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Landscape Planning for Sustainable Development

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Introduction

The European Landscape Convention commits the Northern Ireland government since 2007 to recognising landscape as a common resource to which everyone has rights and responsibilities for culture, quality of life and individual and social wellbeing, and economic activity; that changes in the economy accelerate landscape transformation; and that cooperation in protection, management and planning of landscape is important for sustainable development. Landscape Character Assessment, accompanied by objectives for landscape quality and value, is the basis for multifunctional and interconnected (green infrastructure) spatial design, and ultimately the local development plan that seeks quality of life and sustainability.

This paper details research undertaken for the Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment in Northern Ireland (MAG) 2011-2013, whilst also lecturer in landscape architecture at Ulster University and Chair of the Landscape Institute in Northern Ireland.

Our Landscape Relationship

Landscape is environment, lifestyle and wealth. Landscape arises from the relationship of people with the components and resources of their environment. Landscape is a functional system, which refers to the living action and interaction in places of natural and human factors, represented physically, visually, ecologically, culturally and intangibly, and interconnected between all scales and time. Our landscapes are unique to Northern Ireland's physical, social and economic composition and evolution. Our character, and that of our landscape, is defined by how we respond to and harness the resources of Northern Ireland's environment. Landscape is countryside, townscape and seascape, and might be outstanding, everyday or even degraded.¹

Landscape is valuable. There is a fundamental relationship between the quality of Northern Ireland's landscapes and the condition of its economy. The environment provides value to society through essential Natural Capital resource and Ecosystem Services, not often recognised in economic terms but the critical base for our agriculture, renewable energy

and tourism sectors, amongst others.² Landscape quality impacts productivity and development, health and education, community and safety, climate and climate change, pollution and waste, activity and tourism, biodiversity and sustainability benefit.ⁱ All landscapes possess inherent wealth, but all our interactive processes with the environment must nourish and support it as well as harvest from it, without which Northern Ireland's ability for sustainability in essential recourses is 'unstable' and 'insecure'.³ The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has stressed that Northern Ireland's society, and Northern Ireland Executive's first priority for economic development and growth, are completely dependent on environmental value, and this must be recognised by all parts and levels of government, whether or not they have an environmental remit.⁴

Landscape is changing. Landscape represents an active process of caring who and how we are and wish to be. As society develops and changes, it is inevitable that our landscape changes also. However, transformations often do not mutually benefit economic wellbeing, the value of lifestyle, and the resource of landscape. It is our responsibility to seek that the speed and scale of change is not beyond the capacity of the landscape to successfully adapt and provide for future benefit. Awareness of the process of landscape change is essential, as often the criticality of change is only truly appreciated cumulatively. Resource depletion and degradation of longterm value is avoidable.

The benefit of landscape value. High landscape value exists in many different landscapes, generally where there is a strong relationship between the physicality of a place, its natural systems, its wellbeing as a resource, and the manner of its use. Development that degrades landscape value disadvantages society and the value of future development. The European Landscape Convention requires that developments for society make reciprocal benefits to the landscapes and ecosystems that define and support it. Thus, the value of the altered landscape may be equal to or preferably greater than before.⁵ Good design obliges any successful development to be located in the environment to which it is the most fit, and benefit that environment and itself continuously.ⁱⁱ

All landscapes matter. Landscapes exist at all scales. In Northern Ireland, broad landscape areas are recognisable (eg. the Mourne, the Erne Lakelands, the Antrim Coast and Glens), each of which contains a matrix of smaller landscape areas (eg. the high peaks, the drumlins, the lakes, the towns, the glens) and a myriad of locally distinct landscapes (eg. a copse, a housing estate, a motorway, a bog). Each landscape unit comprises its own life-system and is a working part of a greater or smaller life-system matrix. Ecological principles demonstrate that wellbeing (natural, socio-economic, and cultural) benefits when all landscape units and their connectivity are functioning as well as possible. The European Landscape Convention applies to the entire territory of the ratifying country. It is important that all our interactions in all places serve to nourish and benefit landscape value (natural and sociocultural). Even on industrial sites, inner urban developments and scarcely frequented locations, the European Landscape Convention requires that equal consideration is given to protecting, managing or planning the enhancement of their landscape value.

We are all responsible. All human and natural actions at all levels make demands on the landscape, whether or not they have remit towards the land and its quality. Similarly, all nature and society are impacted by the resulting character and quality of our multifaceted landscape. Landscape is a shared resource; we are all responsible.

A landscape approach to planning. Development is traditionally regulated through a land use planning system, which (dependent on specific interest in the land) seeks to spatially order human use of land to avoid conflicts between uses,

ⁱ The 2013 State of the Environment Report for Northern Ireland reveals that health complications which can be addressed or reduced by access to a high quality environment cost the Northern Ireland economy £9bn annually. The 2012 Economic Strategy for Northern Ireland prepared by Department for Enterprise Trade and Investment makes no mention of the economic benefit provided to society by the environment through natural capital and ecosystem services, or the level of expenditure which would be required if these were not available to us (eg. landscapes for tourism); neither does it discuss the level of expenditure committed to address issues problematic to either nature or society (eg. pollution clean up, waste disposal, social or health problems) which could be avoided through attention to integrated design for integral natural and socioeconomic benefit.

ⁱⁱ This theory of 'Creative Fitting' relating to the design of our built and natural environment was introduced by Scottish Landscape Architect, Ian McHarg (1969)

both at detail and regional / national scales. Whilst the system can avoid conflict between uses, often the land use is mono-functional, precluding opportunity for other uses. The system insufficiently concentrates on enriching and sustaining the environmental and cultural resource on which it depends. A landscape approach to planning promotes multifunctionality, reconciling spatial land use with natural and human components and processes, where land performs a range of interconnected social, environmental and economic benefits concurrently – both site specifically and between all areas, scales and time. This is related to Ecosystem Services, Natural Capital and Green Infrastructure design, which seeks to improve resilience by considering biodiversity and human wellbeing (including economic) integrally through all projects.ⁱⁱⁱ To achieve this, the European Landscape Convention requires a baseline knowledge relating to all the landscapes of a territory, their condition, and the forces causing change, in order to formulate, in all sectors, quality objectives and policies to benefit all landscapes. Professional expertise relating to landscape must be promoted, and collaboration on landscape matters (civic, local, national and international) is required.⁶

Practice and mechanisms for landscape value in Northern Ireland

All places. All people. Since 2013, the Landscape Architects Team in Northern Ireland central government has been tasked with advancing Northern Ireland's compliance with the European Landscape Convention, and the Department of Environment has committed to biennial production of a European Landscape Convention Action Plan.⁷

A Landscape Character Assessment of the whole territory of Northern Ireland was carried out in 1999⁸, before the European Landscape Convention was published and became binding. It identifies and briefly describes 130 areas of distinct landscape character, no matter whether of exceptional, good, ordinary or poor condition or importance; and it defines broad principles for each area whereby that landscape character might be enhanced or upheld. Where development activity might affect the landscape character, the land use planning system will generally refer to the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment, but it is not an automatic material consideration. The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment assesses the landscape at a single scale only; it does not clearly distinguish between landscape and visual matters; it only considers rural / countryside aspects of landscape and does not consider townscape or seascape; there is a weak relationship between the three components of its landscape assessment (character, biodiversity and geodiversity), and between the assessment and its principles for management which favour visual rather than multifunctional and interconnected criteria; it does not include the historic characteristics of landscape; and it does not consider cross-border landscape. It has been augmented in 2014 by a Seascape Assessment for Northern Ireland, which identifies and briefly describes 24 areas of distinct seascape character for Northern Ireland, and the influences and forces which might cause their change.⁹

Local government reform has stimulated comprehensive review of the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment, with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency undertaking a Landscape Character Assessment of Northern Ireland at regional scale (expected June 2015).^{iv} It is understood that local authorities will be required to make local Landscape Character Assessments informed by this regional level assessment, as part of the local development plan-making process transferred to local government in Northern Ireland on 1st April 2015.

ⁱⁱⁱ The European Commission promotes Green Infrastructure design for territorial development, providing ecological, economic, and social benefits through natural solutions. Recognising that the many development projects espousing Green Infrastructure principles already carried out throughout Europe will remain as independent initiatives not delivering their full potential unless they are interconnected and interdependent at all scales and across administrative boundaries, the European Commission requires Green Infrastructure to become a standard part of spatial planning and territorial development in all regions and levels of government. Member States' progress will be reviewed by the Commission in 2017. (European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Green Infrastructure – enhancing Europe's Natural Capital, 2013).

^{iv} The regional Landscape Character Assessment for Northern Ireland is to be prepared according to revised Natural England guidance (Natural England 2014, An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, NE579), which it is understood should address the identified shortcomings of the existing Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment.

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The Northern Ireland Environment Agency also published a Landscape Charter for Northern Ireland in 2014¹⁰, whose affirmations and guiding principles for decision-making state that: landscape is essential; landscape contributes to wellbeing; landscape is part of identity; landscape reflects culture; landscapes matter and each of us has a right to landscape benefit; landscapes are shared and each of us is responsible; landscape is a networked asset whose whole is more than the sum of its parts; landscape change is inevitable but can be managed to enhance value; transparency engenders awareness and confidence. Everyone with an interest in the value of Northern Ireland's landscape is asked to become a signatory to the Charter and commit to these affirmations and guiding principles through all their actions. Republication of the Charter after a six-month consultation period is still awaited. Review of other Landscape Charters in existence throughout the world reveal them all to have broadly similar principles, but only the Northern Ireland Charter represents a government document (the rest are largely drawn up by professional organisations, eg. that nation's institution of landscape architects). Only those of Northern Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand and Quebec seek all members of society to become signatories, with those of Scotland and Northern Ireland indicating the actions expected from signatories after commitment. The New Zealand Charter further undertakes to inform signatories of all new signatories to the Charter. These aspects of these four Charters are beneficial to a landscape planning approach.

Integrated policy, implementation, and management. Eight areas of Northern Ireland are designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), to conserve or enhance the qualities (natural beauty, amenities, wildlife, heritage, natural phenomena) of each area, and to promote their enjoyment by the public. Principally rural areas, these comprise approximately 20% of the total area of Northern Ireland. Despite their initial designation in 1965, specific planning policy relating to development in AONBs was only introduced in 2013 with revised Planning Policy Statement for Natural Heritage (PPS2); this requires development to be sympathetic to the character, and respect or conserve features important to the landscape, of the AONB in general as well as the locality in particular.¹¹ Within six AONBs (approximately 12% of the total area of Northern Ireland), partnerships between central and local government, and environmental, community, recreational, landowning and business interests have been established for integral consideration of societal and ecological benefit.

No National Parks exist in Northern Ireland, but economic wellbeing is explicit in the proposed statutory purposes for National Park designation in Northern Ireland: sustainable communities through economic and social development; conservation and enhancement of heritage (natural, cultural and built); public understanding and enjoyment; and sustainable resource management.¹²

The integral purposes for human benefit and agency in landscape planning is not always appreciated or understood. Concern exists amongst the public and landowners that AONB or National Park designation may imply landscape quality at the cost of community or economic wellbeing. This is contrary to the stipulations of the European Landscape Convention, which acknowledges that if landscape quality is considered separately from community and economic wellbeing, it could become an economic and social burden rather than a benefit.

The 2006 non-statutory Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland¹³, developed in partnership with all relevant government departments, provides a similar vision for integrated management in the development of coastal areas, but no ICZM areas have yet been designated. Nonetheless, recognising that sectoral governance was proving detrimental to the health of the community and environment of Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland Executive has since 2010 operated a specific interdepartmental partnership of governance in Rathlin Island (located within a designated AONB) involving the Islanders and other organisations.¹⁴

Following Priorities 3 and 4 of the Northern Ireland Programme for Government (for the protection and safety of our people and the environment; and for building a strong and shared community), the Together: Building a United Community strategy¹⁵ was published in 2013 by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). The strategy is overarching to all Northern Ireland Executive Departments, to provide the 'framework for government action in tackling sectarianism'. One of the strategy's four key priorities is for shared community, to be met by 'moving from contested spaces to shared spaces', piloted through creation of 'urban villages' and ten new shared

neighbourhood developments to create and stabilise change within communities, as well as removing interface barriers by 2023. Delivery requires integration of all Executive departments, and embeds residents and community in decision-making, to influence ownership and pride, social cohesion, and priorities for all residents and the amenities and infrastructure of the area in which they live and work. Five Urban Villages have been designated, one in Derry city, the other four in Belfast.

Natural Heritage policy. Multiple areas (less than 16% of Northern Ireland's total area, 75% included within AONBs) are designated in Northern Ireland for the protection of natural heritage^v. Many of these originate from European directives for species and biodiversity, and are covered by Northern Ireland Planning Policy for Natural Heritage (PPS2).

Built Heritage policy. In Northern Ireland there are 60 Conservation Areas (less than 0.5% of Northern Ireland's total area, 50% included within AONBs) of special architectural or historic interest in cities, towns and villages, designated to preserve or enhance their character or appearance, and covered by specific planning policies contained within Planning Policy Statement for Archaeology and Built Heritage (PPS6).¹⁶

Recommendations for Northern Ireland government action

Recognise benefits of and contributors to landscape value, and seek in all cases. Landscape quality reflects, and is a resource for, social, cultural, economic and natural wellbeing. Integrated governance processes for the design and stewardship of landscape are not currently practised throughout more than 85% of Northern Ireland's area.

Northern Ireland's government and people need to:

- recognise the benefit of landscape quality to all development, environment, society, culture, and the economy;
- understand why landscape value is strong in some places and weak in others;
- ensure that all development increases the strength of landscape value in all cases.

Key principles for development relating to landscape value include: the impact of all actions on landscape value should be recognised; all areas can achieve landscape value through integral action for social, economic, cultural and natural factors; development that degrades landscape value disadvantages the value of future development; and 'creative fitting' of development in landscape obliges any successful development to be located in the environment to which it is most fit, and benefit both that environment and itself, continuously. Awareness of landscape, its connectivity and change, is required at all scales.

Engage with European Landscape Convention. Northern Ireland government representatives should attend regular meetings of national public sector landscape bodies, within the UK and the Republic of Ireland, to keep apprised of national and transnational landscape planning approaches. Northern Ireland government should consult with RECEPT-ENELC (international association of local and regional authorities that shares best practice and provides support in implementation of the principles of the European Landscape Convention) regarding European Landscape Convention implementation and Northern Ireland's proposals for new local governance and planning structures from 2015.

Adopt a landscape planning system. Northern Ireland's planning system should serve the quality of all living surroundings rather than focus on 'special' features. It should require landscape stewardship to be nurtured through (rather than in spite of) economic development. To adequately serve sustainable wellbeing (societal, ecological and economic) for Northern Ireland, landscape character, multifunctionality, connectivity and change at all scales should be considered in all planning actions.

^v As well as sites locally designated and included in local development plans, these include: 471 Areas of Special Scientific Interest, 49 National Nature Reserves (wildlife, habitats, geology), 21 Ramsar Sites (wetlands), 57 Special Areas of Conservation (habitats), 15 Special Protection Areas (birds), one marine nature reserve (Strangford Lough - marine flora, fauna, geology), one Geopark (Marble Arch Caves - geology), and one World Heritage site (Giant's Causeway - outstanding universal natural heritage value).

Northern Ireland government has already committed to a Landscape Charter. This obliges the stipulations of the European Landscape Convention to be adhered to by Northern Ireland government, and was launched as the foundation for statutory landscape policy.¹⁷ A revised Landscape Character Assessment at a regional scale for Northern Ireland is underway. It is essential that local authorities carry out local Landscape Character Assessment in line with this regional assessment as part of the process of local development plan-making. Publication of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement is awaited (due 1st April 2015), which will inform local development plan-making and it is hoped that this aspect will be made specific.^{vi} The Landscape Character Assessment should inform spatial green infrastructure planning and design for each local authority, from which the local development plan can be developed. Regional and local landscape character assessment should:

- include all types and aspects of landscape (rural / countryside, urban / townscape, seascape and water, geophysical, ecological, visual, historic, social and cultural), their connections between each other and between character areas (including cross-border landscapes).
- provide assessment at an hierarchy of scales;
- regularly evaluate and monitor change;
- present dynamic and forward-planning multifunctional and interconnected management objectives for achieving optimum holistic landscape value in each landscape character area, and interconnected between character areas to guide a spatial Green Infrastructure plan and Local Development Plan at local authority level.

The Republic of Ireland and other regions and countries have adopted overarching Landscape Strategies committing to the principles and objectives of the European Landscape Convention, and specifically stating requirement for adherence in all sectors for the protection of value in all the nation's landscape. The Landscape Strategy of Andalucia, 'A Plan for Good Territorial Governance', was explicitly proposed in 2010 as a measure out of economic crisis, to improve government efficiency through commitment to coordinated effort. Despite landscape already being the object of many policies, regulations and actions, it was recognised that these were generally disjointed (and concentrated on outstanding landscapes) and did not stop general deterioration of the quality of the ordinary landscapes in which most people live. The primary objectives of the Andalucian strategy are that all of the region's landscape (and citizens and government sectors) must be recognised and accountable, and that landscape is valuable capital (for natural, cultural, historic, ecological and economic wealth and quality of life), is dynamic, and is a key factor in sustainable development.¹⁸ Also brought forward in a period of challenging public finances, the objectives of the Republic of Ireland National Landscape Strategy¹⁹ specify that the term landscape will be defined in law; a national Landscape Character Assessment (including Historic Landscape Characterisation) will be developed to inform landscape policy and local development plans; all government sectors must develop policies for management, protection and planning of landscape and publish 'state of landscape' reports; awareness of the nature and process of landscape as a resource, and its beneficial management for sustainability must increase; a national inventory of designed landscape will be completed; education, research and training relating to landscape will be developed and promoted at all levels; and public participation in sustainable landscape assessing, shaping, management, and monitoring must increase.

A Northern Ireland Landscape Strategy should be adopted as the basis for long-term sustainable development. The Landscape Strategy should explicitly recognise landscape as a valuable and dynamic resource for sustainable economic, social and environmental development, dependent on integrated good design for all aspects of society and environment, in all areas of Northern Ireland, at all scales, and through time. The draft Strategic Planning Policy

^{vi} In England, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local authorities to undertake local Landscape Character Assessment to align with the National Character Assessment carried out by Natural England, and to inform Local Development Plans. The NPPF also suggests local authorities also set out a spatial strategic Green Infrastructure approach to complement the Local Development Plan. The Landscape Institute recommends Green Infrastructure strategies are a requirement of local authority planning. Northern Ireland government has stated that 'the concept of green infrastructure will be embedded in local development plans post RPA' (Northern Ireland Environment Agency (2013) From Evidence to Opportunity: a Second Assessment of the State of Northern Ireland's Environment).

Statement published in 2014 acknowledges the monofunctional limitation of current land use planning.²⁰ The Northern Ireland Landscape Strategy, overarching to all sectoral strategies, policies and programmes, will require multidimensional concern in all development, from all land and all activities, to protect, enhance and manage the resources of the environment at the same time as the resources of cultural society. The Northern Ireland Landscape Strategy will require final issue of the Landscape Charter; comprehensive and regularly monitored Landscape Character Assessment of Northern Ireland to inform a spatial strategic Green Infrastructure approach as the basis for the Local Development Plan; a general presumption in favour of refusal for detriment to landscape value; the submission of a Statement of Landscape Value in all development applications to demonstrate multifunctional and interconnected design consideration relating to the value of landscape; and monitoring and enforcement of decisions to maintain enhanced landscape value through time.

This will demand interdepartmental commitment and partnership, and appropriate senior expertise, throughout all sectors and levels of governance.^{vii} A Landscape Steering Group should involve and coordinate all government departments and all key and interested parties, to champion landscape issues, landscape understanding, and landscape value throughout government and generally throughout Northern Ireland, promoting publicly the issues and significance of landscape for Northern Ireland's prosperity.

Promote and develop landscape expertise. A culture that relates landscape quality with quality of life and a durable and successful Northern Ireland should be nurtured. Programmes delivering landscape professional expertise and research should be required and supported.^{viii} Specific landscape training should be delivered to professionals working in all sectors, embracing the multifunctional dynamic nature of our designed environment, the critical integration of people in place, and management and stewardship as fundamental to sustainable development.

Be an exemplar landscape steward. All government departments, even those without land or landscape remit, should demonstrate respect for, and achievement or enhancement of, landscape value through their processes and actions.^{ix} A definition of landscape should be determined in Northern Ireland legislation, the use of which is common to all Northern Ireland policy and processes.^x All existing and all new governance policies, programmes and activities in all sectors of NI government should be 'landscape-proofed', for an approach aligned with the European Landscape Convention. Landscape skill and expertise should be embedded and respected in government. Currently, professionals with landscape expertise are employed within the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, as well as in Belfast City Council and Derry City Council at local government level. Following reform of local government in 2015, landscape expertise at appropriately senior level, with sufficient responsibility for decision-making and the consideration of all actions and processes, should be embedded in all new local authorities and available across all sectors of government.

^{vii} Council of Europe suggests statutory consultation between landscape, town planning and spatial planning sectors on any development plans, commencing from the outset of any project so as to minimise damage to landscapes. Landscape considerations should be integral to all policy areas, supported either by a landscape leadership service available to all departments, or the attendance of all areas of administration on a Landscape Council which includes specialists and non-governmental organisations. (Priour, M, Landscape and social, economic, cultural and ecological approaches, in Council of Europe (2006) Landscape and Sustainable Development: challenges of the European Landscape Convention

^{viii} This is a specific commitment of signatory nations to the European Landscape Convention that is not currently being fulfilled in Northern Ireland.

^{ix} The Landscape Strategy of Mallorca included three pilot schemes to demonstrate and test good government landscape practice, with the following specific goals: improve connectivity between different sectors, create Green Infrastructure networks, eliminate uses incompatible with citizens, improve the landscape, reduce impact of heavy transport, promote supra-municipal coordination. (RECEP-ENELC (2012) Working Landscapes 1: Landscape Strategies in Spain – a compared analysis). Similar 'pilots' in Northern Ireland could be Rathlin Island and the T:BUC Urban Villages, which provide coherent opportunities to test integrated multifunctional working to inform best practice in the rest of Northern Ireland.

^x The definition of Landscape as 'an area as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' is embedded in Planning Policy Statement 2 for Natural Heritage and the 2013 State of the Environment report. Policy usage should also include clarification that landscape comprises townscape, countryside, or seascape and may be of good, ordinary or poor condition.

Next Steps

The Northern Ireland Land Matters Task Force was formed in 2014 by a coalition of organisations concerned with the resources of the land and landscape. The Task Force seeks to influence and inform multidisciplinary, strategic planning, management, stewardship and protection of Northern Ireland's land and landscape resource, and their incorporation into the legislative framework; provide a discussion forum for shared understanding of trends, change and best practice in land, land use and landscape practice and policy; and embed an outward looking and inclusive approach which appreciates the local regional, national and international context of landscape matters. Recognising that there is no strategy which directs systematic multifunctionally-considered use of land for long-term sustainability of Northern Ireland, the Task Force commissioned a report to scope for a Land Strategy for Northern Ireland. Referring to the European Landscape Convention, but not led by it, the ten stated objectives of the proposed Land Strategy nonetheless strongly adhere to a Landscape Approach: land use should seek derivation of multifunctional benefits; protection of public interest is essential; primary suitability of land should be recognised; land actions have implications beyond discrete pieces of land; impact of landscape change should be considered in all land use and management actions; climate change adaptation and mitigation should be considered in all land use decisions; use of all land should be prioritised and incentivised, unless it is inherently more valuable undeveloped; opportunities for outdoor access for health and wellbeing should be encouraged; greater civic awareness and engagement in land-related matters should be encouraged alongside policy and decision-making; precious landscape resources should be recognised, protected and enhanced for sustainable benefit. The scoping report indicates that the Strategy could be implemented from 2020.²¹

Restructure of Northern Ireland's Executive departments is planned for April 2016. A new Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will comprise most of the existing Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the environmental functions of the Department of the Environment, the fisheries functions of the Department for Culture Arts and Leisure, and the sustainability functions of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. A new Department for Communities: will comprise the existing Department for Social Development, most of the existing Department for Culture Arts and Leisure, the built heritage and local government functions of the Department of the Environment, the social investment fund and united communities functions of Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and the employment service of Department of Education and Learning.^{xi} Landscape is the interaction of human and natural factors, people with their environment, creating culture and place. With the planning functions of development control and development management transferred to local authority, and the built heritage functions transferred to the new Department for Communities along with existing Department for Culture Arts and Leisure functions, it is reasonable to consider that this new Department should now be responsible for progressing Northern Ireland's Landscape Strategy.

^{xi} Accompanied by an Executive Office responsible for the Programme for Government, equality, the Together: Building a United Community strategy, and the Delivering Social Change strategy, the other departments will be Economy, Education, Finance, Health, Infrastructure, and Justice.

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- ¹ Council of Europe (2000) European Landscape Convention, Article 2
 - ² Northern Ireland Environment Agency (2013) From Evidence to Opportunity: a Second Assessment of the State of Northern Ireland's Environment; UK National Ecosystem Assessment (2005), including Northern Ireland Environment Link (2011) UK National Ecosystem Assessment: Technical Report, Status and Changes in the UK Ecosystems and their Services to Society: Chapter 18 Northern Ireland
 - ³ Agri-Food Strategy Board (2013) Going for Growth: a strategic action plan in support of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Industry
 - ⁴ Northern Ireland Environment Agency (2013) From Evidence to Opportunity: a Second Assessment of the State of Northern Ireland's Environment
 - ⁵ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Natural Capital Committee (2013) State of Natural Capital report; KPMG, Flora and Fauna International, and Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (2012), Is Natural Capital a material issue?; Scottish Natural Heritage (2012) Scotland's Natural Capital Asset Index; Northern Ireland Environment Agency (2013) From Evidence to Opportunity: a Second Assessment of the State of Northern Ireland's Environment.
 - ⁶ Council of Europe (2000) European Landscape Convention, Articles 5 – 9.
 - ⁷ Northern Ireland Environment Agency (2013) From Evidence to Opportunity: a Second Assessment of the State of Northern Ireland's Environment
 - ⁸ Environment and Heritage Service (1999) Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment series
 - ⁹ Northern Ireland Environment Agency (2013) Regional Seascape Character Assessment
 - ¹⁰ Northern Ireland Environment Agency (2014) Northern Ireland's Landscape Charter, version 1
 - ¹¹ Department of the Environment (2013) Planning Policy Statement 2 Natural Heritage, Policy NH6
 - ¹² Department of the Environment (2011) White Paper on proposed enabling legislation for National Parks.
 - ¹³ Department of the Environment (2006) An Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2026
 - ¹⁴ Department for Regional Development (2010) Rathlin Island Policy and Action Plan
 - ¹⁵ Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (2013) Together: Building a United Community strategy
 - ¹⁶ Department of the Environment (1999) Planning Policy Statement 6 Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage, Policies BH12-14
 - ¹⁷ Speech by Minister for Environment, Mark H Durkan, Changing Landscapes conference, Craigavon, January 2014
 - ¹⁸ RECEP-ENELC (2012) Working Landscapes 1: Landscape Strategies in Spain – a compared analysis
 - ¹⁹ Department for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (2015) National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2014 - 2024
 - ²⁰ Department of the Environment (2014) A Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) Planning for Sustainable Development, Public Consultation Draft.
 - ²¹ Northern Ireland Land Matters Task Force (2015) Towards a Land Strategy for Northern Ireland