



Northern Ireland Central Government
**Strategic Overview of
Land & Property Assets**



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DOF PERMANENT SECRETARY FOREWORD



I am pleased to introduce this Strategic Overview of Land & Property Assets Report, which brings together a clear and comprehensive picture of the land and buildings held across central government. It reflects the continuing progress we are making to strengthen how we collectively understand, manage, and plan for these important assets.

This work takes place at a time of both challenge and opportunity. Central government continues to face sustained pressures — from financial constraints and evolving service delivery models to the increasing impacts of climate change and the need to meet long-term sustainability commitments. These pressures are not new; they have shaped our approach for many years. However, they do reinforce the importance of working together, adapting how we use our assets, and continuing to think differently about how best to support public services and communities across Northern Ireland.

This report highlights the opportunities that arise when we take a joined-up approach: from repurposing assets to support changing needs, to improving utilisation, reducing running costs, and aligning our actions with wider social, economic, and environmental priorities.

The examples included here demonstrate that positive change is well established across the system. Organisations are collaborating and identifying new ways of supporting service delivery and taking forward improvements that offer tangible benefits to citizens. These achievements show the value of a sustained, strategic, cross-government approach to land and property management.

As we look ahead, by strengthening partnerships, aligning departmental plans, and grounding decisions in robust evidence, we can ensure that central government assets continue to deliver maximum value for citizens and contribute meaningfully to the Executive's wider ambitions for people, place, and prosperity.

I want to thank colleagues across central government for their leadership and ongoing commitment. We must continue to ensure that our assets remain resilient, efficient, and responsive to the needs of citizens — now and in the years to come.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'N. Gibson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Neil Gibson
Permanent Secretary

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This report provides a transparent overview of the land and property assets owned, leased, occupied, used, or overseen by core Northern Ireland Departments and their Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs).

It offers stakeholders — including citizens, communities, and delivery partners — a clear view of the **scale, composition, and location** of Northern Ireland central government's² land and property assets, supporting informed discussion and decision-making. By presenting this information³, the report **promotes external transparency** and encourages wider conversations on opportunities for optimisation, rationalisation, and improved utilisation and sharing of central government assets.

Chapter 3 includes a series of case studies which showcase some of the **positive activities and strategic initiatives** being progressed across central government, highlighting how they are being repurposed, reimaged and redistributed to maximise value.

¹For the purposes of this report, this refers to the core NI Departments and their in-scope ALBs

²Data is based on information available at a point in time and may be subject to a low margin of error.
The dataset continues to be refined

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the land and property assets owned, leased, occupied, used, or overseen by Northern Ireland central government — specifically core NI Departments and their Arm's Length Bodies. It offers a clear view of the scale, composition, and location of these assets, supporting informed discussion and decision-making.

Given the evolving and dynamic reality of asset management, the included data provides a snapshot of our land and property assets at a specific point in time.

Managing land and property assets is complex, requiring a balance of **strategic, operational, and financial objectives** within a dynamic environment shaped by fiscal pressures, sustainability requirements, and technological change.

This report supports wider initiatives to modernise services, identify income-generation opportunities, and improve efficiency, in line with **Programme for Government** and sustainability commitments.

Efficiency involves not only the disposal of surplus assets, but also **repurposing, reimagining, and redistributing** them to meet evolving organisational and societal needs.

Sustainability is central to this approach. Assets play a vital role in reducing emissions, improving energy performance, and supporting biodiversity across the estate. Better design, adaptive reuse, and integration with broader strategies remain key priorities.

Built Assets

The estate includes **9,839 unique buildings**, providing a high-level picture of the distinct buildings where public services are delivered.

This report, however, takes a more detailed approach by examining the **12,678 built assets**, which range from very small units—such as switch rooms or school playhouses of only a few square metres—to large, multi-functional buildings including hospitals, depots, offices, and warehouses.

This granular view is intentional and reflects how buildings are configured and used in practice. It also provides a consistent basis for understanding the size and composition of the estate, revealing opportunities for improved strategic planning, investment, and use of space.



Land Assets

Northern Ireland central government oversees approximately **98,743 hectares of land**, including areas with and without built assets. Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs holds the largest proportion (over 90%), primarily due to its **forestry and environmental holdings**.

Around **16,021 hectares** of land contain built assets such as schools, offices, and health centres. This represents roughly 16% of the overall landholding.

Approximately **82,722 hectares** have no built assets, but this does not mean they are empty or unused. These areas may serve as operational assets for transport, water management, or environmental purposes.

In addition, the data indicates that nearly **75% of this land is classified as Recreation and Leisure**, primarily comprising publicly accessible amenities.

Understanding our footprint helps inform decisions about **land use, protection, and opportunities for optimisation**. It provides a clearer picture of how central government land assets are distributed, how effectively they support public service delivery, and where there is potential to release, repurpose, or enhance assets.

Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Assets

Disposal is a key tool for reducing costs and unlocking capital, but it is only part of a wider strategic approach. There are numerous reasons, including **operational needs and legal constraints**, why the disposal of assets can be challenging or is not the correct course of action. Our overarching asset management approach must also include the ability to **repurpose, reimagine, and redistribute** assets to adapt to changing demands, support sustainability, and deliver long-term value.



Most transactions involved small parcels of land sold to adjoining owners, reflecting the complexity of surplus asset management.

The refreshed Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland Policy (June 2025) **strengthens governance and transparency**, introducing clearer processes and robust checks.

Additional Indicators



Central government oversees **651 listed built assets**, concentrated in historic urban areas such as those within Belfast and Derry City Council boundaries.



1,714 built assets (13.5%) and 5,792 hectares of land (5.9%) are located **within flood-prone areas**, presenting resilience and planning challenges.



Around **11% of built assets and 58% of land assets** fall within designated Protected Areas such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Looking Ahead

Managing land and built assets requires collaboration, adaptability, and a commitment to transparency. This report is part of that journey—providing clarity on what we hold and how these assets support the delivery of public services and a range of strategic objectives.



We will publish an updated version of this Strategic Overview within three years, reinforcing our commitment to continuous improvement and external transparency.



A common approach is being adopted as Departments revise their existing plans to align with the new Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) Framework, which promotes consistency, best practice, and coherence with wider priorities. These plans will help organisations understand their asset needs, set clear objectives, and identify opportunities for optimisation and re-use.



Northern Ireland central government will build on this foundation by developing a new Asset Management Strategy. This strategy will strengthen collaboration, enhance transparency, and promote a more strategic approach to managing public assets. The focus will remain on partnership and evidence-based decision-making to maintain a balance of strategic, operational, and financial objectives.

The effective management of the central government estate is an established and ongoing priority. The insights in this report will continue to inform evidence-based decisions, supporting the efficient, sustainable and responsible use of land and property across central government.

CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO ASSET MANAGEMENT

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Effective asset management is fundamental to delivering high-quality public services, supporting economic development, and meeting sustainability goals. It ensures that land and property assets are managed strategically, enabling better decisions about investment, utilisation, and long-term planning. This approach reflects the importance of collaboration across central government and the need for continuous improvement.

Managing assets is inherently complex, requiring a careful balance of strategic, operational, and financial objectives within a dynamic environment shaped by fluctuating market values, evolving environmental requirements, and rapid technological change. In addition, across public sectors globally, there is a growing recognition that land and property assets are not just components of corporate planning but must be managed with the same rigour, effectiveness and efficiency as other resources.

This shift reflects recognised best practice and is strongly supported by professional bodies such as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), which highlights that **traditional approaches to asset management are evolving**³ in response to sustainability pressures, technological innovation, limited resources, and the need for greater adaptability in public service delivery.

For Northern Ireland, this report complements the wide range of initiatives already underway across central government to optimise asset use, reduce costs, and modernise service delivery. But this work does not happen in isolation. It is shaped by the **Programme for Government (PfG)** and by the shared commitment to sustainability and financial responsibility.

In alignment with many other public sectors, financial constraints remain a significant challenge. While multi-year budgets provide some stability, ongoing fiscal pressures require us to treat land and property as strategic resources—**optimising utilisation, reducing wastage, and identifying opportunities for income generation**. Although disposal of surplus assets is an important mechanism for achieving efficiency and releasing capital, managing assets requires a **holistic approach** which considers service delivery and long-term planning to support the PfG and other strategic commitments.

³ <https://www.rics.org/profession-standards/rics-standards-and-guidance/sector-standards/real-estate-standards/strategic-public-sector-property-asset-management-3rd-edition>

Sustainability is also central to our thinking. Land and property assets play a vital role in reducing emissions, improving energy efficiency, and supporting biodiversity. The focus is on **maximising their positive contribution through better design, adaptive reuse, and integration** with broader strategies.

To respond effectively to this range of strategic, operational, and financial challenges, the management of our land and property must remain adaptive. Assets are continually repurposed, reimagined, and redistributed to meet evolving needs. As a result, the provided data and examples of positive actions represent **a snapshot of central government's land and property assets at a specific point in time.**

CHAPTER 2

LAND & PROPERTY ASSETS OVERVIEW

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The central government estate features a diverse and extensive portfolio of land and property assets that underpin the delivery of public services, support economic development, and contribute to environmental stewardship. This chapter provides a detailed overview of assets as they stood on 31 March 2025, drawing on verified data provided by Departments and ALBs to strengthen data quality and consistency.

In this chapter, we present primary asset data⁴ across three main categories: built assets, land assets (both with and without built assets), and insights into the disposal of surplus public sector assets. Primary data is presented as an aggregated total along with a breakdown⁵ for each Department and its respective ALBs. These sections offer an initial understanding of the scale, location, and type of assets held by central government.

This chapter also explores additional indicators on utilisation as well as environmental and heritage considerations such as listed buildings, protected areas, flood-prone areas, and designated natural landscapes. Additional data is presented in various formats, including as an aggregated total, a breakdown for each Department and its associated ALBs, and distribution.

Maps included in this chapter illustrate the location and concentration of central government of assets across the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs), commonly referred to as district councils, supporting a more comprehensive understanding. While the data tables and visuals provide a quantitative backbone of this chapter, the narrative aims to contextualise the figures and highlight the strategic importance of our land and property assets.

While this report presents the most comprehensive data currently available, it is important to note that it includes NI Water's treatment plants, administrative buildings, and sewage works that have been identified during the data collection process. Given the scale and complexity of NI Water's wider asset base, the remaining assets will be examined further with a view to incorporating them into future editions of this report.

Similarly, while this report includes the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's (NIHE) working estate—that is, the buildings and land from which the organisation delivers its services—it does not, at this stage, incorporate NIHE's residential housing stock or its commercial property portfolio. Given the scale and diversity of NIHE's wider asset base, additional asset categories will be examined further with the intention of incorporating them into future editions of this report.

Furthermore, whilst the majority of assets falling within the Department of Health (DoH) remit have now been mapped, not all elements of the Departmental Retained Estate (i.e. core assets) have been captured. DoH continues to collaborate with the Department of Finance to map the remaining DoH estate, with full coverage to be reflected in the next report.

⁴A full glossary and list of data definitions is provided in Appendix B

⁵Tables throughout the report include rounded figures for ease of understanding

Primary Data on Central Government Land & Property Assets

Built Assets

Built assets are the places where public services are delivered — from offices and schools to hospitals and depots. Each built asset helps us understand the scale and type of property used across central government. Some sites, like hospitals or schools, may include multiple built assets, each recorded separately. Knowing what built assets we have, and where they are, helps us to plan better, reduce costs, and make sure our spaces are fit for purpose.

The estate comprises 9,839 unique buildings, representing the number of individual buildings used across central government.

This report, however, takes a more detailed approach by examining every individual asset separately. For example, a single multi-occupancy site may appear numerous times where it contains different organisations or distinct functional areas. A hospital that may previously have been recorded as one single asset is split into every individual building, warehouse, boiler house that makes up the site.

This level of detail is intentional: it reflects how buildings and assets are used and provides the granularity required for effective strategic planning and provides a more consistent and comprehensive view of the estate.

Accordingly, this section presents an overview of the **12,678 built assets**, providing insight into the scale and distribution of built infrastructure across central government. The data helps inform decisions about investment, maintenance, and modernisation, and supports efforts to improve operational efficiency and sustainability.

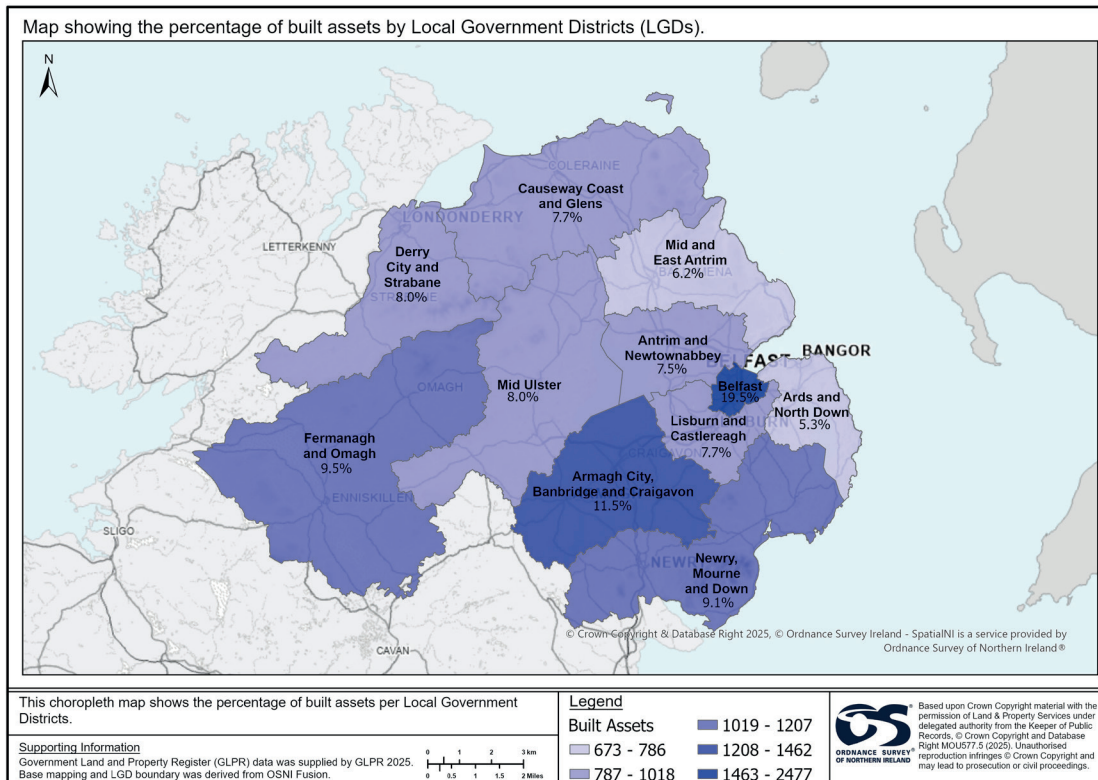
Table 1: Built assets by core Department and ALBs

Department	Core Dept. Built Assets	ALB Built Assets	Total Built Assets
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	727	547	1,274
Department for Communities (DfC)	334	231	565
Department for the Economy (DfE)	27	232	259
Department of Education (DE)	20	6,218	6,238
Department of Finance (DoF)	319	—	319
Department of Health (DoH)	57	2,363	2,420
Department for Infrastructure (DfI) ⁸	1,074	328	1,402
Department of Justice (DoJ) excl. PSNI & Prisons	122	—	122
The Executive Office (TEO)	39	40	79
Total	2,719	9,959	12,678

⁸NI Water's complete land and property asset base is not fully reflected in the provided data

Table 1 provides a breakdown of built assets by core and ALB per Department. A built asset refers to any property that a Department or ALB has oversight of—whether through ownership, leaseholding, or sponsorship. For example, DE sponsors schools and their management boards, which accounts for its high number of built assets. Similarly, the figures for DoH reflect its extensive responsibilities across the health and social care sector.

Map 1: Percentage of all built assets per LGD



Map 1 illustrates the geospatial distribution of built assets across each LGD. The data shows a strong concentration in urban areas such as **Belfast City Council**, reflecting its dense infrastructure and population, while larger rural districts display a more dispersed pattern due to their extensive land area.

Land Assets

Land assets include all land owned, leased, occupied, or overseen by Departments and ALBs, whether or not it contains built structures. Understanding this full footprint helps inform decisions about how land is used, protected, or repurposed.

This section provides an overview of **approximately 98,743 hectares of land**, highlighting its scale, location, and type across Departments and ALBs. By examining the full extent of land holdings, we can better understand how space is being used, where opportunities might exist for optimisation or repurposing, and how land assets contribute to wider priorities such as sustainability and regeneration.

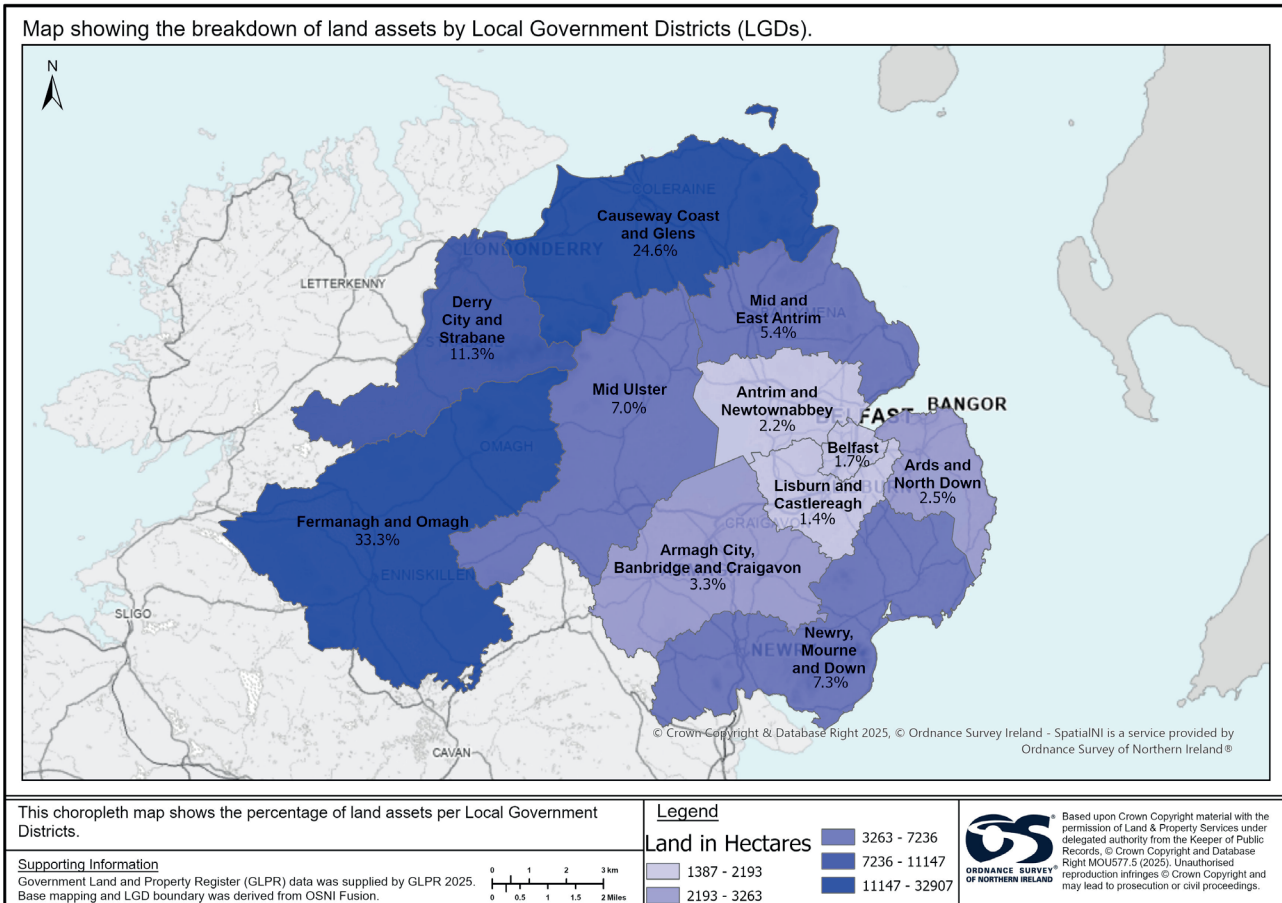
Table 2 presents a breakdown of the total area of land assets by Department, along with their respective percentage share of the overall central government footprint. **DAERA has oversight of the largest proportion of land assets**, primarily due to its extensive holdings and those managed by the Forestry Service.

Table 2: Land assets (Ha) by Department (incl. ALBs)

Department (Including ALBs)	Land Assets (Ha)	% of Total Land Assets
Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA)	89,558	90.7%
Department for Communities (DfC)	1,629	1.6%
Department for the Economy (DfE)	1,257	1.3%
Department of Education (DE)	4,052	4.1%
Department of Finance (DoF)	279	0.3%
Department of Health (DoH)	1,148	1.2%
Department for Infrastructure (DfI)	519	0.5%
Department of Justice (DoJ) excl. PSNI & Prisons	153	0.2%
The Executive Office (TEO)	148	0.2%
Total	98,743	100%

Map 2 demonstrates the distribution of land assets across LGDs, with a **notable concentration in the northern and western areas**. In contrast, more urban districts such as Belfast City, Antrim and Newtownabbey, and Lisburn and Castlereagh display a smaller share, reflecting their limited land availability and higher development density.

Map 2: Percentage of land assets (Ha) per LGD



Land With Built Assets

This is land that has built assets on it — like schools, offices, or health centres. It's important to know how much land is joined to built assets, as this helps us manage space more efficiently and plan for future needs. It also supports decisions about maintenance, investment, and sustainability.

This section provides an overview of **approximately 16,021 hectares of land with built assets**, offering insight into holdings across central government. By isolating these areas, we gain a clearer picture of how much of our overall estate is tied to built assets. This can help identify opportunities for optimisation, environmental enhancement, or future development, while supporting wider priorities such as sustainability, biodiversity, and regeneration.

Table 3: Land assets (Ha) with built assets by core Department and ALBs

Department	Core Dept. Land (Ha) with Built Assets	ALB Land (Ha) with Built Assets	Total Land (Ha) with Built Assets
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	8,927	105	9,032
Department for Communities (DfC)	481	102	583
Department for the Economy (DfE)	1	1,022	1,023
Department of Education (DE)	9	3,585	3,594
Department of Finance (DoF)	237	—	237
Department of Health (DoH)	9	901	910
Department for Infrastructure (DfI)	380	67	447
Department of Justice (DoJ) excl. PSNI & Prisons	141	4	145
The Executive Office (TEO)	10	40	50
Total	10,195	5,826	16,021

Table 3 presents a breakdown of land which contains built assets, categorised by Department – core and ALB. It highlights that **land with built assets represents a relatively small proportion, at approximately 16%**, of the overall land area that is owned, leased, occupied, used, or overseen by central government.

DAERA holds the largest quantity of land with built assets; however, this is consistent with their extensive land holdings and represents only around 10% of their total land use, including assets they oversee.

Land Without Built Assets

This is land that doesn't have built assets — however that does not mean it is empty or unused. Some of this land may be used as an operational asset such as transport, water management, or environmental purposes. Understanding this helps us protect natural resources, assess development potential, and support wider government goals like sustainability and regeneration.

This section provides an overview of **approximately 82,722 hectares of land without built assets**, illustrating the extent and distribution of these holdings across Departments and ALBs. Understanding this component of our land portfolio helps clarify how land is allocated and used, supporting informed decisions on stewardship, environmental management, and alignment with wider priorities such as sustainability and biodiversity.

Table 4: Land assets (Ha) without built assets by core Department and ALBs

Department	Core Dept. Land (Ha) without Built Assets	ALB Land (Ha) without Built Assets	Total Land (Ha) without Built Assets
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	80,089	444	80,533
Department for Communities (DfC)	1,046	1	1,047
Department for the Economy (DfE)	—	235	235
Department of Education (DE)	294	164	458
Department of Finance (DoF)	42	—	42
Department of Health (DoH)	1	235	236
Department for Infrastructure (DfI)	61	8	69
Department of Justice (DoJ) excl. PSNI & Prisons	5	—	5
The Executive Office (TEO)	37	60	97
Total	81,575	1,147	82,722

Table 4 provides a breakdown of land assets without built structures, including core Departments and their ALBs. While this information is valuable, it should be considered alongside the Land Use data to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Assets

The disposal of surplus assets is a key enabler of a more efficient and sustainable asset base. By releasing surplus assets, Departments and their ALBs can reduce costs, minimise environmental impact, and unlock capital for reinvestment. Disposals also support wider policy goals, including regeneration, housing delivery, and the transition to net zero.

While disposal is an important mechanism for achieving efficiency, it is only one part of a broader, holistic approach to asset management. The approach extends beyond selling surplus properties—it includes **repurposing, reimagining, and redistributing assets to deliver long-term value**. This reflects recognised best practice and aligns with guidance from professional bodies which emphasises that modern asset management strategies must adapt to sustainability pressures, fiscal constraints, and evolving service delivery models.

In June 2025, Department of Finance published a refreshed Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland Policy (June 2025)⁹, providing **a comprehensive framework that strengthens governance and transparency** in how surplus public sector land and property assets are managed.

This updated policy further enhances the requirements and standards governing the treatment of public sector assets. It introduces **clearer processes, robust checks, and improved guidance** to ensure that every disposal decision protects the public purse, delivers value for money, and supports the Northern Ireland Executive's long-term vision for a fit-for-purpose, sustainable estate.

The refreshed policy acknowledges that public sector assets can be complex. While some assets may appear surplus, declaring them as such is not always straightforward due to a range of issues, including **historic title issues, planning constraints and operational considerations**. The policy provides guidance to navigate these complexities, ensuring decisions are well documented, transparent, and compliant with Managing Public Money NI and other statutory obligations.

⁹<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/disposal-surplus-public-sector-assets>

Table 5: Disposal of surplus central government assets through D1 process 2020 – 25¹⁰

Year	Open Market Sales	Internal Market sales	Sale to former owner or adjoining owner	Total Sales	Total Revenue Generated
1st April 20 – 31st March 21	22	17	42	81	£9,373,878
1st April 21 – 31st March 22	20	14	54	88	£15,036,960
1st April 22 – 31st March 23	17	27	57	101	£8,009,440
1st April 23 – 31st March 24	12	12	62	86	£6,699,315
1st April 24 – 31st March 25	18	12	28	58	£10,684,150
Totals	89	82	243	414	£49,803,743
Sales Type as % of Total Sales	21%	20%	59%		
Average Days to Complete	722	766	505		

Table 5¹¹ outlines the volume of **asset disposals** over the past five years, the total revenue generated for Departments and ALBs, and the average time taken to complete each sale. In the five-year period a total of **414 disposals took place which generated approximately £50m.**

Table 5 also presents a detailed classification of disposal types, demonstrating that many transactions are not subject to internal circulation or open market exposure. These **disposals typically comprise small parcels of land that hold negligible market value** beyond their potential utility to former or adjoining owners.

The nature of disposal sales varies considerably, reflecting the diverse and often complex circumstances surrounding each transaction. Furthermore, **the disposal of public sector assets is generally insulated from conventional market dynamics**, contributing to extended timelines. As a consequence of these contributing factors, the average time required for completion during the five-year reporting period has ranged from approximately 500 days to nearly 800 days.

¹⁰Disposal figures correct at time of writing; however, they may change where a disposal occurs which is only confirmed to LPS at a later date

¹¹Only those NIHE assets that were declared surplus and subsequently managed via the D1 process are included

Table 6: Summary of core Department and ALB disposals through D1 process 2023-25

Department	Departmental Breakdown	Total no. of disposals 1/4/23 – 31/3/24	Total no. of disposals 1/4/24- 31/3/25	Total Revenue Generated
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural	Core Dept ALBs	— —	1 —	£430,000 —
Department for Communities (DfC)	Core Dept ALBs	2 44	— 20	£438,500 £1,913,501
Department for the Economy (DfE)	Core Dept ALBs	— 2	— —	— £2,055,000
Department of Education (DE)	Core Dept ALBs	— 3	— 1	— £2,343,000
Department of Finance (DoF)	Core Dept ALBs	1 —	4 —	£6,751,000 —
Department of Health (DoH)	Core Dept ALBs	— 1	— 1	— £370,000
Department for Infrastructure (DfI)	Core Dept ALBs	32 —	30 —	£2,016,930 —
Department of Justice (DoJ) (incl. PSNI)	Core Dept ALBs	1 —	— 1	£640,534 £300,000
The Executive Office (TEO)	Core Dept ALBs	— —	— —	— —
	Total	86	58	£17,258,465

Table 6 highlights that, from April 2023 to March 2025, **a total of 144 disposals were completed across Departments and ALBs**. Most disposals were undertaken by the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure, primarily involving land parcels of less than 0.5 hectares.

Focused Case Studies – Disposal of Public Sector Assets

Open Market



The highest-value disposal recorded during the reporting period was the sale of **Netherleigh House**, situated on Massey Avenue in Belfast. This transaction, overseen by Department of Finance, **achieved a final sale price of £4.9 million** on the open market.

Marketing materials highlight the substantial scale of the property, with Netherleigh House — a Grade B1 listed building — serving as the focal point. The site also included a two-storey office building dating from the 1970s along with associated car parking and grounds.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT)



Department of Finance also instructed the disposal of 43/47 Falls Road, Belfast during this reporting period, through a CAT to the West Belfast Partnership.

The CAT process supports third sector organisations to acquire surplus public sector assets, thereby **enhancing their capacity to provide services that benefit local communities**. The property is now used as offices for a community-based organisation.

Additional Data on Central Government Land & Property Assets

This section presents additional indicators relating to central government land and property assets, including environmental and heritage considerations such as listed buildings and protected areas.

While these indicators provide valuable insights, work is ongoing to centralise a range of data currently collected by individual Departments and ALBs. To enhance external transparency, it is intended that these additional indicators will be incorporated into future editions of this report.

Green, Climate Action and Sustainability

The central government estate has a vital role to play in supporting Northern Ireland's climate and environmental ambitions. This section examines some of the sustainability characteristics which apply, including the presence of listed buildings, flood-prone areas and protected areas, including designated natural landscapes such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Protection Areas.

Understanding the environmental context of land and property assets helps ensure that decisions about development, maintenance, and disposal are made responsibly. It also supports efforts to protect heritage, enhance biodiversity, and build climate resilience.

Listed Buildings

Listed buildings¹² are protected because they are historically or architecturally important. They range from grand landmarks to small, everyday structures. Listing ensures these buildings are preserved and respected. Managing changes to listed buildings requires careful consideration, as any alteration that may affect their special character is subject to statutory planning approval.

This section outlines the number and distribution of listed built assets held by central government. It highlights the importance of preserving these assets while ensuring they remain functional and accessible. These assets also offer unique potential for adaptive reuse, community engagement, and tourism.

In total, across Northern Ireland, there are 9,100 listed buildings. As Table 7 details, central government owns, occupies, uses, or oversees **651 listed built assets**.

Table 7: Listed Built Assets per LGD

Local Government District	Listed Built Assets
Antrim and Newtownabbey	36
Ards and North Down	44
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	53
Belfast City Council	204
Causeway Coast and Glens	49
Derry City and Strabane	79
Fermanagh and Omagh	56
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	36
Mid and East Antrim	25
Mid Ulster	23
Newry, Mourne and Down	46
Total	651

¹²<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/listed-buildings>

Table 7 indicates that urban areas such as Belfast City and Derry City and Strabane account for a significant share of listed built assets, reflecting their historic development and architectural heritage. In contrast, more rural districts have smaller proportions, consistent with their less densely built environments.

Focused Case Studies – Listed Built Assets

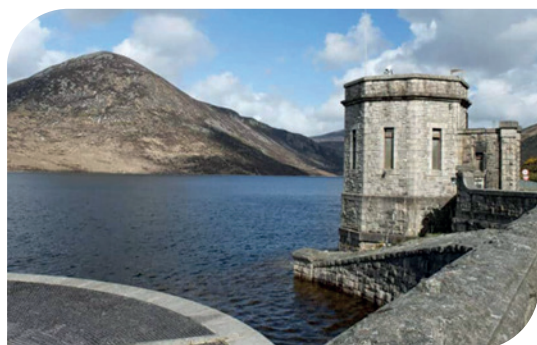
Enniskillen Castle



Enniskillen Castle, located in County Fermanagh, **dates back to the 1420s**. Strategically positioned on the banks of the River Erne, it originally served as a defensive stronghold and later evolved into an important military barracks. In the early 17th century, the distinctive Watergate, with its twin turrets, was added, becoming one of the site's most recognisable features.

The Old Castle Barracks are Grade B / B1-listed, reflecting their architectural and historic importance. The Castle Complex is a State Care site and today **operates as a major heritage attraction**, housing both the Fermanagh County Museum and Inniskillings Museum.

Valve Tower House



The Valve Tower House is a distinctive granite structure situated at the Silent Valley Reservoir. Built in 1932, it is just one of several listed buildings and structures that Northern Ireland Water is responsible for on this site.

A Grade B1-listed building, **it serves as a control point for Northern Ireland Water in regulating the flow of water from the reservoir**. Situated against the picturesque background of the Mourne Mountains, it is another example of the diverse portfolio of central government assets.

Land Use

Land use indicates how land is being used — whether for farming, housing, or recreation. Accurate land use data helps central government make better decisions about planning, transport, housing, and sustainability. It also supports long-term goals like protecting the environment and improving quality of life.

Land Use data¹³ can play a key role in assessing changes over time and can support policy development and decision-making across areas such as planning, environmental modelling, land regeneration, housing, net zero, and biodiversity.

Table 8: Land Use classification data in relation to land without built assets

Primary Land Use	Land Without Built Assets
Agriculture and Fisheries	8,464
Community Services	3
Conservation	576
Forestry	8,335
Industry and Business	25
Minerals	21
Mixed Use Land	6
Recreation and Leisure	61,710
Residential	97
Retail	2
Semi-Natural Areas (cliff, dunes, marsh and beach)	1,244
Transport	259
Unknown ¹⁴	1,921
Utilities and Infrastructure	59
Total	82,722

As shown in Table 8, Recreation and Leisure, which primarily includes publicly accessible amenities, accounts for nearly 62,000 hectares of land without built assets—approximately 75% of the total.

Agriculture and Fisheries is the second most common land use without buildings, accounting for just over 10% of the total. It encompasses a diverse range of areas, from orchards and heathlands to fish farms and hatcheries.

¹³The indicative Land Use dataset used was created by Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland in 2023

¹⁴Unknown includes areas where no authoritative source could be identified at the time of classification

Flood Areas

Flood areas are places at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea. Identifying these areas helps central government plan safely, protect communities, and make informed decisions about land use and building development. It also supports climate resilience and emergency preparations.

This section identifies the extent of flood risk¹⁵ across central government land and property assets, helping to plan appropriately for maintenance, development, and emergency preparedness.

The Q100cc flood extent represents areas at medium probability flood risk, with a 1% annual chance of flooding during a river event, adjusted for the impact of changes to the climate. “Q100” indicates a 1-in-100-year event, while “cc” reflects an allowance for increased peak flows due to predicted changes to the climate. This modelling provides a more conservative estimate of flood risk.

Table 9 outlines the number of central government assets located within these Q100cc zones, highlighting exposure and informing resilience planning.

Table 9: Assets within flood-prone areas

Asset Type	Assets within Q100cc Flood	% of Total Assets
Built Assets	1,714	13.5%
Land Assets (Ha)	5,792	5.9%

Table 9 highlights that the central government estate includes a total of 1,714 built assets located within flood-prone areas, representing 13.5% of all built assets for which central government is responsible. Being situated in such areas presents Asset Owners with additional risks, including emergency planning requirements and potential repair costs.

The table also shows that 5,792 hectares of land—5.9% of the total central government landholding—is intersected by flood-prone areas. This includes land containing built assets, meaning that flooding could potentially negatively impact service access and delivery.

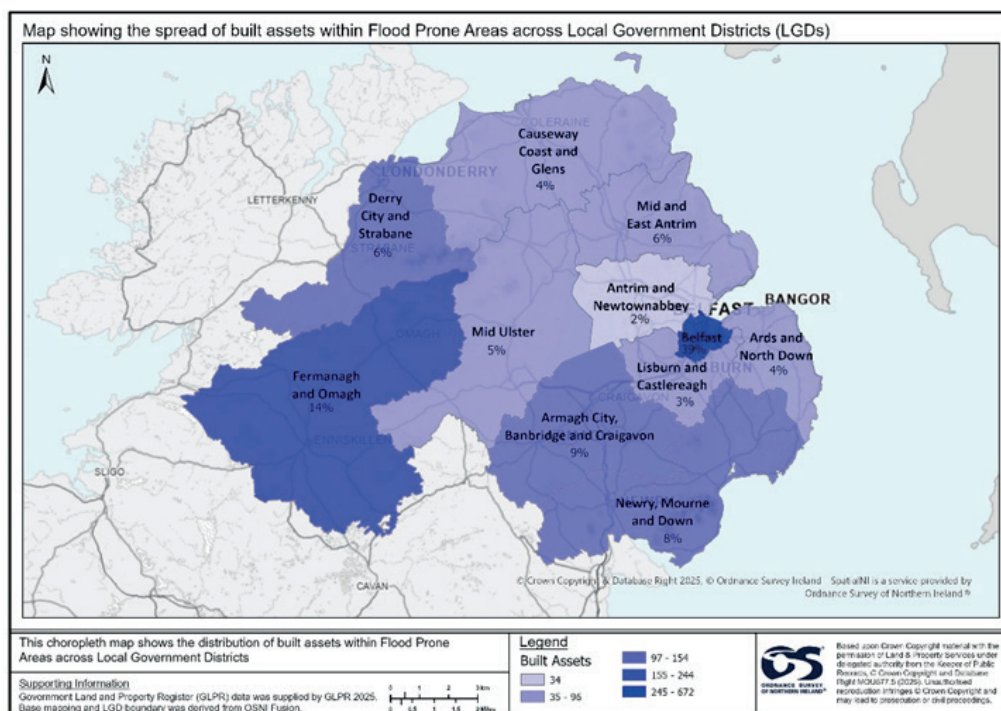
¹⁵<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/rivers-and-flooding>

Table 10: Assets within flood-prone areas per LGD

Local Government District	Built Assets within Q100cc	Land Assets (Ha) within Q100cc Flood
Antrim and Newtownabbey	34	351
Ards and North Down	66	127
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	154	534
Belfast City Council	672	769
Causeway Coast and Glens	68	1,501
Derry City and Strabane	109	130
Fermanagh and Omagh	244	1,297
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	54	163
Mid and East Antrim	96	380
Mid Ulster	75	125
Newry, Mourne and Down	142	415
Total	1,714	5,792

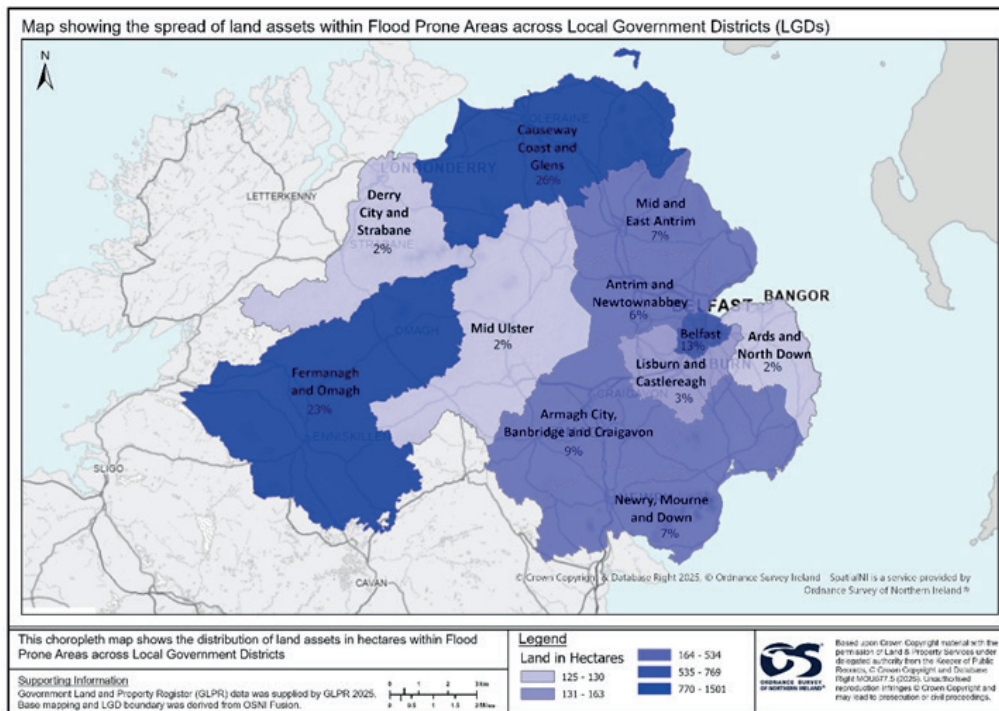
Table 10 outlines the number of central government built assets and land areas intersecting flood-prone zones across LGDs. **Urban districts** such as Belfast City show notable exposure due to their location on low-lying land near the Lough, while larger **rural districts** like Causeway Coast & Glens and Fermanagh & Omagh have extensive land intersecting flood-prone areas, reflecting their size and natural landscape.

Map 3: Built assets within flood-prone areas per LGD



Map 3 illustrates the geographical distribution of central government built assets located in areas identified as flood-prone. The pattern highlights exposure in both urban and rural contexts, providing insight into potential risk zones for asset management and resilience planning.

Map 4: Land assets within flood-prone areas per LGD



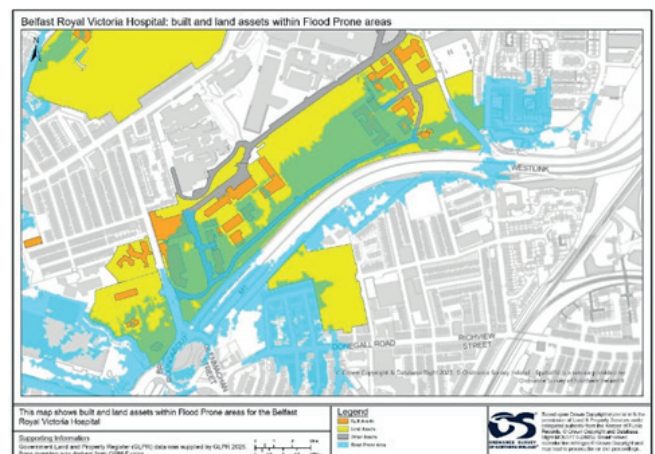
Map 4 illustrates the geographical distribution of central government land intersecting flood-prone zones across LGDs. The pattern shows significant exposure in some rural districts, reflecting their extensive land holdings and natural landscapes, which include river systems and low-lying terrain.

Focused Case Study – Flood-prone Areas

Royal Victoria Hospital

The Royal Victoria Hospital is an example of a critical central government asset that provides 24/7 essential services to citizens. The hospital treats more than 80,000 people as inpatients and 350,000 people as outpatients every year¹⁶.

The map shows the **assets around the Royal Victoria Hospital that fall within a flood-prone area**. The areas in brown show the built assets, for example, the laboratories, that sit within an area prone to flooding.



The areas in green show the land parcel assets, for example, the hospital car park, that sit within an area prone to flooding.

Although the main hospital building may not be at risk of flooding, the linked built, land and other assets can have a major impact on the provision of the critical services. The map also illustrates how flooding on access routes, like the Westlink and Broadway roundabout, may have a significant influence on service delivery and access.

¹⁶<https://belfasttrust.hscni.net/hospitals/rvh/>

Protected Areas

Protected Areas are special places that are protected for their natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural value. These areas are important for tourism, wellbeing, and conservation. Knowing where they are helps central government manage development responsibly and protect these landscapes for future generations.

This section provides insight into the number and location of central government assets situated within the following types of Protected Areas:

- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)¹⁷** - AONBs are designated for their distinctive character and scenic importance. Any intervention must respect visual integrity and avoid adverse impacts on landscape quality. Restrictions typically include limits on large-scale development and requirements for sympathetic design and materials.
- **Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)¹⁸** - ASSIs protect sites of unique geological or biological significance. Management here demands strict adherence to conservation guidelines, with limitations on construction, drainage, or land alteration. Consent processes are rigorous, reflecting the scientific importance of these areas.
- **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)¹⁹** - Areas designated for the protection of important habitats and species. They help conserve biodiversity and form part of a wider network of protected sites across Northern Ireland, including coastal, marine, and upland environments.
- **Special Protection Areas (SPA)²⁰** - SPAs safeguard habitats critical for rare and migratory bird species. Activities within or near SPAs often require ecological assessments and mitigation measures to prevent disturbance. Permissions are tightly controlled to ensure compliance with conservation objectives.

These designations are essential for environmental stewardship but present challenges for Asset Owners. They **require early engagement with conservation authorities, robust planning, and often additional time and cost** to secure permissions. By integrating these considerations into asset strategies, central government can help to meet its sustainability goals while respecting the natural and scientific heritage of Northern Ireland.

¹⁷<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/areas-outstanding-natural-beauty>

¹⁸<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/areas-special-scientific-interest>

¹⁹<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/special-areas-conservation>

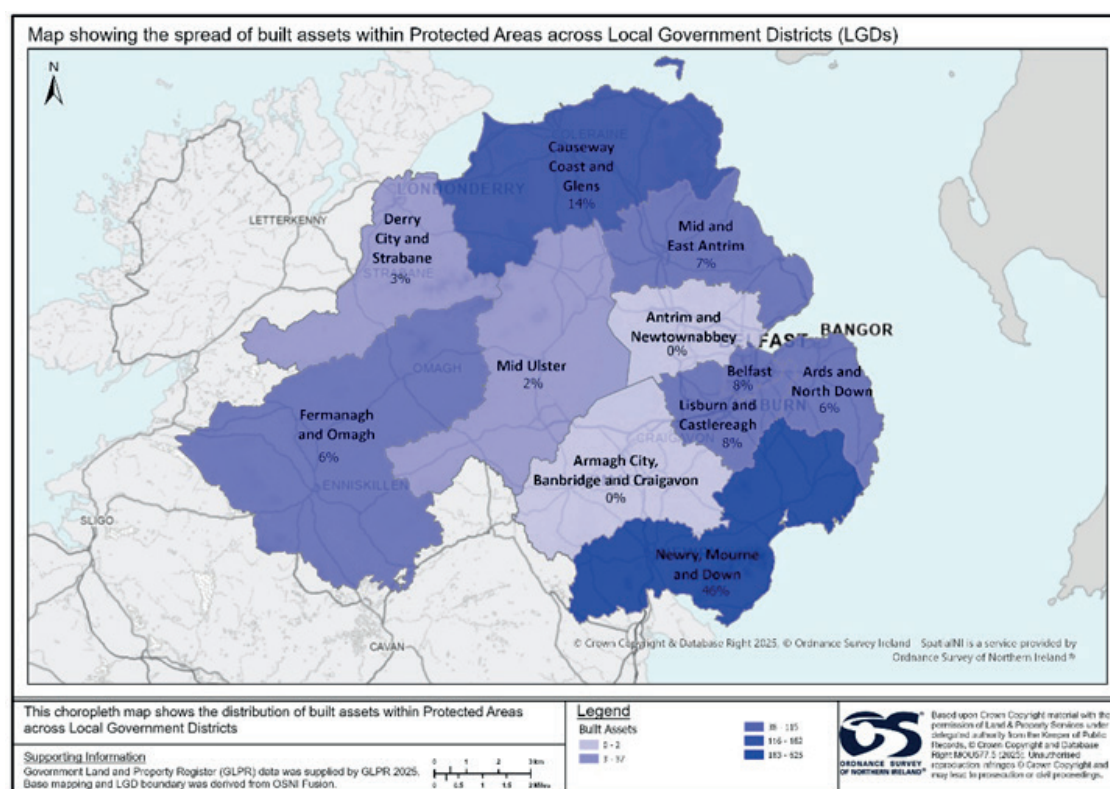
²⁰<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/special-protection-areas>

Table 11: Assets within Protected Areas

Protected Area	Built Assets Within	Land (Ha) Assets Within
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	1,337	35,416
Areas of Special Scientific Interest	21	31,696
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	6	18,003
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	10	22,472
Combined Total²¹	1,352	57,231

Table 11 helps to illustrate that only 11% of all built assets are located within at least one of the four Protected Areas. In contrast, 58% of all land assets fall within at least one of these Protected Areas.

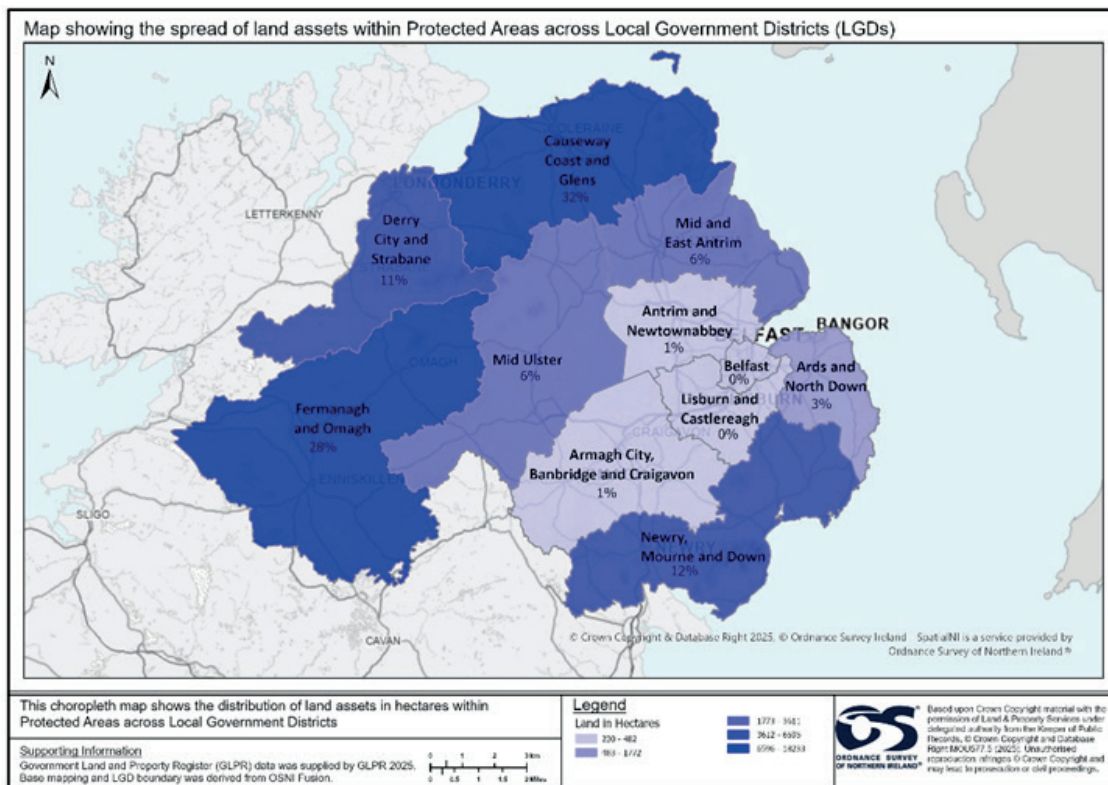
Map 5: Built assets within Protected Areas per LGD



Map 5 illustrates the distribution of central government built assets located within designated Protected Areas across LGDs. The pattern shows a strong presence in districts with significant natural and heritage sites, **reflecting the intersection of government infrastructure with conservation zones**, while some urban districts have little or no overlap due to their developed character.

²²A single built or land asset may sit within multiple Protected Areas

Map 6: Land assets within Protected Areas per LGD



Map 6 illustrates the **influence of natural landscapes and conservation zones**, with rural districts showing greater overlap due to their extensive land holdings, while highly urbanised areas have **minimal presence** within Protected Areas.

CHAPTER 3

THEMATIC CASE STUDIES

CHAPTER 3 THEMATIC CASE STUDIES

To bring the data to life and showcase the positive impact of strategic asset management, this chapter includes a series of case studies, aligned with the overarching themes of repurposing, reimagining and redistributing assets to optimise their value.

Each of the six subcategories is presented as a standalone feature within the chapter, supported by photographs and narrative summaries. These examples demonstrate innovation, collaboration, and leadership in areas such as sustainability, climate resilience, heritage conservation, and support for the natural environment.

Repurposing – Strategic Support for Communities and Services

Repurposing underused assets enhances public value by adapting them to meet changing service needs. From converting offices into community hubs to reusing surplus buildings, this approach promotes sustainability, reduces waste, and supports modern service delivery.

The NI Regional War Rooms in Belfast, a Grade B1 listed Cold War-era bunker, was declared surplus by the Department of Justice and is now being repurposed by the Department for Communities as the new archive store for the Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland. Originally built to withstand nuclear attack, its secure, climate-stable structure makes it ideal for archival preservation. Refurbishment began in early 2025, with completion expected by February 2026, balancing heritage conservation with sustainable reuse.

In 2025, TEO invested in an 18-month vibrant, varied, and inclusive anchor events programme to showcase the Ebrington site and attract both local visitors and those from further afield. In 2027, the new Derry/Londonderry North Atlantic (DNA) Museum will also open its doors, further enhancing the Ebrington visitor offering. Between September 2024 and December 2025, Ebrington welcomed more than 150,000 visitors, reinforcing its status as a shared and inclusive space for all.

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust repurposed underutilised space at Ulster Hospital to create an Urgent Care Centre adjacent to the Emergency Department and a MacMillian Cancer Services Unit. This data-driven project optimised space utilisation, avoided the need for new construction, and enhanced clinical efficiency through strategic fitout and adjacency planning.



Ebrington Site,
Source The Executive Office



MacMillian Cancer Unit,
Source South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust



War room bunker,
Source Department for Communities

Repurposing – Strategic Support for the Natural Environment

Repurposing public assets isn't limited to buildings and infrastructure—it can also extend to the natural environment, transforming land and resources into drivers of sustainability and resilience. By integrating environmental considerations into asset management strategies, Departments can unlock long-term value, reduce ecological risk, and align with climate and biodiversity commitments. Repurposing underutilised land for initiatives such as habitat restoration, native planting, and conservation projects demonstrates how central government estates can deliver co-benefits for communities, ecosystems, and future generations. This approach ensures that public assets are not only functional but also contribute positively to environmental stewardship and national climate goals.

NI Water, in collaboration with Forest Service, has demonstrated proactive asset management by repurposing publicly owned land at Lough Bradan from degraded conifer forestry to restored peatland. Building on lessons from previous projects, the initiative involved negotiating lease adjustments and implementing measures such as drain blocking, bunding, and tree clearance to improve hydrology, biodiversity, and carbon storage. This strategic approach not only enhances ecosystem services like water quality, flood attenuation, and habitat restoration but also aligns with long-term sustainability goals, turning underperforming assets into valuable natural resources that support drinking water supply and climate resilience.

Maghaberry Prison demonstrates proactive land management by protecting endangered species through habitat preservation. A 4.8-hectare Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) was established within the prison grounds to support breeding populations of Lapwings, one of the UK's most endangered birds. The site's secure, predator-free environment and tailored habitat management—developed in partnership with Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency—highlight how central government land assets can be leveraged to enhance biodiversity and support national conservation priorities.



Endangered Lapwing Bird,
Source Northern Ireland Prison Service



Reimagining – Strategic Modernisation

Effective asset management of central government land and property requires a balanced approach that prioritises both modernisation and conservation. As public assets age and demands on infrastructure evolve, modernising facilities ensures they remain fit for purpose, energy-efficient, and aligned with contemporary service delivery needs. At the same time, conserving historically, culturally, and environmentally significant assets safeguards public value and heritage for future generations. By integrating these dual priorities into proactive asset management strategies, central government can optimise performance, reduce long-term costs, and support sustainable development goals.

The Royal Courts of Justice (RCJ), a Grade ‘A’ listed building and the only High Court in Northern Ireland, has undergone a strategic modernisation initiative led by Northern Ireland Court and Tribunal Service. Triggered by critical infrastructure failures in 2019, the project exemplifies proactive asset management aimed at safeguarding judicial service continuity. It focuses on replacing end-of-life systems, enhancing energy efficiency, and preserving a significant heritage asset, while improving facilities for staff, judiciary, and the public. The initiative reflects a balanced approach to conservation and modernisation, ensuring statutory compliance and long-term sustainability within a complex, protected environment.

The transformation of a disused recreational hall at Newtownards Community Hospital into the Quality Innovation & Improvement Centre exemplifies the benefits of modernising existing public assets. By repurposing underutilised estate rather than constructing new facilities, the project aligned with sustainability goals, significantly reducing embodied carbon. Upgrades included replacing an outdated boilerhouse with a high-efficiency modular plant, installing zoned underfloor and space heating, and enhancing building fabric through insulation and window replacements. The result is a flexible, energy-efficient space that meets evolving organisational needs. This case highlights how strategic reinvestment in existing infrastructure supports cost-effective, sustainable, and adaptive asset management across the public estate.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service have initiated a proactive asset management approach through the modernisation and extension of Crumlin Fire Station. Through a deep retrofit approach, the project enhances operational functionality while significantly improving energy efficiency and sustainability. By exceeding statutory building standards—such as advanced insulation, airtightness, and PassivHaus-certified glazing—the scheme reduces long-term running costs and supports carbon reduction targets, aligning with the NI Energy Management Strategy. This initiative demonstrates how upgrading existing properties can deliver resilient, future-proof infrastructure that meets evolving service needs, environmental commitments, and fiscal responsibility.



Royal Courts of Justice,
Source Northern Ireland Court and Tribunal Service.



Refurbishment and Extension at Crumlin Fire Station,
Source Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

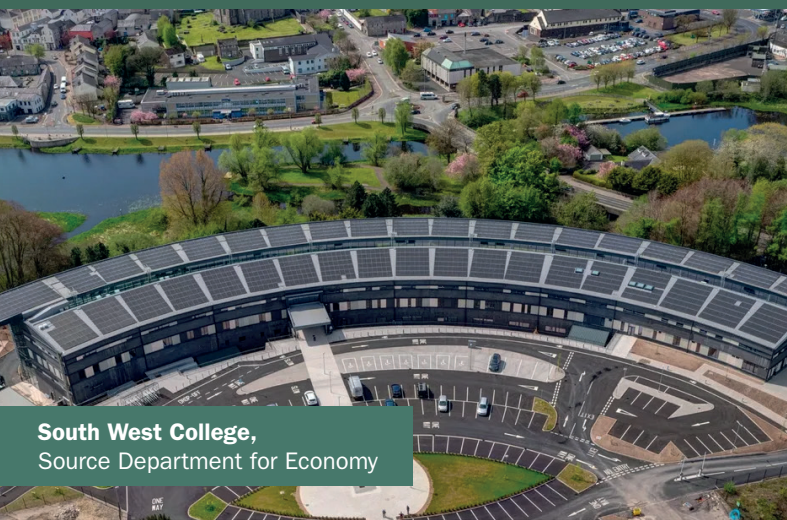
Reimagining – Strategic Innovation

Reimagining public sector assets goes beyond modernisation—it unlocks opportunities for strategic innovation that transform how services are delivered and how estates operate. By leveraging existing infrastructure in new ways, Departments can introduce cutting-edge technologies, create flexible spaces for collaboration, and embed sustainability into core operations. This approach fosters innovation ecosystems, accelerates digital transformation, and supports adaptive service models that respond to evolving societal needs. Reimagining assets is not just about upgrading buildings—it’s about rethinking their purpose to enable smarter, more resilient, and future-focused public services.

South West College is reimagining its estate through a strategic Net Zero Action Plan that embeds innovation into proactive asset management. Spanning five campuses across Tyrone and Fermanagh and serving approximately 15,000 students annually, the initiative—launched in 2024—goes beyond traditional upgrades to transform how assets deliver value. By integrating renewable energy feasibility studies on PFI-managed sites, halving single-use plastics and paper consumption, and deploying Carbon Literacy training, the college is leveraging its infrastructure as a platform for sustainability and education. Strategic innovation is evident in its approach to biodiversity and community outreach, which turns underutilised spaces into living laboratories for climate resilience. This evidence-based plan demonstrates how reimagining public assets can align operational performance with environmental leadership, positioning the college as a sector pioneer in achieving net zero by 2050 and a 30% reduction by 2030.

Department for Infrastructure’s Operations & Maintenance division is reimagining its assets through a proactive, sustainability-driven approach that aligns with Net Zero goals. By leveraging data from a comprehensive carbon baseline study, the team has implemented solar PV systems across key depots, reducing emissions and energy costs. Simultaneously, it is pioneering a NICS-wide fuel framework introducing Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) to significantly cut fleet emissions, alongside trials of electric equipment to phase out fossil fuel reliance. These integrated initiatives demonstrate how strategic asset management can transform traditional infrastructure into a platform for innovation, resilience, and long-term decarbonisation across the central government estate.

Northern Ireland Prison Service has deployed Building Management Systems and a Monitoring & Targeting platform across its estate to improve energy and water efficiency. These systems enable real-time tracking, early leak detection, and informed planning, delivering annual savings that exceed operational costs. Centralised data monitoring supports targeted interventions and enhances stakeholder confidence in sustainability efforts.



South West College,
Source Department for Economy



Installation of Solar PV at Sandyknowes Depot,
Source Department for Infrastructure

Redistributing – Strategic Transformations



College Street,
Source Department of Finance

Proactive asset management isn't just about maintaining or modernising existing properties—it can also take the form of redistributing assets to unlock strategic transformation across central government. By reallocating underused buildings and land, Departments can reduce costs, optimise space, and create opportunities for collaboration and innovation. This approach supports long-term efficiency goals, enables flexible service delivery, and aligns estates with evolving organisational priorities. Redistributing assets helps central government adapt to changing demands, improve sustainability, and deliver better outcomes for citizens by ensuring resources are deployed where they create the greatest public value.

Since 2022, Department of Finance has been working to make the NICS office estate that it manages more efficient, modern, and environmentally friendly. By 2028, the goal is to reduce the estate size by 40%, cutting down on building space, energy use, and costs. So far, 16 buildings have been released from use, saving over £3.6 million in rates and rent, and reducing energy consumption by 23%. Looking ahead to 2035, the focus will shift to upgrading the remaining offices to be more energy-efficient and better suited for modern working needs.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs is driving strategic transformation across its estate by combining modernisation with redistribution of assets. Managing over 860 buildings, the Department has implemented a long-term strategy to rationalise and repurpose underused spaces, reducing office accommodation by 46% and generating rental income. This redistribution not only optimises resources but also supports collaborative working and operational efficiency. Alongside this, a planned £265 million investment in new research and teaching facilities will ensure the estate meets top environmental standards. Energy use has dropped by 16%, cutting carbon emissions by around 3,000 tonnes through upgrades such as LED lighting, renewable energy, and cleaner heating systems, while electric vehicle chargers are being installed to enable a greener fleet. These measures reflect a proactive approach to asset management—aligning estate planning with sustainability, cost savings, and future service delivery needs.



Animal Health Science Building,
Source Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs



Netherleigh House,
Source Department of Finance

Redistributing – Strategic Energy Deployment



The management of public estates increasingly involves deploying sustainable energy solutions to enhance efficiency, resilience, and long-term value. Strategic energy deployment—such as integrating solar photovoltaic (PV) systems—transforms underutilised roof space and land into sources of clean power, reducing operational costs and supporting carbon reduction targets. By embedding renewable energy into estate strategies, Departments can future-proof public assets, strengthen energy security, and demonstrate leadership in climate action. This proactive approach aligns fiscal responsibility with environmental stewardship, ensuring that central government properties contribute to national sustainability goals while delivering measurable financial and ecological benefits.

As part of its climate change strategy, Northern Ireland Prison Service installed a PV farm at Hydebank Wood Secure College and Women’s Prison in 2024. Comprising 668 panels with a general capacity of 356kWp, the installation is projected to reduce electricity costs by approximately £60,000 annually while significantly lowering greenhouse gas emissions. This initiative exemplifies the Department of Justice’s commitment to sustainable energy use across its estate, aligning with broader objectives to reduce carbon footprints and enhance energy efficiency in public sector properties.

Causeway Hospital has installed a 1.3 MWp solar PV system, generating over 429,000 kWh between April and August 2025 and meeting up to 85% of peak summer electricity demand. The initiative is projected to save £200,000 annually, cut carbon emissions by 200 tonnes, and support long-term sustainability and energy resilience. This project exemplifies positive asset management by leveraging estate infrastructure to support environmental targets, reduce reliance on grid electricity, and future-proof healthcare delivery against climate and energy risks.



Installation of Solar PV at Causeway Hospital,
Source Northern Health and Social Care Trust



CHAPTER 4

LOOKING AHEAD

Managing land and property assets is an ongoing responsibility that requires collaboration, adaptability, and a commitment to transparency. This report is part of that journey—providing clarity on what we hold and how these assets support the delivery of public services and a range of strategic objectives. While challenges remain, particularly in gathering and maintaining accurate data, this work is vital to informed decision-making and to ensuring that public assets deliver maximum value for citizens.

Looking ahead, we plan to publish **an updated iteration of this report within three years**, again reflecting commitment to continuous improvement and increased transparency. This timeframe acknowledges that meaningful change—whether through **repurposing, reimagining, or redistribution**—takes time. It also recognises the need for sustained collaboration across central government and with external partners. This includes efforts **to centralise and incorporate additional indicators** relating to the management of our land and property assets, ensuring a more comprehensive and externally transparent view in future editions.

To support this, significant work is already underway across central government. Departments are actively revising and aligning existing plans with the **new Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) Framework**, which promotes consistency, best practice, and coherence with wider priorities. These plans will help organisations understand their asset needs, set clear objectives, and identify opportunities for optimisation and reuse. This report's granular asset-level data approach has been designed to directly support this process, ensuring that future SAMPs are informed by a consistent and robust evidence base. SAMPs also embed sustainability and social value considerations, ensuring that decisions about land and property contribute positively to communities and the environment.

There are also plans to further strengthen our proactive approach through an **updated Asset Management Strategy**. This will consolidate well-established practice across central government—deepening collaboration, enhancing transparency, and supporting a consistently strategic approach to the management of public assets. It will continue to promote **partnership working and evidence-based decision-making**, ensuring that strategic, operational, and financial objectives are balanced effectively.

The effective management of the central government estate is an established and ongoing priority. The insights in this report will continue to inform evidence-based decisions, supporting the efficient, sustainable and responsible use of land and property across central government.

APPENDIX A: OUR DATA APPROACH

Appendix A: Our Data Approach

To provide a clear and transparent overview of the land and property assets owned, leased, occupied, used or overseen by central government, this report uses two complementary reporting approaches. Each offers a different but equally important perspective on the estate.

1. Unique Buildings – 9,839

This count identifies individual buildings across the estate and records each one once, regardless of how many internal spaces, functions or occupying organisations it may contain. This aligns with how Departments often describe their estate for planning, operational and public-facing purposes.

It provides stakeholders with an intuitive sense of how many individual spaces central government uses to deliver services, while still capturing the full diversity of facilities — from larger public buildings to smaller units such as depots, warehouses and switch rooms.

2. Built Assets – 12,678

The built asset count records each individual asset separately where multi-occupancy or multiple functional areas exist, including smaller ancillary assets that may not typically appear in traditional site or building-level summaries. These assets range from very small units—such as switch rooms or school playhouses of only a few square metres—to larger buildings such as offices, depots, or warehouses.

This approach offers a more granular understanding of the estate, supporting strategic planning, maintenance decisions, investment prioritisation and analysis of service delivery pressures.

As each asset is counted individually, the figures may differ from historic departmental reporting, which has often grouped multiple structures together at a site or building-level.

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY AND DATA DEFINITIONS

Appendix B: Glossary and Data Definitions

Term	Definition
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Designated landscapes of high scenic value protected under legislation. AONBs are conserved for their natural beauty, cultural significance, and biodiversity.
Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)	Protected areas designated for their ecological or geological importance. ASSIs are legally safeguarded under the Planning Act (NI) 2011.
Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs)	ALBs are public sector organisations including Executive Agencies and non-departmental public bodies.
Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP)	SAMPs are structured plans developed by organisations to manage their land and property holdings. They align asset decisions with operational needs, financial planning, and strategic goals.
Asset Management Strategy (AMS)	An AMS guides the rationalisation, reuse, and disposal of public sector assets. It supports efficient planning, identifies surplus assets, and promotes optimal asset use.
Asset Owner	The asset owner is the public sector body that holds legal ownership of an asset. They are responsible for its management, operational use, or disposal through established processes.
Built Assets	Individual assets, each recorded separately, ranging from small ancillary units and building floors to large multi-storey facilities.
Community Asset Transfer (CAT)	CAT enables the transfer of public land or buildings to Third Sector Organisations. It supports community-led service delivery, regeneration, and local empowerment.
Conservation Areas	Designated zones where development is restricted to preserve architectural or environmental character. Assets within these areas may require special planning permissions and careful management to maintain heritage value.
Disposal	Refers to the sale or transfer of surplus assets via the D1 process, overseen by Land & Property Services (LPS). Data is derived from LPS' OSCAR system.
Draft Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2023–2027	The Draft CAP outlines Northern Ireland's roadmap to net zero by 2050. It sets sectoral targets, including for public buildings, and supports emissions reduction, energy efficiency, and climate resilience.
Flood Areas (Flood-prone areas)	Geographic zones at risk of flooding from rivers, sea, or surface water. Defined by DfI using Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP).
Internal Market	The internal market refers to the transfer of surplus assets between public bodies or to Third Sector Organisations, including via Community Asset Transfer.
Land Use	Describes how land is used (e.g. housing, farming, education). Supports planning, sustainability, and policy alignment.
Listed Buildings	Buildings protected under planning legislation due to architectural or historical significance. Any alterations require special permission from planning authorities.

Term	Definition
Local Government District (LGD)	LGDs, commonly referred to as district councils, are administrative divisions in Northern Ireland responsible for local services such as planning, waste management, and leisure.
Managing Public Money Northern Ireland	This guidance sets out principles for handling public funds, including asset management. It supports transparency, accountability, and efficient use of resources.
Northern Ireland Central Government	For the purposes of this report, this refers to the nine core NI Departments and their in-scope ALBs and agencies.
Northern Ireland Executive	The Executive is the devolved government of Northern Ireland, comprising Ministers responsible for public services and policy.
Open Market	Open market disposal involves selling surplus assets to external buyers at market value. Land & Property Services manages a framework of qualified agents to support this process.
Programme for Government (PfG)	The PfG (2024–2027) outlines the Executive’s priorities for improving society. It includes goals for economic growth, public service reform, and community wellbeing.
Sale to Adjoining Owner	Refers to disposal of small or low-value land parcels to neighbouring owners. Often initiated by the purchaser, it supports practical reuse and avoids unnecessary marketing.
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	Legally protected sites for rare or migratory bird species, designated under the Birds Directive.
Surplus Asset	A surplus asset is no longer required for operational use. Surplus status is determined by the appropriate Asset Owner.
Unique Building	This identifies individual buildings across the estate and records each one once, regardless of how many internal spaces or occupying organisations it may contain.



Department of

Finance

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