

PEACE IV European Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2014-2020 for Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Non-Technical Summary



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NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

What is the Environmental Report and why has it been written?

ADAS UK Ltd has been instructed by the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the PEACE IV Operational Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2014 – 2020 in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

The process of Strategic Environmental Assessment (hereafter referred to as SEA) was introduced under European Directive 2001/42/EC12 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (SEA Directive), and came into force in Northern Ireland through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 (SR 280/2004).

The Environmental Report describes the outcome of the SEA. This involves an evaluation of the likely environmental effects of implementation and non-implementation of the PEACE IV Programme, including an assessment of realistic strategic alternative approaches. The Report also suggests measures to minimise potentially adverse environmental effects of implementing the PEACE IV Programme, along with enhancement measures that could improve the effect on the environment yet further.

The Environmental Report has been written to accompany the draft Programme and has been issued to the statutory consultation bodies for viewing and comment on by other interested organisations and members of the public for a period of eight weeks. This Non-Technical Summary is a simplified version of the Environmental Report.

What is the PEACE IV Programme?

The PEACE Programme was first introduced in 1994. There have been three previous PEACE Programmes: PEACE I (1994-1999), PEACE II (2000-2006) and PEACE III (2007-2013). The PEACE IV Programme for Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland 2014-2020 is a European Union supported Structural Funds Programme, with the broad objectives of supporting peace and reconciliation on areas formerly affected by conflict and promoting social

and economic stability, particularly through actions to promote cohesion between communities.

Following extensive public consultation it has been identified that the PEACE IV Programme will focus on the following four themes:

Shared Education: The creation of a more cohesive society by increasing the sustained contact between school children from all backgrounds across the Programme area.

Increase in the provision of shared education in the region. Shared education is defined as “involving two or more schools from different sectors working together with the aim of delivering educational benefits to learners promoting the efficient and effective use of resources and promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion”. A key attribute of all shared education activities will be ongoing and sustained sharing of classes, subjects, sports and extra-curricular activities.

Children and Young People (aged under 26): Providing children and young people with the necessary skills and attitudes to contribute to a more cohesive society.

Young people not involved in employment, education or training will be involved in cross-community activities aimed at improving their employability.

Young people will engage in sustained, meaningful and purposeful cross-community initiatives aimed at enhancing their understanding of other cultures and beliefs, increasing their levels of tolerance and promoting social cohesive, understanding of civil rights, equality of opportunity and respect for differences.

Anti-social, sectarian behaviour by young people involved in the programme will be reduced.

There will be an increase in cross community cooperation at interface areas between young people in targeted areas.

Shared Spaces and Services: The creation of a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared spaces and services.

Increased provision of new shared civic spaces which will contribute to social and economic development in targeted areas.

Increased usage of existing local civic spaces in a manner that respects diversity.

Civil Society: The creation of a society characterised by good relations and respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

Citizens will participate in events that will build respect and good relationships across communities in Northern Ireland and the Border Region;

Networks will be created to facilitate exchanges between communities on a cross border and cross community basis in areas such as sport, culture, history, economic activity, language or adult education;

Networks will be created to promote greater participation and integration of minority and marginalised groups in communities across Northern Ireland and the Border Region.

Strong civil leadership will be developed, characterised by respect and inclusion within local communities.

Commemoration events will be conducted in a peaceful and respectful manner.

What is the current state of the environment in Northern Ireland and the Border Regions of Ireland?

Northern Ireland is a predominantly rural region, with 80% of the landmass in agricultural and forestry use. Almost two fifths of the urban population live within the Belfast Metropolitan Area with another sizeable concentration of population around Derry/Londonderry. The region has distinctive cultural heritage (archaeological and historic features from 9,000 years of human activity) and retains strong rural dimensions through the importance of agriculture, tourism and their interactions with the landscape.

The Border region of Ireland is made up from the geographical area of Counties Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo. It encompasses an area of 12,156 sq. km. from the Atlantic Ocean on the West Coast to the Irish Sea on the East Coast. One of the key strengths of the Region is its attractive rural

and coastal landscapes, along with its strong cultural and heritage assets. The population of the Border Region is currently estimated at 515,000 (2013). This is equivalent to 11% of the Republic of Ireland population.

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
Ecology and Nature Conservation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large area of land of international and national nature conservation value, e.g. Natura 2000 sites and SSSIs • Good representation of peatland, grassland and hedgerows • Good representation of coastal habitats such as inlets, bays and dunes along with endemic marine species • Integration of Natura 2000 site management with Agri-environment schemes and Habitat and Species Action Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued loss and degradation of semi-natural habitat by agricultural conversion and building and intensification • Nitrogen deposition caused by agricultural ammonia emissions are threatening sensitive habitats • Significant proportion of habitats and species in unfavourable condition • Wetland birds and bee continue to decline • Intermediate-value habitats less well protected and thus more vulnerable • Increasing trend of problematic pests, diseases and invasive species • Coastal habitats at risk from poor water quality, offshore renewable energy connections, oil exploration, sea-level change, flood defence schemes, and tourism-related developments • Climate affecting biodiversity through changes in species/habitat distributions, migrations, life cycles, food chains/predation, hydrological changes and facilitating invasive species
Socio-Economics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong businesses and communities in rural areas • Good provision of telecommunications but opportunity to improve broadband speed • Opportunity to boost the 'blue economy' through offshore renewable energy and maritime industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to and provision of services, facilities and public transport in rural areas affecting vulnerable groups such as elderly, young and low income • Northern Ireland still suffers from incidents and attacks related to punishment, sectarianism, terrorism and the threat of dissidence, though this has reduced significantly over time • Extreme weather events have disrupted a wide range of businesses and their operations; impacting on staff, premises, insurance and disrupting supply chains and energy, water and transport infrastructure
Health and Quality of Life	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good staffing levels for hospital and community health services • Less difference in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas of Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the UK • Noise Policy Statement being prepared to control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest level of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland of any UK region • Higher infant mortality in Northern Ireland than UK and much of Europe • Higher rates of obesity than most of Europe, though lower than rest of UK • Lack of public access to green space and woodlands in particular under-used

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
<p>environmental, neighbour and neighbourhood noise and improve quality of life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing fatalities of vulnerable older people from flooding, heatwaves, cold snaps, air pollution and storms
Soil and Land Use	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant natural resources including carbon rich peaty soils and grassland to capture and store carbon along with good biomass potential Good quality soil and less erosion compared to UK Good proportion of land under agri-environment schemes Very geologically diverse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenfield development still prevailing in rural areas, particularly single dwellings Long-term degradation of peatland Loss of soil organic matter and fertility due to intensification of agriculture Northern Ireland is the least wooded country in the EU. Woodlands typically unmanaged, inaccessible, small and fragmented with limited new planting Abandonment of upland farms due to an aging farming demographic resulting in landscape dereliction Northern Ireland's land tenure system (small farms, short-term lettings) mean landscape scale improvements can be difficult Risk that the total land under agri-environment schemes will fall dramatically when current schemes end in 2015
Water	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chemical quality of rivers has improved in last decade Good quality of marine, drinking and groundwater Intact peatlands have good water storage potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few rivers classed as good ecological quality with no improvement in recent years – unlikely to meet targets of EU Water Framework Directive Historically poor manure management and fertiliser use has polluted many lakes and rivers, though improving due to Nitrates Action Programme Some concerns regarding quality of bathing and shellfish growing waters in Irish Sea, and absence of Shoreline Management Plans in NI Localised flood events caused by intense and/or prolonged rainfall and local conditions experienced across the Region with increasing frequency Predicted reductions in summer rainfall may reduce river flows, affecting water supply and quality
Air Quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards for sulphur dioxide, lead and particulate matter (dust) being met Ammonia emissions reduced slightly in past decade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burning of coal due to poor availability of natural gas causing exceedance of hydrocarbon (PAH) standards 12 Local Authorities have declared total of 28 Air Quality Management Areas for nitrogen dioxide or particulate matter, mainly due to road transport emissions High dependency on cars in rural areas Ammonia emissions from agriculture affecting sensitive habitats (eutrophication)

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases in temperature as the climate changes will lead to changes in the chemistry associated with ozone formation, potentially causing breathing problems and damage to crops and vegetation
Climate Change	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon dioxide and total greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by 16% and 17.5% respectively since 1990 Good natural resource availability for renewable energy production, e.g. offshore wind, tidal and wave Good opportunities to develop low carbon technology 14.3% of electricity produced from renewable energy Peatland and grassland act as substantial carbon stores Agro-forestry sector addressing GHG emissions through Implementation Partnership The region's grass and wheat yields are projected to increase with warming climate, benefitting agriculture Northern Ireland Cross Departmental Working Group preparing a climate change Adaptation Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenhouse gas emissions falling more slowly in NI (17.5% since 1990) compared to rest of UK (29% reduction). Greenhouse gas emissions have increased much more than in rest of UK from transport (25%) and land use change (83%) since 1990 Push for renewable energy may be weakened due to the availability of shale gas and oil Agriculture and infrastructure (e.g. transport, water, waste and energy) prone to disruption from increasing intensity/frequency of floods, drought and snow Changing climatic conditions may increase threat from pests, diseases and invasive species Seas around Northern Ireland and Ireland are warming more quickly than around the rest of the UK Intensively farmed landscapes restrict the ability of people and wildlife to adapt to climate change
Material Assets	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant natural resources including water, carbon rich soils and high quality grassland Substantial renewable energy potential (including geothermal) Substantial mineral resources Levels of waste produced and sent to landfill are falling Recycling targets being met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recycling rates lower than in rest of UK, particularly for electronics, textiles, plastics and food Continued reliance on landfill Northern Ireland's natural resources, infrastructure and waste management likely to be impacted on by climate change
Cultural Heritage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rich heritage of archaeological sites, monuments and buildings providing evidence of human activity for 9,000 years Archaeological sites and built heritage generally well preserved due to undeveloped nature of NI Northern Ireland's centralised heritage recording system has 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legacy of neglect and mistreatment of Northern Ireland's built and archaeological heritage undermines its value among society New build typically preferred to renovation/restoration of existing buildings Cultural heritage may be at risk from coastal, fluvial and pluvial flooding and erosion related to a changing climate, changing land use, agricultural

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
<p>created a unified, standardised and advanced baseline data set</p>	<p>practices, vandalism/theft, renewable energy, funding, visitors, skills, materials and maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government target to reduce number of buildings and monuments on Built Heritage at Risk Northern Ireland Register will not be met • Enforcement of heritage legislation and planning policy in Northern Ireland under resourced and not always carried out • Lack of coordination across rural tourism sector, with opportunities for sharing and promoting cultural heritage being missed
Landscape and Seascape	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giant's Causeway is a World Heritage Site with 'outstanding universal value' • Substantial land area designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) • Major rural tourism attractions include the Giant's Causeway, the Mourne Mountains, the Glens of Antrim, and the Antrim (Causeway) coast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Ireland's World Heritage Site receives no legal protection (though is protected through regional policy) and may be at risk of inappropriate development • AONBs have very low levels of financial support available for management; no statutory management plans; and fail to qualify as Protected Areas under IUCN definitions – however they are protected by planning policy • Landscapes have been degraded by rural development (housing and infrastructure) and agricultural intensification • Lack of coordination across rural tourism sector, with opportunities for sharing and promoting landscape assets being missed
Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural environment contributed £573 million to the Northern Ireland economy in 2006, and is likely to have grown further since • Substantial coastline provides critical natural defences against storms, floods and erosion as well as productive and biologically diverse ecosystems • Substantial grassland and peatland are excellent carbon stores • Extensive hedgerow networks provide connectivity across the landscape whilst helping to minimise soil erosion • Social use of woodland is increasing • Ecological, carbon and greenhouse gas footprints are lower than the UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disparity to public access to woodland in Northern Ireland, with most being located far from where people live • No mechanism for co-operation of landowners or advice on where to direct funding regarding the creation of multi-functional networks of green infrastructure • Sea level rise and flood defenses may have significant implications for coastal ecosystem services • Lack of environmental knowledge transfer and integration of environmental skills amongst agriculture and forestry sectors and rural communities • Environmental management can sometimes be considered a separate rather than integral part of production systems, whilst integration of environmental issues into all sectors and cross-sector support are lacking • Ecosystem services are not fully recognised by political and community stakeholders • The economic importance of Northern Ireland's tourism sector is the lowest of all the UK regions

How has the PEACE IV Programme been assessed?

The PEACE IV Programme has been assessed against a number of SEA objectives designed to cover the broad range of environmental issues facing Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. These objectives are used within high level and detailed assessment matrices to ascertain the magnitude of likely effects, the sensitivity or value of the receiving environment (including people and wildlife) and thus significance of impacts of the main activities likely to be funded or stimulated under the PEACE IV Programme.

Assessments of alternatives to the Programme have been undertaken, along with an assessment of likely cumulative effects of policies within the PEACE IV Programme itself and accounting for likely in-combination effects with other plans and programmes. Opportunities for improvement and measures to address possible impacts have also been identified.

What are the alternatives?

Five strategic alternatives have been assessed against the SEA objectives. These include:

- Alternative 1: Do Nothing (ie, do not operate a PEACE Programme over the period 2014 – 2020);
- Alternative 2: Continue with PEACE III Programme, 2007 – 2013;
- Alternative 3: Draft proposals as at June 2013, and modified August 2013;
- Alternative 4: Draft Operational Programme as submitted for consultation in May 2014.
- Alternative 5: Capital Intensive, Ecosystems Services.

The 'do nothing' option is assessed as the least favourable alternative as the Programme will fund numerous socio-economic improvements to the border regions that would not be realised without this or an equivalent scheme.

Continuing with the PEACE IV Programme 2007-2013 would have obvious socio-economic benefits as well as environmental benefits related to an

improved physical environment, but is not feasible due to changes to EU funding regulations and priorities.

The draft proposals for the PEACE IV Programme set out in the June 2013 document have similar benefits for people and the environment as the 2007-2013 Programme. However, the proposals for creation of an international trauma centre and removal of interface barriers would have uncertain, potentially adverse effects on aspects of the environment that would require mitigation.

Alternative 4 (proposals as set out in May 2014) has fewer investment priorities, thus meeting ETC Regulations requirements to focus spending, and is also more detailed (though less prescriptive in terms of numbers). The main difference is the removal of the proposed international treatment centre (which is likely to have been one of the most resource intensive aspects of the Programme but otherwise, expected environmental impacts are similar to Alternatives 2 and 3.

Alternative 5 is unlikely to be realistic with the reduced funding available; however the environmental benefits are much greater than those of any other alternative.

What are the likely environmental impacts of the PEACE IV Operational Programme?

The majority of the indicative actions under the Programme are predicted to have beneficial or strongly beneficial effects against the SEA objectives for cultural heritage, health and socio-economics. Neutral impacts are predicted against the other parameters (with the exception of green infrastructure / ecosystems services, where impacts are at times uncertain).

The indicative action '*capital developments to create new shared space*' under Specific Objective 3 is assessed as uncertain against ecology, soil, water, air, climate, material assets, landscape and green infrastructure / ecosystems services. This reflects the fact that impacts associated with capital development will be highly dependent on the sensitivity / characteristic of the site to be developed and the features of the proposed development. These parameters are not known at this point.

In-combination effects could occur between the capital works to create new shared spaces and other plans and programmes that propose regeneration activities in the Programme area.

Of particular relevance are the Northern Ireland Investment Strategy (2008) and the Building a United Community Strategy (2013) due to their focus on substantial regeneration of Belfast, the North West and deprived urban villages (with few references to sustainability or environmental enhancements). For this reason, it is thought that there may be significant adverse cumulative impacts with capital works brought forward under the PEACE IV Programme (prior to mitigation).

What are the key recommendations for enhancing the beneficial effects of the PEACE IV Programme?

Potential enhancement measures are discussed in full in the Environmental Report, some of the key measures are summarised as follows. Such measures may be regarded as best practice, but SEUPB is under no obligation to consider or endorse these.

- Empowering young people to affect change in their local communities should include elements related to improving the quality and sustainability of the environment.
- Training, education and employment initiatives for young people should include elements related to improving the quality and sustainability of the environment.
- Regeneration of derelict or underused areas and creation of shared spaces should include urban greening and sustainable drainage measures, for example tree planting and creation of new habitats (using native and climate resilient species) to enable these spaces to contribute to ecosystem service provision.
- Local or regional leadership initiatives related to economic development must be 'sustainable' to prevent any adverse impact on provision of ecosystem services. Local economic development resulting indirectly from the Programme should include provision of

new (permeable and cooling) greenspace, improvements to the multi-functionality and/or connectivity of existing greenspace and ensure that ecosystem service delivery is maintained and ideally enhanced.

What will happen next?

The Environmental Report has been submitted to the statutory authorities and made available to other interested parties to facilitate determination of the likely effect of the PEACE IV Programme, as currently drafted, on the environment.

Copies of the Environmental Report (a fee will apply to cover the cost of reproduction and postage) and Non-Technical Summary (free of charge) can be obtained from:

ADAS UK Ltd.
4205 Park Approach
Thorpe Park
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These documents are also available on the SEUPB website, <http://www.seupb.eu/Home.aspx>

The public consultation period runs for 8 weeks, between 3rd June and 29th July 2014.