

Local Development Plan – Preparatory Studies: Discussion Paper 7: The Coast	25th May 2016
Planning Committee	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Outcome
Leader and Champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Elected Members will provide civic leadership to our citizens, working to promote the Borough as an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit.
Protect the environment in which we live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All environments in the area will benefit from pro-active decision making which protects the natural features, characteristics and integrity of the Borough; • Our citizens will be given the maximum opportunity to enjoy our natural environments; and • Our natural assets will be carefully managed to generate economic and social returns without compromising their sustainability for future generations.
Resilient Healthy and Engaged Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will work to support healthy lifestyle choices for all citizens. • Citizens will have access to Council recreational facilities and protected natural environments which help them to develop their physical, emotional and cognitive health.
Lead Officer	Sharon Mulhern
Cost:	N/A

1.0 Background

1.1 This is the eighth topic-related preparatory paper presented to Members, and relates to The Coast.

1.2 The purpose of this paper is to:

- Set out the existing Regional Strategic Objectives that relate to the coast and coastal development;

- Highlight the issue of coastal flooding and erosion and the impacts of storms, erosion and flooding on development in coastal areas;
- Identify other organisations and bodies that have an active interest, involvement or stake in the coastline and its management; and
- Advise of the preparation of a Northern Ireland wide Marine Plan.

1.3 The information presented is factual in nature and is accompanied by maps, intended as a visual aid.

2.0 Financial Implications

2.1 None

3.0 Other Implications

3.1 None

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that Members endorse the use of the information contained within this paper in the preparation of the Local Development Plan.

Appendix 1

Discussion Paper 8: The Coast

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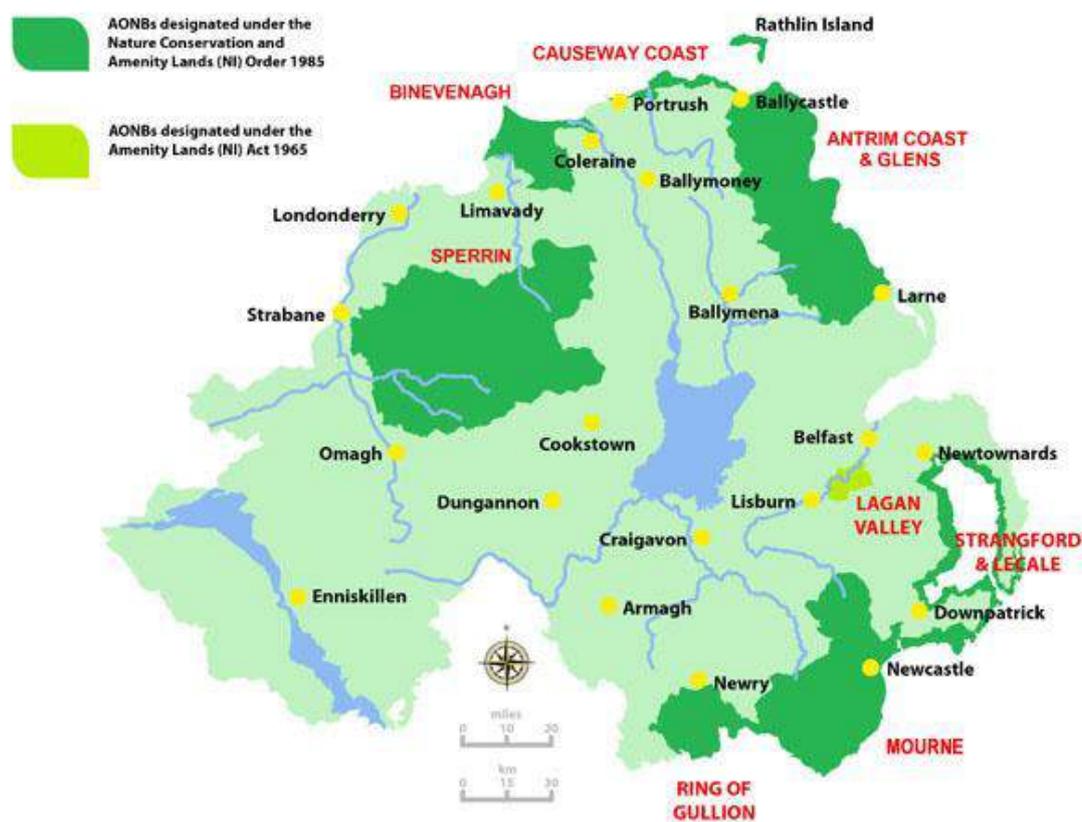
The Giant's Causeway

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area has a 237 km coastline, the longest coastline of any council area in Northern Ireland. The Borough's coast is largely within three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Binevenagh, Causeway Coast and The Antrim Coast and Glens. Much of the Borough's attractive coastline is free from development and supports economic prosperity as a strong visitor attraction in itself and through associated coastal activities. Coastal settlements benefit from their location in terms of employment opportunities through tourism, recreation and the fishing industry.



Map showing large areas of the North Coast designated as AONBs.

- 1.2 The landscape quality of the area's coastline is also covered by a number of international and national natural conservation designations such as Ramsars, Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs), as detailed within the previous Discussion Paper 2: Environment, presented to the Planning Committee in September 2015.
- 1.3 The purpose of this paper is to:
- Set out the existing Regional Strategic Objectives that relate to the coast and coastal development;
 - Highlight the issue of coastal flooding and erosion and the impacts of storms, erosion and flooding on development in coastal areas; and

- Identify other organisations and bodies that have an active interest, involvement or stake in the coastline and its management.
- Advise of the preparation of a Northern Ireland wide Marine Plan.

1.4 The paper, by way of example, explores the attributes of two protected areas in the Borough to relate regional criteria to a local context:

- The designated Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI); Lough Foyle (SPA); and Magilligan SAC, with a 7 mile long beach backed by plant and wildlife rich Dune ecosystem.
- A Local Landscape Policy Area at Portrush which leaves an undeveloped corridor of land between the sea and the Development Limit shown in the Northern Area Plan 2016.

2.0 Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland – Coastal Development.

2.1 The SPPS must be taken into account in the preparation of new Local Development Plans (LDPs) and is material in decisions on individual planning applications and appeals. The SPPS provides a policy framework for councils to prepare specific policies for their LDPs. The SPPS highlights that:

‘Northern Ireland is valued for its beautiful and relatively unspoilt coast including well known features such as the Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast, Benone Strand, Antrim Coast Road, Strangford Lough and the Mourne Coast.’

(Para 6.31, pg 31)

2.2 The SPPS recognises the need to protect Northern Ireland’s unique coastal landscapes, much of which are designated within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The SPPS advises that:

‘The RDS recognises that the coastal areas need to be protected from coastal squeeze, to safeguard against loss of distinctive habitats, and to help adaption to climate change, and accordingly states the landscape setting of features should also be conserved.’

(Para 6.33, pg 45)

‘The aim of the SPPS in relation to the coast is to protect the undeveloped coast from inappropriate development, consistent with the RDS; and to support the sensitive enhancement and regeneration of the developed coast largely within coastal settlements.’

(para 6.34, pg 45)

2.3 The SPPS defines the developed coast as existing settlements and existing major developments such as ports, isolated industrial units and power stations. The SPPS provides two Regional Strategic Objectives for coastal development:

- 1** To conserve the natural character and landscape of the undeveloped coast and to protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development; and

- 2 To facilitate appropriate development in coastal settlements and other parts of the developed coastline (subject to all other relevant planning policies) that contributes to a sustainable economy and which is sensitive to its coastal location.

(para 6.35, pg 45)



Mussenden Temple to the west of Castlerock. The National Trust has a significant number of properties along the Borough's coastline. The SPPS seeks to protect the setting of coastal heritage features from overdevelopment.

2.4 The following Strategic Policy must be taken into account in the preparation of LDPs:

- The undeveloped coast will rarely be an appropriate location for new development. Where new development requires a coastal location, it must normally be directed into coastal settlements and other parts of the developed coast.
- In dealing with proposals that require a coastal location, planning authorities must carefully assess the need for such development, its benefits for the local or regional economy and potential impacts on the environment. Development should only be permitted on the undeveloped coast where the proposal is of such national or regional importance as to outweigh any potential detrimental impact on the coastal environment and where there is no feasible alternative site within an existing urban area in the locality.
- Within the developed coast, areas of amenity value (such as parks, outdoor sports/ play areas and coastal walkways) and areas or features designated for their importance to the archaeological, built or natural heritage, should be protected from inappropriate development.

- Within the developed coast there will be a presumption in favour of development that promotes the enhancement and regeneration of urban waterfronts.
- In considering development proposals within the developed or undeveloped coast, attention must be paid to the retention of existing public accesses and coastal walkways. Development which would result in the closure of existing access points or the severing of routes will normally only be acceptable where a suitable alternative is provided. Proposals to extend access to the coastline or for the provision of associated facilities such as pathways or picnic areas, should not impact adversely on the nature conservation archaeological/ built heritage, geological or landscape value of the area.
- Development will not be permitted in areas of the coast known to be at risk from flooding, coastal erosion, or land instability.

(Para 6.37 - 6.42, pg 46)

2.5 Council's Coast and Countryside Team is developing a programme of review of coastal paths to consider additional access where appropriate and how existing access is managed (increasing demand from participation events along the coast rather than the passive outdoor recreation user).



Recent development adjacent Portstewart Harbour. Development proposals should be appropriate to their location and complement the existing character of the setting. Very few locations in the Borough would suit high density proposals.

2.6 The SPPS advises that LDPs should identify urban waterfronts within coastal settlements where there are opportunities for enhancement and regeneration through new

development. Development should be sited on the landward boundary of the settlement away from the coastal fringe where there would be adverse environmental and visual impacts and greater risk from the sea.

2.7 The SPPS advises the following areas are incompatible with development and LDPs will identify to protect:

- Areas of amenity and landscape value,
- Areas of nature conservation interest,
- Areas of archaeological, heritage/ historic importance,
- Public access along the coast should be protected, and
- Areas at risk from flooding, coastal erosion, or land instability.



The SPPS seeks to protect heritage features such as the Fisherman's Cottage and the coastal path above which are within a Local Landscape Policy Area (PTL 07) and outside the development limits for Portstewart.

2.8 The SPPS advises that the LDP should identify flooding risk in coastal areas. Some development requires a coastal location, such as marinas and recreational projects, but should avoid the sensitive portions of the coastline and be appropriate in scale and design whilst maintaining access and public amenity views of the coast. The Department of the Environment is currently preparing a Marine Plan which is expected to align with the Council's LDPs.



Long term coastal erosion can affect apparently stable portions of the coast. A coach and horse was once able to pass between Mussendun temple and the cliff edge. The temple is now at the cliff edge and has been underpinned. Rocks on the rail line embankment dissipate wave energy. The above portion of the coastline is mapped as stable (see map at Appendix 1).

3.0 Coastal Flooding and Erosion.

3.1 Coasts are likely to be Northern Ireland's most dynamic changing physical environment. Coastal areas are subject to great forces from the combination of wave action, storms and high tides. These combination of forces, which are occurring more frequently, can damage property and defences putting lives at risk and are costly to repair. Areas which are known to be at risk from the forces of the sea are not places for housing or commercial property. The SPPS recognizes that the sea is a source of intermittent flooding and that climate change is expected to increase flood risk with unknown implications for coastal communities. The SPPS advises that the planning system should help to mitigate and adapt to climate change by:

'avoiding development in areas with increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change, particularly areas at significant risk from flooding, landslip and coastal erosion and highly exposed sites at significant risk from impacts of storms'

(Para 3.13, pg 31)

- 3.2 The European Union Floods Directive which entered into force on 26 November 2007, identifies the role of the planning system in managing development so as to reduce the risks and impacts of flooding. The Directive underlines the importance of preventing development in flood prone areas. The Directive requires member states to produce mapping to identify areas at risk from flooding. Although there are well developed Northern Ireland wide maps for river flooding, detailed maps to show coastal areas that flood are lacking, with only a few long term studies in some coastal locations.
- 3.3 Many open spaces in and around settlements have remained undeveloped historically as they are areas which have been known to be at risk from flooding or erosion. It is also increasingly understood that manmade sea defences may be ineffective in the long term and may place pressure on other parts of the coast. The cost of repairing sea defences through time can also outweigh the cost of what is being protected.



Storm damage and coastal erosion is an issue in the Borough. This area has been inundated by the sea during storms. The small café in the centre of the picture has been damaged by rocks carried by storm waves. Development should avoid land known to be susceptible to coastal erosion and storm damage.



The stable rocky platforms may take some of the force out of waves during storms, however, this long established property may be susceptible to damage where high tides and high wind speeds combine.

- 3.4 The Borough's largely north facing coast is subject to high energy forces from the Atlantic with the east coast subject to medium forces. Aggradation is occurring at certain points along the beach at Benone Strand and at Magilligan Point (to the east of the Point). However, there is clear erosion at Magilligan Point adjacent to the ferry terminal and there are issues at Downhill at certain times of the year. The long shore drift is predominantly from west to east at this site so there is a natural movement of material within this system.
- 3.5 The Martello Tower at Magilligan was, at one time, on the shore's edge and is now a significant distance inland where the beach is in an 'Erosion versus Deposition' process that is still not understood. In contrast, the shoreline just to the south along Lough Foyle is subject to erosion north of the of the River Roe estuary. The seawall to the south of the River Roe keeps Lough Foyle from inundating a large area of farmland which is at or below sea level. Some stretches of the Borough's coastline are stable with tougher rocks such as Basalt in cliffs and coastal rock platforms providing resistant to the actions of the sea, with the exception of softer beaches between Portstewart to Waterfoot (see Appendix 1).
- 3.6 Extensive erosion has occurred at West Bay, East Strand and most notably White Rocks, Portrush. Whilst West Bay and East Strand have demonstrated recovery some challenges remain around maintaining public access to White Rocks.



The Martello Tower at Magilligan Point, once at the shoreline is now a significant distance from the shore. Accumulations of sediment extend the Point as a likely result of losses elsewhere along the coast.

- 3.7 Beaches can be impacted or lost by built structures/ coastal defence works through beach lowering which can occur in front of sea walls. The Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust's "Beach Management Strategy" was developed by Heritage Trust in partnership with Council staff. The Coastal Research Unit at UU Coleraine was also instrumental in its development. The Strategy advises on the role of the beach as a sea defence:

'Beaches survive in the hostile marine environment by their ability to change shape. This natural buffering of storm waves makes beaches excellent natural defences. It is vital that no human structure or activity interferes with this ability'

(objective 4, pg 6)

'It is important that they are free to fluctuate in response to storms and sea level rise. Steps should be taken to prevent any construction that would impede the natural response of the beach'

(objective 2, pg 6)

- 3.8 Built seawall structures prevent the natural shapeshifting ability of beaches to adjust to storms and cuts the vital dune beach exchange. At some locations around the UK, unsuitable coastal developments with sea defences have often been followed by coastal erosion.



Portstewart Strand backed by dunes provide a natural buffer to storms dispersing the energy and force of waves against the shelving platform of the beach. This Beach is managed by the National Trust.

3.9 The National Trust's Approach

3.10 The National Trust has a significant number of properties along the Borough's coastline. The Trust has adopted an approach which works with nature in allowing areas of the coastline to be shaped by the sea and moving away from the engineered solutions to coastal erosion. St Anne's Point near Mount Stewart, Co Down, is an example of this approach where sea defences were breached and a salt marsh created. The Trust's, *Shifting Shores – Playing Our Part at the Coast 2015*, acknowledges that,

'For many years the default response to flooding and erosion along the coast has been to 'hold the line' and build our way out of trouble. In some places defence is of course necessary, but increasingly we must view adaptation as having an equal role in the long term health of the coastline' (pg 6)

3.11 The Shifting Shores Seminar Summary Report 2016, organised by the National Trust, highlighted the need for:

- coastal monitoring for the whole of Northern Ireland and a Coastal Monitoring Observatory for Northern Ireland which operate in other regions of the UK studying coastal erosion.
- Develop Northern Ireland wide coastal erosion risk mapping to complement the existing river flood risk mapping.

- A coastal planning strategy for living at the coast with a review of permitted development rights.
- A single government department taking ownership of coastal erosion and change, combining both flood and erosion management.
- The report adds that the Local Development Plan process should start a public debate regarding coastal change.



Parts of the Spanish coast are degraded by overzealous development. Here at La Manga, this sand spit was originally backed by dunes. Modern development is under threat from the sea and has destroyed the dunes.

3.12 With regard to long term planning for coastal erosion, the National Trust's Shifting Shores – Playing Our Part, provides the following advice for Northern Ireland;

- Establish shoreline plans which involve Central Government, local councils and all coastal stakeholders to ensure sustainable adaptive management of the coast.
- Ensure Local Development Plans identify where development may be permitted in the coastal zone, to prevent future developments in erosion or flood risk prone areas.
- Develop a coastal adaptation toolkit for use by local councils and communities.

(pg 17)

3.13 North Norfolk District Council Guidance

- 3.14 North Norfolk District Council has a fast eroding coastline. It has produced Development Control guidance on what is considered appropriate within the Coastal Erosion Constraint Area as detailed in; Development and Coastal Erosion – North Norfolk Development Control guidance. This Council has adopted a presumption against proposed commercial and residential development beside the sea in areas which are at risk from coastal erosion. Due to the speed of erosion on parts of the North Norfolk coastline, relocation of existing at risk property to safer inland sites is considered appropriate in some cases.



New development is best placed a safe distance from the shoreline. The rocky foreshore above gives some resistance to storm waves for Portsetwart.

4.0 Marine Planning and Proposed Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ's)

- 4.1 Land and sea areas have two separate planning systems which overlap in the area between low tide and high tide on the foreshore known as the Intertidal Area. The following Legislation and policy have been introduced since 2009, to ensure that marine activities and resources are planned and managed in a sustainable manner:

- UK Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA) 2009
- UK Marine Strategy Regulation 2010
- UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) 2011

- The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013

4.2 The Marine Policy Statement (MPS) is the framework for preparing Marine Plans and making decisions affecting the sea. The Department of the Environment (DOE) is currently preparing a Northern Ireland wide Marine Plan which will cover offshore and inshore areas will overlap with planning functions at intertidal areas. Councils making planning or enforcement decisions that may impact the marine area are required to do so in accordance with the MPS and the Marine Plan. The provisions within the MPS will be material considerations for coastal development proposal within the Borough.

4.3 The Marine team has advised that consultation is required on development proposals within 100 metres inland from the sea and 100 metres inland from tidal rivers that may impact the marine environment. As an example, the River Bann is tidal up to the Cutts which is approximately 7 miles inland from the Bar Mouth. The Marine team has advised that the Harbour Porpoise is a sea mammal species which may be impacted upon by on shore development, through the noise of driving piles on land which may disturb the porpoise.



The tidal influence of the River Bann extends to the Cutts to the south of Coleraine some 7 miles inland where seal and otter hunt for fish at this bottleneck in the river.

4.4 The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) makes provisions for Marine Conservation Zones in Northern Ireland's marine area. As advised to Members at the Planning Committee on the 24th February 2016, of the four proposed around Northern Ireland two are off the Borough's Coastline:

- Rathlin Island.

- Part of Red Bay Waterfoot.

4.5 The MCZs are proposed for habitats, particular species and geological formations. The Proposed MCZs will provide benefits for wildlife and people as the conservation of the seagrass beds at Waterfoot will provide a measure of coastal protection through the dissipation of wave energy regulating coastal erosion whilst providing a nursery for fish species.



Magilligan Point lies at the western edge of one of the most extensive sand dune systems in the UK and Ireland.

5.0 An Extensive Dune System and Beach on the North Coast – Magilligan Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)

5.1 A significant number of the Borough's sites designated for Natural Heritage and Geology are located along the coast. Some of these sites have features which are recognised as internationally important. These sites cover large portions of the coast and include a mix of habitats. As an example, Magilligan SAC and ASSI extends for approximately 9 miles of coastline between Mussendun Temple and Lough Foyle (at its mouth), with a 7 mile beach backed by dune systems; some of the best examples in Northern Ireland. Magilligan SAC/ASSI adjoins Lough Foyle Ramsar site and Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for internationally important numbers of overwintering birds. These sites form part of a wider European Network of natural sites designated under Natura 2000 which can be viewed at: <http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/>. The Importance of Magilligan SAC/ASSI lies in its

extent and largely unaltered nature, the wide range of plant and animal communities present, and the number of rare plant species. Magilligan has the highest number of dune grassland and dune slack plant communities in Northern Ireland.

- 5.2 Notable insect species and communities also occur here, particularly in the dune slacks. The site is one of the best on the North Coast for butterflies with species including the Grayling and Dark Green Fritillary typically found in dune lands but scarce elsewhere in Northern Ireland. The site hosts moth species found in only a few other sites in Northern Ireland and the Small Eggar moth is only recorded at this site. The tiny Scarce Crimson and Gold moth, one of the UK's rarest moths, is present in the heart of a military training area of the ASSI, according to a 2013 survey which reported a healthy population. The survey team also noted a large area of suitable habitat, making Magilligan Training Centre one of the strongholds for this species. In the UK the species has declined and is restricted to a few locations only including the North coast's Dunes and a single site on the Isle of Man.



The Dark Green Fritillary butterfly (above) and the rare Scarce Crimson and Gold Moth are associated with the dune lands at Magilligan SAC, ASSI. In high summer the dunes are ablaze with wild flowers and invertebrates. The valleys, known as slacks, between the dunes provide warm, sheltered havens for butterflies and moths.

- 5.3 The beach and dune land system is an internationally recognised beach cusate foreland. It is the largest and most intensively studied coastal accumulation site in Ireland and amongst the top such localities in Europe. Birds associated with the site include the great northern diver, red-throated diver, black guillemot off the coast and wintering sanderling on the beach. Little Tern have previously bred at Magilligan Point which has suitable nesting habitat for this species. The beach is popular in summer but is becoming increasingly busy throughout the year. Public access is concentrated around Benone and Downhill with Magilligan Point also playing a role. Council is endeavouring to manage this site (and others) in a way that helps keep the site in favourable condition whilst also permitting appropriate public access.



A summer visitor to the UK and Ireland, the smallest tern species the Little Tern has in the past nested at Magilligan.

5.4 Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust

5.5 Magilligan is one of many beach and dune land systems whose importance to wildlife and the economy cannot be underestimated. The Causeway Coast and Glens Beach Management Strategy (2013) produced by Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, underlines the value of beaches:

'Beaches are important ecosystems in their own right. It is important that their biodiversity and ecosystem functioning is preserved. Many creatures live in or on the beach or utilise it at critical stages of their life cycle. Many of these (e.g. angling species) have additional value to humans. The importance of beaches and dunes is often recognised in conservation designations, but even outside formally designated sites, beach ecosystems should be valued and protected.' (pg 8)

5.6 Development that would affect natural processes of beaches should be avoided. The Causeway Coast and Glens Beach Management Strategy (2013), advises, in one of its objectives, in relation to the aim of maintaining and enhancing the conservation interest of beaches:

'Ensure that new development or activity does not compromise the conservation quality of the beach. Anything that damages the physical integrity of the beach will also damage its conservation value and should be avoided. Potentially damaging physical interventions include seawall, jetties, pipelines, car parks, while some new activities may require careful management.' (pg 9)

5.7 The European tier SAC designation for Magilligan is an international designation and the ASSI is a national designation for the site. The SPPS advises regarding international designations:

‘Development proposals are restricted where they are likely to impact upon the integrity of European or Ramsar sites as these are afforded the highest form of statutory protection. Such designations should be identified in the LDP.’

(para 6.175, pg 81)

5.8 New Development in Designated Areas

5.9 New visitor facilities on the coast are most appropriate when they are low key, sensitive to, and designed to be in keeping with the designated status of the site. The RSPB’s Rathlin Island Seabird Centre is situated adjacent to Rathlin Island SPA. The Seabird Centre is a successful development which complements the site whilst providing information and facilities for visitors who contribute to the island’s economy. There are also new low key additions at Lough Foyle’s Ramsar site to the south of Magilligan where a footbridge has improved visitor access and provision of interpretation of the site adds to an appreciation of the importance of the site to wild birds.



The visitor centre at West Light Seabird Centre has been extended and upgraded providing a positive example of visitor facilities complementing an adjacent designated site without compromising the attributes of the site.

6.0 The Northern Area Plan 2016

6.1 The Northern Area Plan 2016 has policies and land use zonings which are specific to the different parts of the Borough’s coast. The development plan process identifies the landscape assets of the Borough whilst balancing the needs of communities with the protection of the environment. The Plan identifies existing coastal landscapes and features which are integral to the identity of the area, and their protection from overdevelopment is key to their integrity and visitor appeal, such as:

- The Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage site.
- Rathlin Island.



The coastline at Port Moon to the east of the Causeway headlands within the Distinctive Setting of the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast UNESCO World Heritage site, as defined by the Northern Area Plan 2016, where the scale and intensity of development is restricted. With no vehicular access, the sensitively restored cottage just above the shoreline provides visitor accommodation along the North Coast Sea Kayak trail.

6.2 With significant portions of the Borough's coast within AONBs and natural heritage designated landscapes, future LDPs will be expected to continue to protect the unique qualities of the area's coastlines, in line with regional planning guidance.

6.3 Coastal Settlements

6.4 The following settlements in the Borough have a coastal location:

- Castlerock
- Portstewart
- Portrush
- Portballintrae
- Ballycastle
- Cushendun
- Cushendall
- Church Bay - Rathlin

- 6.5 Coasts have given a special character to the settlements situated on them and, in turn, settlements have shaped parts of the coasts. The development and current uses of the settlements are based to some extent on traditional activities such as fishing and export of minerals. Harbours and marinas now provide tourism activities. The Plan incorporates the developed parts of coastal settlements such as harbour walls within the development limits.



Ballycastle harbour and marina is a focus for tourism with boat trips to Rathlin and Scotland. The development limits for the settlement meet the coastline in the built up harbour walls.

6.6 **Ramore Head Local Landscape Policy Area (LLPA) - Portrush**

- 6.7 The Plan, recognises the environmental significance of the coastline in many places by placing development limits in coastal settlements back from the coastal fringe and designating these areas as Local landscape Policy Areas, and areas of open space where appropriate. Many of these corridors have coastal footpaths and coastal parks where public rest and recreational activities take place. Ramore Head is an example of an area designated as a Local Landscape Policy Area (LLPA) in the Northern Area Plan, (See Appendix 2, pg 27). The Ramore Head LLPA incorporates the following features:

- Ramore Head and The Skerries Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI).
- Portrush National Nature Reserve (NNR) and the Countryside Centre.
- The Historic Arcadia - a Listed Building.
- Areas of open green space at Lansdown Road and Antrim Gardens.
- Diving area at the Blue Pool.
- Areas which are popular for sea angling, and an autumnal sea watching site at Ramore Head for birdwatchers.
- A playground and recreational grounds with bowling greens and tennis courts.



Footpaths wrap around the elevated section of Ramore Head providing an accessible and invigorating walk for residents and visitors to the resort.

- 6.8 Ramore Head LLPA has a variety of natural, geological and built heritage within a relatively small area and is significant to Portrush as it provides a setting for the town and a link for the town to its coastal setting. Maintaining this the LLPA protection to this area in the future would preserve coastal views to the Skerries extending to the Causeway headlands whilst keeping the appeal of Portrush as a resort town.
- 6.9 Most of the LLPA is outside the development limits for Portrush, with some of the areas of open space such as Antrim Gardens within the development limits. The Plan advises that favourable consideration will be given to appropriately sited buildings for uses ancillary to the enjoyment of open space and recreational activities. Areas of open space are protected from development by policy OS1 of Planning Policy Statement 8 and the SPPS advises of the importance of open space:

‘for its contribution to the quality of urban life by providing important green lungs, visual breaks and wildlife habitats in built up areas. Open space can enhance the character of residential areas, civic buildings, conservation areas, listed buildings and archaeological sites. It can also help to attract business and tourism and thereby contribute to the process of urban and rural regeneration’ (Para 6.200, pg 86)



Coastal views from Main Street, Portrush over a designated open space to the Listed Arcadia building within part of the Ramore Head LLPA. The edge of the LLPA provides an attractive setting for business with the restaurant in the foreground capitalising on the sea views.

- 6.10 Given the regional policy context and increasing awareness of flooding and erosion of coastal areas, the LDP should consider continued protection of the Borough’s existing coastal LLPAs with their special features and enduring appeal as areas of recreation for visitors and residents. Studies have evaluated the importance of experiencing open spaces and nature with its ability to refresh and renew, indicating that time taken out to experience the less urbanized outdoors can reduce stress, improve mood, health and mental ability. Most of the coastal settlements have development limits which do not include the immediate coast line and, due to the precautionary approach in relation to flooding and coastal storms, these areas should remain largely undeveloped, and act as an environmental buffer to settlements. A number of coastal settlements, such as Portrush and Cushendall, have undeveloped coastal areas with good public access. These spaces provide vistas from within the settlements, highlighting the unique setting which draws visitors to the area.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Borough's beautiful coastline is a key environmental and economic asset. The coast is a dynamic changing environment subject to erosion and storm damage from the sea. The SPPS has specific criteria for the preparation of LDPs advising that development should avoid the undeveloped coast. Many of the coastal settlements rely on the wider coastline and their immediate undeveloped coastal corridors as areas for recreation and as a buffer to the sea. Beaches can provide a natural coastal defence against storms. Organisations such as the National Trust advocate a natural response of coastal realignment in response to the increase in frequency of storms and climate change which may take pressure off other parts of the coastline. Many types of development do not suit coastal locations liable to erosion and flooding during storms.
- 7.2 Local Landscape Policy Areas, such as Ramore Head, provide an attractive setting for coastal settlements where there is the opportunity for residents and visitors to unwind and enjoy the connection with the sea. The Borough's beaches and dunes are home to species which specialise in these habitats adding an extra dimension to the area's natural heritage.
- 7.3 It is clear that knowledge of the coast and an understanding of the potential changes that may occur to it in the future are not yet fully known. A precautionary approach is advocated in regional planning. The Northern Area Plan has positioned settlement development limits away from the coastal fringe unless existing manmade structures exist, such as harbours, in recognition of this planning principle and also in acknowledgement of the role the coastline plays in settlement identity and leisure activities. Approaches such as that advocated by the National Trust and applied elsewhere in the UK, require further consideration in the production of the Council's LDP.

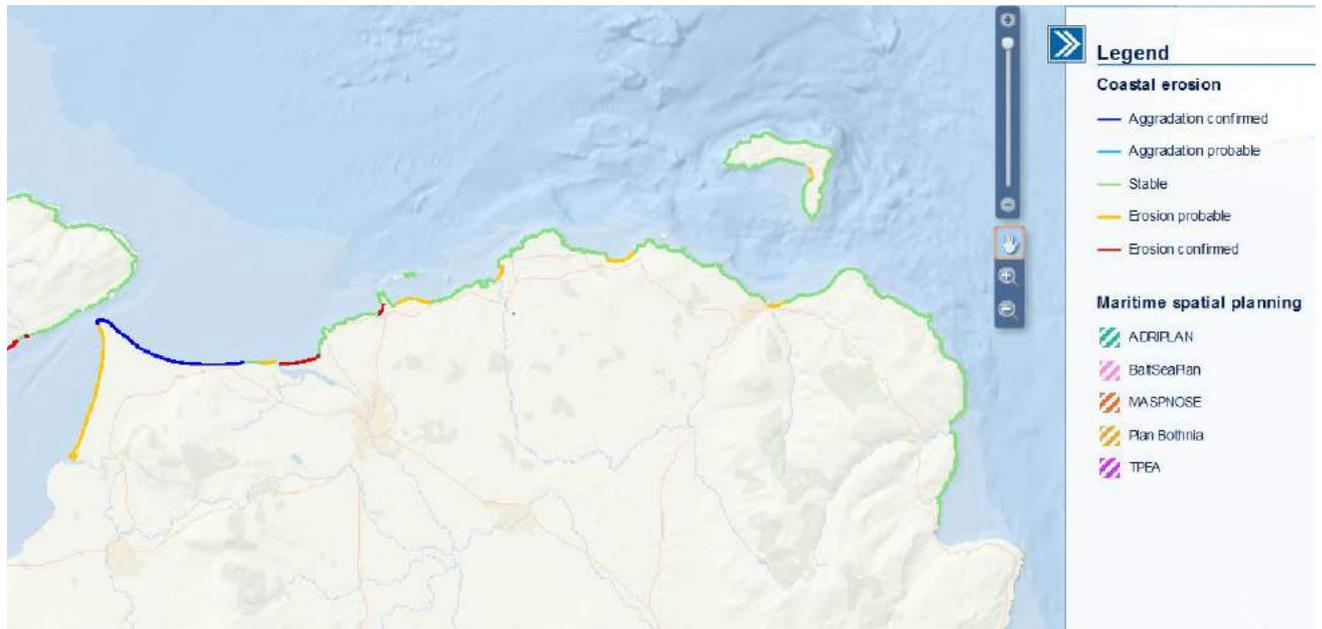
Glossary

Aggradation	The increase in land elevation, due to the deposition of sediment. Aggradation occurs in areas in which the supply of sediment is greater than the amount of material that the system is able to transport.
Cuspate foreland	Features found on coastlines that are formed by accumulations of sand and shingle extending outwards from the shoreline in a triangular shape. Magilligan Point and Dungeness in Kent are examples of cuspate foreland.
Natura 2000	European wide network of sites designated to protect a wide variety of biodiverse habitats and species.



East of Ramore Head, Portrush, looking towards the Skerries and the Causeway Headlands.

Appendix 1



Indicative map showing coastal erosion on the north coast (Source: European Atlas of the Seas)

Appendix 2



Ramore Head LLPA is shown as PHL 01 indicated by the diagonal green lines. The thick black line represents the development limits for Portrush. (Source: Northern Area Plan 2016). The Northern Area Plan has accompanying text for each of the Borough's LLPAs.