

Draft Ammonia Strategy Consultation



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Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

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PLEASE NOTE: This is an 'Easy Read' short version of the consultation which contains a lot less detail than the full consultation document and impact assessments. If you would like more detail, you may find the full version better suited to your needs. This can be accessed at:

<http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations>

To get a copy of this document in another format, or tell us what you think, you can:



- **Telephone:** 028 9052 4528 and talk to one of the Consultation Team. If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via Text Relay. Dial 18001 028 9052 4528.



- **Email:** ammonia@daera-ni.gov.uk



- **Visit:** <http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations>

About us

We are the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

What do we do?

Here are some of the things we do.



- We look after the development of farming, forests and fishing in Northern Ireland.
- We provide a service to look after the health and welfare of animals, fish and plants.
- We look after environment and rural development in Northern Ireland.
- We provide research, expert advice and education.
- We look after some parts of public health in how food is made.

Consultation on the draft Ammonia Strategy for Northern Ireland

- Ammonia is a key environmental challenge for Northern Ireland.
- High ammonia emissions are a result of current farming practices and are having a negative impact on our habitats, biodiversity, and air quality.
- We know that action on ammonia is required urgently to achieve better outcomes for nature, and for public health.
- This draft strategy aims to set out a pathway which delivers solutions to the ammonia challenge.
- The greater the extent and speed of action to lower ammonia emissions and reduce ammonia concentrations, the greater opportunity there will be to support sustainable farm development.
- This consultation provides an opportunity for you to share your views on the draft Ammonia Strategy for Northern Ireland.
- All stakeholders with an interest in food production and land use are encouraged to respond.

Targets: what we want to achieve

The long-term target is to reduce ammonia emissions to a point where nitrogen deposition and levels of ammonia are not being exceeded at designated sites.

Given the generational challenge posed by the scale of current exceedances, interim targets are required. The targets DAERA proposes for 2030 are to:

- Reduce agricultural ammonia emissions from Northern Ireland by at least 30%, based on the 2020 emissions levels.
- Reduce ammonia concentrations at all designated sites by at least 40% (using 2020 as the baseline year) or to below Critical Levels.

What does the Consultation Cover?

- Introduction and background to ammonia in Northern Ireland.
- Addressing the ammonia challenge: actions so far.
- The strategic approach to ammonia.
- Pillar One: An ammonia reduction programme.
- Pillar Two: Conservation actions to protect and restore nature.
- Conclusions and timelines.

Introduction and Background to Ammonia in Northern Ireland

- This Ammonia Strategy aims to address emissions and their impact on the environment in Northern Ireland. It will support the restoration of biodiversity, ecosystems, and the services they provide, while facilitating the sustainable development of a prosperous agri-food industry.
- Nitrogen pollution, and in particular, ammonia emissions, threaten existing commitments to safeguard Northern Ireland's biodiversity.
- To reverse the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services and restore nature we must address the key factors driving species and habitat loss. We must improve our performance to meet our legal obligations and to protect and enhance our environment.
- The UK has committed to reduce ammonia and other emissions under the international Gothenburg Protocol and the National Emissions Ceiling Regulations (2018). The agreed reductions in ammonia emissions are 8% by 2020 and by 16% by 2030, based on 2005 levels. Northern Ireland is expected to contribute to these targets.

Addressing the Ammonia Challenge: Actions so far

Key actions already taken by DAERA to address the ammonia challenge include:

- Commissioning of a report on ammonia from the Expert Working Group on Sustainable Agricultural Land Management.
- Funding a comprehensive research programme on ammonia in Northern Ireland.
- Publication of a Code of Good Agricultural Practice on Ammonia Emissions.
- Implementing a Nutrients Action Programme which includes actions to reduce ammonia emissions.
- Supporting positive behavioural change through the Environmental Farming Scheme.
- Provision of the Small Woodland Grant Scheme which offers support for establishment of tree plantations around livestock housing to reduce the impact of ammonia emissions through recapture.
- Supporting adoption of Low Emission Slurry Spreading Equipment (LESSE) through the Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS).
- Development of the Ruminant Genetics Programme to breed cattle which are more environmentally efficient.

The Strategic Approach to Ammonia

The long-term target is to reduce ammonia emissions to a point where Critical Loads of nitrogen deposition and Critical Levels of ammonia are not being exceeded at designated sites.

Given the generational challenge posed by the scale of current exceedances, interim targets are required. The targets DAERA proposes for 2030 are to:

- Reduce agricultural ammonia emissions from Northern Ireland by at least 30%, based on the 2020 emissions levels (from 31.2 kt in 2020 to 21.8 kt in 2030).
- Reduce ammonia concentrations at all designated sites by at least 40% (using 2020 as the baseline year) or to below Critical Levels.

A coherent approach to ammonia which can deliver on the targets must include the following elements:

1. An ambitious and verifiable ammonia reduction programme:
 - Implemented on a Northern Ireland-wide basis; and
 - Spatially targeted in areas around designated sites.
2. A strategic programme of conservation, restoration, and management of our most valuable habitats.

Pillar One: An Ammonia Reduction Programme

The proposed measures to reduce ammonia are:

- 1. Low Emission Livestock Housing**
- 2. Emerging Technologies**
- 3. Low Emission Slurry Spreading Equipment (LESSE)**
- 4. Longer Grazing Seasons**
- 5. Move to Stabilised Urea Fertiliser**
- 6. Reducing Crude Protein in Livestock Diets**
- 7. Improving Feed Efficiency Through Genetic Improvement**
- 8. Establishing Tree Plantations around Livestock Housing**
- 9. Covering Above Ground Slurry Stores**

The mechanisms to support adoption of ammonia reduction measures are:

- 1. Cross cutting support through Green Growth and Future Agricultural Policy**
- 2. Support through Knowledge Transfer and education**
- 3. Legislation to require uptake of ammonia reduction measures**
- 4. Spatially targeting measures around designated sites**

Pillar Two: Conservation Actions to Protect and Restore Nature

Northern Ireland's semi-natural habitats require specific conservation measures to be put in place to restore them to, and maintain favourable conservation status, helping to build ecological and climate resilience.

Our designated sites receiving excess nitrogen and ammonia emissions require a strategic approach to be put in place. This includes national reduction measures to reduce the overall background levels, as well as spatially targeted measures to address N-related pressures at sites, with clearly defined trajectories for emission reductions at the NI and site-levels.

This will also need to be accompanied by habitat restoration measures on-site to address existing damage, improve condition, and enhance resilience to N loading while efforts continue to reduce emissions at source.

The conservation actions to be taken are:

- Habitat restoration measures.
- The Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy.
- SAC Conservation Management Plans.
- The role of Agri-environment Schemes.
- Ecological research, monitoring and reporting.

Conclusions and Timelines

Our timeline for action is:

By	Action
1st June 2023	Publish the final Ammonia Strategy.
	Establish a stakeholder group to advise on the implementation of the Ammonia Strategy.
30th June 2024	Legislate to reduce ammonia emissions from chemical fertiliser.
1st January 2025	Introduce mandatory spreading of all slurry exported and imported between farms by LESSE.
	Introduction of a prohibition on slurry spreading within 50m of Natura 2000 designated sites.
	Introduce a requirement for all slurry that is spread within 1km of a designated site to be by LESSE.
31st December 2025	Carry out a two year stocktake of the actions of the ammonia strategy to ensure that Northern Ireland remains on course to meet its 2030 targets.
1st January 2026	A requirement to spread all slurry using low emission slurry spreading equipment by 2026.
31st December 2028	Report on the delivery of the ammonia strategy to 2028 and determine the optimal approach to 2030 to meet targets.

How to respond

You can respond to this consultation by:



- **You can respond to the full consultation survey online through the Citizen Space website at:**

<https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/daera/ammonia-strategy-consultation/>

Or tell us what you think about it by:



- **Telephone:** 028 9052 4528 and talk to one of the Consultation Team. If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via Text Relay. Dial 18001 028 9052 4528.



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Please respond through Citizen Space. Please note you can complete as few or as many questions as you want.

Closing Date:

We need to receive your views by **23:59, Friday 3 March 2023**



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