



Subject:	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs public consultation into the designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area
Date:	23 rd June 2026
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services.
Contact Officer:	Alastair Curran, Environmental Protection Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has recently consulted upon the designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area in accordance with the provisions of The Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. Public Consultation on the Designation of Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area pursuant to the Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
1.2	As an aspect of the consultation process, DAERA have posed a series of questions that consultees are invited to respond to within their respective consultation responses.
1.3	This report serves to provide the People and Communities Committee with an overview of the Quiet Area qualifying criteria and designation process, and the report additionally provides at Appendix 1, a proposed response to the DAERA public consultation concerning the proposed designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area.
1.4	The Committee is advised that the DAERA consultation process is scheduled to run for an eight week period from 1 st June 2026 until 27 th July 2026.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the contents of this report concerning the designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area; • Agree that the proposed consultation response, provided at Appendix 1 to this report, be submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs by the consultation deadline of 27th July 2026.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 serve to transpose the various provisions of Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 th June 2002 relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise, colloquially referred to as the Environmental Noise Directive or END, into Northern Ireland legislation.
3.2	END requires that Member States periodically determine the noise exposure of their populations through noise mapping; that they make information on environmental noise and its effects available to the public; and that they establish Noise Action Plans, based upon the mapping results to reduce noise levels where necessary, and preserve environmental noise quality where it is good. Noise mapping and action planning have therefore to be completed every five years by corresponding Competent Authorities for the main sources of environmental noise; namely, roads (Department for Infrastructure), railways (Translink), airports (George Best Belfast City Airport) and industry (DAERA).
3.3	Accordingly, the first round of strategic noise maps for Northern Ireland were based on 2006 year data, for major roads (roads with more than 6 million vehicle passages annually), major railways (railways with more than 60,000 train passages annually), major airports (airports with more than 50,000 aircraft movements annually) and for agglomerations (urban areas with a

	<p>population of greater than 250,000 inhabitants, taking account of the above sources and additionally other roads, railways, aircraft movements and industrial premises).</p>
3.4	<p>At present, the only agglomeration within Northern Ireland is the Belfast agglomeration, encompassing the Belfast City Council area and aspects of Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Lisburn, Holywood, Dundonald, Carryduff and Bangor.</p>
3.5	<p>Subsequent rounds 2, 3, and 4 of noise mapping and action planning have been completed for 2011, 2016 and most recently for 2021 year activity data, for the same noise sources but with the application of more conservative qualifying criteria for major roads (roads with more than 3 million vehicle passages annually); major railways (railways with more than 30,000 train passages annually; and agglomerations (urban areas with more than 100,000 inhabitants, taking into account the above sources and additionally, other roads, railways, aircraft movements and industrial premises).</p>
3.6	<p>END additionally requires Member States to 'preserve environmental noise quality where it is good' through the identification and protection of Quiet Areas within agglomerations, recognising that Quiet Areas can make a beneficial contribution to public health, particularly for people living in noisy city areas. For clarity, a Quiet Area is not one that is silent, but rather one that is undisturbed by unwanted or harmful outdoor sound created by human activities from any source; not just those referred to in the Regulations. Accordingly, Regulation 40 of The Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 places a duty upon DAERA to prepare maps identifying Quiet Areas within agglomerations, commencing by 30th September 2007 and every fifth year thereafter.</p>
3.7	<p>In order to assist in the identification of potential Quiet Areas, DAERA consulted upon '<i>Guidance on the Identification and Designation of Quiet Areas</i>' in September 2015. The guidance advanced three qualifying criteria, similar to those adopted by the other parts of the UK and the Republic of Ireland; i.e.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Land type filter - publicly available parks and open space within an agglomeration; 2. Noise level filter - noise level less than or equal to 55 dB Lden, where Lden (day, evening and night) indicates a 24-hour annual average noise level, with separate weightings for the evening and night periods; and 3. Minimum area filter – a minimum area of 5 hectares / 12.35 acres.
3.8	<p>DAERA have advised that once formally designated, district councils will manage the local noise environment within Quiet Areas to avoid increases in noise from sources covered by the END, to include monitoring noise levels within Quiet Areas and co-ordinating or undertaking any necessary mitigation activities. DAERA have additionally advised that councils may also protect Quiet Areas by bringing forward bespoke policies within their Local Development Plans and managing development through the determination of planning applications. The Committee is advised that '<i>Policy ENV1 – Environmental quality</i>' of the Belfast City Council Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035 provides that the council will require development to address protection of the city's designated Quiet Areas. DAERA have finally advised that councils may also protect Quiet Areas by applying the statutory nuisance regimes provided for within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978. Quiet Areas are additionally protected from an increase in noise by the various Competent Authority Noise Action Plans referred to in paragraph 3.2.</p>

3.9	<p>The Committee is advised that in applying the aforementioned three qualifying criteria to the then Belfast agglomeration noise data, DAERA previously consulted upon the designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area in September 2016. The People and Communities Committee considered the designation at agenda item 8(i) of its meeting of 11th October 2016 and subsequently indicated to DAERA that the Council welcomed and was supportive of such a designation. The Committee minutes may be accessed via the following weblink: https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=35594. At the conclusion of the consultation process, however, the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs did not progress with designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area.</p>
3.10	<p>Notwithstanding, DAERA are again consulting upon the designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area on the basis of 2021 year noise data, which was derived using a new EU calculation methodology for noise mapping - Common Noise Assessment Methods (CNOSSOS).</p>
3.11	<p>DAERA have highlighted that the Lagan Meadows are located within the wider Lagan Valley Regional Park, which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); that the Lagan Meadows are also a site of local nature conservation in line with the Belfast Local Development Plan Strategy, and that the Lagan Meadows are readily accessible by the general public and by public transport.</p>
3.12	<p>Moreover, in referring to the DAERA fourth round of noise mapping (https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/noise-maps), it is noted that the section of the Lagan Meadows to be designated as a Quiet Area falls below the noise filter of less than or equal to 55 dB Lden and covers some 48.5 hectares.</p>
3.13	<p>With regard the questions that DAERA have posed within their Lagan Meadows Quiet Area consultation document, the Department have asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you agree that Lagan Meadows should be designated as a Quiet Area for the purpose of The Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006?
3.14	<p>It is proposed that the Council's consultation response will respond YES to this question.</p>
3.15	<p>DAERA have secondly requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please provide information on any matters that would affect the designation of Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area.
3.16	<p>The Committee is advised that the Lagan Meadows, whilst council owned lands (https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/things-to-do/parks-and-open-spaces/a-z-parks/lagan-meadows), form a component of the wider Lagan Valley Regional Park, established in 1967, and stretching from the Stranmillis area of Belfast City to Lisburn City. It is noted that the Lagan Valley Regional Park is presently engaged in the implementation of a 5-Year Management Plan (https://www.laganvalley.co.uk/publications), covering the period 2023 – 2028. Priority themes identified within the Management Plan include biodiversity, visitors, neighbouring communities, landscape, heritage and health and recreation.</p> <p>On this basis, it is recommended that the council's consultation response should include a recommendation that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs should engage directly with the Lagan Valley Regional Park to ensure that the designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area is appropriately compatible with the Park's 5-Year</p>

	<p>Management Plan and the Lagan Valley Regional Park's stated priority theme of health and recreation. The Lagan Valley Regional Park have advised that objectives and targets developed to support achievement of the health and recreation priority theme will have consideration of relevant stakeholders within the Lagan Valley Regional Park to ensure maximum physical and mental health benefits to its users.</p>
3.17	<p>The Committee is additionally advised that George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) has recently published a 2040 Masterplan entitled '<i>Our Vision for the Future</i>'. The Airport has indicated that its vision is to deliver growth to 7 million passengers per annum by 2040 in a sustainable and responsible way, and that to accommodate the projected growth in passenger numbers will require the number of annual air traffic movements (ATM) to increase to approximately 61,000; an increase of some 13,000 atms over the current annual cap of 48,000 atms. The Airport Masterplan document advises that all growth to 2040 can be delivered within the existing noise contour area limit of 5.2 km².</p>
3.18	<p>Notwithstanding, the Airport's Annual Performance Report for 2024 demonstrates that the initial departure route over the city passes close to the Lagan Meadows before turning towards the southeast over Belvoir Park Forest.</p>
3.19	<p>It is recommended therefore that the Council's consultation response should include a recommendation that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs should engage with George Best Belfast City Airport concerning the Airport's 2040 Masterplan in order to identify and understand any potential implications of the Airport's air traffic movement and passenger growth proposals upon noise levels within the Lagan Meadows and the designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area.</p>
3.20	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications.</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications associated with the Council's consultation response concerning the DAERA proposed designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area, pursuant to the provisions of The Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.</p>
3.21	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment.</u></p> <p>There are no equality or Good Relations / Rural Needs Assessment implications associated with the Council's consultation response concerning the DAERA proposed designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area, pursuant to the provisions of The Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.</p>
4.0	Appendices
4.1	<p>Appendix A – Belfast City Council consultation response concerning the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs proposed designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area, pursuant to the provisions of The Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.</p>