

# Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

## Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment (NIRLCA): Public Consultation document

To: Planning Committee

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015

### For Decision

<b>Linkage to Corporate Plan</b>	
<b>Strategic Priority</b>	Natural Heritage
<b>Objective</b>	Protection of Heritage Assets
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Sharon Mulhern
<b>Cost: (If applicable)</b>	

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Department of the Environment (DoE) first published the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment in 1999. This report addressed landscape character; diversity; key components; and forces for change. It also included strategic advice on how to tackle the effects of development and land use change, both in the countryside and urban fringe. A total of 130 Landscape Character Areas were identified (see MAP1 at Appendix 1) and the report was supplemented by a Landscape Character Assessment Report for each of the former Local Government Districts.
- 1.2 These reports identified the Landscape Character Areas within each Council area, and provided information on the Key Characteristics; Landscape Description; Principles for Landscape Management; and Principles for Accommodating New Development. They were used by DoE to inform the preparation of its Development Plans and in its determination of planning applications.
- 1.3 Following on from this the European Landscape Convention, first signed in October 2000, came into force in the UK in 2007. Administered by the Council of Europe, it has now been signed by 37 countries. It places particular value on regional and local landscapes.
- 1.4 NIEA published Northern Ireland's Landscape Charter in January 2014. At that time the Minister for the Environment, Mark Durkan, stated that he attached "*considerable priority to increasing the value and enjoyment we derive from our surroundings*". He also gave a commitment to produce the NIRLCA to underpin the Development Plans to be prepared by the 11 new Local Planning Authorities.

## 2.0 The Consultation document

- 2.1 As promised, NIEA published the consultation document: Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment (NIRLCA) on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2015. The (6 week) consultation period ends on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The consultation draft may be downloaded at: [www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/nirlca-consultation.zip](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/nirlca-consultation.zip).
- 2.2 This provides an opportunity for Council to comment on the draft proposals.
- 2.3 This document follows on from the Landscape Charter. The purpose of the consultation is to allow interested parties to review and comment on the emerging document.
- 2.4 The NIRLCA is a regional and overarching document which seeks to set out the special character of each particular landscape, drawing together information on people and place; the combinations of nature; and culture and perception which make each location in Northern Ireland unique.
- 2.5 The consultation document now presents 26 Regional Landscape Character Areas (RLCA's) (see MAP2 at Appendix 1) rather than the 130 previously drawn up.
- 2.6 The document draws on more up to date information sources via Geographical Information Systems (GIS) on:
- Topography,
  - Geology,
  - Land Use,
  - Woodland and Forest,
  - Natural Heritage, and
  - Cultural Heritage.
- 2.7 Each RCLA map (see MAP's 3 to 10 at Appendix 1) identifies its boundary. An associated narrative provides descriptive material under the following headings:
- Introduction
  - Location and Setting,
  - Landscape Character Description,
  - Key Characteristics,
  - Natural Influences,
  - Cultural Influences,
  - Perceptual Influences,
  - Past, Present and Future Forces for Change,
  - Indicators of Change, and
  - Ecosystem Services.
- 2.8 The headings chosen reflect those widely used and recognised in the landscape industry. They have been used previously in Natural England publications.

- 2.9 This is a factual description based on field surveys undertaken in February 2015. It is not a judgement of each area. It is understood that the GIS information used to inform this document will be made available to the Council, to assist it in developing its own more detailed work.
- 2.10 This Council area contains the following eight Landscape Character Areas:
- Sperrins
  - North Sperrin Hills and Valleys
  - Lough Foyle Coast and Dunes
  - Binevenagh Ridge
  - Lower Bann Valley
  - North Coast and Bush Valley
  - Maine and Braid River Valleys
  - Antrim Plateau and Glens
- 2.11 It should be noted that these areas do not necessarily correlate to the Council's boundary and may, on occasion, overlap into adjoining Council areas.

### **3.0 Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The production of a more detailed Local Landscape Character Assessment will have implications for Council, most obviously in terms of determining if the necessary skills are presently available within Council or if consultants should be employed to undertake this work. This will be an additional cost to Council.

### **4.0 Other Implications**

- 4.1 As the Landscape Character Assessment should inform the production of the Development Plan, the work should be programmed into the timetable for the preparation and adoption of the Development Plan, which must be agreed with the DoE.

### **5.0 Recommendation**

**IT IS RECOMMENDED** that;

- a) Members note the publication of the Draft Consultation NIRLCA and the likely additional costs to Council for carrying out the detailed Local landscape Character Assessments;
- b) Members agree that the Head of Planning responds (before 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015) to NIEA on behalf of Council along the lines of the above concerns in relation to the high level assessment and the costs to council of carrying out local detailed assessments.

## APPENDIX 1 - MAPS

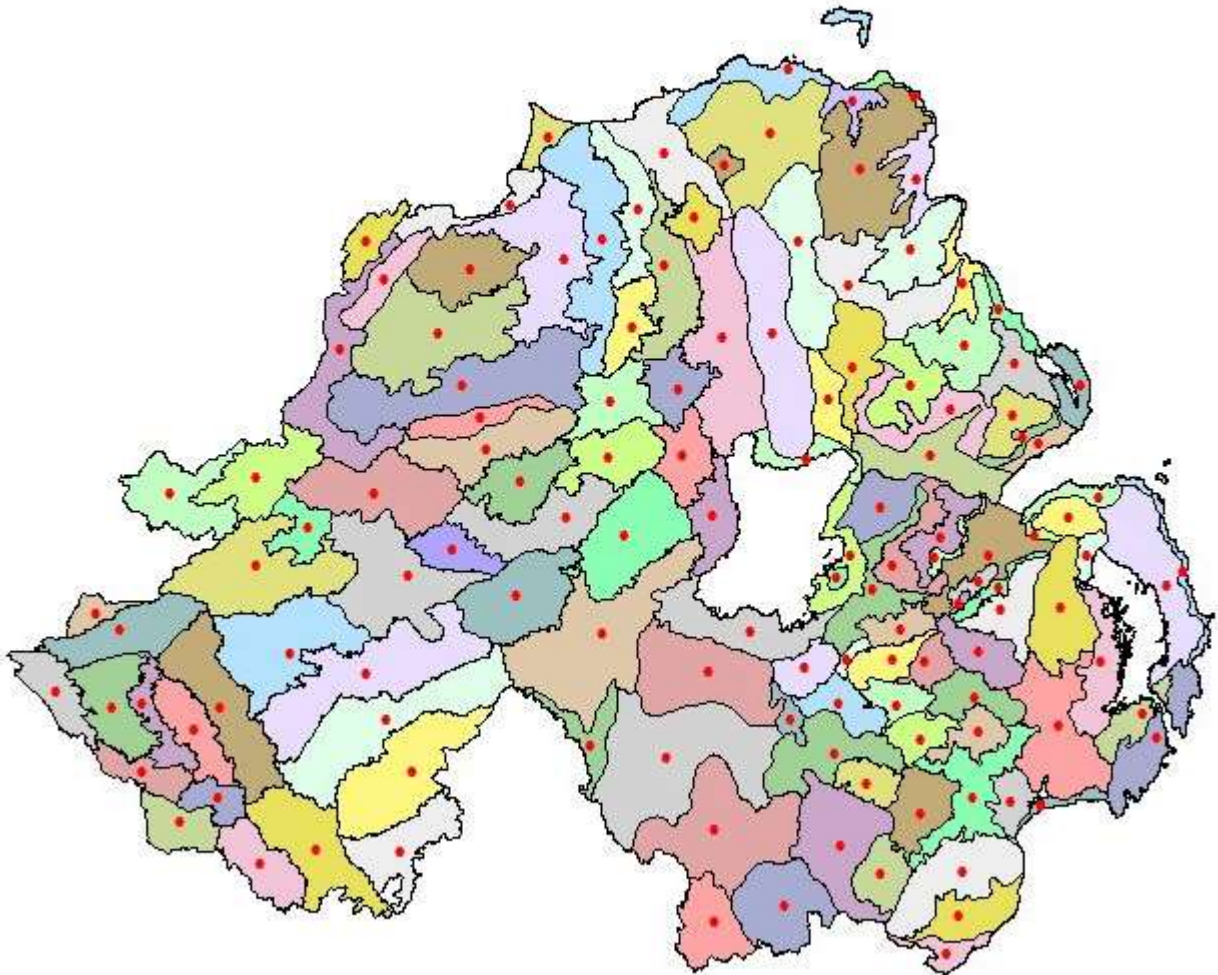
### MAP 1

NI Landscape Character Assessment 1999; Showing the existing 130no. Areas

**NB:** This is **not** an interactive map. It is for illustrative purposes only.

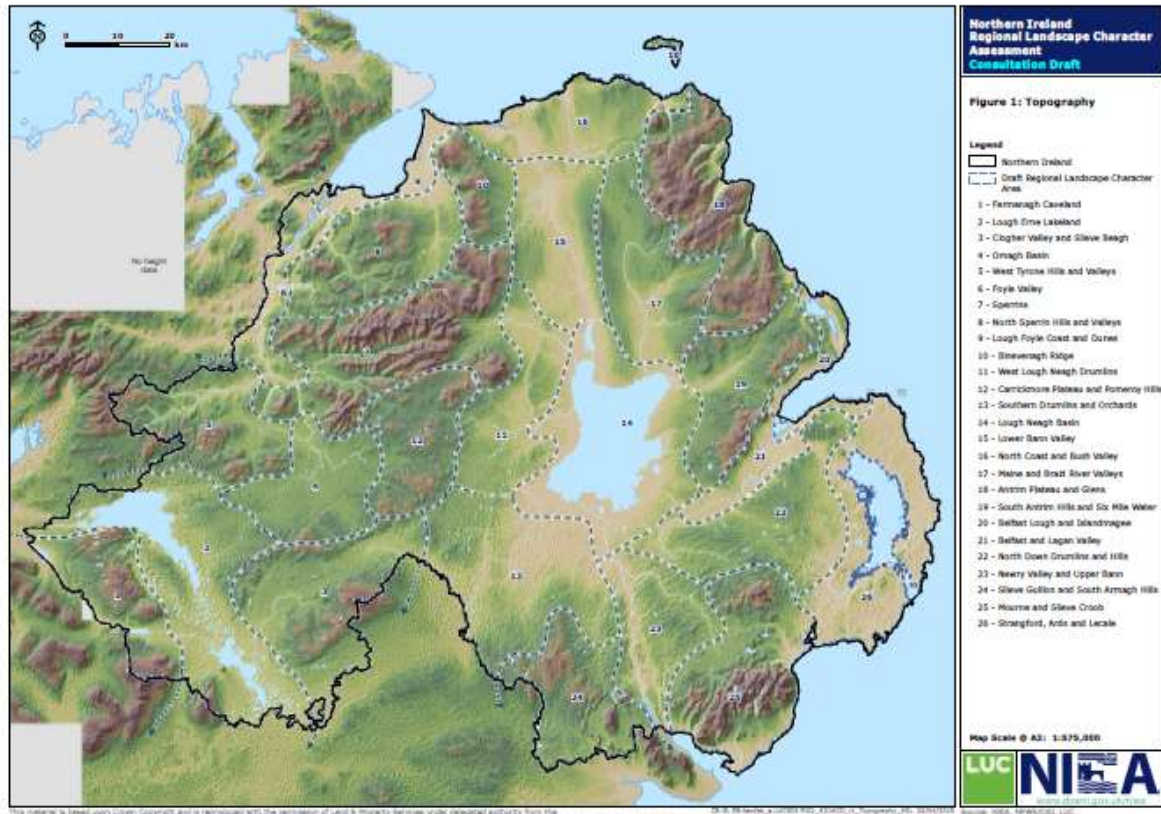
## Landscape Character Areas

Click on the red dot within each Landscape Character Area to find out details about that area



# MAP 2

NI Regional Landscape Character Assessment (NIRLCA) Map 2015  
 NI Overview Map showing the new 26no. Areas



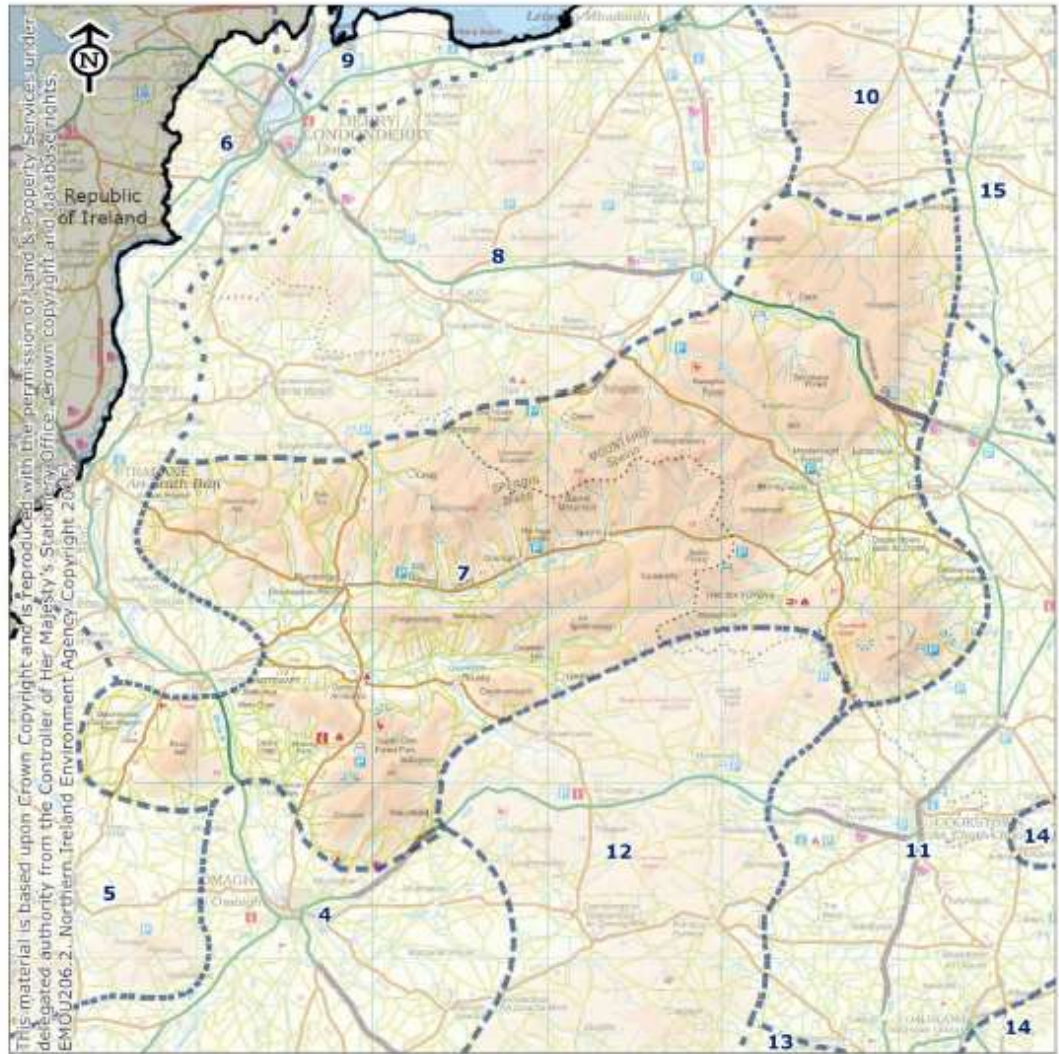
Regional Landscape Character Assessment (RCLA's): The following areas are located within Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council boundary.

**NB:** Map numbers (coloured purple - below) refer to the Overview Map (MAP2) and accompanying list.

**MAP 3**

**7 Sperrins**

*Introduction*  
The principal mountain range of the north-west, the Sperrins comprise some of the wildest and most rugged terrain in Northern Ireland. The main ridges, divided by the scenic Glenelly valley, are surrounded by a series of outliers including Bessy Bell and Mullaghcarn above the River Strule, Slieve Gallion in the east, and Benbradagh across the Glenshane Pass. The boundaries follow the main east-west ridges of the Sperrins, separating them from the lower hills to north and south.

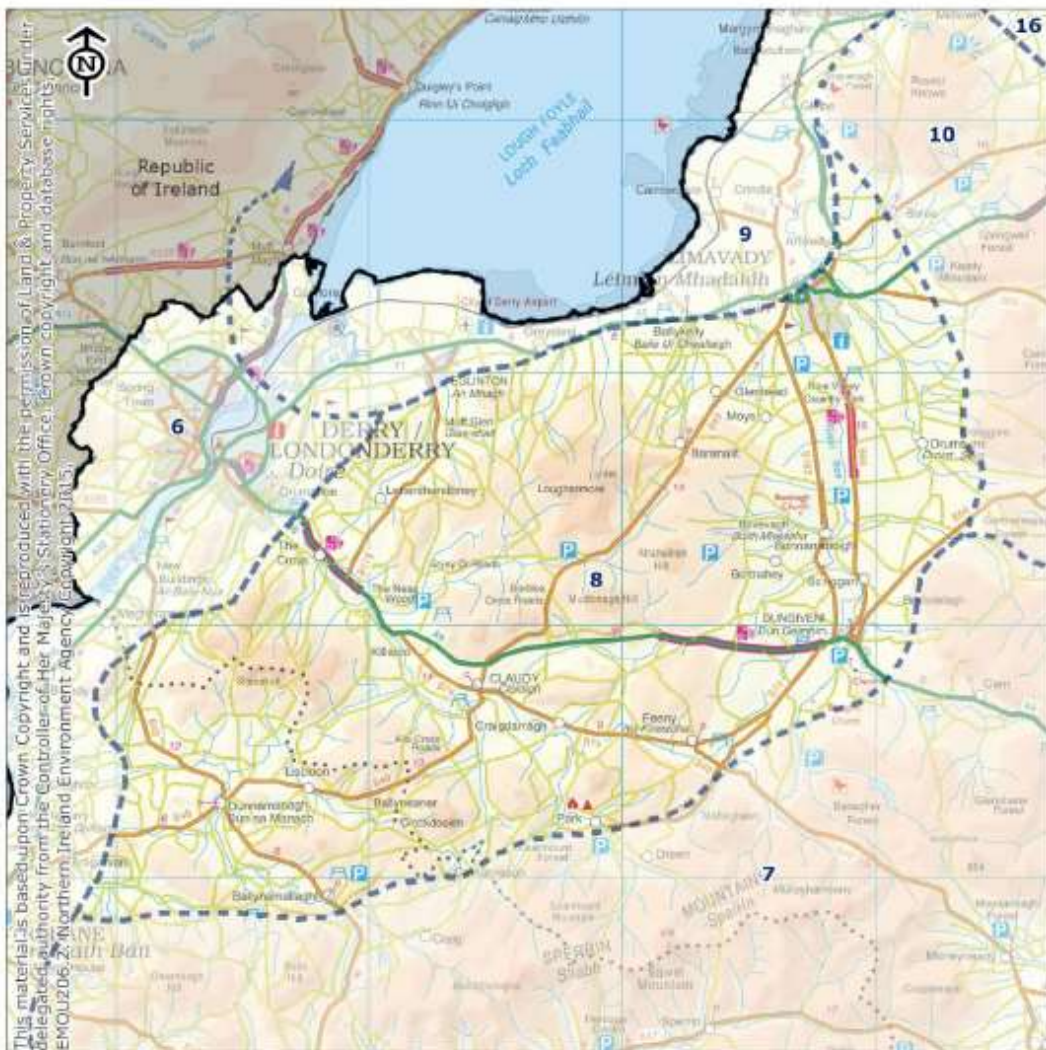


## MAP 4

### 8 North Sperrin Hills and Valleys

#### Introduction

This complex series of hills, plateaux and valleys occupies the area between the Sperrins and Lough Foyle. The broad Roe Valley lies below the basalt ridge to the east, and gives access to the smaller and more intricate valleys around Claudy and Dunnamanagh. To north and west the hills overlook the Foyle with Donegal beyond.

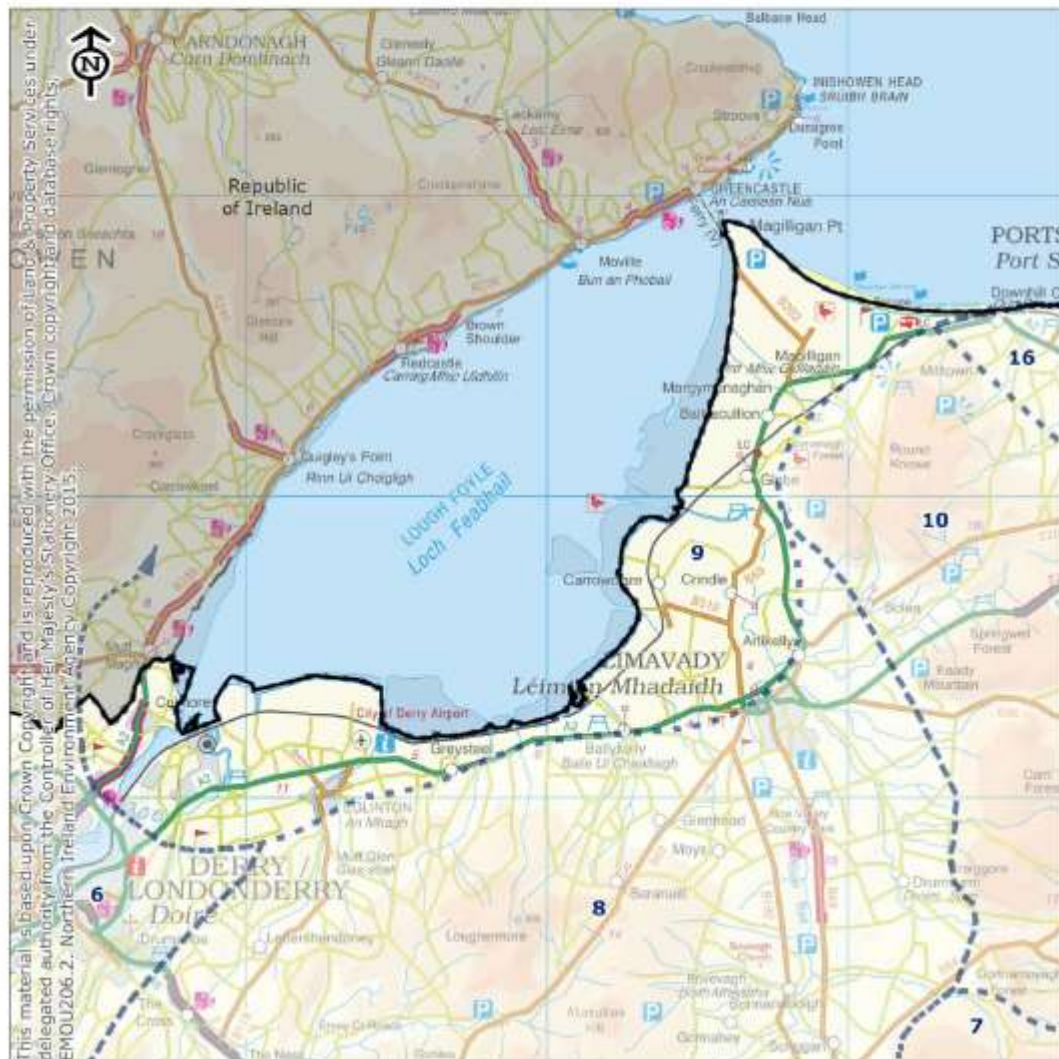


## MAP 5

### 9 Lough Foyle Coast and Dunes

#### Introduction

The unique coastal flats fronting Lough Foyle include Maquillian Point and the reclaimed 'polders' around the lough shore. This area is defined by the lough and the backdrop of the Inishowen peninsula to the north, and by the Binevenagh Ridge which rises to the east forming an essential relationship recognised by AONB designation. A predominance of arable land makes this area stand out, as well as its use as a key route along the north coast.



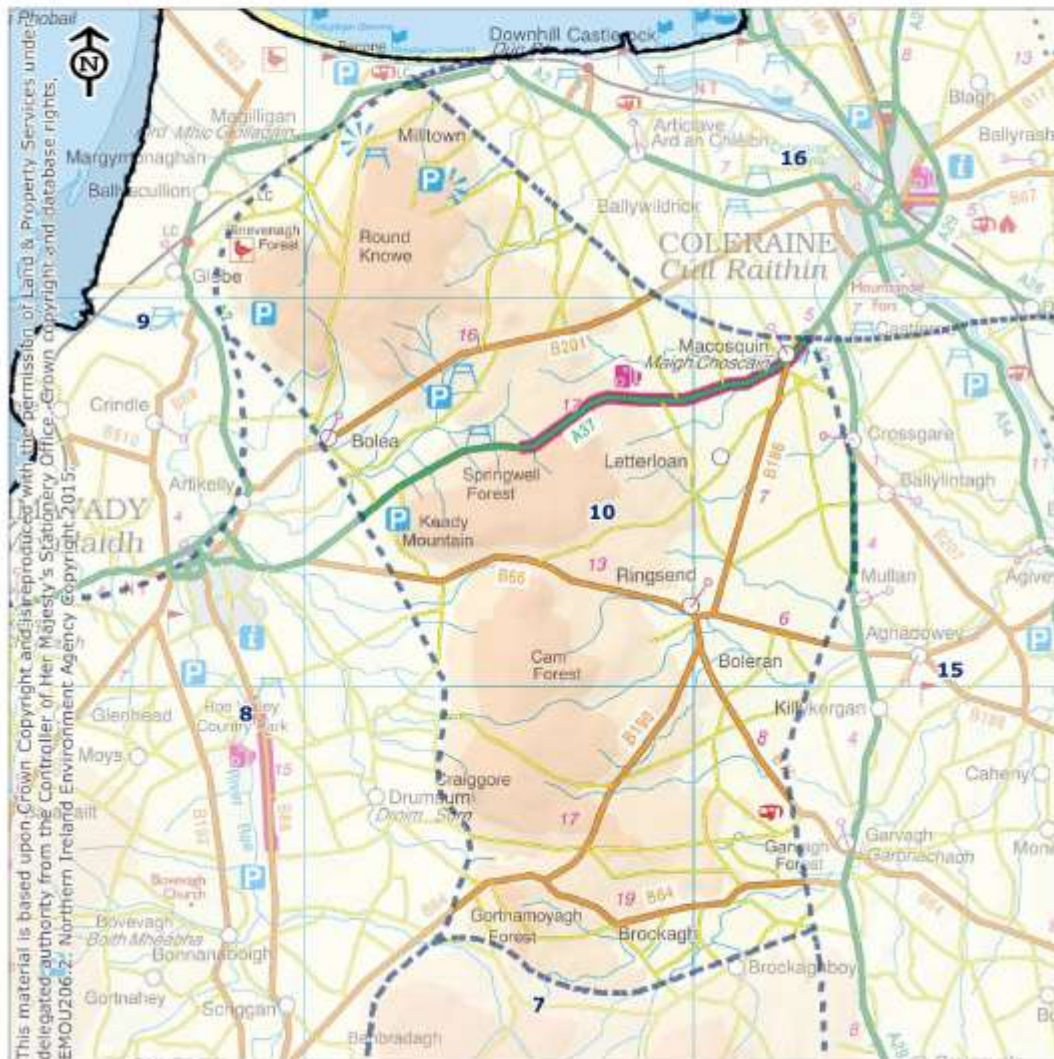


## MAP 6

### 10 Binevenagh Ridge

#### Introduction

A distinct series of west-facing scarps run south from Binevenagh Mountain to Gortnamoyaagh. The ridge forms the skyline in views from the Roe Valley and Lough Foyle, with Binevenagh Mountain looming above Magilligan and Downhill. These dramatic basalt hills contrast with the much gentler east-facing slopes above the River Bann, though they share continuity of forestry and upland pasture.

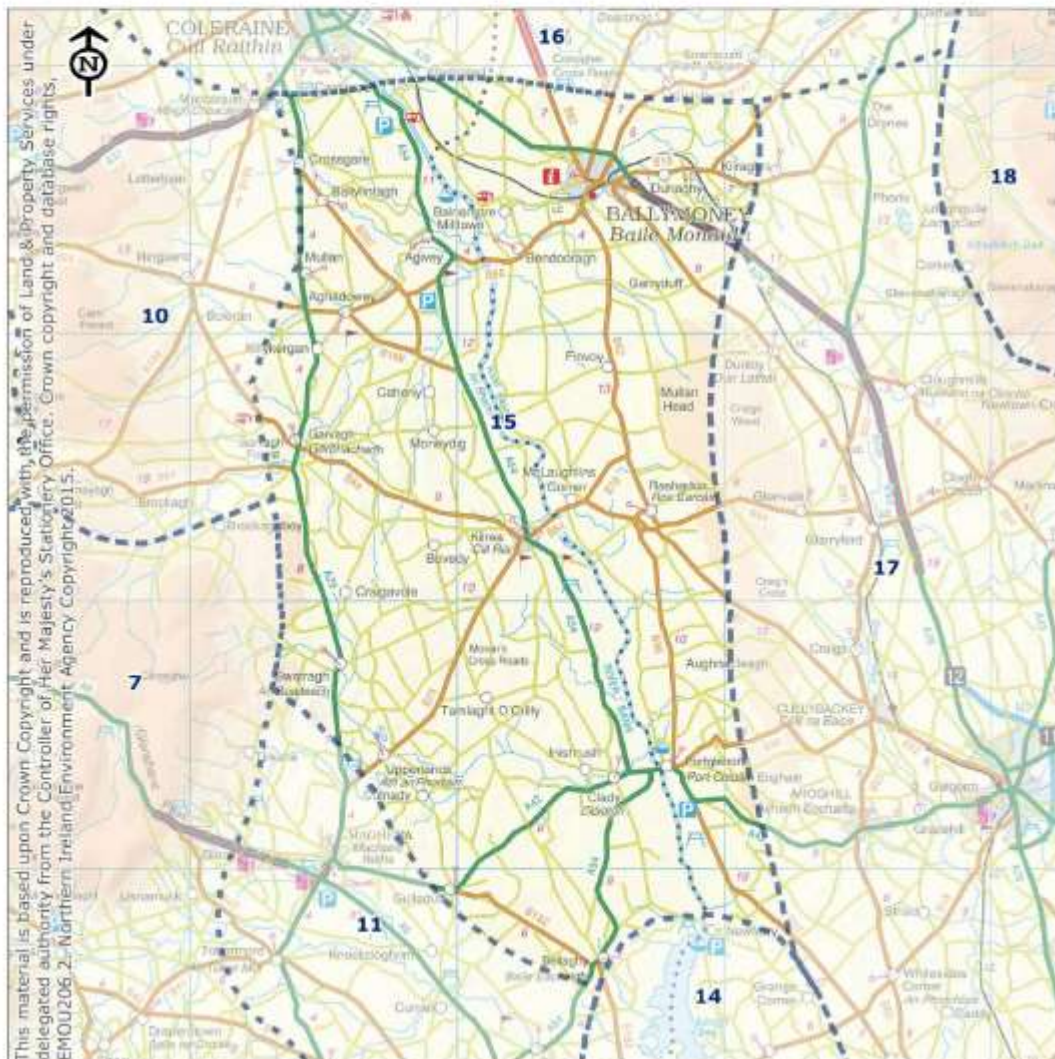


## MAP 7

### 15 Lower Bann Valley

#### Introduction

The broad valley of the Lower Bann extends from Lough Neagh northwards to Coleraine, where the river becomes tidal and the landscape coastal. The valley marks the 'Bann Divide' between Antrim and Londonderry; east and west. The valley is visually and physically defined by the ridges of Binevenagh to the west and Long Mountain to the east.

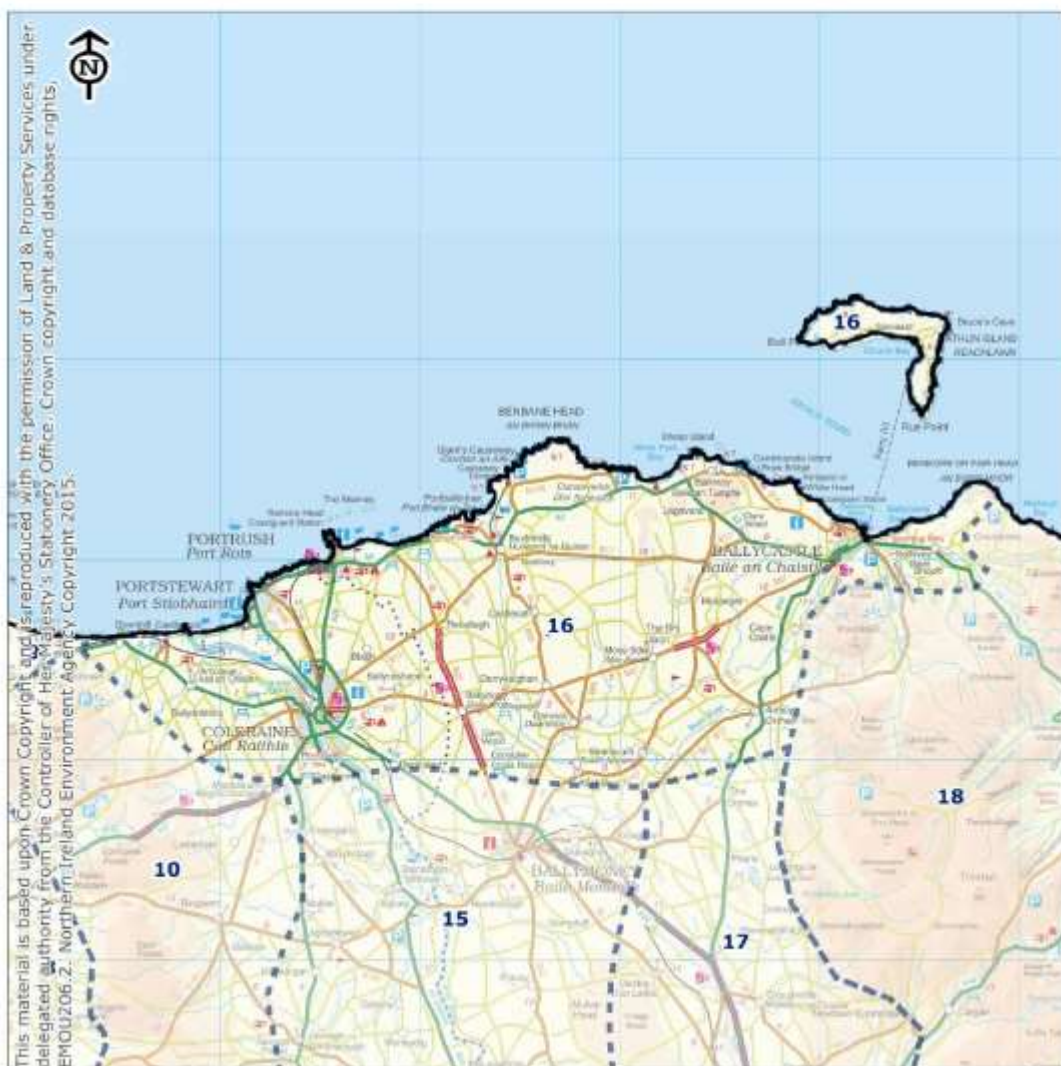


## MAP 8

### 16 North Coast and Bush Valley

#### Introduction

The north coast is justly famous for the Giant's Causeway, but includes a wealth of dramatic basalt cliffs and headlands, as well as sandy bays and picturesque villages. Rathlin Island and the fishing villages have their own distinct character, and the area is a popular holiday destination for visitors from Northern Ireland and beyond. Also included in this area are the tidal parts of the River Bann, and the shallow valley of the River Bush which flows through Bushmills of whisky fame.

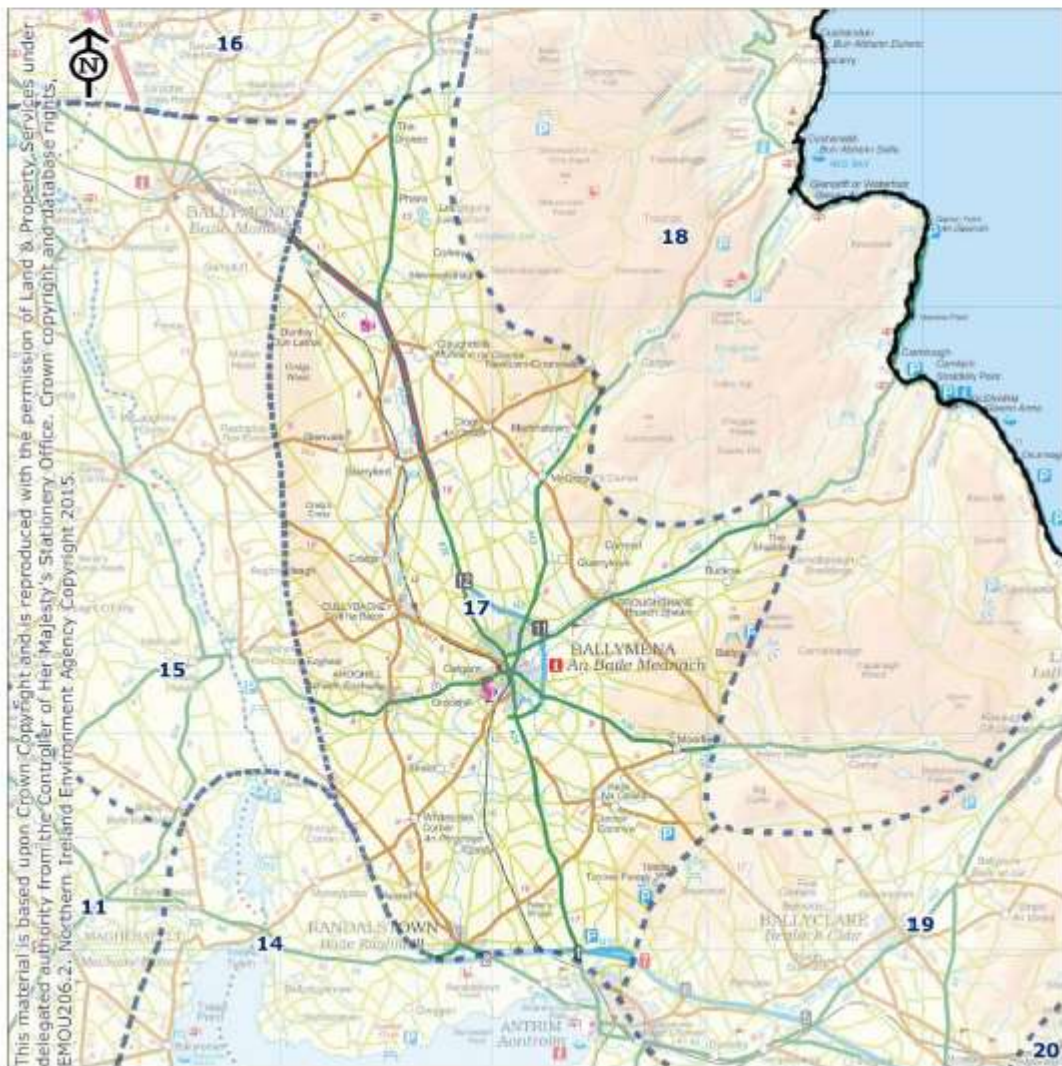


## MAP 9

### 17 Maine and Braid River Valleys

#### Introduction

A broad farmed valley flanked by the Antrim Plateau, separated from the Lower Bann and Bush valleys by watersheds following the ridge north from Randalstown to Long Mountain. The eastern slopes of the Antrim Plateau, including Slemish are contained within the Maine Valley, as they form the skyline and setting to it, and because the historic sites in this area relate strongly to the tributary Braid Valley in particular.



## MAP 10

### 18 Antrim Plateau and Glens

#### Antrim Plateau and Glens

Upland plateau and hills, with glens and cliffs along the coast, closely culturally associated with the west coast of Scotland. Includes the whole of the higher parts of the Antrim plateau as having a distinct character from the pastoral River Maine r valley to the west. Relates to seascape character areas 8, 9 and 10.

