

DAERA Marine & Fisheries Advice for Development Planning

Standing Advice

Marine Litter

Advice for Planning Officers to inform decision making and for applicants seeking planning permission for developments which may impact upon the marine environment

Introduction

Litter Pollution Prevention should be a consideration during all stages of a development's lifecycle, from planning, construction, operation and maintenance all the way through to decommissioning or reinstatement.

A good understanding of the risks of litter pollution that a development poses to the aquatic and terrestrial environments will help reduce:

- The risk of incidences
- Impact to the water environment
- Waste and costs
- Bad practice

Marine litter is defined as items arising from human activity, deliberately discarded or unintentionally lost, that end up in the sea and on beaches and coastlines. Marine litter is any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment. Typical examples are plastics, wood, metals, glass, and rubber, fishing gear, clothing and paper. Marine litter is a global environmental problem that causes significant impacts to ecosystems, including direct damage to wildlife through entanglement, entrapment and/ or ingestion and can also destroy coastal habitats, by interfering with biological production and smothering of the seabed. An estimated 80% of marine litter comes from land based sources.

The socio-economic impacts of marine litter include financial burdens on local communities, such as costly clean-up operations. In addition, the presence of medical waste, sanitary waste and broken glass constitutes a potential risk to human health and safety. The impacts of marine litter can be particularly challenging for some sectors such as tourism, recreation and fishing. Removing litter at water treatment facilities, before it enters the marine area, can also entail significant cost to the public purse.

Policy Requirement – Marine litter considerations

The Marine Strategy Regulations 2010, as amended, impose a general duty on government departments to take measures to achieve good environmental status in marine waters. They also place a duty on public authorities to have regard to the UK Marine Strategy which has been developed in accordance with the Regulations when exercising their functions. The objective of the UK Marine Strategy is to achieve good environmental status in marine waters. In respect of marine litter, this is ensuring that the properties and quantities of marine litter do not cause harm to the coastal and marine environments.

Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland

The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland will inform and guide the regulation, management, use and protection of our marine area. DAERA consulted on the Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland in 2018 and work is on-going to further develop it.

The draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland provides a framework of policies to be considered by public authorities taking decisions which affect or might affect the marine area through decision making processes. It is a material consideration in this regard.

Public authorities must consider the potential risk of litter entering the marine area as a result of proposals. Where a proposal creates the potential for litter to enter the marine area, a public authority may require the proposer to demonstrate:

- a) how the risk has been considered; and
- b) appropriate measures to minimise the risk.

Information on how this is to be achieved is set out in paragraphs 187 to 199 of the Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (<http://www.daerani.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/daera/Marine%20Plan%20for%20NI%20final%2016%2004%2018.PDF>)

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Further reading and resources:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/artides/marine-plan-northern-ireland>

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-marine-litter-strategy>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-marine-policy-statement>

<https://www.ospar.org/work-areas/eiha/marine-litter/regional-action-plan>