

# NIEL Strategy 2024-2026



# NIEL Strategic Review

## The Process



# Steps to a draft strategy

**The NIEL Staff and Board worked together over a number of months to undertake a review and update NIEL's strategy and approach. This has resulted in the strategy that was launched at Environment Week in October 2024. The process involved:**

<b>Reviewing the Existing Strategy</b>	We examined NIEL's existing strategy through a series of exercises and activities to develop a SWOT analysis and understanding of what we wanted to build on and develop. Our current Purpose, Vision and Mission remain relevant and are unchanged.
<b>Identifying the Challenges</b>	NIEL used the initial review and subsequent workshops to draw out the challenges facing NIEL and develop a strategy to counter these. The main challenges identified were: the sheer range of activity leading to a dilution of effort and a loss of focus; the need to consider how we implement change and measure outcomes effectively; the complexity of coordinating our outputs across a wide range of partners and working groups; the need to maintain NIEL's financial resilience.
<b>Initial Series of Workshops</b>	We carried out a series of workshops to develop these themes with the team. Subsequently a 2-day session with the team and Board was held to draw out and distill these themes and develop them into the initial draft strategy.
<b>Input from Key Stakeholders</b>	We shared the draft strategy with a range of stakeholders, including the team, working groups and funders for initial comment and input. Then revised the strategy based on this feedback.
<b>Developing the Approach</b>	We are consistently looking to develop a proactive approach and reflect this in the strategy i.e. NIEL and our members know and understand our positions on our focus areas and we provide consistency across all of our working groups and interactions with key stakeholders in these areas. NIEL sets the agenda rather than reacts to it.
<b>Member Feedback</b>	We shared the draft strategy with our wider membership, gathered feedback and made relevant changes prior to launching the final strategy.



## Purpose Statement

Northern Ireland Environment Link exists to proudly stand up for our environment and the benefits it brings, so that the future is sustainable, secure, and healthy for all.



## Vision Statement

Northern Ireland Environment Link seeks to champion a Valued, Resilient, Healthy Environment.



## Mission Statement

Northern Ireland Environment Link is a collective voice promoting the importance of environmental issues through influencing policy and developing partnerships for a healthy environment.

# What does good look like?

**As part of the process we considered what themes should underpin our strategy. When exploring the strategic goals and objectives this gave us a picture of what good could look like, whilst accepting that not everything can be achieved at once: (NB: these are not ranked)**



**Happy Healthy People**

The need for the human element of a resilient and vibrant environment – we support coexistence between people and the wider environment, understanding that we benefit more from the environment than it benefits from us.



**Informed and educated people**

The importance of people valuing the environment – we support in promoting understanding, respect and care for nature across the whole population.



**Equitable & Accessible**

The Environment is for everyone – we promote fair and transparent access for all, linked to ecosystem services and the wider societal benefits that these bring.



**Energy (Resource)**

The source of our consumption, and an ever-growing demand – we recognise that energy usage will increase, and we must promote and secure energy sources that are not harmful to the environment.



**Biodiverse Ecosystems**

The vibrancy that brings so much benefit and resilience to our world - we contribute towards supporting the recovery of nature and our ecosystems.



**Collaborative Leadership**

The value of working together and playing to our strengths – we know where we add value, promote our members, and fill in the gaps, leading by soft and direct influence, when required, to ultimately achieve our mission.

# What are the risks to success?

**NIEL is not alone in facing this challenge, and there is a wider recognition of the economic, societal and governance challenges present. For NIEL, the following issues and risks were identified as potential obstacles to be addressed in designing a future strategy:**



**Isolation and close-mindedness**

Working with others, both inside and outside of NIEL will be essential, and a lack of collaboration, or empathy with the real and/or perceived challenges of others will only delay action.



**Striving for perfection**

Not letting perfection get in the way of ‘good-enough’, whether in strategy, engagement, or delivery but instead understanding the power of positive action.



**Misleading Solutions**

Either through a lack of data, evidence and understanding, or wilful misdirection, NIEL faces a challenge against current structures that do not lean-in to environmental challenges as strongly as NIEL believes is required.



**Fatigue**

The need for societal change has already and will continue to lead to a fatigue within NIEL, its membership and the wider sector. Finding areas of progress, championing these, and coordinating activities across every supporter will spread the burden and galvanise action.



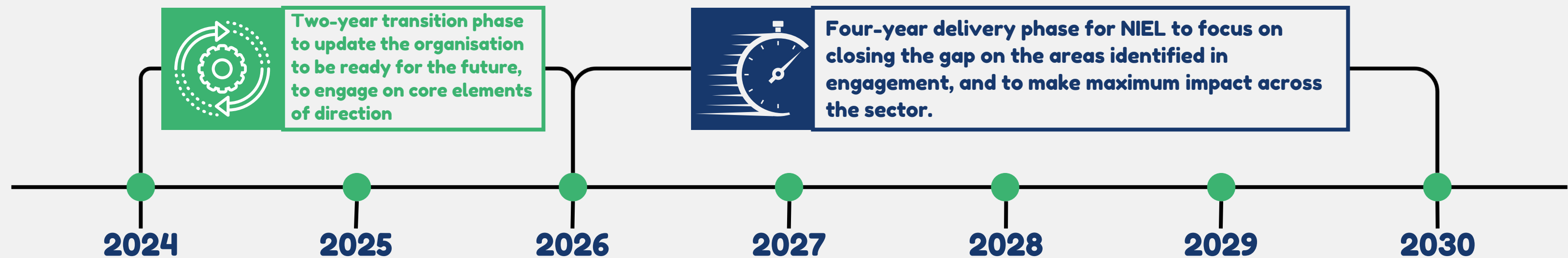
**Following the money**

Current funding for NIEL, and wider environmental action is not optimised and delivering programmes for the financial return will act as a constant distraction from the bigger mission.

# The Time for Change

It is proposed that a stepped approach is taken for NIEL to align strategy and execution together in a measured way that promotes rapid progress in the right direction.

To make sure this happens, NIEL will go through a two-year transition period to set-up the enablers, engage with the membership, and fully realise its potential to advocate and deliver the change needed to create a Valued, Resilient, Healthy Environment.



# Our Strategy



Northern Ireland Environment Link exists to proudly stand up for our environment, and the benefits it brings so that the future is sustainable, secure, and healthy for all.

# A Valued, Resilient, Healthy Environment

To be a collective voice promoting the importance of environmental issues through influencing policy and developing partnerships for a healthy environment

## Environmental Action Areas (Policy Focus)



Water: Source to Sea



Landscapes, Land Use & Agriculture



Nature Recovery



Climate Crisis



Planning & Sustainability

## Strategic Priorities



Influence Policy Makers



Enable the Sector



Deliver Action



Commercial Development Delivery

## Strategic & Tactical Enablers



NIEL Climate Services



Communications



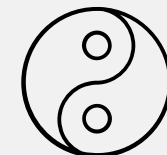
Strengthened Mandate



Engaged Membership



Analytics



EDI&SDGs

# A Strategy for NIEL (2024-2026)

## Strategic Priorities

### INFLUENCE POLICY MAKERS

- 5 Key areas and 10 sub-bullets, agreed and understood by all staff, trustees and members.
- Develop an advocacy plan in partnership with sector leaders to create coherent media and government responses and undertake planned engagement.
- Further develop North-South and East-West relationships to deliver against our priority areas.
- Encourage landscape scale interventions that cut across our priority areas

### ENABLE THE SECTOR

- Ensure continued buy-in from the sector on our 5 key policy areas.
- Develop improved remit and accountability for the working groups as useful and engaging forums for the sector.
- Work to build long-term (formal) partnerships with the agricultural sector, developed around a clear mutual benefit for both the economic and environmental benefits that nature friendly farming can bring.
- Develop a roadmap to deliver training and education to the sector.
- Advocate to maintain the sectors funding at adequate and required levels

### DELIVER ACTION

- Develop NIEL Climate Services to deliver meaningful change in NI as a wholly owned subsidiary of NIEL.
- Develop a cohesive vision, backed-up with a plan to help shape the future of freshwater management.
- Develop a NI-Wide Land Use plan in coordination and collaboration with the wider sector and major land-owning organisations
- Explore potential structures and governance mechanisms to support action against our Environmental Action Areas

### COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY

- Develop & structure NIEL Climate Services to be a successful surplus generating organisation
- Investigate further potential opportunities to blend commercial delivery and demonstrative action

# A Strategy for NIEL

## Strategic & Tactical Enablers



**Adapt the structures of Climate Team to best maximise the commercial potential of this business unit. Explore potential and scope for a similar approach in other areas.**



**Hire a Strategic Communications agency or Employee to deliver a communications strategy for NIEL.**



**Review the membership structure to ensure that NIEL's aims are not diluted, but that the mandate of NIEL may increase to represent further interests in the benefit of the Environment.**



**Implement a robust system for monitoring and reporting on the impact of NIEL's work, strategy, and desired outcomes.**



**Review the current organisational structure in line with the new strategy and ensure resource, job descriptions, and team members are meeting the new needs for the future.**



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