

## Heather Cooke

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**From:** DAERA SEA Team <SEATeam@daera-ni.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 23 January 2019 15:57  
**To:** RSES  
**Subject:** Draft Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy  
**Attachments:** DAERA response Draft Eastern and Midland Spatial and Economic Strategy.pdf

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

Dear Antonia

See attached response from DAERA regarding your consultation on the Draft Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

Kind regards,  
Georgina Thurgate



23rd January 2018

Antonia Gaughran  
RPS  
West Pier Business Campus,  
Dun Laoghaire,  
Co. Dublin, Ireland

Dear Antoina Gaughran,

**RE: Draft Eastern & Midland Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy SEA & Natura Impact Statement**

### **General Comments**

Thank you for your email dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Northern Ireland (DAERA) and Department for Communities Historic Environment Division (HED) has considered the consultation and associated documents and our opinions are set out below.

### **Natural Heritage Directorate comments**

#### **SEA Environmental Report**

We welcome the consideration of transboundary issues during the SEA process and the inclusion of the state of the environment and baseline conditions and pressures in Northern Ireland. We also welcome the identification of mitigation measures to reduce impacts identified within the Environmental Report, including any transboundary impacts with Northern Ireland.

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Note that the number of ASSIs in Northern Ireland has increased to 394. Note also that DAERA is currently consulting on 2 additional Ramsar sites: Derryleckagh proposed Ramsar and Teal Lough proposed Ramsar.

The SEA should include an assessment of the impact of wind energy on bats, including potential transboundary impacts.

#### Natura Impact Statement

It is noted and welcomed that the chapter on all Ireland cohesion includes mitigation measures *"to ensure that the potential for adverse effects is addressed in a coherent manner"* and that *"Any plans or programmes that stem from all island cohesion will be subject to appropriate environmental assessment"*.

On p25 the section on alterations to air quality should include an assessment of the potential impact of nitrogen deposition as a result of ammonia emissions stemming from agriculture; including potential transboundary impacts.

Given the fact that it is acknowledged on p128 that transboundary impacts can extend beyond the normal 15km buffer during Appropriate Assessment eg via hydrological and hydrogeological pathways, a map of European sites in Northern Ireland which could potentially be impacted should be included in the Natura Impact Statement. The statement should also consider migratory birds in terms of potential transboundary impacts in N. Ireland.

Given the potential for transboundary impacts on European sites, the Natura Impact Statement should refer to the status of habitats and species in the relevant reports available on the JNCC website as follows: UK Article 17 report for the Habitats Directive <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=6397> and the UK Article 12 report for the Birds Directive <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=6526>.

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### **Air & Environmental Quality Team Comments**

Page 73 states that there are 22 monitoring stations in Northern Ireland, please note there are only 19 monitoring stations.

### **Marine Conservation and Reporting Team Comments**

Marine Conservation and Reporting Team have reviewed the RSES, SEA Environmental report and Natura 2000 Impact Report and we are broadly content with the information in these documents and that all marine designated sites that have the potential to be impacted have been included in the screening. We welcome the recommendations for 'All Island Cohesion' and facilitation of co-operation between relevant Departments and local authorities in Ireland and Northern Ireland that will both support and be supported by the implementation of both the NPF and the RSES. To this effect we have the following comments to make. General recommendations for the Natura 2000 Impact Report and SEA Report;

#### **Marine Mammals**

We are concerned that there is no specific information on how protected species have been included in the impact assessments. All species of dolphins, porpoises, whales, marine turtle species, the grey seal and harbour seal, are protected from disturbance and injury under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive. Recent advice, relating to SACs which have seals as a site selection feature, recommends the following ranges should be used when screening for either Harbour or Grey seals:

- all SACs within 135km of the project should be screened for Grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) and
- all SACs within 50km should be screened for Harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*).

For assessing potential impacts on cetaceans it is recommended that \*Management Units for cetaceans in UK waters should be considered to inform assessments.

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### Coastal Erosion and Climate Change resilience

Although flooding has been extensively discussed within the documents, we are concerned that coastal erosion has not been specifically mentioned as part of the Natura 2000 impact report and or the SEA. Current research and guidance suggests that competent authorities should help to mitigate and adapt to climate change by ... avoiding development in areas with increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change, particularly areas at significant risk from flooding, landslip and coastal erosion and highly exposed sites at significant risk from impacts of storms. Public Authorities should apply a precautionary approach in assessing plans and projects. A precautionary and risk-based approach should be taken in terms of understanding emerging evidence on coastal processes. This approach is reflected in the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (April 2018). Any development activities occurring along the coastline may have knock effects further along the coast and within the marine areas. The Natura 2000 impact report should therefore include the potential impact of predicted development along the coast and how this will impact coastal change in relation to habitat loss.

We also have the following observations regarding the Strategy

- Fig 7.1 – Map of Designated areas does not include those Natura 2000 sites in Northern Ireland that may be impacted. We consider that all receptors should be included in the map.
- The Natura 2000 impact report does not consider the potential impacts of reduced water quality and port growth on Natura 2000 sites in NI as well as ROI sites.
- Page 43 – NI Marine Protected Areas are not listed. We consider all receptor MPAs should be listed here. Ensure relevant Marine Conservation Zones are also considered.
- Key Policy Area page 92 – NI Marine Plan not mentioned within Integrated Land and Marine Planning section
- Coastal Erosion is not mentioned in Climate Change resilience.

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- Page 114 – Impacts – no detail on how impacts of climate change may impact species at the higher end of the food web e.g. birds, cetaceans and or/ ecosystems as a whole, particularly in relation to site selection features
- There was no mention of invasive species in the Natura Impact Report in relation to port growth, however they were mentioned in the SEA doc. Increased port growth has the potential to bring in new or increase the import of existing non-native marine species to the area.

\*IAMMWG. 2015. Management Units for cetaceans in UK waters (January 2015). JNCC Report No. 547, JNCC Peterborough.

[http://incc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Report\\_547\\_webv2.pdf](http://incc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Report_547_webv2.pdf)

#### **Marine Plan Team**

The Marine Plan Team welcome the references to the marine area and its aspects in contributing to the Strategy and notes evidence of marine aspects being considered in the Environmental Report.

The references within the Strategy document to the integration of land and marine planning within the region and with Northern Ireland is particularly welcomed. It is noted that the EMRA supports the preparation of the forthcoming (Irish) National Marine Spatial Plan and will work with key stakeholders to promote integrated land and marine planning to align 'blue growth' with the sustainable use of shared marine resources.

Given these statements, the references to Northern Ireland terrestrial planning documents (Regional Development Strategy and the Strategic Planning Policy Statements) and the shared waters of Carlingford Lough it is noted that there is a lack of references to the transboundary marine issues within the Environmental Report.

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The lack of reference to the Northern Ireland marine policy documents, such as the UK Marine Policy Statement and the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland, raises concern about the full consideration of transboundary marine aspects within the Environmental Report and the Strategy. The inclusion and consideration of these documents was raised in our previous response on the Scoping Report and should be taken into account within the SEA Environmental Report (Chapter 4) and listed in the Appendices under review of Regional level Plans, Programs and Policies.

#### Marine Strategy

Noted that Carlingford Lough is taken into consideration as the only marine transboundary area, specifically wastewater, agricultural and shellfisheries issues.

#### Marine Monitoring and Assessment

Good to see transboundary issues being considered in a holistic manner. Similar comments to those from Marine Conservation and Reporting including NNIS and addressing pathways in the marine.

#### Department for Communities- Historic Environment Division (HED) Comments

Historic Environment Division are grateful for the opportunity to review the related information. We recognise that impacts to heritage assets and their settings within the trans-boundary area would be more clearly assessable at the project specific stage, notably programmes and/or policies around the shared border region. HED recommend the inclusion of the following items:

Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy; SEA Report Environmental report; Table 3.2 Summary of Statutory Scoping Consultation Responses; NIEA-DAERA (pg50)

Historic Environment data downloads:

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/historic-environment-digital-datasets>

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The Environmental Report should consider if there will be any transboundary effects – note the UK Marine Policy Statement on MSP, the Regional Development Strategy and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement.

Landscape topic should also consider seascapes.

Historic Environment Division considers that cross-boundary co-operation is essential.

Within the shared border region consideration given to overlap with the historic landscape/historic/cultural heritage setting of sites and monuments.

Specific opportunity to consider capturing the potential of heritage assets that lie adjacent to potential greenways.

Datasets on the marine historic environment can be sought from DAERA.

Please contact the SEA Team at [seateam@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:seateam@daera-ni.gov.uk) should you have any queries or require clarification.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Georgina Thurgate  
Senior Scientific Officer  
Natural Environment Division

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