



**LOUGH  
NEAGH  
PARTNERSHIP**  
**Independent  
Strategic Review  
and Plan for  
2023 - 2028**

## **FOREWORD**

This independent strategic review was carried out by Helen Keys from Helen Keys Business Support over a year period. The first part was carried out in the spring summer of 2021 when the Lough Neagh Partnership Board, staff and stakeholders were consulted through a series of online review exercises. This initial review included an analysis of the needs of both Lough Neagh and the Partnership body itself and how the Partnership could be improved and best placed in tackling the future problems and opportunities that may arise in the Lough area over the next five years from 2023 – 2028.

A second follow on review was then carried out in the summer of 2022, whereby the strategy was updated, based on new emerging needs and funding opportunities. This final review document attempts to highlight how the LNP body can be more effective, the existing problems of navigation and ownership can be addressed in combination with the new emerging global issues such as climate change, together with the Green Growth opportunities that exist in carbon capture and carbon trading.

Finally, the strategic review also focusses on the real additional value the Partnership has brought to the Lough Neagh area and in particular to the three main adjoining Councils and points out the huge value and investment that can be brought into the Lough and Council areas through closer cooperation with the Partnership and more long term financial and management support,

## SUMMARY

The purpose of this strategic review is to firstly take stock of the large amount of effective work which has been carried out by the Lough Neagh Partnership over the last five years. It is therefore linked to the recent “Lough Neagh Partnership Report” published in 2021 which provides details of projects and programmes delivered but also the impact and changes it has made and how the Partnership has worked collaboratively with local shoreline Councils and other bodies.

The review, however, also looks to the future, taking note of changes that are happening to the economy and society from the policy responses to Brexit, Covid, Climate Change, Inflation, and the recent War in Ukraine. As with any strategy, there is a need to adapt and change to new circumstance and this document attempts to not only assess the changing needs of the Lough but of the Partnership organisation itself and to provide a framework for the way forward in terms of new goals and outcomes.

The report also aims to highlight the investment value Lough Neagh Partnership has brought and can bring to all the local Council bodies around the Lough especially the three main Councils of Mid Ulster District Council, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. There are currently many investment opportunities available through the new funding programmes such as the Levelling Up Fund and the SEUPB Peace Plus programme that can contribute to the corporate and operational goals of the respective Councils. To successfully maximise the impact of these opportunities, there is a need for the Partnership and the three main Councils to continue to work closely together using a structured service level framework approach, to review Council core funding to the Partnership and maximise the future programme funding through the development more joint strategic partnerships. The main recommendations include:

- The Partnership should review and improve its governance, remit, and staffing structures to take on board future economic and political challenges and become more financially resilient in the long term.
- The Partnership should take lead with other partners and agree to set up a new management structure known as the Lough Neagh Management Body (LNMB) made up of senior director staff from the three main Councils, DFI, DAERA DFC and DFF to meet twice a year to work to this strategic review and plan and monitor progress, integrating common goals and funding applications associated with this document. This strategic review and plan 2023 – 2028 should be used as a working tool for the LNMB.
- The three main Councils should each increase the core funding levels to the Lough Neagh Partnership from £22.000 per annum to £49,378 per annum for the next five years. (2023 – 2028) to retain effective staff members, provide

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## LOUGH NEAGH PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC REVIEW AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE PLAN

financial stability to the body and allow the Partnership to lever in increased value and investment. (This means an increase of £27,378 per annum for each of the three main Councils)

- The Lough Neagh Partnership should set up a formal linkage and partnership with cross border body Waterways Ireland and Border Council to allow it to apply for shared Island and SEUPB funding. This should be supported by the main Councils. Also recommend that LNP rep sits on ICBAN and EBR bodies to make sure more integrated approach to cross border development.
- The three main Councils should endorse the nomination of political representatives to sit on the Lough Neagh Partnership Board to ensure political support and public transparency for the development of the Lough.
- The three main Councils should enter into a new five-year service level agreement with the Partnership from April 2023 – March 2028 based on the attraction of additional investment and addressing agreed strategic needs and outcomes. The SLA should be outcomes and not outputs/actions focussed, and the Partnership should provide an annual report to feed into new Lough Neagh Management Body structure.
- Common Lough Neagh Marketing Destination Pot developed from three main Councils from existing City Deal, Tourism NI and Levelling Up Fund.
- Landfill Tax funds could be prioritised to Lough Neagh Area for match funding of joint conservation projects.
- Three main Councils and three main Departments in the new Lough Neagh Management Body should bid, budget, and provisionally allocate revenue and matching capital funds for the next 5 years specific for joint Lough Neagh Projects and funding applications.
- The Lough Neagh Partnership develop sponsorship programme with Lough Neagh private sector
- The report and its recommendations should be approved by each of the three main Council relevant committees and used as a working tool.

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## 01 INTRODUCTION

### The Need for Change

In late 2021 the Lough Neagh Partnership (LNP) finalised its major Landscape Partnership project on the Lough and in the wake of Brexit and Covid, and in light of the new funding streams coming online, it is believed that it is now an important time to review the main strategic goals of the Partnership and together with its core and long-term financial resilience.

The world is facing a lot of serious issues from Covid, inflation, the war in Ukraine, carbon zero requirements, possible oncoming recession and Climate and Biodiversity Loss Crisis with governments around the world recognising the need for urgent action. There are increasing pressures on nature, on resources and a drive for more carbon friendly approaches together with the need to examine alternative financial resources for the management of Lough Neagh

Work on the Lough to preserve its heritage, wildlife and water quality and try to support and stimulate the local economy and tourism industry has never been more important.

### Pulling In the Same Direction.

In reviewing the Partnership's new strategic, staffing, and financial needs, an independent review involving the Board, staff as well as consulting with our key stakeholders have carried out.

We have considered wider strategies, starting at the highest level with the UN Sustainable Development Goals – known as 'The World's Best Plan', more locally at the Programme for Government and departmental strategies. It is important to try to now align Funders, Departments and Councils needs and the needs of Lough Neagh and Lough Neagh Partnership board and staff itself. Whilst there are problems and issues that need addressed there are also opportunities for greater connections and synergies to be created and new funding streams that could be maximised to gain the most efficient and effective impact



FIGURE 1: UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

### Building Resilience

The review has focused on building financial resilience into the Partnership organisation, itself moving away from timebound projects and becoming more linked to Councils but in long term become more financially independent and resilient

The Partnership wishes to become less dependent on one off grants, free to do our work on our own terms and secure sufficient core funding to make long term plans. To do this we need to bring greater value to our main Council core funders, adapt to a more outcomes-based service level agreement format and yet also diversify our income streams, building on our in-house skills, systems, and processes.

#### Innovation

Through strong engagement the Partnership has he used creative techniques to really push our thinking, to go beyond the things we already do or that we see other people doing. In developing this strategic, staffing, and financial review. we have looked at the long-term future, where the world is likely to be in 10-, 20- and 30-years' time and how we can build an organisation that is fit for the future. We have considered how new technology might change how we work and communicate together with the need to grasp innovative opportunities to develop new financial relations through new service level agreements and a more outcomes-based relationship with existing core funders...

## 02 A LITTLE HISTORY

Lough Neagh Partnership (LNP) is a non-profit making company limited by guarantee with directors representing the five district councils that surround the lough, the private sector, community sector and special interest groups such as Lough Neagh Fishermen's Co-operative, Lough Neagh Sand traders, The Shaftesbury Estate and Shooting and Conservation Clubs.

LNP was formed in 2003, mainly to administer grant funding of £3.5 million under the Rural Development Programme. With the demise of the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committee in 2011, Lough Neagh Partnership assumed responsibility for the integrated management, marketing and development of activities relating to tourism, recreation, the environment, heritage, and culture.

LNP works closely with the five local authorities and government departments and agencies such as NIEA, Tourism NI, Inland Waterways Branch in the Department for Infrastructure and DAERA. It also liaises closely with the Local Action Groups under the Rural Development Programme.

As at Jul 2022 the LNP has 9 staff to deliver a wide range of projects which have attracted more than £10 million of investment over the last 5 years.



SUNSET OVER LOUGH NEAGH



### 03 THE STRATEGIC REVIEW PROCESS

The table below shows the schedule that we worked through as part of the review process. The pandemic meant no traditional face to face workshops, but we tried to be creative in our use of technology to make sure we still had plenty of engagement.

We had a Virtual Away Day with Board and staff followed by two more detailed planning workshops with the full staff team and a planning session with senior team members. We used Menti to allow everyone to respond to questions and collaborative documents on a shared Google Drive to replace flipcharts and post its.

#### STRATEGIC REVIEW ACTIVITIES

Activity
Initiation Meeting
Document review: Review of current strategy documents and business plan
Surveys: The right people in the right places: Skills audit and development plan - using a short online user-friendly survey to gather data on skills availability within the organisation. Governance Audit – review of governance practices. Stakeholder Audit – how the organisation is perceived externally. Development of an action plan to address identified skills gaps.
Virtual Away Day: Part 1: Board and staff - Governance audit - how we do things / how we should do things, Part 2: Where we are now, where we want to be, what needs to change in a post Covid world, Part 3: Governance Development Plan - taking the lead
Zoom Workshop 1: Staff, board, volunteers, stakeholders Ideation - Creative approaches to business planning
Zoom Workshop 2: Staff, board, volunteers, stakeholders Ideation - Creative approaches to business planning
Scoping ideas - assessing viability and costs
Planning Meeting: Prioritising and planning for an innovative new approach
Review of funding opportunities
Write up updated strategic and action plan and one pager that can be used when more accessible info is needed.

LOUGH NEAGH PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC REVIEW AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE PLAN

The main areas that we tackled in the workshops were:

Virtual Away Day

- Organisational Culture
- SWOT analysis
- Futureproofing
- Governance Audit
- Systems and processes audit

Planning workshop 1

- Goal Setting
- Creative planning

Planning workshop 2

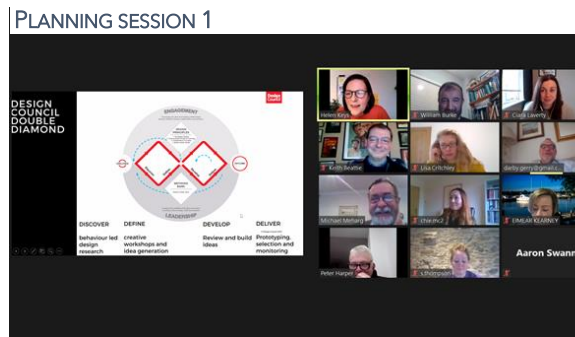
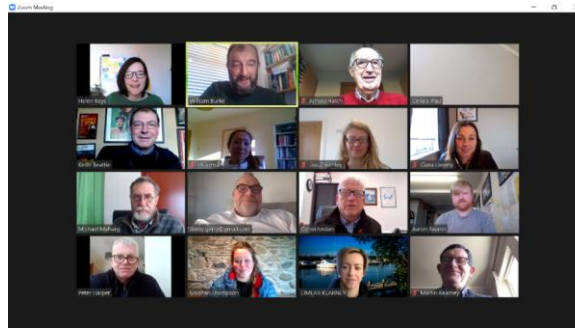
- Creative Planning
- Packaging and Prioritising

Planning workshop 3

- Review of priorities

Outside of the workshops we also considered wider strategies, funding opportunities and skills.

In this process we have not only looked internally at the organisation and how we need to build resilience, but we have also considered the wider picture – how do our strategies need to be updated considering the very different environment.



PLANNING SESSION 2

## 04 STRATGIC REVIEW

### OUR PLACE

Lough Neagh is the biggest Lough in the British Isles with a surface area of 383km<sup>2</sup>, a shoreline of 125 km and a catchment area of 5,750km<sup>2</sup>, more than a third of Northern Ireland. It is bordered by 5 different Local Government Districts. It contains over 800 billion gallons of water, enough to fill 7 million swimming pools. It is a special place, remarkable for its sheer scale, its wildlife, and the relationship that local people have with it.

#### Rivers Inflowing:

Blackwater, Ballinderry, Moyola, Six Mile Water, Main and Upper Bann are major tributaries, Glenavy and Crumlin are minor tributaries

#### River Outflowing:

Lower Bann (reaching the sea at Portstewart)



GOOGLE EARTH IMAGE OF LOUGH NEAGH

#### Industries Past:

Linen, Coal, Diatomite, Willow basket making and Reed harvesting.

#### Industries Present:

Fishing, Agriculture, Peat extraction, Sand extraction, Water extraction, Tourism and Recreation.

Lough Neagh is a haven for wildlife. It attracts bird watchers from all over the world due to the number and variety of birds which winter and summer in its shores. Over 100,000 wintering wildfowl fly in from places as far away as Canada, Iceland, Greenland, and the Russian Arctic.

The eels in Lough Neagh travel over 4000 miles to breed in the Sargasso Sea and the young fry return by drifting on the Gulf Stream back over the Atlantic and enter the river Bann as young elvers. The Lough also has its own unique species of fish, such as the Dollaghan which is a huge Trout and Pollan which is a small freshwater type of Herring.

The areas carry the following designations:

**Ramsar Sites** are wetland sites of international importance designated under the Wetlands Convention (also known as the Ramsar Convention). An area overlapping but somewhat larger than the Lough Neagh, Lough Beg and Portmore Lough ASSI/SPA has been designated as a Ramsar Site.

**Special Protection Areas** are sites designated under the Birds Directive that have internationally important populations of over-wintering, migrating, or breeding birds. SPA designation brings stronger protection measures to ASSIs. Lough Neagh, Lough Beg and Portmore Lough are all part of an SPA.

**Special Areas of Conservation** are sites designated under the Habitats Directive for one or more of the habitats and species listed in the Directive. As for SPAs, SAC designation brings stronger protection measures to ASSIs. Montiaghs Moss, Farr's Bay and Rea's Wood are all candidate SACs.

**Areas of Special Scientific Interest** are examples of Northern Ireland's best sites in terms of wildlife habitats such as lakes, peat bogs or wet grasslands or because they have rare species. As most ASSIs are in private ownership EHS works in partnership with farmers and landowners to protect them from damaging activities. ASSIs in the LNW include Lough Neagh, Lough Beg, Portmore Lough, Culnafay, Toome, Peatlands Park and Montiaghs Moss.

**National Nature Reserves** are nationally important wildlife sites managed specifically to conserve the natural heritage and, where possible, provide opportunities for public access, education, and research. There are NNRs at Lough Beg, Randalstown Forest, Rea's Wood, Oxford Island, Lough Neagh Islands, Mullenakill and Annagarriff Woods and Farr's Bay.

**Local Nature Reserves** or LNRs for short, are areas that have been specially set aside for biodiversity and where people can enjoy wildlife. LNRs do not have to contain rare or threatened species or habitats – they are usually areas with good wildlife content which are accessible to people and provide them with opportunities to be close to wildlife. Hence, many LNRs lie within, or close to, urban areas. Local Nature Reserves are very much what their name suggests – sites where the principal objective is nature conservation, but where local people can have easy access and be involved, for example, in practical conservation measures taken on site.

LNP Board

Lough Neagh Partnership Ltd (LNP) has 24 Directors representing the five local authorities, the community sector, the business sector, and special interest groups. Please note there is no official representation of the

**TABLE 1: BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Term</b>
Arnold Hatch (Treasurer)	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council	2006
Henry Cushinan	Antrim and Newtownabbey Council	2011
Roderick Swann	Antrim and Newtownabbey Council	2015
Glenn Finlay	Antrim and Newtownabbey Council	2019
Paul Dunlop	Antrim and Newtownabbey Council	2019
Ryan Wilson	Antrim and Newtownabbey Council	2019
Paul McLean	Mid Ulster District Council	2019
Donal McPeake	Mid Ulster District Council	2019
Derek McKinney	Mid Ulster District Council	2015
Ian Milne	Mid Ulster District Council	2019
Martin Gerard Kearney	Mid Ulster District Council	2019
Thomas Gordon	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	2015
William McNeilly	Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	2020
Conor Corr	CWSAN	2001
Mary Devlin (Secretary)	Tabbda	2005
Una Johnston	Tidal Ltd	2013
Conor Jordan (Chair)	Norman Emerson & Sons Ltd	2001
Rory O’Kane	Traad Gun Club	2017
Elizabeth Meharg	Shaftesbury Estate	2012
Shane O’Neill (Vice Chair)	Shane’s Castle Estates	2004
Drew Nelson	Inland Waterways Ireland	2014
Brian Wylie	Lough Neagh Fishermen’s Association	2016
Patrick Close	Lough Neagh Fishermen’s Co-op	2009
Seamus Burns	RSPB	2015

The staff

The diagram below shows the current staffing structure and roles.

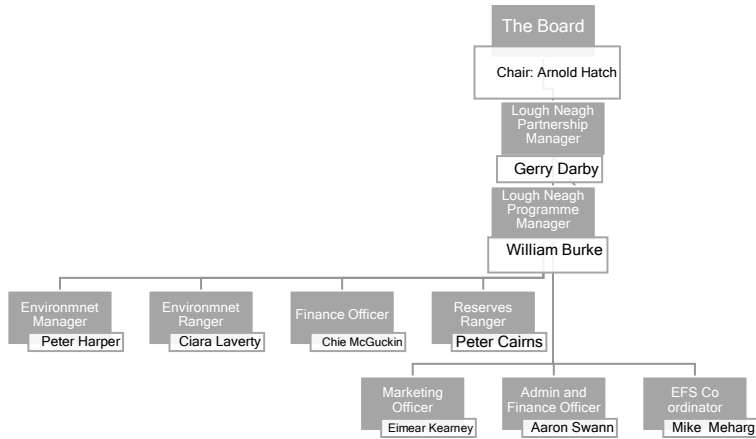


FIGURE 2: ORGANISATIONAL CHART

LNP Culture

Lough Neagh Partnership is considered by Board and Staff to be an organisation that is flexible, professional, innovative, ambitious and community based. The Board and Staff are proud of the work that they do, they feel it is important and worthwhile. It is a place where staff feel comfortable in putting forward ideas.



ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE WORD CLOUD

LNP ORGANISATION

Governance

The organisation has been operating since 2003 and has developed sound Governance policies and procedures.

10 Board Members carried out an online self-assessment and a further 5 participated along with staff in the Virtual Away Day to examine in depth the Board systems and processes. In both cases they were asked to agree or disagree with a Good Governance Statement.

In the diagram below we've combined the highest and lowest scoring statements from each exercise.

GOVERNANCE SELF-ASSESSMENT

Agree – 4.5 or more	Moderate / Disagree – 3.5 or less
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The organisation’s resources are used efficiently</li> <li>▪ Board members are committed to the mission and don’t get distracted</li> <li>▪ The Board debates in a constructive way – questioning and challenging with becoming conflicted</li> <li>▪ Meetings are well managed and stay to the allotted time</li> <li>▪ The Board monitors progress against budgets</li> <li>▪ The Board is prepared to take difficult or unpopular decisions</li> <li>▪ We have a business plan</li> <li>▪ The Board is involved in setting policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Board Members have a clear understanding of their roles and the roles of the staff</li> <li>▪ Board Members have minimum standards for attendance at meetings and take action when these are not met.</li> <li>▪ We actively seek out new members with the skills we need</li> <li>▪ If a Board member is not performing, we have protocols in place to deal with it</li> <li>▪ We allocate time/resources to networking and building relationships</li> <li>▪ Our Board members actively work on developing external relationships</li> <li>▪ We have a good reputation with other organisations</li> <li>▪ We are sufficiently diverse to do a good job (age, gender, background)</li> <li>▪ Meetings are well attended</li> </ul>

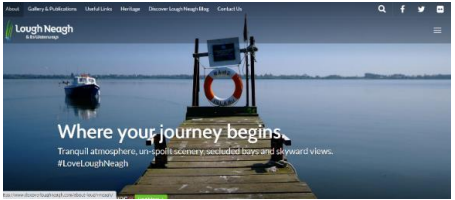


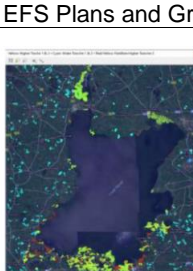
The full self-assessment is included in Appendix 1 Governance .




What we did

<p>Coalisland and East Tyrone: The Historical Manufacturing Base of Mid Ulster</p>	<p>NLHF, Mid Ulster District Council</p>
	<p>This project explores the rich manufacturing legacy of the people of Coalisland and East Tyrone. New partnerships have been developed to create opportunities for local people to build skills capacity, revive lost artisan and manufacturing skills and celebrate the area's industrial manufacturing heritage through the medium of arts and culture. Over £400,000 was brought into the area.</p>
<p>Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership Programme</p>	<p>NLHF, Councils</p>
	<p>The Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership (LNLPP) Programme was developed by Lough Neagh Partnership Ltd (LNP) and its stakeholders to help advance the conservation, promotion and enhancement of the built, cultural, and natural heritage found around Lough Neagh. Since 2016, the Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership Scheme has successfully delivered twenty-seven heritage projects, each of which made up of a few sub-projects, with a total combined value of £3.4m and in doing so, have forged some excellent working relationships between public, private, community and academic sector partners. The full scope of the heritage outcomes and impacts of the scheme will be available for review in the Lough Neagh Partnership evaluation report.</p>
<p>Waterpro Water Quality</p>	<p>Interreg IV and AFBI</p>
	<p>The Partnership successfully delivered WaterPro, a three-year transnational programme involving nine partners from Northern Europe. The project researched practical methods to reduce farming and mining nitrate run off and was part of EU Northern Peripheries Transnational Interreg Programme. Partners collaborated from the Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute in Northern Ireland to develop new practical tools and models for water quality management.</p>










What we do

Projects	Funded by
Marketing, Promotion and Tours	Councils, NLHF
 <p data-bbox="120 751 571 856">We deliver an integrated marketing strategy that has promoted the Lough to both trade and consumers over the past three years. We have invested heavily in the development of 'Lough Neagh Tours' which offer 12 themed itineraries that promote the Lough's heritage to local communities, educational groups, and visitors. The Partnership are currently progressing with the delivery of a comprehensive series of promotional activities using a wide range of media that will engage and signpost visitors to the broad suite of heritage, recreational and experiential activities present on and around the Lough</p>	<p data-bbox="589 533 1037 856">We deliver an integrated marketing strategy that has promoted the Lough to both trade and consumers over the past three years. We have invested heavily in the development of 'Lough Neagh Tours' which offer 12 themed itineraries that promote the Lough's heritage to local communities, educational groups, and visitors. The Partnership are currently progressing with the delivery of a comprehensive series of promotional activities using a wide range of media that will engage and signpost visitors to the broad suite of heritage, recreational and experiential activities present on and around the Lough</p>
Artisan Food Chain	DAERA RDP Measure 16.4
 <p data-bbox="120 892 311 1094">Lough Neagh &amp; its Waterways Support our local Lough Neagh hospitality &amp; tourism businesses this Christmas - online sales</p>	<p data-bbox="589 884 1037 1102">Lough Neagh has a vast range of unique and award-winning local food produce, including Lough Neagh Eels (PGI) and Lough Neagh Pollan (PDO) as well as rapeseed oils, breads, chutneys, and many other products. We are working to connect the SMEs across the sector using an overarching brand which will be internationally marketed.</p>
Shoreline ASSA/SPA	DAERA, NIEA, RDP Measure 7.1
 <p data-bbox="120 1138 311 1339">Lough Neagh Shoreline Plan</p>	<p data-bbox="589 1129 1037 1348">This five-year Shoreline Management Plan funded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency aims to improve the SPA and ASSI designation features of the Lough by working with farmers, sand traders, landowners, shooting clubs and fishermen via a structured stakeholder forum to develop site management prescriptions and implement conservation actions.</p>
EFS Plans and Group Plan	DAERA Measure Code 10.1 and 16.5
 <p data-bbox="120 1383 311 1652">Map of Lough Neagh area showing environmental features.</p>	<p data-bbox="589 1375 1037 1661">Lough Neagh Partnership has managed the delivery of two of Northern Ireland's most successful Environmental Farm Group projects as part of a wider DAERA funded scheme. Aimed at restoring and enhancing the number of important habitats and wildlife species along the shoreline, together with helping improve water quality and soil management, the scheme has attracted over 140 farmers from the Lough Neagh area who have benefited from more than £4 million of new investment.</p>

Lough Neagh Islands Plan	DAERA, NIEA Environment Fund
	<p>With funding support from NIEA, we have delivered a suite of conservation actions outlined in the 'Lough Neagh Islands Conservation Plan' (2018) including data collection and species monitoring, stakeholder engagement, erection of signage and the creation of a new Tern Breeding Platform.</p>
Rea's Wood & Farr's Bay SAC Plan	DAERA, NIEA Environment Fund
	<p>In consultation with NIEA and other stakeholders, we have developed a new SAC management plan for Farr's Bay/Rea's Wood. This includes several conservation actions that will bring these important priority wet woodland habitats back into favourable condition</p>
Moiled cattle food supply chain	Agri Food Cooperation Scheme
	<p>The Partnership has identified how the traditional Irish Moiled cattle, already being bred in increasing numbers in the area, can both conserve the biodiversity within the unimproved less intensive grazing lands around Lough Neagh and at the same time provide sustainable income to the rural community. The project is currently delivering on a programme of adding value and emphasising the food experience associated with Lough Neagh Irish Moiled Meat by engaging a group of 10 farmers to produce "Lough Neagh Traditionally Farmed Moilie Beef" in line with agreed protocols.</p>

What we wish to do

Lough Neagh Ownership	SEUPB Peace Plus and Shared Island
	<p>The Lough Neagh Partnership is working with local stakeholders to investigate the possibility of purchasing the bed and soil of Lough Neagh. The Partnership has met with senior politicians from the main parties to gather cross party-political support for the purchase of the bed and soil of Lough Neagh. It has also had early discussions with the SEUPB.</p>
Navigation on Lough Neagh	Levelling Up Fund 2 and DFI
	<p>The Lough Neagh Partnership has identified safety and navigation on the Lough as a key priority area that needs to be addressed. We have engaged a diverse number of stakeholders to progress the formation of a steering group that will lobby and develop proposals for the improvement of the existing marker system and dredging of channels river mouths and marinas on the Lough Neagh system</p>
Blackwater River	DFI Blue Green Programme/Shared Island
	<p>The Lough Neagh Partnership has been working closely with the two main Councils who are on either side of the River Blackwater. The Councils (MUDC and ABCBC) have now set up a Blackwater working group to take the project forward with a stage one focus on dredging the mouth of the river at the navigation cut. A study identifying the main potential development hubs has also been drawn up. 2 main Councils hope to apply to DFI to get first dredge of Blackwater done. ICBAN are also carrying out a study into the requirements of the development of the Ulster Canal including the navigable part of the Lough Neagh Partnership.</p>
Saving Curlew and Breeding wetland birds	SEUPB Peace Plus Theme 5
	<p>The Partnership has already entered into discussions with the RSPB about applying to the SEUPB Peace Plus theme 5 regarding the development of a series of Nature Recovery Network around the whole shores of Lough Neagh targeting wet grassland habitat for breeding waders. Focus will be on the saving of the Curlew from extinction on Lough Neagh.</p>

Peatland and Carbon Management	SEUPB Peace Plus theme 5
	<p>The Partnership has entered into discussions with ABC Council, the Ulster Wildlife Trust and the East Border Network regarding the protection and development of the lowland peatlands particularly in the southern shores of the Lough, at Derrytresk and Peatlands Park. The Partnership has also taken ownership of 304 Ha of peatland in the Derrytresk area and wishes to restore this and other bogs. The Partnership is also in the process of drawing up a major Climate change and carbon storage study for Lough Neagh</p>
Lough Neagh ASSI Management 2023 - 2028	NIEA Environment Fund and Challenge Fund
	<p>The Lough Neagh Partnership has been successfully monitoring and helping protect the main objectives and requirements of the ASSI and SPA designation. Three rangers are now in place to help protect and monitor this massive resource. The Partnership has also taken over Killykolpy and Killywoolyhan Nature Reserves from NIEA and managed them on their behalf. A new 5-year Environmental Fund application will be made to NIEA in Nov 2022</p>
New Follow on EFS Group Schemes 2023 - 2030	DAERA EFS
	<p>Lough Neagh Partnership will continue and follow up on the present EFS programmes. An abandoned land Programme will be developed to examine the commerciality of the Partnership providing direct commercial services to DAERA and G Darby will apply to Dormant Accounts to work up this proposal and the Lough Neagh Ownership Proposal. It hopes to attract an additional £4 million of new investment in the future five years.</p>

LNP

Internal systems and processes

A review of the internal systems and processes of the LNP organisation using the statements below as prompts was also carried out.

REVIEW OF INTERNAL SYSTEMS AND PROCESS

Area of work	Statement
Internal communications	We know about the challenges and achievements of each department/team in the organisation
	We make time in our schedules to catch up and communicate
	We actively work on building good relationships within teams
	There are opportunities/processes to put forward ideas that would improve the organisation
Development	There are easy systems for sharing information across the organisation
	We take time out of our daily work to develop our skills
Efficiency	We share skills across teams
	Time is well spent and managed
	Processes within the organisation are regularly reviewed and streamlined where possible
Effectiveness	We make use of new and emerging technologies to improve efficiency
	Decisions are based of solid fact
	We know what we must do and how to do it
Troubleshooting	Achievements are recognised and acknowledged
	If there is a problem, we feel OK about letting other people know
	We have strategies in place to deal with problems

The main areas in need of development were identified below:

- The need for more communications across staff teams – introduce weekly ‘Stand Up’ meetings – just a quick catch up on what happened and what is planned – detailed discussions can be planned for other time.
- The need for shared online storage and a Project Management System.
- Some more systems around HR and Finance.

Skills Audit

We asked both staff and Board to rate themselves against the list of skills outlined below. We have highlighted the areas where there is no one within the organisation who rates themselves as excellent, or where those with excellent skills are not in a position to deliver fully on the area of work.



SKILLS AUDIT

Legal support can be sought externally.

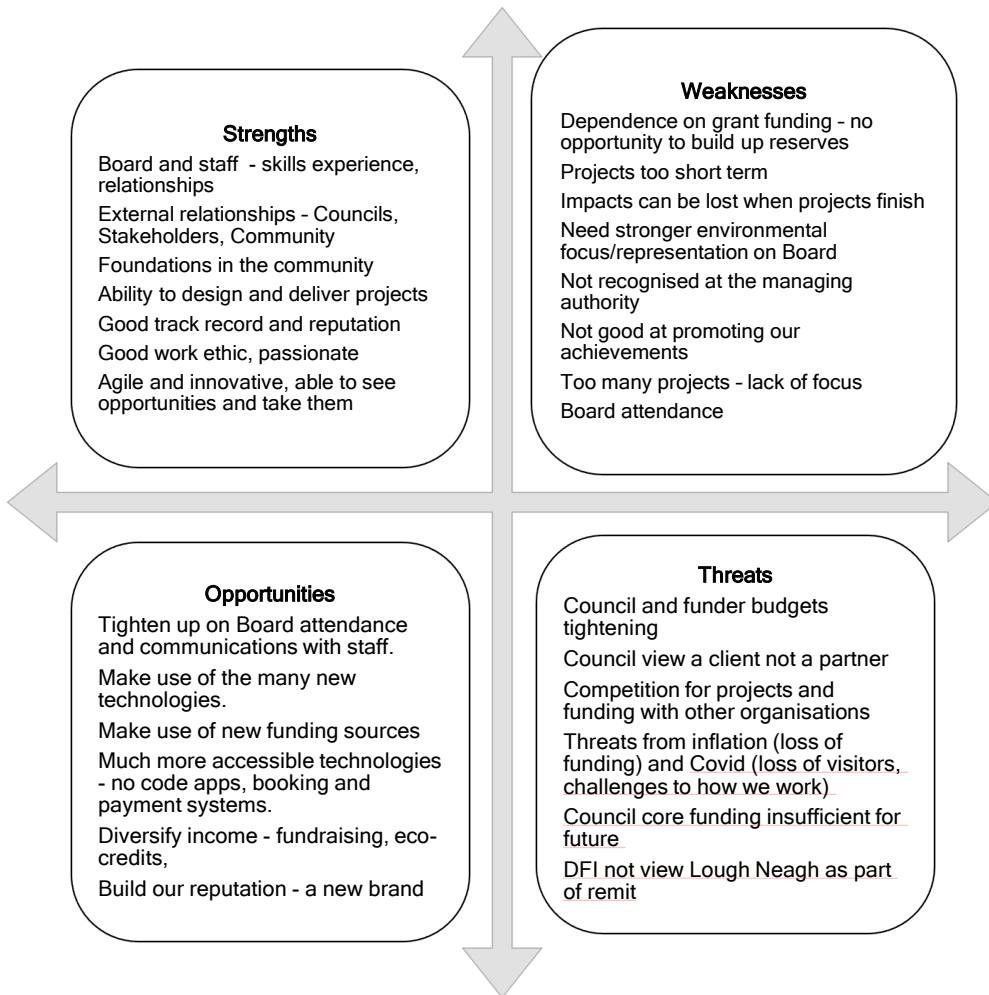
The gap around fundraising, marketing, campaigning, and digital communications is important as much of the strategy to be discussed depends on these skills. LNP needs to recruit to fill this gap and/or train up existing staff in these areas and/or seek some external consultancy to develop these areas and work with existing staff.

Skills around Change Management and Business Development were only highlighted by one Board member – this could be an area of focus for the next Board recruitment phase.

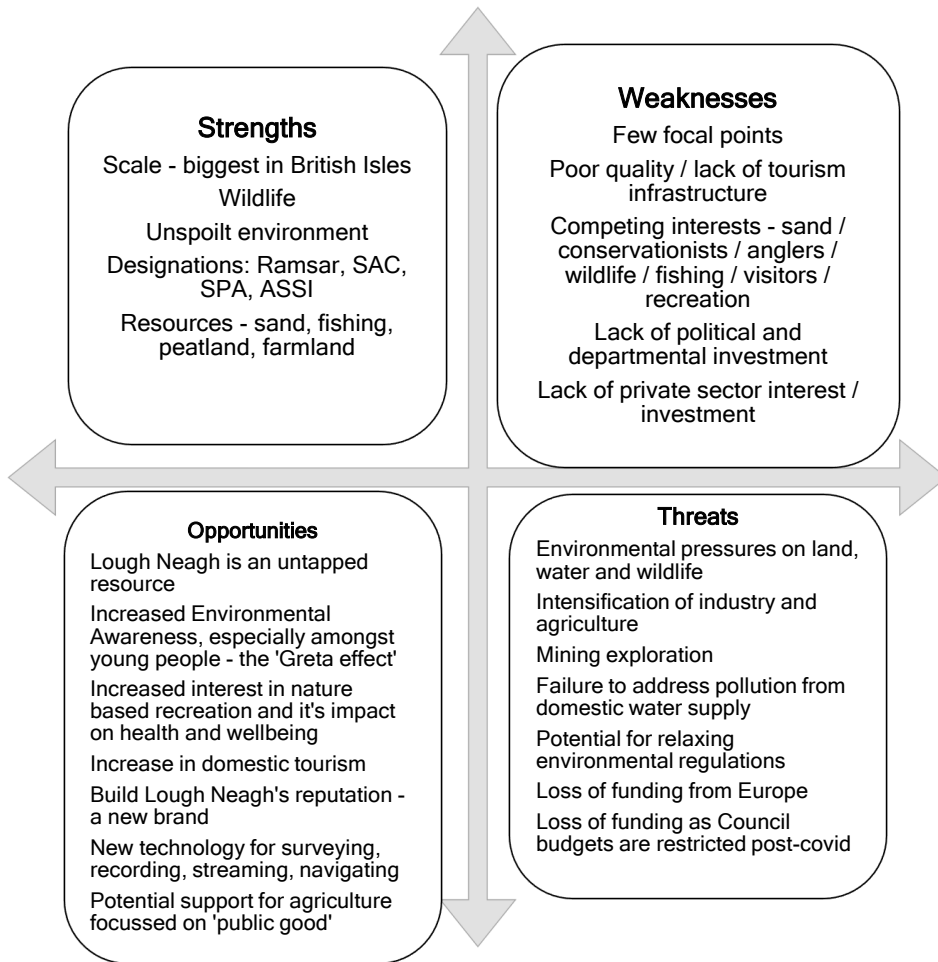
Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Below we have set out the SWOT analysis, both for the Lough Neagh Partnership as an organisation, and for the wider Lough area that we serve.

Lough Neagh Partnership SWOT



Lough Neagh SWOT





WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The big picture – UN Sustainable Development Goals



**UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

The UN Sustainable Development Goals are billed as ‘The World’s Best Plan’. Many Governments, Universities, NGOs, and Businesses are putting these goals at the heart of their planning and operations.

LNP can expect to see these goals reflected in government policy and funding mechanisms, so it makes sense to keep these at the heart of its own strategic planning process.

### A new Programme for Government

Consultation on the proposed outcomes from the new Programme for Government was published on 25 January 2021.

Whilst there are elements of all these goals that apply to the Lough Neagh Area and the people who live in it, there are four goals which align very clearly with our work. The extracts below are taken from the PFG consultation document.

*"We live and work sustainably, protecting the environment."*

This is at the heart of what the Lough Neagh Partnership does. i.e., protects the largest designated site in the UK and Ireland.

Within this there are three key priorities that particularly relate to the work of Lough Neagh Partnership:

- **Natural Environment:** Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and the natural environment, supporting sustainable practices and resource use in the energy, agri-food, fishing, and forestry sectors, and ensuring human, animal and plant health. (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Department for Infrastructure)
- **Green Economy:** Creating economic opportunity through tackling climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (including energy decarbonisation). (Department for the Economy, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Department for Infrastructure)
- **Water and Wastewater Management** Enhancing and improving the existing network and infrastructure to ensure service delivery and sustainable environmental management. (Department for Infrastructure, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs)

### Our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced, and carbon-neutral

'A strong, regionally balanced, inclusive economy is essential if we are to tackle the social and economic challenges facing us. This will be very significant in terms of the impacts of exit from the EU and recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. It is also important that the Loughs economy grows in a sustainable way that the LNP helps supports local businesses and protects our environment.

There is a need to improve the infrastructure of the Lough for the fishing and tourism industries to enhance opportunities for growth and it is internationally recognised that a sustainable development approach seeks to progress economic and social ambitions while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.'

Within this there are three key priorities that particularly relate to the work of Lough Neagh Partnership:

**Green Economy:** Need to develop the Lough economy in an environmentally friendly way, recognising the impacts industry has on climate change and striving for low-carbon / zero-carbon alternatives. (Department for the Economy, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Department for Infrastructure)

**Growth:** Need to help grow the Lough economy to attract and stimulate investment across Northern Ireland, including building sustainable investment, encouraging business start-ups and development through City and Growth Deals, and supporting sustainable development of rural industries. (Department for the Economy, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs)

**Food, Farming and Fishing:** Providing the tools under a future agricultural policy to increase productivity, enhance environmental sustainability, improve resilience, and supply chain integration of the agri-food industry. (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs)

#### [People want to live, work, and visit here](#)

'This Outcome is about promoting Northern Ireland as a place where people want to live, work and visit. We want to retain and attract people to live and work here by having attractive employment, a healthy and clean environment, recreation, and housing opportunities where people feel respected and safe.

We want to build on international relations and enhance our reputation, deal with the impacts of EU Exit and the COVID-19 pandemic, attract investment and help grow our economy. We want to promote our built and natural environment our sports, arts, and culture sectors to encourage tourism and provide opportunities for people to take part in the things they enjoy.'

Within this there are two key priorities that particularly relate to the work of Lough Neagh Partnership:

**Sports, Arts and Culture:** Need to provide access to sports, arts and culture and encouraging and facilitating opportunities for people to get involved. Promoting built heritage, eco-tourism, and outdoor recreation. Providing spaces and facilities for sports, arts and culture events and activities to take place. (Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs)

**Planning:** Creating and shaping high quality, sustainable, places for people to live, work and spend leisure time. Furthering sustainable development and supporting positive placemaking and effective stewardship. (Department for Infrastructure, Department for Communities, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs)

## Northern Ireland Environment Agency

NIEA has been a key delivery partner for the Lough Neagh Partnership and the relationship is only likely to get closer as our missions are so closely aligned.



*“The Agency’s primary purpose is to protect and enhance Northern Ireland’s environment, and in doing so, deliver health and well-being benefits and support economic growth.”*

The Agency’s key priorities are:

1. a full compliant regulated industry
2. freshwater and marine environment at "good status"
3. a compliant crime free waste sector
4. good habitat and landscape quality with species abundance and diversity
5. promote environmentally sustainable development and infrastructure.”

These are closely aligned to the LNP goals. LNP should double down on building this relationship, both to influence policy and to act as a delivery agent.

## Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs



Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone

There are a few new strategies in development by DAERA, Green Growth, the Food Strategy Framework, the Future Agricultural Policy. It’s been billed as **“the biggest shake up in 40 years”**

DAERA has several emerging strategies which are also relevant:

The current **NI Biodiversity Strategy** runs to the end of this year. While initial work has been done on drafting a new strategy. DAERA plan to conduct a review of the existing Biodiversity Strategy to coincide with the new targets that will be agreed by the CBD in 2021. (NIEL<sup>1</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> Sourced from Northern Ireland Environmental Link

DAERA are currently developing a **Peatland Strategy** for Northern Ireland which will provide a framework for conserving our intact semi-natural peatlands and restoring degraded seminatural peatlands.

#### Tourism NI



Tourism NI has clearly stated that the domestic market is the key to recovery post-Covid. From the Tourism NI website, we find this statement Domestic Tourism Strategy Steering Group Chairperson, Ciaran O'Neill.

“As a consequence of the Covid 19 pandemic the world we live in has and is undergoing a period of profound change. More than any sector tourism has been severely impacted. However, as we move out of crisis and begin to understand what the ‘new norm’ will look like we must now begin to chart the road to recovery for the tourism industry throughout Northern Ireland. The domestic market will be key to the sectors recovery.

For practical reasons the NI consumer will be likely highly unlikely to travel overseas for holidays in the near term. Not only will there be travel restrictions, but many consumers will not want to travel abroad. Recent research shows that taking a holiday on the island of Ireland represents a much comfortable proposition than going abroad. Additionally, while the pandemic has damaged consumer confidence, the enforced lock down has also limited their spending and created a latent desire and pent-up demand to take short breaks and holidays. This is a demand that the domestic market is best positioned to meet.”

Guidance on how to attract the domestic market highlights the opportunity for nature-based tourism. Tourism NI research has shown that the pandemic has driven a new appreciation for the natural environment. This points a clear direction for LNP to renew a focus on low impact experiential tourism that provides opportunities for people to experience the unspoilt nature of Lough Neagh.

From a structural and management perspective it is important to note that Tourism Ni seem to only engage mainly with Councils and the private sector as their main working clients. It is therefore important to liaise with the three main Councils around the shores of the Lough and persuade them to develop joint Lough proposals.

## European Programmes

We understand that the Brexit withdrawal agreement allows for the completion of current programmes like Interreg. It seems that the UK will continue to participate in Horizon and some of the research programmes but won't participate in future ERDF programmes.

The decision of the UK government to opt out of the future European Territorial Cooperation programmes had already been announced last July 2020. Whilst bodies like the LNP cannot become main partners in projects they can however still become associate partners, and this should still be investigated

## SEUPB Peace Plus



PEACE PLUS is a new EU cross-border programme that will contribute to a more prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The programme will achieve this by funding activities that promote peace and reconciliation and contribute to the cross-border economic and territorial development of the region. It will build upon previous PEACE and INTERREG Programmes and is funded by UK and Irish governments as well as an EU contribution.

The overall objective of the PEACE PLUS Programme will be to build prosperity and peace within the region, to ensure that this Programme will leave a lasting and tangible legacy. The Programme will have two interlinked core objectives, firstly to take advantage of the opportunities and address the needs arising from the peace process, in order to boost economic growth and stimulate social and economic regeneration and secondly to take action to promote social inclusion, particularly for those at the margins of economic and social life.

The framework developed for PEACE PLUS includes the following six themes:

- Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities
- Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation
- Theme 3: Empowering and Investing in Young People
- Theme 4: Healthy and Inclusive Communities
- Theme 5: Supporting a Sustainable Future**
- Theme 6: Building & Embedding Partnership and Collaboration

The focus on sustainability in theme 5 is aligned to LNP goals but there are also opportunities for sustainable food, farming, and tourism projects under Theme 2 and for nature-based activities in Theme 4. There are also opportunities in Theme 6 to develop a potential cross border pilot best practice ownership development project, but it is essential that cross border partners are found. For example, Waterways Ireland would be a good partner to formalise a working relationship with

## Dept for Infrastructure

DfI has responsibility for Roads, Transport and Water including Inland Waterways.



The Department has 3 strategic objectives:

- shaping the region and promoting economic growth.
- developing our infrastructure in a sustainable way; and
- connecting people to opportunities and services.

It leads on the Long-Term Water Strategy - 0 and has relevance for LNP due to its role in navigation, dredging and fisheries. It also has an Inland Waterways Section that has discretionary powers to develop navigable waters but after considerable lobbying to Ministers and senior staff they do not wish to pursue this option. However, there are opportunities for LNP to develop their own inland waterway recreational programmes particularly the upgrading of markers and the provision of a new dredger.

## Dept of Communities

DoC has responsibility for Benefits and Pensions, Housing, Museums, Arts and Culture, Sport, Social Inclusion, and a raft of other areas.

Particularly relevant for LNP is the Historic Environment Division who manage a few historic sites around the Lough. There are opportunities to develop a service level agreement with HED to focus on the protection of important historic sites that can also attract tourists and develop local commercial tours linked to the rich build heritage along the Loughs shores. There are opportunities to open up a number of sites E.g., Arboe Cross, Hill of the O'Neill fort Site, Toome Fort, etc

## Interdepartmental strategies

There are several new interdepartmental strategies emerging:



**The Northern Ireland Environment Strategy** – an early stage, high level consultation was launched last year, a further consultation is planned later this year. Four themes are proposed

which all relate back to the second Programme for Government Outcome 'We live and work sustainably, protecting the environment'.

- Environmental Engagement; Education; General public awareness; Use of technology; DAERA's Knowledge Advisory Service (KAS).
- Environmental Prosperity; tourism, agri-food, renewables, recycling

- Environmental Efficiency; Reducing emissions, Resource efficiency (water, timber, coal, oil), Circular economy, sustainable production, and consumption
- Environmental Quality; Air Quality, Particulate Matter, Ammonia, Noise, Biodiversity, Land Quality, Litter, Water Quality

### **The Green Growth Strategy**

The first Interdepartmental meeting was held in Jan 21 to sign off on Terms of Reference for the Green Growth Strategy. “The Executive’s overarching multi-decade Green Growth Strategy and Delivery Framework for Northern Ireland is aiming to transform our society towards net zero by 2050, protect and enhance our environment and deliver sustainable economic growth.” A consultation can be expected soon.

### **Food Strategy Framework**

DAERA are developing a new strategy for Food which will look at sustainable production methods, local purchasing schemes and branding. Having already worked closely with so many local farmers and food producers this strategy will be important for LNP to engage with. LNP could be a delivery partner on the ground.

### **Sustainable Water - A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040)**

This was an interdepartmental strategy and there is an associated implementation plan, annual reports on progress are published.

There are four high level aims:

- provide high quality sustainable supplies of drinking water to households, industry, and agriculture
- manage flood risk and drainage in a sustainable manner
- achieve the environmental requirements of the Water Framework Directive in a sustainable manner
- provide sustainable reliable water and sewerage services that meet customers' needs

In the implementation plan there are actions for biodiversity, river catchment management, fisheries management, and managing agricultural impact.

### **Shared Island Fund**

The Shared Island Fund is set up by the ROI government with €500m of capital funding available between 2021-25, for investment in collaborative North/South projects working with the Northern Ireland Executive and the British Government to address strategic challenges faced on the island of Ireland and further developing the all-island economy, deepening North/South cooperation, and investing in the Northwest and border regions.



It focusses on gaps in the Good Friday agreement and the Ulster Canal connecting Lough Erne to Lough Neagh could be seen as an important strategic Project. ICBAN are presently developing a study to look at the future development of the Ulster Canal and this could be an important study for the development of the Blackwater River and the Ownership of the bed and soil of the Lough.

### Councils

There are 5 Councils that bound Lough Neagh

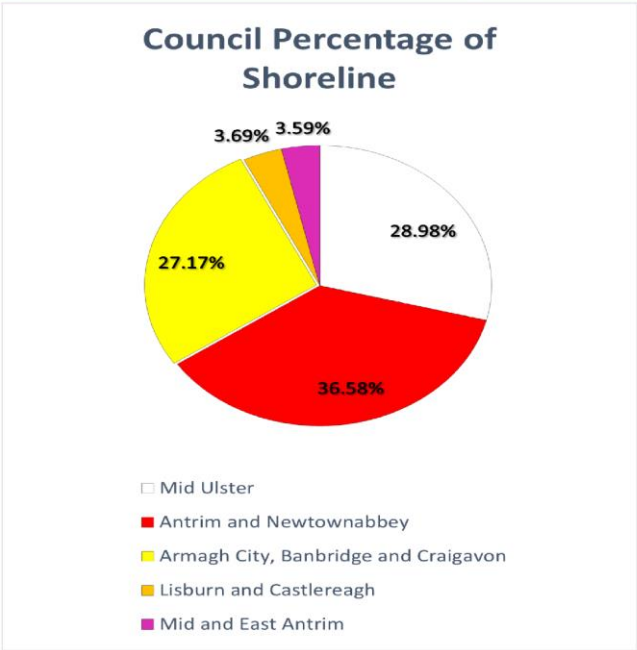
- **Mid Ulster District Council**
- **Antrim and Newtownabbey Brough Council**
- **Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council**
- *Mid and East Antrim Borough Council*
- *Lisburn and Castlereagh Borough Council*

The first three main Council bodies highlighted in bold above cover almost 93% of the shoreline of the Lough. The other two have a much smaller shoreline of 7% combined. Future development of the Lough should therefore have greater focus in partnering up with the three main larger Councils above and review core funding assistance with a service level agreement approach. The smaller ones should still be included, however, the focus should be on the larger ones. The reasons for the greater focus on the main Councils would include

- They cover vast majority of Lough
- Targeting the main three would be more efficient and effective
- It would create more synergy and integration of resources
- The larger Councils have their own economic and biodiversity strategies that relate more directly to the Lough
- Larger Councils have existing strategic tourism hubs on the Lough and rivers flowing into the area

Each of the three larger councils have strategies that include Valuing Heritage, Health and Wellbeing, Environmental Protection and Economic Development – as such their goals are closely aligned to LNP. LNP already supports the Councils to achieve their aims through Service Level Agreements but there is a need to review this funding in light of the new increased roles and focus on the Lough. All three of the large Councils have approved a Council motion highlighting the importance of the Lough as a tourism and economic resource and the huge success of the developments at Antrim and Ballyronan have brought significantly large amounts of visitors to these sites and have contributed their regeneration and revitalisation.

Council Share of Lough Shoreline



### Where we are now – conclusion

LNP is in great shape having delivered successfully on some very significant projects and developed a strong team.

The new strategy needs to help us adapt to current and future trends.

The declaration of a climate emergency, the upswell in support for environmental action and the apparent new direction for our government departments gives us reassurance and confidence to continue our important work in conserving our natural and built heritage of Lough Neagh

We need to develop, resource, and implement a new comprehensive programme of works that will build on the successes of the past Landscape programme, contribute to partner and stakeholder environmental and economic objectives and avoid losing the momentum that has been gained. The Partnership has already begun conversations with the RSPB and the Ulster Wildlife Trust regarding the development of major Nature Recovery Networks and the restoration of peatlands along the southern shores of the Lough. The Partnership will also be taking over responsibility of new nature reserves from the Department of Education and NIEA in the end of 2022 and there are huge opportunities to not only restore these large stretches of peatland but to store the immense amounts of carbon that still exist there.

The broad themes should focus on:

**New structures for management and ownership.:** Many of the strategic needs of the Lough are still outstanding. The Lough was never included in the Good Friday Agreement and has no formal navigation authority. Likewise, the bed and soil of the Lough is owned by Shaftesbury estates and there is an opportunity to redirect the income from this asset back into the Lough itself. Finally, there is a need for new integrated structures on the Lough to meet twice a year to monitor strategic progress.

**More commercial and sustainable financial approach.** The Partnership has also undertaken a study of commercial opportunities for the generation of profitable funding from the provision of environmental services to EFS clients. The ownership of the bed and soil of the commercial opportunity associated with it has still to be developed. Funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund will allow the manager of the Partnership to spend all of his time developing this option along with other commercial opportunities associated with the ownership of the Lough.

**Farming Economy:** The farming sector is undergoing massive change at the moment with the implications of Brexit, Climate Change and Carbon Zero legislation. Farmers also own and manage the vast majority of land along the shores of Lough Neagh and within the Special Protected Area and Area of Special Scientific Interest. It is therefore imperative to try and help this major economic sector adapt to the new requirements and still operate financially successful businesses.

**Environmental Protection:** The primary aim will be to create new linked wildlife corridors by connected the existing nature reserves along the shores of the Lough Neagh with the Lough Neagh Environmental new Farming Group Programme. Strong emphasis should be made on linking conservation and environmental protection with more social and economic sustainability for both the Partnership and the stakeholders on the ground.

**Visitors and Tourism Development:** The Partnership also needs to refocus its tourism strategy and refocus on local artisan food development and helping private sector create new tourism experiences. Working more closely with the councils is imperative as these are the main mechanism used by Tourism NI to develop tourism products on the ground.

**Climate change, Green Recovery, and the Economy –** The protection of our natural and built heritage make a significant contribution to local economies but there is so much potential to improve the way that this is done. The Partnership is presently undertaking a major climate change and carbon capture study of the whole of the Lough. There is potential to examine the development of carbon trading schemes to allow the linkage between peatland restoration and income from the carbon capture.

**Engaging with communities in the landscape -** The conservation of the landscape can only be sustainable if it is supported by the communities that live and work around them. Under the Lottery Funded Lough Neagh Landscape Scheme the Partnership developed strong working relationships with local communities in Derrytresk and Derryloughan regarding the management of the “school lands” in the southern shores of the Lough and this successful type of engagement should be transferred over the whole of the Lough.

**Linking and bringing value to Councils:** There are three main Councils around the shores of the Lough (Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, and Mid Ulster Council and the Partnership should focus of developing its relationship with these three main Councils as they cover 96% of the Lough. There is a need for each of the main Councils to re-examine the value they are getting form the Partnership and increase the level of funding below. There is large value brought by the Partnership to the Councils and that if the Partnership wishes to develop new programmes it needs increased core funding from the three main Councils. However, the Councils need to be sure that this this will result in greater benefits, investment, and strategic fit for their own programmes.

## 05 LNP Staff and Financial Review

### Review of Financial Impact of LNP Work

In Nov 2021 the Lough Neagh Partnership held a small information event after the publication of the financial impact report of its work over the previous five years and the impact it had on its main stakeholders. The main elements of the review are detailed below.

#### Strategic Impact

- Over £10 million of new investment brought to Lough Neagh by Lough Neagh Partnership Ltd.
- A new strong management structure with systems now in place
- Lough Neagh Partnership is now recognised as the Lough Neagh Management body
- The improved management of Nis most important environmental designation
- Over 504 ha of new nature reserves of new Nature Recovery Networks
- New tourism experiences and businesses developed with the Private Sector and Councils
- Increased visitor numbers and improved perceptions of Lough Neagh
- New collaborative clusters set up for local artisan food and moil cattle
- New focus on safety and a new navigation subcommittee set up
- New cross-party political support for better management of Lough
- New tourism infrastructure developed by Councils working with the Partnership
- More Important historic buildings of Lough Neagh protected and conserved
- New environmentally friendly farming culture developed and additional funding for farmers
- Monitoring Lough Neagh's environment increased, and annual data now recorded

#### Specific Indicators

- 21 FTE jobs created
- £10.8m total direct investment brought into the Lough Neagh area
- 5 new businesses started
- 1,815 hectares of land under better environmental management
- C.350 hectares of new land transferred to Lough Neagh Partnership
- 1791 Volunteers involved in helping to protect Lough Neagh
- 25,000 people engaged in heritage & environmental activities
- 2 environmental group farm schemes created with over 140 farmers signed up
- Media reach 47,171,732
- 213 tonnes of litter and 48 km of shoreline cleaned up through major litter lifts
- 20 barn owl nests install
- Toome & Clonoe WW11 historic Airfields recorded and researched
- 5 books published and 15 additional publications
- 3 new bespoke sculptural interpretations in place

LOUGH NEAGH PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC REVIEW AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE PLAN

- 74 walks and talks provided
- Washingbay Masterplan implemented valued at £526,250
- 3.1km new trail created, 8km refurbished
- 1,134 pupils engaged in schools' Lough Neagh heritage programme
- 2 community heritage gardens created
- Restoration of Toome Canal Lockhouse
- Return & restoration of WW11 torpedo platform boat to Lough Neagh
- Conservation of Church Island medieval church
- Development of 12 heritage and food tours, attracting 773 visitors
- 3 new exhibitions and visitor centres developed
- 1,657 people trained in heritage skills
- £4,560,819 investment in Farming economy of shores of Lough Neagh

**Summary of Investment Value brought to Councils over last 5 years**

This part of the strategy and plan attempts to highlight the benefits and in particular investment value the three main Councils get back from their annual core funding of £22,000 per annum to the Lough Neagh Partnership. It highlights the effectiveness of the Lough Neagh Partnership team in targeting and applying for grant assistance. The funding applications can be quite complex and are often attached with a detailed business proposal and economic appraisal and so there is a great skill set associated with staff in the Partnership. It is important to note that the Partnership carries out this development work on its own initiative and using internal resources . LNP seldom receives technical assistance or brings in other accounting or economic consultants to help out. Details of the main funding attracted into the Council areas over the last 5 years is detailed below.

**Investment brought into Council Lough shores by LNP (Jan 2017 – Jan 2022)**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grant Assistance</b>	<b>Total incl Matched Investment</b>	<b>Total incl Matched and Levered Funds</b>
Lough Neagh Environment Protection	£429, 439.	£580,250	£614,750
Lough Neagh Landscape Scheme	£2,494,900	£3,536,556	£4,344,451
Waterpro Water Quality	£179,600	£179,600	£179,600
2 Environmental Farm Schemes	£401,899	£401,899	£4,962,718

LOUGH NEAGH PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC REVIEW AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE PLAN

Lough Neagh Artisan Food Programme	£29,550	£35,000	£35,000
Coalisland Industrial Heritage Project	£312,151	£344,151	£400,496
Marketing   Grants for 3 festivals 32 Tour promotion	£30,234	£41,654	£78,404
Community Renewal Fund	£210,000	£210,000	£210,000
TOTAL			£10,825,419.00
Core funding from all 5 Councils over 5 yrs			£365,000
Over last 5 years for all 5 Councils every £1 spend on core an additional £29.6 levered			
Core funding 3 main councils (93% of shoreline) over 5 yrs			£392,473
<b>Over last 5 years for all 3 main Councils every £1 spent on core funding £29.6 levered by LNP</b>			
<b>Assume 3 main Councils cover 93% of shoreline</b>			

### Levered Funds

The Partnership has also been successful in not only directly bringing in additional grant and match funding, but they have been able to act flexibly and quickly and apply for other possible funding linked to the project as and when it appears. It also has mentored and given advice and help to other community groups and businesses in successfully applying for follow up funding. Additional levered money has therefore also been attracted. This is particularly highlighted in the two Lough Neagh Environmental Group Farm schemes whereby not only did the Partnership apply to DAERA for funding to provide a group co ordinator, but they have also the helped and drawn up plans for each farmer in the scheme. It was this added facilitation that helped lever in so much more other additional funding. This successful strategy should be continued into the next programme. Another example of attracting levered funding would be when in 2019 the Partnership filled in the Rural Development Programme application and economic appraisal for the Lough Neagh Rescue to attract £380,000 for a new Rescue Building in Kinnego.

*Levered Funds (2017 – 2022)*

### Link with Council Strategies

Whilst investment attracted into the main Council areas has been significant it is also worth noting that a considerable amount of projects developed by the partnership over the last five years (See Lough Neagh Partnership Report 2017 – 2022) have fitted in well with the main economic development and tourism strategies of the Councils. The Partnership has a good track record of working closely with the Councils around the shores of the Lough and have on numerous occasions linked match funding for projects being developed by the Council or which match both outcomes and goals expand tis Good working relationships have been developed between staff members of the Partnership and Councils and the there are opportunities to build on these working relationships by developing a more formal structure whereby a new working structure is developed. Eg the Partnership meets with Council and Departmental officials twice a year to coordinate and create maximum impact and efficiencies from any grant assistance or joint projects that link in with both parties' development strategies and plans.

There is also room for exploring working a more formal yet outcomes-based way with the Lough


Levered Funds Breakdown	Additional
Additional grants at Washing Bay LNLP	£550,345
Lough Keepers Cottage LNLP	£48,500
Additional small grants via LNLP	£65,000
Volunteer Time Value LNLP	£144,050
Additional spend at Festivals and Tours	£36,750
Volunteer Time Value Coalisland Project	£56,345
Value of 2 in Kind Boats (Rib and small Boat)	£34,500
EFS addition funds brought to shore farms	£4,560,819
Total levered funds over last 5 years	£5,496,309.00

Neagh Partnership more such as through service level agreements and developing a sub contractual arm of the three main Councils to assist in the area's heritage, biodiversity agriculture, carbon management and climate change. There is a need for a more service level based symbiotic approach rather just seeing the Partnership as standalone separate body just dealing with environmental issues on Lough Neagh.

Below are some examples of how the work of the Partnership linked in with the outcomes of the three main Council economic and tourism development strategies around the Lough.



**Example One: Link with Tourism and Access Strategies**

<b>Developing Tourism Infrastructure in partnership with Councils</b>	
<b>Project: Working with Mid Ulster Council - Access at Lough Beg</b>	
	<p>Working with Council we supported the <b>development</b> of a new pedestrian access boardwalk to Long Point on Lough Beg as part of a wider Seamus Heaney Trail Experience. This project involved the creation of a 930m pathway consisting of 410m boardwalk across the ASSI / Ramsar Site and 520m pathway through the ancient woodland of Long Point Wood, ending at a viewing platform overlooking Lough Beg and Church Island. The project also included the creation of a car park with disabled facilities to allow visitors to access the walkway safely. This walk now allows visitors to immerse themselves in the landscape, the birdlife of the area and the poetry of Seamus Heaney. The project allowed us to help engage less able bodied directly with nature.</p>
<b>Partners:</b> Mid Ulster District Council	
<b>Impact:</b> Heritage visitor attraction, New 930m DDA compliant trail, Car Park, Educational resource	

**Example Two: Linking with Council Economic Development Strategies**

<b>Creating Economic Development Hubs from Heritage</b>
<b>Project:</b> Refurbishment of the Lock-keepers cottage and installation of heritage interpretation



Working with Toome based development group TIDAL Ltd and Waterways Ireland, we upgraded the existing Quay and developed a new waterways heritage centre and café on the site of the former Lock Keeper's cottage at Toome Canal. The new centre houses a comprehensive interpretative display that covers the history of the canal and its importance as a gateway linking the north coast to the Lough as well as information on the community, natural environmental and wider cultural and industrial heritage of the site.

**Partners:** TIDAL, Waterways Ireland, Antrim, and Newtownabbey Borough Council

**Impact:** Built and cultural heritage asset conserved, new heritage interpretative facility created, new jobs created Heritage tourism

### Example Three: Linking with Council Business skills and Training Strategies

#### Developing Business Clusters

**Project:** Lough Neagh Artisans



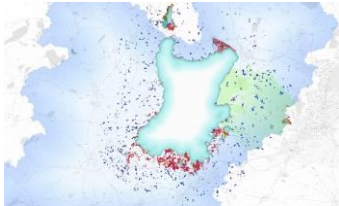
Lough Neagh Artisans was formed in 2019 and operates as a collective. The group collaborates and inspires people from around the world with their foods, crafts, and experiences.

The group believes that there is a strong need for collaboration among Lough Neagh businesses which complement each other and the necessity to make excellent artisan products and services, including hospitality and experiential initiatives which are unique to this part of the world. Some of the initiatives the artisans have collaborated on include a recipe book showcasing the local produce, hampers featuring our local produce and attendance at consumer shows under the Lough Neagh Artisan Brand.

**Partners:** Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Antrim, and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Mid Ulster District Council, and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

**Impact:** The Lough Neagh Artisans have established a brand and through the cluster can benefit from increased exposure and more cost-effective marketing, resulting in increased profitability.

**Example four: Economic opportunities in the agricultural and Green Growth sector**

<b>Working With Shoreline Farmers and Landowners</b>	
<b>Project: Lough Neagh Group Farm Schemes</b>	
	<p>The delivery of two major Environmental Group Farming Scheme (EFS) has made a substantial contribution to bringing the Lough Neagh wetland habitats back into favourable condition but at the same time brought in over £4 million of investment into the area. Funding secured from DAERA encouraged two groups of farmers to come together and liaise with one central coordinator who helped them draw up environmental farm plans, providing group training, and arranging best practice visits. Through the schemes many Lough Neagh farmers are now carrying out environmentally friendly farming practices on their land.</p>
<p>Partners: DAERA, Landowners</p>	
<p>Impact: 141 farmers engaged in wetland habitat management, 664 ha Wet grassland and fen managed for conservation, 105 ha Wet woodland under management, 167km of riparian fencing completed</p>	

**LNP and effects of HLF Landscape Programme Termination**

The Landscape Partnership funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund came to an end in Jun 2021 which meant all 6 staff were to be made redundant. At the May LNP 2021 Finance subcommittee it was noted that this would leave a deficit in the annual Lough Neagh Partnership budget as it received a management fee from the Landscape programme and this would have serious implications for future staff levels and in particular the partnership's ability to attract additional funding capital funding. There is a need to have senior staff developing new projects as they roll out.

The Landscape programme therefore has and will leave a deficit in the operational roles of the Partnership since Chie Mc Guckin was a de facto finance officer covering all associated finances for all programmes belonging to Lough Neagh and Willie Burke also took on the role of developing and applying for a few future programme funding on behalf of the Partnership as well as his HLF Landscape duties. A staff review was therefore carried out with a number of options examined by the LNP Finance subcommittee.

## Financial Review

In Jul 2021 a consultation exercise was carried out with all senior staff in the Lough Neagh Partnership. It focussed on a review of the Partnerships finances, especially its revenue and staffing costs. A number of problems were highlighted by staff and in particular by the LNLFP finance officer, Chie Mc Guckin.

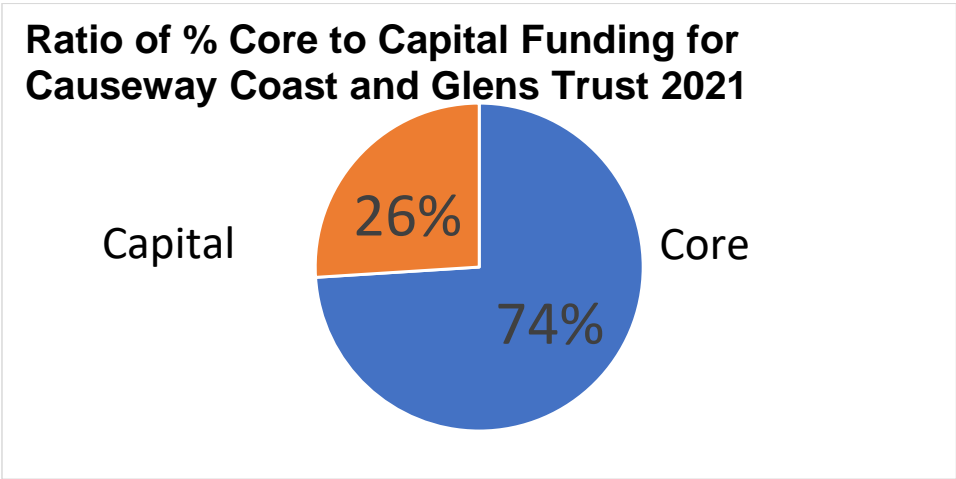
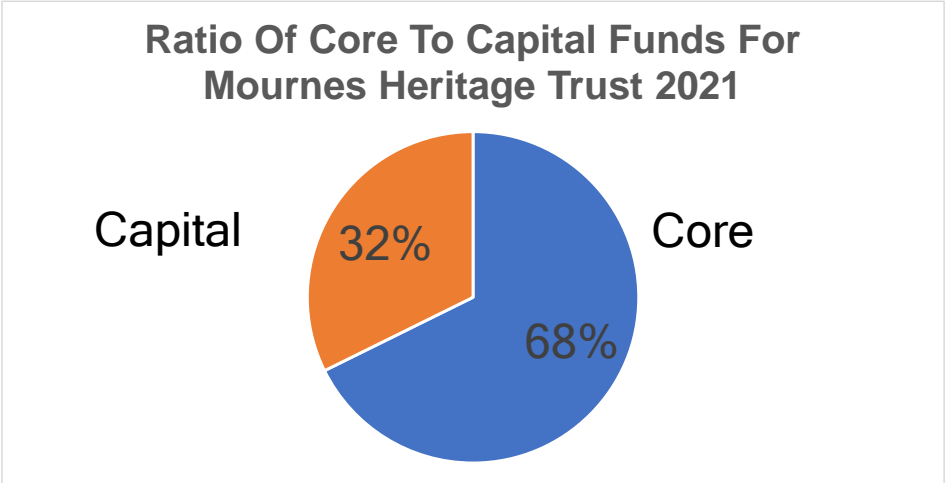
## Issues

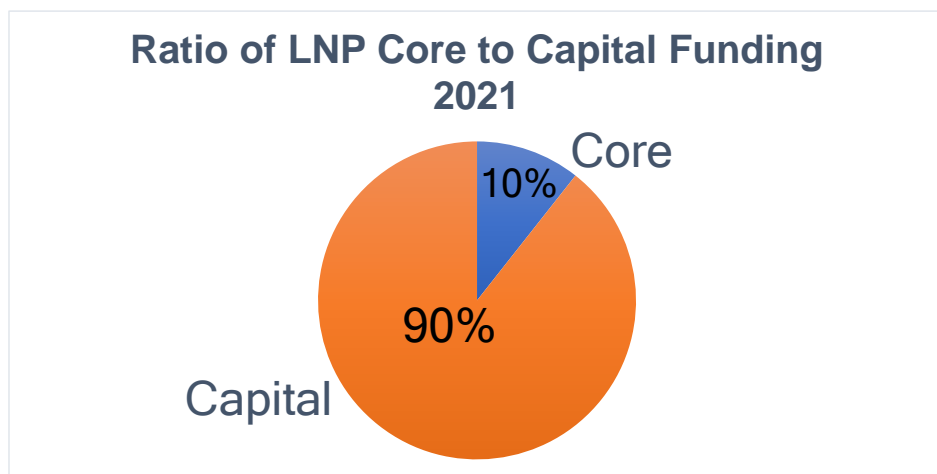
- There is insufficient core funding from Councils to cover existing and possible future core staff and revenue costs.
- There was too much reliance on gaining small project management fees to cover the running costs of the Partnership itself.
- In benchmarking the funding for other Environmental NGOs such as the Mourne Heritage Trust and the Belfast Hills there was lower levels of funding from the respective Councils.
- The Partnership provided extremely good value to Councils by delivering major common economic, community and environmental objectives but did not have sufficient funding to allow it to build up reserves so that it could have long term sustainable finances.
- The reporting and claiming of finances from some Councils can be more outputs rather than strategic outcome based.
- Some Councils may not be fully aware of the level of investment and value brought into the relevant Council area by the Partnership.
- Other NGOs seem to have a more strategic alignment with the Council/Councils they work with and receive larger amounts of core funding to allow them to operate and keep a strong team of staff who are committed long term to the organisation. Too much reliance on programme management and core revenue funds means that people leave on the completion of the programme.

## Bench Marking of Core Funding to Capital Programme Ratio of other NGO bodies

A benchmarking exercise was also carried out to compare the amount of core funding to capital spend in other similar NGOs. It was noted that the LNP core funding ratio is very low when compared to other NGOs such as the Mournes Heritage Trust and the Belfast Hills. (The most up to date information was for 2019/2018). So, the Partnership seems to be great value for funding partners but poor on its own financial resilience and ability to generate reserves for future work. See comparison below for two other similar bodies such as the Mournes Heritage Trust and the Belfast Hills Partnership

Financial Benchmarking





As can be seen above the LNO extracts great value and investment for the present core funding it receives from the Lough Neagh surrounding Councils

#### The Way forward

There is a need for the three main Council bodies to review core funding requirements of the Partnership and enter into a new service level agreement to provide beneficial services and added value. The Partnership should also examine opportunities of generating its own commercial funding via commercial tenders, ownership bid and using or leasing equipment it has and try to build up reserves to become more resilient, relying less on project management fees. The recent success of applying to the Dormant Funds NI to investigate new commercial prospects is a real opportunity to be grasped by the Partnership

#### Staff Review

In the May 2021 LNP Finance and Personal subcommittee carried out a review of all staff roles This was necessary considering the end of the Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership Scheme in Sep 2021. The issues raised included

#### Issues

- Reliant in past on good will of senior staff in Landscape Partnership Scheme carrying out in kind duties for the whole of the office and not just the Landscape Partnership Scheme duties.
- No staff dedicated to working up commercial ventures via a Community Interest Company.

- Staff spend a lot of additional nonpaid time preparing bids outside their mainstream duties
- Need core senior team to allow new programme to be delivered over the next 5 years with programme manager and finance manager

#### Staff Review

It was agreed by the Partnership to create new LNP roles in developing and managing new programmes. The present two senior staff roles are fundamental to the present and future overall operational success of the LNP business and therefore must be kept on. Their posts and new roles will be funded from the £130,000 legacy surplus from the Landscape Partnership Scheme, and it was therefore agreed at the Sep LNP Finance Sub Committee that this would cover the costs of the two senior members for up to Mar 2023. There is only sufficient funding from the Lottery Landscape Legacy Fund to fund these posts until Mar 2023. There is therefore a need to go back to the three main councils to ask for a review of core funding.

It was therefore agreed roles and responsibilities of the of two remaining Landscape staff would change to reflect a wider management role overseeing and managing all the programmes associated with the Lough Neagh Partnership. The Partnership has also recently applied to the Dormant Account fund to allow the existing Manager Gerry Darby to have a different role working up new commercial opportunities for the Partnership.

#### New Roles

It was therefore agreed that Gerry Darby will take on a new role of developing commercial opportunities such as the EFS abandoned land project and Lough Neagh Ownership project. Gerry has already started his new role in Jul 2022

Overall Strategic Manager with new roles of:

- Development of Lough Neagh Abandoned Land Project and Purchase of Bed and Soil application
- Negotiation with senior funder representatives of all applications to LNP
- Lobbying of Politicians and influencers
- Overall promotion of Lough Neagh and LNP
- Development and steering the implementation of LNP strategy.
- Creation of sustainable finances and setting up of new CIC businesses.

Overall LNP Programme Manager with new roles for

- Applying for new funds (Lottery, Peace Plus, Trusts etc)
- Implementing actions outlined in the LPS Legacy Plan (Currently under development)
- Day to Day management of all new programmes
- Writing reports for funders and other stakeholders
- Securing new management fees to assist core funding.

Overall LNP Finance Manager with new roles for:

- Financial oversight and management of all LNP Programmes
- Accounting and reconciling all LNP programme finances.
- Providing funding reports to funders and Board
- Development of new business proposals

### Environmental Ranger Posts

It was noted that all Environmental Rangers P Harper and C Laverty are funded by 5-year Environment Funding and LNP will continue to apply for in year funding and when new 5-year cycle returns in 2023 apply to cover all Ranger Funding.

### Other Staff

LNP receives core funding of £73,000 from 5 Councils for staff and Admin Officer together with running costs of the office. There is a need for full time administration and this role will be kept on as a full-time post to cover all administration requirements and the marketing role and post will be kept on part time to assist with the marketing and promotion of Lough Neagh and develop Lough Neagh food and the artisan food group.

### Need for Increased Core Funding from the three main Councils for the Partnership

As can be seen below there is therefore a potential serious revenue funding problem for the Partnership beginning Apr 2023 and it is imperative to enter discussions with the three main Councils to ask for a reasonable increase the level of core funding so that the Partnership can bring in substantial new programme funds and investment into the Lough Neagh and Council areas from 2023 – 2028. There is a great amount of opportunities available through the SEUPB Peace Plus fund and the Levelling Up Fund and there is a chance to address major strategy needs of the Lough such as navigation, tourism development and ownership of the bed and soil and most of all to bring great value and levered investment to the Councils.

### Reasons for Increase in Core funding to LNP

- 1) Ability to apply for new funding and programmes
- 2) Increased focus on new Lough Navigation and Ownership Needs
- 3) Ability to apply for funding that Councils cannot apply for. Eg Lottery
- 4) Provide financial stability to Lough Neagh Partnership
- 5) Lough Neagh Partnership can lead in new management body for Lough
- 6) Lough Neagh Partnership can provide technical advice to Councils on biodiversity, climate change, farming change and carbon trading
- 7) More additional funding and investment attracted to Councils areas



**Projected Budget for LNP Mar 2022 – Mar 2028**

PROJECTED INCOME	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Local authorities (existing)	£ 72,000	£ 72,000	£ 72,000	£ 72,000	£ 72,000	£ 72,000
Management fees	£ 20,000	£ 20,000	£ 20,000	£ 20,000	£ 20,000	£ 20,000
Dormant Account Fund	£ 37,500	£ 50,000	£ 12,500	£ -	£ -	£ -
LP legacy	£ 29,876	£ 7,469	£ 4,272	£ -	£ -	£ -
LP surplus	£ 52,668	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
Misc funds	£ 11,500	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
HMRC	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	£ 5,000
NIEA	£ 73,750	£ 75,225	£ 76,729	£ 78,264	£ 79,829	£ 81,426
CRESI	£ 20,930	£ 28,464	£ 29,034	£ 7,404	£ -	£ -
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£ 323,224</b>	<b>£ 258,158</b>	<b>£ 219,535</b>	<b>£ 182,668</b>	<b>£ 176,829</b>	<b>£ 178,426</b>
PROJECTED EXPENDITURE	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Manager	£ 57,971	£ 59,130	£ 60,313	£ 61,519	£ 62,749	£ 64,004
Admin officer	£ 26,610.78	£ 27,143	£ 27,686	£ 28,240	£ 28,804	£ 29,380
Programmes manager	£ 54,374.16	£ 55,462	£ 56,571	£ 57,702	£ 58,856	£ 60,033
Finance officer	£ 38,812.02	£ 39,588	£ 40,380	£ 41,188	£ 42,011	£ 42,852
Travel/Mobile	£ 8,000	£ 8,000	£ 8,000	£ 8,000	£ 8,000	£ 8,000
Bank Charges / interests	£ 600	£ 600	£ 600	£ 600	£ 600	£ 600
Office Running Costs	£ 19,000	£ 19,000	£ 19,000	£ 19,000	£ 19,000	£ 19,000
Marketing officer	£ 37,060	£ 22,681	£ 23,134	£ 23,597	£ 24,069	£ 24,550
Marketing Costs	£ 2,000	£ 2,000	£ 2,000	£ 2,000	£ 2,000	£ 2,000
Accountancy	£ 3,000	£ 3,000	£ 3,000	£ 3,000	£ 3,000	£ 3,000
Shoreline Manager (NIEA)	£ 42,207.44	£ 43,052	£ 43,913	£ 44,791	£ 45,687	£ 46,600
Ranger (NIEA)	£ 31,542.48	£ 32,173	£ 32,817	£ 33,473	£ 34,143	£ 34,825
Ranger No.2 (CRESI)	£ 20,930	£ 28,464	£ 29,034	£ 7,404	£ -	£ -
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>£ 342,107</b>	<b>£ 340,293</b>	<b>£ 346,447</b>	<b>£ 330,513</b>	<b>£ 328,919</b>	<b>£ 334,846</b>
<b>Deficit</b>	<b>£ 18,883</b>	<b>£ 82,135</b>	<b>£ 126,912</b>	<b>£ 147,845</b>	<b>£ 152,090</b>	<b>£ 156,420</b>
Additional fund required per council	£ 6,294	£ 27,378	£ 42,304	£ 49,282	£ 50,697	£ 52,140

As can be seen from the table above, if the Partnership wishes to operate with an appropriate skilled team to apply for and manage new programmes and bring strategic value, there is a need for the three main Councils to increase core contribution to allow it to get through Mar 2023 – Mar 2024. The deficit to be covered for the three large Councils is an additional £27,378 per year, bringing the total to £49,378 each per year with the small amount from the two smaller Councils continuing to be £3500. There continues to be deficits in year 24/25 onwards but if the Council continues with the new agreed Council funding, then the deficit will be manageable as the Partnership will have started to develop new programmes by then and there will be associated small new management fees with these programmes that can fill the gap.

The Partnership is therefore requesting that the three main Councils increase their funding to £49,378 per annum from April 2023 – Mar 2028. The three main Councils should subject to their approval then enter into a service level agreement to work up detailed programmes that will address the needs of the Lough and the who live and work on its shores.

**Suggested LNP Core funding Arrangements of Councils from Apr 2023 – Mar 2028**

<b>Council Area</b>	<b>Previous Annual amount up to Mar 2023</b>	<b>New Annual Amount from April 2023 – Mar 2028</b>
Mid Ulster Borough Council	£22,000	£49,378
Antrim and Newtownabbey BC	£22,000	£49,378
Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon BC	£22,000	£49,378
Mid and East Antrim BC	£3500	£3500
Lisburn and Castlereagh BC	£3500	£3500
<b>Total</b>	<b>£73,000.00</b>	<b>£155,134.00</b>

It is imperative to note that this is not a request for an increased handout from the Council but an opportunity for all parties to enter a new dynamic joint partnership scheme whereby larger investment and value can be brought to the table. The next section of this strategic report details the main new strategic themes and funding streams the Partnership intends to target over the next five years and highlights the expected additional investment it believes it can bring to the three main Councils.

## 06 FUTURE GOALS 2023 - 2028

### Our Vision

For Lough Neagh...

“A world class landscape; valued and supported by vibrant communities, thriving businesses and low-impact visitors.”

For the Lough Neagh Partnership...

“Lough Neagh Partnership is the lead body co ordinating and managing the sustainable development of Lough Neagh

### Our Strategy

- Build a more financially resilient organisation
- Form strategic partnerships at a high level for better co-ordination
- Bring increased investment and value to Lough and its funding partners
- Take the lead to address outstanding strategic needs such as navigation and ownership
- Promote Loughs artisan food experiences and shift our focus to local visitors rather than international
- Double down on our work in the agri-food sector as it goes through a major transition
- Promote, protect, and utilise our built, cultural, and natural heritage assets for the benefit of all
- Help partners adapt to new climate change and carbon zero requirements

### Our Future Goals for The Next Five Years

The following section describes the future overall goals of the Partnership, what actions and projects it wishes to carry out to achieve these goals and after the five years is over what change has it brought to the Lough

**Goal 1: Lough Management: To establish a new model for the navigation, management and ownership of the Lough that can deliver on shared goals.**

#### *Projects*

- Improve LNP Board and staff skills
- Set up new Interdepartmental/Council working group ( Lough Neagh Management Group)
- Develop new navigation management and ownership models
- Apply to Levelling Up fund for new markers and dredger
- Enter new SLAs with three main Councils

#### Outcomes

- A more efficient working Board
- More synergy created by Departments Private Sector and Council working together
- A safer Lough for boats
- Bed and soil income remains in Lough area

**Goal 2: Resilience: To become a resilient and financially sustainable organisation; well governed with skilled staff who are secure in their posts and reserves to spend on our important work.**

#### *Projects*

- Increase Council core funding to allow core stability and
- Examine other Income generation opportunities via use of Dormant Account Fund NI
- Develop LNP Reserve Fund
- Increase linkages between conservation and economic prosperity

#### Outcomes

- Increase financial stability for Partnership
- Use of reserves to develop new projects

- Additional value created for Councils

**Goal 3: Support farming sector to adapt to new environmental and climate requirements**

*Projects*

- Develop an innovate new EFS Group Scheme 2024 - 2029
- Grow Moil Cattle Chain
- Promote the foodstuffs of Lough Neagh

**Outcomes**

- Help farming sector to adapt to new Carbon and Climate regulations
- Increase financial viability of small farms
- Improve biodiversity of Lough

**Goal 4: Conservation and Green Economy: Protect this special place and it's cultural, built, and natural heritage and create new green economy business opportunities**

*Projects*

- Lough Neagh Heritage protection via Community Renewal Fund
- Protecting and restoring our wetland habitats and species via Peace Plus
- Develop Historic Antrim Archaeology
- Engaging Communities – Heritage Learning, Training and Volunteering

**Outcomes**

- Have baseline data
- Maintain ASSI and SPA designation status
- Increase in more Local people in protecting Lough
- Maximise investment from environmental programmes
- Protect habitats for breeding waders and focus on endangered Curlew Species
- Preserve 2000, ha of Peatland, 1000 ha of wet grassland and 500ha of wet woodland
- Increase in Jobs and new businesses created from Green economy

**Goal 5: Visitors: To establish Lough Neagh and Navigable rivers as a common brand and work with private sector on food development and food experience branding**

*Projects*

- Work with local private operators to develop Lough Neagh Tourism Experiences

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- Develop stronger links between heritage sites and potential Tourism visits and tours
- Promote Lough Neagh Food and food artisan events and clusters
- Review Lough berthing/marina infrastructure needs
- Help Councils promote and develop River Bann and Blackwater River / Ulster Canal

### Outcomes

- Improve tourism infrastructure on Lough
- Lough Neagh food experience is main reason to visit
- Navigable rivers to Lough opened and hubs developed

### **Goal 6: Innovative approaches to land management, climate change and carbon capture**

#### *Projects*

- Develop commercial Abandoned land EFS Develop Project
- Examine needs of Lough from Climate Change
- Develop carbon capture project and examine possible trading options

### Outcomes

- Have detailed data on climate change needs of Lough
- Evaluate level and trade sequestrated carbon
- Assist Councils develop climate and carbon strategies

## 07 FUTURE VALUE AND INVESTMENT PLAN

The table below details the main programmes and funding bodies the Partnership wishes to apply to, and which will help address the needs of the Lough and fit its agreed strategic goals. Most of them will involve working in partnership with Councils and Departments and will also help address their common needs and goals. Many partners believe that the Partnership is at its heart only an environmental and conservation body. It must be emphasised that this is far from the truth.

The Partnership is responsible for the sustainable development of Lough Neagh, and this includes its economic development. One of the themes of the next five years will be to try and expand and develop the linkages between environmental protection and the attraction of inward investment and increased economic prosperity. These two needs are not always mutually exclusive. Below is therefore an estimate of the grant assistance and levered investment the Partnership intends to bring into the Lough over the next five years. It also highlights the value the Partnership hopes to bring to the main Council shoreline areas and hopefully helps justify any increased revenue and core funding to the Partnership may request from the three main Councils around the Lough. It also highlights the programme development and grant application work staff will carry out if funding from the Council is increased.

Theme	Main aspects	Funding Programme	Grant Funding	Period	Total leverage	Need for Increase Council Core funding
<b>Goal 1: Lough Management: To establish a new structure for the navigation, management and ownership of the bed and soil of the Lough.</b>						

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<p><b>Landscape Legacy</b></p>	<p><b>Management and maintenance of existing HLF projects, Priority retention of 3 important interim staff.</b></p>	<p><b>National Lottery Heritage Fund (HLF)</b></p>	<p><b>Budget finishes for key senior staff on Mar 2023</b>  £83,304</p>	<p><b>Jan 2022 – Mar 2023</b></p>	<p><b>83,304</b></p>	<p><b>Key senior needed to develop and apply for Lev Up programmes</b></p>
<p><b>Management and Ownership study Project</b></p>	<p><b>Develop cross community project to improve management and purchase Lough Neagh. Link with Waterways Ireland as a cross border partner.</b></p> <p><b>a) Apply to SEUPB Theme 6 Building and embedding Partnership and Collaboration</b></p> <p><b>Develop Strategic Plan and Pilot Project and Demonstration Initiative for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improved best practice Dredging and Management on Lough</b></li> <li>• <b>Cross border Marketing and promotion of WI lakes and Lough Neagh</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>2-year development SEUPB</b></p> <p><b>Apply to SEUPB Theme 6 Building and embedding Partnership and Collaboration</b></p> <p><b>Develop Pilot Project and Demonstration Initiative for improved.</b></p>	<p><b>£350,000 100%</b></p>	<p><b>Mar 23 – Mar 28</b></p>	<p><b>350,000</b></p>	<p><b>Strategic Manager to develop and over see</b></p> <p><b>Finance Manager and Admin Officer and to administer</b></p>



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	<p><b>b) Carry out feasibility study into purchase of bed and soil of Lough Neagh Legal costs and business plan. Ownership map of Lough, Coordination with Shaftesbury Estates</b></p>					
Navigation	<p><b>Upgrade Markers and dredge main entrances to rivers and agree protocol on.</b></p> <p><b>Capital grant application to LUF Submitted 02/08/2022</b></p>	<p><b>2-year programme with DFI, Councils and DAERA RDP Main project part of interdepartmental programme.</b></p>	<p><b>£1,166,303</b></p>	<p><b>Mar 22 – Mar 23</b></p>	<p><b>1,166,303</b></p>	<p><b>Strategic Manager to develop and over see</b></p> <p><b>Senior Program and Finance Manager to apply to Lev Up</b></p> <p><b>Senior Finance and admin officer to administer</b></p>
Ownership Stage 2	<p><b>Purchase for transfer of asset and implement management plan. This should also be a peace and reconciliation project</b></p> <p><b>Use study to make bid to shared island programme Link this to Ulster Canal and Blackwater development.</b></p>	<p><b>Shared Island Fund</b></p> <p><b>Develop linkages with ICBAN, MDC and Shared Island Body regarding</b></p>	<p><b>£5,500,000</b></p>	<p><b>Mar 2023 Mar2028</b></p>	<p><b>5,500,000</b></p>	<p><b>Strategic to develop apply and over see</b></p> <p><b>Senior Finance and admin officer to administer</b></p>

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**Goal 2: Resilience: To become a resilient and financially sustainable organisation; well governed with skilled staff who are secure in their posts and reserves to spend on our important work.**

<p><b>Unmanaged Land Scheme And Ownership Bid development</b></p>	<p>EFS scheme above identified major amount of land unmanaged and ineligible for Farming subsidy via EFS and SFP</p> <p>G Darby to also oversee development of ownership bid</p>	<p><b>Dormant Fund</b></p> <p>Funding started 1/Jul/2022</p>	<p><b>100,000</b></p> <p>100%</p>	<p><b>Jul 2022- Ju 2023</b></p>	<p><b>100,000</b></p>	<p><b>Strategic Manager to examine opportunities for 2 years</b></p>
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**Goal 3: Food and Farms: Supporting growers, processors, retailers, and restaurants to sustainably produce and market beautiful food.**

<p><b>Environmental Group Farm Scheme Programme</b></p> <p>DAERA</p>	<p>a) Finish existing programme up to 2025</p> <p>b) Develop follow on EFS schemes. For 2025 – 2030. Process EFS applications, do advice and training, EFS plans, best practice, built corridors, upgrade own sites, link public and farm sites, manage moil cattle scheme. Help Funding for schemes at back of higher designations, industrial sites</p> <p>Include a new GIS mapper to target unmanaged land</p>	<p><b>DAERA EFS Programme</b></p>	<p><b>DAERA EFS Additional Levered funds</b></p> <p>58pprox. ¼ of £4,560,819 = 1140,204</p> <p>Levered funds form new Programme 2025 – 2030 Estimated £4, 560,000</p>	<p><b>Mar 23 – Mar 25</b></p> <p><b>Apr 2025 Apr 2030</b></p>	<p><b>1,140,204</b></p> <p><b>4,560,000</b></p>	<p><b>Strategic Manager to coordinate finishing off present programme and then developing new programme</b></p> <p><b>Admin officer to administer</b></p>
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LOUGH NEAGH PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC REVIEW AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE PLAN

<b>Goal 4: Conservation and Green Economy: Protect this special place and it's cultural, built, and natural heritage and create new green economy business opportunities</b>						
<b>HLF Application</b>	<b>HED Antrim Town Regeneration Project</b>  Regeneration programme linking built heritage restoration and economic development in Antrim Town	<b>National Lottery for Heritage</b>	<b>£1,200,000</b>  Match ABC Council <b>£625,000</b>	<b>Sep 2022</b>  - <b>Sep 2027</b>	<b>1,625,000</b>	<b>Programme Manager to prepare</b>
<b>Lough Volunteer Engagement Officer and volunteer programme</b>	<b>Have officer for developing Voluntary work on the Lough and actively organisation voluntary environmental work on the shore of the Lough.</b>  Linkage with Nature conservation, Mental and Physical health, Wild Food, access for walking, Use of Council sites. 2/3 staff with main programme of events and training. £1 million programme over 5 years	<b>National Lottery Community Fund Places and Communities or Dormant Fund.</b>	<b>£360,000</b> National Lottery Grant  <b>NIEA match funding £120,000</b>	<b>Mar 2023 – Mar 2028</b>	<b>480,000</b>	<b>Strategic Manager to prepare Bid</b>
<b>Wetland bird Programme</b>	<b>Project to help preserve the curlew form extinction on the shores of the Lough.</b>	<b>5-year SEUPB and bid to theme five “Supporting a sustainable and better-connected</b>	<b>£1,400,000</b>  Grant is 100%	<b>Mar 2022</b>  <b>Mar 2028</b>	<b>1,400,000</b>	<b>Programme Manager and Finance Manager to</b>

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	<p>Major partnership ties in with RSPB and focus on Killykolpy and DerryTresk School Lands where last breeding Curlews remain. Includes team to manage and restore sites. Other sites around the Lough will be targeted by RSPB</p> <p>Initial preparation discussion has already happened between RSPB and LNP</p>	<p>future” under the Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Resilience.</p>				<p>prepare and oversee</p>
<p>Peatland Habitat Restoration Project</p>	<p>Restoration of peatland sites around the shores of Lough Neagh owned by LNP and Councils and NIEA.</p> <p>Target sites in three main Councils including Peatlands Park, DerryTresk Bog and</p>	<p>5-year SEUPB and bid to theme five “Supporting a sustainable and better-connected future” under the Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Resilience.</p> <p>This includes project site restoration</p>	<p>£1.100, 200 Grant 100%</p>	<p>Mar 2022 Mar 2028</p>	<p>1,100,000</p>	<p>Senior Program and Finance Manager and to prepare and over see</p>
<p>Nature reserve and Island Conservation</p>	<p>Major 5-year cycle application to Environment funds. To include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund 3 rangers</li> <li>• New Bird Hide Project</li> </ul>	<p>Continued funding from NIEA £330,000 to provide core funding for 3 staff</p>	<p>£264,000 80% grant Match funding LNP in kind and man</p>	<p>Mar 23 – Mar 28</p>	<p>a) 330,000</p>	<p>Revenue Funding from NIEA  3 Rangers to manage</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bird Monitoring</b></li> <li>• <b>Nature Reserve and island conservation</b></li> <li>• <b>Further Land Purchase Nature Reserve accumulation</b></li> <li>• <b>Management costs for Tradd Point</b></li> <li>• <b>Revenue for boats and Pickup</b></li> </ul> <p>Application to be prepared Sep 2020</p>		<p><b>Additional Land purchase and capital and maintenance costs</b></p>		<p><b>b) 230,000</b></p>	<p><b>No Council funding required</b></p>
<p><b>Linking Heritage and Business and Skills Development</b></p>	<p><b>Major 2 year Shared Prosperity Fund programme following CRF development application.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Investment in Skills the green economy and building capacity for green recovery</b></li> <li>• <b>Conservation management</b></li> <li>• <b>Investment for business</b></li> <li>• <b>Artisan food &amp; Heritage business expansion</b></li> <li>• <b>Heritage Tourism Packaging heritage for visitors</b></li> <li>• <b>Museums &amp; visitor centre upgrades</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow up to community Renewal Fund stage one development with stage 2 Shared Prosperity Funding.</b></p>	<p><b>New bid for £833,764 in Autumn 2023 (100%)</b></p>	<p><b>Mar 2023 – Mar 2025</b></p>	<p><b>833,764</b></p>	<p><b>Overseen by Program Manager</b></p> <p><b>3 new business posts to be included to assist skills, jobs and business development</b></p>

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<b>Goal 5: Visitors: To establish Lough Neagh and Navigable rivers as a common brand and work with private sector on food development and food experience branding</b>						
<b>Marketing of Lough as a destination and development of Lough Neagh food products</b>	<b>Marketing plan for Lough and Lough Food products</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand Adverts</li> <li>• PR and social media</li> <li>• Food Events and festivals</li> <li>• Develop Food Experiences</li> <li>• Artisan food group cluster</li> <li>• Moil Cattle Meat Brand</li> <li>• p/t marketing officer and sla, s</li> <li>• Focus on local visitors</li> </ul>	<b>Link with 3 main Councils marketing budgets for common Lough promotion</b>	<b>£250,000</b> <b>Not included in overall</b>	<b>2023 – 2028</b>	<b>250,000</b>	<b>Marketing Officer to over see</b>
<b>Goal 6: Innovative approaches to land management, climate change and carbon capture</b>						
Assessing abandoned land value and ownership commerciality	Develop a plan to use commercial income form EFS Abandoned land, ownership of bed and soil of Lough and	Dormant Accounts	£100,000 100%	Jul 2023 – Jul 2026	100,000	Strategy Manager to work on project
Climate Change Carbon Study	Consultant Draw up carbon study for Lough Neagh to get estimate of value.	NIEA	£28,000		32,000	Programme Manager to to oversee

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	Investigate carbon trading option		LNP in kind Match funding			
<b>Total Expected Investment</b>					<b>17,380,575</b>	

## 08 CONCLUSION

This strategic review and plan will act as a working tool to help the Lough Neagh Partnership prioritise its goals and workload over the next five years and attempt to address the remaining needs of Lough Neagh and its navigable river systems.

It hopes to show its partners and in particular the main government departments and three large Councils around the Lough, that its management and development is not the sole responsibility of the Lough Neagh Partnership but all of relevant Departments and Councils.

The main Councils have already stepped up to the mark and carried out major tourism and infrastructure investment on the shores of the Lough, such as developments at the Antrim Gateway Centre and Ballyronan Marina and it hopes to encourage other funders and partners of the need to address the management and ownership issues on the Lough.

However, this review and report also hopes to highlight the amount of value and investment the Partnership has brought to the main Councils over the last 5 years and that there is a strong logical argument for increases to the core revenue funds of the Partnership, since this will facilitate and lever new significant funding opportunities and investment well into the future.

## 09 RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Partnership should review and improve its governance, remit, and staffing structures to take on board future economic and political challenges and become more financially resilient in the long term.
- The Partnership should take lead with other partners and agree to set up a new management structure known as the Lough Neagh Management Body (LNMB) made up of senior director staff from the three main Councils, DFI, DAERA DFC and DFF to
- New body should meet twice a year to work to this strategic review and plan and monitor progress, integrating common goals and funding applications associated with this document. This strategic review and plan 2023 – 2028 should be used as a working tool for the LNMB. Main areas include, navigation, ownership, conservation and promotion.
- The three main Councils should each increase the core funding levels to the Lough Neagh Partnership from £22,000 per annum to £49,378 per annum for the next five years. (2023 – 2028) to retain effective staff members, provide financial stability to the body and allow the Partnership to lever in increased value and investment. (This means an increase of £27,378 per annum for each of the three main Councils)



- The Lough Neagh Partnership should set up a formal linkage and partnership with cross border body Waterways Ireland and Border Council to allow it to apply for shared Island and SEUPB funding. This should be supported by the main Councils. Also recommend LNP sits on ICBAN and EBR bodies to make sure more integrated approach to cross border development.
- The three main Councils should endorse the nomination of political representatives to sit on the Lough Neagh Partnership Board to ensure political support and public transparency for the development of the Lough.
- The three main Councils should enter into a new five-year service level agreement with the Partnership from April 2023 – March 2028 based on the attraction of additional investment and addressing agreed strategic needs and outcomes. The SLA should be outcomes and not outputs/actions focussed, and the Partnership should provide an annual report to feed into new Lough Neagh Management Body structure
- Common Lough Neagh Marketing Destination Pot developed from three main Councils from existing City Deal, Tourism NI and Levelling Up Fund.
- Landfill Tax funds could be demarcated to Lough Neagh Area for match funding major conservation projects.
- Three main Councils and three main Departments in the new Lough Neagh Management Body should bid, budget, and provisionally allocate revenue and matching capital funds for the next 5 years specific for joint Lough Neagh Projects and funding applications.
- The Lough Neagh Partnership develop sponsorship programme with Lough Neagh private sector
- The report and its recommendations should be approved by each of the three main Council relevant committees and used as a working tool.

Appendix 1 Governance self-assessment

