

SEA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

APPENDIX III – NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

FOR THE

WEST CORK COAST DESTINATION EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

for: **Fáilte Ireland**
88-95 Amiens Street
Dublin 1



by: **CAAS Ltd.**
1st Floor
24-26 Ormond Quay Upper
Dublin 7



APRIL 2023

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Section 1 Introduction and Terms of Reference

This is the Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Report for SEA Environmental Report for the West Cork Coast Destination Experience Development Plan (hereafter referred to as 'the Plan' or 'DEDP'). The purpose of the Environmental Report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the adoption and implementation of the Plan. The Environmental Report has been prepared as part of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process that is being undertaken by CAAS Ltd. on behalf of Fáilte Ireland.

What is an SEA?

SEA is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a proposed plan, or other strategic action, in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic, social and other considerations.

Why is it needed?

The SEA is being carried out in order to comply with the provisions of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations, as amended, and in order to contribute towards sustainable development and environmental protection and management. The output of the process is an Environmental Report that should be read in conjunction with the Plan.

How does it work?

All of the main environmental issues in the area were assembled and considered by the team who prepared the Plan. This helped them to devise a Plan that contributes towards the protection and management of environmental sensitivities. It also helped to identify wherever potential conflicts between the Plan and the environment exist and enabled these conflicts to be mitigated.

The SEA was scoped in consultation with designated environmental authorities.

What is included in the Environmental Report that accompanies the Plan?

The Environmental Report contains the following information:

- A description of the environment and the key environmental issues;
- A description and assessment of alternatives for the Plan;
- An assessment of the provisions of the Plan; and,
- Mitigation measures, which will avoid/reduce the environmental effects of implementing the Plan and will contribute towards compliance with important environmental protection legislation.

Difficulties Encountered during the SEA process

No significant difficulties were encountered in undertaking the assessment.

What happens at the end of the process?

An SEA Statement is prepared which summarises, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan.

Section 2 The Plan

2.1 Overview

The West Cork Coast DEDP is a five-year plan designed to be a roadmap for enhancing the existing West Cork¹ visitor proposition to achieve the objectives of addressing seasonality, increasing visitor numbers and spend, and increasing dwell time and visitor dispersion across the destination.

The challenge is to deliver enough memorable moments that will inspire visitors to share their experience and also encourage them to return, while providing the tourism industry with a central focus for experience development. The new destination ambition will be realised by maximising the opportunities presented by its natural and built heritage and cultural assets to develop a world class tourism destination.

The purpose of the Plan is to present the destination development themes organised into an experience development framework to be adopted as a destination action plan for the next five years. This framework will provide the context for tourism operators and stakeholders to work in partnership, create new and improve existing visitor experiences, and communicate coherent and unified stories to the visitor.

The Plan objectives are to:

- Position the West Cork Coast as a 'must visit' destination, by ensuring that local experiences are brought to life through the optimal mix of HERO and ancillary products that motivate people to visit the destination, stay overnight and spend more.
- Unlock the economic growth potential of the destination and communities through strengthening individual businesses, creating new entrepreneurial opportunities, sustaining and increasing job creation, and increasing the attractiveness of the area for other forms of economic growth.
- Improve the market mix of the destination by growing international visitors while retaining a good domestic and overseas visitor balance.
- Grow awareness of the area through an improved digital footprint.
- Support enhancement of 'sense of place' by creating the conditions that encourage international and domestic visitors to immerse themselves actively in the locale, interact with local people, and engage the senses by immersing themselves in the destination.
- Promote collaboration and partnership, support business engagement, and build lasting links between national and regional partners, local agencies and associations and local tourism experiences.
- **Protect the natural heritage and special environmental character of the region.**
- Improve access to and within the West Cork Coast, ensuring that infrastructure and traffic management systems are in place to help visitors move freely in the destination.

Implementing the Plan will involve Fáilte Ireland helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans that have been subject to environmental assessment. The Plan does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent.

The Plan is situated alongside a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for, among other things, land use development, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management.

Fáilte Ireland provides funding for sustainable tourism projects that emerge as part of specific, competitive, themed and time-bound grant schemes or as part of wider strategic partnerships. These include projects relating to land use, infrastructural development and land use activities and attractions. Reference made to such projects included in the Plan does not guarantee funding. While funding is provided to certain projects, Fáilte Ireland is not the developer.

In order to achieve funding (including promotion) for land use or infrastructural development or land use activities from Fáilte Ireland, Fáilte Ireland's stakeholders shall be required to demonstrate compliance² with measures relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management contained within the following Fáilte Ireland published documents:

¹ Focused on the area stretching from Kinsale to Ballydehob with its boundary being the R586 on the northern side and the coastline on the southern side and the inhabited islands of Cape Clear, Sherkin, Heir and Long.

² Demonstration of compliance may be supported by monitoring undertaken by the beneficiary.

- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 5 "Site Maintenance Guidelines" and other relevant measures from the Fáilte Ireland visitor and habitat management guidelines series (and any subsequent replacements); and
- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 6 "Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others" (and any subsequent replacements).

2.2 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

The Plan sits within a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for, among other things, land use development, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management. These documents have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant, and form the decision-making and consent-granting framework.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out Ireland's planning policy direction up to 2040. The NPF is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans. The RSES for the Southern Region (that includes the area to which the West Cork Coast DEDP relates) sets out objectives relating tourism development, that have been subject to environmental assessment, including those relating to: enhancing provision of tourism and leisure amenity; promoting tourism activity; developing a road network and public transport services, facilitating improved visitor access and longer dwell times; developing walking and cycling trails, opening greater accessibility to the marine and countryside environment by sustainable modes; and facilitating appropriate tourism development, including that relating to greenways, blueways and peatlands. The RSES provides a framework for the review of existing, assessed lower-tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans, which already include various provisions relating to land use, tourism and infrastructure. Such reviews will also be subject to environmental assessments.

Implementation of the West Cork Coast DEDP shall be consistent with and conform with the NPF, RSES and lower-tier land use plans, including provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been integrated into these documents including through SEA and AA processes. In order to be realised, projects included in the West cork Coast DEDP (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the West Cork Coast DEDP is not part and does not contribute towards.

Section 3 The Environmental Baseline

3.1 Introduction

The summary of the environmental baseline of the Plan area is described in this section. This baseline together with the Strategic Environmental Objectives, which are identified in Section 3.11, is used in order to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan and in order to determine appropriate monitoring measures.

3.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Plan

The likely evolution of the environment in the absence of a plan would resemble the environmental effects that are described for Alternative 1 (Business as Usual).

3.3 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

Key ecological sensitivities across the area to which the Plan relates include those relating to:

- **Rare species and habitats** protected in the designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) located within the wider West Cork Coast area;
- **Aquatic and riverine ecology** associated with the various streams, rivers and estuaries including the River Bandon, the River Argideen, the River Ilen and their estuaries; and
- **Coastal areas and marine waters and associated aquatic ecology** downstream of the area to which the Plan relates.

Land cover types for the West Cork Coast DEDP area is shown on Figure 3.2.

European sites occur along the waterways, marine and coastal areas and within and downstream of the area to which the Plan relates. These European sites comprise:

- Special Areas of Conservation³ (SACs); and
- Special Protection Areas⁴ (SPAs).

The SEA uses the same zone of influence cited in the Appropriate Assessment (AA); a 15 km buffer around the area to which the Plan relates. European sites designated within and within 15 km buffer of the area to which the Plan relates are mapped on Figure 3.1. For more detail on European sites refer to the SEA Environmental Report and AA document that accompanies the Plan.

Other ecological designations occur within and adjacent to the Plan area and these are detailed in the main SEA Environmental Report.

Existing Fáilte Ireland Environmental Monitoring

Fáilte Ireland regularly engages with environmental research that is used to make informed management decisions and produce robust guidelines to facilitate the protection of the environment. From its inception in 2014, the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) Operational Programme Monitoring Programme (undertaken to date by CAAS on behalf of Fáilte Ireland guided by relevant stakeholders) has been conducting research into the impacts of tourism on the receiving environment. On site observational surveys and ecological assessments have covered 57 locations and monitored the activities and effects of over 26,000 visitors.

³ SACs have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. The Habitats Directive seeks to establish Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the EU. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SACs to protect habitats and species, which, together with the SPAs designated under the 1979 Birds Directive, form Natura 2000. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats)(Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010.

⁴ SPAs have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the EU.

From the monitoring work it was seen that 75% of all visitor observations resulted in no identifiable effects; which highlights the feasibility of 'no impact tourism' being an achievable target.

3.4 Population and Human Health

Using the 2016 Census data, the population of the area to which the Plan relates was identified as being located within/partially within three Local Electoral Areas: Skibbereen-West Cork, Bandon-Kinsale and (partially) Bantry-West Cork⁵.

Population has the potential to interact with various environmental components. Potential interactions include:

- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and landscapes;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for wastewater treatment at the municipal level;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction;
- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality.

Human health has the potential to be impacted upon by environmental vectors (i.e. environmental components such as air, water or soil through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported so that they come into contact with human beings). Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise as a result of exposure to these vectors arising from incompatible adjacent land uses for example. These factors have been considered with regard to the description of: the baseline of each environmental component; and the identification and evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan.

The greatest health risk from radiation in Ireland is caused by radon. The presence of radon gas, a naturally occurring radioactive gas that originates from the decay of uranium in rocks and soils, occurs across the country. The number of homes within the area to which the Plan relates with radon levels above the reference level is within the normal range experienced in other locations across the country.

3.5 Soil

Brown podzolics are a dominant soil type occurring extensively in the area to which the Plan relates. Other soils types in the area to which the Plan relates include: podzolics, brown earths, alluvial soils, lithosol soils and surface and groundwater gleys. Outcropping rock is found mainly in the coastal and upland areas. There are also a number of islands scattered across the coastal waters in the west of the area to which the Plan relates.

Tidal marshes can be found along rivers and coasts which flood and drain by the tidal movement of the adjacent estuary, sea or ocean. Areas of tidal marsh occur along estuaries surrounding the area to which the Plan relates. These areas are often very sensitive to development due to ecological sensitivities.

Geological Survey of Ireland coordinates the Irish Geological Heritage Programme, which seeks to identify and select sites of geological interest within each county across the country. The audit of County Geological Sites in County Cork has not yet been completed. There are a number of potential County Geological Sites across the area to which the Plan relates. The highest concentration of these sites occurs within coastal locations in the area to which the Plan relates.

The area to which the Plan relates has a small number of locations with a history of landslide events, associated with the upland, peatland areas. The GSI have identified the area to which the Plan relates as having mainly low levels of landslide susceptibility with some areas of moderately high and high levels of landslide susceptibility mainly in the upland and coastal parts of the area to which the Plan relates.

⁵ Detailed information on the population for the area to which the Plan relates can be accessed from the *CSO – Census 2016 Small Area Population Statistics* mapping: <https://cso.maps.arcgis.com>.

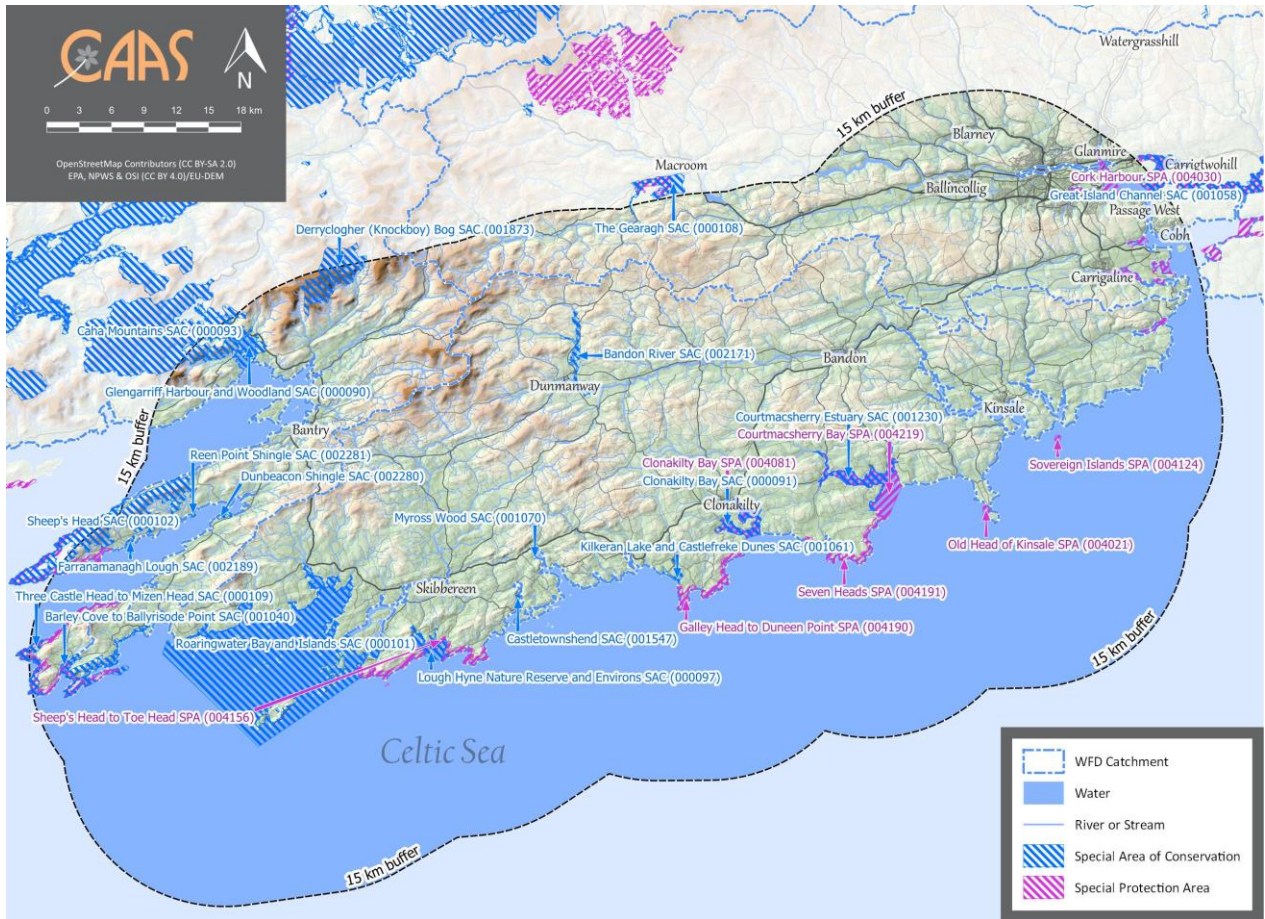


Figure 3.1 European sites within and adjacent to the area to which the Plan relates

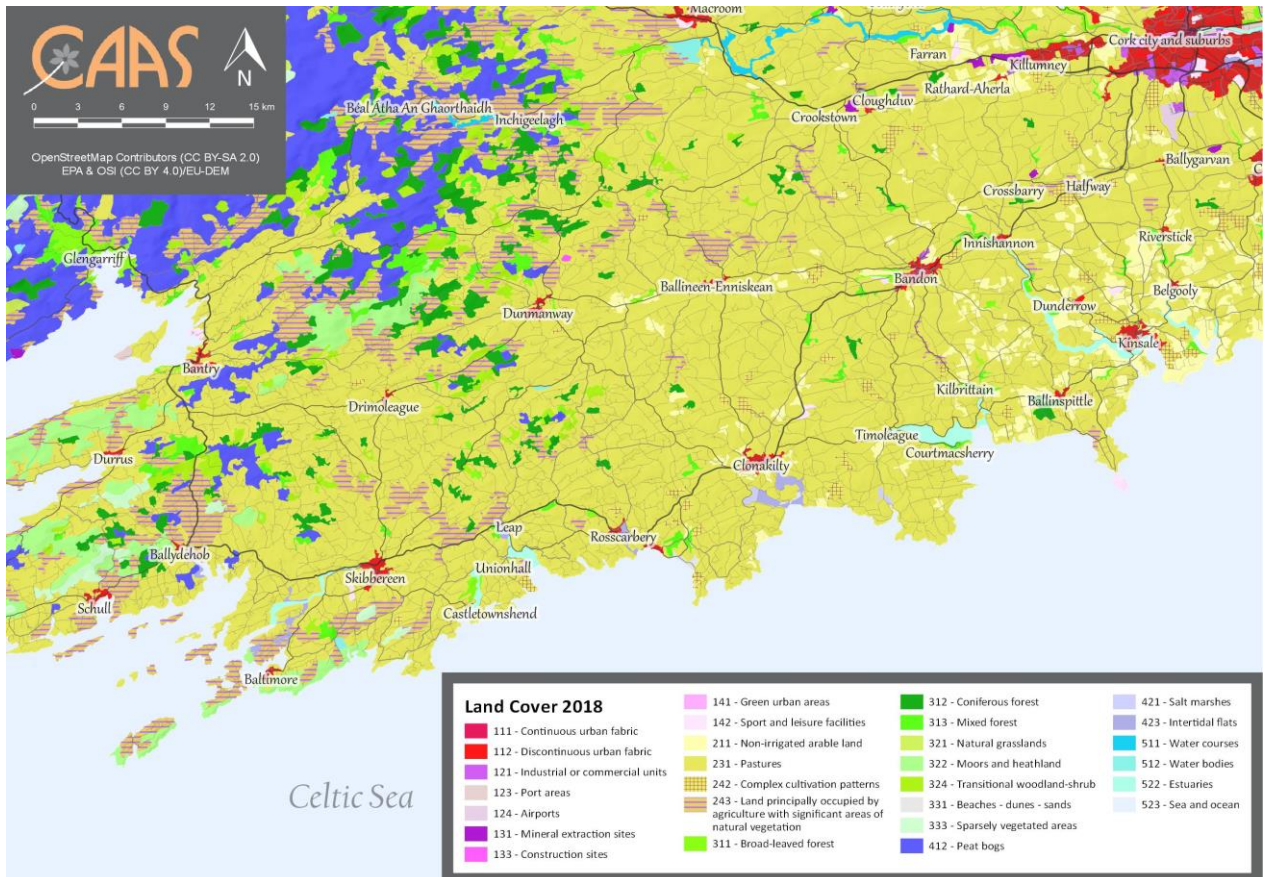


Figure 3.2 CORINE Land Cover Mapping 2018

3.6 Water

Surface and Ground Water Status

Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD). The WFD requires that all Member States implement the necessary measures to prevent deterioration of the status of all waters - surface, ground, estuarine and coastal - and protect, enhance and restore all waters with the aim of achieving *good status*.

The WFD surface water status (2013-2018)⁶ for rivers, lakes, coastal and transitional waters within and surrounding the area to which the Plan relates is shown on Figure 3.3. The main waterbodies in the area to which the Plan relates include: Clonakilty Bay, Courtmacsherry Bay, Roaringwater Bay, Kinsale Harbour, Argideen Estuary, River Bandon, River Ilen and River Lee.

The WFD status of the surface waters in the area to which the Plan relates is classified as *high*, *good* and *moderate* however, sections⁷ of rivers Bride (Lee), Clonakilty and Diny are identified as being of *poor* due to unsatisfactory ecological/biological and/or physio-chemical status. The status of lakes within the area to which the Plan relates ranges from *good* to *moderate*, however, lakes Allua and Ballin are of *poor* status due to unsatisfactory ecological/ biological and/or physio-chemical status.

The status of coastal waterbodies within and adjacent to the area to which the Plan relates ranges from *high* to *good*. The status of transitional waterbodies within and adjacent to the area to which the Plan relates ranges from *good* and *moderate*, however Argideen Estuary and Upper Bandon Estuary are of *poor* status, while Kilkeran Lake is of *bad* status, due to unsatisfactory ecological/biological and/or physio-chemical status.

There are a number of *unassigned*⁸ waterbodies within and surrounding the area to which the Plan relates. The WFD groundwater status (2013-2018) of all groundwater underlying the area to which the Plan relates is identified as being of *good* status, meeting the objectives of the WFD.

Aquifer Vulnerability

Aquifer vulnerability refers to the ease with which pollutants of various kinds can enter into groundwater. The aquifers underlying most the Plan area are generally classified as being of *High*, *Moderate* or *Low vulnerability*. Extreme vulnerability and extreme (rock at or near surface or karst) is found mainly throughout the south, west, south-east and south-west of the area to which the Plan relates and along the coastline and islands.

Flooding

Certain areas across the area to which the Plan relates are at risk from pluvial⁹ and fluvial¹⁰ flooding. Historical flooding is documented at a number of locations, including in Clonakilty Harbour and Kinsale Harbour in the south of the area to which the Plan relates.

Predictive flood risk mapping is available from the Office of Public Works (OPW) for rivers, lakes and coastal locations across the area to which the Plan relates¹¹. A number of settlements in County Cork are identified by this mapping as being at elevated risk of flooding, including: Bandon; Clonakilty; Inishannon; Dunmanaway; and Skibbereen.

⁶ The most recent data available at the time of preparation of this report before the public display. For the most up to date information refer to: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>.

⁷ As per EPA classification system (gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps).

⁸ There is a data gap relating to WFD surface water status data. Overall status is currently not assigned and the term "*unassigned status*" applies in respect of these waterbodies.

⁹ Resulting from high intensity rainfall events where run-off volume exceeds capacity of surface water network.

¹⁰ Watercourse capacity is exceeded or the channel is blocked and excess water spills from the channel onto adjacent floodplains.

¹¹ www.floodinfo.ie

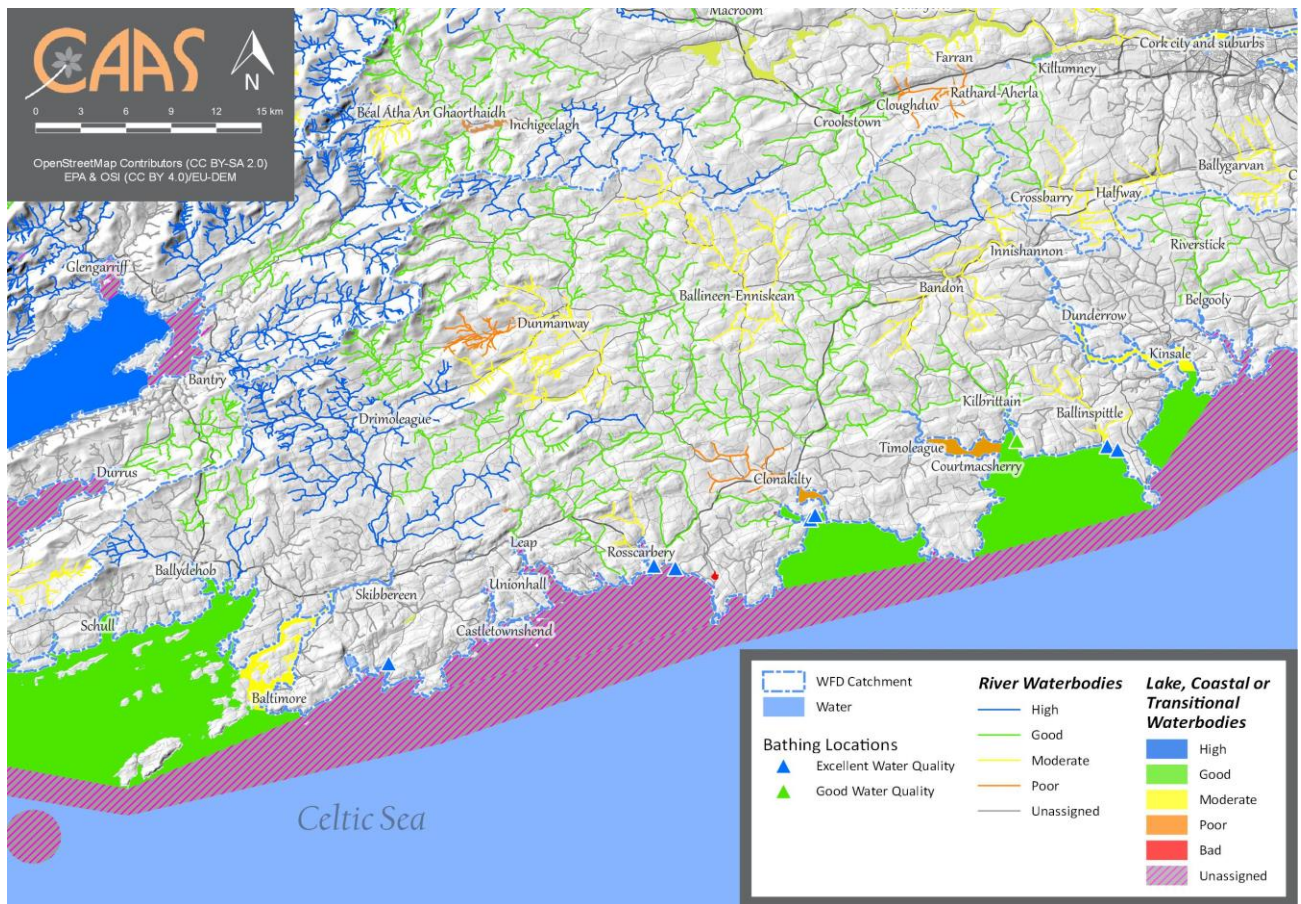


Figure 3.3 Surface Water Status (2013-2018)

3.7 Air and Climatic Factors

Various provisions relating to climatic factors have been integrated into the Plan, compliance with which will need to be demonstrated by those seeking or maintaining funding from Fáilte Ireland. Such measures include those relating to:

- Walking and cycling; and
- Contribution towards European and national objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation, taking into account a wide range of detailed measures including those relating to resilience.

Interactions with climatic factors are also present with other environmental components including water/flooding (see Section 3.6).

Total emissions of greenhouse gases by humans come from various sectors including transport, agriculture, energy industries, manufacturing combustion, industrial processes, residential developments, commercial services developments, waste management processes and fluorinated gases equipment (such as refrigeration and fire protection systems).

The National Climate Action Plan 2023 (the second annual update to Ireland's Climate Action 2019) provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting Ireland on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government and set out in the Climate Act 2021. The Plan lists the actions needed to deliver on climate targets and sets indicative ranges of emissions reductions for each sector of the economy. It will be updated periodically, to ensure alignment with legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings.

In order to apply with European Directives relating to air quality, the EPA manages the National Ambient Air Quality Network and measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants at locations across the country.

3.8 Material Assets

Wastewater

Based on the EPA's assessment of monitoring information provided by Irish Water and the enforcement activities carried out by the EPA, this report identifies urban areas with the most important environmental issues that must be addressed. There are 20 Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP) in County Cork listed as priority areas¹², where improvements are required to resolve urgent environmental issues, including Castletownshend located within the area to which the Plan relates.

The area to which the Plan relates is served by combined sewer networks, including septic tanks and sewerage treatment schemes serving agglomerations under 500 P.E. and urban WWTPs. As identified in the emerging Draft Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028, there are deficiencies in many wastewater treatment plants and public sewers in County Cork due to a legacy of underinvestment in water services. Settlements within the area to which the Plan relates with wastewater infrastructure and capacity issues identified by the Cork County Council include Skibbereen, Dunmanway and Kinsale. The most up to date Irish Water Investment Plan covers the period 2020-2024. In addition, Irish Water have developed a Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme in order to provide for growth in smaller settlements that are not otherwise provided for in the current Investment Plan, with funding of €17.9m allocated to Cork County Council for the period 2020-2024.¹³

Water Supply

Drinking water supply in the area to which the Plan relates is provided by domestic water wells, private and public water supply schemes, including the Skibbereen Regional Water Supply, Innishannon Public Water Supply, Clonakilty Public Water Supply and Dunmanway Water Supply. Settlements within the area to which the Plan relates with drinking water infrastructure and capacity issues identified by the Cork County Council include Bantry, Clonakilty and Dunmanway¹⁴. Irish Water is currently preparing a National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) to address urgent issues with the supply and demand for drinking water in Ireland over the short, medium and long term.

Under Section 58 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992, the EPA is required to collect and verify monitoring results for all water supplies in Ireland covered by the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2000. The EPA publishes their results in annual reports that are supported by Remedial Action Lists (RALs). The RAL identifies water supplies that are not in compliance with the Regulations mentioned above. None of the public water supply schemes serving the area to which the Plan relates are listed on the most recent EPA Remedial Action List (Q4 of 2021).

Public Assets and Infrastructure

Clonakilty is one of the largest settlements in the area to which the Plan relates, designated a "Key Town" by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region. Key Towns are strategically located urban centres with accessibility and significant influence in a sub-regional context. Clonakilty's strategic attributes include a key sub regional role in network of strong towns, significant employment role with potential enhanced role in combination with other West Cork settlements such as Skibbereen and Bantry as service centres for West Cork.

The area to which the Plan relates is served by bus, cycle network, regional and strategic roads and Cork International Airport, with flights to Dublin, UK and Europe. Ferry services operate from Ringnaskiddy, with routes to France. The ports and harbours located across the area to which the Plan relates have many functions including transport, fishing, marine leisure and tourism.

The area to which the Plan relates provides with access to Wild Atlantic Way, natural environment, Old Head of Kinsale and other significant cultural, tourism, recreation and sports assets including access to lakes, forests and mountains.

Public assets and infrastructure that have the potential to be impacted upon by the development of tourism related infrastructure, if unmitigated, include resources such as public open spaces, parks and

¹² EPA's 2021 report 'Urban Waste Water Treatment in 2020'

¹³ Draft Cork CDP 2022-2028

¹⁴ Draft Cork CDP 2022-2028

recreational areas; public buildings and services; utility infrastructure (electricity, gas, telecommunications, water supply, wastewater infrastructure etc.). These resources are generally located within the immediate outskirts of urban/suburban areas. Various provisions relating to material assets have been integrated into the Plan, compliance with which will need to be demonstrated by those seeking or maintaining funding from Fáilte Ireland.

Green Infrastructure

Parks and open space promote health and well-being, provide recreational facilities and range of habitats for various species. Green infrastructure is also a crucial component in building resilient communities capable of adapting to the consequences of climate change with trees, woodlands and wetlands providing carbon capture and slowing water flows while improving air quality.

Forestry

Some parts of the area to which the Plan relates are covered by forestry. Woodlands provide recreational opportunities in addition to their heritage and economic benefits. They are a valuable resource in terms of biodiversity, recreation and tourism, and also important as links in the county's green infrastructure network.

Peatlands

Peatlands provide a valuable natural and archaeological resource. Peatlands are also important controllers of water levels in river catchments, providing a source of water in dry conditions and soaking up excess water during wetter periods; they actively capture and hold carbon and are an important natural resource in combatting climate change. Cutaway bogs have the potential to facilitate land uses such as employment, renewable energy generation, waste management, industrial, and tourism and recreation. Peat soils, such as those found in some parts of the area to which the Plan relates, are often indicative of areas that are the most sensitive to development due to ecological sensitivities and impeded drainage issues. Some of the peatland areas are subject to ecological designations.

Coastline

The coastline and coastal erosion are topics with relevance to various environmental components. Coastlines can be amongst the most sensitive and valuable resources, in terms of natural and cultural heritage, scenic beauty and recreation. The coast is also an important economic resource - particularly for the fishing, aquaculture, leisure and tourism industries. Some of the settlements within the area to which the Plan relates have developed along or near the coast.

Waste Management

Waste management across the area to which the Plan relates is guided by the Southern Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021. The Southern Region comprises: Limerick City and County Council; Tipperary County Council; Wexford County Council; Carlow County Council; Kilkenny County Council; Waterford City and County Council; Cork City Council; Cork County Council; Kerry County Council; and Clare County Council. The Plan provides a framework for the prevention and management of waste in a sustainable manner.

3.9 Cultural Heritage

Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological heritage is protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), National Cultural Institutions Act 1997 and the Planning Acts. The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is an inventory, put on a statutory basis by amendment to the National Monuments Act 1994, of sites and areas of archaeological significance, numbered and mapped.

Various archaeological monuments, including entries to the SMR and RMP, are located within the area to which the Plan relates. Figure 3.4 shows the spatial distribution of recorded monuments and associated SMR Zones of Notification within and surrounding the area to which the Plan relates. Clusters of archaeological heritage are concentrated around the towns and villages across the area to which the Plan relates, including examples of medieval sites such as town walls, religious foundations, castles and modest houses. These archaeological monuments also include a number of National Monuments in State Care.

Lakes, rivers, estuaries, coastal and transitional waters within and surrounding the area to which the Plan relates, may contain many features and finds associated with maritime/riverine heritage such as shipwrecks, piers, quay walls, fords, stepping stones and associated archaeological objects and features.

Architectural Heritage

Records of Protected Structures are legislated for under Section 12 and Section 51 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. Protected structures are defined in the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended as structures, or parts of structures that are of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view.

Similar to the general spatial spread of archaeological heritage, clusters of architectural heritage are indicated within the area to which the Plan relates, as shown on Figure 3.5. Examples of Protected Structures within the area to which the Plan relates include: churches; townhouses; squares; castles; lighthouses; signal towers; monuments and bridges. Notable structures include: Old Head of Kinsale Lighthouse; Lispatrick Upper Signal Tower; Castle Townsend; Roaringwater Quay; Maid of Erin Monument; Clonakilty Library; Kingston Buildings; St. Joseph's Convent; and The Southwell Gift Houses.

In addition to Protected Structures, the Planning and Development Act, 2000 provides the legislative basis for the protection of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The ACA designation requires that planning permission must be obtained before significant works can be carried out to the exterior of a structure in the ACA that might alter the character of the structure or the ACA. There are number of ACAs designated across the area to which the Plan relates.

3.10 Landscape

The area to which the Plan relates comprises of varied landscapes including shallow river estuaries and valleys and low hills formed by glacial activity, the shoreline with low but steep cliffs and stony or sandy beaches and characteristic for this area promontories (such as Old Head of Kinsale and Seven Heads, which recede to bays, such as Kinsale Harbour, Courtmacsherry Bay, Clonakilty Bay and Rosscarberry Bay).

The different landscapes found across the area to which the Plan relates have varying visual and amenity values, topography, exposure levels and contain a variety of habitats. Each landscape type has varying capacity to absorb development related to its overall sensitivity. Coastal landscapes along the area to which the Plan relates are classified with high landscape sensitivity.

The area to which the Plan relates contains many sites, areas and vantage points from which views over areas of great natural beauty, local landmarks, historic landscapes, may be obtained. In addition to scenic views, the area also contains important prospects i.e. prominent landscapes or areas of special amenity value or special interest that are visible from the surrounding area.

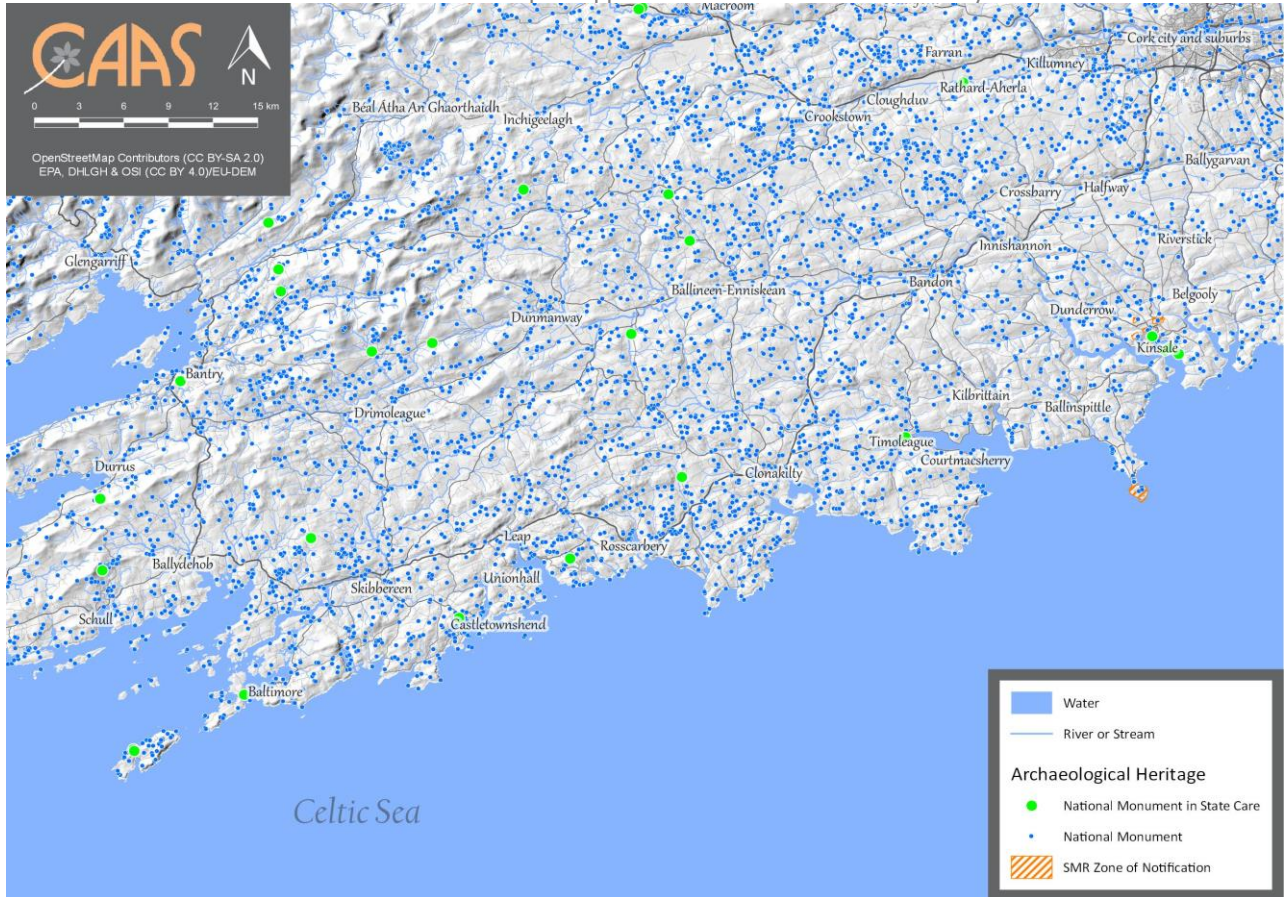


Figure 3.4 Archaeological Heritage

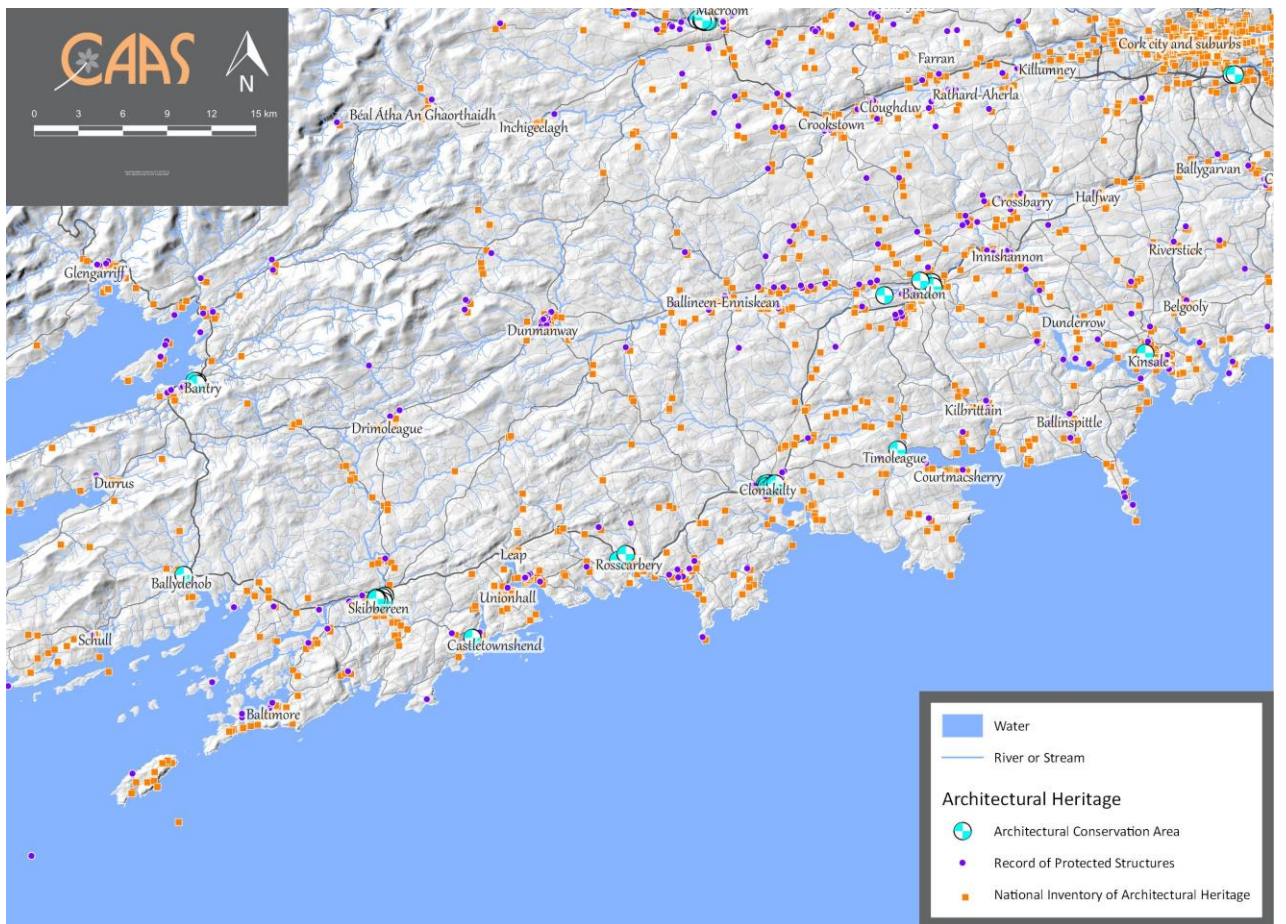


Figure 3.5 Architectural Heritage

3.11 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies that generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level e.g. the environmental protection objectives of various European Directives that have been transposed into Irish law and that are required to be implemented. The SEOs are set out under a range of topics and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Plan and the alternatives are evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if - in the case of adverse effects - unmitigated.

Table 3.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Environmental Component	Code	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	B1	To contribute towards compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of European sites and Annexed habitats and species ¹⁵
	B2	To contribute towards compliance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to the management of features of the landscape which - by virtue of their linear and continuous structure or their function act as stepping stones (designated or not) - are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species
	B3	To contribute towards avoidance of significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites ¹⁶ and to ensure compliance with the Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 with regard to the protection of species listed on Schedule 5 of the principal Act
Population and Human Health	PHH1	To contribute towards the protection of populations and human health from exposure to incompatible landuses
Soil	S1	To minimise land take and loss to extent of soil resource
Water	W1	To contribute towards the maintenance and improvement, where possible, of the quality and status of surface waters
	W2	To contribute towards maintaining and improving, where possible, the chemical and quantitative status of groundwaters
	W3	To contribute towards compliance with the provisions of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines
Air and Climatic Factors	AC1	To contribute towards climate adaptation and mitigation, air quality and noise management objectives.
Material Assets	M1	For development to be served with adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure with sufficient capacity (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) that does not present a danger to human health
	M2	To contribute towards the protection of public assets and infrastructure, including that relating to recreation and leisure, transport, utilities and fisheries
	M3	To reduce waste volumes, minimise waste to landfill and increase recycling and reuse
Cultural Heritage	CH1	To contribute towards the protection of archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context
	CH2	To contribute towards the protection of architectural heritage including entries to the Records of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context
Landscape	L1	To avoid conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in the Development Plans and other statutory land-use plans

¹⁵ 'Annexed habitats and species' refer to those listed under Annex I, II & IV of the EU Habitats Directive and Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

¹⁶ The definition of a 'wildlife site' provided by the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, includes Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed NHAs.

Section 4 Alternatives

4.1 Description of Alternatives

Alternative 1: Business as Usual

As identified in the Plan, there are various **strengths** associated with the current tourism development situation include:

- Diversity of coastal landscapes and ecosystems.
- Unique and welcoming small towns in close proximity to each other.
- Array of opportunities to build 'slow' tourism.
- Sense of intimacy balanced with a 'cosmopolitan' feel.
- Energy and commitment to sustainability and maintaining local traditions and values.
- Quality of the food, diversity of local artisan food producers – highest numbers in Ireland.
- Well established recognition for local foods and food specialisms such as Clonakilty black pudding.
- Rich depth and colour in local stories – layers of history.
- Distinctive and vibrant maritime heritage.

However, there are a number of **weaknesses** associated with this situation, including:

- Seasonality.
- Limited public transport.
- Reduction of sea routes.
- No traffic management systems in place.
- Roads not suited to high volumes / signage to towns.
- Insufficient focus on the strengths of the area – its potential for 'slow' travel.
- Insufficient marine infrastructure for visiting boating vessels.
- Accommodation – varied needs - to include parking for camper vans near amenities.
- No significant markers for start or end of Wild Atlantic Way.
- Insufficient experiences, particularly in non-peak periods.
- Staff shortages and issues relating to affordable housing for staff.
- Marketing and positioning of West Cork experiences.

There are also various policies and plans that are already in place relating to the development of tourism, including:

- People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025 Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Tourism Development and Innovation – A Strategy for Investment 2016-2022, Fáilte Ireland
- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme 2015-2019, Fáilte Ireland
- South West Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017
- Taste Cork 2021 Food Support Strategy for Cork
- Cork County Council Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme 2017-2022
- West Cork Local Development Strategy
- West Cork: Maximising the Benefits of Walking Tourism 2012
- Cork County Development Plan 2014 and new emerging Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028

This current situation presents **Alternative 1 (Business as Usual)** to be considered by the SEA. Overtime, numbers of visitors would continue to increase under this scenario – consistent with the development of tourism over many decades.

Prepare a Plan (Alternatives 2A and 2B: Prepare a Plan)

The weaknesses presented by the current situation establish a potential need for a plan that seeks to better manage tourism in the West Cork Coast area; facilitating, promoting, supporting and coordinating stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans that have been subject to environmental assessment. Such a Plan would not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent (such frameworks fall under the remit of other public authorities). Any projects would continue to be required to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of documents that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

Features of such a Plan (in combination with the wider and extensive policy and wider and extensive policy and planning framework) would include:

- Reduces seasonality.
- Encourages sustainable growth that maintains the quality and vibrancy of local life.
- Offers unique experiences that builds on local strengths and passion.
- Improves the area's capacity to offer slow tourism through enhanced connectivity. between trail systems and the development of new opportunities for safe hiking and cycling.
- Attracts new investment in accommodation infrastructure.
- Generates a greater level of coordination, new thinking and progressive leadership.
- Appeals to the international markets.

The existence of themed, saleable experiences that return economic value to the communities and businesses of the West Cork Coast is the key performance indicator of the Plan. The existence of compelling and saleable visitor experiences is the vehicle for:

- Driving average length of stay.
- Increasing overnight visitation and visitor spend.
- Dispersing visitors especially in peak season.
- Extending the season towards a year-round destination.

Under Alternative 2 there are two separate alternatives:

Alternative 2A: A Plan with Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management

Fáilte Ireland provides funding sustainable tourism projects including land use and infrastructural development and land use activities. In order to achieve funding (including promotion) for land use or infrastructural development or land use activities from Fáilte Ireland, **Alternative 2A** would require Fáilte Ireland's stakeholders to demonstrate compliance with measures relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management contained within the following Fáilte Ireland published documents:

- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 5 "Site Maintenance Guidelines" and other relevant measures from the Fáilte Ireland visitor and habitat management guidelines series (and any subsequent replacements); and
- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 6 "Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others" (and any subsequent replacements).

In order to be realised, projects included in the Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) would have to demonstrate compliance, as relevant, with various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the **Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.**

Further environmental requirements would be integrated into the Plan under Alternative 2A, relating to infrastructure capacity, visitor management and green infrastructure and ecosystem services.

Alternative 2B: A Plan without Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management

Alternative 2B would not include the requirements for environmental protection and management described under Alternative 2A. Projects would continue to be required to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of documents that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

4.2 Detailed Consideration of Alternatives

Alternative 1: Business as Usual

Sustainable development, environmental management and environmental protection under Alternative 1 is provided through the existing statutory planning and consent framework. These measures would contribute towards positive effects on the protection and management of all environmental components.

Tourism-related development would continue to be planned for and consented through the existing statutory planning and consent framework. Potential adverse effects would continue to be mitigated through that process.

In the absence of a Plan, there would continue to be an increase in tourist numbers – consistent with the development of tourism over many decades. The most popular locations in the West Cork Coast area would see the largest increases in visitors, which would occur during the peak season. This would give rise to greater concentration of tourists during peak seasons and in the most popular locations thereby increasing potential environmental effects on all components and peak load additions on various infrastructure in particular locations/at particular times.

Contributions towards an increase in travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air, including from aviation, would not occur as a result of a Plan that seeks to lengthen dwell time and grow visitor numbers however increases in tourist numbers would occur. Similarly, the positive mitigatory effects as a result of provisions of a Plan, such as those relating to sustainable mobility, traffic management and compliance with climate adaptation and management plans/strategies would not be provided for.

There would be one layer of mitigation under Alternative, through the existing statutory planning and consent framework.

Alternative 2A: A Plan with Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management

In addition to the measures relating to sustainable development, environmental protection, environmental management which are provided under all alternatives, and measures relating to seasonality and regionality, provided for by this alternative and Alternative 2B, this alternative would provide additional requirements for environmental protection and management, including those taken from the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme and those relating to infrastructure capacity, visitor management and green infrastructure and ecosystem services. In order to be realised, projects included in the Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) would have to demonstrate compliance, as relevant, with various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

Tourism-related development would continue to be planned for and consented through the existing statutory planning and consent framework. Potential adverse effects would continue to be mitigated through that process.

Although a Plan would help to improve the seasonal and geographic spread of visitors, a Plan's objective would be to increase the number of visitors to the West Cork Coast area. Although this would be likely to happen without a Plan, a Plan would have the potential to increase numbers of tourists – and associated potential adverse effects – to a greater degree than would be the case if there was no Plan. This would be likely to contribute towards an increase in travel-related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air, including from aviation. These increases will be mitigated by provisions that have been integrated into the Plan, including those relating to sustainable mobility and compliance with the Climate Action Plan 2021, the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions).

A Plan would also help to promote new experiences – including those relating to land use activities and developments. These would also have the potential to increase adverse effects. Notwithstanding this, there would be three layers of mitigation, through:

- The existing statutory planning and consent framework;
- Visitor management strategies; and
- Additional environmental requirements for environmental protection and management, under this alternative.

Alternative 2B: A Plan without Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management

In addition to the measures relating to sustainable development, environmental management and environmental protection, which are provided under all alternatives, this Alternative (2B) would

provide measures to improve seasonality and regionality. Seasonality and regionality would provide a greater spread of tourists throughout the year and across the West Cork Coast area thereby reducing potential environmental effects and peak load additions on various infrastructure in particular locations/at particular times.

Tourism related development would continue to be planned for and consented through the existing statutory planning and consent framework. Potential adverse effects would continue to be mitigated through that process.

Although a Plan would help to improve the seasonal and geographic spread of visitors, a Plan's objective would be to increase the number of visitors to the West Cork Coast area. Although this would be likely to happen without a Plan, a Plan would have the potential to increase numbers of tourists – and associated potential adverse effects – to a greater degree than would be the case if there was no Plan.

This would be likely to contribute towards an increase in travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air, including from aviation. These increases would be mitigated by the wider planning framework.

A Plan would also help to promote new experiences – including those relating to land use activities and developments. These would also have the potential to increase adverse effects. Notwithstanding this, there would be one layer of mitigation, through the existing statutory planning and consent framework.

Table 4.1 below provides a comparative evaluation of alternatives against SEOs (for detailed SEOs please refer to Table 3.1).

Table 4.1 Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives against SEOs

	Likely to Improve status of SEO			Potential Conflict with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated by complying with other measures included within the Plan		Probable Conflict with status of SEOs- unlikely to be fully mitigated
	to the Greatest degree	to Moderate degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Moderate degree	to a Greater degree	
Alternative 1: Business as Usual			✓		✓	
Alternative 2A: A Plan with Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management	✓			✓		
Alternative 2B: A Plan without Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management		✓			✓	

4.3 Selected Alternative for the Plan

Taking into account the environmental effects detailed above and the challenges and opportunities present for tourism across the West Cork Coast DEDP area, Fáilte Ireland have proceeded with Alternative 2A "A Plan with Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management".

Section 5 Summary of Effects arising from Plan

Table 5.1 Overall Findings – Environmental Effects arising from Plan Provisions

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the existing statutory planning/decision-making and consent-granting framework ¹⁷		
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potential Significant Adverse Effect, if unmitigated	Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects
Biodiversity and flora and fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution towards the protection and management of biodiversity and flora and fauna (in designated sites, including European sites and Wildlife Sites, and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats) including through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visitor management strategies; and ○ Plan requirements for environmental protection and management. • Contributes towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and its ecosystem services. • Contribution towards protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna as a result of contributing towards the protection of environmental vectors, air, water and soil. 	<p>Arising from both construction and operation of tourism related development/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna; • Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and • Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) - and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of an extent of non-protected habitats and species arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces arising from projects consented through the statutory planning/consent-granting framework. • Losses or damage to ecology (these would be: in compliance with relevant legislation; and mitigated as projects would demonstrate compliance with various environmental protection and management measures)
Population and human health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution towards the protection of human health including through Plan requirements for environmental protection and management. • Contribution towards the protection of human health as a result of not directing additional tourists towards specific locations in instances where significant problems with critical infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) have been identified. • Contribution towards the protection amenity usage and access. • Contribution towards the sustainable growth of tourism and associated sustenance and growth of communities in the West Cork Coast area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential interactions if effects upon environmental vectors such as water are not mitigated. • Potential interactions if additional tourists are directed towards specific locations in instances where significant problems with critical infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) have been identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential interactions with residual effects on environmental vectors. This has been mitigated by provisions that have been integrated into the Plan, including those relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management.

¹⁷ Effects include in-combination effects – those arising from services, infrastructure and other development (to service development, including tourism) that are planned for and consented through the statutory framework including the NPF, RSES and lower-tier land use plans. Examples may include developments/operation of developments relating to water services, transport, access or accommodation. Mitigation includes that which has been integrated into the Plan – please refer to Section 9 of this report.

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the existing statutory planning/decision-making and consent-granting framework ¹⁷		
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potential Significant Adverse Effect, if unmitigated	Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various provisions (e.g. relating to maintaining the wildness of areas that have not yet been developed) help to minimise land-take and loss of extent of soil resource. • Contribution towards the protection of the environment from contamination. • Contributes towards protection of designated sites of geological heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse impacts upon the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource. • Adverse effects on designated geological heritage sites. • Potential for increase in river bank erosion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution towards the protection of water resources (including the status of surface and groundwaters) and water-based designations including through integrating requirements for environmental protection and management into the Plan. • Contribution towards flood risk management and appropriate drainage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse impacts upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology. • Increase in flood risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased loadings as a result of development to comply with River Basin Management Plan. • Flood related risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to extreme weather events – however such risks will be mitigated by: measures that have been integrated into the Plan; and the statutory planning/consent-granting framework.
Air and climatic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution towards climate adaptation and mitigation through measures relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Walking and cycling; and ◦ Contribution towards European and national objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation, taking into account a wide range of detailed measures including those relating to resilience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential conflict, in combination with plans and programmes from all sectors including transport and land use planning, between increases in visitors (which is likely to result in an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and other emissions to air, including from aviation, with associated interactions with climatic factors) and local, national and European objectives to reduce carbon emissions. • Potential conflicts between transport movements, including car movements, and air quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air, including from aviation. This has been mitigated by provisions that have been integrated into the Plan, including those relating to sustainable mobility and compliance with the Climate Action Plan 2021, the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions). • Risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to climate and interactions with issues including flooding and material assets.
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes towards protection and allows for continued use of public assets and infrastructure. • Contains clear objectives around seasonality and regionality which look not only to spread the benefits of tourism but also the potential impacts/ load associated with tourism. • Helps to minimise likelihood of exceeding capacity in material assets as a result of not directing additional tourists towards specific locations in instances where significant problems with critical infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) have been identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of visitors have the potential to increase traffic levels. • The need to provide adequate and appropriate water services (it is the function of Irish Water to provide for such needs). • Increases in waste levels and residual wastes from visitors and construction of developments. • Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residual wastes to be disposed of in line with higher level waste management policies. • Increased loading on critical infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) where no significant problems have been identified with this infrastructure. • Exceedance of capacity in critical infrastructure risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to climate – however such risks will be mitigated by: measures that have been integrated into the Plan; and the statutory planning/consent-granting framework.

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the existing statutory planning/decision-making and consent-granting framework ¹⁷		
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potential Significant Adverse Effect, if unmitigated	Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution towards compliance with national and regional water services and waste management policies. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any impacts upon public assets and infrastructure to comply with statutory planning/consent-granting framework.
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution towards the long-term protection of archaeological and architectural heritage by encouraging greater levels of awareness and appreciation through, use, interpretation and access, in line with the requirements relating to the protection of cultural heritage including: entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context; and entries to the Records of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential effects on designated and unknown archaeological heritage. Potential effects on architectural heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential alteration to the context and setting of architectural heritage however, these will occur in compliance with legislation. Potential alteration to the context and setting of archaeological heritage however, this will occur in compliance with legislation. Potential loss of unknown archaeology however, this loss will be mitigated by measures integrated into the Plan.
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution towards the protection of landscape designations as a result of: facilitating compliance with relevant plans; and maintaining the wildness of areas that have not yet been developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurrence of adverse visual impacts, especially in marine, island and ridge areas where, and conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape. Changes in the appearance of the landscape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residual visual effects (these would comply with landscape designation provisions).

Section 6 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

6.1 Mitigation

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the Plan. Various environmental sensitivities and issues have been communicated to Fáilte Ireland through the SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) processes.

By integrating all SEA and AA recommendations into the Plan, Fáilte Ireland is helping to ensure that:

- The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and
- The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised.

Mitigation was achieved through the following:

- Establishing the status of the Plan and its interrelationship with the Statutory Decision-Making and Consent-Granting Framework¹⁸; and
- Integrating Requirements for Environmental Compliance into the Plan¹⁹.

The SEA team worked with the Plan-preparation team at Fáilte Ireland in order to help establish the status of the Plan and its interrelationship with the Statutory Decision-Making and Consent-Granting Framework.

Implementing the West Cork Coast Destination Experience Development Plan will involve Fáilte Ireland helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans that have been subject to environmental assessment. **The West Cork Coast Destination Experience Development Plan does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent.**

In order to achieve funding (including promotion) for land use or infrastructural development or land use activities from Fáilte Ireland, Fáilte Ireland's stakeholders shall be required to demonstrate compliance²⁰ with measures relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management contained within the following Fáilte Ireland published documents:

- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 5 "*Site Maintenance Guidelines*" and other relevant measures from the Fáilte Ireland visitor and habitat management guidelines series (and any subsequent replacements); and
- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 6 "*Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others*" (and any subsequent replacements).

In order to be realised, projects included in the West Cork Coast Destination Experience Development Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the West Cork Coast Destination Experience Development Plan is not part and does not contribute towards. Such legislation, policies, plans and programmes include:

- Requirements for lower-tier environmental assessment, including EIA and AA;
- Statutory land use plans that form part of the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework (e.g. Development Plans, such as the existing Cork County Development Plan 2014, the emerging Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028, West Cork Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017 - 2023, and the Bandon Kinsale Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017 – 2023) and that have undergone environmental assessment, as appropriate, including various provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management²¹; and

¹⁸ This framework includes various environmental requirements.

¹⁹ These requirements include those that have arisen through the SEA and/or AA processes.

²⁰ Demonstration of compliance may be supported by monitoring undertaken by the beneficiary.

²¹ For more information please refer to Appendix II of this report or the website of the relevant public authority.

- The Climate Action Plan 2023 and the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions)²².

Further measures relating to infrastructure capacity, visitor management, green infrastructure, ecosystem services and climate change have been integrated into the Plan.

6.2 Monitoring

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. Monitoring is based around indicators that allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives identified at Table 3.1 and used in the evaluation.

Sources

Confirmation of compliance with relevant environmental measures will be a source of information for the Monitoring Programme. This documentation may include monitoring undertaken by beneficiaries to demonstrate compliance with the environmental requirements.

Other existing monitoring sources will be used, including:

- Ireland environmental monitoring programmes (and any subsequent replacements), including the Monitoring Programme for the Wild Atlantic Way, a sub-programme of which will be extended to/reported on for West Cork Coast Destination Experience Development Plan area in order to monitor any effects of visitors;
- Sources maintained by Cork County Council (such as those arising from the SEA of land use plans) and the relevant authorities e.g. the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Central Statistics Office; and
- Lower-tier environmental assessment and decision making – including a review of project approvals granted and associated documents – will also be utilised as part of the Monitoring Programme.

Reporting and Responsibility

Reporting on environmental monitoring will address the indicators set out below. Fáilte Ireland is responsible for the ongoing review of indicators and targets, collating existing relevant monitored data, the preparation of monitoring evaluation report(s), the publication of these reports and, if necessary, the carrying out of corrective action, in combination with the relevant authorities.

Environmental monitoring for the DEDP and other existing/future Fáilte Ireland plans, programmes, etc. may be undertaken and reported on at the same time. The findings of monitoring will be reported on periodically with frequencies to be determined during implementation.

Table 6.1 overleaf shows the current indicators and targets that have been selected for monitoring the likely significant environmental effects of implementing relevant Fáilte Ireland Plans, Programmes, etc. These monitoring measures are updated on an ongoing basis.

²² For more information please refer to Section 4.10 and/or Appendix II of this report or the website of the relevant public authority.
CAAS for Fáilte Ireland

Table 6.1 Selected Indicators, Targets and Monitoring Sources

Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Source and (where available) Frequency
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	B1: Conservation status of habitats and species as assessed under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive	B1: Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under National and International legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the Plan ²³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management" • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Government report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years) • Government National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every 3 years) • Consultations with the NPWS • CORINE mapping resurvey (every c. 5 years) • Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes
	B2: Percentage loss of functional connectivity without remediation resulting from the Plan	B2: No significant ecological networks or parts thereof, which provide functional connectivity to be lost without remediation resulting from the Plan	
	B3i: Number of significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites resulting from the Plan B3ii: Number of significant impacts on the protection of listed species	B3i: Avoid significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites resulting from the Plan B3ii: No significant impacts on the protection of listed species resulting from the Plan	
Population and Human Health	PHH1: Occurrence (any) of a spatially concentrated deterioration in human health arising from environmental factors resulting from the Plan, as identified by the Health Service Executive and Environmental Protection Agency	PHH1: No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management" • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Consultations with the HSE and EPA • Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes
Soil	S1: Artificial surfaces land cover extent	S1: Contribute towards the target of the National Planning Framework's SEA (2018) to "Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4%."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management" • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • CORINE mapping resurvey (every c. 5 years) • Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes
Water	W1i: Classification of Overall Status (comprised of ecological and chemical status) under the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (S.I. No. 272 of 2009) W1ii: Mandatory and Guide values as set by the EU Bathing Water Directive and transposing Bathing Water Quality Regulations (S.I. No. 79 of 2008)	W1i: No deterioration in the status of any surface water or adverse effect upon the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status' as a result of the Plan W1ii: No deterioration in the value of bathing waters or adverse effect upon the ability of any bathing water to achieve Mandatory values and, where possible, Guide values as a result of the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management" • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • Data issued under the Water Framework Directive Monitoring Programme for Ireland (multi-annual) • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes
	W2: Interactions with Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC resulting from development adhering to the Plan	W2: Not to affect the ability of groundwaters to comply with Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC, subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD	

²³ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: (a) No alternative solution available; (b) Imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the programme to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

SEA Environmental Report Appendix III: Non-Technical Summary

Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Source and (where available) Frequency
	W3: Compliance of relevant lower tier assessments and decision making with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines	W3: For lower tier assessments and decision making to comply with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines	
Air and Climatic Factors	AC1: Demonstration of compliance with provisions relating to climate adaptation and mitigation have been integrated into the Plan	C1: To maximise the amount of measures relating to climate adaptation and mitigation being implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management" • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes
Material Assets	M1: Number of instances whereby additional tourists are directed by beneficiaries of funding towards areas in the Plan area where adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure with sufficient capacity is unavailable	M1: No instances whereby additional tourists are directed by beneficiaries of funding towards areas in the Plan area where adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure with sufficient capacity that does not present a danger to human health are unavailable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management" • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Consultations with the partners such as the EPA, Irish Water and/or Cork County Council • Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes
	M2: Number of significant adverse effects on the use of or access to public assets and infrastructure	M2: No significant adverse effects on the use of or access to public assets and infrastructure	
	M3: Preparation and implementation of construction and environmental management plans	M3: For construction and environmental management plans to be prepared and implemented for relevant projects	
Cultural Heritage	CH1: Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places protected from significant adverse effects arising from the Plan	CH1: No unauthorised adverse effects on archaeological heritage resulting from implementation of the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management" • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes
	CH2: Percentage of entries to the Records of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from the Plan	CH2: No unauthorised adverse effects on architectural heritage resulting from implementation of the Plan	
Landscape	L1: Number of unmitigated conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in the Development Plans and other statutory land-use plans	L1: No unmitigated conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in the Development Plans and other statutory land-use plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management" • Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities • SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies) • Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes