



NIEA Northern Ireland
Environment
Agency
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

**Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Business Plan 2019-2020**



A living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

 An Agency within the Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

 **INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**

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“ In Northern Ireland we are truly fortunate to enjoy one of the most stunning landscapes on the planet. The hugely diverse nature of our living environment and systems, including water, air, farmed land, mountains and woodlands means we can enjoy a range of activities and natural wonders right on our doorstep. To remain ‘living’ requires activity, and NIEA works to protect these vital resources and to create prosperity and well-being through delivery and support of sustainable management, and regulation of our natural environment. ”

*David Small
Chief Executive NIEA*

Who We Are

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency is an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland operating within the context of the Department's overall vision, strategic objectives and policies. The Agency's primary purpose is to protect and enhance Northern Ireland's environment, and in doing so, deliver health and well-being benefits and support economic growth.

We have some 490 staff (Full Time Equivalents) who are located in offices and regional sites (mainly country parks) across Northern Ireland. There are two major office sites: one in Belfast and one in Lisburn, with the Agency's headquarters located in the Klondyke Building, Belfast. Some Agency staff are also located in the new DAERA building at Ballykelly. Regionally NIEA operates seven country parks. It also manages 65 nature reserves including the Quoile Countryside Centre which has a range of facilities including a small visitor centre.

NIEA Locations





Chief Executive's Foreword

I am pleased to present the Agency's Business Plan for 2019/20. This Plan sets out the key activities for the year and has been prepared for consideration and approval by an incoming Minister. Until then it will remain as a draft.

During the period of this plan, preparing to leave the EU will continue to be a top priority for the Agency. This will entail continuing to prepare the Agency on all aspects of policy frameworks, relevant legislative amendments and transitional and day one planning, specifically in regard to Waste and Water compliance and regulation.

This will of course increase the importance of continuing to work with our customers and stakeholders who have a responsible and progressive approach to environmental management, but we will also seek to enforce against those who want to take short cuts or who damage our environment and natural heritage.

Our main focus is to ensure that our objectives and targets, and associated activities, underpin and help to deliver the Agency's primary purpose "to protect and enhance Northern Ireland's environment and in doing so, deliver health and well-being benefits and support economic growth". This purpose remains at the core of everything we do as an organisation and contributes to DAERA's vision of "A living, working, active landscape valued by everyone".

The Agency also plays an important role in supporting policy development within DAERA's Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group as well as contributing to wider policy development across DAERA on key issues such as waste, biodiversity, animal disease control, environmental farming schemes and future agri-environment policies.

An emerging issue for the protection of our biodiversity is the impact that nitrogen deposition is having on our protected areas and special sites across Northern Ireland primarily due to emissions of ammonia and nitrogen oxides. During 2019/20, the Agency will therefore continue to assist DAERA in the delivery of a cross departmental approach to the management of ammonia and nitrogen deposition from agriculture.

The Agency also faces other long term environmental challenges, for example in relation to water quality, we are currently implementing a second Northern Ireland-wide six year cycle of programmes and measures which aims to have 70% of all water bodies within Northern Ireland classified as achieving 'good status' or better by 2021. However, an interim analysis in 2018 has disappointingly shown no overall improvement in status alongside a decline in rivers. Therefore, in considering interventions to prevent further deterioration and deliver

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improvements, it is essential that these are considered as part of joined up policies on environment, land use, agriculture and economy.

This year we will continue to engage with the wider Department, public and community groups to help us to deliver our environmental outcomes. For example, through the Environment Fund over £2 million will be provided to community groups and councils to deliver a range of environmental outcomes and data for habitats, species, special sites, landscapes, air and water, as well as encouraging environmental responsibility.

In addition, through the provision of technical evidence and advice, we will continue to support DAERA's Environmental Farming Scheme which helps to facilitate environmental delivery on farms.

The Agency manages a range of lands encompassing seven country parks and 65 nature reserves - we are committed to continuing our role in connecting the public with the living landscape available on our doorstep. These facilities and their biodiversity are also crucial to the conservation of our natural environment.

We will be continuing our key role of environmental regulation which includes working with local councils to ensure that waste is responsibly managed. Indeed going beyond environmental compliance can bring significant benefits for business. For example, many businesses have realised that acting in a socially and environmentally responsible way is more than just a legal duty as it can affect the long-term success of their organisation. This can help businesses unlock the economic opportunities provided by the climate change and resource efficiency agendas.

We will of course need to be clear about the allocation of resources to our competing priorities, in particular the delivery of our statutory obligations but also focussing on the draft Programme for Government - Outcome 2, "We live and work sustainably - protecting the environment".

Therefore the targets included in the NIEA Business Plan set out our priorities so that our staff know what they have to deliver, our customers and stakeholders know what to expect from us and the public knows what we intend to deliver.

Finally, I recognise that the Agency staff is our main strength and with this in mind I am committed to the provision of opportunities for the continuous development of all staff across the organisation both scientific and administrative.



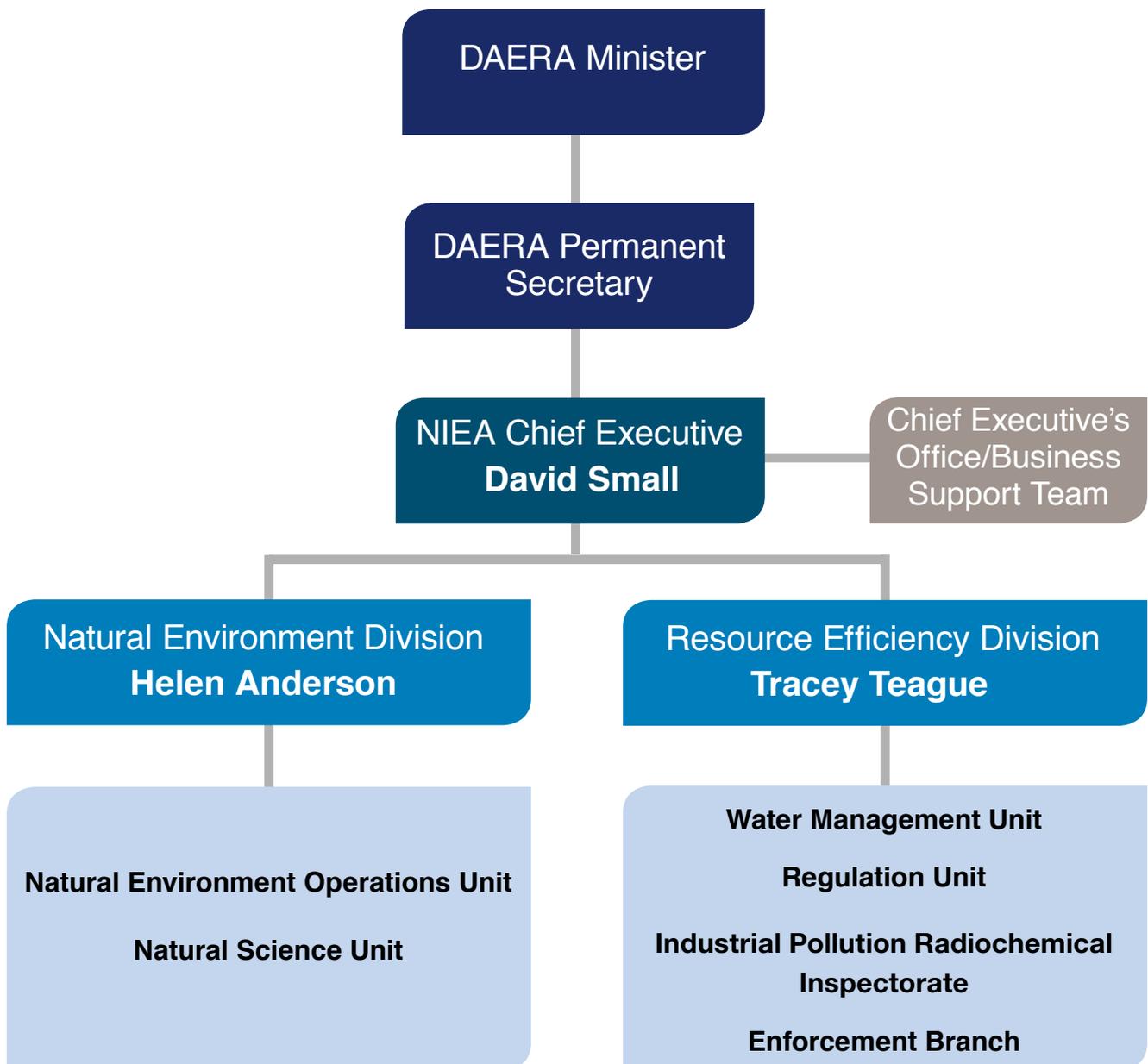
David Small

Chief Executive

Governance

NIEA sits within the Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group of the Department and is headed by a Chief Executive supported by two Executive Directors with responsibility for the Agency's two divisions, Natural Environment Division (NED) and Resource Efficiency Division (RED). A Business Support Team assists the Chief Executive and directors in the delivery of key corporate functions such as strategic planning, financial management and governance.

NIEA Organisation Chart at 1 April 2019



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The Agency's Framework Document sets out its relationship with the Department and the approach to corporate governance to ensure proper and effective management of the Agency's affairs.

The Chief Executive of the Agency is also the Agency Accounting Officer in line with Department of Finance guidance.

A Statutory Advisory Council, the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC), provides the Agency with independent advice on matters relating to nature conservation.

A formal Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), which includes a non-executive chair, three independent members and representatives from both internal and external audit, advises the Chief Executive on issues of risk, control, governance and assurance.



NIEA Purpose

NIEA’s primary purpose is to protect and enhance Northern Ireland’s environment, and in doing so, to deliver health and well-being benefits and support economic growth.

As an Executive Agency within DAERA, NIEA is a key contributor to DAERA’s vision of “a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone”.

One of DAERA’s four strategic outcomes is “A clean, healthy environment, benefitting people, nature and the economy”, which underpins the draft Programme for Government (PfG) Outcome 2, “We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment”.

In line with NIEA’s overall purpose, the Agency has a pivotal role in delivering these outcomes through its own five key priorities:



The Agency also plays an important role in supporting policy development within DAERA’s Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group as well as contributing to wider policy development across DAERA on key issues such as waste, biodiversity, animal disease control, environmental farming schemes and future agri-environment policies.

What We Do

The key activities and functions which help to deliver against our 5 key priorities are:



A fully compliant regulated industry

NIEA is continuing to develop a new risk based regulatory system that will continue to protect our environment and human health by measuring how a business complies with regulations, by delivering more effective and efficient customer service, and by helping responsible businesses/citizens operate effectively within environmental limits, whilst allowing them to prosper.

NIEA promotes a sustainable approach to managing both waste and land resources in Northern Ireland to protect our environment, encouraging resource efficiency and supporting economic growth. We monitor, audit and regulate waste facilities and activities in order to protect and minimise impacts to the environment and human health.

Going beyond environmental compliance can bring business benefits. Many businesses have realised that acting in a socially and environmentally responsible way is more than just a legal duty. It affects your bottom line and the long-term success of your business.

NIEA wishes to transform its regulatory approach to facilitate opportunities for those businesses who have this ambition, whilst rigorously pursuing those who seek to circumvent legal requirements and cause environmental harm.





Freshwater and marine environment at “good status”

DAERA is the lead Department responsible for improving water quality under Outcome 2 of the draft Programme for Government (PfG) and NIEA is measuring one of the indicators, the level of soluble reactive phosphorous, to support the delivery of PfG Outcome 2.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) was introduced by the European Commission (EC) to protect water, get polluted waters clean again and ensure that clean waters are kept clean. It aims to achieve ‘good status’ in all waters. NIEA takes the lead for DAERA in delivery of the Directive through development and implementation of River Basin Management Plans, supported by catchment management which encourages a sustainable and integrated approach to managing all the different needs within a water catchment area.

The Agency works closely with CAFRE’s Knowledge Advisory Service (KAS) providing guidance to ensure good advice is provided to the agri-food sector in respect of mitigating the impact of agricultural practices on water quality. However, as pressures on water quality increase, and where the necessary improvements in water quality are not being achieved, this work is supported with regulation, pollution response and enforcement, development control and monitoring of water status through sampling and analysis.



A compliant crime free waste sector

Environmental offenders can inflict large-scale and long term damage on our environment and deprive the local economy of considerable revenue. Their offending also negatively impacts on the ability of legitimate businesses to compete and enforcement assists in the creation of a level playing field.

Therefore, through NIEA’s dedicated Enforcement Branch (EB) we work with a range of partners and stakeholders to educate, facilitate observance or enforce against offenders. While we work to encourage compliance through education, advice and regulation we will also robustly apply our enforcement policy when there are serious or persistent breaches of the law.

EB is responsible for investigating and prosecuting the most serious and persistent environmental offenders, which often involves organised criminality. It is also responsible for investigating volume crime incidents and some cases involving fly tipping.



Good habitat and landscape quality with species abundance and diversity

(a) Country Parks and Nature Reserves

NIEA is responsible for the management of seven Country Parks and 65 Nature Reserves. These managed lands, their biodiversity, and their free public access connects people to nature and their natural environment, and also provides a unique value and service in terms of environmental heritage, wellbeing, conservation and natural culture.

Country Parks are managed primarily for public amenity and enjoyment providing a range of “naturally inspired” settings. Public access is provided where appropriate for Nature Reserves, however these are primarily managed for nature conservation to reflect and protect the important biodiversity of Northern Ireland.

A significant number of these assets have been awarded special designations and recognition as important areas for nature and biodiversity conservation both nationally and internationally.

(b) Protection and Management of Habitats and Species

NIEA carries out surveys to identify the best of our terrestrial and freshwater assets. This data and information is used to inform the designation programme for protected areas, especially species-rich grasslands which are habitats that have declined significantly over the past 50-60 years. This data is also shared outside the Agency.

NIEA has been developing habitat mapping capability from satellite data through the Earth Observation project. This will permit quantification of habitat extent as well as more timely monitoring of change across Northern Ireland.

NIEA has led on providing evidence and advice to key stakeholders to support them in managing some of the region’s special habitats. The DAERA Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS), EU funded INTERREG Va programme, the Management of Sensitive Sites (MOSS) Programme and the management of our Nature Reserves will continue to contribute to improving the area of land under favourable management, thus contributing to the PfG Outcome 2 target.

During 2019/20, the Agency will continue to assist DAERA in the delivery of a cross departmental approach to the management of ammonia and nitrogen deposition from agriculture which is having a detrimental impact on the protection of our protected areas and special sites across Northern Ireland.



Promotion of environmentally sustainable development and infrastructure

NIEA protects the environment through effective regulation of a range of sectors. For example NIEA monitors and regulates discharges to the aquatic environment from both industry and sewerage providers and this work is supported by an extensive compliance sampling programme. In order to effect significant environmental improvements the Agency provides extensive advice and guidance to all industry types so that they may enhance their environmental compliance.

As agriculture significantly impacts on water status, NIEA works closely with the CAFRE's Knowledge Advisory Service (KAS) to identify and agree key environmental issues, priorities and programmes, and provide specialist advice to ensure environmental outcomes are achieved. This also provides the separation required for NIEA to perform its regulatory functions.

NIEA is continuing to work in partnership with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency on the NetRegs programme. The NetRegs website (www.NetRegs.org.uk) provides web based sector guidance for small to medium sized businesses to ensure that businesses are aware of their environmental obligations and have the right information to operate within the law.



Murlough



European Red Squirrel

NIEA and Programme for Government (PfG)

The draft Programme for Government is the highest level strategic document of the Northern Ireland Executive setting out the priorities that it will pursue in the current Assembly mandate. The draft PfG has 12 outcomes for citizens and DAERA has lead responsibility for delivering against draft PfG Outcome 2.

PfG Outcome 2

We live and work sustainably - protecting the environment

The main NIEA activities relating to the delivery of PfG Outcome 2 are the protection of the environment through regulation and enforcement, statutory designations, research and monitoring, funded interventions, raising public awareness of the environment and their role in protecting it.

However, NIEA also contributes to other PfG outcomes as follows:

PfG Outcome 1	We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy
PfG Outcome 4	We enjoy long, healthy active lives
PfG Outcome 10	We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest
PfG Outcome 11	We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure

A clean and green environment makes a major contribution to people having long, healthy and active lives (outcome 4) as well as creating a place where people want to live in and visit (outcome 10). A sustainable environment is also good for the economy (outcome 1) providing the right environmental conditions to allow businesses to flourish while still complying within regulations. By working closely with NI Water, NIEA also has a role to play in regional infrastructure (Outcome 11).

Targets

Monitoring

Following the end of the 2019/20 year the NIEA 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts will be published and placed on the NIEA website. The Annual report will include a Performance section showing the extent to which the targets in this Plan were achieved.

Key Performance Targets (KPTs)

In line with HM Treasury guidance (“Setting Key Targets for Executive Agencies; A Guide”) seven of the targets have been designated as Key Performance Targets (KPTs).



Key Priority 1

A fully compliant regulated industry.



Key Priority 4

Good habitat and landscape quality with species abundance and diversity.



Key Priority 2

Freshwater and marine environment at “good status”.



Key Priority 5

Promotion of environmentally sustainable development and infrastructure.



Key Priority 3

A compliant crime free waste sector.

Number	Division	Agency Key Priority (1-5)	Target	By When
1	NED	4	Achieve 5,000 hectares of terrestrial protected areas under favourable management, which in turn will contribute directly to the delivery of PfG Outcome 2 indicator associated with protecting biodiversity. DAERA and KPT target	31 March 2020

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Number	Division	Agency Key Priority (1-5)	Target	By When
2	NED	4	To approve 10 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) habitat maps and complete 30 SAC Pressures and Threats Reviews. KPT	31 March 2020
3	NED	1, 2, 4 & 5	Deliver new integrated environmental advice for planning to support effective and informed planning decisions. KPT	31 March 2020
4	NED	4	Complete a comprehensive analysis of key sources of atmospheric Nitrogen inputs (including ammonia) to one Special Area of Conservation (to inform mitigation options and future management of the wider designated site network).	31 March 2020
5	NED	4 & 5	Develop revised guidance on assessing the cumulative impacts of ammonia and nitrogen on natural habitats/designated sites.	31 December 2019
6	NED	4	Achievement of at least a three star rating for six Country Parks across the region under the Tourism NI Quality Grading Scheme.	31 March 2020
7	NED	2 & 4	Issue letters of Offer for Environment Fund 2020-21.	31 March 2020
8	RED	2	Secure a 5% decrease in Soluble Reactive Phosphorus (SRP) against the 2017 average in order to support the PfG Outcome 2 indicator (improve water quality) and the 2021 EU Water Framework Directive water quality status target. DAERA, KPT and PfG target	31 March 2020

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Number	Division	Agency Key Priority (1-5)	Target	By When
9	RED	2	Prepare and implement Outcome Action Plans (Year 1) for 20 river bodies and monitor progress through phosphorus monitoring. KPT	31 March 2020
10	RED	1 & 3	Help protect the environment by providing effective and efficient regulation and enforcement to regulated businesses and industry, aiming for 90% compliance with all authorisations and regulatory requirements using agreed compliance assessment methodology. DAERA and KPT target	31 March 2020
11	RED	1 & 3	Implement the 2019/20 actions for delivery of the Mobuoy Remediation Programme within agreed timeframes (approval of Outline Business Case 1, development of a Procurement Strategy and development of a Site Vision). DAERA and KPT target	31 March 2020
12	RED	1	Deliver the Prosperity Agreement Programme, signing at least two further agreements, and monitor and maintain the existing portfolio.	31 March 2020
13	RED	2	Prepare and consult on the Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) report in line with Directive and statutory requirements.	31 December 2019
14	RED	2	Complete Cross Compliance inspections on at least 1% of all farms and 5% under derogation.	31 December 2019

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Number	Division	Agency Key Priority (1-5)	Target	By When
15	RED	1	Implement the project plan for delivery of the Regulatory Transformation Programme within agreed timeframes.	31 March 2020
16	Agency	1, 2, 3, 4 & 5	Within 6 months of EU Exit, assess the impact of EU Exit on the Agency's operational activities by producing a business change analysis based on the Day 1 Delivery Plans.	31 March 2020
17	Agency	1, 2, 3, 4 & 5	Provisional Resource and Capital outturn to be between 1% of Final Budget for 2019/20.	31 March 2020
18	Agency	1, 2, 3, 4 & 5	Achieve a 5% increase in the NIEA Employee Engagement Index score (from 48% to 53%)	31 March 2020

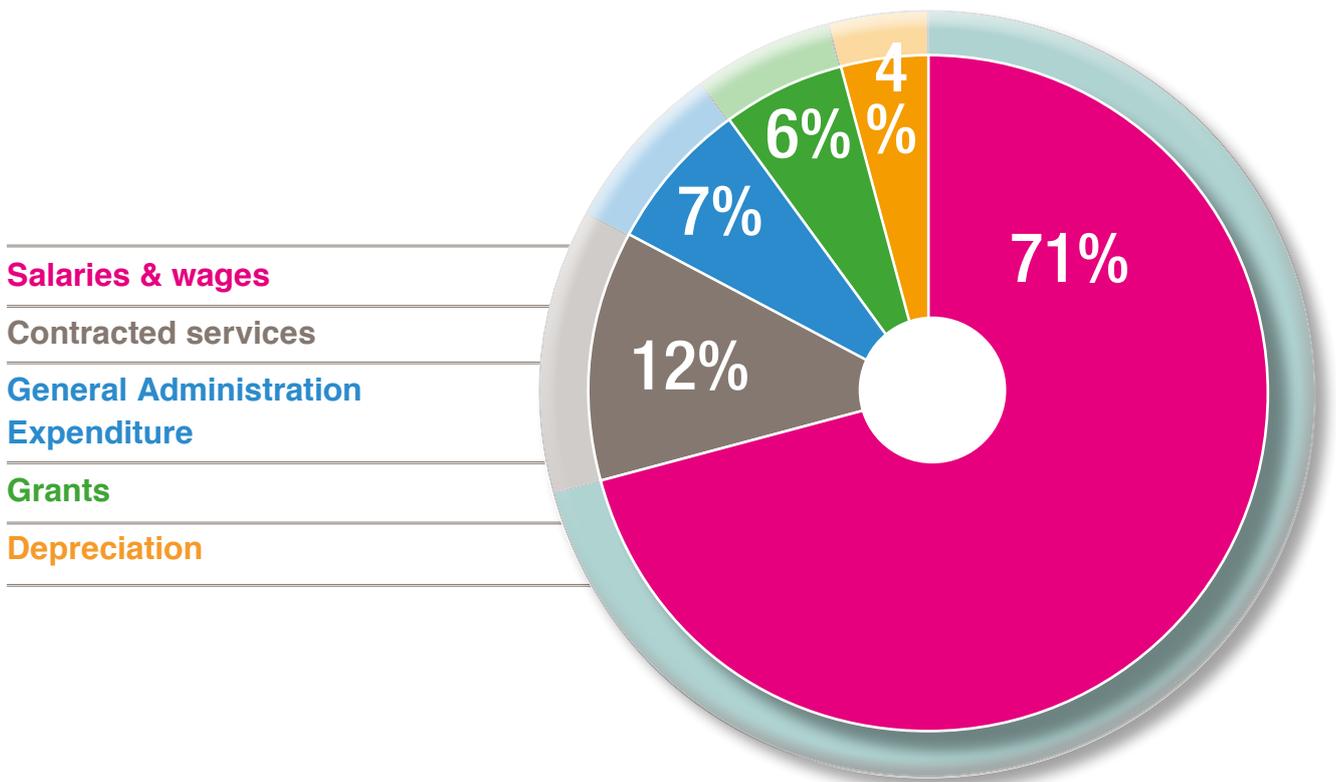


Funding

The Agency's primary source of funding in terms of Departmental Resource and Capital expenditure comes from the Department's overall initial Budget allocation.

For the 2019/20 financial year, the Agency was allocated an opening budget of £22.3 million for resource expenditure and £1.0 million for capital expenditure. Based on these opening allocations, bids and/or easements will be submitted to the Department at each of the in-year monitoring rounds. The Agency also funds additional expenditure on programmes through income from services and the carrier bag levy. Income for 2019/20 is estimated to be £11.3 million.

Analysis of Resource DEL Budget 2019-20



Budget

Notes		£'000s	% (of Gross Resource Budget)
1	Salaries and wages	23,957	71%
	Depreciation (ring fenced)	1,470	4%
	Sub Total		
	Non salary and non-ring fenced		
2	GAE	2,094	7%
3	Contracted Services	4,006	12%
4	Grants	2,075	6%
	Sub Total	8,175	
	Gross Budget	33,602	
	Funded By:		
	Income		
	Regulatory & Commercial	8,976	
	Carrier bag levy	2,355	
	Total Income	11,331	34%
	Net Resource DEL Budget	22,271	66%

Notes:

1. Non industrial salaries, industrial wages, overtime and local council rivers officers.
2. Travel and subsistence and non-salary running costs (including accommodation costs).
3. Management agreements in respect of designated sites; maintenance of country parks and nature reserves; environmental sampling, monitoring and analysis; mapping services; and vehicle running costs.
4. Environmental grants funded from the carrier bag levy income and disbursed mainly through the competitive Environment Fund.

Capital Investment

Notes	£'000s
Vehicles, machinery, equipment and capital works at country parks	1,000



NIEA's Continuing Impact



Waste

- The Agency successfully ensured that 94% of industry was compliant with its permit or licence conditions in 2018/19.
- In 2019/20 the Agency is focussed on transforming key areas of how it regulates, for example it will seek to place applications on line for septic tanks and implement a project to digitise its inspection services, thus making its services easier for citizens and industry.



Working with Industry - Prosperity Agreements

- NIEA have and will continue to deliver an innovative programme of Prosperity Agreements with industry exploring opportunities for reducing significant environmental impacts in ways that create prosperity and well-being. These voluntary agreements are about finding common environmental goals.
- Eight businesses are currently involved in the programme and a further two with action plans agreed and ready to sign.
- In June 2018 NIEA signed an agreement with Lakeland Dairies (NI) Ltd which includes a commitment to reduce the carbon footprint of their product and to support good environmental performance among their 800 or so suppliers.
- Partnership working in this way enables NIEA to influence and promote environmental outcomes all along the supply chain in a way which effectively complements our regulatory work.
- For 2019/20 NIEA will continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with progressive Northern Ireland companies on delivering positive environmental and business benefits and make at least two further agreements.



Water

- The Agency successfully delivered its programme of cross compliance inspections as well as 87% of the actions contained within the 2018/19 catchment programme.
- In 2019/20, we plan to prepare and implement Year 1 of Outcome Action Plans for 20 high priority river water bodies.
- For 2019/20 EU Interreg Va funding of nearly £3.5m is forecast to be drawn down to help improve water quality in transitional waters and freshwater in river basins. In 2018/19 we spent £2.05m Interreg Va funding.



Biodiversity

- NIEA has developed and implemented a series of conservation measures on the dune systems at Portstewart in partnership with key stakeholders. The works included removal of invasive non-native scrub, visitor access management facilities and introduction of conservation grazing.
- Almost 350 hectares of dune habitats across the site are now being managed sustainably for future generations.
- For 2019/20 EU Interreg Va funding of nearly £1.6m is forecast to be drawn down to help the recovery of protected habitats and species. In 2018/19 we spent £1.2m Interreg Va funding.
- During 2019/20 NIEA also plan to issue letters of offer worth almost £2m through the competitive Environment Fund to help fund 23 environmental projects. In 2018/19 we allocated £2m to help 22 projects.



Country Parks and Nature Reserves

- NIEA sites attracted an estimated 2.3 million visits over the course of the 2018 calendar year, an increase of 300,000 on the previous year.
- In 2018/19 six NIEA country parks received three star awards, with 1 four star award for excellence, through the Tourism NI quality grading scheme.
- NIEA undertakes substantive projects to enhance both visitor facilities and public access across a number of sites including significant habitat management works to maintain and improve the condition of Nature Reserves.
- In 2018/19 over 10km of pathways were upgraded and restored at Crawfordsburn, Quoile and Ness Country Parks.
- Over 180 events were held or facilitated at our sites over the 2018/19 year, including filming, sponsored walks, corporate away days, birthday parties and educational visits.



NIEA Contact Information:

To find out more about NIEA's work visit:

Website: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/northern-ireland-environment-agency

Follow us on Facebook: @Northern.Ireland.Environment.Agency

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