

Belfast Hills Partnership

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## Belfast Hills Baseline Study

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## The Belfast Hills Baseline Study

### The Belfast Hills - a brief description

The Belfast or South Antrim Hills consist of a basalt and chalk escarpment which slopes steeply down on one side to frame the urban areas of Newtownabbey, Belfast and Lisburn, and more gently on the Antrim side into the Lough Neagh basin.

The basalt escarpment forms the edge of the Antrim Basalt Plateau and is broken by a series of steep wooded glens. The basalt overlies a thin chalk layer which with the basalt has attracted a large number of quarries. A large part of the escarpment is wooded in its lower slopes or is covered with regenerating patches of scrub or gorse. There are more formal stands of deciduous woodland associated with old estates such as Belfast Castle and Collin House, and open pastures with strong field boundary patterns.

The broad, rounded hills rise to 478m at their highest point on Divis Mountain, with Black Mountain, Squires Hill and Cave Hill reaching over 350m. Most of the hills are topped with heathland and between them are extensive waterlogged and windswept mosses. The valley slopes to the west have a more farmed character, with straight, overgrown hedgerows, belts of mature trees and farmsteads. Many of the farmsteads are sheltered by stands of mature (particularly beech) trees.

There are important archaeological remains, particularly on the summits of Cave Hill. Radio masts are situated on most of the highest summits where they are prominent in views from surrounding areas.

Settlement patterns in the hills are scattered with a few focal points such as Groganstown, Mullaghglass, Hannahstown, Legoniel and Carnmoney. The cities of Belfast and Lisburn have grown towards the hills and major communities such as Glen Road, Upper Springfield, Bellevue and Cloughfern lie on the hill fringes.

The hills have a strong farming community with predominantly beef enterprises.

### The Belfast Hills Partnership Trust

The Belfast Hills Partnership Trust, established in 2004, is a body representative of Councils, community interests, statutory bodies, environmental and landowning bodies who have an interest in the Belfast Hills. The Partnership's programmes span the following areas of interest:

1. Developing and coordinating an enhanced effort by public bodies and others towards the care and management of the Belfast Hills
2. Enhancing the quality of life of people resident within the Hills and its fringes
3. Tackling urban fringe farming issues
4. Protecting and enhancing aspects of the natural, built and cultural heritage
5. Managing existing opportunities for countryside recreation
6. Tackling inappropriate forms of recreation
7. Displacing inappropriate/unauthorised landfill activity and encouraging responsible approaches to waste management
8. Contribute to the economic regeneration of the communities of the Belfast Hills
9. Encourage people to value and care for the Belfast Hills
10. Promoting greater understanding of the Belfast Hills

The Partnership is based initially at the Colin Glen Forest Park Centre on the Stewartstown Road and has a complement of three staff.

The formation of the partnership was the culmination of some 15 years work by a number of interests and individuals supported by Bryson House its directors and chief executives Peter McLaughlin and later John McMullan. This work raised the profile of the hills and the issues that beset them and drew a body of people and organisations together to try to provide a mechanism of management and proper care. The Belfast Hills Committee formed by Bryson House, with a widespread participation, brought forward a vision for a Belfast Hills Regional Park. The Planning Service consulted on the proposal and, based on the responses, decided that the time was not right to proceed. A second stage of the process, was led by EHS which convened a working group of all interests. The working group brought forward proposals for a Belfast Hills Partnership as a management and coordinating mechanism. A third stage brought all of the interests together to develop a business plan and forward programme for the Partnership.

*The geographical area covered by the Partnership's activities is shown in Map 1. It extends to some 4254 hectares.*

## The terms of reference for the baseline study

The terms of reference for the baseline study arose from a need to take stock of aspects of the Belfast Hills early in the work of the Partnership. It related mainly to baselines in relation to the aims of the Partnership and the main conditions its programmes would set out to change. The baseline is designed to allow the partnership to track the progress of its programmes.

The terms of reference for the baseline study included gathering data, where available, on the following aspects of the Hills:

**Quality of life for communities** - including their access to green space, on foot, car and public transport; linear access opportunities, the appeal of their home zones, and their environmental issues.

**Tackling the issues of urban fringe in farming** - including describing agriculture in the area.

**Natural and built heritage** - including landscape character, habitats and species, archaeology and listed buildings, and the access to and interpretation of the heritage .

**The management of countryside recreation** - including access issues, management activity and 'nuisance' use of the hills.

**Landfill activity in the hills** - including the number and activities of waste operators and the number of landfill sites.

**Economic status of hills communities** - including socio-economic indicators such as unemployment, access to a car, facilities for visitors and the position of tourism in the hills.

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## Quality of life for Belfast Hills Communities

### Baseline 1.

#### Accessible community green space for Belfast Hills communities.

- 1.1 The Belfast Hills have traditionally, albeit informally, been an area of quiet countryside recreation for the immediate and surrounding vicinity in North and West Belfast. People have also visited the Belfast Hills from further afield, for example to undertake a skyline walk as part of the Ulster Way in the area.
- 1.2 Councils and others in the area have sought over the years to establish, manage, enhance and protect significant areas of community green space through land purchase and the development of urban parks, country parks and accessible nature reserves.
- 1.3 The following open space is available within the Belfast Hills.

#### Cave Hill

Cave Hill provides many opportunities for countryside recreation within the 700 acres of Cave Hill Country Park owned by Belfast City Council. The area provides varied terrain from the wooded walks of Belfast Castle Estate to the rugged slopes and moorland of Cave Hill itself. The City of Belfast Zoological Gardens adjoins the country park and Hazelwood Park, Carr's Glen Linear Park and the Wallace Estate are also close by or linked.

#### Slievenacloy ASSI

Slievenacloy is located in the Belfast Hills, west of Belfast and is accessed via the Ballycollin and Flowbog Roads. The site occupies most of the upper catchment of the Stoneyford River. The reserve extends to elevated ground on the Ballycollin ridge overlooking Dunmurry and Slievenacloy (Priest's Hill), reaching to just over 300m. The reserve was acquired in 2000 from Forest Service with assistance from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Environment and Heritage Service (EHS). The site was designated as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) in 1993. Visitor access is limited except by arrangement. It is anticipated that a range of paths will be provided, including those suitable for wheelchairs.

#### Colin Glen Forest Park

The Colin Glen Trust manages Colin Glen Forest Park, and provides a network of footpaths within the Glen. The glen comprises of 200 acres of woodland, river and open grassland, waterfalls and wild flower areas. The area covers the recreation interest of the residents of Poleglass, Twinbrook, Lagmore, Suffolk, Derryiaghy, parts of Lisburn and Dunmurry. Along with the Colin Glen River Valley the Derryiaghy River is designated in the Belfast Urban Area Plan as an area of major recreational and tourism potential. The area is rich in historic interest with old railway and pack horse bridges as well as diverse flora and fauna. The Forest Park also links with the **Glenside Community Woodland** which provides access onto the Black Hill and Black Mountain via Divis Rd.

## Glenside Woodland

Glenside Community Woodland is located in Hannahstown on the southern escarpment of the Antrim plateau between Black Hill and White Hill and is the largest privately owned community woodland in Northern Ireland. The site sits between 190 and 250 metres above sea level on a south west facing slope. The woodland comprises about 65 acres of recently planted trees and a further 10 acres of open meadow, wetlands, quarry holes and overgrown quarry spoil. The woodland lies within the headwaters for the Colin River. There is a network of approximately 3,300 metres of pathway.

The woodland is made up of two blocks of planting which are effectively separated by the Rumbly Hole Waterfall. Block 6, which has approximately 70% conifer planting, is a 21 acre site to the north of the waterfall. Block 7 is the larger area to the south of the waterfall (over 43 acres) with 40% conifer planting.

Car parking facilities are available at Lámh Dhearg CLG on the Upper Springfield Road or across the road at Glenmeen Close.

## Divis and the Black Mountain

The National Trust acquired Divis Mountain and part of the Black Mountain through an HLF and EHS assisted purchase from the Ministry of Defence in 2004. The area purchased comprises 599 hectares (1480 acres) of upland grassland and heath rich in biodiversity and archaeological interest. The Trust intends to have the area open for public access in summer 2005.

## The Black Mountain

There are community-based proposals for a country park on the face of the Black Mountain (the Saffron project), which include job training and employment opportunities in addition to creating open space accessible to adjacent communities. The area includes the Hatchet Field, which is accessed via an assumed public right of way from the top of the Mountain Loanen. The land is currently in private ownership and is accessed unofficially by the community for recreation.

## Legoniel

In the Legoniel area the Legoniel Improvement Association are proposing to develop a series of footpaths around the dams and mill races close to the Legoniel and Forth River Valleys. The Association propose Legoniel as the 'Gateway to the Belfast Hills'. Additional plans for active recreation include bowling greens and football pitches. The Association has recently acquired additional lands to manage for their nature conservation interest.

## Carnmoney Hill:

The 200 acre area of Carnmoney Hill provides a mosaic of woodland and other habitats, and constitutes a major recreational resource for local residents of Carnmoney, Cloughfern and Whiteabbey. Newtownabbey Borough Council is also keen to develop an interpretative centre in old farm buildings close to Dunnaney Rath, to maximise enjoyment and understanding of the natural and cultural heritage features within the area. A further 90 acres of farmland may also be available for purchase as additional green space on Carnmoney Hill. Parts of the woodland and pathways are managed on behalf of the Council by the Woodland Trust.

### **Hannahstown Hill**

The NIHE is seeking planning permission for housing development, over part of a site in the Hannahstown Hill area of West Belfast. Current land uses on the site include pastoral agriculture, vacant and derelict land, several playing fields and a travellers' site. The proposal includes new formal parkland and recreational space with enhanced pedestrian access to the Belfast Hills.

### **Throne Woodland**

The Woodland Trust manages this woodland. It was probably planted as part of the Throne House (a rest home) in the early 1800s and consists mainly of mature beech, ash, sycamore and common lime. The wood has considerable fungi interest and has seven species of bat. Former paths on the site provide access and new pathways have been developed by the Woodland Trust to enable a circular walk within the wood.

*Map 2 gives detail of those parts of the Belfast Hills Partnership area that are managed for nature conservation amenity and have arrangements for public access.*

### **Baseline 1- Extent of accessible green space**

#### **Assessment:**

The Belfast Hills fringe area on the city sides of the hills is generally well served for open space, though not for all communities. There are few accessible sites within the uplands or the rural parts of the area where there are increasing populations.

#### **Proposed Key indicators:**

Km<sup>2</sup> of accessible open space.

**Baseline 2 - Extent of linear access routes for walking**

2.1 The following kilometres of linear routes are available within or linking to the Belfast Hills Partnership Area

| <u>Site</u>            | <u>Ownership/management</u> | <u>Access (km)</u> | <u>Comments</u>       |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Glenbank Park          | Belfast City Council        | 0.8                | 3 Access Points ( AP) |
| Glencairn Park         | Belfast City Council        | 5.25               |                       |
| Forthriver Linear Park | Belfast City Council        | 0.5                | 4 AP                  |
| Legoniel Park          | Belfast City Council        | 1                  | 3 AP                  |
| Hazelwood Park         | Belfast City Council        | 1.5                | 7 main AP overall     |
| Belfast Zoo            | Belfast City Council        | 4.6                |                       |
| Belfast Castle Estate  | Belfast City Council        | 8.4                |                       |
| Carr's Glen L Park     | Belfast City Council        | 4.8                |                       |
| Wallace Estate         | Belfast City Council        | 5.7                |                       |
| Valley Park            | Newtownabbey B.C.           | 2.5                | 3 AP                  |
| Carnmoney Hill         | Newtownabbey B.C.           | 3                  | 6 AP                  |
| Colin Glen FP          | EHS                         | 4.8                |                       |
| Snakey Path            | N.I.H.E.                    | 0.81               | 3 AP,                 |
| Glenside CW            | Readymix plc                | 8                  |                       |
| Rathfern Wood,         | Woodland Trust              | 2                  |                       |
| Throne Wood            | Woodland Trust              | 2.5                |                       |
| Moyard Wood            | Woodland Trust              | 0.5                |                       |
| Legoniel Wood          | Woodland Trust              | 0.5                |                       |
| Slievenacloy ASSI      | Ulster Wildlife Trust       | 4                  |                       |
| Divis                  | National Trust              | 2                  | 1 AP, unofficial      |
| Black Mountains        | Private                     | 1.5                | 1 AP, unofficial      |

2.2 The Belfast Metropolitan Area draft plan identifies the designation of several routes as community greenways including a route from the Shore Road to the Belfast Hills and a route between Forth River, Glencairn and Legoniel.

2.3 The Ulster Way, a long distance footpath developed in the 1970s under the direction of the Sports Council and now an EHS responsibility, formerly linked the Lagan Valley Regional Park to the Belfast Hills. This route was developed under a series of verbal permissions. As a result of a review of the Ulster Way route the Belfast Hills section of the route is currently not promoted.

2.4 The Belfast Hills annual walk ran for some years along parts of the skyline. The route had permissive status, only for the day of the walk.

**Baseline 2 - extent of linear access routes for walking**

**Assessment:**

The Belfast Hills fringe area on the city sides of the hills is well served for linear walks in amenity park, woodland and parkland environments. Upland walks, with the exception of within the Cave Hill Country Park are not accessible at present except by special permission. The potential for a long distance walk in the area remains unfulfilled.

**Proposed Key indicators:**

- Km of walking routes:
- No. and length of long distance walks.

**Baseline 3**

**Opportunities to reach open space or green space by public transport and by car**

- 3.1 Public transport services the residential urban fringe area, and to most municipal parks on the fringe of the Belfast Hills is both quite frequent and efficient. This is not so for the rural areas with only infrequent services operating on the main roads and almost nothing available at tertiary road level. Within the Hills area the road network, off the main through-routes is generally narrow, winding and hilly and unsuitable for large volumes of traffic or further heavy vehicles.
- 3.2 Ulsterbus services that provide access to the wider hills area include  
105 Lisburn to Wyebridge  
106 Belfast, Europa Buscentre - Crumlin  
108 Belfast, Europa Buscentre - Gregorys Corner  
109 Belfast, Europa Buscentre - Lisburn - Antrim  
536 Belfast - Stoneyford  
*A map of Translink routes appears in the Appendix to this report*
- 3.3 Urban fringe parks served by public transport - Citybus and Metro services are:  
Belfast Castle and Cavehill Country Park  
Forthriver  
Glenbank and Legoniel  
Glencairn  
Colin Glen
- 3.4 For those without personal transport, access to the Hills is restricted by limited bus and taxi services. Better accessibility by public transport would be of considerable benefit to walkers and tourists wishing to enjoy the Hills, particularly in a linear way. There is a need for improvement of transport services in conjunction with bus companies and hackney carriage operators, in order to meet the needs of the public.
- 3.5 There are four car parks in the Belfast Hills partnership area specifically associated with access to the countryside these are at:
- Rathfern giving access to Newtownabbey Borough Council/Woodland Trust lands on Carnmoney Hill,
  - Belfast Castle giving access to Cave Hill County Park,
  - At the lower end of the Collin Glen,
  - At the upper entrance to the Cave Hill Country Park from the Hightown Road.
- 3.6 The Belfast Black Taxi service, which also potentially provides recreational access ends at the Glen Road, Poleglass and Lagmore terminus. Private hackney cabs may be also used.
- 3.7 The development of additional public transport services into the hills to serve e.g. Divis and Slievenacloy, need to be preceded by the development of robust and well managed recreation sites and on good information services to the public about where access is permitted.

### Baseline 3 - Opportunities to reach open space by public transport and by car Assessment:

Public transport services (bus) are available to reach almost all of the municipal and country parks that fringe the Belfast Hills, but this information is hard to access in relation to recreation.

There is public transport access to only a limited part of the upland areas, but not to those with access arrangements.

Public transport to the hills should only develop when secure routes have been agreed and there is proper access management in place.

There are only four access related car parks in the Partnership area.

### Proposed Key indicators:

No. of opportunities to access upland areas by bus.

No. of access related car parks, particularly in the uplands.

## Baseline 4

### Visual appeal, environment and amenity of home zones in the Belfast Hills Partnership area

4.1 No objective information is available documenting the visual appeal, environment, or amenity of home zones (residential areas) in the Belfast Hills area. However, a number of issues are clear from community consultations and the representations of communities to other bodies:

- A Landscape Character Assessment carried out for EHS in 2000 notes the **negative influence of the city on the landscapes and visual appeal** of some areas. The impacts noted include house style, removal of wooded glens, pressure on minor roads, insensitive road realignments etc.
- The city's edge is abrupt and offers **little blending of settlement and countryside**. City edge estates are often close up to farmed lands giving the impression of rural life but with no access to open space. Estates are often hemmed in with high fencing.
- The extent of **quarrying and landfill activity** in the hills puts pressure on routes through both areas of major population and through rural settlements. The key factor being **heavy lorry use of rural and urban roads** not designed for the purpose. This reduces personal safety, increases fumes and dust and damages some of the more minor roads and their verges and hedgerows.
- The city's edge and extensive **parts of the Belfast Hills have a degraded** feel with litter, fly tipping, urban fencing, broken machinery, dilapidated buildings etc. There is little sign of civic pride or management within home zones.
- A major concern to communities throughout the hills is the **proximity of the home zones to major landfill sites** with an additional two planning approvals being given in 2005 within an area that already receives some one third of Northern Ireland's waste. Concerned communities include Castle Robin, Mullaghglass, Ballycollin and communities around sites on Carnmoney Hill and Hightown. Issues include concern for the health and safety of children in the area.

- Communities are also concerned with issues such as a **perceived lack of monitoring by a range of bodies** e.g. EHS on landfill activity, Planning Service on adherence to conditions of planning approval, Councils on fly tipping. The construction of homes and businesses without planning permission is also a concern.
- Some communities close to **Black Mountain Quarry** are concerned about issues of rock dust and of the changes to the profile of the mountain slopes when viewed from their homes. The Black Mountain Environment Group was formed to address these issues.
- **Dog fouling** is an issue for communities within city fringe open spaces.
- **Loss of favourite sites** - communities feel that there is a progressive loss of amenity in the Belfast Hills due to a cumulative loss of places people value these include routes believed by communities to be public rights of way, streams, rivers, dams and ponds, hedges, woodland and open space.

#### Baseline 4 - Visual appeal, Environment and amenity of home zones

##### Assessment:

The Belfast Hills area is perceived by communities as becoming a less pleasant, functional and safe place to live due to landfill, heavy traffic and constant change and development. Communities feel powerless to affect major changes to their quality of life and there is limited meaningful consultation.

##### Proposed Key indicators:

Level of satisfaction with quality, safety and amenity of the home zone environments.

Incidence of meaningful consultations with Belfast Hills communities on major issues affecting quality of life- e.g. spatial policies for landfill, major planning applications, traffic and road safety issues.

#### Baseline 5

##### Community safety in relation to green space and open space

- 5.1 The Belfast Hills Partnership is setting out to increase the opportunities for people to enjoy the Belfast Hills and the parks and public open space linking the hills to the urban areas of Belfast.
- 5.2 It is important that people perceive open space to be an opportunity for recreation rather than a threatening environment. There are no figures maintained at present for community safety within the open spaces of the urban fringe.
- 5.3 The nearest indicator is figures for recorded crime in the 15 Belfast Hills electoral wards are as follows:

| Ward Code | Ward Name | DC Name | Total Recorded Crime incidents 2004 |
|-----------|-----------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 95AA04    | Clady     | Antrim  | 218                                 |
| 95GG08    | Bellevue  | Belfast | 469                                 |
| 95GG14    | Cavehill  | Belfast | 272                                 |
| 95GG25    | Glen Road | Belfast | 414                                 |
| 95GG26    | Glencairn | Belfast | 204                                 |
| 95GG27    | Glencolin | Belfast | 439                                 |

| Ward Code | Ward Name         | DC Name | Total Recorded Crime incidents 2004 |
|-----------|-------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 95GG28    | Highfield         | Belfast | 350                                 |
| 95GG32    | Legoniel          | Belfast | 675                                 |
| 95GG46    | Upper Springfield | Belfast | 402                                 |
| 95SS04    | Ballymacoss       | Lisburn | 254                                 |
| 95SS06    | Collin Glen       | Lisburn | 509                                 |
| 95SS07    | Derryaghy         | Lisburn | 500                                 |
| 95WW10    | Cloughfern        | N'abbey | 204                                 |
| 95WW11    | Collinbridge      | N'abbey | 260                                 |
| 95WW24    | Valley            | N'abbey | 835                                 |

- 5.4 The Belfast Hills Partnership may wish to discuss further with PSNI the recording of crime figures in relation to open space in the Belfast Hills

#### Baseline 5 - community safety in relation to green space and open space

##### Assessment:

No conclusions can be drawn from the figures about community safety.

##### Proposed Key indicators:

No. of recorded crimes taking place in open space.

## Tackling Urban Fringe Farming issues

The Belfast Hills Partnership wishes to see farming retained within the Belfast Hills area for a number of reasons including:

- It is an important traditional industry in the area and supports Belfast Hills people and the local economy.
- Sustainable farming practices contribute to the diversity of flora and fauna in the area and to the important landscape character.
- Farmers contribute strongly to community life and to the overall care of the Belfast Hills.

Farmers in the Belfast Hills are fully involved in the partnership through their two Directors. The South Antrim group of the UFU is the main reference point with the Partnership and there have been several meetings with UFU and the South Antrim group about urban fringe issues.

### Baseline 6

#### Farming statistics in the Belfast Hills

- 6.1 Due to the way the annual NI farm census is recorded, it is not possible to derive figures for 2004 on the basis of the Belfast Hills boundary. Some descriptive statistics are however available for 2003 on the basis of the BHP boundary and both EHS and DARD have given assistance in drawing out statistics on a GIS basis.
- 6.2 The BHP boundary encloses some 4,254 ha of lands and includes 19 farms in 2003 which together comprised 1,146 hectares (27% of the BHP area) This area supported 1,655 cattle, 392 sheep, 0 pigs and 57 poultry. In terms of farm size there were
  - 4 farms @ <20 ha.
  - 7 farms @ 20-50 ha.
  - 6 farms @ 50-100 ha.
  - 2 farms @ >100 ha.
- 6.3 Of the 1,146 ha. Farmed: 701 ha is improved grass, 437 ha is rough grazing, 8 ha is crops plus horticulture and 'other land'.
- 6.4 It is estimated that 40 people may be employed in farming in the BHP area. This is based on the average number of employees per farm (2.1) in the total ward area for which statistics are described later in this section.
- 6.5 If the boundary of BHP were to be extended by a further 500m the number of farms enclosed would be 45. If the boundary were extended by 1km then the number of farms enclosed would be 72 and an estimate for employment 151.
- 6.6 On the basis of the 500m extension to the BHP area the total area would be 7,298 ha of which 2,652 was farmed in 2003 (36%) and of which 1,922 ha is improved grass, 717 ha is rough grazing, 13 ha is crops plus horticulture and 'other land'
- 6.7 Farm sizes in 2003 were

- 14 farms @ <20 ha.
- 11 farms @ 20-50 ha.
- 13 farms @ 50-100 ha.
- 7 farms @ >100 ha.

These farms supported 3,481 cattle; 435 sheep; 22 horses; <5 pigs; 57 poultry

6.8 Economic data for farms is not available at BHP level, so the area of the full set of 15 electoral wards that include parts of the Belfast Hills Partnership area has been selected for this purpose. The total area of the wards is almost twice that of the Partnership area. These electoral wards are:

- Bellevue
- Cave Hill
- Glen Road
- Glencairn
- Glencolin
- Highfield
- Legoniel
- Upper Springfield
- Ballymacoss
- Colin Glen
- Derryaghy
- Cloughfern
- Collinbridge
- Valley
- Clady

6.9 A number of the wards have considerable agricultural land and farm holdings outside the Belfast Hills Partnership area. These include Clady, Derryaghy and Ballymacoss. In other wards all of the farming activity takes place within the Belfast Hills Partnership area.

Key agricultural statistics for the 15-ward area are as follows:

- The number of farms within the area 189
- The total area farmed 8,650 hectares
- The average area per farm 45.8 hectares
- The number employed in farming 397

### Farm size breakdown

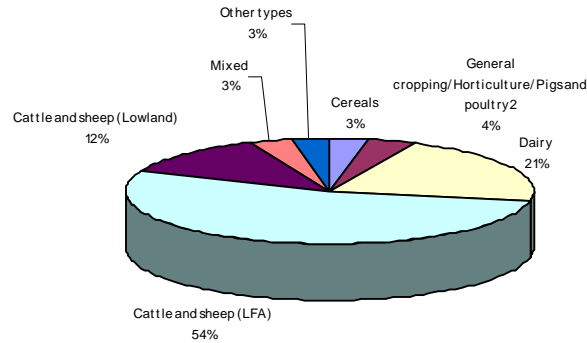
6.10 The majority (33%) of farms in the area extend to less than 20 hectares. Only 10% of farms extend to more than 100 hectares.

| Farm size bands       | Number of farms | % of farms in the area |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Less than 20 hectares | 63              | 33%                    |
| 20 - 50 hectares      | 58              | 31%                    |
| 50 - 100 hectares     | 50              | 26%                    |
| 100 + hectares        | 18              | 10%                    |
| TOTAL                 | 189             |                        |

### Farm type

6.11 The vast majority of farms in the 15 wards and all of the Belfast Hills Partnership area farms lie within the less favoured area (LFA) with a predominance of cattle and sheep farming.

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| Farm type   | Number of farms |
|---|-----------------|
| Cereals   | 6               |
| General cropping/Horticulture/Pigs and poultry <sup>2</sup> | 7               |
| Dairy   | 40              |
| Cattle and sheep (LFA)                                      | 101             |
| Cattle and sheep (Lowland)                                  | 23              |
| Mixed   | 6               |
| Other types   | 6               |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>189</b>      |
| Source DARDNI Agricultural census 2004                      |                 |

### Livestock numbers

6.12 In terms of the numbers of livestock in the 15-ward area there are nearly twice the number of cattle (14,733) as sheep (7,987) and the poultry flock numbers 28,577.

| Livestock type                         | Number of livestock |
|--|---------------------|
| Total Cattle                           | 14,733              |
| Total sheep                            | 7,987               |
| Total pigs                             | 14                  |
| Total poultry                          | 28,577              |
| Source DARDNI Agricultural census 2004 |                     |

### Economic performance

6.13 The economic performance of the Belfast Hills farm units can be illustrated by looking at their gross margins in terms of European Size Units (ESU). One ESU represents €1200 of gross margin (total output less the variable costs attributed to the output). The majority of farms in the Belfast Hills (77) lie below 8 ESUs

<sup>2</sup> General cropping, horticulture and pigs and poultry have been amalgamated due to DARD disclosure policies.

(€9600/£6720) whilst 68 are between 8 and 40 ESU (€9600/£6720 to €48,000/£33,600)

| Size bands - European size unit (ESU)         | Number of farms |
|---|-----------------|
| Less than 8                                   | 77              |
| 8 - 40  | 68              |
| 40 - 100                                      | 33              |
| 100 +   | 11              |
| TOTAL   | 189             |
| <i>Source DARDNI Agricultural census 2004</i> |                 |

## Baseline 6 - Agricultural statistics

### Assessment:

The partnership needs to retain farmers in the area, to help the economy, protect the continuity of traditional ways of life and community values, and maintain the stewardship of the landscape. The overall numbers of farm businesses retained and their profitability are therefore important as is the number employed in farming.

Further statistical work needs to be carried out at a postcode level or census super-output area level and the partnership should work with NISRA to devise easy reporting mechanisms across the range of their statistics.

### Proposed Key indicators:

- No. of farm businesses in the area
- No. employed in farming
- No. of people supported through farming (no. living on Belfast Hills farms)
- Gross margins and other indicators of economic performance
- No. of livestock in the hills
- Land use in the hills

## Baseline 7

### Issues affecting farmers on the urban fringe

7.1 During the process of setting up the BHP and working to identify issues and programmes several meetings were held with farmers. The following main issues were identified in relation to farming on the urban fringe:

- **Public lawlessness and attacks on farmers, families and stock**, mainly from people in high density urban areas close to the farm. Farmers felt that they were under siege and often had to house stock for longer periods or to invest in more extensive security measures than their rural counterparts. Often farmers felt there was no one to turn to to find a way to stop the attacks and general lawlessness.
- **Diminishing farm incomes**. In common with others in Northern Ireland and elsewhere farmers had seen their incomes diminish over the past five years,

and were receiving poor returns for intensive and anti social working hours. Many farm families had had to change towards part time working or an additional family member working off the farm to make ends meet.

- **Lack of respect for property.** The construction of large housing estates with limited recreational facilities has led to people seeking recreation in the nearest stretch of green space, often the farm. This use for recreation often includes destruction of gates, field boundaries and incursions into buildings.
- **Unwelcome recreational use.** In Northern Ireland as a whole and across the UK as a whole many people make an assumption that open upland is land accessible for recreation. In the Belfast Hills whilst there is a long tradition of walking the skyline and visiting the peaks this land has always been private and recreation has only been tolerated in places. Farmers are unwilling to give permission for paths as this leaves them in a position that they cannot control who comes on to the farm. To date farmers have not felt that they have access to an agency that can sort out unwelcome access issues.
- **Outside interference in farm affairs.** Farmers in the hills feel that increasingly farmers do not have autonomy over their farms, but are subject to direction for a range of agencies. More interference would be unwelcome unless clearly of benefit.
- **Illegal dumping of waste.** Farmers have had long experience of people dumping waste on their land but this seems to be increasing as financial incentives to dump illegally increase due to Landfill tax and the cost of disposal in legal sites. Farmers become liable for any waste dumped on their lands. On the wider issue of waste many farmers resent the use made of the Hills by the cities and urban areas for dumping and find it inappropriate.
- **Compliance with proposed nitrates action plan** In common with all farmers in Northern Ireland the Belfast Hills farmers feel that the proposals outlined in the Nitrates Action Plan will affect their businesses in a negative way. Particular issues are the close period for spreading and the overall restrictions on the amount of nitrate that can be spread per hectare.

### Baseline 7- Issues affecting farmers on the urban fringe

#### Assessment:

Farmers have become fully engaged in the process of managing the Belfast hills and in the work of the Partnership. However they experience major issues of which lawlessness, farm security, waste dumping are key. The Belfast Hills Partnership needs to bring forward programmes to address these issues or there will be a further reduction in farmers willing to face these issues on a daily basis.

#### Proposed Key indicators:

No. of farmers in the area

Measures to assist farmers experiencing security and crime related urban fringe pressures.

Measures to assist farmers experiencing unwelcome or nuisance recreational visits.

### Baseline 8

**Support available to solve urban fringe issues from Government agencies and other responsible bodies**

- 8.1 The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development was involved from time to time in the process of setting up the BHP and had a standing member on the Belfast Hills Working Group. The Department's position has been that its role will be in support of farmers and their needs, but that its role is minimal within the urban fringe. To date though the Shadow Partnership has had two meetings with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development on urban fringe issues no progress has been made.
- 8.2 BHP has prepared a draft Interreg submission with the Wicklow Uplands Council, in discussion with Dublin Wicklow LEADER for pilot initiatives to ameliorate the problems of the urban shadow on farmers e.g. city neighbour relations, urban fringe education initiatives, farm security measures, market garden schemes. Technical difficulties in matching funder requirements and priorities led to the application not being progressed at that time.

**Baseline 8 - Support for urban fringe issues**

**Assessment:**

Farmers in the Belfast Hills urban fringe have no special support for issues such as attacks on farm property and on farm livestock. Support is available for other activities such as farm diversification, countryside management, and renewal of slurry storage.

**Proposed Key indicators:**

Special support scheme to address urban fringe issues.

**Baseline 9**

**Examples of projects to identify and resolve urban fringe issues**

- 9.1 There appear to be no projects in the UK dealing with urban fringe issues, except for specific issues on fly tipping.
- 9.2 The Belfast Hills is not alone however in having urban fringe farming problems. The National Farmers Union carried out a survey of farming issues in England and Wales in 2002 and published the following:  
*Farming on the edge of towns and cities can be like working in a "war zone" with some farmers having to contend with prostitution, illegal raves and even attacks on livestock.*
- 9.3 It is estimated that 32,000 farms in England and Wales operate in close proximity to large centres of population and that working on the "urban fringe" brings with it a unique set of challenges and opportunities. A survey of 2,000 urban farmers found:
- Almost 70% suffer from "fly-tipping" - the dumping of industrial and domestic rubbish from garden refuse to abandoned cars on farmland.
  - A third have problems with illegal encampments of travellers, including New Age travellers.
  - 43% are plagued by joy-riders.

- Other problems reported included: prostitution, drug-taking, animal cruelty, theft, vandalism, arson, animal rustling and illegal raves.
  - Almost half thought their children would be more likely to be lured to the city lights than continuing the family farming business.
  - 60% have used their proximity to large populations to their advantage by diversifying into businesses like B&Bs and farmers' markets. But only 18% found their local authority supportive of them.
- 9.4 The NFU is calling for a number of measures including more visible policing, an extension of local authority powers for the removal of fly-tipped wastes from private land and a positive planning attitude towards farming and diversification in Green Belt lands.
- 9.5 The Government's Rural White paper has the following to say about urban fringe farming:
- Farming on the urban fringe has its own special attributes and problems. Its landscape is vitally important in its own right and as a bridge to the wider countryside. Demand for access and amenity is high. Crime and vandalism can be problems. The Urban White Paper recognises the importance of agricultural and horticultural businesses in and around cities and towns and sets out our policies for dealing with problems such as crime and antisocial behaviour.*
- But urban fringe farmers also face the same challenges as the rest of farming. Our measures will help these farmers too. For example, the ERDP has a separate London chapter, programming group and budget for rural economy measures. And our initiatives to improve the planning environment will achieve a better dialogue and awareness between farmers and urban authority planners.*
- 9.6 The Fly Tipping Forum which brings together the Government, the Environment Agency, local authorities, the NFU and the Country Landowners Association is addressing the problem of fly tipping on farms. It is assessing the scale of the problem, and will look at how the enforcement agencies can work more effectively together, including the pursuit of offenders and more effective deterrence. The fly tipping forum commissioned a report from Marcus Hodges Environment LTD. Scheduled for publication June 2004 (no update available).
- 9.7 Across the world there are issues of the urban fringe but published materials deal largely with the impact of urban sprawl on nature conservation and recreational amenity; on urban rural linkages in horticulture or market gardening; or on the issue of dumping urban waste in the countryside.

## Baseline 9 - Examples of projects to alleviate urban fringe issues

### Assessment:

The Belfast Hills Partnership is unaware of any good examples of relieving urban fringe issues for farmers.

### Proposed Key indicators:

Contacts with other areas with similar problems and joint resolution of issues.

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## Natural and Built Heritage

### Baseline 10

#### Habitats of the Belfast Hills

- 10.1 The Belfast Hills includes a mosaic of habitats of varying value and importance in addition to the framework of designated sites included in Figure 1. This interest contributes to the outstanding landscape quality of the Belfast hills and the urban fringe of the city of Belfast providing attractive areas for recreation and amenity uses.
- 10.2 The Belfast Hills area embraces 3 main zones of habitat - urban, urban fringe and rural habitats. Wedges of linear habitat cross all three including the river valley linkages - Forth, Collin, Stoneyford, Ballygomartin, and Three Mile Water.

#### Dry and Wet Heathland

- 10.3 The upland areas of the Belfast Hills include a mosaic of heathland habitats including wet and dry heath and areas of generally poorly managed dwarf shrub heath. There are no notable bog habitats but areas of inundation and springs leading to additional habitats.

*Key Areas*

Divis, Black Mountain, Squires and Collin mountains.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

Upland heathland.

#### Acid grassland

- 10.4 Characteristic of leached soils, there are extensive areas of acid grassland creating a patchwork pattern with the other typical upland habitats - heathland, gorse scrub,

*Key Areas*

Divis, Black Mountain, Squires and Collin mountains.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

Purple moor grass and rush pastures.

#### Neutral grassland

- 10.5 Intermediate between acid and calcareous grassland, it includes wet and dry grassland types where soils are inundated or flushed by water. Other species have adapted to this habitat and depend on its conservation.

*Key Areas*

The western slopes of the key mountain peaks and on the lower slopes of the higher ground - Slievenagraveny, Hannahstown, Ballymurphy, Ballygomartin.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

Lowland meadows.

**Broadleaved woodland**

- 10.6 The most notable areas of woodland are on Carmoney Hills and along the scarp slope of the basalt cliffs where areas have been left to regenerate. In places this merges with lowland wood pasture and parkland.

*Key Areas*

Carmoney Hill, Collin Glen, Black Hill, Cavehill.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

Upland mixed ash woods.

**Lowland wood pasture and parkland**

- 10.7 The demesne parkland woodlands of Belfast Castle and Bellevue add to the outstanding landscape quality of the Belfast Hills and is a notable priority habitat.

*Key Areas*

Cavehill, Belfast Castle, Bellevue and Collin Valley.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

Lowland woodland pasture and parkland.

**Planted conifer woodland**

- 10.8 There is little coniferous plantation in the Belfast Hills. However, the small pockets of coniferous planting contribute to the mosaic of biodiversity interest. Conifers planted in mixed woodland create to add to the biodiversity interest and Red Squirrel has been shown to benefit from mixed plantations.

*Key Areas*

Aughrim, Slievenacloy, Black Hill.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

None.

**Boundary features including hedgerows**

- 10.9 Hedges, banks and ditches are characteristic of a more traditional NI farmed landscape. Aerial photography reveals zones of interest - areas where farming is less improved or small scale show a network of historic hedge boundaries with some of greater biodiversity interest - thicker, greater species interest, historic features associated with the boundary, less heavily managed by industrial hedge cutters. Generally, the hedges in the Belfast Hills tend to be species poor, over managed and gappy.

*Key Areas*

Generally lower areas, along roadlines and tracks, townland boundaries.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows.

**Marsh, wet grassland and swamp**

- 10.10 Belfast Hills, because of its upland terrain, is generally devoid of extensive areas of marsh and wet habitat. There are localised areas of wet grassland and swamp, associated with water logged areas. In addition there are a number of notable

flushes and springs associated with the Cretaceous chalk outcrop below the basalt.

*Key Areas*

Lower slopes of basalt hills, habitats associated with reservoirs, areas of more extensive wet grassland associated with extensive, upland habitat.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

None.

## Openwater

10.11 Belfast Hills, because of its upland terrain, is generally devoid of open water. The majority of the Openwater bodies are man-made associated with Belfast's industries and water needs. In addition, a number of the worked quarries have created open water bodies as part of the workings.

*Key Areas*

Lagmore, Legoniel, Collin Glen, Ballycollin.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

None.

## River and stream

10.12 There are a number of arterial rivers flowing off the heights of the Belfast Hills following fault lines and cutting into the basaltic landscape. Some of the minor watercourses within the Belfast Hill Partnership area flow into major watercourses outside of the area.

*Key Areas*

Forth River, Collin, Clady, Crumlin, Flush, Three Mile Water.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

None.

## Urban / urban fringe

10.13 There is a range of habitats associated with the city and its urban fringes and industrial uses including derelict quarries and associated quarry lands, wasteland areas, gardens, parklands, ponds, school grounds and industrial lands. The Urban Flora for Belfast identifies a number of species rich areas of local value and interest.

*Key Areas*

Belfast urban fringe along Belfast Hills partnership boundary, settlement areas - Legoniel, Lagmore, Hannahstown, industrial sites.

*NI Biodiversity Priority Habitats*

None.

## Biodiversity Habitats - Indicators of Change

10.14 Both statutory and non statutory agencies are beginning to identify ways and means of identifying and quantify changes to our natural heritage and establishing an overall vision for the protection, enhancement and recreation of key habitats. Changes to habitats come in various forms and can be both positive as well as negative; -

- direct change to a habitat as a result of land use alterations,
- indirect changes to habitat as a result of other background changes - e.g. - water quality deterioration or improvement and climate change impacts.

- 10.15 It is not just the extent of a habitat that is crucial but the quality of the habitat - e.g. -dwarf heath scrub must be managed including healthy mosaic of different age stands of heath or the quality of boundary features.

### Baseline 10 - Habitats of the Belfast Hills

#### Assessment:

It would be advisable to select features that are part of the Northern Ireland wide survey of indicators of environmental changes established by Environment and Heritage Service and the NI Biodiversity Forum. However, in advance of this information being published, it is suggested that a combination of habitats are selected and monitored including priority habitats in both upland and lower areas:

- Areas of upland heath
- Lengths of historic boundary hedgerows
- Areas of neutral species rich grassland
- Areas of deciduous woodland
- Areas of newly planted woodland
- Areas of wet grassland/ marsh/ swamp.

#### Proposed Key indicators:

Area of each priority habitat.

Quality of habitats.

No. of farmers in the countryside management scheme.

### Baseline 11

#### Important species in the Belfast Hills

- 11.1 The range of habitats supports a wealth of biodiversity interest including protected species within the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985, the NI Biodiversity strategy, the Red Data book species and species of value identified by specialists and local environmental groups. A number of species recorder or known to be present in the BHP area include NI Biodiversity Action Plan species, proposed NI species of conservation concern, Birdlife International et al Birds of Conservation Concern and other species of note identified by specialist organisations.
- 11.2 There are a number of information sources:
- Ulster Museum CeDar records
  - EHSNI survey information
  - Non government organisation survey information
  - Local natural history society records
  - Local anecdotal information.
- 11.3 The protection and enhancement of a network and framework of habitats in a strategic way is crucial for the protection of key species: The key groups as identified in the NI Biodiversity strategy includes;

#### Vascular plants

- 11.4 The range of habitats supports a wealth of plants. Vulnerable habitats include - neutral grassland, marsh and wet grassland, dry and wet heath, native woodland

and wet flushes where the limestone outcrops below the basalt. Shady Horsetail is noted as a species of conservation concern.

### **Fungi and algae**

11.5 There has been less information on the distribution of fungi compared with vascular plants. Protecting the range of habitats is crucial in protecting the distribution of fungi. Key habitats include woodland and unimproved grassland.

### **Lichens**

11.6 Similar to fungi, lichen flora is not well known. Species are associated with a variety of habitats and features including older trees, grassland, heath, walls and historic monuments.

### **Bryophytes - Mosses and liverworts**

11.7 Heath, grassland, woodland, rock formations, rivers and building structures all support a good range of bryophytes - in particular where there are outcrops of limestone below the basalt formations.

### **Mollusca**

11.8 As with a number of groupings, mollusca are associated with a variety of habitats and features including wet grassland, neutral grassland associated with limestone outcrops and native woodlands.

### **Arthropoda - arachnida**

11.9 Protecting woodland, mesotrophic grassland, heath and wetland is important to a range of arachnida. Management of sites is crucial to ensure key plant species are protected. Habitat management should allow for ranges in vegetation structure.

### **Arthropoda - Insecta - dragonflies, butterflies, Moths, Bugs, Beetles, bees, Wasps, Ants**

11.10 This is a huge sector of species but the range of habitats supports some interesting and significant species. Management of sites is also crucial to ensure key plant species are protected and vegetation height varied. The protection of unpolluted wetlands with marginal vegetation is crucial.

### **Fish**

11.11 Brown Trout and Atlantic Salmon are the 2 protected species. Clean rivers are essential for spawning.

### **Birds**

11.12 The NI Biodiversity Strategy identifies key species that are vulnerable because of loss of habitat and changes in land Management. Birdlife International has produced lists of conservation concern - some species of note include Red Grouse, Skylark, Linnet, Twite, Yellowhammer, Song Thrush and Bullfinch,

### **Amphibians and Reptiles**

11.13 Protecting an unpolluted wetland habitat is crucial for Smooth Newt, Frog and Viviparous Lizard. Openwater, wet grassland and watercourse crucial. Some disused and flooded quarries are important for these species.

## Mammals

- 11.14 Species include Irish Hare, Otter, Bats -Daubenton's, Leisler and Pipestrelle, Badger, Red Squirrel and Stoat. Protecting a network of linking and appropriate habitat is critical. Woodland, older buildings, open grassland and watercourses are important,

## Biodiversity Species - Indicators of Change

- 11.15 A number of species have been flagged up by both statutory and non statutory agencies as being indicative of changes to habitats, providing a baseline for establishing an overall vision for the protection, enhancement and recreation of the natural heritage.
- 11.16 Changes to populations and distribution of species are varying and complex and can be both incremental as well as detrimental. The changes can be localised or widespread and the influences on change harder to isolate

## Baseline 11 - Species and Biodiversity in the Belfast Hills

### Assessment:

Flora and Fauna of the Belfast Hills is an important part of its character and value and is constantly under threat from change in land use or removal altogether. Although only a very small area of the Hills is considered on national importance (ASSI) and none of international importance (SAC) there is a wealth of species which are prioritised within the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and species action plans.

It would be advisable for monitoring to select species which are part of the Northern Ireland wide survey of indicators of environmental changes established by Environment and Heritage Service and the NI Biodiversity Forum. However, in advance of this information being formerly published, it is suggested that a combination of species are agreed specific to the Belfast Hills Partnership area and might include:

- Birds - Yellowhammer, Red Grouse, Lapwing, Barn Owl, Skylark, Curlew
- Vascular Plants - Shady Horsetail, Calluna vulgaris, Meadow Crane's bill, Smooth Cat's Ear
- Fish - Brown Trout
- Mammals - Irish Hare, Red Squirrel
- Butterfly - Marsh Fritillary

### Proposed Key indicators:

Diversity of species.

No. observed of each species for which there is an action plan.

Mechanisms and programmes of protection and enhancement.

No. of farmers in the area in the Countryside Management Scheme.

## Baseline 12

### Nature conservation designations

- 12.1 The Belfast Hills partnership area does not contain any areas with international or European designations or accords. It does however have the following nature conservation designations:

#### Slievenacloy ASSI

- 12.2 Slievenacloy is an area of marginal agricultural grassland in the Belfast Hills. Soils have developed from glacial tills and are generally surface-leached. However, because of poor drainage in places base-enrichment by springs and surface flushing occurs. This has led to the development of a wide range of grassland types, reflecting the varied soil conditions.
- 12.3 Species of note recorded on the ASSI include purple orchid, twayblade, greater and lesser butterfly orchid, frog orchid, northern marsh orchid, and moonwort fern. The area is renowned for its variety and abundance of waxcap fungi present on the drier swards, and recent studies rank the site the fourth most important site of its type in Ireland.
- 12.4 The variety and quality of grassland and heath support a wide range of animal and invertebrate life. Irish hares are regularly seen on the higher ground, while birds on the site include breeding curlew, snipe, lapwing, skylark, grasshopper warbler, reed bunting and meadow pipit. Marsh and dark green fritillary butterflies have also been recorded. (UWT, Ulster Wildlife Trust). Over much of the area, the vegetation is dominated by Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, but with a wide variety of associated species, including herbs such as Devil's-bit *Scabious*, *Succisa pratensis*, Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Marsh Willowherb *Epilobium palustre* and Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*. More pronounced flushing produces localised stands of very species-rich vegetation, with a predominance of sedges such as Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*, Carnation Sedge *C. panicea*, Tawny Sedge *C. hostiana* and, more notably, Dioecious Sedge *C. dioica*.
- 12.5 Drier areas are characterised by a range of different grassland species in which Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris* is prominent; however, these grasslands are generally very species-rich and include a wide range of herbs, such as White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, Self-heal *Prunella vulgaris*, Eyebright *Euphrasia* agg. and Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, in addition to a number of other grasses and sedges, eg. Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Carnation Sedge *C. panicea* (EHSNI).
- 12.6 More elevated ground illustrates transitions to wet heath vegetation, in which acid-tolerant species such as Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and Sphagnum bog mosses are dominant.

#### Other sites with ASSI potential

- 12.7 Upland Heath habitats on Divis have been surveyed and are considered potentially of ASSI status following a restoration programme. The National Trust intends to engage in an upland heath restoration programme on the site.

## National Nature Reserves and Nature Reserves

- 12.8 There are 2 local nature reserves managed by Belfast City Council. These are
- **Ballyagaghan Meadows**- an area of upland meadow on Cave Hill with notable grassland flora.
  - **Hazelwood**- an area of mixed deciduous and conifer woodland with hazel dominant in the lower slopes. A varied ground flora including goldilocks buttercup and wood vetch.

## Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs)

- 12.9 Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI) are local designations within Northern Ireland, and derive from the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 under SPG-Env 1.2. They are designated in area development plans, with the aim to manage suitable sites, particularly in urban and urban fringe situations, as Local Nature Reserves.
- 12.10 A total of some 50 SLNCI have been proposed within or close to the BHP area. Many of these were identified in a report 'Nature in the City' prepared for EHS by the late Dinah Browne. A full list of proposed SLNCIs and their locations is set out within the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan [www.planningni.gov.uk/AreaPlans\\_Policy/Plans/BMA/draft\\_plan](http://www.planningni.gov.uk/AreaPlans_Policy/Plans/BMA/draft_plan)

## Baseline 12 - Nature conservation Designations

### Assessment:

The Belfast Hills area contains fewer designated sites than most upland areas of Northern Ireland, and will rely extensively on SLNCI in development plans for its protection.

With restoration, it should be possible to bring forward Divis summits as an ASSI.

### Proposed Key indicators:

- No. and integrity of ASSI sites.
- No. and integrity of national nature reserves.
- No. and integrity of SLNCI.

**Baseline 13**

**Key elements of landscape character, extent of protection of these key elements including protection of the landscapes in statutory development plans.**

13.1 The Belfast Hills creates a prominent and dramatic landscape setting to the urban parts of Belfast, Lisburn and Newtownabbey and can be seen from far afield. Despite its dramatic nature the area has not received any landscape designation, although it has been considered in the past as a regional park. The Belfast Hills Partnership Area includes sections of 4 definite and different Landscape Character Areas (LCA) which are part of a series of 126 Landscape Character Areas for Northern Ireland. This overall Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken by Environment and Heritage Service in 2000 and covers the whole of Northern Ireland. Information for each LCA includes defining the landscape character, information on the geodiversity and defining some of the biodiversity characteristics for each LCA. Landscape Character areas are as follows:

- LCA 111 Divis Summits
- LCA 112 Belfast Basalt Escarpment
- LCA 110 Derrykillultagh
- LCA 114 Three and Six Milewater River Valleys

*The boundaries and locations of the landscape character areas are indicated on Map 3*

**LCA 111 Divis Summits**

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

13.2 The Antrim basalt plateau ends in a series of broad, open, rounded summits including Divis (476m), Black Mountain, Squires Hill and Cave Hill. The valleys between the summits are characterised by farmland, fragmented communities partially waterlogged moss and marginal farmland, There is a wide range of archaeological sites particularly on the summit of the Cave Hill. Radio masts and military installations dominate the highest summits.

**GEODIVERSITY**

13.3 Abandoned quarry works reveal underlying geology including Tertiary Basalt formations and intrusive structures, underlying Cretaceous Greensand and Limestone, Jurassic and Triassic mudstone group. Carr's Glen and Crow's Glen are important sites.

**BIODIVERSITY CHARACTERISTICS**

13.4 There are few broadleaved woodlands (1%) and mainly consist of small scattered areas of stream side hazel scrub. One such area is part of the Leathemstown ASSI. Grassland is the dominant cover including a mosaic of grassland type - improved, species rich, unimproved acid grassland and species rich mesotrophic marginal grassland. A range of upland habitats occur on the summits including blanket bog, wet and dry heath and wet flushes. There are no extensive areas of wetland. Boghill Dam is significant for birds. Rivers include Flush, Forth, Stoneyford, Rushyhill and Crumlin River.

## LCA 112 Belfast Basalt Escarpment

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

13.5 Distinctive dark basalt cliffs with stepped profile/steep scarp slope with a thin underlying layer of chalk. Below the cliffs lies an area of marginal farmland with encroaching development. The area is pitted with quarries of differing size and which have a strong impact on the landscape quality of the cliff line and skyline. Within and at the foot of the escarpment there is fly tipping, abandoned farmsteads, derelict vernacular buildings, use of quarries for land fill sites, development pressure, high land prices and changing land use.

### GEODIVERSITY

13.6 As with LCA 111, the geology consists of Tertiary basalt formations and intrusive structures. The underlying Cretaceous Greensand and Limestone, the Jurassic Mudstone and the Triassic mudstone group. Collin Glen, Carr's Glen, Crow Glen and Ballygomartin Sill and Bellevue Sill all creating localised landscape features of geodiversity and biodiversity interest.

### BIODIVERSITY CHARACTERISTICS

13.7 Deciduous woodland and scrub occur along the base of the slope and in incised river valleys. Where the limestone outcrops there is evidence of more species diversity and importance. Good range of grassland types where farmed land is less improved and falling into dereliction. There is shrub and heath on the fringes of the upland heath habitats.

## LCA 110 Derrykillultagh

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

13.8 This landscape character area is set behind the summits and plateau of the Hills where the landscape falls gently toward Lough Neagh. It is characterised by rounded hills and shallow slopes. Gorse and Holly typically occur in the hedgerows of the small farms and land holdings. The slopes are divided by narrow glens. The Derrykillultagh area includes part of upper Lagan Valley.

### GEODIVERSITY

13.9 Triassic sandstones and siltstones. Lagan Valley is a deglacial complex of note.

### BIODIVERSITY CHARACTERISTICS

13.10 Woodland occupies less than 2% of LCA. Here there is a variety of woodland types including Alder/ Ash woodlands. The wet woodland around Stoneyford Reservoir is of note. Grassland is the main land cover - mainly improved but with pockets of unimproved meadows. Wetlands and Lakes. More significant areas of wetland including industrial ponds/ reservoirs.

## LCA 114 Three and Six Mile River Valleys

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

13.11 These notable river valleys lie to the north of the main area of the Belfast Hills but embrace the important landscape feature Carnmoney Hill - an outlier of the Belfast Hills. There is a traditional settlement pattern with a contemporary overlay of new build, industrial areas and landfill sites. Electricity pylons are

prominent on the local skyline and there is increased pressure from development on the remaining countryside of Carnmoney Hill.

#### GEODIVERSITY

13.12 Significant features include Triassic sandstones and siltstones. The Glas Na Bradan ESCR, Six Mile Water Glaciofluvial complex. Earth Science Sites - Ballypalady/Carnmoney Plug, Craig Hill.

#### BIODIVERSITY CHARACTERISTICS

13.13 Woodland occupies less than 3% of this LCA, with a variety of types. Important areas include Carmoney Hill. Grassland is the predominant land cover and includes pockets of species rich mesotrophic grassland, improved pasture and rough grassland. Wetlands and lakes Includes key riparian habitat associated with major rivers- Six Mile Water and Three Mile Water. In addition there are industrial reservoirs and associated wet grassland and marginal vegetation.

#### Landscape condition and sensitivity to change

*(Reproduced from the EHS - NI Landscape Character Areas report 2000)*

#### DIVIS SUMMITS

13.14 The landscape of the Divis Summits is generally in poor condition, particularly on the summits and in areas where there has been a history of mineral extraction. There is much evidence of hedgerow removal and the character of the roads, which were fringed with hedgerows on the lower slopes of the plateau, has been eroded by a combination of neglect and ongoing minor road improvements, largely to accommodate the mineral lorries. Much of the farmland is in a partially abandoned condition and there is much evidence of fly-tipping and derelict farmsteads. The basalt summits and steep escarpment slopes are particularly sensitive to change, as they form the backdrop to the urban areas of Lisburn and Belfast and because they are relatively exposed. The quarry sites are often in extremely prominent locations and their restoration should be considered a priority. Hazelwood Area of Scientific Interest (ASI) occurs within this character area, forming a particularly sensitive part of the landscape. Priorities for restoration include

- The restoration of abandoned quarry sites
- Retaining the character of minor roads
- The control of fly-tipping and the removal of existing tips and scattered dumping on derelict sites
- The landscape on the edges of active quarry sites should be restored, particularly at entrances and the permanent boundaries, where there are often steep, odd-shaped bunds and abandoned plant.
- Limiting routes for mineral lorries will help conserve narrow roads and remaining hedgerow trees from further erosion by heavy vehicles.
- New hedgerow tree planting and the encouragement of natural regeneration.

#### BELFAST BASALT ESCARPMENT

13.15 Belfast Basalt Escarpment LCA is sensitive to change due to its prominence and is generally in a rather degraded state, with neglect and loss of field boundaries and fly tipping. Restoration of abandoned quarry workings will improve the visual appearance and landscape condition of the escarpment. Quarries in prominent positions are particularly important. Management of degraded hedgerows and replanting along post and wire boundaries will strengthen landscape patterns

and enhance the condition of the landscape. Management and replanting of the remaining deciduous woodland on the lower slopes of the escarpment will ensure that these slopes remain wooded, creating recreational opportunities for residents of Belfast and enhancing the setting of the city.

#### DERRYKILLULTAGH

13.16 Derrykillultagh has lost character through the dereliction and at times insensitive replacement of traditional buildings, the removal of field boundaries to make large fields, ribbon development, the loss of wooded glens, and road realignment. Priorities for retaining landscape character include replanting of hedgerows and trees at realigned junctions and homestead entrances, the conservation of existing hedgerows, and further tree planting within hedgerows and woodland and copse planting on waste sites and on marginal farmlands.

#### THREE AND SIX MILE WATER VALLEYS

13.17 The landscape condition of this area is generally poor due to the incomplete hedgerow network and the decline of mature trees. Built development is quite open and incoherent, leading to a rather degraded visual character in some areas. The extent of built development in this area has a significant impact and continued hedgerow loss will result in a greater sensitivity to landscape change. Woodland planting could substantially reduce the sensitivity of the landscape to large-scale development. Priorities for retaining and enhancing landscape character include woodland planting and hedgerow retention and restoration.

### Baseline 13 - Belfast Hills Landscape

#### Assessment:

The Belfast Hills landscapes are dramatic and important for their own sake and as an attractive backdrop to the city and its residents and visitors. Landscapes are generally degraded and highly impacted, showing the pressure of low returns in farming, of insensitive development, and of industries such as quarrying and waste management. Telecommunications masts dominate the upland landscapes, with few summits free from structures.

In order to define further the quality of the landscapes and to create a dialogue on change more detailed landscape assessment will be necessary, since the character assessment to date has been at a coarse scale.

The priority should be to halt further degradation of landscape and to bring forward programmes that protect and enhance the critical features such as gates, hedges, vernacular buildings, wooded glens, and open moorland.

#### Proposed Key indicators:

No. of telecommunication masts and other structures on hill tops and open slopes.

Retention of identified features of landscape character.

Engagement of communities and industry in programmes to enhance and interpret landscape.

### Baseline 14

#### Lands with high nature conservation value, under threat

14.1 Throughout the last fifteen years that management mechanisms for the hills have been discussed there have been threats to lands of high nature conservation value in the Hills. Typical incidents include fly tipping and illegal

landfill activity on sites used by nesting birds, burning of mountain vegetation, hunting or shooting of species of conservation concern.

- 14.2 Such incidents can occur at any time given the lack of nature conservation designations and therefore habitat and species monitoring; and given the considerable pressures placed on the hills by their proximity to Belfast.

#### Baseline 14 - Lands with high conservation value under threat

##### Assessment:

The key to reducing the threat to lands with high nature conservation value is to bring them into more active conservation management, either by their owners or by an organisation working on their behalf, and to ensure that all of the relevant information is available to inform planning decisions.

A further protection is afforded from a wider range of people being aware of the special nature of parts of the hills and knowing the point of contact when they see any activities occurring to threaten sites.

##### Proposed Key indicators:

No. of incidents leading to loss of nature conservation lands or value.

Availability and accessibility of nature conservation information (surveys, monitoring reports) for all lands within the Belfast Hills.

#### Baseline 15

##### No. of Historic monuments in the Belfast Hills with access and interpretation

##### SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

- 15.1 The following scheduled monuments lie within the BHP operational area.

*Numbers refer to numbered red triangles on Map 4*

1. McArts Promontory Fort on Cave Hill,
2. Ballyaghagan Cashel
3. Dunanney Church Site
4. Dunanney Rath
5. Greencastle Fortification (site of) and settlements
6. Ballymurphy Platform Rath
7. Slievenacloy Glacial erratic - Sibs Stone
8. Slievenacloy Enclosure
9. Castle Robin - Mullaghtglass Motte and Bailey with remains of castle

- 15.2 Scheduling provides statutory protection for an historic monument, normally in private ownership, but does not imply any right of access to the public. Scheduling is intended to preserve a proportion of monuments of each type. Of the scheduled sites above only McArts Fort has secure public access.

- 15.3 Information on scheduled monuments and their special interest can be accessed by the general public by appointment in the Sites and Monuments Database at Hills St Belfast. Information on a proportion of scheduled monuments is also accessible via the internet on [www.ehsni.gov.uk](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk) or from the Archaeological Data Service.

##### OTHER SITES

- 15.4 Other Sites of historic importance but which are not scheduled include:

*Numbers refer to blue circles on map 4*

1. Dunnaney associated sites - soutterains, cave, cropmarks and rath
  2. Cloughfern rath
  3. Ballyduff, Dunanney, Carnmoney and Glebe - cairns
  4. Church site at Carnmoney/Glebe and Urn burial, cropmarks and possible medieval settlement
  5. Drumnaoraogh Fort
  6. Ballyaghagan Mound
  7. Ballygolan crannog - Hazelwood
  8. Ballyvaston site of medieval chapel and site of castle
  9. Ballyyaghan cairn and enclosure
  10. Ballyvaston prehistoric settlement
  11. Ballyvaghan mound
  12. Greencastle enclosure
  13. Ballyvaghan rath and soutterain
  14. Old Park enclosures
  15. Upper Ballysillan Neolithic occupation site
  16. Legoniel - sites of megalithic tombs
  17. Legoniel soutterain
  18. Ballygomartin rath site
  19. Ballygoamrtin Standing Stone site
  20. Divis glacial erratics
  21. Altigarron/Divis remains of round cairn
  22. Ballymurphy platform raths
  23. Ballymurphy flint sites
  24. Tarnaroy mound
  25. Divis enclosure
  26. Englishtown rath site
  27. Ballycollin well and bathhouse
  28. Ballycollin cairn and standing stones
  29. Ballycollin round cairn
  30. Poleglass platform rath
  31. Aghalislone mound
  32. Lagmore platform rath and enclosure
  33. Aghalislone megalith and barrow
- 15.5 All of these sites are in private ownership and are not accessible to the public except by special permission. This is only a selection of sites, which are numerous. There is a particular concentration of sites at Budore, on Divis and on the Cave Hill.
- 15.6 There is little information easily available on the built heritage of the Belfast Hills and few or no sites have any signage or access.

## Baseline 15 - Historic monuments

### Assessment:

The Belfast Hills area is rich in historic monuments, some of significant size and interest. Most remain inaccessible and there is little information available to the general public.

### Proposed Key indicators:

Information about historic monuments in the Belfast Hills which are accessible to the public.

No. of sites accessible to the public.

## Baseline 16

### Historic and vernacular buildings, townlands

- 16.1 Environment and Heritage Service undertook a survey of all notable buildings in NI the 1970s. This information is included on the EHS Listed Buildings database on [www.ehsni.gov.uk](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk) The original survey did not include all buildings of vernacular interest including farm and industrial buildings. A resurvey is currently starting but is anticipated will take 20 years to complete. Only the Belfast Castle is a listed building within the area.
- 16.2 It is difficult to perceive the vernacular character of dwellings within the Belfast hills area as so many traditional buildings have been lost or renovated in a modern style.

### Townland Boundaries and Local Identify

- 16.3 The townlands of the Belfast Hills are not generally apparent to the visitor. Townland names are rich in description of the topography, land use, community, or history and can provide a depth of insight into heritage. In some areas in Northern Ireland townland names have been included below the road names on road signs, and in others communities have erected their own townland welcome signs. Townlands of the Belfast Hills include:

|                    |                |                   |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Aghalislone        | Ballymurphy    | Hannahstown       |
| Aghanlough         | Black Mountain | Island Kelly      |
| Altigarron         | Bovolcan       | Knocknadona       |
| Ballyaston         | Budore         | Lagmore           |
| Ballyaghagan       | Carnmoney      | Legoniel          |
| Ballycollin        | Cloughfern     | Mullaghglass      |
| Ballycullo         | Collinward     | Old Park          |
| Ballydownfine      | Derryaghy      | Poleglass         |
| Ballyduff          | Divis          | Slievenacloy      |
| Ballygolan         | Drumankelly    | Slievenagravery   |
| Ballygomartin      | Dunmury        | Tarnaroy          |
| Ballymacward Lower | Englishtown    | Toberangee        |
| Ballymacward Upper | Glebe          | Tullyrusk         |
| Ballymagarry       | Greencastle    | Upper Ballysillan |

## Industrial Archaeology

- 16.4 There is much evidence in the Hills of the former industries that shaped Belfast and its surrounding landscape during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 16.5 Sites of interest include relics of derelict quarries and workings, linen and textile factories associated with Belfast, reservoirs and waterworks, fragmented demesnes with associated buildings and structures, relics and existing structures associated with transport routes including bridges.

### Baseline 16 - Historic buildings, townlands

#### Assessment:

As with historic monuments information on historic buildings is difficult for the public to access without specialist knowledge and skills. The BHP area has lost much of its vernacular housing and farmsteads. The remaining traditional buildings therefore are even more important.

#### Proposed Key indicators:

- No. of buildings at risk.
- No. of traditional buildings apparent in the landscape.
- Presentation of aspects of the built heritage.

## Management of countryside recreation

### Baseline 17

#### Use of access and recreation sites and routes

- 17.1 Despite the wide-open spaces of the Hills, formal public access is limited in that much of the area being walked is in private ownership; therefore, there is a lack of definitive information as regards to the levels of use of particular routes. In terms of public access to the Hills, there is no formal system in place for monitoring the area with each Council undertaking its own access to the countryside activities.

#### Cave Hill:

- 17.2 In 2003, some 37500 people visited The Cave Hill Visitor Centre at Belfast Castle and 212,185 the Zoological Gardens, these being the Province's eighteenth and third most visited tourist attractions respectively. As a whole some 369,700 people were estimated to have visited Cave Hill Country Park in 2003. Usage of these sites is increasing slightly.

The Cave Hill Campaign Group conducted a one-day survey of the Park on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1999. Over the day they surveyed 576 visitors, with the majority being local. Most of the visitors that day were frequent visitors to the hill, two-thirds of them coming more than once a week.

#### Belfast Hills Walk:

- 17.3 The Belfast Hills walk was organised by Bryson House and Belfast Hills Committee to provide a recreational event and to draw attention to the need to care for the Belfast Hills. This was a one-day annual walking event carried out with permission from landowners over Collin, Black Mountain, Wolf Hill, Squires Hill and Cave Hill.

| DATE                      | NUMBER OF PEOPLE |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| 26 <sup>th</sup> May 1996 | 670              |
| 25 <sup>th</sup> May 1997 | 760              |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> May 1998 | 1083             |
| 30 <sup>th</sup> May 1999 | 824              |
| 28 <sup>th</sup> May 2000 | 517              |

- 17.4 There was some criticism that 1000 people at a time onto the Hills is not environmentally friendly and that smaller scale walks should be organised and the annual walk was discontinued.
- 17.5 Bryson House also organised a number of other walks and events with the following participation

|                        | <u>1998</u> | <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Carnmoney Hill Walk    | 32          | 52          | 40          |
| Slievenacloy ASSI Walk | 8           | 5           | 24          |

Cave Hill Walk 18 9 50

### Colin Glen Forest Park

17.6 In addition, Colin Glen Forest Park centre receives over 8000 school visitors on educational visits each year, with an estimated overall number of visitors at 205,241 in 2003.

#### Baseline 17 - Use of access sites and routes

##### Assessment:

There is relatively little information about the usage of sites and pathways in the Belfast hills area and this should be an important area of effort for the Partnership. Visitor surveys, visitor attitudes surveys, and recreational user surveys will all be important in managing recreational use.

A more detailed assessment of facilities for access and recreation is required.

##### Proposed Key indicators:

No. of visitors at key recreation sites.

Attitudes of visitors to the countryside and the recreational provision.

No. of incidents of nuisance recreation.

#### Baseline 18

##### Arrangements for management, maintenance, inspection. Staff deployed.

- 18.1 Typical maintenance works listed by land managers in the BHP area include:
- Replacement of signs and marker posts
  - Vegetation control and grass cutting in spring/summer
  - Lanes cleared of leaves in autumn in urban areas
  - Fencing repaired when necessary
  - Inspections carried out
  - PROW maintained where possible (landowners refusing access permission in a number of sites including the Belfast Hills)
  - Fencing repaired when necessary
- 18.2 Site management arrangements are as follows:

##### Cave Hill

The Hill is popular with walkers and joggers. There are three way marked trails, which range from short easy strolls to challenging 5-mile treks over the summit. There are five access points - Hightown Road, Carrs Glen, Upper Cave hill Road, Belfast Castle and Hazelwood. Whilst litter collection, path maintenance/repairs, woodland management and grazing etc occur on an *ad hoc* or reactive basis, there appears to be no written policy or standards of maintenance for the work that takes place. Grass cutting, upkeep of shrubs, herbaceous areas etc are done on a weekly basis. With regards to the ranger service, on average the wardens spend 1-2 hours a day in the Park.

Belfast City Council is preparing a management plan for the Country Park.

### **Throne Wood:**

The Bryson House Projects Unit carries out maintenance of Throne Wood consisting of litter collection, path maintenance, boundary checks, clearance of noxious weeds etc. Work is carried out in partnership with the Woodland Trust and other bodies.

### **Slievenacloy ASSI:**

This area has a dedicated member of staff with additional work carried out by other Ulster Wildlife Trust staff. Extensive new fencing and improved path work has been undertaken. The UWT is considering what to do with a number of former dwellings and farm buildings on the property.

### **Divis Mountain:**

Divis has been acquired by the National Trust from the Ministry of Defence. The Trust plans to transform the 1,600 acres into a major conservation and upland-walking facility, including a circular path with a three-hour trek, which should be open to the public in 2005.

Plans for Divis include habitat restoration plans and to raise the quality of upland heath habitat to that consistent with an ASSI.

Dedicated staff have been appointed to prepare the site for visitors in 2005 including making safe Divis Lodge and its outbuildings and removing large dumps of waste materials including tyres.

### **Black Mountain**

The Black Mountain is covered by approx 1.5km of unofficial access routes, and only one access point. The Black Mountain Environmental Group have produced a Preservation and Development Plan known as the Saffron Project, which advocates opening the traditional access point onto the mountain via the Mountain Loanen at Upper Whiterock Road and the reconstruction of the Old Highway route. Divis is then within short walking distance through an unofficial route.

### **Carnmoney Hill**

This area is being transformed by The Woodland Trust which manages Rathfern Wood, a community woodland, footpaths and ponds on a 25 acre site. The site has been leased to the Woodland Trust with the help of the Millennium Commission and Newtownabbey Borough Council. The Trust has now exercised an option to lease a further 136 acres of grassland, wetland and woodland and will plant a further 50,000 trees to link and buffer the existing fragments of ancient woodland which have survived on the hill. Paths have been improved by either gravel or forest bark chippings to create a good walking surface throughout the fields and woods. Some paths have been created by mowing a 2m wide band through the grassland areas.

### **Colin Glen:**

Colin Glen is one of the largest parks in Belfast and provides open space in an area of high-density housing and is used for both passive and active recreation. Its facilities include over 4000m of path, two wildlife ponds, comprehensive woodland, 1.5 miles of river and 60 acres of reclaimed industrial land. The Trust, a cross community charity, provides a workforce of staff rangers, volunteers and trainees. The workforce undertake tasks including the removal of invasive species of trees and plants from the forest park, tree thinning and planting of native Irish species. Work is also conducted on the maintenance of pathways, including

trimming back encroaching grass and brambles and the construction of vehicle access barriers.

One of the core functions of the Colin Glen Trust is environmental education

### **Belfast Hills Watch**

The Belfast Hills Watch is a scheme devised and carried out by Bryson House which provided a coordinator and used volunteers to identify fly tipping and illegal waste activity in the Belfast Hills. The Hills Watch has been successful in highlighting waste management issues, in increasing vigilance from Councils and EHS and in the clearing up of a large number of fly tipping sites (see paragraph 22.1 for a list of over 50 monitored fly tipping sites).

The programme is developing a fire watch initiative in partnership with landowners and the emergency services to ensure that summer fires on the hills are dealt with speedily.

A further programme runs an environmental action team providing training opportunities for the long term unemployed. It carries out conservation work on the hills - tree planting, woodland maintenance, fencing, and general clean up, and also engages closely with urban fringe communities playing a significant role in encouraging their participation in the "Belfast in Bloom" campaign.

Some vital statistics of the Belfast hills Watch programme are:

- On average 2500 volunteer hours per year - (1200 Hills Watch & 1300 practical)
- 56 dumping sites monitored.
- 32 illegal dumping attempts successfully stopped.
- 45 New Deal trainees taken on per year.
- 5,000 window boxes, flower tubs & hanging baskets; 10,000 trees, 38 community groups, 17 clean-ups, 4 hill surveys, 4 managed community woodlands, and 9 environmental improvement schemes undertaken.

### **Glenside Woodland**

Glenside Woodland is owned and was established by RMC quarries under the Community Woodland Grant Scheme. The site is accessible to the public and has been managed since 1999 by Bryson House. Management activity includes the development of a site management plan, tree planting, weed control, path maintenance and boundary maintenance. The site also has recreational and education programmes.

### **Council Countryside Officers**

The four Councils in the Belfast Hills area have appointed countryside officers to deal with access and recreation issues and developments and to provide a source of expertise in this regard between councils. Staff development for countryside officers is provided through EHS and the Belfast Hills partnership provides a liaison point where work programmes cross boundaries. Countryside officers are the development mechanism for the assertion of public rights of way; the development of new routes; and for the sections of long distance walks that pass through the areas.

### **EHS monitoring of habitat and of waste management activity.**

Considerable statutory monitoring activity takes place within the Belfast Hills by EHS. This activity is in the following work areas:

Surface water quality monitoring

Ground water quality monitoring  
Conservation monitoring - state of ASSI and key species  
Waste management monitoring

### Baseline 18 - management and monitoring

#### Assessment:

Monitoring and management of the BHP area is a key activity currently undertaken separately by each land manager. There is potential for a combination of resources on a number of management fronts including training, volunteering, and monitoring. A **State of the Belfast Hills** report could be an annual output of a coordinated management and monitoring process. At present farmers and other landowners have gained a contact point to discuss issues of unwelcome or nuisance recreation but there is no capacity to provide an effective recreational monitoring and wardening service.

#### Proposed Key indicators:

No. of sites with active management.  
No. of staff deployed in countryside management.  
Extent to which results of monitoring are available on a Belfast Hills basis.  
Effectiveness of monitoring activity.  
Public awareness of the state of the Belfast Hills.

### Baseline 19

#### Access to the Countryside - Issues

- 19.1 A number of issues arise in relation to countryside access in the Belfast Hills area:
- The process of consultation on the Regional Park some years ago and subsequent recommendations has confirmed that farmers are generally unwilling to allow access to their lands in the BHP area. The reasons include management of diseases like Brucellosis, the difficulty of managing current, unwelcome incursions on to the land, and the number of attacks on stock, property and people which make farmers need to know who is on their lands.
  - There has been no strategic approach between the four Councils towards access development and management within the Belfast Hills. All other upland areas in Northern Ireland now have countryside recreation strategies developed between all of the agencies involved.
  - There is currently no walking guide or access information materials to guide people to where they are welcome in the hills.
  - There are nuisance issues in relation to some activities which are taking place where they are unwelcome. These include mountain biking in Cave Hill Country Park, despite prominent notices; and motor bike use within a number of the public parks and upland areas.
  - There are no public rights of way signed in the Belfast Hills area.
  - Public access is associated by many landowners with vandalism and fire setting. There is a need to establish the *bona fides* of normal recreational

users with farmers and landowners and to develop monitored codes of practice for recreational use of lands in the Belfast Hills.

- Access to the countryside with dogs is also an issue with landowners and user codes need to address this.

### Baseline 19 - Access to the Countryside Issues

#### Assessment:

The Belfast Hills needs a strategic approach to access to the countryside which addresses the concerns of landowners and prioritises the solution of current issues before moving on the develop new agreed access. This process should be fully inclusive and involve extensive engagement with farmers and landowners.

#### Proposed Key indicators:

Strategic access and recreation plan on a Belfast Hills basis

Respected arrangements and codes for managing countryside access issues

Belfast Hills Partnership is known as an effective contact point for landowners with access problems.

## Landfill Activity

### Baseline 20

#### No. of legal landfill sites in core area

20.1 There are 16 licensed landfill sites within the Belfast Hills Partnership area. Details are as follows

| Business Name                | Site Address   | Use of Site | Type of waste licensed to accept  | Amount of waste allowed at each site <sup>1</sup>    |
|------------------------------|--|-------------|---|--|
| Eastwood Ltd                 | Crosshill Quarry, Cross Hill Road, Crumlin               | Landfill    | Inert, uncontaminated construction waste                                | 200,000 tonnes/year or not more than 2000 tonnes/day |
| Whitemountain Quarries Ltd   | Upper Springfield Road, Belfast                          | Landfill    | Inert, non-putrescible waste  | 300 tonnes/day until final contours achieved.        |
| Anderson Haulage Ltd         | Wolfhill, Ligoniel, Belfast                              | Landfill    | Solid inert waste   | 2 trucks/day until final contours achieved.          |
| Mr Bernard O'Neill           | 39 GROGANSTOWN ROAD, BELFAST                             | Landfill    | Inert construction waste and metal                                      | Maximum 1000 tonnes/day 240,000 tonnes/year          |
| John McQuillan Contracts Ltd | Rumbling Hole Quarry, Glenside Road, Dunmurry            | Landfill    | Uncontaminated inert construction waste                                 | Not stated   |
| Rosbotham Demolition Ltd     | 21 Mullaghglass Road, Sales Corner, Lisburn              | Landfill    | Topsoil, sub-soil, concrete, stones and road metal                      | 500 tonnes/day<br>50,000 tonnes/year                 |
| RMC Quarries (Ulster) Ltd    | Aughrim Quarry, Flowbog Road, Lisburn                    | Landfill    | Topsoil, sub-soil, concrete, stones, inert waste wood, paper and glass. | 500 tonnes/day<br>50,000 tonnes/year                 |
| Quarry Landfill Services     | 141 Colinglen Road, Dunmurry, Belfast                    | Landfill    | Topsoil, sub-soil, concrete, stones, inert waste wood, paper and glass. | Not stated   |
| Colinwell Concrete Ltd       | 37, Colinglen Road, Dunmurry, Belfast                    | Landfill    | Topsoil, sub-soil, concrete, stones, inert waste wood, paper and glass. | 200 tonnes/day<br>70,000 tonnes/year                 |
| Eastwood Ltd                 | Boomers Hill, Aughrim Hill, Mullaghglass Road, Lisburn   | Landfill    | Topsoil, subsoil, concrete, stone, clay, sand, road metal.              | 500 tonnes/day<br>100,000 tonnes/year                |
| John McQuillan Ltd           | Hannahstown Road, Dunmurry, Belfast                      | Landfill    | Construction and Demolition waste, clay and quarry spoil                | Not stated   |
| John McQuillan Ltd           | Glenside Landfill Site, Glenside Road, Dunmurry, Belfast | Landfill    | Construction and Demolition waste, clay and quarry spoil.               | Not stated   |
| Mr Samuel Cunningham         | 51 Glenside Road, Dunmurry, Belfast                      | Landfill    | Topsoil, subsoil, brick, concrete, stone, clay, clinker                 | 500 tonnes/day<br>100,000 tonnes/year                |

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| Business Name        | Site Address                       | Use of Site | Type of waste licensed to accept | Amount of waste allowed at each site <sup>1</sup> |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|---|
|                      |                                    |             | ash and road metal.              |   |
| Hightown Quarry      | Hightown Road                      | Landfill    | Inert waste                      | 1800 tonnes/day                                   |
| D.R. Martin & Son    | Ballyduff Quarry, Carnmoney Hill   | Landfill    | Inert                            | 1000 tonnes/day                                   |
| Anderson Haulage Ltd | Upper Hightown Road                | Landfill    | Inert                            | 1000 tonnes/day                                   |
| MR B.O'NEILL         | Sinclairs Quarry, Groganstown Road | Landfill    | Inert/household                  | 1500 tonnes/day                                   |

- 20.2 It should be noted that the majority of waste currently received in the Hills is construction and demolition waste (although new planning permissions include municipal waste) for which NI has very low recycling rates compared to other countries. The majority of the waste currently received could be recycled if market conditions made it financially viable. A programme of reduction of construction waste being brought to landfill sites in the Hills could feasibly be attempted.
- 20.3 It is estimated that just under one third of all landfill sites in Northern Ireland lie within the 4400 hectares of the Belfast Hills. This is compared with just 5 sites in the Greater Dublin area.
- 20.4 Whilst these sites are licensed and monitored there is some concern amongst communities that planning conditions are not always adhered to. These include use of wheel washes, types of waste received, operating hours, screening, vermin control etc.
- 20.5 Employment in landfill sites in the Belfast Hills was estimated as circa 120 in 2002 by the Belfast Hills Waste Management Group. This number may be of the order of 200 in 2005.
- 20.6 A further set of three landfill sites in the hills was approved in early 2005 as follows. These have **introduced household waste** into the hills as a licensed activity, a major change.

| Business Name            | Site Address  | Use of Site | Type of waste licensed to accept   | Amount of waste allowed at each site  |
|--------------------------|---|-------------|--|---|
| Whitemountain Quarries   | Mullaghglass Quarry, 26 Mullaghglass Road, Castlerobin, Lisburn | Landfill    | Household waste, Commercial and Industrial waste   | 200,000 tonnes per year (147,000 tonnes household and 53,000 tonnes per year commercial and industrial waste).    |
| Readymix (NI) Ltd        | Aughrim Quarry, Ballycollin Road, Lisburn                       | Landfill    | Household, commercial and industrial, construction and demolition and civic amenity sites waste. | 250,000 tonnes per year.  |
| Biffa Waste Services Ltd | Cottonmount Quarry, Mallusk Road, Belfast                       | Landfill    | Household, commercial and industrial waste.  | 400,000 tonnes per year (325,000 tonnes household waste and up to 75,000 tonnes commercial and industrial waste). |

## Baseline 20 - Licensed Landfill Sites

### Assessment:

The Belfast Hills carries an undue burden of legal landfill sites, compared to any other area of Northern Ireland (and probably elsewhere) due to the existence of former quarry holes and its proximity to Belfast. The number of landfill sites is unprecedented within a scenic area. There is no oversight or consideration of the cumulative impact of landfill sites in the area.

Until recently legal landfill in the hills was restricted almost entirely to inert wastes- e.g. construction and demolition waste which is relatively stable and which presents few end of life restoration difficulties. The new approvals will however present much more longstanding issues of management and monitoring.

Added to these issues is the continuing problem of illegal landfill sites in the Hills.

### Proposed Key indicators:

No. of landfill sites - legal/illegal.

Annual tonnage of landfill received by the hills.

Compliance with planning and license conditions.

Groundwater quality.

## Baseline 21

### Estimated no. of illegal sites

- 21.1 There are an estimated 4 permanent illegal landfill sites in the Belfast Hills Partnership area (2002 figures to be updated by the Waste SEA study) and an unknown number of opportunistic sites on a less permanent basis.
- 21.2 These are believed to be in Ballyutoag, on Divis Rd and on the Upper Crumlin Rd. Together, these sites are estimated<sup>1</sup> to receive 3267 tonnes/day and employ 24 people.
- 21.3 Since 2003 EHS has been more vigilant in the hills and a number of illegal waste activities have been discontinued.

## Baseline 21 - No. of Illegal Landfill sites

### Assessment:

The number of permanent illegal landfill sites should decrease with additional vigilance from EHS.

### Proposed Key indicators:

No. of permanent illegal landfill sites - should become a zero figure.

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<sup>1</sup> Derived from discussions with legal operators.

**Baseline 22**

**Fly tipping sites**

22.1 Fly tipping has been a serious issue in the Belfast Hills for years. Bryson House's Belfast Hills Watch Scheme which included both paid staff and volunteers reported 52 regularly monitored fly tipping sites in the hills in 2002.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Slievenacloy                             | 18. Sale's Corner.                              | 35. Opposite 32 Upper Springfield Road        |
| 2. Slievenacloy/Ballycollin                 | 19. Rusheyhill/Wheeler's Road                   | 36. Army Road Divis                           |
| 3. Collin Glen Road                         | 20. Hamillis Bottom lower gate<br>Glenside Road | 37. ITV Mast                                  |
| 4. Groganstown Quarry                       | 21. Collin House                                | 38. Hannahstown Hill                          |
| 5. Corner of<br>Barnfield/Mullaghglass Road | 22. Water Services gate<br>Brianswell Road      | 39. Off Divis Road<br>(North Tornaroy Bridge) |
| 6. Flowbog Road                             | 23. Collinwell Road                             | 40. Ballyutoag Road                           |
| 7. Entrance to quarry at<br>Glenside Road   | 24. Sycamore Road                               | 41. Collinward                                |
| 8. Hamillis Bottom Laneway                  | 25. Upper Crumlin Road                          | 42. Rockview Lane                             |
| 9. Glenside Road                            | 26. Horseshoe Bend                              | 43. Ballyduff Brae                            |
| 10. Upper Springfield Road<br>(Glenside)    | 27. Rockwood Upper<br>Hightown Road             | 44. Three Mile Water Valley                   |
| 11. Tornagrough Road                        | 28. Upper Hightown Road                         | 45. Ballyhill Road                            |
| 12. Tullyrusk Road                          | 29. Glencairn Road                              | 46. Blackburn, Lylehill Road                  |
| 13. Budore Road                             | 30. Ballygomartin Road                          | 47. McIlwhains                                |
| 14. Near Rusheyhill River                   | 31. Old Ballygomartin Road                      | 48. Quarry near Collin Mtn.                   |
| 15. Ballymacaward Road                      | 32. Top Mountain Loney                          | 49. Black Mountain<br>(Glencairn)             |
| 16. Ballymacaward Road                      | 33. Mountain Loney                              | 50. Tornaroy                                  |
| 17. Glenside Hairpin Bend                   | 34. Old Highway at Top of<br>Mountain Loney     | 51. Glencairn<br>(Lyndhurst)                  |
|   |   | 52. Legoniel Bus Terminus                     |

22.2 It is estimated that 65% of these sites are now inactive as a result of increased vigilance, early removal of waste dumped, greater pressure on responsible bodies etc. The problem persists however and is exacerbated by the costs of disposing of waste legally, which creates a market for illegal carriers to dispose of their loads in quiet parts of the countryside. Disposal of tyres illegally within the hills is a current issue with hotspots at Ballycollin and Divis.

**Baseline 22 - Fly tipping sites**

**Assessment:**

Continued vigilance is required to solve both illegal waste and fly tipping issues in the Belfast Hills.

**Proposed Key indicators:**

No. of fly tipping sites - should become a zero figure.

## Baseline 23

### Arc 21 strategy in relation to the area

- 23.1 The Eastern Region Waste Management Group (ERWWMG) was established incorporating 11 Councils from the eastern part of Northern Ireland. These Councils have formed a partnership, identified as arc21, in response to the NI Waste Management Strategy. The objective of the partnership is to develop a long-term plan for the management of all controlled wastes produced within the Eastern Region, and to ensure that all waste facility and capacity issues are catered for in the statutory Waste Management Plan.
- 23.2 The Eastern Region currently relies primarily on landfill for managing its wastes. Recycling rates are low, overall around 5% for municipal waste, with approximately 26% of commercial and industrial waste is recorded as being recycled. Municipal waste disposed of to landfill sites in the Eastern Region is estimated at 510000 tonnes in the base year 1999/2000. The remaining capacity at council operated landfill sites within the Eastern Region is limited and estimated at 2 million tonnes. This represents a total of 4 years disposal capacity for municipal waste.
- 23.3 At present significant quantities of waste are produced in the Eastern Region by households and industry. Controlled wastes disposed of in the Eastern Region amount to approximately 800,000 tonnes every year, of which more than 500,000 tonnes is municipal waste. Over 90% of waste is disposed of at landfill sites in the Eastern Region. The quantity of waste is further predicted to increase substantially over the next 20 years, as demonstrated earlier in this document. European and national policy and legislation are designed to significantly reduce the dependence on landfill as the main method of disposing of waste. Targets have been set in the NI Waste Management Strategy for the recycling and recovery of household and other wastes, and these have been adopted in the aims of the arc21 Sub-regional Municipal Waste Strategy produced for the Eastern Region in January 2001.
- 23.3 Achievement of the targets will require a step change in the way waste is managed within the Eastern Region. In the short term it will require a major push to increase recycling and composting initiatives. However it is agreed that in the medium to longer term it will require a move towards more effective waste minimisation and treatment processes that recover value from waste. The planning of waste management services and the mix of recovery, treatment and disposal facilities required to achieve these targets is therefore a key element of the Plan.
- 23.4 The principal objectives of the Plan are therefore to identify the options for managing waste within the Eastern Region which:
- Meet the statutory obligations of European Directives, national and Northern Ireland legislation and the NI Waste Management Strategy over the plan period.
  - Increase the re-use, recycling and composting of waste and reduce the quantity of waste disposal to landfill consistent with sustainable waste management.
  - Assess the opportunities for integrated waste management options to contribute to a reduction in waste requiring disposal.
  - Encourage self-sufficiency in waste management facilities for the Eastern Region and disposal of waste in accordance with the proximity principle.

- Review existing waste treatment and disposal sites with the capacity to accommodate future waste management needs.
- Identify an adequate integrated network of regional facilities in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, BPEO and Best Available Techniques.
- Set criteria and guidelines for the development of facilities to ensure a high level of environmental protection, and minimise the risks to the environment, human health and amenity.
- Ensure future waste management arrangements are developed and implemented in accordance with the principles of Best Value and Community Planning.
- Ensure that social needs, human rights and Equality Scheme requirements can be met in the implementation of the proposals.
- Improve options for long-term benefits and achieve economies of scale in order to reduce costs.

23.5 The ARC 21 strategy was developed during the early stages of BHP. BHP was in its shadow stage and did not participate in the consultations.

### Baseline 23 - Arc 21 strategy

#### Assessment:

Where the ARC 21 strategy is weak is on the spatial distribution of waste sites - the proximity principle automatically puts pressure on sensitive areas close to Belfast yet the plan undertakes no strategic assessment of its impacts on the environment.

BHP needs to engage with the ARC 21 planning group to ensure that the next planning phase considers the sensitivity of parts of the region and the spatial distribution of sites.

The Belfast Hills Partnership has not developed the relationships it needs in terms of waste management planning in the Hills.

#### Proposed Key indicators:

Belfast Hills Partnership's level of engagement in strategic planning for waste in the area.

## Contributing to the economic regeneration of the Hills communities

### Baseline 24

#### Economic status and relative deprivation of communities in or bordering on the Belfast Hills

24.1 The Belfast Hills Partnership Operational Area covers all or part of the following 15 electoral wards:

|                       |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Bellevue,             | Ballymacoss,  |
| Cave Hill,            | Collin Glen,  |
| Glen Road,            | Derryaghy,    |
| Glencairn,            | Cloughfern,   |
| Glencolin,            | Collinbridge, |
| Highfield,            | Valley,       |
| Legoniel,             | Clady         |
| Upper<br>Springfield, |               |

24.2 Levels of economic and social well being within these wards vary. Using the Noble indices an overall multiple deprivation measure has been derived for all wards in Northern Ireland with a score of 1-566 reflecting the relative levels of deprivation of all wards in Northern Ireland. A score of 1 indicated that the ward is the most deprived across an average of all measures in Northern Ireland whilst a score of 566 reflects the least deprivation. Individual wards may however experience individual aspects of deprivation higher than those with a lower overall ranking.

| Ward Name         | LGD Name     | Rank of Multiple Deprivation Measure |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Upper Springfield | Belfast      | 11                                   |
| Glencairn         | Belfast      | 35                                   |
| Collin Glen       | Lisburn      | 38                                   |
| Glencolin         | Belfast      | 48                                   |
| Glen Road         | Belfast      | 71                                   |
| Highfield         | Belfast      | 76                                   |
| Legoniel          | Belfast      | 86                                   |
| Valley            | Newtownabbey | 136                                  |
| Bellevue          | Belfast      | 176                                  |
| Derryaghy         | Lisburn      | 270                                  |

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|              |              |     |
|--------------|--------------|-----|
| Cloughfern   | Newtownabbey | 317 |
| Ballymacoss  | Lisburn      | 354 |
| Cavehill     | Belfast      | 496 |
| Clady        | Antrim       | 514 |
| Collinbridge | Newtownabbey | 532 |

Source NISRA 2001

- 24.3 The MDM was constructed by combining seven domain scores, using the following weights:
1. Income (25%)
  2. Employment (25%)
  3. Health Deprivation and Disability (15%)
  4. Education, Skills and Training (15%)
  5. Geographical Access to Services (10%)
  6. Social Environment (5%)
  7. Housing Stress (5%)
- 24.4 A full table detailing individual domain scores can be found in Appendix II of this report.
- 24.5 The detailed socio- economic status of the electoral wards of which all or part is included in the Belfast Hills operational area can be extracted from the 2001 census, with data as follows:

| Council                   | Ward Data                       | Ward map |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Belfast City Council Area | <b>Legoniel</b>                 |          |
|                           | Population:                     | 5528     |
|                           | Households                      | 2253     |
|                           | Catholic community background   | 38%      |
|                           | Protestant community background | 59%      |
|                           | Owner occupied housing          | 59%      |
|                           | Limiting long term illness      | 27%      |
|                           | Access to car ( households)     | 56%      |
|                           | Degree level qualifications     | 10%      |
|                           | 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 40%      |
| Unemployed                | 5%                              |          |
| Belfast                   | <b>Glencolin</b>                |          |
|                           | Population:                     | 7129     |
|                           | Households                      | 2380     |
|                           | Catholic community background   | 98%      |
|                           | Protestant community background | 1%       |
|                           | Owner occupied housing          | 56%      |
|                           | Limiting long term illness      | 24%      |
|                           | Access to car ( households)     | 58%      |
|                           | Degree level qualifications     | 9%       |
|                           | 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 47%      |
| Unemployed                | 9%                              |          |

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|                                 |  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------|------|------------|------|-------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|----------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|------------|-----|--|
|                                 | <b>Glen Road</b> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Population:</td><td>5872</td></tr> <tr><td>Households</td><td>2089</td></tr> <tr><td>Catholic community background</td><td>97%</td></tr> <tr><td>Protestant community background</td><td>2%</td></tr> <tr><td>Owner occupied housing</td><td>61%</td></tr> <tr><td>Limiting long term illness</td><td>28%</td></tr> <tr><td>Access to car ( households)</td><td>52%</td></tr> <tr><td>Degree level qualifications</td><td>10%</td></tr> <tr><td>5 GCSE Grade C or above</td><td>60%</td></tr> <tr><td>Unemployed</td><td>8%</td></tr> </table>         | Population: | 5872 | Households | 2089 | Catholic community background | 97% | Protestant community background | 2%  | Owner occupied housing | 61% | Limiting long term illness | 28% | Access to car ( households) | 52% | Degree level qualifications | 10% | 5 GCSE Grade C or above | 60% | Unemployed | 8%  |  |
| Population:                     | 5872   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Households                      | 2089   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Catholic community background   | 97%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Protestant community background | 2%   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Owner occupied housing          | 61%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Limiting long term illness      | 28%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Access to car ( households)     | 52%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Degree level qualifications     | 10%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 60%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Unemployed                      | 8%   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
|                                 | <b>Upper Springfield</b> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Population:</td><td>5895</td></tr> <tr><td>Households</td><td>1835</td></tr> <tr><td>Catholic community background</td><td>97%</td></tr> <tr><td>Protestant community background</td><td>3%</td></tr> <tr><td>Owner occupied housing</td><td>44%</td></tr> <tr><td>Limiting long term illness</td><td>28%</td></tr> <tr><td>Access to car ( households)</td><td>44%</td></tr> <tr><td>Degree level qualifications</td><td>4%</td></tr> <tr><td>5 GCSE Grade C or above</td><td>27%</td></tr> <tr><td>Unemployed</td><td>10%</td></tr> </table> | Population: | 5895 | Households | 1835 | Catholic community background | 97% | Protestant community background | 3%  | Owner occupied housing | 44% | Limiting long term illness | 28% | Access to car ( households) | 44% | Degree level qualifications | 4%  | 5 GCSE Grade C or above | 27% | Unemployed | 10% |  |
| Population:                     | 5895   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Households                      | 1835   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Catholic community background   | 97%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Protestant community background | 3%   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Owner occupied housing          | 44%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Limiting long term illness      | 28%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Access to car ( households)     | 44%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Degree level qualifications     | 4%   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 27%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Unemployed                      | 10%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
|                                 | <b>Highfield</b> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Population:</td><td>5310</td></tr> <tr><td>Households</td><td>2107</td></tr> <tr><td>Catholic community background</td><td>4%</td></tr> <tr><td>Protestant community background</td><td>94%</td></tr> <tr><td>Owner occupied housing</td><td>60%</td></tr> <tr><td>Limiting long term illness</td><td>26%</td></tr> <tr><td>Access to car ( households)</td><td>59%</td></tr> <tr><td>Degree level qualifications</td><td>6%</td></tr> <tr><td>5 GCSE Grade C or above</td><td>35%</td></tr> <tr><td>Unemployed</td><td>5%</td></tr> </table>          | Population: | 5310 | Households | 2107 | Catholic community background | 4%  | Protestant community background | 94% | Owner occupied housing | 60% | Limiting long term illness | 26% | Access to car ( households) | 59% | Degree level qualifications | 6%  | 5 GCSE Grade C or above | 35% | Unemployed | 5%  |  |
| Population:                     | 5310   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Households                      | 2107   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Catholic community background   | 4%   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Protestant community background | 94%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Owner occupied housing          | 60%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Limiting long term illness      | 26%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Access to car ( households)     | 59%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Degree level qualifications     | 6%   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 35%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Unemployed                      | 5%   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Belfast                         | <b>Glencairn</b> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Population:</td><td>4026</td></tr> <tr><td>Households</td><td>1729</td></tr> <tr><td>Catholic community background</td><td>12%</td></tr> <tr><td>Protestant community background</td><td>85%</td></tr> <tr><td>Owner occupied housing</td><td>48%</td></tr> <tr><td>Limiting long term illness</td><td>32%</td></tr> <tr><td>Access to car ( households)</td><td>46%</td></tr> <tr><td>Degree level qualifications</td><td>4%</td></tr> <tr><td>5 GCSE Grade C or above</td><td>28%</td></tr> <tr><td>Unemployed</td><td>7%</td></tr> </table>         | Population: | 4026 | Households | 1729 | Catholic community background | 12% | Protestant community background | 85% | Owner occupied housing | 48% | Limiting long term illness | 32% | Access to car ( households) | 46% | Degree level qualifications | 4%  | 5 GCSE Grade C or above | 28% | Unemployed | 7%  |  |
| Population:                     | 4026   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Households                      | 1729   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Catholic community background   | 12%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Protestant community background | 85%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Owner occupied housing          | 48%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Limiting long term illness      | 32%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Access to car ( households)     | 46%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Degree level qualifications     | 4%   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 28%  |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |
| Unemployed                      | 7%   |             |      |            |      |                               |     |                                 |     |                        |     |                            |     |                             |     |                             |     |                         |     |            |     |  |

The Belfast Hills Baseline Study

|                |                                 |      |  |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------|--|
| <b>Belfast</b> | <b>Cavehill</b>                 |      |  |
|                | Population:                     | 5282 |  |
|                | Households                      | 1850 |  |
|                | Catholic community background   | 51%  |  |
|                | Protestant community background | 45%  |  |
|                | Owner occupied housing          | 94%  |  |
|                | Limiting long term illness      | 16%  |  |
|                | Access to car ( households)     | 88%  |  |
|                | Degree level qualifications     | 29%  |  |
|                | 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 83%  |  |
| Unemployed     | 2%                              |      |  |
| <b>Belfast</b> | <b>Bellevue</b>                 |      |  |
|                | Population:                     | 4952 |  |
|                | Households                      | 2010 |  |
|                | Catholic community background   | 61%  |  |
|                | Protestant community background | 35%  |  |
|                | Owner occupied housing          | 68%  |  |
|                | Limiting long term illness      | 22%  |  |
|                | Access to car ( households)     | 64%  |  |
|                | Degree level qualifications     | 15%  |  |
|                | 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 58%  |  |
| Unemployed     | 5%                              |      |  |

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|   |                                 |      |
|---|---------------------------------|------|
| Newtownabbey<br>Borough<br>Council Area | <b>Colinbridge</b>              |      |
|   | Population:                     | 3150 |
|   | Households                      | 1059 |
|   | Catholic community background   | 74%  |
|   | Protestant community background | 23%  |
|   | Owner occupied housing          | 95%  |
|   | Limiting long term illness      | 13%  |
|   | Access to car ( households)     | 90%  |
|   | Degree level qualifications     | 21%  |
|   | 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 80%  |
| Unemployed                              | 2%                              |      |
|   | <b>Valley</b>                   |      |
|   | Population:                     | 3107 |
|   | Households                      | 1393 |
|   | Catholic community background   | 52%  |
|   | Protestant community background | 45%  |
|   | Owner occupied housing          | 45%  |
|   | Limiting long term illness      | 28%  |
|   | Access to car (households)      | 55%  |
|   | Degree level qualifications     | 10%  |
|   | 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 31%  |
| Unemployed                              | 6%                              |      |
|   | <b>Cloughfern</b>               |      |
|   | Population:                     | 3052 |
|   | Households                      | 1169 |
|   | Catholic community background   | 6%   |
|   | Protestant community background | 89%  |
|   | Owner occupied housing          | 83%  |
|   | Limiting long term illness      | 19%  |
|   | Access to car (households)      | 77%  |
|   | Degree level qualifications     | 11%  |
|   | 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 45%  |
| Unemployed                              | 3%                              |      |

|  |                                 |      |
|--|---------------------------------|------|
| <b>Antrim<br/>Borough<br/>Council Area</b> | <b>Clady</b>                    |      |
|  | Population:                     | 2563 |
|  | Households                      | 860  |
|  | Catholic community background   | 25%  |
|  | Protestant community background | 72%  |
|  | Owner occupied housing          | 89%  |
|  | Limiting long term illness      | 14%  |
|  | Access to car ( households)     | 93%  |
|  | Degree level qualifications     | 18%  |
|  | 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 70%  |
| Unemployed                                 | 2%                              |      |

|                                      |                                 |      |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------|
| <b>Lisburn City<br/>Council Area</b> | <b>Glenavy</b>                  |      |
|                                      | Population:                     | 4305 |
|                                      | Households                      | 1380 |
|                                      | Catholic community background   | 55%  |
|                                      | Protestant community background | 43%  |
|                                      | Owner occupied housing          | 90%  |
|                                      | Limiting long term illness      | 14%  |
|                                      | Access to car ( households)     | 93%  |
|                                      | Degree level qualifications     | 19%  |
|                                      | 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 65%  |
| Unemployed                           | 2%                              |      |

|            |                                 |      |
|------------|---------------------------------|------|
|            | <b>Collin Glen</b>              |      |
|            | Population:                     | 6258 |
|            | Households                      | 1777 |
|            | Catholic community background   | 96%  |
|            | Protestant community background | 3%   |
|            | Owner occupied housing          | 21%  |
|            | Limiting long term illness      | 22%  |
|            | Access to car ( households)     | 48%  |
|            | Degree level qualifications     | 5%   |
|            | 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 39%  |
| Unemployed | 10%                             |      |

| <b>Ballymacoss</b>              |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Population:                     | 5379 |
| Households                      | 2073 |
| Catholic community background   | 9%   |
| Protestant community background | 85%  |
| Owner occupied housing          | 69%  |
| Limiting long term illness      | 17%  |
| Access to car ( households)     | 81%  |
| Degree level qualifications     | 14%  |
| 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 37%  |
| Unemployed                      | 2%   |

| <b>Derryaghy</b>                |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Population:                     | 6258 |
| Households                      | 1777 |
| Catholic community background   | 96%  |
| Protestant community background | 3%   |
| Owner occupied housing          | 21%  |
| Limiting long term illness      | 22%  |
| Access to car ( households)     | 48%  |
| Degree level qualifications     | 5%   |
| 5 GCSE Grade C or above         | 39%  |
| Unemployed                      | 10%  |

24.6 The most striking aspects of the socio-economic conditions of the Belfast Hills Partnership area are:

1. The enormous differences between communities quite close to each other in terms of deprivation, religious affiliation, education and employment
2. The existence of wards which are almost single identity
3. The low levels of household access to cars and vans for personal transport.

#### **Baseline 24 - socio economic status**

##### **Assessment:**

The Belfast Hills Partnership's work will involve some communities where there are high levels of deprivation and needs to take this into account in the way that it works with communities and it what it delivers to them. Economic regeneration, public transport access to recreation and the development of training and job opportunities needs to be part of the mix.

An interesting social dimension would be to survey the community's perceptions of countryside.

### Proposed Key indicators:

Level of deprivation of Belfast Hills Communities.

## Baseline 25

### Levels of tourism and visitor activity in the hills

#### Context

25.1 The Belfast Hills Area covers four separate Council areas of Antrim, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and Belfast all of which have their own statutory responsibilities for developing tourism product and promoting the area. The Belfast City Council area is promoted by the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, which is a regional marketing organisation and product development tool, whilst Lisburn, Newtownabbey and Antrim have separate arrangements for tourism marketing. Newtownabbey Borough Council is within the Causeway Coast and Glens Ltd regional tourism marketing organisation and is included in the Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Masterplan.

The Belfast Hills area lies almost entirely within the Belfast Metropolitan area plan boundary and as such has been subject to the development of a tourism plan by external consultants to advise the statutory plan. This separate tourism plan has been published as a technical appendix to the draft BMAP.

25.2 The plan makes a strategic recommendation that the:

*Rural hinterland of the Belfast Hills will be sensitively developed as an integral element of the visitor experience within BMA. Specific initiatives will encourage connectivity between the urban area and its rural surroundings.*

25.3 Within the strategy it is expected to see at least a 34% increase in tourist visits by 2015 (minimum growth scenario of 2% increase in visits per annum).

25.4 The Belfast Hills area contains the following visitor attractions

1. Cave Hill Country Park - 369700 visitor 2003 (less than 1% up on 2002)
2. Belfast City Zoological Gdns 212,185 visitors 2003 (up 1% on 2002)
3. Colin Glen Forest Park 205,241 visitors 2003 (up 13% on 2002)
4. Cavehill Visitor Centre 37500 up 4%

25.5 The total number of visitors to counted sites in the area is an estimated to be 824,626.

### Baseline 25 - tourism and visitor figures

#### Assessment:

The tourism and visitor figures available for the Belfast Hills area bear no particular relation to the area as a whole and are weak indicators of activity at present. However, they represent a significant opportunity to inform people of a wider range of sites and to present a message about the value of the Belfast Hills.

A Belfast Hills Users Survey which includes both estimates of numbers and a survey of attitudes would help the BHP to develop its planning for tourism and visitors and for visitor management.

### Proposed Key indicators:

No. of visitors.

Attitude of visitors to key dimensions of the Hills and their opportunities.

### Baseline 26

#### No. of tourism providers in the Belfast Hills

26.1 There are 25 tourist accommodation beds in hotels and B&Bs within or close to the boundary of the Belfast Hills Partnership Area.

#### Bed and Breakfast Establishments

26.2 There are three B&B and guesthouse establishments in or close to the BHP area.

1. Hillview Farm Guesthouse in Stoneyford with 5 rooms (outside boundary)
2. Ballycolin Lodge B&B with 3 rooms
3. Sliabh Cuilin Country House B&B with 3 rooms

#### Hotels and restaurants

26.3 There is one hotel, the Ballymac Inn at Stoneyford, just outside the BHP boundary. The hotel has conference facilities, restaurant and 14 bedrooms. The Ballymac uses Hillview Farm as an annexe with larger groups.

#### Sites with visitor facilities and orientation.

26.4 Within the Belfast Hills Partnership area there are two sites with permanent information and interpretation about aspects of the Belfast Hills Area.

- Belfast Castle where there is a heritage centre interpreting the Castle, Demesne, its history and Cave Hill Country Park.
- Colin Glen Forest Park - where there is a visitor centre offering static displays, audio visual presentations and education programmes about the development of the park, its wildlife and habitats.

26.5 Walks and talks are available by special arrangement at Divis Mountain ( National Trust) and at the Slievenacloy ASSI ( Ulster Wildlife Trust), at Cave Hill Country Park and at Black Mountain Quarry.

26.6 The Belfast Hills Partnership has begun a walks and talks programme on aspects of the Belfast Hills. This is advertised on its website [www.belfasthills.org](http://www.belfasthills.org)

#### Tourist Information

26.7 There are no dedicated tourist information materials on the Belfast Hills area as a whole. Each local authority advertises attractions and services in its own area with the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau providing information on the wider metropolitan area. The Belfast Hills are currently not promoted as an area for visitors though this will change when Divis is opened to the public in 2005.

### Baseline 26 - Tourism and visitor service providers

#### Assessment:

The Belfast Hills has only a light scattering of tourism providers and visitor attractions and as such cannot be considered to be a tourism area. However it sits on the fringe of Belfast and Lisburn and can play a role in city breaks. The viewpoint and recreational facilities at Divis will make a significant difference to

the ability to present the Belfast Hills as a tourism area but this needs to be accompanied by a much more robust approach to environmental management and the provisions of basic services such as walking routes, car parks more viewpoints and information. If improved management is not provided the Belfast Hills will disappoint or even disgust visitors.

**Proposed Key indicators:**

No. of tourism providers and indicators of the throughput to their services.  
Visitor attitudes to the area and its services.

**Baseline 27**

**Visitor attitudes to the Belfast Hills**

- 27.1 Most upland areas with tourism potential have annual or regular visitor surveys which gather a variety of information about length of visit, accommodation used, activities taken, response to aspects of the area etc. To date no survey work of this kind has been available to the Partnership, though Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) does run regular surveys of visitors to Belfast.
- 27.2 Belfast Hills Partnership should initiate a survey of visitors to countryside sites such as Cave Hill Country Park, Carnmoney Hill, Divis, Slievenacloy, and the upper parts of Collin Glen to develop a baseline of the activities attitudes and place of residence of visitors. Volunteers could undertake this survey.
- 27.3 Questions of relevance could also be inserted into the annual BVCB surveys where these are carried out in places like Belfast Castle and Collin Glen. A question to city visitors on the importance to their visit of the Belfast Hills 'backdrop' should also be inserted.

**Baseline 27 - Visitor attitudes to the Belfast Hills**

**Assessment:**

There is no combined data on visitor attitudes to the Belfast Hills.

**Proposed Key indicators:**

No. of visitors satisfied with aspects of the Belfast Hills, e.g. access arrangements, information, management etc.  
Level of appreciation of the Belfast Hills amongst general city visitors.

## Summary

This study sets out a baseline picture for most aspects of the Belfast Hills that the Belfast Hills Partnership Trust would like to address within its programmes and activities.

It identifies key indicators against which the partnership may monitor its effectiveness and progress.

A summary of the condition of important baseline measures and proposals for key indicators recommended in the report is as follows:

| No   | Baseline measure                                      | Assessment   | Key indicators  |
|--|---|--|---|
| <b><i>Quality of life for communities in the Belfast Hills</i></b> |   |  |   |
| 1  | Extent of accessible green space                      | Well served for open space, but not for all communities. There are few accessible sites within the uplands or the rural parts of the area where there are increasing populations.  | Km <sup>2</sup> of accessible open space.   |
| 2  | Extent of linear access routes for walking            | Fringe area on the city sides of the hills is well served for linear walks in amenity park, woodland, and parkland environments. Upland walks, with the exception of within the Cave Hill Country Park are not accessible except by special permission. The potential for a long distance walk in the area remains unfulfilled | Km of walking routes:<br>No. and length of long distance walks  |
| 3  | Opportunities to reach open space by public transport | Good services to the city parks on the fringe of the Belfast Hills. Limited to the upland areas and no services to the upland areas with access arrangements. 4 access related car parks.  | No. of opportunities to reach upland areas by bus<br>No of access related car parks, particularly in uplands                                    |
| 4  | Visual appeal, environment and amenity of home zones  | Perception of declining amenity due to landfill, heavy traffic, development.   | Level of satisfaction with home zone environments<br>Extent of community participation in consultation and decisions on policies affecting them |
| 5  | Community safety in green space and open space        | Not possible to distinguish within crime statistics. So liaison with local police essential in deriving estimates. Crime figure for Partnership area should be possible if   | Recorded crime in the Belfast Hills area  |

The Belfast Hills Baseline Study

| No   | Baseline measure                                 | Assessment  | Key indicators  |
|--|--|---|---|
|  |  | postcodes are researched.   |   |
| <b><i>Tackling Urban Fringe Farming Issues</i></b> |  |   |   |
| 6  | Farming statistics                               | Small number of farms in the hills 19 with an estimated 40 employed, but very important in terms of land management and community structures.   | No. of farm businesses in the area<br>No. employed in farming<br>Gross margins or other economic indicators<br>No. of livestock in the hills                                    |
| 7  | Farming issues                                   | High level of issues of concern including farm security, personal security, disease, access, landfill proximity, fly tipping on the farm. Levels of concern likely to discourage continuation with farming. | No. of farmers in the area<br>Measures to assist farmers with security and crime pressures<br>Measures to assist farmers with unwelcome recreation pressure                     |
| 8  | Support for tackling urban fringe farming issues | None at present.  | Special support scheme to address urban fringe issues   |
| 9  | Examples of projects to resolve issues           | NFU survey of urban fringe issues. GB Fly Tipping Forum report. Rural White Paper.  | Contacts with other areas with a problem. Joint resolution of issues.   |
| <b><i>Natural and built heritage</i></b>           |  |   |   |
| 10   | Habitats of the Belfast Hills                    | Rich array of habitats including nationally important habitats but little survey information. Irregular and partial monitoring.   | Area of each priority habitat<br>Quality of habitat<br>No. of farmers in countryside management scheme ( CMS)<br>Other landowners engaged in nature conservation on their lands |
| 11   | Species of the Belfast Hills                     | Wealth of biodiversity interest including priority species within UK and NI Biodiversity Strategies. Need for monitoring of species and for BHP participation in BAPs for key species.                      | Diversity of species<br>No. observed for key species for which there is a BAP<br>Mechanisms and programmes of protection/enhancement<br>Farmers in CMS                          |
| 12   | Nature Conservation Designations                 | No. European sites, 1 ASSI, 2 NNR, 1 potential ASSI, 50 proposed SLNCI.   | No. and integrity of ASSI<br>No. and Integrity of NNR s   |

The Belfast Hills Baseline Study

| No   | Baseline measure  | Assessment  | Key indicators  |
|--|---|---|---|
|  |   |   | No. and integrity of SLNCI  |
| 13   | Landscape Character   | 4 main LCA in BHP area. All with distinctive landform and features. Considerable threats and loss of character incl. Features which impose on the skylines e.g. quarries, landfill sites and telecoms masts.                                      | No. of telecommunication masts and other skyline impacts<br>Retention of identified features of landscape character<br>Engagement of communities in programmes to protect, enhance and interpret landscapes |
| 14   | Lands with high nature conservation value- under threat               | A high proportion of lands of nature conservation interest are not protected by designation. Threats occur frequently.  | No. of incidents leading to loss or value of important habitats or species<br>Availability of nature conservation interest to the public  |
| 15   | No. of historic monuments in the Hills with access and interpretation | 9 scheduled monuments in the BHP area. Multiple historic sites on private lands, no access. Secure access only to one scheduled site and little easily accessible information or interpretation.  | Information about historic monuments in BHP and about access to them.<br>No. of accessible monuments.   |
| 16   | Historic and vernacular buildings. Townlands                          | Belfast Castle only listed building in BHP Resurvey underway. Extensive loss of vernacular buildings. No information except about Belfast Castle.   | No. of buildings at risk<br>No. of traditional buildings in the landscape<br>Presentation of built heritage interest and townlands.   |
| <b><i>Management of countryside recreation</i></b> |   |   |   |
| 17   | Use of access and recreation sites and routes                         | Busiest site probably Cave Hill CP with 576 visitors recorded in one day in 1999 and overall annual visitor numbers of 369,7000. Hills walk attracted 1083 people in 1998. Colin Glen 205,241 in 2003. Little other user data or user research. . | No. of visitors to key recreation sites<br>Attitudes of visitors to the countryside and recreation provision<br>Incidents of nuisance recreation.   |
| 18   | Arrangements for management of countryside recreation sites           | Multiple agencies managing BH sites with varying levels of management and maintenance. Potential to combine countryside work and volunteer teams, user research and surveying.<br>No overall survey and management at BH level.                   | No. of sites with active management<br>No. of staff deployed<br>Extent of monitoring and accessibility of results<br>Public awareness of the state of the   |

The Belfast Hills Baseline Study

| No   | Baseline measure                 | Assessment   | Key indicators  |
|--|----------------------------------|--|---|
|  |                                  |  | Belfast hills   |
| 19   | Access to the Countryside Issues | General lack of countryside access, particularly to the uplands. Issues include lawlessness, which is attributed to recreation access by farmers. Current problems need to be sorted before moving on. Lack of a joint mechanism to sort the issues for farmers. No strategic approach to access and recreation between Councils | Development of a countryside access and recreation plan/strategy for BHP area<br>Respected arrangements and codes for managing countryside access issues<br>BHP known as an effective contact point for landowners with access problems.              |
| <b><i>Landfill Activity</i></b>  |                                  |  |   |
| 20   | Legal landfill sites             | 16 landfill sites in or very close to core area, all inert waste. 3 new sites for development all including household waste - a new chapter in BH (legal) landfill<br>Estimated one third of all landfill sites in NI are in 5000 ha within the hills. Traffic a big issue.  | No. of landfill sites<br>Annual tonnage of landfill received in the Hills<br>Routing and impact of heavy traffic use of BH roads<br>Compliance of owners with planning and license conditions<br>Groundwater quality - other environmental indicators |
| 21   | Illegal landfill sites           | Thought to be 4 permanent illegal sites in area. Multiple opportunistic sites of shorter duration. EHS vigilance is reducing the numbers.  | No. of illegal landfill sites - target 0  |
| 22   | Fly tipping sites                | Some 52 sites monitored by Belfast Hills Watch scheme. 65% now inactive due to early clear up and vigilance. Problem persists with tyres on upland farmlands.  | No. of fly tipping sites - target 0   |
| 23   | ARC 21                           | BHP formed too late to consult on strategy. Waste streams set to increase before waste reduction mechanisms can be effective. Proximity principle and quarrying history of the hills places undue pressure on the Hills. No spatial strategy for landfill sites in ARC 21 or in Planning Policies.                               | BHP level of engagement in strategic planning for waste in the area.  |
| <b><i>Contributing to the economic regeneration of Hills communities</i></b> |                                  |  |   |

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| No | Baseline measure                                    | Assessment  | Key indicators  |
|----|---|---|---|
| 24 | Economic status and relative deprivation            | Upper Springfield amongst the 11 most deprived communities in NI. Collinbridge in Newtownabbey one of the least deprived. Several communities are almost single identity in terms of religion. Low level of access to a car or van. | Level of deprivation<br>Relative socio-economic differences between communities   |
| 25 | Levels of tourism and visitor activity in the hills | Total visitors to counted sites 824,626 in 2003. No survey data for the hills. No surveys to assess visitor activity or attitudes.  | No. of visitors<br>Attitude of visitors to key dimensions of the hills experience   |
| 26 | No. of tourism providers in the hills               | 25 tourists beds available in 4 establishments in or close to the Hills. No tourist information about the hills.  | No. of tourism providers<br>Level of information available to visitors  |
| 27 | Visitor attitude to the Belfast Hills               | No survey data  | No. of visitors satisfied with aspects of the Belfast hills<br>Level of appreciation of the Hills by general city visitors. |