

# **DRAFT NORTHERN IRELAND MARINE LITTER STRATEGY 2013-2020**

## **SUMMARY PAPER**

1. This Paper is intended to provide an update to the Good Beach Summit IV. It provides an overview of the strategic goals for a draft Northern Ireland Marine Litter Strategy (the draft strategy), which will be published for consultation by the summer.
2. The draft strategy has been developed through detailed engagement with members of the Good Beach Summit. This engagement is ongoing, in order to finalise the action plan which will accompany the goals within the draft strategy.
3. The proposed aim of the draft strategy is to help realise the vision of “clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas” which is underpinned by developments in marine legislation such as the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the Marine Policy Statement which was adopted in 2011, and the Marine (Northern Ireland) Bill which was introduced in 2012.

### **Marine Strategy Framework Directive**

4. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) is a key driver for addressing the problem of marine and coastal litter in Northern Ireland. The Directive requires Member States to achieve good environmental status (GES) in their marine waters by 2020. Key milestones include:
  - an initial assessment of the environmental status of marine waters and a determination of the characteristics of GES by 2012;
  - establishment of a monitoring programme by 2014; and
  - development of a programme of measures by 2015 which must be implemented by 2016.
5. A joint consultation between Defra, the Northern Ireland Executive, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government on the proposed implementation of the initial stages of MSFD (the initial assessment and determination of the characteristics of GES) was launched on 27 March 2012.

### **Draft Northern Ireland Marine Litter Strategy Objective**

6. It is proposed that the MSFD objective for litter, "that an overall reduction in the number of visible litter items within specified categories from 2010 levels is achieved by 2020", is adopted as the objective for the Northern Ireland Marine Litter Strategy.
7. The draft strategy will be updated to take account of any amendments made to this target as a result of either discussions at an EU level or the outcome of the consultation.

## **Strategic Goals**

8. The draft Northern Ireland Marine Litter Strategy has two proposed strategic goals. Achieving these will help deliver the objective of an overall reduction in the number of visible litter items within specific categories on coastlines by 2020. The goals are:
  - Strategic goal 1 - reducing the levels of additional litter entering the marine environment; and
  - Strategic goal 2 - the removal of litter which is currently present on the coast.
9. The draft strategy recognises that preventative measures to reduce additional litter entering the marine environment are required. Separate sub-strategies or strands have been developed to achieve strategic goal 1. These include:
  - effecting attitudinal change through learning and communication;
  - effective enforcement of existing legislation;
  - provision of accurate and reliable information on the levels and composition of coastal litter to measure our progress in implementing both the strategy and achieving the requirements of MSFD; and
  - provision of a robust coastal infrastructure in terms of waste water treatment and litter receptacles.
10. Summaries of the two proposed strategic goals and associated strands are provided below and details of their aims and objectives can be found in Appendix 1.

## **Strategic Goal 1: Reducing Litter Entering the Marine Environment**

### *Learning and Communication*

11. The draft strategy recognises that the challenge of addressing marine litter levels will require a change in public attitudes and behaviour towards the appropriate disposal of litter. The draft strategy seeks to educate current and future generations in the actions required to safeguard the environment by building on existing measures such as the Eco-schools programme and council-facilitated beach cleans, which encourage children and young people to connect with their environment.
12. A number of initiatives such as the Northern Ireland Water “bag it and bin it” and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board sponsored “leave no trace” campaigns are making an important contribution to changing public attitudes towards dropping litter. Public attitudes to litter are closely intertwined with the concept of civic pride. The Department is supportive of this principle which underpins work being undertaken to provide information highlighting the benefits to individuals, communities, and businesses of keeping their communities and shared spaces tidy and litter free.

13. A new campaign is being developed by the Public Health Agency (PHA) in partnership with Councils, Volunteer Now and TidyNI, with DOE involvement, to further embed the principle of civic pride. It is anticipated that the roll out of this campaign could play an important role in achieving the objectives of this strand of the draft strategy.

#### *Enforcement*

14. Enforcement builds on the message that it is not acceptable to degrade environmental quality by dropping litter. Effective enforcement is necessary to ensure compliance with the law and the protection of the coastal and marine environment. Offenders need to realise the consequences of littering and polluting Northern Ireland's coast, and a consistent and robust approach to enforcement throughout Northern Ireland is essential.

#### *Data*

15. The draft strategy recognises that the current evidence base for the levels of marine and coastal litter is limited, with the result that the linkages between litter properties and the quality of the marine environment are unclear. The draft strategy seeks to build on existing data capture and management measures so we can help deliver appropriate and reliable data. This will inform policy development and help monitor progress towards achieving the objectives of both the draft strategy and the MSFD.

#### *Infrastructure*

16. This strand examines the infrastructure necessary to address the problem of marine and coastal litter. It focuses on capital investment by NI Water in sewerage infrastructure and outfalls, and examines the provision of litter bins on the coast and beach signage.

### **Strategic Goal 2: The removal of Litter from the Coastal Environment**

17. The draft strategy proposes that litter is removed from the coastal environment through a combination of council cleansing programmes and activity by the voluntary and community sector, which builds on existing measures.
18. Developing and supporting a structure to facilitate individuals or groups to actively clean up and maintain their shared spaces is a further strand of the PHA Civic Pride campaign. The roll out of this campaign will play an important role in achieving to objectives of this strand of the draft strategy.

#### **Strategy period**

19. As the draft strategy will form part of the implementation of the MSFD, it is also proposed that the strategy timeframe is closely aligned with that of implementing MSFD, with reviews scheduled for:

- 2014 to coincide with the development of a monitoring programme to measure progress towards the achievement of GES; and
  - 2016 to coincide with the implementation of the programme of measures.
20. It is proposed that strategy will finish in 2020 with the achievement of GES. A review of its effectiveness should then be completed and further measures considered at this stage.

### **Strategy Development: Next Steps**

21. The Department anticipates that the first version of the draft strategy will be available for discussion with stakeholders by mid-May. A series of one-to-one meetings to finalise the draft strategy and proposed action plan will then take place, ahead of the 12-week public consultation.

## Appendix 1: Aims and Objectives

| Strategic Goal | Strand                     | Aim  | Objectives  |
|----------------|----------------------------|--|---|
| 1              | Learning and Communication | To promote awareness that littering has undesirable environmental, economic and social impacts and to achieve a behavioural change and towards the enjoyment and maintenance of cleaner beaches.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To educate current and future generations in the actions required to safeguard the environment.</li> <li>• To engage with Government Departments and Agencies, district councils, businesses and the voluntary and community sector to enhance participation in litter prevention by all stakeholders.</li> <li>• To increase public awareness of the range of punitive measures available to punish those litter offences.</li> </ul> |
| 1              | Enforcement                | To consistently enforce legislation to deter and address littering, fly tipping and poorly maintained private areas of Northern Ireland's beaches and coast.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure that enforcement of legislation in respect of littering is given a higher priority.</li> <li>• To achieve a consistent and robust approach to enforcement between councils.</li> </ul>   |
| 1              | Data and Research          | To provide appropriate and reliable data on the levels and composition of coastal litter which will inform policy development and help monitor progress towards achieving the aim of this strategy and good environmental status in Northern Ireland's seas by 2020. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop an agreed model for data collection for use by all stakeholders.</li> <li>• To obtain accurate data on the levels and composition of beach litter.</li> <li>• To provide data which will help monitor progress towards achieving the strategy objectives and good environmental status by 2020.</li> </ul>  |

| Strategic Goal | Strand         | Aim  | Objectives  |
|----------------|----------------|--|---|
|                |                |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To encourage data sharing between stakeholders.</li> </ul>   |
| 1              | Infrastructure | To deliver cleaner coastal areas through an on-going targeted programme to deliver a modern and cost effective coastal infrastructure.                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-going investment by Northern Ireland Water in a high quality modern waste water treatment to ensure increasing levels of compliance with water quality requirements.</li> <li>• On-going investment by councils in the provision of appropriate litter bins.</li> </ul>   |
| 2              | Removal        | To reduce the levels of waste and litter present in the marine area by the safe removal and appropriate disposal of litter and waste deposited on the coast. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To achieve and sustain a high quality coastal environment by the consistent and thorough implementation of the revised 2011 Statutory Code of Practice on Litter by councils.</li> <li>• To engage with the voluntary and community sector to increase participation in existing measures aimed at removing coastal litter, such as the TidyNI Big Spring Clean Up and the Marine Conservation Society's Beachwatch Big Weekend.</li> <li>• To develop a co-ordinated volunteer programme to support the removal of litter from the coastal and marine environment.</li> </ul> |