

water matters

"Help us plan!"

north western
international
river basin district



North South Shared Aquatic Resource (NS SHARE)

Draft River Basin Management Plan for the North Western International River Basin District

December 2008

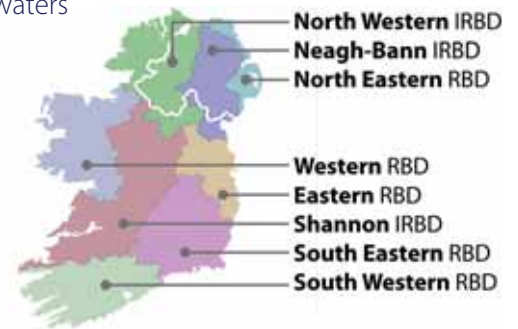


The Draft River Basin District Management Plan

The European Union Water Framework Directive was adopted in 2000. It requires governments to manage all of their waters: rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, groundwaters, wetlands, estuaries and coastal waters. Member States must ensure that their waters achieve at least good status by 2015 and that their status doesn't deteriorate.

The Directive requires the preparation of a management plan for all of the waters in an area called a River Basin District. Some 400 river basins on the island of Ireland have been grouped and assigned to a total of eight River Basin Districts; one of these lies wholly in Northern Ireland, four lie wholly in Ireland and three are International River Basin Districts, one of which is the North Western District.

Since 2000, the district's local authorities and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency have been working on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. We have met all of the deadlines and our performance has been amongst the best in the European Union.



We have actively sought people's views at every stage of the implementation process. Management plans are considered by the District's Advisory Council (Ireland) and by the Catchment and National Stakeholder Groups (Northern Ireland). We produced a series of consultation documents and we discussed significant water management issues with interest groups, public authorities and local authorities at a series of public consultation events in 2007 and 2008.

The next stage is the production of a River Basin District Management Plan. It will cover the six-year period from 2009 until 2015; any remaining issues or new problems will be tackled in two further six-year plans, 2015–2021 and 2021–2027.

We have produced a draft of the plan and we are beginning a process of consultation to elicit views on the draft. In Ireland the final version of this plan must be adopted by all local authorities in the district, whilst in Northern Ireland the plan must be approved by the Environment Minister. The plan will come into effect at the end of 2009.



How the plan was developed

We followed a nine-step process in developing the plan. Our approach was structured: find out the issues, decide what action to take and make a plan.

What are our key water issues?

We investigated which water issues are causing problems, what actions we could take to solve them and where we should focus these actions.

What is the status of our waters?

Comprehensive monitoring established the condition of our waters; identifying where they are satisfactory and where they must be improved.

What do we plan to achieve?

We identified sustainable objectives for our waters.

What measures must we take?

The Water Framework Directive stipulates mandatory measures. We identified actions under these measures, setting out existing and new plans and programmes to ensure full and effective implementation.

What will these mandatory measures achieve?

We assessed how effective these mandatory measures will be in meeting our objectives and have identified cases where extra effort may be needed to improve our waters.

What further measures can we take?

We identified supplementary measures for the cases where the mandatory measures alone would not be sufficient to achieve our objectives.

What will supplementary measures achieve?

We assessed whether the combination of measures would achieve our objectives and how long it would take

What are our objectives in the North Western District?

We outline the objectives we plan to achieve and specify where extended timescales or lower objectives are necessary.

What is our action plan for the North Western District?

The outcome of this planning process is a tailored action plan for the North Western District. We have proposed a detailed suite of measures setting out what, where and when actions are needed and who will do them.

North Western District: current status

The status of our surface waters and groundwaters is summarised in these two tables. These tables include the whole international district's waters: those in Northern Ireland, those in Ireland and the shared waters.

Surface water status in the North Western District

Surface Water Category	High	Good	Moderate	Poor	Bad	Yet to be Determined
Rivers and canals (number) % of total	(61) 7.0	(283) 32.7	(342) 39.5	(165) 19.1	(10) 1.2	(5) 0.6
Lakes and reservoirs (km ²) % of total	(9.5) 3.4	(28.8) 10.2	(227.4) 80.6	(13.5) 4.9	(3.1) 1.1	(0) 0
Estuaries (km ²) % of total	(11.5) 8.7	(0) 0		(120.5) 91.2		(0.2) 0.1
Coastal (km ²) % of total	(239.0) 10.7	(0) 0		(212.5) 9.5		(1,778.5) 79.8

Groundwater status in the North Western District

Groundwater	Good	Poor
Chemical Status (km ²) % of total	(12,077) 100	(0) 0
Quantitative Status (km ²) % of total	(12,077) 100	(0) 0
Combined Status (km ²) % of total	(12,077) 100	(0) 0



Protected Areas

There are 186 protected areas amongst the shared waters of the North Western International River Basin District. In the whole District there are 477 protected areas. These include drinking water sources such as Gartan Lough and Lower Lough Erne, shellfish waters such as Mulroy Bay and parts of Lough Foyle, bathing waters such as Murvagh and Benone beaches, nutrient sensitive areas such as Killybegs Harbour and Upper Lough Erne and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas such As Lough Melvin and River Foyle and Tributaries.

Pressures

The main pressures on our waters come from:

- wastewater and industrial discharges
- landfills, quarries, mines and contaminated land
- agriculture
- wastewater from unsewered properties
- forestry
- usage and discharge of dangerous substances
- physical modifications
- abstractions
- local issues. In the North Western District, they include climate change, aquaculture, invasive alien species, cruising and boating and peat extraction, as well as the need to protect high quality areas and to manage shared waters issues properly.

We can achieve the greatest gain by concentrating our efforts on those issues that pose the greatest threat to our water environment. Two key sectors stand out, agriculture and the water industry. Both Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency have identified the need to take action in response to these sectors in the River Basin Management Plan. *“Discharges from municipal wastewater treatment works and from agricultural activities are the principal suspected causes of less than satisfactory water in the State. Industrial discharges and discharges from several other activities have also been identified as contributing to a lesser extent”*. (Environmental Protection Agency, 2008)



Measures and objectives

The measures to improve our waters fall into three categories:

- the implementation of 11 key directives, specified under the Water Framework Directive and already transposed into domestic legislation
- the implementation of other stipulated measures required by the Water Framework Directive
- the use of additional or supplementary measures.

Basic measures

The first two categories are referred to as **basic measures**. They are:

The 11 key EU Directives	Other stipulated measures
Bathing waters	Cost recovery for water use
Birds	Promotion of efficient and sustainable water use
Habitats	Protection of drinking water sources
Drinking waters	Control of abstraction and impoundment
Major accidents	Control of point source discharges
Environmental impact assessment	Control of diffuse source discharges
Sewage sludge	Authorisation of discharges to groundwaters
Urban wastewater treatment	Control of priority substances
Plant protection products	Controls on physical modifications to surface waters
Nitrates	Controls on other activities impacting on water status
Integrated pollution prevention control	Prevention or reduction of the impact of accidental pollution incidents

Supplementary measures

A range of possible supplementary measures has been identified by a series of technical studies. Some are already being taken: they include farm based environmental protection schemes and implementation of a suite of forestry good practice guidelines. Other possible measures are codes of practice, voluntary agreements, demand reduction and rehabilitation programmes and legal, administrative and economic instruments.

Supplementary measures range from **reducing** the pressure at source through **remediation** by technical or engineering solutions to **relocation** of the pressure. They have to be technically feasible; the combination of supplementary measures must be the most cost-effective and the cost of these combinations of measures must not be significantly greater than the benefits gained. The impacts of the supplementary measures on the wider environment have to be considered, through Strategic Environmental Assessment, to ensure that they are sustainable.

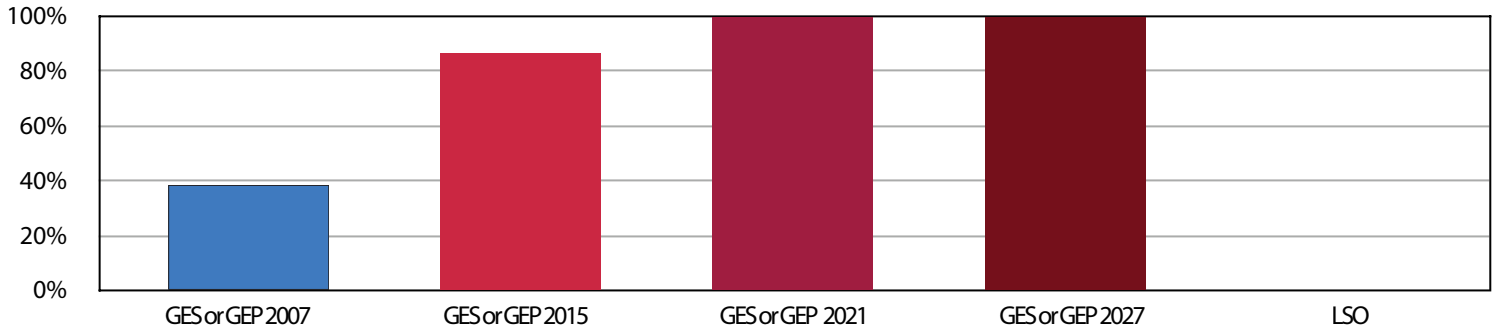
Our objectives for each category of waters

These charts show the improvements we expect in each category of waters over three cycles of the river basin district planning process.

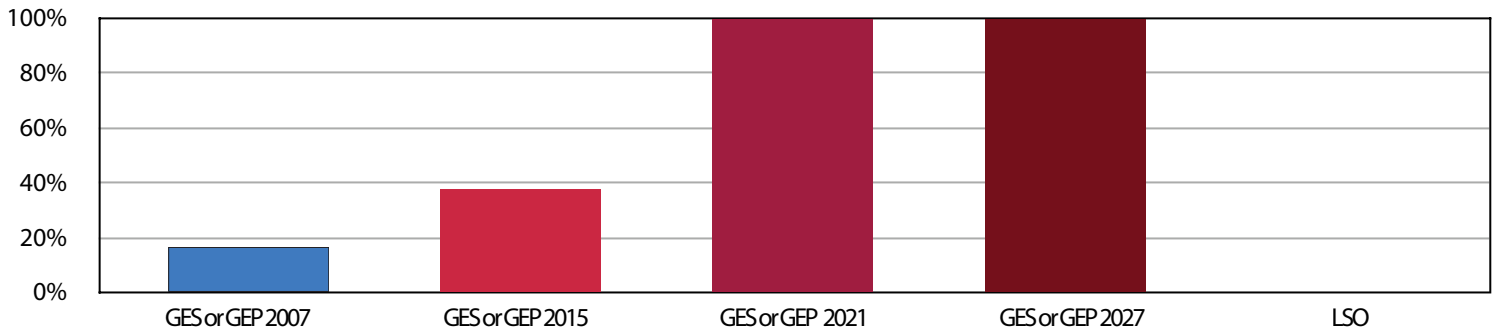
GES or GEP means good ecological status or good ecological potential, in other words compliant with the Water Framework Directive. The standard of good ecological potential is applied to artificial and heavily modified waters (such as canals and reservoirs) where the benefits to humans need to be retained.

LSO means less stringent objective, which means that the waters won't achieve good status or good potential before 2027.

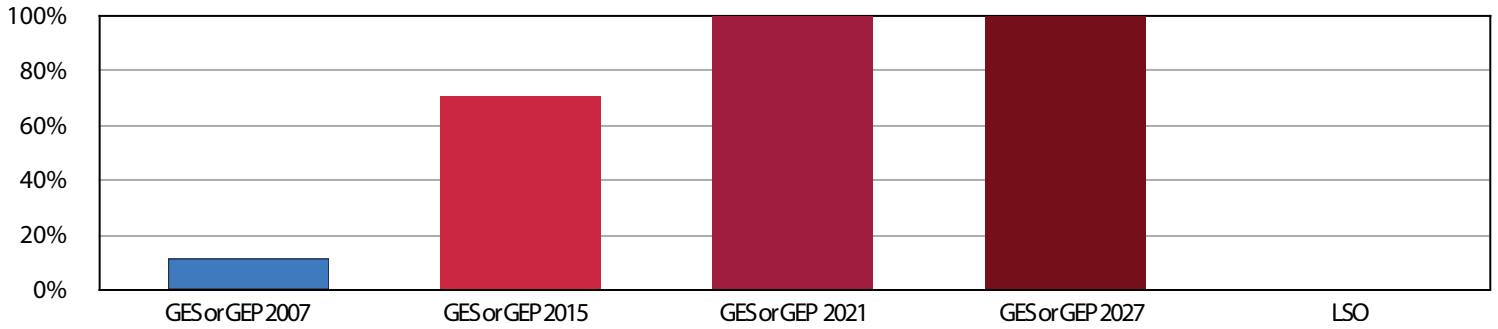
Rivers and Canals (number)



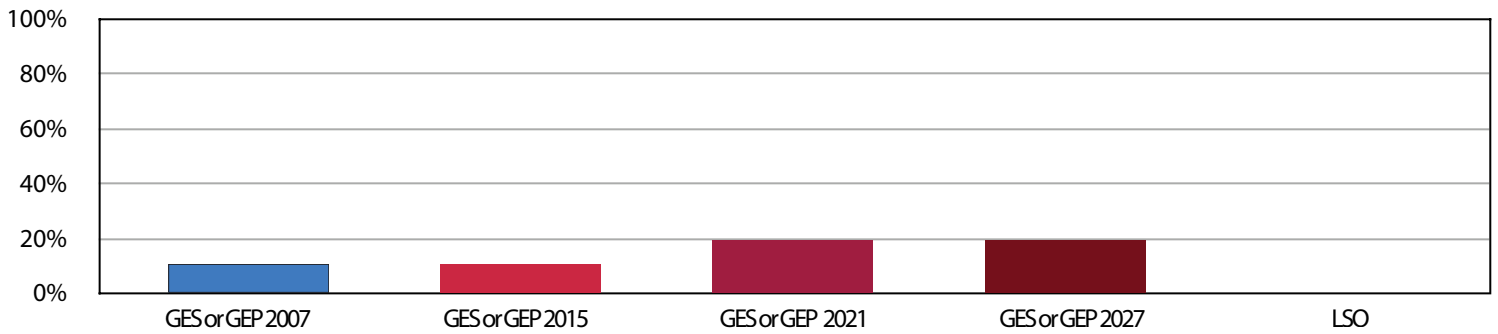
Lakes and Reservoirs (km²)



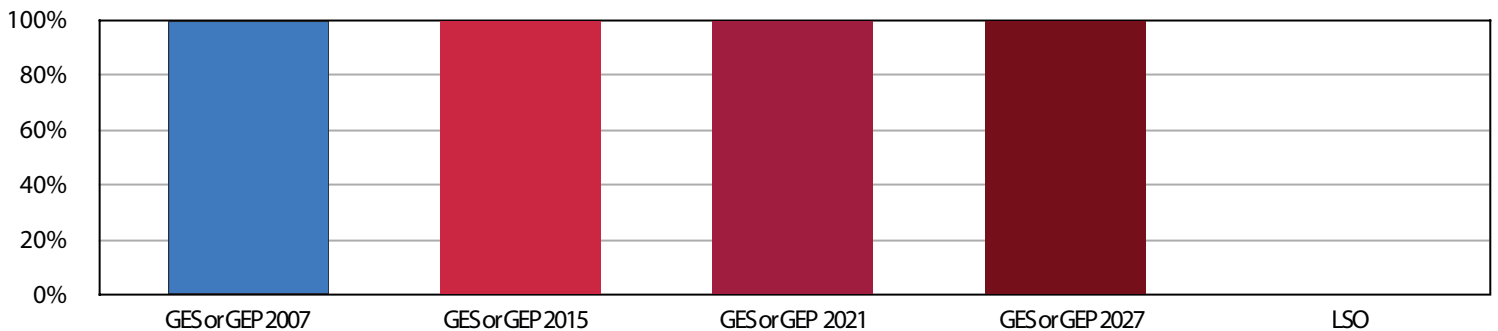
Estuaries (km²)



Coastal Waters (km²)



Groundwaters (km²)



What happens next



The full text of the draft plan is available on www.wfdireland.ie along with background documents including technical studies into our key water issues, our register of protected areas, and documents detailing monitoring programmes and status development, economics, objectives, programmes of measures and links to plans and programmes. There is also a list of the District's relevant authorities and stakeholders, as well as documents on climate change and Strategic Environmental Assessment. Our interactive webmap viewing tool can also be accessed at www.wfdireland.ie.

Comments, views and suggestions may be sent by 22 June 2009 to:

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Early responses would be appreciated to allow more time to clarify and resolve issues that may arise.



We will comply with data protection requirements and will use information that you provide to compile a digest of responses. Please let us know if you wish your response to remain anonymous: if you do, we will include your comments in the digest without saying who made them. If you want to add new comments or information you can contact our website at any stage (www.nwirbd.com).

Implementation



The North Western International River Basin District is cross-border; partly in Ireland and partly in Northern Ireland. This document is issued by the county councils of Donegal, Cavan, Leitrim, Longford, Monaghan and Sligo and by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Preparation of the draft River Basin District Management Plan has been closely coordinated between the two jurisdictions and these coordinated arrangements are outlined in the document entitled *Working Together* (www.wfdireland.ie)

The task of implementing the management plans will fall mainly to the statutory authorities. In the case of the North Western District, it is envisaged that a unit will be set up by Donegal County Council to coordinate the work of Ireland's statutory authorities and to coordinate work with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. In Ireland, implementation of the plans will be coordinated by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, working together with the local authorities the Environmental Protection Agency, and other relevant public authorities. In Northern Ireland, work will be coordinated by the Department of the Environment and Northern Ireland Environment Agency, through the Interdepartmental Working Group, which includes the four main government departments responsible for implementing the plan.

