

Appendix 2

Draft Consultation response to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Mr. Dave Foster
Director, Regulatory and Natural Resources Division
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Environmental Policy Division
6th Floor Goodwood House
44-58 May Street
Town Parks
Belfast
BT1 4NN

Dear Mr. Foster

Re: Draft Guidance on the Identification and Designation of Quiet Areas.

Further to Belfast City Council's consultation response of 3 March 2016, and in respect of the identification of Candidate Quiet Areas for the Belfast City Council area, I would advise that council officers have reviewed in detail the noise modelling data developed by your Department in order to meet the requirements of the Environmental Noise Directive and the Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.

Accordingly, the council would propose that the Department considers the Lagan Meadows as a Candidate Quiet Area. The Lagan Meadows are situated to the south of the city but are nonetheless in a location readily accessible by the general public and public transport. Furthermore, the Lagan Meadows are located within the wider Lagan Valley Regional Park, which has been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a site of local nature conservation within the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan. Moreover, it is considered that the natural environment at the Lagan Meadows is more in keeping with the soundscape and functional objectives described in the European Environment Agency publication, 'Good practice guide on quiet areas', i.e. a calm place to relax, think, walk, bike, read or picnic. The council considers therefore that the Lagan Meadows fulfil the Department's criteria for identification as a Candidate Quiet Area; i.e. the Lagan Meadows are publically available park and open space within an agglomeration, of a minimum area of 5 hectares and of a suitable noise climate.

The council previously expressed concern regarding the Department's application of a 5 hectare de minimus in the identification of Candidate Quiet Areas. Although the area of the Lagan Meadows substantially exceeds this criterion, I would nonetheless request that the Department engages with the council in order to refine the policy guidance document and screening criteria prior to subsequent rounds of Quiet Area designations.

The council continues to be of the view that Ligoniel and Tullycarnet Parks remain unsuitable for designation as Quiet Areas principally as a result of the soundscapes at these Parks but also as a consequence of the council's longer-term leisure and other development objectives for these Parks

and due to their locations on the periphery of the city. It is therefore respectfully requested that the Minister does not designate these parks as quiet areas. The council will however, reconsider designation of these Parks in the light of any revised guidance or screening criteria.

It has been highlighted earlier in this response that the Lagan Meadows form part of the wider Lagan Valley Regional Park. The council therefore anticipates that Lagan Valley Regional Park staff will assist in the promotion and management of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area. The council has already written to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in support of the Lagan Valley Regional Park and noting the Agency's funding cut to the Park of 70% for the 2016/17 financial year. The council would wish to reiterate its support of the work of the Lagan Valley Regional Park staff and to call upon the Department to continue to provide an appropriate level of financial assistance for the Park.

Yours sincerely

Chair, People and Communities Committee