

Neagh Bann Draft River Basin Management Plan

Lower Bann

December 2008



An Agency within the Department of the
Environment
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There are three areas within Lower Neagh Bann which are classified under the Habitats Directive; these are Wolf Island Bog, Carn / Glenshane Pass and Dead Island Bog.

Dead Island Bog is a lowland raised bog lying in a shallow inter-drumlin hollow within the Lower Bann valley. Special features within dead island bog include a large, intact core of deep peat, which exhibits a wide range of characteristic vegetation and structural features. These include shallow pools and a well-developed hummock and lawn complex. The bog surface supports a dense and diverse cover of bog-mosses. Notable species include cranberry and great sundew in several of the pools.

There are two Areas of Outstanding natural Beauty in the management area; Binevenagh and Sperrin. There are, however, thirty Areas of Special Scientific Interest in the area including the Bann estuary and Errigal Glen ASSI's.

Four nature reserves are located locally. They are Lough Neagh islands, Lough Beg, Ballynahone and Altikeeragh NNR's.

Three RAMSAR sites are present in the management area as well as eleven Special Areas of Conservation.

Ballynahone Bog RAMSAR site is situated in Londonderry in the centre of Northern Ireland. It is one of the largest lowland raised bogs in Northern Ireland formed in the valley of the Moyola River which flows into Lough Neagh. The raised bog which covers most of the site exhibits the full range of characteristic vegetation and structural features associated with this type of habitat and is surrounded by cut-over bog with poor fen and birch woodland. The area of the Ramsar site is 243 hectares.

Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Specially Protected Area is situated in the southern most section of the management area.

The Lower Bann is designated as a sensitive area under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive as the majority of rivers display characteristics symptomatic of eutrophic conditions and most of the remainder show signs of becoming eutrophic if protective action is not taken.

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Further information is available on the **Protected Areas** section of the website.

28% of the river water bodies in the management area are currently at good status. This is proposed to rise to 72% by 2015 and 90% by 2021. These waterbodies include the Macosquin river, the Agivey River, the Clady River and

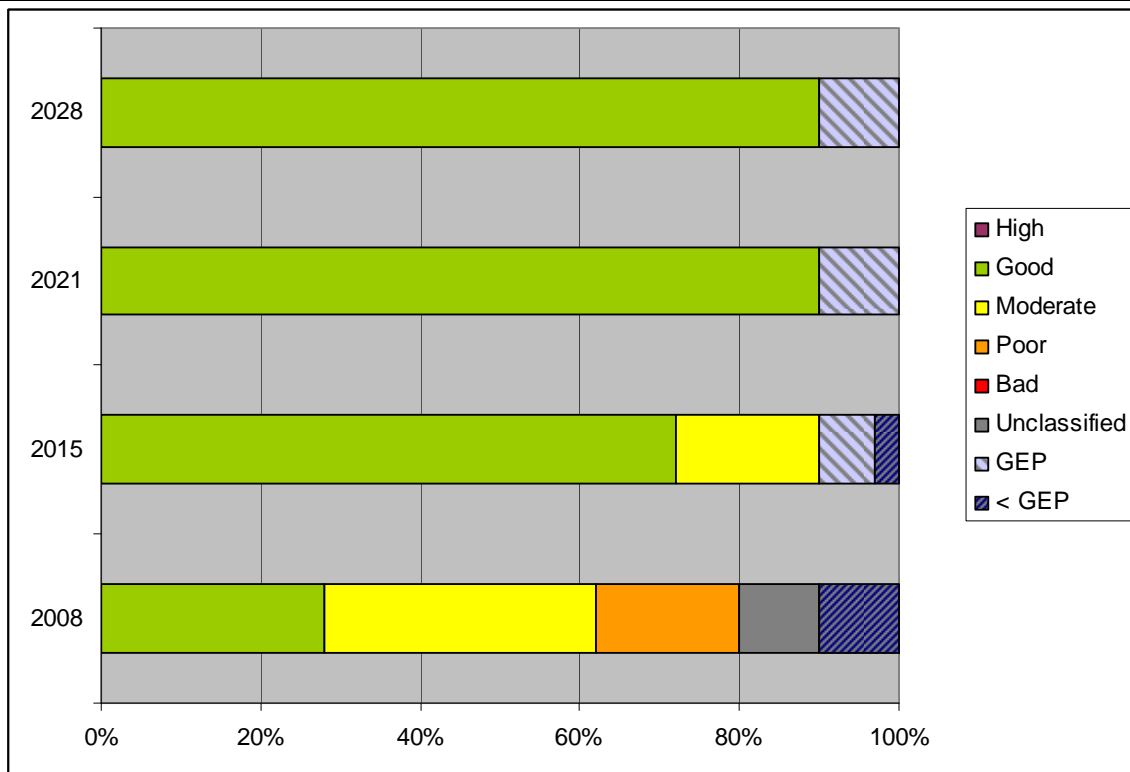
the Ballymoney River.

The Lower Bann management Area is part of the Lower Neagh Bann Catchment Stakeholders Group area. Analysis of the status for this area has shown a large percentage of water bodies failing to achieve good status due to benthic invertebrates 76% and this is accompanied by a significant level of downgrading due to other elements that may be indicative of a high level of enrichment within the catchment. These are DO 21%, BOD 15%, Macrophytes 26% and phosphorus 9%. The range of elements emphasises the numerous pressures influencing water quality in this catchment.

Morphology also has a large influence on quality in the catchment with 21% of river water bodies affected by morphological changes. There was a minor influence by pH affecting 4 % of water bodies.

Four of the river waterbodies are Heavily Modified. They comprise of two waterbodies called River Bann, the Bann Brook and the Ballymoney River. All these modified rivers have been modified in order to manage flood risk. There are no waterbodies designated as artificial.

Current status and proposed objectives for river water bodies in the Lower Bann Management area 2008-2027



Lakes

There is only one lake waterbody in the Lower Bann Management area. Lough Beg is 4.7 km² and heavily modified due to flow regulation and navigation. The River Bann flows from Lough Neagh into Lough Beg and from Lough Beg to the sea at Coleraine. The current classification for the Lough is poor due to phosphorus levels together with macrophytes and phytoplankton all of which emphasise the high level of enrichment. It is proposed to attain Good Ecological Potential by 2015 but further work will also need to be done to improve the water quality.

Transitional and Coastal Waterbodies

There are two transitional waterbodies and one coastal waterbody in the Lower Bann Management area. The coastal waterbody is Portstewart and it is currently at Good Ecological Status. The transitional waterbodies are Ballyaghan and Bann Estuary. Bann estuary is heavily modified and has an overall classification of moderate ecological potential due to Nitrogen levels. It is proposed that the Bann estuary to reach good ecological potential by 2015.

Groundwater Bodies

There is one groundwater body in the Lower Bann Management area. The Coleraine – Kilrea groundwater body covers 919km² and is currently ranked at good status for both quantitative and chemical classification.

i Further information on how water bodies were classified can be read in the **Assessing the Quality of Our Water Environment** section of the website. The quality of individual water bodies and their objectives can be viewed on the **interactive web map**.

The improvements in water quality proposed above will be delivered through a programme of measures coordinated by the Department of the Environment. A number of these measures are already being carried out in the Lower Bann Management area.

Supporting the Programme of measures are a number of projects and initiatives run, for example, by local communities, angling groups and voluntary environmental organisations that will contribute to achieving the objectives we have set for our waters. Some of those happening in the Lower Bann Management area are provided below.

- Lower Bann Targeted Action Plan: Catchment investigation by NIEA Regional Ops in conjunction with Ballinderry Fish Hatchery into poor water quality in the lower Bann and associated tributaries.

- Friends of the River Bann
- Lough Neagh Partnership Project

Lough Neagh Partnership Project

The Lough Neagh Partnership Project has responsibility for the delivery of a £3.2 million strategic fund, under the European Union Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity, to support work and provide additional resources to help achieve implementation of parts of the Lough Neagh Management Strategy.

This funding is available to support organisations to help develop the Lough in an economic, environmental and socially sustainable way. The Strategic Fund will operate to the end of this year and the fund is currently supporting over 130 environmental, economic and social projects. For example, the Moyola Angling Association in conjunction with landowners on the Moyola River worked with the Lough Neagh Partnership to enhance the habitat of the river for spawning and growth of game fish.

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Further information is available in the **Programme of Measures** section of the website. The key pressures and associated sectors impacting on water bodies can be viewed on the **interactive web map**.