

Northern Ireland
Environment Agency

The Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Action Plan 2011 - 2016



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The Ring of Gullion – A Special Place

The Ring of Gullion is a unique geological landform, unparalleled elsewhere in the British Isles. The ring of low, rugged hills forms a 'rampart' around the heather-clad Slieve Gullion mountain. Rich semi-wild habitats of heath, bog and woodland contrast with the neatly patterned fields and ladder farms. Slieve Gullion's mysterious reputation arises from its associations with legends and the wider area's rich archaeological heritage. The area sits to the north of the Northern Ireland border with the Republic of Ireland and it shares many landscape characteristics with the adjacent area of County Louth.

The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Designation

Part of South Armagh was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as long ago as 1966. Following a redrafting of the legislation, it was designated in 1991 as the Ring of Gullion AONB. Covering an area of 15,353ha, it includes almost the whole of the Ring of Gullion landscape character area. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), part of the Department of the Environment, is responsible for the designation of AONBs and it facilitates their management. In practice, many public bodies, conservation organisations, communities and landowners work together to protect and provide for the enjoyment of the landscape of AONBs. AONB management plans provide an agreed framework for all stakeholders to work to. The goal of having a management plan for each AONB in Northern Ireland is a stated objective of NIEA's policy 'Protected Landscapes - Shared Horizons'. Objectives of AONB management plans include retaining the landscape character and the natural built and cultural heritage of the area.

The Scope of the Management Plan

This management plan outlines an agreed set of objectives and actions for the period 2011-2016 for the Ring of Gullion AONB. The action programme identifies what needs to be done and provides details of when it will be done and who will take responsibility for leading the action. In Northern Ireland, the legislation does not provide statutory status for management plans for AONBs. Instead they are implemented through voluntary agreement.

Who is the Management Plan for?

This management plan is for the benefit of the Ring of Gullion AONB. Its success relies on all of those who live, work, plan for, develop and manage the area taking its special character into account when making decisions that will affect its future.

¹ *Environment and Heritage Service, 2003. Shared Horizons – Statement of Policy on Protected Landscapes in Northern Ireland. Available from <http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/index/publications>*

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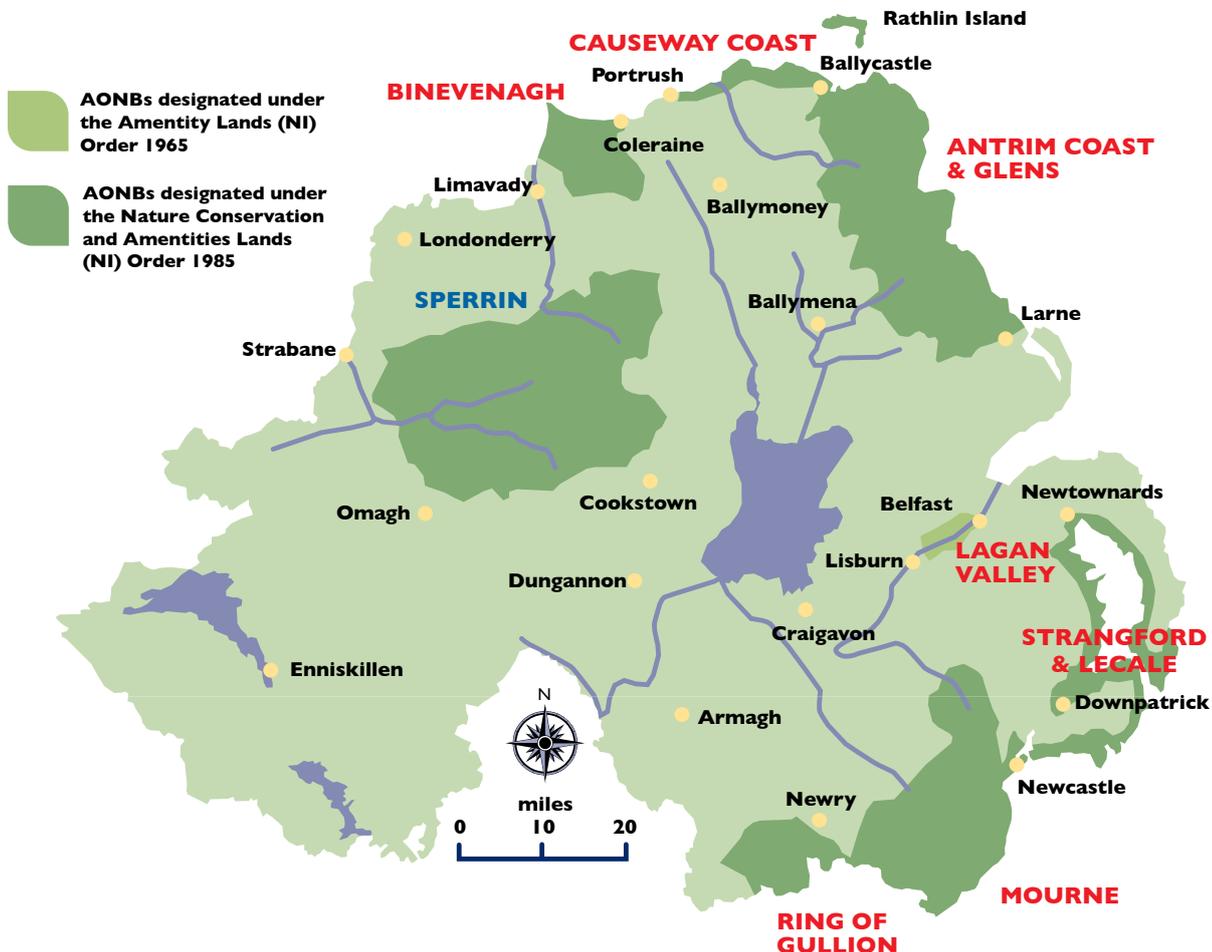
1. Purposes of AONB designation

Current powers to designate AONBs are derived from the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985. Designation signals that the landscape is of importance to the whole of Northern Ireland and it allows NIEA to make proposals for:

- Conserving or enhancing the natural beauty and amenities of the area;
- Conserving wildlife, historic objects or natural phenomena within it;
- Promoting its enjoyment by the public;
- Providing or maintaining public access to it.

Other public bodies are required to have regard to protecting the area’s special features in their work. District Councils in Northern Ireland usually provide additional resources to manage an area designated as an AONB. There are nine designated AONBs in Northern Ireland as shown below.

Map 1 Northern Ireland’s AONBs



2. How AONBs are managed in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, NIEA is responsible for the designation of AONBs and facilitates their management. However in practice, public bodies, conservation organisations, communities and landowners normally work together in AONBs to protect the landscape and to provide for countryside enjoyment. In two areas of Northern Ireland (the north-east and the Mourne) partnerships have been formed between the statutory, local government, community, landowning, environmental and recreational interests to undertake the AONB management role. In the Lagan Valley responsibility for the management of the AONB is undertaken by the Regional Park management body as the AONB and Regional Park designations cover roughly the same area.

In the Ring of Gullion, NIEA and Newry and Mourne District Council jointly fund the AONB officer. The AONB officer's work programme is aimed at enhancing the built, cultural and natural heritage of the area, and in increasing the opportunities for public enjoyment of

the special qualities of the AONB. A steering group has been convened for the Ring of Gullion AONB comprising statutory, community, recreation and environment sectoral interests in order to raise awareness of the need for management of the AONB and to facilitate inter agency co-operation.

AONB management plans provide an agreed framework for all stakeholders to work to. It is NIEA's policy, outlined in 'Shared Horizons', to have a management plan for every AONB. An important objective of AONB management plans is to retain vibrant rural communities and traditional land management practices, as well as protecting and enhancing the landscape and providing opportunities for its study and enjoyment.



3. Introduction to The Ring of Gullion AONB

The Ring of Gullion is defined topographically by the hills of the ring dyke. The boundary of the AONB generally includes these hills and their outer slopes but a deviation to the west has been made to include the whole of a historic site, 'The Dorsey' enclosure. In the south, the boundary lies along the border with the Republic of Ireland which, apart from in the Ravensdale area, coincides roughly with the ring dyke. In the west, the AONB includes the valleys of the Cully Water and the Ummercam Rivers, which separate the hills of the ring dyke from the rolling drumlin landscape, extending towards Cullyhanna and Crossmaglen. In the north-west the ring dyke runs through the higher ground of 'The Fews' where it is identified by sharp rocky hills with distinctive heath vegetation. The village of Camlough is not included but the boundary follows the Belfast-Dublin railway line to include the lower slopes of Camlough Mountain. Just south of the quarry at Cloghoge it drops down to cross the Newry Canal and joins the Newry River which then forms the boundary as far south as the border at Fathom. The total area designated is just over 15,300 hectares.

The Ring of Gullion in the south of County Armagh is a remarkable area with a fascinating history. Its distinctive landscape owes much to long, complex and turbulent geological activity. The most important landforms are the volcanic ring dyke with Slieve Gullion at its centre. These features are the remnants of the heart of a volcano formed some 60 million years ago, features that were later remoulded by glacial activity and weather to form the landscape we know today.

People have lived in the Ring of Gullion for over 6000 years. The area is rich in historic monuments dating from Neolithic times to the Plantation, including burial sites, raths, ecclesiastical sites and the early 17th century fortification at Moyry. Many of the sites have been well-studied and their significance understood. Others such as the Dorsey earthworks, thought to be both a gateway and defensive boundary to Ulster, may still have secrets to reveal.

The area has been important for communications and travel through the ages and the AONB is traversed by both the modern and newly-upgraded A1 and the Slige Midluachra, the ancient road from Drogheda to Dunseverick.

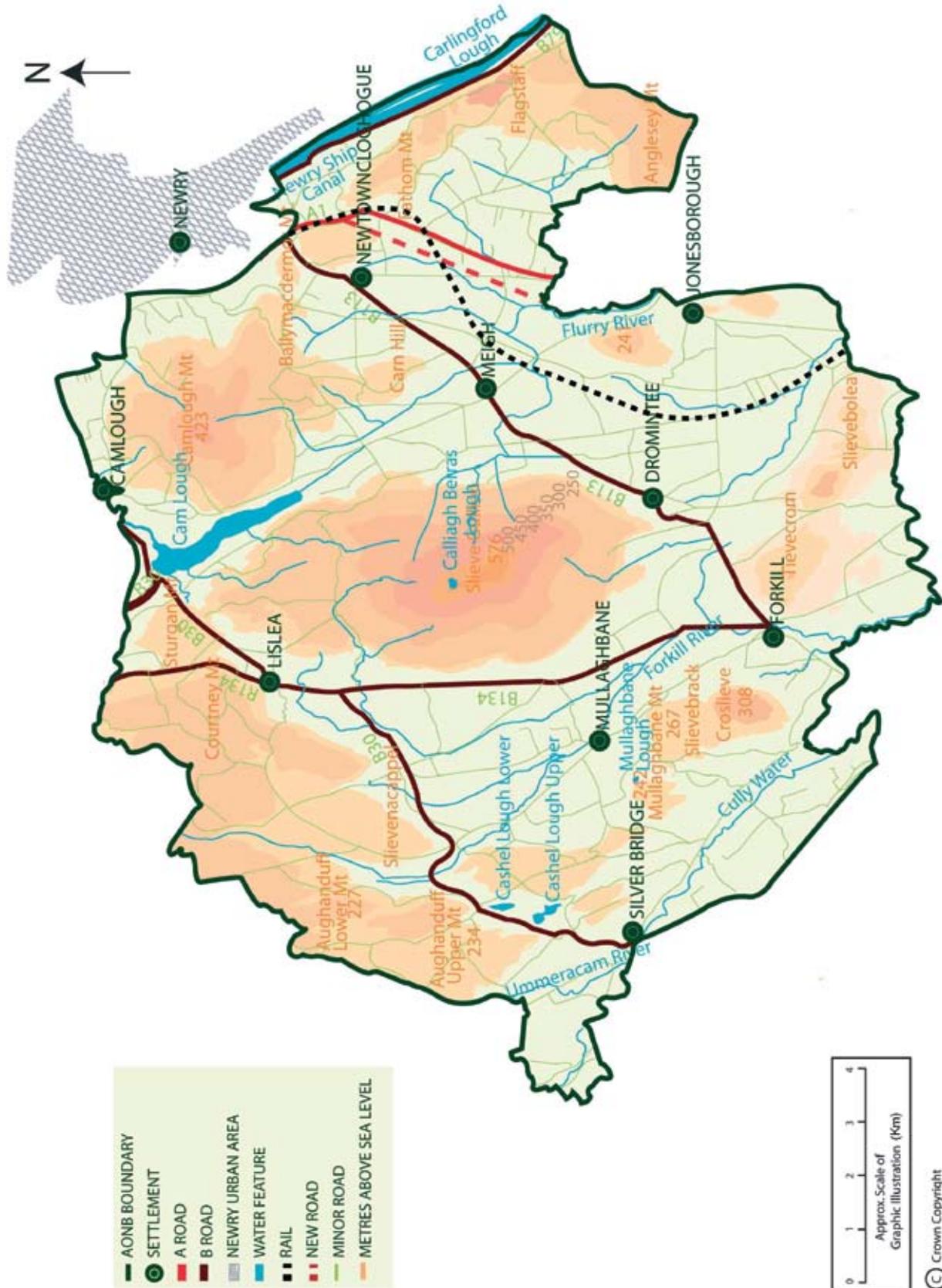
Farming and commerce have also shaped the landscape with its overlay of ancient field boundary patterns, parklands, market towns and villages, and the dense network of roads and lanes. Industrial development led to the creation of man made features such as the Newry Canal in the east of the AONB, the railways, and the enlargement of Camlough Lake (or Camlough) to power the mills of Bessbrook and to supply the canal.

Until the end of the 1600s it is likely that the Ring of Gullion area was densely wooded; John Speede's map of 1610 shows extensive woodlands in the lowlands between Fathom, Camlough and Forkhill. This woodland was gradually cleared for farming and to support an increasing population with fuel and raw materials. Although today there are remnants of important semi-natural woodlands and mature parklands, the bulk of the AONB's woodland is recent upland conifer plantation. Many of the bogs that would have characterised the lowland areas have been drained to allow for agricultural improvement, though some important wetlands remain.

The area today has a rich flora and fauna with many nationally and internationally important habitats and species. The upland heaths of Slieve Gullion and the ring dyke hills – although they are vulnerable to scrub encroachment - are of particular significance, as are Camlough, the Cashel Loughs, and the intertidal mud of the upper reaches of Carlingford Lough. The species-rich grassland at both Carrickasticken and Levallymore is testament to the persistence of traditional farming methods. Indeed much of the biodiversity of the AONB lies in its farmland with its patchwork of hedgerows, walls and pockets of woodland.

The Ring of Gullion AONB attracts many visitors, drawn by the opportunities to walk the heather clad uplands of Slieve Gullion, to explore its archaeology, its many cultural events and opportunities for study, and to enjoy the scenic Slieve Gullion Forest Drive.

Map 2 Ring of Gullion AONB



4. The Ring of Gullion AONB - key features and issues

The natural environment

The Ring of Gullion AONB is of interest for its underlying geology and landforms and for the species and habitats they support.

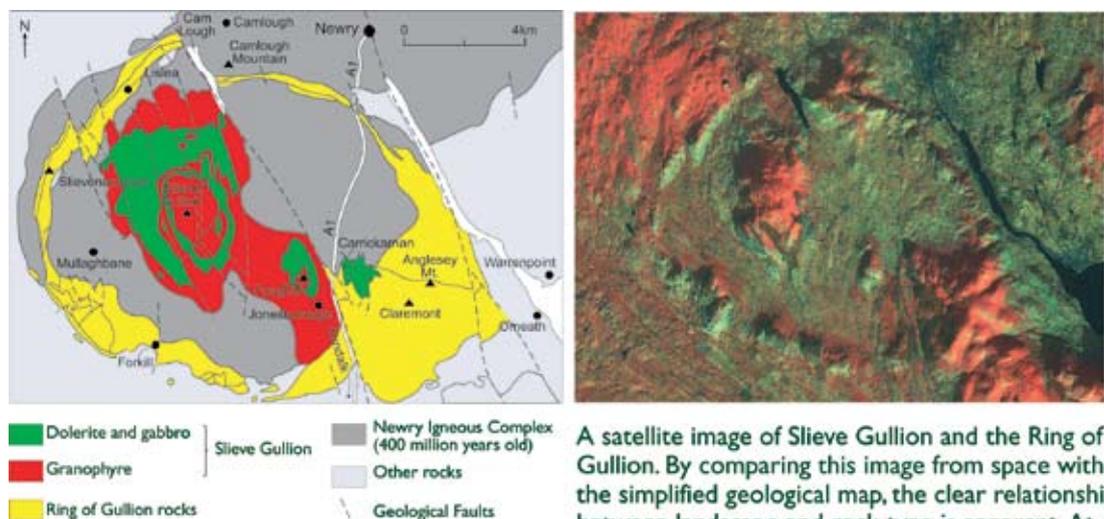
Geologically Slieve Gullion and the encircling 'ring dyke' hills are considered to be the best example of a volcanic ring dyke system in the UK or Ireland (see Fig. 1). The complex attracts international research interest and has made contributions of world significance to scientific understanding of volcanicity. Slieve Gullion is the eroded heart of a volcano active in the area some 60 million years ago. Volcanoes often develop an encircling ring fault or fracture around them and the Ring Dyke which gives the area its name is caused by magma, or molten rock, reaching the surface at several points in the fracture resulting in explosive eruptions of which there is still evidence today; the encircling ring dyke is some 11km in diameter and includes the hills of Crosslieve, Mullaghbane Mountain, Slievenacappel, Anglesey Mountain, Flagstaff and the Sugarloaf or Sturgan Mountain.

The ice age has also left its mark on the area. To the south-east of Slieve Gullion is a 'tail' of glacial deposits, the Cashel Loughs lie in ice scoured basins, and the deep valley of Carlingford Lough is thought to have been formed by the ice. The ice finally retreated some 12,000 years ago. Parts of the AONB are considered to be of national importance for nature conservation and these have been declared as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) – see Table 1.

Table 1 Areas of Special Scientific Interest in Ring of Gullion AONB

ASSI name	Main features of interest
Carlingford Lough	Inter tidal muds supporting wading birds
Cashel Loughs	Lakes and wetland fringes with important water beetle, ground beetle and spider communities
Levallymore	Rare example of old meadow grassland with considerable plant biodiversity
Carrickasticken	Species rich grassland with herbs and orchids, retained due to traditional farming methods. Contains the rare Field Scabious <i>Knautia arvensis</i> and Burnet Saxifrage <i>Pimpinella saxifraga</i> which are uncommon in Northern Ireland
Slieve Gullion	Heathland and fen, with considerable geological interest
Camlough	Aquatic flora and fauna which depend on low nutrient levels and unpolluted waters.
Fathom Upper	Lowland meadow and pasture dependent on traditional farming methods

Figure 1



A simplified geological map of Slieve Gullion and the Ring of Gullion, both of which are some 58–56 million years old.

A satellite image of Slieve Gullion and the Ring of Gullion. By comparing this image from space with the simplified geological map, the clear relationship between landscape and rock type is apparent. At the top (north) of the image the elongate shape of Cam Lough is apparent as is the offset of the Ring of Gullion by the Camlough Fault.

In each case these sites represent the best of the habitats in the area and are very significant in Northern Ireland terms. Each ASSI site contains considerable biodiversity but this is also true of many other areas of Ring of Gullion, that have not been designated.

Six hundred and twelve hectares of Slieve Gullion have also been designated as a Special Area of Conservation under the EC Habitats Directive as this is one of the largest expanses of European Dry Heath in Northern Ireland. Cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* is found there, a plant which is scarce elsewhere.

Ancient woodland sites include Aughtanduff, Carrive Grove and parts of the lands of Slieve Gullion Forest, Killeavy Castle and Fathom Forest. The Woodland Trust's 'Ancient Woodland Inventory' records that of Forest Service's 1403 hectares of land in the area, some 920 hectares are planted with a mixture of conifers and broadleaved trees.

Not all of the land owned by Forest Service is woodland. Forest Service manages its unplanted areas for nature conservation with Forest Nature Reserves on Camlough Mountain and at Hawthorn Hill. Forest Service works to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard and replants at least 5% of felled areas with mixed species broadleaved trees and leaves 10-20% open space to promote biodiversity, new or replanted forests under this Standard comprise more than 75% of one species.

The Banbridge/Newry and Mourne Draft Area Plan 2015 recognises 50 Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI) in the Ring of Gullion area. These include the summits of some of the hills of the Ring Dyke, pockets of wetland and fen, and traditionally farmed grassland areas.

Farming is an important activity in the AONB with an estimated 550 farms in the area. In December 2007, just over half of these farms participated in the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) agri-environment scheme. This voluntary scheme, managed by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), provides financial support to farmers for adopting environmentally sensitive farming methods. The AONB lies wholly within the Slieve Gullion ESA that was designated in 1994 primarily for its heather moorland.

The ESA scheme is one of several agri-environment schemes available to farmers and landowners in Northern Ireland. The schemes are co-funded by DARD and the European Union as part of the Rural Development Programme. They are the main mechanism used to encourage farmers and landowners to farm in more environmentally friendly ways. In return, scheme participants receive an annual payment from DARD. Uptake of the schemes across Northern Ireland has been very successful. Over 13,000 farmers and landowners participate with about 40% of farmland managed under the schemes.

Uptake in the Slieve Gullion ESA has also been successful, bringing about half the area's farmers and a similar proportion of the land into positive management, thereby improving the area's biodiversity, landscape and heritage features. Additionally, using enhancement grants, participants have restored and installed a variety of traditional features and wildlife-friendly items such as bat boxes.

Table 2 ESA scheme management in the Ring of Gullion AONB 1998-2007

Management	Hectares
Improved Grassland	2657
Unimproved Grassland	1009
Species Rich Grassland	18
Wetlands	15
Moorland	457
Woodland, Scrub & Parkland	194
Watercourse margins & buffer areas	4
Archaeological sites	23 sites

Table 3 ESA scheme enhancement in the Ring of Gullion AONB 1994-2007

Type of work	Amount achieved
Field boundaries restored	25.5 km
Trees & shrubs planted	3790 trees/shrubs
Nest & bat boxes & squirrel feeders installed	53 boxes/feeders
Traditional buildings restored	8 buildings
Traditional gates installed	150 m
Traditional pillars, caps & posts installed	79 pillars, caps & posts
Protective fencing erected	10 km

In 2008, many farmers and landowners in the Ring of Gullion AONB applied for a new agri-environment scheme, the Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS). Applications were encouraged through local publicity and a well-attended visit to an ESA scheme farm near Forkhill. Furthermore, the Organic Farming Scheme re-opened for applications in the autumn of 2008. Overall, by 2013, DARD aims to increase participation in all its agri-environment schemes to 18,000 with about 50% of all farmland management under scheme agreements.

Since January 2005 all farmers who receive the single farm payment have also been required to protect the environment in their activities. This cross compliance requirement involves statutory management requirements to protect wild birds, flora, fauna and groundwater and 'good agricultural and environmental condition measures' to keep field boundaries, habitats, and archaeological sites in good condition and to maintain appropriate grazing levels.

Farming in Northern Ireland is changing, and the Ring of Gullion area is no exception. There has been an annual decline of 2% in the number of farming businesses in Northern Ireland over the past 5 years and both the number of part and full time farmers and agricultural workers in declining. According to local farming organisations there are now fewer full-time farmers in the Ring of Gullion. A comparison with figures published at the time of designation of the AONB (in 1991) shows that there has been a reduction in sheep numbers and an increase in cattle in the area.

A monitoring study of habitats and species in the Slieve Gullion ESA (comparing 1994 and 2004) showed that heathland sites under ESA agreement had reduced in plant diversity, with some being encroached by dwarf scrub. Reductions in some species of beetles were also recorded. The reasons for this may be reduced upland grazing levels as economic circumstances and farming practices change. This concern has been addressed through the new Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme with participants being required to actively control scrub and prevent encroachment by better grazing management.

A separate study of land cover within ESAs (comparing 1995 and 2005) showed that in the Slieve Gullion ESA there was a significant loss of grassland to building development and an increase in associated amenity grassland/gardens. The study also identified that broadleaved woodland cover had increased in all ESA areas in Northern Ireland except for the Ring of Gullion. In terms of hedgerow and field boundary losses, there

has been no significant recorded loss within ESAs compared to a 4% loss found in the general countryside during the Northern Ireland Countryside Survey in 2000. This finding is surprising given the apparent evidence of hedge removals in the area (undertaken to meet sight line requirements for access to new dwellings).

Cultural Distinctiveness

The Ring of Gullion area has long been an important 'gateway' landscape. One of the ancient roads of Tara running north passes through the 'Gap of the North' at Moyry and the Dorsey earthworks may have been built to control an ancient route way north to the traditional capital of Ulster at Eamhain Macha (Navan Fort).

The area is rich in archaeological and historical features, having been settled for at least 6000 years. Historic monuments and buildings include prehistoric tombs, cashels, churches and prominent buildings like Killeavy Castle and Forkhill House. There are important early Christian associations with St Moninna and Ternoc, and saints' days for figures associated with the area are still observed.

The area features in the stories of the Ulster Cycle. In the Táin Bó Cuilaigne, Cuchullain is reputed to have defended Ulster single handedly against the hordes of Queen Maebh of Connacht at the Gap of the North, and in another of the stories Fionn Mac Cumhal was bewitched by Miluchra on the summit of Slieve Gullion at the Calliagh Berras lough.

The Ring of Gullion AONB encompasses twelve State Care Monuments including Moyry Castle, Kilnasaggart Stone and the North and South Cairns on Slieve Gullion. State Care monuments are owned or held in care by the Department of the Environment.

There are also 28 scheduled monuments in the AONB (appendix 1). Scheduling is carried out to protect a representative sample of historic monuments in Northern Ireland for heritage, scientific and research purposes; it ensures legal protection for the monument but does not imply there is public access to it. Scheduled sites include the Newry Ship Canal, the Calliagh Berra's stone at Tullynavall and parts of The Danes Cast linear earthwork. Seventy further monuments have been recorded in the AONB area but are not Scheduled.

The Ring of Gullion also contains a proposed Area of Significant Archaeological Interest covering the Dorsey Earthworks and surrounding lands, as a feature of wider importance to the whole of Northern Ireland. The Dorsey forms a large enclosure or double set of earthworks thought to be part of Ulster's defences in the Iron Age and possibly controlling access along an important route to Navan Fort near Armagh. 'Dorsey' is derived from the Gaelic, Na Doirse, which means 'the Gateways'.

Townland names in the area, still in use today, continue to bear testament to the AONB's cultural landscape, its heroes and heroines and the families who tended the land.

The people of the Ring of Gullion and the whole south of County Armagh have a rich tradition of music, song, poetry and legend. This was celebrated in former names for the area, still used in the 18th century – Ceantar na nAmhran (The District of Songs) and Ceantar na bhFill (the District of Poets).

The area was the last gaeltacht in Northern Ireland. In the 2001 Census some 9% to 17% of people are recorded as being able to speak, read, write and understand Irish. Today, festivals, storytelling, publications, townland drama festivals, ceilidhs and dances all give expression to this heritage. The Ti Chulainn Cultural Centre in Mullaghbane was established to help collect, present perform and give access to this rich cultural life and to provide a venue for study and enjoyment. Other initiatives such as the Poet's Trail, and assertion of the Urney Graveyard Path as a public right of way give physical access to sites associated with the poets and, through interpretative panels and guidebooks, introduce visitors to the poetry of the area.

Nestling close to Camlough Mountain, just beyond the northern edge of the AONB, are the mill villages of Camlough and Bessbrook, which in former times provided employment to people all over the Ring of Gullion. Linen working has been known in Bessbrook since 1752 but the village is now probably best known for its 'Model' village built from 1845 by John Richardson, a Quaker, to provide housing, educational and social facilities for their workforce in the spinning mills. The nearby thatched Derrymore House, in the care of the National Trust, is believed to have been where the Act of Union was drafted in 1800. The house was built by Isaac Corry, who represented Newry in the Irish House of Commons for 30 years from 1776.

The Ti Chulainn Cultural Centre in Mullaghbane provides a focal point for cultural activity in the Ring of Gullion AONB with accommodation, conference centre and cultural events. The centre also forms part of the Armagh genealogy project and the Cuimneamh oral history project. Lislea, a small settlement to the north-west of Slieve Gullion provides an important and long-established annual drama festival which draws players from all over the country to perform traditional plays in the Old Schoolhouse Theatre.

Social and economic wellbeing

The settlement pattern of the Ring of Gullion AONB shows a significant dispersed rural population as well as clusters in small settlements. The main settlements are Jonesborough, Newtowncloghoge, Forkhill, Mullaghbane, Killeen, Lislea, Dromintee, Meigh and Silverbridge. The AONB boundary excludes the villages of Camlough and Bessbrook but the designated area extends to the outskirts of the city of Newry. The whole AONB lies within the District Council area of Newry and Mourne and includes parts of at least of five electoral wards (Forkhill, Silverbridge, Fathom, Derrymore and Camlough).

This AONB, surely more than any other in Northern Ireland, has a landscape influenced by the civil unrest of the 20th century. This affected patterns of investment, the physical infrastructure, and the cultural life. As new monuments are erected and watchtowers removed from hilltops, a new landscape is emerging, one that sees renewed confidence expressed in increased numbers of new houses dotting the rural lanes.

Since its designation in 1991, the Ring of Gullion AONB has experienced considerable investment in rural development, designed to help address social deprivation. From 1996-2000 this included an area based Rural Development Strategy, investment through the Newry and Mourne Liason Entre Actions pour le Development de l'Economie Rurale (LEADER) company and from 2002 to 2008 the Natural Resource Rural Tourism Programme. The South Armagh Tourism Initiative, since 1993, provided both tourism product development and marketing support to the area.

Business development in the AONB funded through LEADER+ has included a confectionery company, craft workshop, business units, a physiotherapy clinic, bread making equipment and equipment for a forge workshop. Development for young people has been provided through the South Armagh Youth Initiative designed to ensure participation by young people in strategies and decisions for the area.

The Newry and Mourne area has had the highest rate of business start ups in Northern Ireland in recent times. This is assisted through the Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency, Invest Northern Ireland training and support, a small business loan fund and the development of business units for example at Flurrybridge near Jonesborough. The East Border Region Committee, a cross border network between local authorities has also assisted in economic development in the region.

Other support to the area has included funding for projects under the Building Sustainable Prosperity programme which has supported the South Armagh Rural Women’s Network, and the Plato cross-border business development scheme, developed by Newry and Mourne and Louth Councils and funded under the second EU Peace and Reconciliation programme.

DARD’s Rural Connect staff provide a signposting service for farmers and farming families in the area, helping them to access DARD grants, training and support for business development and diversification and referring them to other forms of support if required.

In four out of the five Ring of Gullion electoral wards, mining, quarrying and construction industries are the main employers. In Derrymore the most significant employment sector is manufacturing, with quarrying and construction coming a close second. Health and social work and education are also significant employers within the AONB. Hotel and catering work accounts for 5-8% employment, with Camlough ward having the highest percentage in this sector.

Agriculture is surprisingly insignificant as an industry in the area accounting for fewer than 7% of employees in each ward. Furthermore, fewer than 7% of all farmers in the AONB wards are farming full-time, and the figures fall to under 3% for Forkhill and Fathom wards. This is of crucial significance to the future of the AONB given the importance of the role of farmers in managing the landscape and in underpinning rural life.

Employment in the area is strongly influenced by proximity to the urban centres of Newry and Dundalk and the relative ease of access to Belfast and Dublin. More than half the people in employment in the Ring of Gullion AONB work over 10 km from home, with the longest distances travelled by those in Forkhill and Silverbridge.

People living in the AONB do have access to a network of bus transport routes which serve most areas but the frequency of the services is relatively low. Newry, the hub of all forms of public transport in the area, is the terminus for bus routes which include:

- Route 43 serving Forkhill, Meigh, Jonesborough, Dromintee and Kilnasaggart;
- Route 41 serving Camlough Lislea and Mullaghbane;
- and Bessbrook.

The Newry train station, on the main Belfast to Dublin rail line, lies just beyond the north-west corner of the AONB.

National Cycle Route 9 enters the AONB at Camlough and is signposted to Slieve Gullion Courtyard.

No new initiatives are planned in the AONB within the Sub Regional Transportation Strategy.

As an assessment of a ‘living landscape’, future AONB management plans will include data on the proportion of settlements with facilities such as a village shop or post office and the number of primary and secondary schools.

Countryside visits, access and recreation

Statistics are not available on tourism for the Ring of Gullion AONB as a unit; however, we are able to say that in 2005 92,500 visitors stayed overnight in the Newry and Mourne area resulting in expenditure of £14.5M. The trends are shown below.

Table 4 - Newry and Mourne Area Staying Visitors

Year	Trips	Nights	Spend
2000	80,700	319,700	£8.6 m
2001	77,800	322,400	£8.3m
2002	87,100	362,400	£10.7m
2003	78,800	352,500	£9.3m
2004	89,800	378,500	£13.5m
2005	92,500	408,200	£14.5m

Whilst tourism performance in Newry and Mourne has improved over this period, its share of Northern Ireland tourism remains at an average of around 3%. Visitors to the area primarily come from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and Europe. This may change as exchange rates between currencies fluctuate.

Progress has been made in improving the tourism infrastructure, accessibility and marketing of the South Armagh area in recent years. The South Armagh Tourism Initiative (SATI) led many initiatives bringing positive results on the ground, and the Natural Resource Rural Tourism Initiative (NRRTI) helped to address the legacy of the troubles in the area through developing new sustainable tourism infrastructure.

New tourism initiatives funded through NRRTI included:

- A new SATI website
- Direct mail to archaeology and geology departments in universities, promoting field visits to the area
- Genealogy archive at Ti Chulainn Cultural Centre
- Political tours
- Lake survey to establish angling potential
- Camlough fishing jetties and Newry Canal fishing stands
- Oriel Angling- charter boats
- Electrification of lock gates on Newry Ship Canal
- Guided tours
- Green accreditation scheme for tourism providers

In terms of the remaining potential for development of tourism infrastructure, these are opportunities to extend existing trails. For example the Ring of Gullion Way could be linked with the Newry Canal Way via the Bessbrook tramway. The disused Great Northern Railway line could be reused to provide safe access to the Newry Ship Canal for angling and water sports enthusiasts.

In early 2008 there were seven bed and breakfast and five self catering establishments in the Ring of Gullion AONB. The Ti Chulainn Cultural Centre at Mullaghbane offers both B&B and self-catering accommodation. There are no touring caravan or camping sites in the area, and no hotels in the AONB itself, however, recent development in Newry and Crossmaglen has served to improve hotel accommodation nearby.

Newry and Mourne District Council has responsibility for encouraging the development of visitor amenities and services in the AONB area. Responsibility for the overseas marketing of the destination rests with the Armagh Down Tourism Partnership, which is charged with coordinating product development, industry training and visitor servicing at regional level.

Visitors arriving by bus and train to Newry can access the AONB by bus. Journey time from Belfast or Dublin, into the heart of the AONB by public transport is around two hours. Existing bus routes do allow a visitor to be dropped off at the south side of Slieve Gullion, to walk across the mountain and to be picked up again from the north side; however timetabling is difficult with infrequent services.

At the centre of the Ring of Gullion AONB is the Slieve Gullion Forest Park with walks from the Slieve Gullion Courtyard complex, a scenic drive and a walk from an upper car park to the ancient cairns on the summits of Slieve Gullion.

There are four asserted public rights of way in the area, including the Urney Graveyard Funeral Path at Forkhill. Although the hills are an important designation feature of the AONB, there is no formal access to the Ring Dyke Hills except within Forest Service lands where informal walking access is allowed. Camlough Forest is a great asset to the area and to Newry and is in public ownership, but has no formal facilities for walkers at present. People locally walk to the summit of the Sugarloaf Hill or Sturgan Mountain. The Ring of Gullion Way has long on-road sections, albeit on quiet narrow roads. The AONB officer and Regeneration of South Armagh (ROSA) hosts organised walking tours in the area.

Camlough Lake, the Cashel Loughs, the Flurry River, Forkhill River, Cullywater and the Newry Canal are all important for water recreation and angling. Camlough is a venue for waterskiing, angling, triathlon, swimming, canoeing and coarse angling. Rowing and canoeing are practiced on the Newry Canal. Game fishing on waters elsewhere. Camlough Lake and Newry Canal are the only AONB venues with boat access and their use is constrained by limited parking and access opportunities.

The Ring of Gullion AONB has hosted many countryside recreation events, including:

- the Crooked Lake Triathlon (Camlough Lake),
- Wee Binnian Walking Festival,
- South Armagh Walking Festival
- Mullaghbane half marathon.
- 'Spin of Gullion' family cycle event
- Slieve Gullion Fell Race
- Tour of South Armagh (cycling)
- Charity walks

For cyclists, National Cycle Route 9 runs through the area between Newry and Slieve Gullion. The area is used by local cycle clubs, including a tandem club for people with visual impairment.

The Cloverhill Golf Club near Mullaghbane provides opportunities for golf and there is also a driving range at Cloghoge.

Greenvale and the Ring of Gullion equestrian centre's provide opportunities to enjoy the area on horseback.

At present, there is no one body involved in the management of the AONB that is representative of all of the interests of the recreational sector.

Built environment

There are some 27 listed buildings and structures in the AONB, including 14 houses and 4 churches. Examples of the latter include Forkhill Parish Church, St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church (Killeavy Chapel), the Church of Ireland Church in Jonesborough and the Roman Catholic Chapel in Lislea. Individual listings include bridges, farm buildings and public houses. Although just outside the AONB, Bessbrook is significant in having complete listings of all buildings in Charlemont Square, College Square and Pondview.

The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society (UAHS) and NIEA maintain a register of buildings at risk which includes Killeavy Castle and one of its gate lodges. UAHS is also concerned that tax regulations and financial incentives can influence the reuse of traditional buildings; for example grant aid is provided for replacement dwellings (where the repair bill would exceed £20,000) but not for repairs which attract VAT whereas new building is VAT free.

Three sites in the Ring of Gullion appear on the Register of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes or its Supplementary Sites listing. These are sites that have been selected as being worthy of protection through the planning process. The sites are at Killeavy Castle where there is an important gate lodge; at Hawthorn Hill which contains mature trees from the early 19th century, exotic trees and a walled garden; and at Forkhill House where the grounds contain interesting ornamental features and ponds. The National Trust's Derrymore estate is also on the register.

The courtyard buildings at Slieve Gullion Forest Park have, in recent times, been renovated to fulfil new functions, providing visitor facilities to this site, a venue for meetings and a base for the Clanrye training and employment agency.

The villages of the AONB provide local focal points for the provision of housing, social interaction, employment and services. All have experienced growth in recent years and further development within the settlement limits of each village is anticipated. Some villages have grown and developed in a way that provides a sharp visual contrast in form, massing and colour with their surroundings. The design of many new houses is essentially urban in character and makes little reference to traditional local housing style and materials. This is seen most strikingly at Mullaghbane, Forkhill and Lislea. In addition, new developments – at least in their early years - often lack the enveloping hedges and trees traditionally associated with the gardens of dwellings.

Some parts of the area, for example west of Camlough Lake and noticeably in the gaps between the hills of the Ring Dyke, are beginning to be developed for individual housing. These are visually sensitive areas within the AONB and vulnerable to a change in landscape character.

Responses to the draft Plan from RoSA and from the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC) have expressed concern that the Special Countryside Policy Area does not protect the summits and passes of all of the Ring Dyke Hills. These are visually important, contain important habitats and potentially present an area for amenity and recreation development. They are one of the main distinguishing features of the AONB.

Apart from housing, other built developments in the countryside that impact on the quality of the landscape include the construction of a new north-south gas pipeline, erection of electricity pylons and radio masts, the widening and realignment of the A1 through the AONB and further through more localised programmes of road and junction improvement and realignment. The recent removal of the observation towers by the Ministry of Defence from several of the mountain tops has greatly improved the visual integrity of the area; there is potential for further reinstatement of the vegetation at these sites.

The works to the A1 road present an opportunity to promote the AONB through signage. It is important however to ensure that the existing advertising hoardings and intrusive signage associated with the border crossing, which detract from the visual quality of the surrounding landscape, do not transfer to the new road. There is no indication that the final roadside treatment of the new A1 road has been designed to reflect the traditional character of the Ring of Gullion AONB however, some important mitigation works

have been carried out including investigation of archaeological and wetland sites during the process of route choice and development, the installation of otter passes and, the protection of aquatic life during construction.

Interpretation, awareness and understanding of the AONB

The Ring of Gullion AONB is a distinctive region within the south of County Armagh. Levels of resourcing in recent years have, however, meant that it has been more efficient to promote and interpret the AONB within the wider context of the SATI.

Initiatives to promote awareness and understanding of the AONB in recent years have included:

- creating, maintaining and promoting the Ring of Gullion Waymarked Way and production of the Ring of Gullion Way leaflet.
- an introductory AONB leaflet
- development of a Gateway Heritage visitor map to South East Ulster showing cultural and recreation sites and visitor attractions on both sides of the border. The AONB is included in this wider area.
- 15 interpretative panels to promote the geological, cultural and archaeological heritage of the Ring of Gullion.
- inclusion of the area in the cross-border 'Landscapes from Stone' series of scenic drives and walks with geological interpretation.
- 'Walk Mourne, Gullion and Cooley' route cards interpreting the geological interest of Fathom, Mullaghbane and Slieve Gullion.
- a series of walks and talks (organised by the AONB officer) to enable visitors to enjoy the landscapes and delve into its history and volcanic past.
- The Gap of the North – a book centred on the AONB on the archaeology and folklore of Armagh, Down, Louth and Monaghan.
- an AONB bookmark produced to raise awareness of the area (provided to school pupils)
- Participation in Archaeology and European Heritage Days
- a study tour of the Ring of Gullion as part of the 2006 International Geoparks conference
- a leaflet providing guidance on restoring traditional buildings

- **Uncovering the Past** - a book on geological and archeological sites in the Ring of Gullion AONB and the wider Armagh and Down area. This publication illustrates a set of information panels placed at the sites concerned.
- interpretive signs at key points of interest in the AONB developed by the AONB officer

Ti Chulain Cultural Centre, in Mullaghbane, has developed links with universities in America and delivers a module 'Ireland and the Irish' for some 50 students a year at the Council of International Schools (CIS) University in Boston. The Centre also provides accommodation and programmes under the EU Comenius programme of teacher exchanges. Ti Chulain gives visitors and academics access to its important Michael J Murphy archive, documenting the life, times and writings of the poet.

The geological features of the Ring of Gullion area were recently highlighted in a BBC television series about the formation of Northern Ireland.

The Ring of Gullion AONB is listed on the UK's National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty website www.aonb.org.uk. There are links from this site to local information.

5. The Ring of Gullion Action Plan 2011-2016

This management plan, like the designation, aims to raise awareness and encourage a focus on the landscape - the beauty and distinctiveness of its natural features and cultural heritage, the opportunities to derive benefit from this landscape and its capacity to accommodate change. The development of the management plan was overseen by a working group (see Appendix 2).

Priorities are identified under three themes as follows:

Looking after the AONB

- Protecting the natural environment by maintaining biodiversity, encouraging participation in agri-environment schemes and encouraging broadleaved woodland planting.
- Maintaining the cultural landscape by mapping rural heritage features, promoting the restoration of traditional farm buildings, developing guidance on design of villages and dwellings.
- Engaging the community in protecting the area by developing a deeper understanding of its special features.

Living and Working in the AONB

- Sustaining vibrant rural communities by seeking ways to bring derelict houses back into use as affordable accommodation.
- Encouraging 'safe routes' to schools and to village services.
- Promoting sustainable rural enterprise through advice and developing job skills in countryside management, environmental management and tourism and encouraging financial support for new and sustainable tourism businesses.
- Safeguarding the cultural heritage of the AONB through assisting the local community to retain, invest in and celebrate knowledge of its history, culture and traditional skills.

Visiting and Enjoying the AONB

- Encouraging visitors to be aware of the special qualities of the Ring of Gullion AONB through provision of more accessible information.
- Providing a warm and informed welcome for visitors at a major visitor centre at Slieve Gullion Courtyard; also by installing AONB boundary signs, signs on special interest trails and a map of the AONB aimed at visitors.

- Preparing masterplans for a wider range of visitor facilities to help provide an excellent visitor experience.
- Increasing opportunities for off road walking, cycling and horse riding, developing a 'Ring Dyke Walk' and providing more opportunities to visit the area by public transport.

Actions and Responsibilities

The next section of this report sets out the Action Plan to manage the AONB over the next 5yrs. There is no one organisation or individual that can implement this action plan as a whole. Action will be required by all stakeholders, individually and collectively, if the targets are to be achieved.

For some proposed actions, implementation will be the responsibility of only one agency. For others, the co-operation of several agencies will be required to attain the target. In the plan below, we have sought to identify which agency will take responsibility for leading on implementation, will coordinate the input of the other stakeholders and will report progress on this action to the AONB Management Group. Those playing a supporting role are shown in italics.

For one or two of the actions, the relevant stakeholder will be identified during the implementation process.

Related Actions

Actions that are interrelated are noted. For example, should funding to create the Project Officer post be unavailable, then projects directly related to that post may be adversely affected. A key to the abbreviations used in the Action Plan is provided overleaf.

Costs

All actions require staff time. This is taken as read and is only mentioned where this is the only substantive resource required.

Potential funding

For some targets, it is possible at planning stage to identify a likely suitable source of funding. Identifying such a source does not indicate that approval has yet been obtained for the project.



OBJECTIVE 1 Protecting and enhancing the AONB's biodiversity and sites of nature conservation value		LEADER	YEAR				
			11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
1.1	<p>Target: Complete AONB Biodiversity Action Plan by March 2012</p> <p>Costs: staff time</p> <p>Potential funding: NIEA, LBAP Funding to NMDC</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager, NMDC LBAP Officer</p>		✓				
1.1.1	Collect and collate AONB Biodiversity Plan information from the Newry and Mourne Local Biodiversity Strategy.	NMDC	✓				
1.1.2	Draft AONB Biodiversity Action Plan.	AONBB NMDC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.2	<p>Target: Create two Local Nature Conservation Areas and one Local Nature Reserve: 3 new sites by March 2016</p> <p>Costs: £30K for infra structure, promotion and publicity</p> <p>Potential funding: NIEA, LBAP funding to NMDC</p> <p>NMDC Voluntary Contribution to Community Groups, NIEA Natural Heritage Grant Programme, DARD Rural Development Programme 2007-2013</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer, NMDC.</p>						
1.2.1	Identify three potential sites near settlements (see Action 4.2).	AONBB NMDC			✓		
1.2.2	Carry out Phase 1 survey of the potential sites.	AONBB			✓		
1.2.3	Carry out Phase 2 survey of candidate LNR site.	AONBB NMDC				✓	
1.2.4	Manage the LNCA areas; Site one in 11/13 and Sites one and two in 13/14.	COM				✓	✓
1.2.5	Designate Local Nature Reserve with management agreement between NMDC and community group.	NMDC					✓
1.3	<p>Target: Improve current standards of reporting of damage to the countryside in order to reduce time lag in remedying damage.</p> <p>Costs: staff time</p> <p>Potential funding: Postholder responsible: AONB Manager, NIEA</p> <p>Background: EHS 07/08 monitoring regime includes annual ASSI/SAC site integrity monitoring, site visit response to reports of incidents of concern and resurvey of ASSIs/SAC every six years.</p> <p>AONB 07/08: monitoring regime includes visual inspection of ASSIs/SAC for major impacts twice a year. Impacts identified in the wider countryside reported as soon as observed; major impacts reported to NIEA (ASSI/SAC), DARD (cross compliance, environmental impact assessment), Planning Service (quarrying), NMDC (fly tipping, abandoned cars).</p>	NMDC					

1.3.1	Maintain 07/08 monitoring regime of designated sites.	NIEA / AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.3.2	Increase monitoring regime to four times per annum.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.4	Target: Undertake <u>Slieve Gullion Footpath Repair Project</u> to protect the Special Area of Conservation (SAC); 3.9km of footpath and adjacent habitat repaired by March 2012 Costs: £370K Postholder responsible: AONB Manager (Project Officer when appointed)								
1.4.1	Enter in to land lease agreement.	NMDC / FS	✓						
1.4.2	Enter in to management agreement.	NMDC	✓						
1.4.3	Appoint consultants to develop project.	NMDC		✓					
1.4.4	Appoint contractor to undertake work.			✓					
1.5	Target: Increase the percentage of land in the AONB under DARD agri-environment scheme agreements. Costs: staff time Potential funding: DARD Rural Development Programme 2007-13 Body responsible: DARD Countryside Management Unit								
1.5.1	DARD CMU to encourage greater participation in Agri-Environment Schemes.	DARD CMU							
1.5.2	DARD CMU to increase awareness of and compliance with Agri-Environment Schemes through workshops, farm walks and training events.	DARD CMU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.5.3	AONB Officer to organise one interpretative walk per year on an Agri-Environment scheme farm within the AONB	AONBB	✓						
1.5.4	AONB Officer to raise public awareness of Agri-Environment Schemes through AONB newsletter and provision of DARD literature on the schemes.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.5.5	AONB Officer to promote Agri-Environment Schemes among farmers when opportunities arise.	AONBB	✓						
1.5.6	AONB Officer to notify DARD CMU / DoE of any negative environmental impacts on the AONB.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.5.7	AONB Officer to notify DARD CMU of priority species sightings within the AONB.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

1.6	<p>Target: Carry out Red Squirrel conservation within the AONB Costs: staff time Potential funding: NIEA Body responsible: DARD Countryside Management Unit</p>							
1.6.1	Draw up local Red Squirrel action plan.	AONBB	✓					
1.6.2	Establishment of local Red Squirrel Conservation Group.	AONBB		✓				
1.6.3	DARD CMD staff to encourage uptake of Red Squirrel feeders on appropriate Agri-environment scheme farms in the AONB.	DARD-CMD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

OBJECTIVE 2 Conserving the AONB's landscape heritage and encouraging new development to reflect locally distinctive character								
ACTION	LEADER	YEAR						
		11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16		
2.1	<p>Target: Lobby relevant organisations by March 2012 to seek change in legislation and policy to improve the likelihood of restoration or renovation of traditional buildings. Costs: staff time Potential funding: Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>							
2.1.1	Identify relevant organisations, legislation and policy.	DARDCM	✓					
2.1.2	Identify actions required to improve opportunities for restoration or renovation of traditional buildings.			✓				
2.1.3	Lobby all relevant organisations.			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.2	<p>Target: Produce Building, Landscape and Rural Heritage <u>Design Guide</u> by March 2013. Costs: staff time + production, promotion and distribution costs (est. £20K) Potential funding: NIEA Natural Heritage Grant Programme, DARD Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer for commissioning (Planning Service, NIHE, UAHS, etc to provide expertise). Background: Maintenance of landscape quality requires widespread recognition of the importance of appropriate siting, design, maintenance and retention of traditional features such as field boundaries, pillars, gates, wells and other landscape features. New buildings should be carefully designed and sited to maintain landscape quality.</p>							
2.2.1	Secure funding and produce Guide.	AONBB			✓			
2.2.2	Promote and distribute Guide.	AONBB					✓	✓

OBJECTIVE 3 Increasing opportunities for community involvement in protecting and enhancing the AONB		LEADER	YEAR				
			11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
3.1	<p>Target: Support community projects and activities that meet the objectives of the AONB Management Strategy: at least one group assisted each year to undertake a project or activity in support of AONB objectives.</p> <p>Costs: staff time</p> <p>Potential funding:</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager and (when appointed) AONB Project Officer</p>						
3.1.1	Identify potential projects and participant groups. Identify assistance required and provide this where possible.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.1.2	Keep up to date information on grant availability.	AONBB NMDC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.2	<p>Target: Increased awareness locally of biodiversity of the AONB: <u>Local Biodiversity Awareness training programme</u> for the community delivered during period 2011-14. Aim is to have a minimum participation of 10 people at each event. Outcome of seminar to include identification of three suitable sites for potential nature conservation management by the community.</p> <p>Costs: seminar (£1K) and workshops (£2.5K)</p> <p>Potential funding: NIEA Natural Heritage Grant</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer</p>						
3.2.1	Secure funding and hold seminar on local involvement in nature conservation within the AONB with relevant speakers.	AONBB NMDC			✓		
3.2.2	Publish and distribute proceedings of seminar.	AONBB			✓		
3.2.3	Hold four training workshops on basic species identification, surveying and mapping.	AONBB NMDC				✓	

3.3	<p>Target: Deliver project to offer local people the chance to develop skills and become involved in landscape maintenance by March 2014. Ring of Gullion Traditional Building Restoration and Countryside Skills Project.</p> <p>Costs: £25K for skills and £25K for advice service.</p> <p>Potential funding: East Border Region INTERREG IV Environment Programme, DARD Rural Development Programme 2007-2013</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager for developing project with partners: As the project is developed a suitable agency for offering the advice and information service will be identified.</p> <p>Background: This project is a joint initiative between Ring of Gullion AONB, Mourne Heritage Trust and Louth County Council. Skills project to comprise three-five training sessions to be offered in each of three skills (eg. dry stone walling, hedge laying, thatching, lime mortar plastering) with a minimum of four participants in each session. A wider advice service to be offered for those unable to participate on the course.</p>					
3.3.1	Skills programme delivered.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.4	<p>Target: Hold annual Local Community Open Meeting to discuss and report on progress in implementing AONB management plan.</p> <p>Costs: meeting costs</p> <p>Potential funding: Core</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>					
3.4.1	Advertise and hold a meeting. Report back to AONB Management Group.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.5	<p>Target: Hold annual Farming Community Open Meeting to discuss and report on progress in implementing AONB management plan.</p> <p>Costs: meeting costs</p> <p>Potential funding: Core</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>					
3.5.1	Advertise and hold a meeting. Report back to AONB Management Group.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.6	<p>Target: Hold annual Recreational Community Open Meeting to discuss and report on progress in implementing AONB management plan.</p> <p>Costs: meeting Costs</p> <p>Potential funding: Core</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>					
3.6.1	Advertise and hold a meeting. Report back to AONB Management Group.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓

OBJECTIVE 4 Developing sustainable access and recreational opportunities in the AONB						
ACTION	LEADER	YEAR				
		11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
4.1						
4.1.1	AONBB CAAN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.2						
4.2.1	AONBB			✓		
4.2.2	AONBB			✓	✓	✓
4.2.3	AONBB NIEA NMDC			✓	✓	✓
4.3						
4.3.1	NMDC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.3.2	Develop plan (including strategic environmental assessment) for infrastructure works for each parcel of land acquired in accordance with strategic masterplan.	NMDC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.3.3	Install infrastructure (e.g. footpaths, jetties, angling platforms).	NMDC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.4	Target: Formulate proposals to improve recreational use of Slieve Gullion Forest Park by March 2012 and implement these proposals thereafter. Costs: meetings + infrastructure works Potential funding : Postholder responsible: Forest Service Officer / AONB Manager							
4.4.1	Convene working group (FS, NMDC, AONBB, SGCG) and develop proposals for recreational use of Slieve Gullion Forest Park. Agree who will take lead in implementing proposals.	FS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.4.2	Implement proposals.	tbc		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.5	Target: Create a <u>Heritage Driving Route</u> in AONB by March 2014. Costs: £5K for producing booklet Potential funding: DARD Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer. ADT/NITB as well as NMDC for advice							
4.5.1	Identify route and secure funding for booklet.	AONBB			✓			
4.5.2	Publish and promote route guide.	NMDC				✓		
4.6	Target: Develop concept plan for off-road walking route along the Ring Dyke by March 2014 Costs: staff time Potential funding: Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer. CAAN for advice.							
4.6.1	Map (GIS) and carry out field survey of route.	AONBB			✓			
4.6.2	Prepare report describing route, land ownership, works required and timetable. Include land owners' perspective on potential access in report.	AONBB					✓	
4.7	Target: Develop a business case for a Rambler Bus Service in the AONB by March 2012 with the aim of improving public transport for visitors and local community. Costs: Potential funding: Body responsible: Translink							
4.7.1	Assess the economic viability and potential usage of a service connecting Newry bus and train stations and sites within the AONB.	Translink	✓					
4.7.2	If potentially viable, make recommendations for route and operation.	Translink	✓					

4.8	<p>Target: Produce and distribute to local outlets 3000 copies of <u>route-cards for walks on Slieve Gullion</u>.</p> <p>Costs: £3K</p> <p>Potential funding: NIEA Natural Heritage Small Grant Programme</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>							
4.8.1	Source and secure funding for production.							
4.8.2	Design, print and distribute route-cards.	AONBB	✓					
4.9	<p>Target: <u>Inspect and maintain the Ring of Gullion Waymarked Way</u></p> <p>Costs: £2K budget for routine maintenance.</p> <p>Potential funding: NMDC</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer. CAAN to train volunteers in validating the trail.</p> <p>Background: NMDC is responsible for maintaining this route; AONBB undertakes the maintenance work under a Service Level Agreement.</p>	AONBB	✓					
4.9.1	Carry out four inspections per annum. Maintain path, fencing, signage and waymarkers and resolve land issues with owners.	AONBB				✓		✓
4.9.2	Recruit and train volunteers to undertake annual condition survey of waymarked way for validation and insurance purposes.	CAAN					✓	✓
4.9.3	Installation of Ulster Way signage and waymarkers.	NIEA	✓			✓		
4.10	<p>Target: <u>Implement Slieve Gullion Footpath Schools' Heritage Programme and Volunteer Programme</u> in 2013.</p> <p>Costs: £60K</p> <p>Potential funding: HLF, NIEA, UWT</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager to develop the project. Delivery likely to be either by a new part time environmental education officer or undertaken (under contract) by an outside provider.</p> <p>Background: This project is an integral part of the Slieve Gullion Footpath Repair project (1.4). Aim to engage eight primary schools in a project centred on the mountain landscape heritage and in footpath restoration works. Volunteers from the wider community will also be offered the opportunity of engaging in this project.</p>							
4.10.1	Project to be developed and funding secured.	AONBB	✓					
4.10.2	Environmental education Officer or contractor appointed.	AONBB				✓		
4.10.3	Eight primary schools signed up to and engaged in the project.	AONBB					✓	✓
4.10.4	Volunteers trained and engaged in footpath maintenance work.	AONBB					✓	✓

4.11	<p>Target: Improve directional signage on asserted PROWs in AONB. Aim to erect signs on one route per annum. Costs: borne by NMDC Potential funding: Body responsible: NMDC Background: This target will be subject to obtaining landowners' agreement. Signs required at entry points to asserted PROW and at junctions.</p>						
4.11.1	Assess signage requirements and manufacture signs.	NMDC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.11.2	Arrange maintenance of signs.	NMDC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.12	<p>Target: Encourage schools in the AONB to participate in the Best Foot Forward Programme to encourage more people in the AONB to enjoy the health and environmental benefits of walking and cycling. Costs: staff time Potential funding: Core Postholder responsible: AONB Manager. Background: DRD's Travelwise Initiative can provide funding to participating schools.</p>						
4.12.1	Write to all Key Stage Two teachers to participate in this programme.	AONBB	✓				
4.13	<p>Target: Encourage all schools in the AONB to take part in the Safe Routes to School Scheme. Aim to have three new schools participating by 2016. Costs: staff time Potential funding: Core Postholder responsible: AONB Manager. Background: DRD's Travelwise Initiative can provide funding to participating schools.</p>	NMDC					
4.13.1	Contact all schools in AONB to encourage participation in the Safe Routes to Schools Scheme.	AONBB DRD				✓	

OBJECTIVE 5 Monitoring recreational usage and condition of recreational facilities in the AONB						
ACTION	LEADER	YEAR				
		11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
5.1 Target: Monitor condition of asserted Public Rights of Way in the AONB. Costs: staff time Potential funding: staff related Body responsible: AONBB staff to report their observations to NMDC.						
5.1.1 Inspect condition of PROWs in AONB annually and report to NMDC.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.2 Target: Collect data on number of visitors at key sites using car and pedestrian counters Costs: £5K per annum Potential funding: NMDC Body responsible: NMDC for data collection and reporting to AONB group. Background: Equipment is inspected & repaired by contract. Numbers collected from seven car counters and ten pedestrian counters.						
5.2.1 Statistics collated and reported to AONB management group four times per annum.	NMDC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.3 Target: Carry out visitor participant survey at key locations and events undertaken in 2013/14 to improve AONBB's understanding of visitors. Costs: £10K Potential funding: DARD Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 Postholder responsible: Armagh Down Tourism Background: Results of this survey to be compared with results of survey undertaken in 2005. Armagh Down Tourism currently conducts visitor surveys at Slieve Gullion.						
5.3.1 Carry out survey.	ADT			✓		
5.4 Target: NMDC to assess user evidence for one new PROW each year in AONB Costs: staff time Potential funding: Body responsible: NMDC assisted by AONBB staff Background: Evidence of use is required by Council to assert Public Rights of Way.						
5.4.1 Collect PROW user's evidence.	NMDC AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.4.2 Assess PROW user evidence.	NMDC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

5.5	<p>Target: Identify opportunities for development of <u>low cost and landscape-friendly visitor accommodation</u> (e.g. touring caravan/camp sites, camping barns, etc) in AONB by March 2012.</p> <p>Costs: staff time</p> <p>Potential funding: DARD Rural Development Plan 2007-2013 may fund commissioning consultant to undertake study if the lead agencies decide this is necessary.</p> <p>Body responsible: NMDC</p> <p>Background: There is a perception that an increase in low-cost visitor accommodation and accommodation making better use of existing underused buildings would benefit the local economy. However, it is uncertain if there is sufficient current market demand for increased provision of visitor accommodation in the AONB itself. Group to consider demand for this type of accommodation, financial viability of the enterprise and opportunity for reuse of underused properties.</p>	NMDC	▼		
5.5.1	Evaluate potential and assess market demand as part of the review of the Newry and Mourne District Tourism Strategy.	NMDC	▼		
5.6	<p>Target: Develop <u>maintenance programme</u> for existing <u>information panels</u> at key sites in AONB by March 2015 to ensure these are kept in good condition.</p> <p>Costs: £7.5K for repair/replacement</p> <p>Potential funding: DARD Rural Development Programme 2007-2013</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer</p>				
5.6.1	Source and secure funding.	AONBB			▼
5.6.2	Carry out necessary replacement or repairs.	AONBB			▼

OBJECTIVE 6 Increasing public awareness and appreciation of the special landscape of the AONB through promotion, events & activities						
ACTION	LEADER	YEAR				
		11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
6.1						
6.1.1	AONBB	✓				
6.1.2	AONBB			✓		✓
6.2						
6.2.1	AONBB	✓				
6.2.2	AONBB		✓		✓	✓
6.3						
6.3.1	AONBB		✓		✓	✓
6.4						
6.4.1	AONBB	✓		✓	✓	✓

6.5	<p>Target: Promote AONB by supplying articles about events and activities to local and regional newspapers, magazines and other broadcasting media. Costs: staff time Potential Funding: Core Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>					
6.5.1	Write and submit articles to various media. Identify one opportunity per year for magazine feature.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5.2	Respond to opportunities for radio interviews on major issues or events in relation to the AONB.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6	<p>Target: Give at least three talks/presentations per annum to promote awareness of AONB Costs: staff time & mileage Potential funding: Core Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>					
6.6.1	Opportunities sought to give presentations to groups or organisations to promote the AONB.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.7	<p>Target: Produce and distribute brochure about the AONB by end of 2011 Costs: staff time + publication/distribution Potential funding: Core Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>					
6.7.1	Draft, design and publish 5-10,000 copies of brochure.	AONBB	✓			
6.7.2	Distribute brochure.			✓		
6.8	<p>Target: Draft and publish 'An Activity Map of Ring of Gullion AONB' by March 2014. Costs: £10K Potential funding: Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 Postholder responsible: AONB Manager will lead in collaboration with OSNI. Background: Other AONBs in Northern Ireland have undertaken similar collaborative projects with OSNI to encourage people to enjoy the activities offered within the AONB.</p>				✓	
6.8.1	Source and secure funding.	AONBB		✓		
6.8.2	Draft map.	OSNI/ AONB		✓		
6.8.3	Print (5000 copies) and distribute to tourism outlets (Ireland and beyond).	OSNI/ AONBB			✓	

6.9	<p>Target: Hold AONB heritage photographic competition in 2014. Costs: staff costs, advertisement, photo reproduction and display Potential funding: Project Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer Background: Joint aims of this action are to encourage people to appreciate the AONB landscape, to celebrate the landscape and to create an archive of images for promotional and publicity purposes and as a record of the landscape. Competitions for different age groups and topics, e.g. natural, cultural and built heritage, village life, country life and countryside recreation.</p>					
6.9.1	Advertise and hold photographic competition.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	
6.9.2	Arrange display of photographs in travelling exhibition.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	
6.9.3	Store images in archive.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	
6.10	<p>Target: Design, manufacture and install five AONB displays at tourist information centres. Costs: staff time + display materials costs Potential funding: Core Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>					
6.10.1	Design and manufacture five displays. Update as necessary.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.10.2	Move displays to new locations as required.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.11	<p>Target: Erect AONB boundary signs at key entry points to AONB by 2013 Costs: borne by NIEA Potential funding: Body responsible: NIEA</p>					
6.11.1	Agree siting, design and manufacturing specification with DRD.	NIEA	✓			
6.11.2	Manufacture and install signs.	DRD	✓			
6.12	<p>Target: Promote AONB trails on WALKNI website and in the NITB Walking Guide and other related publications by March 2012. Costs: staff time Potential funding: Core Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>					
6.12.1	Provide descriptions and photos of AONB trails for the WALKNI website and for the NITB Walking Guide as new routes are developed.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.12.2	Keep Ring of Gullion AONB trails on WALKNI website.	CAAN	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.12.3	Update trail descriptions as necessary and send to publishers. Provide text and photos to other publishers on request.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓

<p>6.13</p>	<p>Target: Offer local people training to retain cultural heritage: <u>Community Cultural Heritage Training and Audit Project 2012-2015</u>. Aim is to train four community groups and four primary schools to collect and collate cultural heritage information and data. Costs: staff time + £20K training sessions, £2.5K GIS system, £2.5K report production. Potential funding: Joint initiative between Ring of Gullion AONB and Mourne Heritage Trust and Louth County Council. Heritage Lottery Fund. Postholder responsible: AONB Manager to develop this project with partners.</p>					
<p>6.13.1</p>	<p>Develop project, obtain funding and identify who will deliver training.</p>	<p>AONBB</p>	<p>▼</p>			
<p>6.13.2</p>	<p>Deliver training</p>	<p>tbc</p>	<p>▼</p>			
<p>6.13.3</p>	<p>Collate information generated. Store in GIS format and publish on AONB website. Update regularly on receipt of new material.</p>	<p>AONBB</p>	<p>▼</p>	<p>▼</p>	<p>▼</p>	<p>▼</p>
<p>6.13.4</p>	<p>Produce project guide, publish, promote and distribute.</p>	<p>AONBB</p>				<p>▼</p>
<p>6.14</p>	<p>Target: Offer local people opportunity to take part in <u>Local Heritage Guide Training Programme</u>. Train 10-15 people as visitor guides, qualified to interpret natural, cultural and built heritage of the AONB by March 2014. Aim to involve 10-15 people in each training session. Costs: £5K delivery of training Potential funding: East Border Region INTERREG IV Programme Postholder responsible: AONB Manager to work with training provider (eg. SRC) to develop project. Background: It is believed a guide's local knowledge adds substantially to the visitor experience. This project will offer AONB residents the option of widening their employment opportunities.</p>					
<p>6.14.1</p>	<p>Funding application secured for course.</p>	<p>AONBB SRC</p>	<p>▼</p>			
<p>6.14.2</p>	<p>Training course held.</p>	<p>AONBB SRC</p>	<p>▼</p>			
<p>6.15</p>	<p>Target: Provide people with <u>events/activities to enjoy the AONB</u>. Aim to provide 10 events/days of interpretative activities per annum. Costs: Potential funding: DARD Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, NIEA Natural Heritage Grant Programme Postholder responsible: AONB Manager to develop programme; other partners may assist with publicity and delivery of this action. Background: Activities should capitalise on relevant events such as European Heritage, National Bike Week, Archaeology Days, etc.</p>					
<p>6.15.1</p>	<p>Organise, publicise and run 10 days of events per annum aiming to attract at least 15 people to each.</p>	<p>AONBB</p>	<p>▼</p>	<p>▼</p>	<p>▼</p>	<p>▼</p>

OBJECTIVE 7 Establishing an effective body to implement the management plan for the AONB and to respond to opportunities for protecting and enhancing the AONB						
ACTION	LEADER	YEAR				
		11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
<p>7.1</p> <p>Target: Establish an effective management body for the AONB. First meeting by June 2011 with regular meetings thereafter.</p> <p>Costs: staff time + meeting costs</p> <p>Potential funding: Core</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager to facilitate</p> <p>Background: The role of this body is to oversee implementation of the management strategy, to provide advice and guidance to the AONB officers and to facilitate interaction between the bodies responsible for the AONB. Composition of group to be based on AONB Management Strategy Steering Group to include representatives of countryside recreation interests, government, community, business, local strategy partnerships and other stakeholders who have a role and function within the AONB.</p>						
7.1.1	NMDC / NIEA	✓				
7.1.2	AONBB	✓				
7.1.3	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.1.4	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>7.2</p> <p>Target: Secure funding for core staff and office costs to enable delivery of AONB management plan. Submit bids for funding to NIEA. Apply for funding from other sources in accordance with those bodies' funding cycles.</p> <p>Costs: staff time to develop applications</p> <p>Potential funding: NIEA Natural Heritage grant, NMDC, charitable bodies, business/private sponsors</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager on behalf of sponsor (see background)</p> <p>Background: Core staff to include one full time AONB Manager and one full time administration officer. Core funding required to run office and to secure project funding. NIEA grants are only available to a legal entity; for 2010/12 the grant application was made on behalf of the AONB by NMDC.</p>						
7.2.1	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

7.3	<p>Target: Secure funding for AONB Projects Officer to allow delivery of AONB management plan targets 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 4.2, 4.5, 4.9, 5.1, 5.4, 5.7, 6.9, 9.1, 9.3, 9.4</p> <p>Costs: c.£40K per annum</p> <p>Potential funding: NIEA Natural Heritage grant, NMDC, charitable bodies, business/private sponsors</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager to submit funding application on behalf of employing sponsor. AONB Manager to oversee post.</p>					
7.3.1	Identify sources of funding for an AONB Projects Officer. Apply for funding.	AONBB		✓		
7.3.2	Employ an AONB Projects Officer.	tbc		✓		✓
7.4	<p>Target: Develop a database of potential funding opportunities for AONB projects.</p> <p>Costs: staff time</p> <p>Potential funding: Core</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>					
7.4.1	Research and update database of funding available. Establish and maintain contact with potential funders. Check Grant Tracker monthly.	AONBB		✓	✓	✓
7.5	<p>Target: Submit at least one funding application for landscape management projects each year.</p> <p>Costs: staff time</p> <p>Potential funding:</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p> <p>Background: Requires database of funding opportunities and potential partners and staff time to prepare bids. Success will depend partly on the availability of funding.</p>					
7.5.1	Submit funding applications each year for landscape management operations.	AONBB		✓	✓	✓
7.6	<p>Target: AONB staff to network with staff of other organisations working in the protection of the landscape on a regular basis to further aims of the AONB.</p> <p>Costs: staff time</p> <p>Potential funding: Core</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager and AONB Project Officer</p>					
7.6.1	Meet at least once a year with appropriate officers to discuss topics of mutual interest and opportunities for cooperation.	AONBB		✓	✓	✓
7.6.2	Participate in networking groups such as CAAN, NIPAN, Countryside Recreation Group, and CAAN Countryside Officers Forum.	AONBB		✓	✓	✓
8.6.3	Develop strategic partnerships to deliver actions within AONB management plan where appropriate.	AONBB		✓	✓	✓

7.7	<p>Target: Represent the AONB's interest in public consultations. Respond to advertised opportunities to comment on development proposals in or affecting the AONB. Comment on all applications for development consent with potential significant impact on the landscape quality of the AONB.</p> <p>Costs: staff time</p> <p>Potential funding: Core</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager.</p> <p>Background: Local newspapers will be consulted to identify projects which may affect the AONB. Other relevant consultations will be responded to as resources permit.</p>					
7.7.1	Comment on all newspaper-advertised applications for development consent likely to have a significant effect on the landscape of the AONB and to all draft area plans.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.7.2	Respond to requests for comment on relevant consultations as resources permit.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓

OBJECTIVE 8 Monitoring and reporting progress							
ACTION	LEADER	YEAR					
		11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	
8.1							
8.1.1	Report on progress and conduct review with stakeholders.	AONBB		✓			
8.1.2	Revise Management Plan in light of consultations.	AONBB		✓			
8.1.3	Initiate new management plan for next five year period.	AONBB				✓	

OBJECTIVE 9 Researching the AONB		LEADER	YEAR				
			11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
9.1	<p>Target: Prepare AONB research and monitoring strategy in 2013 for implementation 2014-2016</p> <p>Costs:</p> <p>Potential funding:</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer</p> <p>Background: Further research and monitoring of AONB condition (rural heritage features, biodiversity, landscape and land use) is required.</p>						
9.1.1	Develop a research and monitoring strategy for the AONB and source funding.	AONBB			✓		
9.1.2	Implement monitoring programme.	AONBB				✓	✓
9.2	<p>Target: Develop and maintain Geographical Information System (GIS) archive of the AONB.</p> <p>Costs:</p> <p>Potential funding: Core</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p> <p>Background: Relevant data sets include Area Plan designations, biodiversity, socio-economic, tourism, recreation, farm census data sets, etc.</p>						
9.2.1	Update hardware and software and train staff in its use.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9.2.2	Develop GIS database.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9.3	<p>Target: Undertake historical landscape character study of the AONB by March 2015</p> <p>Costs: training course</p> <p>Potential funding:</p> <p>Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer</p>						
9.3.1	Train staff in methodology.	AONBB					✓
9.3.2	Undertake assessment and collate information.	AONBB					✓
9.3.3	Enter results in GIS and present findings to Management Body.	AONBB					✓

9.4	<p>Target: Develop and maintain photographic archive of the AONB. Costs: Potential funding: Postholder responsible: AONB Project Officer</p>					
9.4.1	Existing and new material collated and entered into archive.	AONBB		✓	✓	✓
9.4.2	Seasonal record to be created by identifying suitable locations and installing 15 mounting plates to allow recording of changes in landscape four times per annum. Project Officer to take the photos.	AONBB		✓	✓	✓
9.4.3	Gaps in record identified and new material acquired and added to archive.	AONBB		✓	✓	✓
9.5	<p>Target: Develop an AONB reference library of relevant audio-visual and published material. Costs: Potential funding: Postholder responsible: AONB Manager</p>					
9.5.1	Acquire, catalogue and store relevant material as resources permit for research, promotion and publicity for the AONB.	AONBB	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix I - Scheduled Monuments

Type of Monument	Location (Townland)	Town / Village
Cashel and Portal Tomb	Aghmakane	Lisle
Standing Stone	Ballard	Lisle
Portal Tomb	Latbirget	Lisle
Portal Tomb	Aughadanove	Mullaghbane
Enclosure/Linear Earthwork	Dorsy, Tullynaval, Ummerac	Dorsy
Cashel	Carrigans	Silverbridge
Cashel	Carrive	Silverbridge
Ecclesiastical Site	Cloghinny	Drumintee
Ecclesiastical Site	Mullaghbane	Mullaghbane
Standing Alone	Tullynavall	Silverbridge
Earthwork	Cashel	Silverbridge
Linear Earthwork	Ballinliss	Meigh
Megalithic Tomb	Clontygora	Killeen
Cashell	Foughillotra	Jonesborough
Linear Earthwork	Seafin	Meigh
Linear Earthwork	Aghayallogge	Meigh
Megalithic Chambers	Clontygora	Killeen
Rath	Tullydonnell (Gage)	Ballsmill
Enclosure	Shean	Forkhill
Rath	Carrickastickan	Forkhill
Enclosure and Cairn	Carrickastickan	Forkhill
Cairn	Carrickbroad	Forkhill
Rath	Carrickbroad	Forkhill
Cashel	Carrickbroad	Jonesborough
Newry Canal		

There are also five scheduled State Care sites

- Clonlum court tomb
- Clonlum portal tomb
- Killeen cashel (Lisbanemore)
- Killeen cashel (Lisdoo)
- Edenappa (Kilnasaggart) inscribed pillar stone.

Appendix II - Members of the Ring of Gullion AONB in 2009 Management Plan Working Group.

Organisation	Name
Clanrye	Mr Liam Devine
Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN)	Dr Caro-lyne Ferris
DARD Forest Service	Mr Mark Parker
DARD Rural Development (South Branch)	Mr John McDermot
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Countryside Management (CM)	Mr Keith Johnston Mr Aidan Kerr
Department of the Environment (DOE), Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)	Ms Sandi Howie Mr Colum McDaid Mr Ken Neill
Department of the Environment, Planning Service	Mr Tony Donnelly
Department for Regional Development, Roads Service	Mr John Hall Mr Ivor Johnston
Geological Survey of Northern Ireland	Dr Patrick McKeever Dr Kirstin Lemon
Newry and Mourne District Council (NMDC), Members	Clr Colman Burns Clr Geraldine Donnelly Clr Anthony Flynn Clr Danny Kennedy
Newry and Mourne District Council, Officers	Mr Jonathan McGilly Ms Michelle Boyle
Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association	Mr Lawrence Nugent
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Mr Jan Sweeney
Northern Ireland Tourist Board	Mr Richard Robinson
Regeneration of South Armagh (RoSA)	Ms Edina McCoy Mr Damian McGenity
Ring of Gullion AONB Officer	Dr Ron Murray
South Armagh Farmers Group	Mr Sean Quinn
Ulster Farmers Union	Mr Robert Cummings

Appendix III Glossary - Acronyms

GIS	Geographic Information System	HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan	IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NI	Northern Ireland	NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
ROI	Republic of Ireland	NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
tbc	to be confirmed	NIPAN	Northern Ireland Protected Areas Network
UK	United Kingdom	NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistical Research Agency
WALKNI	website of NI walking routes	NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
NNRTI	Natural Rural Tourism Initiative	NMDC	Newry and Mourne District Council
LEADER	Liason Entre Actions pour le Developement de l'Economie Rurale	NRRTI	Natural Resource Rural Tourism Initiative
Designations			
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NIEA)	OSNI	Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland
ASSI	Area of Special Scientific Interest (NIEA)	ROSA	Regeneration of South Armagh
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area (DARD)	SGCG	Slieve Gullion Courtyard Group
PROW	Public Right of Way	SRC	Southern Regional College
SAC	Special Area of Conservation	UAHS	Ulster Architectural Heritage Society
Agencies and other Bodies			
ADT	Armagh Down Tourism	UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
AONBB	AONB staff	UWT	Ulster Wildlife Trust
CAAN	Countryside Access and Activities Network		
COM	Community groups		
DARD	Department for Agriculture and Rural Development		
DARDCMU	DARD Countryside Management Unit		
DOE	Department of the Environment		
DRD	Department for Regional Development		
EC	European Community		
EGN	European Geopark Network		
EHS	Environment and Heritage Service		
ESCR	Earth Science Conservation Review		
EU	European Union		
FS	Forest Service		

Our aim is to protect, conserve and promote the natural environment and built heritage for the benefit of present and future generations.

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