for meetings with interest groups at any time during the year and this is obviously something that needs to be clarified when communicating the decision to stakeholder groups.</p> <p>The Department is recommending that one meeting per River Basin District is held annually with consideration to be given to a whole day conference on alternate years. Further engagement with stakeholders on this will take place through the WFD Stakeholder Forum.</p>
Farmers For Action	This respondent indicated that close working with farmers and fishermen and all stakeholders to take water issues forward and keep oil and gas exploration from Northern Ireland.	<p>The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of the WFD.</p> <p>See earlier comments in respect of oil and gas exploration.</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
Rivers Agency	This respondent suggested more liaison with the new super councils suggesting water protection and enhancement measures should be an integral part of all new planning applications. The respondent also felt that catchment officers have a role in bringing together groups at a project level and sharing information in the Catchment Oversight Group (COG).	<p>The Department acknowledges and recognises the key role of the Councils going forward, in particular with respect to the processing of planning applications and ensuring that environmental and water quality objectives are a key consideration. This engagement will take place at various levels. While the majority of planning functions have transferred to local government, the key principles and policies on which planning decisions are made remain consistent with the current approach and the Department, through NIEA, will continue to provide input, advice and guidance in respect of the environmental aspects and impacts of any proposals.</p> <p>Councils in their statutory role as plan-maker will also be responsible for preparing Local Development Plans (LDPs) for their areas. In preparing their LDPs, councils must take account of the strategic policy contained within the SPPS (once published). It will enable councils to bring forward bespoke local planning policy tailored to the specific circumstances of their area. This process will also involve public consultation and stakeholder engagement which will provide opportunities to liaise and address issues such as water protection and enhancement measures.</p>
Six Mile Water Trust	This respondent feels that, under the current financial climate, government agencies need to actively engage and gain the support of the public and volunteer groups.	<p>The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of WFD.</p> <p>During the implementation of the final second cycle RBMPs it is considered that the relationships, initiatives and partnerships involving stakeholders, government agencies and departments and local communities developed during the first cycle, will be strengthened.</p>
UAF	This respondent comments that there is little involvement by NGOs except at stakeholder level and more involvement is needed to bring them on board.	The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of the WFD.
UFU	This respondent indicated that it believed partnership working which aims to improve communication and a more advisory approach to achieving compliance would be a	The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
	<p>more effective way to deliver a better environment. The respondent further highlighted positive examples in Scotland and England where the tailored catchment advisory approach has worked more successfully in delivering on the ground for water quality as opposed to the regulatory/enforcement approach.</p>	<p>objectives of the WFD.</p> <p>As previously highlighted, in terms of adopting a more advisory approach with farmers and the agricultural sector in order to achieve positive environmental outcomes, the Department has been engaging with a range of stakeholders including NGOs and the Ulster Farmers' Union and the farming community to promote partnership working between NIEA and the agricultural sector.</p>
Freshwater Taskforce UAF	<p>This respondent believes that the current funding pressures will affect the statutory, environment, community and voluntary sectors and it will be difficult to implement genuine projects that can deliver robust outputs for water quality in NI.</p> <p>The respondent highlighted the need for a clear timetable to be in place so that stakeholders are aware of when a review of progress will take place and when action will be scaled up from voluntary to mandatory measures.</p> <p>The respondent asked that stakeholders be informed as soon as WMU come to a decision regarding Catchment Stakeholder Groups (CSGs) to provide enough time for stakeholders to adjust and identify how they can raise water quality issues.</p>	<p>The Department is committed to ongoing engagement and partnership working at a local level and is willing to engage with all stakeholders and individuals who can assist in helping to meet the objectives of the WFD.</p> <p>In line with the requirements of the Directive, the Department will be conducting a review of progress in terms of the implementation of measures by the end of 2018.</p> <p>The Department will keep stakeholders informed of any operational change to CSGs.</p>
NIW	<p>This respondent believes there is an opportunity to develop more partnership working in the area of Education and Awareness Campaigns.</p>	<p>The Department notes these comments and will continue to identify opportunities for working together in improving education and awareness on key water issues.</p>
Alvin Wilson	<p>The respondent believes that the opportunity to develop electronic monitoring systems along river corridors with other agencies should be examined.</p>	<p>The Department is pursuing the use of new technologies to extend its investigative monitoring capabilities. This includes the use of in-river instrumentation and lake monitoring buoys as part of multi-agency catchment studies.</p>
Other Comments		

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
<p>Brian Cunningham Brian McDonald</p>	<p>These respondents highlighted that the shellfish water in Carlingford Lough has been deteriorating since 2010 resulting in the shellfish being recently downgraded to Class C.</p> <p>These respondents also felt that it is unclear which jurisdiction has responsibility for the water quality within Carlingford Lough.</p>	<p>Within Carlingford Lough, in 2015 there are nine shellfish harvesting areas classified by the FSA in NI that sit within the Shellfish Water Protected Area (SWPA). This area is protected under the WFD by the Department. Each of these harvesting areas receives an annual classification (Class A, B or C) from the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland (FSA in NI) based upon levels of <i>E. coli</i> detected within the shellfish flesh. Since 2011, all shellfish harvesting areas have been classified as either Class A or Class B. At two sites (AFFNI 39-C7 and AFFNI 39-C9) there has been an improvement in Class from Class B (up until 2011) to Class A (provisional) in 2012, 2013 and 2014 and Class A in 2015.</p> <p>At Narrow Water, there is a wild shellfishery which does not sit within the SWPA. It has typically been a Class B or Class B (provisional) since 2005. In June 2015 it was reclassified by the FSA in NI as Class B (seasonal) from 1 July to 31 October 2015 and Class C (seasonal) from 1 November 2015 to 30 June 2016 to provide greater clarity for the industry. Narrow Water wild shellfishery was not included within the SWPA at the last review and consultation carried out by DOENI in 2011. This was mainly due to lack of production data to satisfy the criteria for designation. A further review is being carried out at present, however, due to the current FSA classification and a number of recent exceedences in chemical contaminants at this location it is unlikely that Narrow Water Wild shellfishery will be proposed for designation as a SWPA under the WFD.</p> <p>All cross-border catchments are managed as shared waters by authorities in both Northern Ireland and ROI. In Northern Ireland, DOENI is responsible for regulating point and diffuse sources of pollution.</p> <p>Responsibility for the licensing of aquaculture in these waters will, on commencement of the necessary provisions of the Foyle and Carlingford Fisheries (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (and parallel legislation in the south of Ireland) transfer to the Loughs Agency of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission. Discussions are</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
		ongoing.
Brian McDonald	This respondent commented that there are no measures, within the plans, to prevent the water quality at Carlingford Lough from deteriorating.	<p>All water bodies are managed under WFD to ensure no deterioration and to meet their water quality objectives.</p> <p>Within the Carlingford Lough Shellfish Water Protected Area (SWPA), microbiological classifications of shellfish harvesting areas have remained constant at Class B. Two of the harvesting areas (AFFNI 39-C7 and AFFNI 39-C9) have in fact improved in Class since 2011. There remain ongoing exceedences for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH's), mainly at the wild shellfishery at Narrow Water, which falls outside of the SWPA. The Department recently published Pollution Reduction Programmes for Northern Ireland's shellfish waters (http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/protect_the_environment/water/marine-home/shellfish_waters.htm). The programmes set out what measures have been taken, as well as ongoing and planned measures to improve the quality of shellfish waters.</p> <p>In addition to this, the Department has recommended that the Newry transitional water is designated as a sensitive area under the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive. This means that further treatment is likely to be required upstream to improve water quality.</p> <p>The Department has also worked closely with Northern Ireland Water to secure INTERREG VA funding, of which approximately €30m has been secured to improve water quality in transitional waters (Loughs Foyle and Carlingford) and €20m has been secured to improve freshwater quality in cross-border river basins.</p>
Cadogan Enright	This respondent was concerned that the plan does not cover replacement of the barrier on the Quoile River.	<p>The Quoile barrier is a designated flood defence, constructed to alleviate flooding problems upstream and provide protection to Downpatrick. As such the lead agency regarding any alterations or replacement of this barrier will be Rivers Agency.</p> <p>There have been ongoing discussions regarding water quality issues</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
		<p>within the Quoile pondage, and a detailed modelling process has been undertaken by consultants on behalf of NIEA, utilising Rivers Agency information. The removal of the barrier would render Downpatrick vulnerable to flooding, and indeed, could be seen as a breach of the Floods Directive. Replacement costs would run into millions of pounds and would require a detailed planning and design process.</p>
Peter McCarron	<p>This respondent raised concerns around oil and gas exploration:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be considered in Protected Areas, especially those linked to the supply of drinking water. • Increased difficulties of meeting the requirement to achieve good water status. • With the current funding problems the Department will be unable to monitor the effects. • Risk of severely damaging water. • The RBMPs should consider the findings of the all-Ireland research project on fracking. • Proposal for a NI Groundwater Protection Strategy should include proposals to prevent pollution from oil and gas exploration. <p>This respondent also raised a concern regarding the drilling of boreholes and felt that they should be subject to control.</p>	<p>With regard to oil and gas exploration, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement, published by the Minister in September 2015, states that in relation to unconventional hydrocarbon extraction there should be a presumption against its exploitation until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts.</p> <p>Conventional oil and gas projects and their associated activities should be assessed on a case by case basis. Exploitation may be permitted in areas where it is likely to have the least environmental and amenity impacts. Projects within or in close proximity to an area that has been designated (or is proposed for designation) will not normally be granted permission where this would prejudice the rationale for its designation.</p>
Rivers Agency	<p>This respondent made some general comments on additional items that should be highlighted in the text of the RBMPs, including highlighting some of the inter-departmental groups and projects which are already set up and running, eg SCAMP, the Catchment Oversight Group and the Derg project.</p> <p>This respondent made some comments on the presentation and consistency of the surface water classification results.</p> <p>The respondent accepted that there are pressures due to</p>	<p>The Department will take these comments into consideration when finalising the plans.</p>

Respondent		Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
		<p>flood defences and navigation, but also highlights that there are legislative remits for much of this work.</p> <p>The respondent made reference to flood risk maps, regarding IPPC sites, and the link between RBMPs and FRMPs.</p> <p>The respondent highlighted the multi-benefits from inter-departmental working. The respondent further suggested that an action should be established for the Catchment Oversight Group for the identification and implementation of multi-benefit projects.</p> <p>The respondent highlighted the need for a balanced approach to water environment objectives vs providing flood/drainage benefit to the local community.</p>	
Natural Assets	Living	<p>This respondent commented that it would be helpful, in conjunction with recent Flood Management Plan, to develop a process for determining the impact of flood prevention schemes on wider environmental impacts, in particular salmonid habitats.</p> <p>The respondent also commented that while the methodology for determining flood risk is scientific, there is a need to consider the impact on river hydro geo morphology within salmonid rivers.</p> <p>The respondent felt that the impact of flood mitigation measures on national and international salmonid management plans need to be considered.</p> <p>The respondent noted that the goals of the flood management plans need to be well communicated and defined in the context of flood prevention but less holistically in the context of wider environmental impacts.</p> <p>The respondent feels there is a need for a wider</p>	<p>Rivers Agency already has a robust environmental assessment system set out within legislation (Drainage {Environmental Impact Assessment} Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006), which is followed for all capital works schemes. Consultation with statutory consultees, including Loughs Agency and DCAL Inland Fisheries group is an integral part of this process. The EIA process covers a wide range of topics, as set out in the legislation, and which includes natural and built heritage, designated sites, air and noise pollution, material assets and cumulative effects. Rivers Agency also checks all such works against WFD classification and targets, and seeks to identify positive measures to mitigate the impact of such works, to enhance the ecological value of the river and to benefit and assist in the aims and objectives of other directives, plans and strategies. An example of this if the reconnection of fish passage at Lodge Burn, Coleraine, which was incorporated into the design for the flood alleviation scheme at that site.</p> <p>Rivers Agency is also a key player in the Catchment Oversight Group (formerly the Catchment and Restoration group) which is an interdepartmental group looking at restoration and barrier issues, with the aim of identifying works and measures which would benefit a</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
	catchment approach and incorporation of a scientific approach to total catchment management.	number of directives and plans. Through this group, the Agency is currently leading on a catchment study on the Moyola, which will involve a number of Departments and groups. This will be the first such study in Northern Ireland, and aims to develop a process and methodology which can be used for further catchment studies. River Restoration Centre (of which Rivers Agency is a core funder) has assisted in the development of both the group, and the study.
The Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Organisation Ltd	This respondent is concerned that the RBMPs do not appear to acknowledge how important securing water quality at Narrow Waters is to maintain the commercial mussel fishery.	During the 2011 review of designated shellfish waters in Northern Ireland, Narrow Water did not meet the production criteria for designation. A further review is being carried out currently which will assess Narrow Water against a number of criteria including production data over the last three years and the technical and economic feasibility of designating. An assessment against these criteria is currently underway.
UAF	<p>This respondent highlighted the following issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using SMART is an effective way of setting objectives. • The PwC report on the social and economic value of angling in NI, states that angling supports approx 780 full time equivalent jobs and are worth approx £40 million to the NI economy. • Failure of existing strategies and programmes. • Concerned with the low level of ambition in the plans. • Needs to be integration with other plans and programmes. • More needs to be done to address pollution and the effects of climate change. • Weaknesses in the fisheries classification tool. • Lack of progress with fish monitoring. 	<p>The Department notes these comments, the majority of which have been addressed in other parts of the synopsis.</p> <p>In respect of the fisheries classification tool and fish monitoring, NIEA will endeavour to meet statutory WFD fish monitoring requirements through the second cycle. In the short term, limited resources will likely preclude anything in excess of the minimum requirements in the area under DCAL jurisdiction but Departmental re-structuring may create opportunities. In the Loughs Agency area, WFD fish monitoring is continuing as previously. We have been able to utilise both DCAL and Loughs Agency NASCO data for WFD purposes, but it cannot be used for overall fish classification as it does not meet WFD protocols. We are aware of the limitations of the river fish classification tool and maintain an expert judgement override by those undertaking the work. It should be noted, however, that the tool has intercalibrated successfully with other European countries. We will explore opportunities to develop the tool further during the second cycle but again this will be resource dependent.</p>
Waterways Ireland	This respondent gave an alternative description for Lough Beg and highlighted that proposals which may affect navigation or its infrastructure should not be progressed without full consultation or the agreement of the Statutory Navigation Authority.	<p>The Department notes the comments with regard to Lough Beg and the Lower Bann.</p> <p>With regard to weirs and navigation, the Department is aware of the</p>

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	<p>The respondent also commented that there is no mention about potential positive impacts from man made changes.</p> <p>The respondent further highlighted that Waterways Ireland's focus will be in maintaining the Lower Bann as a living navigation and a popular location for water-based activities.</p>	<p>positive effects and impacts that some man made changes can have and the legislative and policy drivers behind the construction of some of them.</p>
Freshwater Taskforce	<p>This respondent believes that its submission to the first cycle plans in 2009 is still relevant to the second cycle consultation and there has been no systematic review of the effectiveness of the measures implemented during the last cycle.</p> <p>The respondent would encourage DARD (along with other government Departments) to pursue a land strategy for Northern Ireland. The respondent believes it is vital to have interaction with the planning system and engagement with the strategic planning policy for Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>The Department notes these comments in respect of the submission to the first cycle plans.</p> <p>DARD has established an independent Agricultural Land Use Expert Working Group to develop a land management strategy for the agriculture sector. This strategy will focus on encouraging increased uptake of sustainable land management practices on farms. Contributing to the improvement of water quality is a key priority for this strategy. Commitment to the production of an overarching land strategy will be a decision for the Executive in light of the restructuring of government departments.</p>
Alvin Wilson	<p>This respondent felt that there has been some improvement in the North West and North East RBDs but nowhere near enough to deliver the objectives set for 2015. A clear funding programme needs to be established to support the RBP process and the benefits that accrue from it. The respondent also believes that the lack of a clear cost benefit analysis in the draft RBMPs is becoming one of the significant gaps in the river basin planning process.</p>	<p>As part of the process of developing the final second cycle RBMPs, the Department has undertaken an exercise to identify the costs and benefits of the proposed measures in the draft RBMPs. A range of options are being considered on the basis of which measures may be affordable and cost effective given current financial constraints. Details of this economic analysis will be published alongside the final RBMPs and will also be used as a basis for seeking additional funding to take forward measures during the second cycle. While the Department acknowledges the uncertainty around budgets and funding, as well as the impacts of Departmental reorganisations, meeting the objectives of the WFD remains a key target and DOE will continue to try and obtain funding through the standard bidding processes as well as looking at opportunities to avail of European funding.</p>
Alvin Wilson	<p>This respondent made comments about the following issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrients - nutrient problems still pose the most 	<p>The Department notes these comments. A range of measures have been identified and will be implemented to reduce the impact of nutrients and sediment on water bodies across NI.</p>

Respondent	Respondents' comments	Departmental reply
	<p>significant threat to our water environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sediment - the profile of the impact of sediment on water quality has been raised. The respondent further highlighted the need to focus on development projects through the planning system and welcomes the further development of SCIMAP modelling. • Quarries and mines, including oil and gas exploration – the results of research needs to be disseminated through the CSGs. Caution should be taken with the measure to assess the use of abandoned mines and quarries for flood attenuation and management of flow in flood events, as it could expose the environment to further pollution. • The physical condition of the water environment – the development of river and lake restoration measures is a vital measure in the development of sustainable water bodies within the plan and it will be critical that planning policy within the new councils takes this on board when assessing proposals that would modify existing water bodies. 	<p>See earlier comments in respect of oil and gas exploration.</p> <p>In the determination of a proposal to modify a water course/body, planning policy FLD 4 'Artificial Modification of Watercourses' contained within revised PPS 15 and the SPPS, once published in final form, as well as all other materials considerations, such as responses from relevant consultees, will be key in the assessment.</p> <p>In addition, councils in their statutory role as plan-maker will be responsible for preparing their LDPs bringing forward local planning policy tailored to the specific circumstances of their plan area. These local planning policy matters will be required to reflect the strategic planning policy position for Northern Ireland.</p>
CNCC	<p>This respondent suggested that a detailed examination of the strengths, weaknesses and effectiveness of the measures implemented during the first cycle of RBMP should be undertaken and this used to inform future actions.</p>	<p>A review of progress during the first cycle 2009-2015 will be undertaken as part of reporting to EC in March 2016.</p>
GSNI	<p>This respondent commented that the plans state if a groundwater body is at 'good' or 'poor' status for chemical or quantitative status but there is no breakdown provided to indicate which status tests have been failed or passed to produce the results. The respondent also commented that there are no details of the process used to define the objectives for groundwater bodies. The respondent feels that to achieve the objectives for both groundwater and surface water bodies, appropriate attention and consideration should be given to measures to tackle contamination of shallow groundwater resources, particularly from diffuse pollution. The respondent feels</p>	<p><i>No breakdown provided of status tests:</i> - reasons behind the 2014 status are presently included visually within the River Basin Planning Interactive Map Viewer. The final RBMPs will include the results from the individual tests used to inform the Groundwater Chemical Status and the Groundwater Quantitative Status, which combined inform the overall groundwater body status as detailed within the Classification Methodology.</p> <p><i>No details provided of the process used to define the objectives:</i> - Detailed information on the objectives of each River Basin Management Plan is included within the document <i>What we Plan to Achieve by 2021 and Beyond</i> located under the Groundwater</p>

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	<p>there is a lack of details of the groundwater monitoring data and lines of evidence that have been used to determine the status results.</p> <p>The respondent noted that the failure to achieve the objectives in the first RBMPs may be as a result of not giving consideration to groundwater as a pathway for water to migrate to surface waters.</p> <p>The respondent is concerned about the potential impact the quantitative status assessment results for groundwater bodies would have on the ability to sustainably utilise Northern Ireland's groundwater resources.</p>	<p>section.</p> <p><i>Objectives & contamination of shallow GW – point noted</i></p> <p><i>GW monitoring data and lines of evidence - Status results are supported by details of the annual groundwater monitoring data and other lines of evidence.</i></p> <p><i>Objectives in the first RBMPs: - point noted. NIEA actively supports Sustainable Integrated Catchment Management, which acknowledges that baseflow is the continual contribution of groundwater to rivers and lakes and is an important source of flow between rainfall events. This concept of Sustainable Integrated Catchment Management is further emphasised in the Long Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015–2040), which is soon (2015) to be published by the Department of Regional Development.</i></p> <p><i>Potential impacts on quantitative status assessments: - point noted. NIEA supports and encourages sustainable usage of Northern Ireland's groundwater resources. For example, abstraction licence applications are reviewed on a site specific basis accordingly. It is noted that the query raised regarding the Quantitative Status Assessment Result has only considered one of the four tests used in the Classification Methodology for the Quantitative Status Assessment, namely water balance. The UKTAG methodology (see page 5 of document) incorporates additional tests to inform the Quantitative Status result. Furthermore, additional groundwater quality monitoring data had been collected since the 2009 assessment and the 2014 Quantitative Status result reflects this. Continuous records of groundwater level monitoring are of insufficient length to be used as other lines of evidence within the Classification Methodology.</i></p>
Housing Executive	This respondent commented that the water environment and biodiversity that the RBMPs support is a vital asset and inextricably linked to economic prosperity and well-being.	The Department notes these comments.

ANNEX B

List of Respondents

Agri-Food and Bioscience Institute (AFBI)

Alvin Wilson

Angus McRobert

Brian Cunningham

Brian McDonald

Cadogan Enright

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC)

Department for Regional Development, Water Policy & Shareholder Division

Farmers For Action

Freshwater Taskforce

Geological Survey of Northern Ireland GSNI)

Housing Executive

Natural Living Assets

Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation (NIFPO)

Northern Ireland Water (NIW)

Peter McCarron

Rivers Agency

Six Mile Water Trust

Department for Regional Development - Transport NI

Ulster Angling Federation (UAF)

Ulster Farmers Union (UFU)

Waterways Ireland