



Call for Evidence - Review of Drivers and Pressures Affecting Biodiversity in Northern Ireland

We are inviting interested parties to submit evidence as part of our review of drivers, and pressures affecting biodiversity in Northern Ireland.

We would appreciate evidence to be submitted to insights.ni@theoep.org.uk by Friday 3 November 2023 to best inform the review.

The evidence submitted will help inform our report, which will be made publicly available once completed.

Background

Evidence shows the natural environment in Northern Ireland is in a degraded state. Research indicates that Northern Ireland has lost 50% of its biodiversity¹ based on a 1970 baseline. Ecosystems such as rivers, lakes, and other freshwater bodies are also failing to meet good or high ecological status². However, there is no single comprehensive analysis or evidence base addressing the drivers and pressures underpinning the negative trends in these environmental data.

We are seeking to understand the range and importance of drivers and pressures causing this decline in biodiversity in Northern Ireland, and to collate supporting evidence. We define biodiversity as; the diversity within-species, between-species and of ecosystems³ in Northern Ireland. By drivers, pressures, and impacts we mean:

- *Drivers*: Social, economic and demographic influences (e.g. urban & infrastructure development, agriculture, energy production and waste management) and natural conditions that impact upon the environment. These can include direct and indirect drivers.
- *Pressures*: The stresses that arise from a driver that cause a decline in the natural environment (e.g. gaseous emissions, pollution, chemicals and habitat destruction).
- *Impacts*: The effects that any pressures have on the biotic and abiotic components of the natural environment (e.g. species abundance, hydrological flows, habitat destruction and soil health).



Call for Evidence

To inform our report, we are calling for evidence linking drivers and pressures to impacts on biodiversity in Northern Ireland. We are interested in;

- The drivers and pressures impacting upon terrestrial and freshwater priority species and habitats, as listed at the links below.
 - *Priority Habitats* - [Northern Ireland Priority Habitat Guides | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)
 - *Priority Species* - [List of Northern Ireland priority species 2023 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)
 - *Freshwater Protected Sites* - [Protected areas | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)
- Evidence originating from Northern Ireland, though we would welcome submissions from organisations / persons in other jurisdictions who hold evidence relevant to Northern Ireland.
- Evidence that demonstrates gaps or lack of coherence in current governance that may affect biodiversity.
- Evidence demonstrating the transboundary sources and effects of drivers and pressures on biodiversity.

To inform our report we are particularly interested in evidence that addresses the following questions in the context of one or more of these priority species and/or habitats

1. What are the key drivers and pressures affecting biodiversity in Northern Ireland? What evidence is available to demonstrate these affects?
 - a. Over what time period (short, medium, long term) and spatial area do these pressures and drivers have their affects?
2. What are the cumulative and synergistic relationships between drivers, pressures, and their affects?
3. How should drivers and pressures be prioritised? For example, by the scale of impact. What evidence supports any such prioritisation?
4. What actions are needed to reverse the decline in biodiversity, for example land use and land use change? What are the trade-offs that need to be taken into consideration?
5. What are the barriers and opportunities to address pressures and drivers through governance and mitigation strategies? What evidence supports these?
6. What are the transboundary drivers and pressures impacting biodiversity in Northern Ireland?

We will also welcome any other information that people consider is relevant to this review.



Submission Guidelines

- Evidence includes submissions written specifically for this Call for Evidence.
- We ask that written submissions are kept to a **maximum of 15 pages**, which are fully referenced with supporting evidence, and where possible links are provided for the relevant documents and data.
- Evidence also includes existing academic literature and reports, audits, consultation responses, and grey literature. Preferably all documents should already be in the public domain or made available if requested.
- While we welcome submissions from all sectors / persons we emphasise the need for submissions that are **supported by strong evidence** based on natural, economic, or social sciences that are empirically based, case study based, or based on comprehensive literature reviews / audits, and / or expert opinion.
- If raw data is referred to in your submission, we ask that you provide a description of the dataset and who is the custodian / owner. **We do not wish you to submit raw data as evidence.**
- Where there are gaps in evidence, your response should make this clear and where appropriate, detail why such gaps exist.

While all submissions will be reviewed, criteria will be applied to inform inclusion in the final analysis and reporting. We may contact you for further information on your submission.

Please send any evidence to insights.ni@theoep.org.uk by Friday, 3 November 2023.

How we will use your information

Evidence received will be treated with the utmost care and attention to inform our review. Information will not be quoted and attributed to individuals or organisations for official publication without their prior permission to do so.

In any case, we may publish or disclose the information you provide, including personal data, in accordance with the access to information regimes. These are primarily the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). We have obligations, mainly under the EIRs, FOIA and DPA, to disclose information to particular recipients or to the public in certain circumstances.



If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that as the OEP is bound by FOIA and the EIRs we may be obliged to disclose all or some of the information you provide. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain why you regard the information you have provided to be confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation. However, we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.