

Neagh Bann Draft River Basin Management Plan

Upper Bann

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**Neagh Bann River Basin District
Upper Neagh Bann Catchment Stakeholder Group
Upper Bann River Basin Management Area**

The Upper Bann management area covers an area of 673 km². Craigavon and Banbridge are the main towns. There are also many small towns in the area including Tandragee, Markethill and Rathfriland.

The main land area is given over to Improved grassland with 56% of land utilisation. Significant Landuse categories include Arable Horticulture and Neutral grass with 14% and 9% landcover respectively.

Map of Upper Bann management area



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Protected Areas

A large number of water features within the area have been designated under various European Directives and require special protection. The Upper Bann and Cusher Rivers are designated as Salmonid under the Freshwater Fish Directive and both have complied with this directive in 2007. The Lough Neagh and Lough Beg region is registered under the Birds Directive and is also a designated RAMSAR site.

There are four lake areas that are registered under the Freshwater Fish Directive, these are; Gullion Lough, Spelga Dam, Lough Island Reavey reservoir and Lough Neagh.

The Eastern Mourne are designated under the Habitats Directive and are also a single designated Special Area of Conservation as well as a Specially Protected area.

The management area also contains two Areas of Outstanding Beauty; the ring of Gullion and Mourne.

There are six Areas of Special Scientific Interest in the region; Lough Neagh, Selshion, Lackan Bog, Eastern Mourne, Derryvore and Moyrourkan Lough.

Moyrourkan Lough is a large wetland with a diverse range of communities ranging from open water to swamp and fen. Marginal grasslands and carr woodland provide additional habit diversity. The open waters of the two small lakes in Moyrourkan Lough supports an extensive growth of floating Broad-leaved Pondweed, with localised Yellow Water-lily along the margins. A wide range of fen communities surround the lakes and is dominated by Bottle Sedge and associated flora.

Brackagh Bog is the only Nature Reserve in the management area. Originally a raised bog, over 300 years of turf cutting, have left Brackagh Bog a maze of pools, drainage channels and peat ramparts. Most of the reddish acid bog peat was removed, exposing older, black, base-rich fen peat underneath. This variety in soils has resulted in an extremely varied flora. Dense alder and willow carr woodlands open on to luxuriant species-rich fens and shallow pools, while in a few areas acidic bog mosses survive, bedecked with insect-eating sundew plants. The range of dragonfly species, which includes the rare Irish damselfly, is one of the best in Northern Ireland. Pike survive in many of the small pools where hunting mink or otters occasionally be found.

The Upper Bann management area as part of the Neagh Bann River Basin District and is designated as a nutrient sensitive area under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive in relation to phosphorus.

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

River Waterbodies

The 2008 assessment of ecological status determined that 4% of river waterbodies in the Upper Bann management area are characterised at good status. This figure is proposed to rise to 36% by 2015 and 100% by 2021. The

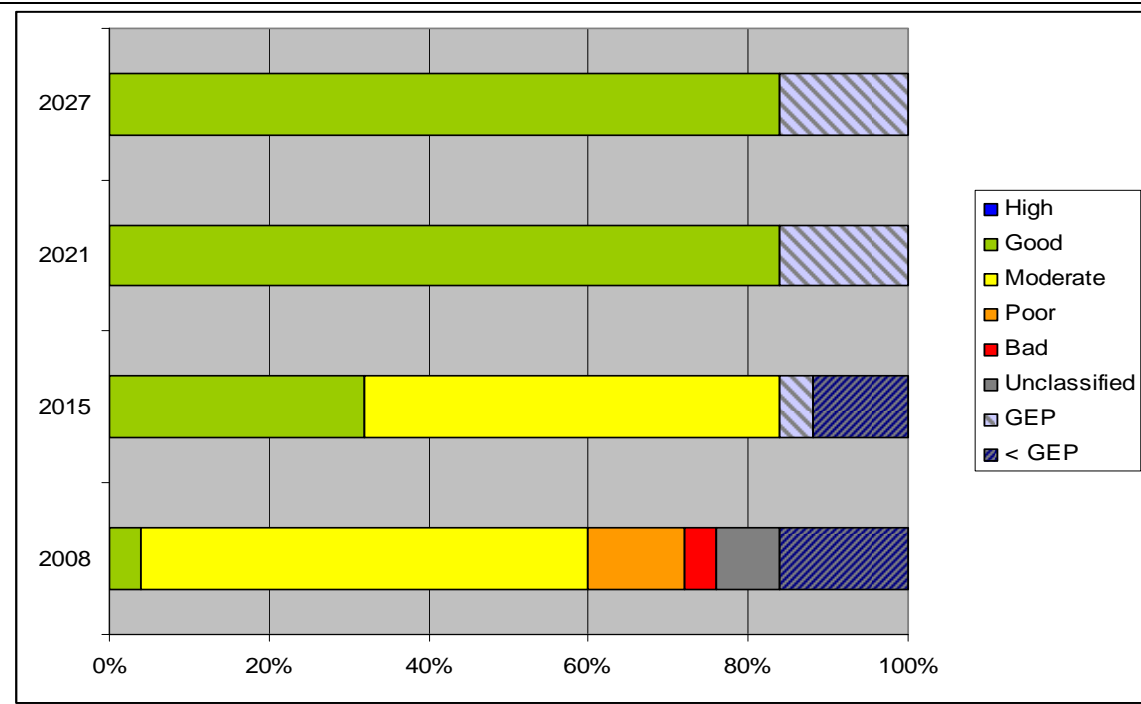
river water bodies assessed include the Cusher River, the Creggan River, the River Bann Upper and the Corcrain River.

Many of the rivers in the area have failed to achieve good status due to suppressed invertebrate populations and elevated levels of phosphorous. Analysis of the Upper Neagh Bann management area indicated a high percentage of river water bodies failing to achieve good status for benthic invertebrates (69%) 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 34%, Phosphorus 31%, BOD 25% and Macrophytes 25% 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 37% of river water bodies affected by morphological changes. Ammonia and metals were both downgrading 6 % of water bodies but only have a minor influence.

There are four river waterbodies which are classified as heavily modified; The river Bann Upper, Muddock River, River Bann and the River Bann Bannfoot. The Muddock River is heavily modified due to abstraction and the River Bann is heavily modified due to a mixture of Navigation, flood defence and the wider environment. These four water bodies are proposed to reach good ecological potential by 2021.

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



Lake Water bodies

Lough Gullion, Spelga Dam and Lough Island Reavey are monitored lakes within the management area. Spelga dam and Lough Island Reavey are both heavily modified as a result of abstraction. Lough Island Reavey as well as modification is proposed to reach good ecological potential by 2015. Lough Gullion was downgraded on phosphorus and phytoplankton, dissolved oxygen and macrophytes. It is severely impacted by enrichment and it is considered it is unlikely to meet good status until 2027. Spelga was downgraded only on macrophytes and this may be as a result of its nature and use, however, we propose to attain good ecological potential by 2027.

Ground Waterbodies

There are three groundwater bodies that have intersected the Upper Bann management area; Neagh, Aughnacloy and Tandragee. All three groundwater bodies are measured at good status for both quantitative and chemical status in 2008.

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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 Upper Bann 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 Upper Bann management area are provided below.

- National Source Protection Pilot Project
- Friends of the River Bann

National Source Protection Pilot Project

This project has relied on effective cross border liaison and has provided an opportunity to share information and expertise regarding onsite Waste Water Treatment Works and water quality monitoring.

The outcomes from the project will assist in the development of an NIEA Dispersed Settlement Project and other local catchment initiatives.

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