



Northern Ireland
**environment
link**



2020-21 Annual Report

Our vision is for a **valued, resilient, healthy environment**

028 9045 5770

| www.nienvironmentlink.org

| @EnvironmentNI

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Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) is the forum and networking body for organisations interested in the environment of Northern Ireland. It assists members to develop views on issues affecting the environment and to influence policy and practice impacting on the natural and built environment of Northern Ireland. Our 65+ Full Members represent 190,000 individuals, attract 1.5m visitors per annum and have an annual turnover of over £65 million in Northern Ireland. NIEL also has 40+ Associate Members composed of statutory organisations, companies and individuals with an interest in the environment. Northern Ireland Environment Link's Vision is for 'a valued, resilient, healthy environment'.

Chair	Stephen Aston (Independent Member)	
Vice Chair	Joanne Sherwood (RSPB NI)	
Treasurer	Terry Waugh (Action Renewables)	Completed term December 2020
Co Secretary	Craig McGuicken (NIEL)	
Trustees	Paul Armstrong (The Woodland Trust)	Joined June 2021
	Anne Casement (Independent Member)	Completed term December 2020
	Patrick Casement (Independent Member)	Completed term December 2020
	Karen Kerr (Queen's University Belfast)	Joined June 2021
	Jim Kitchen (Independent Member)	Resigned April 2021
	Nichola Hughes (Sustainable NI)	Resigned December 2020
	Ian Humphreys (Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful)	
	Dawn Miskelly (Ulster Wildlife)	
	Ian Nuttall (Independent Member)	
	Lizzy Pinkerton (Belfast Hills Partnership)	
	Diane Ruddock (National Trust)	
	Murray Watt (Supporting Communities NI)	
	Caroline Winder (Action Renewables)	
Staff	Craig McGuicken – Chief Executive Officer	
	Sean Kelly – Development Manager	
	Malachy Campbell – Senior Policy Officer	
	Jill Eagleson – Policy & Projects Officer	Joined November 2020
	Ruari Fairtlough – Finance Manager	
	Iona Meyer – Network, Events and Membership Coordinator	
	Connor McLean – Policy & IT Officer	
	Michelle Grimes – Communications Assistant	Contract ended March 2021
	Dr Jane McCullough – Climate NI Manager	
	Dr Jade Berman – Climate Resilience Researcher (TalX Project)	Joined March 2020
	Stephen Jones – Climate NI Project Officer	
Amy Bell – Climate NI Programme Assistant		
Perla Mansour – Climate NI Mitigation Officer	Joined January 2021	
Lucy Keown – Open Government Network Coordinator	Joined March 2021	
Kerry Melville – Belfast Food Network Coordinator		

A View from NIEL



We cannot hide from the overwhelming evidence of climate change resulting from the exponential growth of industrialisation. Now, the internet and social media are continuously building an expectation of global economic equality. So, we need a new kind of industrial revolution because a repeat of the last one would risk permanently choking life on earth as we know it. This is the frightening prospect for the younger generations.

We are simply not giving nature a chance. By striving to satisfy our endless needs, taking what we want when we can, we risk the extinction of other species. The scale of our removal of habitat and biodiversity will also extinguish the opportunity for nature to help us.

Nature has amazing but not infinite resilience. Its silent and often unobserved attrition should not fool us into thinking that because the view from our front door may have remained the same for the last decade we are not facing an existential threat. The clock will not stay “at one minute to midnight”. The personal question is: “Can I really make a difference given how small my contribution might be?” Raindrops form rivers and equally every small contribution everyone can make by careful use of: energy, transport, insulation, and recycling adds up to make a significant impact.

NIEL’s response to the challenging events of this past year have seen both our members and staff rise to the occasion. NIEL has continued to sparkle with success by building partnerships to work on the Environment Strategy and Green Growth Strategy. Our work through Climate NI has had increasing influence and their presentation at the recent COP26 talks in Glasgow provided a perfect illustration of positive impact. I am immensely heartened by everyone’s strong and positive approach. Thank you.



Stephen Aston
Chair, Northern Ireland Environment Link



2020-21 was a difficult year for many people and organisations. The resilience of our sector was tested to the limit.

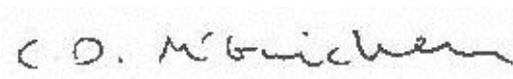
For NIEL, it was an extremely busy period. We were able to switch to homeworking very quickly at the beginning of the year and were soon faced with a range of queries from our membership, from practicalities of homeworking to the details of furlough to assistance with hosting online events.

A key aspect of our role was to maintain communications with the sector, and represent our members' needs to Government and others. I hope that Members feel that we did this to the best of our ability. We organised a number of meetings with DAERA and other agencies, and were able to put forward the case for support of the sector. Overall, I think that funders listened to us (and other 3rd sector representatives) and put in place a more flexible approach to resourcing.

In fact, my general sense is that the response of the voluntary sector to the pandemic has caused a shift in relations with Government. There is clearly a much stronger sense that the voluntary sector is a crucial part of our society and should be treated more as partners, and less as delivery agents.

Of course, many organisations within the environment sector had a difficult year. NIEL ran a number of surveys during the period to gather information on how we were all doing. This data was shared with government and other relevant agencies, and provided a really important overview of the state of our sector.

I want to thank NIEL members for persevering with the surveys. Of course, we haven't navigated through the pandemic. Its impacts will be with us for some time yet. Members should feel free to contact us if there is anything we can help with, and I would particularly encourage you all to make use of the NIEL Funding Database.



Craig McGuicken
Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Environment Link

Introduction

This annual report details the activities and initiatives delivered by NIEL in accordance with the organisation's purposes for the public benefit.

- ◆ Advance and promote for the public benefit environmental conservation, protection, improvement and sustainability in NI.
- ◆ Raise awareness of environmental issues by providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and promoting a collective voice on environmental matters.
- ◆ Advance the education of all sections of the public in environmental and ecological sciences.

The Board of Directors have had due regard to Charity Commission guidance in the preparation of this report.

Strategic Aim 1: Environmental Policy & Advocacy

Advance the conservation, management and access of the environment through development of relevant policy and advocacy

Brexit

Throughout the year, NIEL took a multi-level approach to deal with the implications for Northern Ireland's environment due to the UK's decision to leave the EU. Through our "Nature Matters NI" campaign we continued to raise awareness of the implications for Agriculture & Land-Use, Nature & Environmental Protection, Fisheries & Marine and Cross Border Environmental Protection, culminating in our detailed *Brexit Preparedness Briefing* for the Assembly Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee.



DAERA Stakeholder Engagement Group

Engagement with DAERA on Brexit issues continued to focus mainly on our participation in the DAERA Brexit Stakeholder groups, namely Trade & Agriculture; Environment, Fisheries & Marine; and Rural Society. Our involvement meant that the sector could provide a co-ordinated and coherent voice for the eNGO sector on a wide range of environmental issues.

Environmental Governance & Cooperation - The North-South, East-West Dimension

In early 2021, NIEL together with colleagues in the Irish Environmental Network, partnered with academics from Queen's University Belfast and University College Dublin, to form the "*Environmental Governance in the Island of Ireland Network*" to map existing co-operations, challenges and opportunities for all-island environmental governance after Brexit. The Network plans to hold a range of online events during 2021-2022, with the first event "*The Ireland/ Northern Ireland Protocol and the Environment*" held on 15th February 2021.

NIEL and IEN worked with the Shared Island Unit within the Department of the Taoiseach to help deliver an all-island seminar entitled: "*Environment and Climate - addressing shared challenges on the island*" in early 2021. NIEL and IEN also submitted a joint response to the National Economic and Social Council consultation on Climate and Biodiversity Challenges and Opportunities.

Environment Links UK (ELUK), which comprises the combined memberships of NIEL, Wildlife and Countryside Link, Scottish Environment Link, and Wales Environment Link have been working with Greener UK to set out our recommendations for how the UK and devolved governments should work together to protect and enhance the environment as we leave the EU.



Environmental Governance & Cooperation - The North-South, East-West Dimension cont'd.

NIEL took over the co-ordination of the ELUK/Greener UK Devolution Group in February 2021 and gave evidence to the House of Lords Inquiry on Common Frameworks on 2nd February 2021.

The Office for Environmental Protection

One of the key provisions of the UK Environment Bill that extends to Northern Ireland is the proposed creation of an Office for Environmental Protection (OEP). Having left the EU, the role of the OEP is to provide a domestic replacement for the scrutiny of the European Commission and European Environment Agency and oversee performance against environmental improvement plans.

The OEP will protect and improve the environment by holding government and public bodies to account against their commitments and environmental law.

Throughout the year NIEL has participated in DEFRA OEP Stakeholder Workshops around the development of the OEP. Ultimately the commencement of the OEP in Northern Ireland is subject to the approval of the NI Assembly.

PfG assessment and NI environmental scorecard

An environmental scorecard for NI was published in March 2021, setting out progress in NI towards the delivery of a range of statutory environmental targets. The scorecard can be accessed [here](#).

In advance of the new Programme for Government which was expected in 2021, NIEL also reviewed the progress made towards achieving the goals of the draft PfG 2016-21. The review is available [here](#).

GREENER UK



**Office for
Environmental
Protection**





Priorities for the Environment 2021-26

In advance of the Programme for Government, NIEL wanted to highlight the eNGO sector's perspective on some of the most important environmental issues we currently face and are likely to face in the coming years. In collaboration with members, NIEL has prepared a [sectoral priorities manifesto for 2021-26](#).

Nature Targets

As part of a wider Environment Links UK initiative, NIEL is taking forward a NI [Nature Targets project](#). The aim of the project is to forge a common four-country policy and advocacy position in the environment sector ahead of international talks for a post-2020 global nature deal. This is to help galvanise UK governments behind a strong negotiating position capable of securing an effective global deal to bend the curve of nature's decline.



In 2022, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will meet in Kunming, China, to agree to a post-2020 global biodiversity framework. It will replace the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-20, which failed to halt biodiversity loss by 2020.

One of the main project objectives is to illustrate the scale of domestic effort needed in each administration to contribute to the proposed global post-2020 framework and articulate the challenges in a way that allows each administration to showcase its own leadership role, using international aspirations to boost domestic ambition.



The project also aims to develop a nature targets briefing. This will link to existing UK commitments, e.g. 30x30, (to protect 30% of land and ocean by 2030), and seek to address delivery strategy at a national level. A briefing on monitoring, reporting, verification and enforcement of nature targets at a national level will also be prepared.

Environmental Policy Consultations

NIEL responded to a range of policy consultations including: Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031, Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill and Clean Air Strategy for NI. A comprehensive list of policy consultations responses is available on the NIEL website.

Consultation	Organisation	Deadline
Green Recovery response to DAERA	DAERA	12th May 2020
Planning for the third cycle River Basin Plan 2021-2027	DAERA	22nd June 2020
UK internal market policy option proposals	BEIS	13th August 2020
Proposal to establish an Infrastructure Commission for NI	Dept for Infrastructure	7th September 2020
Proposed UK Emissions Trading Scheme Common Framework	BEIS	11th September 2020
Statement on Global Biodiversity Output	The Executive Office	15th September 2020
Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2020 to 2030 and beyond	Dept for Communities	25th September 2020
Future Infrastructure Investment and Delivery in NI	DUP	7th November 2020
Development of a strategic Programme for Government 2022	The Executive Office	13th November 2020
NIMTF response to Islandmagee gas storage proposal	DAERA	5th January 2021
Living with Water in Belfast	Dept for Infrastructure	29th January 2021
Discussion Document on a Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill	DAERA	1st February 2021
Discussion Document on a Clean Air Strategy for NI	DAERA	15th February 2021
Consultation on the 2021-22 Draft Budget	The Executive Office	25th February 2021
Environmental Plans, Principles and Governance for NI	DAERA	26th February 2021
Shared Island: Climate & Biodiversity Challenges & Opportunities	National Economic and Social Council	19th March 2021
Submission to Programme for Government	The Executive Office	22nd March 2021
Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031	Dept of Health	26th March 2021
The provision of access for outdoor recreation in NI	DAERA	29th March 2021



Strategic Aim 2: Partnership & Collaboration:

Advance collaboration within and beyond the Environmental NGO sector

Task Forces & Working Groups

We would encourage members to engage with Task Forces/Working Groups that are relevant to their own work areas – if you are interested in participating in any of the below, please contact [Sean Kelly](#).

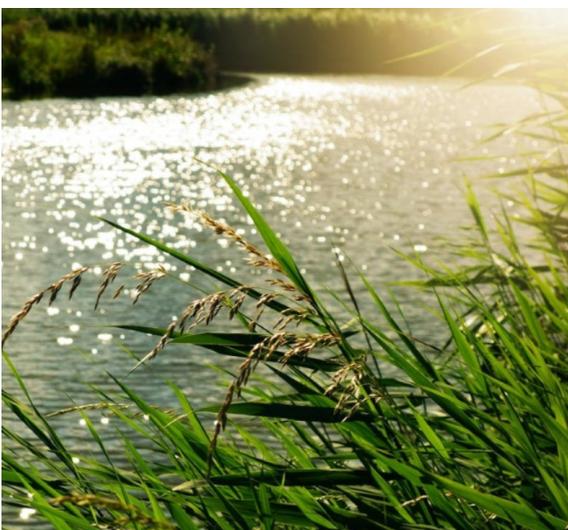
Green Recovery Group

The Green Recovery Group (GRG) met frequently throughout 2020-21 and helped lead on the eNGO sector's response to the coronavirus pandemic. Three sub-groups were formed on "green jobs", "health" and "recovery funding".

- ◆ GRG produced "[Thinking Globally and Acting Locally](#)" in summer 2020, which was followed up with meetings with Ministers and officials.
- ◆ GRG members signed RSPB's [5-point plan](#) and supported an e-action to the Finance Minister around the creation of a Green Recovery fund.
- ◆ Detailed submissions were prepared in response to government proposals e.g. the 2021-22 Draft Budget for NI.
- ◆ GRG provided input to the sectoral "[Delivering a Green Recovery](#)" proposals.

Freshwater Task Force

The NI Freshwater Taskforce (FWTF) represents a range of organisations working together to ensure that Northern Ireland preserves and improves freshwater ecosystems. The group was re-established in June 2020 with an expanded membership. NIEL organised a freshwater policy webinar with RSPB on 14th May 2020 during the RBMP consultation period which had 68 participants. NIEL submitted a response to the RBMP consultation in June 2020.



NI Marine Task Force (NIMTF)

NIEL sits on the NIMTF steering group which reviewed the NIMTF advocacy strategy and took part in four days of training on the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in November and December 2020. After the departure of the NIMTF Policy Officer Ellen McMahon in December 2020, Donal Griffin was appointed as the NIMTF Policy Office in February 2021 initially on a one year contract. NIEL would like to thank Ellen for her contribution to NIMTF. NIMTF has submitted an application to Esmée Fairbairn for funding of the Policy Officer post up to 2026. The NIMTF expect to hear back from Esmée in relation to this application towards the end of 2021. One of the main issues the NI MTF Policy Officer has to deal with is the proposed gas storage at Islandmagee and with reviews of fisheries legislation, the marine plan and a Marine Protected Area strategy also due, it will be a busy time ahead for the NIMTF.



Climate Coalition NI

In 2020, the NIEL Senior Policy Officer re-established a working group on climate change, the Climate Coalition NI (CCNI) and is the secretariat for CCNI. CCNI has gone from strength to strength and as of March 2021 includes 26 organisations which in turn represent more than 400,000 individuals in NI. Since 2020, CCNI worked with its members on a draft climate change bill and with MLAs to ensure that the draft bill was supported by a cross-party, cross-community majority of MLAs. This is a significant and ongoing area of work. The draft bill was first introduced to the Assembly in October 2020 as a Private Members Bill (PMB) and was the first piece of NI-specific climate change legislation to be introduced to the Assembly. It is significant that civic society was the source of this draft bill and not political representatives. CCNI has been busy engaging with stakeholders and it is hoped that NI climate change legislation will be introduced before the end of the current Assembly mandate.



Climate Northern Ireland



Climate Northern Ireland

Climate NI is governed by a Steering Group composed of 22 organisations from across academia, the business community, the community and voluntary sector, local and central government. Over the past year, Climate Northern Ireland delivered a broad programme of work funded by DAERA on climate adaptation, and also secured additional funding from DAERA to support climate mitigation for the first time. Climate NI Mitigation Officer Perla Mansour started in January 2021. This project will deliver Carbon Literacy Training to councils and businesses in Northern Ireland over the next two years.

On climate change adaptation, Climate NI built on a broad range of existing partnerships and developed exciting new collaborations. Some key outcomes included:

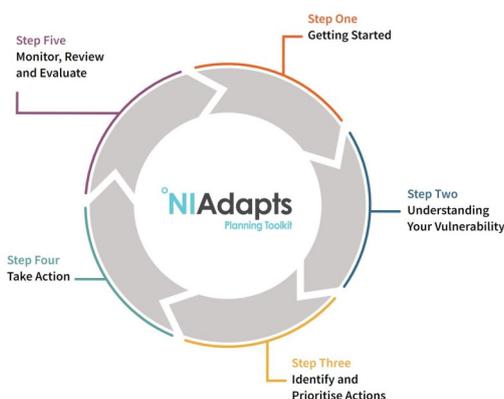
CLIMATE Project

The CLIMATE Project (funded by NPA Interreg VB) project ended in July 2020. NIEL, through Climate NI, supported Derry City and Strabane District Council through the development of the first local authority Climate Adaptation Plan in Northern Ireland, alongside a coalition of European partners.

LGCAN and NI Adapts

Using the methodology from the CLIMATE project and other international best practice, Climate NI created a dual approach to bring adaptation planning to every other council in NI:

[NI Adapts](#) is an online climate adaptation toolkit, providing users with the guidance, information and resources they need to complete a climate adaptation plan.



Belfast Climate Commission & Place-Based Climate Action Network

Belfast Climate Commission was officially launched on 10th January 2020 and it involves members from the public, private and third sectors in Belfast. The Commissioners, Commission Members and people with specific expertise collaborate within three working groups:

- ◆ Business and Finance;
- ◆ Community Climate Action; and
- ◆ Just Transition

Jane McCullough and Jade Berman have contributed as Climate Commissioners and are members of the Just Transition working group and Housing sub-group. Craig McGuicken is also a Commissioner and is a member of the Community Climate Action working group.

TalX - Transboundary Adaptation Learning Exchange

The TalX project is an Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funded research project that aims to establish an innovative learning network to enable a cohesive approach for measuring and acting on climate change adaptation across boundaries. It seeks to develop best practice for processes which empower national, sectoral and local decision makers on a transboundary scale. It kicked off in March 2020 with the appointment of Jade Berman as the TalX Resilience Researcher.

The TalX project is in partnership with SNIFFER in Scotland and MAREI Centre at University College Cork and works across the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. So far the project has carried out a literature review of best practice in adaptation and started the review of national policy across the five jurisdictions. The first practitioner meeting was held in March 2021.



TalX
Transboundary
Adaptation
Learning Exchange



Ministerial Advisory Panel on Infrastructure

The NIEL CEO was asked to join a panel appointed by the Minister for Infrastructure, which was tasked with considering how an Infrastructure Commission might support the longer-term planning and development of relevant infrastructure in NI. The panel members carried out an intense programme of research which included surveying more than 50 organisations and hosting 45 online meetings. The panel found that an infrastructure commission should be created, and that it could play an important role in meeting our climate change (mitigation and adaptation) objectives and in helping to restore our natural environment. The proposal has been included in The Executive Office’s Covid Recovery Plan for NI. More information is available [here](#).

Belfast VCSE Panel

NIEL continues to engage with local government to help advocate for the environment. The NIEL CEO has been appointed to the Belfast VCSE Panel. The panel’s aims are:

- ◆ To ensure that the sector’s voices are represented as part of the community planning process
- ◆ To develop and improve cross-sectoral relationships and partnerships
- ◆ To promote effective community engagement

The panel has developed strong links across the Council, and is now represented on all of the Community Planning Boards. The Panel held a Conference in November 2020, *“Putting Community Wellbeing at the Heart of Community Planning”*, and gave attendees the opportunity to hear how others embed wellbeing into community planning. The Belfast Agenda is being reviewed in 2021-22, and this will be an important opportunity to move environmental issues further up the Community Plan. More information is available [here](#).

Strategic Aim 3: Membership and Capacity

Increase the capacity and sustainability of the environmental NGO sector in NI

Education for Sustainable Development

The Education for Sustainable Development Forum (ESDF) is a network that promotes a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of environmental education in NI. ESDF published 10 e-bulletins during the year, providing a range of information and updates for its members. We received funding from DAERA to undertake a review of environmental education with a view to developing a new strategy. A tender process took place and the successful applicants McCreanor, Murray & Rose were appointed. A comprehensive report and action plan were completed and we have now received funding from DAERA for the implementation of the action plan.

The Joint Forum

NIEL represent the environment sector on the NICVA Joint Forum, which is made up of representatives from Government and the VCSE sector. The Forum provides a mechanism to facilitate open discussion of key issues which shape the relationship between the voluntary and public sectors; it also seeks to examine and influence the impact of public policy and support opportunities for greater co-operation and joined up activity. The pandemic coincided with the appointment of a number of new members to the VCSE panel, which met in September and November 2020, and March 2021. A full Forum meeting was also held in March. Indeed, most of the year was used in reviewing the progress and objectives of the Forum, with a new programme set out for 2021-24, with a focus on communications, resourcing and relationship building between the voluntary and public sectors.



**education for
sustainable
development
forum**





Linking with the Historic Environment

Most of NIEL's work is around the natural environment, but given the breadth of the environment sector and of the NIEL membership, we maintain as strong a relationship as possible with the Historic Environment Division of the Department for Communities.

Together with some member organisations, NIEL has been an important participant in the creation of a Historic Environment stakeholder group. Together, we have been working to show how fundamental heritage is to our society - how it supports our economy, strengthens our communities and is crucial in shaping our character.

A key aspect of this work is around communications. NIEL manage the sectoral website [NI Heritage Delivers](#) where up-to-date information and news is posted. The NIEL CEO is a member of the Historic Environment Core Group, and this has been an important mechanism in assisting with communications and advocacy during the pandemic. A number of meetings have been held with other agencies, providing information on the impact of covid on the sector and setting out proposals for a response and assisting with the long term resilience of the sector.

NIEL Funding 4 the Environment

As part of our commitment to help improve the sustainability and resilience of the Environment sector, NIEL, with the financial support of NIEA, has purchased an online funding database. The database has a very wide range of funding opportunities and is updated on a weekly basis. It is available free of charge to all NIEL members and we hope that organisations are able to maximise the benefits from it. So far it is proving popular with members, and hopefully, it will become even more useful as additional post-covid funding becomes available.

Environment Links UK (ELUK)

During 2020-21 ELUK largely focused on the pandemic, and ways to support our respective memberships. As well as the regular exchange of information we also carried out a number of UK-wide surveys to get a better understanding of the impact of covid, sharing this information with, amongst others, the National Lottery Heritage Fund. NLHF responded strongly to the situation, and feedback provided by ELUK members was an important aspect of this.

ELUK also initiated a new joint area of work aimed at developing a common four-country policy and advocacy position around 'Nature Targets'. In 2021-22, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will meet to agree a new global biodiversity framework (replacing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, which aimed to halt biodiversity loss by 2020 and has failed). The project is aimed at galvanising the four UK governments and seeks to develop a strong negotiating position capable of securing an effective global deal to bend the curve of nature's decline. The project will conclude in Winter 2021/22.

Way Forward for Archaeology in Northern Ireland

The Department for Communities (DfC) has brought together a wide range of stakeholders to look at the long-term strategic development of the archaeology sector in NI. As part of this process, NIEL was appointed as secretariat, assisting a range of working groups looking at issues including Research, Policy, Skills and Communications.

The first draft of the Strategy was completed in June 2019, and shared with a wide range of stakeholders. Over the following months the Strategy was further developed, with Steering Group meetings in June and October 2020. The final strategy, "[Archaeology 2030: A Strategic Approach for Northern Ireland](#)", was published in December 2020.



**ARCHAEOLOGY 2030:
A STRATEGIC APPROACH
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

BELFAST FOOD NETWORK



Belfast Food Network

The Belfast Food Network (BFN) is a cross-sector partnership of public sector organisations, NGOs and businesses working together to develop proactive sustainable food partnerships across Northern Ireland in partnership with Sustainable Food Places. The Network seeks to promote sustainable food as a means of enabling positive social, economic and environmental benefits for Belfast and beyond.

BFN is the NI partner of Sustainable Food Places, which is one of the fastest-growing social movements today. It is an alliance of cities and towns, each of which is harnessing sustainable food as a vehicle for driving positive change. We are delighted that Derry City and Strabane, Mid and East Antrim and Newry, Mourne and Down Councils joined the SFP network in November 2021. We'll continue supporting the growth of the SFP across the country, and look forward to seeing an upswell in activity across all aspects of the food system to solve some of today's most pressing social, environmental and economic issues.

We set up NI's first Food, Farming and Land Convention in February 2021, with RSPB, NIEL, Food Farming and Countryside Commission, Nature Friendly Farming Network and Food NI. The event addressed challenges including climate change, nature loss, Covid-19 and Brexit to explore how food and farming can play a pivotal role in building a more resilient future.

BFN launched Sustainable Fish Cities in association with Ulster Wildlife. Fish City is the first local business to join the campaign committing to buy, serve, and promote only fish from sustainable sources on its menus. Any establishment that serves fish, from restaurants and retailers to hospitals and educational institutions, can take the pledge.

Full Members

Action Renewables
 Balinderry Rivers Trust
 Belfast Charitable Society
 Belfast Civic Trust
 Belfast Healthy Cities
 Belfast Hills Partnership
 British Trust for Ornithology
 Broughshane Improvement Committee
 Buglife
 Business in the Community
 Butterfly Conservation
 Carntogher Community Association
 Carrickfergus Community Cultivators
 Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust
 Cavehill Conservation Campaign
 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
 Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
 Colin Glen Trust
 Community Places
 Copeland Bird Observatory
 Council for British Archaeology
 Creggan Country Park
 Development Trusts NI
 EcoSeeds
 Enriched Earth Ecovillage
 Field Studies Council
 Field Studies Ireland
 Friends of the Earth NI
 Glens Red Squirrel Group
 Grass Roots Conservation Group
 Green Foundation Ireland
 Holywell Trust
 Institute of Public Health in Ireland
 Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful
 Lagan Valley Regional Park
 Landscape Institute Northern Ireland
 Lecale Conservation
 Lough Erne Heritage
 Lough Neagh Partnership
 Mountaineering Ireland
 Mourne Heritage Trust
 National Trust
 Natural Copeland
 Nature Friendly Farming Network
 Northern Ireland Badger Group
 Northern Ireland Forest School Association
 Organic Centre
 Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland
 Ringhaddy Area Residents
 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
 Rural Community Network
 Social Farms & Gardens
 Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership
 Supporting Communities NI
 Sustainable Northern Ireland
 Sustrans
 The Conservation Volunteers
 The Woodland Trust
 True Harvest Seeds
 Ulster Angling Federation
 Ulster Archaeological Society
 Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs
 Ulster Wildlife
 Waste and Resources Action Programme
 Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust



Associate Members (Organisations)

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
 Association of Professional Game Angling Instructors
 Delamont Country Park
 EcoTourism Ireland
 Education Authority - Belfast Region
 Education Authority - South Eastern Region
 Education Authority - Southern Region
 Envirocentre
 Food, Farming and Countryside Commission
 Glenhordial Permaculture Farm
 Made In Trebania
 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
 RES UK and Ireland
 The Hermitage Cottage
 The Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Associate Members (Individuals)

Anderson, Zoe	Robinson, Lorraine
Casement, Anne	Saunders, Jim
Casement, Patrick	Stelfox, Dawson
Christie, Peter	Stephens, Jude
Christie, Sue	Williams, Brian
Curry, Robin	Workman, Sacha
Foster, Bill	
Green, Frances	
Hernan, Robert Emmet	
Heron, Alastair	
Hood, Isabel	
Irving, Tina	
Jack, Brian	
Knott, David	
McAdam, Jim	
McCabe, Stephen	
Moorhead, Heather	
Nelson, Roy	
O'Neill, Leah	
O'Sullivan, Philip	
Orford, Julian	

Strategic Aim 4: Communications

Communicate effectively with our members, partners, stakeholders and other target audiences.

NIEL e-Bulletin

The e-Bulletin maintains a very high open rate (47.25%). 10 issues were circulated in 2020-21. NIEL issues e-Bulletins on a monthly basis and publishes special issues on a range of topics and projects.

Social Media

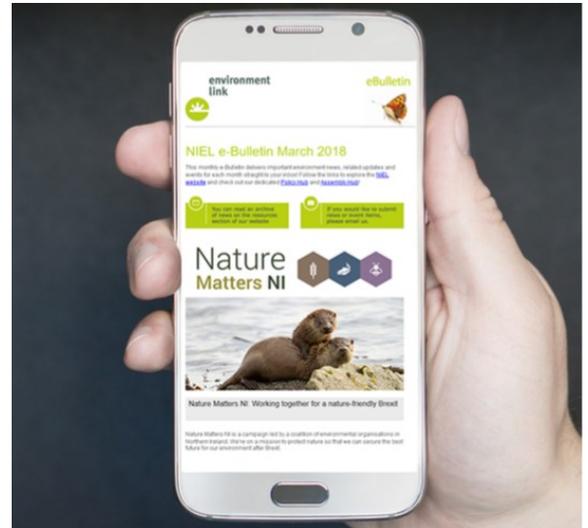
NIEL social media analytics for the 2020/2021 period showed an increase in following, with the Facebook page growing from 1,360 followers to 1,790 followers (32% increase) and Twitter followers growing from 1,950 to 2,449 (26% increase). NIEL's LinkedIn company profile has seen moderate growth, reaching 391 followers this year.

NIEL website

Analytics continue to record interest in the website, with 19,660 visits recorded in the April 2020 - March 2021 period. 123,591 total pageviews were recorded between April 2020 - March 2021.

Environmental News, Research and Analysis

In recognition of the key role that the European and other international institutions play in the development of environmental policy at the local level, NIEL continued to produce a monthly environmental news-sheet entitled Environmental News, Research and Analysis (ENRA) which provides the latest international research information and policy analysis relevant to Northern Ireland.





Staff Training

- ◆ No training was organised in 2020-21 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Carbon Literacy training is planned for June 2021.

Staff Changes

- ◆ Dr Jade Berman joined as Climate Resilience Researcher (TalX Project) in March 2020.
- ◆ Jill Eagleson joined as Policy & Projects Officer in November 2020.
- ◆ Perla Mansour joined as Climate NI Mitigation Officer in January 2021.
- ◆ Lucy Keown joined as Open Government Network Co-ordinator in March 2021.
- ◆ Michelle Grimes' contract as Communications Assistant ended in March 2021.

Funding

NIEL, along with many other environmental NGOs, receive funding from NIEA's Environment Fund. We also accessed in-year funding for: activity around the 'Green Recovery' from the pandemic; we developed a new Strategy for Education for Sustainability; and we finalised a report into the potential for developing better linkages between the environment and health sectors.

Other significant funding came from DAERA for the delivery of the Climate NI programme, which continues to go from strength-to-strength. Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is our other main funder; as well as providing the annual grant they also gave an extra amount to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and also supported our work with the Environment Links UK on Nature Targets.

We are grateful to our funders for their ongoing support, and their flexible approach during the pandemic.

Finances and Subscriptions

NIEL is a membership organisation and receives income from subscriptions. The organisation's budget is prepared in December and finalised at the beginning of the following Financial Year. Accounts are prepared for each meeting of the Finance and Human Resources Committee, which meets four times per year, in advance of the Board. The financial report is included on all Board Agendas. The end of year accounts are reviewed at the FHR closest to the AGM, and also sent out in advance to all Board Members.





Board of Directors

The Board of Directors met on the following dates:

- ◆ 25th June 2020
- ◆ 17th September 2020
- ◆ 3rd December 2020 (also the AGM)
- ◆ 18th March 2021

The FHR Sub Committee met on the following dates:

- ◆ 17th June 2020
- ◆ 3rd September 2020
- ◆ 19th November 2020
- ◆ 3rd March 2021

The SIM Sub Committee did not meet.

Risk Register

The Risk Register is a standing item on the FHR Agenda and reviewed quarterly by the NIEL Board of Directors to ensure that emerging risks that could potentially impact on the organisation are identified and mitigation measures are agreed.

Events

NIEL hosted, co-hosted and participated in a broad range of events throughout the year.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, many events were cancelled, postponed or hosted online.

A full list of events is available on our website – www.nienvironmentlink.org/events

Event	Location	Date
Significant Water Management Issues	Online	14th May 2020
Sustainable Development Goals webinar	Online	21st May 2020
NIE Net Zero Launch Event	Online	2nd June 2020
NIEL & Historic Environment Division meeting	Online	9th June 2020
NIEL & Ecosystems Knowledge Network meeting	Online	11th August 2020
Green Recovery Group Meeting	Online	24th August 2020
Tree Charter Meeting	Online	22nd September 2020
Let's put toxic air into lockdown	Online	30th September 2020
National Outdoor Recreation Forum Meeting	Online	1st October 2020
Green Recovery Group Meeting	Online	2nd October 2020
Tree Charter Meeting	Online	12th October 2020
Priorities for NI infrastructure: Economic recovery post COVID-19	Online	21st October 2020
NIEL AGM 2020	Online	3rd December 2020
National Outdoor Recreation Forum Meeting	Online	9th December 2020
Living With Water in Belfast consultation event	Online	14th December 2020
Environmental Plans, Principles & Governance consultation event	Online	13th January 2021
Food, Farming and Land Convention 2021	Online	9th-10th February 2021
The Protocol and the Environment	Online	15th February 2021
Responsible Use of the Outdoors Marketing Campaign	Online	25th February 2021
ESDF Conference 2021	Online	10th March 2021

Image Credits

Cover page

Common seal ([Pixabay](#))

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Coprinopsis picacea ([Pixabay](#))

Parliament Buildings ([Pixabay](#))

Brexit ([Pixabay](#))

Pg. 5

Justice ([Pixabay](#))

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Graph icon ([Pixabay](#))

Pg.7

Ballynahone Bog (Michelle Grimes)

Red squirrel ([Pixabay](#))

Atlantic puffins ([Pixabay](#))

Pg.9

Collaboration (NIEL)

Return on investment ([Pixabay](#))

Freshwater ([Pixabay](#))

Pg.10

Antrim Coast ([Pixabay](#))

Submission of Private Members' Bill on climate change, 21st October 2020 (Climate Coalition NI)

Pg.11

CLIMATE NPA (Climate NI)

NI Adapts website (Climate NI)

Pg.12

Belfast Climate Commission (Climate NI)

Belfast Climate Commission2 (Climate NI)

Pg.13

Ministerial Advisory Panel on Infrastructure ([Department for Infrastructure](#))

Belfast City Hall ([Pixabay](#))

VCSE Panel ([Belfast City Council](#))

Pg.14

Reading outdoors ([Pixabay](#))

Pg.15

Dunluce Castle ([Pixabay](#))

Piggy bank ([Pixabay](#))

Pg.16

Hands holding seedling in a group ([iStock](#))

Pg.19 & Pg.21

Red fox ([Pixabay](#))

Pg.20

Smartphone ([Pixabay](#))

Social media ([Pixabay](#))

International flags ([Pixabay](#))

Pg.22 & Pg.23

Bee orchid ([Pixabay](#))

Company Registration Number NI034988
HMRC Charity Reference Number XR19598
NI Charities Commission Reference Number NIC101074

Northern Ireland Environment Link

A private company limited by guarantee without share capital - exempt from using "limited"

Summary Financial Statement for the year ended 31st March 2021

Northern Ireland Environment Link

**DIRECTORS' STATEMENT
ON THE SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

The director/trustees present herewith the summary financial statement of Northern Ireland Environment Link for the year ended 31st March 2021 and confirm the following:

- the summary financial statement is only a summary of information derived from the charity's annual accounts;
- the summary financial statement does not contain any additional information derived from the director / trustees' report;
- the full annual accounts, the independent auditor's report and the directors'/trustees' report can be obtained on application to Northern Ireland Environment Link;
- the annual accounts were approved by the Board on 2nd December, 2021

This directors' statement was approved by the board of director/trustees on 2nd December, 2021 and signed on its behalf by:

Stephen Aston

Chair - Board of Directors / Trustees

**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' STATEMENT TO THE MEMBERS
OF NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT LINK**

We have examined the summary financial statement of Northern Ireland Environment Link.

Respective responsibilities of director / trustees and examiner

The director / trustees are responsible for preparing the summary financial statement in accordance with applicable law. Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summary financial statement with the full annual accounts and Director / Trustees' Report, and its compliance with the relevant requirements of Section 427 of the Companies Act 2006 and the regulations made thereunder. We also read the other information contained in the summary financial statement and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summary financial statement.

Basis of opinion

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Opinion

In my opinion the summary financial statement is consistent with the full annual accounts and director / trustees' report of Northern Ireland Environment Link for the year ended 31st March 2021 and complies with the applicable requirements of Section 427 of the Companies Act 2006, and the regulations made thereunder.

Nigel V Skillen FCA

Diamond & Skillen

Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditor

Sinclair House

89/101 Royal Avenue

Belfast

BT1 1FE

2nd December, 2021

Northern Ireland Environment Link

Statement of Financial Activities
for the year ended 31st March 2021

	General Funds <i>(unrestricted)</i> £	Restricted funds £	Totals 2021 £	Totals 2020 £
Income				
<i>from donations and legacies</i>				
• Donations	-	-	0	-
• Subscriptions	3,715	-	3,715	9,067
• Grants	415,838	39,270	455,108	345,808
<i>from charitable activities</i>				
• Event and project income	4,761	-	4,761	64,988
• Members servicing and accommodation	10,004	-	10,004	8,185
<i>from other activities</i>				
• Sundry income	380	-	380	39
• Other servicing and accommodation	153,486	-	153,486	87,348
<i>from investments</i>				
• Investment income	604	-	604	510
Total income	588,788	39,270	628,058	515,945
Expenditure				
<i>on raising funds</i>				
• Advertising / PR costs	-	-	0	-
<i>on charitable activities</i>				
• Employee costs and expenses	387,902	19,400	407,302	338,054
• Premises costs	20,694	671	21,365	26,817
• Travel & training costs	803	245	1,048	18,949
• Administration costs	14,124	1,216	15,340	15,449
• Programme / event costs	95,441	60,254	155,695	112,129
<i>on other items</i>				
• Legal and professional fees	3,165	-	3,165	3,191
• Other expenses	326	-	326	1,572
• Depreciation of assets	-	-	0	-
Total expenditure	522,455	81,786	604,241	516,161
Net (deficit) / income for the year	66,333	(42,516)	23,817	(216)
<i>Transfers</i>				
• Gross transfers between funds	-	-	0	-
Net movement in funds for the year	66,333	(42,516)	23,817	(216)
<i>Reconciliation of funds</i>				
• Fund balances b/fwd at 1st April	286,069	38,059	324,128	324,344
Fund balances c/fwd at 31st March	352,402	(4,457)	347,945	324,128

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities.
All gains and losses in the year are included above.

Northern Ireland Environment Link

**Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet)
as at 31st March 2021**

	2021 £	2020 £
Non Current Assets		
• Tangible assets	-	-
Current Assets		
• Receivables	146,430	220,937
• Cash and cash equivalents	238,711	142,480
	385,141	363,417
Payables: amounts falling due within one year	(37,196)	(39,289)
Net assets	347,945	324,128
Accumulated funds		
<i>Unrestricted income funds:</i>		
• General funds	352,402	286,069
• Other funds	-	-
	352,402	286,069
<i>Restricted income funds:</i>		
• HLF Catalyst Fund	-	13,296
• Open Government Network Pioneer Fund	-	24,016
• Interreg Fund	-	4,097
• TalX Fund	(3,997)	(3,360)
• NIOGN Lottery Fund	(470)	-
• Other projects	10	10
Total funds	347,945	324,128

The summary financial statement was approved by the Board of Directors on 2nd December, 2021 and signed on their behalf by:

Stephen Aston
Chairman of Director / Trustees

Murray Watt
Director/Trustee, Hon Treasurer



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89 Loopland Drive
Belfast
BT6 9DW

Northern Ireland Environment Link is funded by



An Agency within the Department of
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and Rural Affairs**
www.daera-ni.gov.uk



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