



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

- Environmental Regulation,
Protection and Enforcement

- Water Quality

- Nature Recovery

Interim Business Plan 2026-27



Towards 2050: Developing a net zero nature positive future, supporting sustainable agriculture and thriving rural communities.

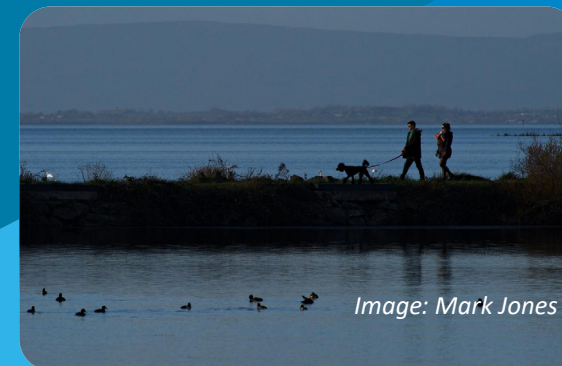
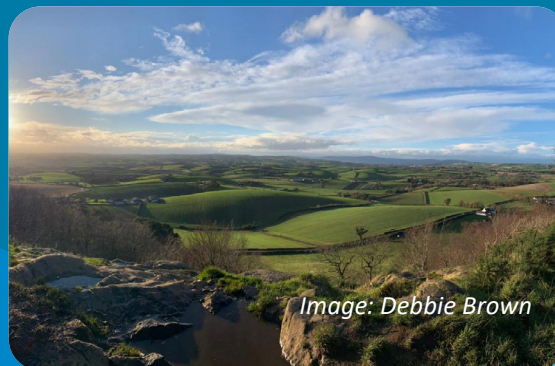


An Agency within the Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

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

An Agency wí'n the Department o
**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**



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Image: Conaire McNeary

An Introduction from NIEA's Interim Chief Executive

As Interim Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), I am pleased to present our Interim Business Plan for 2026-2027. Our environment is one of our greatest assets, and this plan sets out how we will deliver on the Agency's clear purpose - to protect and enhance our natural environment whilst regulating activities that can adversely affect it. During 2026-27, NIEA will focus on delivering our three key priority areas: **'environmental regulation, protection and enforcement'; 'water quality' and 'nature recovery'**. This work will support the PfG Missions of: People, Planet, and Prosperity quoted within the Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027: 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'.

As evidenced by our 2026-27 targets, NIEA continues to support the Programme for Government Priority of Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment. Our approach will also underpin delivery against ministerial priorities as demonstrated in the 'targets' section of this document.

Over the past year, the Agency addressed several prominent and complex environmental issues including a public consultation, seeking views on the draft Remediation Strategy for the Mobuoy site, and conducting regulation, compliance and enforcement work within the Lough Neagh catchment and sub-catchment.

While we made significant efforts to confront many challenges, we acknowledge that there is still much to do to improve aspects of our performance to deliver effectively for people and the environment in which we live.

Despite the challenges we have faced, we have many positives to build on for



Dr Richard Crowe
Interim Chief Executive, NIEA

the year ahead. Our staff have demonstrated great commitment to delivering the 2025-26 Agency Business Plan, and they continue to demonstrate resilience, professionalism and a deep commitment to public service in the face of dynamic events and multiple pressures.

We remain dedicated to providing high-quality service and improving it to meet the needs of those we serve. We will also ensure openness and transparency, robust governance and clear communications to empower our people to deliver the best for our environment.

Looking ahead as Interim Chief Executive, it is apparent that the scale and urgency of environmental challenges demands ambition as well as pragmatism. While priorities will continue to evolve, our direction of travel is clear: a well protected environment that underpins economic prosperity, supports climate resilience and enhances the health and wellbeing of people.

I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders. These are vital relationships which we do not take for granted

as we strive to protect and enhance our environment. While I have only recently taken up the role of interim Chief Executive, I will endeavour to build on the work led by the previous NIEA Chief Executive Officer, David Reid. I am confident that, with the dedication of our people and the support of our partners, NIEA will continue to protect and enhance Northern Ireland's environment, and in doing so, deliver health and well-being benefits and support economic growth.

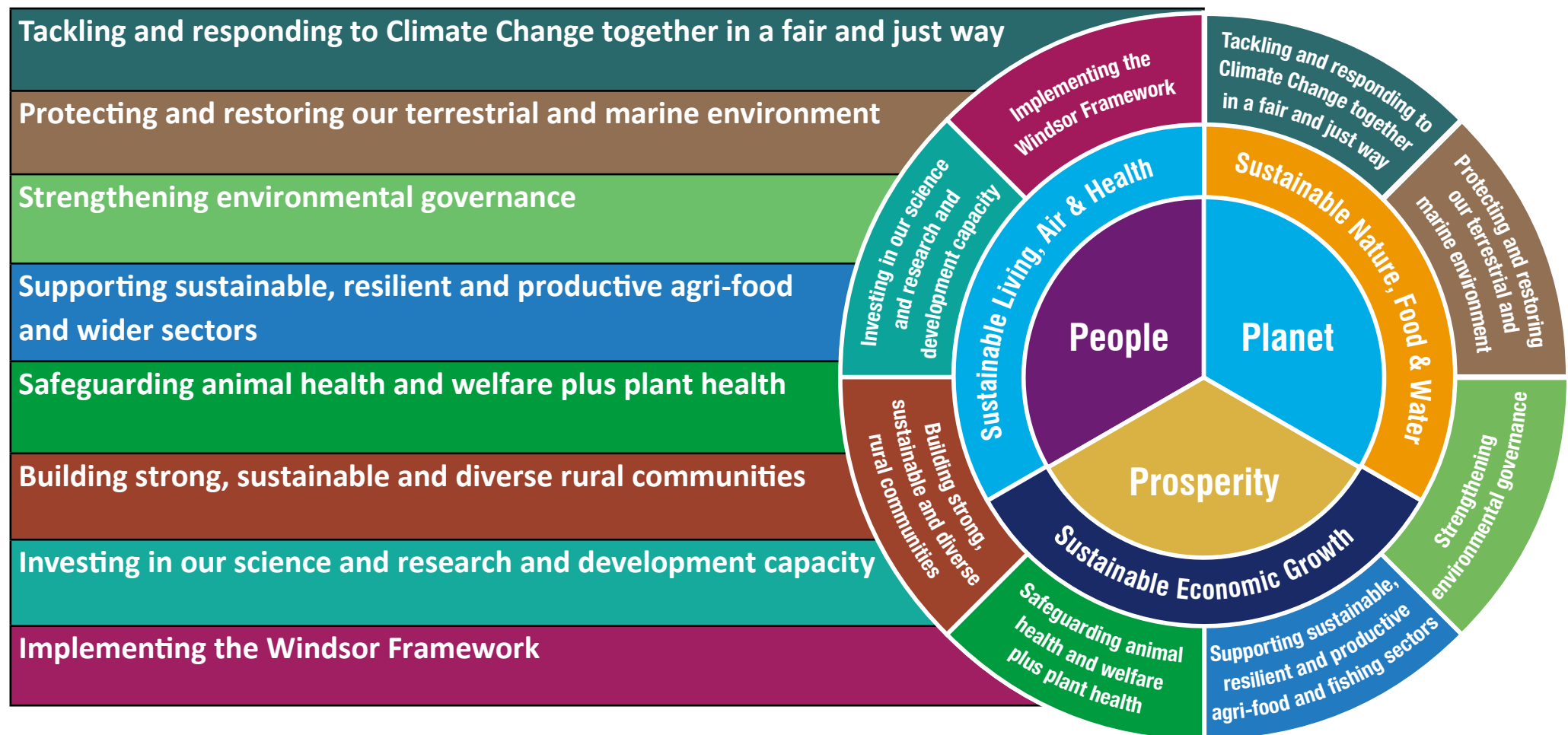
Dr Richard Crowe
Interim Chief Executive, NIEA



Image: Mike Caiden

Ministerial Priorities

NIEA is committed to ensuring that it uses its resources, organises and delivers its functions in a way that reflects the priorities set by the DAERA Minister for the Agency, and also supports the delivery of the Ministerial Priorities, Key Pledges, and objectives of DAERA. The Ministerial Priorities, and Ministerial Key Pledges, as referenced in the 'DAERA Corporate Plan 2025-27', are illustrated in the following diagrams.



Ministerial Key Pledges

1	We will have brought forward the Carbon Budget Regulations to set carbon budgets and published climate action plans capable of delivering those budgets. The Just Transition Commission will be established.
2	We will have delivered improvements to water quality, including through implementation of the Lough Neagh Action Plan and other related interventions.
3	We will have presented to the Executive and the Assembly a robust and effective way forward for improving environmental governance.
4	We will continue roll out of the Sustainable Agriculture Programme to help drive sustainable agricultural practices and a positive future for agri-food, whilst also protecting animal health and restoring our natural environment.
5	We will have brought forward new, effective and evidence-based solutions capable of reducing and then eradicating bovine Tuberculosis.
6	We will have delivered a range of new animal welfare priorities, including legislation to better protect domestic and farmed animals.
7	We will have delivered a new, partnership-based rural policy framework capable of improving the wellbeing of our rural communities coupled with new support arrangements.
8	We will have published and worked to deliver a new Nature Recovery Strategy to ensure 30% of our land and seas are protected and well managed for nature by 2030.
9	We will have published and will be working to implement a new Waste Management Strategy to help build a low carbon circular economy.
10	We will continue to fulfil our international obligations through full, timely and faithful implementation of Windsor Framework and in supporting the UK Government to negotiate a new ambitious and comprehensive agri food, drink and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) and Veterinary Agreement with the EU.

NIEA Key Performance Targets

Our Key Performance Targets reflect many of the challenges facing the environment and go to the heart of the Agency's primary purpose which is to protect and enhance Northern Ireland's environment, and in doing so, deliver health and well-being benefits and support economic growth:

- Lough Neagh - Deliver the recommendations identified in the Lough Neagh Report, for which NIEA has responsibility to deliver;
- Mobuoy - Safeguard Water Quality and the environment;
- Planning¹ - Ensure that all statutory planning consultations are assessed and responded to within agreed service standards, delivering timely, evidence based environmental advice that protects Northern Ireland's natural assets while enabling sustainable development;
- Drinking Water Supplies - Protect public health by providing effective and efficient regulation and enforcement of drinking water supplies;
- Environment Fund - Establish an Environment Fund 2028-2033; and manage the Environment Fund 2023-2027 to support NGOs to deliver key environmental priorities, including enhanced habitats and landscapes improved air and water, and targeted action on priority sites, peatland restoration and water quality;
- Protected Areas Strategy and 30by30 Programme (2026-2030) - Develop Protected Areas Strategy and 30by30 Programme 2026-30 (which sets out strategic approach to designation, protection, management and restoration of ASSIs, SACs, SPAs, and delivery of 30by30/OECMs/EIP target) and begin

¹ We fell short of our planning performance target for 2025-26. We will endeavour to implement process improvements and improved service through the continued delivery of the Planning Improvement Plan during the current financial year.

implementation of a 4 year programme; and

- Operational Review Programme - Delivering the NIEA's Operational Review Programme to make the services we provide more effective.

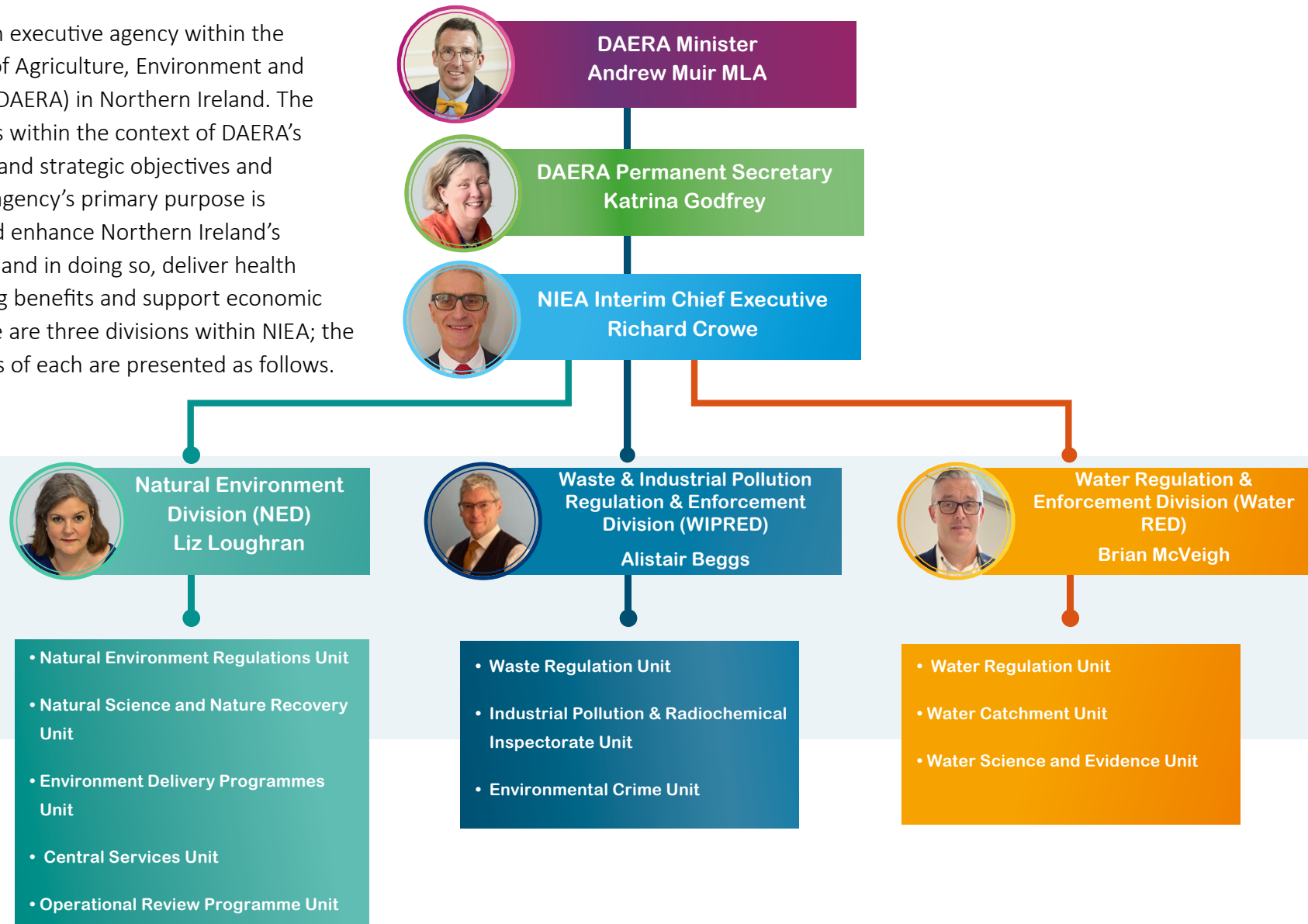
As well as supporting the delivery of significant elements of wider departmental programmes, regulation and enforcement will be key to the delivery of our work in 2026-27 whereby we aim to support economic operators while safeguarding nature.



Image: Rodney Cuthbertson

What we do

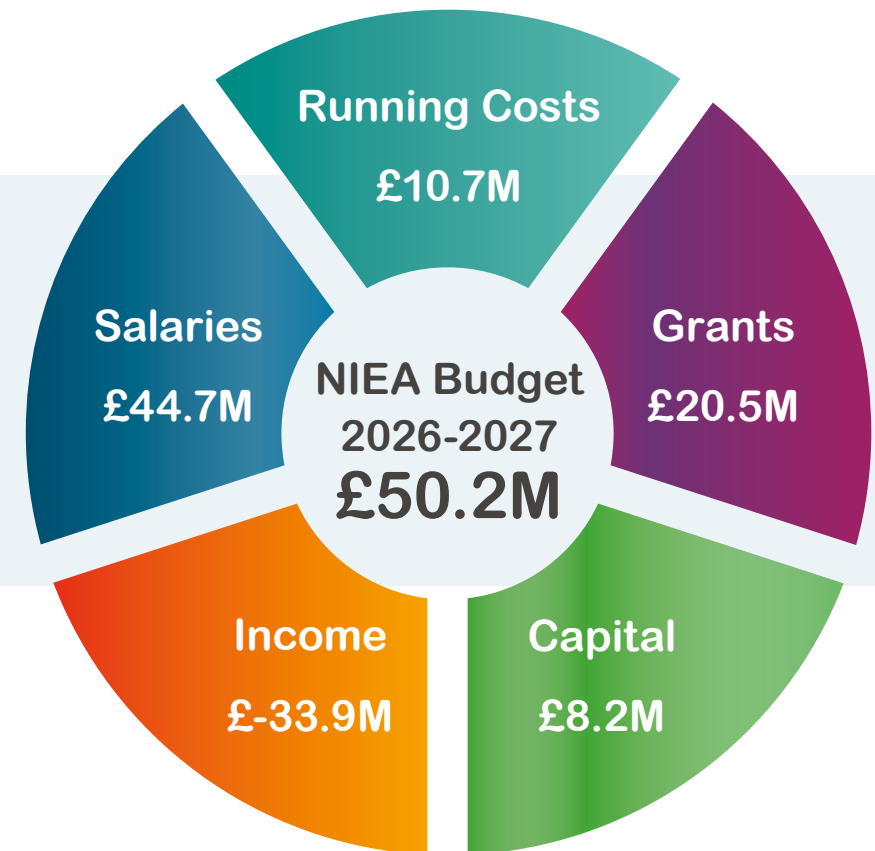
The NIEA is an executive agency within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland. The NIEA operates within the context of DAERA's overall vision and strategic objectives and policies. The agency's primary purpose is to protect and enhance Northern Ireland's environment, and in doing so, deliver health and well-being benefits and support economic growth. There are three divisions within NIEA; the core functions of each are presented as follows.



Our Financial Position

In 2026-27 NIEA has been allocated an indicative opening budget of £42.0m resource and £8.2m capital to fulfil its statutory duties and deliver the range of priorities outlined in this Interim Business Plan.

In achieving our targets and making a positive impact on the issues facing the environment, it is crucial that we place the right level of focus on the areas where our expertise and resource is most needed so that we can continue to move ahead in a strong position with clear goals as we progress through the next year.



Our Plan on a Page

We aim to support and deliver:

Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-27	PfG Commitments: • People - Planet - Prosperity Cross-cutting Commitment: • Peace	
Ministerial Priorities and Key Pledges 2025-27, relevant to the Agency	• Tackling and responding to Climate Change together in a fair and just way. • Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment. • Strengthening environmental governance. • Supporting sustainable, resilient and productive agri-food and fishing sectors. • Building strong, sustainable and diverse rural communities. • Investing in our science and research and development capacity.	• Key Pledge 2: We will have delivered improvements to water quality, including through implementation of the Lough Neagh Action Plan and other related interventions. • Key Pledge 8: We will have published and worked to deliver a new Nature Recovery Strategy to ensure 30% of our land and seas are protected and well managed for nature by 2030. • Key Pledge 9: We will have published and will be working to implement a new Waste Management Strategy to help build a low carbon circular economy.
NIEA Key Priorities	• NIEA Key Priority 1: Environmental Regulation, Protection and Enforcement • NIEA Key Priority 2: Water Quality • NIEA Key Priority 3: Nature Recovery	
NIEA Key Performance Targets²	• KPT1: Lough Neagh • KPT2: Mobuoy • KPT3: Planning Consultations • KPT4: Drinking Water Supplies	• KPT5: Environment Fund • KPT6: Protected Areas Strategy and 30by30 Programme 2026-30 • KPT7: Operational Review Programme
NIEA Wider Targets	8. Influencing Fines for Environmental Offences 9. Complete Review of Waste & Industrial Pollution Specific Fees and Charges 10. Environmental Crime and Enforcement Interventions 11. Review of NIEA Odour Guidance 12. Response to Water Pollution 13. Water Quality Monitoring 14. Regulation Evidence and Data 15. Strengthen Water Regulation and Improve Water Quality Outcomes	16. Enhance Our Nature / Natural Capital Data, Mapping and Reporting Systems 17. Connecting People to Nature and Supporting Health & Wellbeing 18. Our People 19. Inspections of Waste, Water and Industrial Pollution Regulated Activities 20. Processing of Applications for Environmental Authorisations 21. FOI (Freedom of Information) and EIR (Environmental Information Regulations)

²All of the NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-27 align with the NIEA Key Priorities. However, in line with HM Treasury guidance ('Setting Key Targets for Executive Agencies; A Guide'), targets 1 to 7 have been designated as Key Performance Targets (KPTs)

NIEA Key Priorities

Our primary purpose is to protect and enhance Northern Ireland’s environment, and in doing so, to deliver health and well-being benefits and support economic growth. As an Executive Agency within DAERA, NIEA is a key contributor to DAERA’s vision of

‘Delivering a net zero nature positive future, supporting sustainable agriculture and thriving rural communities’.

In line with NIEA’s overall purpose, the Agency has established its three Key Priorities detailed below.

NIEA Key Priorities 2026-2027

NIEA Key Priority 1:	Environmental Regulation, Protection and Enforcement	
NIEA Key Priority 2:	Water Quality	
NIEA Key Priority 3:	Nature Recovery	

Interim NIEA Business Plan Targets 2026-2027

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
1 Ministerial Priority KPT 1 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment. Supporting sustainable, resilient and productive agri-food and fishing sectors. Investing in our science and research and development capacity.	LOUGH NEAGH Prepare draft Conservation Management Plan for Lough Neagh ASSI, SPA, Ramsar site (Lough Neagh Action Plan Action 6). Implementation of actions identified in the Lough Neagh Report, for which the Water Catchment Unit has responsibility to deliver. To increase evidence and baseline data within Lough Neagh catchment by delivering the recommendations identified in the Lough Neagh Action Plan (for which NIEA WSEU has responsibility). This will be measured by: Natural Environment Division (NED): • A baseline assessment of the protected species and habitat features, their location (mapping), condition - freshwater and terrestrial habitats and species, bird populations; • Completing an analysis of the pressures (current impacts) and threats (potential future impacts) on Lough Neagh and it's protected features; • Defining and setting necessary conservation measures to protect/ improve species and habitat features, and addressing identified pressures and threats (including alignment with River Basin Management Planning and Nutrient Action Programme); and	31st March 2027	NIEA Chief Executive & Directors, NED & Water RED

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
	Tackling and responding to Climate Change together in a fair and just way.	- Developing a draft Conservation Management Plan for Ministerial consideration and stakeholder consultation. Water Regulation and Enforcement Division (Water RED): - Producing one Local Management Area report for a selected Lough Neagh catchment to include detailed investigations and assessment of 3 priority waterbodies, outlining appropriate recommendations / actions to address poor water quality through education, incentivisation, regulation and enforcement; - Undertaking 120 Farm Sustainability inspections (FSS1) within identified sub catchments of Lough Neagh, to monitor regulatory compliance and ensure environmental protection; and - Identifying site location and overseeing installation of 1 additional permanent monitoring station with data feed to Lough Neagh Science Platform.		

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
2 Ministerial Priority KPT 2   	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	MOBUOY We will continue to take action to safeguard water quality and the environment at Mobuoy by: • Completing the post consultation update to the draft Remediation Strategy for the Mobuoy site. • Delivering the Environmental Monitoring Programme for the Mobuoy site.	31st March 2027	NIEA Chief Executive & Director, Water RED
	Strengthening Environmental Governance.			
	Investing in our science and research and development capacity.			

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
3 Ministerial Priority KPT 3 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	PLANNING CONSULTATIONS Ensure that all statutory planning consultations are assessed and responded to within agreed service standards, delivering timely, evidence based environmental advice that enables fair and sustainable development while protecting Northern Ireland's natural assets by: • Responding to 80% of planning consultations within the statutory or agreed timeframe; • Providing clear, defensible and proportionate environmental standing advice based on up-to-date science, policy and regulatory requirements; • Applying a structured risk-screening approach to focus resources on applications with the greatest potential environmental impact; and • Implementing process improvements and improved service through the delivery of the Planning Improvement Plan. (Short Term actions by June 2026 and medium/longer term actions by September 2026).	31st March 2027	NIEA Chief Executive & Director, NED
	Supporting sustainable, resilient and productive agri-food and fishing sectors.			
	Building strong sustainable and diverse rural communities			

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
4 KPT 4 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES Protect public health by providing effective and efficient regulation and enforcement of drinking water supplies by: • Delivering 95% of the annual monitoring programme for private drinking water supplies; • Categorising 90% of drinking water quality events notified by NI Water within 5 days; and • Publishing an independent 2025 annual report on drinking water quality in Northern Ireland.	31st March 2027	Director, Water RED
	Investing in our science and research and development capacity.			
	Supporting sustainable, resilient and productive agri-food and fishing sectors.			

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
5 KPT 5 	Tackling and responding to Climate Change together in a fair and just way.	ENVIRONMENT FUND Establish an Environment Fund 2028-2033; and manage the Environment Fund 2023-2027 to support NGOs to deliver key environmental priorities, including enhanced habitats and landscapes improved air and water, and targeted action on priority sites, peatland restoration and water quality by: • Launching a new fund; and • Completing a review of the management of the projects within the following funds by 30th September 2026 to identify actions to maximise delivery against environmental objectives and implement all necessary improvements by 31st December 2026. - Environmental Fund 2023-2027; - Peatland Challenge Fund; - Water Quality Improvement Strand; and - Nature Recovery Challenge Fund	31st March 2027 31st Dec 2026	Director, NED
	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.			
	Investing in our science and research and development capacity.			

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
6 KPT 6 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	PROTECTED AREAS STRATEGY AND 30by30 PROGRAMME 2026-2030 Develop Protected Areas Strategy and 30by30 Programme 2026-30 (which sets out strategic approach to designation, protection, management and restoration of ASSIs, SACs, SPAs, and delivery of 30by30/OECMs/EIP target) and begin implementation of a 4-year programme by: • Publishing a review of protected sites network and recommendations for site designation; • Developing and publishing a working 30by30 framework; and • Developing and publishing Protected Areas Strategy and 30by30 Programme 2026-2030.	30th Sept 2026 31st Dec 2026 31st March 2027	Director, NED
	Tackling and responding to climate change together in a fair and just way			
	Supporting sustainable, resilient and productive agri-food and fishing sectors.			

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
7 KPT 7 	Strengthening Environmental Governance.	OPERATIONAL REVIEW PROGRAMME Ensuring that staff across the NIEA are effectively aligned and mobilised to support the successful delivery of Phase 2 of the Operational Review Programme. This will be measured by: • Projects teams and critical friends groups for phase 2 are effectively staffed;	31st March 2027	NIEA Chief Executive & Directors, NED, Water RED & WIPRED
		• Staff across the NIEA include Personal Performance Agreement (PPA) objectives that are relevant to their roles in respect of the ORP;	31st March 2027	
		• Operational Review Programme Unit (ORPU) will support delivery teams to complete required change management activities to embed the changes from approved ORP project recommendations;	31st March 2027	
	Investing in our science and research and development capacity.	• Monitoring procedures to track benefit realisation will be implemented; and	30th June 2026	
		• The Operational Review Programme Unit (ORPU) managing, supporting and driving successful delivery through best practice programme and project management techniques.	31st March 2027	

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
8 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	INFLUENCING FINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL OFFENCES Work with the Public Prosecution Service and Department of Justice (DoJ) to influence the setting of more appropriate fines for environmental offences by: • Continuing engagement with Public Prosecution Service to determine and then implement the further steps needed to strengthen our cases and influence the setting of more appropriate fines for environmental offences; and • Meeting with Department for Communities (DfC) Historic Environment Division to learn from its work in successfully influencing the fines being issued for offences under their legislation; and • Collaborating with the Department of Justice Sentencing Review.	31st Oct 2026 30th June 2026 31st March 2027	Director, WIPRED

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
9 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	COMPLETE REVIEW OF WASTE & INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION SPECIFIC FEES AND CHARGES Complete the review of fees and charges across a number of our regulatory regimes, and implement the new charging schemes in time to begin using them on 1st April 2027 by: • Completing fees and charges review and produce report; • Preparing the consultation document (and supporting information i.e., impact assessments); • Carrying out a public consultation, subject to Ministerial approval; • Publishing new charging schemes for 2027-2028; and • Supporting the delivery of the Fees Matrix Operational Review Programme Project. Regulatory Regimes to be included: - PPC (Pollution Prevention Control); - RSA (Radioactive Substances Act); and - WML (Waste Management Licensing)	30th June 2026 31st August 2026 31st Dec 2026 31st March 2027 31st March 2027	Director, WIPRED

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
10 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME AND ENFORCEMENT INTERVENTIONS We will strengthen our enforcement capability and capacity to tackle waste crime, including fly-tipping ³ and prevent serious and organised environmental crime and harm by: • Enhancing our capacity and capability to recover financial benefit derived from environmental crime, in alignment with the polluter pays principle; and • Strengthening our intelligence-led approach and partnership working to deliver disruption and enforcement interventions to effectively disrupt serious organised criminal activities. - Increasing the number of accredited financial investigators within the unit; -Increasing the number of qualified intelligence officers within the unit; - Strengthening collaborative efforts with strategic partners to facilitate enforcement disruptions; and - Commencing Operational Review Programme Project 22 – ‘Review of Criminal Investigation Activities’. • Playing a lead role in reviewing and updating the DAERA enforcement policy. • Contributing to the departmental training programme for enforcement.	31st March 2027	Director, WIPRED

³ Local councils also have powers over fly-tipping under Articles 4 and 5 of the Waste Contaminated Land Northern Ireland Order (1997).

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
11 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	REVIEW OF NIEA ODOUR GUIDANCE NIEA odour guidance to be reviewed, updated and published on the DAERA website by: • Preparing draft guidance and consulting internally; and • Publishing new guidance on the DAERA website.	30th Nov 2026 31st Dec 2026	Director, WIPRED
12 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment. Supporting sustainable, resilient and productive agri-food and fishing sectors.	RESPONSE TO WATER POLLUTION To provide an effective, timely and proportionate response to water pollution incidents to minimise environmental harm and take appropriate enforcement action by: • Meeting target response times for at least 90% of all incidents (high/medium/low); and • Undertake a quarterly progress assessment of all recorded High and Medium Severity incidents	31st March 2027	Director, Water RED

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
13 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment. Investing in our science and research and development capacity.	WATER QUALITY MONITORING To monitor, protect and improve Northern Ireland’s freshwater aquatic environment by: • Reviewing and updating the freshwater monitoring requirements ahead of the 4th cycle River Basin Management Plan (RBMP); • Delivering 95% of the 2026 Aquatic Monitoring Assessment Programme for freshwater monitoring sampling and analysis programme; • Delivering 95% of the 2026 Aquatic Monitoring Assessment Programme for Mobuoy sampling and analysis programme; and Water Protection Reviews • Supporting the delivery of Operational Review Programme Projects: - Project 25: Review of River Basin Management Activities; - Project 26: Review of freshwater activities; and - Project 27: Review of water chemistry activities.	31st March 2027	Director, Water RED

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
14 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	REGULATION EVIDENCE AND DATA Improve the transparency of our regulatory decision-making, by making our science and evidence publicly available by. • Making 50 datasets from the RED Water Dataset Registry publicly available; and • Publishing the individual chemical monitoring datasets, which have been used to produce official statistics under Water Environment Regulations.	31st March 2027	Director, Water RED
	Investing in our science and research and development capacity.			
	Supporting sustainable, resilient and productive agri-food and fishing sectors.			

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
15 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	STRENGTHEN WATER REGULATION AND IMPROVE WATER QUALITY OUTCOMES To deliver a modern, integrated and risk-based system for water regulation, ensuring that discharge consents, abstraction licenses, and associated compliance processes are consistent, legally robust, and capable of supporting improved environmental outcomes across Northern Ireland by: Implementing the Good Water Project plan to include: • Reviewing & implementing 12 prioritised discharge consent methods, and commence a review of priority discharge consents; • Delivering & implementing a new integrated digital system for all discharge consent applications; • Ensure that the DAERA Enforcement Policy is applied consistently across all water regulation regimes and deliver a planned withdrawal from Statement of Regulatory Principles and Intent (SORPI); and • Implementation of unannounced sampling & priority substances at wastewater treatment works. • Develop and implement Wastewater Regulation and Enforcement Plans.	30th November 2026	Director, Water RED
	Strengthening Environmental Governance.		31st March 2027 31st March 2027 31st January 2027 31st March 2027	

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
16 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	ENHANCE OUR NATURE / NATURAL CAPITAL DATA, MAPPING AND REPORTING SYSTEMS Enhance our biodiversity and natural capital reporting, data and habitat mapping systems to make biodiversity, natural capital and ecosystem datasets more readily available and integrate into natural capital accounting and reporting systems by: • Natural capital reporting: Reviewing and enhancing natural capital evidence base, and establishing needs to inform a natural capital assets framework for Northern Ireland; • Biodiversity and Natural Capital Data: Making 10 evidence packages publicly available to support nature recovery; and • Habitat mapping systems: Providing Living Maps update.	31st March 2027	Director, NED
	Tackling and responding to climate change together in a fair and just way			
	Supporting sustainable, resilient and productive agri-food and fishing sectors.			
	Strengthening Environmental Governance.			
	Investing in our science and research and development capacity.			

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
17 	Building strong sustainable and diverse rural communities	CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE AND SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING Deliver actions associated with the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) and in support of the Programme for Government (PfG) Cleaner Environment wellbeing indicators to help connect people to the environment through outdoor recreation and provision of quality natural spaces by: • Reviewing and updating the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for NI; • Identifying and initiating a mechanism to develop Community Trail Network & Green/ Blue Places Plans for all district council areas; • Publishing the 'People in the Outdoors Monitor for NI'; and • Completing the 2026-2027 actions within the 'NIEA Landscape Action Plan'.	31st March 2027 31st March 2027 30th Sept 2026 31st March 2027	Director, NED
18 	Investing in our science and research and development capacity.	OUR PEOPLE Demonstrate ethical leadership by supporting staff wellbeing and strengthening engagement. Attract, develop and retain talent by: • People Plan: (i) Developing and implementing an NIEA People Plan; and (ii) Delivering a series of actions to develop health and wellbeing of staff; • Culture: (i) Developing an NIEA Culture Strategy, and (ii) Ensuring that 95% of End of Year Reviews are completed by Year End; and • Training: (i) Introducing a dedicated NIEA training coordination resource, and (ii) Completing, by NIEA Future Leaders' Team, of ORP leadership & training projects.	31st March 2027	Director, NED

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
19 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	INSPECTIONS OF WASTE, WATER AND INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION REGULATED ACTIVITIES • Carry out 90% of our inspection programmes, across regulatory regimes, to monitor regulatory compliance, ensuring environmental protection. Regulatory Regimes: - Waste Licensing - Pollution, Prevention & Control (PPC) - Radioactive Substances (RSA) - COMAH - UK and EU Emissions Trading Schemes (UK ETS & EU ETS) - Chemicals - Water Order consents - Abstraction and Impoundment Licensing. • Continue the implementation of the recommendations set out in the NIAO report on Waste Crime to assist in improving waste regulation activities.	31st March 2027	Directors, Water RED & WIPRED

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
20 	Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.	PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATIONS Natural Environment Division (NED): • Issuing decisions for 95% of Environment Order notifiable operations consent applications within 3 months; • Issuing decisions for 95% of Environment Order notifiable operations assent applications within 28 days; • Issuing decisions for 95% of Wildlife Order licences within 15 working days; and • Supporting the delivery of Operational Review Programme Project 32: Review of Biodiversity and Wildlife Activities. Water Regulation and Enforcement Division (Water RED), and Waste & Industrial Pollution Regulation and Enforcement Division (WIPRED): • Meeting statutory deadlines for assessing and determining 90% of applications across regulatory regimes; • Commencing Operational Review Programme Project 16: Review of Radioactivity activities;	31st March 2027	Directors, NED, Water RED & WIPRED

NIEA Business Plan targets 2026-2027				
NIEA Target Number	Link to Ministerial Priorities	How We Will Achieve it	Target Date	SRO and Business Area
21 	Strengthening Environmental Governance.	FOI (FREEDOM OF INFORMATION) & EIR (ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS) - Improving FOI, EIR and information request compliance by increasing on-time responses to 95%, reducing complaints and appeals, and strengthening staff knowledge and governance arrangements; - Supporting the delivery of Operational Review Project 43: Review of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) Activities; and - Developing an action plan to improve Agency performance in handling Information Requests. Key Metrics include: - % responses within statutory deadline; - Average Response Time; - Number of escalations; and - ICO decision outcome	31st March 2027	Directors, NED, Water RED & WIPRED



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

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We would like to express our sincere thanks to our NIEA colleagues for generously contributing photographs.



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