

River Basin Management Plans – Groundwater Objectives

# What we plan to achieve by 2015 and beyond

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An Agency within the Department of the  
**Environment**  
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## **Purpose**

This paper summarizes the objectives set for groundwater bodies currently at poor status.

For each groundwater body currently at poor status its objectives are given together with the relevant background information.

### **Belfast groundwater body (GBNI4NE005)**

Objective: Improve water balance by 2021

- Estimation of abstraction based upon current licensed abstractions only. It is generally assumed that there are abstractions which have not applied for a license yet.
- The recharge estimation used will not reflect the complexity of aquifer recharge with respect to distribution and different mechanisms across the groundwater body.
- The aquifer resource investigation of groundwater body is ongoing.
- Abstraction licensing will allow better calculation of abstracted volumes and control of abstractions.
- By 2021 the understanding of the groundwater body should have improved due to more recent monitoring and improved register of abstractions.

Objective: Improve DWPA Nitrates by 2027

- Historically the Enler valley part of the groundwater body (Comber area) has been identified as a nitrate vulnerable zone (NVZ)
- Several abstraction boreholes show nitrate concentrations exceeding the threshold value of 37.5 mg NO<sub>3</sub>/l. However, maximum values are generally below 60 mg NO<sub>3</sub>/l.
- Some of the 2000 to 2008 monitoring data show non-statistical rising trends, but other datasets suggest period of a decrease in nitrates concentration too.
- The main abstractor Northern Ireland Water who is using water for public supply is still indicating that most groundwater abstractions will cease by 2021 (although licenses have been issued).
- The Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 became operational on 1 January 2007 with the aim of reducing the pollution of water by nitrates from agricultural sources.

## **Ballymena groundwater body (GBNI4NB002)**

Objective: Improve DWPA Nitrates by 2021

- The poor status and related objective is linked to public water supply sources in a superficial aquifer (sand/gravel deposits) in an area where a nitrate vulnerable zone had been defined historically. The sand and gravel deposits form a small part of the overall groundwater body area (approximately 5%).
- The main abstractor Northern Ireland Water who is using water for public supply is still indicating that most groundwater abstractions will cease by 2021 (although licenses have been issued).
- The Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 became operational on 1 January 2007 with the aim of reducing the pollution of water by nitrates from agricultural sources.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency  
17 Antrim Road  
Lisburn  
BT28 3AL

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