



BULLETS, BIRDS AND BINOCULARS: ENGAGING PEOPLE AND CHANGING MINDSETS AROUND LOUGH NEAGH

Peter Harper , Lough Neagh Partnership and Nial O'Neill , d-on Architects

Lough Neagh: Some facts

- 120m shoreline
- 12-15m deep
- Drains 450,000ha
- Provides 43% of Northern Ireland's drinking water
- Private ownership (bed and soil)
- Hyper Eutrophic
- Commercial
- Five counties.
- Five Councils



Lough Neagh Partnership

- Antrim, Banbridge, Craigavon Borough Council
- Mid Ulster Council
- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Lough Neagh Fisherman`s Co-operative
- Norman Emerson Sand Traders
- Shaftesbury Estate
- Shanes Castle Estate
- Wildfowling rep
- Inland Waterways Association of Ireland
- Cookstown and Western Shoreline Area Network
- Traad, Ballinderry, Ballyronan Development Association
- Toomebridge Industrial, Development and Amenities Group
- Royal Society for the Protection of birds

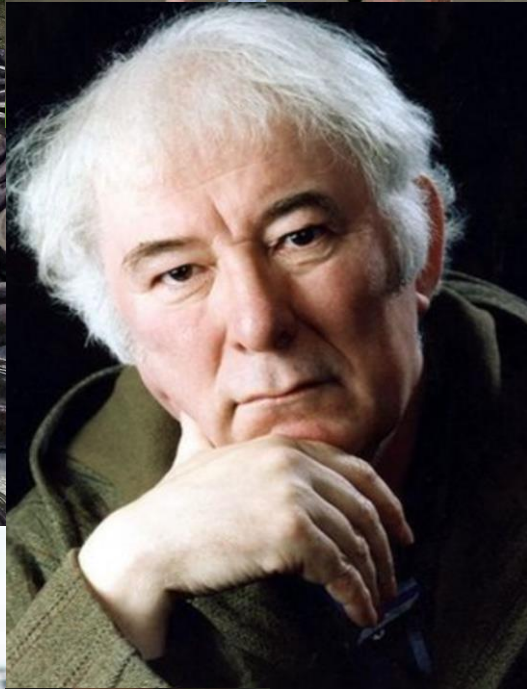
Lough Neagh Partnership: Aims and Objectives

Managing and protecting Lough Neagh

- The protection of the natural environment
- The conservation of it's built and cultural heritage.
- The promotion and development of the lough as a tourism destination
- The economic development of the lough and the wider area
- Developing navigation and safety on the lough

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Lough Neagh: management issues

- Eutrophic
- Sand Extraction
- Commercial fishing
- Algal blooms
- Wildfowling
- Navigation
- Avian Flu
- Invasives
- `Troubles` legacy
- Low level community engagement/awareness



Lough Neagh designations

RAMSAR

ASSI

SPA

SACs

NNRs

SLNCIs

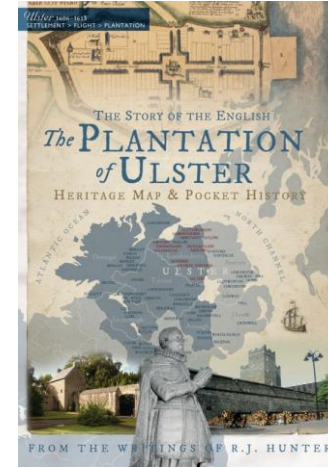
ASSI/SPA/RAMSAR Management Plan?



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Lough Neagh: Ownership

- Bed and Soil of Lough is owned by the Shaftesbury Estate
- Plantation of Ulster 1600
- Arthur Chichester
- Income source



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September 2023...



Lough Neagh EFS Group Farm Scheme



Higher Scheme ●●●

● 2017: 47 agreements

● 2018: 18 agreements

● 2019: 47+ agreements

● 2020: 25+ agreements

● 2021: 10+ plans

Total: 147

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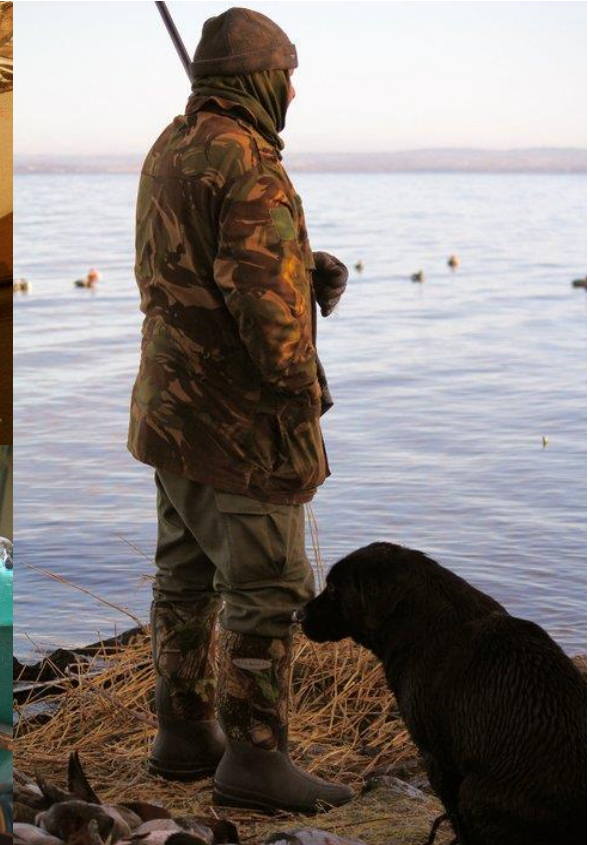


Diving Ducks...



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Wildfowling...



Duckhunter: “Wat a last wk on the lough we had the last Saturday we had 40 between 4 guns 35 tufted, 3 GoldenEye & 2 red head. to top the Saturday we had 47 between 3 on the last day 46 tufted & 1 scaup about 40 were drakes, safe to say the dogs were....etc”

Greylag 1: “you must have a lot of ferrets to feed that lot to!”



Wildfowlers Information Evening

- In partnership with BTO, BASC
- 25 clubs represented, 60+ attendees
- Bird Trends
- Discussion re: Bird number declines
- Discussion re: Potential for Lough Neagh Wildfowling Association
- Presentations from BASC, BTO and LNP
- Shaftesbury Estates attended



Position of the species included in the sector analysis on the UK Birds of Conservation Concern list.

Green-list	Amber-list	Red-list
Tufted duck Mute swan Coot Little Grebe Great-crested Grebe Cormorant Golden Plover	Mallard Teal Shoveler Wigeon Gadwall Whooper Swan Greylag goose	Pochard Goldeneye Scaup Lapwing Curlew Bewick's Swan

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2020/21)			2020/21)		
■ Dark-bellied Brent Goose	-15	6	▼ Scaup	-66	-54
■ Svalbard Light-b. Brent Goose	50	-31	n/a Eider*	-29	-27
▼ Canadian Light-b. Brent Goose	106	8	■ Goldeneye	-55	-23
n/a Canada Goose	72	18	■ Goosander	-25	-1
n/a Naturalised Barnacle Goose	273	47	■ Red-breasted Merganser	-44	-23
▲ Greenland Barnacle Goose	100	24	■ Little Grebe	42	10
▲ Svalbard Barnacle Goose	86	10	■ Great Crested Grebe	-17	-6
n/a British/Irish Greylag Goose	210	9	▼ Little Egret	1,214	59
▼ Icelandic Greylag Goose	-3	-15	▼ Cormorant	58	28
▲ Pink-footed Goose	104	52	■ Moorhen	-13	-12
▼ Greenland White-fronted Goose	-43	-4	■ Coot	-25	-27
■ European White-fronted Goose	-78	-43	■ Oystercatcher	-21	-13
n/a Mute Swan	16	-3	▲ Avocet	272	29
▼ Bewick's Swan	-95	-90	▼ Lapwing	-47	-9
▲ Whooper Swan	244	27	■ Golden Plover	-14	19
n/a Egyptian Goose	658	78	▼ Grey Plover	-40	-12
■ Shelduck	-23	-3	▼ Ringed Plover	-52	-10
n/a Mandarin	213	28	▼ Curlew	-30	-18
▲ Shoveler	53	34	▲ Bar-tailed Godwit	-38	-30
▲ Gadwall	73	-5	▲ Black-tailed Godwit	159	23
▼ Wigeon	-11	-6	▲ Turnstone	-25	-3
■ Mallard	-37	-22	■ Knot	3	8
■ Pintail	-28	1	■ Sanderling	27	7
▲ Teal	5	-9	■ Dunlin	-45	-7
▼ Pochard	-73	-39	▼ Purple Sandpiper	-31	-13
▼ Tufted Duck	-11	-8	▼ Redshank	-20	-3

11

44

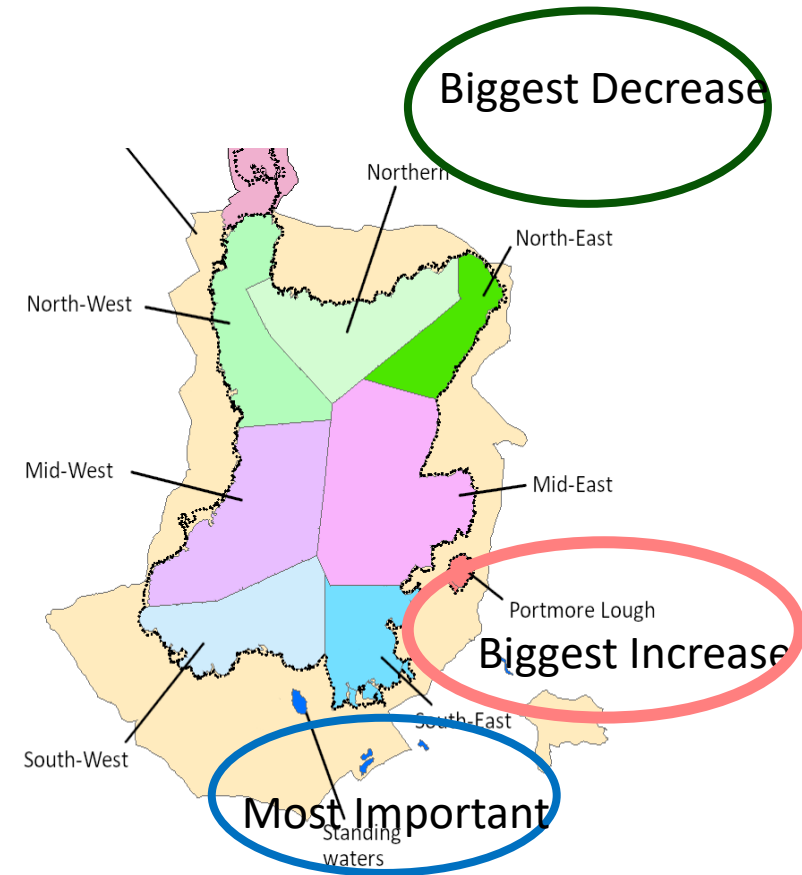
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Pochard

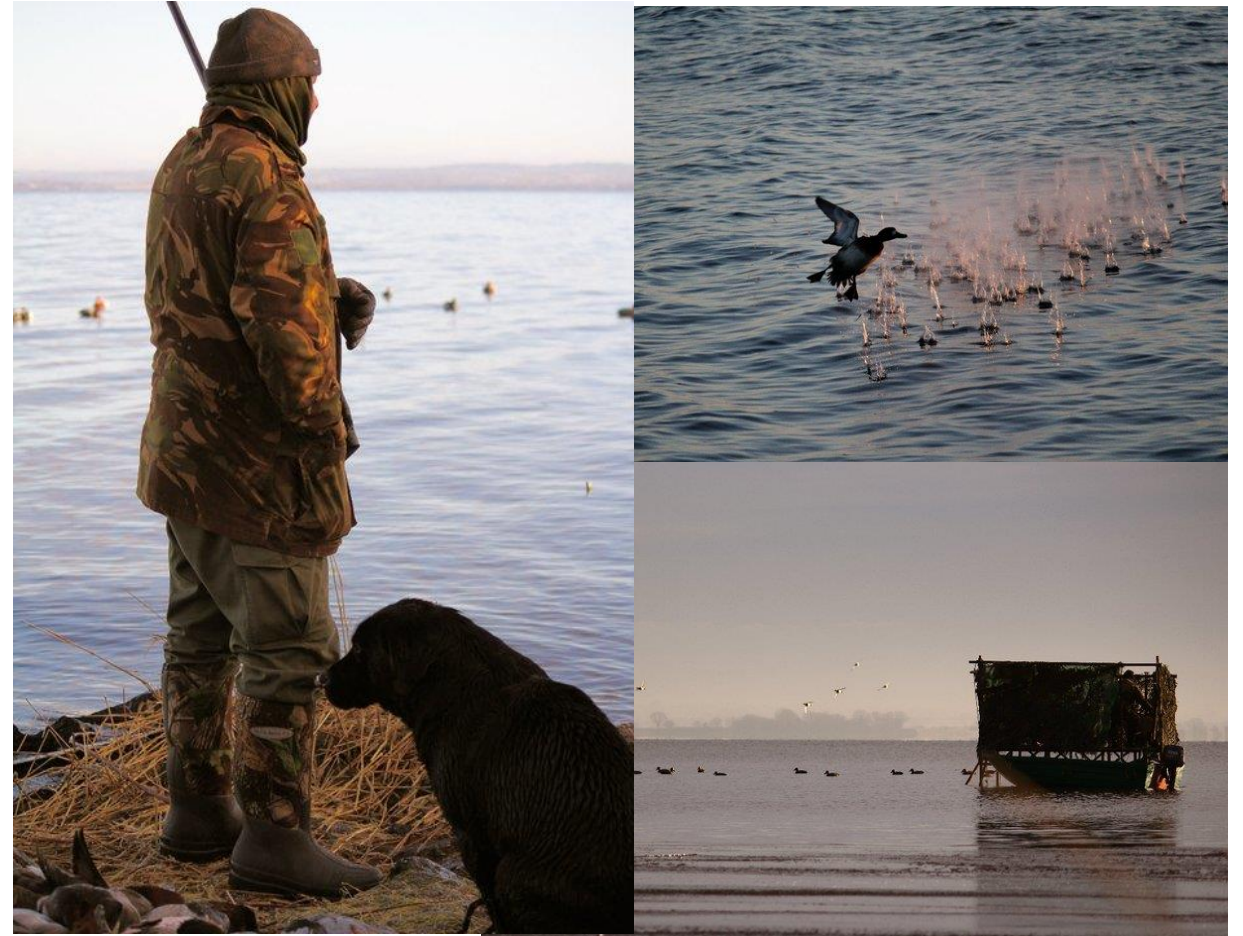


Most Important



Going forward

- Second Information Evening February 2024
- Lough Neagh Wildfowlers Association...?
- Pilot project Wildfowlers/ LNP/BTO?
- More refuges...?
- Sconce removal project?
- Bag limits?



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The problem...

- Perceived as a commercial Lough; somewhere to draw sand, fish for eels or shoot ducks
- Only 6 bird hides yet 200+ shooting sconces
- Conservation interest undervalued
- Very poor visitor infrastructure
- So big, its perceived as an obstacle
- Limited public access to shoreline
- Limited visitor infrastructure



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Lough Neagh Community Bird Hide: Project Aim and Objectives

■ AIM

- To raise awareness, change pervading mind sets and generate more support for conservation work on the Lough

OBJECTIVES

- To provide more opportunities to enjoy wildlife
- To engage local people especially young people

OUTPUT

- To design and hopefully install 7 new or refurbished community Bird hides around the Lough shoreline



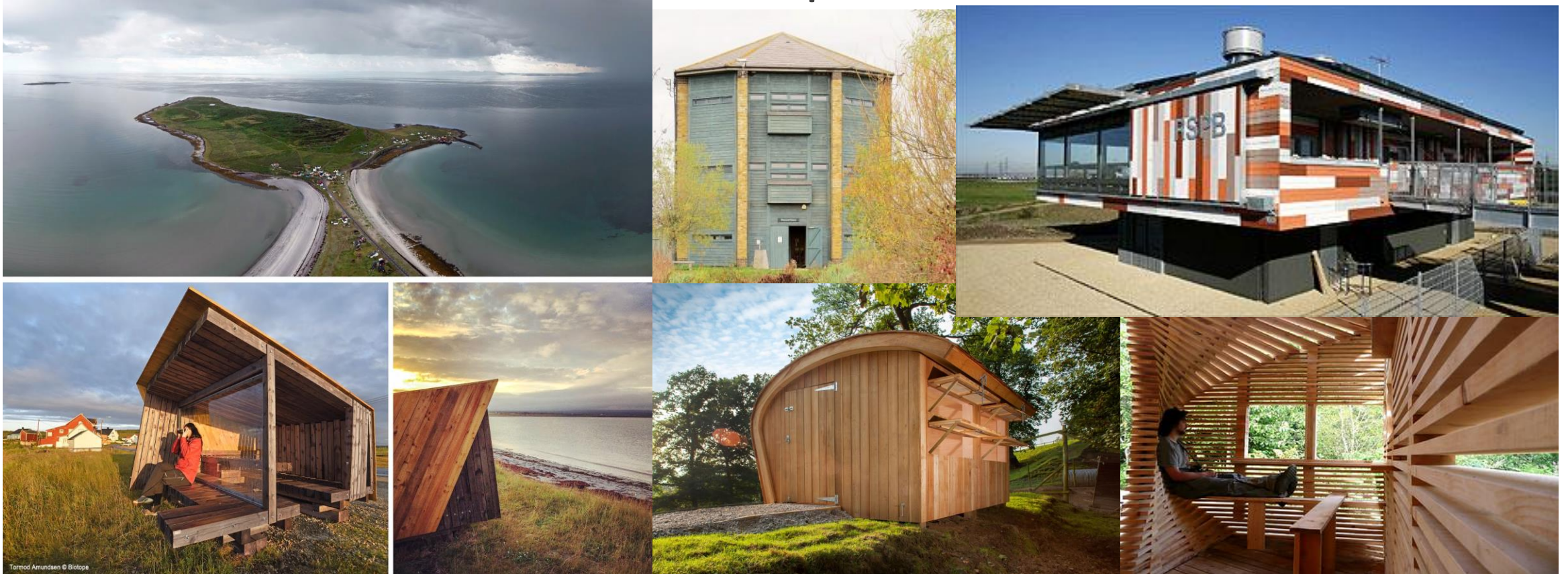
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Lough Neagh Community Bird Hide Project: Funding and appointment of Architect

- Successful bid to DAERA (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs) EF Challenge Fund for Phase 1 Funding
- Appointment of d-on Architects Belfast (Nial O Neill et al)



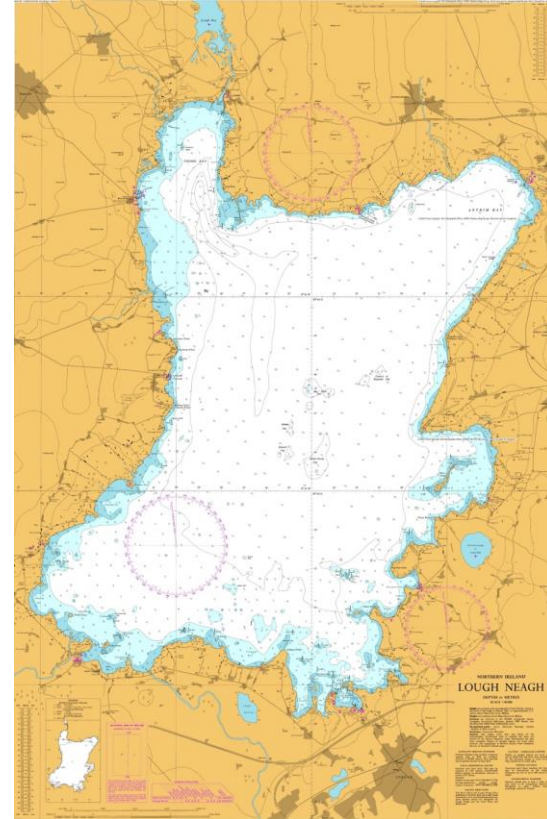
Lough Neagh Community Bird Hide project: Review best practice elsewhere



Lough Neagh Community Bird Hide Project: Site Selection

Selection Criteria

- 30 potential sites identified (Longlist)
- Development of 30 criteria against which potential sites were scored generating a
- Shortlist
- and ...
- Reserves



Assessment Criteria...

- Quality of view. Variety of birds
- Community Buy –in
- Existing hide: condition
- Access and parking
- Accessibility
- Safety: antisocial activity
- Susceptibility to flooding
- Environmental impact
- Access to services



The sites

- Ballyronan
- Moyola Waterfront
- Cranfield
- Oxford Island 1
- Oxford Island 2
- Washing Bay
- The Battery



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Brief Development

All key stakeholders invited, community & commercial:

- Key sites identified through the scoping and evaluation criteria
- Conceptual approaches to the design development:
 - Engagement
 - Modular & Simplicity
 - Landscape & Shelter
 - Materials



Community engagement Design Process

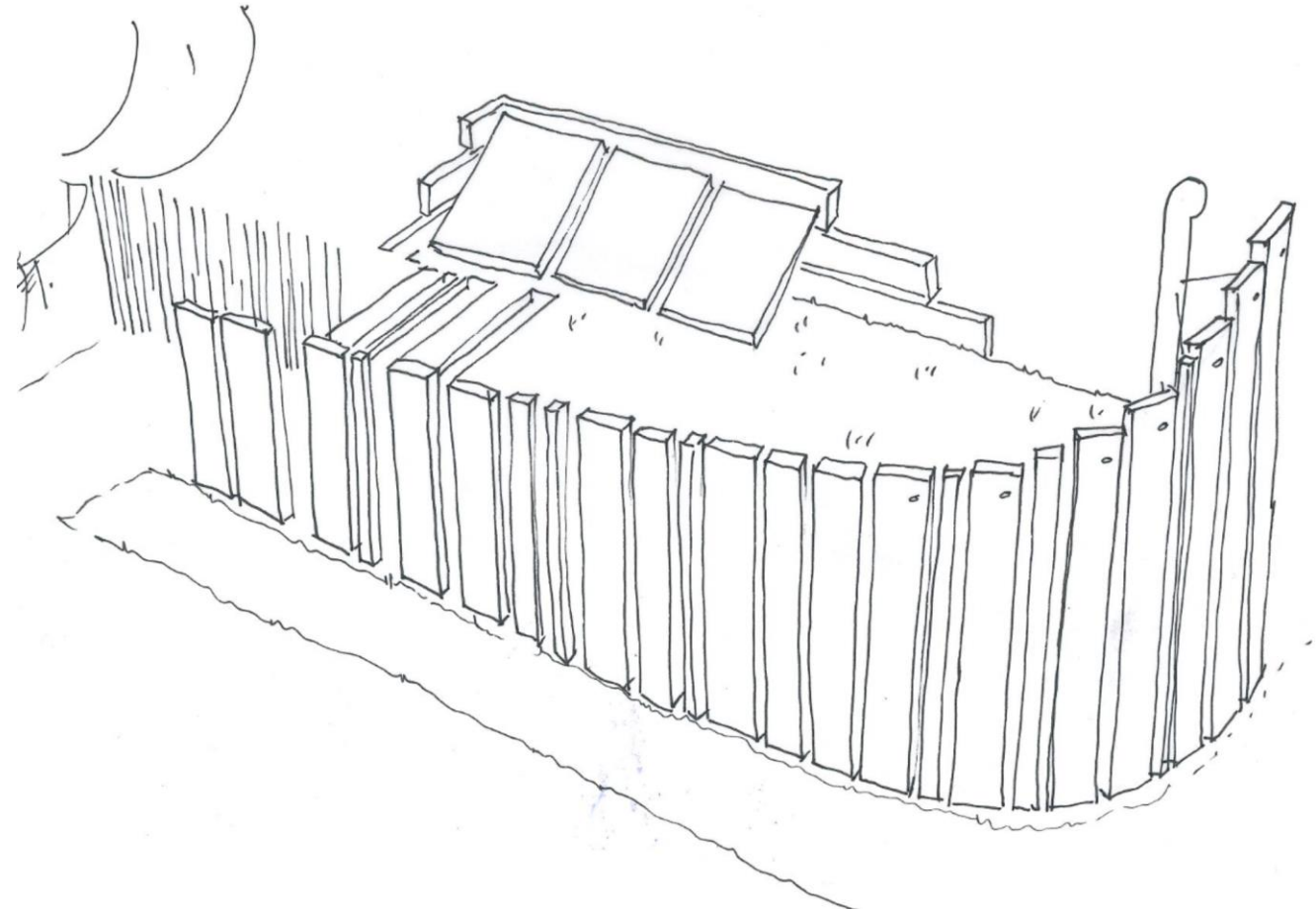
- Conceptual designs including models
- Engagement of primary schools and community groups
- Workshops/ ZOOM
- PR/Media interest (UTV Life) – School involvement



Community engagement Design Process

Proposals were developed & presentations made to all stakeholders included:

- Site analysis
- Sketch's & model
- Clarification of how proposals addressed:
 - Modular & Simplicity
 - Landscape & Shelter
 - Materials
 - Engagement



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Design outcome

- Lightweight timber constructions
- Minimal site impact
- Green planted roofs
- Photovoltaics panels
- Bird boxes integrated into fabric
- Wild bee habitat
- Invertebrate habitat



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Design outcome

- Classroom size interior layout
- Periscope (Birds eye) view of surroundings
- Connection with landscape
- Monitored electrical storage
- Mobile charging station



Sustainable design

- Engage with local community
- Engage with local business
- Identify common deliverable outcomes
- Encourage educational opportunities
- Use sustainable materials
- Support local Flora & Fauna
- Create landmark structures



Lough Neagh Community Bird hide Project: Planning requirements

- HRA
- Ecological Surveys
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Etc



Planning
Portal NI



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Publications



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<https://loughneaghpartnership.buzzsprout.com/>



Thank you

