

Northern Ireland
Environment Agency

River Basin Management Plans (2015 - 2021)

Programme of Measures

Key Sectors: Waste and Contaminated Land
Pressure Type: Diffuse and Point Source Pollution

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Waste and Contaminated Land

Pollution of groundwater and surface waters can occur when there is seepage from the residues or waste products contained in old waste disposal sites (including old un-lined landfills). Contamination of land and groundwater can also occur, through a wide range of circumstances, from diffuse or point sources. This can be an issue in urban development when potentially contaminated sites are redeveloped. For example, land and groundwater may be affected by contamination on former industrial sites such as factories and petrol filling stations where spillages of materials may have occurred over time.

Why is this a significant issue?

The potentially harmful properties of landfill leachates result from the presence of high levels of ammonia and suspended solids, dissolved solids, toxic compounds, immiscible organic chemicals, high chemical or biochemical oxygen demand, nutrients or microbiological contaminants. Some components of leachates are of concern due to their toxicity, bioaccumulation and persistence. Landfilled waste decays over a period of decades and therefore the pollution from leachate and gas continues to be emitted over a long period of time.

What are we already doing about this?

In Northern Ireland, waste is regulated through primary legislation (e.g. the Waste & Contaminated Land Order 1997), secondary regulations (e.g. the Waste Management Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003) and amendments. The Waste & Contaminated Land Order 1997 provides the basis for licensing controls and other provisions aimed at ensuring that waste handling disposal and recovery options do not harm the environment, such as waste management licensing, duty of care, registration of carriers, hazardous waste and producer responsibility. The provisions of the Order have been implemented through secondary legislation such as the Waste Management Licensing Regulations and the Controlled Waste Regulations, which include Duty of Care and Registrations of Carriers. The Order was amended in 2007 to introduce new powers to the waste enforcing authorities to combat fly-tipping. It also gives power to the DOE for making regulations on Site Waste Management Plans.

The Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 introduced a permitting regime whereby operators of certain installations or mobile plants must obtain a permit from NIEA and comply with the conditions in the permit. The Landfill Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 aim to prevent, or to reduce as far as possible, the negative environmental effects of landfill. The Planning (Management of Waste from Extractive Industries) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 transpose the EC Mining Waste Directive and is implemented through the Northern Ireland Planning System. The main requirement is the development of a site waste management plan.

The revised Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy was published in October 2013 and sets the policy framework for the management of waste in Northern Ireland. It moves the emphasis of waste management from resource management, with landfill diversion as the key driver, to using resources in the most effective way while minimising the impact of their use of the environment.

An environmental management system called NVIR-O_CERT has been set up. It requires participating construction businesses to commit to continual environmental improvement, and will contribute to the monitoring and reduction of waste going to landfill, energy use and water use with the overall aim of improving resource efficiency within the sector. Groundwater is protected through the provision and regulation of consents to discharge under the Groundwater Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 and the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

For a full list of measures already in place in the first cycle please see our website.

What further actions will deliver environmental improvements?

RBMP 1 (2009-2015)

Table 1 summarises the progress we have made against the existing and planned measures.

RBMP 2 (2015-2021)

The measures which we will take forward in the second cycle are summarised in Table 2.

These are measures which will improve our understanding of the pressures, enable us to improve the evidence base to target actions, and build on actions already complete.

In the current economic climate there is no certainty at this stage around future funding and budgets that will be available throughout the lifetime of this plan. However DOE will in collaboration with other departments and agencies continue to make a strong case for additional funding through the standard government bidding processes.

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Pressure Type: Diffuse and point source pollution

Table 1 Summary of existing and planned measures 2009-2015

Improvement Required	Actions	Delivery mechanism	Lead Department / Agency	Support Provider	Deadline for delivery of action (year end)
Reduction in discharges/ impacts from waste disposal and contaminated land	Ensure better management of waste from construction through adoption of sustainable construction practices	Site Waste Management Plans	DOE		Voluntary codes of practice in place
	Exercise effective regulatory control over historical contamination sites	Contaminated Land regime Contaminated Land Regulations The Waste & Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 The Environmental Liability Directive	DOE		Not started
	Manage waste from the extractive industries	Mining Waste Directive & Mining Waste Regulations	DOE		In Place

Table 2 Summary of supplementary measures for 2015 to 2021.

Improvement Required	Actions	Delivery mechanism	Lead Department / Agency	Support Provider	Deadline for delivery of action (year end)
Reduction in pollution	Improved collection, coordination and analysis of data in and around waste and the waste system	Waste data flow project and LIFE SMART Waste Project	NIEA		2016
	To advise on new waste management facilities and extensions for legacy landfills and remediation of contaminated land-advise planners and third parties on the risk management and remediation of contaminated land and groundwater sites	Advice to planners in line with NIEA's statutory requirements	NIEA		Ongoing
	Develop partnership process with Local Councils to support their effective management of significant waste contracts	Development of Stakeholder engagement structure	DOE RNRPD		2015
	Update and develop a NI Groundwater Protection Strategy to support land use planning	Working with UK/ROI counterparts, GSNI Research community	DOE RNRPD	NIEA	2021
	Develop process for joint Waste/Water authorisations to include regulation DOE Regulatory Reform programme	DOE Regulatory Reform programme	DOE RNRPD		2015
	Develop a compliance assessment process for Waste Authorisations	Measurement of compliance	NIEA		2015



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