

Environment, Marine & Fisheries Group

Regulatory & Natural Resources Policy
Division,
Natural Heritage Branch,
Klondyke Building,
Gasworks Business Park,
Ormeau Road,
Belfast,
BT7 2JA.

Date: 9th June 2021

Dear Stakeholder,

Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy 2021-2040.

In 1993, the Department of Environment, supported by the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC), published “Conserving Peatland in Northern Ireland – A Statement of Policy”, which set out the Government’s policies for protecting and conserving peatland.

However, since then, much has changed in the appreciation of our peatland habitats and a greater acknowledgement of the role they play in Climate Change mitigation and the Ecosystem Services they provide.

The UK Peatland Strategy was published in 2018 and identifies a common way forward and sets the context for the devolved administrations strategic peatland action plans. It is under the auspices of the UK Peatland Strategy that we propose to take forward a Peatland Strategy for Northern Ireland. Our Strategy will set the direction of travel over the next 2 decades and beyond and provides a framework for both conserving intact peatlands and a peatland restoration programme.

The Draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy Consultation Document provides information on a series of Strategic Objectives and Actions that the Department and its partner organisations intend to take forward. We welcome your views and consultation responses will be used to inform the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy and the accompanying Implementation Plan.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a duty on public authorities to have due regard to promote quality of opportunity. The Department has completed an initial Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise in order to ascertain if the proposed Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy will have an impact on the Section 75 groups and has concluded that no adverse differential impact is likely. Therefore, the Department does not consider a full Equality Impact Assessment to be necessary.

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Rural proofing is a process to ensure that all relevant Government policies are examined to assess whether or not they have a different impact in rural areas. It is considered that there are no negative impacts on rural productivity or the provision of services to the rural community as a result of these proposals.

The Human Rights Act 1998 implements the European Convention on Human Rights. The 1998 Act makes it unlawful for any public authority to act in a way that is incompatible with these rights. The Department considers that the proposals detailed in this consultation paper are compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

A Habitat Regulations Assessment screening exercise was conducted to establish the likely impact of the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy on Northern Ireland's Natura 2000 sites. The findings of this screening exercise indicate that the actions proposed for the inclusion in the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy are unlikely to have any significant, detrimental effects (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on Natura 2000 sites.

A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the DAERA website at: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/. The summary will include a list of respondees but not contact details.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be made available to the public on request, in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs). DAERA may also publish the responses to the FOIA/EIR requests on www.daera-ni.gov.uk/

If you want information, including personal information, such as your name, to be treated as confidential, please explain clearly in writing when you provide your response to the consultation why you need to keep these details confidential. If we receive a request for the information under the FOIA or the EIRs we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot guarantee that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. However, DAERA will not permit any unwarranted breach of confidentiality nor will we act in contravention of our obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as a confidentiality request.

The Department takes data protection, freedom of information and environmental information issues seriously. It takes care to ensure that any personal information received from you is dealt with in a way which complies with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation, and the Data Protection Act 2018. This means that any personal information you supply will be processed principally for the purpose for which it has been provided. However, the Department is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use the information you have provided for this purpose.

A full copy of the DAERA Privacy Statement can be found here: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/daera-privacy-statement>

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The consultation is open from **9th June 2021**. This is a twelve week consultation, responses should be received by **1st September 2021**. We would prefer that you respond via the online consultation process but if you prefer consultation responses may be emailed to NIPeatlandStrategyConsultationResponse@daera-ni.gov.uk

Or sent by post to: Renny McKeown,
Natural Heritage Branch,
Regulatory & Natural Resources Policy Division,
Klondyke Building,
Gasworks Business Park,
Malone Lower,
Belfast,
BT7 2JA.

This consultation is in line with consultation guidelines, which can be found at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/public-consultations>

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to Renny McKeown at the address above, or email renny.mckeown@daera-ni.gov.uk

Copies of the consultation document can also be made available, on request, in alternative formats e.g. in large print, Braille disc, audio cassette and other languages. Please contact 028 7744 2087 to arrange such copies, or to discuss the consultation more generally. For those with hearing difficulties, leave a message on DAERA's text phone (18001 028 7744 2087)

We look forward to receiving your responses.

Yours faithfully,

Renny McKeown,
Natural Heritage Branch,
Regulatory & Natural Resources Policy Division,
DAERA.

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