



STRATEGIC
DIRECTION
FOR A NEW
DECADE

2020 | 2030

*Through partnership and
science, protecting and
developing our fisheries and
natural resources.*

Loughs
Agency

Gníomhaireacht na Lochanna
Factrie fur Loughs

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COVER PHOTOS REFERENCE

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| 1 Fish Counter, River Finn | 3 Shore fishing, Carlingford Lough |
| 2 Sailing, River Foyle | 4 River Derg, County Tyrone |



Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present the new Strategic Direction for Loughs Agency, which will act as the overarching context and reference point for future organisational development. This plan clearly sets out our new vision, revised values and key strategic development goals, objectives and outcomes which will take us into the next decade and beyond.

The Agency is looking forward to the next phase of its work as a North South Body, as we continue to work in partnership with our Sponsor Departments and the North South Ministerial Council, as part of a body of organisations that represent the key infrastructure which facilitates North South co-operation.

In taking this Strategic Direction forward, we will focus on our core purpose to oversee the necessary intergovernmental approach required to deliver our functions and statutory remit. The work of the Agency forms a template for the effective management, conservation and protection, development and promotion of a vulnerable natural environment, which straddles both sides of an international border, sponsored and supported by two governments.

We are very conscious that globally, there is a demand for collaborative structures to ensure effective and ethical stewardship and protection of some of our most precious and valued natural resources. We are fortunate that we are the product of the foresight of both governments on this island, that such a structure was and remains necessary for the effective conservation, protection, enhancement and promotion of such amazing, but fragile

environmental assets. We understand the value of co-design, of working collectively with other agencies and stakeholders across the entire geography of our remit.

As a North South Body, the Agency is aware of the responsibility it has as part of the architecture for North South co-operation, which ensued from the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in 1998. We clearly understand our role in contributing to the institutional memory of collaboration, good relations, and facilitative partnership.

We look forward to continuing to play our part in the wider story of North South co-operation, and to taking forward our very unique and specific organisational vision and strategy in the coming years. As in previous years, the Agency will continue to deliver a bespoke and valuable public service, in a challenging economic and political reality, with increased pressure on public finances and heightened demands for ever more efficient delivery.

The Strategic Direction recognises the impact of climate change and the importance of collaborative working to develop the work of the Agency, create better local environments that will enhance peoples' lives, and support sustainable green/blue growth in the local economy. Critical to achieving the outcomes set out in this plan is the continuing dedication and commitment of the skilled and enthusiastic staff in the Agency. Finally, I look forward to the continued support and direction in the delivery of this Strategic Direction over the coming years from our Board and Sponsor Departments.

Sharon McMahon

Designated Officer



Introduction

WHO WE ARE

Loughs Agency is an agency of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (FCILC), established as one of the North South Implementation Bodies under the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, constituted under the North South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and the British Irish Agreement Acts 1999 and 2002.

The Board of Loughs Agency report to the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) and our government Sponsor Departments – the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) in Ireland.

WHAT WE DO

Loughs Agency aims to provide sustainable social, economic and environmental benefits through the effective conservation, management, promotion and development of the fisheries and marine resources of the Foyle and Carlingford areas. Loughs Agency's statutory functions are as follows:

- Promotion of development of Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough for commercial and recreational purposes in respect of marine, fishery and aquaculture matters;
- Management, conservation, protection, improvement and development of the inland fisheries of the Foyle and Carlingford areas;

- Development and licensing of aquaculture and shellfisheries; and
- Development of marine tourism.

HOW WE OPERATE

Our headquarters are located in Derry~Londonderry, with a regional office in Carlingford, County Louth. The Agency has a staff complement of 53 across a diverse range of functions including fishery protection, scientific research, development, marketing and administration support. As a North South Body we operate under the policy direction of the NSMC and the two governments, and are accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Oireachtas. At an administrative level, we report to our Sponsor Departments.

FUNDING THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Loughs Agency is funded equally by the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Irish Government. The Agency is fully committed to enhancing its focus on finding and securing funding from alternative sources. Collaborative funding opportunities will be realised by continuing to work with other government agencies and public bodies, pooling sovereignty to share resources, and through the transfer of knowledge and systems between organisations. This plan will work contiguously with our corporate and business plans and will be subject to budgetary considerations by the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Oireachtas.



Acting Locally and Protecting Globally

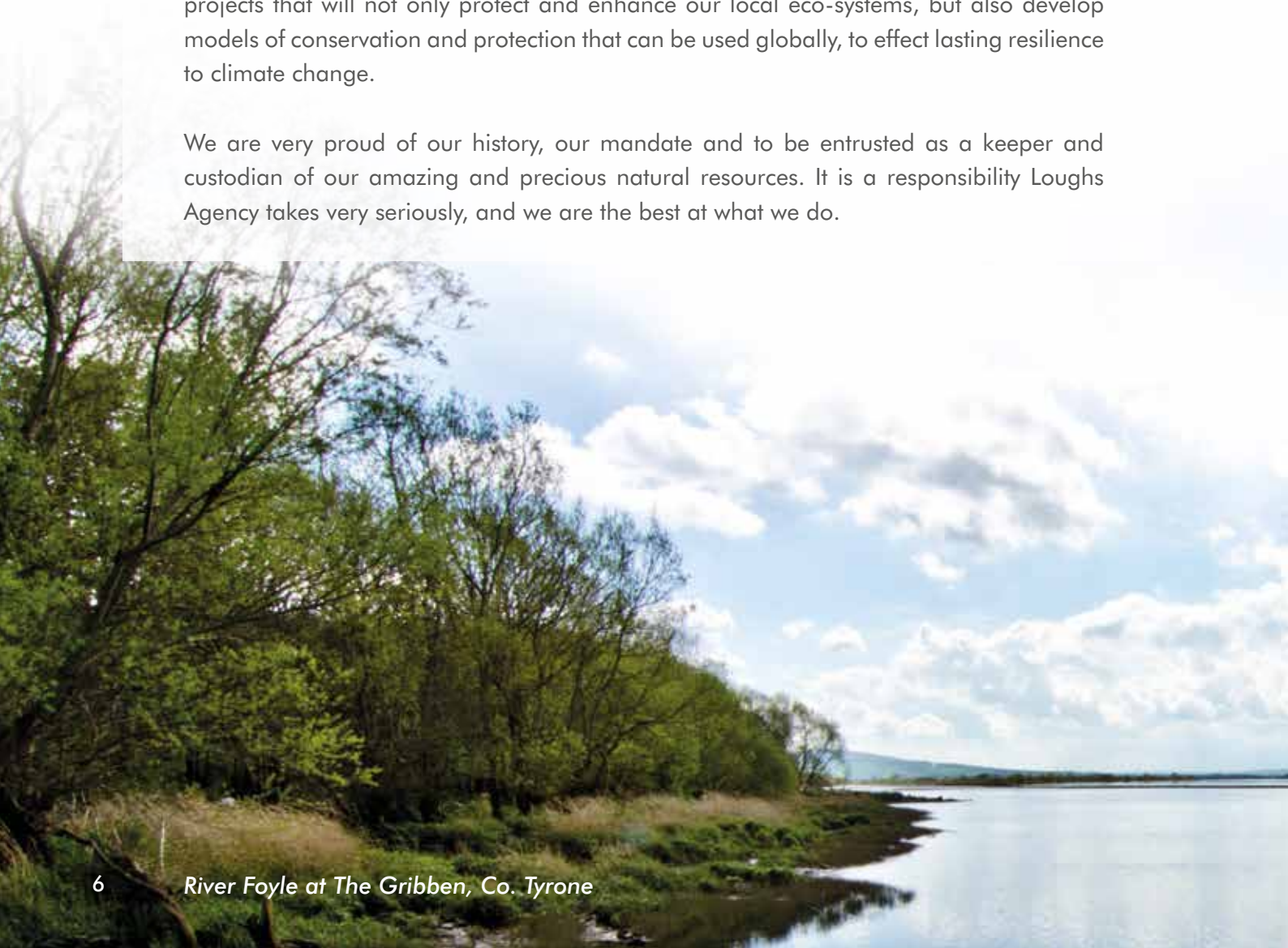
For millennia, the peoples who settled beside the wonderful rivers, loughs and shores of Ireland, flourished by harvesting the natural riches of our islands waters. The waterways and fisheries were a bountiful source of food. Until relatively recently, scant regard was paid to the delicate ecological balance within these aquatic habitats, or the essential value of how this balance relates to wider eco-systems. Thankfully, through the work of the Agency and our stakeholders, this is now changing.

The reality is that climate change is upon us and the work of Loughs Agency could not be more relevant. The aquatic eco-systems that we protect, conserve and develop are now also impacted upon by wider global climate challenges and events further out at sea.

This new plan will strive to ensure that Loughs Agency is at the forefront of developing international best practice, to protect our natural environment and the species within it.

Our unique strength is that we have been working innovatively on an integrated cross-border basis since 1952. This distinct way of working is now strengthened with new partnerships of international significance, delivering highly innovative and cutting edge projects that will not only protect and enhance our local eco-systems, but also develop models of conservation and protection that can be used globally, to effect lasting resilience to climate change.

We are very proud of our history, our mandate and to be entrusted as a keeper and custodian of our amazing and precious natural resources. It is a responsibility Loughs Agency takes very seriously, and we are the best at what we do.



Strategic Environment Review

ENHANCING STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS

The strategic environment that Loughs Agency now operates in is new and largely uncharted, given the realignment issues pertaining to BREXIT and post BREXIT scenarios. In this regard, relationship management with our Sponsor Departments and stakeholders must not only be maintained but enhanced, with good intention and a spirit of co-operation.

INNOVATION IN ADVERSITY

The reality is that Loughs Agency continues to work within a strategic environment that is very fluid, and as a North South Body, faces challenges both externally and internally. That said, Loughs Agency remains a unique and very important organisation with the potential to become more recognisable as an organisation of international best practice. In many ways, the Agency is already ahead and generating a high level of innovation, on what can be reasonably achieved with limited resources.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Loughs Agency is a North South Body created under the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement. We are therefore compelled to keep a watching brief on BREXIT and ensure we anticipate the direction of change. Nevertheless, BREXIT could herald positive change. There are real opportunities to tie up regulatory loop holes, to enhance the process of legislative travel, to develop a more sensible method of budget allocation and ratio, to seek out and nourish new partnerships and stakeholder relations.

THE HISTORICAL RELEVANCE OF LOUGHS AGENCY

Loughs Agency, while a constituted Body, is uniquely placed in its historical development in that its origins and rationale for co-operational existence predate both the EU and the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. This makes the work of the Loughs Agency historically relevant, now and into the future. The purpose of the plan will not only help to retain but also reinforce institutional memory and organisational expertise within Loughs Agency, for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

JUST TRANSITION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Just Transition means moving to a modern, low carbon economy in a way which protects workers' livelihoods, creates a new greener economic model that protects the environment, and delivers a fairer society. The need for action is urgent. As a forward-thinking public sector organisation the Agency will fully consider, develop and integrate Just Transition action planning.

The concept of Just Transition is a key requirement of the Paris Climate Agreement (COP 21), and this was defined further still in the Silesia Declaration 2018 (COP 24). The Declaration committed all Members of the EU, which also included the UK and Ireland, to prepare and promote Just Transition within economic and environmental policy.

Just Transition is now internationally recognised and accepted as central to a successful response to climate change and the achievement of UK / Ireland greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

For Loughs Agency, implementing Just Transition is an organisation-wide process that plans emission reductions, promotes energy sustainability, insulates and future proofs our assets, works with stakeholders and supports workforce resilience, skills development and new career opportunities. Loughs Agency, given its remit, is acutely sensitive to the implications of climate change.



Communication and Stakeholder Outreach

COMMUNICATION AND PRIMARY STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT (STAFF)

Loughs Agency recognises that the strategic themes and outcomes, as set out in this plan, can only be achieved through the shared ownership and commitment of our staff. Our staff have been at the very heart of this process and will continue to be, as we refer to and implement the Strategic Direction in a participative manner. We will consistently promote the opportunity for all staff to be part of the implementation process, to improve how we work together to deliver the plan.

COMMUNICATION AND SECONDARY STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT (EXTERNAL)

It has been noted and generally accepted that the Agency needs to communicate its role and its successes in a joined up and coherent manner, with a unified approach to communications. In this regard, there needs to be a strong communications effort for the new Strategic Direction, which provides assurance and the opportunity for good governance, oversight and dynamic stakeholder outreach, working to underpin the quality, independence, innovation and integrity of Loughs Agency.



THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2020-2030

MISSION

Sustainably Manage, Promote and Develop the Fisheries and Resources of the Foyle and Carlingford Areas.

VISION

Through partnership and science, protecting and developing our fisheries and natural resources.

VALUES

INTEGRITY	TEAMWORK	PROFESSIONALISM	PASSION
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Acting and communicating with honesty and sincerity.

Working collectively and productively together to achieve more.

Using our unique skills and experience to achieve the highest standards of practise

Having enthusiasm and enjoyment in our work.

INNOVATION	RESPECT	SUSTAINABILITY
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Finding better and more creative / productive ways of working and delivering services.

Treating colleagues, areas of work, and stakeholders with decency and courtesy.

Focusing our efforts on core services, innovating, influencing and planning for the long term.



GOALS	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
<p>Sustainably deliver our conservation and protection statutory remit</p>	<p>Deliver excellence in all areas of Agency responsibility, service provision and organisational remit.</p> <p>Develop, deliver and embed management systems that ensure sustainability in all programme areas.</p>	<p><i>To maintain and enhance a policy and regulatory environment conducive to the statutory work of the Agency.</i></p> <p><i>To build a robust and integrated regulatory framework for future cross-border fisheries management, fisheries research, fisheries development and marine tourism.</i></p> <p><i>To have established Loughs Agency as an international “hub” for fisheries management, development, research and environmental related best practice.</i></p>
<p>Making connections through effective engagement and communication</p>	<p>Develop, promote, educate and inform our cross-border / international profile to stakeholders and the general public, to create sustainable outcomes for the eco-systems within the Foyle and Carlingford Areas.</p> <p>Enhance communication and relationships with important partners and key stakeholders, based on a clear understanding of the organisations strategic function.</p>	<p><i>To have developed and established significant innovative co-productive partnerships and relationships that add value to our work, protecting and developing our natural resources.</i></p> <p><i>To have designed and implemented communications channels and an outreach strategy which effectively illustrates the work of the Agency.</i></p> <p><i>To have created innovative collaboration in the Foyle and Carlingford areas, facilitating the mapping and sharing of expertise and resources to deliver projects that require effective inter-agency working.</i></p>
<p>Understanding and strategically promoting Just Transition</p>	<p>Align with government-led, national and international Just Transition plans that will also help channel investment towards the Agency.</p>	<p><i>To have entered into policy dialogues with government and social partners to help shape regulations, protect our workforce and assets, ensuring the future needs of the environment and organisation are sustainable.</i></p>
<p>Valuing all staff, inspire our workforce and improve performance through innovation</p>	<p>Ensure all staff are afforded relevant development opportunities and personal support, creating a professional, talented and skilled workforce.</p> <p>Using innovative methods to improve internal systems, management processes, organisational and staff performance.</p>	<p><i>To have developed a strategy aligned leadership skills and professional development curriculum for all staff across the organisation.</i></p> <p><i>Enhanced capacity in the area of organisational change and in the use of ICT, to support transformation and innovation.</i></p> <p><i>Empower staff to foster a supportive workplace environment.</i></p>

Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring, evaluation and delivery of the new Strategic Direction will be undertaken at various levels throughout the Agency, its Sponsor Departments and the NSMC. The Agency will report on the implementation of activities it has undertaken against the goals, objectives and outcomes set out in this plan.

DIRECTORATES

Each Directorate will employ a common shared approach, encouraging communities of practise with staff and inter-directorate working. Performance will be assessed through the presentation of bi-monthly reports based on referral to and consideration of the goals, objectives and outcomes of the Strategic Direction.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Senior Management Team (SMT) will review the management reports with regard to each strand of the plan. The SMT will evaluate these reports against the efficient operation of the Agency, with regard to the resources, staff and budget available to them. It will allocate resources between Directorates where necessary to ensure that, as far as possible, the work of the Agency is aligned to the Strategic Direction.

THE BOARD

The SMT will report to the Board at each of its meetings, and to each meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee, as appropriate. The Board will review the performance of the Agency, as reported by the Chief Executive Officer. The approved minutes of the Board meetings will be published on the Agency's website.

THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

The Chair, Vice Chair and Chief Executive Officer, supported, where appropriate, by other Agency colleagues, will provide a progress report on the Agency's activities at Aquaculture and Marine Sectoral Meetings of the NSMC. The Agency will address any issues, recommendations or instruction raised or made by the Council.

STAKEHOLDERS

Where appropriate, the Agency will pro-actively seek to consult and discuss issues with stakeholder groups or representatives.



Process Review

The strategic planning process has been informed by an impressive level of professional expertise and knowledge sharing across the organisation from our staff and Board. Participation was forthright and inclusive, involving all sections of the Agency workforce and representatives of the Board during the participatory workshops and planning exercises.

RISK REVIEW

During 2018, Loughs Agency risk management policies and procedures were reviewed in line with the aspirations of the Agency, and also change within the strategic political environment. This review has led to a number of significant improvements and adaptations to ensure that the Agency can robustly meet all the requirements of its statutory function, now and into the future. Corporate performance is evaluated and assessed consistently within individual Directorates that make up the SMT, and reviewed on a joint Directorate basis. The Audit and Risk Committee continues to assist the Board, assessing internal controls and providing oversight and guidance on governance arrangements, risk management and financial statements. The SMT of Loughs Agency also meets senior officials from Sponsor Departments on a regular basis, to review strategic and operational risk and opportunities for development.

POLICY AND RESEARCH REVIEW

During the course of the planning process the following policy and research documents were reviewed and considered:

- Climate Change Act (UK)
- National Development Plan (Ireland)
- National Mitigation Plan (Ireland)
- National Adaptation Framework (Ireland)
- National Policy Position on Climate Change and Low Carbon Development (Ireland)
- Climate Resilient Ireland: Research Report (EPA)
- Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration - COP 24
- Climate Change and Social Justice: An Evidence Review (JRT)
- Integrated Marine Policy (EU)
- EU Atlantic Strategy (Action Plan)
- Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth – An Integrated Strategy Plan for Ireland
- Towards an integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland



*Lough Foyle
Native Irish
Oysters*

- EU Report on Blue Growth Strategy: Towards more Sustainable Growth and Jobs in the Blue Economy
- Blue Growth Study – Scenarios and Drivers for Sustainable Growth from the Oceans, Seas and Coasts
- European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Marine Tourism
- The State of the World Fisheries and Aqua Culture Report
- Strategic Review of Angling in Northern Ireland
- Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland
- Tourism Development and Innovation Strategy for Investment (Ireland)
- North West Strategic Growth Plan (ICLRD)
- Donegal County Council Development Plan
- Louth County Council Development Plan
- Derry City and Strabane District Council Community Plan
- Mid Ulster Council Community Plan
- Newry City Council Master Plan
- Dundalk Development Plan
- Shared Services: Propositions for Local Government Collaboration (ICLRD)
- Applying the Functional Territories Concept: Planning Beyond Boundaries (ICLRD)
- Small Island: Big Marine Challenges Ahead for the Blue Economy (ICLRD)

*Atlantic Salmon,
River Finn*



The new Strategic Direction is ambitious, it is therefore important that we not only review the relevant policy but also key research, to ensure all documents considered relevant are given due regard.

Agility and Amendment

As an organisation we must remain agile and responsive to change. Therefore, it may become necessary to modify or add to the agreed Strategic Direction due to unforeseen circumstances. A necessity for amendments may be prompted by changes such as: legislation; government/ministerial priorities; prevailing operating circumstances and/or broader political, economic, financial or other related factors. The Board and SMT of Loughs Agency will engage with NSMC and Sponsor Departments to highlight amendments and any subsequent resourcing requirements.

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