

Strangford & Lecale

Proposals for Designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Your chance to shape the future landscape

What is an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB)?

AONBs are landscape areas officially recognised for their high scenic quality in Northern Ireland. They are designated under countryside legislation by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) on behalf of the Department of the Environment.

AONB-designated land remains the property of its existing owners, designation doesn't demand a change in management of land and there is no change in public access to it. Development is not prohibited because of AONB designation. The designation indicates that these landscapes are of high value to society and merit extra care to keep their outstanding qualities for future generations to enjoy.



What is proposed? And why is this being done?

NIEA proposes designating a new AONB in the area – to be known as Strangford and Lecale AONB. It is also considering making a small alteration to the boundary of Mourne AONB to bring the whole of Dundrum Bay into one AONB as it is currently split between two such designations. Some land will be included in an AONB for the first time and some will be left out of the new designation.

NIEA has assessed the landscape to check that it meets the standard required for designation. These proposals are the result of this assessment. A similar process was undertaken in 2008 for Sperrin AONB and in 2006 for Binevenagh AONB.

As described below, legislation introduced after the first designations were made empowers the Department to better promote the area as an outstanding landscape and to bring all those with an interest in the area together to agree common goals for managing the landscape.

Isn't this already a designated AONB?

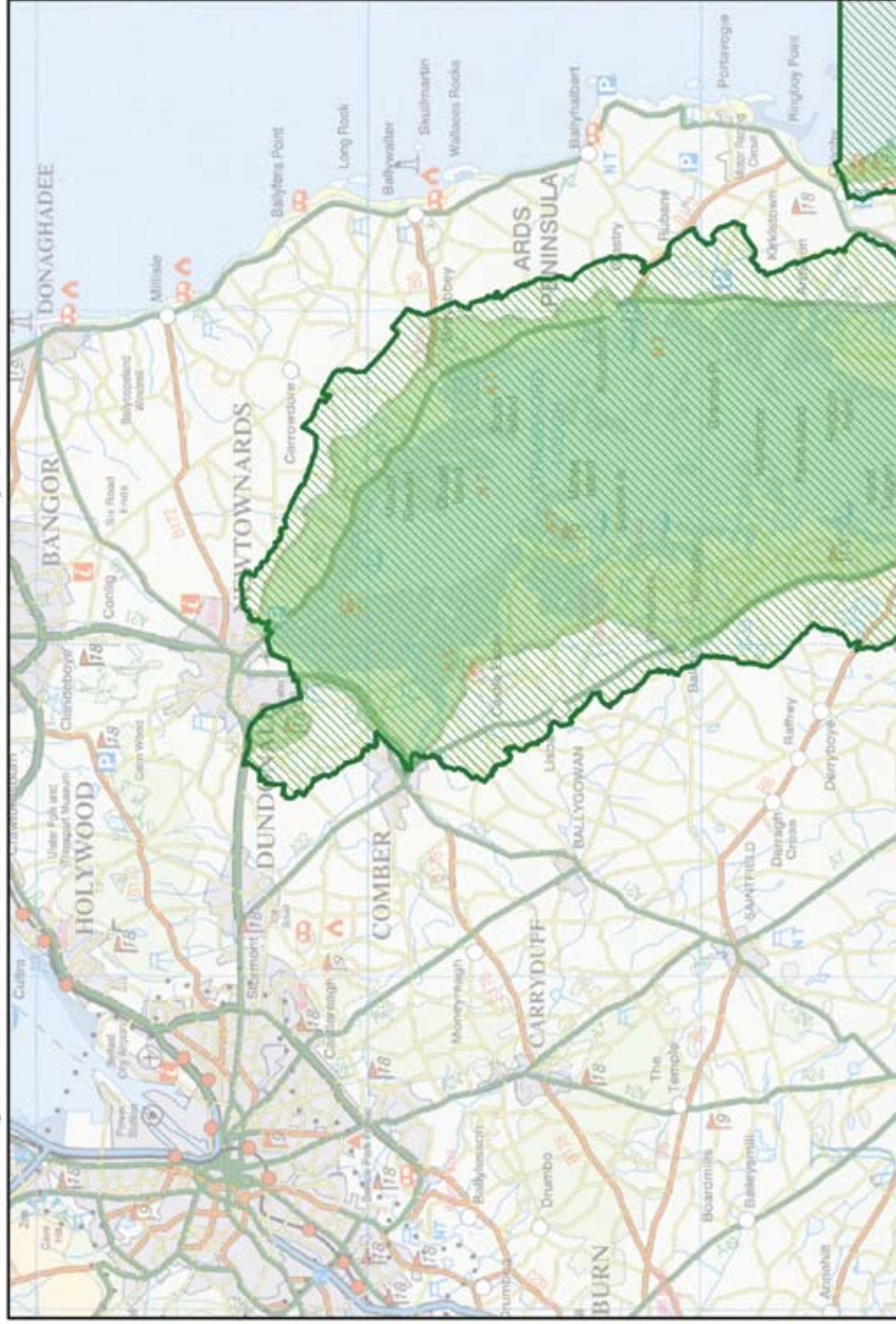
Most of the area proposed for the new AONB was designated under the Amenity Lands Act in 1967 either as Lecale Coast AONB or in 1972 as Strangford Lough AONB. However since then the criteria used for drawing the boundaries of AONBs have changed and, in some cases, there has also been a change in the condition of the land. All AONBs are being reviewed to see if the boundaries remain appropriate or need to be changed to reflect today's landscape.

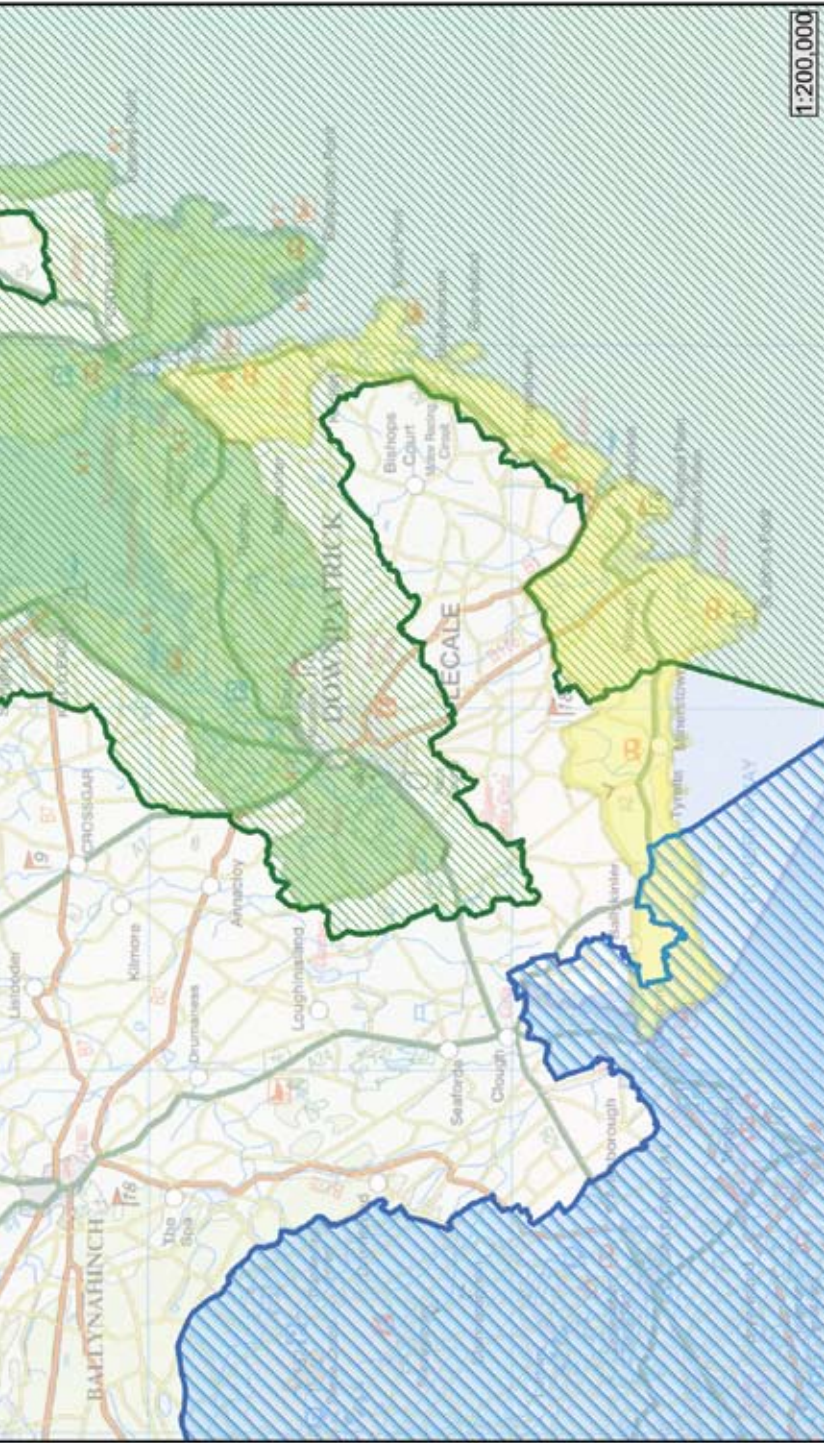
The original designation, made by the Ministry responsible for planning as well as countryside management, was primarily intended to protect it from over-development. The legislation however did not allow the Department to take any positive steps to encourage anyone to enjoy, improve or safeguard its landscape. New legislation was introduced in 1985. It empowers the Department to promote the area and to take steps to encourage the voluntary and co-ordinated management of the landscape.

Planning Service, a separate branch of DOE, takes note of an AONB designation however it protects the countryside through its own policies and zones such as Countryside Policy Areas or Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development.

Other AONBs designated using the 1985 legislation are beginning to benefit from the management plans drawn up by local stakeholders. The new designation will not require anyone to manage their land in a different way, nor can it prevent development. It will however allow all interested parties to propose ways to retain and enhance the landscape character of the area and to ensure that necessary development takes account of the potential to enhance rather than spoil those outstanding qualities for which the area was designated.

Existing and Proposed AONBs - Strangford, Lecale & Mourne







Existing AONBs

-  Strangford Lough
-  Mourne & Sileve Croob
-  Lecale Coast

Proposed AONBs

-  Strangford and Lecale
-  Revised Mourne & Sileve Croob

What are the proposed changes to the area designated?

The two separate AONBs will be merged into one new larger AONB. The Order to create the new AONB will rescind (cancel) the previous designation.

The whole area currently designated as Strangford Lough AONB will remain designated.

Lands found to be of AONB standard adjacent to the current boundary will be included by moving the boundary inland to broaden the designated AONB.

Some lands in Lecale Coast were found to no longer meet the standard for AONB designation; these will be left out of the new AONB.

Some lands in Lecale Coast are of AONB standard but their landscape characteristics relate more closely to the Mourne AONB than to that of Strangford and Lecale. It is proposed to alter the Mourne AONB boundary to include a small area around Dundrum Bay.



What about my opinion?

Under the legislation (Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985), the Department of the Environment must consult and local authorities with lands in the area. These are Ards and Down for the proposed Strangford and Lecale AONB, and Banbridge and Newry and Mourne on the Mourne AONB proposal. All these bodies have already been contacted.

If you would like further information about the proposals and how they may affect you or your organisation, please contact the Protecting Landscapes team. Arrangements are being made to have maps available for consultation in the area; dates and venues will be published after 1st August on the NIEA website www.ni-environment.gov.uk. We can also meet with you by arrangement.

We do not believe the proposals will have any negative equality impacts but will be interested in any evidence to the contrary.



We wish to receive opinions on the proposal from those living in, working in and enjoying the area. We will consider submissions made up to 31st December 2009. Anonymous submissions will not be considered.

The final legislation gives the final decision on what should be designated to the Department but this decision will not be made until after the consultation period and the Department will take account of opinions received.

Please post or email your comments, under the heading 'Strangford and Lecale AONB proposals':

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This document is available in alternative formats and alternative arrangements can be made for receiving responses; please contact us to discuss your requirements.

Freedom of Information / Data Protection

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, all comments received will be considered disclosable unless you indicate to the contrary, with your submission, why you do not wish this information disclosed. The final decision with regard to disclosure rests with the Department. All personal information falling within the Data Protection Act 1998 will only be used for the purpose of informing the Department of your views and will be destroyed once the decision on this proposed designation has been made.