

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 2

IMPROVING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT: NORTHERN IRELAND

PART 1

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Environmental improvement plans

- 1 (1) The Department must prepare an environmental improvement plan.
- (2) An “environmental improvement plan” is a plan for significantly improving the natural environment.
- (3) The plan may—
 - (a) relate to a period specified in the plan, or
 - (b) be of no specified duration.
- (4) An environmental improvement plan must set out—
 - (a) the steps that the Department intends to take to improve the natural environment, and
 - (b) any steps that any other Northern Ireland department intends to take to improve the natural environment.
- (5) It may also set out steps that any Northern Ireland department intends to take to improve people’s enjoyment of the natural environment (and if it does so references in this Schedule to improving the natural environment, in relation to that plan, include improving people’s enjoyment of it).
- (6) In preparing an environmental improvement plan, the Department must consult such other Northern Ireland departments as it considers appropriate.
- (7) The Department must lay before the Northern Ireland Assembly, and publish, an environmental improvement plan before the end of the 12 month period beginning with the day on which this paragraph comes into force.
- (8) References in this Schedule to the current environmental improvement plan are to the environmental improvement plan for the time being in effect.

Annual reports on environmental improvement plans

- 2 (1) The Department must prepare annual reports on the implementation of the current environmental improvement plan.
- (2) An annual report must—

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- (a) describe what has been done, in the period to which the report relates, to implement the environmental improvement plan, and
 - (b) consider, having regard to any data obtained under paragraph 5, whether the natural environment has, or particular aspects of it have, improved during that period.
- (3) Annual reports on an environmental improvement plan must relate to—
- (a) the 12 month period beginning with the day on which the plan is published, and
 - (b) each subsequent 12 month period.
- (4) An annual report must be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly before the end of the 4 month period beginning immediately after the last day of the period to which the report relates.
- (5) The Department must publish annual reports laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under this paragraph.

Reviewing and revising environmental improvement plans

- 3 (1) The Department must—
- (a) review the current environmental improvement plan in accordance with this paragraph, and
 - (b) if the Department considers it appropriate as a result of the review, revise the plan.
- (2) The first review of an environmental improvement plan must be completed before the end of the 5 year period beginning with—
- (a) if it is the first environmental improvement plan, the day on which it is published, and
 - (b) otherwise, the day on which it replaces the previous plan (see paragraph 4(6)).
- (3) Subsequent reviews of an environmental improvement plan must be completed before the end of the 5 year period beginning with the day on which the previous review was completed.
- (4) In reviewing an environmental improvement plan, the Department must—
- (a) consider what has been done to implement the plan in the period since it was published or (if it has been reviewed before) last reviewed,
 - (b) consider whether, having regard to data obtained under paragraph 5, the natural environment has, or particular aspects of it have, improved during that period, and
 - (c) consider whether any Northern Ireland department should take further or different steps to improve the natural environment (compared to those set out in the plan).
- (5) In reviewing and revising an environmental improvement plan, the Department must consult such other Northern Ireland departments as it considers appropriate.
- (6) If as a result of a review the Department considers it appropriate to revise the plan, the Department must lay before the Northern Ireland Assembly—
- (a) a revised environmental improvement plan, and

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- (b) a statement explaining the revisions and the reasons for them.
- (7) If as a result of a review the Department does not consider it appropriate to revise the plan, the Department must lay before the Northern Ireland Assembly a statement explaining that and the reasons for it.
- (8) The Department must publish the documents laid under sub-paragraph (6) or (7).
- (9) A review is completed when the Department has laid and published the documents mentioned in sub-paragraph (6) or (7).
- (10) References in this Schedule to an environmental improvement plan include a revised environmental improvement plan.

Renewing environmental improvement plans

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- (1) This paragraph applies where an environmental improvement plan relates to a period specified in the plan.
 - (2) Before the end of the period to which the environmental improvement plan (the “old plan”) relates, the Department must prepare a new environmental improvement plan (the “new plan”).
 - (3) If the new plan relates to a period specified in the plan, that period must begin no later than immediately after the end of the period to which the old plan relates.
 - (4) In preparing the new plan the Department must—
 - (a) consider what has been done to implement the old plan,
 - (b) consider whether, having regard to data obtained under paragraph 5, the natural environment has improved since the beginning of the period to which the old plan relates,
 - (c) consider whether any Northern Ireland department should take further or different steps to improve the natural environment (compared to those set out in the old plan) after the end of that period, and
 - (d) consult such other Northern Ireland departments as it considers appropriate.
 - (5) At or before the end of the period to which the old plan relates the Department must lay before the Northern Ireland Assembly, and publish, the new plan.
 - (6) The new plan replaces the old plan when—
 - (a) it has been laid and published, and
 - (b) if it relates to a period specified in the new plan, that period has begun.

Environmental monitoring

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- (1) The Department must make arrangements for obtaining such data about the natural environment as the Department considers appropriate for the purpose of monitoring whether the natural environment is, or particular aspects of it are, improving in accordance with the current environmental improvement plan.
 - (2) The Department must lay before the Northern Ireland Assembly, and publish, a statement setting out the kinds of data to be obtained under sub-paragraph (1).
 - (3) The first statement must be laid before the end of the 4 month period beginning with the day on which this paragraph comes into force.

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- (4) The Department may revise the statement at any time (and sub-paragraph (2) applies to any revised statement).
- (5) The Department must publish any data obtained under sub-paragraph (1).