

Prepared by

Roughan & O'Donovan
Arena House, Arena Road, Sandyford Dublin 18, D18 V8P6
Tel +353 1 294 0800 | Email info@rod.ie | www.rod.ie

Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement of the Waterford Destination & Experience Development Plan



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 August 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ("the Habitats Directive"), Part 5 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended¹ (S.I. No.477 of 2011) ("the Habitats Regulations") the relevant case law, established best practice and the Precautionary Principle, Fáilte Ireland, has undertaken an Appropriate Assessment of the Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan (hereafter referred to as the 'Waterford DEDP' or the 'DEDP').

This document contains the Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement, which has been prepared by Roughan & O'Donovan on behalf of Fáilte Ireland. This Conclusion Statement has been prepared in accordance with *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Published 2009, revised 2010* (DEHLG, 2010). In accordance with this guidance this AA Conclusion Statement includes the following:

1. A summary of how the findings of the AA were factored into the plan (refer to Section 3).
2. Reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in light of other reasonable alternatives considered as part of the AA process (Refer to Section 5).
3. A declaration that the DEDP as adopted will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site or sites (Refer to Section 6 and refer to NIS Appendix B AA Determination Fáilte Ireland).
4. A copy of the NIS (Refer to Appendix A).

This document should be read in conjunction with the DEDP and the NIS (Appendix A).

¹ Including inter alia S.I. 290 of 2013; SI 499 of 2013; SI 355 of 2015; the Planning, Heritage and Broadcasting (Amendment) Act 2021, Chapter 4; SI 293 of 2021.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE WATERFORD DEDP

The Waterford DEDP is a five-year sustainable tourism plan for Waterford City and County. The plan represents a five-year multi-stakeholder operational approach focusing on new product and experience development opportunities. It builds on existing tourism projects ensuring a connected destination approach between all tourism related investment activity. This includes projects currently underway, projects featuring in existing plans and new concepts designed to grow tourism across Waterford City and County.

A number of long-term projects within the DEDP are designed to deliver the ten-year vision for tourism in Waterford City and County. The projects outlined within the DEDP include a mix of short to long term projects. In the implementation of the plan, short to medium term projects will be the priority. A number of these more immediate actions will also represent the initial stages required to activate the longer-term projects identified within the plan.

The target outputs from the DEDP are to grow the value of tourism as a key economic sector in Waterford, growing tourism employment, disperse visitors across the destination and increase the length of stay. The key target is to achieve sustained revenue growth and return to 2019 levels of tourism income by 2026. Equally, the development focus within the DEDP is to ensure Waterford as a destination plays an integral role in growing the regional share of the market.

The strategic objectives of the DEDP are:

- Ensure local experiences are brought to life through the development of the optimal mix of hero and ancillary tourism products that attract visitors and retain them for longer in the destination.
- Unlock the economic growth potential of an area by progressing a range of key initiatives that will motivate tourists to explore the wider destination.
- Develop a sustainable basis for commercial tourism development centered on creating strong signature, supporting and ancillary experiences that are commoditized through the creation of saleable experiences that excite consumers and buyers alike
- Create the conditions to attract leisure visitors on a year-round basis to Waterford to immerse themselves actively in the community, through interaction with local people
- Strengthen the value of tourism to the local community by providing sustainable employment opportunities

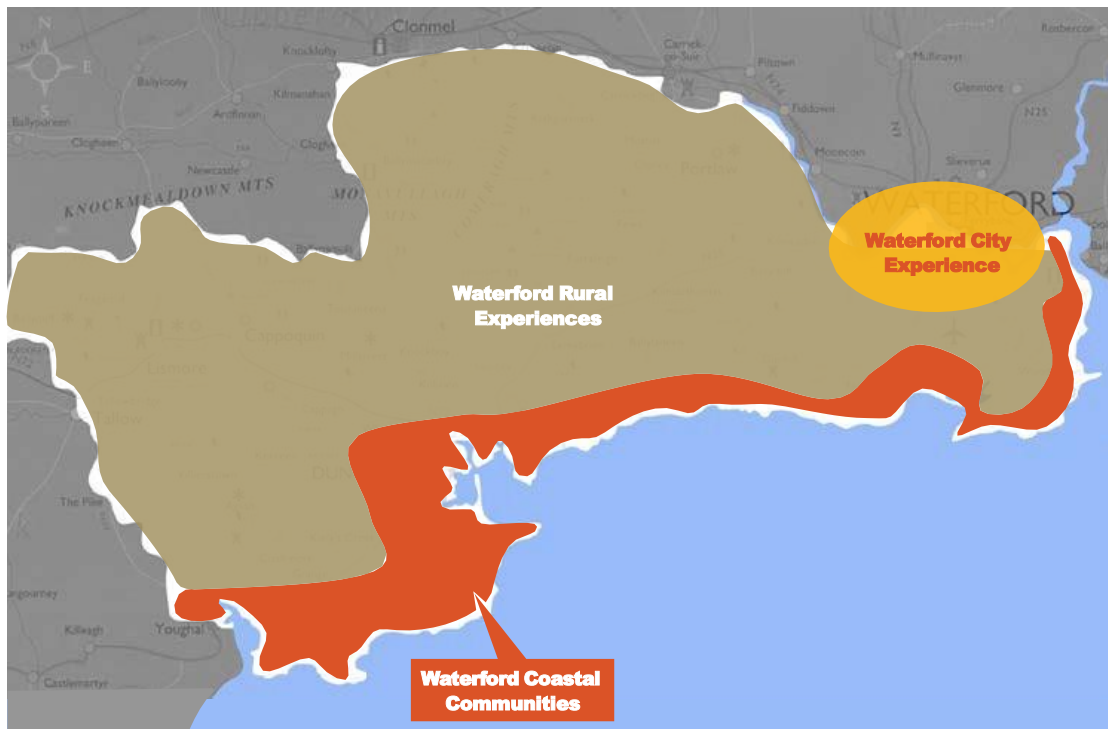


Figure 2-1 Visitor destination experiences across Waterford County (Source Fáilte Ireland DEDP)

The DEDP concentrates on Waterford City, Coastal Communities and Rural Waterford experiences (as illustrated in Figure 2-1) and how these each integrate with each other to enhance the Waterford Visitor Experience. This spatial approach builds on established tourism networks/clusters across the county, emerging product and experience development opportunities and the requirement to present Waterford as a coherent destination experience. It will provide the visitor with access to a blend of urban, rural and coastal experiences each underpinned by the principles of sustainable tourism development.

3.0 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

3.1 Methodology

The following guidance documents informed the AA assessment methodology:

- EC (2021) *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. Environment Directorate-General of the European Commission.
- EC (2018) *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*. European Commission, Brussels.
- DEHLG (2010) *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.
- NPWS (2010) *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Circular Letter NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10. National Parks & Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.
- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR (2021) *Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management*. Office of the Planning Regulator, Dublin.
- Scottish Natural Heritage (2015) *Habitat Regulation Appraisals of Plans. Guidance for Plan-making Bodies in Scotland*. Version 3.0. January 2015.

With regard to carrying out AA of Plans, EC (2018) states that “a distinction needs to be made with ‘plans’ which are in the nature of policy statements, i.e. policy documents which show the general political will or intention of a ministry or lower authority”. SNH (2015) expands on this: “Plans or parts of plans which are merely general policy statements, or which only show the general political will or intention of a public body, will not be likely to have a significant effect on a European site. However, it is a case-by-case decision as to whether a plan should be subject to appraisal, a critical test being whether it, or any part of it, would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site”. The Waterford DEDP contains Strategic Objectives, Catalyst Projects and Enabler Projects.

Appropriate Assessment guidance (EC, 2002) promotes a four-stage process to completing AA. The four steps are summarised in the sections below as they relate to the development of the DEDP.

3.2 Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Screening for Appropriate Assessment is the process of determining if a plan, project or in this case, the Draft DEDP, is necessary for the management of the Natura 2000 network, or if it, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have a significant effect on one or more European sites. At this stage, mitigation measures to avoid or reduce the potential for significant effects cannot be considered.

An AA Screening Report (December 2024) was prepared by ROD on behalf of Fáilte Ireland. The AA Screening Report concluded that in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of the European Sites concerned, that the Draft DEDP, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on European sites, in view of their Conservation Objectives.

Fáilte Ireland as the competent authority determined that the risks to the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites had been addressed by the inclusion of achievable mitigation measures that will prioritise the avoidance of impacts in the first place and reliably mitigate these impacts where they cannot be avoided.

3.3 Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment:

Where the possibility of significant effects on one or more European site cannot be excluded, the process proceeds to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. This stage considers whether the plan, in this case the draft Waterford DEDP, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, will adversely affect the integrity of one or more European site, and includes any mitigation measures to avoid or reduce negative impacts. At Stage 2, the proponent is required to submit a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). This report must contain complete, precise and definitive findings to enable the Competent Authority (Fáilte Ireland in this case) to carry out Appropriate Assessment.

3.3.1 Assessment and Preparation of Natura Impact Statement

To ensure that the AA was properly integrated into both the preparation of the Draft DEDP and the requirements of Article 3.2(b) the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law which requires integration with the AA process. An NIS was prepared in relation to the Draft DEDP (December 2024) which informed both the DEDP and the SEA process. The Draft NIS on the Draft DEDP proposed mitigation measures and a conclusion based on the Draft DEDP.

It demonstrated that, in the absence of appropriate mitigation, the Waterford DEDP, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would adversely affect the integrity of European sites. In light of this finding, the Draft NIS prescribed appropriate mitigation to eliminate or minimise such effects. The Draft NIS determined that, given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation that the Waterford DEDP, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity any European site. The summary of these key findings from the AA process were included as part of Appendix 1 Environmental of the Draft DEDP.

In-combination assessment

Given the strategic nature of DEDP and that the specific details of the Catalyst and Enabler Projects contained in the DEDP do not contain specific locations, it is not possible to assess the DEDP projects against specific locations relevant to Natura 2000 network. Therefore, the in-combination assessment has assessed the potential for in-combination effects with other, similar, strategic Plans.

The mitigation measures prescribed in the NIS have been designed according to the principle of a mitigation hierarchy, as outlined in the European Commission's guidance document *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC, 2021). According to this hierarchy, the following mitigation approach was adopted, in order of decreasing preference:

1. Avoidance (preventing impacts from happening in the first place)
2. Reduction (reducing the magnitude and/or likelihood of an impact)

Any future plans or projects that stem from the DEDP will be subject to Appropriate Assessment at the project level, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, as transposed into domestic law by Part 5 of the Habitats Regulations and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act. Where potential adverse effects cannot be avoided, the mitigation measures presented in Table 5-1 (of the NIS) will

apply and any other measures specified as part of the project level assessments, including AA, as appropriate.

Section 5.0 of the NIS contains the mitigation measures to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of European sites which could result from the DEDP. These measures include application of the relevant and current best practice guidelines at all stages of the assessment of plans and projects that stem from DEDP. In particular, the policies and objectives of the Waterford City and County Development Plan, relevant Fáilte Ireland guidance, TII publication, *Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Road Schemes* (NRA, 2009).

The NIS concluded that given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation prescribed in the Waterford DEDP, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of one or more European site.

3.3.2 Consultation on the Draft DEDP, Draft NIS and SEA ER

The Draft DEDP was placed on public display from 17th December 2024 to 24th January 2025. It was accompanied by the associated environmental assessments including the Draft NIS, the SEA ER and Non-Technical Summary (NTS). The statutory environmental authorities (under SEA legislation) were notified and the environmental reports issued to them for consultation.

On the 17th December 2024, the Draft Natura Impact Statement was submitted to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage for a period of six weeks in accordance with Regulation 42(10). No submission from the Minister was received during the consultation period.

3.3.3 Finalisation of the DEDP and NIS

Following the public consultation on the Draft DEDP, a review of any submissions and observations received was undertaken. There was one submission from one of the SEA statutory environmental authorities namely the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), this submission did not influence the AA process. No material changes were made to the Final DEDP after consultation therefore AA Screening was not required.

Based on the Final DEDP, the NIS was updated in March 2025 and concluded that with the implementation of the DEDP will not have significant adverse effects upon the integrity of any Natura 2000 site provided the mitigation identified in the NIS is implemented.

3.4 Stage 3 and 4 of the AA Process

Stage 3 Assessment of Alternative Solutions: Where adverse effects cannot be excluded, the plan, must proceed to Stage 3, the Assessment of Alternative Solutions. This stage examines alternative options or solutions which avoid adverse effects. Once an alternative solution is selected, the process returns to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. If after examines all alternatives and establishing that adverse effects remain, the process proceeds to Stage 4. The NIS concluded that given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation prescribed in the NIS, that the Waterford DEDP, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site. It is therefore not necessary to proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 4 Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI): IROPI is a derogation process which allows a plan, to proceed despite the fact that it will have an adverse effect on one or more European sites. At Stage 4 it must be established that

no alternatives exist. In addition to the mitigation measures permitted from Stage 2 of the process, at Stage 4 compensatory measures are also permissible. Where priority Annex I habitats are concerned, as defined in the Habitats Directive, the Competent Authority can only approve proposals relating to human health, public safety or beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment. Stage 4 was not required to be undertaken as part of this process.

4.0 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AA THE SEA PROCESSES

The AA and SEA assessments of the draft Waterford DEDP were carried out concurrently. There were several areas of overlap and, in accordance with good practice, data on Natura 2000 sites and potential ecological issues were shared with the SEA team. Iterative reviews of Waterford DEDP were also sent to the SEA team for integration into their assessment.

The findings of both processes are documented separately, taking into account their statutory implications. Information on the ecological impact of the Waterford DEDP gathered in the AA is carried forward to contribute to a comprehensive environmental baseline to inform the SEA. Information on the Qualifying Interests, conservation condition and Conservation Objectives of Natura 2000 sites is, therefore, also used to inform environmental assessment in the SEA.

5.0 REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE PLAN IN LIGHT OF OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Fáilte Ireland considered the following alternatives:

- Alternative 1 – Do Nothing: Continue without developing a Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP).
- Alternative 2A – Do Something (Without Environmental Consideration): Develop a DEDP without integrating environmental protections.
- Alternative 2B – Do Something (With Environmental Consideration): Develop a DEDP that incorporates environmental management and mitigation.

Alternative 1, proceeding without a DEDP, would allow tourism growth to continue in an unstructured manner. This could increase pressure on existing tourism sites and supporting infrastructure, potentially leading to negative impacts on European Sites. The implementation of a DEDP under Alternatives 2A and 2B would provide a more coordinated approach to tourism development. Alternative 2A, while likely to achieve economic growth and tourism expansion, does not include environmental safeguards, posing a risk of significant negative effects on European Sites. Alternative 2B balances economic growth with environmental protection, ensuring sustainable tourism development in County Waterford. As a result, Alternative 2B was selected as the preferred option.

Alternative 2B supports the objectives of the DEDP by encouraging the sustainable growth of tourism and economic potential of Waterford. It is anticipated that Alternative 2B will result in more positive than negative environmental effects. This is due to the considerations of environmental effects as part of the preparation of the DEDP and opportunity for mitigation and monitoring of any potential negative effects. Alternative 2B is the preferred option from an environmental perspective and delivery of the DEDP objective

6.0 CONCLUSION

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, Part 5 of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, the relevant case law, established best practice and the Precautionary Principle, and considering the contents of the Waterford DEDP and the NIS, it is the considered opinion of ROD, as the author of the NIS, that given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation prescribed in the NIS, that the Waterford DEDP, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site.

The NIS has been prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Habitats Directive, the Habitats Regulations and the Planning and Development Act, as well as the relevant case law and current guidance. It has demonstrated that, in the absence of appropriate mitigation, the Waterford DEDP, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would adversely affect the integrity of European sites. In light of this finding, the NIS has prescribed appropriate mitigation to eliminate or minimise such effects. It is the considered opinion of ROD, as the author of the NIS, that, in making its AA in respect of the Waterford DEDP, Fáilte Ireland, as the Competent Authority in this case, may determine that, given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation prescribed in the NIS, the Waterford DEDP, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity any European site.

In carrying out an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations 42(12), the Competent Authority (public authority) shall take into account the matters detailed in Table 6.1 in completing their Appropriate Assessment of the Waterford DEDP.

Table 6.1 Requirements under Regulation 42(12)

Requirement under Regulation 42 (12)	How this has been addressed by Fáilte Ireland
(a) the Natura Impact Statement	An NIS has been prepared by ROD and is available alongside the DEDP. The NIS is appended to this AA Conclusion Statement (Appendix A) and will inform Fáilte Irelands AA.
(b) any other plans or projects that may, in combination with the plan or project under consideration, adversely affect the integrity of a European Site	Section 6.0 of the NIS (Appendix A) contains the assessment of the DEDP and it's potential to adversely affect the integrity of European sites, in-combination with other plans and projects.
(c) any supplemental information furnished in relation to any such report or statement	N/A
(d) if appropriate, any additional information sought by the authority and furnished by the applicant in relation to a Natura Impact Statement	N/A
(e) any information or advice obtained by the public authority	N/A
(f) if appropriate, any written submissions or observations made to the public authority in relation to the application for consent for proposed plan or project	Ministerial Consultation was undertaken on the Draft NIS was undertaken; no submission was received from the Minister. A submission from the EPA was received on the Draft DEDP. The comments did not relate to AA process and did not result in material changes to the DEDP.
(g) any other relevant information	N/A

7.0 REFERENCES

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 August 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). Official Journal of the European Communities, L206/7.

DEHLG (2010) *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Published 2009, Revised 2010. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.

Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive). Official Journal of the European Union, L20/7.

EC (1999) *Guidelines for the Assessment of Indirect and Cumulative Impacts as well as Impact Interactions*. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

EC (2018) *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*. European Commission, Brussels.

EC (2021) *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. Environment Directorate-General of the European Commission.

European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011. SI No. 477/2011.

European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations, 2013. SI No. 499/2013.

European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations, 2015. SI No. 355/2015.

NPWS (2010) *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Circular Letter NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10. National Parks & Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.

Scottish Natural Heritage (2015) *Habitat Regulation Appraisals of Plans. Guidance for Plan-making Bodies in Scotland*. Version 3.0. January 2015.

APPENDIX A

Natura Impact Statement

Prepared by

Roughan & O'Donovan

Arena House, Arena Road, Sandyford Dublin 18, D18 V8P6

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Natura Impact Statement

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1.0 Introduction

Fáilte Ireland has prepared the Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan (hereafter referred to as the 'Waterford DEDP' or the 'DEDP') which will provide a framework to grow the value of tourism as a key economic sector in Waterford, growing tourism employment, disperse visitors across the destination and increase the length of stay. This Natura Impact Statement ("NIS"), with respect to the Waterford DEDP has been prepared independently by Roughan & O'Donovan ("ROD"), on behalf of Fáilte Ireland. It does not, in and of its own right, confer planning permission for any specific development but rather guides the tourism investment and decision making in Waterford.

The requirements arising out of Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ("the Habitats Directive") in relation to Appropriate Assessment are transposed into Irish law by Part 5 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (as amended) ("the Habitats Regulations") and, where planning permission is required, Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) ("the Planning and Development Act"). In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report was prepared to assess whether or not the Plan, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, was likely to have a significant effect on one or more sites of Community importance for nature conservation ("European Sites").

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and section 177V of the Planning and Development Act, it is the Competent Authority – in this case Fáilte Ireland – which carries out the appropriate assessment (AA) which includes inter alia (i) an examination (ii) an analysis (iii) an evaluation (iv) the making of findings (v) the making of conclusions and (vi) the making of a final determination¹. In accordance with Regulation 42(9) of the Habitat Regulations, where a public authority conducts an Appropriate Assessment, they are required to submit the Natura Impact Statement to the Minister no later than six weeks before the plan or project is adopted. Regulation 42(10) of the same Regulations states that the public authority shall take account of any submission made by the Minister before concluding Appropriate Assessment.

This NIS was prepared by Patrick O'Shea and Madeleine van der Poel. Patrick is a Principal Ecologist with ROD and has over ten years' experience in Appropriate Assessment. He holds a B.A. in Natural Sciences from Trinity College Dublin, and an MSc in Ecological Management and Conservation Biology from Queen's University, Belfast. Madeleine has five years' experience in ecological assessment. She holds a degree in BSc in Ecology from the University of Auckland, New Zealand and a MSc in Forestry and Nature Conservation from Wageningen University, The Netherlands.

1.1 Legislative Context

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of the 21st May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora ("the Habitats Directive") and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 30th November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds ("the Birds Directive") list habitats and species which are important for conservation and in need of protection. This protection is afforded in part through the designation of sites which support significant examples of habitats or

¹ *Waddenzee* (Case C-127/02) [2004] ECR I-7405; *Commission v Spain* (Case C-404/09) [2011] E.C.R. I-11853; *Sweetman* (Case C-258/11).

populations of species ("European Sites"). Sites designated for birds are termed "Special Protection Areas" (SPAs) and sites designated for natural habitat types or other species are termed "Special Areas of Conservation" (SACs). The complete network of European Sites is referred to as "Natura 2000".

In order to ensure the protection of European Sites in the context of land use planning and development, Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive provides for the assessment of the implications of plans and projects for European Sites, as follows:

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site [or sites] but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site [...], the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned [...]."

The requirements arising out of Article 6(3) are transposed into Irish law by Part XAB, Appropriate Assessment (including section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) (and in other circumstances by Part 5 of the Habitats Regulations).

The determination of whether or not a plan or project meets the two thresholds for requiring AA is referred to as "Stage 1" or "AA Screening". The first threshold is reached if the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of one or more European Sites. In its ruling in *Waddenzee*², the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) interpreted the second threshold as being reached where *"it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that [the plan or project] will have a significant effect on that site"*.

Thus, in applying the Precautionary Principle, the CJEU interpreted the word "likely" to mean that, as long as it cannot be demonstrated that an effect will not occur, that effect is considered "likely". A likely effect is considered to be "significant" only if it interrupts or causes a delay in achieving the Conservation Objectives of the site concerned.³

Prior to approval of a plan or project which is the subject of AA (also referred to as "Stage 2"), it is necessary to "ascertain" that the plan or project will not "adversely affect the integrity of the site". In its guidance document (EC, 2018), the European Commission stated that *"the integrity of a site involves its constitutive characteristics and ecological functions"* and that *"the decision as to whether it is adversely affected should focus on and be limited to the habitats and species for which the site has been designated and the site's conservation objectives"*. Regarding the word "ascertain", the CJEU, also in *Waddenzee*, interpreted this as meaning *"where no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects"*. Therefore, the legal test at Stage 2 is satisfied (and the plan or project may be authorised) when it can be demonstrated beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the plan or project will not interrupt or cause delays in the achievement of the Conservation Objectives of the site or sites concerned.

The CJEU has made a relevant judgment on what information should be contained

² Landelijke Vereniging tot Behoud van de Waddenzee, Nederlandse vereniging tot Bescherming van Vogels v. Staatssecretaris van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en Visserij (Waddenzee) [2004] C-127/02 ECR I-7405.

³ Conservation Objectives are referred to, but not defined, in the Habitats Directive. In Ireland, Conservation Objectives are set for Qualifying Interests (the birds, habitats or other species for which a given European site is selected) and represent the overall target that must be met for that Qualifying Interest to reach or maintain favourable conservation condition in that site and contribute to its favourable conservation status nationally.

within documents supporting AA⁴ :

“[The AA] cannot have lacunae and must contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions capable of removing all reasonable scientific doubt as to the effects of the works proposed on the protected site concerned.”

The High Court⁵ and Supreme Court⁶ have also provided clarity on how Competent Authorities should undertake AA and has stated that the following four matters require to be addressed:

- First, an appropriate assessment must identify, in the light of the best scientific knowledge in the field, all aspects of the development project (in this case the Waterford DEDP which can, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, affect (a) European site(s) in the light of its conservation objectives.
- Second, there must be complete, precise, and definitive findings and conclusions regarding the previously identified potential effects on any relevant European site(s) this and may not have lacunae or gaps. The requirement for precise and definitive findings and conclusions requires analysis, evaluation, and decisions. Further, the reference to findings and conclusions in a scientific context requires both findings following analysis and conclusions following an evaluation each in the light of the best scientific knowledge in the field.
- Third, on the basis of those findings and conclusions, the Competent Authority (here Fáilte Ireland) must be able to determine that no scientific doubt remains as to the absence of the identified potential effects.
- Fourth, where the aforesaid three requirements are satisfied, Fáilte Ireland may determine that the proposed development (in this case the Waterford DEDP) will not adversely affect the integrity of any relevant European site. Accordingly, an appropriate assessment may only include a determination that the proposed development (in this case the Waterford DEDP) will not adversely affect the integrity of any relevant European site where upon the basis of complete, precise, and definitive findings and conclusions made, Fáilte Ireland decides that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of the identified potential effects.

1.2 Overview of the Appropriate Assessment Process

Appropriate Assessment guidance (EC, 2002) promotes a four-stage process to completing AA. The four steps are summarised as follows:

Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment: Screening for Appropriate Assessment is the process of determining if a plan, project or in this case, the Draft DEDP, is necessary for the management of the Natura 2000 network, or if it, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have a significant effect on one or more European sites. At this stage, mitigation measures to avoid or reduce the potential for significant effects cannot be considered.

Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment: Where the possibility of significant effects on one or more European site cannot be excluded, the process proceeds to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. This stage considers whether the plan, project or in this case

⁴ *Sweetman v. An Bord Pleanála* [2013] Case C-258/11.

⁵ *Kelly v. An Bord Pleanála* [2014] IEHC 422.

⁶ See *Kelly (Eoin) v An Bord Pleanála* [2014] I.E.H.C. 400 where the High Court (Finlay Geoghegan J.) held that section 177V(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) must be construed so as to give effect to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, and hence, an appropriate assessment carried out under section 177V(1) of the 2000 Act must meet the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as interpreted by jurisprudence of the CJEU case law; *Connelly v An Bord Pleanála* [2018] 2 I.L.R.M 453; [2018] I.E.S.C. 31.

the draft Waterford DEDP, in-combination with other plans and projects, will adversely affect the integrity of one or more European site, and includes any mitigation measures to avoid or reduce negative impacts. At Stage 2, the proponent is required to submit a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). This report must contain complete, precise and definitive findings to enable the Competent Authority (Fáilte Ireland in this case) to carry out Appropriate Assessment.

Stage 3 Assessment of Alternative Solutions: Where adverse effects cannot be excluded, the plan, project or in this case the Draft DEDP, must proceed to Stage 3, the Assessment of Alternative Solutions. This stage examines alternative options or solutions which avoid adverse effects. Once an alternative solution is selected, the process returns to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. If after examines all alternatives and establishing that adverse effects remain, the process proceeds to Stage 4.

Stage 4 Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI): IROPI is a derogation process which allows a plan, project or in this case the Draft DEDP, to proceed despite the fact that it will have an adverse effect on one or more European sites. At Stage 4 it must be established that no alternatives exist. In addition to the mitigation measures permitted from Stage 2 of the process, at Stage 4 compensatory measures are also permissible. Where priority Annex I habitats are concerned, as defined in the Habitats Directive, the Competent Authority can only approve proposals relating to human health, public safety or beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment.

1.3 Relationship between the AA the SEA Processes

The SEA and AA exercise of the draft Waterford DEDP were carried out concurrently. There were several areas of overlap and, in accordance with good practice, data on Natura 2000 sites and potential ecological issues were shared with the SEA team. Iterative reviews of Waterford DEDP were also sent to the SEA team for integration into their assessment.

The findings of both processes are documented separately, taking into account their statutory implications. Information on the ecological impact of the Waterford DEDP gathered in the AA is carried forward to contribute to a comprehensive environmental baseline to inform the SEA. Information on the Qualifying Interests, conservation condition and Conservation Objectives of Natura 2000 sites is, therefore, also used to inform environmental assessment in the SEA.

1.4 Methodology

This NIS contains an examination, analysis and evaluation of the likely impacts from the Waterford DEDP, both individually and in combination with other plans and projects, in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of the European Sites concerned. It also prescribes appropriate mitigation to ensure that the DEDP will not adversely affect the integrity of those sites. Finally, it provides complete, precise, and definitive findings which are capable of removing all reasonable scientific doubt as to the absence of adverse effects on the integrity of the European Sites concerned and sets out detailed reasons which explain the basis for such findings.

With regard to carrying out AA of Plans, EC (2018) states that “*a distinction needs to be made with ‘plans’ which are in the nature of policy statements, i.e. policy documents which show the general political will or intention of a ministry or lower authority*”. SNH (2015) Expands on this: “*Plans or parts of plans which are merely general policy statements, or which only show the general political will or intention of a public body, will not be likely to have a significant effect on a European site. However, it is a case-*

by-case decision as to whether a plan should be subject to appraisal, a critical test being whether it, or any part of it, would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site". The Waterford DEDP contains Strategic Objectives, Catalyst Projects and Enabling Projects.

The following guidance documents informed the assessment methodology:

- EC (2021) *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. Environment Directorate-General of the European Commission.
- EC (2018) *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*. European Commission, Brussels.
- DEHLG (2010) *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.
- NPWS (2010) *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Circular Letter NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10. National Parks & Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.
- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR (2021) *Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management*. Office of the Planning Regulator, Dublin.
- Scottish Natural Heritage (2015) *Habitat Regulation Appraisals of Plans. Guidance for Plan-making Bodies in Scotland*. Version 3.0. January 2015.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE WATERFORD DEDP

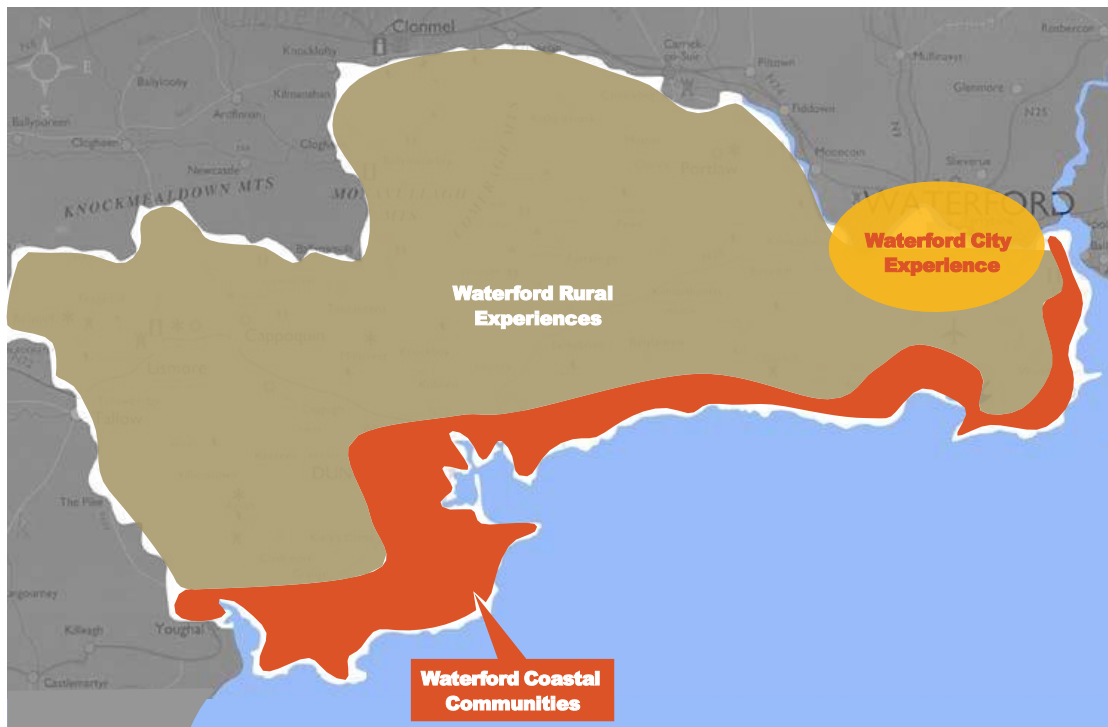
The Waterford DEDP is a five-year sustainable tourism plan for Waterford City and County. The plan represents a five-year multi-stakeholder operational approach focusing on new product and experience development opportunities. It builds on existing tourism projects ensuring a connected destination approach between all tourism related investment activity. This includes projects currently underway, projects featuring in existing plans and new concepts designed to grow tourism across Waterford City and County.

A number of long-term projects within the DEDP are designed to deliver the ten-year vision for tourism in Waterford City and County. The projects outlined within the DEDP include a mix of short to long term projects. In the implementation of the plan, short to medium term projects will be the priority. A number of these more immediate actions will also represent the initial stages required to activate the longer term projects identified within the plan.

The target outputs from the DEDP are to grow the value of tourism as a key economic sector in Waterford, growing tourism employment, disperse visitors across the destination and increase the length of stay. The key target is to achieve sustained revenue growth and return to 2019 levels of tourism income by 2026. Equally, the development focus within the DEDP is to ensure Waterford as a destination plays an integral role in growing the regional share of the market.

The strategic objectives of the DEDP are:

- Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Waterford and Ireland's Ancient East.
- Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism in Waterford.
- Ensure the destination is easy to access, navigate and consume.
- Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure that it can thrive and create sustainable jobs in local communities.
- Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development.



**Figure 2-1 Visitor destination experiences across Waterford County
(Source Fáilte Ireland DEDP)**

The DEDP concentrates on Waterford City, Coastal Communities and Rural Waterford experiences (as illustrated in Figure 2-1) and how these each integrate with each other to enhance the Waterford Visitor Experience. This spatial approach builds on established tourism networks/clusters across the county, emerging product and experience development opportunities and the requirement to present Waterford as a coherent destination experience. It will provide the visitor with access to a blend of urban, rural and coastal experiences each underpinned by the principles of sustainable tourism development.

3.0 IDENTIFICATION OF ADVERSE EFFECTS

Section 3.1 below describes the potential effects that the DEDP could have on the natural environment in general, as a pretext to the identification and assessment of adverse effects on European sites (Section 3.2- 3.4 and Section 4 of this NIS). Section 3.2 presents the methodology for identifying potential adverse effects on European Sites, beginning with establishing the Zone of Influence.

3.1 Potential effects on the Natural Environment

The subsections below describe the potential effects that DEDP could have on the natural environment in general, as a pretext to the identification and assessment of adverse effects on European sites (Section 3 and 4 of this NIS). A number of elements of Waterford DEDP have the potential to lead to environmental and ecological impacts. Potential risks to the natural environment arising from DEDP are as follows:

Habitat loss and fragmentation

The development of tourism infrastructure in Waterford to promote outdoor activities, and the ensuing increased visitor numbers could lead to the loss of habitats, including habitats that are Qualifying Interests of European Sites, and also habitats that are not Qualifying Interests but support Qualifying Interest habitats and species. This can include habitats and species outside the Natura 2000 network, such as areas used for feeding by wintering birds which lie outside the boundary of an SPA.

Direct species mortality

Direct species mortality is possible as a result of site clearance, tree felling and vegetation removal as part of any infrastructure construction required to promote visitors to Waterford.

Disturbance (noise, vibration, movement, lighting)

Disturbance can occur during construction and operation of the proposed infrastructure as a result of noise, both within and outside the footprint of the development. Increased visitor numbers during operation could also result in disturbance to wildlife.

Changes in water quality and hydrology

Water quality impacts arising from both the construction and the operation of the required infrastructure have the potential to directly and indirectly affect a wide range of habitats and species. Accidental pollution events can result in sediment and pollutants entering sensitive watercourses resulting in a deterioration in water quality.

Introduction and spread of invasive species

Invasive species pose a threat to biodiversity and ecosystem functioning and could inadvertently be introduced or spread through increased visitor numbers during operation or construction plant and vehicles during construction works.

3.2 Establishing the Zone of Influence

Section 3.2.3 of DEHLG (2010) guidance outlines the procedure for selecting the European sites to be considered in AA. It states that European sites potentially affected should be identified and listed, bearing in mind the potential for direct, indirect, and in-combination effects. It also states that the specific approach in each case is likely to differ depending on the scale and likely effects of the plan or project. However, it advises that the following sites should generally be included:

- All European Sites within or immediately adjacent to the plan or project area.

- All European Sites within the Zone of Influence of the plan or project.
- In accordance with the Precautionary Principle, all European Sites for which there is doubt as to whether or not they might be significantly affected.

The “Zone of Influence” of a plan or project is the geographic extent over which significant ecological effects are likely to occur. In the case of projects, the guidance recognises that the Zone of Influence must be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model (OPR, 2021). A plan or project may only lead to significant effects on the integrity of the European site where all three elements of Source-Pathway-Receptor are linked. In the absence of one element of this model, adverse effects cannot occur. The assessment should make reference to the following key variables:

- The nature, size and location of the plan or project.
- The nature of the impacts which may arise from the project.
- The sensitivities of the ecological receptors.
- The potential for in-combination effects.

For example, in the case of a project that could affect a watercourse, it may be necessary to include the entire upstream and/or downstream catchment in order to capture all European Sites with water-dependent Qualifying Interests. In the case of plans, however, DoEHLG (2010) states that this zone should extend to a distance of 15 km in all directions from the boundary of the plan area.

The Zone of Influence for the Waterford DEDP was defined as County Waterford and a 15km buffer.

A geographical representation of the Zone of Influence is produced in ArcGIS 10.5.1 using publicly available Ordnance Survey Ireland maps. This is used in combination with NPWS SAC and SPA shapefiles to identify the boundaries of European Sites in relation to the Zone of Influence (Appendix A).

There are 25 European sites within the Zone of Influence. Table 3-1 presents the number of SACs and SPAs in the Zone of Influence and Table 3-2 lists the names and site codes of the European sites.

Table 3-1 European Sites within the Zone of Influence.

European Sites	No. sites
Special Areas of Conservation	13
Special Protection Areas	12
Total	25

Table 3-2 European Sites within the Zone of Influence.

Site Code	Site Name
Special Protection Area	
004022	Ballycotton Bay SPA
004023	Ballymacoda Bay SPA
004027	Tramore Back Strand SPA

Site Code	Site Name
004028	Blackwater Estuary SPA
004028	Blackwater Estuary SPA
004033	Bannow Bay SPA
004094	Blackwater Callows SPA
004094	Blackwater Callows SPA
004192	Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA
004193	Mid-Waterford Coast SPA
004032	Dungarvan Harbour SPA
004237	Seas off Wexford SPA
Special Area of Conservation	
002137	Lower River Suir SAC
002162	River Barrow And River Nore SAC
002170	Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC
002324	Glendine Wood SAC
002123	Ardmore Head SAC
000665	Helvick Head SAC
000668	Nier Valley Woodlands SAC
000764	Hook Head SAC
000077	Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC
000671	Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC
000697	Bannow Bay SAC
000646	Galtee Mountains SAC
001952	Comeragh Mountains SAC

3.3 Conservation Status and Site Integrity

Article 1(e) of the Habitats Directive defines the conservation status of a natural habitat as “the sum of the influences acting on a natural habitat and its typical species that may affect its long-term natural distribution, structure and functions as well as the long-term survival of its typical species [...]”.

The conservative status of a natural habitat will be taken as "favourable" when:

- its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable as defined in (i).”.

Article 1(i) defines the conservation status of a species as “the sum of the influences acting on the species concerned that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations [...]”;

The conservation status will be taken as "favourable" when:

- *population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and*
- *the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and*
- *there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis;".*

EC (2018), the European Commission stated that "*the integrity of a site involves its constitutive characteristics and ecological functions*". The site's integrity is therefore based on the Qualifying Interests for which the site is designated, along with their ecological requirements. When undertaking Appropriate Assessment, the integrity of a site is not affected as long as the conservation objectives for the site are not undermined.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF ADVERSE EFFECTS

Table 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4, 4-5 and 4-6 below identify the Vision, Key Objectives, Strategic Objectives, Catalyst Projects, Destination Enabling Projects and Guiding Principles contained within the DEDP and assesses their potential to adversely affect the integrity of the European sites listed in Table 3-2.

Table 4-1 Evaluation of potential Adverse Effects as a result of the Vision.

Vision 2035	Summary	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required?
<i>"Outdoor activities animate the distinct Waterford coast, mountains and countryside. Visitors are inspired to immerse themselves in these activities and the Waterford story told through epic heritage experiences delivered in vibrant urban centres and welcoming rural communities".</i>	<p>The Vision will be delivered through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterford being recognised as a national outdoor activity destination through the quality of its outdoor trails, greenways and water-based experiences. • Visitors to Waterford being motivated to explore the county through the Waterford Orientation Project, a network of connected Greenways, Trails, Blueways, coastal, mountain and pilgrim experiences. • Waterford recognised as Ireland's family destination activated through county wide tourism networks/ clusters collaborating to deliver great visitor experiences in our rural and coastal communities. • Developing a new attraction of scale in Ireland's oldest city which will be the catalyst to disrupt regional tourism flows and generate new levels of demand for the Waterford experience in the international market. • Building on the city's rich heritage, the Waterford experience will be animated by new levels of creative tourism experiences brought alive through the energy of Waterford events and festivals hosted in the vibrant Viking Triangle and Cultural Quarter. 	The Vision is a high-level policy statement, and therefore it can be concluded that it will not lead to an adverse effect on any European site.	No

Table 4-2 Evaluation of potential Adverse Effects as a result of the Key Objectives.

Key Objective	Summary	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required?
Key Objective 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure local experiences are brought to life through the development of the optimal mix of hero and ancillary tourism products that attract visitors and retain them for longer in the destination. 	The Key Objectives are a set of high-level policy statements, and therefore it can be concluded that they will not lead to an adverse effect on any European site.	No
Key Objective 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlock the economic growth potential of an area by progressing a range of key initiatives that will motivate tourists to explore the wider destination. 		
Key Objective 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a sustainable basis for commercial tourism development centred on creating strong signature, supporting and ancillary experiences that are commoditized through the creation of saleable experiences that excite consumers and buyers alike. 		
Key Objective 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create the conditions to attract leisure visitors on a year-round basis to Waterford to immerse themselves actively in the community, through interaction with local people. 		
Key Objective 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the value of tourism to the local community by providing sustainable employment opportunities. 		

Table 4-3 Evaluation of potential Adverse Effects as a result of the Strategic Goals.

Strategic Goal	Strategic Objectives	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required?
Strategic Goal 1: Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Waterford and Ireland's Ancient East.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a year-round world-class tourism destination supported by a mix of compelling urban and rural experiences that motivate domestic and international visitors to visit Waterford. Examine the opportunities provided through future strategic development sites in the city and county to include an attraction of scale. Develop a more integrated Waterford City visitor attraction experience linking key attractions animated by new approaches to experience innovation. Develop Waterford as a destination of excellence for outdoor activities incorporating Greenways, Blueway's, coastal routes, pilgrim routes and mountains. Leverage the success of the Waterford Greenway to develop new Greenway experiences in the county, links to the Greenway and new ways of encouraging visitors to explore Greenway communities. 	<p>Plans and projects stemming from Strategic Goal 1, (such as the development of greenways, blueways or walking tracks), as well as increased visitor numbers (as an outcome of the successful implementation of this goal), have the potential to adversely affect European sites.</p> <p>This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	Yes
Strategic Goal 2: Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism in Waterford.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the Waterford City visitor experience that encourages increased levels of visitor movement across the city through new experience development within vibrant city quarters. Maximise the investment in the city's Cultural Quarter to create distinctive urban and cultural visitor experiences. Develop Dungarvan and Tramore as key destination visitor hubs building on their strengths for outdoor recreation and gateways to coastal and rural tourism experiences throughout the destination. Maximise the unique cultural experience development opportunity presented by the Gaeltacht linking the cultural sustainability of the Irish language with visitor experiences. Grow the accommodation base in Waterford City, Dungarvan and Tramore while exploring the opportunity to increase the volume of niche visitor accommodation options in rural destinations. Grow the tourism enterprise base delivering saleable experiences to support the ambition of Waterford to become an outdoor activity centre of excellence. 	<p>Plans and projects stemming from Strategic Goal 2, (such as the development of greenways, blueways or walking tracks), as well as increased visitor numbers (as an outcome of the successful implementation of this goal), have the potential to adversely affect European sites.</p> <p>This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	Yes

Strategic Goal	Strategic Objectives	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required?
Strategic Goal 3: Ensure the destination is easy to access, navigate and consume.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an innovative destination approach to visitor orientation and connectivity through the development of a Waterford Orientation Project to disperse visitors across the county linking the county's natural and built heritage with outdoor amenities and creating a looped county visitor exploration route. • Leverage the Waterford Orientation Project to integrate county wide experiences in areas such as food, gardens and cultural experiences. • Develop the opportunity for Waterford to be a key element of the future Dublin to Cork Greenway and any future possible seaway propositions. • Achieve regional connectivity through regional product opportunities such as Greenways, coastal routes and Eurovelo and the development of experience focused trails such as food, culture, and heritage. • Maximise the coastal tourism opportunity for the destination and the development of an iconic Waterford coast walking trail. • Develop St. Declan's Way as an international pilgrim trail supported by iconic trail head experiences in Ardmore and Mount Melleray linked to Cashel. • Achieve greater levels of visitor dispersion across the county by maximising the opportunity presented by natural heritage assets that include the Blackwater River, River Suir and the Comeraghs 	<p>Plans and projects stemming from Strategic Goal 3, (such as the development of greenways, blueways or walking tracks- specifically the Lower River Suir SAC, Comeragh Mountains SAC, Blackwater Estuary SPA, Blackwater River SAC, Blackwater Callows SPA), as well as increased visitor numbers (as an outcome of the successful implementation of this goal), have the potential to adversely affect European sites.</p> <p>This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	Yes

Strategic Goal	Strategic Objectives	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required?
Strategic Goal 4: Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure that it can thrive and create sustainable jobs in local communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the tourism industry to grow the range and quality of visitors' experiences aligned with the vision for the WDEDP. • Develop a coherent destination approach to encourage new levels of collaboration in Waterford City and county in experience development and how the industry collectively motivates the visitor to explore the wider destination for longer. • Strengthen the tourism networks' capacity to work together through the rural networks / clusters network and the development of new urban tourism networks / clusters. • Build the tourism industry's capacity to align with future niche destination positioning opportunities for Waterford such as family destination, cycling destination and excellent outdoor activity base. • Develop the day time and evening time opportunity to create vibrant Waterford towns and villages and maximise the economic value of tourism for local communities. 	Strategic Goal 4 is a high-level policy statement, and it can be concluded that this will not lead to an adverse effect on any European site.	No
Strategic Goal 5: Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve low carbon and sustainable growth in the development of urban and rural visitor experiences that contribute to the county's ambition to become a leading sustainable tourism destination. • Collectively work towards reducing the carbon footprint of tourism. • Ensure tourism is integrated as a key element of future strategic development sites in the city and county. • Develop a county wide approach to grow access to slow tourism experiences as a key element of sustainable tourism development for Waterford. • Ensure tourism is integrated into future urban and rural regeneration activity in developing the city and county as a great place to live, work and visit. 	Strategic Goal 5 is a high-level policy statement, and it can be concluded that this will not lead to an adverse effect on any European site.	No

Table 4-4 Evaluation of potential Adverse Effects as a result of the Key destination Catalyst Projects.

Catalyst Project and Objective	Activating Project	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required?
Catalyst Project 1 Attraction of Scale: Develop an iconic attraction of scale in Waterford City with the capacity to transform the city, county, and the Southeast as a tourism destination.	Develop a Visitor Attraction of Scale for the north side of the river and within or in the vicinity of the North Quays of Waterford City to become a transformational project for sustainable tourism across the South East Region in accordance with the NQ SDZ Planning Scheme and associated SEA, NIS and SFRA.	Plans and projects stemming from this Catalyst Project, which promotes the development of a visitor attraction of scale on the North Quays has the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, the introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction. Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.	Yes
Catalyst Project 2 Waterford Orientation Project: Develop the profile of Waterford for outdoor excellence through the creation of a discovery trail and orientation project linking the county's natural amenities and outdoor activities to motivate our visitors to explore the wider destination.	Undertake an analysis of the requirements to develop an orientation approach across County Waterford linking key natural heritage locations and outdoor activities. It will examine how to influence visitor flow between the southern and northern communities of Waterford through the development of motivational outdoor experiences building on existing infrastructure such as coastal experiences, greenways, blueways and walking trails and enhance existing outdoor resources to create a logical orientation route.	Plans and projects stemming from this Catalyst Project, which aims to create a logical orientation route in Waterford, to build on existing infrastructure, and to enhance existing outdoor resources, attract visitors to natural heritage locations have the potential to adversely affect European Sites. This could be through habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction. Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.	Yes
Catalyst Project 3 Industry Collaboration – Tourism Networks / Clusters: Deliver a collective approach to destination development through the development of the tourism networks / clusters to create approaches to collaboration across the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COLLECTIVE TOURISM INDUSTRY - Network/ Cluster Development • Collective Tourism Industry Promotion through Visit Waterford • Digital that Delivers - Industry Capability Development • Training Partnerships • Regional Experience Trails / Network/ Cluster Development • Gaeltacht Cultural Experiences • Great Houses & Gardens Network • Waterford Estuary Network/ Cluster Development 	Plans and projects stemming from this Catalyst Project, which aims to promote collaboration in the tourism industry, and the development of a number of experiences included a fishing heritage experience and an outdoor education experience in an Gaeltacht have the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction. Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.	Yes

Catalyst Project and Objective	Activating Project	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cappoquin • Kilmacthomas • Portlaoise 		
Catalyst Project 4 Waterford City Experience: Develop Waterford City as a year-round tourism destination and gateway to Waterford coastal and rural communities and experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COLLECTIVE TOURISM INDUSTRY - Network/ Cluster Development • Waterford City Visitor Orientation • Viking Triangle Tourism Experience Masterplan • Night Time Economy • Urban Animation • Tourism Retail • University City • Waterford Airport • Waterford South Quays • Waterford City Walls 	Plans and projects stemming from this Catalyst Project, which aims to attract visitors via the development of greenways, innovative lighting and improvement of outdoor activities have the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction. Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.	Yes
Catalyst Project 5 Accommodation Development Grow the volume and diversity of accommodation stock distributed across our urban and rural destinations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterford Accommodation Strategy • Dunmore East Accommodation 	Plans and projects stemming from this Catalyst Project, which aims to develop new and existing accommodation which would in turn increase the tourist capacity of Waterford, has the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction. Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.	Yes
Catalyst Project 6 Waterford Coastal Tourism: Increase the value of tourism for coastal communities through the sustainable development of Waterford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platforms for Growth Investment • Coastal Excellence • Coastal Blueway • Waterford Estuary • Outdoor Activity Destination Hubs 	Plans and projects stemming from this Catalyst Project, which aims to attract visitors to the coast/outdoors via the development of greenways or improvement of outdoor activities have the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species	Yes

Catalyst Project and Objective	Activating Project	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required?
as an active coastal tourism destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal Tramore - Outdoor Activity and Tourism Regeneration Copper Coast Destination Vision Dunmore East Activity Base Development Lighthouse Tourism 	<p>or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	

Table 4-5 Evaluation of potential Adverse Effects as a result of the Enabling Projects

Destination Enabling	Project	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required
Destination Enabling 1: North Stars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Declan's Way Experience Development Plan • Mount Melleray Visitor Experience Development • Comeragh Mountains Outdoor Recreation Strategy • River Blackwater Blueway Feasibility Study 	<p>Plans and projects stemming from this Enabling project, which aims to attract visitors to the coast/outdoors via the development of greenways or improvement of outdoor activities have the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	Yes

Destination Enabling	Project	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required
Destination Enabling 2: Waterford Outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterford Greenways Masterplan • Regional Greenway • Waterford to New Ross Greenway • Waterford to Tramore Greenway • Dungarvan to Mallow Greenway • Dungarvan to Youghal Link • Spur to Helvick • Waterford Greenway to Suir Blueway - Waterford County Outdoor Recreation Plan • Waterford to Rosslare Greenway • Local Loops • Linking Anne Valley Walk with Greenway • Greenways – Visitor Interpretation • Greenways – User Experience • Cycling Tourism Destination • Waterford Outdoors • International Routes and Trails – Eurovelo 1 • Linking Cycling Infrastructure • Off Road Cycling Infrastructure • Signature Adventure • Water Activity Centre • River Suir Experiences Cluster 	<p>Plans and projects stemming from this Enabling project, which aims to attract visitors to the coast / outdoors via the development of greenways or improvement of outdoor activities have the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	Yes

Destination Enabling	Project	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required
Destination Enabling 3: Waterford Attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaeltacht Cultural Facility Community Heritage Centres Waterford Visitor Attractions Cultural Visitor Experience Dungarvan Castle Dungarvan Cultural Centre Mount Congreve 	<p>Plans and projects stemming from this Enabling project, which aims to attract visitors to the coast/outdoors via the development of greenways or improvement of outdoor activities have the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	Yes
Destination Enabling 4: Taste Waterford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Tourism – Taste Waterford Food Tourism – Distillers & Brewers 	<p>Plans and projects stemming from this Enabling project, which aims to promote food in Waterford through the promotion of food from the coast, mountains, river valleys and rural communities, and to establish a food and drink trail have the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	Yes
Destination Enabling 5: Family Destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Market Focus 	<p>Plans and projects stemming from this Enabling project, which aims to develop the capacity of the Waterford tourism industry to become recognised as a family friendly destination have the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	Yes
Destination Enabling 6: Festivals & Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Festival Development Festivals and Events 	<p>Plans and projects stemming from this Enabling project, which aims to develop festivals and events have the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	Yes

Destination Enabling	Project	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required
Destination Enabling 7: Climate Action / Sustainable Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Tourism Destination – Networks / Clusters Pilot Programme Smart Tourism Sustainable Tourist Transport Strategy 	<p>Plans and projects stemming from this Enabling project, which aims to develop the county as a sustainable tourism destinations including the promotion of land a water-based activities have the potential to adversely affect European sites. This could be through habitat loss and fragmentation, direct mortality, disturbance, introduction or spread of invasive species or habitat degradation as a result of water quality reduction.</p> <p>Therefore, adverse effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded and mitigation is required.</p>	Yes

Table 4-6 Evaluation of potential Adverse Effects as a result of the Guiding Principles.

Guiding Principles	Potential to negatively impact on any of the European sites within the Zone of Influence?	Mitigation required?
<p>Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Thus, sustainable tourism should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity. 2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance. 3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation. <p>Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.</p> <p>Sustainable tourism is also required to maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them</p>	<p>The guiding principles are a set of high-level principles to guide the projects contained in the Plan, and therefore it can be concluded that it will not lead to an adverse effect on any European site.</p>	No

5.0 MITIGATION

5.1 Principles and Approach

Section 4.0 of this NIS identified adverse effects likely to arise from the DEDP. This section prescribes measures aimed at mitigating these adverse effects, thereby protecting the integrity of European sites.

The mitigation measures prescribed in this NIS have been designed according to the principle of a mitigation hierarchy, as outlined in the European Commission's guidance document *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC, 2021). According to this hierarchy, the following mitigation approaches were adopted, in order of decreasing preference:

1. Avoidance (preventing impacts from happening in the first place)
2. Reduction (reducing the magnitude and/or likelihood of an impact)

The mitigation measures presented in Table 5-1 below apply to the Strategic Goals, Catalyst Projects and Enabling Projects contained in the DEDP, where the potential for adverse effects could not be excluded, as specified in Table 4-1.

Any future plans or projects that stem of the DEDP will be subject to Appropriate Assessment at the project level, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, as transposed into domestic law by Part 5 of the Habitats Regulations and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act. Where potential adverse effects cannot be avoided, the mitigation measures presented in Table 5-1 below will apply and any other measures specified as part of the project level assessments, including AA, as appropriate.

Table 5-1 Mitigation Measures

Source	Relevant Strategic Objective/ Catalyst Project/ Enabling Project	Potential Effect	Mitigation Measure (s) ⁷	Residual Effects
The construction and operation of tourism-related infrastructure and development, as well as increased visitor numbers during operation.	<p>Goals: Strategic Goal 1 Strategic Goal 2 Strategic Goal 3</p> <p>Catalyst Projects: 1. Attraction of Scale 2. Waterford Orientation Project 3. Industry Collaboration – Tourism Networks / Clusters 4. Waterford City Experience 5. Waterford Accommodation Strategy 6. Waterford Coastal Tourism</p> <p>Enabling Projects: 1. North Stars 2. Waterford Outdoors 3. Waterford Attractions 4. Taste Waterford 5. Family Destination 6. Festivals and Events 7. Climate Action/ Sustainable Tourism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat loss and fragmentation 	<p>The potential for habitat loss and fragmentation will be mitigated through the implementation of the Policy Objectives in the adopted Waterford City and County Development Plan (2022-2028), including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity Policy Objectives BD 01, BD 03, BD 05, BD 07, BD 08, BD 10, BD 11. Tourism Policy Objectives ECON 26, ECON 27, ECON 28. Wetland Policy Objectives BD 16, BD 17. Hedgerow Policy Objectives BD 20, BD 21, BD 23, BD 24. Amenity Policy Objectives BGI 11, BGI 17. Development Management Policy Objectives DM 13, DM 48. Blue Green Infrastructure Policy Objectives BGI 04, BGI 13 <p>The 4th National Biodiversity Plan including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome 3A (Sustainable tourism) and Outcome 3B (Biodiversity and tourism) <p>Visitor Management Guidelines for the Wild Atlantic Way (June 2020) development by Fáilte Ireland. It should be noted that although these guidelines were developed for the Wild Atlantic Way, the principles and objectives are applicable to all Fáilte Ireland tourism regions (Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027).</p> <p>The assessment of effects of plans and projects stemming from the DEDP will be undertaken by competent experts and in accordance with best practice guidelines, including the guidelines published by the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS), the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), including any subsequent updates.</p>	<p>Provided the mitigation measures prescribed in this NIS are implemented, the DEDP, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of the any European site.</p>

⁷ The policy objectives contained in Table 5-1 are presented in full in Table 5-2.

Source	Relevant Strategic Objective/ Catalyst Project/ Enabling Project	Potential Effect	Mitigation Measure (s) ⁷	Residual Effects
			<p>Ecological surveys and assessment will be carried out in accordance with the following best practice guidance and any subsequent updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for the Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.2. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester. • TII (2009) <i>Ecological Survey Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes</i>. Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Dublin. • Smith et al. (2011) <i>Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Survey and Mapping</i>. Heritage Council. <p>Site specific surveys will be undertaken in accordance with these guidelines in order to identify Qualifying Interests, including non-Qualifying Interest species and habitats on which they rely, that may be affected by a plan or project. This will include surveys for mobile species which may be found outside the boundary of a European site.</p>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct mortality 	<p>Pre-construction surveys will be carried out for Qualifying Interests, where required. The life span of ecological surveys and the requirement for pre-construction surveys will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, determined by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist and informed by <i>Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys</i> (CIEEM, 2019). The following guidance and any subsequent updates will also be adhered to, where appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TII (2009) <i>Ecological Survey Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes</i>. Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Dublin. • Collins (2023) <i>Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines</i> (4th Edition). • Inland Fisheries Ireland (2016) <i>Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries During Construction Works and Adjacent to Waters</i>. • NIEA (2019) <i>Otters and Development</i>. Northern Ireland Environment Agency 	

Source	Relevant Strategic Objective/ Catalyst Project/ Enabling Project	Potential Effect	Mitigation Measure (s) ⁷	Residual Effects
			<p>Where works are to be carried out in sensitive areas, a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works will be employed to supervise the works.</p> <p>In-stream works will only take place between the 1st July and 30th September, unless otherwise agreed with Inland Fisheries Ireland.</p> <p>Site specific mitigation measures will be incorporated into any future project(s) to reduce the risk to QI species and habitats, such as fencing, green bridges and hop-over planting.</p>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disturbance 	<p>The potential for disturbance will be mitigated through the implementation of the Policy Objectives as laid out in the adopted Waterford City and County Development Plan (2022-2028), including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity Value Policy Objective BD 13, BD 14. Tourism Policy Objectives ECON 26, ECON 27, ECON 28. Natura 2000 Network Policy Objective BD 05. Amenity Policy Objective BGI 10, BGI 11. BGI 16, BGI 17. Development Management Policy Objective DM 13. <p>Visitor Management Guidelines for the Wild Atlantic Way (June 2020) development by Fáilte Ireland. It should be noted that although these guidelines were developed for the Wild Atlantic Way, the principles and objectives are applicable to all Fáilte Ireland tourism regions (Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027).</p> <p>Relevant legislation and guidance relating to noise, vibration and lighting will be adhered to during the planning of projects, and will inform the Ecological Impact Assessment process, which will be undertaken in line with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIEEM (2018) <i>Guidelines for the Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine</i>. version 1.2. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester. Institution of Lighting Professionals (2020) Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light. Guidance Note 01/20. Institution 	

Source	Relevant Strategic Objective/ Catalyst Project/ Enabling Project	Potential Effect	Mitigation Measure (s) ⁷	Residual Effects
			<p>of lighting professionals, Regent House, Regent Place, Rugby, Warwickshire, UK.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IFI (2016) <i>Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and adjacent to Waters.</i> 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat degradation as a result of water quality impacts 	<p>The potential for habitat degradation as a result of water quality impacts will be mitigated through the implementation of the Policy Objectives as laid out in the adopted Waterford City and County Development Plan (2022-2028), including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Quality Policy Objectives WQ 01, WQ 02, WQ 03. Greenways and Blueways Policy Objectives BGI 09. Tourism Policy Objectives ECON 26, ECON 27, ECON 28. Amenity Policy Objective BGI 10, BGI 13. Development Management DM 13. Blue Green Infrastructure Policy Objectives BGI 04, BGI 13 <p>Plans and projects will be designed, constructed and operated in accordance with relevant legislation and where applicable, with the following guidelines and any subsequent updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TII (2008) <i>Guidelines for the crossing of Watercourses During Construction of National Road Schemes</i> TII (2015) Road Drainage and the Water Environment. IFI (2016) <i>Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and adjacent to Waters.</i> CIRIA C753 The SUDS Manual CIRIA C753 The SUDS Manual CIRIA C532: Control of Water Pollution from Construction Sites, Guidance for Consultants and Contractors CIRIA C692: Environmental Good Practice on Site CIRIA C648: Control of Water Pollution from Linear Construction Projects: Technical Guidance CIRIA C648: Control of water pollution from linear construction projects: Site guide. 	

Source	Relevant Strategic Objective/ Catalyst Project/ Enabling Project	Potential Effect	Mitigation Measure (s) ⁷	Residual Effects
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spread of invasive species 	<p>The potential for the spread of invasive species will be mitigated through the implementation of the Policy Objectives as laid out in the adopted Waterford City and County Development Plan (2022-2028), including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invasive species Policy Objectives BD 28 and BD 29. Development Management DM 13. <p>And as laid out in Ireland's Ancient Easy Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027 pertaining to visitor management (Appendix A3).</p> <p>Plans and projects will be designed, constructed and operated in accordance with relevant legislation and where applicable, with the following guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TII (2020a) <i>The Management of Invasive Alien Plant Species on National Roads – Standard</i>. TII (2020b) <i>The Management of Invasive Alien Plant Species on National Roads – Technical Guidance</i> 	

In addition to the mitigation described above to be implemented as part of the plans and objectives of the DEDP, Fáilte Ireland's stakeholders will be required to demonstrate compliance with the following measures contained within the DEDP, in order to begin land use or infrastructure development or land use activities.

- Infrastructure Capacity – *“With respect to infrastructural capacity (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) the potential environmental impacts associated with increase visitor numbers and increase pressure on capacities of existing infrastructure (including accommodation) will require careful planning and assessment. The potential environmental effects of the likely increase in tourism volumes resulting from the relevant projects in this plan will need to be considered at project level and mitigated as appropriate. This aspect should be linked to the development of visitor management plans as appropriate. The promotion of developing visitor friendly supporting infrastructure where it is required will also be encouraged.”*
- Visitor Management – *“Partners tasked with progressing actions and projects shall seek to sustainably manage existing and any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour to avoid significant effects on the environment including loss of habitat and/or disturbance to sensitive species (including human beings and biodiversity) where relevant. This shall include for example, ensuring that new projects are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Visitor management plans will be required for proposed plans, programmes and projects that are to receive funding as relevant and appropriate”.*
- Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services – *Blue and Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services “Those receiving funding shall contribute towards the maintenance and enhancement of existing blue and green infrastructure and its ecosystem services. Proposals for the development of any blue and green infrastructure or activities in these areas should demonstrate the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the: provision of open space amenities; sustainable management of water; protection and management of biodiversity; protection of cultural heritage; and protected landscape sensitivities”.*

The majority of the mitigation measures are achieved through the environmental policies and objectives laid out in the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028. The Development Plan provides for sustainable planning and management of all development in the county. The table below (Table 5.2) describes the relevant objectives from the Development Plan.

Table 5.2 Relevant objectives from the Waterford City & County Development Plan

Greenways & Blueways Policy Objectives		
BGI 01	Managing our BGI Assets	To conserve, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of Waterford in recognition of its importance as a non-renewable resource and as a natural asset for health and well-being of our communities.
BGI 02	Enhancing the role of BGI	To establish BGI as a key component in the planning process and designing the future for Waterford so that environmental resilience is achieved through implementation of this plan
BGI 03	BGI Strategy	We will develop a BGI Strategy for the City and County during the lifetime of this plan
BGI 04	Development Proposals	We will assess all proposals for development with the aim of no net loss of biodiversity and to achieve gain for BGI and ecosystem services. In particular we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the retention and creation of open drainage ditches instead of underground pipes where appropriate as these

		<p>provide additional habitats and water source for wetland species; and,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the integration of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in design concept and layout.
BGI 05	Maintaining and Enhancing Amenity through BGI	We will continue to invest in the maintenance and enhancement of BGI and support the provision of new parks, green space corridors and other public open spaces across our urban and rural settlements
BGI 06	Enhancing Waterford Greenway	To support the enhancement of the existing Waterford Greenway and expansion of the Greenway network in Waterford City and County by examining the feasibility of developing a Waterford to Tramore Greenway, a Waterford to Portlaoise/Carrick-on-Suir Greenway and by extending the Waterford Greenway to the west of Dungarvan.
BGI 07	Greenway Network	To support the development of a South East Greenway network with Waterford City as its hub, linking Waterford City with South Kilkenny, New Ross and Rosslare.
BGI 08	Cycle Network	To support the maintenance, upgrade, development and promotion of Waterford's Cycling Trail network including EuroVelo 1-Atlantic Coast Route.
BGI 09	Developing our Blueways	To support the sustainable environmental and economic development of Blueways on Waterford's waterway corridors and coastline including the development of water-based sport activities, improvement of quays and slipways and enhanced interpretation and safety that do not cause landscape or environmental degradation and avoid adverse impacts on ecological integrity including the Natura 2000 Network and built heritage. The Council will also support the 'The Irish Sea Way' program or similar sustainable tourist attraction initiatives.
BGI 13	Community Engagement and Sustainable Amenities	We will support communities and ensure recreational trails and outdoor recreational amenities, and associated facilities are developed in sympathy with the natural environment and do not pose adverse impacts on habitats, species, the ecological integrity of the Natura 2000 Network and landscape amenity or affect ecosystem services including flood risk and climate change impacts such as coastal erosion. In doing so ensuring to realise the positive impacts of development of outdoor recreational amenities and trails including health & wellbeing, social, cultural, economic and tourism benefits as well as enhanced community resilience.
BGI 16	Visitor and Habitat Management	Where relevant, the Council and those receiving permission for development under the Plan shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Management measures may include ensuring that new projects and activities are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate
BGI 17	Increases in Visitor Numbers to Semi-Natural Areas	Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.
Regulatory Framework and Decision-Making Policy Objectives		
ENV 01		Through implementation of the Development Plan we will cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management, including compliance with EU Directives - including the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC, as amended), the Water Framework Directive(2000/60/EC), the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU, as

		amended by 2014/52/EC) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) – and relevant transposing Regulations.
Biodiversity Policy Objectives		
BD 03		<p>All proposed development will be considered in terms of compliance with the standards and legal requirements of the following where they apply;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland- Guidance for Planning Authorities Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2021). • NRA Guidelines on Ecological Impact Assessment (2009) • All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (2021) • Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment (2020) • Requirements for the Protection of Fisheries Habitat during Construction and Development Works at River Sites.
Development Management		
DM 13		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not place unsustainable demands upon existing or planned infrastructural capacity for the area; • Does not conflict with the maintenance of the natural and cultural heritage of the area; • Is compliant with the policy objectives of this Development Plan (2022-2028) • Reinforces and supports the provision of non-residential tourism facilities in the County either through integration with established facilities, or by the provision of new facilities; and • Minimises the need for additional vehicular journeys to/ from visitor facilities in the immediate environs.
Tourism Policy Objectives		
ECON 26	Tourism Product and Infrastructure	<p>In collaboration with landowners, local communities, relevant stakeholders and social enterprise, we will promote, facilitate, encourage investment, and deliver improvements to our tourism product, infrastructure and facilities, including improved car, bus and bicycle parking, walking and cycling trails, directional signage/information boards, and service/rest facilities. Proposals for development shall ensure no adverse impacts on ecological integrity including the Natura 2000 Network. Tourism product developments and infrastructure/ facilities will be subject to normal planning and environmental criteria. The potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/ tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals. Any such works shall incorporate and integrate elements of green infrastructure, where appropriate, and be designed in accordance with the principles of universal design. In particular we will continue to advance initiatives such as the INTERREG 'Local Flavours' programme aimed at encouraging, strengthening and delivering investment and improvement to rural economic development and tourism and heritage assets in the following principle (rural cluster) areas and tourism-related initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackwater Valley • Waterford Blueways • Coastal Walks • Comeragh Uplands • Waterford Greenway • Copper Coast Geopark • Waterford Estuary • Gaeltacht na nDéise
ECON 27	DEDPs/ Ireland's Ancient East	To support the delivery and implementation of Destination Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) through continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and other tourism stakeholders. b) To

		continue to actively engage, invest, encourage and promote the development of the Ireland's Ancient East regional experience brand through sustainable tourism, which will enable visitors to have enjoyable experiences while having regard for the social, cultural heritage and environmental impacts, including the protection of designated sites
ECON 28	Tourism Strategy	To support the development of any update to Waterford's Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Plan (2017-2022), and to support the creation of a Strategy for the further development of Greenways, Blueways and Trails in County Waterford incorporating walking, cycling and other activities to support tourism development, and to assist in seeking funding opportunities for their development.

6.0 IN-COMBINATION EFFECTS

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that AA be carried out in respect of plans and projects that are likely to have significant effects on European sites, “*either individually or in combination with other plans or projects*”. Therefore, regardless of whether or not the likely effects of a plan or project are significant when considered on their own, the significance of the combined effects of the plan or project under assessment and other plans and projects must also be evaluated.

6.1 Methodology

Given the strategic nature of DEDP and that the details of the Catalyst and Enabling Projects contained in the DEDP are unknown, it is not possible to assess DEDP against projects. Therefore, the in-combination assessment has assessed the potential for in-combination effects with other, similar, strategic Plans.

Table 6-1 below presents the in-combination assessment of the DEDP and other Plans.

Table 6-1 In-combination effects assessment

Plan	Summary	Potential for In-combination Effects
<p>Project Ireland 2040:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF) National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030 	<p>The NPF is a high-level framework that sets plans for investing in social, economic and cultural infrastructure to achieve overarching strategic objectives of wellbeing, equality and opportunity.</p> <p>The NDP a high-level budgetary plan that identifies strategic need and priorities for governmental capital investment for the period 2021 - 2030.</p>	No
National CFRAMS Programme South- eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study	<p>Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Studies and their product – Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) – are at the core of national policy for flood risk management and the strategy for its implementation. These studies are required by The Floods Directive [2007/60/EC], which is being implemented in Ireland through the European Communities (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 [S.I.122/2010].</p> <p>Each FRMP is accompanied by an associated SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Statement.</p>	No
Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027 – Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027	<p>Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027 is high-level strategy for the tourism industry and relevant stakeholders to increase awareness and consumer appeal of the region.</p> <p>This plan was subject to AA and SEA processes.</p>	No
River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland 2022-2027	<p>The River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland 2022-2027 sets out the measures that are necessary to protect and restore water quality in Ireland. The overall aim of the plan is to protect and sustainably manage Ireland's freshwater and marine waters to improve Ireland's water-based environments.</p> <p>This plan was subject to AA and SEA processes.</p>	No
4 th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030	<p>The purpose of the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 is to set out a high-level strategy for halting the decline of Ireland's biodiversity and restore and maintain ecosystems and ecosystem services from 2023 – 2030.</p> <p>This plan was not subject to SEA or AA processes.</p>	No

Plan	Summary	Potential for In-combination Effects
Waterford City Biodiversity Action Plan 2010	The Waterford City Biodiversity Action Plan contains specific objectives and actions that translate the high-level strategies set out in the National Biodiversity Action Plan. This plan was not subject to SEA or AA processes.	No
Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028	The County Development Plan (CDP) provides the principal planning strategy document for the development of a local authority area over the statutory time period of the plan. The CDP has been subject to SEA and AA processes to ensure that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the DEDP have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No
Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028	The County Development Plan (CDP) provides the principal planning strategy document for the development of a local authority area over the statutory time period of the plan. The CDP has been subject to SEA and AA processes to ensure that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the DEDP have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	
Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	The County Development Plan (CDP) provides the principal planning strategy document for the development of a local authority area over the statutory time period of the plan. The CDP has been subject to SEA and AA processes to ensure that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the raft DEDP have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	
Kilkenny County Development Plan 2021-2027	The County Development Plan (CDP) provides the principal planning strategy document for the development of a local authority area over the statutory time period of the plan. The CDP has been subject to SEA and AA processes to ensure that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the DEDP have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	
Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028	The County Development Plan (CDP) provides the principal planning strategy document for the development of a local authority area over the statutory time period of the plan. The CDP has been subject to SEA and AA processes to ensure that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the DEDP have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	
Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)	The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) stems from the growing recognition that biological diversity is an asset of tremendous value to present and future generations across the world. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) tasked experts to prepare an international legal instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. They were to consider	No

Plan	Summary	Potential for In-combination Effects
	"the need to share costs and benefits between developed and developing countries" as well as "ways and means to support innovation by local people". The text of the Convention was adopted on 22 nd May 1992 in Nairobi and was opened to signature on 5 th June 1992, during the Rio "Earth Summit". Within a year, it had received 168 signatures. It entered into force on 29 th December 1993. The CBD meets every two years. Its website offers more information about the CBD and how it works, as well as all the available documents, for every meeting since the first Conference of the Parties. In accordance with Article 6 of the Convention, parties have to develop national biodiversity strategies or action plans (NBSAPs).	
Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1983)	The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (also known as CMS or the Bonn Convention) aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is one of a small number of intergovernmental treaties concerned with the conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitats on a global scale. Since the Convention entered into force on 1 November 1983, its membership has grown steadily to include 80 (as of 1 st September 2002) Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.	No
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) 1971	The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty, which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and appropriate use of wetlands and their resources.	No
Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979)	The Bern Convention aims to ensure conservation of wild flora and fauna species and their habitats. Special attention is given to endangered and vulnerable species, including endangered and vulnerable migratory species specified in appendices to the Convention. The Parties commit to take all appropriate measures to ensure the conservation of the habitats of the wild flora and fauna species. Such measures should be included in the parties' planning and development policies and pollution control, with particular attention to the conservation of wild flora and fauna. The Parties undertake to promote education and disseminate general information concerning the need to conserve species of wild flora and fauna and their habitats. The Convention establishes a Standing Committee on which the parties are represented by their delegates. The Committee's principal task is to monitor the provisions of this Convention in the light of development of the wild flora and the assessment of its needs. For this purpose, the Standing Committee is especially competent to make recommendations to the Parties and amendments to the appendices where these protected species are specified.	No
Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Implementation	The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) was established by the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean in 1984. NASCO's objective is to conserve, restore, enhance and rationally manage Atlantic salmon through cooperation of six Governments and the European Union. Implementation plans are prepared by	No

Plan	Summary	Potential for In-combination Effects
Plan for the period 2019 – 2024	<p>each jurisdiction to demonstrate what actions are being taken by the parties to implement NASCO's resolutions, agreements and guidelines.</p> <p>NASCO. The U.K and the European Union are members of the North-East Atlantic Commission under this organisation. The functions of this Commission are brought into effect through implementation plans and include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a forum for consultation and co-operation on the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of salmon stocks. • Proposing regulatory measures; and • Making recommendations on scientific research; • Each jurisdiction develops Implementation Plans detailing measures to be taken over five-year periods in relation to three areas of concern; • Management of salmon fisheries; • Protection and restoration of Atlantic salmon habitat; and • Management of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics. <p>Atlantic Salmon is protected under Annex II and V of the Habitats Directive. A total of 26 SACs in Ireland have been designated for the protection Atlantic Salmon. As discussed above, the European Communities Regulation on Quality of Salmonid Waters (S.I. No. 293/1988) intends on maintaining or restoring water quality and unimpeded migratory corridors within salmonid waters.</p>	
Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)	<p>The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and The Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) transposed through Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) as amended. Adopted in 1992, the Habitats Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora aims to promote the maintenance of biodiversity, taking account of economic, social, cultural, and regional requirements. It forms the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy with the Birds Directive and establishes the EU wide Natura 2000 ecological network of protected areas, safeguarded against potentially damaging developments.</p> <p>Concerned with the decline of migratory and wild birds, Member States unanimously adopted Directive 79/409/EEC (Bird Directive) in April 1979. It is the oldest piece of EU legislation on the environment. Habitat loss and degradation are the most serious threats to the conservation of wild birds. The Birds Directive therefore places great emphasis on the protection of habitats for endangered and migratory species. It establishes a network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) including the most suitable territories for these species. Since 1994, all SPAs are included in the</p>	No

Plan	Summary	Potential for In-combination Effects
	Natura 2000 ecological network, set up under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. The Birds and Habitats Directives have had to evolve to reflect successive enlargements of the European Union. The Birds Directive provides a common framework for the conservation of naturally occurring species of wild birds and their habitats throughout the EU. It obligates EU states to preserve, maintain and re-establish sufficient areas in order to safeguard the habitats of listed migratory and wetland species in order to ensure their survival and reproduction in their area of distribution.	
European Union Biodiversity Strategy for 2030	<p>The EU's Biodiversity Strategy 2030 is a comprehensive, ambitious, and long-term plan to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems. The Strategy aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 and contains specific actions and commitments. The Biodiversity Strategy is designed to halt biodiversity loss in Europe by committing to land and sea protection and restoring ecosystems by 2030. The biodiversity strategy aims to put Europe's biodiversity on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, climate and the planet. In the post-COVID-19 context, the strategy aims to build our societies' resilience to future threats such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the impacts of climate change; forest fires; food insecurity; and <p>disease outbreaks - including by protecting wildlife and fighting illegal wildlife trade.</p>	No
Nature Restoration Law	Under the European Green Deal, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 sets out the general objective of reversing biodiversity loss, so that Europe's biodiversity is on the path to recovery by 2030 and that by 2050 all of the EU's ecosystems are restored, resilient and adequately protected. One of the commitments in the Biodiversity Strategy is to put forward a proposal for legally binding EU nature restoration targets. The proposed regulation on nature restoration aims to fulfil this commitment.	No
Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000	The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 supersedes the Wildlife Act 1976 as the principal National legislation provided for the protection of wildlife and the control of activities that may adversely affect wildlife. A network of nationally protected Nature Reserves, which public bodies have a duty to protect, are established under the Wildlife Act, specific reserves were established under various Ministerial Orders. Sites of national importance for nature conservation are afforded protection under planning policy and the Wildlife Acts. Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are sites that are designated under the Wildlife Acts for the protection of flora, fauna, habitats and geological features of interest. Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) are published sites identified as of similar conservation interest, but which have not been statutorily proposed or designated – but are nonetheless afforded some protection under planning policies and objectives. The Wildlife Acts	No

Plan	Summary	Potential for In-combination Effects
	also protect species of conservation value from injury, disturbance and damage to individual entities or to their breeding and resting places.	
European Communities (Quality of Salmonid Waters) Regulations, 1988. (S.I. No. 293/1988)	The European Communities (Quality of Salmonid Waters) regulations, S.I. No 84 of 1988 defines freshwaters as being waters capable of supporting Salmon (<i>Salmo Salar</i>), Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>), Char (<i>Salvelinus</i>) and whitefish (<i>Coregonus</i>) and are hereby designated as Salmonid waters. A local authority shall carry out or cause to be carried out, sampling of Salmonid waters in its functional area in respect of the parameters specified in the second schedule of the 1988 regulation. The European commission oversees Member State's policies in this area. In Ireland the Department of the Environment and local Government is responsible for making designations which the local authorities implement.	No
Prioritised Action Framework 2021 - 2027 (NPWS)	The Prioritised Action Framework 2021-2027 for Ireland has been informed by reports on: the 'Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland' submitted in 2019 to the European Commission, under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, and on the 'Status of Birds in Ireland', submitted in 2019 to the European Commission, under Article 12 of the Birds Directive. Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAFs) are strategic multiannual planning tools, aimed at providing a comprehensive overview of the measures that are needed to implement the EU-wide Natura 2000 network and its associated green infrastructure, specifying the financing needs for these measures and linking them to the corresponding EU funding programmes.	No
Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (2019)	The Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan considers terrestrial, freshwater, and marine biodiversity and ecosystem services. The goal is to protect biodiversity from the effects of climate change and to conserve and manage ecosystems so that they deliver services that increase the adaptive capacity of people and biodiversity. This is achieved by identifying adaptation options that will help to protect biodiversity and ecosystem services from the effects of changing climate.	No
Management Plans for Natura 2000 sites	Natura 2000 sites are designated sites that receive protection due to the biodiversity that they support. To ensure the survival, support the enhancement and protect against deleterious impacts on Natura 2000 sites, management plans and conservation objectives for respective natura 2000 sites must be developed to ensure ecological protection.	No

7.0 CONCLUSION

This NIS has been prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Habitats Directive, the Habitats Regulations and the Planning and Development Act, as well as the relevant case law and current guidance. It has demonstrated that, in the absence of appropriate mitigation, DEDP could adversely affect the integrity of European sites, in view of their Conservation Objectives. In light of this finding, this NIS has prescribed appropriate mitigation to eliminate or minimise such effects. This assessment has been undertaken on the basis of the best scientific knowledge in the field and the Precautionary Principle. No reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

It is the considered opinion of ROD, as the author of this NIS, that given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation prescribed in this NIS, that the Waterford DEDP, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site.

8.0 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A

European Sites and the Zone of Influence

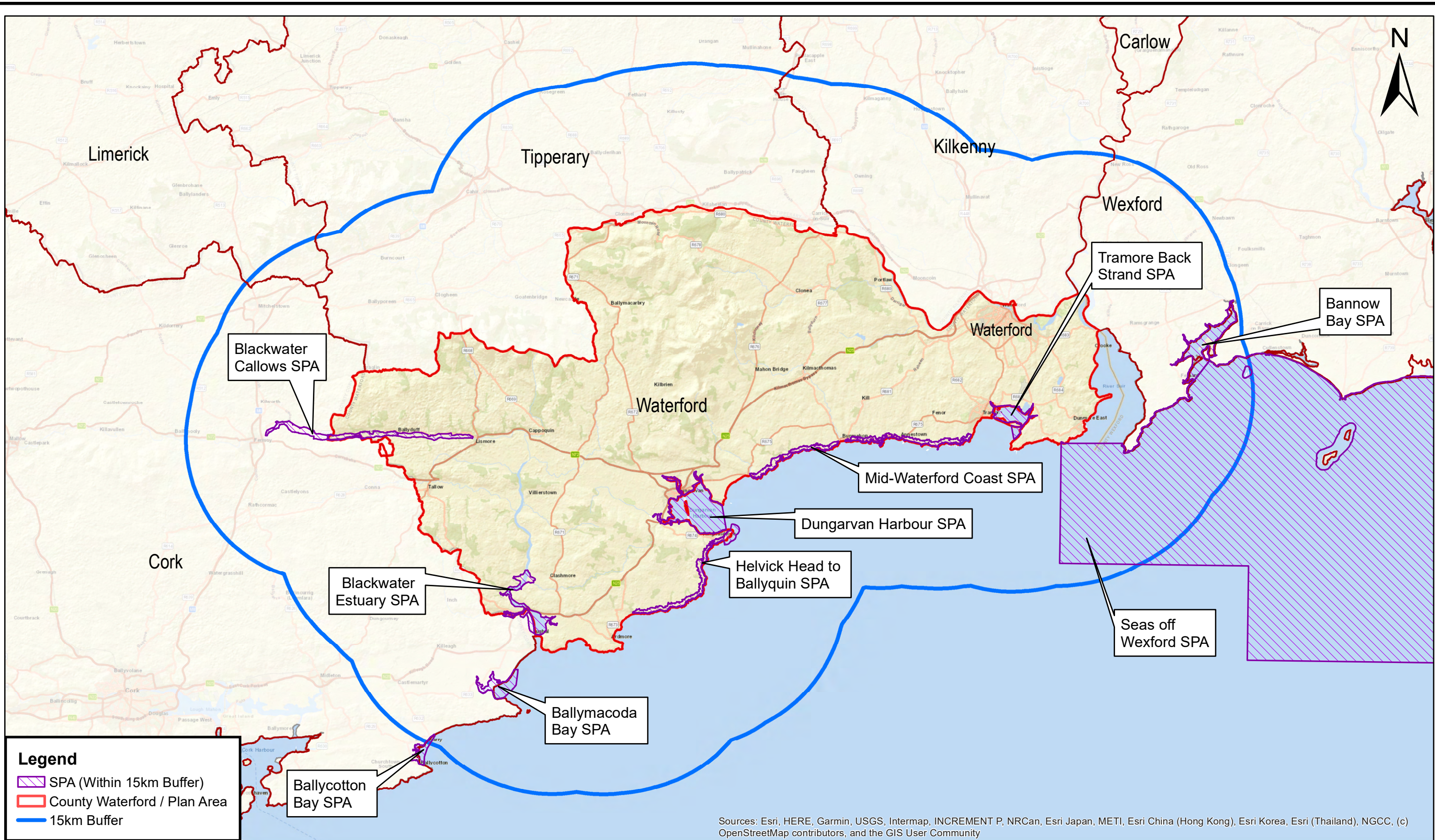


TITLE: Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) Within Co. Waterford & a 15km Buffer

Sources:
Nature Reserves - National Parks and Wildlife Services (2015)

CYAL50320424
© Ordnance Survey Ireland/Government of Ireland.





TITLE: Special Protection Areas (SPA) Within Co. Waterford & a 15km Buffer

Sources:
National Parks - National Parks and Wildlife Services (2017)



APPENDIX B

AA Determination Letter

**Appropriate Assessment Determination under the
European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (as amended)
for the
Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan**

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) Determination, pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Regulation 42 (11) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), as to whether a plan or project would adversely affect the integrity of a European Site has being made by Fáilte Ireland.

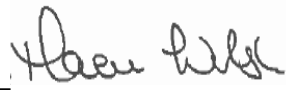
In carrying out this AA, Fáilte Ireland is taking into account the relevant matters specified under Regulation 42 (12) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended). The AA Natura Impact Statement (which considers other relevant plans and projects) has been carefully considered and its reasoning and conclusion agreed with and adopted. All other relevant documents prepared and submitted during the preparation process for the Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan were also considered in making this determination, including the Plan to be finalised and written submissions made on the Draft Plan and associated documents while they were on public display.

It is determined that the risks to the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites have been addressed by the inclusion of achievable mitigation measures that will prioritise the avoidance of impacts in the first place and reliably mitigate these impacts where they cannot be avoided. Furthermore, in order to be realised, projects included in the Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier AA) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

Having incorporated these mitigation commitments; it is determined that implementation of the Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan will not have a significant adverse effect on the ecological integrity of any European Site, either individually or in combination with any other plan or project¹. Therefore, no further assessment is required.

Date: __March 2025__

Signed: _____



Signatory
Approved Officer

¹ 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 plan to proceed; and
- c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.