

**Regulatory and Natural Heritage Policy
Division
Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Belfast
BT7 2JA
Telephone: 028 9056597
Email: biodiversity.policy@daera-ni.gov.uk**

**Your reference:
Our reference: 1121/BIO/02
Date: 8th November 2021**

BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY TO 2032

1. With the previous Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 now elapsed, you will recall the Executive's agreement to the development of a new document in April 2021. It is intended to develop a new Biodiversity Strategy to meet the challenges faced by the natural environment, and to secure your input to the document.

Background

2. The scientific evidence points to an on-going decline in the world's overall biodiversity; with that trend very much mirrored in Northern Ireland. Internationally the United Nations, through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), is refocusing its intention on reducing the loss of biodiversity through a Global Biodiversity Framework. This framework has been developed internationally with DEFRA representing the UK. Work is ongoing but it is likely that the framework will include the 21 strategic targets set out at **Annex A**.
3. The CBD intends to get international agreement to the framework at the Council of the Parties meeting (CoP15) in May 2022 in China. In the meantime the four UK countries are refreshing their strategies, based on the draft framework.

What is required?

4. The framework is very cross cutting and while the targets focus on many of DAERA's responsibilities including agriculture, forestry, fishing and other marine activities, there are aspects of the targets which are relevant to other bodies, including your



Department. You will also see that there are links within the biodiversity targets to address some of the issues affecting climate change, which is very relevant to the CoP 26 climate conference in Glasgow.

5. In order to assist with development of the new strategy, we would like you to tell us in relation to strategic targets; 3,8,14, and 15.

(i) How your area of responsibility relates to biodiversity?

(ii) What factors or changes do you intend to put in place that could benefit biodiversity – or possibly be counterproductive?

(iii) What do you envisage needs to happen in the medium to long term to assist “turning the curve” in terms of restoring species or habitats to a better overall ecological condition? And

(iv) What overall strategic milestones or outcomes do you envisage are required?

6. In addition, is there any other information in relation to other targets outside your direct area of responsibility that you may wish to highlight?

What will we do with the information?

7. We will coordinate all responses, edit and integrate them into an overall part of the strategy document which we will share with you. We would be happy to discuss our thinking with you prior to receiving your input if you think this would be helpful, either on a one to one basis or relevant group.

When do we need your input?

8. While we can progress parts of the document your input is fundamental to DAERA's overall direction in terms of safeguarding and restoring biodiversity. Therefore your input should be with us by Friday 3rd December 2021.
9. Many thanks in anticipation of your response to help ensure we have a strategy document that will help NI to make a positive benefit to our natural environment.

KEN BRADLEY
Regulatory & Natural Resources Policy Division
DAERA

Reducing threats to biodiversity

Target 1. Ensure that all land and sea areas globally are under integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning addressing land- and sea-use change, retaining existing intact and wilderness areas.

Target 2. Ensure that at least 20 per cent of degraded freshwater, marine and terrestrial ecosystems are under restoration, ensuring connectivity among them and focusing on priority ecosystems.

Target 3. Ensure that at least 30 per cent globally of land areas and of sea areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and its contributions to people, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

Target 4. Ensure active management actions to enable the recovery and conservation of species and the genetic diversity of wild and domesticated species, including through ex situ conservation, and effectively manage human-wildlife interactions to avoid or reduce human-wildlife conflict.

Target 5. Ensure that the harvesting, trade and use of wild species is sustainable, legal, and safe for human health.

Target 6. Manage pathways for the introduction of invasive alien species, preventing, or reducing their rate of introduction and establishment by at least 50 per cent, and control or eradicate invasive alien species to eliminate or reduce their impacts, focusing on priority species and priority sites.

Target 7. Reduce pollution from all sources to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and human health, including by reducing nutrients lost to the environment by at least half, and pesticides by at least two thirds and eliminating the discharge of plastic waste.

Target 8. Minimize the impact of climate change on biodiversity, contribute to mitigation and adaptation through ecosystem-based approaches, contributing at least 10 GtCO₂e per year to global mitigation efforts, and ensure that all mitigation and adaptation efforts avoid negative impacts on biodiversity.

Meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing

Target 9. Ensure benefits, including nutrition, food security, medicines, and livelihoods for people especially for the most vulnerable through sustainable management of wild terrestrial, freshwater and marine species and protecting customary sustainable use by indigenous peoples and local communities.

Target 10. Ensure all areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, in particular through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, increasing the productivity and resilience of these production systems.

Target 11. Maintain and enhance nature's contributions to regulation of air quality, quality and quantity of water, and protection from hazards and extreme events for all people.

Target 12. Increase the area of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces, for human health and well-being in urban areas and other densely populated areas.

Target 13. Implement measures at global level and in all countries to facilitate access to genetic resources and to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources, and as relevant, of associated traditional knowledge, including through mutually agreed terms and prior and informed consent.

Tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming

Target 14. Fully integrate biodiversity values into policies, regulations, planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies, accounts, and assessments of environmental impacts at all levels of government and across all sectors of the economy, ensuring that all activities and financial flows are aligned with biodiversity values.

Target 15. All businesses (public and private, large, medium and small) assess and report on their dependencies and impacts on biodiversity, from local to global, and progressively reduce negative impacts, by at least half and increase positive impacts, reducing biodiversity-related risks to businesses and moving towards the full sustainability of extraction and production practices, sourcing and supply chains, and use and disposal.

Target 16. Ensure that people are encouraged and enabled to make responsible choices and have access to relevant information and alternatives, taking into account cultural preferences, to reduce by at least half the waste and, where relevant the overconsumption, of food and other materials.

Target 17. Establish, strengthen capacity for, and implement measures in all countries to prevent, manage or control potential adverse impacts of biotechnology on biodiversity and human health, reducing the risk of these impacts.

Target 18. Redirect, repurpose, reform or eliminate incentives harmful for biodiversity, in a just and equitable way, reducing them by at least US\$ 500 billion per year, including all of the most harmful subsidies, and ensure that incentives, including public and private economic and regulatory incentives, are either positive or neutral for biodiversity.

Target 19. Increase financial resources from all sources to at least US\$ 200 billion per year, including new, additional and effective financial resources, increasing by at least US\$ 10 billion per year international financial flows to developing countries, leveraging private finance, and increasing domestic resource mobilization, taking into account national biodiversity finance planning, and strengthen capacity-building and technology transfer and scientific cooperation, to meet the needs for implementation, commensurate with the ambition of the goals and targets of the framework.

Target 20. Ensure that relevant knowledge, including the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities with their free, prior, and informed consent, guides decision-making for the effective management of biodiversity, enabling monitoring, and by promoting awareness, education and research.

Target 21. Ensure equitable and effective participation in decision-making related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities, and respect their rights over lands, territories and resources, as well as by women and girls, and youth.

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Target 21. Ensure equitable and effective participation in decision-making related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities, and respect their rights over lands, territories and resources, as well as by women and girls, and youth.

Appendix 3 – Draft consultation response

Regulatory and Natural Heritage Policy Division
DAERA
Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Belfast
BT7 2JA

28th January 2022

Your Ref: 1121/BIO/02

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Biodiversity Strategy to 2032

Mid Ulster District Council would like to thank DAERA for the opportunity to feed into the development of a new Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy to 2032.

As throughout the rest of the world, Northern Ireland is undergoing biodiversity loss. The evidence of this is clear to see, with many once familiar species and habitats becoming increasingly rare, and a few now even extinct from Northern Ireland. This loss of biodiversity impacts the way we live.

Biodiversity represents the foundation, and the building blocks for the ecosystem services that we rely on in our everyday lives. The services ‘gifted’ to us by the natural environment include; purification of air and water, mitigation of floods and droughts, pollination of crops, generation and renewal of soil, as well as the sense of wellbeing provided by nature. Too often, the goods and services that a healthy natural environment provides for us are taken for granted.

Most significant threats to our biodiversity are often caused by human activity. Fortunately, this means we are in a position to adapt our behaviour to manage and enhance our natural environment to safeguard our biodiversity for ourselves and for future generations.

It is recognised that many targets set out in the previous Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy failed to be met. While some improvements have occurred, the decline of our natural environment continues.

Mid Ulster District Council welcomes the development of a new Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy. This new strategy is an opportunity to set out how Northern Ireland could meet its commitments to protect nature, and ensure the environment can continue to support people and the economy. The strategy must recognise the biodiversity emergency we are currently facing, and the increasing public concern for our wildlife. To ensure the outcomes of the new strategy are implemented a strong, coordinated and adequately resourced effort will be required. In some cases, new or refined legislation will be required, (coupled with enforcement) to ensure action is taken to fulfil the new commitments.

The responses to the specified questions and the comments on the Strategic Targets identified as being relevant to Mid Ulster District Council are detailed below.

Yours faithfully

Mid Ulster District Council

Draft Responses

Mid Ulster District Council draft response to specified questions:

5(i) How your area of responsibility relates to biodiversity?

Local authorities have a major role to play in safeguarding and restoring biodiversity at a local level. In addition to obligations under international, national and regional legislation, there is a moral obligation for local authorities to protect and enhance the wider environment for both nature and the wellbeing of residents.

5(ii) What factors or changes do you intend to put in place that could benefit biodiversity – or possibly be counterproductive?

Mid Ulster District Council are continually looking at ways to benefit biodiversity throughout the Mid Ulster area. Biodiversity values have been integrated into a range of policies and plans that will ensure positive action is taken to both protect and enhance our local environment.

MUDC Corporate Improvement Objective 1 states, “Mid Ulster District Council will seek to reduce the environmental impacts of our own activities and will contribute to the improvement of the wider environment through local action.” Activities and measures have been identified and are being put in action across the range of council services. In addition to having positive impacts on council property, partnerships have been and continue to be established with public, private, voluntary and community sectors, to encourage and engage participation in action to enhance our local biodiversity in the wider countryside.

5(iii) What do you envisage needs to happen in the medium to long term to assist “turning the curve” in terms of restoring species or habitats to a better overall ecological condition?

To assist in the restoration of habitats and species, a Biodiversity Strategy with associated and targeted Action Plans is required. This should identify the key pressures and solutions which will help “turn the curve”.

These solutions must be adequately resourced to enable implementation.

New or refined legislation will be required, coupled with enforcement to ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity is taken seriously.

While there is growing public concern for the state of our biodiversity, further awareness raising must be undertaken to ensure “buy in” from the wider community. This should highlight both the issues and the solutions, and the vital role the public play in enhancing our local biodiversity resource.

5(iv) What overall strategic milestones or outcomes do you envisage are required?

The first milestone required is to halt biodiversity loss. However, there is a lack of appropriate, up to date data to enable calculations to be made as to when this may occur. The production of baseline data is an essential requirement and in itself would be a significant outcome.

Milestones should be set for interim monitoring of the Strategy to enable any slippages to be identified and acted upon.

Mid Ulster District Council draft Comments on specific Strategic Targets as outlined in Appendices 1 and 2

Target 1 – Ensure that all land and sea areas globally are under integrated biodiversity exclusive spatial planning addressing land – and sea use change, retaining existing and wilderness areas

Draft Response –

Biodiversity will be considered through the adoption of policies in the Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030.

In order to protect and enhance our natural heritage in relation to biodiversity, the Strategy includes identifying sites of international, national and local importance in the Mid Ulster area. These designations will be accompanied by appropriate policies to ensure their protection and/or enhancement. MUDC will ensure that the precautionary principle is applied when considering the impacts of a proposed development on national or international significant landscape or natural heritage resources. A review of the existing SLNCIs is being undertaken and brought forward within the Local Policies Plan.

In order to protect and enhance our natural environment in terms of landscape and visual amenity our strategy is to designate Special Countryside Areas (SCA) which will protect our most sensitive landscapes from inappropriate development. The introduction of an SCA is anchored in regional strategic policy within the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS). The SCAs are designated at our most exceptional landscapes, such as along the shores of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg, and on the most wild and remote parts of the Sperrins AONB and Slieve Beagh. These are complemented with Areas of Constraint in other environmentally sensitive areas in order to control specific types of development, namely wind turbines and other high structures.

In addition to these designations biodiversity and landscape character are recognised through the designation of Local Landscape Policy Areas and they are also a planning consideration when determining a planning application in the context of the General Principles Planning Policy.

Target 3 – Ensure that at least 30 percent globally of land areas and of sea areas, especially areas of particular interest for biodiversity and its contributions to people, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

Draft Response –

In an effort to ensure our most important areas for biodiversity are protected, a range of international, national and regional designations are in place. As a local authority, Mid Ulster District Council can only designate Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and through the Local Development Plan, Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs).

The criteria for the suitability of a site as an LNR does include both the biodiversity value of the site, and the opportunity for people to visit the site to enjoy and learn about our natural environment. Where the conservation value of the site is the main objective, an LNR may already have a 'higher' designation such as being within an Area of Special Scientific Interest. If this is the case, such an LNR would

not contribute to the target of 30% of areas protected. If the site is not within any other designation, it could contribute to the 30% total of areas protected. However, to ensure the site maintains its conservation value, the development and implementation of management plans will be required, which would need to be adequately resourced.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) can be designated through the Local Development Plan. Although this does give the site a certain level of protection, a change in legislation would be required to ensure the site is fully protected, and managed for its conservation value. Mid Ulster District Council are currently in the process of assessing SLNCIs to be brought forward within the Local Policies Plan. All of the proposed SLNCIs will be of biodiversity or geodiversity value. In addition to the value of the site on its own merit, a number of sites will have a Key Feature of "Wildlife Corridor" or "Wildlife Stepping Stone", recognising the value of the site in connecting natural habitats and enabling movement of species across the landscape.

With regard to other designations, Mid Ulster District Council welcomes that the Strategic Target is to "Ensure that at least 30 percent globally of land areas and of sea areas ... are conserved through effectively and equitably managed...". These sites hold the resource for many of our threatened species and habitats. To ensure these sites remain valuable they must be managed effectively and must be in favourable condition. Adequate resourcing must be in place to enable these sites to be of high quality.

Target 6 – Manage pathways for the introduction of invasive alien species, preventing, or reducing their rate of introduction and establishment by at least 50 per cent, and control or eradicate invasive alien species to eliminate or reduce their impacts, focusing on priority species and priority sites.

Draft Response –

Invasive Alien Species (IAS) can have a detrimental impact on our local environment through competition for resources, predation, alteration of habitats and food webs, disease, etc. and are a significant contributing factor to our biodiversity loss. The control of non-native invasive species in Northern Ireland is a huge undertaking and will require cooperation between a range of statutory and non-statutory organisations and individual landowners. However, Mid Ulster District Council is of the opinion that the target to reduce the rate of introduction and establishment by at least 50% should be substantially increased. The aim should be to have no further introductions of Alien Invasive Species and although this may not practically be achievable, the target should more closely reflect this. Adequate and appropriate enforcement of The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019, should assist in this target.

Mid Ulster council have been undertaking an audit of council properties to identify where selected non-native invasive species are present. This has formed the basis of a management plan to control these species on council property. (Eradication is unlikely unless working in partnership with neighbouring landowners to prevent recolonization). This audit is reviewed and updated on a regular basis with resultant modifications to the management plan and implementation.

Target 8 – Minimize the impact of Climate change on Biodiversity, contribute to mitigation and adaption through ecosystem-based approaches, contributing at least 10 GtCO₂e per year to global mitigation efforts, and ensure that all mitigation and adaption efforts avoid negative impacts on biodiversity.

Draft Response –

Mid Ulster District Council recognises the importance of our natural assets and the impact of Climate change on these, and are currently reviewing their Climate Action Plan.

Target 12 - Increase the area of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces, for human health and well-being in urban areas and other densely populated areas.

Draft Response –

Mid Ulster District Council recognises our natural assets contribute to the health and well-being of our local community. The intrinsic value of such assets relates to their potential to provide opportunities for physical activity such as walking and cycling; and improve quality of mental health. The important role our environment plays is encouraged through the sustainable development of our natural heritage assets as part of the District's green and blue infrastructure.

It is difficult to "Increase the area of...green and blue spaces...in urban areas..." given the conflicting demands for land in densely populated or developed areas. However, there is an opportunity to incorporate such spaces in new development proposals through relevant planning policies.

Mid Ulster District Council is of the opinion that this target should not be restricted to just "urban areas and other densely populated areas", as access to safe open spaces is not always available in the rural setting.

Mid Ulster District Council does strive to provide suitable and appropriate access to open spaces to enable local residents to enjoy the benefits that come from connecting with nature. However, it is also recognised that occasionally some key areas of natural habitat may be more appropriately managed with only limited public access. A balance must be achieved between the value the site may have for biodiversity with the provision of public open spaces. Increasing access to such areas may destroy the very features that visitors come to see.

Target 14. Fully integrate biodiversity values into policies, regulations, planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies, accounts, and assessments of environmental impacts at all levels of government and across all sectors of the economy, ensuring that all activities and financial flows are aligned with biodiversity values.

Draft Response –

Mid Ulster District Council supports this strategic target and agrees that wherever possible, biodiversity values should be embedded into all policies, plans and strategies.

The services 'gifted' to us by the natural environment have for too long been taken for granted. The purification of air and water, the pollination of crops, the mitigation of floods, etc. by the natural environment have been 'free', and have not always

been valued. It will require a change in society to get people to appreciate what the natural environment provides for us, and that it is to be valued.

Mid Ulster District Council also recognises the need for a better understanding of biodiversity values so it can be developed and incorporated into such plans and policies.

Target 15.

All businesses (public and private, large, medium and small) assess and report on their dependencies and impacts on biodiversity, from local to global, and progressively reduce negative impacts, by at least half and increase positive impacts, reducing biodiversity-related risks to businesses and moving towards the fully sustainability of extraction and production practices, sourcing and supply chains and use and disposal

Draft Response –

Whilst Mid Ulster Council strives to make positive impacts on council activities, partnerships have also been established with public and private businesses to encourage and engage participation in action to minimise impacts on and to and enhance both local and global biodiversity.