



Northern Ireland Environment Agency  
Gníomhaireacht Comhshaoil Thuaisceart Éireann  
Norlin Airlan Environment Agency



# Environment Fund Water Quality Improvement Strand Guidance Notes

*Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.*



An Agency within the Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**  
[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

Gníomhaireacht de chuid na Roinne  
**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

An Agency w'in the Department o  
**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1	<b>Priorities for Funding</b> .....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Eligibility – Applicants and Projects</b> .....	<b>3</b>
2.1	<b>Who can apply?</b> .....	3
2.2	<b>Which Projects are eligible?</b> .....	3
2.3	<b>Match Funding</b> .....	4
2.4	<b>Granted Projects</b> .....	5
2.5	<b>Themes for funding</b> .....	5
<b>3.</b>	<b>Eligibility - Costs</b> .....	<b>7</b>
3.1	<b>Which costs are eligible?</b> .....	7
3.2	<b>Projects and costs that cannot be funded by the Water Quality Improvement Strand</b> .....	9
<b>4.</b>	<b>Making and Application</b> .....	<b>10</b>
4.1	<b>Before you apply</b> .....	10
4.2	<b>Demonstrating Value for Money</b> .....	10
4.3	<b>Application Submission</b> .....	11
4.4	<b>Compliance with Legislation</b> .....	11
4.5	<b>Grant Levels</b> .....	12
<b>5.</b>	<b>Assessing Applications</b> .....	<b>12</b>
5.1	<b>Assessment Process</b> .....	12
5.2	<b>Notification of Final Decision</b> .....	14
<b>6</b>	<b>Annex 1</b> .....	<b>15</b>
6.1	<b>Northern Ireland Environment Agency Authorisations</b> .....	15
6.2	<b>Water Management Unit Authorisations</b> .....	15
6.3	<b>Waste Management Authorisations</b> .....	15
6.4	<b>Built Heritage Authorisations</b> .....	16
6.5	<b>Natural Heritage Authorisations</b> .....	16
6.6	<b>(National) Nature Reserves ((N)NRs)</b> .....	17
6.7	<b>Planning Permission</b> .....	18
6.8	<b>Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)</b> .....	18
6.9	<b>Marine Division Authorisations</b> .....	18
6.10	<b>Department for Infrastructure – Rivers Agency</b> .....	18
6.11	<b>Inland Fisheries / Loughs Agency</b> .....	18

# 1 Introduction

Water is of fundamental importance for life and our natural environment. Our water bodies provide us with drinking water and are critical for businesses, generating and sustaining wealth through activities such as agriculture, fishing, industry, services, transport & tourism. Our economy, our health and our enjoyment of the environment depend on the way we maintain our rivers, lakes, transitional (estuarine) waters, coastal waters and groundwater. The protection of our aquatic environment underpins our well-being and our livelihoods.

Since the last Statistics report [Water Classification Statistics for Northern Ireland 2024 Report | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#) as published, our water body status has not shown the improvements that were set out in 2015. In fact, our rivers and lakes are clearly showing deteriorations in ecological status, whilst our coastal & transitional water bodies remain unchanged. Although the groundwater chemistry classification results show some improvement in status this is mostly due to changes in monitoring data collection or changes in monitoring stations within the groundwater bodies.

Northern Ireland's water resources are managed and protected using a catchment-based approach which includes rivers, lakes and groundwater as well as coastal and transitional water bodies. The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 place a responsibility on us all to ensure that all inland and coastal waters reach at least "good status".

Within Northern Ireland, the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 is the primary driver for assessing our local waters and achieving good ecological status for our water environment.

More information on the regulations is available at the link below:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/water-framework-directive>

The aim of the Water Quality Improvement Strand of the Environment Fund is to help communities deliver projects focused on improving water quality and work towards achieving good status. This fund is delivered through the Strategic Environment Programme (SEP). Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) are using the Environment Fund as a mechanism for delivery of this programme.

### 1.1 Priorities for Funding

In making this funding available the Department will focus on supporting projects which would not ordinarily be taking place. Project bids can be made that build on existing projects and actions. However, it should be made clear how the elements that are being bid for go beyond that which has already been committed. The Water Quality Improvement Grant should not be used as a replacement source of funding.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to view the current Water Framework Directive status of their chosen water body using the NIEA Catchment Data Map Viewer and Water Information Request Map Viewer: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/daera-map-viewers>

- Eligible projects need to have a clear objective to do at least one of the below;
- Improve the water body status
- Raise awareness of water pressures in the community
- Encourage behaviour change in the local community

Projects which have a strong link with one of more of the below will be looked at favourably if they are located within;

- Local Management Areas; Braid and Main, Six Mile Water, Lough Neagh peripherals, Upper Bann, River Blackwater, Ballinderry, Moyola
- Protected areas dependent on water (Drinking Water Protected Areas, bathing waters, shellfish water protected areas, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Protected areas can be viewed on <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/daera-map-viewers>
- Water, nutrient and sediment retention related to Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk (APSFR). A map of the APSFR sites can be viewed on page 4 (Figure 1-3) [Second Cycle Northern Ireland Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027](#). Detailed descriptions of each APSFR site can be viewed on <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/second-cycle-northern-ireland-flood-risk-management-plan-2021-2027>

The fund will support up to 85 % of the total project cost, with the maximum of grant aid awarded to a single project limited to £30k and no less than £5k. You will need to demonstrate how your project delivers against at least one of the Fund's themes.

All on the ground project activity must take place in Northern Ireland.

Your local NIEA Catchment Officer can help interested groups through the application process to ensure they are addressing appropriate water issues, in line with the themes below and the priority areas.

Further information on the Water Quality Improvement Strand can be requested by e-mailing the Integrated Catchment Planning Team at [catchmentplanning@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:catchmentplanning@daera-ni.gov.uk) or you can get further details from your Catchment Officer [RiverBasinPlanning@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:RiverBasinPlanning@daera-ni.gov.uk)

## 2 Eligibility – Applicants and Projects

### 2.1 Who can apply?

The grant scheme is open to a range of groups and organisations, including community groups, schools, Rivers Trusts, environmental charities, other interested not-for-profit organisations and local councils.

The organisation applying for the grant may have partners which are not eligible to apply directly or may sub-contract provision of services to such organisations.

Supporting information to confirm the status and financial standing of the organisation will be required.

Applicants should also either already be registered on the government funding database <https://govfunding.nics.gov.uk/> or be in the process of registering.

### 2.2 Which Projects are eligible?

- Projects must be consistent with the aims and objectives of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.
- Grant applications will not be supported where work is targeted by other government grant schemes such as the Environmental Farming Scheme or the Woodland Grant Scheme.
- Projects must have a clearly identified need.
- Partnerships are encouraged where this will enhance the outcomes.
- Grants are discretionary.
- Grants will be awarded up to a value of 85 % of the total project cost.

- Grants are capped at £30k (minimum of £5k).
- The Project must be completed by the end of February in the project year to allow time to process claims by the end of the financial year.
- A Letter of Offer must be formally accepted in advance of any expenditure on the project.
- Grants are paid in arrears in up to two instalments and subject to the Conditions of Offer.
- The Northern Ireland Environment Agency may publish details of all projects applying to and supported by the Water Quality Improvement Grant.

### 2.3 Match Funding

Grant Applicants must be able to demonstrate that sufficient match funding is available to complete their project. We can take account of contributions in-kind, including labour or donations of materials. When calculating the value of volunteer time please use the following standard rates below (as published by the Heritage Lottery Fund):

- Unskilled tasks can be costed at up to £50 per day. This might include removal of aquatic invasive alien species, riparian planting.
- Skilled tasks can be costed at up to £150 per day. This might include training in identification of aquatic alien species or verifying data in a species identification project.
- Professional tasks can be costed at up to £350 per day. This might include carrying out an ecological impact assessment or designing a river restoration scheme.

### 2.4 Granted Projects

This Water Quality Improvement Strand of the Environment Fund scheme seeks to support projects that address pressures affecting the water environment.

Previously funded projects have included (list not exhaustive)

- Tackling Invasive Non-Native Species through volunteer training, treatment days.
- Riparian planting.
- Aquatic planting.
- Drainage misconnections campaign.
- Adopt a river.
- Citizen science monitoring.
- Habitat improvement.
- Farm surveys to identify water sources, pathways and receptors to improve Water Quality resulting in recommendations such as wet woodlands, lagoons, riparian fencing.

### 2.5 Themes for funding

There are 3 key themes for funding under this Water Quality Improvement strand of the Challenge, which are outlined below:

#### 2.5.1 Connecting people with the aquatic environment to achieve behavioural change

These projects will seek to increase the public's appreciation, understanding of and behaviour towards their water environment. Including, but not limited to, an understanding of water quality pressures, how to reduce their impact on the water environment and how they can get involved and make improvements.

For example, projects may include actions contributing to:

- Volunteering, including the establishment of new local groups or greater public involvement within existing groups, to improve the water environment e.g. adopt a "local water body", host a river day.
- Community engagement and citizen science for aquatic/ marine conservation, protection and improvement e.g. Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring Initiative, Invasive non-

native species identification and training, outfall safari training, litter picking (can include purchase of specialist equipment).

- Engaging and empowering the community to support and increase understanding of the water environment or develop citizen science skills, such as species identification or water quality monitoring, water conservation and development of digital/social media and webinars that tie in with behavioural change and raise awareness of key issues.
- Local Pollution Prevention campaigns e.g. drainage misconnections, workshops, signage, leaflets.

### **2.5.2 Conservation, Protection and Restoration of our Aquatic environments**

These projects should look to conserve, protect and restore our water environment.

Such projects could include, but are not limited to:

- Creation, protection or restoration of aquatic, coastal or marine habitat.
- Creation of blue and associated green spaces.
- Recovery of threatened aquatic and marine species.
- Improving and maintaining fish passage.
- Tackling invasive non-native species e.g. removal and biosecurity planning.
- Preventing, removing or cleaning up pollution e.g. litter picking, wetlands, buffer zones, awareness raising.
- Water quality surveying and monitoring e.g. Citizen Science Monitoring Initiative, baseline surveys and post project surveys.
- The development of restoration plans.
- Action that aids the improvement of water quality e.g. tackling diffuse pollution.

### **2.5.3 Nature-based solutions, particularly for climate change mitigation and adaptation**

These projects should seek to work sustainably with the water environment to address socio-environmental issues, particularly in reference to climate change and flood risk management.

For example, projects may include, but are not limited to, action contributing to:

- Peatland and other wetland restoration to reduce pollution and flooding.

- Natural flood management e.g. silt trapping including woody debris to drains, swales, attenuation ponds, measures to prevent soil erosion and nutrient run off.
- Creating, enhancing or connecting blue and green infrastructure.
- River or waterways bank stabilization and in-stream improvements.
- Riparian management / tree planting, planting of native species/hedgerows, de-tunneling, etc.

For further information on all aspects of river restoration projects you may find this web link helpful: <https://www.therrc.co.uk/rrc>

Your local NIEA Catchment Officer can help interested groups through the application process to ensure they are addressing appropriate water issues, in line with the themes and the priority areas.

Further information on the Water Quality Improvement Strand can be requested by e-mailing the Integrated Catchment Planning Team at [catchmentplanning@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:catchmentplanning@daera-ni.gov.uk) or you can get further details from your Catchment Officer at [RiverBasinPlanning@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:RiverBasinPlanning@daera-ni.gov.uk).

### **3. Eligibility - Costs**

Project funding will be limited to the current financial year. Projects requiring repeat funding for addressing an issue, campaign or area of work are not eligible for this grant. Projects should therefore clearly identify the area of need, resource requirements and scheme of work.

The project costs, staff and other resources required must be assessed carefully when preparing the application as there are limited opportunities for making amendments once the bid has been submitted and approved. Sufficient resources must be allocated to ensure the Project is being managed properly, keeping complete financial records and supporting documents.

Problems may be experienced if projects slip in relation to their expected financial spending profile, potentially leading to a loss of grant.

#### **3.1 Which costs are eligible?**

The administration costs and day-to-day running expenses of an organisation will not be grant aided. These include accommodation and related costs, insurance charges, legal and other professional costs.

Costs should be identifiable and verifiable. General apportionment of costs as overheads is not acceptable as eligible costs. Only actual overheads relating to the Project are eligible costs. A reasonable apportionment basis such as a percentage of direct staff costs or a fixed hourly rate of time charged should be used.

Overhead items relating to the Project which may be included in the calculation are:

- Rent of building and plant.
- Utilities such as water and electricity.
- Maintenance, public liability insurance and office equipment or supplies.
- Communication and postage costs.

Overhead items which cannot be included in the calculation are financial management, human resources, training or legal advice unless they can be directly attributed to the Project. In this case the incurred cost should be charged to the Project directly and not included in the overheads.

Overheads, administration and on-costs should be no more than 20% of direct costs. The overall calculation method or percentage used should be specified on the application form.

Costs unrelated to the Project will not receive grant unless the Project could not proceed without incurring them, or where they were for reasonable environmental improvements. Examples might be:

- Reasonable extra costs for environmental enhancements and biodiversity gains.
- Reasonable costs to make a solution less environmentally intrusive or to sustain existing amenities.
- Where the Project reveals finds of such archaeological importance that approved works cannot continue without first securing the finds, additional costs may be considered for grant, but only at the minimum level to allow work to continue.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency is prepared to consider, for grant aid, the salaries, national insurance and superannuation of an applicant's workforce who are solely engaged on the delivery of approved Projects, provided that these costs have not been included in any other public funding application. Records in respect of staff engaged on a Project, salaries paid and associated costs should be kept and made available for audit inspection.

Where appropriate public liability insurance costs relating to the Project are necessary, these will be eligible for the grant.

Any match funding which applicants receive from other funding bodies for the Project must be disclosed.

### 3.2 Projects and costs that cannot be funded by the Water Quality Improvement Strand

Funding will not be provided to those who have a duty to undertake specific work and cannot be used to ensure compliance with a legal obligation. Projects that duplicate work undertaken by other funding will not be grant aided.

All VAT must be excluded from budgets and claims if the VAT is recoverable by the beneficiaries. If the applicant cannot recover its VAT it can include a line item into the budget and claim form. VAT must be stated separately from other costs.

Water Quality Improvement Strand support will **not** normally be considered for the following:

- The purchase of vehicles and other mobile equipment.
- Work which is targeted by other government grant schemes for specific work areas such as agri-environment schemes.
- VAT, if the Grant Applicant can reclaim VAT.
- Actions by individuals or businesses as part of a planning consent.
- Projects which could progress without support from Government funding.
- Work which is the statutory responsibility of another body.
- The purchase of land or the purchase and construction of buildings.
- Gifts or entertaining including hospitality.

This grant is being awarded on a no-State-Aid basis in regard to the below. Any aid granted to companies in Northern Ireland from 1 January 2021 which falls under Article 10 of the Northern Ireland Protocol that is, in respect of measures which affect trade in goods between Northern Ireland and the European Union, will have to follow the EU State aid rules. However, if required, the Department reserves the right to require that the Applicant repays any State Aid deemed to be incompatible.

The Department reserves the right to recover any financial assistance granted subject to a decision by a court of law that the financial assistance in question constitutes a remediable subsidy and/ or a decision by the European Commission (where it is established that the financial assistance in question falls within the scope of the Northern Ireland Protocol and is a State aid).

### **4. Making and Application**

#### **4.1 Before you apply**

Your local NIEA Catchment Officer can help interested groups through the application process to ensure they are addressing appropriate water issues, in line with the themes below and the priority areas.

Further information on the Water Quality Improvement Strand can be requested by e-mailing the Integrated Catchment Planning Team at [catchmentplanning@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:catchmentplanning@daera-ni.gov.uk) or you can get further details from your Catchment Officer at [RiverBasinPlanning@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:RiverBasinPlanning@daera-ni.gov.uk).

You can find out the relevant water body name, Identification Codes and WFD status for the locations of your work on the NIEA Catchment Data Map Viewer:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/daera-map-viewers>

The final decision will be carried out by the Water Quality Improvement Grant Decision Panel and will depend upon the assessment of the completed grant application form and the availability of finance.

#### **4.2 Demonstrating Value for Money**

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency must ensure that the project represents value for money – that is, to weigh up the quality of the proposed activity against the cost of its provision.

At all stages of the assessment process consideration will be given as to how an organisation is minimising costs, sharing resources and maximising value for money.

Match funding is required to be secured for the Project and can be secured from a variety of sources such as other grants, membership fees, and donations or in-kind.

The Applicant shall implement the procurement procedures as set out in the table below. The actions related in Table 1 should be implemented by the Applicant based on the estimated value (excl. VAT) of each contract at pre-tender stage. Procurement

decisions must demonstrate best value for money and the Applicant must keep records which support its decisions.

*Table 1 - Tender Guidance*

Estimated Value	Tender Action Required
Up to £10,000	Provide evidence that 2 prices have been sought, where this is possible*
£10,000 - £50,000	3 written quotations are sought, where this is possible*

\*For some specialist supplies or services there may be only be one supplier in the market. If this is the case, sufficient justification for not seeking a second price check should be documented.

### 4.3 Application Submission

Interested organisations with project plans should submit their application for grant aid by completing the Water Quality Improvement Strand Application Form available on the NIEA website: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/environment-fund-water-quality-improvement-strand>

All sections of the Application Form must be completed, including the Environmental Scoping Report (Section 7). The completed form must be signed by an authorised senior member of the organisation to confirm that the information supplied is correct and that there is support from within the organisation.

The completed application should be accompanied by relevant supplementary information detailed in the Application Form.

### 4.4 Compliance with Legislation

In carrying out any project supported by the Water Quality Improvement Grant, the grant recipient must comply with the provisions of all the enactments, statutory provisions and other laws operating in Northern Ireland including, but not restricted to, those relating to planning, nature conservation, pollution, access, equal opportunities, fair employment and health and safety. In cases of non-compliance, the Department reserves the right to suspend, defer, withhold or claw back any or all of the payments

and/ or require the grant recipient to repay part or all the financial assistance. Details of NIEA authorisations which may be required are found in Annex 1 of this document.

### 4.5 Grant Levels

The Water Quality Improvement Grant budget is limited. Scoring against the assessment themes and criteria only determines the potential of a project to support the delivery of the River Basin Planning objectives. Additional factors will be assessed, alongside the outputs of other projects, before the final selection of projects to be supported is chosen.

The overarching factors the Northern Ireland Environment Agency will also consider include:

- Evidence of the need for the project and its outputs
- Value for money
- Your organisation's ability to manage and deliver the project
- How you will measure the progress and success of the project
- Environmental Impact
- Community Involvement and impact on behaviour change

Grant applications may be refused or offered at a lower level of grant if there is insufficient budget or there are concerns about value for money or risks in delivering the outputs.

Grant Applicants must be able to demonstrate that sufficient match funding is available to complete their project. We can take account of contributions in-kind, including labour or donations of materials.

## 5. Assessing Applications

### 5.1 Assessment Process

The assessment will be based solely on the information submitted. Therefore, it is important to consider the points below and include as much information and supporting documentation as possible.

Applications will be reviewed to ensure they meet the **eligibility** requirements outlined below:

- Not-for-profit organisation.

- Registered, or in the process of registering on the Government Funding Database <https://govfunding.nics.gov.uk/>
- Match funding or contributions in-kind clearly outlined.

**Technical** Assessments will focus on the below areas:

- Does the project clearly fit into at least one of the key themes for this fund?
- Does the project have a clear objective to improve the water environment, most prominently water quality?
- What, if any additional benefits will the project achieve?
- Level of community involvement including awareness raising and encouraging behaviour change.
- Do the costs represent value for money?

**Additionally** the assessment will consider how well each application:

- provides support to other initiatives within a catchment, avoiding duplication and conflict.
- raises awareness of water issues and addresses them.
- forms a part of a wider consideration/ awareness of the surrounding landscape. We particularly want to see how a proposed Project will fit in with the range of issues and actions being undertaken in the catchment as a whole.

Does the project fall within:

- Local Management Areas; Braid and Main; Six Mile Water, Lough Neagh peripherals, Upper Bann, River Blackwater, Ballinderry, Moyola
- Protected areas dependent on water (Drinking Water Protected Areas, bathing waters, shellfish water protected areas, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Water, nutrient and sediment retention related to Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk (APSFR).

The panel will be made up from experts within the DAERA, and other independent technical experts.

The decision of the Water Quality Improvement Grant Decision Panel is final.

In general, the panel will give most weight to the assessment ratings that apply to feasibility and effectiveness and fit in with River Basin Management Plan objectives.

The Water Quality Improvement Grant Decision Panel are keen to ensure that Projects deliver value for money; with Project funding costs assessed against their likelihood of helping waters achieve the water quality objective of 'good' ecological status for surface water and 'good' chemical status for groundwater as set out in the River Basin Management Plan.

Please note, by submitting an application to the fund there is no guarantee that you will be successful, additionally, any costs incurred in submitting an application will not be re-imbursed.

## **5.2 Notification of Final Decision**

### **5.2.1 Successful Applications**

For successful applications, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency will confirm to applicants the amount of funding to be awarded through an award letter and a Contract with the standard Grant Conditions and any other special conditions in the Contract Schedule. This will need to be signed and returned to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency before the Project can begin.

### **5.2.2 Unsuccessful Applications**

Basic feedback will be given to each unsuccessful applicant as part of a dialogue to enable potential Projects to be better aligned with future catchment goals.

### **5.2.3 Reserve List**

In the event of a successful applicant withdrawing from the scheme, a prioritised reserve list of projects will be drawn up.

### Annex 1

In carrying out any project supported by the Water Quality Improvement Grant, the grant recipient must comply with the provisions of all the enactments, statutory provisions and other laws operating in Northern Ireland including, but not restricted to, those relating to planning, nature conservation, pollution, access, equal opportunities, fair employment and health and safety. In cases of non-compliance, the Department reserves the right to suspend, defer, withhold or claw back any or all of the payments and/ or require the grant recipient to repay part or all the financial assistance. Details of some examples of Northern Ireland Environment Agency authorisations which may be required are found below.

#### 6.1 Northern Ireland Environment Agency Authorisations

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency are the responsible body for granting authorisations relating to activities which impact the built and natural environment. The applicant should use the contact details below if the proposed project is likely to require any of the authorisations listed.

#### 6.2 Water Management Unit Authorisations

Regulation of Discharges - Under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, the consent of DAERA is required to discharge any trade or sewage effluent to any waterway, or any water contained in underground strata. This includes effluent from any commercial, industrial or domestic premises. For more information contact the [Consents Team](#): <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/regulating-water-discharges>.

Abstraction and Impoundment Licensing - In order to protect plants, animals and to manage the use of this resource, the licensing of abstractions and impoundments is necessary. For more information contact the [Abstraction & Impoundment Licensing Team](#): <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/contacts/abstraction-and-impoundment-licensing-ail-team>.

#### 6.3 Waste Management Authorisations

Under the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and the Waste Management Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, all activities involving the treatment, keeping or disposal of waste must be authorised by NIEA and must be carried out in accordance with that authorisation. For more information contact the Waste Management Team: WRU.[Queries@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Queries@daera-ni.gov.uk)

## 6.4 Built Heritage Authorisations

**Under Article 4 of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects Order (NI) 1995 Scheduled Monument Consent is required for -**

- Any works resulting in the demolition, destruction or disturbance of, or any damage to, a scheduled monument.
- Any works for the purpose of removing or repairing a scheduled monument or any part of it or of making any alterations or additions thereto; and
- Any flooding or tipping operations on land in, on or under which there is a scheduled monument.

The HM Enquiries section ([historicenvironmentenquiries@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:historicenvironmentenquiries@communities-ni.gov.uk)) of Historic Monuments Unit should be contacted in the first instance.

**Under Article 41 of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects Order (NI) 1995 a licence to excavate is required for -**

Excavation in or under any land (whether or not such excavation involves the removal of the surface of the land) for the purpose of searching generally for archaeological objects or of searching for, exposing or examining any particular structure or thing of archaeological interest.

Article 44 of the Planning (NI) Order provides that **Listed Building Consent is required for** the demolition of a listed building and for any works of alteration or extension which would in any manner affect the character of a listed building.

**Planning permission is also required** in addition to Listed Building Consent if the works involve 'development'. In such cases, it will generally be preferable if both applications are considered concurrently.

Planning permission is normally also required through the planning process for any development proposal that would affect the physical remains or setting of an archaeological site or monument.

## 6.5 Natural Heritage Authorisations

**Designated sites - ASSIs, SACs and SPAs**

The scheme must adhere to the statutory requirements associated with designations, Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the UK site network sites and Assents for Councils and other public bodies for work within an ASSI as outlined in the table below:

Table 2 Guidance for work within ASSI

Grant Applicant	ASSIs	SACs and SPAs
<p><b>Councils and other Competent Authorities</b></p>	<p>The Competent Authority <b>must</b> notify NIEA Conservation Designations and Protection (CDP) unit <b>if</b> the project could affect an ASSI feature. CDP will decide whether they will issue Assent, with or without conditions, prior to any work commencing on a site.</p>	<p>The Competent Authority applying must undertake an HRA. Standard assessment pro-forma for an HRA is on the NIEA website</p> <p><a href="https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/assi-guidance-public-bodiescompetent-authorities">https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/assi-guidance-public-bodiescompetent-authorities</a></p>
<p><b>Landowners and Community Groups</b></p>	<p>Consent must be received for the project. This must be issued by NIEA and can only be issued to the landowner – a 3<sup>rd</sup> party can coordinate the application but it must be signed by the landowner.</p>	<p>The Competent Authority must undertake an HRA</p> <p><a href="https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/assi-guidance-public-bodiescompetent-authorities">https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/assi-guidance-public-bodiescompetent-authorities</a></p>

## 6.6 (National) Nature Reserves ((N)NRs)

If a project is proposed on a Nature Reserve or National Nature Reserve permission must be granted from the reserve manager

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/land-and-landscapes/nature-reserves>

### Habitats and Species

There are a number of species protected on a European and National level. These are listed in the Schedules of the relevant legislation:

- Habitats Regulations – European protected species – for instance bats and otters - The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 Schedule 2 & 3 [www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/1995/380/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/1995/380/contents/made)
- The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 [www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1985/171/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1985/171/contents)
- Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 [www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/15/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/15/contents)

In addition, applicants are required to comply with legal requirements to prevent the introduction or spread of non-native invasive species.

For more information on protected species, priority habitats, priority species and invasive species contact NIEA: [nieainfo@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:nieainfo@daera-ni.gov.uk)

The Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 (as amended) is equivalent to Part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in England and Wales and the Wildlife Act 1976 as amended by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 in the Republic of Ireland.

This order gives us the power to issue licences to permit otherwise prohibited action to be taken to resolve problems where there is no other satisfactory solution.

The licensing system safeguards the conservation and welfare of wild animals but provides a way to allow action to be taken when necessary. Further information can be obtained from the wildlife team: [elmswildlife@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:elmswildlife@daera-ni.gov.uk)

### **6.7 Planning Permission**

Planning Permission may be required before the Project can begin.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/making-a-planning-application>

### **6.8 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

If the project is within an AONB, notify the appropriate AONB body in case a similar project is already being undertaken in the area. The AONB maps and contacts can be found at:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/land-and-landscapes/areas-outstanding-natural-beauty>

### **6.9 Marine Division Authorisations**

Details of when and how to apply for a marine licence, application forms and guidance documents can be found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/marine-licensing>

### **6.10 Department for Infrastructure – Rivers Agency**

If you plan to discharge to a watercourse or intend to carry out works that will impact on the free flow of a watercourse; approval is required from DfI

Rivers. <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/schedule-6-application-consent-undertake-works-watercourse>

### **6.11 Inland Fisheries / Loughs Agency**

Anyone wishing to undertake the **artificial propagation of salmon or freshwater fish, scientific research or the improvement, remove riverbed material** from the freshwater portion of any river require a Section 46 permit of the Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1952 from Inland Fisheries or Loughs Agency (if in Loughs Agency area).

<https://www.loughs-agency.org/managing-our-loughs/conservation/river-permits/>

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/inland-fisheries-statutory-approvals-sections>



For further information:

Integrated Catchment Planning Team  
NIEA Water Management Unit  
17 Antrim Road, Tonagh, Lisburn, Co. Antrim  
BT28 3AL

Tel: 0300 200 7850  
Email: [catchmentplanning@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:catchmentplanning@daera-ni.gov.uk)  
[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

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