



An audit of access to Strangford Lough for water-based recreation

May 2018



CONTENTS

List of Figures	8
1 INTRODUCTION	12
1.1 Background to project.....	12
1.2 The study area.....	12
1.3 Sustainability	12
1.4 Methodology.....	13
2 Assessment of need	16
2.1 Strategic context	16
2.2 Strategic context summary	16
3 Environmental context	21
3.1 Summary of environmental designations.....	21
3.2 Regulation of access.....	24
3.2.1 Right of access	24
3.2.2 Strangford Lough Regulation of Anchoring, Mooring and Diving Byelaws 2012	24
3.2.3 Ownership of Strangford Lough.....	24
4 Strategic audit, assessment and description of current access to the water	32
4.1 Review of current and future trends in water-based recreation relevant to Strangford Lough	32
4.1.1 Current participation levels – domestic and tourism.....	32
4.1.2 Trends in watersport participation	32
4.1.3 Tourism opportunity.....	33
4.1.4 Summary.....	34
4.2 Overview assessment of type and volume of current water-based recreation.....	35
4.2.1 Sailing – local boaters and visitors	35
4.2.2 Paddling including canoeing & kayaking.....	37
4.2.3 Coastal rowing	38
4.2.4 Diving.....	39
4.2.5 Swimming (including triathlon).....	40
4.2.6 Windsurfing	41
4.2.7 Kitesurfing.....	41
4.2.8 Boat trips	42
4.2.9 Stand up paddle boarding	42
5 Site based audit, assessment and description of current access to the water	44
5.1 Sites.....	44
5.2 Points of interest/ egress points.....	46

5.3	Bar Hall	47
5.3.1	Description of current provision and use	47
5.3.2	Issues	49
5.4	Portaferry Shorefront.....	51
5.4.1	Description of current provision and use	51
5.4.2	Portaferry Sailing Club	53
5.4.3	Issues	55
5.4.4	Opportunities	59
5.5	Ballyhenry Bay and Ballyhenry Island	61
5.5.1	Description of current provision and use	61
5.5.2	Issues	63
5.6	The Dorn Nature Reserve – Point of interest	66
5.6.1	Description of current provision and use	66
5.6.2	Issues	66
5.7	Horse Island.....	67
5.7.1	Description of current provision and use	67
5.7.2	Issues	69
5.8	Kircubbin	71
5.8.1	Description of current provision and use	71
5.8.2	Issues	74
5.8.3	Opportunities	80
5.9	Greyabbey	81
5.9.1	Description of current provision and use	81
5.9.2	Issues	82
5.10	Cunningburn	84
5.10.1	Description of current provision and use	84
5.10.2	Issues.....	86
5.10.3	Opportunities	86
5.11	Newtownards Sailing Club	88
5.11.1	Description of current provision and use	88
5.11.2	Issues.....	90
5.12	Warden’s Bay	92
5.12.1	Description of current provision and use	92
5.12.2	Issues.....	94
5.13	Island Hill.....	95
5.13.1	Description of current provision and use	95

5.13.2	Issues.....	97
5.13.3	Opportunities	98
5.14	Comber Cruising Club	99
5.14.1	Description of current provision and use	99
5.14.2	Issues.....	101
5.14.3	Opportunities	101
5.15	Ringneill Quay (inc. Nendrum)	102
5.15.1	Description of current provision and use	102
5.15.2	Issues.....	104
5.15.3	Potential opportunities	106
5.16	Island Reagh.....	107
5.16.1	Issues.....	108
5.16.2	Opportunities	108
5.17	Whiterock	109
5.18	Down Cruising Club.....	110
5.18.1	Description of current provision and use	110
5.19	Issues	113
5.19.1	Opportunities	115
5.20	Whiterock Bay car park.....	116
5.20.1	Description of current provision and use	116
5.20.2	Issues.....	118
5.20.3	Opportunities	118
5.21	Strangford Lough Yacht Club.....	120
5.21.1	Description of current provision and use	120
5.21.2	Issues.....	122
5.21.3	Opportunities	122
5.22	Whiterock (Braddock Reach)	124
5.22.1	Description of current provision and use	124
5.22.2	Issues.....	126
5.22.3	Opportunities	128
5.23	Ballymorran Bay.....	129
5.23.1	Description of current provision and use	129
5.23.2	Issues.....	131
5.23.3	Opportunities	132
5.24	Ringhaddy quay and slipway	133
5.24.1	Description of current provision and use	133

5.24.2	Issues.....	135
5.24.3	Opportunities	137
5.25	Ringhaddy Cruising Club	138
5.25.1	Description of current provision and use	138
5.25.2	Issues.....	140
5.25.3	Opportunities.....	141
5.26	Ringdufferin	142
5.26.1	Description of current provision and use	142
5.26.2	Issues.....	144
5.26.3	Opportunities	144
5.27	Taggart Island.....	145
5.27.1	Description of current provision and use	145
5.27.2	Issues.....	147
5.27.3	Opportunities	147
5.28	Rathcunningham Quay.....	148
5.28.1	Description of current provision and use	148
5.28.2	Issues.....	150
5.28.3	Opportunities	151
5.29	East Down Yacht Club	152
5.29.1	Description of current provision and use	152
5.29.2	Issues.....	154
5.29.3	Opportunities	155
5.30	Killyleagh Town	156
5.30.1	Description of current provision and use	157
5.30.2	Issues.....	159
5.30.3	Opportunities	161
5.31	Killyleagh Yacht Club and Outdoor Education Centre (KOEC)	163
5.31.1	Killyleagh Yacht Club	163
5.31.2	Killyleagh Outdoor Education Centre	164
5.31.3	Description of current provision and use	164
5.31.4	Issues.....	165
5.31.5	Opportunities	168
5.32	Salt Island.....	169
5.32.1	Description of current provision and use	169
5.32.2	Issues.....	171
5.32.3	Opportunities	171

5.33	Delamont Country Park.....	172
5.33.1	Description of current provision and use	174
5.33.2	Development proposals for water based recreation	174
5.33.3	Council proposals	174
5.33.4	Delamont Outdoor Education Centre proposals	175
5.33.5	DAERA guidance regarding potential developments at Delamont.....	176
5.33.6	Killyleagh Coastal Rowers wih Seaboard Sailing Association	176
5.33.7	Strategic Issues.....	178
5.33.8	Site specific issues	178
5.33.9	Opportunities	179
5.34	Gibbs Island & Mullagh Quay.....	181
5.34.1	Description of current provision and use	181
5.34.2	Issues.....	183
5.34.3	Opportunities	185
5.35	Quoile River.....	186
5.35.1	Description of current provision and use	186
5.35.2	Issues.....	188
5.35.3	Opportunities.....	189
5.36	Quoile Sailing Club	190
5.36.1	Description of current provision and use	190
5.36.2	Issues.....	192
5.36.3	Opportunties	192
5.37	Castle Ward Bay.....	194
5.37.1	Description of current provision and use	194
5.37.2	Issues.....	197
5.37.3	Opportunities	199
5.38	Strangford Sailing Club.....	201
5.38.1	Description of current provision and use	201
5.38.2	Issues.....	202
5.38.3	Opportunities	203
5.39	Strangford Village.....	204
5.39.1	Description of current provision and use	204
5.39.2	Issues.....	208
5.39.3	Opportunities	211
5.40	Kilclief Bay.....	212
5.40.1	Description of current provision and use	212

5.40.2	Issues.....	214
5.40.3	Opportunities	215
5.41	Ballyhornan Bay	216
5.41.1	Description of current provision and use	216
5.41.2	Issues.....	218
5.41.3	Opportunities	219
6	Recommendations for potential future access (site based)	220
7	Strategic issues and recommendations relevant to access to strangford Lough for sustainable water based recreation	225
7.1	Communication among stakeholders.....	225
7.1.1	Recommendation	225
7.2	Communication to users	225
7.2.1	Assessment of current communication	225
7.2.2	Recommendation	226
7.3	Cruising on the Lough.....	228
7.3.1	Navigation Aids	228
7.3.2	Other physical infrastructure.....	228
7.3.3	Case Study – Visitor Mooring Scheme	229
7.3.4	Recommendation	230
7.4	Water taxi.....	231
7.4.1	Recommendation	231
7.5	Strangford Lough Canoe Trail.....	232
7.5.1	Recommendation	232
7.6	Positive management approach for moorings	233
7.6.1	Approach to infrastructure.....	233
7.6.2	Case Study – The West Highland Anchorages and Moorings Association (WHAM)	234
7.6.3	Recommedation	235
7.7	Responsible water recreation.....	235
7.7.1	Recommendation	238
7.8	Training Opportunities	239
7.8.1	Recommendation	240
7.9	Informal nature of access to the Lough.....	240
7.9.1	Recommendation	240
7.10	Sustainability of Sailing Clubs	240
7.11	Wildlife monitoring opportunities	241
7.11.1	Case Study - CEDaR	241

7.11.2	Recommendation.....	243
7.12	Quays.....	243
7.12.1	Recommendation.....	243
7.13	Strategic action plan.....	244
7.14	Management of water-based recreation.....	245
8	HRA Screening report.....	246
8.1	Introduction.....	247
8.2	The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process.....	248
8.3	Timing of operations.....	249
8.4	Summary of site designations.....	249
8.5	Conservation Objectives.....	251
8.6	Site Visit.....	253
8.7	Past and Current Management.....	253
8.8	Potential impacts of the Scheme.....	254
8.9	Discussion.....	257
8.10	Site Summary Table.....	258
8.11	References.....	261
8.12	Stage 1: Test of Likely Significance – Strangford Lough SAC.....	263
8.13	Stage 1: Test of Likely Significance – Strangford Lough SPA/Ramsar site.....	270
9	PART D // APPENDIX.....	281
9.1	List of consultees.....	281
9.2	Crown Estate interests.....	286

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1: Overview of methodology	13
Fig. 2: Map of study area including sites assessed	14
Fig. 3: The development of water-based recreation on Strangford Lough – summary of strategic fit	20
Fig. 4: Environmental designations relating to the Lough (1)	22
Fig. 5: Environmental designations relating to the Lough (2)	23
Fig. 6: Public landownership around the Lough	25
Fig. 7: National Trust and Crown Estate	28
Fig. 8: Other publicly owned land (exc. Crown and National Trust)	30
Fig. 9: Requirements for sailing	37
Fig. 10: Requirements for canoeing/ kayaking	38
Fig. 11: Requirements for coastal rowing	39
Fig. 12: Requirements for diving	40
Fig. 13: Requirements for swimming	41
Fig. 14: Requirements for windsurfing	41
Fig. 15: Requirements for kitesurfing	42
Fig. 16: Requirements for boat trips	42
Fig. 17: Requirements for paddle boarding	43
Fig. 18: List of sites and type of access	46
Fig. 19: Barhall site map	48
Fig. 20: Summary of water-based access at Bar Hall	49
Fig. 21: Informal parking at Bar Hall (top) and access to shore at Bar Hall (bottom)	50
Fig. 22: Portaferry site map	54
Fig. 23: Summary of water-based access at Portaferry	56
Fig. 24: Cook Street Quay (top left) and Slipway (Lough side) at Cook Street Quay (top right). Slipway (seaward side) at Cook Street Quay (bottom left) and illegible Canoe Trail panel at Cook Street Quay (bottom right).	57
Fig. 25: Abandoned vessels at Cook Street (top left) and Portaferry marina Pontoon (top right). Portaferry marina slipway (bottom left) and Portaferry ferry slipway (bottom right)	58
Fig. 26: Portaferry Sailing Club	59
Fig. 27: Ballyhenry Bay and Island site map	62
Fig. 28: Summary of water-based access at Ballyhenry	63
Fig. 29: Informal shore access at Ballyhenry (top) and informal layby parking (bottom).	64
Fig. 30: Ballyhenry Island	65
Fig. 31: Horse Island site map	68
Fig. 32: Summary of water-based access at Horse Island	69
Fig.33: Car park at Horse Island (top left) and Access to shore at Horse Island (top right). Pooling of water caused by vehicles (bottom).	70
Fig. 34: Kircubbin site map	73
Fig. 35: Summary of water-based access at Kircubbin	75
Fig. 36: Council slipway and adjacent shore access	76
Fig. 37: Shore access from Council managed facility	76
Fig. 38: Kircubbin Quay Fig. 39: Privately operated car wash adjacent to the Quay	77
Fig. 40: Council car park and signage (northern end of town)	78
Fig. 41: Slipway and shore access from car park	79
Fig. 42: Kircubbin Sailing Club slipway	79
Fig. 43: Greyabbey site map	81
Fig. 44: Summary of water-based access at Greyabbey	82
Fig. 45: Car park at Greyabbey (top) and shore access at Greyabbey (bottom)	83
Fig. 46: Cunningburn site map	85
Fig. 47: Summary of water-based access at Cunningburn	86
Fig. 48: Cunningburn car park (top left) and toilet at Cunningburn (top right). Slipway 1 (bottom left) and slipway 2 (bottom right).	87

Fig. 49: Newtownards site map	89
Fig. 50: Summary of water-based access at Newtownards Sailing Club	90
Fig. 51: Private access to Newtownards Sailing Club (top left) and Slipway at Newtownards Sailing Club (top right). Jetty at Newtownards Sailing Club (bottom left and boat yard at Newtownards Sailing Club (bottom right).	91
Fig. 52: Warden's Bay site map	93
Fig. 53: Summary of water-based access at Warden's Bay	94
Fig. 54: Informal parking and access to shore at Wardens Bay	94
Fig. 55: Island Hill site map	96
Fig. 56: Summary of water-based access at Island Hill	97
Fig. 57: Island Hill slipway	98
Fig. 58: Comber Cruising Club site map	100
Fig. 59: Summary of water-based access at Comber Cruising Club	101
Fig. 60: Ringneill Quay site map	103
Fig. 61: Summary of water-based access at Ringneill Quay	104
Fig. 62: Ringneill Quay (top left) and parking at Ringneill Quay (top right). Shore access 1 (bottom left) and shore access 2 (bottom right).	105
Fig. 63: Island Reagh site map	107
Fig. 64: Island Reagh car park	108
Fig. 65: Whiterock overall site map	109
Fig. 66: Down Cruising Club site map	112
Fig. 67: Summary of water-based access at Down Cruising Club	113
Fig. 68: Down Cruising Club (top left) and pontoon at Down Cruising Club (top right). Roadside parking on Ballydorn Road (bottom left) and restricted access to slipway (bottom right).	114
Fig. 69: Whiterock Bay car park site map	117
Fig. 70: Summary of water-based access at Whiterock Bay car park	118
Fig. 71: Whiterock Bay car park	119
Fig. 72: Strangford Lough Yacht Club site map	121
Fig. 73: Summary of water-based access at Strangford Lough Yacht Club	122
Fig. 74: SLYC slipways (top). SLYC Pontoon (bottom left) and SLYC Clubhouse (bottom right).	123
Fig. 75: Whiterock (Braddock Reach) site map	125
Fig. 76: Summary of water-based access at Whiterock Bay (Braddock Reach)	126
Fig. 77: Shore access via stony slipway (top left) and Braddock Reach boathouse (top right). Layby for parking at Braddock Reach (bottom).	127
Fig. 78: Ballymorran Bay site map	130
Fig. 79: Summary of water-based access at Ballymorran Bay	131
Fig. 80: Ballymorran Bay slipway	132
Fig. 81: Ringhaddy quay & slipway site map	134
Fig. 82: Summary of water-based access at Ringhaddy - quay and slipway	135
Fig. 83: Ringhaddy Quay fenced off	135
Fig. 84: Ringhaddy slipway (top) and informal road parking (bottom).	136
Fig. 85: Ringhaddy Cruising Club site map	139
Fig. 86: Summary of water-based access at Ringhaddy Cruising Club	140
Fig. 87: Ringhaddy Cruising Club pontoon and slipway	140
Fig. 88: Ringdufferin site map	143
Fig. 89: Summary of water-based access at Ringdufferin	144
Fig. 90: Ringdufferin shore access	144
Fig. 91: Taggart Island site map	146
Fig. 92: Summary of water-based access at Taggart Island	147
Fig. 93: Rathcunningham Quay site map	149
Fig. 94: Summary of water-based access at Rathcunningham Quay	150
Fig. 95: Rathcunningham Quay	150
Fig. 96: East Down Yacht Club site map	153

Fig. 97: Summary of water-based access at East Down Lough Yacht Club	154
Fig. 98: East Down Yacht Club Pontoon (left) and East Down Yacht Club slipway (right)	155
Fig. 99: Killyleagh site map	158
Fig. 100: Summary of water-based access at Killyleagh Net Walk	159
Fig. 101: Killyleagh Net Walk shore access (top) and Killyleagh Quay (bottom).	160
Fig. 102: Example of a floating pontoon with rolling ramp (Lower Bann Canoe Trail)	162
Fig. 103: Summary of water-based access at Killyleagh Yacht Club and OEC	166
Fig. 104 Killyleagh Yacht Club jetty (left) and Killyleagh Yacht Club slipway (right)	167
Fig. 105: Killyleagh Yacht Club brick jetty	168
Fig. 106: Salt Island map	170
Fig. 107: Summary of water-based access at Salt Island	171
Fig. 108: Map of landownership at Delamont Country Park	173
Fig. 109: Delamont site map	177
Fig. 110: Summary of water-based access at Killyleagh Yacht Club and OEC	178
Fig. 111: Delamont Country Park shore access	179
Fig. 112: Gibb's Island & Mullagh Quay site map	182
Fig. 113: Summary of water-based access at Gibbs Island and Mullagh Quay	183
Fig. 114: Gibbs Island shore access (top) and Mullagh Quay (bottom)	184
Fig. 115: Jane's Shore	187
Fig. 116: Summary of water-based access at the Quoile Pondage	188
Fig. 117: Jane's Shore access	189
Fig. 118: Quoile Sailing Club site map	191
Fig. 119: Summary of water-based access at Quoile Sailing Club	192
Fig. 120: Quoile Sailing Club pontoon (top) and Quoile Sailing Club slipway (bottom)	193
Fig. 121: Castle Ward Bay site map	196
Fig. 122: Summary of water-based access at Castle Ward Bay	198
Fig. 123: Lead Quay	198
Fig. 124: Audley's Quay	199
Fig. 125: Summary of water-based access at Strangford Sailing Club	202
Fig. 126: Strangford Sailing Club slipway and Lead Quay	203
Fig. 127: Strangford site map	207
Fig. 128: Summary of water-based access at Strangford village	209
Fig. 129: Strangford pontoon (top left) and Strangford quay (top right) – left hand side of picture. Strangford public slipway (bottom left and top right).	210
Fig. 130: Kilclief site map	213
Fig. 131: Summary of water-based access at Kilclief Beach	214
Fig. 132: Kilclief beach shore access	215
Fig. 133: Ballyhornan Bay site map	217
Fig. 134: Summary of water-based access at Ballyhornan Bay	218
Fig. 135: Ballyhornan shore access	219
Fig. 136: Summary of site-based opportunities	224
Fig. 137: Assessment of current communication to visitors and users	225
Fig. 138 Summary of recommended communication	227
Fig. 139: Excerpt from Welcome Anchorages	229
Fig. 140: Blue visitor moorings at Carrick Castle	230
Fig. 141: Canoe Trail panel at Kircubbin	232
Fig. 142: Proposed training schemes	239
Fig. 143: CEDaR – online recording of species	242
Fig. 144: Strategic Action Plan	244
Fig. 145: Sustainable management – roles and issues	245

PART 1 // INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to project

Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership (SLLP) on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) and Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) commissioned Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) to complete 'An Audit of access to Strangford Lough for water-based recreation'.

This included –

- An audit of current and potential access to the Lough for water-based recreation.
- Site based recommendations relevant to potential development of sustainable water-based recreation.
- Strategic recommendations relevant to the holistic development and management of sustainable water-based recreation.
- In addition, ORNI worked with Blackstaff Ecology to prepare an 'Information to inform a 'Habitats Regulation Assessment report' to aid Council, as the Competent Authority. The Stage 1 HRA (Screening) will consider both the site-based and the strategic recommendations.

1.2 The study area

The study area is shown in Fig. 2. and includes the area designated as a Special Conservation Area (SAC) and additional lands at the Quoile Estuary included in land designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA).

This audit included a review of 36 sites. A list of 34 sites was provided by the client with 2 additional sites added.

1.3 Sustainability

The following is an extract from the specification provided by the client¹ -

'The Lough's waters are a significantly untapped resource in terms of recreation for local communities, visitors and clubs. Strategic plans for economic and community development highlighted the opportunity to develop outdoor recreation and in particular water-based recreation. However, access to the water can be problematic and must be environmentally sensitive and sustainable. Provided it is done sustainably there is scope for developing many different kinds of water-based activity for different levels of ability.'

Sustainability as defined here², is considered in its widest sense. When considering development proposals this includes consideration of 5 key components –

- Impact on land use and vice versa
- Impact on landscapes
- Impact on habitats
- Impact on people and communities
- Management and maintenance

If development proposals are not able to balance these components, then consideration will be given as to whether the proposal has the capacity to be sustainable.

¹ Page 7 of 33

² Outdoor Recreation NI, Principles and standards for Trail development in Northern Ireland, 2011, pp 02.

1.4 Methodology

Outdoor Recreation NI employed a methodology comprising the phases shown in Fig. 1.

GIS mapping combined information already held in-house by ORNI plus information supplied in digital format by key stakeholders. Neither Council could provide up-to-date digitized information on Council owned or leased land. Therefore, both Councils were supplied with maps of all sites and asked to identify if Council had an interest in these.³

Extensive consultation was carried out in the form of emails, phone calls, site visits and meetings. While every attempt was made to contact all relevant stakeholders or those with an interest in water-based recreation on the Lough, several consultees did not respond. However, it was not felt that this hindered the report or left a gap in information. A full list of consultees and the type of consultation is contained in Appendix 9.1.

The following diagram provides an overview of the methodology employed to complete this report.

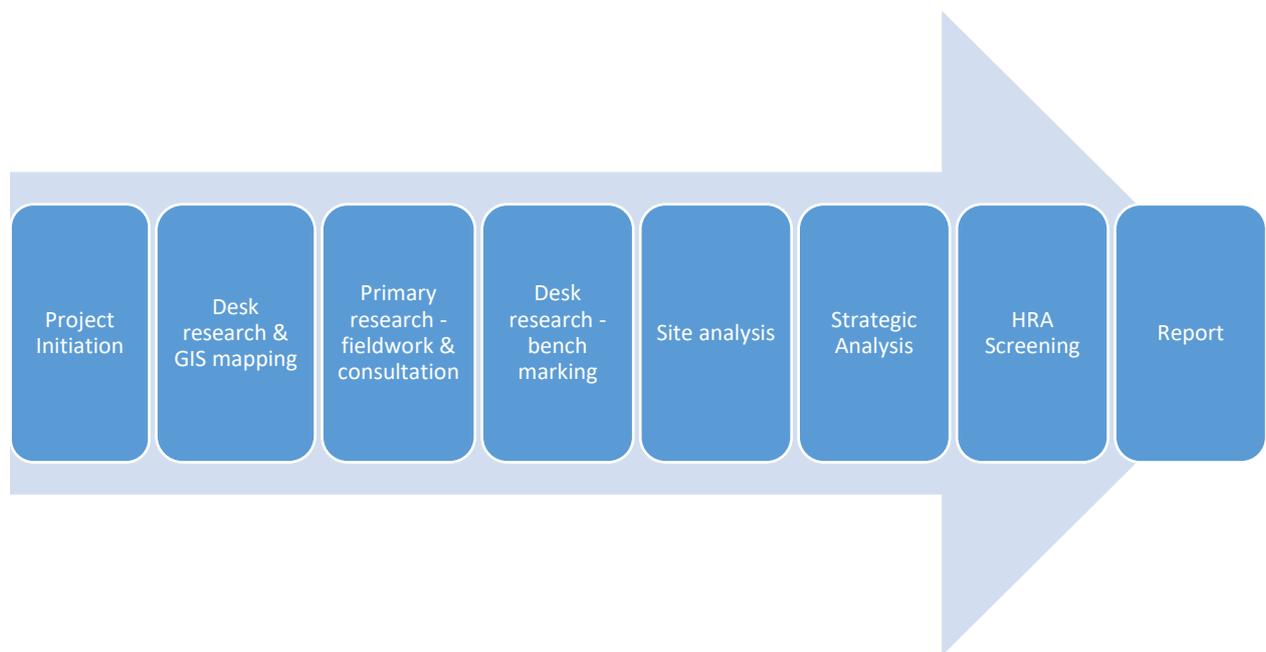


Fig. 1: Overview of methodology

³ Both Councils confirmed that GIS records are currently being updated and that it would be irresponsible to share potentially inaccurate information.

PART 2 // FINDINGS

2 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The objective of this section was to review the need for intervention. It is important that proposals to enhance and or increase access to Strangford Lough for water-based recreation are backed up with clear evidence of demand whether current or latent. i.e. demand that will only be realised when opportunities are improved.

2.1 Strategic context

This section summarises through desk research, any needs identified within strategic documents relevant to Strangford Lough.

These may relate to either the -

- Economic development (including tourism and events); or
- Community development (including health and wellbeing, leisure and sport).

2.2 Strategic context summary

The development of water-based recreation on Strangford Lough meets a range of strategic objectives contained in national, regional and local plans.

The NI Executive reveal the importance of improving the health and well-being of society in N. Ireland. To achieve this, one of pre-requisites includes the provision of infrastructure to enable access to places that could enhance health and well-being. Sport Matters: Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009 - 2019 (Sport NI) is the national framework for the development of sport and physical recreation.

Both Council plans recognise improved infrastructure and access would create more opportunities for communities to enjoy an active lifestyle. This can help empower local communities and lead to an overall improvement in quality of life.

Newry Mourne and Down Council is actively involved in activity tourism as highlighted in the Council's Tourism Strategy. This focuses on the delivery of EPIC moments (Experiential, Personalised, Iconic and immersive, Creative) – the vision is a 'premier, year-round mountain and maritime destination in Ireland recognised for its EPIC experiences in outdoor adventure, its rich tapestry of cultural heritage, myths and unique stories, and its authentic local life.' The Mourne's coast, running from Strangford Lough to Carlingford Lough is highlighted as a key Destination Experience. In addition, Council is also involved in a range of water-based events e.g. the International Skiff events.

Ards and North Down Borough Council back the idea that investment in blue green economies – the land and sea - is key to generating a more prosperous community. Therefore, Strangford Lough should be seen a Strategic Natural Resource and promoted as a key site for outdoor recreation activities to encourage locals and visitors to use the area.

DAERA understands the benefits of improved infrastructure and access to environmental sites but stresses the importance to manage the heritage assets sustainably in order to protect and enhance the area. DAERA also has a statutory and legal responsibility to protect the features for which the area has been designated. This is discussed in greater detail in 3.2.

Village and town plans in the Strangford Lough and Lecale area support the idea that development should take place to improve access to Strangford Lough for water-based recreation. Specific aspirations of the community include a pontoon at Kircubbin and Portaferry for recreational boating. There is also demand for a canoe/skiff access point at Kircubbin and canoe hire facilities in Portaferry. There is currently a proposal for the Comber greenway to connect to Strangford Lough which would create potential for the development of water-based recreation activities.

The strategic context is summarised in Fig. 3.

Level	Document	Fit with water-based access to Strangford Lough
National	<i>NI Executive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme for government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assist the NI Executive to deliver improvements on the essential components of societal wellbeing - Support the Department of Regional Development to maximise the potential of towns, villages and rural communities whilst improving the health and wellbeing of its communities - Help create an environment that supports a physically active lifestyle - Support Sport NI to encourage the development and use of open spaces for a variety of informal recreational and outdoor pursuits - Sport Matters – national framework for the development of sport and physical recreation
	<i>Dept. for Communities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outdoor Recreation Action Plan, Sport NI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve access and infrastructure for outdoor recreation to increase opportunities for people to participate in such activities - Ensure outdoor recreation is sustainable and the people involved understand they are responsible for maintaining, supporting and enhancing our environment and heritage
	<i>Dept. for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate Plan - Marine Division, Strangford Lough European Marine Site Management⁴ 	Corporate Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure water quality of marine environments is rated ‘good’ - Ensure good habitat and landscape quality with species abundance and diversity - Promote environmentally sustainable development and infrastructure Marine Division, Strangford Lough European Marine Site Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The new priority management actions include the development of an Outdoor Recreation Plan
	<i>Dept. for Investment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NI Regional Development Strategy 	NI Regional Development Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guide the community in the drive to create a dynamic, prosperous and progressive NI - Support towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential and improve health and wellbeing - Recognition of Strangford Lough as a Strategic Natural Resource that needs to be used sustainably - Host high profile events to help move the tourism industry in to the heart of economic development

⁴ Meeting workshop attended on 21/02/2018 on Strangford Lough Marine Site Management Draft Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NITB 2020 Tourism Strategy & Tourism Ireland Plans - Strangford Lough Tourism Destination Strategy 	<p>NITB 2020 Tourism Strategy & Tourism Ireland Plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximise Strangford Lough’s potential to attract and encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more <p>Strangford Lough Tourism Destination Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen appeal of Strangford Lough through development of a distinct outdoor recreation playground which includes canoe trails, mountain biking, walking, hiking and cycling
Regional	<p>Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate Plan - Economic Development Plan - Community Plan - Tourism Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute to the creation of a prosperous, healthy and sustainable district by improving the quality of life of residents, protecting the natural and built heritage and regenerating rural areas - Empower rural communities to help themselves through collaboration and tourism opportunities, complementing rather than competing with other towns, villages and rural areas - Improve the wellbeing of the people in Newry, Mourne and Down and in turn improve levels of deprivation in line with the Community Plan - Lead to the creation of sports facilities and trails to meet community needs - Delivery of EPIC moments (Experiential, Personalised, Iconic and immersive, Creative) – the vision is a ‘premier, year-round mountain and maritime destination in Ireland recognised for its EPIC experiences in outdoor adventure, its rich tapestry of cultural heritage, myths and unique stories, and its authentic local life.’ - Destination Experience – The Mourne’s coast - running from Strangford lough to Carlingford Lough is highlighted as a key Destination Experience
Regional	<p>Ards and North Down Borough Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate Plan - Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 	<p>Corporate Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide opportunities for residents to enjoy an active lifestyle by investing in and promoting facilities and outdoor spaces - Enhance the visitor experience to increase visitor spend through a variety of recreational and sporting events <p>Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invest in blue and green economies which are the natural landscape of sea, loughs and land - Develop a blue way network to help contribute to the quality of life for residents and attract investment from residents and businesses. - Build on the Mourne Coastal Route to generate increased economic activity to the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors, while also improving amenity for residents - Offer sustainable blue green accommodation such as small motorhome facilities

Regional	Ards and North Down Borough Council – Community Plan	Community Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve access to a well-managed sustainable environment - Ensure residents enjoy good health and wellbeing - Ensure residents live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure
Strangford Lough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heritage Management Strategy 2013 – 2018 - Modiolus Biogenic Reef Revised Restoration Plan - Strangford Lough AONB 2017-2022 Action Plan - Playing Our Part - The National Trust 	Heritage Management Strategy 2013 – 2018 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protect and enhance the heritage assets of Strangford Lough and Lecale - Develop access points to Strangford Lough for outdoor recreation - Provide a co-ordinated system and opportunity to take part in water-based activities on Strangford Lough. This will be implemented through clubs, outdoor recreation providers and events - Improve access to areas for wildlife watching and nature pursuits Modiolus Biogenic Reef Revised Restoration Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restore the Strangford Lough Modiolus biogenic reef feature to Favourable Conservation Status - Ensure maximum protection for the remaining reefs in Strangford Lough - Monitor the rate of natural recovery of Modiolus Biogenic Reef - Maintain the ban on the use of mobile fishing gear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Under Objective 4: Develop sustainable Access & Outdoor Recreation within the AONB there are a list of actions including sustainable use, events and management of the Local Outdoor Recreation Forum. - The National Trust focus is on land, outdoors and nature
Local	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Village Plans 	Ballyhornan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plans include community facility/ café, beach improvements, upgrade of beach play park Strangford <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A publicly accessible pontoon at the Quay has been recently developed - Develop facilities for water-based activities. The rowing club has significantly grown since 2012 and require improved facilities - It is a community aspiration to connect Strangford Village to the Down Coastal Path to enhance and improve the accessibility to the coastline and nearby settlements Downpatrick (2010) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a wildlife and activity centre were local residents and visitors can take part in activities such as cycling and canoeing - Increase the opportunity to outdoor recreation activities at Quoile River Country Park

3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Section 6 includes a strategic audit, assessment and description of current access to the water.

To set this within context, this section summarises the environmental legislation relating to protection of the Lough and then considers how this legislation impacts on water-based recreation.

3.1 Summary of environmental designations

The geographic area of Strangford Lough and Lecale consists of several environmental designated areas. These are of international and national importance. Environmental designations place statutory responsibilities on public bodies to conserve and protect the heritage of Strangford Lough.

The lead authority with responsibility for conserving the heritage of Strangford Lough is the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). DAERA also advises all other authorities on the management of any activities or issues that might negatively affect Strangford Lough. All public bodies have a legal responsibility to help deliver objectives that DAERA set.

Strangford Lough is part of the Europe-wide network of Natura 2000 (NK2) and European Marine Sites (EMS). Natura 2000 and European Marine Sites aim to protect the range of important European habitats and species in order to maintain the European Union's overall biodiversity. Natura 2000 sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC'S) and Special Protection Areas (SPA'S).

Strangford Lough qualifies as a SPA as it supports populations of overwintering and breeding birds which are of international importance such as Arctic Tern, light-bellied Brent Goose and Redshank. The Lough is Northern Ireland's most important coastal site for wintering waterfowl. A European Marine Site is not a statutory site designation but refers to the marine areas of both SAC'S and SPA'S.

Strangford Lough is also a designated Ramsar Site because of its international importance as a wetland which supports many wintering and breeding birds.

At a national level, the foreshore of Strangford Lough and some islands have been declared as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs). Overall Strangford Lough has five ASSI's including Ballyquintin Point and Killard. ASSI's are of national importance and are protected areas designated under The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002. ASSI's are protected for their species, habitat and geological features. The ASSI'S designation extends to the Mean Low Water Mark.

The recognition of Strangford Lough as a European site comes on top of several other statutory nature conservation designations. The Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) includes all the waters, seabed and shores up to mean tide high water mark and an area around the mouth of the Lough. Parts of the Lough are National Nature Reserves (NNRs) under the management of DAERA or the National Trust. Strangford Lough's 1995 designation as a Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) has now been superseded and is now Strangford Lough Marine Conservation Zone as of 2013.

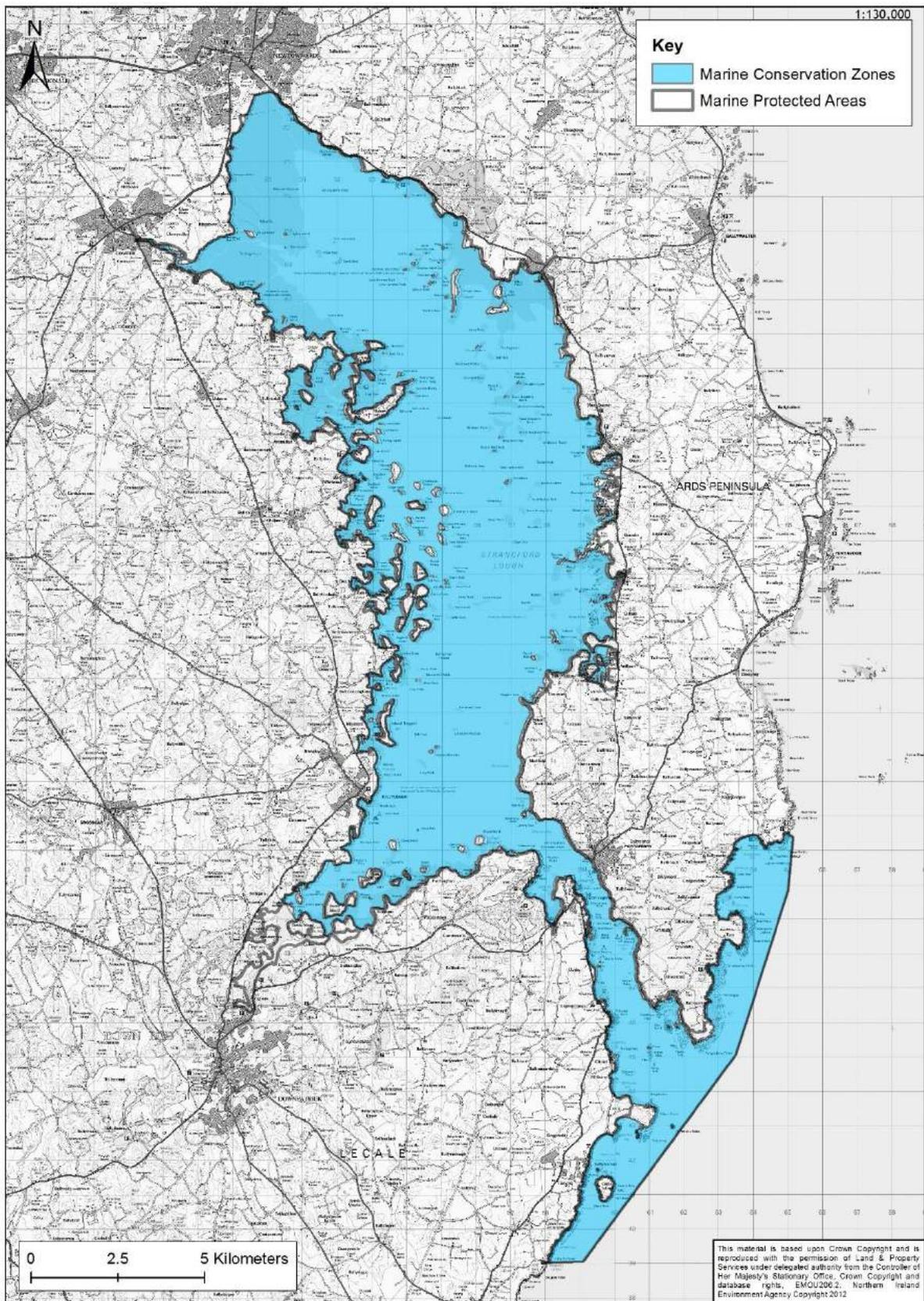


Fig. 4: Environmental designations relating to the Lough (1)

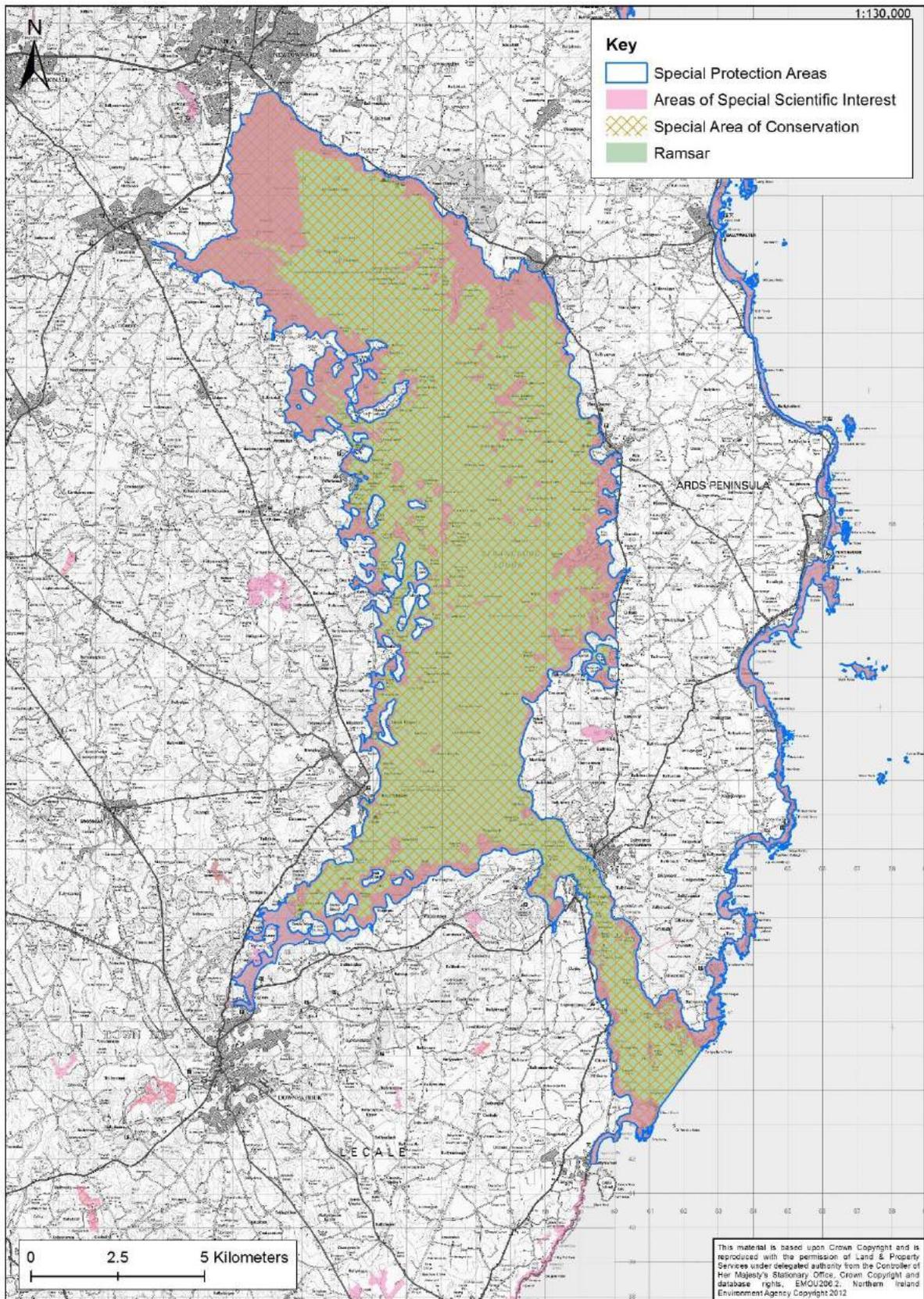


Fig. 5: Environmental designations relating to the Lough (2)

3.2 Regulation of access

3.2.1 Right of access

There is a public right of navigation and fishing to all water within UK that no-one can stop other than a regulatory body. This applies equally to Strangford Lough. While there is a 'Public right of navigation'⁵, there is no public right of access over the foreshore. However, there may be historic rights associated with accessing the shore for specific purposes e.g. gathering seaweed or shore based shellfish collection.

The public right of navigation in marine waters has been recognised by Common Law since medieval times. As a result, the owner of the seabed cannot charge a boat owner for anchoring in the course of navigation. Mooring is not part of the public right of navigation.

3.2.2 Strangford Lough Regulation of Anchoring, Mooring and Diving Byelaws 2012

Within the Lough restrictions were introduced to allow the recovery of horse mussel (*M modiolus*) communities on the seabed. These regulations relate to the area contained within the Marine Nature Reserve updated to the Marine Conservation Zone in 2013 (UK designation). An outline of the Marine Conservation Zone is shown in Fig. 4.

Offences under the regulations include –

- Anchoring or mooring a vessel within the restricted zone at any time
- Depositing any mooring, beacon pole, buoy or associated tackle within the restricted zone at any time
- Diving within the restricted zone at any time

The Department may issue permits to allow any of the above.

3.2.3 Ownership of Strangford Lough

Strangford Lough highlights the complicated mix of landownership throughout N.Ireland. The Lough itself can be divided into the foreshore and the seabed.

Public land ownership is shown in Fig. 6. While most of the land appears to be in public ownership (National Trust is included within the term public), many key sites/ areas are in private ownership. In relation to the Lough shore, it is estimated that the foreshore is 406 kms long⁶ (this includes those islands linked to land via a causeway). Of this, at least 75% is estimated to be public land⁷.

⁵ Public right of navigation

⁶ This is the length of the county boundary taken from OSNI data

⁷ This includes land identified through this project as belonging or leased to Crown Estate, National Trust, Councils, NI Water, DAERA

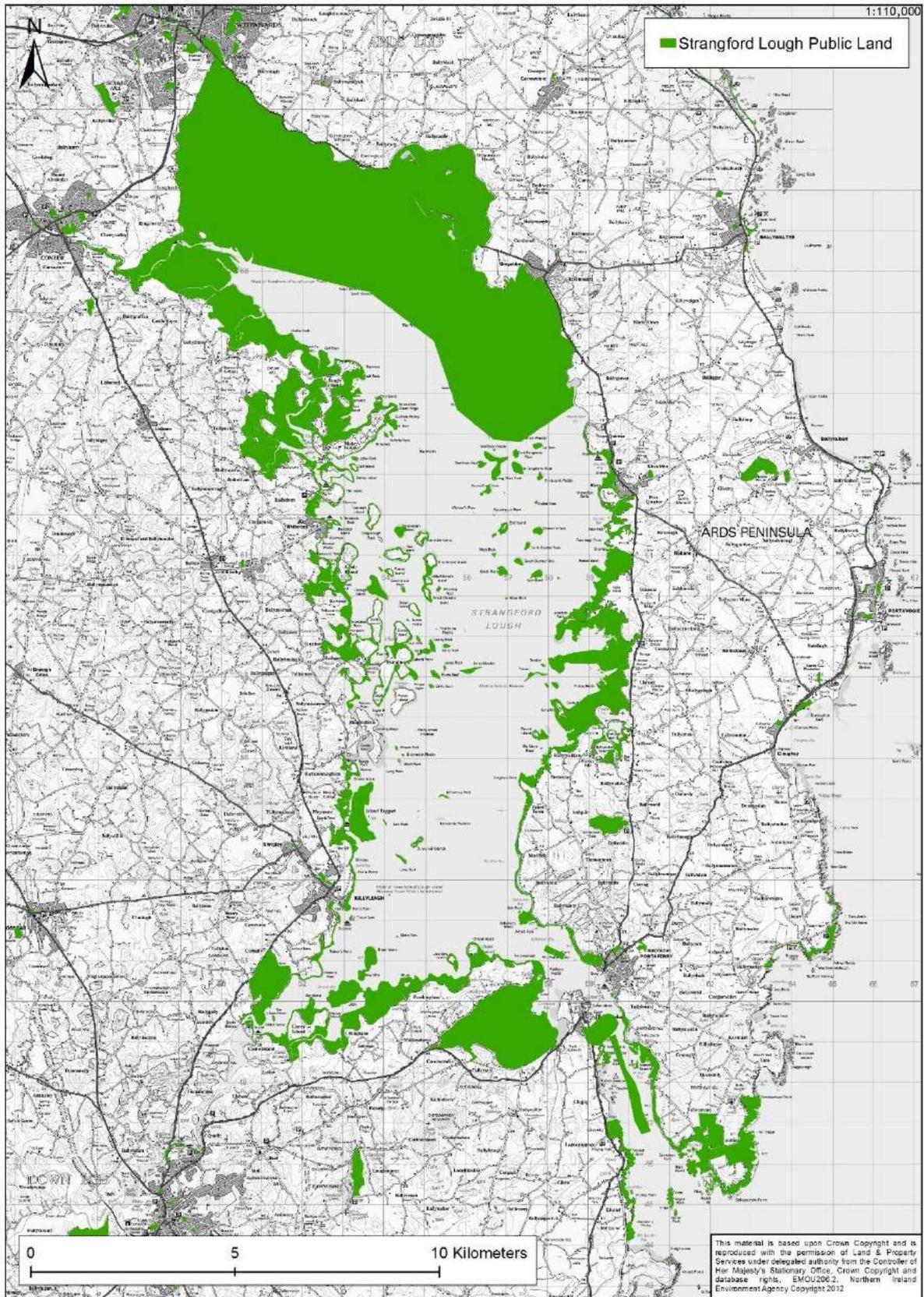


Fig. 6: Public landownership around the Lough

3.2.3.1 The Crown Estate

The Crown Estate

- Owns and manages the seabed and foreshore from mean high watermark to the 12 NM territorial sea limit.
- Holds the rights to the resources to develop renewable energy out to the continental shelf around England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Crown Estate operates under UK statute (the Crown Estate Act 1961). Under this Act consent is required for placing a mooring on the seabed. In most cases within the UK, a block lease or licence is issued to an appropriate body, such as a harbour authority, boat club or fairways committee. These operators provide local administration and sometimes the mooring tackle as well as other facilities and then charge boat owners to moor there.

In relation to Strangford Lough, various areas of the foreshore have been granted by the Crown Estate through 'claims' to landed estates. Certain areas were sold to others. e.g. for the development of ports or harbours such as Portaferry.

In addition, the Crown Estate enters into lease arrangement with others such as the National Trust.

There are 2 main types of leases granted –

- Regulating leases – these do not permit the tenant to do anything e.g. build or sublet
- Conservation leases – these permit the lease holder to sublet for things such as slipways. Therefore, the lease holder could grant license or subleases within the terms of this lease.

Finally, the Crown Estate can issue licences for specific activities/ events. For example, the Skiffie Worlds where a licence was issued for the international coastal rowing championships at Delamont in 2016 and this was renewed last summer for a further 2 years. (2017-2018). A condition of issuing the licence is that all statutory approvals must be in place e.g. DAERA Marine Licence.

A table detailing all Crown interests in relation to the sites considered in this study is set out in the Appendix, Section 9.2. Reference to this is made throughout the report.

The Crown Estate also has a role in the planning process as a statutory consultee on any planning applications butting onto mean high water mark. Most planning applications are dealt with directly by Crown Estate in London.

The Crown Estate is also a consultee on any DAERA Marine Licence applications, these come straight to the Crown Estate office in N. Ireland.

3.2.3.2 The National Trust

The National Trust owns about half of the foreshore of Strangford Lough, with a further quarter on lease from the Crown Estate. An extensive area of seabed and approximately 50 islands in Strangford Lough are also in Trust ownership. Some islands such as Taggart and Salt Island are popular egress points on the Lough, others rarely have visitors.

Many of the surrounding wetlands, woodland, car parks and picnic sites are owned or leased and cared for by the National Trust. The National Trust also holds the sporting rights for most of the foreshore and therefore plays a key role in the management and conservation of Strangford Lough's international wildlife interests. In the early 1960's, The Strangford Lough Wildlife Scheme was established to maintain a balance between shooting and nature conservation. A refuge/shooting permit scheme was established whereby wildfowling was either banned or restricted to certain times of year. In 1990 a major review of the effectiveness of the refuge system was carried out. The review stressed that refuges should be free from all forms of disturbance, not just shooting.

For organisations wishing to undertake new recreational activity, it is courteous to contact the National Trust where the activity relates to an area managed or owned by the organisation. For example, Council sought permission from NT to install a temporary pontoon at Delamont where the Trust lease the foreshore from the Crown Estate.

The National Trust currently has a proactive approach to recreation on and around the Lough.

Consultation identified the following National Trust aspirations -

- The acquisition and development of a property on the Lough that would enable access to the waters and the Lough and provide opportunities for land-based recreation adjacent to the Lough.
- A focus on the development of a Coastal Path around N. Ireland. This is included in the National Trust's Business Plan. As part of this, the Trust would be keen to see a walk around Strangford Lough and associated coastline. To take this forward, a full time Coastal Officer (based at the North Coast), has recently been appointed.

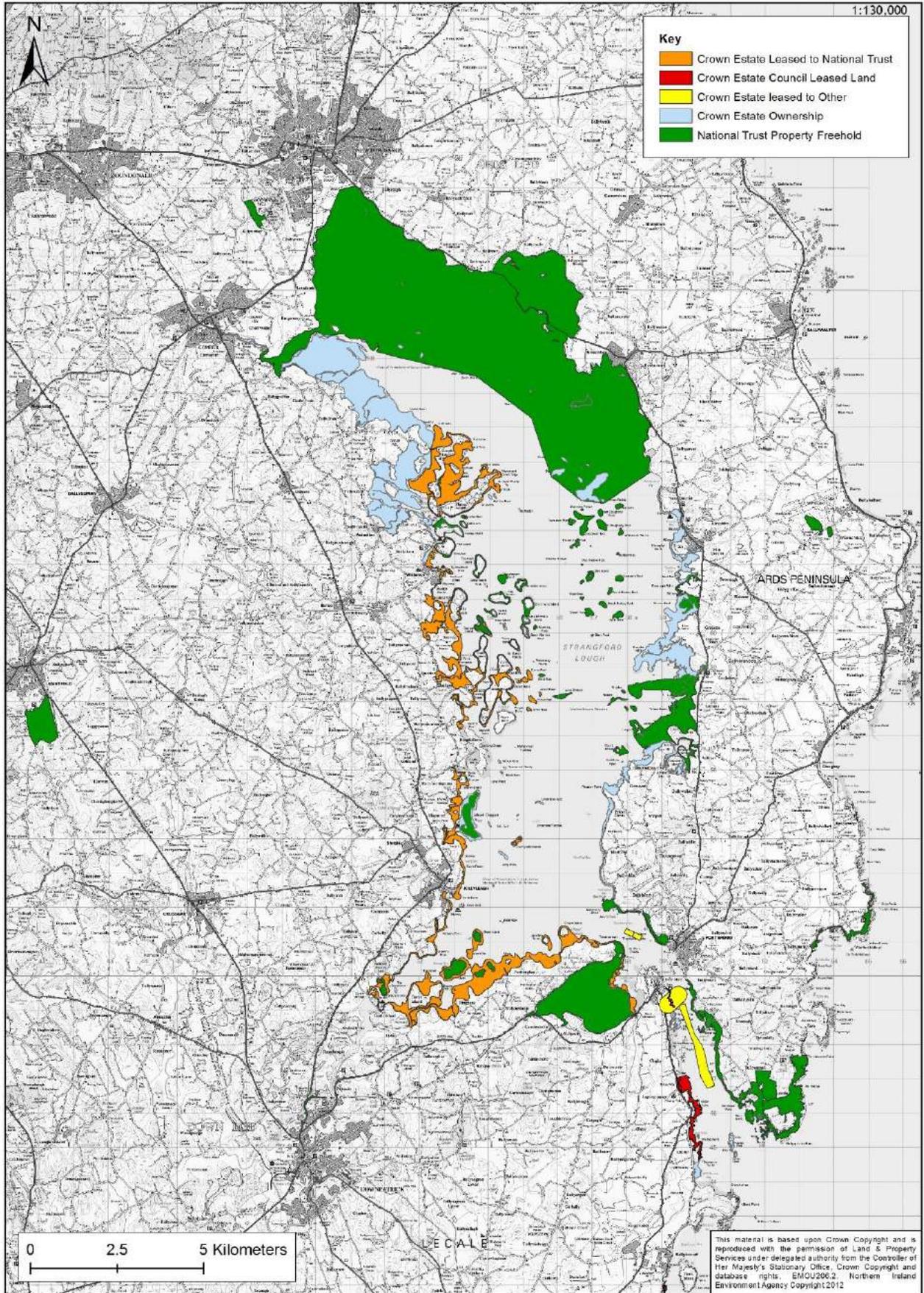


Fig. 7: National Trust and Crown Estate

3.2.3.3 Council owned land

Both Newry, Mourne and Down Council and Ards and North Down Council, own/ lease and manage a range of facilities around the Lough⁸. This includes recreation sites such as Island Hill, Comber and Delamont Country Park, Killyleagh and facilities such as car parks, toilets, quays and jetties.

3.2.3.4 Other publicly owned land

There are several other government departments with land butting the foreshore.

This includes –

- Transport NI who own the ferry and related facilities including ferry slips at both Portaferry and Strangford. *Both these sites are considered in greater detail under the site audits.*
- The Department of Education owns land at Killyleagh Outdoor Education Centre and at Delamont Country Park. *Both these sites are considered in greater detail under the site audits.*
- Department for Communities, (Historic Environment Division) owns several historic sites on the Lough. This includes Nendrum Monastic Site on Mahee Island.
- DAERA, Natural Environment Division owns an area at the Quoile estuary including Janes Shore and land at Quoile Yacht Club.
- NI Water owns various sewerage works around the Lough. For example, at Greyabbey, Comber/ Newtownards and Strangford. Often these sites, in public ownership, are in prime locations that are adjacent to the Lough. There are 41 waste water treatment works located within the Strangford Lough catchment area. Thirteen of these lie on the coast within the study area.

⁸ Neither Council was able to provide an up to date GIS layer showing ownership, however, Council officers have identified where Council(s) have an interest in relation to all access points contained in this report.

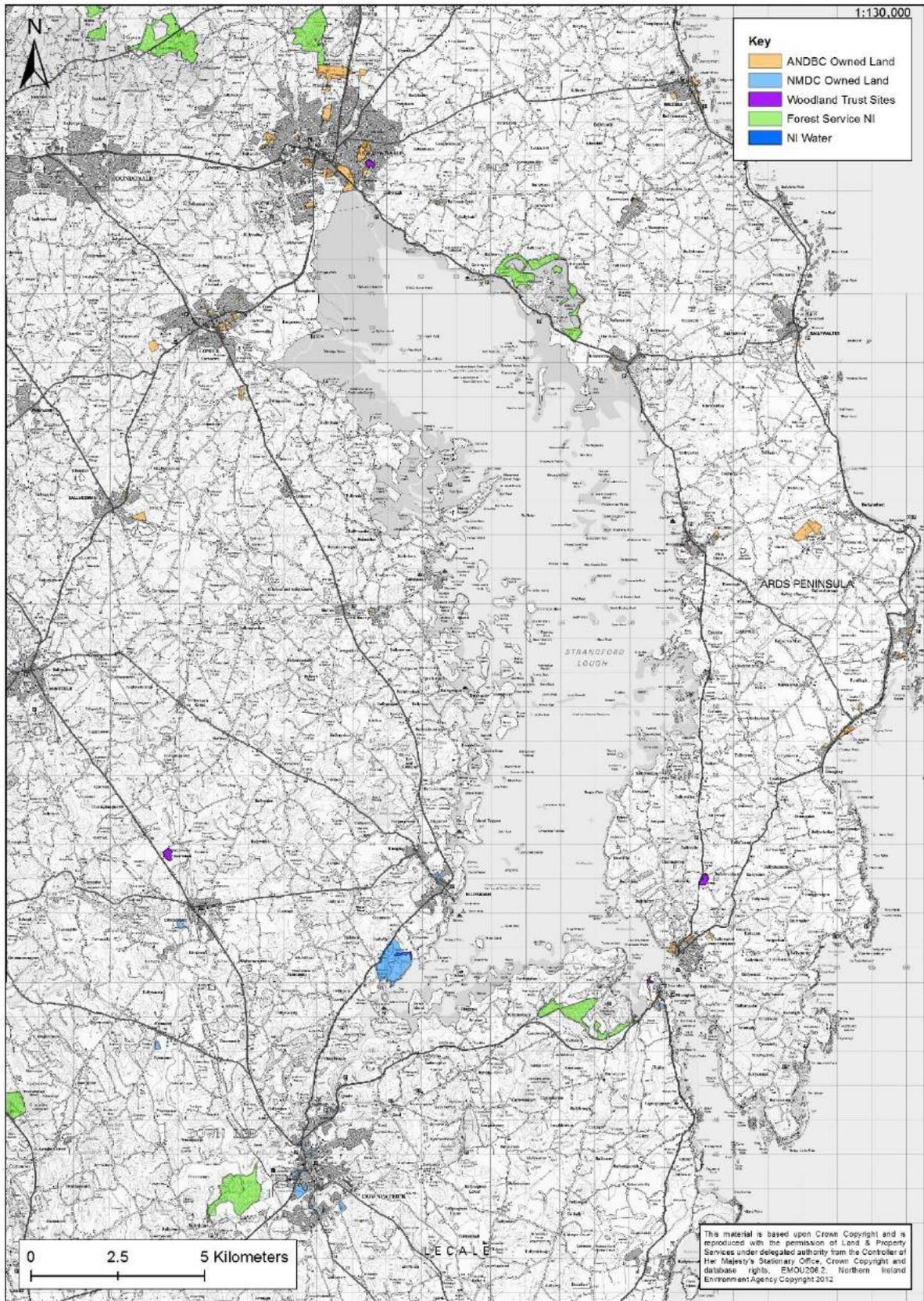


Fig. 8: Other publicly owned land (exc. Crown and National Trust)

3.2.3.5 Private landownership

There are numerous prime access sites around the Lough that are privately owned.

This includes –

- Many of the Sailing Club owned facilities – each of the 11 Sailing/ Yacht Clubs are considered in detail in the site-based audit.
- Private individuals – There are many private individual landowners around the Lough that seek to ensure that their land and access to/ from the Lough from it, remains private. In addition, some of the islands within the Lough are privately owned and access is restricted. As such, many of these private properties are unique and therefore command high property prices.

4 STRATEGIC AUDIT, ASSESSMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT ACCESS TO THE WATER

Using desk research and consultation, general trends, current levels of use of the Lough and profiles of current and potential users in relation to water-based recreation have been identified.

4.1 Review of current and future trends in water-based recreation relevant to Strangford Lough

4.1.1 Current participation levels – domestic and tourism

Due to a lack of available research and differing methodology within the limited research available, identifying the level of participation in water sports recreation in Northern Ireland and more specifically Strangford Lough is a challenge.

Experience of sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland 2015/16 - Based on findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2015 / 2016, this report by the Department for Communities highlights only 1% of the adult population participated in 'canoeing / kayaking' in the past year whilst less than 0.5% participated in either 'windsurfing / board sailing' or 'yacht or dinghy sailing', other water sports did not gain a sufficient level of response for inclusion.

National Watersports Survey - Conducted annually since 2002, this survey seeks to benchmark participation rates and monitor trends across the United Kingdom. The collaborative research group consists of representatives of the Royal Yachting, British Marine, the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution), MCA (Maritime & Coastguard Agency), British Canoeing and Cefas (Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science).

The 2014 report indicated that participation rates among Northern Ireland residents continues to be at a far higher level than anywhere else in the United Kingdom with 10.1% participating in 'any boating activity'⁹ in the past 12 months (the United Kingdom average was 7.1%). Due to changes in methodology such regional analysis is not available from 2015 onwards.

Limited tourism research is available, however in terms of external overnight visitors to Northern Ireland in 2016, 3% participated in a watersports activity (not including angling)¹⁰. A detailed breakdown for domestic tourists within Northern Ireland in relation to watersports is not available.

Research from Failte Ireland indicates that 19% of domestic holidaymakers engaged in watersports (excluding swimming) in 2016¹¹. However, it is worth considering that Republic of Ireland residents took 5m overnight holiday trips on the Island of Ireland in 2016, spending £942m, Northern Ireland's share was just 3% of holiday trips and 4% of holiday spend.¹²

4.1.2 Trends in watersport participation

The aforementioned National Watersports Survey 2016 indicated the following positive trends in water sports participation in the United Kingdom:

⁹ Any boating activity: covers the 12 core activities measured since 2002: – Small sail boat racing, other small sail boat activities, yacht racing, yacht cruising, power boating, general motor boating/cruising, canal boating, canoeing, rowing/skulling, windsurfing, water skiing & wakeboarding, using personal watercraft

¹⁰ External overnight trips to N.Ireland 2016, NISRA 2016

¹¹ Tourism Fact 2016, Failte Ireland 2016

¹² Unlocking the growth potential for tourism to N. Ireland from the ROI market, Market Recovery Taskforce Review and Strategy 2017

- 3.5 million people (6.7% of UK adults) participated in one or more of 12 core boating activities in 2016, the highest volume recorded since 2009 (3.534 million).
- An additional 668,828 (1.3% of UK adults) took part in growing water-sports activities, a rise of approximately 95,000 more participants.
- Overall, a total of 4.16 million people (7.9% of UK adults) enjoyed boating and water-sports in 2016.
- In total, over 14.3 million people (27.3% of UK adults) participated in any water-based leisure activities.¹³
- With an increase of 2 million more participants in 2016, it is the highest volume of participants recorded since pre-recession (14.4 million in 2007). It includes participants of the 12 core boating activities and growing water-sports activities, as well as activities such as sea angling and coastal walking.
- The research also found a substantial increase in the number of younger people (aged 16-34) classed as boating 'enthusiasts'.
- All participants are looking for opportunities to get active on the water throughout the year, with increasingly popular pursuits including small sailboat activities, yacht cruising and stand up paddle boarding.
- This appetite for manageable and flexible pursuits is reflected in boat ownership trends with households across the socio-economic landscape downsizing or taking up ownership of smaller boats or water-sports craft.

It is noted that when the research for the National Water-sports Survey was conducted GDP was still growing and consumer confidence was still positive. Following major events (Brexit and US election), there was economic uncertainty going into 2017. This may impact participation moving forward.

4.1.3 Tourism opportunity

There is no specific potential tourism market research for water-sports available in N. Ireland, however, research commissioned by Fáilte Ireland in 2013 provides some useful insights. Nearly 15,000 interviews were conducted across the Irish and four key overseas markets of Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands with the following key findings:

- The potential for water-sports activities amongst the British, French, German and domestic markets is quite good with a combined core market potential of almost 16m people.
- This market potential is however open to very strong competition from warm weather countries such as France, Spain and Italy in particular
- This could be due to the fact that a significant proportion of the overseas markets are unaware of what Ireland offers in relation to water-sports. This is across all areas related to price, value, quality and the practicalities involved in booking and participating.
- The Irish are more critical of the water-sports offering, with value for money seen as key.
- In the domestic market, awareness of the offer, particularly in relation to the practicalities of getting a trained guide and availing of equipment needs to be improved and may in fact improve perceptions of the product overall.
- Water-sports has probably the most to do in the area of promotion and raising awareness, as the core potential markets for these activities are quite good.
- What can be seen across all activities is that beautiful landscape is the main reason for coming to Ireland. Activity-doers overall appear to think destination first and then consider whether it would be good to do an activity there.
- The holiday experience is what matters in destination choice; whether the country is set up for activities comes second for most.

¹³ This includes approximately 5 million taking part in outdoor swimming and 7.9 million in leisure beach time.

- Promoting Ireland as an activities destination therefore is about using Ireland's USP in the same way as for general marketing; the activity is a means of enjoying the Ireland experience.

Further useful context, is research undertaken by Failte Ireland in 2016 to –

- Gain a better understanding of consumer preferences for Blueway¹⁴ experiences in key markets;
- The likely appeal of such a product and;
- To identify potential opportunities and barriers for Blueway development in Ireland.

Key learnings included:

Potential visitors would like the key features of a Blueway to be:

- Mixture of land and water-based activities a key selling point
- Offers rich opportunity to experience Ireland's culture, history and scenery
- Safe experience

The type of location with greatest interest included:

- Attractive locations, i.e. not just anywhere with water, but scenery unique to Ireland which visitors don't find closer to home
- In coastal locations – especially important to attract overseas visitors
- Sheltered waters - i.e. not the brunt of the ocean

How water-based activities should be offered:

- Need to be guided
- Focus on the easier entry level, more popular activities such as canoeing / kayaking
- High safety standards essential

Overseas market considerations:

- They need the 'full Irish' experience – culture, music, history, hospitality
- The physical activities alone are not enough to attract them to Ireland – they can go to places with better weather and closer to home for that
- Be careful of over-development though, as this would take away the appeal for some

Domestic market considerations:

- More likely to use Blueways than overseas consumers as they can wait for suitable weather and don't need to travel far

4.1.4 Summary

Participation in water-sports in N. Ireland is relatively low when compared to other sports and recreation, although relatively high when compared to other parts of the UK. Water-sport participation across the UK is beginning to approach pre-recession levels although it is sensitive to consumer confidence which is dictated by wider socio-economic factors.

¹⁴For the purposes of the research Blueways were defined as water-based recreational trails, usually located on beaches or along scenic rivers and inland waterways. They offer a variety of activities both on the water (e.g. kayaking, snorkelling etc) and beside the water (e.g. walking/cycling trails). They are safe and have user services and facilities.

Specific water-sports tourism (i.e. water-sports being the sole reason for a trip to Northern Ireland) potential is limited, however consumer research would indicate the focus should be to incorporate water-sports as a supporting component to the wider tourism offering.

4.2 Overview assessment of type and volume of current water-based recreation

This section includes a review of use by clubs, communities, activity providers, individuals, relevant research and industry transport.

Eight water-based recreation activities have been identified as taking place on Strangford Lough. These are summarised as follows -

4.2.1 Sailing – local boaters and visitors

Sailing takes place on a formal basis on Strangford Lough with 11 sailing and boat clubs situated within the Lough. DAERA estimates that there are about 2,000 yachts located around the Lough and approximately 5,000¹⁵ active boaters. This is more than anywhere else in Northern Ireland.

Sailing takes place both recreationally and competitively. Frequent regattas are organised by the Yacht and Sailing Clubs. In addition, each club runs their own Royal Yachting Association (RYA) training courses from beginner to advanced level.

In terms of mooring, most cruisers are moored on permanent swing moorings close to club premises. The majority of these are owned by individuals i.e. club members, rather than the Sailing/ Yacht Clubs. There are also a few public moorings and scattered private moorings elsewhere.

Consultation has identified the majority of sailing, and to a lesser degree motor cruising, activity on Strangford Lough is undertaken by boat owners within the Lough. However, whilst no specific research is available, anecdotal evidence would suggest there is an increasing volume of visitors to the marinas/ pontoons within both Strangford and Portaferry and indeed visitors to Clubs such as Down Cruising Club based at Whiterock.

The Irish Cruising Club East and North Coasts of Ireland Sailing Notes 12th Edition¹⁶, presents the appeal of Strangford Lough as follows -

'...The west shore of the Lough, and the northern part of the Ards peninsula, fall within the commuter belt of greater Belfast, but the Lough has nevertheless a remote feel, and is ringed by small communities, each with its own distinctive character and charm; in keeping with that, there are no less than eleven sailing clubs on Strangford Lough, each one distinct in its aims and ambience. Strangford Lough is simply a delight.'

However, the publication also provides caution relating to the challenges of navigation through the Strangford Lough entrance and Narrows due to a tidal flow of up to 8 knots. Encouraging entrance on a flood tide and departure on an ebb tide whilst highlighting an ebb tide against an onshore wind raises steep and dangerous seas at the entrance and for at least a mile out to sea.

The publication further recognises the challenges within the Lough i.e. rocks, 'Pladdies', shallows and shoals, albeit all identified within Chart AC 2156.

The facilities at both Strangford Pontoons and Portaferry Marina offer formal facilities for visitors near the entrance of Strangford Lough, however facilities for visiting cruising yachts further north in the Lough are much more limited. Cruising yachts currently avail of the hospitality of yacht clubs

¹⁵ Strangford Lough SAC, Conservation Objectives 2017, DAERA

¹⁶ Revised and reprinted with amendments in 2018

(informally) or sheltered anchorages many of which are identified through Irish Cruising Club publications, online forums and word of mouth.

Prominent references include:

- Audley's Road
- Ringhaddy Sound
- The Dorn
- Down Cruising Club
- Whiterock Bay
- Ballyhenry Bay

Aids to navigation installed in the Lough¹⁷ have improved safety, particularly for visiting boats.

Sailing clubs include –

1. Portaferry Sailing Club
2. Kircubbin Sailing Club
3. Newtownards Sailing Club
4. Comber Cruising Club
5. Down Cruising Club
6. Ringhaddy Cruising Club
7. East Down Yacht Club
8. Strangford Lough Yacht Club
9. Killyleagh Yacht Club
10. Quoile Sailing Club
11. Strangford Sailing Club

In relation to the conservation objectives in relation to the SAC, DEARA¹⁸ recognises that -

“Although generally a benign activity, boating may result in a number of potentially harmful impacts on the Lough and its wildlife. It may cause physical disturbance to the seabed and shore, particularly at moorings and where slipways and jetties are built. It is often difficult to maintain water quality at anchorage’s and harbours. Boating may also cause noise and general disturbance to wildlife, particularly to breeding or over-wintering birds. Fast powered craft including jet-skis tend to be the worst in this regard”. Windsurfing during the winter could potentially conflict with wildlife in refuges.

¹⁷ These were installed by the legacy Ards Borough Council in 2015.

¹⁸ Strangford Lough SAC, Conservation Objectives 2017, DAERA

Requirements for access to the water for sailing/ cruising include -

Essential – clubs	Desirable
Access/ egress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slipway - Pontoon - Berth - Mooring 	Toilets Showers Visitor services e.g. food, pubs etc.
Sufficient water depth to reach access facility	
Essential - visiting boats (as above plus)	Desirable
Sheltered anchorages	Facility to empty toilets
	Marina with associated facilities

Fig. 9: Requirements for sailing

4.2.2 Paddling including canoeing & kayaking

Both formal and informal sea canoeing and kayaking takes place on Strangford Lough on a regular basis. The flat water within the Lough provides excellent conditions for both open boating (Canadian Canoes) and kayaking. Very few paddlers use the same spot repeatedly as there are many variables that influence where paddlers go. This includes tides, wind, experience of the individual or group.

The governing body for canoeing is the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI) estimated to have 1284 members This includes 359 female members, 925 male members and 24 clubs throughout Northern Ireland. Trends show a general increase in membership over the last 10 years.

Canoeing and kayaking on the Lough takes place individually or in groups organised by clubs or activity providers. Clubs which use Strangford Lough for canoeing include –

- Belfast Canoe Club
- Sit on Top Touring Club (Newtownards)
- Belfast Kayak Club

Activity providers using Strangford Lough includes –

- Clearsky Adventure Centre which offers guided trips on Strangford Lough.
- Mobile Team Adventure offers night kayaking courses on Strangford Lough.
- Tollymore Mountain Centre

The Strangford Lough Canoe Trail, launched in 2010, stretches 80 square nautical miles and has 11 formal access/ egress points around the Lough including –

- Portaferry (Cook St jetty)
- Kircubbin
- Cunningburn
- Island Reagh
- Whiterock
- Killyleagh
- Delamont
- Salt Island
- Castle Ward

- Strangford
- Kilclief

The canoe trail is suitable for canoeists of all abilities with some areas imposing greater challenges than others. For less experienced canoeists the western side of the lough between Whiterock and Killyleagh is more suitable. The group of islands in this area offers interesting paddling with a range of channels and routes to explore. The south west area around Delamont Country Park and Salt Island also offers sheltered waters for padding.

‘The Narrows’ part of Strangford Lough between Strangford and Portaferry is the place with the strongest currents and provides an excellent challenge for the experienced paddler. The fast-flowing tidal waters include the Routen Wheel, a series of whirlpools, boils and swirling waters, which is caused by pinnacles of rock on the seabed. Although fine close to high and low tides, outside these times it is best avoided.

While paddlers can access the Lough almost anywhere they can get their boat to, there were several locations identified during consultation as the most popular access points. These were Whiterock, Killyleagh, Strangford and Portaferry. Each location has numerous access points that are used.

Several islands including Salt Island Bothy and Taggart Island are used by canoeists for day visits and overnight camping. Requirements for access to the water for canoeing and kayaking include -

Essential	Desirable
Access/ egress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slipway - Shore 	Toilets
Secure car parking close to access point	Places of interest to visit/ stop off including places to camp (for overnight trips)
	Refreshments/ potable water
	Boat storage (if doing overnight trips)

Fig. 10: Requirements for canoeing/ kayaking

4.2.3 Coastal rowing

Eight coastal rowing clubs and Down Coastal Rowing Association was established in 2014 by the Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership, working with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The aim was to develop community coastal rowing as part of a wider effort to regenerate communities through their maritime heritage. People living along the Co. Down coast from Donaghadee to Dundrum built 9 coastal rowing boats, known as the St Ayles’ skiffs and raced in the ‘Narrows Challenge’.

Coastal rowing has developed at the following 9 villages –

- Portaferry, Kircubbin, Killyleagh, Strangford
- Ballywalter, Portavogie, Donaghadee, Ardglass and Dundrum (outside the study area)

The World Championships, Skiffie Worlds were held in Delamont Country Park, Killyleagh in 2016, hosted by Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership (SLLP) working closely with the Scottish Coastal Rowing Association (SCRA), and with the support of local councils and communities along the Co. Down coast.

The Strangford Lough rowing festival took place in June 2017 again at Delamont Country Park.

To facilitate both events, Council purchased and installed a temporary pontoon on the Lough shore. This provided access to the water for numerous boats and enabled crews to change over safely. The site provided a wide stretch of calm water that could facilitate such competitive events. *Delamont and the temporary pontoon is considered in greater detail in the site-based audit.*

Requirements for coastal rowing include -

Essential	Desirable
Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slipway - Shore - Pontoon 	Toilets Changing
Parking close to access point – this includes boat trailers (where boats are not stored locally) and parking for rowers	
Sheltered, even ¹⁹ stretch of water – for major rowing events	
Boat and equipment storage – ideally close to launch site/shore	

Fig. 11: Requirements for coastal rowing

4.2.4 Diving

Strangford Lough is popular for diving all year round. Even during the worst weather conditions, a reasonably sheltered site can normally be found where visibility remains good enough to dive.

There are 15 dive sites in the Lough which are explored by both individuals and members of clubs. DV Diving Club, based outside Newtownards, is the most active club.

Most diving takes place in the southern end of the Lough (from Ringhaddy south). This is for a variety of reasons –

1. Access for dive boats to Strangford Lough is limited with Strangford and Portaferry the most frequently used slipways.
2. Diving is not permitted within the Modiolus Exclusion Zone (see DAERA advice below).
3. The water is shallow to the northern end of the Lough and not of great interest to the general diver. The northern end may be more attractive to marine biologists.
4. There are good wrecks to the southern end of the Lough including –
 - Lees Wreck, one of the favourite dives in Northern Ireland. This is a sunken liberty ship which was part of the World War II Mulberry harbour and was brought to Strangford Lough to be scrapped but struck a reef in Ballyhenry Bay and has since broken into 2 large pieces. The wreck is at a depth of 15m and breaks the surface. It is suitable for novice divers.
 - The Zarina Dive Site is located between Ballyhenry and Portaferry and is also popular. MV Zarina was lost in approximately 1700 and the wreck is still discernible today. It is suitable for novice divers. The wreck is at a depth of 12m and has a height of 2m.
 - The Alasdair Wreck is another popular dive whereby a large motor yacht caught fire and sank at its mooring in Ringhaddy Sound in March 1946. The wreck is at a depth of 23m and has a height of 7m. It is suitable for experienced novices.

The main access to Strangford Lough for diving purposes is by boat (RHIB) via Strangford and Portaferry slipways. However, there are also sites where divers can walk into the water including Ballyhenry Bay.

¹⁹ 'Even' – this refers to water where the effects of the tide are evenly distributed

In relation to the conservation objectives in relation to the SAC, DEARA recognises that

“Strangford Lough is one of the principal areas in Northern Ireland used by recreational divers for training, exploring wrecks and observing marine life. The Lough's sheltered waters are ideal as training areas for novice divers, while also affording some of the most challenging dives to be found in Northern Ireland for the more experienced.

The study of the seabed by divers is in harmony with conservation interests provided no damage is done. Over-collection of marine life could, however, prove damaging to the populations of certain species. The Strangford Lough Regulation of anchoring, mooring and diving byelaws 2012 () prohibit anchoring, mooring or diving within a restricted zone at any time. This byelaw applies to all waters deeper than 10m below chart datum in the restricted zone which is bounded by a Northern Limit and a Southern Limit. Diving for the purposes of monitoring condition and recovery of the designated features within the zone may be permitted by the Department following an assessment of the proposed methodology and qualifications of the Dive Team. Any such Permit will be time bounded and require the production of a detailed survey report.”²⁰

The Northern Ireland Federation of Sub Aqua Clubs is the national governing body for the sport and the British Sub Aqua Club is the governing body of sport for recreational diving.

Requirements for access to the water for diving include -

Essential	Desirable
Dive site of interest – marine life, wreck, cliffs	Toilets
Slipway to access the water by boat (RHIB) or Access point on foot close to dive site	Places to stop off by boat for lunch, drinks etc.
Parking close to access point	Changing – if diving in wet suits (rather than dry suits)
Good visibility i.e. sheltered site	
Safe conditions to use boat i.e. not big waves	

Fig. 12: Requirements for diving

4.2.5 Swimming (including triathlon)

Both wild swimming and club swimming take place on Strangford Lough as well as casual swimming by individuals. In addition, many people enjoy paddling within the waters of the Lough and spending time on the beaches. The main access points for these activities identified through consultation are Cunningburn, Island Hill, Kilclief, Ballyhornan and Castle Ward Bay.

Ards Sailing Club hosts swimming lessons twice a week in Strangford Lough and let out their facilities to Peninsula Triathlon Club who regularly swim at Cunningburn during the summer months. Triathlon events regularly take place in Strangford Lough, with the Narrows Tri Club hosting the Portaferry Sprint Triathlon in August 2018. It is tradition to hold an annual New Year’s Day Swim at Strangford which includes an 80m dash in the water.

In relation to the conservation objectives in relation to the SAC, DEARA recognises that

²⁰ Strangford Lough SAC, Conservation Objectives 2017, DAERA

“Efforts to keep beaches suitable for recreation often include the removal of drift seaweed along with litter. Seaweed is an important component of the marine ecosystem and in most instances is better left in place unless there are compelling reasons for its removal. There have been proposals to create or extend sandy beaches for bathing. In addition to loss of natural foreshore, such efforts can be counterproductive if they fail to take account of the local sediment regime. There may also be a desire to provide amenities such as promenades and car parking areas. These are likely to increase the numbers of people using the area with the consequent risk of increased disturbance”.

Requirements for access to the water for swimming include -

Essential	Desirable
Any type of access including shore-based access i.e. ability to walk in to the water	Toilets
Safe bathing water e.g. no strong current	Place to swim to e.g. island or other shore to rest before return swim
Parking close to access point	
Somewhere safe to leave clothes/ towel close to access point	

Fig. 13: Requirements for swimming

4.2.6 Windsurfing

A large windsurfing community base themselves at Newtownards Sailing Club on Strangford Lough. Windsurfing is mainly confined to the Upper Lough, especially around Cunningburn and Island Hill (to a lesser extent) where the water is relatively shallow and calm. The horse shoe beach at Cunningburn provides excellent conditions in a southerly wind but is very patchy in a northerly wind.

Generally, participation in wind surfing has experienced a general decline over the last 10 years. Many participants have moved away from windsurfing to newer activities such as kitesurfing and more recently stand up paddle boarding.

The national governing body for windsurfing is the Royal Yachting Association (RYA).

Requirements for access to the water for wind surfing include -

Essential	Desirable
Somewhere to prepare and assemble equipment	Toilets
Access to the water from the shore i.e. ability to walk in	Changing
Secure parking close to access point	
Good reliable winds over a long stretch of water	
Shallow water to relaunch	
Area mostly without other craft	

Fig. 14: Requirements for windsurfing

4.2.7 Kitesurfing

Kitesurfing is mainly confined to the upper part of the Lough and takes place at Warden’s Bay and Greyabbey.

The body associated with kitesurfing is the British Kitesurfing Association (BKSA), there is no governing body.

Requirements for access to the water for kite surfing are like windsurfing and include -

Essential	Desirable
Somewhere to prepare and assemble equipment	Toilets
Access to the water from the shore i.e. ability to walk in	Changing
Secure parking close to access point	
Good reliable winds over a long stretch of water	
Shallow water to relaunch	
Area mostly without other craft	

Fig. 15: Requirements for kitesurfing

4.2.8 Boat trips

The striking natural and built heritage of Strangford Lough provides a perfect location for boat trips. Currently, there are 3 private operators offering trips on the Lough that were identified during the course of this study. These include -

- Strangford Yacht Charter
- John Murray Boat Tours
- Clearsky Adventure Centre based at Castle Ward, offering the Strangford Sea Safari, a 12-seater high speed Rigid Hulled Inflatable Boat (RHIB) trip around Strangford Lough. In recent years, the Game of Thrones Boat Tour (Winterfell Tour) has also become particularly popular.

Operators offer boat trips to explore ancient monastic sites and castles of Strangford.

In addition, Newry, Mourne and Down Council hosts a regular programme of summer boat trips leaving from Mullagh Quay (to the south of Delamont Country Park). A private boat owner is employed to deliver these.

Requirements for access to the water for boat trips include -

Essential	Desirable
Somewhere for boat to access the shore that passengers can alight at a range of tide times	Toilets
Secure parking close to access point	A range of places to stop off and explore
A range of places to view by boat around the Lough	

Fig. 16: Requirements for boat trips

4.2.9 Stand up paddle boarding

A relatively new activity, stand up paddle boarding (SUP) takes place at a low level on the Lough and particularly at Jane's Shore on the Quoile River. Paddlers require relatively flat, stable water to board.

Two providers were identified during consultation –

- Clearsky Adventure Centre based at Castle Ward

- Tollymore Mountain Centre

The sport is regulated through the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI).

Requirements for access for paddle boarding include –

Essential	Desirable
Somewhere to prepare and assemble equipment	Toilets
Access to the water from the shore i.e. ability to walk in	Changing
Secure parking close to access point	
Shallow water to relaunch	
Area mostly without other craft	

Fig. 17: Requirements for paddle boarding

5 SITE BASED AUDIT, ASSESSMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT ACCESS TO THE WATER

5.1 Sites

This section sets out the findings identified through primary research²¹, consultation and desk research relating to 36 access/ egress sites²² around the Lough where access/ egress is known to take place on foot or by a water craft.

The sites are numbered from 1 -36 starting with Bar Hall (1) to the southern end of the Ards Peninsula and working anticlockwise around the Lough finishing with Ballyhornan (36). Each site is described in terms of current provision and use, and issues. Folio searches were completed for sites at -

- Strangford town (adjacent to ferry berth)
- Portaferry (Marina)
- Killyleagh Yacht Club (slipway)
- Whiterock (Braddock Reach)

The aim of this was to identify land ownership. For each site a search was completed on the online map on www.landregistry.co.uk. From this search, folio numbers were obtained, a search was then completed to identify the registered landowner for each folio. Whiterock (Braddock Reach) was registered with landowners identified.

Photos, maps and a summary table are provided for each site.

As the list below shows, there are numerous access sites around the Lough and within many of these sites, numerous access points. These sites are all used throughout the year, some more so than others. The tidal nature of the Lough means that a range of sites are required depending on the state of the tide.

Site name and number	Type of access
1. Barhall	- Shore Access
2. Portaferry	- Cook St – Temporary pontoon seaward side of Quay - Cook St – Quay - Cook St – Slipways (x2) - Marina – Floating moorings - Marina – Slipway - Ferry slip
3. Ballyhenry Bay	- Shore Access
4. Horse Island	- Shore Access
5. Kircubbin	- Slipway - Shore Access - Quay - Slipway - Sailing Club

²¹ Site visits took place throughout February and March 2018.

²² A list of 34 sites was provided by the client, this was amended to reflect desk research and site visits and increased to 36.

6. Greyabbey	- Shore Access
7. Cunningburn	- 2 slipways
8. Newtownards Sailing Club	- Slipway - Pontoon
9. Warden's Bay	- Shore Access
10. Island Hill	- Public slipway
11. Comber Cruising Club	- Number of small pontoons
12. Ringneill Quay	- Quay - Shore access
13. Island Reagh	- Shore access
14. Rathcunningham Quay	- Quay
15. Down Cruising Club	- Pontoon - Slipway
16. Whiterock car park	- None
17. Strangford Lough Yacht Club	- 2 pontoons - 2 slipways
18. Braddock Reach (Whiterock)	- Stone slipway/ shore access
19. Ballymorran Bay	- Quay - 3 slipways - Shore access
20. Ringhaddy	- Slipway - Quay
21. Ringhaddy Cruising Club	- Slipway - Pontoon
22. Ringdufferin	- Shore access
23. Taggart Island (egress point)	- Shore access
24. East Down Yacht Club	- Slipway - Pontoon
25. Killyleagh Town	- Net Walk - shore access - Quay - Shore Rd – (shore access over the wall)
26. Killyleagh Yacht Club & Outdoor Education Centre	- Slipway - Slipway (further along Shore Rd)

27. Salt Island (egress point)	- Shore access
28. Delamont Country Park	- Shore access - Temporary Pontoon (currently not in place)
29. Gibb's Island & Mullagh Quay	- Shore Access - Quay
30. Quoile Pondage	- Shore Access (Jane's Shore)
31. Quoile Sailing Club	- 2 slipways - Pontoon
32. Castle Ward Bay	- Audley's Quay <i>(Slipway and Lead Quay at Strangford Sailing Club – see 33)</i> - Dickson's Island – boathouse and slipway - Boat house and slipway - Shore access - Coal Quay
33. Strangford Sailing Club	- Slipway - Lead Quay
34. Strangford	- Private pontoon - Quay - Shore access - Public slip - Ferry slip - Slipway adjacent to ferry berth
35. Kilclief Bay	- Shore Access
36. Ballyhornan	- Shore Access

Fig. 18: List of sites and type of access

5.2 Points of interest/ egress points

In addition to the 36 sites listed above, there are a range of points of interest for water-based recreation around the Lough. These may be –

- *Particular sites* e.g. islands. Islands are popular with paddlers and cruisers as somewhere to stop for a rest, lunch/ snack etc.
- *Areas* e.g. the Dorn, where paddlers visit without going ashore. The attraction may be wildlife, landscape, tidal feature, peace and quiet or shelter that the area offers.

Points of interest are contained within the site audits where appropriate. This list is not exhaustive but offers an example of the type of areas and sites visited by water users.

5.3 Bar Hall

5.3.1 Description of current provision and use

Owned by the National Trust, Bar Hall is a relatively sheltered bay close to the mouth of the Lough at the southernmost tip of the Ards Peninsula. The beach provides informal shore access to the Lough. Consultation identified a very low level of use by paddlers as an access point to the Lough.

This site is used occasionally by kayakers to go out to Angus Rock when the correct conditions produce a series of waves adjacent to the rock. This is suitable for experienced paddlers only and requires an ebb tide and a swell from the south through to the east.

The beach is also used occasionally by swimmers (local).

An access point was also identified by paddlers near to the nursing home on the Barhall Rd. This is used occasionally.



Fig. 19: Barhall site map

5.3.2 Issues

Parking is informal and tolerated and takes place on the laneway that leads to the beach or at the junction between the laneway and the Barhall Rd. Parking was not identified as an issue. See Fig. 21.

The beach can become covered in seaweed following storms/ high tides, this can make access to the water difficult at times. However, for environmental reasons, DAERA recommend that seaweed is not removed.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
1	Shore/ beach	Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Canoeing and kayaking infrequently - Swimming infrequently 	Informal parking at the rear of the beach or where the lane to the beach joins the Barhall Rd.	None	Limited parking	None in place	National Trust name sign

Fig. 20: Summary of water-based access at Bar Hall



Fig. 21 Informal parking at Bar Hall (top) and access to shore at Bar Hall (bottom)

5.4 Portaferry Shorefront

The town of Portaferry has a long association with Strangford Lough and its waters. It is a former shipbuilding and trading port and now home to an RNLI station, Portaferry Sailing Club and Exploris Aquarium provide evidence of this.

With active community and regeneration groups, improvements to aid water recreation are currently planned and being implemented. In addition, Ards and North Down Borough Council has recently taken active steps to improve Council provision for water recreation at Cook Street Jetty.

The most recent development is 'Portaferry Recreation Hub'. The facility is located within a listed building beside the Sailing Club on the shorefront in Portaferry. The facility has been developed with public funds including a grant from the Rural Development Programme, Heritage Lottery and Coastal Communities Fund. The aim is to provide a base for the public who wish to access the Lough. The facility must be pre-booked and there will be a small charge (to be agreed). The facility is linked to the Sailing Club although run by an independent company.

Facilities include –

- Muster Room – for people to do briefings, safety precautions etc. This is a wet room with lockers that individuals can use. Shower room and changing facilities are also available with full disabled access.
- Opportunity for boat storage to the rear of the building with green space that could be used for camping with access to the building facilities e.g. toilets available for those staying overnight.
- Function Room – 1st floor – available for conferences, training events, parties etc. with a PA system
- 2nd & 3rd floor office space
- Information Centre with a screen on the wall with scrolling information.
- Consideration is also being given to the installation of vending machines and a small coin operated laundry.
- A website is being developed.

The hub was opened in April 2018 with core opening hours of 8.30-5pm Monday to Friday. It is anticipated that evening and weekend opening will be facilitated by volunteers.

This facility has the potential to provide a valuable resource and address some of the issues identified in this report.

5.4.1 Description of current provision and use

There are 3 locations along Portaferry shorefront where the water can be accessed for recreation.

- a. Cook St Jetty – See Fig. 24 & Fig. 25.

This Council owned and managed facility includes a quay and 2 slipways. There was also a temporary floating pontoon that is not currently in place (due to damage from winter storms).

Consultation identified the importance of the boatyard area among water users. Historically, Cook St has been difficult to market as an access point to the Lough as there was an absence of any management plan or Harbour Master. However, Council has recently appointed a harbour master for its 5 harbours and is due to carry out some project works in the area soon. The works will include:

- The boat yard resurfaced and rid of abandoned vessels
- Bollards and chain erected to demarcate the area and keep the slipway clear
- Picnic area refreshed with new seats, picnic tables and BBQ.

The introduction of a licence for boat owners to use the area is due to begin in April 2018 and will allow Council to effectively exercise control and ensure it is a usable facility for all. Charges will apply. The public slipway will remain free to use for anyone. Alongside this, Council is keen to maximise the benefits of the harbours for the wider community and would welcome proposals for the water-based recreation. Council would also consider how any development proposals could best be accommodated.

The Coastal Rowers use the slip at Cook St and this generally provides good access i.e. the physical infrastructure is good. However, the tidal nature of access is very restrictive.

b. Portaferry Marina

Portaferry Marina and adjacent slipway are owned by Portaferry Regeneration Ltd. (P.R. Ltd). The marina is leased to Portaferry Marina Ltd. who currently manage the site. The lease was issued approximately 10 years ago for 25 years. PR Ltd. currently insure both the marina and the slipway, however insurance for the Marina is from April to October. It was stated that insurance cannot be obtained during the winter months (due to weather).

The marina currently has 50 berths, 15 visitor berths, on site water and electricity. Portaferry Regeneration Ltd. along with the Sailing Club and Council have plans to double the size of the marina.

The slipway has bollards at the top that inhibit public access, in addition, the end of the slipway drops off into the water.

c. Ferry slipway

The ferry slip is legislated via the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993. Part VIII Road Ferries states, '*a ferry vessel or ferry landing place belongs to a road ferry service if it is used in the provision of that service.*'

The Strangford Lough ferry and landing places at Portaferry and Strangford belong to the Department of infrastructure. In terms of use of the slip for recreational purposes, the Department of infrastructure in theory would enter into an agreement with a person if that person wants to use that land for recreational activities.

"The Department may enter into arrangements with any other person -

- *for the provision by that person, of any facilities, amenities or services on Strangford Lough ferry landing place*
- *for the use by that person of such land for recreational or leisure activities.”*

In addition,

“The Department may make byelaws in connection with the operation or management of a road ferry service, for all or any of the following purposes,

- *for protecting persons, vehicles and goods on ferry vessels or land forming part of the road ferry undertaking from injury or damage;*
- *for protecting vessels, land, equipment and other property forming part of the road ferry undertaking from damage;*
- *for maintaining order on ferry vessels and land forming part of the road ferry undertaking and preventing obstruction to the operation of the road ferry service.”*

Any person who breaks a byelaw shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.

Therefore, use of the ferry slip is regulated under the Act and no-one has a right to use it for recreational purposes without permission.

In terms of its use, the slip has recently been used by the coastal rowers to launch their boats and by dive boats. E.g. the private operator DV Diving. The slipway offers trailer access to the water at all tide times. The Skiffs use the ferry slip when unable to use Cook St. due to tidal restrictions. It is also used by QUB Marine Station.

5.4.2 Portaferry Sailing Club

The Club now based in its clubhouse at Shore Road, Portaferry started as Cooke Street Sailing Club in 1968. It was named after a previous sailing club in the town which ceased operating in 1956. The Club has been responsible over the years for running national and international sailing events and is recognised as an excellent centre for competitive racing in Strangford Lough.

Unlike all other clubs around the Lough, Portaferry does not have its own access to the water e.g. a slipway or a club facility for housing boats/ equipment. Most boats are kept in private property, the Flying 15's stay at Cook St.

The RYA has identified Portaferry Sailing Club as one of 10 affiliated groups that will be promoted in an attempt to get more people to try sailing.

The Sailing Club has plans to purchase a tall ship and moor this on a permanent basis alongside the harbour wall (south side of ferry slip). This would provide a range of facilities including training, education, trips, visitor information etc. These plans are only in the initial stages. The tall ship is currently moored in Newry and scheduled to come to Portaferry summer 2018. The ship, if secured, could offer access to the Lough in the form of trips and training/ instruction.



Fig. 22: Portaferry site map

5.4.3 Issues

Portaferry offers a range of access opportunities to the Lough and is a key location within the study area in terms of physical infrastructure and services within the town. However, there are a range of issues that impact on access to the Lough –

General issues

- The strong tides at the Narrows limits the use of Portaferry as an access point to the water. The Narrows is a serious undertaking for those using the water and should only be tackled by those with suitable experience. For example, when there is a southerly or easterly swell in the Irish Sea – the sea state at the Bar Mouth can be significant with large (4m+) breaking waves. This sea state also occurs with a flooding tide against an opposing wind direction.
- Facilities to access the water are spread out within the village. For visitors to Portaferry, it may be unclear where to go to access the water. Cook St to the south is not obvious from the ferry slip. However, local people currently using the water, generally know where to go.
- Ferry Slip – Consultation with ferry staff identified that there are issues associated with recreational use of the ferry slip. Responsible use is tolerated by those who are mindful of the ferry timetable and passengers getting on and off the ferry. Informal use of the ferry slip is undesirable for a range of reasons including –
 - o Use is challenging due to the ferry timetable i.e. ferry cannot be held up by people using the slipway.
 - o There is a safety issue relating to launching boats in an area where vehicles are going on and off the ferry
 - o Finally, there is no legal right to use the ferry slip (unless agreed), therefore, the informal access could be taken away at any time
- Parking within the town is limited and may lead to congestion or conflict with residents at busy times.
- If paddlers want to stay overnight at Portaferry during a trip, there is currently nowhere to store boats or camp.
- In relation to the Marina, there are major concerns that the marina is not open to everyone and that there are no clear guidelines about who can use it. Consultation identified concerns that this may limit use by the public, visitors and those taking part in festivals.
- To facilitate coastal rowing, boat storage is required close to the shore.

Cook St

- Tidal nature of use e.g. the slipway can only be used to launch skiffs 2 hours before or after high tide.
- Fishing boats can block access to the slips
- A pontoon on the east side was damaged and is no longer there. Consultation with Council did not identify any plans to reinstall the pontoon.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
2a Cook St Jetty	Slipways (x2) Quay	Public Public (licence from April 18 from Council)	Local fishermen Canoes/ kayaks Coastal rowers Other small boats	Street parking	None	On street parking limited Turning space limited	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Canoe Trail panel (illegible) - Canoe Trail brown road sign - Community notice board - Council Advisory signage (to be updated after changes April 18)
2b Marina berths	Floating pontoon with moorings	50 boat berths 15 visitor berths	Cruisers on paid moorings and visiting boats	Street parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Electric hook up and water - Toilets - Life ring 	On street parking is limited	None	Various signage appropriate for a private marina.
2c Marina slipway	Slipway	Private	Paddlers	Street parking	Life ring	Bollards at entrance to slipway	None	Caution slippy surface.
2d Ferry slip	Ferry slip	Ferry access only – other users by agreement	Ferry Dive boats Paddlers	Street parking	Life ring	On street parking limited Turning space limited	None	Various signage appropriate to public ferry facility.

Fig. 23: Summary of water-based access at Portaferry



Fig. 24: Cook Street Quay (top left) and Slipway (Lough side) at Cook Street Quay (top right). Slipway (seaward side) at Cook Street Quay (bottom left) and illegible Canoe Trail panel at Cook Street Quay (bottom right).

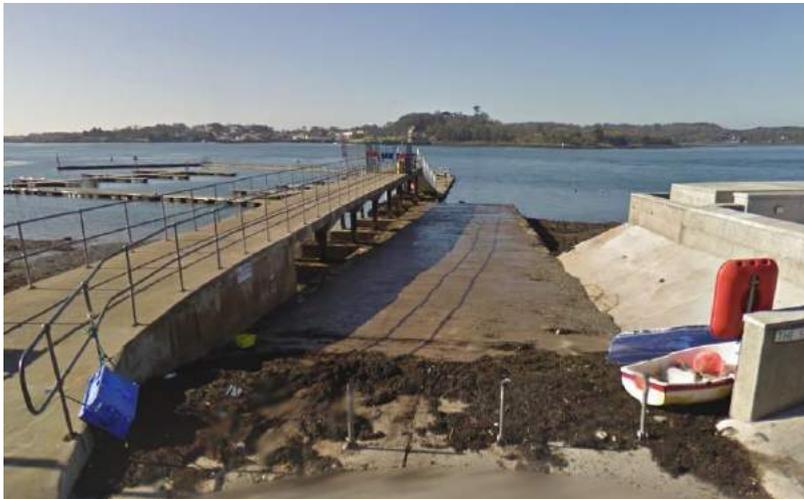


Fig. 25: Abandoned vessels at Cook Street (top left) and Portaferry marina Pontoon (top right). Portaferry marina slipway (bottom left) and Portaferry ferry slipway (bottom right)



Fig. 26 Portaferry Sailing Club

5.4.4 Opportunities

General opportunities include –

- Information – A consistent joined up approach to promoting access to the Lough from Portaferry including clear information on the different access points would be beneficial. Portaferry Recreation Hub, with a full-time manager, is one of the conduits to do this.
- The development of a water taxi is one of the strategic recommendations of this report. Portaferry provides an opportunity to provide a stop off/ get on point on the east side of the Lough.
- Parking was identified as an issue, however, a parking strategy for the town is in the final draft stages²³. In summary, this plan outlines the need for increased parking provision at several locations in Portaferry including;
 - Meetinghouse Street
 - The Promenade
 - Shore Road

²³ Portaferry Parking Strategy, Ards and North Down Council, 2018

- Cook Street Quay
- Ferry Street

To help relieve issues with parking in Portaferry, the strategy has identified 2 options to encourage public use of Meeting House car park:

- Introduce parking charges at the Square
- Use the land to the rear of Exploris Aquarium for parking

The strategy also states there are plans to develop a car park with 31 spaces including 1 disabled bay at High Street.

- Boat storage for paddlers – Portaferry Community Hub has confirmed that there will be an opportunity for some boat storage (for paddlers) to the rear of the building and potential for a few tents to be pitched on a small grass area, again to the rear of the building.

Specific opportunities include –

Cook St

- Council led improvements relating to the facilities and management of the site should lead to a decline in the instances of boats blocking the slipway
- The pontoon, if reinstalled, could be valuable for novices wishing to access the water e.g. coastal rowers, paddlers, other small boats
- Installing a winch for people with a disability on the pontoon.

Marina

- There is an opportunity to make the marina slipway more accessible to the public. This may involve –
 - Extension of the slipway and reduction of the gradient
 - Removal of the bollards at the top or putting in place a management system to improve access. This could include key holders being identified e.g. the Coastal Rowers, Portaferry Recreation Hub.
 - Promotion of this slipway as a public facility along with guidelines relating to its use
 - Portaferry Regeneration Ltd. (along with Council and Portaferry Sailing Club), expanding the marina. This would provide an opportunity to improve public access to the marina
 - Installing a breakwater to protect and shelter the pontoons at the marina. This may then enable the season to be extended (if there is a demand).

5.5 Ballyhenry Bay and Ballyhenry Island

5.5.1 Description of current provision and use

Ballyhenry Bay located to the north of Portaferry provides informal shore access. Within the Bay lies the wreck of the S.V. Zarina known locally as 'The Pins'. This is a shallow dive, excellent for novices and used frequently for training. Most divers access the wreck from dive boats that enter the water at either Portaferry or Strangford (via the slips). However, many divers do also use this location to walk into the water.

Most divers enter the water wearing dry suits and therefore do not need to get changed before/ after diving. Some divers (generally those who are new to the sport), may dive in wet suits (as they do not own dry suits). These divers may then get changed in or beside their vehicles.

There is a small informal layby, but cars do park along the narrow road on the shore side.

Ballyhenry Island further north is owned and managed by the National Trust. The island is a popular place for kayakers to stop off on a journey along this stretch of the Lough. There are currently no known issues.



Fig. 27: Ballyhenry Bay and Island site map

5.5.2 Issues

- Parking may become an issue should use of this site increase significantly.
- Changing on the road side does take place, however, this was not identified as an issue at this location.
- Nearby rocks are used as haul outs by Common Seals.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
3a – Bay	Informal shore based	Public	Kayakers – infrequent Diving – (walk ins)	Small informal layby	None	Limited parking	None in place	None
3b - Island	Informal shore access	Public	As above	Informal layby	None	Limited parking	None in place	- National Trust site name sign - Out and About on Strangford Lough

Fig. 28: Summary of water-based access at Ballyhenry



Fig. 29: Informal shore access at Ballyhenry (top) and informal layby parking (bottom).



Fig. 30: Ballyhenry Island

5.6 The Dorn Nature Reserve – Point of interest

5.6.1 Description of current provision and use

The Dorn Nature Reserve is described on DAERA's website as follows - *'An extensive area of mud-flats, sheltered bays, pladdies and seabed on the eastern side of Strangford Lough. At the northern end of the reserve, Gransha Point, a spit of shingle and bedrock, extends over 1km into the Lough. The variety of shore types, ranging from coarse sand and gravel to boulders and bedrock, supports an exceptional diversity of marine life. The Dorn, from the gaelic word narrow channel, refers to the channel which connects several sheltered bays to the Lough.*

Near the mouth, rock barriers or sills hold back water as the tide falls, creating saltwater rapids, a feature which is unique in Ireland. These conditions allow extraordinary growth of marine plants and animals.

Unusually large sponges, anemones and sea squirts are abundant. Starfish, sunstars and brittle stars are among the many deeper water animals able to survive in shallower areas here.

Within the maze of sheltered bays near Bishop's Mill, fine areas of saltmarsh with glasswort and sea purslane can be easily viewed from the road.

The foreshore supports large numbers of wintering wildfowl and waders including curlew, goldeneye and red-breasted mergansers. Brent geese, shelduck and teal are frequent and may be seen from high points along the road north of Ardkeen. Feral Canada geese occur in the summer. Common seals frequently bask on the rocks below Castle Hill and may be seen with pups on nearby pladdies in July."

The description above outlines the ecological importance of this site. This makes it appealing to visitors including paddlers who visit this area 1 – 1.5 hours either side of high tide access when the area is accessible. Most will access the Lough at Portaferry and paddle up the Lough to the Dorn. Some paddlers land on Castle Hill on the stony shore to visit the hill and church.

5.6.2 Issues

Consultation did not identify any known issues in relation to water-based recreation. However, desk research identified that this is an important site for Common seals to pup. Disturbance could be an issue during the pupping season.

5.7 Horse Island

5.7.1 Description of current provision and use

Horse Island, owned by and managed by the National Trust is located to the south of Kircubbin. The foreshore and seabed are owned by Crown Estate. With a Council maintained car park with space for up to 12 cars, this is a popular stop-off point on the Lough. A gap in the wooden fence surrounding the car park provides shore access to the water. The site is currently use infrequently by paddlers.



Fig. 31: Horse Island site map

5.7.2 Issues

- Mud flats at low tide restrict use of this as an access point to the Lough.
- Some evidence of damage by vehicles to the foreshore, however, it is not believed that this is caused by those taking part in water-based recreation.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
4	Informal shore access	Public	Paddlers	Formal car park	None	Car parking limited to up to 12 spaces. Tidal access, mud flats at low tide.	None in place	- Out and About on Strangford Lough

Fig. 32: Summary of water-based access at Horse Island



Fig.33: Car park at Horse Island (top left) and Access to shore at Horse Island (top right). Pooling of water caused by vehicles (bottom).

5.8 Kircubbin

The village was established in 1769 and developed in prosperity through the creation of various industries including agriculture, linen, kelp and the making of straw hats. Trading with England and Scotland was made easy as the deep water of Kircubbin Bay enabled large vessels to anchor. Kircubbin was a key route for smugglers who plied their trade via the inlet to the south of Kircubbin Main Street, known as Doctor's Bay, to avoid being in full view of the village.

The historical importance of Kircubbin's harbour is still largely recognised by the local community. This is evident through the Village Plan which reveals local aspirations to reinstate the harbour as an access point to the Lough (although currently in private ownership). The community would like to see the harbour restored and repaired so the coastline of Kircubbin is accessible for the benefit of residents, visitors and water sports enthusiasts.

The Village Plan hopes to turn some of these community aspirations into actions to help restore the significant utilisation of the harbour which Kircubbin historically had. Kircubbin is ideally positioned half-way up the Lough although access is very tidal.

5.8.1 Description of current provision and use

Today, there are 5 access points to the Lough from Kircubbin (from south to north) -

- a. Slipway – The Council owned and managed facility is the official access/ egress point for the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail. This location is well used by canoeists and kayakers as a launch point from which to explore the islands on the eastern side of the Lough.

Consultation identified that it is also used by the coastal rowers in Kircubbin – the Black Neb Rowing Club (although this may be infrequently as consultation with the Sailing Club identified that the Coastal Rowers use the sailing club's slipway during the summer).

The closest access to the slipway is from the car park beside Kircubbin Presbyterian Church rather than the Council car park off Shore St (slightly further north).

The slipway is somewhat protected from tides by a bank to the southern side (it is not known if this is manmade or a natural feature).

- b. Shore Access – There is a range of shore access from the bay and used by paddlers, though not frequently. The foreshore and seabed within this area is owned by the Crown Estate.
- c. Quay - Today, in private ownership, the quay is in a poor state of repair. As such, it is not currently well used as an access point to the Lough. However, fishing boats do use the quay on a regular basis. The quay is directly accessible from the main road. There is a layby adjacent to the quay that is currently being used as a car wash.

The need to repair the Quay was identified throughout consultation and is documented. For example, Ards and North Down Area Plan 2015, states that *'In the long term there exists a need for the establishment of a pro-active strategy to address: the poor state of the quay; the extension of the recreational walkway to link the quay to the existing public spaces;'*

- d. Slipway (and shore access) – Located within the Council car park (north end of town) - this concrete slipway is used by paddlers to access the Lough. The advantages of this site are that parking is available beside the slip. The slipway is currently in a poor state of repair.
- e. Kircubbin Sailing Club - This is a private club with approximately 100 members. However, consultation identified low participation numbers with only 3-4 boats competing in weekly racing during the summer. The slipway is owned by the Crown Estate.

The club offers courses in:

- Powerboat instruction
- First Aid
- VHF

These are mainly for club members although open to public. However, this is not widely publicised.

Black Neb Rowing Club (Coastal Rowing Club) use the Sailing Club facilities monthly during the summer. The Clubhouse has a fully licenced bar with basic changing facilities including one shower.

Navigation aids (floating marks) have been positioned by the club on two reefs – one to the north and one to the south of the bay – See <http://www.strangfordloughregattas.co.uk/documents/KSC2014.pdf>

The Club has plans for development including -

- The replacement of the current hard gravel stand with concrete. This is being done in phases as and when the Club can afford it.
- The current slipway could be extended a further 100 metres as is not fit for purpose at low tide. However, lack of current demand would not make this a priority.



Fig. 34: Kircubbin site map

5.8.2 Issues

Despite there being numerous formal and shore access points to the Lough from Kircubbin, consultation did not suggest a high level of use as an access point to the Lough or a demand for improvements to access. This is for several reasons including -

- The tidal nature of the bay and characteristic of the northern end of the Lough, there are substantial mud flats at low tide.
- While Kircubbin is ideally positioned half-way up the Lough, Kircubbin Bay exposed to winds, often offers little shelter for water users.
- Lough users prefer to access the Lough from the western shore which is more sheltered and there are more features/ places of interest to visit such as islands.

Other issues include -

- The Sailing Club is private with access from the slipway restricted to club members only.
- Kircubbin Quay is in a poor state of repair and in private ownership – this may be an attractive feature to visitors and encourage greater access if publicly accessible.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
5a	Council owned and managed slipway Informal shore access	Public	Paddlers Coastal rowing (during summer months)	Formal Council owned public car park	Toilets in Council car park (pay to use)	Car parking limited to up to 12 spaces	None	- Canoe Trail panel (illegible) - Canoe Trail brown road sign
5b	Quay	Private	Fishing boats (small)	On road parking	None	Limited on street parking	None	None
5c	Council owned and managed slipway (northern end of town) Informal shore access	Public	Paddlers	Large car park	Bins Seats	Car parking limited to 20 spaces	None	- Out and about on Strangford Lough
5d	Kircubbin Sailing Club – slipway	Private	Yachts/ sailing boats – members or visitors boats	Private, secure parking	Club house Toilets/ bar Refreshments	Access limited to club members	None	Various relating to use of the site and access to the water

Fig. 35: Summary of water-based access at Kircubbin



Fig. 36: Council slipway and adjacent shore access



Fig. 37: Shore access from Council managed facility



Fig. 38: Kircubbin Quay



Fig. 39: Privately operated car wash adjacent to the Quay



Fig. 40: Council car park and signage (northern end of town)



Fig. 41: Slipway and shore access from car park



Fig. 42: Kircubbin Sailing Club slipway

5.8.3 Opportunities

While the community through the Village Plan aspires to increase the level of use of Kircubbin as an access point to the Lough, general consultation throughout the course of this study did not identify a high level of use of Kircubbin or a demand for improved facilities that would lead to increased use.

However, it should be noted that no one to one consultation took place in Kircubbin.²⁴

While access provision within the village is good – with 2 public slipways and shore access, there is an opportunity to restore the historic quay. However, due to the likely cost of this, this should only be considered –

- If public access can be secured and managed i.e. by Council or other body through agreement with the owner.
- Following additional consultation to identify the potential demand

Consultation also identified the opportunity to install a breakwater at Kircubbin. While this would not address the tidal nature of the Bay, it would provide shelter. This could be considered as a joint project along with the reinstatement of the quay. (if this goes ahead). However, as the cost of this would be substantial, a cost benefit analysis would need to be completed to identify if the benefits would justify the expenditure.

²⁴ *Phonecalls and emails to various contacts were not returned*

5.9 Greyabbey

5.9.1 Description of current provision and use

This large car park is a National Trust owned and managed facility located to the southern side of the village. It is well used by the public as a stop off point along the Lough shore. It is a popular location for kite surfers, and to a lesser extent windsurfers, to access the Lough.



Fig. 43: Greyabbey site map

5.9.2 Issues

The main issue here is disturbance to overwintering birds. It is therefore important that users are aware of wildfowl and how to behave around them.

A recent report ²⁵, was commissioned due to anecdotal reports of kite surfers disturbing birds on the Lough. The report concluded that kite surfing does cause disturbance to birds at Greyabbey Bay but was not a regular cause of disturbance during the study period.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
6	Informal shore access	Public	Windsurfers/ kitesurfers	Formal car park up to 20 cars	Rubbish bin	None	None in place	NIEA ASSI sign Village heritage trail panel

Fig. 44: Summary of water-based access at Greyabbey

²⁵ *The impact of recreational sports and activities on over wintering birds in the north end of Strangford Lough, Summary Report (Draft), Allen and Mellon Environmental, 2015.*



Fig. 45 Car park at Greyabbey (top) and shore access at Greyabbey (bottom)

5.10 Cunningburn

5.10.1 Description of current provision and use

This Council owned and managed car park is located adjacent and to the south side of Newtownards Sailing Club. It is popular for windsurfing and kite surfing due to the reliable and strong off shore winds. It is also a formal access/ egress point for the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail.

There are 2 slipways here, both owned by the National Trust. Both are fairly sheltered, providing good starting points to explore Boretree and Chapel Islands and the northern end of the Lough. Due to the calm water, this area is good for learning how to kitesurf.

The site is also used as an access point for swimming by both individuals and clubs. Peninsula Triathlon Club have regular swims here during the summer.

Paddlers do use this location to access the Lough but not on a regular basis.



Fig. 46: Cunningburn site map

5.10.2 Issues

- Substantial mud flats during low tide.
- The grass that butts onto both slipways is eroded as shown in Fig. 48. This leaves the slipway protruding from the surrounding ground rather than being level with it.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
7	Slipways (x2)	Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Windsurfing - Swimming - Paddling – (infrequently) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Car park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Toilets - Picnic tables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parking for up to 24 cars - Slipways accessible at high water only 	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Canoe trail panel - Canoe Trail brown road sign - Out and about panel TransportNI picnic sign - NIEA ASSI sign

Fig. 47: Summary of water-based access at Cunningburn

5.10.3 Opportunities

There is an opportunity for improvements to be made to the slipways by repairing the ground surrounding them, particularly slipway 2.



Fig. 48: Cunningburn car park (top left) and toilet at Cunningburn (top right). Slipway 1 (bottom left) and slipway 2 (bottom right).

5.11 Newtownards Sailing Club

5.11.1 Description of current provision and use

Newtownards Sailing Club, to the south of the town is open to private members only. Access to the long slipway and jetty within the club grounds is therefore restricted. The seabed and foreshore belong to the National Trust.

However, the Club is taking a progressive approach and working with several groups to enable greater use of the facilities by non-club members. This includes -

- An affiliate membership arrangement with a Triathlon Club with up to 40 swimmers using the site on a weekly basis between March – June.
- Experimenting with a membership arrangement with Donaghadee Coastal Rowing Club
- Making arrangements with local organisations to use the club building. The Women’s Institute use the building monthly and a flower arranging club uses it on a weekly basis.

The jetty is closed during the winter (Oct – March) to stop damage during winter gales. The club has approximately 200 members, with 60% of club members being windsurfers. The club hosts an annual adult sailing course (open to public) to encourage new members. There are 2-3 light moorings available from the Club, however these are not suitable for overnight or large boats.



Fig. 49: Newtownards site map

5.11.2 Issues

- This is a private/ members only sailing club so access for the public to use the slipway is restricted to members, however, the club do have affiliate membership arrangements.
- There are tidal restrictions to using the jetty and slipway i.e. not accessible at low tide.
- There have been issues in the past with windsurfers using nearby Cunningburn and requiring to be rescued.
- Issues were identified in relation to jet skis using Island Hill as an access point to enter the Lough. Concern was raised that these are damaging the environment but no evidence of this was documented. Noise and general disturbance by jet skis is an issue. To confirm this, jet skis have been banned by the club.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slipway 40-50m - Jetty 	Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yachts/ sailing boats - Swimming - Coastal rowing 	Private, secure parking	Club house with toilets/ bar and refreshments	Access limited to club members	None	Various relating to use of the site and access to the water

Fig. 50: Summary of water-based access at Newtownards Sailing Club

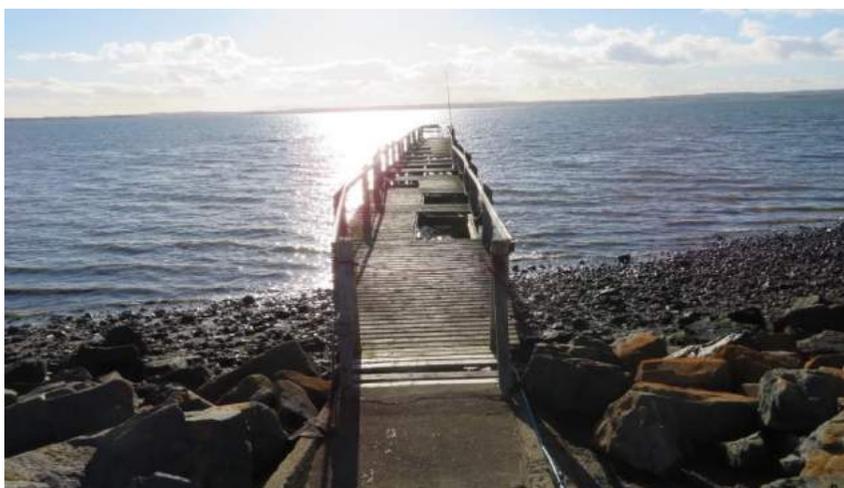


Fig. 51: Private access to Newtownards Sailing Club (top left) and Slipway at Newtownards Sailing Club (top right). Jetty at Newtownards Sailing Club (bottom left) and boat yard at Newtownards Sailing Club (bottom right).

5.12 Warden's Bay

5.12.1 Description of current provision and use

This natural bay is located beside the main A20. There is a small layby to the southern end of the bay that can accommodate up to 2 cars, it is owned by the National Trust.

Like the previous 2 sites at Greyabbey and Cunningburn, the main use of the access point is by windsurfers and kitesurfers, although it is not used as frequently as the previous 2 sites.

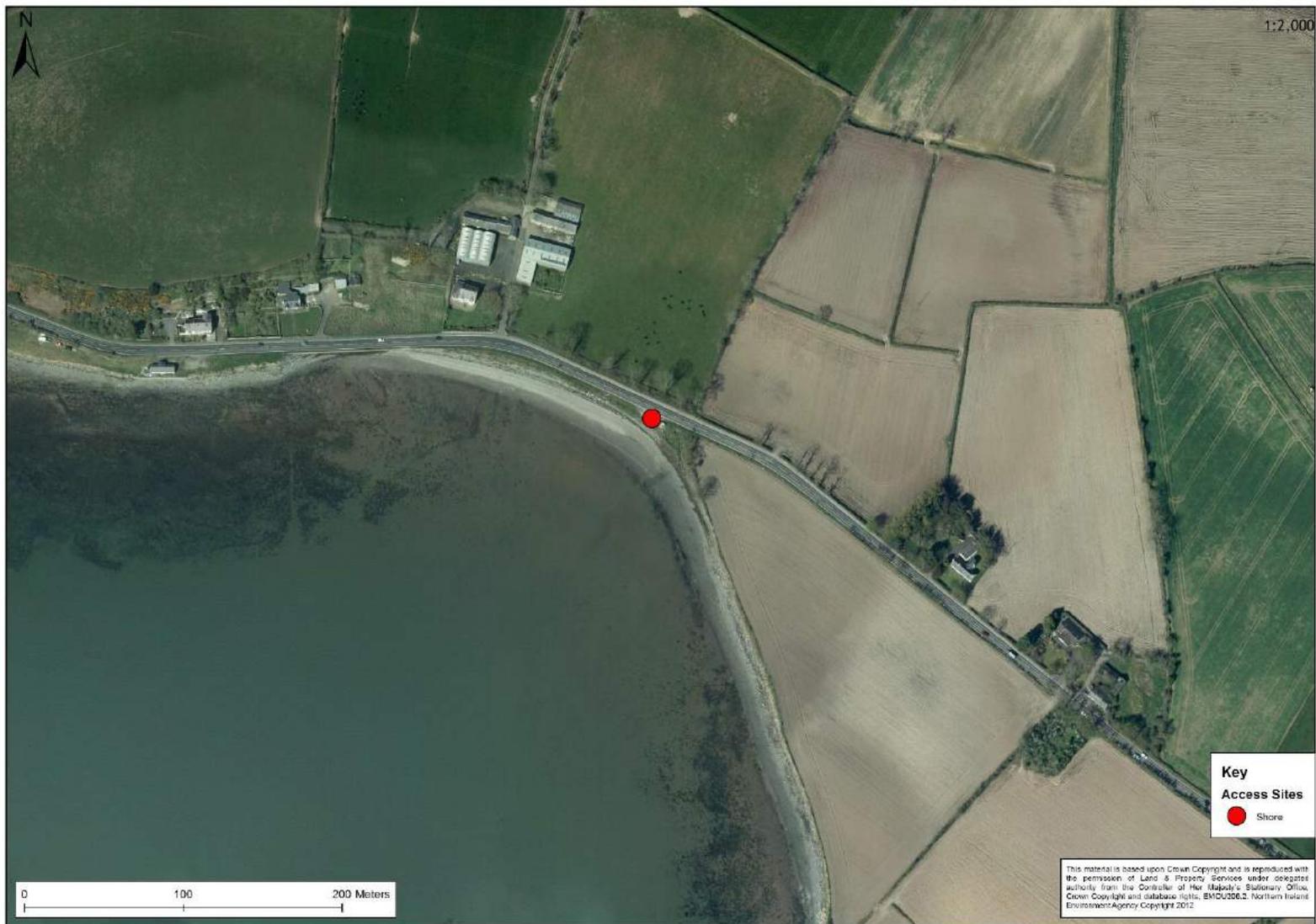


Fig. 52: Warden's Bay site map

5.12.2 Issues

- Proximity to the main road with no screening.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
9	Shore access	Informal public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Windsurfing - Kitesurfing 	Informal parking	None	Car parking limited to 2 cars	None	None

Fig. 53: Summary of water-based access at Warden's Bay



Fig. 54: Informal parking and access to shore at Wardens Bay

5.13 Island Hill

5.13.1 Description of current provision and use

A Council owned facility with a public slipway, car park and toilets, this site is a popular access point for paddlers. This is one of the access/ egress points on the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail. The foreshore and seabed are owned by the National Trust.

Consultation also suggests that swimming takes place here when the tide is in.

In the past, the slipway has been used to launch jet skis at the northern end of the Lough.

This is also a popular location for walkers to walk out to Rough Island on a causeway that is covered at high tide.



Fig. 55: Island Hill site map

5.13.2 Issues

- Accessible only when tide is in with deep mud at low water
- Jet skis have been reported in the past to be using this site to access the water. Disturbance to other users of the Lough and disturbance to wildlife are the main concerns identified through consultation. As the northern end of the Lough is where the highest concentration of overwintering birds is, this activity has the potential to have a significant impact particularly during the winter months.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
10	Slipway	Formal public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kayaking - Jet skis - Canoeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal parking for up to 30 cars (inc. disabled spaces) - Ample turning for boat trailers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Toilets (inc. disabled toilet with RADAR key). - Picnic tables - Litter bins - Dog waste bin at slipway 	Tidal access to slipway	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Out and about panel - Council information panel on toilet block

Fig. 56: Summary of water-based access at Island Hill



Fig. 57: Island Hill slipway

5.13.3 Opportunities

Observation is required to determine if jet skis are currently using this as an access point to get onto the Lough. If they are, then there is an opportunity to manage this by installing bollards and a gate at the top of the slipway.

5.14 Comber Cruising Club

5.14.1 Description of current provision and use

Accessed from the Killinchy to Comber Rd, the private club is located approximately 1km from Strangford Lough on the Comber River. It is accessed by water along a narrow channel, which becomes very narrow when the tide is out. There are several small pontoons and moorings.

The Crown Estate owns the riverbed, the pontoon is not regulated.

As this is a private club, use is limited to members. N.B. No consultation took place with the Club as no one responded to an email request to meet.



Fig. 58: Comber Cruising Club site map

5.14.2 Issues

- Accessible only when tide is in with deep mud at low water
- Access restricted to narrow channel.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
11	Boats moored in the river	Private	- Cruisers	- Parking within club grounds - Ample turning for boat trailers	- Toilets - Club house	Tidal access to Lough	None	- Club information

Fig. 59: Summary of water-based access at Comber Cruising Club

5.14.3 Opportunities

None identified.

5.15 Ringneill Quay (inc. Nendrum)

5.15.1 Description of current provision and use

Ringneill Bay and this area in general, provides a relatively sheltered location within the Lough. This is appealing as on many days the Lough can be windy. The area is also of interest in terms of being a scenic location with lots of interesting wildlife and the monastic site at Nendrum.

Ringneill Quay is a National Trust site located adjacent to the Ringneill Rd. The site includes an old quay and informal shore access from a stony beach. The shore is owned by the Crown Estate.

There is informal parking suitable for a couple of cars. This is a good access point to the Lough for paddlers. From here paddlers may do a downwind trip (if wind coming from the north) and go as far as Whiterock, Ringhaddy or Killyleagh and then get out. Alternatively, paddlers may complete a circular trip around Mahee Island and get out on the other side of the quay (on the opposite side of the road). As the quay does dry out, timing of the tide is important.

The site is occasionally used for bathing and swimming during good days in the summer time, as shown in  Fig. 62.



Fig. 60: Ringneill Quay site map

5.15.2 Issues

- The site is located close to 2 bad bends in the road. Safety could become an issue if use increased.
- Parking takes place on the verge and is limited.
- Access is very tide dependent with deep mud at low water. Any development of access would need to be sympathetic to the historic nature of the quay.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
12	Quay Shore access (x2)	Public	Paddling Shell fishing Bathing/swimming	Informal parking	None	Access is tide dependent Parking is limited	None	- None

Fig. 61: Summary of water-based access at Ringneill Quay



Fig. 62: Ringneill Quay (top left) and parking at Ringneill Quay (top right). Shore access 1 (bottom left) and shore access 2 (bottom right).

5.15.3 Potential opportunities

Nendrum Monastic site is a key tourist attraction within this area. Currently accessible via a causeway, there is currently no access to Nendrum from the water. There is an opportunity to create access from the water to Nendrum on the western shore. However, this would mean crossing private land, where there is often livestock, before gaining access to the Department for Communities (Historic Environment Division) owned and managed site. It is recommended that Council consider entering into a Permissive Path Agreement (PPA) with the private landowner (not known) to secure access on foot to the site from the western shore.

If access could be secured across the private land, this would provide an interesting stop off point for paddlers. For this, no infrastructure would be required as current shore access is suitable.

An additional opportunity would be the installation of a wooden jetty to enable access to Nendrum from the shore for motorised vehicles. Of interest would be the development of this location as a stop off point for any potential water taxi. However, there are a range of issues associated with this –

- Strong currents that are prevalent when the tide drains from Ardmillan Bay.
- As a Scheduled Monument, HED should be consulted at the earliest stage.

Demand for this would need to be identified prior to further investigation of this option.

5.16 Island Reagh

Owned and managed by the National Trust, there is an egress point for the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail on the east side of Island Reagh. The rocky shoreline runs into a muddy bay with soft mud when the tide goes out. From here paddlers could walk across the causeway to Mahee Island and Nendrum.

There was no other evidence of use identified through consultation.



Fig. 63: Island Reagh site map

5.16.1 Issues

This location is extremely tidal; hence it is an egress point only on the Canoe Trail.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
13	Shore access	Public	Paddling	Small formal car park	None	- Access is tide dependent - Parking is limited	None	- None

5.16.2 Opportunities

None identified.



Fig. 64: Island Reagh car park

5.17 Whiterock

One of the most popular locations for accessing the Lough, Whiterock has a range of access points as shown in the map below. Each site is considered in detail in the following sections.

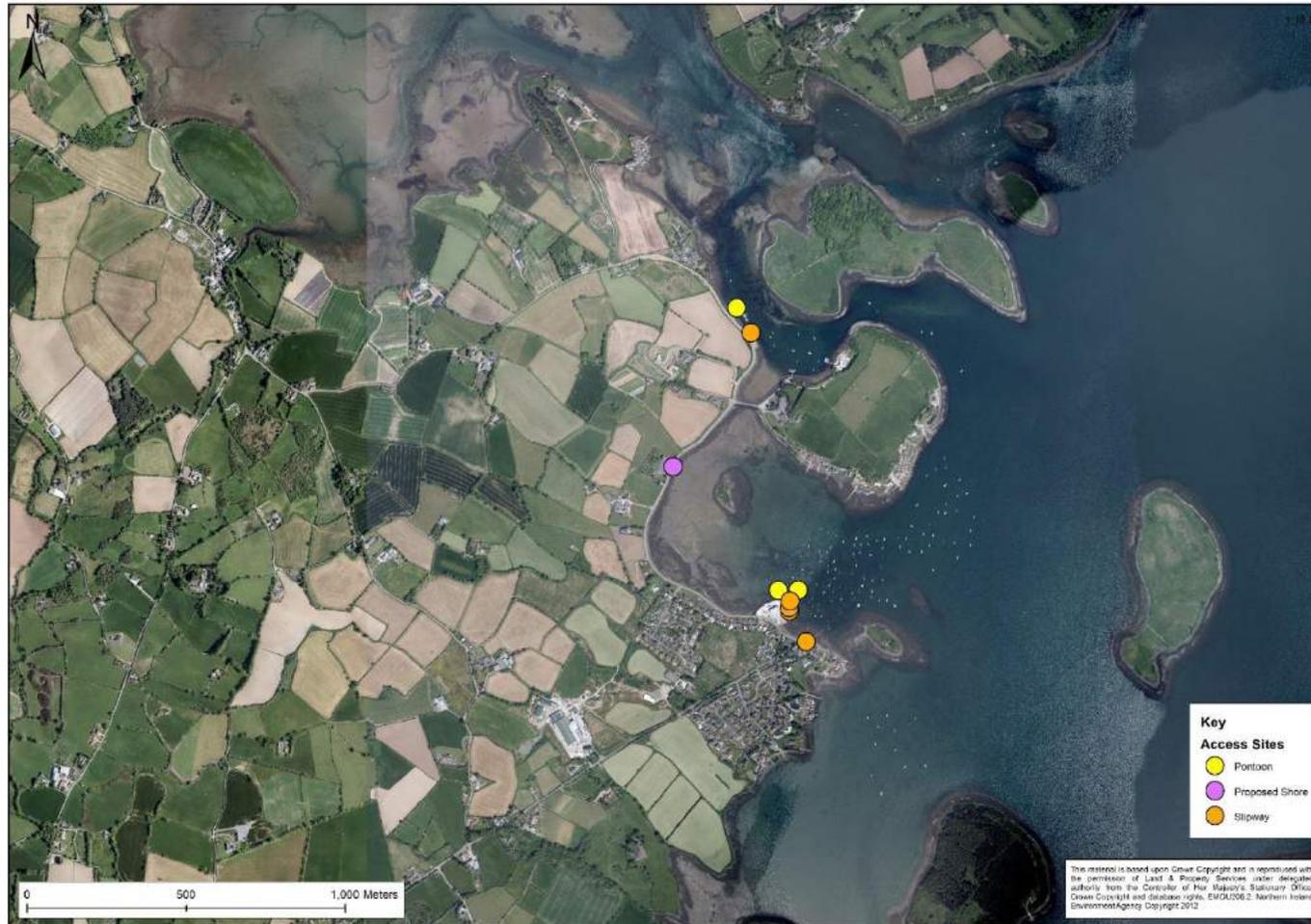


Fig. 65: Whiterock overall site map

5.18 Down Cruising Club

5.18.1 Description of current provision and use

Down Cruising Club located at Ballydorn has approximately 100 members with c.30 boats. 1/3 of the members are social members. In addition, members can sign in a limited number of guests per year. Home of the club is the lightship 'Petrel', moored beside the Ballydorn Rd. The club holds one open day a year (social occasion rather than sailing) and takes part in the European Heritage Open Day – the Lightship is listed on Natural Historic Ship Register.

Down Cruising Club has a 100-year lease with the Crown Estate – approximately 50 years are left.

There is an access ramp from the road to the ship. There are also moorings in the bay to the south of the Lightship owned by the Club. Off the ship are 2 floating pontoons. Up to 6 boats can stay in the water all year and avail of the winter pontoon berthing from Oct – March when members can access the pontoon for 3 nights per week. Visitors are also welcomed at the pontoon. The current rate is £20 per night. During the summer months the club welcomes 2-3 visiting yachts per weekend from Scotland, Republic of Ireland or Peel on the Isle of Man (which whom they have a close relationship). A short stay (i.e. not overnight) is charged at £15. This is very popular for visiting yachts and RHIBS from within Strangford Lough who use the pontoon to access Daft Eddys.

The Club also has a facility at Ballydorn Quay with the quayside store known as 'The Black Shed'. There is a slipway to the northern side of the quay. There is parking for up to 10 cars on the quay. This is used by private members for launching tenders to access their moorings (these are stored in adjacent shed owned by the club) and for craning in and out keelboats. Non-members can avail of a permit to gain access to quay and slipway at a cost of £15 for 2 years. There are currently c.6 permit holders ranging from commercial fishing craft to outdoor education centres. Permit holders must also demonstrate their public liability insurance cover. The slipway has a gate with key pad – this was installed following a recent tragedy in Bunrana (in which a car entered the water resulting in the drowning of 5 passengers).

The short stay option at the pontoon and the permit system for the Quay / Slipway provide opportunities for non-members to utilise the water access infrastructure.

The Club is primarily a cruising club with a low-key Friday evening racing series during the summer months

In terms of additional Infrastructure -

- All moorings in Ballydorn Bay are private and controlled by Ballydorn Fairway Committee (separate entity from the club) under lease from the Crown Estate.
- The number of moorings within the bay have reduced over the years due to silting – currently c.20
- A waiting list is in operation for application for moorings within the Bay
- Many members have therefore installed their own private moorings to North and South of Rainey Island c.24

Future provision -

- Car parking is very limited and cars typically park along the grass verge. The club has plans to widen a short section of the road to increase car parking provision. The club also has plans to extent the current pontoon by c.30 ft.
- The Club is aware that *Didemnum vexillum* or Carpet Sea Squirt has been identified in the sound. It is also growing on the pontoon and the Lightship²⁶. DAERA staff remove *Didemnum* manually on an annual basis. No restrictions relating to this invasive species were identified.

Cadew Point Slipway Association is located to the north of the Cruising Club. It is a separate Ltd company although those using the site must be members of Down Cruising Club.

The site is used for overwintering boats and has two slipways and an electric winch.

²⁶ *This was identified by DAERA*



Fig. 66: Down Cruising Club site map

5.19 Issues

- Parking on Ballydorn Rd which becomes congested at busy times, Club plans to widen the road to increase parking provision.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
14	2 pontoons attached to the lightship Slipway Quay	Private members only or through permit	- Yachts - Cruisers	Road side parking at lightship Parking on quay up to 10 cars	Club house with toilets/ showers, bar and refreshments	Access limited to club members Parking	None	Private Property sign – the stone quay is for DCC members only

Fig. 67: Summary of water-based access at Down Cruising Club



Fig. 68: Down Cruising Club (top left) and pontoon at Down Cruising Club (top right). Roadside parking on Ballydorn Road (bottom left) and restricted access to slipway (bottom right).

5.19.1 Opportunities

Whiterock is one of the most important access sites around the Lough in terms of volume of users. As such, there is a real demand to develop more public access to the water in this area.

Down Cruising Club is willing to discuss opportunities for non-members to utilise the water access infrastructure for a fee. Each opportunity would be considered on a case by case basis – the club need to be cautious about increasing exposure to liability and ensure this is not detrimental to the experience of their members i.e. the benefits to the club need to outweigh any potential detriment.

5.20 Whiterock Bay car park

5.20.1 Description of current provision and use

Whiterock Bay is located between Down Cruising Club and Strangford Lough Yacht Club. There is a large Council owned and managed car park with a range of facilities in a relatively central location and consequently, this is a popular stop off point for visitors driving along the Lough shore. However, there is no access to the Lough for water-based recreation as there is a wall between the road and the shore.

To reach other access points (within Whiterock) from this car park, users would have to leave boats at the shore and then park in the car park and walk back along the road (busy at times). This rarely happens, with most paddlers choosing to park informally at other places around the Bay that are closer to the access point.



Fig. 69: Whiterock Bay car park site map

5.20.2 Issues

Whiterock Bay is one of the most popular locations for accessing the Lough and this causes major issues in this area. In relation to this site the following issues exist-

- No access to the water from this point
- The large car park is used by those accessing the water at other locations but users then need to walk from the car park along the road back to the access point. This is not done very often.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
15	None	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Car parking space for up to 30 cars - Bins - Dog bins - Seating and picnic tables 	Toilets	Access limited to rocky shoreline	None	Numerous Council signs Out and About on Strangford Lough

Fig. 70: Summary of water-based access at Whiterock Bay car park

5.20.3 Opportunities

Consultation identified the potential to develop a formal access point by creating a hole in the wall and developing a stony access point. This may reduce pressure at Braddock Reach. The foreshore is owned by the Crown Estate so the necessary permissions would be required.

However, access would still be very tidal. Further investigation is therefore required to quantify the level of demand that could be met by the development of a tidal facility. This would in turn inform the cost effectiveness of this option.



Fig. 71: Whiterock Bay car park

5.21 Strangford Lough Yacht Club

5.21.1 Description of current provision and use

Located to the southern end of Whiterock Bay, this private yacht club has a large modern club house with surrounding parking, 2 pontoons (dingy and main) and a slipway. The club has 600 members and as such is the largest club on the Lough.

In terms of public events:

- One open day each year through RYA Push the Boat Out initiative
- Deliver a sailing programme for local schools (mainly Killinchy Primary School) on Sunday mornings – c.50 children

The club owns the premises i.e. physical building and surrounding infrastructure, however, the footprint of the club is leased from the National Trust

There are numerous access points to the Lough from the club grounds. This includes -

- 3 slipways (including 1 stone)
- 1 large Pontoon – these are often removed from Nov – Feb for maintenance / service and reduce impact from poor weather
- 1 additional small boat pontoon for tenders and rescue craft – again removed during the winter months

The first 2 slipways are located on land sold from Crown Estate to the Yacht Club, the 3rd stone slipway is on ground owned by Crown Estate and leased to National Trust.

The Club also has a small crane for launching rescue boats, tenders etc. and its own tractor. Additional Infrastructure includes -

- A navigation aid – a black buoy marks a local hazard and identified on club sailing instructions
- A disability hoist – this can be attached to pontoons to transfer those with a disability

The Club offers a fuel point that is primarily used by members however it is accessible to visiting yachts. The Club is also considering installing additional navigation markers within central channels of Strangford Lough.

The National Trust is a corporate member of the Club and Trust staff can use the Club facilities. This includes use of a mooring off shore.



Fig. 72: Strangford Lough Yacht Club site map

5.21.2 Issues

The Club has identified that sewage pump-out is an issue. The common practice is to empty off shore. However, many old yachts do not have the facility for sewage pump-out (to shore), all new yachts (of which there are very few) have this facility. Old yachts would therefore need a retro fit on which owners are reluctant to spend. The key objections of the sewage pump-out facility at SLYC in the aesthetics and potential for odour. This is being debated by members.

The Club also identified that there is an issue relating to the Crown Estate potentially charging the Club for moorings. However, like many other sailing clubs within the Lough, the moorings are owned by individuals.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
16	2 pontoons Slipways x3	Private members only	- Yachts - Cruisers	Parking on site for up to 30 cars	Club house with toilets/ showers, bar and refreshments	Access limited to club members	None	

Fig. 73: Summary of water-based access at Strangford Lough Yacht Club

5.21.3 Opportunities

- The Club identified that there is an opportunity to improve the appeal of Strangford Lough to visiting yachts though further promotion.
- As discussed above, there is an opportunity to improve the environmental sustainability of the Club through the development of a sewage pump-out facility on land. i.e. a facility to empty sewage holding tanks on yachts.



Fig. 74: SLYC slipways (top). SLYC Pontoon (bottom left) and SLYC Clubhouse (bottom right).

5.22 Whiterock (Braddock Reach)

5.22.1 Description of current provision and use

Located to the southern end of Whiterock Bay, this site is located on the corner where the Whiterock Rd joins Whiterock Bay and a private laneway Braddock Reach leads to private houses. There is a small layby (used for parking) with a stony slipway providing informal shore/ water access. In addition, there is a boathouse (private) beside the slip.

This is an official 'egress' point on the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail. It is not promoted as an access point due to the range of issues listed below. However, it is heavily used by paddlers as an access point. Consultation suggests that more than 40 paddlers may access the Lough at this point on a busy summer's evening.

Clubs also use this location for both access and egress on a regular basis including -

- Belfast Kayak Club
- Mobile Team Adventure
- Tollymore Mountain Centre

In addition, this location is used by commercial fishermen and leisure boaters (i.e. speed boats and jet skis).

Evidence suggests that this access point experiences the highest volume of use of any point on the Lough for non-motorised craft



Fig. 75: Whiterock (Braddock Reach) site map

5.22.2 Issues

There are major sensitivities at the site.

- Parking is the major issue with private houses and the laneway (Braddock Reach) often blocked – consultation highlighted that residents are disgruntled with this. Some clubs and users drop off boats and then park at the Council owned car park, however this is not normal practice.
- People getting changed in public – this is not an issue for paddlers but for others who may see people in various stages of undress.
- The layby is very well used and this has led to large potholes/ puddles developing – some form of management is needed to rectify this.
- A land registry search was completed for this site. This identified that the slipway and boathouse are privately owned jointly by 3 people all surname Andrews (inherited in the 1950's). The boathouse facility is currently thought to be leased to another private person. The access point has been well used for many years and with no known objections. *It was rumoured* that the owner was previously (some years ago) interested in selling the slip to the Council. The layby is privately owned and included in the folio for No1 Braddock Reach – there is no name on the folio regarding ownership.
- Access to the layby is off a blind bend in the road and as such poses issues for road safety.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
17	Shore access – stony slipway Layby	Public (Private ownership)	Paddlers frequent	Informal parking in layby	Life ring	Limited parking in layby	None	

Fig. 76: Summary of water-based access at Whiterock Bay (Braddock Reach)



Fig. 77: Shore access via stony slipway (top left) and Braddock Reach boathouse (top right). Layby for parking at Braddock Reach (bottom).

5.22.3 Opportunities

There is an opportunity for Council to approach the landowners (identified through Land Registry search) to discuss future management of this site as a public facility. This could involve –

- Land purchase
- A lease arrangement between Council and the private landowners, with management responsibilities attached
- Council resurfacing the layby with permission from the landowners.

Prior to this taking place, it is recommended that discussions take place with residents to quantify the level of use of the facility and the issues attached. This would help build a case for Council taking on a management role at the site.

5.23 Ballymorran Bay

5.23.1 Description of current provision and use

Ballymorran Bay located to the south of Whiterock offers a range of access points to the water. Ballymorran Foreshore is leased by the National Trust from the Crown Estate.

Facilities include (from north to south) -

- a. Layby parking
- b. A concrete slipway
- c. The quay (located opposite the junction of the Bayview Rd and Ballymorran Rd) – it is believed that this was built for the local farmers (1830's) to use with the farmers co-operating to maintain the quay.
- d. A concrete slipway with layby parking
- e. A concrete slipway with layby parking

However, despite the range of access points and parking areas, the Bay is not well used to access the water. This is largely due to the tidal nature of access and the extensive mud flats. Consultation identified that some residents use the Bay for kayaking and jet skiing. However, this is a very low level of use.



Fig. 78: Ballymorran Bay site map

5.23.2 Issues

In 2012, residents were successful in getting a planning application in Ballymorran Bay withdrawn. The plan included proposals to develop a commercial tourist amenity block, picnic area and car park in a field opposite the existing slipway and quay.

Issues stated by residents relating to the development included –

- The unsuitability of the water area for canoeing as mudflats cover the Bay for 70% of the time which can lead to canoeists getting trapped on the mud when the tide goes out.
- Regular flooding on the road opposite the proposed development during heavy rainfall and during spring tides makes the road impassable.
- The right hand turn from the Killinchy to Whiterock road into the Ballymorran Road is extremely dangerous as vision is blocked by a small hill and it is impossible to see oncoming traffic. It was noted that there have been several accidents and near misses at this junction.
- Ballymorran Road is very narrow with few passing places and there were concerns that the road did not have the capacity to take increased volumes of traffic, especially canoe trailers.
- Strangford Lough has been designated an area of outstanding natural beauty and Ballymorran Bay is home to otters and a very diverse range of birds and other wildlife which would be disturbed by increased activity; and there were concerns over public right of access to the slipway and quay.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
18	Slipway (x3) Quay	Private (although no physical barriers in place)	Paddlers	Parking – 3 laybys	None	Tidal access	None	

Fig. 79: Summary of water-based access at Ballymorran Bay



Fig. 80: Ballymorran Bay slipway

5.23.3 Opportunities

The development proposals from 2012 created a high level of opposition to anything being developed with the Bay. This, coupled with the tidal nature of the Bay means that no development is proposed within Ballymorran Bay.

5.24 Ringhaddy quay and slipway

Ringhaddy Sound provides a naturally-occurring, deep-water anchorage that is well sheltered by some of the many islands nearby including the large Islandmore (private). This deep channel means that access to the Lough at this point is less tidal dependant than some other access points along this coastline. There are also many options for trips around here for both beginners and experienced paddlers.

However, upon entering the Lough, or approaching from the north, visitors should take care when approaching Ringhaddy Sound due to the numerous boulder pladdies located throughout the Lough. These are shallow shoals around many of the bays and islands, some of which uncover at low tide while others remain submerged.

The bay is also a great place for divers with MY Alastor cited as '*most dived site in Ireland*' according to www.kayakshack.co.uk.

5.24.1 Description of current provision and use

After passing Ringhaddy Cruising Club, the Ringhaddy Rd continues for a short distance before terminating and becoming a private road/ laneway. At this point there is an old quay and slipway. The quay is in private ownership. The slipway is located on an area of foreshore owned by the Crown Estate and leased to the National Trust to a subsequent licence between the National Trust and a private landowner.

This large quay was thought to be mid -late 18th century and built by the Demesne owner at the time. Unlike the previous quay at Ballymorran Bay this quay does not dry out. Therefore, historically, the quay at Ringhaddy was significant to the locality. For example, coal would have come from Ringhaddy quay via the path to the Quarterland Road. While ownership was disputed some years ago, the quay is currently fenced off and a private sign is in place.

Unlike the quay, the slipway is accessible and well used by the public. There are several small boats at the slipway including a National Trust boat.

The slipway is well used by paddlers and those accessing the water in small personal craft including local fishermen.

Parking takes place informally on the road. In the past the landowner of an adjacent field/ green space (to the north west of the slipway between No 53 and 49 Ringhaddy Rd) has allowed users to park here. It is currently used to store small boats.



Fig. 81: Ringhaddy quay & slipway site map

5.24.2 Issues

- Private landownership was identified as a major issue at this site with the quay fenced off from the landward side.
- Parking is already an issue
- This is an important site as it is one of the few quays that doesn't dry out.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quay - Slipway - Steps onto shore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private – sign in place Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None on quay Paddlers and small craft on slip 	Informal road parking up to 2 cars	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited road parking Private homes and laneways adjacent to slipway 	None	Private sign and fencing on quay prevent access to it from landside

Fig. 82: Summary of water-based access at Ringhaddy - quay and slipway



Fig. 83: Ringhaddy Quay fenced off



Fig. 84: Ringhaddy slipway (top) and informal road parking (bottom).

5.24.3 Opportunities

This quay is an important access point to the Lough as it does not dry out. It was identified through consultation as having significant potential. However, landownership may be a major barrier to any development.

Despite this, an approach could be made to the relevant landowners/ lease and license holders to discuss future management of this site as a public facility. This could involve –

- Land purchase
- A lease arrangement between Council and the private landowners, with management responsibilities attached

Prior to this taking place, it is recommended that discussions take place with residents to quantify the level of use of the facility and the issues attached. This will help to build a case for Council taking on a management role at the site.

In the short term, cutting back grass and hedges at the lay by would greatly improve parking.

5.25 Ringhaddy Cruising Club

5.25.1 Description of current provision and use

Ringhaddy Cruising Club (RCC), founded in 1975, is located to the west of Islandmore in Ringhaddy Sound, between the towns of Killyleagh and Killinchy off the Ringhaddy Road (leading to a dead end). This is a private Club and as such, access to the water is for members only. The National Trust leases the foreshore at this point from the Crown Estate. The National Trust has a licence with Ringhaddy Cruising Club, the seabed area is not regulated.

Islandmore (offshore) is now inhabited all the year round and has signs forbidding landing from the Lough.

Visiting yachts from outside the Lough are welcome to come alongside the pontoons (where water is available) for short periods. Between the old quay (Site 19) and the pontoons there are privately owned facilities for hauling out that can be used in emergency situations.

Ringhaddy Sound provides a naturally-occurring, deep-water anchorage that is well sheltered by some of the many islands nearby. This deep channel enables access to the pontoons even at low tide.



Fig. 85: Ringhaddy Cruising Club site map

5.25.2 Issues

- Access currently private for members only.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
20	Pontoons Slipway	Private members only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yachts - Cruisers 	Parking on site for up to 30 cars	Club house with toilets/ showers, bar and refreshments	Access limited to club members	None	Signs relevant to club members and visitors.

Fig. 86: Summary of water-based access at Ringhaddy Cruising Club



Fig. 87: Ringhaddy Cruising Club pontoon and slipway

5.25.3 Opportunitites

While an opportunity to discuss a potential agreement with the Cruising Club in relation to public access was identified, consultation with the Club confirmed that this would not be an option.

5.26 Ringdufferin

5.26.1 Description of current provision and use

Located off the Ringdufferin Rd (opposite the Ringdufferin Nursing Home), this is an informal shore access point to the Lough. Users must cross a grassy verge, in private ownership, before accessing the stony shoreline, owned by the National Trust. There is some limited roadside parking on the verge.

Paddlers do use this site, however the tidal nature of access limits use. The site can be useful as part of a trip i.e. paddlers can get in at Ringdufferin at high tide and out at Killyleagh.



Fig. 88: Ringdufferin site map

5.26.2 Issues

- Access at this site is restricted by the tide.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
21	Shore access	Public	Limited	Informal road parking up to 2 cars	None	Limited road parking	None	None

Fig. 89: Summary of water-based access at Ringdufferin



Fig. 90: Ringdufferin shore access

5.26.3 Opportunities

None identified.

5.27 Taggart Island

5.27.1 Description of current provision and use

Owned by the National Trust, this island is only accessible from the water. Users include paddlers who pull up along the shoreline and haul boats ashore most frequently along the east side of the island. The island is opposite East Down Yacht Club.

The National Trust has plans to introduce wild camping on Island Taggart in certain areas. This needs to be managed with cattle (mostly there during summer months). The Trust is currently working out which areas to fence to keep cattle and people apart.

There is a range of farm buildings on the island, discussions have taken place in the past regarding the renovation of these into a bothy (similar to Salt Island).

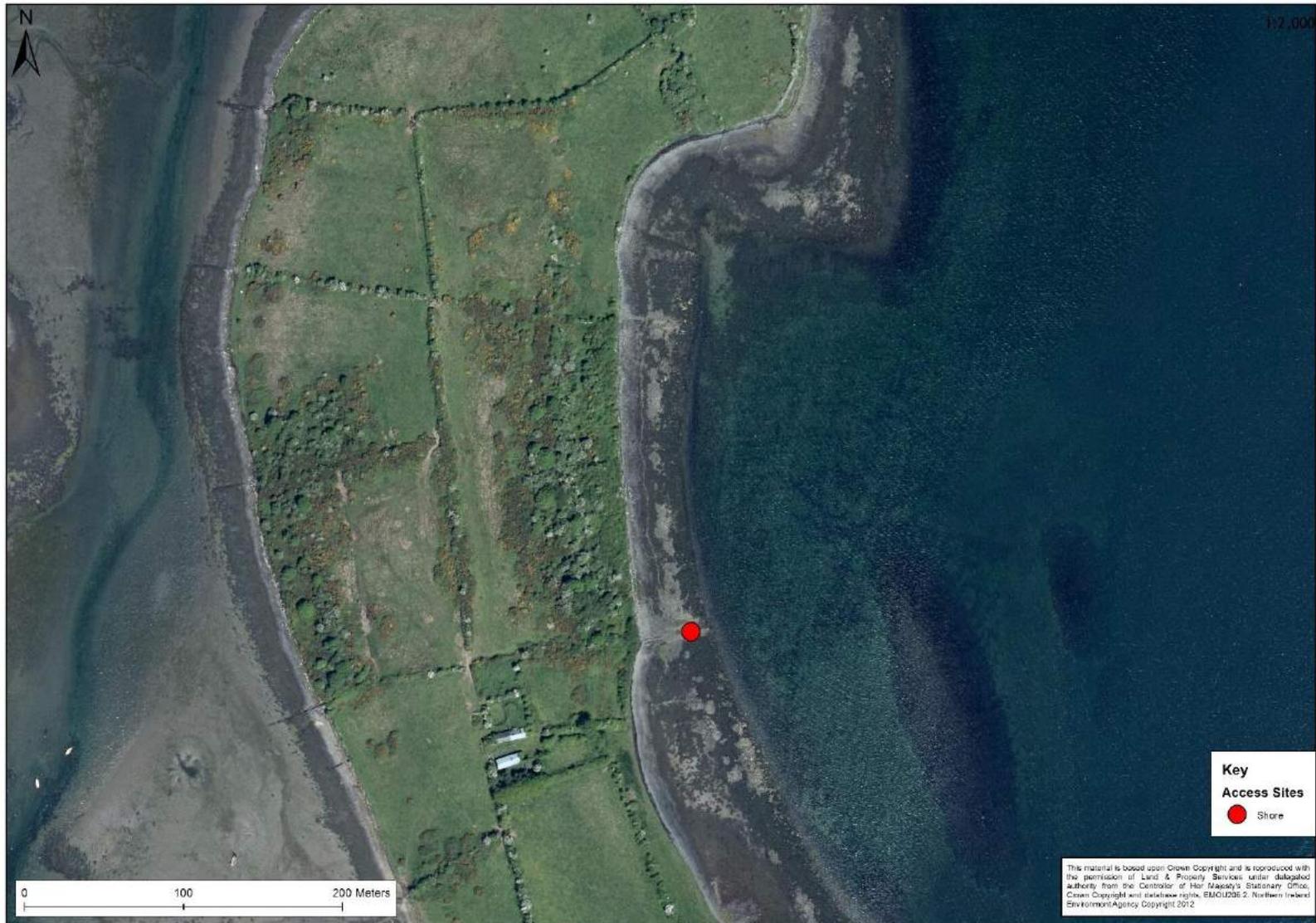


Fig. 91: Taggart Island site map

5.27.2 Issues

- Cattle are used to manage the island habitat, NT is concerned about potential conflict between cattle and people so are installing fences.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
22	Accessible only by water	Public	Paddlers	None	None	Accessible only by water	None	None

Fig. 92: Summary of water-based access at Taggart Island

5.27.3 Opportunities

- Development of wild camping, this is being taken forward by the National Trust
- The development of a bothy within the farm buildings. The Trust has considered this but concluded that the price is inhibitive.

5.28 Rathcunningham Quay

5.28.1 Description of current provision and use

Located north of Killyleagh at the end of the Rathcunningham Road, this historic quay, built in the 1830's is in private ownership. However, the National Trust has a 15-year agreement with the landowner that enables Trust staff, contractors or volunteers to use this facility. In exchange for this, floating pontoons were installed by the Trust. The Trust shores its barge here.



Fig. 93: Rathcunningham Quay site map

5.28.2 Issues

- Privately owned
- Tidal access

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
23	Quay Temporary pontoon	Private	Private boats National Trust through agreement	None	None	Private/ restricted access	None	None

Fig. 94: Summary of water-based access at Rathcunningham Quay



Fig. 95: Rathcunningham Quay

5.28.3 Opportunities

While access to the water from the quay is tidal, this facility would provide access to the bays in this area and importantly Taggart Island (where the National Trust has plans to establish wild camping).

While landownership may be a major barrier to enabling public access, there is a precedent of the landowner entering into an agreement to increase access.

Therefore, an approach could be made to the landowner to discuss future management of this site as a public facility, potentially for non-motorised craft only. This could involve a lease arrangement between Council and the private landowner, with management responsibilities attached.

5.29 East Down Yacht Club

5.29.1 Description of current provision and use

Located north of Killyleagh, this club is accessed off the Comber Rd (A22) via a long laneway. The foreshore is leased from the National Trust and the seabed leased from Crown Estate.

The club currently has 200 – 230 members with a large family membership. Members must be boat owners to be a member with those attending clubs sailing events or courses classified as temporary members

The following facilities are in place –

- 9-acre site which includes a club house, car parking, a boat park, caravan and camping
- Pontoon - usable for keelboats 3hrs either side of high and dinghies at all tide times.
- Slipways (x2). The larger slipway is well used and the smaller lightly used, mainly by tenders accessing moorings
- Swinging moorings owned by private members. The club has a mooring officer to give guidance on the positioning of moorings
- 2 visitor moorings were previously installed by the Council but transferred to the Club
- Extensive facilities for both racing and cruising

Visitor services include -

- Large caravan park with hard standing for c.20 caravans – spaces are available on an annual lease from club (must be members)
- Formal camping ground provides overspill from caravan park and is well used during large events
- Those visiting the club (e.g. for events) in motorhome are charged a nightly rate
- Equipment hire is for club members – the club owns a fleet of small sailing dinghies
- Instruction is during RYA Sailing Courses – primarily dinghy courses
- Food drink – licensed bar – catering a combination of in-house catering or external caterer depending on scale of event

In addition, there is an electric winch used for launching keelboats at the slipway and a mast crane for inserting / removing masts from keelboats

In terms of environmental good practice, the East Down Yacht Club Members Year Book includes the following guidance to members -

Skippers are required to adhere to good environmental practice at all times, especially while moored to the pontoon. This includes not discharging of waste to the environment and the transport of refuse to receptacles on shore.

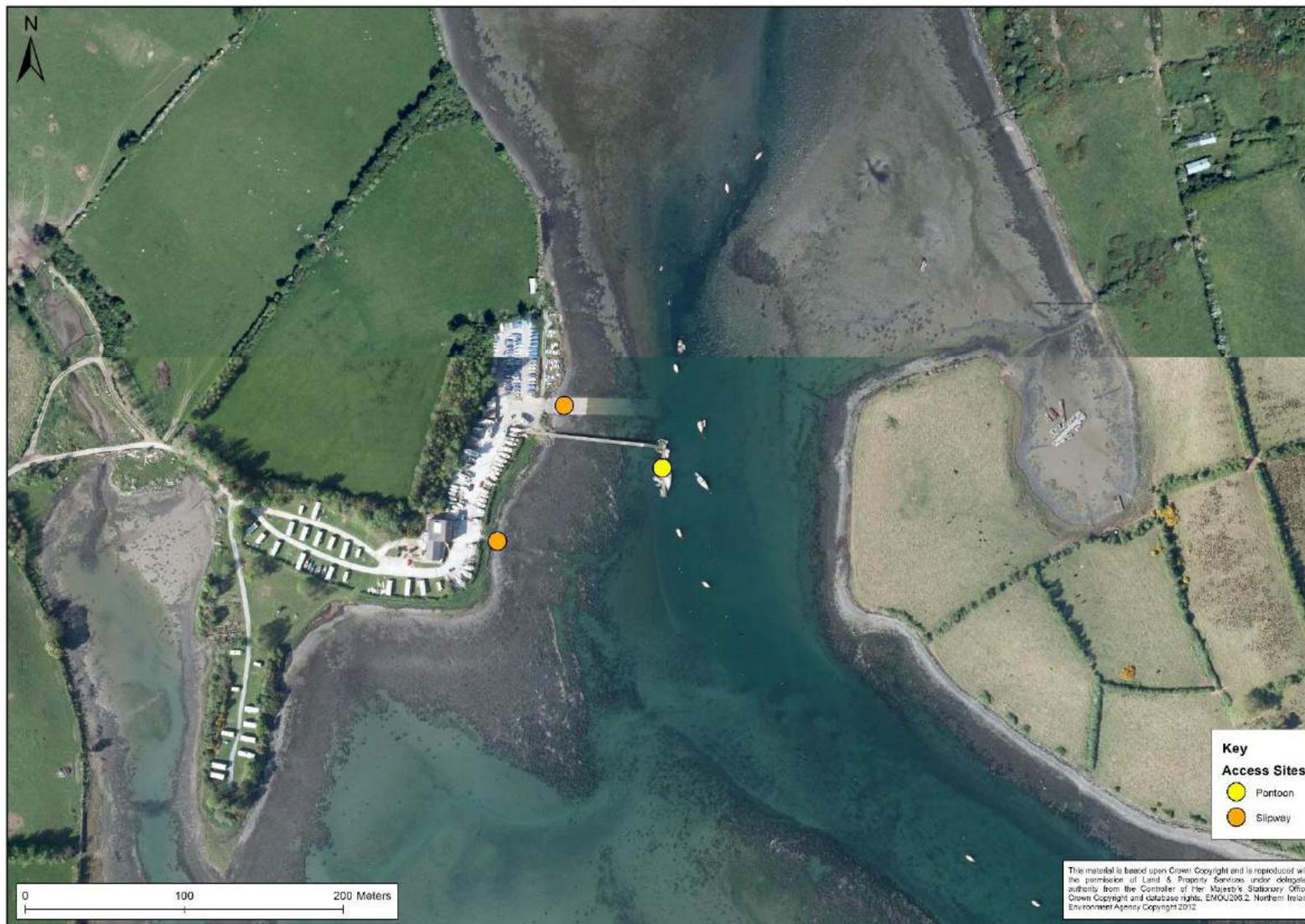


Fig. 96: East Down Yacht Club site map

5.29.2 Issues

- Access to the Lough from this location is for members only.
- The club is accessed via a laneway through private land. The club has private right of way (identified in their deeds). The lane is in a very bad state of repair.
- The club has previously submitted planning proposals to deliver an access laneway to the club via another area of land. However, planning permission was refused on environmental grounds.
- The club believes that the sound is silting up and has concerns regarding this in the long term.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
24	Pontoon Slipways (x2)	Private members only	- Yachts - Cruisers	Parking on site for up to 30 cars	Club house with toilets/ showers, bar and refreshments	Access limited to club members	None	Appropriate signage for members and visitors

Fig. 97: Summary of water-based access at East Down Lough Yacht Club



Fig. 98: East Down Yacht Club Pontoon (left) and East Down Yacht Club slipway (right)²⁷

5.29.3 Opportunities

None identified during consultation.

²⁷ Photo Credit: East Down Yacht Club

5.30 Killyleagh Town

Killyleagh is a key settlement on the shores of the Lough with a range of facilities including pubs, restaurants, accommodation and shops. The Castle is also a popular attraction for visitors to Strangford Lough AONB. Historically, the town was an important port, given the status of maritime port in 1620²⁸. Various corn, linen, cotton and woollen mills supported the export business. From the early 17th to the mid-20th century, the quay was frequented by many trading vessels. Extensions to the quay and the deepening of the channel leading to it in the early 19th century, enabled steamers to provide a competitive service of both goods and passengers from Strangford Lough and Liverpool. With the decline in maritime trade, use of the quay also declined and, coupled with the construction of new housing developments in the area, as resulted in the traditional quay being largely deserted of boats with only a few infrequent leisure craft.

However, the long tradition of accessing the waters of Strangford Lough from the Killyleagh area, has left a legacy to the water in and adjacent to the town. As such, the town has the potential to be a key hub within the Lough for water-based recreation and any strategic development should ensure the profile of Killyleagh as a hub is retained.

Over the past 15-20 years, there have been 3 proposals for marinas near Killyleagh. Two of these were linked to housing developments. Another significant proposal included the installation of breakwaters across the bay proving a 300-400 berth marina.

In 2004, planning permission was refused for a £35m marina development at Gocean Lodge in Killyleagh, on the shores of Strangford Lough. The proposal included a 27-acre site with a 140-berth marina and 335 homes, a cafe and a channel from the marina and into the lough foreshore.

At the time, the local community and leading political representatives, including Strangford MP Iris Robinson and two ex-Environmental Ministers, Dermot Nesbitt and Sam Foster largely supported this development as it would have brought jobs and investment to the town. However, strong opposition was voiced from an array of environmental groups, including the National Trust, RSPB and Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

The proposal was turned down by Stormont Minister Angela Smith. The critical determining factors were the impact the proposed development would have on the important, internationally recognised interests of Strangford Lough and its valuable coastal environment, archaeological aspects of the site and the high-quality landscape and scenic setting of Killyleagh village itself, which is an important conservation area.

Every effort was made to address all the environmental issues but planning permission was still refused.

²⁸ McErlean, T., McConkey, R. and Forsythe, W., 2002. *Strangford Lough. An archaeological survey of the maritime cultural landscape*. Belfast: Blackstaff Press.

5.30.1 Description of current provision and use

There are 2 main access points to the Lough (from north to south) –

a. Net Walk

A historic access location, this natural shoreline is well used despite the relatively informal nature of access. Aerial photography clearly shows the sewage pipe going to the west of the current access point.

Net Walk is the official access point for the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail and is well used by paddlers. The original Canoe Trail panel was removed by Council as this was in a poor state of repair.

The site is also used by the Killyleagh Coastal Rowers who store their boats (x2) in the industrial estate opposite and then carry the boats down to the shore. The club has 51 members and practice weekly. The high demand to row at the weekends, has led to time slots being organised e.g. 3 time slots on a Saturday morning. In the past, rowers used the slipway at Killyleagh Yacht Club to access the water, at a cost of £200 per annum. This year, the Yacht Club increased this to £3,000 for 2 boats which was too expensive for the Rowing Club, hence the use of Net Walk.

b. Killyleagh Quay

The historic quay at the heart of the village has little use as an access point to the water today. A Council managed walk, 'Killyleagh Harbour Net Walkway', leads around the edge of the quay (between the houses and the water). There is a set of stone steps with handrail at the mouth of the quay (historically known as North Point). A metal railing and chain prevent access to the steps. This can either be accessed from a gateway opposite the Smugglers Pub (with a key available from Council) or by road from the Net Walk with some parking available at the end of the road (dead end).

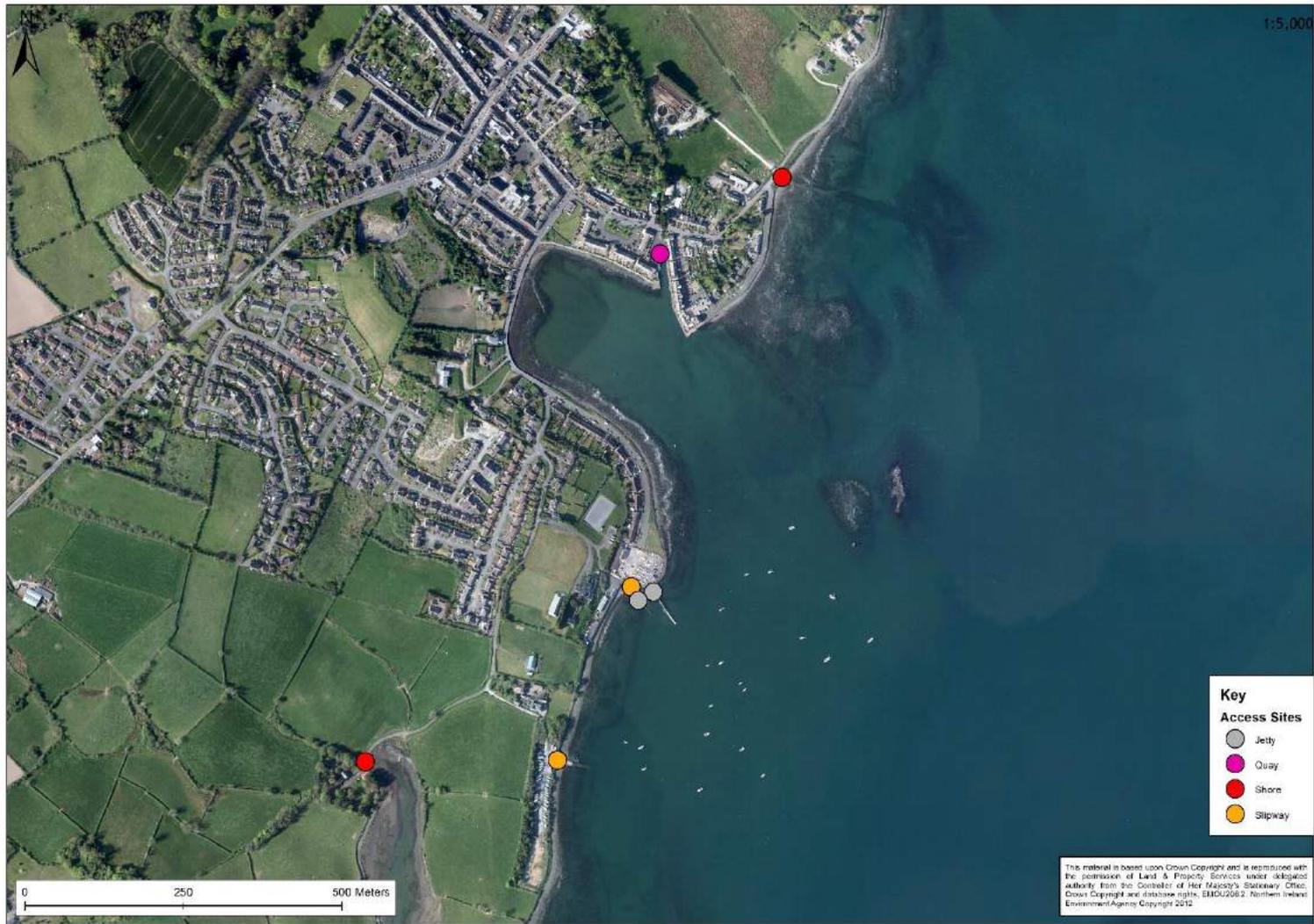


Fig. 99: Killyleagh site map

5.30.2 Issues

a. Net Walk

- The main issue at this location is the informal nature of access. The rocky shoreline can be difficult to navigate for users especially those carrying a boat. Access at this location is also extremely tidal, limiting when the water can be used to 1- 1.5 hrs either side of high tide.
- Parking is limited and takes place informally on the road, with increased usage this may become a concern among residents who currently tolerate the level of use.
- This is a popular walk among local people who walk around the quay along Net Walk and then up Seaside Rd. When cars are parked, and particularly when boats are being unloaded/ loaded, there may be a safety issue with traffic/ people/ boats congested into a relatively small area.
- Currently the rowers walk their boats down the road from the storage facility on Bridge St.

b. Killyleagh Quay

- Owned by Newry, Mourne and Down Council
- The main channel of the quay retains sufficient water at all times for boats to moor here, however access into the main channel is tidal.
- Access to the water is limited to the stone steps and therefore only suitable for users with boats already in the water. i.e. this is a point to get on or off the boat rather than to launch a boat.
- Access to the water from the steps is tide dependent.
- There may be an environmental issue relating to the historic tannery in Shrigley. It was suggested during consultation that leachate deposited on the sea bed, may be exposed if dredging was to occur.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
25a	Shore Access – Net Walk	Public	Paddlers Killyleagh Coastal Rowers	On road parking up to 5 cars	Bins	Parking Tidal access	None	Canoe Trail road sign Canoe Trail panel removed
25b	Killyleagh Quay – stone steps	Public	Low level of use by water craft	Parking at end of Net Walk or in town	Bins	Chain at top of steps Tidal access Parking	None	Safety signs Life rings

Fig. 100: Summary of water-based access at Killyleagh Net Walk



Fig. 101: Killyleagh Net Walk shore access (top) and Killyleagh Quay (bottom).

5.30.3 Opportunities

a. Net Walk

None identified.

b. Killyleagh Quay

There is potential to improve access to Killyleagh Quay from Strangford Lough. This could accommodate both non-motorised and motorised craft. This would require-

- Installation of a floating pontoon with a rolling access ramp running the length of the quay wall. This could be installed parallel to the quay wall (northern side). An example of this is shown in Fig. 102.
- Dredging of a channel the width of the existing quay to create access to the main body of water at low tide. This would involve dredging to ensure that a minimum depth of 2m of water was available at low tide.



Fig. 102: Example of a floating pontoon with rolling ramp (Lower Bann Canoe Trail)

5.31 Killyleagh Yacht Club and Outdoor Education Centre (KOECC)

To the southern side of the town is the private Killyleagh Yacht Club and the publicly owned Killyleagh Outdoor Education Centre. While these venues are beside each other (on the shore), both are accessed via separate electronic gates.

5.31.1 Killyleagh Yacht Club

Killyleagh Yacht Club based at the southern end of the town is a relatively large club with an estimated 300 members. Access to the Club is from Cuan Reach with the Club located at the end of the road.

The Club has a good range of facilities on-site that includes a range of access points described in 5.31.2. In addition, the club offers food and drink within the licensed bar (open for club events and club sailing). There are also sailing courses with the Yacht Club recognised teaching establishment.

Current usage is predominantly sailing (dinghy / yacht) and motor cruising.

Additional Infrastructure includes -

- Swinging moorings – owned by private members not the club. Several moorings located near the club are owned by non-members.
- A disability hoist that is connected to the floating pontoon. This is removed during the winter.

While access to facilities is for members only, the Club has forged links with several organisations enabling greater use of the facilities by others.

This includes –

- Sailing courses are open to both members and non-members – typically via junior sailing courses every Monday evening from May – August.
- The Club has delivered sailing courses for Blackwater College.
- Dundonald Sea Cadets have a form of affiliate membership which allows them to use the club's facilities for sailing, canoeing etc. The club views this as an excellent relationship.
- Killyleagh Skiff Rowing Club previously had a similar membership relationship with the club for 2 years. This is no longer in place as the Rowing Club were not able to pay the required fee. It was noted that the relationship between the rowing club and sailing club had deteriorated during this period.

The Club identified several issues in relation to the study including -

- Legislation that restricts anchoring and laying of racing marks has impacted on race management of regattas
- The current yacht club was built in 1970 and the club has ambitions to extend, potentially by adding another level and including extension of the changing rooms and provision of more showers

5.31.2 Killyleagh Outdoor Education Centre

The Outdoor Centre accessed off the Shore Rd, is scheduled for closure as an outdoor centre in 2018. The site is due to become an EOTAS²⁹ centre .

5.31.3 Description of current provision and use

There are 3 key access points within this location -

a. A piled jetty with a gangway leading to a floating pontoon. The foreshore at this point is owned by the Crown Estate and leased to the National Trust. The gangway is removed from Oct – March to avoid damage during the winter months. The floating pontoon is used for short stays rather than overnight stays.

b. Concrete slipway

This is the main access to the Lough from both the Yacht Club and the Outdoor Education Centre. The foreshore is owned by the Crown Estate and leased to the National Trust who in turn have a licence with the Yacht Club.

This long concrete slipway (approximately 80m long) is well used by both organisations, with the Outdoor Centre paying an annual rent to the Yacht Club for its use. While, there is no formal agreement, it is thought that a ‘Gentleman’s agreement’ was put in place by a previous Centre Manager ‘Rodger Richard’ in the 80’s/ 90s. Delamont OEC plans to continue to use this slipway until a proposed new slip is built at Delamont – see 5.33.

The slipway is heavily used by both Killyleagh Yacht Club members and Killyleagh and Delamont Outdoor Education Centre.

Consultation suggests that the slipway at the Yacht Club/ Education Centre has the potential to be one of if not the most important access point in the south west of the Lough for a range of reasons including–

- The long slipway enables access to the Lough at most states of the tide.
- It is located on the west coast, this is the most popular coast for accessing the Lough and for places of interest.
- It is in good condition.
- There is private/ safe parking on-site in the OEC with ample space to turn boat trailers.
- There is ample space within the OEC site for boat storage.
- The slipway is close to Killyleagh (although not within walking distance if accessing from the OEC).
- Access point for those wishing to visit Salt Island (key available from OEC).

²⁹ EOTAS – Education Other Than At School

c. A brick jetty that runs alongside the slipway

d. Fairy Lodge

This private facility is located approximately 300 metres south of the yacht club (by water). It includes a large area of land where boats are stored. The foreshore is owned by the Crown Estate and leased to the National Trust who in turn have a licence with the Yacht Club.

The facility is accessed from the Shore Rd. The site is used for overwintering boats and repair work during the summer. There is currently a hard stand (concrete) for c.40 boats ranging between 20-40ft. The club owns an additional adjacent brown field space into which they have the potential to extend the hard stand. The site has an electric winch for launching and retrieving boats via the slipway, electric points for power tools and running water. The site can be used by both members (£5 / ft) and non-members (£15 / ft) wishing to store boats. There is a slipway from the site into the Lough.

5.31.4 Issues

a. Jetty with floating pontoon

None identified.

b. Concrete slipway

The slipway is owned by the Club and there is a concern that this important access point could become completely private in the future once the OEC closes and the current gentleman's agreement is not continued.

c. Brick jetty

None identified.

d. Fairy Lodge

There is a need to expand the facility and this can be done onto the adjacent brown field site that is owned by the Club.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
26a	Jetty with floating pontoon	Private members	Club boats	Parking	Club house with toilets/showers, bar a refreshments	Access limited to club members	None	Out and About panel at entrance to Yacht Club
26b	Slipway	Private members only or through agreement with Club.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yachts - Cruisers - Paddlers - Sailing boats 	Parking on site in Yacht Club or at OEC	Club house with toilets/showers, bar and refreshments OEC building	Access limited to club members or OEC users (by agreement)	None	Appropriate signage for members and visitors to both the Yacht Club and OEC.
26c	Brick jetty	Private members	As above	As above	As above	As above	None	
26d	Concrete slipway (Fairy Lodge)	Private by permission from landowner	As above	Parking on site	None	Access limited to Club members or by permission from landowner.	None	

Fig. 103: Summary of water-based access at Killyleagh Yacht Club and OEC



Fig. 104 Killyleagh Yacht Club jetty (left) and Killyleagh Yacht Club slipway (right)



Fig. 105: Killyleagh Yacht Club brick jetty

5.31.5 Opportunities

With the closure of the Outdoor Centre there is an opportunity for public access to be secured at the Sailing Club slipway.

The following are potential options -

- Council lease slipway and car park from Yacht Club. This would allow access for a range of public use in a managed way. This would also secure one of the most important access points for the future.
- In addition, the National Trust has expressed an interest in acquisition of a coastal property to enable access to the Lough.

Discussions should take place at the earliest opportunity between Council, Killyleagh Yacht Club, the National Trust and the Education Authority regarding securing public access at this location.

5.32 Salt Island

5.32.1 Description of current provision and use

Salt Island is owned and managed by National Trust. In 2008, the bothy (once a cottage dwelling) was restored as part of the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail. The Bothy provides basic overnight accommodation for those visiting the island by boat. Bookings are taken by the National Trust.

The Bothy was closed for several years (2016-2018) due to damage to some of the facilities. However, it has recently reopened (Spring 2018).

Facilities include –

- New wood burning stove and basic cooking facilities.
- Flushable toilet that uses rainwater
- Compost toilet (only for use if there is not enough rainwater)
- Users must bring their own water, the original water pipe (from the shore at Myra Rd) was damaged and is no longer operational. The Trust has no plans to reinstall the water pipe. Despite attempts to anchor the pipe to the seabed, seaweed attaches to the pipe making it buoyant. Therefore, all attempts to correct this have been unsuccessful in the long term. In addition, Natural Environment Division (NED) will not allow the National Trust to dig the pipe into the bed of the Lough.
- A key pad to enter the building, with keys in the bothy for the shutters.
- Pre-booking through Mount Stewart office
- Wild camping although users are encouraged to let the Trust know when they plan to camp.

There are additional plans to install bunk beds.

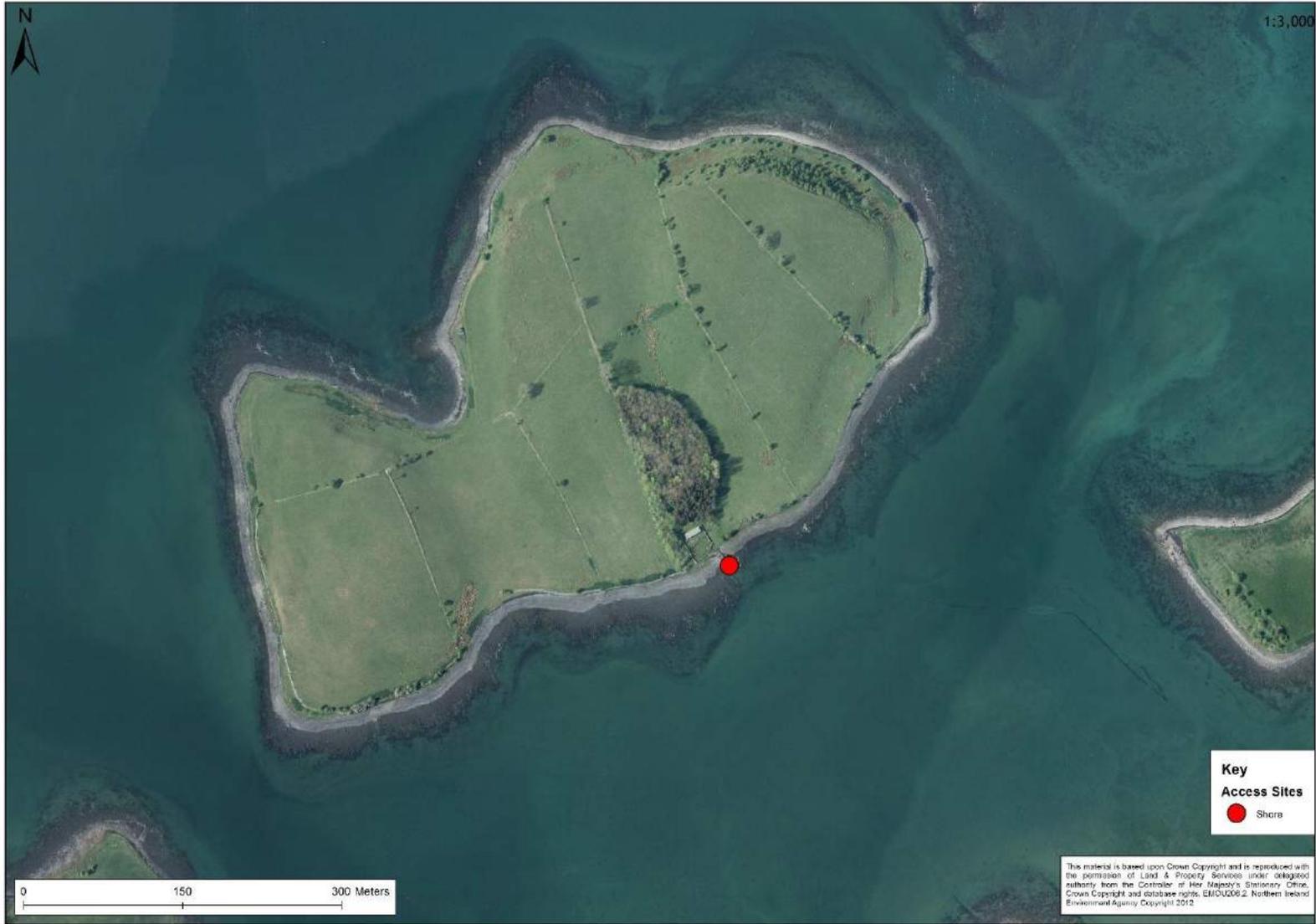


Fig. 106: Salt Island map

5.32.2 Issues

- No drinking water on site.
- Consultation has identified that the booking system is difficult for the public to use.
- Parts of the island are designated as a Special Area of Conservation. Therefore, the Trust does not want campfires in these areas.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
27	Shore access	Informal	Paddlers -	Bothy		Access from water only	None	NT name sign

Fig. 107: Summary of water-based access at Salt Island

5.32.3 Opportunities

Numerous consultees expressed an interest in being part of a 'Friends of the Bothy' group, who, in a voluntary capacity, could be involved in the management of, or maintenance of the bothy. Roles could include inspections, clear ups, basic repairs and liaison with users wishing to stay on the island. The National Trust already has an extensive volunteer programme, however agreed to consider if a 'Friend of the Bothy' Group would help National Trust staff with management of the bothy.

5.33 Delamont Country Park

Situated on the shores of Strangford Lough in an elevated position, this Council-owned Park provides stunning views across Strangford Lough. The 200-acre site provides a range of facilities for visitors including extensive car parking, toilets, café and miniature railway (private sector) and play park. There is also 5* caravan & camping site managed by the Caravan and Camping Club.

There is a programme of events throughout the year.

As Delamont borders the Lough and is a public site with ample car parking, this in theory should be one of the major access points to the Lough within the study area. However, the tidal nature of the bay greatly limits the potential of the site.

The Council owns the majority of the Park with the Education Authority owning an area around Delamont House and an area by the shore as shown in Fig. 108.

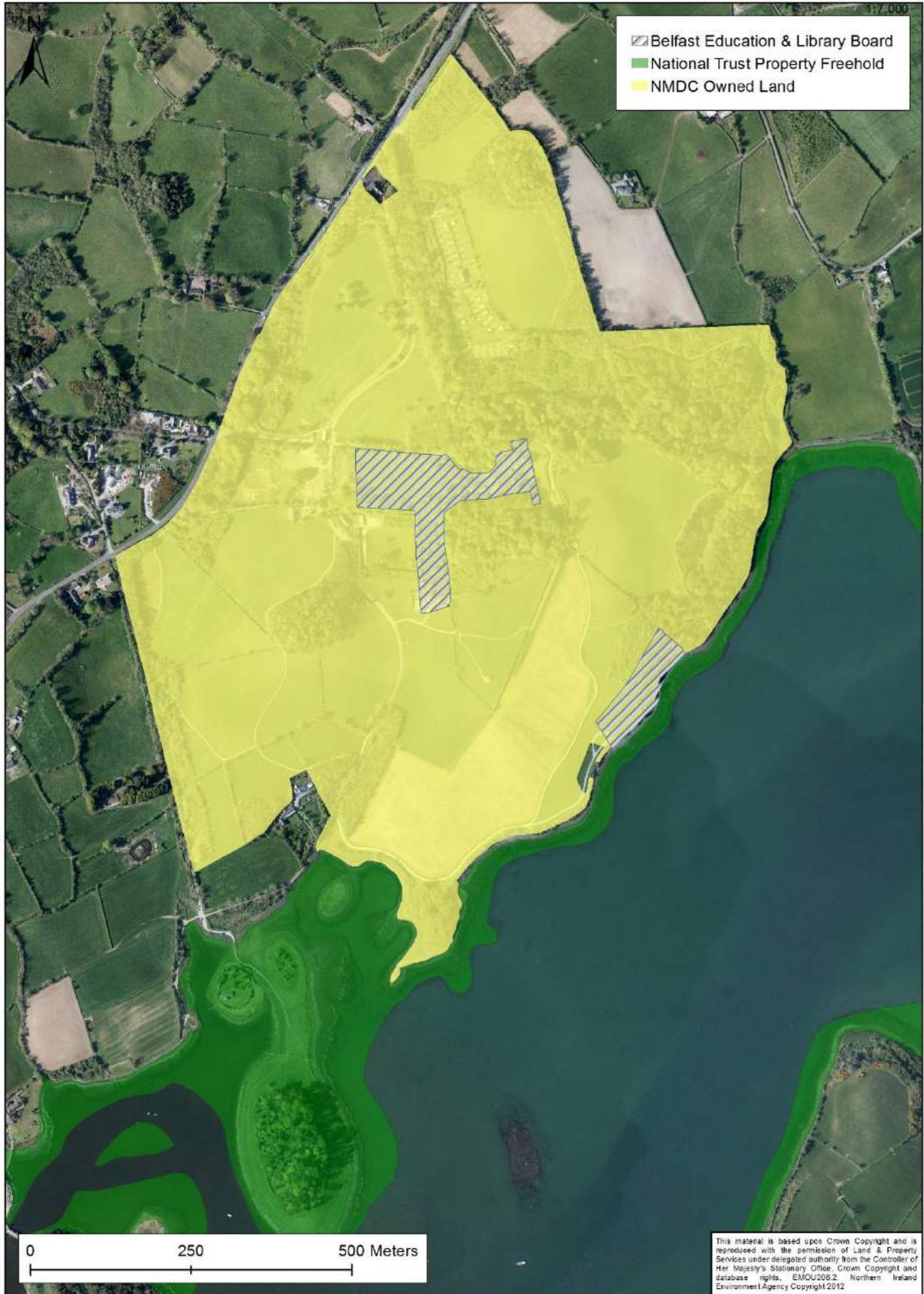


Fig. 108: Map of landownership at Delamont Country Park

5.33.1 Description of current provision and use

A range of water-based recreation takes place as follows -

Paddling - Delamont is one of the access points for the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail. This informal shore access point benefits from secure parking and vehicle access to the shore. However, to get boats to the water, users must check in with Park staff. Users are required to complete a form and staff ensure that they are aware of the WiSe scheme (See 7.7).

Staff then open the barrier to allow access to the shore. Once boats are dropped off at the shore, users return cars to the main car park and walk back to the shore. This is approximately a 5-minute walk. There is some car parking at the shore, however, for security of the car and safety of users, staff prefer all vehicles are parked in the main car park. This means that staff can keep an eye on the car and know if paddlers have not returned (i.e. if the car is still there). Delamont is a popular access point for paddlers visiting Salt Island. If paddlers are staying overnight at Salt Island Bothy they can park in the walled garden (at their own risk).

This check in system is an effective management tool in terms of knowing who is accessing the Lough and when. It also provides a layer of safety that other non-managed sites do not. Staff at Delamont should know when the paddler(s) are going out and when they are coming back, plus if they have a marine radio. If paddlers are not back within 2 hours after they are expected, the Coastguard will be informed. However, there has never been a call to the coastguard since the Canoe Trail was established.

In terms of numbers, it is estimated that there are approximately 50 paddlers per year. This is made up of groups (2-3 people) and individuals.

5.33.2 Development proposals for water based recreation

There is a long history of development proposals for accessing the water at Delamont Country Park. Due to the tidal nature of access, which is very restrictive, there is a clear demand to install a facility for a range of uses, that enables users to access the water at most stages of the tide. This section summarises the main proposals and the associated issues and outcomes.

5.33.3 Council proposals

Over the past 10 plus years, Council has been involved in various plans to improve access -

1. In 2006 a *'Feasibility Study for Provision of a permanent floating pontoon at Delamont Country Park'* was completed by RPS Planning & Environment. Following on from this, Council submitted an application with Sustrans for the development of a permanent pontoon at Delamont, however, this did not progress.

2. In 2008 'A strategy and action plan for marine, water sports and beach development in the Armagh and Down tourism region 2008-2013' was completed by Countryside Consultancy and Royal Haskoning. The Programme Summary includes as an action '*Develop berthing to facilitate water arrival at Delamont Country Park*'. The objective was '*To develop excellence in provision of ...specialist water-based tourism activities*'. This was not taken forward.
3. A Marine Construction License³⁰ was obtained by Council for the installation of a temporary pontoon in July 2016. This was to enable Council to host an international week long 'Skiffie' event. To accommodate this, a temporary pontoon was purchased from Pontoon Ireland, made up of blocks that are connected together, the pontoon could be maximum of 60m long but normally reaches 20-30m from shore.
4. A similar event (only lasting for 3 days) was held in 2017. Rather than ask for an annual license, Council requested a 3-year Licence to install the pontoon between April – Sept for non-motorised craft only. This was considered a cost-effective option. This request was turned down by DAERA, according to the Council because of potential disturbance to seals and because use the pontoon would not be managed and regulated³¹. In addition, substantial objections came from Quoile Yacht Club.

5.33.4 Delamont Outdoor Education Centre proposals

With the proposed closure of Killyleagh Outdoor Centre, the Education Authority has recommended that Delamont Outdoor Education Centre retains its existing remit and takes on sailing provision within the Board. The lack of facilities for sailing at Delamont means that development must take place if sailing is to be incorporated on site.

The Education Authority (along with Delamont OEC staff) has considered a range of proposals all of which include a slipway. Options include other features such as an off shore floating pontoon, secure boat storage, a changing and viewing gallery adjacent to the shore. Drawings have been completed for a slipway and an application was submitted in 2017.

Delamont OEC and Seaboard³² can continue to use Killyleagh Outdoor Centre until provision is made for them at the Delamont site.

³⁰ Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, Part 4 Marine License

³¹ Consultation with Council identified these 2 issues, however, this has not been verified by DAERA.

³² Seaboard Sailing Association (formerly Down County Schools Sailing Association), is an organisation linked with the Education Authority that aims to get young people on the water.

5.33.5 DAERA guidance regarding potential developments at Delamont

DEARA provided a response that summarises the issues that need to be considered when a licence application is being submitted –

- *“There are issues around increasing the access and potentially increasing disturbance in the area. Especially if the numbers were concentrated for example, in summer schemes and there were high numbers of canoe users, in enclosed areas (i.e. the location of the users in conjunction with seals).*
- *The previous temporary pontoon was heavily mitigated for in the licensing process and was also in place outside of the breeding season.*
- *Seals are a SAC feature and the population is in decline. Any proposal would need to demonstrate it can pass the HRA, for both construction and operation.*
- *A ‘business case’ approach should be taken and include details around the use of the slipway, peak times for usage, monitoring usage and impact and mitigation. This monitoring should be linked in spatially. There would need to be a link spatially with the data that would be used to formulate an appropriate management strategy for the project. The project should also look at quantitative details. E.g. Seal count data are available from Marine and Fisheries.*
- *The applicant should look at reviewing the literature available around disturbance to seals related to non-powered boats and activities. There was also a suggestion about carrying out aerial surveys. This should be linked in to monitoring the usage of the site by seals and potential impacts increased activity on the lough may have.*
- *A habitat survey had been completed a couple of years ago and there were no immediate concerns in relation to loss of habitat features, but this may need another small rapid survey.”*

5.33.6 Killyleagh Coastal Rowers with Seaboard Sailing Association

Consultation suggested that there is a joint plan to develop a building that can be used for boat and equipment storage at Delamont. However, this was not confirmed by either the coastal rowers or Seaboard.

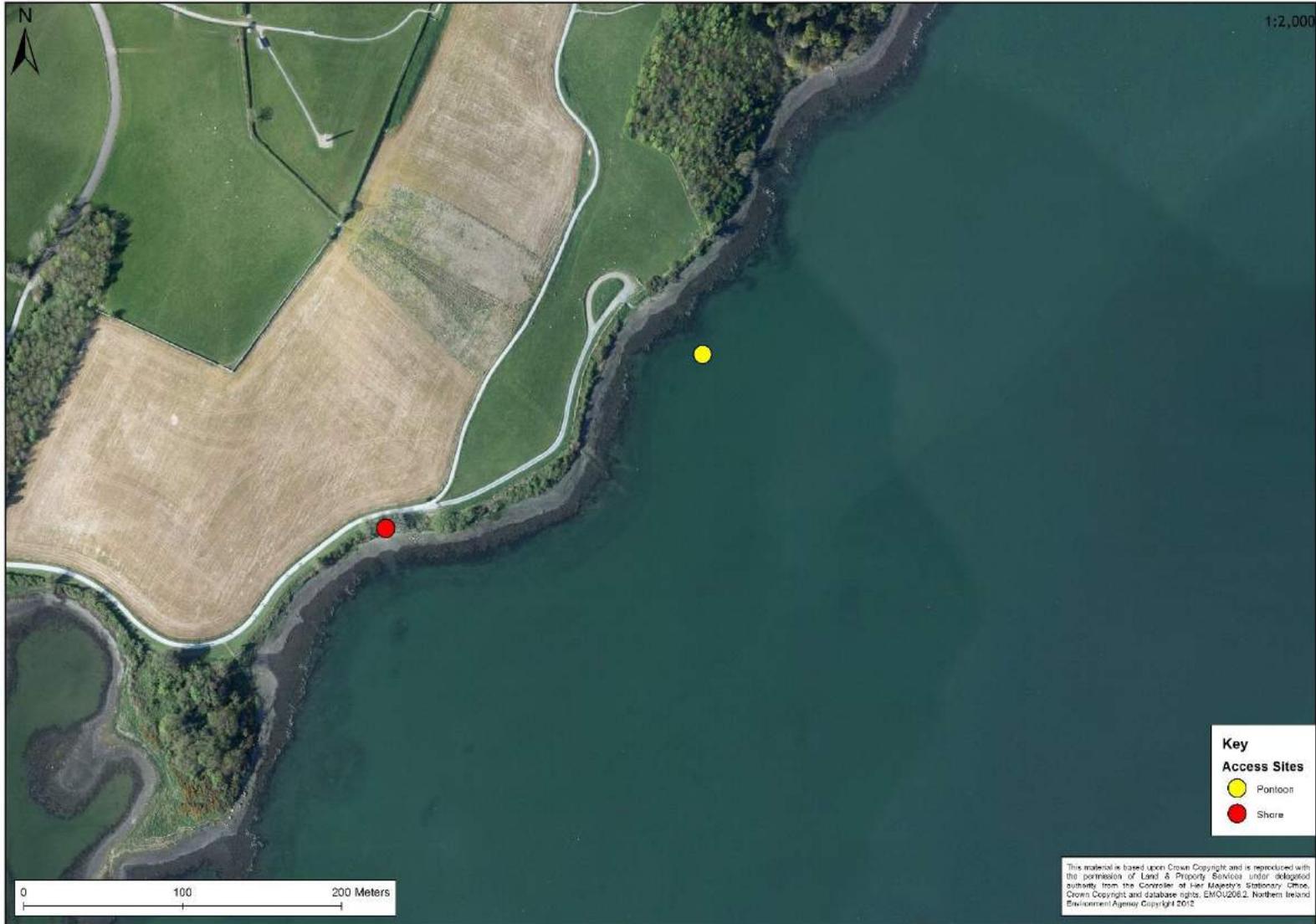


Fig. 109: Delamont site map

5.33.7 Strategic Issues

- No clear jointed up approach to Delamont - leading to multiple planning proposals and applications being submitted.
- Clear miscommunication between responsible organisations highlighting the lack of a joined-up approach.

5.33.8 Site specific issues

- Distance from parking to access points, a gate can be opened by staff or keyholders to access the shore.
- Even with a new pontoon, Council would still run boat trips from Mullagh Quay. The location of the pontoon would only have very limited access as the water is not deep enough for the St Brendan.
- Slipway/ pontoon likely to still be restricted tidal, to be fully accessible RPS³³ estimated it would need to be 225m long. However, consultation suggests that a pontoon of up to 100m may be sufficient. Further investigation into the optimum length of pontoon/ slipway is required.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
28	Shore	Public (users of the Park)	Paddlers	Parking on site up to 100 cars	Toilets Changing Café Play Park	Tidal access	None	Appropriate signage for visitors

Fig. 110: Summary of water-based access at Killyleagh Yacht Club and OEC

³³ Feasibility study of the provision of a floating pontoon at Delamont Country Park, RPS Planning and Environment, October 2016



Fig. 111: Delamont Country Park shore access

5.33.9 Opportunities

Delamont Country Park is a valuable resource in terms of both land and water based recreation. Therefore, a holistic site-based approach should be taken to any development within the Park to ensure a consistent approach.

In relation to water-based recreation, there are numerous, very current opportunities at Delamont that should be considered in the short term to address the range of prominent issues -

There is an opportunity for –

- A joined-up approach to development – In order to develop cost effective and sustainable proposals, it is crucial that the range of organisations involved come together to discuss and agree their requirements and how these can be combined to form one coherent proposal. This should include – The Education Authority, Council, Killyleagh Coastal Rowers and Seaboard. In addition, consultation is recommended with the governing bodies of each activity e.g. CANI, RYA.

Additional meetings should take place with the statutory organisations and those involved in granting licenses/ permissions including DAERA, Crown Estate and the National Trust. The aim is to ensure that they input into the proposals to ensure that any future application is given the best opportunity to be successful.

Consideration should also be given to the use of the pontoon for a private sector operated 'water taxi'. While this would be a motorised craft it could be regulated in terms of number of trips and timing of trips. This would be the exception to the rule that the facility is for non-motorised craft.

Attempts should also be made to develop relations with Quoile Yacht Club who strongly opposed the installation of the proposed pontoon. As a minimum, the Yacht Club and other interested organisations should be informed of the plans to avoid rumour and miscommunication.

- A joined-up approach to management – This would ensure that any facility is managed in a safe and sustainable way. This would also ensure that use is programmed, organised and monitored.
- Creation of an accessible facility - There is a hoist with the temporary pontoon to enable someone with a disability to access the water. It is important that any future proposals are mindful of disabled access.

5.34 Gibbs Island & Mullagh Quay

5.34.1 Description of current provision and use

a. Gibbs Island

Owned and managed by the National Trust, the island is accessible via a causeway at the end of Island Rd (off the main Killyleagh to Comber Rd). The island provides a short circular walk and is popular among locals, (particularly for dog walking) and visitors as somewhere to get out into the Lough. There is no evidence of Gibbs Island being used as an access point for water-based recreation on the Lough. The island is directly opposite Quoile Yacht Club.

The island can either be access by parking at the end of the Island Rd or from Delamont on foot. To access from Delamont, walkers use a private laneway (between the park and Island Rd). It is recommended that Council investigate the possibility of formalising the laneway with the private landowner to secure public access.

b. Mullagh Quay

The Quay owned by Council is accessed via the Island Rd. Turning off the Island Rd there is a rough track/ laneway in poor condition that leads to the quay. Ownership was confirmed following a recent dispute between Council and a private landowner. Some parking exists on the quay and aerial photography confirms that this is well used with a clear turning circle evident.

Consultation did not identify any use of the quay by paddlers.

The main use identified is by organised boat trips. The Council runs an annual programme of boat trips (with John Murray and the St Brendan) out of Mullagh Quay. The quay is only accessible at high tide and 1- 1.5 hrs either side for the St Brendan. The trips mainly run on a Sunday afternoon, if the tide is right. There are up to 10 trips per year with a maximum of 50 people per trip. The guide on the boat is either provided by Council or is John Murray's son. The Council plans to continue to run these popular events. Even with a new pontoon (as proposed at Delamont), Council would still run boat trips from Mullagh Quay. The location of the pontoon would only have very limited access as the water is not deep enough for boats such as the St Brendan.



Fig. 112: Gibb's Island & Mullagh Quay site map

5.34.2 Issues

a. Gibbs Island

- Limited parking with very potholed surface.
- Access to and from the site is via Island Rd i.e. Island Rd is a dead end (which can lead to congestion on the road)
- Access between Delamont and Gibbs Island is on a private laneway, therefore public access is not secure.

b. Mullagh Quay

- Tidal access limits the use of the quay
- Laneway off Island Rd to Mullagh Quay is in poor condition.
- Access to and from the site is via Island Rd i.e. Island Rd is a dead end (which can lead to congestion on the road)
- Limited parking

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
29a	Shore	Informal	None identified	Informal car park	None	Parking is limited Access via the causeway only	None	NT sign
29b	Quay	Off the quay	Boat tours	Informal car park	None	Tidal access only Parking is limited	None	

Fig. 113: Summary of water-based access at Gibbs Island and Mullagh Quay



Fig. 114: Gibbs Island shore access (top) and Mullagh Quay (bottom)

5.34.3 Opportunities

Suggestions have included dredging the bay to make the quay more accessible with the tide. However, the impacts of this, particularly environmental would need careful and full consideration.

5.35 Quoile River

5.35.1 Description of current provision and use

There are 2 clear areas within Quoile Pondage –

a. Quoile Pondage between the tidal barrages

This area of Quoile Pondage lies between the two tidal barrages and due to the northern barrage, is a fresh water environment i.e. not connected to the waters of Strangford Lough. Owned and managed by the DAERA, Natural Environment Division (previously NIEA), Quoile Pondage is designated as a Nature Reserve and is part of the SPA. There are bye-laws in place prohibiting boating on the water. The main reason for these is to prevent disturbance to wildfowl especially in winter. Therefore, there is currently no access to the water or water-based recreation taking place.

b. Janes Shore - from the southern tidal barrage upstream along Quoile River towards Downpatrick/ Inch Abbey

Although this area is outside the study area (the limit is the extend of the SPA, that ends at the barrage), the area is included as it contains a popular access point to the Quoile River at Janes Shore. This small car park and shore access point is owned by the National Trust who are happy for canoeists to access the Quoile here to head upstream towards Inch Abbey and Annacloy (taking in the northern edge of Hollymount Forest). The site is very popular as it offers consistent flat water therefore good for learners or novice water users. Tollymore Mountain Centre, for example, use this site for learning stand up paddle boarding and for introducing canoeists to river trips. This point is often used when conditions on the Lough are not suitable for novice groups.

Canoe river trips take place from here, typically to Inch Abbey and back – a 3-hour trip approximately. Access at the Abbey is poor and could be improved.



Fig. 115: Jane's Shore

5.35.2 Issues

- a. Quoile Pondage
 - Boats not permitted due to features of SAC.
- b. Janes Shore
 - The car park is small, in a poor condition and can get very mucky
 - Access to Inch Abbey is poor and through rushes that can get mucky.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
30a	None	None	None	Car parking	Visitor centre with toilets available during opening hours.	Bye laws in place	None	Various for on site management
30b	Shore access	Public	Paddlers – medium level of use	Small car park in poor condition, laneway also in poor condition.	None	None	None	NT sign at Janes Shore

Fig. 116: Summary of water-based access at the Quoile Pondage



Fig. 117: Jane's Shore access

5.35.3 Opportunities

There is potential to upgrade/ improve the car park at Janes Shore.

There is an opportunity to improve access to Inch Abbey from the water through installation of a boardwalk through the rushes. This may also help with preventing further erosion of the land here.

5.36 Quoile Sailing Club

5.36.1 Description of current provision and use

Quoile Sailing Club accessed off the Castle Island Rd is a private facility with 150 memberships estimated at 300 people. The club has a large family membership. There are 2 slipways and a pontoon. The foreshore where the slipways are located was sold by the Crown Estate to DAERA. There is a dispute over ownership of the foreshore at the pontoon.

Most club members are sailors however, many engage in multiple water sports e.g. motor boating and paddle sports.

Additional Infrastructure at the Club includes –

- Navigation Aids – local marks identify local hazards near to the club
- Disability Hoist – this can be attached to pontoons to transfer those with a disability
- Significant number of moorings

Other facilities include -

- 40 caravan hard stand caravan spaces and formal campsite – for use of members or those visiting QYC events
- Clubhouse including toilets, showers, changing rooms and bar

Services include -

- A small fleet of dinghies are available for club members
- The clubs run sailing courses and coaching for members – primarily junior sailing

There is also a powerful winch to launch and retrieve boats from the slipway. The Club has no major plans for improvement of club (facilities are currently very good).



Fig. 118: Quoile Sailing Club site map

5.36.2 Issues

The key challenge for the Club is keeping it financially sustainable. A significant volume of volunteer support is required and it is becoming increasingly challenging to recruit volunteers. It is recognised that sailing activity within the club is decreasing. However, there is a strong junior membership with sailing on Friday evening and Sundays. However, the junior participation declines when young people move on to University.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
31	Pontoon Slipway	Private members only	- Yachts - Cruisers	Parking on site for up to 30 cars	Club house with toilets/ showers, bar and refreshments	Access limited to club members	None	Appropriate signage for members and visitors

Fig. 119: Summary of water-based access at Quoile Sailing Club

5.36.3 Opportunities

None identified during consultation.



Fig. 120: Quoile Sailing Club pontoon (top) and Quoile Sailing Club slipway (bottom)

5.37 Castle Ward Bay

Castle Ward Bay provides numerous access points to the Lough. All are located within Castle Ward Demesne, owned and managed by the National Trust. The Bay is largely tidal, therefore the use of the bay via the access points reflects this.

Clear Sky Adventure Centre, a private sector operator, is based in the farmyard in a building leased from the National Trust.

The following water based outdoor activities are available from Clear Sky –

- Canoe and kayak hire and tuition within the Bay and trips e.g. overnight trips staying at Salt Island
- Sea Safaris within the Lough and into the Irish Sea
- Bouldering – this does not take place within the bay but along the coast to the south of Ballyhornan

For those who have pre-booked an activity with Clear Sky entry to Castle Ward is included in the price.

Castle Ward is also an official access point for the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail. Paddlers access the Lough from the shore (in front of the farmyard) or from the slipway on Dickson's Island. It is not one of the most popular locations for paddlers to access the Lough, consultation suggests that it may be more popular as an egress point for paddlers wishing to visit Castle Ward as a stop off point.

5.37.1 Description of current provision and use

a. Audley's Quay

Located at the northern end of the bay, Audley's Quay is a historic stone structure. It is thought to be made of an interior fill bounded by a retaining face of stone and boulders. The Quay is currently fenced off as it is deemed to be unsafe. Recent winter storms have undermined the quay and without intervention or repair, it is likely that the Quay may eventually fall into the Lough. It has had modest repair in recent years with concrete pumped into the structure to hold the quay together.

The National Trust confirmed that there was an inspection of Audley's Quay around 7/ 8 years ago and repair works came in at around £100,000. For this reason, it is not currently a priority for the Trust. If funding or matched funding was offered then the Trust would consider a long-term plan for repair and subsequently opening up access from this Quay.

The Quay is important as it is one of the only access points in Castle Ward Bay to be accessible at all states of the tide.

The foreshore is owned by the Crown Estate and leased to the National Trust.

b. Sailing Club – slipway

See site 31.

c. Sailing Club – Lead Quay

See site 31.

d. Dickson's Island – boat house and quay

These historic stone structures are currently leased to Clear Sky Adventure Centre. The boathouse is used to store canoes and kayaks and the slipway well used as an access point to the water. The foreshore is owned by the Crown Estate and leased to the National Trust.

e. Boathouse and slipway

This unused boathouse and quay (located within the trees on the shore side of the Shore trail) are currently vacant. They have in the past been leased out to private individuals for their own use. The slipway is tidal. The foreshore is owned by the Crown Estate and leased to the National Trust.

f. Coal/ Gas works Quay

This Quay located to the southern end of the Castle Ward Demesne is a historic quay used in the past to off-load coal for use by the estate. There is a set of stone steps at the end, providing access to the water. The Quay is tidal, limiting its use.

It is a popular place for walkers to visit, particularly as it is close to the Shore Car Park. Many visitors spend time here, sitting or picnicking.

Sea Safari trips run by Clear Sky operate from this quay when tides allow with all trips pre-booked May- Sept. The Sea Safari trips cater for up to 12 people. Generally, these go along the coastline i.e. out of the Lough, rather than further into the Lough to the north. Stop off points include an Oyster Farm at Killough, Ardglass Marina (Clear Sky pays a £6 landing fee). However, most trips start and finish at Strangford because of tidal issues at Castle Ward which is only accessible 2 hours either side of high tide.

In addition, the quay is occasionally used by motorised craft to land at Castle Ward.

There is a small stony shoreline to the south of the Quay, this is sometimes used by paddlers as an egress point. Groups on paddling sessions with Clear Sky also land here and often jump off the quay back into the water.



Fig. 121: Castle Ward Bay site map

5.37.2 Issues

Secure parking for water users is available at the Shore Car Park, however consultation suggests that the entry price into Castle Ward, currently £9.50 for adults and £4.75 for a child³⁴ for non-members, deters people from using Castle Ward as an access point. To avoid charges paddlers will use access points that they can reach from outside the property e.g. the shore in front of the farmyard, accessed via the Audleystown and Park Roads.

Clear Sky Adventure Centre needs to have a rescue boat in the bay when operating sessions. The tidal nature of the Bay means that launching of the safety boat (on a trailer) is not possible at all times, i.e. the boat may have to be launched well in advance of a session taking place.

Audley's Quay is currently in a poor state of repair and requiring substantial repair to make it useable as an access point to the Lough. However, even with it repaired for use, access to the Quay from the land side is restricted as there is no road access. The nearest vehicle access is from the Audleystown Rd where there is limited parking on the road side verges. From here access to the quay is on foot is either down Green Lane or from the path that leads around Audleys Castle. There are already issues associated with parking here as on busy days it can become congested with cars. In addition, parking here means that visitors are not entering Castle Ward through the main gates and are therefore not paying. This is a popular car parking site for walkers and mountain bikers using the trails within the Demesne.

The Quay can also be accessed on foot along the Shore Trail from the farmyard in Castle Ward or it has been suggested that a bus could bring visitors to the Quay to access a potential water taxi.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
32a	Audley's Quay	Currently closed	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A	Information panel re. Quay
33	Sailing Club Slipway and Quay (see 31)	Private – Sailing Club and NT only	“ “	“ “	“ “	“ “	“ “	“ “

³⁴ Prices correct 13th March 2018

32b	Dickson's Island	Slipway	Paddlers	Informal parking	Various in Castle Ward inc. changing, toilets, showers in Clear Sky Centre Potable water tap on external wall by farmyard gate	Parking Access Tidal	None	None
32c	Boat house	Slipway	None known	None	Various in Castle Ward	N/A	N/A	N/A
32d	Coal Quay	Quay and shore access	Paddlers (occasionally) Cruisers (occasionally) Sea Safari Jumping off the quay	Car parking in Shore Car Park	Various in Castle Ward Potable water tap on external wall by farmyard gate	Tidal	None	Canoe Trail panel on external wall of farmyard (by gate)

Fig. 122: Summary of water-based access at Castle Ward Bay



Fig. 123: Lead Quay

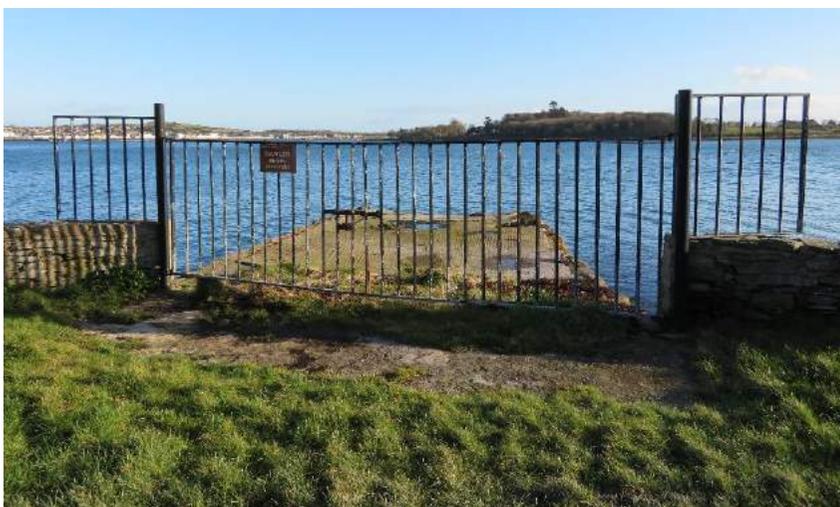


Fig. 124: Audley's Quay

5.37.3 Opportunities

There is an opportunity to reinstate and repair Audley's Quay so that it can be used by -

- Non-motorised craft as a stop off point to visit Audley's Castle and the surrounding area
- Cruisers as a stop off point to visit Audley's Castle and the surrounding area
- A water taxi that could operate between Strangford, Portaferry and Castle Ward and further up the Lough (should opportunities for landing and passenger embarking become available).

The National Trust confirmed that in principle the development of a water taxi would be welcomed. The Trust identified that there is a range of logistics that would need to be worked through including issues relating to the welcome/admission and NT staff on the ground. One aspect of visitors arriving by water taxi from the lough would be ensuring their visitor experience is exceeded (no matter where they arrive from to the Demesne).

Strangford Sailing Club stated that the Club would be interested in -

- Working in partnership to renovate Audley's Quay
- Being part of a funding / maintenance agreement

An alternative may be a pontoon that could be located off Lead Quay (in partnership with the Sailing Club), which could improve the tidal nature of access.

There is an opportunity for the National Trust to attract more water users into the property by creating a new entry category for those wishing to access the water from the Demesne. This may encourage people to park in the car parks provided. However, the Trust has advised that the entry prices are aimed at encouraging regular users to become members rather than pay for each visit. Murlough Nature Reserve operates a £5 per car entry fee for non-members. It is recommended that this is considered for Castle Ward.

There is an opportunity for partnership agreements between the Sailing Club and those wishing to use the facilities leased to the Club e.g. the slipway and the quay.

5.38 Strangford Sailing Club

5.38.1 Description of current provision and use

Based within the ground of Castle Ward Demesne, this Sailing Club was established in 1946. Current membership is 70 units with an estimated 120/130 members. The site including Club House (with showers, toilets and bar), car park, slipway and Lead Quay, is leased from National Trust. Therefore, only the Sailing Club and the Trust have a right to access and use the slipway. A third party could use it but only by agreement of the Club. The Trust has confirmed that it is currently in the process of negotiation with the club regarding renewal of its tenancy (due to end in the next 4/5 years).

The Club pay the Trust a fee linked to the amount of membership subscriptions. The club is content that the current volume of membership creates a sustainable arrangement (i.e. in terms of the fee that the Club pays).

Water access is for members only, however, as the site is part of Castle Ward Demesne and is located along the Shore Trail, the site is relatively open and accessible by the public. Consultation with the Club identified that this has caused a degree of visitor conflict mainly by mountain bikers / cyclists passing through the site at speed and without necessary care and attention. Horses on the trail have also been 'spooked' on a number of occasions by flapping sails – the sailing club would prefer if horses were not permitted to use this trail.

The slipway, opposite the Club House and boat storage area is tidal and this restricts use, i.e. It is not usable for trailer launch for 1 hour either side of Low Water. The Club therefore stores and launches its safety boats in Portaferry.

Lead Quay is an historic stone quay and the Club is responsible for its management and maintenance. Access from the quay is also tidal and again it is not currently usable within 1 hour either side of LW. It is only suitable for dinghies at this state of the tide.

Additional Infrastructure includes swinging moorings owned by individual club members. These can only be used between March – October. The club has a Mooring Officer to manage the position of the moorings on behalf of the National Trust (who leases this area from the Crown Estate).

Facilities include –

- The current club house was destroyed by fire in Sept 2017. However, the club have plans in place to restore and slightly extend the facility – with an anticipated relaunch in July 2018. New facilities include toilets, showers, potable water,

Services include –

- Instruction – Club members only
- RYA Sailing Courses (mainly children) at Easter and July/August c.45-60 participants per year.

5.38.2 Issues

- Club house currently derelict - due to be refurbished and open by July 2018.
- Private sector operator Clear Sky has approached the Sailing Club about use of the slipway for the rescue boat. An agreement has not been reached.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
33	Slipway Lead quay	Private members only	- Sailing boats	Parking on site for up to 40 cars (private car park)	Currently none – Club planned to reopen July 2018	Access limited to club members Parking Disabled parking Winches Disability Hoists		Appropriate signage for members and visitors

Fig. 125: Summary of water-based access at Strangford Sailing Club



Fig. 126: Strangford Sailing Club slipway and Lead Quay

5.38.3 Opportunities

Consultation identified that there is potential to install a floating pontoon alongside Lead Quay as an option if the repair of Audley's Quay does not go ahead. This would potentially allow for –

- Safety boats to be launched here
- A potential water taxi to collect/ drop off passengers

However, this quay is leased to the Sailing Club therefore access would have to be negotiated under the terms of the current lease.

(Also see Castle Ward esp. Audley's Quay)

5.39 Strangford Village

Historically, the principle port of the Lough, the shore falls rapidly away to deep water, creating a sheltered harbour. Swan Island (just offshore), provides additional shelter. The village has a range of visitor facilities including car parking, cafes, restaurants, public toilets (beside the ferry terminal building), shops and bars. Strangford Coastal Rowing Club is based in the village with 2 rowing skiffs, 1 training skiff and 1 safety boat regularly accessing the water.

5.39.1 Description of current provision and use

The village is one of the most frequently used access points to the Lough. There are 5 access points as follows (from north to south) -

a. Private pontoon

This pontoon known at 'Yacht Haven' is owned and managed by a private not for profit company, SCAD Ltd. The Crown Estate owns the seabed and foreshore.

SCAD Ltd³⁵. was formed by local business people who manage the facility as part of Strangford harbour on a voluntary basis. The first pontoon, installed in 2011, can accommodate six average sized boats alongside, this can be increased by boats doubling up if the weather conditions are calm enough. Access to the pontoon is private with access via a coded metal gate. The project was initially funded by a grant from Down Rural Area Partnership and was designed to complement the historic character of Strangford village.

The pontoon facility's primary aim is to accommodate visiting cruisers for short stays. This is aimed at cruisers visiting the Lough rather than from within the Lough, but both use it. During the 'off season', i.e. winter, work boats are permitted to moor on the pontoon in return for checking moorings. The standby ferry boat is also sometimes moored here. Other than this no boats are moored there permanently, Portaferry Marina provides this facility.

The cost of mooring is £10/metre/night (with specific over-wintering arrangements). Fuel and other requirements can be arranged by contacting any of the Yacht Haven directors whose mobile numbers are kept at the Cuan Bar and Restaurant.

In terms of usage, it is estimated that on average 150 boats per year use the facility, increasing to 300 boats in a good year. The main factor affecting usage is weather e.g. last summer the poor weather resulted in low numbers.

"In previous seasons, boats from France, Germany and the United States have docked in Strangford as well as those from Scotland and all around the Irish Sea. Yacht-based tourism is an important feature in today's leisure economy and by extending the Yacht Haven facility, SCAD Ltd. will now be in a position to consider a part-time job for a marina attendant during the busy summer sailing season." Brain Black, Director of SCAD Ltd.

³⁵ SCAD Ltd. is a Not for Profit body, and although not a charity, it is open to appeals and has donated funds to the local Maritime Festival and youth club.

The pontoon is also used by the coastal rowers through an informal agreement with Yacht Haven. Use is permitted from the end of September to Easter. The rowers can use the pontoon for changing over crews but not for mooring up alongside i.e. leaving boats moored to the pontoon would not be welcomed.

SCAD Ltd has the following aspirations for the pontoon –

“ The overall vision is that SCAD Ltd would take over control of the whole bay from the Dept. for Infrastructure (Dfi). This would then enable the installation of permanent floating anchorages (‘permanent holding’) in a grid formation and therefore significantly increase capacity for permanent anchorage. The company believes that demand would come from other areas of UK e.g. south of England, Solent, etc where it is so expensive to moor boat permanently. Owners now moor west coast of Scotland etc (cheaper) and fly up to use their boats. This would bring new business and jobs to village – chandlery, hospitality, etc. At a smaller scale, dredging the inner harbour would be welcomed. SCAD Ltd stated that the company already has a lease for this. This would enable capacity for floating moorings to be increased. ” Brain Black, Director of SCAD Ltd.

b. Quay

The Quay (the more recent of the 2 quays in the village) provides numerous access points with mooring rings, bollards, metal ladders, some fenders (tyres) alongside the Quay and stone steps to the western end of the Quay. The quay is well used by boats including the Sea Safari operated by Clear Sky. However, much of the Quay except the eastern end is tidal. Ownership of this quay was not identified during consultation.

c. Public Slipway

The public slipway is in the centre of Strangford Bay surrounded by a small shingle beach. The slipway is the official access point for the Canoe Trail although many paddlers choose to use the slip beside the ferry berth as there is parking here and it is less distance to carry their boats. The slipway is also used by small craft to access the water including the coastal rowers who use the slip on a regular basis all year round.

Swimming events such as Triathlon and the New Year’s Day swim also use the slipway as it enables swimmers to walk into the water on mass.

d. Shore access

The small beach (either side of the public slipway) is popular among visitors especially those with children, when the tide is low. The beach can be accessed from the slipway or from a set of stone steps at the end of the Quay.

e. Ferry slip

The ferry slip is legislated via the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993. Part VIII Road Ferries states, ‘a ferry vessel or ferry landing place belongs to a road ferry service if it is used in the provision of that service.’

The Strangford Lough ferry and landing places at Portaferry and Strangford belong to the Department of infrastructure. In terms of use of the slip for recreational purposes, the Department of infrastructure in theory would enter into an agreement with a person if that person wants to use that land for recreational activities.

“The Department may enter into arrangements with any other person -

- for the provision by that person, of any facilities, amenities or services on Strangford Lough ferry landing place*
- for the use by that person of such land for recreational or leisure activities.”*

In addition,

“The Department may make byelaws in connection with the operation or management of a road ferry service, for all or any of the following purposes,

- for protecting persons, vehicles and goods on ferry vessels or land forming part of the road ferry undertaking from injury or damage;*
- for protecting vessels, land, equipment and other property forming part of the road ferry undertaking from damage;*
- for maintaining order on ferry vessels and land forming part of the road ferry undertaking and preventing obstruction to the operation of the road ferry service.”*

Any person who breaks a byelaw shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500.

Therefore, use of the ferry slip is regulated under the Act and no-one has a right to use it for recreational purposes without permission.

In terms of its use, the slip has recently been used by the coastal rowers to launch their boats and by dive boats. E.g. the private operator DV Diving. The slipway offers trailer access to the water at all tide times.

f. Slipway (adjacent to ferry berth)

Many paddlers choose to use this slip rather than the public slipway in the centre of the village as there is parking here. The slipway is also used by small craft to access the water including the coastal rowers.



Fig. 127: Strangford site map

5.39.2 Issues

There are a range of general issues that have been identified in relation to access to the water from Strangford.

This includes –

A lack of visitor facilities within Strangford for water users including showers, changing, secure storage e.g. canoes, equipment.

A major issue for the coastal rowers is boat storage. The group currently has 4 boats (each on a trailer). These are stored in Ballyculter (2 miles outside the villages). The related issues include-

- Moving of boats is restricted to those members of the club with tow bars to bring boats to the water and then repeat this at the end of the session
- The club depends on the generosity of the owner of the shed
- The road conditions are not kind to boats
- The general inconvenience of not having the boats in Strangford close to the water

Damage to the Lower Green caused by vehicles parking and or turning particularly with trailers.

There is no disabled access to the water within the village.

a. Pontoon

- Wash from the ferry impacts on the pontoon
- Use is limited to tourism vessels Easter to September (i.e. Paying boats)
- About 80% of users are visiting yachtsmen/women, stopping off as they make their way along the Irish Sea i.e. they are not going into the Lough.

b. Quay

No issues identified.

c. Public slipway

- Tidal access - This slipway is not usable for launching boats at low tide as the end of the slipway stops abruptly and there is a drop into the water. In addition, when the tide is more than half out, the angle of the slip (being shallow), makes launching of boats more difficult.
- Parking and turning (especially with boat trailers) can lead to congestion within the village.
- The slipway can get busy on summer weekends compounded by the tidal nature of use.
- Salt water from the trailers damages the grass on the lower green
- Parking on the lower green can restrict access to the slipway

- Lack of disabled access e.g. hoist
- c. Ferry Slip – Consultation with ferry staff identified that there are issues associated with recreational use of the ferry slip. Responsible use is tolerated by those who are mindful of the ferry timetable and passengers getting on and off the ferry. Informal use of the ferry slip is undesirable for a range of reasons including –
 - a. Use is challenging due to the ferry timetable i.e. ferry cannot be held up by people using the slipway.
 - b. There is a safety issue relating to launching boats in an area where vehicles are going on and off the ferry
 - c. Finally, there is no legal right to use the ferry slip (unless agreed), therefore, the informal access could be taken away at any time

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
34a	Pontoon	Private or through agreement with SCAD Ltd.	Cruisers			Limited size of pontoon	None	Various suitable for private marina facility
34b	Quay	Public	Range of boats					
34c	Public slipway	Public	Paddlers Coastal rowers Small motorised craft					
34d	Shore access	Public	Paddling					
34e	Ferry slip	Tolerated	Ferry Dive boats Coastal rowers Paddlers					
34f	Ferry slip – beside ferry berth	As above	As above					

Fig. 128: Summary of water-based access at Strangford village



Fig. 129: Strangford pontoon (top left) and Strangford quay (top right) – left hand side of picture. Strangford public slipway (bottom left and top right).

5.39.3 Opportunities

There are a range of general opportunities including -

There is a high demand from Strangford Coastal Rowing Club to create a boat store in the village. Ideally this would be at sea level so that boats could be launched using trolleys (i.e. by hand), removing the need for cars and boat trailers to launch boats. The Club had a derelict building in mind within the village, however, it is thought that this has now been agreed for sale. Another potential site is beside the ferry dry dock, adjacent to the recycling bins. It is thought that this is Transport NI land.³⁶ The storage would need to be large enough to accommodate 4 skiffs plus equipment e.g. life jackets, oars etc.

Parking is an issue in the village and congestion does at times prevent access to the slipway. Parking restrictions could be considered in this area i.e. beside the head of the slip.

To maintain the surface of the lower green, consideration could be given to the installation of a more robust surface.

A permanent access point for a water taxi is required in the village with the ability to be accessed during most tides. This would allow for the private sector to develop a regular service.

a. Pontoon

- Increased promotion could raise awareness and increase the number of visitors using the pontoon.
- Use of the pontoon by a potential water taxi (private sector operator)

b. Quay

Consider installation of a disabled hoist (movable) could be installed on the quay to enable access to range of vessels including skiffs and yachts to pull alongside for passengers to alight.

c. Public slipway

- Extension of the public slipway and an increase of the angle of the slip. Extending the slip may interfere with boats accessing the quay. Further investigation is required.

³⁶ A Land Registry search was completed for this site, but ownership of the folio was not listed.

5.40 Kilclief Bay

This small beach is popular all year round particularly in the summer months. Owned and managed by Council, there are a range of low level facilities on site giving the site a very natural feel – one of the reasons that it is so popular. In addition, the beach is relatively sheltered. The beach is opposite Kilclief Castle, owned and managed by Dept. for Communities (Historic Environment Division) and open seasonally (although recently it has not been open).

Kilclief beach connects to Caffrey's Beach in Kilclief Bay (to the south) via an asserted public right of way (Castle Flannen). There is informal road parking to the rear of this beach on Shore Rd.

5.40.1 Description of current provision and use

The beach provides shore access via a gently sloping sandy beach. As such it is very popular among families as even when the tide is in, the water is relatively shallow for a long way out. As such the beach is popular for swimming and used by paddlers (as an egress point more than an access point).



Fig. 130: Kilclief site map

5.40.2 Issues

- There was multiple access point to the beach that led to dune erosion. To address this issue, NIEA has installed a fence and signs to encourage visitors to place stones, sand and vegetation within the fenced off areas to stabilise the dune system.
- In busy summer months, the site becomes very congested with cars parking along the road when the car park is full.
- SLLP identified that there is a demand for toilets at Kilclief.³⁷

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
35	Beach	Shore access	Paddlers Swimmers -	Car parking up to 15 cars including disabled bays.	Benches/ seating Bins	Car parking	None	

Fig. 131: Summary of water-based access at Kilclief Beach

³⁷ Numerous letters have been received by the Strangford Lough office requesting provision of toilets.



Fig. 132: Kilclief beach shore access

5.40.3 Opportunities

Overall, the site has a natural feel and as such it should stay as it is. However, the demand for toilets needs to be considered. Opinion on the installation of built facilities such as toilets is divided particularly in such a picturesque site.

Further investigation is required to identify if there is a suitable location and if so, what would be considered an appropriate design and management plan. Any such development would need to be designed and constructed in a sensitive manner to ensure that the toilets are not obtrusive.

While it would be inappropriate to install toilets anywhere along the shore, due to the natural feel of this shoreline, there may be an opportunity to install toilets on the opposite site of the road close to Kilclief Castle.

5.41 Ballyhornan Bay

Ballyhornan Bay has a long sandy beach backed by high cliffs. The beach is accessed from a large Council owned car park off the Killard Rd. A steep and long set of concrete steps lead to the beach although many choose to access the beach using the grassy bank that slopes from the car park to the shore.

5.41.1 Description of current provision and use

Ballyhornan is a popular location for beach walks particularly walking dogs. There is some evidence of swimming.

Paddlers use the site to access the Irish Sea - benefitting from the large car park that can accommodate groups of paddlers arriving in separate cars.

Ballyhornan is the only access point within the study area identified as an access point for coasteering. Participants disembark in the car park and walk along the coastal path to the south to access the coasteering sites. This activity takes place in organised groups e.g. through Clear Sky Adventure Centre.



Fig. 133: Ballyhornan Bay site map

5.41.2 Issues

The barrier at the entrance to the car park is too high for cars with canoes. This means paddlers must load and unload boats on the road, this results in a safety issue when paddlers are loading boats at dusk as oncoming traffic may not see them clearly particularly as the location is on a bend in the road. However, the necessity for the barrier is appreciated and there is no desire to see this removed.

The walk to the shore/ beach can be difficult for those with mobility issues.

Site ID	Access facility	Access type	Current usage	Facilities	Services on site	Capacity measures	Biosecurity measures	Signage (fit for purpose unless otherwise stated)
36	Beach	Public shore access	Swimming (occasionally) Paddlers	Car park up to 30 cars	Car parking Bins	Car park with barrier	None	Out and About panel in car park

Fig. 134: Summary of water-based access at Ballyhornan Bay



Fig. 135: Ballyhornan shore access

5.41.3 Opportunities

Contained within the Village Plan are a range of development opportunities including '3.1 Refurbishment works to public access to the beach'. There were no other opportunities identified through consultation in addition to this.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POTENTIAL FUTURE ACCESS (SITE BASED)

This section includes a long list of recommendations relating to the improvement of site-based water-based recreation to the Lough. It is of note that the key opportunities relating to the improvement of access to the Lough do not relate to the development of *new* access but rather *better and smarter use of what is already there*.

To do this –

- A strategic approach is needed to the entire Lough.
- Site based development requires a joined-up approach to ensure development caters for the needs of both current and potential users across a wide range of water-based activities.
- There are key sites where access needs to be secured for the future, again through a partnership and joined up approach.
- Structural improvements at some sites could improve access at some sites, further consideration of this is required by relevant experts e.g. structural engineers.
- Access agreements could be considered at some new sites with private landowners, if Councils adopt a consistent proactive approach to access agreements for water-based recreation.

The recommendations set out below are subject to the Stage 1 HRA Screening; therefore, this assessment has been completed by ORNI staff working closely with Blackstaff Ecology to ensure the necessary considerations have been taken into account to preserve the area's conservation features and biosecurity.

Location	Type of access	Development proposal
1. Barhall	- Shore Access	None
2. Portaferry	- Cook St – Temporary pontoon seaward side of Quay	Install pontoon March – September
	- Cook St – Quay	None
	- Cook St – Slipways (x2)	None
	- Marina – Floating moorings/ pontoon	Consider installation of a breakwater (floating) to shelter the marina.
	- Marina – Slipway - Ferry slip	Extend to make more accessible when tide out. None
	General access improvements	- Improved information for users at a central location within Portaferry Regeneration Hub - Provision of storage for skiffs close to the shore – location/ site to be identified

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Other initiatives proposed in Portaferry</p>	<p>Portaferry Regeneration Ltd with Council and Sailing Club have plans to extend the pontoon – double the size i.e. another 50 berths.</p> <p>Ards & North Down Council has recently appointed a harbour master for its 5 harbours and is due to carry out some project works at Cook St in 2018. The works will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The boat yard resurfaced and clearing of abandoned vessels - Bollards and chain erected to demarcate the area and keep the slipway clear <p>Picnic area refreshed with new seats, picnic tables and BBQ. The introduction of a licence for boat owners to use the area is due to begin in April 2018 and will allow Council to effectively exercise control and ensure it is a usable facility for all. Charges will apply.</p> <p>Portaferry Sailing Clubs has plans to purchase a tall ship and moor this permanently alongside the harbour wall (south side of ferry slip). This could provide a range of access opportunities including training, trips and have-a-go sessions.</p>	
3. Ballyhenry Bay	- Shore Access	None
4. Horse Island	- Shore Access	None
5. Kircubbin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slipway (Council site) - Shore Access (Council site) - Quay - Slipway (Council car park) - Sailing Club 	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>Potential to repair to enable motorised craft including potential water taxi to use – further consultation regarding demand and securing of public access essential.</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>
6. Greyabbey	- Shore Access	None
7. Cunningburn	- 2 slipways	Repair ground at upper end of slipway to ensure it is level with the concrete of the slipway
8. Newtownards Sailing Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slipway - Pontoon 	<p>None</p> <p>None</p>
9. Warden’s Bay	- Shore Access	None
10. Island Hill	- Public slipway	None
11. Comber Cruising Club	- Number of small pontoons	None
12. Ringneill Quay plus, Nendrum Monastic site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quay - Shore access 	<p>Approach landowner to secure public access to Ringneill quay for non-motorised craft (through potential Council management arrangement)</p> <p>None</p> <p>Approach landowner at Nendrum to discuss potential for public shore access (egress only) from western</p>

		shore and across field to site – potential for Permissive Path Agreement with Council. If permission obtained, consider installation of wooden jetty to enable water taxi to land passengers.
13. Island Reagh	- Shore access	None
14. Rathcunningham Quay	- Quay	Approach landowner to secure public access to quay for non-motorised craft (through potential Council management arrangement)
15. Down Cruising Club	- Pontoon - Slipway	None Approach Club to secure public access on the slipway for non-motorised craft at slipway (through potential Council management arrangement) Discuss with Club potential for lightship 'Petrel' to become an official stop off point for potential water taxi (to be operated by private sector operator).
16. Whiterock car park	- None	Make hole in existing wall and create shore access
17. Strangford Lough Yacht Club	- 2 pontoons - 2 slipways	Discuss with Club potential for SLYC to become an official stop off point for potential water taxi (to be operated by private sector operator).
18. Braddock Reach (Whiterock)	- Stone slipway/ shore access	Approach landowner(s) to secure public access to slipway for non-motorised craft (through potential Council management arrangement)
19. Ballymorran Bay	- Quay - 3 slipways - Shore access	None
20. Ringhaddy	- Slipway - Quay	Approach landowner to secure public access to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quay for non-motorised craft (through potential Council management arrangement) • Green field between house numbers 53 and 49 for parking
21. Ringhaddy Cruising Club	- Slipway - Pontoon	None
22. Ringdufferin	- Shore access	None
23. Taggart Island (egress point)	- Shore access	Creation of a formal 'wild camping' area. National Trust leading on this with plans to fence off an area for camping so cattle/ visitors do not mix.
24. East Down Yacht Club	- Slipway - Pontoon	None
25. Killyleagh Town	- Net Walk - shore access - Quay	None Quay - Install temporary pontoon with rolling ramp, dredge quay and channel (by up to 2m) to create a facility accessible at all tide times. This could

	- Shore Rd – (over the wall)	accommodate motorised craft including the proposed water taxi. None
26. Killyleagh Yacht Club & Outdoor Education Centre	- Piled jetty and floating pontoon - Slipway - Brick jetty (adjacent to slipway) - Fairy Lodge slipway	None Slipway - Approach Club to secure public access to the slipway and car park (through potential Council management arrangement) Jetty – none Fairy lodge – none
27. Salt Island (egress point)	- Shore access	Bothy to reopen Easter 2018
28. Delamont Country Park	- Shore access - Temporary Pontoon (currently not in place)	Joined up holistic approach to site development required – OEC and Council working together to create enhanced access. None Install temporary pontoon (in place 2016 and 2017 for Coastal Rowing events). AIM – to obtain licence for DAERA, Crown Estate and NT for up to 5 years to enable pontoon to be installed each year for up to 6 months – April to September for non-motorised craft plus licenced water taxi.
29. Gibb’s Island & Mullagh Quay	- Shore Access - Quay	None None
30. Quoile Pondage	- Shore Access (Jane’s Shore) - Inch Abbey (egress only)	Sensitively resurface parking area adjacent to Quoile River Improve access to Abbey for paddlers through installation of a boardwalk through the rushes to the shore. This would also cater for walkers at the Abbey.
31. Quoile Sailing Club	- 2 slipways - Pontoon	None None
32. Castle Ward Bay	- Audley’s Quay - Dickson’s Island – boathouse and slipway - Boat house and slipway - Shore access - Coal Quay	Survey and repair to enable use by motorised craft including potential water taxi. None None None None
33. Strangford Sailing Club	- Slipway - Lead Quay	None None
34. Strangford	- Private pontoon - Quay - Shore access	None Installation of a disabled hoist (movable) None

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public slip - Ferry slip - Slipway adjacent to ferry berth 	<p>Extend and increase angle – this may interfere with boats accessing the quay. Further investigation required.</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>
<p>SCAD Ltd (owner of pontoon) has the following aspirations for the pontoon –</p> <p>The overall vision is that SCAD Ltd would take over control of the whole bay from DFI. This would then enable the installation of permanent floating anchorages ('permanent holding') in a grid formation and therefore significantly increase capacity for permanent anchorage.</p> <p>At a smaller scale, dredging the inner harbour would be welcomed. SCAD Ltd already has a lease for this area. This would enable capacity for floating moorings to be increased.</p>		
35. Kilclief Bay	- Shore Access	None
36. Ballyhornan	- Shore Access	None

Fig. 136: Summary of site-based opportunities

7 STRATEGIC ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS RELEVANT TO ACCESS TO STRANGFORD LOUGH FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER BASED RECREATION

Throughout the research and consultation, many key strategic issues relating to water-based access were identified. What is clear is that a holistic approach to managing access to Strangford Lough for water-based recreation is required. This section describes a range of issues and recommends mechanisms through which these can be addressed. The recommendations are based on desk and primary research including benchmarking.

7.1 Communication among stakeholders

There is a lack of a coordinated joined up approach among stakeholders in relation to water-based recreation. While some statutory organisations regularly meet, there is an opportunity for greater engagement with users of the Lough including Clubs and governing bodies and site managers.

In addition, different organisations are often working on different ideas and proposals and this can be in isolation of others located close by.

7.1.1 Recommendation

Where there are site-based development recommendations, these should be taken forward as joint projects with relevant partners. This would not only ensure a more cost-effective approach but would ensure that facilities developed meet a range of user needs.

Strangford Lough Outdoor Recreation Forum is in place, this group is coordinated by SLLP and supported by Sport NI. There is an opportunity for this group to act as a conduit for information sharing in relation to water-based access.

7.2 Communication to users

7.2.1 Assessment of current communication

In terms of current communication for water-based users of the Lough, the following table summarises the key findings -

Objective	Audience	Message	Platforms
Encourage water-based recreation	Public/ visitor	Limited information on where to access independently Ad hoc information on how to access with others	Website Social Media Email
	User Groups e.g. paddlers or coastal rowers	Positive project on coastal rowing but less focus on this aspect now	Website Social Media Email
Ensure that this is carried out in a responsible and sustainable manner	Public/ visitor	Some information on sustainable and responsible behaviour but format and content not always at the right level and format for audience	Website Social Media Email Signage/ information/ interpretation panels
	User Groups e.g. paddlers or coastal rowers	Issues discussed but further work required on cascading a clear message	Website Social Media Email OR Forum

Fig. 137: Assessment of current communication to visitors and users

It is evident there are areas for improvement in communicating sustainable and responsible access to the Lough. It is essential that the messages to the two key audiences are differentiated. An appropriate message and communication style (e.g. tone of voice, detail of the message) needs to be tailored to each audience and the appropriate platform selected.

7.2.1.1 User Groups

It is more appropriate to engage directly with user groups through stakeholder groups such as the Outdoor Recreation Forum or directly with the clubs on email. This is the most appropriate approach and based on best practise³⁸ has been found to be the most effective. Where specific issues need to be addressed (e.g. damage to habitat due to unauthorised canoe access) this has been dealt with directly with the user groups and not through other platforms (including signage).

7.2.1.2 Public/ Visitor

For the public/visitor, the opportunity to participate in water-based recreation should be the primary message. Again, this is found in other best practise organisations³⁹, where the primary focus is participation and the sustainable/responsible message is the secondary message. The sustainable/responsible message should consist of 3 to 4 key 'bite-sized' messages which are consistently reinforced and delivered in different formats e.g. image, video etc. across digital platforms and through limited signage/ interpretation and or information panels .

In conclusion, communication currently does represent a barrier to accessing Strangford Lough, particularly for the public and visitors. For users of the Lough, more effective communication on sustainable and responsible usage could be improved.

7.2.2 Recommendation

Based on marketing best practice and review of best practice demonstrated at Scottish Canals and Broads Authority, the following outline plan is recommended.

³⁸ *Scottish Canals and Broads Authority*

³⁹ *Scottish Canals and Broads Authority*

Objective	Audience	Message	Platforms
Encourage water-based recreation	Public/visitor	Information on where to access the Lough independently and how to access with others e.g. boat trips, clubs, events etc.	Website Social Media E-newsletter (consumer)
	User Groups e.g. paddlers or coastal rowers	Encourage groups/ clubs to participate in initiatives e.g. Get Wet and increase membership/host open events	Forum Direct communication to clubs and groups
Ensure that this is carried out in a responsible and sustainable manner	Public/visitor	3 to 4 key 'bite-sized' messages, reinforced and delivered in different formats e.g. image, video etc.	Website Social Media E-newsletter (consumer) Signage/ information/ interpretation panels
	User Groups e.g. paddlers or coastal rowers	Interpret complex regulations, rules and codes of conduct; present these appropriately to cascade to users e.g. use of CEDaR for users to record data.	Forum Direct communication to clubs and groups

Fig. 138 Summary of recommended communication

It is recommended to take the outline plan⁴⁰ forward in this way -

- Develop a short, concise communication plan articulating the primary messages and the style of delivery and platform for each audience. It should include the following key actions:
 - Adopt a digital communication approach for public/visitors and direct communication with user groups
 - Revise the content of the website⁴¹ so that it reflects the primary messages and ensure these are to the fore
 - Lead with SLLP's key messages in appropriate formats (refrain from sharing information on Strangford Lough from partners and third parties)
 - Develop newsletter (monthly or quarterly) for public/visitors
- Implement the plan meticulously. It is recommended that a 'Communications Officer' is employed to develop and deliver the plan. An alternative may be to engage a suitably experienced and knowledgeable consultant to produce the Communication Plan and then appoint the Officer to deliver on the plan (developed by an expert). It is important that this Officer is independent of statutory organisations, has excellent communication skills (at a range of levels),

⁴⁰ It should be noted that a key recommendation of the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Strangford Lough and Lecale is the development of a Communications Plan and the appointment of a Communications Officer to deliver this. It is envisaged that the recommendation discussed here, would form part of the overall plan and that one Officer would be appointed for the entire area.

⁴¹ It should be noted that some content is being developed for the website that will improve information for the public but does not go far enough to address the issues highlighted for water-based recreation.

has knowledge of environmental issues, habitats and species related to the Lough (and the ability to increase this knowledge).

- Use signage sparingly and where possible integrate messages regarding interpretation, safety, sustainable usage, wildlife etc.

In conclusion, improved communication to both users and the public/visitors will help SLLP in achieving its objectives of encouraging water-based recreation and ensuring that this is carried out in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Moving forward, there is a gap in communication and an opportunity to improve this.

7.3 Cruising on the Lough

There is an opportunity to attract more cruisers to the Lough. Both Portaferry and Strangford Marinas have plans to increase the number of berths for visitor moorings, this highlights a demand for increased provision at these locations.

While there are challenges relating to navigation and tides, there is no doubt that firstly physical infrastructure and secondly access to landing places could be improved throughout the Lough to attract more cruisers.

7.3.1 Navigation Aids

In 2011, a new system of navigation aids was installed in Strangford Lough. The aim was to improve safety and includes the installation of lights and marks at key points to mark safe passage to the Lough's main mooring areas. These improvements related to major navigation aids.

However, consultation with the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) identified that minor marks, in place to identify hazards such as pladdies or rocks could be improved to aid safe navigation throughout the Lough particularly for visiting boats.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of these minor marks (locally known as perches), are installed by Sailing Clubs, therefore there is an inconsistent approach throughout the Lough.

7.3.2 Other physical infrastructure

Potential development of physical infrastructure for the cruising market outlined in this report includes –

- Killyleagh Quay
- Kircubbin Quay
- Extension of public pontoons in Portaferry Marina
- Extension of public pontoons in Strangford Marina

Substantial levels of investment would be required to implement this programme of infrastructure works. Lower investment options would include the development of a visitor mooring scheme within the Lough. Case studies below provide some useful information on this type of scheme from within the UK and Ireland.

7.3.3 Case Study – Visitor Mooring Scheme

The Irish Cruising Club East and North Coasts of Ireland Sailing Notes 12th Edition⁴², references opportunities for shoreside infrastructure, however a visitor mooring scheme would also provide a lower cost intervention to help attract visiting yachts.

A similar model was launched by Waterways Ireland on Lough Erne in 2016. 18 locations across Upper and Lower Lough Erne were installed with yellow mooring buoys that are permanently attached by chain to an anchor point on the lake bed, to which a boat may tie up as an alternative to mooring at a jetty or deploying an anchor.

The locations were chosen to provide safe, sheltered moorings in quiet locations that that will interest boaters with no negative impact or disturbance to bird, fish or mammal species or their habitat. These locations are not intended to give the boater egress to the land, but to provide a safe mooring opportunity away from other waterway users and offering a more intimate connection to nature, which some boaters are seeking. Waterways Ireland paid particular attention to the provision of safe navigation and a safe mooring in a range of water depths and wind directions and the avoidance of overhead electric wires (for craft under sail).

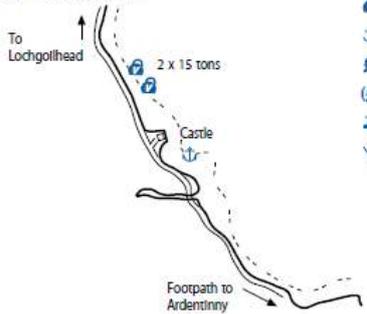
A similar system of visitor moorings is also evident throughout anchorages and mooring areas in western Scotland and the Hebrides. They are provided by a combination of private, public and voluntary sector organisations often for a small charge. An in-depth listing of these opportunities is provided in the annual publication of 'Welcome Anchorages'. The image below is an excerpt from the publication. Carrick Castle is a remote site located on the west shore of Loch Goil on the Cowal peninsula in Argyll and Bute, Scotland.

Two visitor moorings (ideated by blue v symbol) are managed by Carrick Castle Boat Club, a not-for-profit organisation.

WELCOME ANCHORAGES

CLYDE - COWAL

GARRICK CASTLE



The map shows the coastline of Carrick Castle with two blue 'v' symbols indicating visitor moorings. One is labeled '2 x 15 tons'. Other symbols include a blue anchor, a green 'WC' symbol, a blue pound sign (£), a blue anchor with a chain, and a blue 'Y' symbol. A dashed line indicates the path 'To Lochgoilhead' and a solid line indicates the 'Footpath to Ardentinnny'.

Yachts and other boats up to 15 tonnes visiting Carrick Castle can use the 2 blue visitors' mooring buoys with yellow pick-up buoys with stops, one cable north of the castle, which are serviced annually.

The visitor's mooring charge is £10 per day/night that can be paid for by using PayPal at www.pay-mooring.co.uk. There is a free Wi-Fi available at the moorings or if you have no computer on board pay within 14 days of use from home, or use the CCBC box by the Carrick Castle notice board behind the castle.

There is lots of information on the Carrick Castle Boat Club website, including directions for and photographs of eight local walks, and a lot more besides. You can access this information by Wi-Fi from your boat.

Carrick Castle Boat Club
Contact for visiting yachts:
Jim Graham, Moorings Officer
Tel: 01301 703709
Email: moorings@carrick-castle-boat-club.co.uk
Website: www.carrick-castle-boat-club.co.uk



Fig. 139: Excerpt from Welcome Anchorages

⁴² Revised and reprinted with amendments in 2018



Fig. 140: Blue visitor moorings at Carrick Castle

7.3.4 Recommendation

Given the lack of research to identify if there is current or latent demand, it is recommended that market analysis is completed to identify the potential of Strangford Lough as a cruising destination. It may be more beneficial to conduct this NI wide as Strangford Lough may be only one of several destinations that a cruiser may interact with as part of a trip. This should consider not only the demand, but the type of infrastructure that cruisers require. For example, a berth in a marina/ pontoon or quay i.e. with access to land or somewhere to simply moor for the night i.e. without access to the shore and associated facilities.

If this study proves a strong demand, then a Feasibility Study is recommended to consider the development of Killyleagh Harbour including dredging of a channel and installation of a pontoon. This is considered in more detail in Section 5.30.

In addition to this study it is recommended that –

- A visitor mooring scheme is introduced for Strangford Lough. This should be suitably researched and licensed and consider current visitor mooring schemes at Sailing Clubs.
- In addition, an attempt to improve access to current landing places is recommended. This would involve negotiation with key sailing and yacht Clubs around the Lough some of which have permit schemes in place.

In relation to minor navigation aids or ‘perches’ it is recommended that minor navigation marks or perches should be replaced with ‘Isolated Danger Marks’ or ‘Cardinal Marks’. In order to reduce costs an option to install these without lights could be considered. While this option would limit navigation at night, it would greatly improve the current safety and navigation aids for boats on the Lough, particularly for visiting boats (without local knowledge).

While there is no designated navigation authority for the Lough consideration could be given to the engagement of a suitably experienced organization to review, install and maintain navigation aids such as Trinity House.

Trinity House is a charity dedicated to safeguarding shipping and seafarers, providing education, support and welfare to the seafaring community with a statutory duty as a General Lighthouse

Authority to deliver a reliable, efficient and cost-effective aids to navigation service for the benefit and safety of all mariners.

Trinity House services include the following options for the maintenance of navigation assets:

- Asset Condition Survey - A cost-effective and independent assessment of the essential and medium-term maintenance requirements of your buoys, moorings, lights, structures and beacons.
- Refurbishment Agreement - An agreed programme of repair and repainting of buoy bodies
- On-Station Service Agreement - The periodic cleaning, examination and preventative maintenance of buoys, moorings and sinkers
- Outsourcing Agreement - On and off-station maintenance of navigation buoys, moorings, sinkers, lights, structures and beacons utilising the complete range of Trinity House mobile craftsmen, workshops, specialist equipment and vessels.

7.4 Water taxi

A water taxi, also known as a sightseeing boat, is a watercraft used to provide public or private transport on water and is usually confined to a boat operating on demand rather than on a schedule.

Many consultees stated that there is a strong demand for a service of this type for visitors to the Lough and a private sector operator expressed a keen interest in taking this forward.

In addition, The Marine and Inland Waters Recreational Tourism Programme for Armagh and Down recommends *'The encouragement of 'Seafari' type wildlife/ adventure trips operating out of Portaferry and Strangford.'*⁴³

The main limitations to this at present are the lack of accessible access points around the Lough where visitors could get on and off the boat. i.e. sites that are not severely restricted by tides. However, implementation of the proposed site-based recommendations along with consultation to agree use of certain sites, could lead to a range of accessible points with facilities and places of interest for visitors.

This could include –

- Portaferry
- Strangford
- Castle Ward Demesne
- Whiterock – through agreement with Down Cruising Club and/ or Strangford Lough Yacht Club. Both clubs were open to the idea of working through agreement to enable managed access for a water taxi.
- Killyleagh

7.4.1 Recommendation

It is recommended that the development of a water taxi on the Lough is proactively taken forward.

The recommendations contained within this report make the prospect of a water taxi more feasible, due to greater accessibility at more stages of the tide enabling an itinerary to be developed. It is hoped that with this in place, the private sector will be able to avail of the opportunity.

⁴³ A strategy and action plan for marine water sports and beach development in the Armagh and Down Tourism Region 2008-2013, Armagh and Down Regional Tourism Partnership, Programme Summary, April 2008, pp. 67

7.5 Strangford Lough Canoe Trail

Throughout the site visits all the canoe trail access points were visited. Many of the canoe trail panels are in a poor state of repair, missing or ineligible. Only panels at Castle Ward, Delamont and Salt Island are useable.



Fig. 141: Canoe Trail panel at Kircubbin

In addition, consultation with DAERA and Allen and Mellon Environmental Ecological Consultants suggested message communicated to users through the guide and panels, does not reflect the sensitivities associated with paddling on the Lough. e.g. landing on some islands may disturb species.

7.5.1 Recommendation

The Strangford Lough Canoe Trail was established over 10 years ago, therefore, a review of the trail is recommended. This should consider-

- Access/ egress points and if these are still the most suitable points to promote
- Environmental messages for users and the need for these messages to be reviewed/ updated annually (as required) to reflect the transient nature of species.

In addition, the information panels were installed before online information was so readily available, the approach taken now is only to install panels where essential. Observation and consultation throughout the course of this study highlighted that there is a proliferation of signs around the Lough. Therefore, it is recommended that all canoe trail panels are removed by the responsible organisation.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ When the Canoe Trail panels were installed management agreements were signed with all relevant landowners.

7.6 Positive management approach for moorings

7.6.1 Approach to infrastructure

There is a robust approach in place to issuing a licence for new infrastructure. However, consultation identified that the installation of moorings falls outside this.

The Crown Estate owns and manages the seabed and foreshore from mean high watermark to the 12 NM territorial sea limit and operates under UK statute (the Crown Estate Act 1961). This relates to Strangford Lough (although some areas are leased to others). Under this Act consent is required for placing a mooring on the seabed. In most cases within the UK, a block lease or licence is issued to an appropriate body, such as a harbour authority, boat club or fairways committee. These operators provide local administration and sometimes the mooring tackle as well as other facilities and then charge boat owners to moor there.

The mooring operator is required to pay a rent to The Crown Estate for the right to lay the moorings. The ground rent charged to mooring operators is set at a market rate and considers the local context.

This rent is then normally passed onto boat owners who will also subsequently pay the local market rate for a mooring, which depends on several factors such as the type of mooring, the length of boat and location. This fee is paid to the mooring operator. The Crown Estate does not set charges for boat owners as this is a matter for the moorings operator.

In Scotland, The Crown Estate did issue licensing to individual mooring holders. In the case of Strangford Lough, the charge for a mooring is estimated at £50⁴⁵ per mooring. However, The Crown Estate would welcome 'block mooring areas' and it is likely that these would be discounted.

The responsibility for managing the seabed also affords a role for The Crown Estate as facilitator of marinas across the country. As with moorings, The Crown Estate does not manage marinas directly but instead lease their land for appropriate development and management. The approach is to assess the rent on the basis of a percentage of the turnover of a marina. The marina operator can then set its own charges based on the location, facilities provided and prevailing market rates.

In relation to the Lough -

- Some moorings (depending on location), should have a Marine License from DAERA.
- Most moorings within the Lough are privately owned. This includes moorings owned by individuals and moorings owned by members of Yacht/ Sailing Clubs around the Lough. It is estimated that there are in the region of 1,000 moorings. However, most do not have Crown Estate consent. Having said this, The Crown Estate is highly unlikely to go down the route of enforcement or removal of moorings but would rather progress through working with Sailing and Yacht Clubs to gain agreement on managing/ regulating current and future moorings.

With no designated harbour authority for the Lough, it is difficult to regulate moorings and the issue of permission has never been enforced by either The Crown Estate or DAERA (although DAERA may enforce this within the Marine Conservation Zone where no dropping of anchors is permitted).

Some exceptions were identified during consultation including –

- Whiterock where there are 2 leases in place with the Crown Estate. The first was issued to Down Cruising Club for the lightship 'Petrel' and the second to the 'Ballydoran Fairway Committee'. The Committee manages the moorings and licences these to members of Down Cruising Club. Therefore, in this instance, the Club owns the moorings.

⁴⁵ Please note this is only an estimate - provided by the Crown Estate, March 2018

- Strangford Lough Yacht Club where a licence was issued from the Crown Estate for the pontoon at the Club.

One of the main issues associated with this is the environmental impact associated with moorings. In most cases, the mooring is anchored down by a large concrete block which rests on the seabed. A long chain is then attached to a buoy on the surface. The boat is then attached to the buoy. The chain must be sufficiently long enough to reach a boat at high tide when the chain is taut. However, the issue arises then the tide goes out and the chain becomes slack, the chain can then rotate with the tide (or wind). The greatest impact is when there is no boat on the mooring. This creates a circular dredging motion on the sea bed which can lead to a sterile environment for both flora and fauna. This could potentially create a sterile circle with a diameter dependent on the length of the chain. Due to insurance, mooring buoys are typically vacated between October and March.

While the chain can cause degradation of the environment, the concrete block can act like an artificial reef and provides an additional habitat for both flora and fauna.

A Defra⁴⁶ review of the impacts of unlicensed marine activities included impacts resulting from mooring in coastal waters. The review identified motorised water-based recreation and any anchoring of recreational craft as one of the three unlicensed activities (alongside bait-digging and unlicensed commercial fishing) of highest risk to marine biodiversity. The review listed loss of seabed area, smothering of seabed plant and animal communities with sediment, changes in suspended sediment, changes in turbidity, noise disturbance, visual presence, physical disturbance, displacement and synthetic compound contamination as probable environmental pressures arising from boat moorings, and loss of water column volume, heavy metal contamination and introduction of microbial pathogens, parasites and non-native species as possible pressures. Impacts may affect a wide range of taxa. A major concern in many sheltered moorings is loss of seagrass due to swinging chain moorings, which in one study were found to eliminate an average of 122 m² of seagrass. Seagrass beds function as important nursery and foraging habitat for fish, shellfish and wildfowl. They are also thought to oxygenate and stabilise sediments, provide shoreline stabilisation and protection from erosion, and are natural hotspots for carbon sequestration and nutrient cycling. Finally, they are considered a foundation species, i.e. a species that provides habitat and enhances ecosystem biodiversity and are an important bio-indicator of system health. In Strangford Lough, seagrass is critical for the maintenance of the pale-bellied Brent goose wintering population.

Direct physical pressures such as anchoring and propeller scarring, are increasingly resulting in further losses and fragmentation of many beds. Anchoring in deeper waters can also result in indiscriminate damage to benthic flora and fauna and infauna, and erosion of the sea bed. Incidental effects of moored boats may include disturbance of birds and seals due to proximity to roosts, nest sites and seal haul outs. Light pollution may influence the nocturnal behaviour of marine animals, and littering is also likely wherever people are present. Biocide leaching from antifouling paints may have complex impacts on marine organisms, particularly in moorings with little water movement. Effects may include direct toxic effects and reduced viability and fitness in some invertebrates and fish, and toxins may accumulate in bottom sediments, with a potential for concentrated effects if sediments are disturbed.

7.6.2 Case Study – The West Highland Anchorages and Moorings Association (WHAM)

The West Highland Anchorages and Moorings Association was founded in 1985 as a direct result of the growing realisation that there were rapidly increasing pressures on the marine environment which, if not understood and if necessary contested, would result in serious and lasting deterioration in the facilities, environment, right of free anchorage and freedom of navigation.

⁴⁶ *Unlicensed Activities: A review to consider the threats to marine biodiversity. Building the evidence base for the Marine Bill. November 2006. A report for DEFRA by Suzanne Boyes, Daryl Burdon and Michael Elliott, Institute of Estuarine & Coastal Studies, University of Hull.*

The purpose and objectives of WHAM are -

1. To maintain safe and unobstructed access to the anchorages and mooring areas of western Scotland and the Hebrides.
2. To help to ensure protection of the marine environment.
3. To promote and encourage responsible and considerate use of our seas and to further the aims of recreational sailors in and around western Scotland, working with The Crown Estate, The Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage, Royal Yachting Association Scotland and other organisations.
4. To respond on behalf of members to such matters as planning applications or consultations on marine energy and all other developments affecting the use of the seas.
5. To help promote thoughtful and considerate use of our waters by marine based organisations and individuals.

WHAM now consists of some 60-member organisations in western Scotland and the Hebrides including most Moorings Associations, boatyards, clubs and other organisations, including Royal Highland YC, Clyde Cruising Club, Ocean Youth Trust, Argyll Charter Boats, Oban Port Users and others. In the intervening years, WHAM has established excellent working relationships with the Crown Estate, The Scottish Government, Local Authorities, fish and shellfish farmers, local fishermen, and is recognised as a knowledgeable and helpful organisation whose aims coincide with those of most marine users and whose views are taken account of (even if not always acted upon).

It is worth commenting that there has been no reduction in pressures over the intervening 25 years. Indeed, more pressures have arisen with the advent of wind and tidal power, attempts to restrict navigation in channels, changes in licences, and a significant and continuing pressure on mooring space generally. Fortunately, the requirements of leisure and recreational boating are now taken seriously by government and other administrative bodies, and WHAM is a key part of the consultation system that has developed over the past few years.

7.6.3 Recommendation

Consultation has identified that there has been no robust approach to the management of moorings, with exceptions highlighted above. With up to 1,000 boats thought to be moored throughout the Lough, therefore, the potential impact could be notable.

It is recommended that learnings from the WHAM approach are considered by relevant organisations in relation to the Lough. If nothing is done, then the activity could ultimately lead to impact on the designated features and even restrictions. By taking a positive management approach this can be prevented from happening.

7.7 Responsible water recreation

The enjoyment of the scenic landscape and wildlife has been identified through consultation as one of the key reasons for selecting Strangford Lough as a venue for water sports recreation.

The majority of those participating in water sports recreation recognise that Strangford Lough is a sensitive environment and wish to protect it as such. However, they also admit to not understanding how their participation in water sports on Strangford Lough has the potential to have a detrimental impact (albeit unintentionally) on the environment.

Disturbance can prevent wildlife feeding and can cause desertion of nests with eggs or young birds. In addition, there are several invasive species recorded on the Lough.

It is therefore important that steps are undertaken to inform those participating in water based recreation of best practice steps for responsible use.

Several relevant well-resourced and robust schemes are already in place, a summary of which is available below:

The Green Blue – Making the environment second nature

The Green Blue is an innovative environmental initiative developed by British Marine and the Royal Yachting Association.

The initiative provides practical advice and information to help recreational boaters, water sports participants and marine businesses to think and act in an environmentally conscious way.

The overall aim of the initiative is to work towards promoting a sustainable boating community which will help to save money, avoid red tape and safeguard the waters and habitats for the future.

Its four objectives are:

- To raise environmental awareness amongst industry and users;
- To reduce harmful discharges;
- To reduce environmental disturbance; and
- To encourage sustainable choices.

The Green Blue also supports clubs, training centres and businesses by helping them understand and comply with the increasing amount of environmental legislation affecting their operations. The Green Blue offers site audits to help identify areas for environmental improvement, in particular, around wildlife and habitat awareness and biosecurity to prevent the spread of invasive animal and plant species.

The Green Blue website (supported by a selection of free, downloadable posters and leaflets) contains excellent pragmatic guidance of a series of topics for boat users, such as:

- Antifoul
- Invasive species
- Cleaning and maintenance
- Oil and fuel
- Resource Efficiency
- Sewage and waste
- Wildlife

The Green Blue Campaign Manager⁴⁷, recently delivered a workshop at the RYA Northern Ireland Club Conference held at Strangford Lough Yacht Club. The workshop highlighted that following a recent re-focusing of activities, The Green Blue has selected three regions from around the United Kingdom on which to focus their efforts. Strangford Lough has been selected as one of the three.

It was outlined that the programme was keen to work with the sailing clubs/centres and marinas in helping them to pass on environmental awareness of the Marine Conservation Zone and support them in adopting best practice to minimise their impacts on the environment. The programme hopes to achieve this through providing them with resources to help educate their members/clients and supporting them in making their venues and operations greener.

The resources that can be employed to deliver this include:

⁴⁷ Kate Fortnam – Manager – correct May 2018

- Environmental Club Audit – covering a variety of areas e.g. biosecurity, wildlife awareness, waste management, water use, communicating environmental best practice etc. This is a useful tool to provide a baseline as to how sustainable a club currently is. From this The Green Blue can support the club to identify areas for improvement and in turn support the club to achieve the outcomes. A follow up audit can be performed to demonstrate how positive changes can be made.
- Green Boating Event Charter – this is designed to assist clubs/centres, sailing associations, marinas make any boating event they are running a more environmentally sustainable one.
- Instructor teaching resources – to empower instructors to pass on environmental knowledge and best practice to their student on courses.
- Workshops – delivered by the Green Blue and local experts at clubs/centres to raise awareness of the Marine Conservation Zone and Invasive Non-Native Species. Regarding the latter it will highlight the key issues for boaters and the environment and outline mitigations.

WiSe Scheme

The WiSe (**Wildlife Safe**) is the U.K Standard for commercial marine wildlife watching. It aims to promote responsible wildlife-watching, through training, accreditation and awareness -raising.

The WiSe Scheme comprises three levels of WiSe membership, details of which are set out below.

The core element to WiSe, is a modular training and accreditation course aimed primarily at operators of passenger pleasure craft, wildlife cruise operators, dive and service boats, and yacht skippers. These individuals are most likely to come into contact with marine wildlife, as they are out on the water on a regular basis.

WiSe training consists of instruction in how to best to responsibly watch wildlife, whilst at the same time minimising any potential disturbance. All WiSe accredited operators will have received instruction in how to handle their craft whilst in contact with any of these animals, how they may react to the presence of boats, and how to leave them room to carry on with their lives unimpeded.

All WiSe operators will have received instruction into their local and national laws relating to wildlife. They will also have received instruction on species identification, life history and behaviour of a range of species they may encounter in their local waters. All WiSe operators will have agreed to abide by our Codes of Conduct for all of the species covered by WiSe, as well as all relevant local or national laws and bylaws.

WiSe Instructors have been specially selected in all areas around the UK for their years of experience in the field, their knowledge of the species likely to be encountered in their locality, and local conservation issues relating to marine wildlife that are of particular relevance.

WiSe offers three levels of membership:

Affiliate WiSe membership - For people interested in minimising their disturbance on marine wildlife whilst on the water. For example, students, marine guides, wildlife rescuers, sailing club members, and other interested members of the general public. Attendance at a standard training course or presentation by a WiSe instructor or nominated speaker is required. There is no requirement for a refresher course, as no accreditation is provided.

Full WiSe membership - This forms the basis for the accredited WiSe Scheme professional standard. WiSe members commit to abide by not only national and local laws on wildlife conservation and disturbance avoidance, but also the WiSe Codes of Conduct, in addition to any local wildlife-watching codes. Accreditation lasts for 3 years, when the operator should apply to attend a refresher course, or alternatively the operator can attend a Master Class and upgrade their membership level. A WiSe training courses typically lasts 6-8 hours.

Master WiSe membership - This is the WiSe Scheme professional standard 'plus', the Gold WiSe standard of membership. Boat operators are required to have been a standard WiSe member for at

least three years and have attended a WiSe masterclass (one day workshop). WiSe masters must not only commit to the WiSe codes of conduct and local codes but also provide sightings data to the relevant sightings collection organisation and provide any useful photo-identification images to relevant research groups.

Leave No Trace

Leave No Trace is an outdoor ethics programme designed to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships. The programme is delivered throughout the island of Ireland by Leave No Trace Ireland.

At the heart of Leave No Trace are 7 principles for reducing the damage caused by outdoor activities.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Be Considerate of Others
3. Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife
4. Travel and Camp on Durable Ground
5. Leave What You Find
6. Dispose of Waste Properly
7. Minimise the Effects of Fire

The Leave No Trace Ireland programme recognises that as increasing numbers of people seek the beauty and exhilaration of outdoor travel and recreation by the coast, the collective mark on the coastal environment and its natural processes increases. As such, Leave No Trace Ireland has recently developed a 'Coast' edition of the Leave No Trace Ireland Skills and Ethics series to compliment the original mainstay edition.

The Coast edition explains how you can best enjoy the coast and its wildlife, without causing harm. The original Leave No Trace Ireland Skills and Ethics programme is applicable for many situations and contains additional information. The practices in the booklet are appropriate for all coastal locations in Ireland. By following the code, and showing it to other people, you can help ensure that this wonderful part of Irish heritage survives for all of us to appreciate in years to come.

Consultation with Leave No Trace Ireland has identified they are currently working in partnership with Donegal Local Development CLG to develop a pilot programme which will develop resources to create awareness and educate recreational users on responsible use of their environment. The programme (subject to LEADER funding) will be targeted at local communities, walking groups, cycling groups, water sport groups, and adventure race organisers.

The programme which will be bespoke to Donegal will provide 10 targeted workshops (including site visits), development of supporting training resource, an awareness event and short best practice videos. This model could be readily adapted to Strangford Lough and the appropriate training undertaken or funding sought to ensure successful delivery.

7.7.1 Recommendation

Consultation has identified that many of those engaging in water recreation on Strangford Lough do so via a club, group or are a member of their appropriate National Governing Body. In addition, there are commercial operators or outdoor educators. Therefore, there are well developed channels in place through which to champion responsible water recreation.

Rather than creating a specific programme for Strangford Lough, it would be more cost effective to channel appropriate existing schemes to the appropriate target groups as outlined in the table below.

It would be important to identify a key organisation to deliver such an initiative whilst also having champions within the key target groups. It is recommended that these schemes are run together with at least 2 sessions per annum.

In last 5 years SLLP has coordinated 2 sessions of Wise and Leave No trace and is working with RYA to promote the Green Blue initiative, with Sport NI. These were well attended.

The aim is that this information is then be passed onto members/ participants.

Scheme	Target Groups
The Green Blue - Strangford Lough	Sailing Clubs Marina Berth Holders RYA Members
WiSe	Boat Tour Operators Dive Operators
Leave No Trace Programme for Outdoor Recreation Groups	Coastal Rowers Irish Kite Surfing Association CANI – Canoeist / Kayakers / Stand Up Paddleboarders Relevant Community organisations

Fig. 142: Proposed training schemes

7.8 Training Opportunities

The project brief required the identification of desirable infrastructure requirements to potentially develop Strangford Lough as a training facility for water recreation. However, it should be recognised that the supply of infrastructure cannot be viewed in isolation.

Strangford Lough is a relatively challenging environment for water sports participation due to strong tides and other navigational hazards. As such the majority of those participating in self-led water sports recreation are often experienced in their discipline whilst those with less experience choose to engage with an external training provider.

It is noted a modest level of external training providers are currently in place on Strangford Lough, these include:

- Delamont Outdoor Education Centre – Education Authority Centre offering residential and outdoor education
- Killyleagh Outdoor Education Centre – Education Authority Centre offering residential and outdoor education (scheduled to close 31st March 2018)
- Clearsky Adventure Centre – private sector activity provider located at Castle Ward
- DV Diving – private sector PADI Five Star Dive Centre, TDI Facility, RYA Training Centre and HSE recognised scuba assessment centre
- A range of non-Strangford Lough based public and private sector providers regularly use Strangford Lough typically for Sea Kayaking or to a lesser degree kite surfing
- Sailing Clubs – located in various locations offering sailing courses and race training to their members
- Canoe Clubs – offering coaching to their members
- Community Rowing Clubs offering coaching / tuition

Consultation with a range of the above providers has suggested several specific infrastructure requirements (as reflected elsewhere in the report) to allow them offer improved training provision. However, market forces remain as the main barrier.

The level of participation in water sports activity in Northern Ireland is relatively low, findings from the 2015/2016 Continuous Household Survey 2015/2016 indicate only 1% of the adult population participated in 'canoeing / kayaking' in the past year whilst less than 0.5% participated in either 'windsurfing / board sailing' or 'yacht or dinghy sailing', other water sports did not gain a sufficient level of response for inclusion.

This would therefore indicate the current market for water sport training is limited and needs to be addressed at a national level rather local level. Activity to increase awareness of water recreation opportunities is therefore essential.

This has been recognised by the National Governing Bodies of water sports in Northern Ireland. In 2017, the NGBs collaborated on 'Get Wet NI', a campaign to encourage sustained local participation and to raise awareness of the water-based recreation opportunities in Northern Ireland. The campaign was driven by a steering group of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for water sports including the Canoe Association for Northern Ireland, Royal Yachting Association Northern Ireland, Angling NI, Rowing Ireland, Irish Water-ski and Wakeboard Federation, Irish Coastal Rowing Federation, BSAC Ireland and Irish Kitesurfing Association. The campaign was delivered by Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland on behalf of the NGBs and SportNI.

7.8.1 Recommendation

It is recommended that national campaigns such as 'Get Wet NI' are championed to ensure inclusion of Strangford Lough training providers.

7.9 Informal nature of access to the Lough

The public right of navigation and fishing to all water within UK and no-one can stop this other than a regulatory body e.g. DAERA, Crown Estate. However, there is no public right of access over the foreshore. Despite this over 75 access points to the Lough were identified throughout the course of this study. This is partly because users need a range of sites dependent on tide, winds and the ability of users. Few of these access points are 'formal' i.e. with agreed access arrangements in place. The majority are 'informal', where access is tolerated and largely not prevented (unless issues arise). The highest concentration of access points is on the west coast and therefore this is where most demand and most issues are.

7.9.1 Recommendation

It is recommended that retrospective permission is not sought for access at sites where access currently takes place and is tolerated with no apparent issues. The exception is where there are issues. In these cases, it is recommended that landowners are identified, and approaches made regarding the sustainable management of access at these locations. This may involve Councils entering into management or other agreements with the landowners. Where new infrastructure or sites are developed, formal access arrangements should be put in place.

7.10 Sustainability of Sailing Clubs

Consultation identified that for many Sailing Clubs around the Lough, financial viability is a major issue. In addition, many clubs rely on volunteers to help with the running of the Club and its facilities. This is compounded by the fact that many of the clubs in the Lough have been experiencing a reduction in membership numbers and an increase in the average age of their membership.

Therefore, to keep these clubs as sustainable entities, there are opportunities for affiliations with other clubs and organisations. Each needs to be considered on a case by case basis.

7.11 Wildlife monitoring opportunities

Throughout the consultation process it became apparent that there is an untapped resource of information among users of the Lough. Many of these users are local people with a keen interest and knowledgeable understanding of the wildlife of the Lough. In addition, their regular use of the Lough means that they are often aware of species specific information e.g. nesting sites, changes in patterns or numbers etc.

The consultation event held at Mount Stewart⁴⁸ identified a desire among users of the Lough, to record this information and share with relevant organisations. DAERA recognised the importance of this information.

7.11.1 Case Study - CEDaR

Established at the Ulster Museum in January 1995, the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR), is a partnership between Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), National Museums NI and the local biological recording community.

CEDaR is the Local Records Centre (LRC) for Northern Ireland and supports biological recording through working in partnerships with numerous individuals and organisations. The organisation collects, stores, manages and releases information on the wildlife of Northern Ireland and its coastal waters. It also manages several recording initiatives, such as species surveys, websites and training courses.

Records can be added online by both registered and non-registered users. All records must have the following information –

- Species name
- Grid reference
- Site name
- Recorder first name
- Recorder last name
- Recorder email address
- Date of record

There are also functions that allow registered users to view data they have uploaded.

The following extracts taken from the CEDaR website - <http://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/>.

⁴⁸ A consultation event took place on April 26th at Mount Stewart. Over 35 people attended, a list is contained in the Appendix.

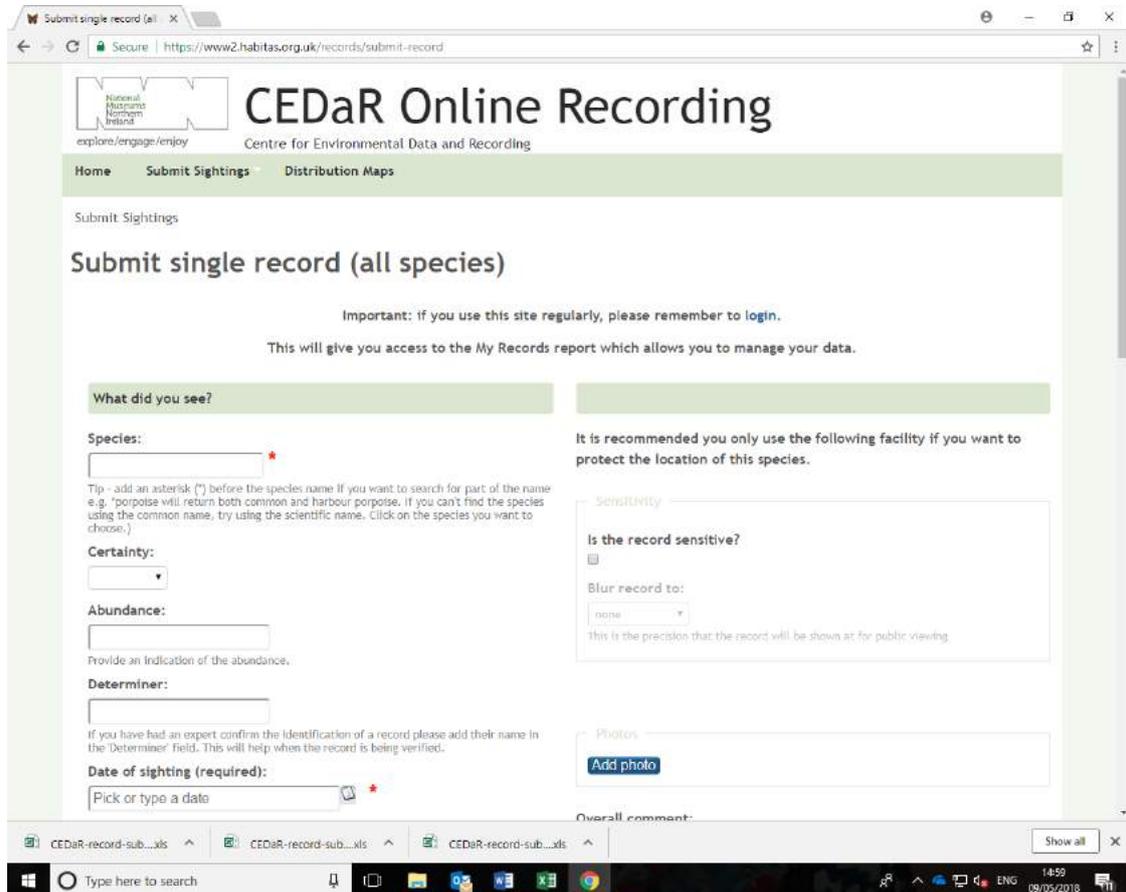
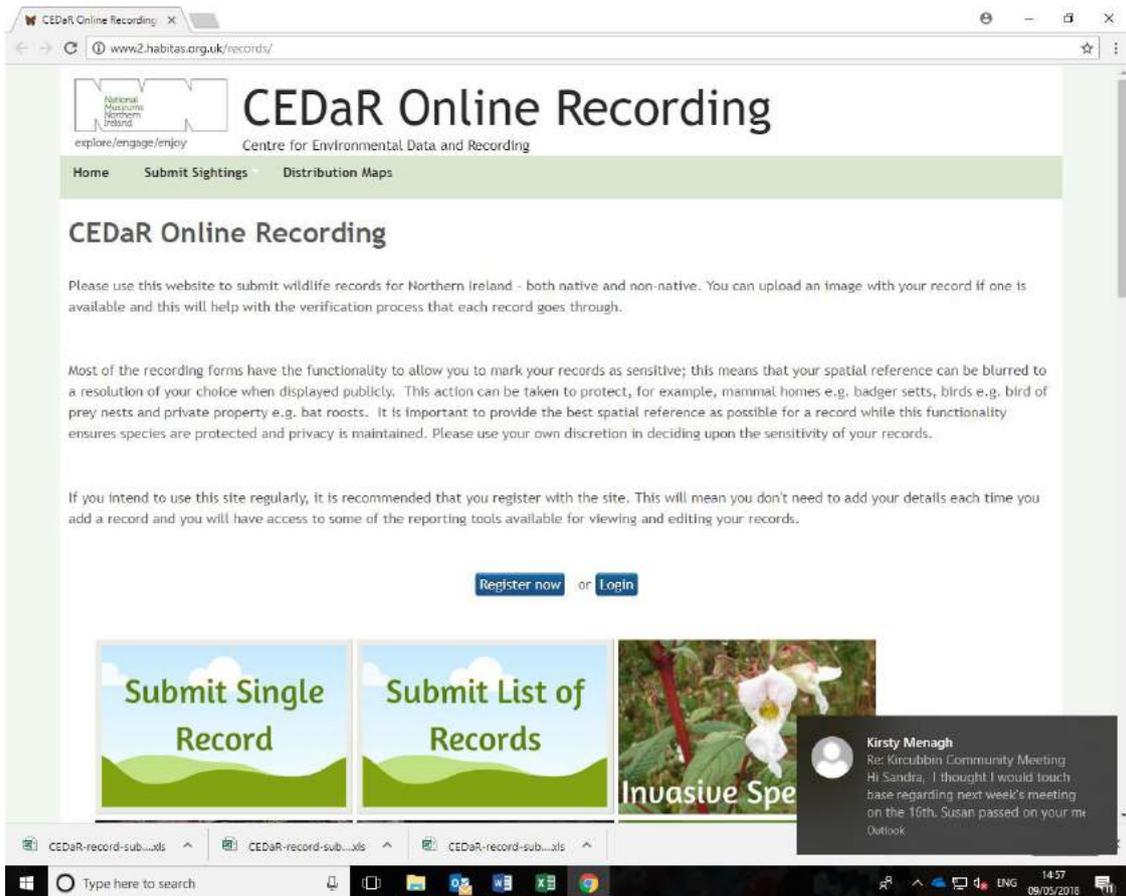


Fig. 143: CEDaR – online recording of species

7.11.2 Recommendation

Rather than create a new system for users of the Lough to record species data, it is recommended that CEDaR is promoted through the proposed Communication Plan and users encouraged to regularly report sightings. It is also recommended that a pilot training session is held for Lough users on how to record and input data to CEDaR.

7.12 Quays

Many traditional quays are constructed in the vernacular fashion - vertical slabs of shale without grout. This construction method is negated if the top surface is airtight. Consultation has identified several places where quays are deteriorating and in need of urgent expert repair to ensure their preservation. In addition, many of these quays are Scheduled Monuments.

As many are in private ownership they are not necessarily publicly accessible.

7.12.1 Recommendation

It is recommended that a survey is undertaken regarding the location and condition of historic quays in addition to costing the works required to stabilise these. This should relate only to those quays where public access is in place or likely to be put in place in the short term i.e. within the next 5 years.

7.13 Strategic action plan

ACTION	PRIORITY – high, medium, low
Communication among stakeholders	HIGH
Communication to users	HIGH
Regulation of the development of water-based recreation – consideration of the WHAM approach	HIGH
Encouragement of responsible water recreation through delivery of training – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WiSe Scheme - Leave No Trace - The Green Blue - Use of CEDaR 	HIGH (2 per annum)
Training opportunities through national campaigns such as ‘Get Wet NI’	MEDIUM
Address the informal nature of access to Strangford Lough	MEDIUM
Sustainability of sailing clubs – development of affiliations with other clubs/ organisations	MEDIUM
Development of a Strangford Lough water taxi (private sector led once access points secured)	MEDIUM
Cruising on the Lough <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NI wide market analysis - Visitor mooring scheme - Physical infrastructure - Negotiation with sailing and yacht clubs to secure access to their facilities - Minor navigation aids (perches) - review and improvement 	HIGH MEDIUM MEDIUM HIGH MEDIUM
Remove Strangford Lough Canoe Trail panels	HIGH
Survey of publicly accessible quays to identify condition and cost to repair to enable public access	LOW

Fig. 144: Strategic Action Plan

7.14 Management of water-based recreation

There are several tasks or roles required to address the issues identified in this report. This is crucial in order that a holistic approach is implemented regarding the sustainable management of water recreation on the Lough.

The following diagram sets out the roles and issues identified in relation to sustainable management -



Fig. 145: Sustainable management – roles and issues

Some of these roles are already being undertaken by one or more organisations. However, what is important is that a holistic and coordinated approach is taken and that one organisation or person has the responsibility for this coordination.

8 HRA SCREENING REPORT

This section completed by Blackstaff Ecology contains an 'Information to inform an HRA report'.

This Stage 1 HRA (Screening) considers both the recommendations for access infrastructure but also the holistic access management system.

To do this, Blackstaff Ecology has undertaken the following four-step process:

1. Determine whether the project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site
2. Describe the project or plan and the description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the Natura 2000 site
3. Identify the potential effects on the Natura 2000 site - this involves the characterisation of the site as a whole or of the areas where impacts are most likely to fall. Impact identification will consider cumulative impacts from other projects or plans, and reference will also be made to the cumulative assessment steps outlined in the EU guidance entitled 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.'
4. Assessing the significance of any effects on the Natura 2000 site.

The HRA Screening report details the findings of the above four steps and provide recommendations for mitigations as required.

8.1 Introduction

1. Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council has commissioned Outdoor Recreation NI to complete 'An audit of access to Strangford Lough for water-based recreation'.
2. The activities included within this study are -
 - Sailing - including yachting and cruising
 - Canoeing/ kayaking
 - Coastal rowing
 - Diving
 - Swimming
 - Wind and kitesurfing
 - Boat trips
 - Stand up paddle boarding
3. One the elements of this audit is the preparation of an 'Information to inform a 'Habitats Regulation Assessment report' to aid Councils, as the Competent Authorities.
4. The following development opportunities are proposed within the audit -
 - Site based proposals*
 - Extension of the marina slip at Portaferry
 - Installation of a seasonal floating pontoon at Cook St. jetty, Portaferry
 - Increase number of berths at Portaferry Marina (private sector proposal)
 - New shore-based access at Nendrum
 - New shore access at Whiterock - opposite Council car park
 - Improvement of access at Killyleagh Quay including installation of a pontoon alongside the Quay and dredging of a channel to to enable access to the Quay from the Lough (and vice versa) during the majority of tides.
 - Installation of a seasonal floating pontoon at Delamont Country Park etc. (take text from your report)
 - Reinstatement of Audleys Quay
 - Extension of pontoon at Strangford (private sector proposal)
 - Extension of the public slipway at Strangford
 - Strategic development proposals*
 - Development of a water taxi (private sector led). Potential stop off points onclude Strangford Marina, Portaferry, Whiterock. Killyleagh and Castle Ward (Audleys Quay)
 - Development of a visitor mooring scheme of the Lough
 - Regulation of moorings (see main report for detail)
 - Education and training programmes (see main report for detail)
5. In addition, consideration is being given to the installation of a floating breakwater at Portaferry to shelter the marina, and to extend the marina slipway to make it more accessible when tide out. Various existing structures, principally at existing quays and slipways would be repaired or upgraded to improve access to boats and the shore. Owners of existing slipways will be approached to allow public access for non-motorised craft, and, in some cases, for a regulated

water taxi. There is also potential development of a pontoon at Strangford to provide permanent floating anchorages, and for a private company to effectively manage the bay to increase available moorings.

6. Strangford Lough is one of the most important wildlife sites in the British Isles, with international designations recognising its important habitats and invertebrate, bird and mammal populations. The entirety of the Lough, including the shore and islands, is located within the Strangford Lough Special Protection Area, a European Protected Site (EPS) designated under the EU Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conservation of wild birds (codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC as amended)). The SPA boundary is coincident with the boundary of the Strangford Lough Special Area of Conservation (SAC), an EPS designated under the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora). The Lough is also designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat.
7. The proposed scheme refers to activities that are totally within the boundary of the EPS. There is a potential for effects, arising from the scheme, to have an impact on the designation features and/or conservation objectives of the Strangford Lough SPA, SAC and Ramsar site. The proposal is subject to the Regulation 43(1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). Therefore, the precautionary approach should be applied, as set out in Commission Guidance: Managing Natura 2000 Sites and as required by the European Court of Justice in C-127/02 (Waddenzee). As such a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required to be completed for the proposed development. It must be considered whether the scheme, either alone or in combination, (neither being directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site) is likely to have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 site. Designated site descriptions and site conservation objectives are to be found in Annex 1.

8.2 The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process

8. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect an EPS. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA:

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the [Natura 2000] site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.”

9. This document constitutes Stage 1 (Screening) of the HRA process, which investigates potential effects of the scheme on the designation features and conservation objectives of the European Protected Site. Effects on all designation features of the SPA, SAC and Ramsar site will be considered.
10. Depending on the outcome of the Screening exercise, and following the precautionary principle, if significant effects are **likely, uncertain or unknown**, a further stage of Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2) will be required that will take account of any mitigation measures that have been identified arising from the screening process. Where no significant effects will be anticipated, works will be carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures produced in the AA. Where significant adverse impacts of a scheme are anticipated, alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the European site are assessed (Stage 3). Stage 4 of the process is initiated where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain. An assessment of compensatory measures is carried out where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

8.3 Timing of operations

11. Timing and duration of any works required by the scheme are yet to be decided.

8.4 Summary of site designations

12. Strangford Lough was declared an SPA in 1998 because it is Northern Ireland’s most important coastal site for wintering waterfowl, and it is important for breeding terns. The site qualifies under Article 4.1 of EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds by supporting internationally important breeding populations of both Sandwich tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* (1.2% of international population, 13.5% of the all-Ireland population at the time of designation) and common tern *Sterna hirundo* (1.2%, 22.3%) and nationally important breeding populations of Arctic tern *Sterna paradisaea* (8% of the all-Ireland population).
13. The site qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive by regularly supporting in winter over 20,000 waterfowl. The five-year winter peak mean for the period 1992/93 to 1996/97 was approximately 70,200 waterfowl, comprising 48,700 waders and 21,500 wildfowl. The mean number of waterfowl had increased by 2005/06-2009/10 to 79,700, illustrating the continuing importance of the site. These numbers include the following internationally important species: light-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota* (52.6% of the international population at the time of designation), knot *Calidris canutus* (2.5%) and redshank *Tringa totanus* (2.1%). The following nationally important species contribute to the overall population of overwintering waterfowl: bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica* (6% of the all-Ireland population at the time of designation), black-tailed godwit *L. limosa* (1.5%), coot *Fulica atra* (1.6%), curlew *Numenius arquata* (2.3%), dunlin *Calidris alpina* (5.5%), eider *Somateria mollissima* (1%), gadwall *Anas strepera* (18.3%), great-crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus* (3.1%), greylag goose *Anser anser* (10.5%), greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (6.3%), goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* (2.7%), golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

(4.1%), grey plover *P. squatarola* (7.1%), lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (3.6%), mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (3.1%), mute swan (2.4%), oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (16.5%), pintail *Anas acuta* (3.6%), red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator* (16.9%), ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula* (2.4%), shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (33.7%), shoveler *Anas clypeata* (2.2%), teal (2.6%), turnstone *Arenaria interpres* (1.6%) and wigeon *Anas penelope* (1.6%).

14. Strangford Lough was designated as an SAC in 2007 because of its important littoral, intertidal and subtidal habitats, and its population of common (harbour) seal *Phoca vitulina*. Designation features are coastal lagoons (a European priority interest), large shallow inlets and bays (for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom), annual vegetation of drift lines (rare in total in the UK), Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*), Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, Perennial vegetation of stony banks, Reefs, *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand, and common seal.
15. The site was designated under the Ramsar Convention in 1998. It qualifies under Criterion 1 because it supports a variety of important wetland features. Areas of fringing saltmarsh and freshwater habitats support a diversity of wetland plant species. Strangford Lough supports one of the most extensive saltmarsh areas in Northern Ireland. It qualifies under Criterion 2 because the site supports an important assemblage of vulnerable and endangered wetland plants and animal species. These include a number of marine sponges, marine hydroids, marine mollusc and sea urchins which are restricted to Strangford Lough in Northern Ireland or, in some cases unknown or very rare elsewhere in the British Isles. The mudflats support luxuriant beds of eelgrass; *Zostera noltei*, *Z. angustifolia*, *Z. marina* and *Ruppia maritima* are all present, with the latter widespread but quite local in its distribution. Such extensive 'beds' are rare in the British Isles. The site qualifies under Criterion 5 by supporting assemblages of international importance, viz waterfowl species with peak counts in winter of 74876 (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003). Ramsar criterion 6 recognises that the site supports species/populations occurring at levels of international importance. Qualifying species/populations are: Species regularly supported during the breeding season - Sandwich tern (an average of 1% of the W European breeding population), and common tern (an average of 17.8% of the all-Ireland population); Species with peak counts in spring/autumn - light-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota* (an average of 54.3% of the East Canada/Ireland population), and common redshank (an average of 1.2% of the W European population); Species with peak counts in winter - red knot *Calidris canutus islandica* (an average of 1% of the W & Southern Africa (wintering) population); and Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6, Species with peak counts in winter - common shelduck (1.1% of the NW European population).
16. Strangford Lough was declared an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), in three parts, in 1988-89. The numerous designation features include a wide range of littoral and intertidal habitats, invertebrate communities and species, and plant communities and species.
17. Strangford Lough was established as a Marine Nature Reserve under the under Article 20 of *The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985* (NCALO). The Order imposes an obligation on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to manage a designated Marine Nature Reserve for the purpose of:
 - conserving marine flora, fauna or features of geological, physiographical or other scientific or special interest in the area; or
 - providing, under suitable conditions and control, special opportunities for the study of, and research into, matters relating to marine flora and fauna and the physical conditions in which they live, or for the study of features of geological, physiographical or other scientific or special interest in the area.

18. The Lough was designated as Northern Ireland’s first Marine Conservation Zone in 2013, because of its wealth of marine biological and geological features of conservation importance. This designation is significant since it allows management measures to be taken under the Marine Act (NI) 2013.

8.5 Conservation Objectives

19. Conservation objectives for the Strangford Lough SPA are listed in Table 1.

Objective	Feature	Feature Objective
To maintain each feature in favourable condition.	Sandwich tern, common tern, Arctic tern (breeding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species Fledging success sufficient to maintain or enhance population
	golden plover, bar-tailed godwit, light-bellied brent goose, shelduck, knot redshank, great crested grebe, cormorant, greylag goose, wigeon, gadwall, teal, mallard, pintail, shoveler, goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, coot, oystercatcher, ringed plover, grey plover, lapwing, dunlin, curlew, turnstone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain or enhance the population of the qualifying species; To ensure there is no significant disturbance of the species; and To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population of the species as a viable component of the site; Distribution of the species within site; Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species; Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
	Waterfowl Assemblage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant decrease in population against national trends
	Waterfowl Assemblage wintering population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain species diversity contributing to the Waterfowl Assemblage
	Habitat Extent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain or enhance the area of natural and semi-natural habitats used or potentially usable by Feature bird species (3781 ha intertidal area, and breeding areas) subject to natural processes
	Habitat Extent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the extent of main habitat components subject to natural processes
	Roost sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain or enhance sites utilised as roosts

Table 1: Conservation objectives for Strangford Lough SPA.

20. The conservation objectives for the Strangford Lough SAC are listed in Table 2.

Objective	Feature	Feature Objective
<i>To maintain (or restore where appropriate) to favourable condition.</i>	Large shallow inlet and bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the extent of the large shallow inlet and bay; Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and extent of the large shallow inlet and bay, to operate appropriately ;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.
	Coastal lagoons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the extent of the coastal lagoons; • Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and extent of the coastal lagoons, to operate appropriately; • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.
	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the extent of mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide; • Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure and extent of mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide, to operate appropriately; • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.
	Reefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To restore the reefs and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change; • Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and extent of the reefs, to operate appropriately; • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.
	Annual vegetation of drift lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance the extent of annual vegetation of drift lines subject to natural processes.
	Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To restore the Atlantic salt meadows and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change; • To maintain or enhance, as appropriate, the composition of the saltmarsh communities; • To maintain transitions between saltmarsh communities and to other adjoining habitats; • To permit the continued operation of formative and controlling natural processes acting on the saltmarsh communities.
	Perennial vegetation of stony banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To restore the perennial vegetation of stony banks and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change; • Allow the natural processes which determine the development and extent of perennial vegetation of stony banks to operate appropriately; • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this community including the presence of notable species.

	<i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To restore the <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change; • Allow the natural processes which determine the development and extent of <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand, to operate appropriately; • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.
	common seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the common seal population; • Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, physical features used by common seals within the site.

Table 2: Conservation objectives for Strangford Lough SAC.

8.6 Site Visit

21. This is a desk-based assessment and thus a site visit was not carried out.

8.7 Past and Current Management

22. For much of its history, Strangford Lough was managed on a piecemeal basis by those with farming and fishing interests around and within the Lough. The Strangford Lough Wildlife Scheme was set up in the 1960s and administered by the National Trust to manage wildfowling in the Lough. The scheme has evolved over the years, and a system of refuges has been established where wildfowling is either banned or restricted to certain times of year and where efforts are made to minimise all forms of disturbance. With the transposition of the Habitats and Birds Directives into Northern Ireland law in the Habitats Regulations, statutory authorities became responsible for the conservation and management of European marine sites. The Strangford Lough Management Committee, representing local and special interest groups on and around the Lough, was established in 1992 to provide advice to Government at a strategic level. The Committee has no executive role in the management of the Lough but works with bodies that have such responsibilities.
23. The Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership was established under a Partnership Agreement between DAERA/ NED (Natural Environment Division), Ards Borough Council and Down District Council to achieve a shared vision for the Lough's heritage, taking into account statutory responsibilities, corporate policies and the opportunity for authorities and others to address issues through improved collaboration. The Strangford Lough and Lecale Action Plan 2013-2018 has been produced by the Partnership, with the aim, among others, to conserve and engage people with the built and natural heritage of the area. An objective is to "develop a programme of heritage activities that engage local people, including volunteering, conservation, outdoor recreation and heritage events." The Strangford Lough and Lecale Heritage Management Strategy 2013 -2018 has as its core values those of sustainable development, managing natural capital and local empowerment.
24. Management of the varied activities within the Lough is the responsibility of a number of statutory bodies and NGOs. Wardens are employed by DAERA and the National Trust. DAERA is responsible, among other activities, for control of invasive species such as *Spartina* and carpet

sea squirt *Didemnum vexillum*, and implementation of the Strangford Lough *Modiolus* Biogenic Reef Revised Restoration Plan. DAERA regulates inshore fishing in the Lough and employs a Fisheries Officer specific to Strangford Lough. The National Trust has extensive land holdings in and around the Lough, which it manages with conservation as a priority. Local councils also have inputs into biodiversity and access issues, as well as statutory duties concerned with environmental health.

25. Coastal engineering works have affected a number of shallow bays, saltmarshes and areas of tidal flat around the Lough. Causeways, boat slips and other restrictions have modified current and tidal flow patterns and, in turn, affected sediment transport patterns. In some cases this has resulted in the incidental creation of new habitat including saltmarsh, brackish ponds and wetlands. Sailing (including cruising and yachting) is widespread on the Lough, with numerous private slipways, pontoons and jetties used by the sailing clubs. DAERA estimates up to 1,000 boats within the Lough. There is a high level of paddling (including kayaking, canoeing and stand up paddle boarding) and diving and lower levels of kite and windsurfing. Jet skiing, although not included within this study is noted as taking place on an adhoc places around the Lough. Commercial fishing is now a relatively minor source of employment for the population around the Lough, with few boats now 'resident' in the Lough, with occasional vessels from Portavogie and other County Down ports. Mariculture is practised in parts of the Lough.

8.8 Potential impacts of the Scheme

26. The proposed Plan, as currently envisaged, will not require land-take of any habitats that are used by the designation feature species of Strangford Lough. There is a limited potential for increased mobilisation of Lough-bed sediments as a result of increased recreational use of the Lough waters. Where this is localised, disturbed sediments may cloak seabed plant and animal communities, with adverse effects on population densities and composition.
27. With increases in tourism and recreational use of the Lough there is a potential for additional land-based infrastructure to be required. Construction of new recreational facilities has the potential to introduce pollutants (sediments, hydrocarbons, building materials) into the Lough waters during construction, and to have impacts on sewage loading, water quality and point storm-water input around the Lough following construction. Water clarity is a key factor in maintaining the extent and diversity of plant and algal communities: turbidity may increase due to increased suspension of organic or inorganic material in the water column.
28. Increased sailing in the Lough has the potential to disrupt benthic animal and plant communities in the vicinity of moorings and anchorages. A DEFRA review (Boyes *et al* 2006) of the impacts of unlicensed marine activities included impacts resulting from mooring in coastal waters. The review identified motorised water-based recreation and any anchoring of recreational craft as one of the three unlicensed activities (alongside bait-digging and unlicensed commercial fishing) of highest risk to marine biodiversity. The review listed loss of seabed area, smothering of seabed plant and animal communities with sediment, changes in suspended sediment, changes in turbidity, noise disturbance, visual presence, physical disturbance, displacement and synthetic compound contamination as probable environmental pressures arising from boat moorings, and loss of water column volume, heavy metal contamination and introduction of microbial pathogens, parasites and non-native species as possible pressures. With an increase in Lough usage there is thus a potential for increases in accidental, minor pollution incidents, with adverse effects on local plant and animal communities.

29. A major concern in many sheltered moorings is loss of sea-grass due to swinging chain moorings, which in one study were found to eliminate an average of 122 m² of sea-grass (Unsworth *et al* 2017). Direct physical pressures such as anchoring and propeller scarring may also result in further losses and fragmentation of sea-grass beds. Uncontrolled increases in moorings therefore have the potential to have significant effects on sea-grass beds, an SAC designation feature. Sea-grass beds function as important nursery and foraging habitat for fish, shellfish and wildfowl. They are also thought to oxygenate and stabilise sediments, provide shoreline stabilisation and protection from erosion, and are natural hotspots for carbon sequestration and nutrient cycling. Finally, they are considered a foundation species, i.e. a species that provides habitat and enhances ecosystem biodiversity and are an important bio-indicator of system health. In Strangford Lough, sea-grass is critical for the maintenance of the pale-bellied brent goose wintering population, an SPA designation feature. Birds rely almost entirely on intertidal *Zostera* in the late autumn and early winter (Portig *et al.*1994), and the Lough can support in excess of 75% of the world population of this subspecies at that time. Significant loss of sea-grass area therefore has the potential to affect the ability of the species to use the Lough as a staging site following their arrival from Canada and subsequently as a wintering habitat.
30. With increased use of the Lough waters by leisure craft there will be an increased potential for disturbance of bottom sediments from propeller wash effects and from direct impact on vegetation. Where disturbance occurs in or near *Spartina* beds there will be an increased potential for dislocation of rhizome fragments, which can readily produce new plants outside the current zones of infestation of this aggressively invasive species. A *Spartina* control programme is currently being undertaken by NIEA and the National Trust because of the threat that the species poses to the feeding grounds of many of the designation species of the SPA and to the integrity of SAC designation habitats.
31. Anchoring in deeper waters can also result in indiscriminate damage to benthic flora and fauna and infauna, and erosion of the sea bed. Incidental effects of moored boats may include disturbance of birds and seals due to proximity to roosts, nest sites and seal haul-outs. Light pollution may influence the nocturnal behaviour of marine animals, and littering is also likely wherever people are present.
32. Increased use of the Lough by leisure craft has the potential to provide greater opportunities for the spread of non-native species in, particularly, subtidal and intertidal habitats. Non-native invasive species are already present both on fixed structures within the Lough and in intertidal habitats. In a 2012 survey across Northern Ireland, the greatest number of species attributed to an intertidal site was for Sketrick Narrows, Strangford Lough, where nine non-native/cryptogenic species were found (Nunn and Minchin 2013). Primary vectors of spread of non-native invertebrates and algae are either as hull contaminants or in ballast water (Macleod *et al* 2016). If Strangford Lough attains a “honeypot” reputation, the likelihood that boats carrying biological contaminants from affected areas elsewhere will increase. The likely consequences for the introduction of non-native species on local species of conservation value will depend on the characteristics not only of the adventive species, but also on conditions in the Lough that have arisen because of human activities. For example, the alga *Sargassum muticum* and sea-grass *Zostera* species frequently co-exist, but where the *Zostera* substrate has been damaged by human activity, *Sargassum* can invade and prevent *Zostera* regeneration (den Hartog 1997). Damage to sea-grass beds is likely to be greatest at the end of the main summer sailing season, when food availability is most critical for arriving brent geese and wigeon.
33. **Possibly the greatest potential impact on designation species is disturbance of birds arising from increased human presence in habitats that are at present relatively remote and are used by**

colonial breeding birds and significant numbers of migrant and wintering waterfowl, and disturbance of seals at loafing and breeding haul-outs.

34. Breeding tern species are readily disturbed by close human approach. Increased water-borne traffic will increase the likelihood of users approaching or landing on islands used by vulnerable breeding birds. Even short-term disturbance that causes brooding birds to lift from their nests has the potential to increase mortality through chilling of eggs or young. Disturbance also provides opportunities for predation of eggs and young, principally by gull species, while parent birds are distracted. Longer-term disturbance can lead to desertion of breeding colonies and total colony failure. There is also a potential for increased human presence and activity to disrupt these species' foraging behaviour, with adverse effects on provisioning of dependent young.
35. Wildfowl and waders use Strangford Lough in considerable, and in some cases, internationally important, numbers as feeding areas during migration and over winter. Gill (2007) defines disturbance in the present context as an event where a bird's ability to exploit resources such as food, nesting or roosting sites are altered. Disturbance of feeding birds during stressful periods (e.g. migration, moulting, winter) can affect their survival by reducing the length of time available for feeding, and by forcing birds to find alternative feeding sites, which requires additional energy expenditure. Similar impacts on birds' energy budgets occur when birds are disturbed from high tide roosts. Knock-on ecological effects of displacement of feeding birds include increased competition within and/or between different species for a finite and unevenly distributed food resource. Potential effects on bird fitness are exacerbated during periods of severe winter weather, when the likelihood of increased mortality is, in any case, higher.
36. Disturbance, with regard to common seal, is considered to occur if the human activity disrupts or alters the animals' normal behaviour. Human disturbance can cause seals to abandon haul-out areas temporarily, long-term, or permanently, or shift their haul-out timing (Grigg *et al* 2002, London *et al* 2012). Overt signs of seal response to disturbance range from increased alertness and sometimes threat displays to moving towards the water and flushing into the water. Impacts on pupping groups include temporary or permanent pup separation, disruption of suckling (Wilson & Corpe 1996), energetic costs and energetic deficit to pups (Jansen *et al* 2010), physiological stress (A. Lund, 1985, unpublished data, in Wilson 2015) and sometimes enforced move to distant or suboptimal habitat. Impacts on moulting groups include energy loss and stress, while impacts on other haul-out groups cause loss of resting and digestion time and stress (Wilson 2015). The majority of common seals in Ireland give birth in June and July, but pups may be present between May and September. They are thus present during the summer months, when outdoor activities tend to be most intensive, and potential effects are therefore exacerbated. **Small paddled craft such as kayaks and canoes have been found in several studies to be a particularly strong stimulus causing seals to flush into the water (Henry & Hamill 2001, Johnson and Acevedo-Gutiérrez 2007).** Human disturbance causing flushing to the water is extremely detrimental to moulting seals, resulting in loss of energy, interruption of hair growth and prolongation of the moulting period (Paterson *et al* 2012). Moulting takes place post-breeding, during July and August, during the likely period of greatest outdoor recreational activity.
37. "Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities" are included in the list of threats to the designation features of the SAC (medium threat level) and SPA (high threat level) in the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form submitted as part of the site designation process to the EU.

8.9 Discussion

38. Assessment of significance may be based on a number of factors, as outlined in EC (2001). Criteria that are relevant to the present study include:
- the character and perceived value of the affected environment;
 - the magnitude, spatial extent and duration of the anticipated change;
 - the resilience of the environment to cope with change; and
 - confidence in the accuracy of predictions of change.

An effect is considered significant if:

- an activity seriously disrupts the lifecycle (breeding, feeding, migration or resting behaviour) of an ecologically meaningful proportion of the population of the species.

In summary, any element of a plan or project that has the potential to affect the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site, including its structure and function, should be considered significant (EC, 2006).

39. Improved access to the Lough for activities such as kayaking, diving, paddling etc, may encourage visits from recreational users who are involved in pastimes that are more disruptive of natural features. Examples are a potential for an increase in jet-skiing, which has considerable potential for disturbance of both breeding and feeding/roosting birds. The presence of jet skis can cause a high degree of disturbance to birds and can even cause injury or death in extreme circumstances (RSPB 2015). Irresponsible jet-skiing can also lead to noise, chemical and air pollution, and increased turbidity in shallow areas.
40. Although the purpose of the Plan is the improvement of water based access.in and around Strangford Lough, the potential for an increase in the use of speedboats and personal water craft (jet skis etc) as a result of the Plan is not acceptable in the vicinity of seal haul-out sites: hauled-out seals may not respond to them overtly, but seals in the water nearby – especially young juveniles foraging or sleeping – are highly likely to be fatally injured by propeller wounds or blunt trauma (Wilson 2015).
41. If the profile of the Lough as a recreational destination increases, there may be a spill-over of activities from the waters of the Lough to the extensive mud and sand flats. An example of an activity that has the potential to cause disruption to large numbers of feeding birds is land yachting.
42. The major problem with regard to effects of increased recreational use of Strangford Lough is the spatial and temporal management of visitor activities to ensure that they do not interfere with the natural processes that underpin the designation of the site. For example, access to tern breeding islands may be acceptable outside the breeding season, although some of these islands are also used as significant roosts by waterfowl during the winter months and during migration, when disturbance would also be undesirable. Moorings are at present largely unregulated in the Lough, and damage to plant and animal communities of conservation importance may be an unintentional consequence of mooring or anchoring in sensitive locations. Close approaches to seal haul-outs that are at present rarely visited may have adverse effects on seal behaviour, and may, potentially, result in increased mortality due to interruption of feeding of pups or through impacts with motorised vehicles.

43. It should be noted that Strangford Lough also consists of a series of ASSIs. Any activities that affect the designation features or their conservation objectives also need to be considered when developments are proposed for the Lough.

8.10 Site Summary Table

44. Table 2 (below) provides a summary of the main issues that arise as a result of the audit/strategy on the main designation features of Strangford Lough SAC/SPA. These would need to be more fully assessed as part of the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the Plan before it could be implemented.

Site name and number		Type of access	Potential impacts
1.	Barhall	Shore Access	Potentially significant impact to common seals due the presence of several haul-outs adjacent to the site. Their status and significance would need to be assessed, as would the likely impacts to them from the current proposals.
2.	Portaferry	Cook St - Temporary pontoon seaward side of Quay	Limited potential impact in the immediate vicinity of the proposed access works. However, there is a tern colony 850m away and numerous seal haul-outs with 2.5km. Therefore, a more detailed site assessment would be required to consider the impacts to the designation feature species/habitats.
		Cook St -Quay	
		Cook St - Slipways {x2}	
		Marina - Floating moorings	
		Marina - Slipway	
	Ferry slip		
3.	Ballyhenry Bay	Shore Access	There are three seal haul-outs in close proximity to the bay, as well as Annex 1 habitats present around the island.
4.	Horse Island	Shore Access	Significant areas of salt marsh (Annex 1) habitat are present in the area as well as inter-tidal mudflats (an important foraging resource). However, the potential impacts here are likely to be insignificant. Although, a site-based assessment would be required.
5.	Kircubbin	Slipway	Potential impacts here are likely to be insignificant (in the immediate area) based on the best available mapping. However, there are numerous seal haul-outs nearby and two tern colonies within 2.5km.
		Shore Access	
		Quay	
		Slipway	
	Sailing Club		
6.	Greyabbey	Shore Access	There are large expanses of <i>Zostera</i> and intertidal mudflats nearby which are a very significant foraging resource for both waterfowl and waders.

			There is also to large waterbird roosts in close proximity to the site.
7.	Cunningburn	2 slipways	There is a waterbird roost and a tern colony within 500m as well as significant areas of <i>Zostera</i> and intertidal mudflats (important for foraging brent geese/wader assemblage).
8.	Newtownards Sailing Club	Slipway Pontoon	As for Cunningburn above, although all features are at a slightly increased distance (>650m).
9.	Warden's Bay	Shore Access	Impacts likely to be limited, both seasonally and spatially. However, there is a significant area of <i>Zostera</i> in close proximity to this location (and important feeding resource for brent geese).
10.	Island Hill	Public slipway	Impacts likely to be limited, both seasonally and spatially. However, there is a significant area of <i>Zostera</i> in close proximity to this location (and important feeding resource for brent geese).
11.	Comber Cruising Club	Number of small pontoons	Impacts at this location are probably limited, again however, there are large expanses of <i>Zostera</i> and intertidal mudflats adjacent to channel out into the Lough. These are a seasonally utilized resource and therefore potentially significant impacts would need to be assessed and managed.
12.	Ringneill Quay	Quay Shore access	Potential impacts as for site 11 above. Although there are also two waterbird roosts and a seal haul-out also in proximity to this location.
13.	Island Reagh	Shore access	Island Reagh is currently mapped as a seal haul-out, therefore disturbance may be a significant issue at this site. However, more detailed location mapping for seals, may alter this precautionary assessment.
14.	Rathcunningham Quay	Quay	Local impact likely to be minimal, however there are significant seal haul-outs nearby, three waterbird roosts (500m, 660m & 1.34km distance). As well as a tern colony within 1.5km.
15.	Down Cruising Club	Pontoon Slipway	Local impact potentially low, however there is a waterbird roost within 1km and a seal haul-out within 1.5km. Further more detailed assessment is therefore required.
16.	Whiterock car park	None	Potential for significant impact with a waterbird roost, seal haul-out and tern colony within 160m.
17.	Strangford Lough Yacht Club	2 pontoons 2 slipways	As for site 16 above, although features are 400m+ distance from the yacht club.

18.	Braddock Reach {Whiterock}	Stone slipway/ shore access	As for sites 16 & 17 above, although the seal haul-out is closer (within 325m) of the slipway.
19.	Ballymorran Bay	- Quay - 3 slipways - Shore access	A waterbird roosts is within a few meters of one of the slipways and a second is located within 500m. There are a further three as you move out into the main Lough.
20.	Ringhaddy	Stone slipway/ shore access	Immediate locality is relatively free of issues. However, there are a number of seal haul-outs, two tern islands and a three waterbird roosts within a 1.6km radius of the site. Therefore, a further and more detailed assessment would be required.
21.	Ringhaddy Cruising Club	- Slipway - Quay	As for site 20 above.
22.	Ringdufferin	Shore access	There are a number of seal haul-outs, a tern island and a two waterbird roosts within a 1.3km radius of the site.
23.	Taggart Island {egress point}	Shore access	There are a number of seal haul-outs, a tern island and a three waterbird roosts within a 1.6km radius of the site.
24.	East Down Yacht Club	Pontoon Slipway	As for site 23 above. However, two of the waterbird roosts are within 160m of the slipway. The impact of the proposed activities at this site would need further assessment.
25.	Killyleagh Town	- Net Walk - shore access - Quay - Shore Rd – (shore access over the wall)	Immediate locality is relatively free of issues. However, there are a number of seal haul-outs, a tern island and a waterbird roosts within a 1.6km radius of the town.
26.	Killyleagh Yacht Club & Outdoor Education Centre	Slipway Slipway (further along Shoe Rd)	As for site 25 above, although the features are all closer to the yacht club, including the tern island (1.1km distance).
27.	Salt Island {egress point}	Shore access	Salt Island is itself a seal haul-out and there is also a tern island some 400m to the east.
28.	Delamont Country Park	- Shore access - Temporary Pontoon {currently not in place}	The immediate environs to the Park contain limited features of concern (i.e. at the shore or the proposed pontoon). However, there are two waterbird roosts approx., 325m & 800m away. A tern colony 850m and a number of important seal haul-outs within 1km.
29.	Gibb's Island & Mullagh Quay	- Quay - Shore access	Similar to site 28 above. Two waterbird roosts within 500m and a tern colony/seal haul-out within 1.5km.

30.	Quoile Pondage	Shore Access (Jane's Shore)	Limited potential impact in the immediate local environs. However, there are 6 waterbird roosts, two tern colonies and a number of seal haul-outs along the route towards tidal sluice and causeway.
31.	Quoile Sailing Club	Pontoon 2 Slipways	Potential impacts/issues as for site 29 above.
32.	Castle Ward Bay	Audley's Quay (Slipway and Lead Quay at Strangford Sailing Club – see 33) - Dickson's Island – boathouse and slipway - Boat house and slipway - Shore access - Coal Quay	Located within an existing honeypot area and thus the impacts are likely to be limited (where disturbance is already high). However, there are several seal haul-outs nearby that would need further assessment.
33.	Strangford Sailing Club	- Lead Quay - Slipway	As for site 32 above, however, in addition there is the important tern colony on Swan Island which is very close to the quay.
33.	Strangford	Private pontoon - Quay - Shore access - Public slip - Ferry slip - Slipway adjacent to ferry berth	As for site 33 above.
35.	Kilclief Bay	Shore Access	Impact should be minimal, but again the impact to the 3 adjacent seal haul-outs (and their status ascertained) would need to be assessed.
36.	Ballyhornan	Shore Access	As for site 35 above the impact should be slight. Although, further assessment on the impact to the seal colonies would need to be undertaken to confirm this.

Table 3: Site summary table along with potential impacts/issues arising from the audit/strategy.

8.11 References

Boyes, S., Burdon, D. and Elliott, M. (2006) Unlicensed Activities: A review to consider the threats to marine biodiversity. Building the evidence base for the Marine Bill. November 2006. A report for DEFRA by Suzanne Boyes, Daryl Burdon and Michael Elliott, Institute of Estuarine & Coastal Studies, University of Hull

den Hartog, C. (1997) Is *Sargassum muticum* a threat to eelgrass beds? *Aquatic Botany* 58 Issue 1, pp 37-41

EC (2001) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. European Commission, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

EC (2006) *Nature and biodiversity cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice*. European Commission Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

Gill, J.A. (2007) Approaches to measuring the effects of human disturbance on birds, *Ibis*, 149 (Suppl. 1), pp. 9-14

Grigg, E. K., D. E. Green, S. G. Allen and H. Markowitz (2002) Nocturnal and diurnal haulout patterns of harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina richardsi*) at Castro Rocks, San Francisco Bay, California. *California Fish and Game* 88:15–27.

Henry, E. and Hammill, M.O. (2001) Impact of small boats on the haulout activity of harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*) in Métiş Bay, St Lawrence Estuary, Québec, Canada. *Aquatic Mammals* 27(2): 140–148.

Jansen, J.K., Boveng, P.L., Dahle, S.P. and Bengston, J.L. (2010) Reaction of harbour seals to cruise ships. *J. Wildlife Management* 74(6): 1186–1194.

Johnson, A. and Acevedo-Gutiérrez, A. (2007) Regulation compliance by vessels and disturbance of harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*). *Can. J. Zool.* 85: 290–294.

London, J. M., Ver Hoef, J. M., Jeffries, S. J., Lance M. M. and Boveng, P. L. (2012) Haul-out behavior of harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) in Hood Canal, Washington. *PLOS ONE* 7: e38180.

Macleod, A., Cook, E.J., Hughes, D. and Allen, C. (2016) *Investigating the Impacts of Marine Invasive Non-Native Species*. A report by Scottish Association for Marine Science Research Services Ltd for Natural England & Natural Resources Wales, pp. 59. Natural England Commissioned Reports, Number223.

Nunn, J. and Minchin, D. (2013) Marine non-native species in Northern Ireland. Invasive Species Forum, Belfast May 2013. <https://invasivespeciesireland.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Julia-Nunn.pdf>

Paterson, W., Sparling, C.E., Thompson, D., Pomeroy, P.P., Currie, J.I. and McCafferty, D.J. (2012) Seals like it hot: changes in surface temperature of harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*) from late pregnancy to moult. *J. Thermal Biol.* 37: 454–461.

Portig, A.A., Mathers, R.G., Montgomery, W.I. & Govier, R.N. (1994) The distribution and utilisation of *Zostera* species in Strangford Lough, Northern Ireland. *Aquatic Botany* 47: 317-330.

RSPB (2015) Policy briefing, March 2015 Jet skis and birds. RSPB. Sandy, Beds.

Unsworth, R. K. F., Williams, B., Jones, B. L. and Cullen-Unsworth, L. (2017) Rocking the boat: damage to eelgrass by swinging boat moorings. *Frontiers in Plant Science* 8, 1309. 10.3389/fpls.2017.01309 file

Wilson, S.C. and Corpe, H.M. (1996) Selection of haul-out sites, scanning and response to human disturbance by lactating harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina vitulina*) in Co. Down. In An investigation into the *status quo* of the harbour seals of Co. Down, Northern Ireland, Ch 2. Final report to Environment and Heritage Service, May 1996.

8.12 Stage 1: Test of Likely Significance – Strangford Lough SAC

Name of Project or Plan.	An audit of access to Strangford Lough for water-based recreation
Project reference (Planning ref. etc.):	
Name and location of Natura 2000 site.	Strangford Lough SAC, Co. Down
Natura 2000 site features: (refer to JNCC website)	<p>Annex I habitats that are primary reasons for designating the site are:</p> <p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide;</p> <p>Coastal lagoons (priority feature);</p> <p>Large shallow inlets and bays; and</p> <p>Reefs</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature but not primary reasons for designating the site are:</p> <p>Annual vegetation of drift lines;</p> <p>Perennial vegetation of stony banks;</p> <p>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand; and</p> <p>Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>)</p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection is:</p> <p><u>Harbour seal</u> <i>Phoca vitulina</i></p>
Description of the Project or Plan Size and scale; Land-take;	<p><u>Description of Project</u></p> <p>Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council has commissioned Outdoor Recreation NI to complete ‘An audit of access to Strangford Lough for water-based recreation’.</p>

<p>Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;</p> <p>Resource requirements (water abstraction etc);</p> <p>Emission (disposal to land, water or air);</p> <p>Excavation requirements;</p> <p>Transportation requirements;</p> <p>Duration of construction, operation, de-commissioning etc;</p> <p>Other.</p>	<p>The activities included within this study are –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sailing – including yachting and cruising – Canoeing/ kayaking – Coastal rowing – Diving – Swimming – Wind and kitesurfing – Boat trips – Stand up paddle boarding <p>The following development opportunities are proposed within the audit –</p> <p><i>Site based proposals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Extension of the marina slip at Portaferry – Installation of a seasonal floating pontoon at Cook St. jetty, Portaferry – Increase number of berths at Portaferry Marina (private sector proposal) – New shore-based access at Nendrum – New shore access at Whiterock – opposite Council car park – Improvement of access at Killyleagh Quay including installation of a pontoon alongside the Quay and dredging of a channel to enable access to the Quay from the Lough (and vice versa) during the majority of tides. – Installation of a seasonal floating pontoon at Delamont Country Park etc. (take text from your report) – Reinstatement of Audleys Quay – Extension of pontoon at Strangford (private sector proposal) – Extension of the public slipway at Strangford <p><i>Strategic development proposals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Development of a water taxi (private sector led). Potential stop off points onclude Strangford Marina, Portaferry, Whiterock. Killyleagh and Castle Ward (Audleys Quay) – Development of a visitor mooring scheme of the Lough – Regulation of moorings (see main report for detail) – Education and training programmes (see main report for detail)
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	<p><u>Size and scale</u></p> <p>The intention is to encourage the use of the waters of the whole of the Lough and to encourage recreational use of the Lough islands.</p> <p><u>Land-take</u></p> <p>Extension of the slipway at Strangford will encroach into the waters of the Lough to an unknown but limited extent. Provision of pontoons at Delamont and Strangford may effectively remove these areas of water from use by designation feature species.</p> <p><u>Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site</u></p> <p>The proposed increased recreational use of the Lough will take place within the SAC boundary.</p> <p><u>Resource requirements (water abstraction etc)</u></p> <p>Limited areas of surface water will be required for construction and operation of pontoons.</p> <p><u>Emission (disposal to land, water or air)</u></p> <p>There is a wide variety of potential emissions from the proposals. Detailed information is not yet available in order to complete this section to a satisfactory level. Therefore, further information is required before an accurate assessment can be undertaken.</p> <p><u>Excavation requirements</u></p> <p>Dredging of the entrance to Killyleagh harbour will be required, and minor excavations may be required for improvements to slipways etc.</p> <p><u>Transportation requirements</u></p> <p>Transportation of plant and materials to construction sites and transport of water-borne craft to the Lough will be via the existing road network.</p> <p><u>Duration of construction, operation, de-commissioning etc</u></p> <p>Duration of construction not yet specified. The increase in use of the Lough is anticipated to be long-term.</p>
<p>Is the proposal directly connected with or necessary to management of the site for conservation of N2K features?</p> <p>If yes proceed no further.</p>	<p>No</p>

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.

Increased use of the Lough waters by close approach of non-motorised and motorised craft and divers has the potential to disrupt natural behaviour of common seals by causing flushing from haul-out sites. This could have adverse impacts by increasing energy requirements during stressful periods (breeding and moulting), and by disrupting parent-pup bonding and feeding, thus reducing fitness of young and increasing risk of morbidity/mortality. Continuing disturbance has the potential to cause animals to desert a site and transfer to less optimal sites.

Increased use by motorised craft has the potential to increase the risk of irresponsible behaviour in the vicinity of haul-outs, and of collision with and mortality of, particularly, young and inexperienced animals.

Increased access to the Dorn lagoon, particularly on low or falling tides has the potential for incidental damage to invertebrate communities in the shallow waters.

Disturbed sediments, particularly from dredging the entrance to Killyleagh harbour, have the potential to blanket local benthic communities that are an integral part of the "Large shallow inlets and bays" interest feature, with consequent local loss or diminution of species.

Unregulated mooring and anchoring have the potential to damage subtidal and intertidal plant and animal species and communities through mechanical action of mooring ropes and anchor points.

There will be an increased potential for invasive non-native species to be brought into the Lough with an increase in boat traffic, with possible adverse impacts on communities of conservation value.

N2K Feature: Mention all features	Describe any likely direct or indirect effects to the N2K features arising as a result of: loss; reduction of habitat area; disturbance; habitat or species fragmentation; reduction in species density; changes in key indicators of conservation value (e.g. water quality, climate change).	<u>*Effect Significant/Not Significant? Why?</u>
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	The Plan does not provide for increased access to intertidal flats.	Significance not determined A “honeypot” effect may encourage uses of the sandflats not envisaged in the Plan. Increased boat traffic may increase the potential for <i>Spartina</i> spread through dislodgement of rhizome fragments.
Coastal lagoons (priority feature)	Potential for incidental, accidental damage to invertebrate communities through grounding of boats or entry into water.	Not significant There is unlikely to be significant use of the waters of the lagoon due to its enclosed nature, small extent and likely low usage. Any damage is unlikely to be significant.
Large shallow inlets and bays	Disturbed sediments arising from dredging and construction activities have the potential to blanket benthic communities, with consequent habitat degradation and local loss or diminution of species. Effects may vary with timing with respect to the tidal cycle.	Significance undetermined The method of dredging and location of spoil disposal are not yet known: effects are yet to be assessed.
Reefs	Potential for unintentional damage from anchoring of craft in deeper waters/	Not significant Biogenic reefs are generally found in deeper waters and are unlikely to be affected by increased recreational use. Intertidal reefs are mainly of boulders or bedrock and are unlikely to be damaged by recreational activities.

Annual vegetation of drift lines		Not significant The habitat is supratidal and is unlikely to be affected by activities associated with the Plan.
Perennial vegetation of stony banks		Not significant The habitat is supratidal and is unlikely to be affected by activities associated with the Plan.
<i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand		Not significant The habitat is intertidal and is unlikely to be affected significantly by activities associated with the Plan.
Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>)		Not significant The habitat is intertidal to supratidal and is unlikely to be affected significantly by activities associated with the Plan.
<u>Harbour seal</u> <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	<p>Increased use of the Lough waters by close approach of non-motorised and motorised craft and divers has the potential to disrupt natural behaviour of common seals by causing flushing from haul-out sites. This could have adverse impacts by increasing energy requirements during stressful periods (breeding and moulting), and by disrupting parent-pup bonding and feeding, thus reducing fitness of young and increasing risk of morbidity/mortality. Continuing disturbance has the potential to cause animals to desert a site and transfer to less optimal sites.</p> <p>Increased use by motorised craft has the potential to increase the risk of irresponsible behaviour in the vicinity of haul-outs, and of collision with and mortality of, particularly, young and inexperienced animals.</p>	Significant Harbour seal populations in Northern Ireland are declining, and any additional pressures that reduce breeding productivity will be additive to this trend. This would be contrary to the conservation objective for the feature - "Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the common seal population."

*Only mitigation measures designed within the application can be considered at this stage. Any conditions that NIEA would impose must be assessed through the appropriate assessment stage.

Describe any potential effects on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of: interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site	Effect considered significant/non-significant: Finding of Significant effects Matrix
Harbour seal is an apex marine predator within the Strangford Lough ecological web, and a significant reduction in the species would have effects down the food chain. Any displacement of animals to sites outside the Lough would have effects on these relationships elsewhere.	Significant
Sediments and existing entrained pollutants could be mobilised during construction and dredging, with an adverse effect water quality.	Not significant Any effects are likely to be readily diluted through tidal motions and are in any case likely to be highly localised. .
Potential for increase in non-native invasive species and for spread of existing such species due to increased boat traffic and substrate disturbance.	Not known Significance will depend on interaction between adventive species and locally native species/habitats. Spread of existing invasive species may be modified by management policies and enforcement.

Provide details of any other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could (directly or indirectly) affect the site.	Provide details of any likely in-combination effects and quantify their significance -
Portaferry Regeneration Ltd with Council and Sailing Club has plans to extend the pontoon at Portaferry to double the size i.e. another 50 berths.	The proposal will effectively sterilise the affected area with regard to common seal, which will be unlikely to make significant use of the area for foraging. In total, with localised similar effects arising from the Plan, a very minor part of the Lough will be affected, and in combination effects are not likely to be significant.

Is the potential scale or magnitude of any effect likely to be significant?	
Alone?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
In-combination with other projects of plans?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

List of Agencies Consulted: Provide contact name and telephone or email address.	
Above consultee response.	

Conclusion: Is the proposal likely to have a significant effect on an N2K site?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>IF IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE PROPOSAL WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT THEN ASSESSMENT IS COMPLETED.</p> <p>IF ANY PART OF THE PROPOSAL IS LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT AN APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT WILL BE REQUIRED – STAGE 2 AA.</p>	

Data collected to carry out the assessment

Who carried out the assessment?	Dr Brian Sutton BSc PhD CEnv MCIEEM
Sources of data	Provided with application, client's drawings, JNCC, DAERA websites, NIEA spatial data and aerial photography.
Level of assessment completed	Stage 1 – Test of Likely Significance
Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed?	
NIEA CDP Response to consultation.	

8.13 Stage 1: Test of Likely Significance – Strangford Lough SPA/Ramsar site

Name of Project or Plan.	An audit of access to Strangford Lough for water-based recreation
Project reference (<i>Planning ref. etc.</i>):	
Name and location of Natura 2000 site.	Strangford Lough SPA/Ramsar site, Co Down. Boundaries of the two designations, and references to the SPA in the following refer to both designations, where appropriate.

Natura 2000 site features:

(refer to JNCC website - NI)

Strangford Lough SPA was designated for:

- Sandwich tern, common tern, Arctic tern (breeding);
- golden plover, bar-tailed godwit, light-bellied brent goose, shelduck, knot redshank, great crested grebe, cormorant, greylag goose, wigeon, gadwall, teal, mallard, pintail, shoveler, goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, coot, oystercatcher, ringed plover, grey plover, lapwing, dunlin, curlew, turnstone (wintering/passage);
- waterfowl assemblage, in excess of 20,000 wintering birds.

Strangford Lough Ramsar site was designated under:

- Criterion 1 because it supports a variety of important wetland features. Strangford Lough supports one of the most extensive saltmarsh areas in Northern Ireland.
- Criterion 2 because the site supports an important assemblage of vulnerable and endangered wetland plants and animal species, some of which are restricted to Strangford Lough in Northern Ireland or, in some cases, unknown or very rare elsewhere in the British Isles. The mudflats support luxuriant beds of eelgrass; such extensive 'beds' are rare in the British Isles.
- Criterion 5 by supporting waterfowl assemblages of international importance.
- Criterion 6 by supporting species/populations occurring at levels of international importance. Qualifying species/populations Sandwich tern and common tern (breeding); light-bellied brent goose and common redshank (spring/autumn peaks); red knot (wintering); and common shelduck (for consideration after original designation).

Description of the Project or Plan	Description of Project
<p>Size and scale;</p> <p>Land-take;</p> <p>Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;</p> <p>Resource requirements (water abstraction etc);</p> <p>Emission (disposal to land, water or air);</p> <p>Excavation requirements;</p> <p>Transportation requirements;</p> <p>Duration of construction, operation, de-commissioning etc;</p> <p>Other.</p>	<p>Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership on behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council has commissioned Outdoor Recreation NI to complete 'An audit of access to Strangford Lough for water-based recreation'.</p> <p>The activities included within this study are –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sailing – including yachting and cruising – Canoeing/ kayaking – Coastal rowing – Diving – Swimming – Wind and kitesurfing – Boat trips – Stand up paddle boarding <p>The following development opportunities are proposed within the audit –</p> <p><i>Site based proposals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Extension of the marina slip at Portaferry – Installation of a seasonal floating pontoon at Cook St. jetty, Portaferry – Increase number of berths at Portaferry Marina (private sector proposal) – New shore-based access at Nendrum – New shore access at Whiterock – opposite Council car park – Improvement of access at Killyleagh Quay including installation of a pontoon alongside the Quay and dredging of a channel to enable access to the Quay from the Lough (and vice versa) during the majority of tides. – Installation of a seasonal floating pontoon at Delamont Country Park etc. (take text from your report) – Reinstatement of Audleys Quay – Extension of pontoon at Strangford (private sector proposal) – Extension of the public slipway at Strangford <p><i>Strategic development proposals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Development of a water taxi (private sector led). Potential stop off points onclude Strangford Marina, Portaferry, Whiterock. Killyleagh and Castle Ward (Audleys Quay)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Development of a visitor mooring scheme of the Lough – Regulation of moorings (see main report for detail) – Education and training programmes (see main report for detail) <p><u>Size and scale</u></p> <p>The intention is to encourage the use of the waters of the whole of the Lough and to encourage recreational use of the Lough islands.</p> <p><u>Land-take</u></p> <p>Extension of the slipway at Strangford will encroach into the waters of the Lough to an unknown but limited extent. Provision of pontoons at Delamont and Strangford may effectively remove these areas of water from use by designation feature species.</p> <p><u>Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site</u></p> <p>The proposed increased recreational use of the Lough will take place within the SPA boundary.</p> <p><u>Resource requirements (water abstraction etc)</u></p> <p>Limited areas of surface water will be required for construction and operation of pontoons.</p> <p><u>Emission (disposal to land, water or air)</u></p> <p>There is a wide variety of potential emissions from the proposals. Detailed information is not yet available in order to complete this section to a satisfactory level. Therefore, further information is required before an accurate assessment can be undertaken.</p> <p><u>Excavation requirements</u></p> <p>Dredging of the entrance to Killyleagh harbour will be required, and minor excavations may be required for improvements to slipways etc.</p> <p><u>Transportation requirements</u></p> <p>Transportation of plant and materials to construction sites and transport of water-borne craft to the Lough will be via the existing road network.</p> <p><u>Duration of construction, operation, de-commissioning etc</u></p>
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	Duration of construction not yet specified. The increase in use of the Lough is anticipated to be long-term.
Is the proposal directly connected with or necessary to management of the site for conservation of N2K features? If yes proceed no further.	No

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.

Extension of existing slipways, and construction of pontoons and associated infrastructure have the potential to pollute the Lough waters with hydrocarbons, cements and silt, affecting foodplants and invertebrate prey communities used by site designation species.

Disturbance of nesting birds at sites around the Lough is likely to increase if recreational use of islands, in particular, is encouraged. This could lead to reduced breeding success through chilling of eggs and young and increased predation and, potentially, colony abandonment by Sandwich and common tern.

Disturbance of waders using high-tide roosts is likely to increase with increased recreational use, particularly of islands. This could result in increased stresses during periods of stress (migration, moult, hard weather) resulting in decreased fitness arising from greater energy expenditure, and potentially increased mortality. Displaced birds may use less secure roosts elsewhere, requiring greater energy expenditure, and where predation risks may be greater.

Close approaches by leisure craft to feeding waterfowl in intertidal areas can affect their survival by reducing the length of time available for feeding, and by forcing birds to find alternative, perhaps less productive, feeding sites, which requires additional energy expenditure.

There is a potential for increased use of the Lough and increased disturbance of the intertidal substrate to cause an increase in non-native invasive species which may colonise important mud- and sand-flat foraging areas. In particular there is a potential for further spread of *Spartina* into these areas, reducing the foraging area available for waterfowl.

An increase in unrestricted mooring of leisure craft has the potential to damage important wildfowl food plants, in particular sea-grass species, and reduce the area of these plants available for foraging. Damage is likely to be greatest at the end of the main summer sailing season,

	when food availability is most critical for arriving brent geese and wigeon.
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------

N2K Feature: Mention all features	Describe any likely direct or indirect effects to the N2K features arising as a result of:	<u>*Effect Significant/Not Significant? Why?</u>
Wintering waterfowl (SPA and Ramsar site)	The waters of the Lough could potentially become contaminated with hydrocarbons, cements and silt from construction or extension of slipways and other recreational facilities, leading to pollution affecting plant, fish and bird species in the SPA/Ramsar site.	<p>Not significant</p> <p>Infrastructure developments will be highly localised, and any construction activities will follow accepted pollution control guidelines.</p> <p>There will be no loss of habitat that supports the designation features, there will be no reduction of habitat area, there will be no disturbance of designation species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density or changes in key indicators of conservation value arising from the Plan.</p>
	Disturbance from increased use by leisure craft could result in disturbance of waterfowl at high tide roosts.	<p>Significant</p> <p>Adverse impacts on birds' energy budgets occur when birds are disturbed from high tide roosts. Potential effects on bird fitness are exacerbated during periods of severe winter weather, when the likelihood of increased mortality is, in any case, higher.</p> <p>Disturbance from secure roosts, which are limited in number, effectively reduces the habitat available, and could result in changes to waterfowl species</p>

		distribution within and outside the Lough.
	Disturbance from increased use by leisure craft could result in disturbance of feeding waterfowl in intertidal habitats.	<p>Significance not determined</p> <p>Adverse impacts on birds' energy budgets occur when birds are disturbed from foraging areas. Preferred feeding areas may be unavailable at times because of human activities. Potential effects on bird fitness are exacerbated during periods of severe winter weather, when the likelihood of increased mortality is, in any case, higher.</p> <p>Disturbance from preferred feeding areas effectively reduces the habitat available and could result in changes to waterfowl species distribution within and outside the Lough, timescales depending on duration of disturbance.</p>
	Disturbance of feeding waterfowl may occur if the Lough becomes a recreational hotspot and intertidal areas are used for recreational activities not envisaged in the Plan.	<p>Significance not determined</p> <p>Adverse impacts on birds' energy budgets occur when birds are disturbed from foraging areas. Preferred feeding areas may be unavailable at times because of human activities.</p> <p>Disturbance from preferred feeding areas effectively reduces the habitat available and could result in changes to waterfowl species distribution within and outside the Lough, timescales depending on duration of disturbance.</p>

	Damage to intertidal and subtidal habitats, particularly sea-grass beds that are used as feeding areas by waterfowl, as a result of mooring or anchoring of increased numbers of leisure craft.	<p>Significance not determined</p> <p>Unregulated moorings and anchorages can damage sea-grass beds, with adverse impacts on food availability for, particularly, brent geese and wigeon. Damaged beds may provide opportunities for non-native invasive species to colonise and prevent sea-grass regeneration.</p> <p>There is a potential for a reduction in area of a critical foodplant, with a potential for fragmentation of feeding areas, and for changes in ecological relationships between foodplants, invasive species and dependent waterfowl species. Significance will depend on extent of area affected.</p>
Breeding Sandwich and common terns (SPA and Ramsar site)	Disturbance of nesting colonies as a result of increased recreational use of islands	<p>Significant</p> <p>Any prolonged disturbance of nesting terns is likely to be significant, with impacts on breeding success due to egg and chick chilling and increased predation.</p> <p>Disturbance can lead to an effective loss of nesting habitat if birds desert preferred locations; reduction in breeding success may also arise as a result of disturbance.</p>
Waterfowl assemblage (SPA and Ramsar site)	Disturbance of waterfowl species with localised population distributions within the Lough.	<p>Significance not determined</p> <p>Different species within the waterfowl assemblage may use different foraging areas. Activities in a particular area may cause significant disturbance to some species and not to others. There may therefore be local impacts on species diversity within the assemblage.</p>
Habitat extent (SPA)	Moorings and anchorages may damage elements of the habitat assemblage.	<p>Significance not determined</p> <p>See comments for wintering waterfowl (above).</p>
Roost sites (SPA)	Disturbance from increased use by leisure craft could result in	<p>Significant</p>

	disturbance of waterfowl at high tide roosts.	See comments for wintering waterfowl (above).
Supports a variety of important wetland features (Ramsar site)		Not significant It is unlikely that the variety of wetland features will decline as a result of the Plan.
Supports an important assemblage of vulnerable and endangered wetland plants and animal species. (Ramsar site)		Not significant It is unlikely that the variety of wetland features will decline as a result of the Plan.

***Only mitigation measures designed within the application can be considered at this stage. Any conditions that NIEA would impose must be assessed through the appropriate assessment stage.**

Describe any potential effects on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of: interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site	Effect considered significant/non-significant: Finding of No significant effects Matrix
Disturbance of seals, breeding birds and wintering waterfowl has the potential to disrupt the relationships of these designation feature animals with those habitat elements of the site which support them. In extreme cases there is a potential for abandonment of seal haul-out and breeding sites and of tern breeding colonies due to increased disturbance. Increased use of the Lough by leisure craft has the potential to increase the potential for non-native invasive species to colonise the Lough, with adverse effects on the relationships between existing native plant and animal communities.	Significant

Provide details of any other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could (directly or indirectly) affect the site.	Provide details of any likely in-combination effects and quantify their significance -
Portaferry Regeneration Ltd with Council and Sailing Club has plans to extend the pontoon	The erection of the pontoon will encourage the use of leisure craft in the vicinity of Swan Island, a tern

at Portaferry to double the size i.e. another 50 berths.	breeding site. Birds here are habituated to human presence to some extent (the Strangford-Portaferry ferry passes close by) and if landings on the island are prohibited there is unlikely to be an enhanced in combination effect on the designation species.
----------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Is the potential scale or magnitude of any effect likely to be significant?	
Alone?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
In-combination with other projects of plans?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

List of Agencies Consulted: Provide contact name and telephone or email address.	
Above consultee response.	

Conclusion: Is the proposal likely to have a significant effect on an N2K site?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>IF IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE PROPOSAL WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT THEN ASSESSMENT IS COMPLETED.</p> <p>IF ANY PART OF THE PROPOSAL IS LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT AN APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT WILL BE REQUIRED – STAGE 2 AA.</p>	

Data collected to carry out the assessment

Who carried out the assessment?	Dr Brian Sutton BSc PhD CEnv MCIEEM
Sources of data	Provided with application, client's drawings, JNCC, DAERA websites, NIEA spatial data and aerial photography.
Level of assessment completed	Stage 1 – Test of Likely Significance
Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed?	
NIEA CDP Response to consultation.	

9 PART D // APPENDIX

9.1 List of consultees

* indicates attendance at the Consultation event held on 26th April 2018 at Mount Stewart.

Name	Organisation	Type of consultation and response
Michael Cox	Newtownards Sailing Club	One-to-one meeting
Connor Coey	Comber Cruising Club	No response
Derek Fairley	Down Cruising Club	One-to-one meeting
PJ Gault	Strangford Lough Yacht Club	One-to-one meeting
Dr. Michael Edgar	Ringhaddy Cruising Club	One-to-one meeting
Margie Crawford & David Maxwell	East Down Yacht Club	One-to-one meeting
Graham Chambers & Gordon Galloway	Killyleagh Yacht Club/ Outdoor Education Centre	One-to-one meeting
Ross Boyd	Quoile Yacht Club	One-to-one meeting
Gerry Reilly	Strangford Sailing Club	One-to-one meeting
Moira	Portaferry Sailing Club	One-to-one meeting
Peter McErlean	SCAD Ltd	One-to-one meeting
Brian Black		Phonecall
Sandra Henderson	County Down Rural Community Collective	Phonecall
Kircubbin		
Susan <i>Irwin?</i>	Rural Community Network	Email and phone call – no response
Ian Bell		Phonecall – no response
Brian Bailie		Email – no response

Phil Derrick		Email – no response
	Sit On Top Touring Club	Email – no response
James Elliott	Strangford Coastal Rowing Club	Email response and phone call
Lynn Andrews	Black Neb Rowing Club	Email – none
Dougie Marr *	Killyleagh Coastal Rowing Club	Email – none
Ann Fee *	Killyleagh Coastal Rowing Club	One-to-one meeting and email response
Maura Bettis	Portaferry Rowing Club	Email – none
John Dumigan	Portaferry Regeneration Ltd	One-to-one meeting
Tony Finley	Lisburn Sub Aqua Club	Email – none
	Dolphin Sub Aqua Club	Email – none
Ryan Conlan	Narrows Tri Club	Email response
Isabelle Hood *	Strangford Coastal Rowing Club, Quoile Yacht Club, SLLP	Email response
	Queens Triathlon Club	Email – none
	Clearsky Adventure Centre	One-to-one meeting
Dave Vincent	DV Diving	Phonecall
	Belfast Activity Centre	Email – no response
	Life Adventure Centre	Email – no response
	Mobile Team Adventure	Email – no response
	NI Kitesurfing School	Email – no response
	NI SUP	Email – no response
	Strangford Yacht Charter	Email – no response
	Tollymore National Outdoor Centre	Email – no response

Mary Farrell	Royal Yachting Association NI	One-to-one meeting
David Williams *	Royal Yachting Association NI	
Mr PJ Gault *	RYA Strangford Lough	One-to-one meeting
Ashley Hunter	The Canoe Association of NI	One-to-one meeting
	Rowing Ireland, Ulster Branch	Email
Nikki Evans	British Sub Aqua Club Ireland	Email
Jean Kelleher	Irish Underwater Council (CFT)	Email
	Triathlon Ireland	Email response
Ruth McQuillan	Swim Ulster	Email response
Rob Marshall	Ulster Angling Federation	Email
Susan McClay	SLLP Committee	Email
Celia Spouncer	Spouncer Ecology	One-to-one meeting
David Thompson	Wild Eireland	One-to-one meeting
Jeremy Rogers	Cuan Marine Services	Phonecall
James Murray	Portaferry Marina Ltd	Phonecall – no response
David Carlisle Passed onto Bill Bennett & Katharine Martin	Maritime and Coastguard Agency	Email – passed on No information provided
Steven McDowell	NIEA Northeast Catchment officer	Email response (not part of remit so no info provided)
Warren Vance	Irish Kite Surfing Association	Email and phonecall – no response
Jacque Baird	National Trust Castle Ward	Email
Sarah Sharpe & Adrian Bell *	National Trust - Castle Ward	

Andrew Upton *	National Trust - Mount Stewart	One-to-one meeting and email
Caroline Nolan	Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership (SLLP)	One-to-one meetings, email and phone
Judith Caldwell *	SLLP	One to one meetings, email and phone
David Sandford *	SLLP	
Jaimie Dick	QUB Marine Station	Email no response
Simon Exley	QUB Marine Station	Email
Mike McClure *	Sport NI	One-to-one meetings, email and phone
Colin Armstrong *	Department of Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	One-to-one meeting
Stephanie Bennett *	DAERA	One-to-one meetings
Tim Mackie	DAERA - Marine Monitoring and assessments Team	Email response
Hugh Edwards	DAERA - Marine Monitoring and assessments Team	Email response
Niall McAleenan	DAERA – Natural Environment Division	Phonecall
Rory Mellon	NIEA - Quoile Countryside Officer	Email – no response
Heather Wilson	Newry & Mourne District Council (NMDDC) - Access Officer	One-to-one meeting
Michelle Boyle	NMDDC - Tourism Officer	Attended steering group meeting
Gail Kane	NMDDC - Facilities Manager	Email – none
Simon Boyle	NMDDC - Delamont Country Park	One-to-one meeting
Ellen Brennan	NMDDC	Email – no response
Katrina Hynds	NMDDC	Email – no response
Judith Hammond	Ards & North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) Tourism Officer	Email response
Jenny Ingram	ANDBC Access Officer	Email response
Peter Caldwell	ANDBC Facilities Manager	Email response

Rosemary Richardson *	ANDBC Tourism Manager	Phonecall, steering group meetings
Sharon Mahaffey *	ANDBC Tourism Manager	Email response
Marguerite Osborne	ANDBC Rural Development Officer	Steering Group meeting
Leona Maginn	ANDBC Principal Planning and Technical Officer	Email – no response
Julia Kane *	ANDBC Corporate Project Officer	Email following consultation event
Keiran Loder/ Trevor Quinn	Killyleagh Outdoor Centre	Phonecall
Keiran Loder	Delamont Outdoor Centre	Phonecall
Fraser McConnell	Crown Estates	Phonecall/ One-to-one meetings/ email
Warren Polly	Kite Surfing and Stand up Paddle boarding business	Email and phone - no response
Michael Forster	Local kite and windsurfer	Phone call
Aubrey Bingham	Disability Sport NI	Email and phone - no response
Maura Lyons	Leave No Trace	Phonecall
Bernard Roddy	Portaferry Recreation Hub Manager	Phonecall, email and meeting
Robert Rosell	AFBI	Email response
Stephen Kennedy	Dibney River Trust	Email – no response
Ken Philpott *	Seaboard	
Cllr Eddie Thompson *	ANDBC	
Cllr Cadogan Enright *	NMDDC	
Kate Fornham *	The Green Blue	Email information
Kevin Balmer	Former Manager of Killyleagh Outdoor Centre, Member of RYA and Yachtmaster	Face to face meetings

9.2 Crown Estate interests

This information was provided by the Crown Estate, April 2018.

Site	Access Point	Foreshore/seabed ownership	Leasehold interest	Comment
Barhall	Shore	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Nugent Estate - now National Trust?
Portaferry	Ferry slip	Non-Crown Estate		Seabed sold to DOE.
	Marina	Seabed only owned by Crown Estate	Portaferry Regeneration Ltd.	
	Marina Slipway	Seabed only owned by Crown Estate	Portaferry Regeneration Ltd.	
	Cook Street Pontoon	Seabed only owned by Crown Estate	Ards & North Down Borough Council	
	Cook Street Quay	Seabed only owned by Crown Estate	Ards & North Down Borough Council	
	Cook Street Slipway 1	Seabed only owned by Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Nugent Estate - now National Trust?
	Cook Street Slipway 2	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Nugent Estate - now National Trust?
Ballyhenry Bay		Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Nugent Estate - now National Trust?
Horse Island		Crown Estate		
Kircubbin	Shore	Crown Estate		
	Slipway	Non-Crown Estate		Sold to Ards Borough Council.
	Quay	Non-Crown Estate		
	Sailing Club	Crown Estate		Slipway not regulated.
Greyabbey	Shore	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Lord Londonderry - now National Trust?

Cunningburn	Slipway 1	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Lord Londonderry - now National Trust?
Newtownards Sailing Club	Pontoon	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Lord Londonderry - now National Trust?
	Slipway	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Lord Londonderry - now National Trust?
Warden's Bay	Shore	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Lord Londonderry - now National Trust?
Island Hill	Slipway	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Lord Londonderry - now National Trust?
Comber Cruising Club	Pontoon	Crown Estate riverbed		Pontoon not regulated.
Ringneill Quay	Quay			National Trust
	Shore	Crown Estate		
Down Cruising Club	Pontoon	Crown Estate	Down Cruising Club	
	Slipway	Crown Estate	Down Cruising Club	
Whiterock Car Park		Crown Estate		
Strangford Lough Yacht Club	Pontoon	Crown Estate	Strangford Lough Yacht Club	Licences from both Crown Estate and National Trust
	Slipway × 2			Sold to Strangford Lough Yacht Club
	Stone slipway/shore access	Crown Estate	National Trust	
Ballymorran Bay	Quay			
	Slipway 1	Crown Estate	National Trust	National Trust licence to Alan David Bell
	Slipway 2	Crown Estate	National Trust	Not regulated.
	Shore	Crown Estate	National Trust	
Ringhaddy	Pontoon	Crown Estate	National Trust	National Trust licence to Ringhaddy Yacht Club. Seabed area not regulated.

	Quay			
	Slipway	Crown Estate	National Trust	National Trust licence to NJG Brown.
Ringdufferin	Shore	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to Bailie Estate - now Martin & Tracy Hamilton?
Taggart Island	Shore	Crown Estate	National Trust	
East Down Yacht Club	Slipway	Crown Estate	National Trust	National Trust licence to East Down Yacht Club?
	Pontoon	Crown Estate		National Trust licence to East Down Yacht Club - includes pontoons which should be Crown Estate.
Killyleagh Town	Netwalk - Shore	Crown Estate	National Trust	
	Quay			
	Shore	Crown Estate	National Trust	
Killyleagh Yacht Club	Slipway	Crown Estate	National Trust	National Trust licence to Killyleagh Yacht Club.
	Jetty & pontoon	Crown Estate	National Trust	Not regulated?
South of Killyleagh Yacht Club	Slipway	Crown Estate	National Trust	National Trust licence to Killyleagh Yacht Club.
Salt Island	Egress point	Crown Estate	National Trust	
Delamont Country Park	Pontoon	Crown Estate	National Trust	Crown Estate seabed licence to Newry & Mourne District Council.
	Shore	Crown Estate	National Trust	
Gibbs Island & Mullagh Quay	Quay			
	Shore	Crown Estate	National Trust	
Quoile Pondage	Shore	Non-Crown Estate		Sold to MAFF (now DAERA).
Quoile Sailing Club	Pontoon	Crown Estate		Dispute with Dunleath Estates over ownership.
	Slipway 1			Sold to MAFF (now DAERA).

	Slipway 2			Sold to MAFF (now DAERA).
Castle Ward Bay	Quay 1	Crown Estate	National Trust	Not regulated.
	Slipway 1	Crown Estate	National Trust	National Trust licence to Strangford Lough Sailing Club.
	Boathouse & Slipway 1	Crown Estate	National Trust	Presumably operated by National Trust.
	Boathouse & Slipway 2	Crown Estate	National Trust	Presumably operated by National Trust.
	Quay 2			Presumably operated by National Trust.
	Quay 3			Presumably operated by National Trust.
Strangford	Slipway	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to De Ros Estate.
	Berth	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to De Ros Estate.
	Ferry Slip	Extension on Crown Estate seabed	DRD	
	Pontoon	Crown Estate		Occupied by Strangford Community Associations Developments Ltd - not regulated.
	New Quay			Sold.
Kilclief Bay	Shore	Crown Estate	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council	
Ballyhornan	Shore	Non-Crown Estate		Admitted claim to De Ros Estate.