



Northern Ireland  
**environment  
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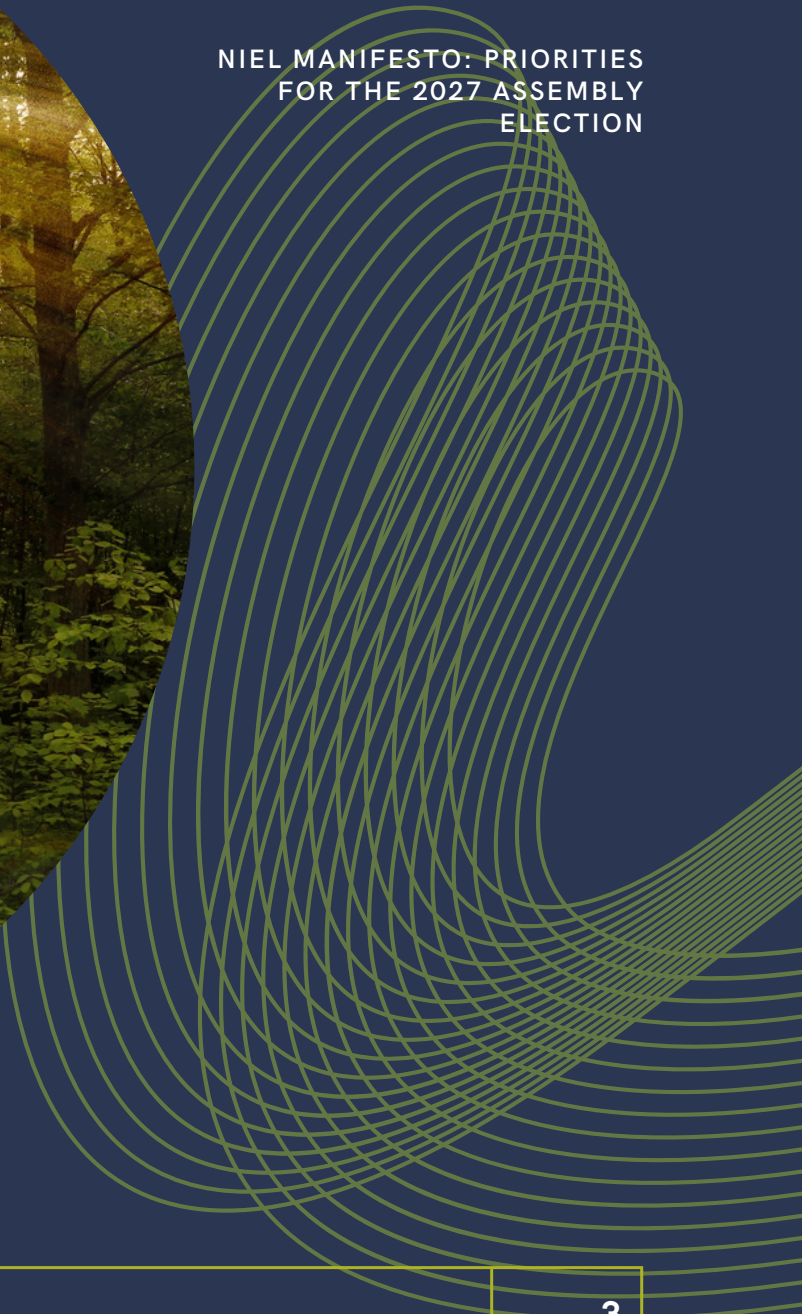
FEBRUARY 2026

# NIEL MANIFESTO: PRIORITIES FOR THE 2027 ASSEMBLY ELECTION

Northern Ireland  
Environment Link



SCAN TO VIEW OUR FULL MANIFESTO



<b>About</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Nature &amp; Environment</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Climate Action &amp; Environmental Governance</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>People &amp; Well-being</b>	<b>6</b>

# NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT LINK

## ABOUT

### Introduction

Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) is the networking and forum body for voluntary organisations working to protect Northern Ireland's natural and built environment. Our 55 Full Members (environmental NGOs) represent 190,000 individuals, attract 1.5m visitors per annum and have an annual turnover of over £65 million in NI.

This manifesto sets out what NIEL members believe needs to be done to ensure Northern Ireland's environment is valued, resilient, and healthy for future generations.

Through bold action and strategic collaboration, we seek commitment from policymakers, businesses, and communities to restore nature, tackle climate change, and ensure responsible management of our land and resources.

For ease of reading these priorities have been presented under three main headings, namely, "Nature & Environment", "Climate Action & Environmental Governance" and "People & Wellbeing".

These asks align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

NIEL believes that the NI Executive should sign up to this global approach to sustainability and formally commit to meeting the SDGs through future strategic policies and legislation, for example, in future Programmes for Government (PfG).

The challenge may seem overwhelming, but we know what the solutions are. By protecting and restoring our natural environment, we can build resilience against climate change, support biodiversity, strengthen our economy, and improve the wellbeing of communities across Northern Ireland. This manifesto outlines key actions that will set us on the path to a future where our environment is truly valued, resilient, and healthy, securing lasting benefits for people, nature, climate, and the economy for generations to come.



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CONTACT:  +447769475742

 [info@nienvironmentlink.org](mailto:info@nienvironmentlink.org)

# NATURE & ENVIRONMENT



## Nature Recovery

Deliver on the commitment to have 30% of our land and seas managed for nature conservation by 2030 – the 30 x 30 target.

Set clear targets in law for the restoration of nature through a Nature Recovery Strategy, in particular, degraded ecosystems such as wetlands, and ancient woodlands in line with other complimentary policies and advice such as that from the UK CCC.



## Sustainable Land Management

Long-term (permanent) funding based on public money for public goods which supports farmers to adopt sustainable practices and nature-based solutions.

Development and implementation of a co-designed land use strategy.



## Marine Conservation

Better implementation and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and enforcement of conservation laws.

Development and implementation of an updated Marine Plan.



## Sustainable Freshwater Management

Mainstreaming nature-based solutions to cut nutrient pollution and improve climate resilience.

Enhancing catchment-scale approaches to wetland and river restoration.

A funded plan to upgrade water and sewage systems to improve water quality and ensure sustainable water use.

# CLIMATE ACTION & ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE



## Environmental Governance

Strengthened environmental regulations and enforcement through an independent Environmental Protection Agency.

Implementation of environmental principles including the precautionary principle and polluter pays principle, as outlined in DAERA's Environmental Policy Principles consultation in 2025.

Greater transparency and public participation in environmental decision-making, in line with the Aarhus principles.



## Climate Action

Full and timely implementation of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

To deliver on adaptation and mitigation measures that will protect and enhance biodiversity and nature recovery.



## Greater Cross-Border, GB, and International Cooperation

Strengthening environmental cooperation and partnerships, especially within the UK and Ireland, to achieve greater legal and policy alignment on land and in the sea.

Greater cooperation in biosecurity between NI and ROI as a single biogeographical unit.

Promotion of knowledge exchange and best practices between NI and other nations.

# PEOPLE & WELL-BEING



## Sustainable Planning & Infrastructure

Improved blue and green infrastructure for the benefit of people and nature.

Increased investment in low and/or zero-carbon sustainable mass transport including active travel.

Reform of planning to ensure there is a specific aim to further sustainable development.



## Improved Environmental Education

Embed Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), including outdoor learning, within national education policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessment.

Investment in teacher education and support resources to effectively implement ESD in all schools.

Strategic planning and implementation of further education for employment in nature and the environment.



## Updated Landscape Legislation and Policy for Living, Healthy and Resilient Landscapes

New landscape legislation and policies that support effective multi-partner, area-based approaches to landscape management supporting nature recovery, climate action, sustainable communities, and health and wellbeing through recreation and access to the natural environment.