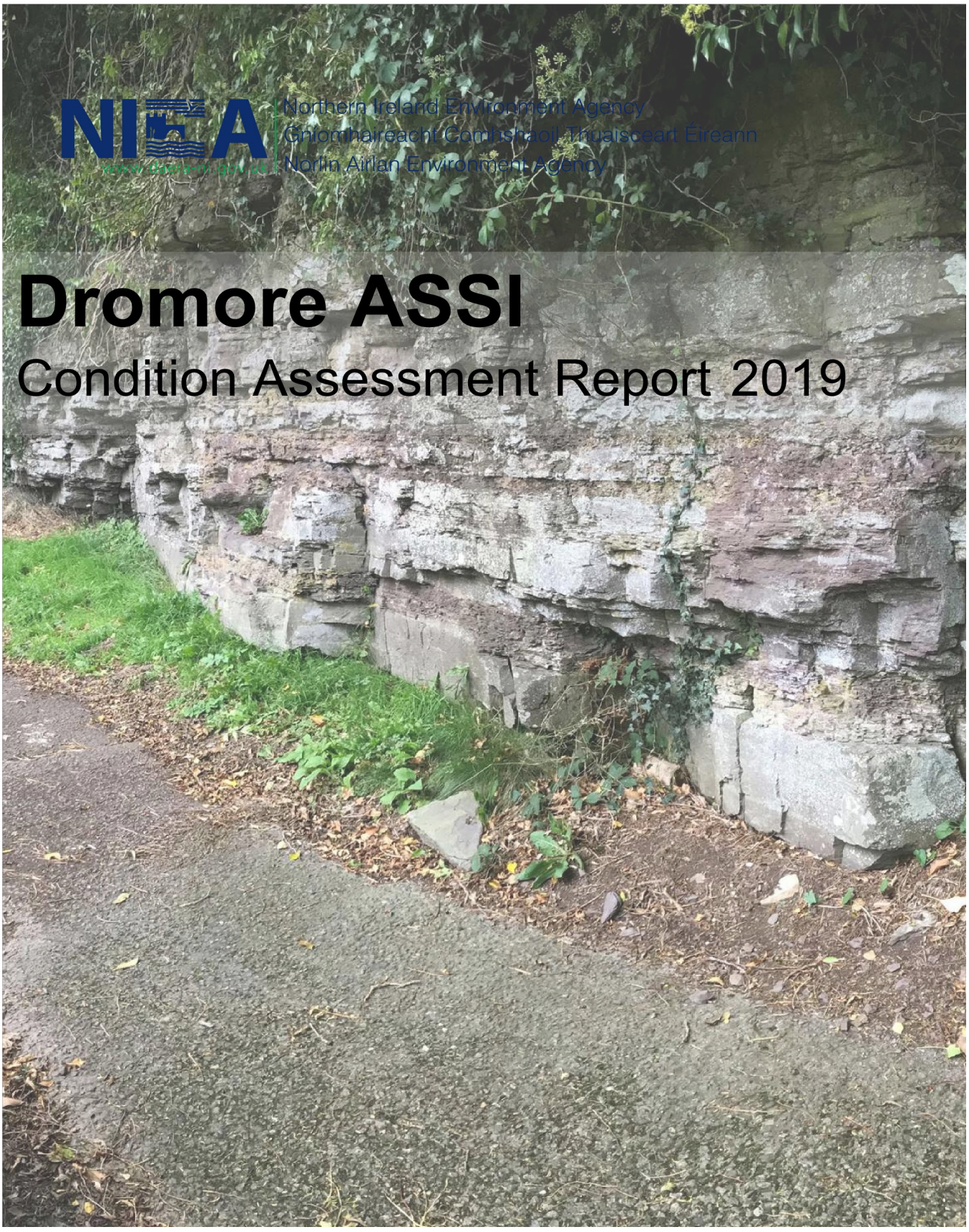


Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Gníomhaireacht Comhshaoil Thuaisceart Éireann
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Dromore ASSI

Condition Assessment Report 2019

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

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Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe

An Agency wi'in the Depairtment o
Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers

Dromore ASSI Condition Assessment Report 2019

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Please note, all external links in this report were correct at the time of completion.

Acknowledgements

The continued stewardship of the special lands within the ASSI, and access permission to undertake monitoring, is acknowledged by the Department. Many protected areas in Northern Ireland are owned and managed by private landowners and farmers and are not accessible to the public.

Summary

Using JNCC Common Standards Monitoring methodology, the Earth Science feature of Dromore ASSI are currently defined as:

1. Devonian stratigraphy – Favourable: declining. Some exposure is visible and accessible, however extent and visibility has reduced since designation.

Dromore ASSI retains its geological diversity and remains a special place.

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1. Condition Statement

The Earth Science interest features of Dromore ASSI and their condition status are summarised in Table 1 below. It is important to note that under the Common Standards Monitoring methodology, a site is classified as unfavourable if any primary attribute is failing. In many cases, these sites continue to represent excellent examples of Northern Ireland's best natural assets.

Table 1: Dromore ASSI Earth Science Interest Features summary results

ASSI Features	Reporting responsibility	Condition Assessment	
		2014-2020	2008-2014
Devonian stratigraphy	Earth Science	Favourable: declining 3 favourable attributes 0 unfavourable attributes	Favourable

*More detailed information on attribute breakdown is available in Section 7 and Appendix 1 of this report.

2. Background

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (hereafter referred to as the Department) in its role as the Statutory Nature Conservation Body, undertakes regular monitoring of the special assets, or features, contained within specially protected sites across Northern Ireland. These sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs). Further details can be found at Protected areas | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk).

This monitoring enables reporting on the status of the special features which are protected, enables objective feedback on current management measures and can inform any subsequent management intentions. Results can also contribute to the assessment of relevant policies in place, and also inform future policy development. In addition, the results inform the implementation of a range of obligations under both national and international policy and legislation. These include: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR), the Bern Convention, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), and the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

The monitoring undertaken is called Condition Assessment, as it is the condition of the special features that is being assessed. The approach is also known as Common Standards Monitoring, because the methodology aims to result in a *common standard* being reported across sites in NI and the rest of the UK. The Department aims to complete a rolling programme of ASSI Condition Assessment and reporting every six years.

The monitoring is focused, as outlined in the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) guidance (JNCC, 2004a; b), primarily on the interest features for which the site has been

notified or designated. They include habitat types, species and Earth Science features, as well as complex features such as habitat mosaics and species assemblages. Each interest feature must be identified, monitored, assessed and reported upon separately.

Monitoring and assessment of the condition of the interest features of individual sites enables relevant authorities, agencies and landowners to adapt management measures accordingly to ensure conservation objectives are achieved.

The Conservation Objectives for each site contain details of the attributes (measurable targets) for each interest feature within the site: the condition assessment determines the condition status of each interest feature when compared against relevant feature attributes.

The JNCC Statement on Common Standards Monitoring (JNCC, 2022) assesses interest features using one of the following four condition categories. These are all common standards:

- **Favourable**: Condition objectives are being met
- **Unfavourable**: Condition objectives are not being met
- **Partially destroyed**: The feature, habitat or processes essential to support it have been removed or irretrievably altered. A condition assessment should be carried out on the remaining, intact feature.
- **Destroyed**: The interest feature, its supporting habitat or processes, have been affected (completely or partially) to such an extent that there is no hope of recovery.

The JNCC has listed the following trend qualifiers which were previously considered part of the common standards as optional, which the Department may choose to use as required:

- **Favourable – maintained**: The conservation objectives which were met at the previous assessment are still being met.
- **Favourable – recovered**: The interest feature has gained favourable condition, having been previously recorded as unfavourable.
- **Favourable – declining**: All targets are being met, but identified pressures indicate that unfavourable condition will result if these pressures are left unaddressed.
- **Unfavourable – recovering:** The interest feature has begun to show, or is continuing to show, a trend towards favourable condition.
- **Unfavourable - no change**. The interest feature is unfavourable but neither declining nor recovering.
- **Unfavourable - declining**. The interest feature is declining as a consequence of damaging activity, but where recovery is possible, either spontaneously or if suitable management input is made.

3. ASSI Overview

Dromore ASSI is located in south Co. Tyrone, on the southern side of Dromore town either side of the (A32) Tummery Road. The site exposes rocks of the Devonian age Shanmullagh Formation that displays a channel complex, not known in other Devonian rocks in Northern Ireland. Many protected areas in Northern Ireland are owned and managed by private landowners and farmers and are not accessible to the public.

Table 2: ASSI details

ASSI name	Dromore
ASSI code	ASSI279
Council Area (s)	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Irish Grid Reference	H349 627
Landowner details	Public and private ownership
ASSI size	0.4ha
Date declared	28/09/2007

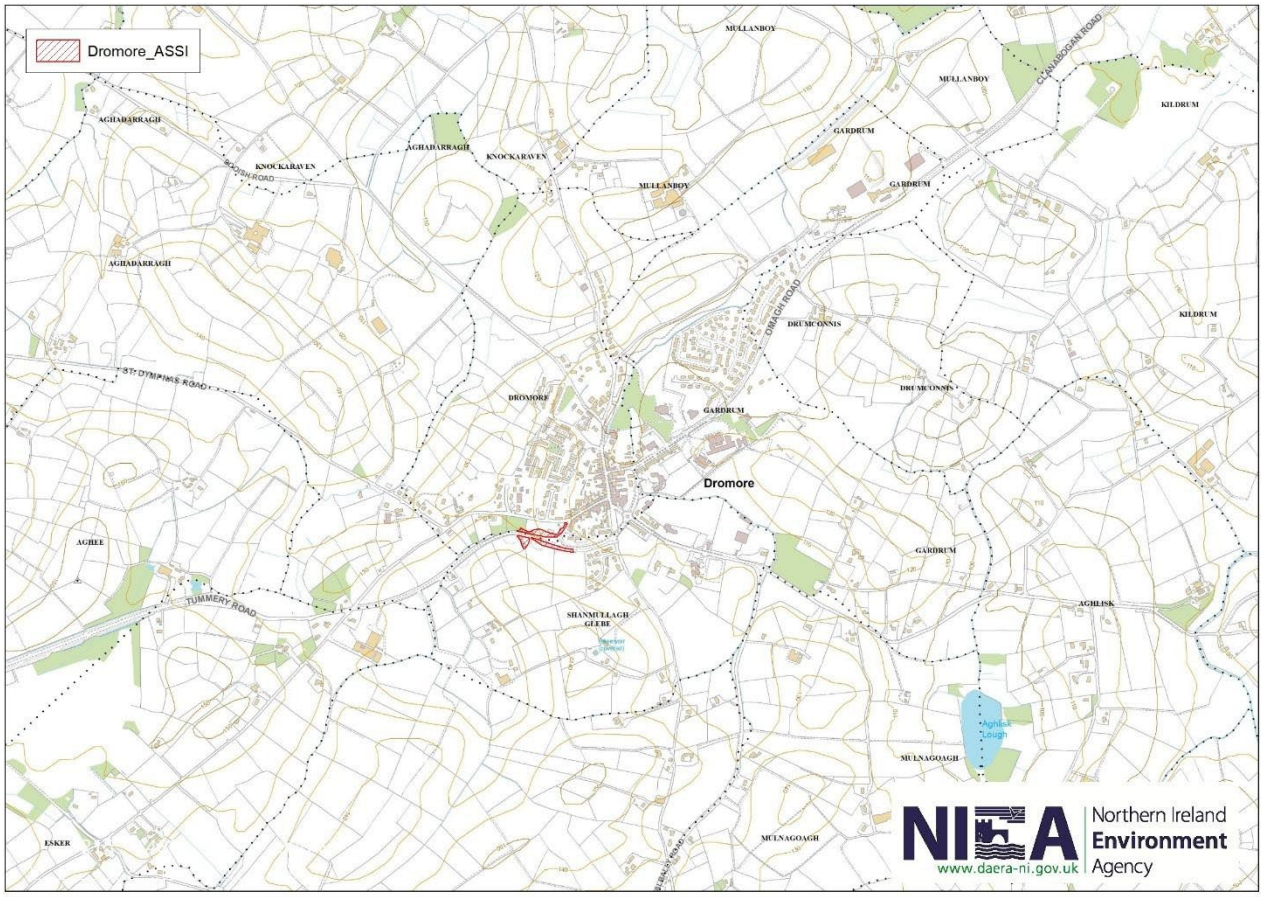
Further information on Dromore ASSI is available via:

- DAERA website
- NIEA map viewer

In addition, the entry for the site and/or features in the Earth Science Conservation Review is available via:

- Earth Science Conservation Review website

4. Location map



5. Feature descriptions

Devonian stratigraphy

Dromore ASSI contains exposures of the Devonian age Shanmullagh Formation. The rocks are sandstones interbedded with thin beds of mud and siltstones, which were originally deposited on a low-lying inland plain experiencing desert conditions and subject to periods of flash flooding. At Dromore, there is evidence of these flooding events in the form of an erosive channel complex.

6. Common Standards Monitoring Methodology

The condition of the Earth Science features of Dromore ASSI have been assessed following the Common Standards Monitoring (CSM) guidance for Earth Science Sites (JNCC, 2004b). Earth Science features and sites used fixed point photography for Condition Assessment. The scale of images will depend on site size, type, scale of features and how the features are expressed.

The attributes to be measured (or estimated) in the field deal with presence, extent, access to and visibility of the site selection features and evidence that hydrological, hydrogeological or other processes are operating without impacts or modifications.

Site specific methodology

The Earth Science features of Dromore ASSI fall into the Exposure (inland outcrops & disused quarries or pits) Earth Science classification category (Evans et al., 2023).

The key localities in Dromore ASSI must be visited. These are identified in the citation, the Earth Science Conservation Review report, and any previous Condition Assessments.

Photos are taken that capture or demonstrate the current state of the site and the position of the photos is recorded on handheld GPS. Any other relevant information and/or observations on the features or site are also recorded in a field notebook.

The baseline Condition Assessment records points where photos were previously taken. These should be returned to where possible, though not all photos must be retaken for each Condition Assessment visit provided no discernible change is detected. Provided the key areas are visited in the field and observations recorded, a representative number of photos can be taken that enable an illustration of feature condition within the ASSI.

The assessment was undertaken by the NIEA Earth Science and Heritage officer on 18/10/2019. The condition assessment of the Earth Science feature(s) was undertaken by recording a number of key feature attributes at a series of points (fixed points) in the site. Not all points where photos are taken or observations made are used for Condition Assessment in favour of more representative photos.

A total of six points were visited, with six used for Condition Assessment in 2019 (Map 2). Photos were taken at these locations covering the Devonian stratigraphy Earth Science feature of the site.

7. Results

ASSI feature – Devonian stratigraphy

At Dromore ASSI, six Condition Assessment locations were assessed against 3 attributes (1 Primary and 2 Secondary attributes) in 2019 (Map 2).

The detailed condition assessment attributes are displayed in the Annex Tables where they are measured against set condition assessment targets.

Table 3: Summary table of all attributes assessed against set criteria

1 Primary Attributes assessed	**1** Favourable
	0 Unfavourable
2 Secondary Attributes assessed	**2** Favourable
	0 Unfavourable

Dromore ASSI failed on **0** primary attributes and the Earth Science features are therefore assessed as **favourable.**

8. Discussion

Devonian stratigraphy

The Devonian stratigraphy feature of Dromore ASSI is in **favourable: declining** condition. While representative exposure is available, the total effective area has been reduced since designation. Scrub and other species are developing on the rock face in the northern part of the ASSI, and on the south side the road cutting is beginning to be covered by scrub species, though rock can still be accessed. The small disused quarry in the south west of the site has extensive vegetation development which is restricting access in this locality and no exposures were clearly visible at the time of the visit.

9. Feature Recommendations

The condition of Dromore ASSI is declining. It is recommended that removal of vegetation which is obscuring and/or preventing access to exposures would return the site to favourable condition.

10. References

- Evans, D., Brown, E., Larwood, J., Prosser, C., Silva, B., Townley, H., Wetherall, A., (2023). Geoconservation: Principles and Practice
- JNCC (2022). A Statement on Common Standards for Monitoring Protected Sites (2022) (version 2.1) (jncc.gov.uk).
- JNCC (2004a). Common Standards Monitoring - Introduction to the Guidance Manual (jncc.gov.uk)
- JNCC (2004b). Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Earth Science Sites (jncc.gov.uk)

11. Appendix 1 – Annex tables

Table 4: Devonian stratigraphy

(* = primary attribute. One failure among primary attribute = unfavourable condition)

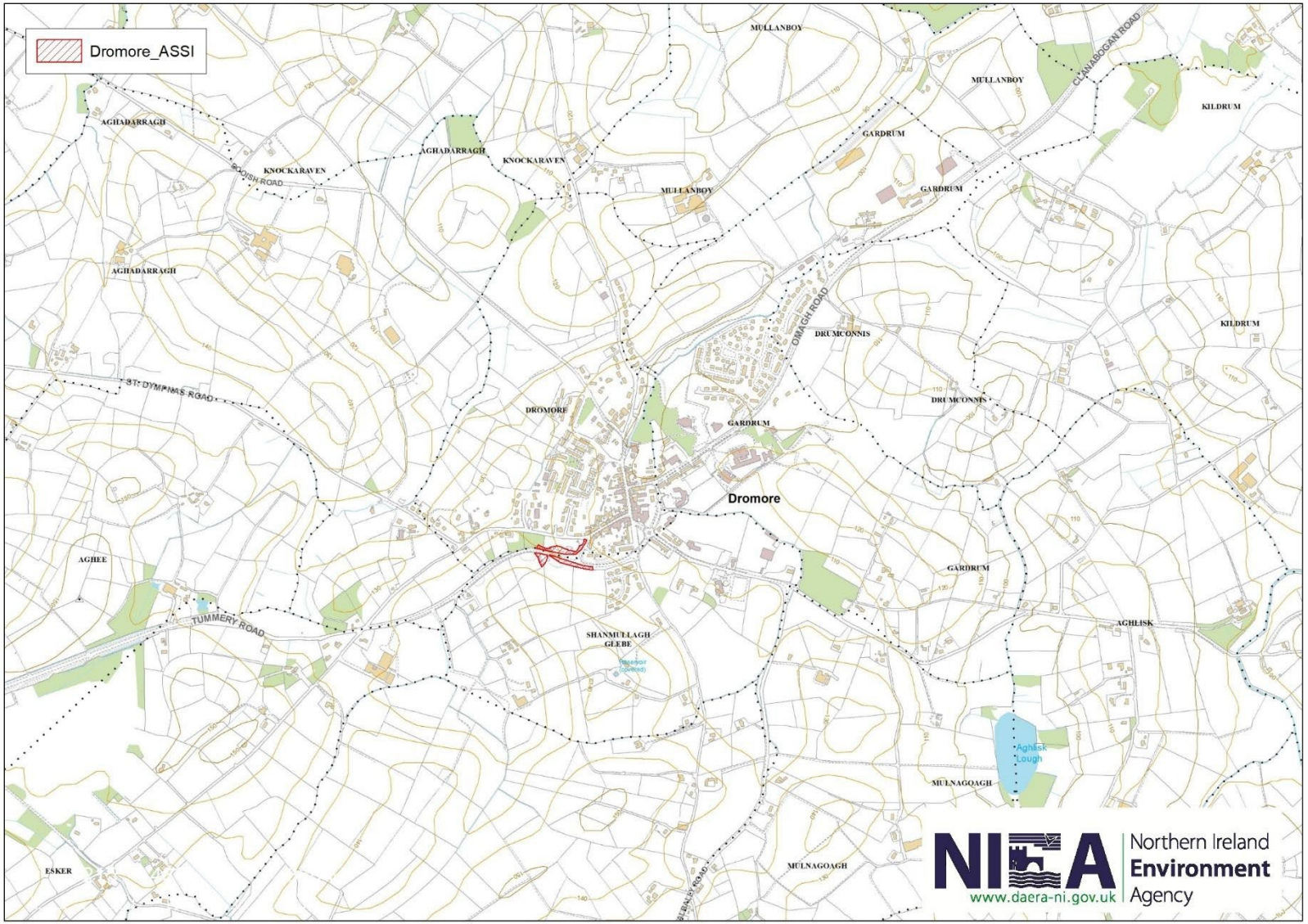
Attribute	Target	Method of Assessment	Monitoring Results 2019	Assessment	2008-2014
* Extent and quality	Maintain the extent and quality of the feature as at time of designation.	Field observation	Extent and quality have declined since designation.	**Favourable: declining**	**Favourable**
Accessibility and visibility	Maintain current extent of accessibility	Field observation	Extent and accessibility have declined since designation	**Favourable: declining**	**Favourable**
Development	No development that would obscure or prevent access to site features	Field observation	No development or disturbance observed at localities	**Favourable**	**Favourable**

Back

12. Appendix 2 – Maps

Map 1 – Dromore ASSI Location

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Map 2 – Dromore ASSI fixed point photo locations 2019.



13. Appendix 3 – Photographs.



L1, photo 1. Limited exposure due to vegetation growth.



L1, photo 2. Limited exposure due to vegetation growth.



L3. Quarry locality is heavily vegetated, restricting access and availability of exposures.



L4. Overview of northern ASSI exposure .



L5. Overview of road cutting on south side of ASSI. Restricted access and visibility due to scrub species encroaching.



L6. Exposure entirely covered by vegetation.

14. Appendix 4 – Survey dates

Table 5. Survey dates and plots monitored

Survey date	Survey Staff	Team days		
			Total	Feature types
18/10/2019	MD	1	6	Devonian stratigraphy
			6	

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