

Prepared by

Roughan & O'Donovan

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

Tel +353 1 294 0800 | Email [info@rod.ie](mailto:info@rod.ie) | [www.rod.ie](http://www.rod.ie)



# Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

of the Draft Waterford Destination  
and Experience Development Plan



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# **Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report of the Draft Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan**

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## Acronyms

AA	Appropriate Assessment
AACH	Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage (AACH) – Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO) contained in this SEA- Refer to Section 6
ACA	Architectural Conservation Area
AFA	Areas for Further Assessment
AQ	Air Quality - EPO contained in this ER- Refer to Section 6
BFF	Biodiversity Flora and Fauna - EPO contained in this ER- Refer to Section 6
C	Climate EPOs contained in this SEA- Refer to Section 6
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CAFE	Clean Air for Europe
CFRAM	Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management
CO	Carbon Monoxide
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon Dioxide
CO <sub>2</sub> eq	Carbon Dioxide equivalent
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DAFM	Department of the Agriculture, Food & Marine
DAU	Development Applications Unit
DECC	Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
DEDP	Destination and Experience Development Plan
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage [formerly Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG)]
DTCAGSM	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media
EC	European Commission
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
ELC	European Landscape Convention
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPO	Environmental Protection Objective
EQS	Environmental Quality Standard
ER	Environmental Report
EU	European Union
FI	Fáilte Ireland
FRA	Flood Risk Assessment or Appraisal
FWPM	Freshwater Pearl Mussel
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GSI	Geological Survey of Ireland
GWB	Groundwater Body
IFI	Inland Fisheries Ireland
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IROPI	Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest

ITM	Irish Transverse Mercator
L	Landscape - EPO contained in this ER- Refer to Section 6
LA	Local Authority
LACAP	Local Authority Climate Action Plan
LAP	Local Area Plan
L&S	Land and Soils - EPO contained in this SEA- Refer to Section 6
LULUCF	Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry
MA	Material Assets - EPO contained in this SEA- Refer to Section 6
Mt	Megatonne (one million tonnes)
NAP	Nitrates Action Programme
NATURA 2000	Network of SPAs and SACs
NBI	National Broadband Ireland
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NDP	National Development Plan
NEC	National Emissions Ceiling
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHA / pNHA	Natural Heritage Area / proposed Natural Heritage Area (designated by EU Habitats Directive)
NI	Northern Ireland
NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
NPF	National Planning Framework
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPW	Office of Public Works
PHH	Population and Human Health - EPO contained in this SEA- Refer to Section 6
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
ROD	Roughan & O'Donovan
RPA	Register of Protected Areas
RPS	Record of Protected Structures
RSEs	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies
SAC (cSAC)	Special Area of Conservation (candidate Special Area of Conservation)
SC	Subcatchment
SCI	Special Conservation Interest
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEO	Strategic Environmental Objective
SO	Strategic Objectives
SPA	Special Protection Area
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland

SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
S.I.	Statutory Instrument
SIS	Irish Soil Information System
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
SRRSEs	Southern Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032
SSFRA	Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment
SuDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage System
TRaC	Transitional and coastal (waterbodies)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UWWT	Urban Waste Water Treatment
W	Water - EPOs contained in this ER- Refer to Section 6
WCCC	Waterford City and County Council
WDEDP	Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WHO	World Health Organisation
WHS	World Heritage Site
WwTP	Waste water Treatment Plant

## Glossary of Key Terms

Appropriate Assessment	An assessment of the potential adverse effects of a plan or project (in combination with other plans or projects) on Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA), as designated under EU and national law.
Birds Directive	Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds.
Catchment	A catchment is an area where water is collected by the natural landscape and flows from source through river, lakes and groundwater to the sea.
Development	The carrying out of any works on, in, over or under any land or the making of any material change in the use of any structures or other land in accordance with the Section 3 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.
Environmental Impact Assessment	The process of carrying out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as required by Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU on assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.
Ecosystem services	Ecosystems are multifunctional communities of living organisms interacting with each other and their environment. Ecosystems provide a series of services for human well-being (ecosystem services) either directly (as food and fibre) or indirectly by providing clean air and water. (NPWS)
Blue and green infrastructure	Strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem service
Habitats Directive	Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.
Habitats Regulations	The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (S. I. No. 477 of 2011) transpose the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive. The 2011 Regulations were amended by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S.I. No. 290 of 2013</li> <li>• S.I. No. 499 of 2013</li> <li>• S.I. No. 355 of 2015</li> <li>• Planning, Heritage and Broadcasting (Amendment) Act 2021 (no.11 of 2021), Chapter 4</li> <li>• S.I. No. 293 of 2021</li> </ul>
Natura 2000	A network of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and some rare natural habitat types which are protected.
Nature-based Solutions (NbS)	Nature-based solutions are actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience and biodiversity benefits.
Nitrates Directive	Council Directive 91/676/EEC concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources.
Plans	A plan is one which sets out how it is proposed to carry out or implement a scheme or a policy. This could include, for example, land use plans setting out how land is to be developed or laying down rules or guidance as to the kind of development which might be appropriate or permissible in particular areas or giving criteria which should be taken into account in designing an area for future development.
Projects	Any development or activity for which development consent may be required. This includes the execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes and interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources.
SEA Directive	Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment - requires that an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	A process for the formal, systematic evaluation used to identify and assess the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme. It is intended to lead to a high level of protection of the environment and promotion of sustainable development as required by the SEA Directive.
Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO)	Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are strategic environmental protection objectives which set the desired environmental outcome for the assessment of the Draft WDDEP. These have been formulated with reference to the environmental protection objectives/policies at International, European, and local level.
Water Framework Directive	Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the Community action in the field of water policy.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Report (ER) has been prepared by Roughan & O'Donovan (ROD) on behalf of Fáilte Ireland (FI) as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process of the proposed Draft Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan, referred to hereafter as "the Draft Plan".

The purpose of this ER is to:

- Inform the development of the Draft Plan;
- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment resulting from the implementation of the Draft Plan and reasonable alternatives;
- Provide appropriate mitigation measures to prevent, reduce and offset any significant negative effects on the environment, if any, from implementing the Draft Plan insofar as possible;
- Consult with statutory authorities and the public to provide an opportunity for submissions on the Draft Plan and the SEA process.

This ER has been prepared in accordance with the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No.200 of 2011. This ER should be read in conjunction with the Draft Plan.

## 2. CONTENTS OF THE PLAN

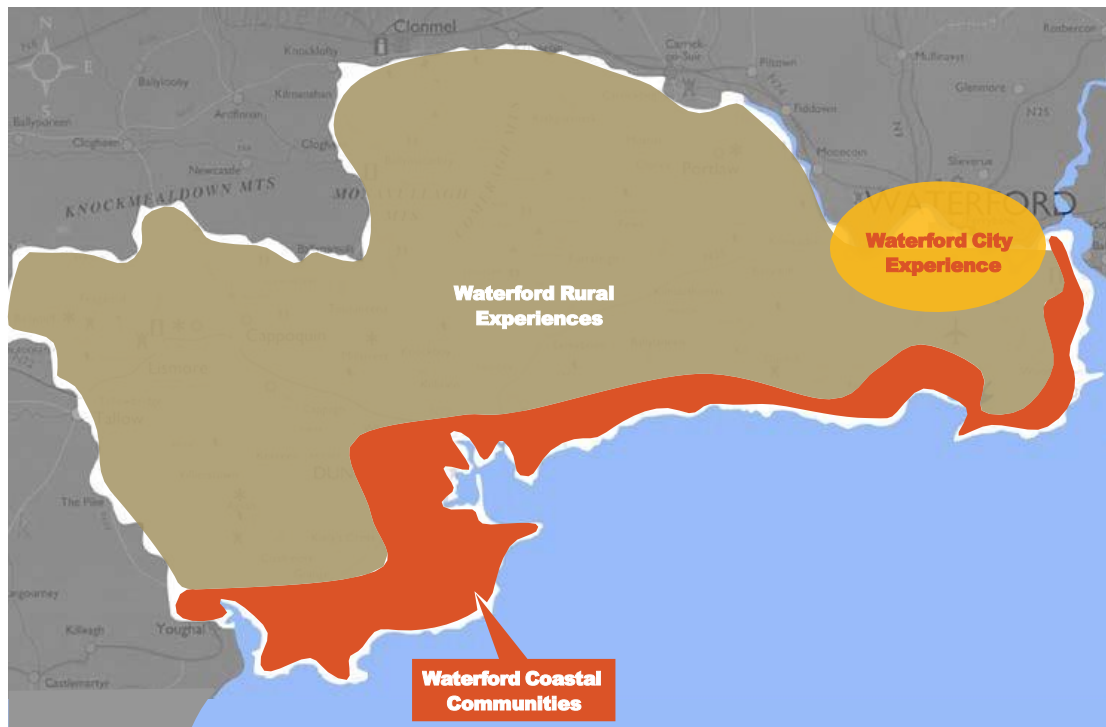
The Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan (WDEDP) is a five-year sustainable tourism plan prepared for Waterford City and County. The Plan represents a five-year multi-stakeholder operational approach focusing on new product and experience development opportunities. It builds on existing 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 Plan 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 Plan 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 Plan is to ensure Waterford as a destination plays an integral role in growing the regional share of the market.

The Draft Plan has been prepared by Fáilte Ireland and a range of stakeholders including Waterford City and County Council with a view to expanding and improving all aspects of tourism in County Waterford.

The key objectives of DEDPs 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 identified for County Waterford DEDP  
(Source: Fáilte Ireland Draft Plan)

The Draft Plan concentrates on developing three spatial categories namely: 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.

The implementation of the Plan is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery over the course of the five-year plan. Projects within the plan may only commence within the timeframe of the Plan. However, the final delivery of these projects after the timeframe of this DEDP will be key contributors to the ten-year vision for Waterford and Ireland's Ancient East. A steering group will be formed to implement the Plan with key stakeholders responsible for project ownership and / or partnering in the delivery of the agreed actions have been identified within the Plan.

### 3. SEA PROCESS

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt a plan or programme, or in this case the Draft Plan. Article 1 of the SEA Directive states:

*'The objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.'*

The SEA process is recognised as a central legislative framework and environmental assessment mechanism in promoting sustainable development, in raising awareness of the significant environmental problems experienced in an area, and ensuring that these issues are addressed, in this case within the capacity of the planning system.

#### 3.1 Legal Context of SEA

The SEA Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment requires an environmental assessment be carried out of all plans and programmes that are prepared for certain specified sectors including land use planning. This requirement is transposed into Irish law by the following SEA Regulations:

- European Communities (**Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes**) Regulations, 2004 (S.I. No. 435/2004) (as amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No. 200/2011)); and
- Planning and Development (**Strategic Environmental Assessment**) Regulations, 2004 (S.I. No. 436/2004) (as amended by the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No. 201/2011)).

NOTE: S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended specifically includes for tourism and land use planning but precludes application of those provisions to development plans and their variations, local area plans, regional planning guidelines and planning schemes for strategic development zones, which are covered separately under S.I 436 of 2004, as amended.

#### 3.2 Guidance

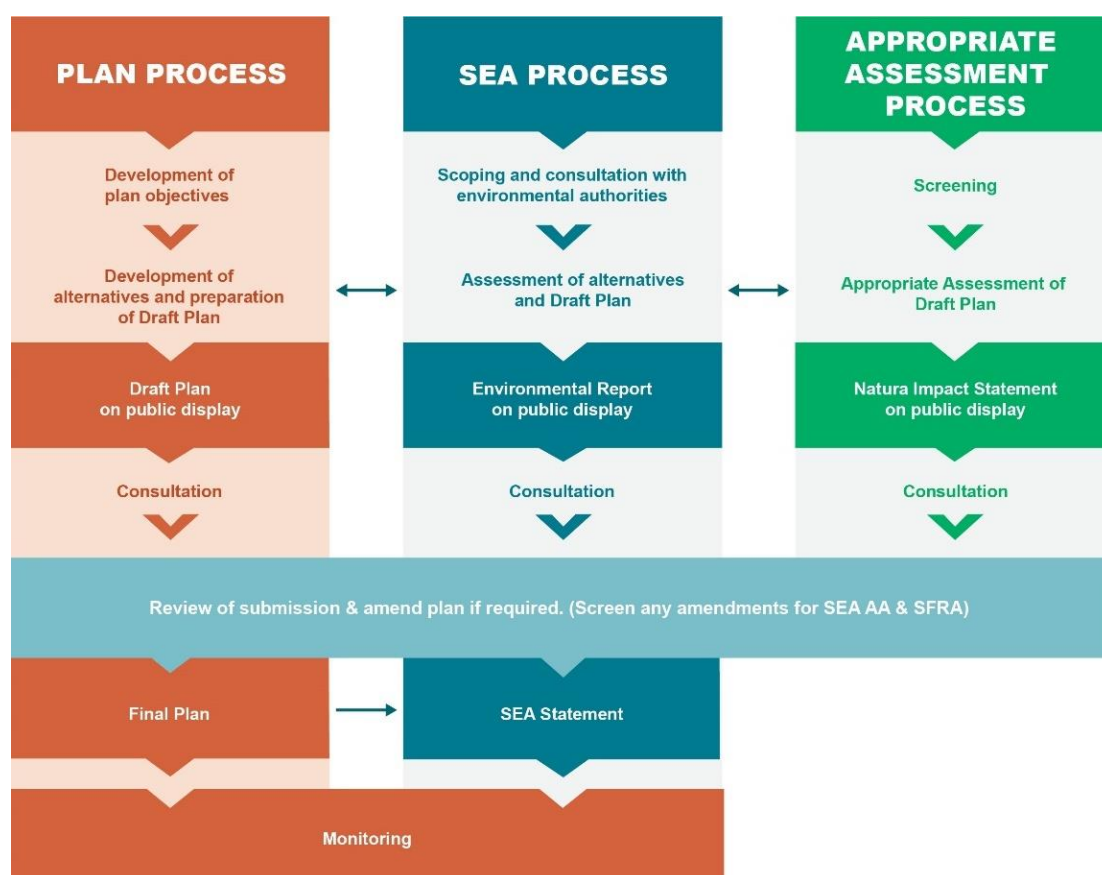
This ER has been prepared having regard to the following guidance documents and resources:

- *SEA Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities (2022)* Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- *SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans EPA Recommendations and Resources (2024)* EPA;
- *SEA Spatial Information Sources (2024)* Environmental Protection Agency;
- *SEA Pack (Updated January 2024)* Environmental Protection Agency;
- *Good practice guidance on SEA for the Tourism Sector (2023)* Environmental Protection Agency;

- *Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring* (2023) Environmental Protection Agency;
- *SEA Screening Good Practice 2021* (2021) Environmental Protection Agency;
- *Tiering of Environmental Assessment – The Influence of Strategic Environmental Assessment on Project-level Environmental Impact Assessment* (2021) Environmental Protection Agency;
- *Integrating Climatic Factors into SEA In Ireland A Guidance Note* (EPA, 2019)
- *Developing and Assessing Alternatives in SEA* Research Report No.157, (EPA, 2015),
- *Good Practice Guidance on Cumulative Effects Assessment in Strategic Environmental Assessment* (2020) Environmental Protection Agency.
- *Integrating Climatic Factors into the Strategic Environmental Assessment Process in Ireland – A Guidance Note* (updated June 2019) Environmental Protection Agency;
- *GISEA Manual – Improving the Evidence Base in SEA* (2017) EPA;
- *SEA and Climate Change, Integrating Climate Change into SEA in Ireland, A Guidance Note* (2015) EPA;
- *SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities – Integration of SEA Legislation and Procedures for Land use Plans* (2013) Environmental Protection Agency & Mid-West Regional Authority;
- *Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment – Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual* (2013) Environmental Protection Agency;
- *Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes, Best Practice Guidance* (2012) EPA, Strive Programme 2007-2013;
- *Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment* (2015) Environmental Protection Agency;
- *Second Review of Strategic Environmental Assessment Effectiveness in Ireland* (2020) Environmental Protection Agency;

### **3.3 Integration of SEA and AA with the Policy Making Process**

The SEA legislation and associated SEA guidelines indicate that there should be complete integration between the preparation of policy making or in this case the Draft Plan and other environmental assessments that might be required. Figure 3-1 illustrates the key stages in the SEA, AA and the plan development processes highlighting the integration between the processes including key stages of consultation feedback as part of the preparation of the Draft Plan.



**Figure 3-1 Integration of the preparation of the Draft Plan with the key stages of the SEA and AA processes.**

### 3.3.1 Appropriate Assessment

There is a requirement under the EU Directive 92/43/EEC [on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, as amended (commonly referred to as the Habitats Directive)] to assess whether the Plan has the potential to adversely affect the integrity of a European Site. These sites include areas designated for the conservation and protection of habitats and wild fauna and flora and include SACs and SPAs.

The Habitats Directive and Birds Directives are transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 to 2015 (S.I. 477 of 2011, S.I. 499 of 2013 and S.I. 255 of 2015), as amended. The Regulations require that any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site but likely to have a significant effect on such a site must undergo an AA in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the site.

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 Plan, 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 the Draft Plan, 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 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.

**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 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.

AA Screening was undertaken by ROD on behalf of Fáilte Ireland and found that while the Draft Plan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site, tourism development and associated activities identified in the Draft Plan have the potential, if unmitigated to affect the integrated of European Sites in view of their Conservation Objectives, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. Therefore, it has been determined that the Draft Plan should undergo stage 2 AA, and a Natura Impact Statement has been prepared.

### 3.4 Stages in the SEA process

The key SEA stages are illustrated in Figure 3-2.



Figure 3-2 Key Stages of the SEA Process

#### 3.4.1 Screening

The SEA Directive [Article 3(2) requires subject to certain exemptions, that SEA is carried out for all plans and programmes. The requirements for screening for SEA was considered under S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by 200/2011. Under Article 9(1):

- (a) *“An environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications and tourism and town and country planning or land use, and which set the framework for future*

*development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, or*

- (b) *which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but, either individually or in combination with other plans, are likely to have a significant effect on any such site."*

The Waterford DEDP is a non-statutory plan and does not form a framework for future development consent however, the Plan does, fall under the definition of a "plan" contained within the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (as amended) and therefore has been screened for the need to undertake AA. The Screening for AA found that the Plan has the potential, if unmitigated, to affect the ecological integrity of European Sites and that measures to ensure that potential effects are avoided are required. Taking into account the requirements of the Habitats Directive and recent case law (including, European Court of Justice Judgement C323-17), Stage 2 AA was therefore carried out for the Plan. A Stage 2 AA (NIS) was undertaken on the Plan.

Furthermore, Department Circular Letter SEA 1/08 and NPWS 1/08 require that plans which require an Appropriate Assessment (AA) under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) must also undergo SEA. Taking the above into account and in order to ensure environmental considerations are integrated into the Draft Plan it has been determined that SEA is required.

### **3.4.2 Scoping**

The purpose of the Scoping Report is to consult with the relevant environmental authorities and to draw an opinion on the scope and level of detail of the environmental information to be included in the ER.

The SEA scoping exercise was concerned with the 'likely' and 'significant' environmental effects as a result of the implementation of the Draft Plan. Scoping is undertaken to ensure that the relevant environmental issues are identified allowing them to be addressed appropriately in the ER and considered as part of the preparation Plan.

Following the scoping and consultation with the environmental authorities, all the SEA topics under the SEA Directive, i.e., biodiversity, flora & fauna; population & human health; water; air quality; climate; land & soils; material assets; architectural, archaeological & cultural heritage; landscape and the interactions between the above factors were scoped in for assessment.

Scoping is an ongoing activity that is re-activated at key stages in the policy making process as new information or available alternatives are narrowed to a preferred approach.

#### **Geographic Scope**

The Draft Plan is applicable to all of County Waterford. The baseline environment and the assessment are described in the ER in this context.

#### **Temporal Scope**

The Draft Plan sits within a hierarchy of plans from national, regional to local level it but does not influence decision making of either plans or projects.

This DEDP is a non-statutory tourism plan which has been informed by and is situated within a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for land use development, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental

protection and environmental management. These include the National Planning Framework (NPF), Climate Action Plan (CAP), the Southern Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (SRRSEs), and lower tier Waterford City and County development Plan 2022-2028 and local area plans in the county.

Implementing the DEDP will involve Fáilte Ireland, who will facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans.

The DEDP does not provide consent, and/ or establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent.

### 3.4.3 Scoping Consultation

A Scoping Notice was prepared by Fáilte Ireland and issued to the environmental authorities and other bodies listed in Table 3-1 in June 2024. The notice provided background on the key objectives of DEDP and how the objectives will relate to Waterford City and County. The environmental authorities were then invited to provide a submission or observation related to the level of detail and scope that should be included in the Environmental Report.

Three environmental authorities responded as detailed below. The responses received were taken into consideration in the preparation of the ER and the Draft Plan itself. A summary of the submissions received, and action taken by the Plan team or the SEA team is detailed in **Appendix B** of this report.

**Table 3-1 Statutory and Non-statutory Authorities Consulted**

Statutory Environmental Authorities consulted	Response Received
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Yes
Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH) – Development Application Units	Yes
Minister for Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)	No
<b>Non-statutory consultees</b>	
Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)	Yes
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	No
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media (DTCAGSM)	No

#### 3.4.3.1 Pre-draft Consultation

The Draft Plan was developed through a programme of stakeholder consultation and research process, reflecting the views of visitors, local tourism industry and the wider community. A programme of international benchmarking was also conducted to assess Waterford City and County against a number of comparable international tourism destinations which has informed the development of the plan.

### 3.4.4 Environmental Report

An ER is required to include the information that may reasonably be required taking into account:

- Current knowledge and methods of assessment;

- The contents and level of detail in the Draft Plan;
- The stage of the Draft Plan in the decision-making process; and
- The extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in the decision-making process in order to avoid duplication of environmental assessment.

The SEA Directive requires that information on the baseline environment be focused upon the relevant aspects of the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected and the likely evolution of the current environment in the absence of the strategic action i.e., the DEDP. In addition, the Directive aims to avoid duplication of the assessment whereby a strategic action forms part of a hierarchy in the decision-making process. The Directive requires that reasonable alternatives, taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the Plan are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment.

This ER details the assessment of the likely significant effects of the Draft Plan and proposes mitigation or monitoring as appropriate. The assessment has used the environmental factors listed within the SEA Directive which were brought forward from Scoping. The Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) have been developed for environmental protection which future environmental effects of the Plan can be measured. The environmental assessment is a qualitative assessment and uses GIS mapping to support the assessment as appropriate.

The ER will be placed on public display alongside the Draft Plan. If any modifications to the Draft Plan are made after this consultation period, these are screened for significant environmental effects by the SEA team and presented in the SEA Statement.

This ER complies with the provisions of the SEA Regulations and is written in accordance with Schedule 2 S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended. The information required to be contained in the ER is outlined in Table 3-2 and includes the corresponding sections of this report addressing these requirements.

**Table 3-2 Checklist of Information to be Contained in the Environmental Report (Schedule 2 S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended)**

Information to be contained in the Environmental Report	Corresponding Section of this Report
(a) An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans or programmes.	Section 2: Contents of the Plan Section 4: Key Relevant Plans and Programmes Appendix A
(b) The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme.	Section 5: Relevant aspects of the Current State of the Environment Section 5.12: Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Plan
(c) The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	Section 5: Relevant aspects of the Current State of the Environment (Baseline)

Information to be contained in the Environmental Report	Corresponding Section of this Report
(d) Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to the Birds Directive or the Habitats Directive.	Section 5: Relevant aspects of the Current State of the Environment Section 5.2: Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna
(e) The environmental protection objectives, established at international, European Union or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	Section 5.13: Assessment Methodology
(f) The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.	Section 8: Assessment of the Draft Plan
(g) The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme.	Section 9: Mitigation
(h) An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.	Section 7: Assessment of Alternatives
(i) A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring of the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme.	Section 10: Monitoring
(j) a non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.	Non-Technical Summary

#### 3.4.4.1 Data gaps and difficulties encountered


The SEA process requires collating currently available and relevant environmental data, it does not require major new research. Data deficiencies, gaps or difficulties were not encountered while undertaking this assessment.

#### 3.4.5 SEA Statement

The SEA Statement provides information on the decision-making process and documents how environmental considerations have been taken into account in the Draft Plan. The SEA Statement is required to report on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Draft Plan - highlighting the main changes to the Draft Plan from the SEA process;
- How the ER and consultations have been taken into account - summarising the key issues raised in consultations and indicating what action, if any, was taken in response; and
- The reasons for choosing the Draft Plan in the light of other reasonable alternatives.

**Table 3-3 Summary of the Key Stages of the SEA Process**

SEA Stage	Role within the SEA Process	Status
<b>Screening</b>	Determines whether there would likely be significant environmental effects and if an SEA is required to be undertaken.  In accordance with the requirements of the SEA Directive and transposing Regulations S.I. 435/2004 (as amended), Fáilte Ireland undertook an SEA Screening having regard to the criteria in Schedule 1 "Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment".	Fáilte Ireland undertook an SEA pre-screening in March 2024 and determined that an SEA is required and to proceed directly to Scoping stage.
<b>Scoping &amp; Consultation</b>	The purpose of Scoping is to scope the SEA environmental factors that will be assessed in the ER. It also provides any opportunity to consult with the relevant environmental authorities to draw an opinion on the scope and level of detail of the environmental information to be included in this ER. The scoping consultation feedback will inform the preparation of the ER and the Draft Plan as appropriate.	The Scoping Notice was issued in June 2024 for a period of 4 weeks to the statutory consultative bodies.
<b>Environmental Assessment and Environmental Report</b>	The purpose of this stage is to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment as a result of the implementation of the Draft Plan as well as the consideration of alternatives. The ER records this assessment and is published with the Draft Plan for public consultation.	This Report is the output of this stage of the SEA process and is informed by the Scoping stage and in turn informs the Draft Plan.
<b>Consultation</b>	The Draft Plan and the SEA ER are issued for public consultation for a period of no less than 4 weeks.	Current stage in the process. 
<b>SEA Statement &amp; Monitoring</b>	The purpose of this stage is to identify how environmental considerations and consultation feedback has been taken into account in finalising the Draft Plan and the SEA process including finalisation of the monitoring programme. The output of this stage is the SEA Statement.	The SEA Statement will be published following the finalisation of the Draft Plan.

## 4. KEY RELEVANT PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

The development of the Draft Plan and this SEA is informed and carried out in the context of hierarchy of legislation, plans and programmes. The Waterford DEDP is a non-statutory plan and does not form a framework for development consent.

### 4.1 National Context

#### 4.1.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out Ireland's spatial planning policy direction up to 2040. The NPF is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) and lower tier county development plans and associated local area plans (LAPs) local area Plans. The development and implementation of the Waterford DEDP is required to be consistent with and conform with these higher-level plans, including provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been integrated into these plans.

Project Ireland 2040 is the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more resilient and sustainable future. Project Ireland 2040 incorporates both the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP). The NPF has a statutory basis and the draft first revision of the NPF is currently at public consultation stage.

The Government's long-term strategic planning framework will guide national, regional, and local planning and investment decisions to 2040. The major public investment approved by Government and detailed in the National Development Plan (NDP) will play a significant role in addressing the opportunities and challenges faced by Ireland over the coming years from issues such housing, health, climate action and the projected population growth of one million people between 2016 and 2040.

The Draft First Revision to the NPF updates the targets set in the NPF in 2018 to take into account the changes that have occurred between 2018 and 2024 such as continuing requirement to address the challenges of climate change, regional development, demographics, digitalisation and investment and prioritisation.

There are several national policies objectives (NPO) contained with the Draft Revised NPF that relate to Waterford and tourism to include:

- **NPO4:** A target of half (50%) of future population and employment growth will be focused in the existing five cities and their suburbs Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.
- **NPO 8:** Deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, within their existing built-up footprints.
- **NPO 15** "Apply a tailored approach to urban development, linked to the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Funds, with a particular focus on places including Waterford.
- **NPO 16:** To ensure that the targeted pattern of population growth of Ireland's cities to 2040 is in accordance with the targets set out in Table 4-1. [Extract below only relates to Waterford]

**Table 4-1 Ireland 2040: Targeted Pattern of City Population Growth**

City	Population 2022	2018 NPF		Population Growth to 2040 <sup>20</sup>		Minimum Target Population 2040
		% Range 2016-2040	% Range 2022-2040	People		
Dublin - City and Suburbs	1,263,000	20-25%	20-25%	296,000		1,560,000
Cork - City and Suburbs	223,000	50-60%	40%	96,000		320,000
Limerick - City and Suburbs	102,000	50-60%	40%	44,000		150,000
Galway - City and Suburbs	86,000		40%	36,000		122,000
Waterford - City and Suburbs	60,000		40%	28,000		88,000

Source: Updated Draft Revised NPF

- **NPO 92:** Relates to the review of Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans for Waterford Metropolitan areas as part of a review of the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

With regard to tourism and environmental, key protection policies and objectives include:

- **NPO34:** Continue to facilitate tourism development and in particular the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, and a Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of their environmental sustainability, achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level while ensuring their development is compliant with the National Biodiversity Action Plan, the national climate change objective and requirements for environmental assessments
- **NPO63:** Support the coordination and promotion of all-island tourism initiatives through continued co-operation between the relevant tourism agencies and Tourism Ireland, pursue the further development of sport, and invest in the diverse heritage, arts and cultural and linguistic traditions of the island.
- **NPO 52: Ensure** that Ireland's coastal resource is managed to sustain its physical character and environmental quality.
- **NPO 53** In line with the collective aims of national policy regarding climate adaptation, to take account of the effects of sea level changes and coastal erosion in **planning** and development management and to support the implementation of adaptation responses.
- **NPO 54** Support the development of coastal management plans to address the likely effects of **sea** level changes and coastal erosion and to support the implementation of adaptation responses.
- **NSO 67:** Support the circular and bio economy including in particular through greater efficiency in land and materials management, promoting the sustainable re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings and structures, while conserving **cultural** and natural heritage, the greater use of renewable resources and by reducing the rate of land use change from urban sprawl and new development.
- **NPO 66** The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the medium and longer-term requirements of all relevant

environmental and climate legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital.

- **NPO 82:** Integrated planning for Green and Blue Infrastructure will be incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans while maintaining **ecosystem** services and ecosystem functions and conserving and/or restoring biodiversity.
- **NPO 83:** Identify and strengthen the value of greenbelts and green and blue spaces at a regional, city and local scales, to enable enhanced connectivity to wider strategic networks and prevent coalescence of settlements and to allow for the long-term strategic expansion of urban areas. Promote and support an increase in the provision of green and blue spaces and tree canopy cover in settlements.
- **NPO 84:** In line with the National Biodiversity Action Plan and the European Union Nature Restoration Law, and best available scientific information, regional and local **planning** authorities shall support the preparation and implementation of the National Restoration Plan.
- **NPO 88** Conserve and enhance the rich qualities of natural, cultural and built **heritage** of Ireland in a manner appropriate to their cultural and environmental significance.

These are some of the NPOs contained in the NPF that provide a policy context for the future development of the tourism sector including coastal management, green and blue infrastructure development, circular economy, supporting the preservation of heritage and culture and enhancement of biodiversity supported by an integrated planning and development system.

Furthermore, the important cross-government role of heritage is acknowledged in the NPF Framework, with one of the 10 national strategic outcomes dedicated to 'Enhanced Amenity and Heritage'. It acknowledges the role of heritage as integral and of added value to fundamental priorities. Delivery of the strategic outcomes is aimed at ensuring that cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways. It demands ongoing investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. Key to this is integration with our built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place.

#### 4.1.2 Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030

The *Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030* published by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media builds in November 2024 provides a tourism policy framework for Irish tourism for the period to 2030. It builds on the *People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025* published in 2015. This new policy sets out strategic objectives to ensure a resilient and flourishing tourism sector in 2030. It builds on the preceding policy by including measures on climate change and sustainability, along with strong set of proposals to support the sector to grow revenue. This policy is formulated to balance economic development with environmental and social considerations. The Policy Framework includes a total of 61 policy proposals, many of which are reflected in the current Fáilte Ireland DEDP and will continue to provide strategic direction for the development of sustainable tourism sector.

Greenway development is a key focus for the tourism industry evidenced by the success of greenways across the county, with the Waterford Greenway being one of

the first to demonstrate the positive tourism effects of such developments. The Government's *Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenway* published in 2018 continues to be delivered across the country.

## 4.2 Regional Context

### 4.2.1 Southeastern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

At a regional level, the Southeastern RSES sets out the strategic regional development framework for the Southern region, with a primary aim to implement Project Ireland 2040 - the National Planning Framework, at the regional tier of Government and to support the achievement of balanced regional development. The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that all City & County Development Plans and variations are consistent with the RSES and relevant national policy, with draft development plans or proposed variations to development plans referred by the relevant local authority to the Regional Assembly.

As a subset of the RSES for the Southern Region, a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) was developed for Waterford Metropolitan Area. The MASP provides a framework for accelerated sustainable growth by identifying infrastructural goals and opportunities. The aim of the MASP is to achieve compact growth within the Waterford Metropolitan area, in line with the strategic objectives of the National Planning Framework.

### 4.2.2 Ireland Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027

The *Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027* is a roadmap for the industry and all stakeholders involved in tourism in the region to navigate the challenges and steer a course towards recovery and continued success. *The IAETDS* provides a 10-year vision for the region and a five-year action plan for development which also supports the preparation of this DEDP.

## 4.3 County Context

### 4.3.1 Waterford City and County Council Development Plan 2022-2028

At county level the *Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028* sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Waterford City and County. The Plan includes a variety of policy objectives for various sectors including supporting the development of tourism together with environmental protection and achieving sustainable development. The preparation of the DEPD is directly supported in the plan under **Policy objective ECON 27** relating to the development and implementation of a DEDP and continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland.

The preparation of the Waterford DEDP supports and compliments the implementation of these higher-level plans and policies.

Every effort has been made to ensure the SEA and in turn the Draft Plan is aligned with and contributes to the achievement of the various environmental protection objectives set in these key plans. Furthermore, additional relevant legislation, plans and programmes are summarised in **Appendix A** of this ER. Appendix A is not intended to be an exhaustive list but is focused on plans, policy or programmes considered to be relevant to the Draft Plan and informing the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) relevant used to inform the assessment of the Draft Plan.

## 5. RELEVANT ASPECTS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

This section of the ER examines the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment under each environmental factor. Establishing the environmental baseline assists with the identification, evaluation, and monitoring of the likely significant effects of the Draft Plan on the environment. Much of the baseline has been compiled using the latest iteration of the EPA report '*Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024*', as well as other up-to-date resources, and datasets.


### 5.1 State of the Environment Report







In October 2024, the EPA published its latest *Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024*. Some of the key messages from the report include:












- Delivering a national policy position on the environment – There is an urgent need to have a national policy position on the environment to address the complex interactions, synergies and trade-offs across environmental policy areas and to deal with its interactions with other policy domains.
- Driving policy implementation – rigorous implementation of existing environmental plans and programmes to achieve the benefits that they were developed to deliver.
- Transforming our systems – Transformation of our energy, transport, food and industrial sectors is critical to achieving a sustainable future.
- Scaling up investment in infrastructure – Investment in water, energy, transport and waste management infrastructure is essential to protect the environment now and into the future.
- Protecting the environment to protect our health – Protecting the environment is key to protecting our health and we must act to reduce the modifiable risks to our health from environmental exposures.

The report states that the overall quality of Ireland's environment is not what it should be, and the outlook is not optimistic with challenges affecting multiple environmental factors. Challenges include the protection of ecosystems, reduction of harmful emissions, and the over exploitation of natural resources. The EPA published *Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024* (EPA, 2024a) which highlighted the fact that the scale of improvements that were made between 2020 and 2024 are insufficient to meet national environmental objectives. Table 5-1 contains the EPA assessment and outlook scorecard for Ireland across key environmental policy areas for some of the environmental factors and identifies the relevance to the Draft Plan. The legend indicating the current assessment and outlook symbols is described at the end of the table.

**Table 5-1 Current assessment and outlook scorecard and relevance to the Draft Plan**

Indicator	Current Assessment & Outlook (EPA Scorecard)	Relevance to the Draft Plan
Water	<b>Current Assessment:</b>  Overall, current assessment is ' <b>poor</b> ' (the same as in 2020). Trends remain mixed, with no net improvement in river or lake water quality in recent years, a sharp decline in the number of monitored estuaries in satisfactory ecological condition and continued direct discharges of raw or inadequately	The Draft Plan introduces numerous projects relating to the use of waterbodies including coastal waters and rivers for the promotion of tourism. It is important for the Draft Plan to align with EU and national

Indicator	Current Assessment & Outlook (EPA Scorecard)	Relevance to the Draft Plan
	<p>treated sewage to water from 19 agglomerations. Significant challenges remain for achieving full compliance with relevant EU obligations and national policy objectives.</p> <p><b>Outlook:</b> </p> <p>The outlook remains '<b>partially on track</b>' (Same as in 2020).</p>	<p>policies &amp; objectives relating to water quality as the ability for these natural assets to continue to draw tourism going forward will be dependent on maintenance or not declining further.</p>
Nature	<p><b>Current Assessment:</b> </p> <p>The overall current assessment for nature is '<b>very poor</b>' (the same as in 2020). Deteriorating trends dominate, especially for protected habitats and bird populations, and Ireland is not on track to achieve policy objectives for nature. While the recent expansion of marine protected areas is welcome, additional far-reaching measures are needed to address the declines in nature and biodiversity.</p> <p><b>Outlook:</b> </p> <p>The outlook remains '<b>largely not on track</b>' (same as in 2020).</p>	<p>The Draft Plan outlines objectives which rely on maximising the opportunity posed by natural heritage assets to drive tourism. It is important that the Draft Plan's objectives align with EU and national commitments to protect species and habitats. The capacity of these sensitive species and habitats to support increased tourism will be diminished if the current trajectory of declining biodiversity is not addressed.</p>
Climate	<p><b>Current Assessment:</b> </p> <p>While there has been progress in terms of beginning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and in strengthening adaptation governance structures and support services, overall current assessment for climate is '<b>poor</b>' (a slight improvement from 'very poor' in 2020). Full implementation of actions set out in the Climate Action Plan and additional actions are needed if Ireland is to meet its 2030 and 2050 climate targets.</p> <p><b>Outlook:</b> </p> <p>The outlook has worsened since 2020 and is now '<b>largely not on track</b>'.</p>	<p>The Draft Plan introduces climate action as an enabling project for tourism within the plan area and intends to attract tourism by way of the county's sustainable tourism credentials. It is important that the Draft Plan does not further intensify climate change if it intends to develop the plan area's profile as a sustainable tourism destination.</p> <p>Natural and built heritage as well as agricultural/ food industry, which the Draft Plan intends to utilise to promote tourism, are also vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The maintenance and promotion of tourism is reliant on the current climate outlook not worsening and threatening the social, economic and natural environment.</p>
Air Quality & Emissions	<p><b>Current Assessment:</b> </p> <p>The overall current assessment for air is '<b>moderate</b>' (the same as in 2020). Ireland is compliant with current air quality standards for many air pollutants. However, Ireland is not meeting the guidelines set by WHO for multiple pollutants, including fine particulate matter, and Ireland is non-compliant with the EU reduction target for ammonia and will remain so in the short term. Achieving the ambitions of the Clean Air Strategy and complying with the limit values of the proposed EU Air Quality Directive from</p>	<p>The Draft Plan outlines objectives to promote tourism in urban and rural areas throughout the county. The contribution that tourism has on air quality from transportation is a key factor to consider in promotion activities. It is important that the impacts of the Draft Plan maintain or do not worsen the current outlook regarding air quality emissions, as the ability of these areas to</p>

Indicator	Current Assessment & Outlook (EPA Scorecard)	Relevance to the Draft Plan
	<p>2030 onwards will be challenging but will have a significant and positive impact on health.</p> <p><b>Outlook:</b> </p> <p>The outlook remains '<b>partially on track</b>' (Same as in 2020).</p>	<p>attract tourism can be negatively impacted if air quality in these areas diminishes.</p>
Waste & Circular Economy	<p><b>Current Assessment:</b> </p> <p>The overall current assessment for the circular economy and waste is '<b>poor</b>' (the same as in 2020) but progress is being made in a number of areas to improve performance. Waste generation continues to grow, in absolute and per capita terms, and Ireland remains overly reliant on export markets for recycling and for treating municipal residual waste. Recycling rates for municipal and plastic packaging waste streams are at risk and need to increase urgently to achieve 2025 targets. Recent interventions, such as the Deposit Return Scheme, statutory roll-out of the organic waste collection service, recovery levy and national end-of waste and by-product decisions, are positive developments but the effects of these remain to be seen. The circular material use rates remains very low by comparison to the European average and Ireland needs to address specific sectoral challenges to accelerate moving from a linear to a circular economy.</p> <p><b>Outlook:</b> </p> <p>The outlook remains '<b>partially on track</b>' (Same as in 2020).</p>	<p>The Draft Plan proposes projects which aim to enhance the plan area's profile as a tourist destination and support the development of attractions. A growing tourism sector will have a significant impact on waste generation. National progress towards a circular economy will enhance the profile of the plan area as a sustainable tourism destination, and for this reason it is important that the Draft Plan considers the impact of its objectives on waste production and that it is in line with EU and national circular economy policy.</p>
Legend:		
    	<p><b>Current Assessment:</b></p> <p>Very poor - significant environmental and/or compliance challenges to address</p> <p>Poor -environmental and/or compliance challenges to address</p> <p>Moderate - on track generally/local or occasional challenges</p> <p>Good - mainly achieving objectives</p> <p>Very good - fully achieving objectives</p>	
  	<p><b>Outlook:</b></p> <p>Largely not on track to meet policy objectives and targets. Significant challenges remain to achieving full compliance. Systemic and transformative change needed.</p> <p>Partially on track to achieving full compliance or measures in place or planned that will improve the situation. However, the outlook is dependent on existing and planned actions, measures and plans being fully implemented and effective.</p> <p>Largely on track to achieving full compliance. Measures in place provide prospect of meeting policy objectives and targets.</p>	
Source: Adapted from EPA Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024		

## 5.2 Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

The Convention on Biological Diversity defines Biodiversity as *"the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other"*

*aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems”<sup>1</sup>.*

Biodiversity is declining globally at unprecedented levels and the rates of species extinction is increasing at an alarming rate. A ‘biodiversity emergency’ was declared by the Irish Government in 2019. According to the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), main drivers of biodiversity loss include:

- Changes in land and sea use resulting in the loss of habitats and species;
- Direct exploitation of organisms;
- Impacts of climate change on biodiversity – weather extremes, changes in growing season, availability of prey/ecosystem imbalance;
- Pollution; and
- Spread of invasive alien species.

### 5.2.1 Designated Sites

There are several nature conservation designations in Ireland, protected at international, European, and national level. The sites designated in county Waterford are depicted in Figure 5-1 and Figure 5-2 and are as follows:

International designations:

- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) World Heritage and Biosphere sites; and
- Sites designated as wetlands of international importance or Ramsar sites.

European designated sites:

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

National designations:

- National Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed National Heritage Areas (pNHAs);
- Other designations including for example:- Salmonid Waters, Freshwater Pearl Mussel (FWPM) catchments, etc.

The European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, S.I. 94 of 1997 transposed the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) into Irish law in 1997. However, the Regulations were subsequently revised and consolidated in the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, S.I. 477 of 2011. The main purpose of the Habitats Directive is to ensure the appropriate conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. Under the directive, Ireland like other Member States was required to establish an ecological network of SACs (sites which host a range of natural habitats and species listed in Annex I and II of the Directive) and SPAs as designated under the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC).

Within County Waterford there are 10 SPAs and 9 SACs, listed in Table 5-2 below. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) monitor and assess the status of the habitats (Annex I) and species (Annex II) listed in the Habitats Directive for which

<sup>1</sup> UN (1992) *Convention of Biological Diversity*. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/>

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) must be established. Similarly, the Birds Directive lists of important bird species (Annex I), other migratory bird species and waterfowl, for which Special Protection Areas (SPAs) must be established. This considers the status of the range, area, structure and functions and future prospects of each species/habitat before defining an overall status for each.

**Table 5-2 Designated European Sites within County Waterford**

Code	Name
<b>Special Area of Conservation</b>	
000665	Helvick Head SAC
000668	Nier Valley Woodlands SAC
000671	Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC
001952	Comeragh Mountains SAC
002123	Ardmore Head SAC
002137	Lower River Suir SAC
002162	River Barrow And River Nore SAC
002170	Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC
002324	Glendine Wood SAC
<b>Special Protection Area</b>	
004027	Tramore Back Strand SPA
004028	Blackwater Estuary SPA
004032	Dungarvan Harbour SPA
004094	Blackwater Callows SPA
004192	Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA
004193	Mid-Waterford Coast SPA
004237	Seas off Wexford SPA
4022	Ballycotton Bay SPA
4023	Ballymacoda Bay SPA
4033	Bannow Bay SPA

The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 makes legal provision for the designation and protection of a national network of Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). The designation is currently used by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to protect wildlife habitats. There 26 pNHAs (no NHAs) in County Waterford, which are listed in Table 5-3 below.

**Table 5-3 Proposed NHA (pNHAs) within County Waterford**

Code	Name
001691	Ballin Lough (Waterford)
001692	Ballyeelinan Wood
001693	Ballyvoyle Head To Tramore
000659	Belle Lake

Code	Name
000072	Blackwater River And Estuary
000073	Blackwater River Callows
000660	Carrickavrantry Reservoir
001695	Castlecraddock Bog
001952	Comeragh Mountains
000663	Dungarvan Harbour
001697	Fennor Bog
001698	Glenanna Wood
002095	Glencairn
001933	Glenmore Wood
000665	Helvick Head
000666	Islandtarnsey Fen
001700	Kilbarry Bog
000667	Lismore Woods
001705	Lissaviron Bog
000399	Lower River Suir (Coolfinn, Portlaw)
000668	Nier Valley Woodlands
000669	Portlaw Woods
001707	Stradbally Woods
000671	Tramore Dunes And Backstrand
000787	Waterford Harbour

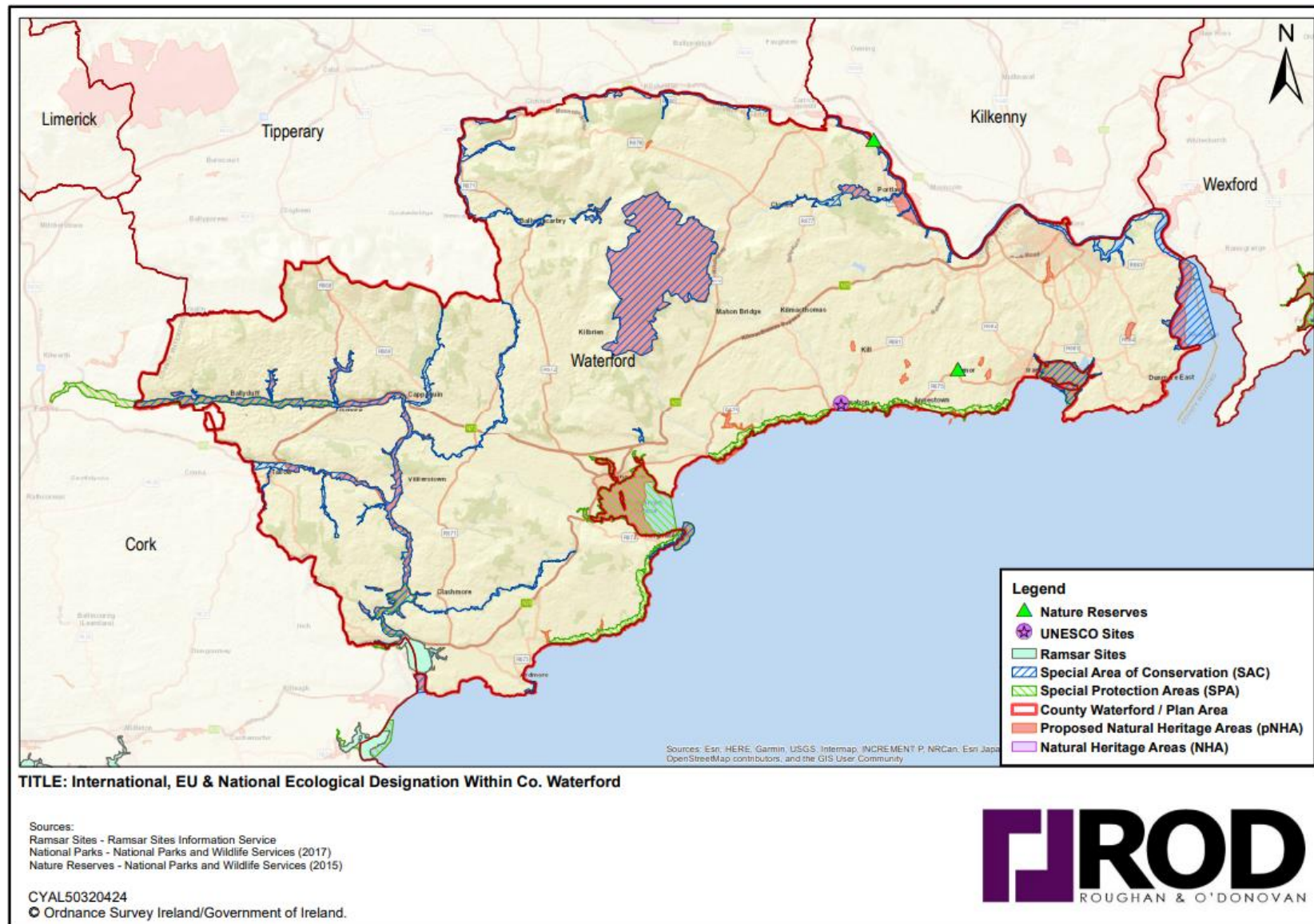


Figure 5-1 International, EU & National Ecological Designations within County Waterford

### 5.2.2 Other ecological designations in County Waterford

Other ecological designations or protected areas include salmonid rivers, designated shellfish areas, Margaritifera sensitive areas, nutrient sensitive areas, Ramsar sites which are described below. (also depicted in Figure 5-2)

**Salmonid Rivers:** Salmonid water, as defined by the Salmonid Regulations (S.I. No. 293 of 1988) identify waters capable of supporting salmon, trout, char and whitefish. The River Bride (IE\_SW\_18B051000) and the River Blackwater (IE\_SW\_18B022700) are both designated as salmonid rivers within County Waterford. The locations of salmonid waterbodies within the county are identified in Figure 5-2 below.

**Designated Shellfish Areas:** The EU Shellfish Water Directive (2006/113/EC) designates waters that need protection in order to support shellfish life and growth. Waterford Harbour (IE\_SE\_100\_0100) and Dungarvan Harbour (IE\_SE\_140\_0000), are designated Shellfish Areas along the coast of County Waterford. Cheek Point and Passage East have been identified as areas to expand fishing tourism, both of which fall within the Waterford Harbour area.

**Margaritifera Sensitive Areas:** Margaritifera Sensitive Areas are protected under Annex II and Annex V of the EU Habitats Directive. Freshwater pearl mussel is an extremely sensitive species that is on the verge of extinction due to poor water quality and habitat damage. There are three Margaritifera Sensitive Areas within County Waterford; Munster Blackwater, Clodiagh and Licky. The locations of Margaritifera Sensitive Areas within the county are identified in Figure 5-2 below.

**Nutrient Sensitive Areas:** Nutrient sensitive areas are those water bodies which contain a sensitive area, as designated by the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC), or areas designated as vulnerable zones by the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC). Middle Suir Estuary (IE\_SE\_100\_0550) and Blackwater Estuary Lower (IE\_SW\_020\_0100) are classified as Nutrient Sensitive Areas for Urban Wastewater Treatment. Increased tourism may result in additional strain on these sensitive receptors.

**Ramsar Sites:** Wetlands in Ireland range from small freshwater springs to large bog and river habitats. They provide an important ecological function and create a transitional zone between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

There are three wetland sites in County Waterford that are recognised as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. They are Tramore Backstrand (Ramsar ID: 835), Dungarvan Harbour (Ramsar ID: 839), Blackwater Estuary (Ramsar ID: 836). Major threats to these sites include urbanization, aquaculture, fishing and pollution.

#### Nature Reserves and Parks

There is one Nature Reserve in County Waterford, Fennor Bog, and another on the border of County Waterford and County Kilkenny, Fiddown Island.

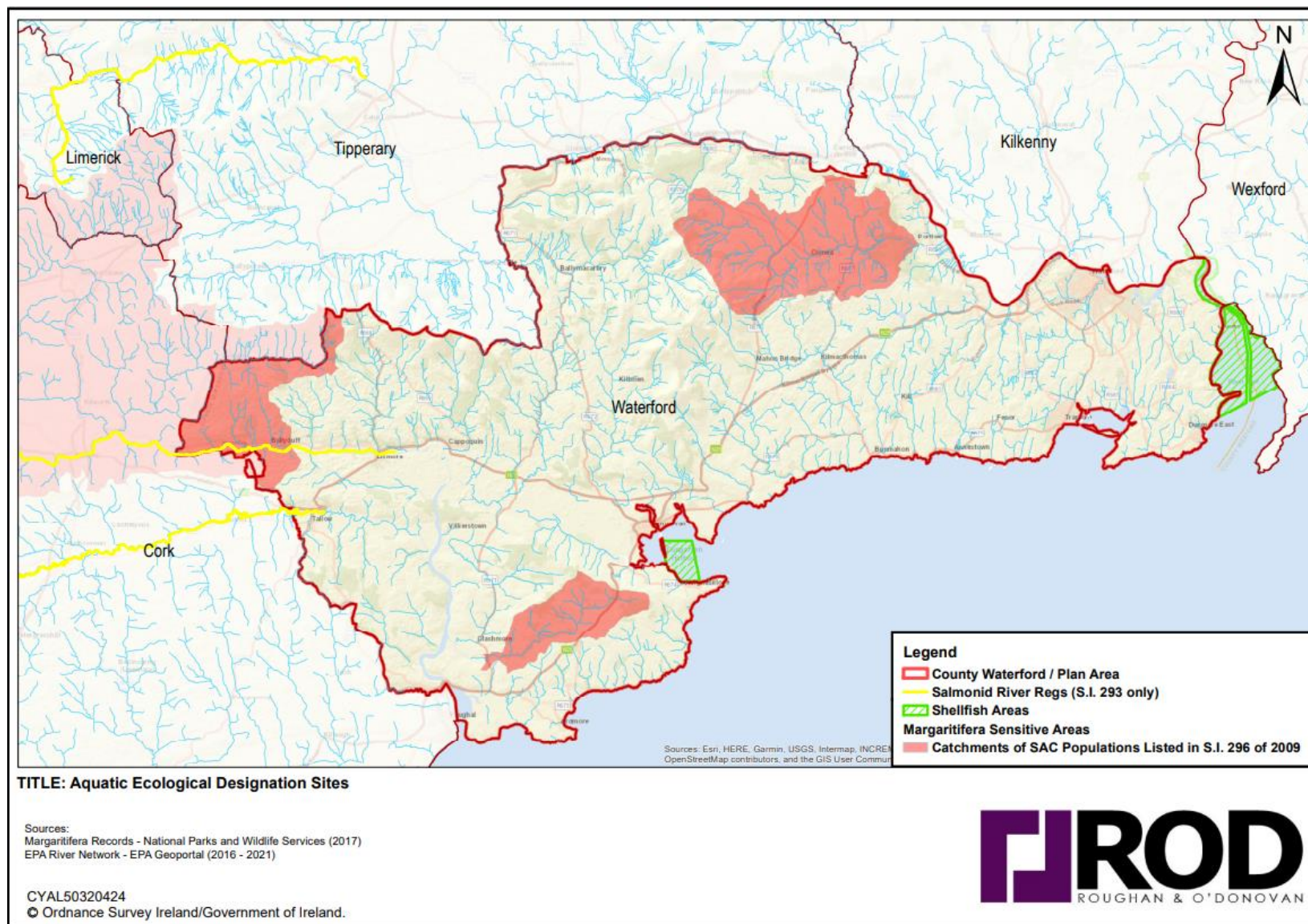


Figure 5-2 Aquatic Ecological Designations within County Waterford

### 5.2.2.1 *Invasive alien species*

Invasive alien species (IAS) are species which are introduced through human activities to areas outside of their natural range that have negative impact on biodiversity as well as on livelihoods, food security and human health. IAS outcompete native species and lead to environmental changes such as alteration of soil nutrients, shading and erosion which can negatively affect a range of habitats and species. IAS have been introduced both intentionally, such as grey squirrel and Himalayan Balsam, and accidentally in the case of Crayfish Plague.

The IUCN list IAS as one of the main drivers of global biodiversity loss. Water Bodies are particularly vulnerable to the impact of invasive alien species, which can also act as a conduit for spreading invasive alien species. The impacts of IAS on water bodies include the degradation of riparian habitat and bank erosion, which can lead to the release of sediment, which can lead to the smothering of gravels used by spawning fish and invertebrates including Freshwater Pearl Mussel. Invasive macrophytes can restrict light in water bodies leading to impacts on habitats and species.

### 5.2.3 Existing Pressures and Threats

The EPA states that most habitats in Ireland are experiencing a decline in biodiversity. Pressure to biodiversity arises primarily from factors such as agriculture, forestry, urbanisation, recreational use, and the presence of invasive species. These pressures and threats are also more pronounced for protected species. Tourism activities and the development of associated infrastructure close to ecologically sensitive areas can give rise to additional pressure on the biodiversity of these areas.

The main drivers impacting biodiversity associated with the planning and development sector include agriculture (including forestry and aquaculture), natural system modifications (draining wetlands, drainage and flood defence works, including changes to hydromorphology), mining, quarrying, and peat extraction as well as increasing soil sealing associated with urbanisation. Declines in biodiversity influence ecosystem services which can affect the environment as well as social and economic activity.

The key pressures relating to tourism in relation to biodiversity are as follows:

- Tourism based infrastructure can impact designated sites during both construction and operation. The development of the infrastructure required to increase visitor numbers and to promote outdoor activities linked to natural heritage areas could lead to the loss of habitat, 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, for example, areas used for feeding by wintering birds which lie outside the boundary of an SPA.
- 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 tourism
- Disturbance can occur during construction and operation of infrastructure as a result of noise, both within and outside the footprint of the development.
- Increased visitor numbers and/ or events can result in disturbance to wildlife.
- Water quality impacts arising from both the construction and the operation of tourism 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.

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

### 5.3 Population and Human Health

The 2022 Census reports the population of the Republic of Ireland is 5.3 million (CSO,2023a). The population of County Waterford was 127,363, an increase of approximately 10% from the 2016 Census an increase of approximately 10% from the 2016 Census, which is above the 8% national average increase. Waterford City comprises 47% (60,079) of this population, a growth rate of 12%.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) projects that between 2022 and 2040 that approximately one million additional people will be living in the country. The NPF contains a target to deliver 50% of future population and employment growth to be focused in the five cities of Ireland and their suburbs, namely, Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford (Government of Ireland, 2024a). It also contains a target to deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs. The population of Ireland is projected to continue to grow and become increasingly urbanised. Changes in land use, increased demand on infrastructure such as housing, transport network, water supply and sewerage will be required to sustainably manage this increase.

Ireland, including Waterford, is currently experiencing a significant housing shortage. *Housing For All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland* (Government of Ireland, 2021) it to deliver a multi-annual, multi-billion-euro plan which is aimed to improve Ireland's housing system and deliver more homes of all types for people with different housing needs. In recent years, short-term letting has increasingly taken the form of tourism letting resulting in some professional landlords withdrawing houses and apartments that would normally be rented on a long-term basis. Consequently, the tourism sector is impacting the availability and affordability of the housing sector, exacerbating the housing crisis. The *Housing For All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland* plan intends to implement revised regulatory controls in this area with assistance from Fáilte Ireland with a view to ensuring the availability of residential accommodation for the general population, balanced with the needs of the tourism sector, as appropriate.

#### 5.3.1 Human Health

There is extensive EU and Irish laws and policies which are integrated into plans and programmes intended to protect the environment and human health. Human beings are dependent on the natural environment for food, clean air, water and a stable climate and economic development. There is cross over among other environmental factors which have been considered separately in their respective sections of this ER.

The 2022 Census indicates the majority of self-reported health in Waterford's to be 'Very Good' (52.2%), with only 1.5% and 0.3 reporting 'Bad' or 'Very Bad' general health, respectively, which are in line with the national trend as shown in Table 5-4.

**Table 5-4 Self-Reported Health in Waterford City & County Compared to National Figures (CSO, 2023b)**

General Health self-reported (%)	Very Bad	Bad	Fair	Good	Very good	Not stated
Waterford City & County	0.3	1.5	9.1	30.0	52.2	6.8
National	0.3	1.4	8.6	29.7	53.2	6.7

The Irish population is at a significant risk due to the presence of radon within the natural environment. *The National Radon Control Strategy Phase 2: 2019-2024* (EPA, 2019) considers Waterford to be one of 12 priority counties, due to the higher levels of radon measured in the county compared to the national average, and the greater risk to human health resulting from it.

The population is also exposed to risks through their interaction with locations within the plan area which have experienced flooding or landslide events. As population grows both naturally and from the implementation of the plan, the frequency of human contact with these risks will increase. It can also be expected that there will be a greater frequency of health issues associated with old age as the national average age grows older.

#### **5.3.1.1 Noise**

The Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC) requires that member states assess noise pollution levels and act to manage it. This is transposed in Irish Law as the Environmental Noise Regulations (S.I. No. 140 of 2006) which requires the production of noise maps for agglomerations, roads, railways and airports, and for local authorities to prepare a Noise Action Plan every 5 years with the aim of reducing noise exposure levels measured in noise maps. The main source of environmental noise within Ireland and Waterford is from road traffic.

The Waterford Noise Action Plan 2019-2023 (Waterford City & County Council, 2019) identified several roads that have excessive noise levels. The greatest excesses of environmental noise are identified along the major (national) roads particularly in Waterford City and its neighbouring towns.

Noise pollution (during day and night) can cause disturbance to people and businesses including detracting tourists, particularly along streets within key destination areas such as Waterford City centre.

#### **5.3.2 Existing Pressures and Threats**

The EPA State of the Environment Report highlights the key pressures and problems in relation to population and human health, which include radon exposure, noise pollution, air quality, drinking water, wastewater management, and the effects of climate change, including increase of extreme weather events, sea level rise, flood risk and coastal erosion. Tourism sector, infrastructure including wastewater management is discussed in more detail in material assets section of this ER.

Existing pressures and threats to population include:

- Effects to residential accommodation (both availability and affordability);
- Pressure on critical infrastructure (refer to material assets) if not planned and managed appropriately;
- Exacerbating effects of climate change (refer to climate section)
- Effects that all other environmental factors have on the population depending on nature of tourism activity e.g. water environment, air quality, land use change, etc.

#### **5.4 Water**

Water is vital for life. Clean freshwater is necessary for creating and sustaining the ecosystems on which all life depends. It provides drinking water for people and

animals, sanitation, irrigation for crops, and supports economic development including industry and tourism.

The EPA reports there has been a deterioration in the number of the highest quality water bodies particularly rivers, while there has been mixed progress in waters achieving the environmental objectives under the WFD and other directives. There has been progress in improving wastewater treatment however, issues remain. Nutrient enrichment remains a significant issue and will continue to be under pressure from balancing the demands of a growing population and economic development such as agriculture. The EPA state that the key pressures relating to water quality in Ireland are agriculture, hydromorphology, urban wastewater discharges, forestry, domestic wastewater treatment systems, diffuse urban runoff, land use and land use change (including peat extraction) and industry discharges.

#### 5.4.1 Waterbody Status and Quality

The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EU (WFD) outlines the standards and practices for monitoring the health of waterbodies within the EU. The WFD aims to protect, enhance, and restore all bodies of surface water and groundwater with the aim of achieving at least good ecological status by the end of 2027, at the latest. The objective of the WFD national monitoring programme is to provide a national picture of the water status in accordance with the WFD criteria and identify water bodies at risk of failing to achieve the objectives of the WFD. This is achieved by collecting information on the status of a range of biological, physio-chemical, hydro-morphological and groundwater quality elements from the water bodies monitoring network. In addition to using this information to assess water status it can also be used to infer status to groups of unmonitored water bodies which share similar characteristics to those which are monitored. Combining status information from monitored and inferred water bodies provides an overall national picture of water body status. In addition to the biological status, the chemical status of water bodies is monitored (in accordance with Directive 2013/39/EC) for certain priority and hazardous substances in the field of water policy.

Water quality that meets the requirements set by the WFD is an important standard to keep if the plan is to succeed in drawing tourists. At the same time, the increased pressure from the tourist industry and the associated development to support it could threaten to diminish this quality, if unmanaged.

Waterford contains three water catchments, Colligan-Mahon, Suir, and Blackwater. It contains eighteen subcatchments, as detailed in Table 5-5 (EPA Maps, 2024).

**Table 5-5 Catchments and subcatchments within County Waterford**

Catchment Name	Catchment_ID	Classification
<b>Suir</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>Catchment</b>
Suir_SC_130	16_3	Subcatchment
Suir_SC_140	16_16	Subcatchment
Clodiagh [Portlaw]_SC_010	16_17	Subcatchment
Dawn [River]_SC_010	16_7	Subcatchment
Williamstown_SC_010	16_19	Subcatchment
<b>Colligan-Mahon</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Catchment</b>
Maoil_an_Choirnigh_SC_010	17_5	Subcatchment
Colligan_SC_010	17_6	Subcatchment

Catchment Name	Catchment_ID	Classification
Tay_SC_010	17_4	Subcatchment
Mahon_SC_010	17_3	Subcatchment
Kilmurrin_SC_010	17_1	Subcatchment
MONLOUM_SC_010	17_2	Subcatchment
<b>Blackwater (Munster)</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Catchment</b>
Goish_SC_010	18_27	Subcatchment
Tourig_SC_010	18_8	Subcatchment
Bride [Waterford]_SC_030	18_19	Subcatchment
Blackwater [Munster]_SC_130	18_5	Subcatchment
Blackwater [Munster]_SC_140	18_24	Subcatchment
Crinnaghtane_SC_010	18_16	Subcatchment
Finisk_SC_010	18_15	Subcatchment

The extent of these catchments is defined as follows:

- Colligan-Mahon: The area drained by the Rivers Colligan and Mahon and all streams entering tidal water between East Point and Cheekpoint.
- Suir: The area drained by the River Suir and all streams entering tidal water between Drumdowney and Cheekpoint.
- Blackwater (Munster): The area drained by the River Blackwater and all streams entering tidal waters between East Point and Knockaverry.

Water quality status as defined by the Water Framework Directive (WFD) considers the ecological and chemical status of a given waterbody.

Through successive WFD reports, the quality of water within these catchments has been decreasing. The greatest pressure on these systems, is the agricultural activities. Other sources include hydromorphology, urban wastewater discharges, forestry, domestic wastewater treatment systems, diffuse urban runoff, land use and land use change (including peat extraction) and industry discharges (EPA, 2024b).

#### 5.4.2 Surface Waterbodies

Surface waterbodies, as defined by the EPA, include rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters. These waterbodies are used for a variety of services such as drinking water abstraction, bathing, wastewater treatment, and agricultural uses and recreational or amenity uses. Surface waterbodies are illustrated on Figure 5-3 below.

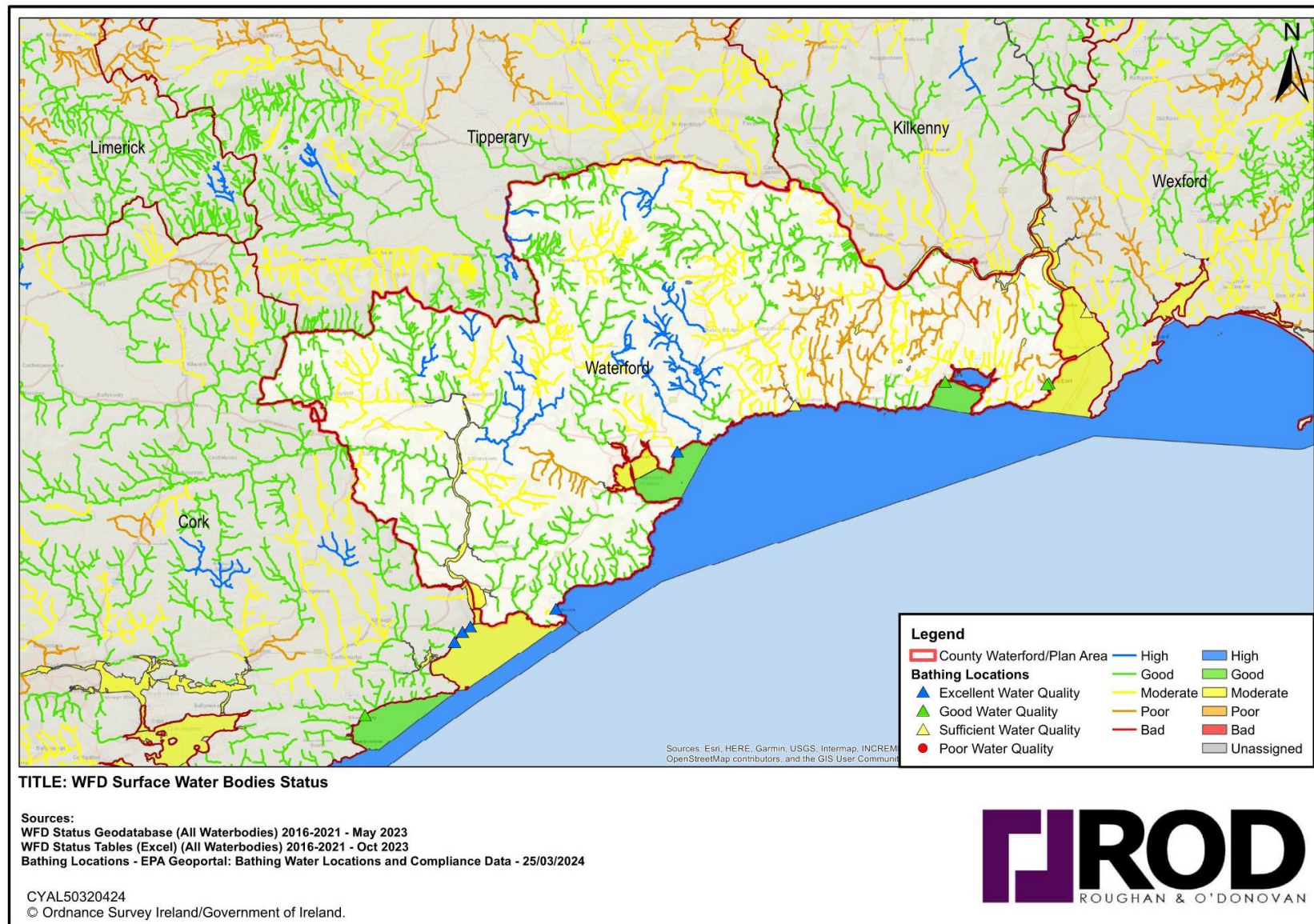


Figure 5-3 WFD Surface Waterbodies and Bathing Water locations status

#### **5.4.2.1 Bathing Water**

The European Bathing Waters Directive (76/160/EC) establishes provision for the monitoring and classification of bathing water quality, the management of bathing water quality and the provision of information to the public on bathing water quality. Bathing waters have historically been an asset within County Waterford for their ability to attract tourists. For this reason, their management and maintenance within the county are of significant concern to the plan.

Bathing water locations have been identified under the Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008 and are illustrated in the plan area on Figure 5-3.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) assess water quality information provided by local authorities for the beaches that they manage. Each year, local authorities take samples of bathing waters just before, and during the bathing water season. In Ireland, the season runs from 1 June to 15 September each year. The bathing waters include beaches and lakes and can be classified as Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor.

All bathing water locations within Waterford met the minimum threshold to be considered 'sufficient', while the majority are of 'good' or 'excellent' quality (EPA, 2024c). The quality in this region has been subject to a downward trend, with the quality of beaches such as Tramore Beach and Dunmore Strand moving from 'excellent' to 'good' within the last year (EPA, 2023). The quality of the coastal waterbody of Waterford Harbour, where the Dunmore East beach is found, is currently considered 'at risk' of not achieving its WFD objectives of good status. The coastal waterbody of Tramore Back Strand and Tramore Bay, where the Tramore Beach is found, is currently not at risk. The quality of these waterbodies is of significance given the level of recreational use these regions attract.

#### **5.4.3 Groundwater**

Groundwater is the accumulation of all the water stored within the void spaces of underground rock and subsoil layers and is a significant source of drinking water. 92% of the groundwater is considered to be of 'good' chemical quality, and 99.6% is of good quantitative status under the WFD (EPA, 2024a). This is consistent with the plan area, in which the majority of ground waterbodies throughout County Waterford have 'Good' status. The quality and quantity of drinking water is vital for human health.

There is an extensive history of karst formations underlaying Waterford. Concentrations of karstic formations as displayed on GSI mapping are shown from Cappoquin to Dungarvan. There are five karstic ground waterbodies within County Waterford, concentrated in the southwest.

#### **5.4.4 Aquifer Vulnerability and Productivity**

Aquifer vulnerability is a term used to represent the natural ground characteristics that determine the ease with which groundwater may be contaminated by human activities.

The aquifers underlying County Waterford are predominantly classified as 'Locally Important Aquifers - Bedrock which is Moderately Productive only in Local Zones'. There are areas of 'Regionally Important Aquifer' from Tallow to Dungarvan and from Waterford City, to Tramore and across the coastline to Stradbally.

Groundwater in Waterford is predominantly classified as having High vulnerability, consistent with the karstic formations found throughout the region. Tramore has substantial cover of High and Low groundwater vulnerability.

#### 5.4.5 WFD Register of Protected Areas

Register of Protected Areas (RPAs) are areas identified as those requiring special protection under existing national or European legislation, either to protect their surface water or groundwater, or to conserve habitats or species that directly depend on those waters. The plan area contains the following RPAs:

- The Suir and Blackwater Rivers, and the middle and lower portions of their respective estuaries;
- Surface waterbodies in areas which the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC) denotes as being Nutrient Sensitive Areas;
- Surface and ground waterbodies designated for drinking water (under Article 7 Abstraction for Drinking Water); and
- All bathing water areas and the groundwater zones associated with these areas.

#### 5.4.6 Flooding

Urban areas are largely impermeable and expanding. Reduced absorption leads to increased volumes and speed of runoff with potential additional flood risk. Furthermore, evidence points to further intensification of rainfall events due to climate change. The current drainage systems are designed based on historic data. This design method does not address the changing climate and new rainfall patterns. Methods of managing flood risk have historically required significant modification to water bodies such as dredging or canalisation. More recently an awareness of the benefits to a more natural approach to flood management driven by the EPA has been progressed through the concepts of natural water retention measures (NWRM) and natural flood management (NFM).

The OPW reports on historic flood events which are identified across the county, including on River Suir, Blackwater, Tay, Mahon and Colligan. Coastal flooding, particularly within the towns of Tramore and Dungarvan has also experienced flood events. Rising sea levels, coastal flooding and erosion is increasing due to climate change. These changes will likely threaten the ability of some coastal regions to hold populations and could impact tourism activities.

#### 5.4.7 Existing Pressures and threats

Changes in land use and development is putting pressure on water quality, which can include tourism activities. Significant pressures to water bodies have been identified for water bodies 'At Risk' of not meeting the water quality objectives under the WFD. Significant pressures on the aquatic environment (in terms of number of bodies at risk of not achieving good status) is from agriculture, hydro-morphology, urban wastewater, forestry, urban runoff, anthropogenic activities. The tourism sector crosses many different sectors and therefore can influence water quality and quantity particularly during peak periods.

### 5.5 Air Quality

The statutory ambient air quality standards in Ireland are outlined in S.I. No. 739 of 2022 Air Quality Standards Regulations 2022 (hereafter referred to as the Air Quality Regulations), which incorporate the ambient air quality limits set out in Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (hereafter referred to as the CAFE Directive) (European Parliament, Council of the European Union 2008), for a range of air pollutants.

Air quality is regulated in Ireland under EU legislation and S.I. No. 739/2022- Ambient Air Quality Standards Regulation 2022. These regulations set standards for ambient air quality and air pollutant emissions. EU Directive on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe was adopted in October 2024 (PE-CONS 88/24) that will mandate a review of air quality regulations based on WHO research every 5 years, starting from 2030.

The Clean Air Strategy for Ireland First Progress Report 2024 (Government of Ireland, 2024b) indicates that transport is a key sector which requires additional focus to ensure continued improvement in air quality. Transport related air emissions are the most likely interaction between tourism and air quality. The Plan supports sustainable transport options including walking, cycling and public transport that have lower emissions than private car travel.

### 5.5.1 Ambient Air Quality

The national ambient air quality in Ireland is monitored and managed by the EPA who publish an annual report on air quality in Ireland. Ireland is divided up into four national air quality zones, as follows:

- Zone A: Dublin;
- Zone B: Cork;
- Zone C: 23 large towns with populations >15,000; and
- Zone D: all remaining areas.

Waterford City is classified into Zone C as a large town, and the rest of the county falls under Zone D. There are currently two active national air quality monitoring stations in Waterford, along Paddy Browne's Road and Merchants Quay in Waterford City respectively. Air quality measuring stations record four pollutants to form the Air Quality Index for Health (AQIH), which are:

- Ozone gas;
- Nitrogen dioxide gas;
- PM<sub>2.5</sub> particles; and
- PM<sub>10</sub> particles.

The AQHI indices are updated hourly through continuous monitoring. The presence of nitrogen dioxide is naturally highest on busy streets, such as those in Waterford City. The quality of air can influence the appeal of a region for tourists, and even disqualify those with breathing difficulties in extreme cases. If tourism is promoted through non-sustainable transport solutions the quality within these areas may suffer.

### 5.5.2 Existing Pressures and Threats

Nationally, the quality of air is very good; the two most significant pollutants are particulate matter, arising mainly from the domestic use of solid fuel, and nitrogen dioxide, arising from petrol and diesel vehicles (EPA, 2024d).

Ireland has reduced the emissions of all air pollutants except for ammonia, the ability to further reduce these emissions is threatened by the continued growth of industry, particularly in the areas of agriculture and transport (EPA, 2024d). The *Clean Air Strategy for Ireland First Progress Report 2024* indicates that transport is a key sector which requires additional focus to ensure improvement in air quality. Poor air quality can lead to health problems for the population such as respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, which can lead to other long-lasting health problems. Atmospheric pollutants such as NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> can impact the biodiversity, affecting the absorption

capacity of flora and due to disposition changing the characteristics of water bodies and in turn harming aquatic life.

## 5.6 Climate

While many greenhouse gases occur naturally, human activities including transport, agriculture, land use change are increasing concentrations of some GHG creating the greenhouse effect resulting in changes to the climate. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states in its *AR6 Synthesis Report* that human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming, reporting that between 2011 and 2020, global surface temperatures were 1.1°C above 1850-1900 levels. EU Member States have collectively agreed to aim to keep global warming to below a 2°C increase from pre-industrial levels, under the Paris Agreement. These changes are directly and indirectly impacting Ireland's climate evidenced by changes in rainfall events, an increased frequency of storm events, sea level rise affecting coastal areas, as well as changes to air and soil temperature.

### 5.6.1 International and National policy context

The Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015), which entered into force in 2016, is an important milestone in terms of international climate change agreements and includes an aim of limiting global temperature increases to no more than 2°C (degrees Celsius) above pre-industrial levels with efforts to limit this rise to 1.5°C. The European Green Deal, published by the European Commission in December 2019, provides an action plan which aims for the EU to be climate neutral by 2050. European Union (EU) Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law') aims to write into law the goal set out in the European Green Deal – for Europe's economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050. In May 2019, the Government of Ireland declared a climate and biodiversity emergency.

#### Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021 builds on the 2015 Climate Act and commits Ireland, in law, to move to a climate resilient and climate neutral economy by 2050 in alignment with the European Green Deal. The purpose of the Climate Act was to enable Ireland *'to pursue, and achieve, the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the end of the year 2050'*. It introduced a system of successive 5-year, economy-wide carbon budgets. The first two carbon budgets covering the periods 2021-2025 and 2026-2030 were announced by the Climate Change Advisory Council in 2021 (with a provisional budget from 2031). The carbon budgets are used to prepare sectoral emissions ceilings for relevant sectors of the economy, many are influenced by the tourism sector.

#### Climate Action Plan

The first Climate Action Plan (CAP) was published in 2019 and is reviewed and updated annually. CAP24 has six vital high impact sectors where the biggest savings can be made: renewable energy, energy efficiency of buildings, transport, sustainable farming, sustainable business and change of land-use.

The first carbon budget programme proposed by the Climate Change Advisory Council was approved by Government and adopted by both Houses of the Oireachtas in April 2022. The carbon budgets comprise three successive 5-year budgets. The total emissions allowed under each budget are set out below in Table 5-6 as well as the average annual reduction for each 5-year period.

**Table 5-6 2021 – 2035 Carbon Budgets**

Period	Carbon Budget (Million tonnes (Mt) CO <sub>2</sub> eq)	Emission Reduction Target
<b>2021-2025</b>	295 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq	Reduction in emissions of 4.8% per annum for the first budget period.
<b>2026-2030</b>	200 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq	Reduction in emissions of 8.3% per annum for the second budget period.
<b>2031-2035</b>	151 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq	Reduction in emissions of 3.5% per annum for the third provisional budget.

CAP23 provided that the economy-wide carbon budgets are supplemented by sectoral emissions ceilings, setting the maximum amount of GHG emissions that are permitted in a given sector of the economy during each five-year carbon budget. The Sectoral Emission Ceilings for each Sector, published in July 2022 (Department of the Taoiseach, 2022), are shown in Table 5-7. It should be noted that 5.25 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>eq of annual emissions reductions are currently unallocated on an economy-wide basis for the second carbon budget period (2026-2030). These will be allocated following a mid-term review and identification of additional abatement measures. The transport sector emitted approximately 12 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>eq in 2018 and has a ceiling of 6 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>eq in 2030 which is a 50% reduction over this period.

**Table 5-7 Sectoral Emissions Ceilings (DECC, 2023)**

Sector	Baseline (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq)	Carbon Budgets (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq)		2030 Emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq)	Indicative Emissions % Reduction in Final Year of 2025- 2030 Period (Compared to 2018)
	2018	2021- 2025	2026- 2030		
Electricity	10	40	20	3	75
Transport	12	54	37	6	50
Built Environment - Residential	7	29	23	4	40
Built Environment - Commercial	2	7	5	1	45
Industry	7	30	24	4	35
Agriculture	23	106	96	17.25	25
Other (F-gases, waste, petroleum refining)	2	9	8	1	50
Land Use, Land- use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)	5	Reflecting the continued volatility for LULUCF baseline emissions to 2030 and beyond, CAP24 puts in place ambitious activity targets for the sector reflecting an EU-type approach.			
Total	68				
Unallocated Savings	-	-	26	- 5.25	-

Sector	Baseline (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq)	Carbon Budgets (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq)		2030 Emissions (Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq)	Indicative Emissions % Reduction in Final Year of 2025- 2030 Period (Compared to 2018)
	2018	2021- 2025	2026- 2030		
Legally Binding Carbon Budgets and 2030 Emission Reduction Targets	-	295	200	-	51

Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) (Government of Ireland, 2023) reports that Ireland has expended 47% of its carbon budget for the period of 2021-2025 in the first two years. *Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2023-2050* (EPA, 2024f) reports that Ireland is also expected to exceed its 2021-2025 and 2026-2030 budgets by between 17-27%, and that the sectoral emissions ceilings are expected to be exceeded in almost every sector. Ireland produced an estimated total of 55.01 MtCO<sub>2</sub>eq in 2023 (excluding LULUCF), which is a decrease of 6.8% in 2023, bringing it to its lowest level in three decades (EPA, 2024g). This also follows a 2% reduction in 2022. Ireland has produced 188.43 MtCO<sub>2</sub>eq since the introduction of the first five-year carbon budget, which represents 63.9% of the 2021-2025 budget. Of Ireland's 2023 emissions the largest contributors were agriculture, transport and energy industries, each representing 37.8%, 21.4%, and 14.3% of the annual emissions respectively. Other significant contributors in 2023 were residential, manufacturing & combustion, and Industrial processes, contributing 9.7%, 7.5% and 3.9% respectively.

CAP24 provides a corrective path for Ireland to meet its national emissions targets through the introduction of corrective measures across all industries. Tourism is influenced by and influences all sectors. Actions include *TR/24/18(TF)*, which aims to expand regional bike sharing schemes in Waterford and other cities, and *TR/24/13(TF)* which supports the development and implementation of BusConnects programmes in Waterford and other cities. *TR/24/11(TF)* supports the roll-out of cycling and walking infrastructure nationwide. These actions all contribute to a reduction in fuel usage and total vehicle kilometres, and their associated GHG emissions.

### National Adaptation Framework

The Governments' second *National Adaptation Framework (NAF)* published in 2024 provides a whole of government and society approach to climate adaptation in Ireland in order to reduce Ireland's vulnerability to climate change risks including extreme weather events, flooding, drought, loss of biodiversity, sea level rise and increased temperatures. Similar to the "Just Transition" when considering carbon emissions, the NAF aims for "Just Resilience" stating that: "*A climate resilient Ireland will have a reduced reliance on fossil fuel, it will have widely accessible electrified public transport and will have transitioned towards sustainable agricultural practices such as agroforestry and organic farming.*"

The NAF highlights that there is a projected increased frequency of droughts, coupled with higher evapotranspiration rates, which could cause reduced river flow, groundwater recharge, and reservoir refill capacity, leading to potential water supply shortages. The NAF warns that national long-term water supply projects must be planned for within budgets to ensure the adaptation required to make Ireland resilient by 2050 and beyond is funded.

A new *Tourism Policy Framework* was published by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in November 2024. In relation to the climate related high-level targets to 2030, these include:

- Fáilte Ireland will establish a baseline figure for tourism associated emissions and subsequent shorter term Tourism Action Plans will contain tourism specific emission reduction and biodiversity targets.
- Measures will be put in place to ensure that the average carbon emissions associated with each visitor bed night is reduced by 60% by 2030.
- In relation to overseas visitors, the focus will be on those markets generating greatest revenue for lowest carbon footprint. The target will be to achieve an average annual 5.6% year- on- year growth in the revenue generated by overseas visitors in the period to 2030.

### 5.6.2 Local Context

As a result of the Climate Action and Low Carbon (Amendment) Act 2021 every Local Authority (LA) in the country is required to develop a Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) that will be in effect for five years. The LACAP will ensure a coordinated local response to climate change and bring together critical stakeholders across local government, communities, and businesses to build a vision for a climate neutral and resilient future.

The Waterford City and County Council's *Climate Action Plan 2024-2029* sets out how the Council will work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from their operations and in the services that they provide to the people of Waterford. The LACAP reports that activity within County Waterford was responsible for GHGs amounting to 1995ktCO<sub>2</sub>eq in 2018. Agriculture and Manufacturing were found to be the predominant contributors accounting for 39.3% and 23.9% GHG emissions, respectively. Residential and transport sectors account for the next highest sectors at 15.6% and 14.1%, respectively. The actions outlined within the LACAP aim to align activity within the county with the CAP24 target to reduce the emissions within the county by 51%.

The LACAP includes strategic goals which set the context for mitigation and adaptations actions in service of Vision and Mission. The identification and development of such goals establishes a structured approach to the arrangement of climate actions to be addressed. The five strategic goals of the plan are as follows:

1. Governance and Leadership
2. Built Environment and Transport
3. Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure
4. Communities: Resilience and Just Transition
5. Sustainability and Resource Management

The plan includes a number of actions including:

- Identify and deliver a Decarbonizing Zone within the local authority area to act as a test bed for a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures in a specifically defined area through the identification of projects and outcomes that will assist in the delivery of the National Climate Objective.
- Preserve and promote the cultural heritage and biodiversity of Ireland's oldest city and the wider county area.

Waterford City was chosen as a Decarbonisation Zone in 2021, meaning it will act as a "Transition Super-Lab" where measures relating to climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity can be trialled. The Plan reports that activity within the decarbonisation

zone was responsible for 289 ktCO<sub>2</sub>eq of greenhouse gases in 2018, with the predominant contributors being the transport, commercial and residential sectors, which account for 29.7%, 28.4%, and 21.8% of emissions respectively. Tourism influences the emissions of all sectors of the economy.

### **Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme**

In order to align the activity of businesses in the tourism industry with government emissions targets, Fáilte Ireland have developed the Climate Action Programme<sup>2</sup> which provides businesses with expert mentoring and guidance in reducing carbon emissions energy and water usage, and waste production. The programme is delivered by Fáilte Ireland and an expert team of sustainability advisors mentor and guide your business over a three-year period. The dedicated advisor will assess the business' existing baseline and develop a tailored action plan to reduce carbon emissions, lower costs and improve business' overall sustainability credentials. The tourism sector is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and as such the programme aims to drive change in business in line with Ireland's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

#### **5.6.3 Existing Pressures and Threats**

Tourism is a cross-cutting sector that depends on several other sector developments. (e.g. water, agriculture, transport) therefore, adaptation in this sector will require significant collaboration. The current pace of delivery of actions aimed at reducing emissions from the energy sector is likely insufficient to meet the sectoral emissions targets putting pressure on all sectors.

Threats to the tourism sector from climate change include but are not limited to coastal erosion, increased flooding, and extreme weather events. Coastal tourism, especially in areas like Waterford, is particularly vulnerable. Climate change events can damage attractions, infrastructure, and agricultural production, negatively impacting businesses, transportation, and the overall tourism experience.

Natural and scenic areas are often closely linked to tourism sites. Nature protection is a crucial adaptation measure, especially for tourism areas that are closely linked to natural environments.

The tourism sector might also benefit from climate change as visitors may select cooler areas in summer or seasons may be extended due to an increase in favourable weather conditions, which may in turn put additional pressures on those areas. The overall impact on the tourism sector due to climate change is likely to be significant and will require significant collaborative efforts from all sectors and stakeholders.

### **5.7 Land and Soils**

Consideration of land and soil management is essential to sustainable planning and development as these resources support the built environment, food production processes, water, resources for development and other ecosystem services. The Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) states Ireland has a diverse geology particularly considering the relatively small land area covering approximately 70,000km<sup>2</sup>.

Given the long-term processes governing the development of soils, sustainable management of soil assets within the plan area is critical to the continued economic development and health of the population and ecological life.

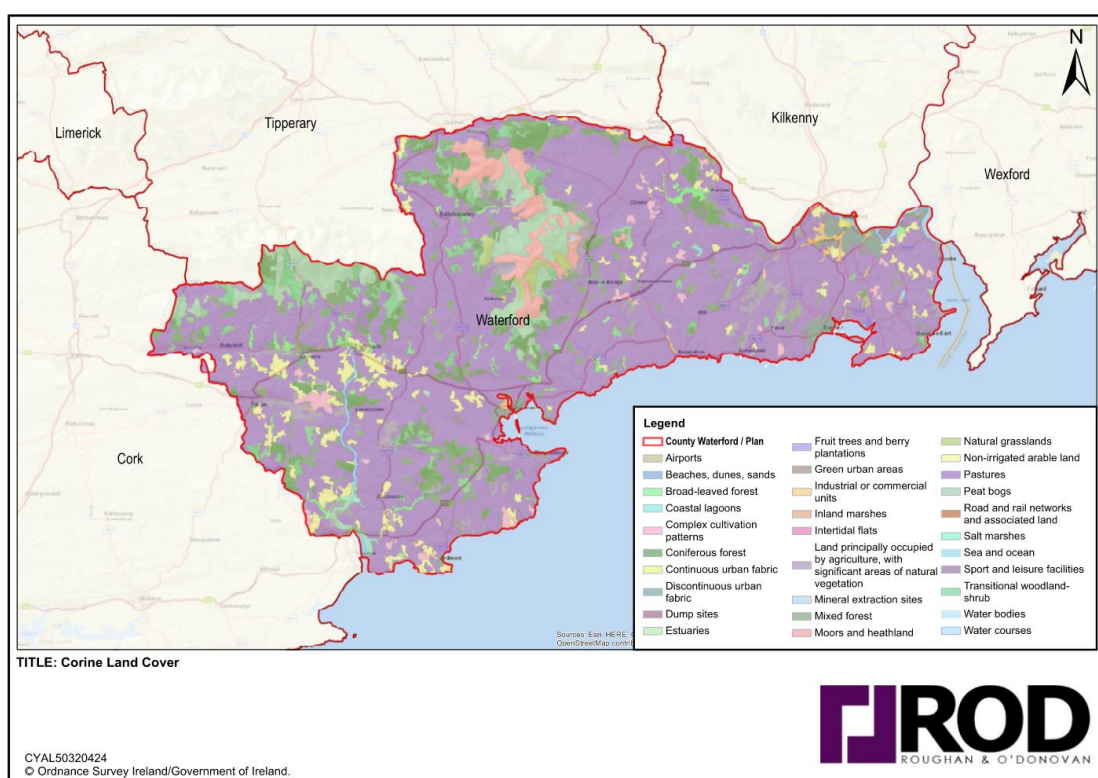
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<sup>2</sup> [Fáilte Ireland - FAQs | Climate Action Programme | National Tourism Development Authority |](#)

### 5.7.1 Land Use

Land use describes the use land has been put to from a human perspective. Land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) are significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Ireland and according to the EPA resulted in 3.3 million tonnes net emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in 2018. Therefore, land use and land use change can have an impact across environmental factors.

The CORINE 2018 land cover survey of County Waterford is illustrated in Figure 5-4 below. The county's land cover is predominately composed of pasture land. Other land cover types in the county include Inland: wetlands, mixed forests, peat bogs, Coniferous forests, moors and heathlands, complex cultivation patterns, discontinuous urban fabric and non-irrigated arable land. Approximately 43km<sup>2</sup> or 2.3% of the total land cover in County Waterford is made up of sealed or artificial surfaces.



**Figure 5-4 CORINE 2018 Land Cover within the Plan Area**

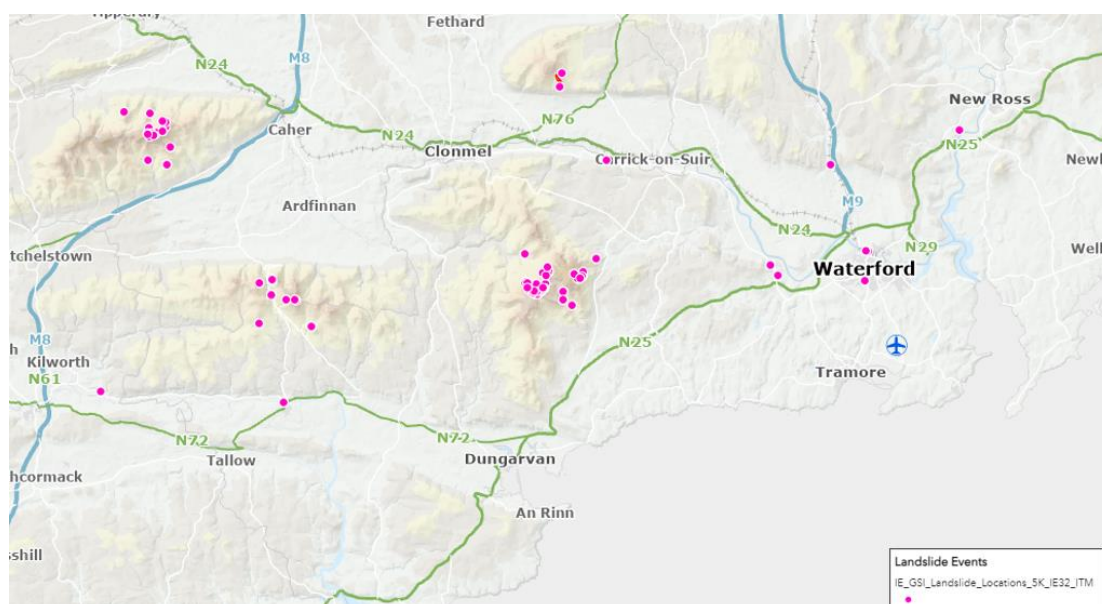
### 5.7.2 Soil Types

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI, 2024) indicates Brown earths and Brown Podzols are the most dominant soils through the area of the plan as identified by Teagasc Soils (GSI, 2024), while blanket peats and peaty lithosols cover the uplands of County Waterford. Peat soils are of significance for the unique species supported by the peatland environments which they encompass. Active blanket and basin bog habitats are listed in Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, giving them priority habitat status. Also present to a lesser extent within the plan area are the following soils:

- Basin peat between Dungarvan and the Suir estuary
- Alluvium deposits in the flood plains of the rivers and streams
- Surface water gleys to the north-west of the county.

### 5.7.3 Landslides

Landslides within the plan area are of concern not just for the risk to human health, but also for their potential impact on land use, water quality, and biodiversity. According to GSI the majority of County Waterford has 'low landslide susceptibility' GSI maps identify that landslide activity in the county is split between two hotspots, and a small number of isolated locations across the county. The Comeragh Mountains are the most active site of landslides, followed by the Knockmealdown Mountains. Isolated landslide events have also occurred in Coolnamuck West, Lismore, Ballyduff, Kilbarry Nature Park, and the Waterford City (North Quays) affecting the Train Station. The North Quays rock face stabilisation project developed by Waterford City and County Council has been developed to prevent landslides from occurring which affect the railway line and the potential to affect the North Quays regeneration area. Figure 5-5 below illustrates the locations of all recorded landslides within the plan area.



**Figure 5-5 Landslide Event History for County Waterford**

### 5.7.4 Geological Heritage

Geological heritage is the valuable geological features of an area, like landforms (natural landscape), rocks or fossils. These are important for understanding an area's history and hence worthy of safeguard for the benefit of present and future generations. Geological Survey of Ireland has a geoheritage programme and works to protect and promote sites of national and international geological importance in Ireland.

Certain soil types such as peats have been utilised to promote tourism due to the unique nature of their environment. The maintenance of soil assets in the country also serves to maintain the health of related natural assets such as waterways which may hold potential for tourism development.

Geological heritage sites also attract tourism. County Waterford has several sites of geological heritage including the Dungarvan Harbour (WD037), Comeragh Mountains (WD016), Tramore Burrow (WD054), Knockmealdown Gullies (WD042) and many other smaller sites, as identified on GSI maps.

The Copper Coast of Waterford is also identified as a UNESCO Global Geopark for its rich mining history, one of three geoparks in Ireland. The Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028, contains two objectives relevant to geological heritage:

- **G01 Protecting our Geological Heritage:** We will contribute towards the appropriate protection and maintenance of the character, integrity and conservation value of features or areas of geological interest. We will protect from inappropriate development the scheduled list of Geological Heritage Sites detailed in Appendix 11.
- **G02 UNESCO Copper Coast Geopark:** We will protect and promote the geological heritage of the UNESCO Copper Coast Geopark and support the work of the Geopark to ensure it retains and adds value to its designation status as a UNESCO Geopark.

### 5.7.5 Existing Pressures and Threats

The dominant pressures on land and soils include soil sealing, erosion, organic matter decline, compaction, salination and landslides. Tourism can create pressure on land and soil due to direct land use change creating soil sealing and/ or impacting geological heritage sites.

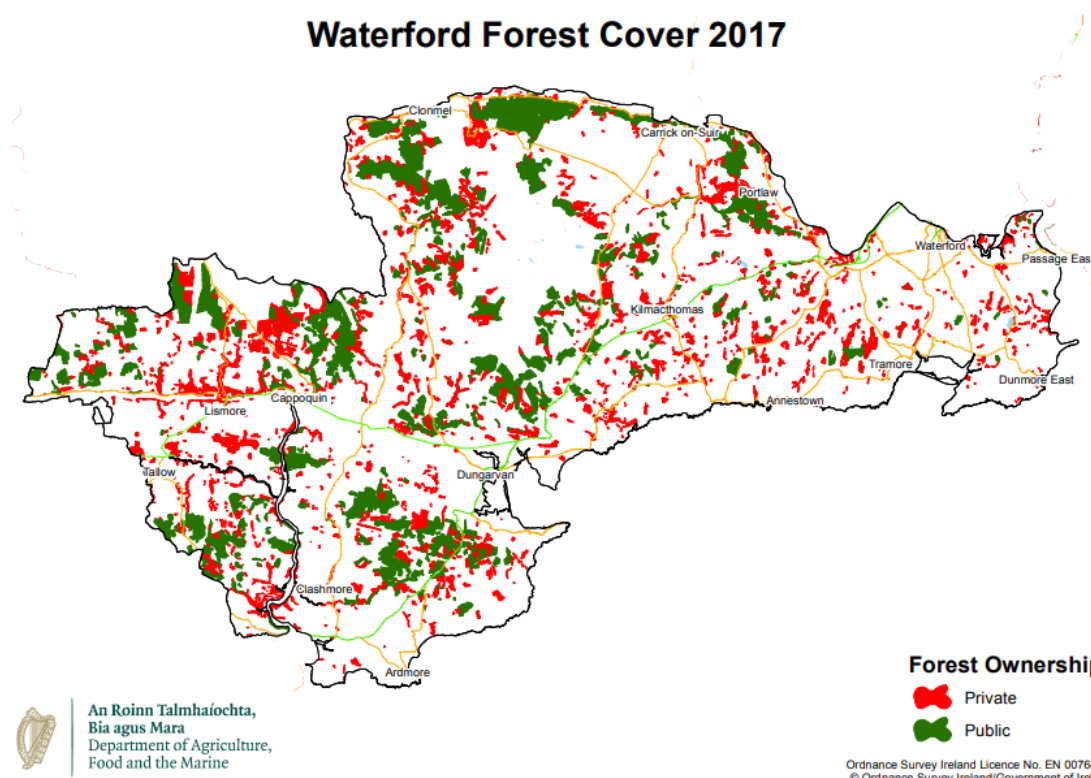
## 5.8 Material Assets

Material assets are considered to include the material use of land and any assets that enable settlements to function. Material assets can include utilities such as drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities, drainage systems, coastal defences, harbours, ports, road and rail infrastructure. Material assets are not limited to human-made resources. Economic assets such as land as well as coastal and water resources which support agriculture, aquaculture, energy, tourism and industry are also included.

The tourism sector has resulted in significant pressure on the water, waste and road infrastructure in many popular tourist destinations (EPA, 2024a). A significant opportunity nationally, and within the plan area is the reuse of the numerous brownfield sites and regeneration opportunities. The *Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028* has identified a number of these brownfield sites within the plan area.

### 5.8.1 Natural Assets

Some of the key natural assets within the county are forestry and coastline. Nationally, forestry makes up 10.5% of the land cover, in County Waterford this figure is significantly higher at 22%. Of this land, 15% is under Coillte management. Figure 5-6 below identifies the private and publicly owned areas of forestry within the region many of which are recreational and tourism assets. Locations of beaches are identified in Figure 5-3. Waterford beaches and its coastlines are significant natural and tourism assets. The balance between safeguarding sensitive ecological sites in these locations and developing tourism proposals will be a crucial factor in shaping future tourism proposals. Tourism in these areas contributes to the growth of the neighbouring towns and villages and the local economy. However, it can also put pressure on these scenic and sometimes sensitive ecological areas, due to for example, increased residential development, including tourism accommodation and critical infrastructure which may negatively impact the natural assets if not planned and managed appropriately. The continued management, maintenance and protection of the coastline is essential for the retention of its value and for the wellbeing of the communities it supports.



**Figure 5-6 Forest Cover Within Plan Area (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 2017)**

### 5.8.2 Public Infrastructure

The existing public assets of County Waterford include public spaces, buildings, and recreational areas, as well as public utilities such as the electrical, water and wastewater infrastructure. The public spaces within the region may have potential for use as drivers of tourism, and the standard of infrastructure can impact the quality of experience for potential tourists.

Irish Water monitors the load of Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs) across the country. Irish Water reports that most settlements within County Waterford currently have capacity. Those which have limited, or no capacity are all smaller settlements which may be affected by the growth of rural tourism as a result of the Draft Plan (IW, 2023a).

Irish Water also monitors and reports on the status of water supply infrastructure across the country. The capacity of the water supply resources can change based on supply and demand. Irish Water reports that while the water supply in the larger settlements such as Dungarvan, Waterford City and Tramore has capacity to satisfy the demand of population targets for 2032, smaller settlements have capacity constraints and may require level of service improvements (IW, 2024b). This is significant in towns such as Lismore, Cappoquin and Portlaoise, which the Draft Plan identifies for potential tourism development.

The National Broadband Plan was established in 2020 to deliver fibre broadband across Ireland and covers 96% of Ireland's land mass. High speed broadband connections are important for enabling business in rural areas. National Broadband Ireland (NBI) has facilitated the roll-out of this plan and reports that high speed fibre broadband is available to order or pre-order in 63% of premises within the county (NBI, 2024). NBI further reports that the deployment areas of Carrick-on-Suir, Dungarvan, and Bonmahon, are not yet fully connected, but are expected to all be connected by

December 2026 at the latest. The completion of this work will grow the ability of rural areas of County Waterford to support tourism, and to support businesses which accommodate tourism.

The transport infrastructure within County Waterford holds key importance to the development of tourism within the region. Major roads connecting settlements within the region and to those beyond include the following:

- M9: Connecting Waterford City to Dublin and major towns through the Southern and East and Midlands Regions
- N24: Connecting Waterford City to Limerick City
- N25: Connecting Waterford City to Dungarvan and on to Cork City
- N72: Connecting Dungarvan to towns within counties Cork and Kerry

Waterford City is also served by Irish-Rail, which provides connections to the south-eastern line to Dublin, and to Limerick City and Limerick Junction via towns in the southern region. Private bus services also operate throughout the County, providing local links. Connectivity within Waterford City and County is also expected to improve into the future with the delivery of the ongoing North Quays project in Waterford City, which aims to develop a transport hub in Waterford City, and BusConnects Waterford. The improving public transport assets within the region will be a strength to any plan within the county which aims to promote tourism.

### **5.8.3 Energy**

Energy is currently increasing in demand by 5-7% annually (Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028, 2022). The growth in energy usage is predicted to continue increasing as tourism expands. Renewable energy on and offshore is being developed, with minimum targets of producing 8GW of onshore renewable energy by 2030 as detailed in the Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028.

### **5.8.4 Tourism**

Tourism is a significant economic driver in Waterford, and more broadly across Ireland. The tourism industry in Waterford is valued at over €100 million (Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028), with significant benefit to businesses, the community and residents. Environmental management is essential to the continued attraction of visitors to Waterford's tourism assets.

The Draft Plan seeks to increase tourism from domestic and overseas visitors. There are a variety of natural attractions including mountains, rivers and coastal areas. Waterford City and coastal towns, including Dungarvan, Tramore and Dunmore East are significant attractors particularly during the peak summer period. Waterford City is best known for its rich Viking heritage, which attracts visitors interested in cultural heritage.

In 2023, Waterford's main tourism attraction was the House of Waterford Crystal with 154,000 visitors, making it Ireland's 49<sup>th</sup> most popular visitor destination that year. Other popular destinations in the county included Mount Congreve Gardens (70,115 visitors) and the Medieval Museum (Waterford Treasures Museum) (49,748 visitors) (FI, 2024b). Overall 'Historic Site's and 'Visitor/Heritage Centres' are the biggest attractions, representing 29% and 24% of visitors respectively.

Domestic tourism across Ireland had an increase in expenditure of €200 million, and an increase in overnight stays by approximately 1 million nights from 2022 to 2023

(CSO, 2023c). There were approximately 499,000 trips to Waterford, accounting for 1.1 million of the total 34 million overnight stays in 2023 (CSO, 2023c).

Tourism from foreign visitors increased by approximately 0.8% in the month of July 2023 to July 2024 nationally (CSO, 2024). Total foreign visitor spending in Ireland increased by 5% from 2023 to 2024, totalling €919.2 million.

Tourism industry offers potential positive opportunities to provide for social and economic benefits including supporting and diversifying the rural economy and provision of ecosystem services.

The Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028 identifies the following key tourism assets in the county:

- Waterford Viking Triangle;
- House of Waterford Crystal;
- The five Waterford Treasures Museums, namely: Medieval Museum, Bishop's Palace, Reginald's Tower, Irish Silver Museum, Irish Museum of Time
- Waterford Greenway;
- Lismore Castle and Heritage Centre;
- The Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark;
- Comeragh Mountains, among others.

The Draft Plan aims to engage with these sites helping to promote sustainable tourism at each destination.

### **5.8.5 Existing Pressures and Threats**

The tourism sector has resulted in significant pressure on the water, waste and road infrastructure in many popular tourist destinations (EPA, 2024a). Existing pressures and threats to material assets include:

- Access to and management to natural assets such as forests, mountain areas and beaches;
- Inadequate provision and access to sustainable transport infrastructure continuing to result in dependency on road-based transport infrastructure;
- Increased tourists can put pressure on water and waste management systems, including water supply and wastewater treatment facilities particularly during peak period;
- Pressure on existing utility services including water, wastewater and waste management in certain areas, essential for local population, tourism and business development;
- Climate change, rising sea levels, and increased natural disasters will put pressure on all material assets, both natural and man-made particularly in coastal and sensitive ecological areas.

### **5.9 Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural Heritage**

Ireland is rich in architectural, archaeological, and cultural heritage with an abundance of heritage sites located throughout the country. Heritage sites by nature are usually invaluable and irreplaceable. These assets are under pressure from competing land uses across all sectors. Cultural heritage encompasses the ways in which communities developed and how customs, practices, places, objects, traditions, and values were passed on from generation to generation. Ireland's heritage policy and

legislation sits within a broad sweep of international and EU conventions, policy, programmes and legislation. The Heritage Act 1995 (as amended) is a statute to promote public interest in, and knowledge, appreciation, and protection of national heritage.

Heritage is a critical consideration of the planning and development process, and statutory provision is made in the development plan and development consent processes to address heritage impacts. Local authorities work to preserve and raise awareness about heritage in the local area. Local authorities have heritage officers who, in partnership with the Heritage Council, are key to promoting heritage awareness and developing heritage policy in counties across Ireland.

Waterford City is the oldest city in Ireland, founded in 914 AD, and is significant from an architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage perspective. Sites of archaeological or architectural significance are both invaluable and irreplaceable and can define the fabric of settlements. Heritage assets are a key driver of tourism within Ireland and is likely to continue to attract tourists. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage reports that between 2013 and 2018, the number of annual visits to OPW-managed properties grew from 3.4 million to 8 million. The Built & Archaeological Heritage Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2019) also reports that in visitor satisfaction surveys, history and culture registered highly.

**Table 5-8 Heritage Designations**

Type of Heritage Designation	Description
<b>Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)</b>	The RMP comprises a list of monuments and places and associated maps indicating their location. The Minister must be notified two months in advance if works are proposed at or in relation to any recorded monument. Monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister (or a Local Authority) will require advance written consent for works to be carried out.
<b>National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)</b>	The purpose of the NIAH is to identify, record and evaluate post-1700 architectural heritage in Ireland to aid in its conservation. NIAH surveys allow the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to make recommendations for the inclusion of structures in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS).
<b>Record of Protected Structures (RPS)</b>	The RPS lists the protected structures in an administrative area. The RPS may be designated for architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, social, scientific or technical importance. Inclusion in the RPS recognition of importance affords legal protection from harm. All future changes to the structures are controlled and managed.
<b>Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)</b>	ACAs are places, areas, groups of structures or townscapes that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, technical, social, cultural or scientific interest or that add to the appreciation of a Protected Structure. ACAs define the boundary of an area that warrants protection and allow appropriate controls over development at the sites to maintain their character.
<b>UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS)</b>	A WHS is designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for having cultural, historical, scientific, or other forms of significance. The sites are considered to contain cultural and natural heritage and be of outstanding value to humanity.

### 5.9.1 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeology is the study of past societies through the material remains of those societies. Archaeological sites and monuments can vary greatly in form and date. Many archaeological sites have no visible surface features. In Ireland, archaeological sites are protected under the National Monuments Act, 1930 (as amended), the Natural Cultural Institutions Act 1997, and the Planning Acts. The National Monuments Service is responsible for the conservation, regulation, and provision of information for all archaeological sites in Ireland. After an archaeological site has been identified, it is added to the Record of Monuments and Places. There are over 126,000 recorded national monuments distributed throughout the island of Ireland. Protection, conservation, and education are of great importance.

### 5.9.2 Architectural Heritage

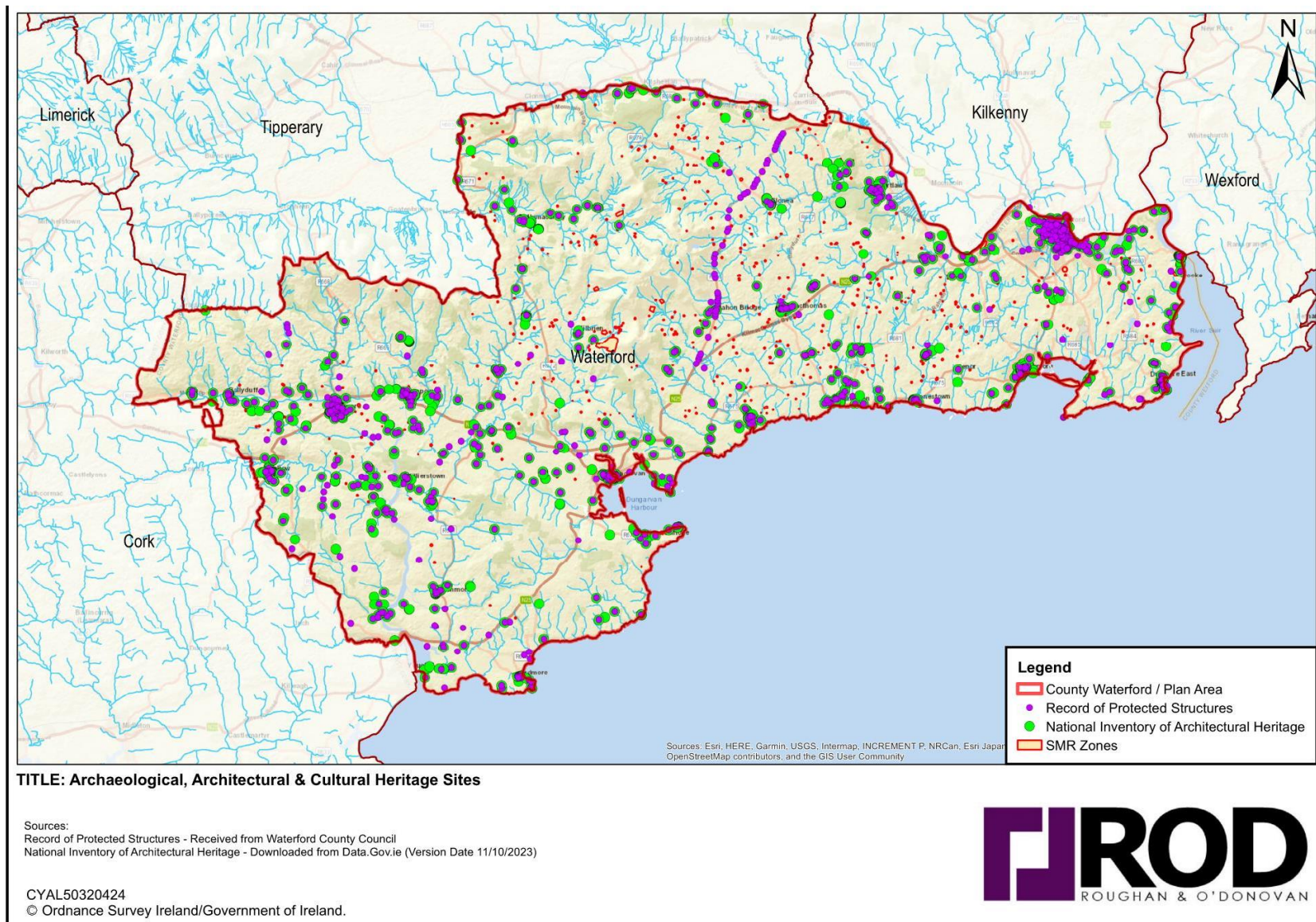
The Architectural Heritage and Historic Monuments Act 1999 (as amended) provides protection status to buildings and monuments which are of historical or cultural interest, all of which are listed on the Record of Protected Structures (RPSs).

The purpose of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is to identify, record, and evaluate the post-architectural heritage uniformly and consistently as an aid in the protection and conservation of the built heritage. NIAH surveys provide the basis for the recommendations of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to the planning authorities for the inclusion of particular structures in their Record of Protected Structures (RPS) designated under the local authority development plans. The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) contains a numbered list of certain and possible monuments for each county and forms the basis for the Record of Monuments and Places.

The numerous sites of historic and archaeological significance within the County are categorised within the Record of Monuments and Places. Under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, these are known as 'Recorded Monuments'. Zones of Notification are areas which indicate archaeological potential and are defined under the same act. Figure 5-7 illustrates the entries into the RPS, NIAH, and within the county. The forward planning and development management process within planning system are required to consider the likely significant impacts that plans or developments they could have on archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage sites and their settings.

The Planning and Development Act also defines Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) which denote zones or groups of structures of cultural or historical significance which contribute to the appreciation of protected structures. Many of the RPS and ACAs within county Waterford are within settlements. This presents an opportunity for development of these settlements as attractions. However, the protected status or ACAs can often lead to higher redevelopment costs and stricter planning controls resulting in dereliction. This can result in significant portions of towns and villages across the county becoming unattractive.

Within the County Waterford there are 1625 protected structures, 677 of which are within Waterford City (Waterford City & County Council, 2022).



**Figure 5-7 Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Sites within the Plan Area**

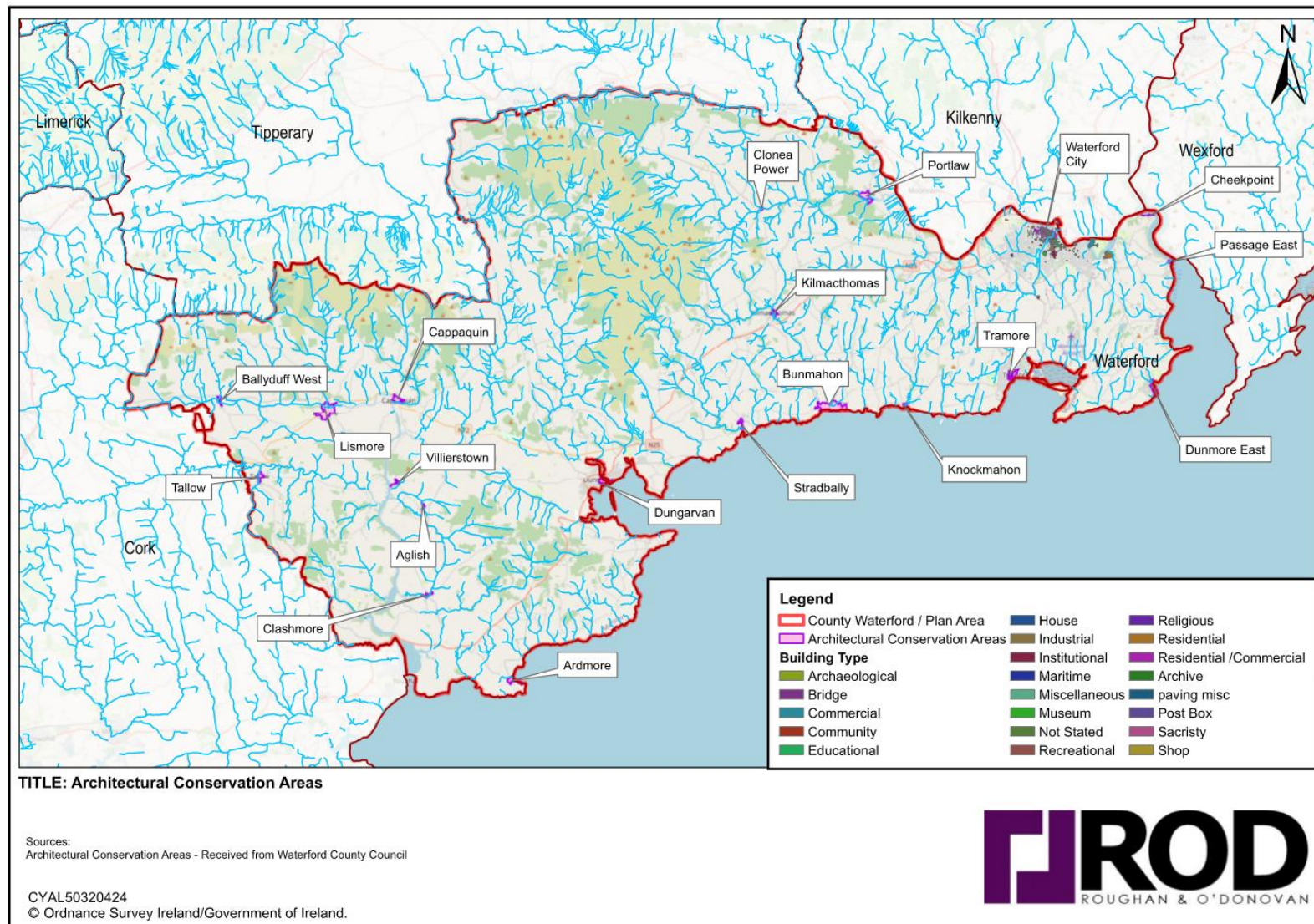


Figure 5-8 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) within Plan Area

### 5.9.3 Existing Pressures and Threats

Development is the greatest threat to archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage. Sites and features of historical and cultural significance can be lost through development on or adjacent to sites or affect their setting.

Climate change also poses a direct and indirect threat to these historic sites. The increased frequency and severity of flooding and rising sea levels have the potential to damage or destroy sites, particularly in coastal or along watercourses. Increased levels of tourists can also lead to damage to sensitive structures or sites. The *Built & Archaeological Heritage Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan* (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2019) identifies that predicted hotter, drier summers will lead to an increase in tourism which could intensify the threat of recreational damage to heritage sites. Hotter, drier summers will also lead changes to tourism numbers at these sites.

### 5.10 Landscape

Article 1 (a) of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) (Council of Europe, 2000) states that a landscape is “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. The ELC addresses natural, urban, peri-urban and rural areas, encompassing land, inland water, coastal and marine areas of all types, not just those that are considered for scenic or amenity value.

The ‘*National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025*’ ensures compliance with the ELC and provides a framework for the State, public authorities, stakeholder, communities to work together for the protection of the many cultural, social, economic, and environmental values embedded in the landscape. The strategy emphasises integrating landscape policies and objectives into local development plans, ensuring the identification and protection of areas with landscape and scenic values by land-use zoning and designations. It also highlights the synergy of landscape protection with biodiversity and climate change, as well as aligning with EU Directives such as the Water Framework Directive and relevant national legislation. Unique, preserved landscape views can be a valuable tourism asset, especially in attracting visitors to rural destinations across the county.

Waterford City & County Council (WCCC) has prepared a Landscape & Seascape Character Assessment as part of the Waterford City & County Development Plan (2022-2028) which includes characterisation of the landscape and has informed the designated scenic routes and protected views in the county. The Plan identifies 7 distinct types of landscape within the county: coastal, farmed lowland, river corridor, estuaries, foothill, upland, and settlement. It includes 15 Scenic Routes and 28 Protected Views. Scenic routes and protected views are often connected to areas of significant visual sensitivity. The entire coast of county Waterford, as well as its mountains many rivers and lake are all considered to be most sensitive or highly sensitive.

County Waterford encompasses many areas which contain areas of significant natural beauty and attractive views of the landscapes such as the uplands of the Comeragh and Knockmealdown mountains in the west or the southern coastline, characterised by its scenic beaches, coves, and estuaries. These natural areas are very often a source of recreation and tourism. Inappropriate change of land use or management of these areas could threaten the natural beauty and tourism value.

### 5.10.1 Existing Pressures and Threats

Development including tourism development has the potential to change the landscape character of County's distinct landscapes. Developments in a manner which is inconsistent with the landscape character or type can impact its sensitivity and in turn can impact tourism. Impacts to landscapes can come in many forms such as housing development, industry such as quarrying, wind farms (onshore and offshore), or any land use changes. Areas of high landscape sensitivity including scenic views are particularly vulnerable to landscape changes and are likely to be the most attractive locations for development pressure. Balancing the pressure for development in unique landscapes including in areas containing features of note (including heritage sites) will remain a challenge.

### 5.11 Interactions

The interactions between the environmental factors are an important consideration for the environmental assessment.

Due to the variety of activities associated with tourism, there is potential for all environmental factors to interact with each other to some degree, either positively or negatively. Main interactions are likely to be between tourism/visitors interacting with local populations and human health, biodiversity, climate, architectural, archaeological and cultural Heritage, the landscape and material assets.

For example, the increase in tourism numbers particularly from international tourists is likely to lead to increase in GHG emissions impacting climate targets, increased visitors to sites have the potential to negatively affect biodiversity, architectural heritage, etc. The likely interactions between environmental factors, given the implementation of the Plan, are set out in Table 5-9. The table below indicated with a tick (✓) interactions across the environmental factors.

**Table 5-9 Interactions between Environmental Factors**

Environmental Factor	Biodiversity	Population & Human Health	Water	Air Quality	Climate	Land & Soil	Material Assets	Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural Heritage	Landscape
Biodiversity		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Population & Human Health	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Water	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Air Quality	✓	✓			✓				
Climate	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Land & Soil	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓
Material Assets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Architectural, Archaeological, & Cultural Heritage	✓	✓					✓		✓
Landscape	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	

## 5.12 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Plan

The SEA Directive requires that the ER includes a description of the likely evolution of the environment in the absence of the Plan. The current situation presented in the Do-nothing alternative presented in Section 7 is likely to continue.

In the absence of the Plan, development in the county is likely to follow the policies and objectives detailed in the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028, and more broadly guided by higher level EU Directives and Irish Regulations. Tourism development under the Development Plan will follow the following Strategic Objective:

*“To develop, deliver and promote Waterford as a year-round world class tourism destination, with authentic, memorable experiences which attracts local, regional, national and international visitors generating long term and lasting benefits to enhance and support local communities and realise additional economic growth, jobs and prosperity for the people of Waterford.”*

Plans will continue to be mitigated under existing statutory planning and consent frameworks. It is anticipated that tourism would continue to grow in the county, primarily in Waterford City and other popular destinations, and during peak travel period throughout the year. This would increase the pressure on the environmental factors described within Chapter 5 of this ER.

The Plan provides a detailed list of experiences and opportunities to develop in order to expand tourism in Waterford City and County. The Plan expands on the broader

goals of the Development Plan to 'expand' tourism and creates potential actionable items that will improve the tourism infrastructure or experience in Waterford. In the absence of the Plan, positive impacts on the environment may be less frequent and of lower significance. For example, there may be less robust protection of biodiversity, especially in non-designated areas, lower contributions to meeting national and regional energy and waste reduction targets, and more potential developments in areas inaccessible to sustainable mode of transport. Similarly, without the Plan potential negative impacts may be more likely and significant. There may be more complications and loss of natural and built heritage during development and increased emissions from transportation.

The Draft Plan is designed to play an important role in the development of tourism and tourist experiences in Waterford to attract tourists, lengthen stays, improve seasonality and increase sustainable tourism employment opportunities. It will provide the basis for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism development for stakeholders involved in the sector across the county.











## 6. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY
















The assessment of the Draft Plan is undertaken using the environmental factors contained within the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC namely: biodiversity, flora and fauna, population and human health, water, air quality, climate, land and soils, material assets, architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage, landscape and the interaction between the above factors, considering the geographical area to which the Plan relates.

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are strategic environmental objectives which were developed to inform the assessment of the Draft Plan. SEOs are methodological measures which set the desired environmental outcome for the assessment of the Draft Plan. These have been formulated with reference to the environmental protection objectives/policies at International, European, and local level. Furthermore, submissions received during the scoping consultation and the relevant pressures and threats identified during the environmental baseline review have informed the development of the SEOs used to assess the Draft Plan.

Each project or action contained within the Draft Plan have been assessed against the defined SEOs. Where potential significant negative environmental effects are identified, mitigation is recommended firstly in the form of changes to the plan/embedded mitigation. After embedded mitigation is applied and there is still the potential for negative effects an environmental target and indicator is assigned for the purposes of monitoring those negative effects, or in order to identify any other unforeseen negative effects and undertake appropriate remedial action, defined in section 9 of this ER. The SEOs and the relevant UN SDGs are presented in Table 6-1.

**Table 6-1 SEO Assessment Framework**

Environmental Factor	Strategic Environmental Objective	Relevant SDGs
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna (BFF)	Protect, actively conserve, prevent damage and, where possible, restore biodiversity, particularly European designated sites, other nature conservation sites, protected and threatened habitats and species (including transboundary priority habitats and species), and support ecological corridors (including riparian zones and coastal areas), green and blue infrastructure.	  
Population and Human Health (PHH)	Protect, support and sustainably manage resources and tourism development, for the benefit of the society and the environment, and contribute towards the economic development of the population supporting positive health outcomes.	   
Water (W)	Protect, maintain and, where possible, improve water quality including surface water, groundwater, transitional and coastal waters and any wetlands, while preventing deterioration, supporting the achievement of good water quality status of all water bodies as required by the EU and national legislation, and increasing the resilience and adaptation of tourism sites/activities to the effects of	  

Environmental Factor	Strategic Environmental Objective	Relevant SDGs
	climate change including flood risk and coastal erosion.	
Air Quality (AQ)	Contribute to the reduction of air pollution and improvement in air quality resulting from the effective operation and management of sustainable tourism activities.	 
Climate (C)	Support and promote the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from tourism activities and the development of a climate resilient and adaptive tourism sector.	   
Land & Soils (L&S)	Safeguard existing land and soil resources, protect and improve soil quality, conserve soil, and prevent soil contamination and erosion.	 
Material Assets (MA)	Sustainably manage, maintain and develop the necessary tourism supporting infrastructure (including water, wastewater, energy supplies, transportation and internet connectivity and associated capacities) and support the development of the circular economy.	  
Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural Heritage (AACH)	Avoid, protect and/or minimise impacts to designated archaeological, architectural, and cultural heritage resources, including their setting and enhance and conserve heritage assets.	 
Landscape (L)	Avoid conflicts with the protection of designated and sensitive features of note in landscapes and sensitively manage landscape change through sustainable planning.	 

## 6.1 Assessment Approach

The assessment of the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Draft Plan is carried out using the assessment criteria (described in Table 6-2 below) which are tested using the SEOs (Table 6-1) against the actions and/or project proposed in the Draft Plan.

The assessment is undertaken using an assessment matrix with a commentary provided under the assessment to aid the reader in understanding the rationale for assigning the potential effects. This approach allows the assessment team to explicitly test the likely significant effects against the SEOs to identify which projects support the SEO and which, if any, contradict them. It can also identify uncertain, neutral and/or not significant effects. Where likely significant effects on the environment are identified as part of the iterative process, additional mitigation measures are recommended to the plan team and incorporated into the Draft Plan, where necessary.

During the plan preparation process recommendations relating to the development of the Draft Plan were proposed by the SEA team for the consideration of Fáilte Ireland. Following an assessment of the projects in the Draft Plan, the SEA team recommended text amendments. The plan team reviewed these recommendations, proposed edits,

and decided whether to incorporate them into the plan. These changes, known as embedded mitigation, were reassessed, and the assessment was updated accordingly.

In accordance with the SEA Directive, short, medium and long-term effects, (including reference to secondary, cumulative, synergistic, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects) are considered as appropriate in the assessment of the Draft Plan.

**Table 6-2 Assessment Criteria**

Symbol	Description of potential environmental effect
+	Potential positive environmental effect
-	Potential negative environmental effect
+/-	Potential positive and negative environmental effects
0	Neutral or no significant environmental effect
?	Uncertain environmental effects (depending on development of the project)

Table 6-3 below includes the assessment criteria or questions used as guidance for the assessment team. The assessment criteria, in the form of questions, can assist in identifying the potential significant effects of the projects identified in the Draft Plan on each environmental factor.

**Table 6-3 Assessment Questions**

SEOs	Assessment Criteria/Questions
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	<p>Is there potential to result in significant or adverse effects (direct or indirect) on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European; (Natura 2000) or species protected in Annex II and IV of Habitats Directive and Annex I of Birds Directive?</li> <li>Nationally designated sites NHA's and pNHAs?</li> <li>Local, county or national biodiversity including Irish Biodiversity Action Plan objectives?</li> <li>Is there potential to improve /increase biodiversity protection?</li> <li>Is there potential for construction works that may impact biodiversity?</li> </ul>
Population, Human Health and Economy	<p>Is there potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affect public health and quality of life in terms of improved access to tourism, recreational, amenity facilities/resources (shops, retail etc) and other community facilities?</li> <li>Reduce journey time to above facilities?</li> <li>Improve access to tourists to rural locations / populations?</li> <li>Improve quality of travel and access to information for visitors?</li> <li>Raise public awareness of opportunities for more sustainable transport or more active travel to tourist destinations?</li> <li>Increase impacts on local populations including public health and wellbeing from increased tourist related effects i.e. pressure on the availability of permanent accommodation for locals/workforce, traffic congestion levels, noise and air quality emissions?</li> <li>Support local economic development for employment and community facilities?</li> </ul>

SEOs	Assessment Criteria/Questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and enhance access and development of tourism and recreation (including water-based recreation)?</li> <li>Improve the tourism offering and disperse the benefits of tourism to new areas?</li> </ul>
Water	<p>Is there potential for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deterioration of waterbody status or conflict with or contribute to potential to achieve WFD objectives for achieving “Good” status (groundwater and surface water and transitional water bodies)?</li> <li>increase flood risk or result in loss of flood plain?</li> <li>Improvements of blue infrastructure and nature-based solutions</li> <li>Improvement in water quality in areas impacted by tourism activities (e.g. beaches, coastal areas, river-based activities)</li> </ul>
Air Quality	<p>Is there potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contribute to improvements to air quality or to increase air pollution?</li> <li>breach air quality standards?</li> </ul>
Climate (adaption and mitigation)	<p>Is there potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significantly increase the level of construction and/or operational carbon emissions?</li> <li>Will projects/proposals contribute to reducing emissions and meeting future emission reduction targets?</li> <li>Will projects/ proposals increase vulnerability to climate change of the environment to climate change?</li> <li>Will projects/ proposals increase resilience and adaptation of the environment to climate change?</li> </ul>
Land and Soils	<p>Is there potential for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impacts on designated geological heritage sites/features?</li> <li>Impact on valuable greenfield sites/ valuable soils or geological resources?</li> <li>Remediation of contaminated land or reuse of brownfield sites?</li> <li>Impacts on planned land use zoning?</li> </ul>
Material Assets	<p>Is there potential for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pressure on critical infrastructure (water, wastewater, transportation networks/services, energy, internet capacity)?</li> <li>impacts on existing tourism assets, businesses or agricultural land?</li> <li>Increase and/or avoid/minimise resource consumption (i.e. does it support the circular economy)?</li> </ul>
Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage	<p>Is there potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cause direct damage to, or detract from the setting of, designated cultural heritage assets, or does this contribute to protecting them (including marine based archaeology, protected bridges and railway corridors and/ or undiscovered archaeology)?</li> <li>Increase connectivity and appreciation of cultural heritage assets?</li> </ul>
Landscape	<p>Is there potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affect sensitive landscapes such as seascapes, townscape and river views or visual amenity, for example are there impacts to landscape protection zones or scenic views or routes?</li> </ul>

SEOs	Assessment Criteria/Questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will there be any significant landscape changes or new viewpoints made available? i.e. from new greenways or trails, new viewing points?</li> </ul>

#### 6.1.1 Extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed

There is a recognition as part of the SEA process that certain strategic planning issues have and/or will be determined at a national level, whereas more detailed/site-specific issues will be left for consideration at regional and/or county/local level as part of the appropriate (plan and/or project level) decision-making process. This SEA process is concerned with the likely significant and strategic effects that the Draft Plan is likely to have on the environment as a result of its implementation.

Where likely significant environmental effects on environmental factors are identified, these are assessed in the SEA and amendments proposed to the Draft Plan, if deemed necessary. When more detailed information is available for the specific plan or project, it will be possible to determine with more precision the likely significant environmental impacts as part of those statutory processes. For example, after the implementation of the Draft Plan:

- At plan level, this could include undertaking the relevant stages of the SEA and AA and/or SFRA, as required.
- At project level, it will involve any necessary project level assessments for example this could include undertaking Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), Appropriate Assessment (AA), and/or site-specific Flood Risk Assessments (SSFRA) or other assessment required as part of the planning or consent process.

## **7. ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATIVES**

In accordance with Schedule 2 of S.I.435 of 2004 (as amended), the ER is required to provide: “an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.” This section presents the environmental assessment of the alternatives considered in the development of the Draft Plan.

### **7.1 Description of Alternatives**

Alternatives are required to be reasonable, realistic and capable of implementation. They must also be set at the appropriate level at which the Plan will be implemented, operating within the planning hierarchy i.e., the higher the level, the more strategic the options are likely to be. Reasonable alternatives were considered by WCCC taking into account the objectives and geographic scope of the Draft Plan.

The alternatives considered by Fáilte Ireland are:

1. Alternative 1: Do-nothing – Continue without the development of a plan.
2. Alternative 2A: Do-something – Prepare a plan without environmental consideration.
3. Alternative 2B: Do-something – Prepare a plan with environmental consideration.

#### **7.1.1 Alternative 1: Do-nothing**

To date, tourism development has developed in the Waterford City and coastal/ beach areas as the key destinations in the southeast with some direction and guidance provided under the local authority development plan process. This current direction of development is likely to continue in the absence of a specific destination tourism plan.

Tourism related development would continue with planning and consent obtained through existing statutory planning and consent framework. Potential negative effects would continue to be mitigated through that process.

In the absence of a plan, tourism numbers are expected to increase during peak seasons, concentrated in existing popular locations within the county, including Tramore, Dungarvan and Waterford City.

This alternative continues to support the broad planning and development objectives set in the Waterford City and Council Development Plan however tourism development would continue in an uncoordinated and ad-hoc basis. The strategic environmental effects resulting from the lack of tourism plan could impact The do-nothing option does not provide additional or specialised training and guidance for the development of tourism in Waterford.

#### **7.1.2 Alternative 2A: Prepare a Plan without Environmental Consideration**

The do-something option, preparation of a plan without specific environmental considerations involves implementing some changes to tourism planning in Waterford. This alternative seeks would result in the development of a tourism plan involving coordination with various stakeholders including local authorities, government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors to better manage and plan for tourism in the county.

The Plan would explore and propose solutions to the following development challenges:

- Unequal spread of tourists across County Waterford;
- Unifying Waterford's tourism destinations to create a multi-destination story (i.e., linking City, coastal and rural communities); and
- Support on-going tourism by planning for year-round attractions.

A Plan would help to promote new experiences relieving some pressure from existing sites but leading to land use changes as a result of such developments which would not be strategically assessed in advance of being proposed. Notwithstanding this, the existing statutory planning and consent framework would address this issue however the promotion of tourism experiences without adequately considering the environment in advance of the planning consent process could lead to delays in projects.

Alternative 2A details plans for the development of tourism across the county and towards the objectives of the Plan without specific inclusion of environmental mitigation as part of the plan making process. Alternative 2A would therefore not offer any environmental mitigation strategies outside of consent-granting framework requirements.

### **7.1.3 Alternative 2B: Prepare a Plan with Environmental Consideration**

Alternative option 2B includes considering environmental mitigation as part of the Plan. Alternative 2B includes considering environmental mitigation as part of the Plan itself. Under this option, Fáilte Ireland would require stakeholder compliance with environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable tourism development. Environmental requirements may include assessment of environmental pressures, threats and developing strategies specific to each project. This may entail ensuring projects are developed with appropriate infrastructure, visitor management, development of green infrastructure and ecosystem services.

This alternative has a more robust procedure that the plan is developed under and projects will follow to ensure adequate environmental considerations with mitigation where necessary, including those outside of the planning system. These include:

- Embedded mitigation (changes to the plan itself).
- Development of Visitor management strategies.

## **7.2 Assessment Methodology**

The assessment of the alternatives described in Section 7-1 was undertaken with regard to the SEOs from Section 6 and the baseline established in Section 5. The environmental assessment accounts for all potential significant effects across all environmental factors. The assessment is to identify and compare the likely significant effects on the environment of each alternative, identify which alternative has the greatest potential to have negative impacts on the environment and the positive impacts while also achieving the plan objectives.

The implementation of each alternative will be done alongside associated environmental assessments and consent applications for relevant plans and projects, limiting the degree to which impacts can be predicted at this stage. Therefore, the impacts on all SEOs are considered together. The environmental assessment of the alternatives is undertaken for all SEOs in Table 7-1.

## **7.3 Assessment of Alternatives**

### **7.3.1 Alternative 1: Do-nothing**

Alternative 1 is a business-as-usual approach, which will follow existing statutory planning framework and environmental management practices. Existing frameworks restrict consent for developments that have negative impacts and provide mitigation measures. It is expected under this scenario that tourism development would continue to be planned and mitigated through these measures. The impacts of this options are undefined as there is no strategy to the growth, however positive and negative impacts can be anticipated.

Similarly, the positive mitigatory effects as a result of provisions of a Plan, such as those relating to sustainable mobility, traffic management and compliance with climate adaptation and management plans/strategies would not be provided for. There would be one layer of mitigation under this alternative, through the existing statutory planning and consent framework.

This approach would not deliver fully on the following DEDP objectives:

- Unlock the economic growth potential of the area by progressing a range of key initiatives that will motivate tourists to explore the wider destination; and
- 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.

In the absence of a plan, tourism development would continue to be unplanned and uncoordinated between the various stakeholders. Tourist numbers are likely to continue growing, with the largest growth anticipated in the most popular destinations, particularly during peak seasons. The full economic potential for tourism across the county and throughout the year would likely not be realised. This type of growth would increase the potential for negative impacts on several environmental factors, particularly those related to travel including impacts to climate. It is anticipated that while tourist numbers continue to grow there would also be increased pressure on critical infrastructure in these popular destinations. There would be no consideration of mitigation, monitoring and/or implementation of remedial measures.

### **7.3.2 Alternative 2A: Prepare a Plan without Environmental Consideration**

The development of a tourism plan provides an additional layer of mitigation in the planning process. The development of the Plan without environmental considerations would still provide provisions for improved seasonal and regional dispersal. This would alleviate some pressure from popular tourist destinations and lower the potential for likely significant impacts in some environmental factors.

Similar to Alternative 1, all projects and developments would be subject to mandatory consent frameworks, through which significant environment impacts would be addressed and mitigation measures proposed.

The implementation of the Plan is predicted to increase overall tourism numbers to the area. Although the distribution seasonally and regionally would be more even, the overall influx without specific environmental considerations is predicted to have more likely significant negative impacts on environmental factors than in Alternative 1 with the absence of the Plan.

There are unknown environmental impacts with Alternative 2A. The Plan would promote novel experiences in Waterford that do not have a baseline for the potential

impacts of tourism on the environment. Given the unknowns, there is potential for both significant positive and negative impacts as a result of this alternative. It is anticipated that this alternative would drive development of tourism in Waterford City and County at an accelerated rate compared to Alternative 1, potentially resulting in greater increased in visitor numbers, infrastructure developments and overall economic growth. Increased expansion of tourism without consideration for the environment is likely to have significant negative effects on the environment but it would be better than no plan being developed.

### **7.3.3 Alternative 2B: Prepare a Plan with Environmental Consideration**

Similar to Alternative 2A, this option involves the development and implementation of a Plan that will increase the regional and seasonal spread of tourism in Waterford. This alternative however provides an additional layer of assessment and mitigation for the environment through the explicit consideration of the environment and promotion of sustainable tourism practices as part of the Plan itself.

The implementation of a Plan is expected to increase tourism seasonality, regionality and overall visitor numbers across Waterford City and county. The general growth of tourism in the county will increase the potential for negative environmental impacts. However, the integration of mitigation measures into the Plan will decrease the likelihood and significance of negative impacts, compared to Alternative 2A and Alternative 1. The environmental considerations will help lower impacts on all environmental factors while improving compliance with various climate action plans and sustainability targets.

The integration of sustainability through the Plan more closely aligns with the objectives of the DEDP, such as:

- Develop a sustainable basis for commercial tourism development centred on creating strong signature, supporting and ancillary experiences that are commoditised through the creation of saleable experiences that excite consumers and buyers alike; and
- Strengthen the value of tourism to the local community by providing sustainable employment opportunities.

The creation of novel tourist experiences and employment opportunities in the tourism sector are likely for both Alternatives 2A and 2B, however Alternative 2B provides the opportunity for consideration and promotion of positive environmental effects and address the wider sustainability agenda including impacts on communities, climate and all other SEOs while also delivering on the DEDP objectives.

### **7.3.4 Summary of the Assessment**

When comparing the alternatives, Alternative 1 is likely to have a blend of some positive and negative environmental impacts. However, as there is no plan, it is assumed tourism growth will continue in the current ad-hoc pattern and expand, primarily in areas of high tourism, increasing pressure in existing tourism sites and pressure on supporting infrastructure in these areas leading to potential for negative impacts on the environment.

The development of a tourism plan presented by Alternates 2A and 2B will result in a more co-ordinated approach to tourism development. Alternative 2A without the additional environmental mitigation and management is likely to deliver on the DEDP objectives by promoting tourism development and economic growth, but as it does not explicitly consider environmental protection or management it has the potential to result in more significant negative effects on the environment than the other

alternatives and/or lead to delays in the implementation phase or the delivery of the plan itself at planning stage.

Alternative 2B is likely to deliver a more effective and sustainable tourism development approach in County Waterford, providing both the necessary economic growth and environmental protection. On that basis Alternative 2B has been selected as the preferred option. Alternative 2B meets the DEDP objectives, contains the most environmental mitigation opportunities and is likely to result in more significant positive effects and fewer negative effects than Alternatives 1 and 2A.

**Table 7-1 Assessment of Alternatives**

Alternative	Description	Env. Assessment of All SEOs	Environmental Evaluation
<b>Alternative 1: Do-nothing</b>	No plan is developed, tourism development would continue business as usual. Tourism development would follow the WCCC Development Plan.	+/-	This alternative would lead to uncoordinated tourism development across the county. With no plan, the objectives of the plan and the full economic potential for tourism across the county and throughout the year would likely not be realised.  Furthermore, the potential environmental effects of this alternative are expected to result in more negative environmental effects than positive.
<b>Alternative 2A: Prepare a plan without Environmental Considerations</b>	Tourism in Waterford City & County will be actioned through the preparation of a plan, without environmental considerations.	+/- ?	Alternative 2A will address deliver on many aspects of the DEDP objectives, especially those related to expanding regional tourism, creating new experiences and opportunities for visitors and encouraging longer stays.  This alternative may also give rise to unexpected environmental effects, uncertainty, positive or negative effects from a lack of consideration to the environmental effects.  It is likely there will be more negative effects on the environment than the other alternatives and or result in delays to new proposals in areas that may not be suitable or prepared for development without mitigation.
<b>Alternative 2B: Prepare a plan with Environmental Considerations</b>	Tourism in Waterford City & County will be actioned through the preparation of a plan, with environmental considerations.	+/-	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 Plan and opportunity for mitigation and monitoring of any negative effects. Alternative 2B is the preferred option from an environmental perspective and delivery of the plan objectives.

## **8. ASSESSMENT OF THE DRAFT PLAN**

This section of the ER evaluates the potential significant environmental effects as a result of implementing the Draft Plan on the SEOs. The environmental factor acronyms are used to denote the SEOs, in accordance with Table 6-1 with the assessment criteria included to indicate the likely significant positive, negative or neutral or unknown effects as defined in Table 6-2. Following an assessment of the projects in the Draft Plan, the SEA team recommended text amendments. The plan team reviewed these recommendations, proposed edits, and decided whether to incorporate them into the plan. These changes, known as embedded mitigation, were reassessed, and the assessment was updated accordingly.

The assessment is presented in Table 8-1 below. Where likely significant effects remain, Section 9 includes the proposed mitigation. Section 10 identifies the proposed environmental monitoring measures for monitoring effects on the environment.

**Table 8-1 Assessment of the Vision**

Destination Vision	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<b>Vision 2035</b> 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. Our Vision will be delivered by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waterford being recognised as a national outdoor activity destination through the quality of its outdoor trails, greenways and water-based experiences.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
<b>Assessment Commentary:</b> The Vision of the DEPD includes a focus on outdoor activities across all areas of the county. Existing and future development of outdoor activities for the tourism sector has the potential to positively and/or negatively affect the majority of the SEOs depending on the specifics of each project particularly Biodiversity (BFF), Water (W), air quality (AQ), climate (C), land and soils (L&S), AACH. The vision is expected to positively influence the economic development of the area and the support positive effects to the PHH SEO. The Vision references how the vision will be delivered, referencing projects that are individually identified in the plan and assessed separately in this SEA. Notably, increasing tourists to these locations has the potential to negatively affect these sites many of which contain or are located in sensitive and protected sites (including sensitive ecological sites (SACs) or heritage sites that include RPSs, however the projects may also promote the protection, preservation and enhancement of these sites. There is the potential for positive and/or negative significant effects on a variety of SEOs including BFF (due to potential construction works causing disturbance or degradation to habitats and species), water quality, due to an increase of coastal activities. However, the development of green infrastructure has the potential to create ecological corridors and thus also promote/enhance biodiversity. The support for active travel (greenways etc) is likely to have positive effects on climate (C) and air quality (AQ) and human health outcomes however, the proposed increased flow of international tourists will also increase GHGs, negatively impacting climate targets. Note: Many of the catalyst and enabler projects are included as part of the Strategic goals objectives which are assessed in more detail under the respective catalyst and enable project tables rather than in the strategic goal and objectives section, in the tables below. <b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant key mitigation includes requirement to consider WCCC DP policies as part of a planning application and associated necessary environmental assessments.</li> <li>Development of visitor management plans for sites this shall include consideration of the availability of capacity of critical infrastructure at these sites.</li> </ul>									

**Table 8-2 Assessment of the Strategic Goals**

<b>Strategic Goal 1</b> <b>Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Waterford and Ireland's Ancient East.</b>	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<b>Strategic Objectives (SOs)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Examine the opportunities provided through future strategic development sites in the city and county to include an attraction of scale.</li> <li>Develop a more integrated Waterford City visitor attraction experience linking key attractions animated by new approaches to experience innovation.</li> <li>Develop Waterford as a destination of excellence for outdoor activities incorporating Greenways, Blueway's, coastal routes, pilgrim routes and mountains.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	+/-	+ ?	- ?	+	+/-	?	?	?	?
<b>Assessment commentary:</b> <p>Due to the strategic nature of Strategic Goal 1 and its associated strategic objectives, there is the potential for unknown, positive and/or negative effects on many of the environmental factors. The SOs are wide reaching across the tourism and development sector likely to affect the city, county and 'Ireland's ancient east'. There is potential for unknown effects on many of the environmental factors as not all the objectives reference specific locations or specific projects. However, references to potential future developments such new experiences including new greenways, outdoor activities etc. have the potential to directly impact all environmental factors to some degree or another. The SOs have the potential for negative effects on BFF and W due to construction activities taking place in rural locations/ undeveloped sites for outdoor activities and water-based tourism attractions near waterbodies (W) including coastal areas.</p> <p>Potential negative effects are likely on climate (C) due to increase of international tourists due to emissions from aviation sector and other unsustainable modes. There is also potential for positives effects to C due to improving active travel infrastructure (greenways, etc). These objectives also supporting the employment in the tourism sector, ancillary services and maintaining rural communities.</p> <p><b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.</p>									
<b>Strategic Goal 2</b> <b>Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism in Waterford.</b>	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<b>Strategic objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop the Waterford City visitor experience that encourages increased levels of visitor movement across the city through new experience development within vibrant city quarters.</li> <li>Maximise the investment in the city's Cultural Quarter to create distinctive urban and cultural visitor experiences.</li> </ul>	+/-	+/-	- ?	0	0	?	+/-	+/-	+/-

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Maximise the unique cultural experience development opportunity presented by the Gaeltacht linking the cultural sustainability of the Irish language with visitor experiences.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Grow the tourism enterprise base delivering saleable experiences to support the ambition of Waterford to become an outdoor activity centre of excellence.</li> </ul>									
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>These SOs have an overall aim to enhance Waterford's appeal as a sustainable tourism destination through improving visitor experiences, supporting cultural heritage, expand outdoor recreation while boosting local economy.</p> <p>Many the objectives under Strategic Goal 2 are related to developing experiences for visitors to increase economic return which is likely to have positive effect on economic development, employment which would directly, indirectly and cumulatively result in positively effects to the PHH SEO. Some of the strategic objectives (SOs) relate to growing the accommodation base which will support the offering to a range of tourists, resulting in positive effects on PHH however there is also the potential unknown or negative effects on the population if this accommodation conflicts with the development of residential properties for the area which is currently under pressure across Ireland and also in Waterford.</p> <p>The influence of increased tourism movement and investment as well as outdoor activities and facilities across the county has the potential to both positively and negatively influence all environmental factors to some degree or another. Key potential effects are assessed below.</p> <p>The assessment indicates that there is potential for neutral or no significant effects on some of the environmental factors namely AQ, C, and L&amp;S, L as there are no specific projects identified that would have the potential to directly and significantly impact those environmental factors.</p> <p>Outdoor recreation hubs may integrate biodiversity initiatives and management and increase awareness of local biodiversity which may result in potential significant positive impacts on BFF. Coastal activities and/or infrastructure development at the coast, specifically where Dungarvan and Tramore are located adjacent to Dungarvan Harbour SPA [004032], Dungarvan Harbour pNHA [000663], the Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC [000671], and Tramore Back Strand SPA [004027] are present and can lead to risk of water pollution (W) and significant negative effects to their qualifying interests, if unmitigated. The assessment recognises that there are wider potential social, economic, and environmental benefits to PHH and AACH as a result of investing in the City's Cultural Quarter, Gaeltacht heritage and its associated cultural and saleable experiences which could support heritage preservation and cultural sustainability (AACH), as well as supporting local economic development, local employment, and social cohesion (PHH). There are potential significant positive effects on material assets (MA) through the provision of enhanced tourism supporting infrastructure and boosting services as part of the development of accommodation in the area, however, there could also be potential significant negative effects as a result of an increase of resource consumption and pressure on existing infrastructure and utilities in the area, if not provided. Development on greenfield sites particularly in rural locations could reduce soil resources negatively impact L&amp;S.</p> <p><b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.</p>									

<b>Strategic Goal 3</b> <b>Ensure the destination is easy to access, navigate and consume.</b>	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<b>Strategic objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Leverage the Waterford Orientation Project to integrate county wide experiences in areas such as food, gardens and cultural experiences.</li> <li>Develop the opportunity for Waterford to be a key element of the future Dublin to Cork Greenway and any future possible seaway propositions.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Maximise the coastal tourism opportunity for the destination and the development of an iconic Waterford coast walking trail.</li> <li>Develop St. Declan's Way as an international pilgrim trail supported by iconic trail head experiences in Ardmore and Mount Melleray linked to Cashel.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	+/-	+	+/-	+	+/-	?	+	0/+	+/-
<b>Assessment commentary:</b> <p>Due to the strategic nature of the Strategic Goal 3 and its associated strategic objectives, there is the potential for positive and/or negative effects on many of the environmental factors. Developing regional connectivity through routes and trails has the potential to both positively and negatively influence all environmental factors to some degree or another.</p> <p>The SOs have an overall aim of enhancing visitor orientation, increasing regional connectivity and dispersion across Waterford through the development of trails and leveraging natural and heritage assets. Construction of new trails or experiences across the county has the potential to negatively impact BFF, L and positively impact MA as a result new recreational and amenity infrastructure while also supporting sustainable transport modes for locals and visitors alike.</p> <p>There are also potential significant negative effects for BFF and W, particularly for the SO sites located in proximity to coastal areas such as the Waterford coast walking trail, which may also be in close proximity to the existing SPAs including the River Suir SAC [002137]. Due to the presence of this designated site, the activities of the SOs may have the potential to create disturbance to aquatic species or other wildlife, or water, if unmitigated.</p> <p>There is potential for positive and unknown effects on AACH due to unknown works to heritage trails and pilgrim routes however there is also likely to be positive effects boosting tourism of these cultural heritage sites.</p> <p><b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.</p>									

<b>Strategic Goal 4</b> <b>Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure that it can thrive and create sustainable jobs in local communities.</b>	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<b>Strategic objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the tourism industry to grow the range and quality of visitors' experiences aligned with the vision for the WDEDP.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Strengthen the tourism networks' capacity to work together through the rural networks / clusters network and the development of new urban tourism networks / clusters.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Assessment commentary:</b> These SOs have an overall aim of growing the tourism industry and creating sustainable employment in local communities through collaboration, capacity building and improving experience development. The effect is likely to have a positive effect on the employment and local community (PHH) as well as the tourism industry. Neutral or not significant effects are likely to all other SEOs. <b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.									

<b>Strategic Goal 5</b> <b>Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development.</b>	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Collectively work towards reducing the carbon footprint of tourism.</li> <li>Ensure tourism is integrated as a key element of future strategic development sites in the city and county.</li> <li>Develop a county wide approach to grow access to slow tourism experiences as a key element of sustainable tourism development for Waterford.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
<b>Assessment commentary:</b>									

These high-level strategic objectives are generally related to improving the consideration of sustainability by stakeholder and industry partnerships with the aim of reduce carbon footprint and supporting sustainable tourism approach resulting in positive effects to PHH and Climate SEOs. While indirect positive effects are likely to all other SEOs the lack of project specifics all other SEOs are rates as having a neutral effect.

The objectives encourage new and existing collaborations with stakeholders to increase the tourism industry's capacity to deliver sustainable tourism experiences more effectively across current and future destination, while considering low carbon and sustainable growth reducing potential GHG and other negative emissions to the environment.

**Proposed Mitigation:** Refer to Section 9.

**Table 8-3 Assessment of the Guiding Principles**

Guiding Principles	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<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"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol> <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 primarily related to the strategic nature of the guiding principles. There is the potential for positive and/or negative effects on BFF. The incorporation of socio-economic benefits and opportunities for communities and the encouragement of collaboration and participation of all stakeholders is likely to result in potential positive effects on PHH by creating more established and better managed projects with better experiences for visitors. Including the conservation and education of built and living heritage in the guiding principles of the Plan will result in potential positive effects on AACH.</p> <p>Uncertain effects are likely for all other SEOs as the guiding principles have no specific reference to any activities or developments at this level which may cause direct impacts but with the development of the projects, under these principles, there may be potential positive and/or negative effects which may evolve.</p> <p><b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.</p>									

**Table 8-4 Assessment of Key Destination Catalyst and Enabling Projects listed within the Draft Plan**

Key Destination Catalyst Projects												
Catalyst Project 1: Attraction of Scale				BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
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.				+/-	+	+/-	0	-	?	0	?	?
<b>Assessment commentary:</b> This project has potential to have significant positive and/or negative effects on the majority of the SEOs. The Waterford North Quays area is a designated Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) for which a statutory Planning Scheme has been created that was the subject of an SEA, AA and SSFRA. The site is adjacent to the River Suir SAC and is located on a flood zone. There is currently an active planning application for the site (ref. no. 19928). Due to the proximity to the River Suir SAC area and location on a flood zone, there is potential for positive and or negative effects on biodiversity and water SEO. A visitor attraction of scale has the potential to increase transport emissions resulting in potential negative GHG emissions to the environment (C), adding more congestion to the city that is already experiencing significant congestion. As the specifics of the project or the site is not known the assessment indicates neutral or unknown effects on all other SEOs. Any future project in the NQ SDZ will have to be compliant with the SDZ Planning Scheme and environmental assessments. The attraction of scale suggestion that it will be large, but it is not clear if it will be i.e. building, outdoor space, etc hence unknown effects on Landscape SEO. At the time of writing construction has commenced on the Waterford North Quays sustainable transport bridge project. An EIAR, NIS, and SSFRA were submitted to support this planning application. There is potential for cumulative effects (positive and/or negative) with this project and the current granted and active planning applications on the NQ SDZ site. <b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.												
Catalyst Project 2: WATERFORD Orientation Project - ANALYSIS		Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L	
WATERFORD Orientation Project - ANALYSIS		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.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Assessment commentary:</b> The project is an analysis exercise and as such will have a neutral effect on the SEOs. The project will gain a greater appreciation of visitor flows linking key natural heritage locations and outdoor activities across the county which is likely to support a greater understanding of social, economic and environmental effects of the Plan. <b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.												

Key Destination Catalyst Projects										
Catalyst Project 3: Industry Collaboration - Tourism Networks / Clusters	Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<b>COLLECTIVE TOURISM INDUSTRY - Network/ Cluster Development</b>	Develop the structures and networks to create a county wide approach to collectively grow tourism, the range and diversity of experiences, and new ways of working together to build a sustainable tourism destination. Support the capability building requirements of five rural destination networks/ clusters (Waterford Estuary, Copper Coast, Comeragh Uplands, Gaeltacht na nDéise, and the Blackwater Valley) to align their experience development focus with the opportunities identified within the Waterford DEDP and deliver a programme of supports to develop best in class community tourism experiences and the development of vibrant community tourism hubs supporting the development of trails and Waterford Ways.									
<b>Collective Tourism Industry Promotion through Visit Waterford</b>	Build a community of tourism stakeholders that collectively contribute to the development and promotion of Waterford as a global tourism destination of choice. Develop and deliver an annual promotional plan and marketing campaigns that align with the growing community of stakeholders and FI/TI marketing strategies.									
<b>Digital that Delivers - Industry Capability Development</b>	Undertake an assessment of the digital capabilities of the local tourism industry supported by the delivery of a digital skills training programme under Digital that Delivers.	- ?	+	0	0	0	0	0	+ ?	0
<b>Training Partnerships</b>	Undertake a periodic review of capacity building requirements for the tourism industry with all relevant training agencies to ensure alignment of training investment with the WDEDP, cluster development and industry collaboration.									
<b>Regional Experience Trails / Network/ Cluster Development</b>	Undertake a network/cluster development approach to establish product networks with the capacity to work together to create regional linkages and creating new ways of influencing visitors flows between Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny and Tipperary. This will include building on the development of the South East Food Stories to create an internationally recognised Regional Food Trail and examination of new networks/clusters opportunities such as a South East Creatives experience network delivering an experiential "Meet the Creator" approach introducing visitors to a mix of urban and rural artisan producer's experiences.									
<b>Gaeltacht Cultural Experiences</b>	Examine the requirements to develop unique Gaeltacht experiences in An Rinn and create specific Irish speaking visitor experiences integrated with the local heritage and activity experience base. Examine the opportunity to develop the outdoor activity potential of the Gaeltacht through the establishment of a social enterprise to address local product									

Key Destination Catalyst Projects										
	and experience gaps. Examine the development of Parents Experience Programmes in conjunction with Coláiste na Rinne.									
<b>Great Houses &amp; Gardens Network</b>	Create an experience development programme for the network of Great House owners to expand the range of saleable experiences on a year-round basis leveraging the day time and evening economy opportunity. This will also include an assessment of opportunities such as Mount Congreve to become an orientation resource to influence visitor flow to other Great House and Gardens experiences across Waterford and the region.									
<b>Waterford Estuary Network/ Cluster Development</b>	Through appropriate training empower the communities of water estuary to identify and assess the opportunities to develop Waterford fishing heritage experiences the combined access activity and culture to tell a unique community and food story.									
<b>Cappoquin</b>	Examine the requirements to develop Cappoquin's potential to grow into an outdoor recreational hub.									
<b>Kilmacthomas</b>	Undertake an opportunity site scoping exercise to examine the potential of the Workhouse in Kilmacthomas as a destination tourism opportunity site.									
<b>Portlaw</b>	Examine the future use of the Tannery site as a potential rural recreation site complementing the ongoing enhancements and creation of new outdoor activity experiences e.g. connecting the canal to the Tannery.									
<b>Assessment commentary:</b> <p>The assessment indicates that there is potential for neutral or not significant effects on many of the SEOs due to the strategic nature of the projects/actions which are primarily related to organisational improvements, delivery of training programmes, etc. resulting in positive effects on PHH. The Waterford Rural Tourism Network (the clusters of Waterford Estuary, Copper Coast, Comeragh Uplands, Gaeltacht na nDéise, and the Blackwater Valley) will promote regional accessibility and strengthen rural economies and communities positively influencing PHH. The development of a unique Gaeltacht experiences in An Rinn linking to key local heritage locations has the potential to preserve and protect cultural heritage of these areas and the Irish language.</p> <p>Developing a fishing heritage experience has the potential to result in negative effects on BFF and water quality, particularly with the presence of EU designated sites in the county, including Lower River Suir SAC [002137] and River Barrow and River Nore SAC [002162], which could be used as potential fishing locations.</p> <p>While the regeneration of historic sites such as the historic Cotton Mill Tannery would result in the reuse of brownfield sites and maintain and preserve the heritage of these buildings there is also potential of negative effects which will depend on the project specifics.</p> <p><b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.</p>										
<b>Catalyst Project 4: Waterford City Experience</b>	<b>Projects</b>	<b>BFF</b>	<b>PHH</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>AQ</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>L&amp;S</b>	<b>MA</b>	<b>AACH</b>	<b>L</b>
<b>COLLECTIVE TOURISM INDUSTRY</b>	Assess the opportunity for the Cultural Quarter to develop the area as a focal point for cultural day time and evening experiences and a location to orientate visitors across the city quarters linked through a new approach to visitor orientation.	0	+	0	0	-	0	0	+/-	0

Key Destination Catalyst Projects									
<b>- Network/ Cluster Development</b>	<p>Examine the requirements to develop creative hubs in the Cultural Quarter providing the opportunity to Meet the Makers linking the Cultural Quarter to rurally based creatives such as the immersive glass making/crystal experiences leveraging the glass craftsmanship heritage of the city.</p> <p>Develop the Waterford Cultural Quarter as Ireland's most vibrant, innovative, urban creative district. Support the development of the key projects to deliver the Cultural Quarter experience for the local community and visitors to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O'Connell Street: the development of shared space and public realm.</li> <li>• Beech Tower Square: the development of the public space.</li> <li>• Live, Work and Play multipurpose focus for 11 buildings/spaces to animate the Cultural Quarter: Examine the tourism potential of the 11 buildings/ spaces within the Cultural Quarter that represent key opportunity sites to be blended with the public realm investment.</li> <li>• New Street at Jenkins Lane.</li> <li>• Gateway Plaza and gateway to the Waterford Greenway.</li> </ul>								
<b>Waterford City Visitor Orientation</b>	<p>Implement a coherent wayfinding and visitor orientation approach that links the core visitor quarters of the city and influences increased levels of visitor flow across the city.</p> <p>Develop an enhanced approach to visitor orientation for Waterford City to link the core tourism zones of the Viking Triangle, Cultural Quarter, North Quays and vibrant City Centre.</p>								
<b>Viking Triangle Tourism Experience Masterplan</b>	<p>Assess the requirements to heighten the awareness of the Viking Triangle as a coherent tourism zone within Waterford City through placemaking, animation and examination of innovative lighting to deliver a day and night time experience.</p> <p>Create and implement a phased plan for the placemaking requirements of the Viking Triangle to create a sense of arrival and a stronger awareness of the Viking proposition.</p> <p>Examine the possibility of a permanent performance space in the heart of the Viking Triangle to grow the scale and diversity of evening economy activity.</p> <p>Examine the opportunity to develop an enhanced Friary experience with the OPW to contribute to the overall Viking Triangle experience.</p> <p>Examine the requirements to enhance City engagement with the Greenway to create a cultural trail head and the inclusion of trail head linkages to the Viking Journey theme and linking the Cultural Quarter with the Viking Triangle.</p>								
<b>Night Time Economy</b>	<p>Develop an evening time economy plan for Waterford City with specific focus on core tourism zones of the Viking Triangle, Cultural Quarter and a vibrant city centre. It will also</p>								

Key Destination Catalyst Projects									
	assess the potential for Dark Tourism themed experiences in Waterford City integrating the night time economy with the Museum for Irish Wakes.								
<b>Urban Animation</b>	Examine the opportunity incorporating urban animation, placemaking and outdoor dining spaces across the city to grow the Waterford night time economy through the development of evening events and night time visitor experiences.								
<b>Tourism Retail</b>	Assess the development opportunities for retail in our urban centres as part of the overall tourism experience using Waterford City and Dungarvan as programme pilot sites.								
<b>University City</b>	Examine the potential for growth in the MICE market attracting conferences and events associated with the university and the development of associated event programmes and experiences to showcase Waterford to delegates.								
<b>Waterford Airport</b>	Support the capacity of Waterford Airport to attract additional levels of inbound visitors and the development of the product base that appeals to international buyers.								
<b>Waterford South Quays</b>	Explore the development of a new vision for the South Quays in Waterford City to understand how the city, community and visitors engage with the River Suir as a key focal point for the Waterford City experience and how it will link to the future North Quays development activity.								
<b>Waterford City Walls</b>	Develop the opportunity through the Waterford City Walls project to create a range of new urban spaces for performance and cultural events and as a means of orientating visitors across the city. Implement the next phases of the City Walls project examining future scope for the creative incorporation of the City Walls into the Waterford City visitor experience. Examine the future potential of the lighting and light projections on the city walls and Quays to incorporate new placemaking opportunities to link to the theme of crystal and glass making heritage of the city.								
<p><b>Assessment methodology:</b></p> <p>Many of the projects are mainly oriented around analysis, increasing understanding, improving wayfinding and plan development. As such the assessment for these are not significant or neutral effect across all SEOs apart from PHH where it influences the tourism industry and associated economic development.</p> <p>The projects have the potential for positive effects on cultural heritage (AACH), material assets through sustainable management of visitor movement in key cultural heritage locations, e.g. Cultural Quarter in the heart of Waterford City, and enhancing cultural experiences, such as in the glass craftsmanship experience. These projects are to build on inclusiveness, sustainable innovation and growth for the cultural sector, increasing economic opportunities through new nighttime experiences and retail centre programmes, resulting in a potential positive effect on PHH. Public realm and way finding improvements will positively influence MA, PHH and AACH e.g. through increased linkages and use of the Waterford Greenway and the Museum for Irish Wakes.</p> <p>The increase in levels of tourism at the Waterford airport is likely to increase aviation emissions at this location affecting climate targets (C) negatively affecting climate SEO. The development of a public space at Beach Tower has the potential for unknown heritage impacts as the project specifics are not available but also likely to improve the appreciation and setting of this historic feature in the city centre.</p> <p><b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.</p>									

Key Destination Catalyst Projects										
Catalyst Project 5: Accommodation Development	Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<b>Waterford Accommodation Strategy</b>	Develop the Waterford accommodation base to meet projected future demand across the county to include a projected minimum level of keys across a range of accommodation options. This will include;  Glamping: examine the opportunity to increase outdoor accommodation options in the rural and coastal regions of Co. Waterford through the extension of existing outdoor sites, the extension of OSA on-farm accommodation and the development of a green field site.  Hostel: examine the potential to add a unique tourist hostel in Waterford City through the repurposing of an old derelict vacant property or any other opportunity sites that may arise.  Support the development of additional hotel room stock supply in Waterford City, Tramore and Dungarvan.  Support the improvement of the quality of hotel accommodation by investment and repositioning of some current hotels from 3 star to 4-star grading.  Other serviced accommodation (B&B's, guesthouses or historic houses) - examine the opportunity to enhance upgraded or 3 star graded B & B's or guesthouses through renovation or repositioning.	+/-	+/-	?	0	0	+	+/-	+/-	0
<b>Dunmore East Accommodation</b>	Develop and sustainably manage the Waterford accommodation base to meet projected future demand across the county to include a projected minimum level of keys across a range of accommodation options.									
<b>Commentary:</b> The assessment recognises that there is potential for wider social, economic and environmental benefits to PHH as a result of investing the City's accommodation opportunities, however, if not carefully planned and managed there is potential for increased pressure on the already low levels of accommodation available to locals. Ensuring adequate critical infrastructure will also need to be addressed so as not to negatively affect areas that have existing capacity issues (MA). The regeneration/ re-purposing of brownfield sites will result in positive effects in terms of L&S.  The accommodation works at coastal areas may result in uncertain effects on nearby water bodies (W). Any construction works to historic houses etc will require appropriate planning permission and heritage/ environmental assessments and mitigation to ensure no significant effects on sensitive features. The upgrade of such historic buildings is positive affect ensuring their continued use and preservation into the future. <b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.										
Catalyst Project 6: Waterford Coastal Tourism	Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<b>Platforms for Growth Investment</b>	Examine how the Platforms for Growth activity centre investment in Tramore and Ardmore can become activity hubs and visitor orientation points for Coastal Blueway activity and a	+/-	+	+/-	+	+	0	+	+	?

Key Destination Catalyst Projects									
	centre of excellence for coastal tourism. Develop Tramore as the Surf Centre for Ireland's Ancient East.								
<b>Coastal Excellence</b>	Work to achieve and maintain Blue Flag status at as many Waterford beaches as possible to contribute to the Waterford coastal experience. In the absence of appropriate infrastructure for Blue Flag status, WCCC will work to achieve Green Coast Awards.								
<b>Coastal Blueway</b>	Undertake a feasibility assessment of the requirements to develop Waterford coastal tourism experience linking the Copper Coast and Dunmore East through a Coastal Blueway linking water-based activity experiences with coastal paths and trails. This should include an assessment of the requirements to develop a Waterford Estuary Blueway with the capacity to link visitor experiences between the Estuary and Waterford City. The assessment will also include a review of the requirements to create a series of Coastal Blueway pilot sites to create a South East Coastal Blueway linking Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow.								
<b>Waterford Estuary</b>	Undertake an economic and tourism development assessment for Waterford Estuary that identifies opportunities for developing the destination while balancing community and economic needs.								
<b>Outdoor Activity Destination Hubs</b>	Identify the requirements to develop Dungarvan as a year-round tourism hub aligned with an agreed tourism vision for the town including a focus on developing the town as a best in class outdoor activity hub supported by a vibrant evening economy.								
<b>Coastal Tramore - Outdoor Activity and Tourism Regeneration</b>	Deliver the projects identified under the Town Regeneration Programme to deliver the best active recreational seaside destination in the country. Examine the tourism potential of the opportunity sites identified in Tramore by Waterford City & County Council including vacant sites and other sites with the capacity to be key economic stimuli.								
<b>Copper Coast Destination Vision</b>	Develop a tourism destination vision for the Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark to develop the destination as an exemplar for eco-tourism establishing a coherent sustainable tourism proposition for the destination.  Undertake a Green Innovation Visitor Experience pilot programme in the Copper Coast to develop innovative approaches to sustainable visitor experiences leveraging the existing eco-tourism base.								
<b>Dunmore East Activity Base Development</b>	Develop the potential of Dunmore East as a quality outdoor activity base incorporating future use of the harbour area, visitor orientation, local trails development and the growth of saleable experiences for visitors to the area. Develop consistency in the visitor welcome and destination signage through future public realm investment.								
<b>Lighthouse Tourism</b>	Examine the opportunity for the Ballinacourty Lighthouse to develop as a niche visitor experience or activity spur from the Waterford Greenway.								

### Key Destination Catalyst Projects

#### Assessment commentary:

Many of the projects are oriented around investment and identifying what the requirements would be for future development of coastal resources such as blueways, local trails and outdoor coastal activities, which would have neutral effects on many SEOs.

There are potential positive and/or negative effects on many environmental factors due to development of any supporting tourism infrastructure related to the variety of projects specified in this project including but not limited to development of the harbour area at Dunmore East, trails, Ballincourty Lighthouse, etc. Depending on the project specifics there is potential for positive and/ or negative effects at these locations particularly at construction stage due to land use change.

The development of outdoor activities such as new blueways, coastal paths and trails has the potential for positive effects on PHH. There is potential for indirect positive effects to AQ and C due to improving sustainable transport infrastructure in the area supporting the tourism sector and local communities, as well as supporting economic development through saleable experiences.

The Platforms for Growth activity centre investment falls under the Platform 2: Facility Centres for Water Sports Activities which focuses on the development of water sports activity facilities through provision of a hub for local water sport operators. This will result in potential positive effects on MA as the hub will provide for additional changing facilities, showers, toilets, secure storage, and enclosed spaces in the area.

The location of any future surf centre and associated activities will be required to have regard for sensitivities associated with Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC [000671] and Tramore Back Strand SPA [004027] as it could lead to disturbance to biodiversity. The EPA report that the WFD coastal water body risk status of Tramore Back Strand is identified as '*Not at Risk*'; however, the Waterford Harbour at Dunmore East is '*At Risk*' of not achieving WFD objectives. The focus on ensuring Blue Flag Status and Green Coast Awards at Waterford's beaches will benefit PHH (bathing waters) as well as indirectly W and BFF.

The Copper Coast Global Geopark is designated as a UNESCO Heritage Site. Sustainably managing and developing the destination for eco-tourism will need to be carefully managed and is likely to result in significant positive effects on PHH. Potential effect to the landscape and geology and geological heritage will depend on project specifics which are not known.

**Proposed Mitigation:** Refer to Section 9.

Destination Enabling Projects										
DESTINATION ENABLING 1: North Stars	Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
St. Declan's Way Experience Development Plan	Develop an experience development plan to guide the development of St. Declan's Way to become an iconic pilgrim way supported by best-in-class community experiences. This will examine the requirements for communities on the route and develop the capacity of Ardmore to enhance the Trail Head experience for visitors reflecting its starting or finishing position on St. Declan's Way. It will examine the role of Local Link in supporting the transport linkages between St. Declan's Way and the community hubs on the route.	0	0/+	0	0	0	0	0/+	0/+	0
Mount Melleray Visitor Experience Development	Develop a visitor experience plan for Mount Melleray to explore its potential as an outdoor hub /trailhead. This will include an assessment of the experience development potential of Mount Melleray as an iconic visitor experience along the St. Declan's Way route and hub to access local experiences.									
Comeragh Mountains Outdoor Recreation Strategy	Develop an integrated visitor management approach to support the development of the Comeraghs as a sustainable outdoor multi - activity destination to become a significant slow tourism attractor for Waterford.									
River Blackwater Blueway Feasibility Study	Examine the feasibility of developing a series of activity focal points on the River Blackwater to develop a Blackwater Blueway proposition integrating a series of local activities on and off the water along the River Blackwater to create a best-in-class approach to river based tourism, and link cultural and heritage experiences with outdoor pursuits e.g. Great Houses and River Experiences.									
<b>Assessment commentary:</b> The projects are predominantly based on development plans or strategies, and building sustainable tourism experiences. The aims of the plans are likely to include consideration of the social, economic and natural environment ensuring the sensitive aspects of the environment are respected and protected. Therefore, the assessments are rated as neutral or not significant effects on the majority of the environmental factors. The development of cultural heritage trails, sites and trail heads, linking to local community hubs on the existing St. Declan's Way has the potential for positively affect PHH, MA and AACH. <i>St. Declan's Way Strategic Plan 2024-2028</i> <sup>3</sup> states that within 5 years St. Declan's Way has the potential to deliver €35.4m of cumulative economic benefit to South Tipperary and West Waterford. Connecting and promoting cultural heritage and natural assets to green infrastructure, that aims to increase regional connectivity and encourage sustainable visitor management in specific areas, such as Comeraghs is considered to be positive. The plans should consider management of visitor numbers in these areas to ensure carrying capacities are not breached.										

<sup>3</sup> [St-Declans-Way-Strategic-Plan- -2024-to-2028.pdf](#)

Destination Enabling Projects										
<b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9 – key relevant mitigation includes consideration of visitor management and critical infrastructure as key component of proposed plans or strategies/ future development of sites.										
DESTINATION ENABLING 2: Waterford Outdoors	Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<b>Waterford Greenways Masterplan</b>	Develop a Waterford Greenways Masterplan to map out future Greenway development requirements in Waterford and associated opportunities to link to regional greenways to create international scale experiences through their connectivity, ability to support network/cluster development and potential for experience innovation. The Greenway masterplan will include the following;	+/-	+	- ?	+/-	+?	?	+	+/-	?
<b>Regional Greenway</b>	Develop the elements required within Waterford to support the creation of a signature Greenway experience linking Dublin with Cork.									
<b>Waterford to New Ross Greenway</b>	Develop the Waterford to New Ross Greenway supported by the continuous enhancement of visitor experiences and opportunities to engage with local communities.									
<b>Waterford to Tramore Greenway</b>	Develop the Waterford to Tramore Greenway and explore its future integration with coastal cycling trails integrating the Waterford Greenway and the Copper Coast route.									
<b>Dungarvan to Mallow Greenway</b>	Examine the requirements to develop a greenway between Dungarvan and Mallow.									
<b>Dungarvan to Youghal Link</b>	Assess the feasibility of linking Dungarvan with Youghal connecting the Waterford Greenway with the Middleton Youghal Greenway as a connecting segment of the proposed Dublin to Cork Greenway proposition.									
<b>Spur to Helvick</b>	Examine the inclusion of a spur to Helvick as part of the link to the Waterford Greenway.									
<b>Waterford Greenway to Suir Blueway – Waterford County Outdoor Recreation Plan</b>	Linking to the Suir Blueway. Linking to the Suir Blueway - Examine the feasibility of linking the Waterford Greenway and Suir Blueway Tipperary.									
<b>Waterford to Rosslare Greenway</b>	Support an appraisal of the requirements to connect Waterford to Rosslare through a sustainable transport method.									

Destination Enabling Projects									
<b>Local Loops</b>	Assess the opportunities to create local loops off existing and proposed greenways to provide more exploration options of Greenway communities.								
<b>Linking Anne Valley Walk with Greenway</b>	Examine the requirements to link the Anne Valley Walk with the Waterford Greenway.								
<b>Mahon Falls Greenway Spur</b>	Examine the requirements to link Mahon Falls with Bunmahon and the coastal route as a Waterford Greenway spur.								
<b>Greenways - Visitor Interpretation</b>	Undertake an investment programme in the Waterford Greenway to develop new visitor interpretation and enhance local exploration points.								
<b>Greenways - User Experience</b>	Undertake an assessment of the trail head requirements across all greenways to deliver a consistent Waterford Greenway user experience								
<b>Cycling Tourism destination</b>	Develop a cycling tourism strategy for Waterford to become Ireland's cycling destination supported by the mix of appropriate cycling infrastructure and access to a mix of cycling experiences.  This will include an assessment of the development of Dungarvan as a national cycling tourism hub with ease of access to a variety of cycling experiences from the greenway, road, off road, BMX and pump track investment.								
<b>Waterford Outdoors</b>	Assess the current trail head offering and ensure consistency according to county outdoor recreation plan and Comeragh outdoor recreation strategy.  Assess the requirements to develop a series of community trailheads into the Waterford Mountain amenities (Waterford Mountain Ways) to include the Vee, Nire Valley, Ballymacarbry, Mahon Falls, Coumshingaun in Kilcooley Wood and Rathgormack.								
<b>International Routes and Trails - EuroVelo 1</b>	Support the delivery of Eurovelo 1 experience in Waterford following the national development programme for the trail.								
<b>Linking Cycling Infrastructure</b>	Increase the cycling infrastructure capacity across the county by linking active travel investment to greenways to expand the mix and variety of cycling trails.								
<b>Off Road Cycling Infrastructure</b>	Undertake a feasibility assessment on the opportunity to develop a Waterford off road trail centre in a suitable location to add to the overall cycling product mix and undertake an audit of suitable sites to develop off road bike trails and mountain biking in the county to expand the cycling product base in partnership with relevant agencies and other stakeholders.								

Destination Enabling Projects										
Signature Adventure	Explore the opportunity to develop an outdoor adventure centre of scale in the county on a stand-alone site or incorporate it into an existing attraction/amenity.									
Water Activity Centre	Examine the potential of developing a water activity centre of scale for Co. Waterford accessible from existing networks/clusters of outdoor activity such as Greenway destinations in the county.									
River Suir Experiences Cluster	Examine the opportunities to grow accessible water activity infrastructure along the River Suir e.g. canoeing and kayaking.									
<b>Assessment commentary:</b> The projects are oriented around assessing, exploring and examining a variety of outdoor activities namely: Greenways Masterplan and the Comeragh Mountains Outdoor Recreation Strategy. The plans themselves are likely to have a neutral effect however, once implemented there is potential for positive or negative effects on many SEOs. The development of sustainable transport infrastructure improving regional connectivity of new and existing greenways, blueways, coastal routes, walking trails, and the development of outdoor adventure centres of scale have the potential for positive effects on PHH, AQ, C and MA. The delivery of Eurovelo 1 linking Ireland with mainland Europe by bike is a significant positive regarding climate considerations. Despite this, there is also potential for negative effects to climate which cannot be determined at this level of the assessment. There is potential for positive effects on AACH through connecting and promoting cultural heritage assets and natural assets (such as Vee, Nire Valley, Ballymacarbry, Mahon Falls, Coumshingaun in Kilcooley Wood and Rathgormack) through green infrastructure and particularly the Waterford Greenway, which aims to increase regional connectivity. Potential positive and negative effects on BFF and W, due to coastal activities and/or construction of infrastructure, such as the integration of coastal cycling trails with the Waterford Greenway and developing water activity infrastructure, in proximity to sensitive sites including: River Suir SAC [002137] or the creation of a spur at Helvick, which is adjacent to Helvick Head SAC [000665], Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA [004192], and Helvick Head pNHA [000665]. Also, these developments have the potential to create disturbance to aquatic species or other wildlife (BFF), or water (W), which will be required to be more appropriately assessed at project level. At the time of writing, the status of a proposed greenway from Dublin to Cork is not known. The status of the Mallow to Dungarvan Greenway and the Waterford to Rosslare Greenway are pre-planning/feasibility stage. Phase 1 of the Midleton to Youghal Greenway has been completed and Phase 2 is currently under construction. Construction of any new infrastructure is likely to have temporary negative impacts on environment which will be assessed at project stage. <b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9.										
DESTINATION ENABLING 3: Waterford Attractions	Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
Gaeltacht Cultural Facility	Examine the potential for a new Gaeltacht multi-purpose cultural facility with the capacity to include visitor accommodation, performance space and a focal point for Gaeltacht cultural activities.	+/-	+	+/-	0	0	0	+	+	0
Community Heritage Centres	Undertake an operational assessment of the commercial and sales approach of existing community heritage centres to also include an assessment of the experience development requirements to appeal to domestic and international visitors.									

Destination Enabling Projects									
<b>Waterford Visitor Attractions</b>	Undertake a review of the experience delivered across Waterford city visitor attractions to identify new ways of linking the stories and enhancing the visitor experience relevant to future visitor strategies. Undertake a review of the commercial experience / demand generation capabilities and examination of future collaboration across attractions in Waterford.								
<b>Cultural Visitor Experience</b>	Examine the potential of a cultural visitor experience in the 25-26 O'Connell Street building aligned with the vision for the Cultural Quarter and creating a permanent home for Waterford cultural and creative experiences.								
<b>Dungarvan Castle</b>	Assess the opportunity to develop the visitor experience at Dungarvan Castle and how it can add to the mix of things to do and see in the day and evening time.								
<b>Dungarvan Cultural Centre</b>	Undertake an analysis on the viability of developing a cultural and heritage year-round proposition in Dungarvan.								
<b>Mount Congreve</b>	Examine the opportunity to further enhance the visitor experience at Mount Congreve to link the site with the city such as river transport, cycling and access from other trails such as the Anne Valley.								
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>Many of the projects are oriented around undertaking assessments and reviews of experiences therefore these projects are rated as having a neutral effect on the SEOs unless specified below.</p> <p>The development of new facilities and accommodation has the potential for positive effects to PHH as a result of investing in accommodation opportunities, The projects encourage new and existing collaborations with stakeholders to increase the tourism industry's capacity to deliver tourism experiences more effectively across current and future attractions across Waterford increasing saleable experiences and through the sustainable management of visitor movement in key cultural heritage locations, such as the Cultural Quarter. There will also be potential positive effects PHH and AACH by promoting and creating space for Gaeltacht cultural activities, and also MA through the provision of tourism-supporting infrastructure as part of the development of multi-purpose facilities.</p> <p>Many of the projects related to historic sites which are protected including Dungarvan Castle. Developing visitor experience at these locations will require ongoing visitor management and ensuring critical infrastructure is available to sustainably managed increased visitor numbers.</p> <p>Examining opportunities at Mount Congreve to link the site with the city such as river transport, cycling and access from other trails such as the Anne Valley has the potential for positive and negative effects on BFF and W which will require project level assessment. The development of river transport and links to cycling and walking has the potential to have positive effects on MA.</p> <p><b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> Refer to Section 9 - key relevant mitigation includes consideration of visitor management and critical infrastructure as a key component of proposed plans, strategies or future development of sites.</p>									

Destination Enabling Projects										
DESTINATION ENABLING 4: Taste Waterford	Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
Food Tourism - Taste Waterford	Develop Taste Waterford as a county wide food experience introducing visitors to the food of the coast, mountains, river valley and rural communities and support the development of Taste Waterford experience development creating best in class immersive food experiences linked together by a Waterford Food and Drink Trail showcasing Waterford artisan producers.  Support food producers in the commercial development of sustainable food tourism experiences to grow the range of Waterford food trails and saleable experiences.  Examine the expansion of major destination food events and festivals to include satellite events in locations such as Lismore, Ardmore and the Comeraghs.	0/+	+	0	0	+	0/+	0	+	0
Food Tourism - Distillers & Brewers	Develop increased access to the county's drinks productions heritage through the development of a Waterford taste experience trail linking distillers and brewers in the county and city to create saleable visitor experiences.									
<b>Assessment commentary:</b> There are no specific projects outlined in the projects, resulting to potential neutral effects on the majority of the SEOs. The projects have the potential for positive effects on PHH, for both locals and visitors, encouraging new and existing collaborations with stakeholders including the expansion of food events, festivals and destinations. The support for 'sustainable food experiences' will also likely lead to direct positive effects on soil resources, climate and potential indirect positive effects to BFF. Additionally, there is potential for positive effects on PHH and AACH due to connecting and promoting drinks producers with organised trails boosting both economic development and greater appreciation of both heritage both past and present. <b>Proposed Mitigation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Refer to Section 9 - key relevant mitigation includes consideration of visitor management and critical infrastructure as a key component of proposed plans, strategies or future development of sites.</li><li>The <i>Sustainable Festival Guidelines</i> developed by Fáilte Ireland (2023) should be used by a guide by promoters.</li></ul>										
DESTINATION ENABLING 5: Family Destination	Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
Family Market Focus	Develop the capacity of the Waterford tourism industry to become recognised for family experience innovation through a blend of outdoor activities, coastal, rural and cultural experiences.	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	0
<b>Assessment commentary:</b> The assessment indicates that there is potential for neutral or no significant effects on the majority of the environmental factors namely BFF, W, AQ, C, L&S, MA, and L as there are no specific projects identified that would have the potential to directly impact those environmental factors.										

Destination Enabling Projects										
<p>There will be potential significant positive effects on cultural heritage (AACH) through connecting and promoting cultural heritage assets.</p> <p>The assessment recognises that there are wider social, economic, and environmental benefits likely to population and human health (PHH) as a result of promoting outdoor activities</p> <p>There are potential indirect significant positive and/or negative effects on these environmental factors, such as through development in sensitive coastal and rural areas, increases in vehicular traffic as well as minor energy use and potential increase in greenhouse gas emissions, however, there is insufficient information what this project entails and based on the information provided, is not significant enough to warrant a classification other than neutral.</p> <p>The effect of this project is dependent on its development and outcomes.</p> <p>There may be uncertain significant environmental effects as a result of the construction and operation of the project, if unmitigated, and should be further assessed and mitigated as part of the environmental assessments and requirements of any planning process.</p> <p><b>Proposed Mitigation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to Section 9 - key relevant mitigation includes consideration of visitor management and critical infrastructure as a key component of proposed plans, strategies or future development of sites.</li> <li>The <i>Sustainable Festival Guidelines</i> developed by Fáilte Ireland (2023) should be used by a guide by promoters.</li> </ul>										
DESTINATION ENABLING 6: Festivals & Events	Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
New Festival Development	Examine the potential for a new Samhain/ Halloween destination festival to contribute to the establishment of Ireland as the home of Halloween and the development of new off-peak season event opportunities.									
Festivals and Events	Develop a city/county festival and events plan to align future investment with destination development objectives and to develop the ambition to host nationally recognised events within the destination. It will assess the development of a hallmark destination festival linked to the Waterford outdoors and the development of Waterford as an international outdoors activity / lifestyle destination.	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	0
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>Due to the nature of the projects, being the examination of festival development and a plan for festival/ events, the assessment is rated as neutral or no significant effects on the majority of the SEOs. These projects will build on growth of the cultural tourism sector as well as outdoor activities, increasing economic development opportunities through new event and festival experiences resulting in a potential likely significant positive effect on population (PHH). The projects will also support the unique heritage of Ireland's 'samhain' resulting in a positive effect on cultural heritage. Planning of any such events will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis including assessment of the receiving environment ensuring appropriate infrastructure is available during such festivals to the visiting public.</p> <p><b>Proposed Mitigation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to Section 9 - key relevant mitigation includes consideration of visitor management and critical infrastructure as a key component of proposed plans, strategies or future development of sites.</li> <li>The <i>Sustainable Festival Guidelines</i> developed by Fáilte Ireland (2023) is to be used as a guide.</li> </ul>										

Destination Enabling Projects										
DESTINATION ENABLING 7: Climate Action / Sustainable Tourism	Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
Sustainable tourism destination - Networks/ Clusters Pilot Programme	Create a series of hallmark sustainable tourism experiences and projects among the rural tourism networks/clusters to develop Waterford’s profile as a sustainable tourism destination. This will include enhancing the industry approach to sustainable tourism, packaging the outdoors and associated opportunities through land and water based activities.	0 ?	+ ?	0	+	+	0	0+	0	0
Smart Tourism	Continue development of digital interpretation programme in Waterford City to assess effectiveness and possible expansion to other urban hubs in the county.									
Sustainable Tourist Transport Strategy	Develop a sustainable tourist transport strategy/ plan to aid visitors to plan their trips using sustainable modes of transport.									
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>Due to the nature of the projects, which focus primarily on rural tourism networks/clusters networking and a digital programme, there is potential for neutral or no significant effects on the majority of the SEOs. The assessment also recognises that there are wider social, economic, and environmental benefits likely to PHH, AQ and C as a result of promoting outdoor activities and integrating sustainable tourism approaches to projects and experiences. The development of a sustainable tourist transport strategy/ plan will encourage and support increase in sustainable transport use ensuring the projected increase of visitor numbers in Waterford is managed appropriately.</p> <p><b>Proposed Mitigation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Refer to Section 9 - key relevant mitigation includes consideration of visitor management and critical infrastructure as a key component of proposed plans, strategies or future development of sites.</li><li>The <i>Sustainable Festival Guidelines</i> developed by Fáilte Ireland (2023) is to be used as a guide.</li><li>ROD recommend including two new enabling projects to further support climate action, namely :<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Diversification - Support the sustainable economic diversification of the local economy through the development of the regenerative tourism sector.</li><li>Climate Action Programme - Support the sustainable tourism by promoting businesses to participate in the Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme.</li></ul></li></ul>										

### **8.1.1 Summary assessment of likely significant effects on the environment**

The Plan takes a destination approach aiming to connect all tourism-related investment and activities through building on existing tourism projects. Key outputs of the Plan include growing 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 will be achieved through six destination catalyst projects, in addition to a number of destination-enabling projects, will be delivered through a series of actions detailed in the WDEDP Action Plan.

Summary likely significant effects on the environment as a result of the Draft Plan are summarised in the Table 8-5 below highlighting the potential positive, negative and unknown effects as a result of the plan.

**Table 8-5 Summary of likely significant effects of the Draft Plan**

Environmental factor	Potential Positive	Potential negative	Unknown Effects
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New ecological corridors due to development of greenways, trails, etc.</li> <li>The redevelopment of brownfield sites with biodiversity considerations and nature-based solutions.</li> <li>Development of ecosystem services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss, damage, disturbance or fragmentation of ecological resources in designated and non-designated sites.</li> <li>Tourism development along river and coastal areas affecting water quality and/or effects on aquatic species.</li> <li>Disturbance of sensitive habitats and species from increased visitors.</li> <li>Loss of biodiversity including native species due to development of new projects and the spread of invasive species, diseases, and pathogens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in climate affecting biodiversity and in turn influencing tourism behaviour visitors' numbers affecting biodiversity.</li> <li>Unknown effects to ecologically sensitive sites due to year-round tourism activity.</li> <li>Unknown effects to ecosystems.</li> </ul>
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism development supports the social and economic development of the county and local communities.</li> <li>Opportunity to regenerate and diversify rural economies.</li> <li>The promotion of outdoor activities supports healthy lifestyles.</li> <li>Improvements to infrastructure including development and access to greenways supports wider sustainable transport options and quality of life factors for tourists and residents alike.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased tourism could increase demand for accommodation and reduce long-term housing availability for local communities.</li> <li>The current housing shortage reduces availability of tourist and local accommodation and also affect affordability.</li> <li>Tourism can increase traffic congestion in certain areas particularly during peak (seasonal) periods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism may increase road traffic and congestion levels, especially in smaller settlements.</li> <li>Future tourism development impacting capacity critical infrastructure which may affect human health.</li> </ul>
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The plan is likely to maintenance or improve bathing water quality due to focus on blue flag beach status Co-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased eutrophication from urban development, agriculture which can be associated with tourism sector/expansion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in bathing water quality from increased year-round visitor numbers.</li> </ul>

Environmental factor	Potential Positive	Potential negative	Unknown Effects
	ordinated management of tourism activities across water bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing flood risk from inappropriately sited existing tourism development in existing flood plains and/or flood risk zones.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cumulative impacts from additional pressure on waterbodies.</li> </ul>
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development and promotion of sustainable transport infrastructure and modes across the county will indirectly improve/ maintain air quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased flights, road-based traffic and congestion from higher tourist numbers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unknown effects due to changes in technology influencing the tourism sector.</li> </ul>
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution towards climate adaptation and mitigation through measures relating to: Walking and cycling.</li> <li>The protection and preservation natural/scenic areas can contribute to climate resilience as these areas are often biodiverse and contribute to natural carbon sequestration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of international and domestic tourists is likely to increase GHG emissions associated with aviation, maritime and road-based transport potential affecting climate reduction targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unknown effects to areas in the plan experiencing coastal erosion, flooding and increase in extreme weather events which is also likely to influence tourism behaviour overtime creating new impacts in different areas.</li> </ul>
Land and Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for the reuse/regeneration of brownfield sites and soil materials.</li> <li>Regeneration of natural areas such as woodlands for tourism and recreational purposes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development for tourism in County Waterford that is spread across the region and may contradict EU Soil Strategy land take targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is potential for the discovery of contaminated land during DEDP related projects.</li> <li>The NPF strategy and EPA State of the environment note the need for compact development planning to limit soil sealing from sprawling developments.</li> </ul>
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Plan supports the continued investment in the infrastructure,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased number of visitors have the potential to increase traffic levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pressure on utilities and services if numbers during peak season increases</li> </ul>

Environmental factor	Potential Positive	Potential negative	Unknown Effects
	<p>services and facilities that support the tourism industry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued promotion of tourism industry supports economic development of the county.</li> <li>The plan supports the development of infrastructure such as walking, cycling, public realm enhancements and museum, festivals etc that support the economic development of the area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pressure on existing utilities, wastewater systems, energy and drinking water capacity.</li> <li>Increases in waste levels and residual wastes from increased visitors.</li> <li>Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.</li> <li>The promotion of sustainable transportation and travel options may cause overcrowding on public transport, greenways, if not managed appropriately during peak and through year-round tourism.</li> </ul>	<p>unexpectedly, and through year-round tourism expansion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exceedance of capacity in critical infrastructure risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to climate it is expected that such risks will be mitigated through the regulatory and planning system.</li> </ul>
Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase connectivity to cultural heritage and historical destinations in Waterford via public transportation and/or active travel.</li> <li>Preservation and restoration works of sites and monuments.</li> <li>Potential to discover unknown artifacts and sites of significant archaeological, architectural or cultural value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential damage to unknown archaeological, architectural or cultural heritage sites and monuments, as items may be lost or damaged during development.</li> <li>Growth of visitor numbers can degrade sensitive historic sites.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential loss and/ or discovery of previously unknown archaeological or cultural heritage artefacts as part of project development.</li> </ul>
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development including greenways, public realm improvements etc. have potential to improve access and appreciation of landscape.</li> <li>New development can offer new viewpoint to appreciate landscape and visual amenities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New development and supporting infrastructure at existing sites can change the existing landscape and visual amenity and negatively impact sensitive sites during both construction and operational phase.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes to the landscape of the area, impacts on landmark sites or the experience/perception at landmark sites.</li> </ul>

## **9. MITIGATION**

Mitigation measures are measures to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any potentially significant negative effects of implementing the Draft Plan on the environment.

### **9.1 Embedded Mitigation**

Changes to the plan made during the SEA process are known as embedded mitigation - mitigation that is incorporated into the text of the plan to prevent, reduce, offset and monitor any likely significant environmental effects. The Draft Plan has benefitted from iterative feedback with stakeholders and the SEA team providing feedback to inform the draft as presented for public consultation. Appendix 1 of the Draft Plan details some of these measures to include:

#### **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. The promotion of visitor friendly supporting infrastructure, including appropriate infrastructure capacity where it is required, will also be encouraged. Visitor management plans will be required for proposed plans, programmes and projects that are to receive funding as relevant and appropriate.

#### **Infrastructure Capacity**

Infrastructure capacity is a key element of visitor management, which includes ensuring adequate supply and quality of drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport services, internet/broadband connectivity to support the industry. 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 as part of the implementation phase. 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.

#### **Blue and Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services**

The Draft Plan has included the provision that 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.

#### **Promotion of Nature-based solutions (NbS)**

Projects developed under the Draft Plan shall promote nature-based solutions, where feasible and appropriate. NbS protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience and biodiversity benefits.

It is acknowledged that further changes to the text in the Final Plan and integration of mitigation will continue during the statutory consultation period as stakeholder feedback is received.

### **9.1.1 Integration of environmental protection**

The DEDP is a non-statutory plan, it does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent.

Projects stemming from the DEDP are required to be consistent with and conform with the higher-level plans and policies including the land use plans such as NPF, RSES and county level land use plans, including provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been integrated into these documents.

In the order to be realised, projects included in the Draft Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier / project level Appropriate Assessment (AA), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), site-specific flood risk (SSFRA) assessment and any other licencing requirements as required) that form part of the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

A review of the key mitigation measures contained in the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028 has been undertaken and is detailed in the SEA ER. The SEA team are satisfied that it contains the necessary policies and objectives that can be relied upon to ensure environmental protection, and a sustainable tourism approach is adopted as part of the planning process.

These include, but is not limited to, mitigation measures relating to:

- Infrastructure capacity (including drinking water, wastewater, waste, transport services).
- Promotion of protection and development of sustainable blue and green infrastructure and ecosystem services.
- Archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage.
- Biodiversity policies.
- Climate policy.

Key environmental protection policies and objectives contained within the development plan that can be considered at project level include:

#### **DM 13 Development Management**

- 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.

**Regulatory Framework and Decision-Making Polic Objective include:**

- **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.

**Tourism policy objectives** are contained in Chapter 4 of the Development Plan and include:

- **Econ 22 Sustainable Tourism:** includes cooperation with various stakeholders and tourism agencies to build on the strengths of Waterford City as the regional capital, Dungarvan as a Key Town and County Waterford in their promotion as a tourism destination of choice. The Council will facilitate and encourage: Sustainable tourism 'products' and activities/ attractors; sustainable modes of transport; and encourage and support investment in digital technology in the tourism sector.
- **Econ 23 Key Flagship Tourism projects** (includes a list of projects in the DP)
- **Econ 24 Tourist Accommodation:** Continue to support the development of a variety of accommodation types at appropriate locations and developed with the principles of universal design to ensure they are accessible for all.
- **Econ 25 Camping/ Campervan sites**
- **Econ 26 Tourism Policy**
- **Econ 27 DEDPs/ Ireland's Ancient East** – (supports the preparation of this plan).
- **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.
- **Econ 29 Tourism Marketing:** To support the marketing and promotion of Waterford City and County as a significant tourism destination, by continuing to work with and develop the Visit Waterford Destination Marketing Group.
- **Econ 30 Tourism Cluster:** To support the development of a Tourism Cluster in the South-East focused around key tourist sites and attractions in conjunction with adjoining local authorities, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and other key stakeholders.

Transport related policies include:

- **Trans 17:** Support sustainable travel in the tourism sector by the promotion of public transport use and by integrating transport plans and tourism strategies to promote increasingly sustainable travel patterns among visitors.
- **Trans 29: Airport, Port, Harbours and Piers:** We will support improved berthing facilities for cruise ships which will help Waterford and the South East

facilitate additional tourist development, subject to environmental considerations including no potential for adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 Network.

- **Trans 59 Car Parking Policy:** We will facilitate parking provision for tourist buses where feasible in the city and towns and villages and at tourist attractions around the city and county as the need arises and as resources permit.

#### **Open spaces, blue & green infrastructure policies include:**

- **SC 40 Open Space Policy:** Prepare an Open Space Strategy for the County having regard to the town parks, trails, walks, outdoor recreation and other amenity spaces and resources and ensure that any plan or project associated with open space planning or tourism is subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening in compliance with the Habitats Directive, and subsequent assessment as required.
- **Policy BGI 03 Blue Green Infrastructure:** BGI Strategy: We will develop a BGI Strategy for the City and County during the lifetime of this plan.
- **Policy BGI 09 Greenways & 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 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 any new projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.
- **BGI 20 Historic Routes and Rail Lines:** We will seek to identify and implement existing and historic routes, railways etc. and their associated infrastructure i.e. railway buildings for the creation of new greenways and associated recreation and tourist amenities including the extension of the Waterford Suir Valley Railway from Bilberry to Waterford (Grattan Quay).

#### **9.1.2 Recommended mitigation measures**

As a result of undertaking the assessment of the Draft Plan, potential significant negative effects as a result of implementing the Plan requiring mitigation include:

- Reduced availability and affordability of housing accommodation affecting local populations and visitors.
- Increasing international and domestic tourists will likely result in increase in GHG emissions affecting ability to meet climate targets.

The existing legislation, plans and policies included in the Development Plan policies and objectives address many of the identified likely and significant environmental effects at project level. It is considered that the Plan and projects stemming from the

Plan will need to consider the potential negative effects as a result of the projected increase in tourists and/or growth of the tourism sector, as appropriate.

This recommended mitigation will require a collaborative approach from national to local level at both the policy and project level. The proposed mitigation and monitoring strategies for consideration of Fáilte Ireland and the plan team is presented below.

**Table 9-1 Proposed mitigation measures**

Negative effects	Proposed Mitigation	Lead & Stakeholders
Inadequate access and availability to sustainable modes of transport to access key destinations/sites particularly in rural or in remote areas.	Ensure the development of the tourist transport strategy/ plan (under Destination Enabling project 7) contains an inventory of the key destination sites in the county together with a plan to increase the available critical infrastructure capacity including access to transport infrastructure and services.  Develop sustainable travel promotional material for each key destination site and work with stakeholders and partners to provide sustainable modes of transport to the site.	Project promoter including Fáilte Ireland, and local authority, as appropriate.
Potential for reduced availability and affordability of housing accommodation affecting local and tourist populations	Implement and review Fáilte Ireland's Short Term Tourist Letting (STTL) Register for all short term tourist accommodation in Ireland, which will align with the EU regulation for Short Term Rentals.  The national online registration system will require all proprietors who offer Short Term Tourist Lettings to register their property/properties annually. Fáilte Ireland will be able to provide a picture of all short term tourist accommodation providers across the country, with a view to ensuring that adequate housing accommodation for tourists is balanced with the availability for residential accommodation for the general population.	Fáilte Ireland, local authority and the Department.
Potential for reduced availability and affordability of housing accommodation affecting local and tourist populations	<i>The Housing for All – a new Housing Plan for Ireland</i> states, it is required to implement revised regulatory controls in this area with a view to ensuring the availability of residential accommodation for the general population, balanced with the needs of the tourism sector, as appropriate.	Fáilte Ireland, local authority and the Department.
Climate change effects: increasing international and domestic tourists resulting in increase in GHG emissions affecting ability to meet climate targets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the actions in the Climate Action Plan 2024 and the Local Authority CAP and subsequent updates.</li> <li>Improve access and availability of sustainable modes of transport and travel;</li> <li>Promote business to reduce carbon emissions;</li> <li>Promote visitors to offset carbon emissions.</li> <li>Work with partners to implement the relevant actions in the National Adaptation Framework.</li> </ul>	Fáilte Ireland, project promoters, as appropriate.

Negative effects	Proposed Mitigation	Lead & Stakeholders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the relevant actions in the Sectoral Adaptation Plan for the Tourism Sector (once developed).</li> </ul>	
Potential for festivals & events to impact the environment	All project promoters receiving funding from FI to demonstrate compliance with The <i>Sustainable Festival Guidelines</i> developed by Fáilte Ireland (2023) when planning festivals and large events.	Project promoters working in collaboration with local authority.

## 10. MONITORING

Article 10 of the SEA Directive requires monitoring to be carried out for significant effects directly related to the implementation of the Plan “*in order to, inter alia, identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.*” It is a key part to ensuring the plan does not negatively impact the receiving environment, and to assess whether current mitigation measures are appropriately compensating any anticipated environmental impacts.

Monitoring of the Plan is focused on monitoring the identified potential significant negative effects on the environment as a result of implementing the Plan.

### 10.1 Indicators and targets

As far as practicable, monitoring is based on existing quantitative measures or indicators that can be recorded over time relating to the various SEOs. Each indicator that is monitored has an accompanying target. The Directive indicates that “existing monitoring arrangements may be used if appropriate, with a view to avoiding duplication of monitoring.”

While not a statutory document the Plan has been prepared to compliment and be consistent with other national, regional and local planning and development plans including, but not limited to, the NPF, the RSES, the Waterford City and County Council Development Plan and Ireland’s Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy, all of which have been subject to SEA. Consequently, the SEA monitoring measures identified in those plans have been used as a guide in the development of this monitoring programme, with some being the same or have been modified to reflect the needs of this plan. This consistency across the hierarchy of planning documents will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future monitoring.

Table 10-1 identifies the indicators and targets that have been selected for monitoring the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan. The source of data collection and frequency is also identified. Proposed remedial measures are identified to address any negative effects. Monitoring is an ongoing process, and the programme allows for flexibility and further refinement of indicators and targets and source of data, as appropriate.

### 10.2 Reporting and responsibility

The monitoring process will be undertaken by Fáilte Ireland including preparation of evaluation reports and corrective actions, if required. The steering group that will be formed to implement the Plan (that includes key stakeholders responsible for project ownership and / or partnering in the delivery of the plan) will be a key source of monitoring data and any remedial measures, as appropriate.

The findings of monitoring will be reported on periodically with frequencies to be determined during implementation stage. It is recommended that the proposed environmental monitoring programme is agreed in advance of finalisation with all partners and stakeholders involved in the monitoring. After consultation is undertaken on the Draft Plan, the environmental monitoring programme can be amended and will be finalised and published in the SEA Statement.

**Table 10-1 Draft Environmental Monitoring Programme**

Environmental Factor and SEO	Indicator	Target	Source and Frequency	Remedial Measures
<b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna (BFF)</b> Protect, actively conserve, prevent damage and, where possible, restore biodiversity, particularly European designated sites, other nature conservation sites, protected and threatened habitats and species (including transboundary priority habitats and species), and support ecological corridors (including riparian zones and coastal areas), green and blue infrastructure.	<b>BFF1:</b> Compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 sites and Annex I habitats and species and no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function.	<b>BFF1:</b> Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under National and International legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every six years)</li> <li>DHLGH National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every three years).</li> <li>Local authority/ An Bord Pleanála planning application project decisions relating to projects under the plan.</li> <li>Data from any relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programme relevant to the project/area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems or the Plan and make changes as necessary.</li> <li>Where adverse effects are identified undertake investigation as per the Fáilte Ireland Tourism Related Environmental Damage Resolution Procedure and act on recommendations based on the profiling of the environmental damage.</li> <li>Review or update the visitor management plan to address any ecological loss or degradation caused by tourism activities.</li> </ul>
	<b>BFF2:</b> Decline in habitat (quantity or quality) and/ or loss of functional connectivity without remediation resulting from projects arising from the Plan.	<b>BFF2:</b> No habitats or ecological networks, or parts thereof to be impacted/ lost without remediation resulting from projects arising from the Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Mitigation Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing - project specific).</li> <li>CORINE mapping resurvey (every five years).</li> <li>Local authority (LA) or An Bord Pleanála (ABP) planning application project environmental assessments &amp; decisions.</li> <li>Data from any relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programme relevant to the project/area.</li> <li>Visitor management plan relating to project(s).</li> <li>National Biodiversity Data Centre, The Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS)</li> </ul>	
<b>Population and Human Health (PHH)</b> Protect, support and sustainably manage resources and tourism development, for the benefit of the society and the environment, and contribute towards the	<b>PHH1(a):</b> Percentage increase in visitor number to the site/ area over time. <b>PHH1(b):</b> Development and implementation of visitor management plan from projects arising from the Plan.	<b>PHH1:</b> Sustainably manage visitors to the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing).</li> <li>Visitor management plan relating to projects.</li> <li>Fáilte Ireland (annual review): Tourism performance reports, visitor surveys, monitoring programmes, tourism research &amp; reports.</li> <li>Central Statistics Office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.</li> <li>Promote sustainable tourism practices, at the site through the preparation of site-specific campaigns to assist in remedial action, if necessary.</li> </ul>

Environmental Factor and SEO	Indicator	Target	Source and Frequency	Remedial Measures
economic development of the population supporting positive health outcomes.	<b>PHH1(c):</b> Reduction in safety incidences at sites under the Plan.			
	<b>PHH2:</b> Improved accessibility to recreational areas and public health amenities (e.g., parks, coastal areas, greenways, blueways, other trails).	<b>PHH2:</b> Ensure that visitors have appropriate access to recreational areas and public health amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing).</li> <li>Visitor management plan relating to project(s)</li> <li>Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the plan.</li> <li>Local Authority reports (annual review).</li> </ul>	
<b>Water (W)</b> Protect, maintain and, where possible, improve water quality including surface water, groundwater, transitional and coastal waters and any wetlands, while preventing deterioration, supporting the achievement of good water quality status of all water bodies as required by the EU and national legislation, and increasing the resilience and adaptation of tourism sites/ activities to the effects of climate change including flood risk and coastal erosion.	<b>W1:</b> The change in water quality status of surface water, groundwater, transitional, and coastal waters (i.e. Water Framework Directive (WFD) water quality status).	<b>W1:</b> Objectives of WFD are met for all waterbodies in accordance with the latest River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures (POM).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFD monitoring data on ecological and chemical status of water bodies (RBMP) (every six years).</li> <li>Irish Water (annual review): Drinking water quality reports.</li> <li>Local Authority (annual review): Monitoring of local water bodies.</li> <li>EPA Remedial Action List (regarding drinking water quality).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.</li> <li>Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary.</li> </ul>
	<b>W2:</b> Overall trend in the mandatory and guide values as set by the EU Bathing Water Directive and transposing Bathing Water Quality Regulations (SI No. 79 of 2008).	<b>W2:</b> No deterioration in the value of bathing waters or adverse effect upon the ability of any bathing water to achieve mandatory values and, where possible, guide values as a result of the Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA through Local Authority (annual review): Monitoring of local water bodies.</li> <li>EPA Water Quality in Ireland report (annual).</li> </ul>	
	<b>W3:</b> Compliance with regards to Flood Risk Management Guidelines.	<b>W3:</b> Compliance with statutory plans and decision-making process relating to developments in flood risk zones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan.</li> </ul>	

Environmental Factor and SEO	Indicator	Target	Source and Frequency	Remedial Measures
<b>Air Quality (AQ)</b> Contribute to the reduction of air pollution and improvement in air quality resulting from the effective operation and management of sustainable tourism activities.	<b>AQ:</b> Trends in emissions from ambient air quality monitoring (NO <sub>x</sub> , SO <sub>x</sub> , PM <sub>10</sub> and PM <sub>2.5</sub> ).	<b>AQ:</b> Maintain air quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA air quality monitoring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Climate (C)</b> Support and promote the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from tourism activities and the development of a climate resilient and adaptive tourism sector.	<b>C1(a):</b> Demonstrate compliance with provisions relating to climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation have been integrated into the plan/project, as appropriate.  <b>C1(b):</b> Evidence that beneficiaries of funding are working to reduce emissions e.g. promoting energy efficiency, water conservation, sustainable travel options to customers through marketing/ promotional material.	<b>C1:</b> Monitor and reduce emissions associated with tourism activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing - project specific).</li> <li>EPA - GHG emissions data and projections.</li> <li>Government Climate Action Plan (annual review).</li> <li>Met Eireann (annual statistics).</li> <li>Transport for Ireland - Local Link network statistics.</li> <li>Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.</li> <li>Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary.</li> </ul>
	<b>C2:</b> Number of projects participating in Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme (FI CAP) or similar under the Plan.	<b>C2:</b> All tourism activities/ promoters to have a link to FI CAP (or similar) to demonstrate climate change resilience and adaptation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FI CAP accreditation (annual review).</li> <li>Waterford City and Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029.</li> <li>FI Sustainable tourism programmes (annual reviews).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.</li> </ul>
	<b>C3:</b> Improve provision of public transport links in the region and 'last mile'	<b>C3:</b> Reduction in transport emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fáilte Ireland – Ireland's Ancient East KPI 5. (Data from National Transport Authority &amp; Local Link a strategic part of visitor orientation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.</li> </ul>

Environmental Factor and SEO	Indicator	Target	Source and Frequency	Remedial Measures
	transport links in partnership with National Transport Authority together with improved e-car charging infrastructure. <sup>4</sup>	emanating from the tourism sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waterford City and Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029.</li> <li>National Transport Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Land and Soils (S)</b> Safeguard existing land and soil resources, protect and improve soil quality, conserve soil, and prevent soil contamination and erosion.	<b>S1:</b> The area of soil that is sealed or artificialised in square km. <sup>5</sup>	<b>S1:</b> Contribute to NPF target to limit the rate of increase of land that is sealed or artificialised and promote the reversal of this in suitable areas e.g., flood zones, high density areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CORINE land cover mapping (CORINE every 6 years (due 2024).</li> <li>Land use national land cover map (Fáilte Éireann - every five years).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of the site selection process/ assessment of alternatives (if undertaken) where projects occur in greenfield sites in favour of infill/ brownfield sites.</li> </ul>
	<b>S2:</b> Soil erosion/ degradation, landslides without remediation resulting from projects developed under the plan.	<b>S2:</b> No projects contributing to soil erosion, degradation or landslides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing - project specific).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Material Assets (M)</b> Sustainably manage, maintain and develop the necessary tourism supporting infrastructure (including water, wastewater, energy supplies, transportation, internet connectivity and associated capacities) and support the development of the circular economy.	<b>M1:</b> Locations where additional tourists are directed by beneficiaries of funding towards areas where critical infrastructure is adequate to sustainably provide for visitors (e.g. water, wastewater capacity, electricity, transport, carparking, etc.) resulting from projects developed under the Plan.	<b>M1:</b> Locations have adequate critical infrastructure available to sustainably provide for tourists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing - project specific).</li> <li>Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan.</li> <li>Visitor management plan relating to projects.</li> <li>Fáilte Ireland (annual review): Tourism performance reports, visitor surveys, any relevant monitoring programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.</li> <li>Consult with Irish Water or the local authority regarding water and WWtF.</li> <li>Consult with TII local authority or transport providers regarding sustainable transport infrastructure.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Note: C3 monitoring indicator is taken from (KPI 5 from Ireland's Ancient East RDS 2023-2027).

<sup>5</sup> Note S1 indicator and target stems from the Revised & updated National Planning Framework SEA ER Monitoring.

Environmental Factor and SEO	Indicator	Target	Source and Frequency	Remedial Measures
	<b>M2:</b> Incidences of significant negative effects on the use of, or access to, public assets and infrastructure from projects developed under the Plan.	<b>M2:</b> No significant negative effects on the use of or access to public assets and infrastructure from projects developed under the plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fáilte Ireland (annual review): Tourism performance reports, visitor surveys, any relevant monitoring programme.</li> <li>Local authority reports (annual review).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult utility and energy providers as appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Archaeology, Architecture and Cultural Heritage (AACH)</b> Avoid, protect and/ or minimise impacts to designated archaeological, architectural, and cultural heritage resources, including their setting and enhance and conserve heritage assets.	<b>AACH:</b> Changes to Record of Protected Structures (RPS), and Record of Monuments and Places (RMPs) being protected and/ or negatively impacted resulting from projects developed under the Plan.	<b>AACH:</b> No negative or unauthorised effects on any entities listed on the RPS and RMPs from any projects developed under the Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan.</li> <li>Visitor management plan relating to projects.</li> <li>Fáilte Ireland (annual review): Tourism performance reports, visitor surveys, any relevant monitoring programme.</li> <li>Local Authority Development Plans record of protected structures (RPS) (updated every six years).</li> <li>Record of Monuments and Places.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.</li> <li>Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary</li> <li>Project promoter to consult with the Conservation Officer or Heritage Officer for Waterford City and County, if required.</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape (L)</b> Avoid conflicts with the protection of designated and sensitive features of note in landscapes and sensitively manage landscape change through sustainable planning.	<b>L:</b> Number of negative landscape or visual impacts resulting from projects developed under the Plan.	<b>L:</b> Avoid negative landscape and visual impacts on the environment, particularly protected landscapes or protected views.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitor management plan relating to projects.</li> <li>Fáilte Ireland (annual review): Tourism performance reports, visitor surveys, any relevant monitoring programme.</li> <li>Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.</li> <li>Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary.</li> </ul>

## 11. NEXT STEPS

This SEA ER, the Appropriate Assessment Screening and NIS, will be published alongside the Draft Plan and will be made available for public consultation for a period of at least four weeks. Feedback received during the public consultation period will be reviewed and the Draft Plan amended accordingly.

On finalisation of the Plan by Fáilte Ireland, an SEA Statement will be prepared that includes information on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan, highlighting the main changes to the Plan that resulted from the SEA process;
- How the SEA Environmental Report and consultations have been considered, summarising the key issues raised in consultations and in the Environmental Report indicating what action was taken in response;
- The reasons for choosing the Plan in the light of the other alternatives, identifying the other alternatives considered, commenting on their potential effects and explaining why the Plan as adopted was selected; and
- The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental implementing of the Plan.

Once the SEA Statement is published, the plan will enter the final SEA stage and undergo monitoring.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Review Of Key Legislation, Policy, Plans And Programmes**

**Table A.1 Summary of the relevant plans, policy, programme, legislation**

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	
<b>International</b>	
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	In Rio, Member States launched a process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 SDGs. These goals represent the UN's policy position regarding sustainable development. Local Agenda 21 aims to promote sustainable development at local and regional levels.  The plan aligns with the UN SDGs and interactions are likely across all SDGs.
Rio Declaration and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (1992)	
Local Agenda 21	
Kyiv (SEA) Protocol	The Kyiv Protocol entered into force in July 2010 and develops further from the Espoo Convention (which sets out the obligations of Parties to assess the environmental impact of certain activities at an early stage of planning) to ensure that individual parties integrate environmental assessment into respective plans and programmes at the earliest stage. The Protocol requires its Parties to evaluate the environmental consequences of their official Draft Plans and programmes.
<b>EU</b>	
EIA Directive (2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)	EIA Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (Environmental Impact Assessment Directive) transposed by European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018). The EIA Directive aims to ensure environmental protection and that environmental considerations are integrated into the preparation and consideration of projects at planning stage.  It applies to a wide range of defined public and private projects, which are defined in Annexes I and II of the EIA Directive. All projects listed in Annex I require a mandatory EIA due to their potential to have significant effects on the environment. For projects listed in Annex II, the national authorities must decide whether an EIA is needed. This is achieved by the "screening procedure", which determines the effects of projects on the basis of thresholds/criteria or a case-by-case examination. However, the national authorities must also take into account the criteria laid down in Annex III of the EIA Directive. Projects stemming from the plan will be required to have regard to the requirements of the EIA Directive as appropriate.
SEA Directive (2001/42/EC)	The SEA Directive - Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment transposed by: European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, S.I. No. 435 of 2004 and Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended and S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended, requires an environmental assessment to be carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. Eleven sectors are specified in the SEA Directive namely: Plans prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste/ water management, telecommunications, tourism, town & country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive. For plans and programmes not included above, competent authorities shall carry out a screening procedure which is based on criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive to determine whether the plans and programmes are likely to have significant environmental effects.
Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC)	Environmental Liability Directive on Environmental Liability with regard to the Prevention and Remedying of Environmental Damage (ELD) (2004/35/EC) transposed by The European Communities (Environmental Liability) Regulations, 2008 (S.I. No. 547 of 2008) establishes a framework of environmental

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	liability, based on the "polluter-pays" principle, to prevent and remedy environmental damage. The Directive defines "environmental damage" as damage to protected species and natural habitats, damage to water and damage to soil which poses a threat to human health.
EU Sustainable Development Strategy 2006	The EU Sustainable Development Strategy 2006 and Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth are key EU sustainable development strategies guiding sustainable development in Member States. The EU Sustainable Development Strategy 2006 integrates guiding principles for sustainable development into a single framework. It aims to tackle the principal sustainable development challenges facing the EU such as climate change and green energy, sustainable transport, and sustainable consumption and production. Europe 2020 sets out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century aiming to turn EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.
Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth	
European Green Deal (European Commission, 2020)	<p>The European Green Deal is a set of policy initiatives by the European Commission with the overarching aim of making the European Union (EU) climate neutral by 2050. The European Green Deal covers all sectors of the economy, notably transport, energy, agriculture, buildings, and industries such as steel, cement, ICT, textiles, and chemicals.</p> <p>A key deliverable of the European Green Deal is the EU action Plan 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water, and Soil'.</p> <p>The European Green Deal commits to review each existing law on its climate merits, and introduce new legislation on the circular economy, building renovation, biodiversity, farming, and innovation. The overarching aim of the European Green Deal is for the EU to become the world's first "climate-neutral bloc" by 2050. It aims to transform the EU into a modern, resource-efficient, and competitive economy, ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050.</li> <li>• Economic growth decoupled from resource use.</li> <li>• No person and no place left behind.</li> <li>• The European Green Deal's Zero Pollution Ambition and Sustainable Blue Economy are two examples of sustainable development.</li> </ul> <p>The Zero Pollution Action Plan was adopted in May 2021 and focuses on supporting a key deliverable of the European Green Deal, which is the achieving of zero pollution for air, water, and soil by 2050. Key targets to be achieved by 2030 have been set which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improving air quality to reduce the number of premature deaths caused by air pollution by 55%;</li> <li>• reducing the share of people chronically disturbed by transport noise by 30%; and,</li> <li>• improving water quality by reducing waste, plastic litter at sea (by 50%) and microplastics released into the environment (by 30%).</li> </ul>
EU 8 <sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme 2020 - 2030	<p>The European Commission published its 8<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme (EAP) in 2020 which will guide environmental policy to 2030 and builds on the long-term objective identified in the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP to "live well, within the planetary boundaries" by 2050 at the latest. The proposal for an 8<sup>th</sup> EAP aims to accelerate the transition to a climate-neutral, resource-efficient, and regenerative economy, which gives back to the planet more than it takes. It recognises that human wellbeing and prosperity depend on the healthy ecosystems within which we operate. Building on the European Green Deal, it has the following six priority objectives: for the period up to 2030:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Achieving the 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, in line with the Union's climate and environment objectives.</li> <li>2. Enhancing and mainstreaming adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and adaptation, and reducing the vulnerability of the environment, society and all sectors of the economy to climate change.</li> </ol>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<p>3. Advancing towards a well-being economy, accelerating the transition to circular economy, where growth is regenerative, resources are used efficiently and sustainably, and the waste hierarchy is applied.</p> <p>4. Pursuing a zero-pollution ambition, including for air, water and soil, and protecting the health and well-being of people, animals and ecosystems from environment-related risks and negative impacts.</p> <p>5. Protecting, preserving, and restoring marine and terrestrial biodiversity, and improving the state of the environment (notably air, water, soil, and forest, freshwater, wetland, and marine ecosystems).</p> <p>6. Promoting environmental aspects of sustainability and significantly reducing key environmental and climate pressures related to the Union's production and consumption (particularly in the areas of energy, industrial development, buildings, and infrastructure, mobility, and the food system).</p>
European Council Directive 2003/35/EC	The Directive requires that Member States shall guarantee that the public is given early and effective opportunities to participate in the preparation and modification or review of the plans and programmes.
<b>National</b>	
Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)	The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) forms the foundations of planning in Ireland. The Act covers a wide range of planning-related issues and combines a wide range of legislation in one place. It establishes a hierarchy in relation to planning system both in the forward planning and development management (development consent) processes. It provides a statutory basis for protecting the natural and built environment. It sets out details regarding the considerations for making of the national, regional (RSES), and Development Plans and Local Area Plans including the requirements for SEA, EIA, and AA, as appropriate. The County Development Plans represent the county planning policy which must be consistent with higher level plans in the planning policy hierarchy. The principal regulations underpinning the Planning and Development Act is the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).
Our Sustainable Future, a Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (2012)	The Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland sets out 70 measures to improve the quality of life in Ireland for the current and future generations. The Framework sets out clear measures, responsibilities, and timelines in an implementation plan. These include areas such as the sustainability of public finances and economic resilience, natural resources, agriculture, climate change, transport, public health, education, innovation and research, education, skills and training, and global poverty.
Building on Recovery; Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021	The Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan presents the Government's framework for infrastructure investment in Ireland over the period 2016-2021. The Plan prioritises spending on those areas of greatest need as the economy continues its strong recovery. The Infrastructure and Capital Investment plan provides for investment in 'vital services' such as 'public transport' and is striving to manage the "increasing public expenditure in a sustainable manner, in line with economic growth".
'Project Ireland 2040': National Planning Framework 2040 (2018) - currently draft revision of the NPF (July 2024) and The National Development Plan 2021-2030 (2021)	<p>Project Ireland 2040 is the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more resilient and sustainable future. Project Ireland 2040 incorporates both the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP). The NPF has a statutory basis and the draft first revision of the NPF is currently at public consultation stage.</p> <p>This Government's long-term strategic planning framework will guide national, regional, and local planning and investment decisions to 2040. The major public investment approved by Government and detailed in the NDP will play a significant role in addressing the opportunities and challenges faced by Ireland over the coming years from issues such housing, health, climate action and the projected population growth by one million people between 2016 and 2040.</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<p>The National Development Plan (NDP) details the major public investment which will help Ireland to address projected population growth. The Draft First Revision to the NPF will updates the targets set in the NPF in 2018 to take into account the changes that have occurred between 2018 and 2024 such as climate transition, regional development, demographics, digitalisation and investment and prioritisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are several national policies objectives (NPO) contained with the Draft Revised NPF that relate to Waterford and tourism</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism specific Plans</b>	
Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030	<p>The <i>Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030</i> published by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media builds in November 2024 provides a tourism policy framework for Irish tourism for the period to 2030. It builds on the <i>People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025</i> published in 2015. This new policy sets out strategic objectives to ensure a resilient and flourishing tourism sector in 2030. It builds on the preceding policy by including measures on climate change and sustainability, along with strong set of proposals to support the sector to grow revenue. This policy is formulated to balance economic development with environmental and social considerations. The Policy Framework includes a total of 61 policy proposals many of which are reflected in the current Fáilte Ireland DEDP and will continue to provide strategic direction for the development of sustainable tourism sector.</p>
Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways	<p>The Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways was published in September 2018 and aims to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenways users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country between 2018 and 2028 with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity.</p>
Tourism policy statement "People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025"	<p>This policy statement is centred on Ireland achieving its full potential as a destination for overseas tourism. However, it is recognised that the domestic tourism market underpins the range of visitor accommodation and services that provide competitive advantage to Ireland in the international market and many of the measures contained in this statement will similarly benefit the domestic tourism sector. This statement represents the Tourism Policy Statement for Ireland which intends to grow the industry up to 2025 in terms of revenue and employment. The overall tourism goal of Government is that: by 2025, revenue from overseas visitors, excluding carrier receipts, will increase to 5 billion in real terms (i.e., excluding the effects of inflation). Employment in the tourism sector will be 250,000 by 2025, compared with around 200,000 at present. There will be 10 million visits to Ireland annually by 2025.</p>
Tourism Action Plan 2019 - 2021	<p>The Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 was published in 2018 by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and replaces the previous Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018. This plan sets out actions that have been identified as priorities to be progressed in order to maintain sustainable growth in overseas tourism revenue and employment, and to achieve the long-term objectives of the tourism policy statement "People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025". Each action involves specific tourism stakeholders, both in the public and private sectors, all of whom we expect to proactively work towards the completion of actions within the specified timeframe. The plan contains actions focusing on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy Context</li> <li>Marketing Ireland as a Visitor Destination</li> <li>Enhancing the Visitor Experience</li> <li>Research in the Irish Tourism Sector</li> <li>Supporting Local Communities in Tourism</li> <li>Wider Government Policy</li> </ul>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Context</li> <li>• Co-ordination Structures</li> </ul>
Actions to Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices 2021 - 2023	<p>Actions to Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices 2021-2023 is a report prepared by the Sustainable Tourism Working Group. The working group was established on the basis of an action from the Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 in order to review international best practice in sustainable tourism and to propose guiding principles for sustainable tourism development in Ireland. The main objectives of the plan are to identify actions which promote sustainable tourism practices, establish new research methods which increase the level of evidence available, and form a clear narrative for communicating about the sustainability agenda to build a better understanding and awareness among tourism stakeholders and the general public. The actions identified within the plan are categorised into the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Evidence Base</li> <li>• Environmental Impact</li> <li>• Awareness &amp; Education</li> <li>• Business Planning</li> <li>• Destination Management</li> <li>• Sales &amp; Marketing</li> </ul>
<b>Regional</b>	
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region 2020 - 2032  Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan	<p>The RSES for the Southern Region sets out the strategic regional development framework for the Southern region, with a primary aim to implement Project Ireland 2040 and to support the achievement of balanced regional development. The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that all City &amp; County Development Plans and variations are consistent with the RSES and relevant national policy, with draft development plans or proposed variations to development plans referred by the relevant local authority to the Regional Assembly.</p> <p>As a subset of the RSES for the Southern Region, a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) was developed for Waterford Metropolitan Area. The MASP provides a framework for accelerated sustainable growth by identifying infrastructural goals and opportunities. The aim of the MASP is to achieve compact growth within the Waterford Metropolitan area, in line with the strategic objectives of the National Planning Framework.</p>
Rural Development Programme 2014-2022	<p>The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), is the Managing Authority for Ireland's Rural Development Programme (RDP). The Programme is co-funded by the EU's European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the national exchequer. The RDP for Ireland was formally adopted by the European Commission in 2015 and is part of the Common Agricultural Policy. Under the EU Rural Development Regulation that governs the RDP there are six priorities for spending: • Priority 1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas. • Priority 2: Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and sustainable management of forest. • Priority 3: Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture. • Priority 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry. • Priority 5: Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors. • Priority 6: promoting social inclusion, poverty reductions and economic development in rural areas. The programme details how funds will be allocated over the 9-year period to support development in rural areas.</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021 - 2025	<p>Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 was published in March 2021 and provides the framework to achieve the vision of transforming the quality of life and opportunity for people living in rural areas. This policy is aligned with current international policy regarding rural development at EU and OECD level.</p> <p>The Draft Plan is aligned with policy measures of Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximising resources and strengths in the Green Economy to support employment opportunities for rural communities across a range of areas including sustainable tourism.</li> <li>• Further development of the Fáilte Ireland Experience Brands including Ireland's Ancient East by strengthening Ireland's image as an outdoor activity holiday destination for both domestic and international markets.</li> <li>• Investment in greenways, blueways, walking trails and other outdoor recreation infrastructure to support the growth in outdoor recreation tourism.</li> <li>• Expansion of the Walks Scheme to achieve a target of at least 80 trails.</li> <li>• Explore the potential for the development of further tourist trails, including cross-border trails and initiatives.</li> </ul>
Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 - 2027	<p>The Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027 is a roadmap for the industry and all stakeholders involved in tourism in the region to navigate the current challenges and steer a course towards recovery and continued success. The strategy is built around the following strategic pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To sustain tourism businesses in the short term so they can thrive over the long term</li> <li>• To support industry to attract and retain talent to support sustainable growth</li> <li>• To achieve a sustained step change in Irish stay-cations.</li> <li>• To transform Ireland's outdoor tourism experience</li> <li>• To transform Irish tourism's online presence and e-commerce capability</li> <li>• To enhance the destination experience and support the industry in building a pipeline of future international business</li> <li>• To reduce the carbon footprint of the tourism sector and make it much more sustainable</li> <li>• To ensure our delivery is best in class</li> </ul>
Waterford City and County Council's Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Plan 2017 - 2022	<p>The Plan set out the strategic vision to support accelerating the growth of the tourism economy as recognised as one of six economic goals in the Waterford Local Economic &amp; Community Plan (2015-2020). The Plan calls out a series of actions across the themes of product development, festivals and events, and marketing and promotion to support the delivery of objectives identified in the LECP.</p>
Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024: South-East	<p>The Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024: South East is developed by regional stakeholders and focuses on collaborative initiatives that can help deliver enterprise growth in within the south-east region. This plan is developed based on the following 5 strategic pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging entrepreneurship and enhancing the region's start up ecosystem.</li> <li>• Ensuring that the green economy becomes an engine for future job creation and economic growth in the region.</li> <li>• The principles of smart specialisation and clustering are critical for the region to create a resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and competitive economy.</li> </ul>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building on the existing RD&amp;I capacity to place innovation at the heart of the South-East economy.</li> <li>Developing a region that is attractive to both domestic and international visitors and communicating the benefits of living and working in the South-East.</li> </ul>
Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Scheme	The Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Scheme (WMATS) aims to manage and plan for the projected population and economic growth within the Waterford Metropolitan Area (WMA) and the associated demand on transport infrastructure, with a view to safeguarding and enhancing the WMA's attractiveness to live, work, visit and invest in.
Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022 - 2028	<p>The Waterford City &amp; County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Waterford City and County. The development plan is aligned with and consistent with higher level plans including the NPF, RSES etc. The Plan includes a variety of policy objectives for various sectors. Many of these supports the development of tourism together with environmental protection and achieving sustainable development.</p> <p>The development of this plan supports the achievement of <b>Policy objective ECON 27</b> relating to the development and implementation of a Destination Experience Development Plan and continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland.</p>
Waterford Economic Strategy 2022 - 2040	<p>The Waterford Economic Strategy 2040 has been developed by Waterford City and County Council (WCCC) and focuses on measures to maximise the capacity of WCCC to contribute to the economic development of Waterford and the wider region. The strategy aims to inform Waterford's economic development as an investment location, a magnet for talent, major tourism destination and a place to live, while recognising the city as the main economic driver for the county and the wider region. The Strategy aims to simultaneously maintain and enhance the existing economy while positioning Waterford to embrace sustainable growth opportunities. The high-level goals of the strategy are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low Carbon &amp; Sustainable Economy</li> <li>Economic Diversity &amp; Sustainable Growth</li> <li>Sustainable Place Making &amp; Destination Management</li> <li>Innovation &amp; Digital Transition</li> </ul>
Waterford City & County Council: Roadmap to Carbon Neutrality 2040	<p>The Waterford City &amp; County Council: Roadmap to Carbon Neutrality 2040 is a document which outlines 6 programme groups which have been developed with a view to transitioning Waterford City towards being a net-zero carbon emission city. The programmes groups developed area as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carbon neutral businesses and services</li> <li>Carbon neutral homes</li> <li>Carbon neutral travel</li> <li>Sustainable Consumption</li> <li>Developing renewable energy sources locally</li> <li>Increasing urban resilience</li> </ul>
Kilkenny County Development Plan 2022 - 2028	The Kilkenny County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Kilkenny which border County Waterford.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Wexford County Development Plan 2022 - 2028	The Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Wexford County, which borders Waterford.
Cork County Development Plan 2022 - 2028	The Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Cork, which borders Waterford.
Tipperary County Development Plan 2022 - 2028	The Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Tipperary County, which borders Waterford.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	
<b><u>International</u></b>	
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 "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 <sup>nd</sup> May 1992 in Nairobi and was opened to signature on 5 <sup>th</sup> June 1992, during the Rio "Earth Summit". Within a year, it had received 168 signatures. It entered into force on 29 <sup>th</sup> 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 <sup>st</sup> September 2002) Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.
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.
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.
Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in	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

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the North Atlantic Implementation Plan for the period 2019 – 2024	<p>the European Union. Implementation plans are prepared by 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"> <li>• Providing a forum for consultation and co-operation on the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of salmon stocks.</li> <li>• Proposing regulatory measures; and</li> <li>• Making recommendations on scientific research;</li> <li>• Each jurisdiction develops Implementation Plans detailing measures to be taken over five-year periods in relation to three areas of concern;</li> <li>• Management of salmon fisheries;</li> <li>• Protection and restoration of Atlantic salmon habitat; and</li> <li>• Management of aquaculture, introductions and transfers and transgenics.</li> </ul> <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>
<b><u>EU</u></b>	
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 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.</p>
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"> <li>• the impacts of climate change;</li> </ul>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• forest fires;</li> <li>• food insecurity; and</li> <li>• disease outbreaks - including by protecting wildlife and fighting illegal wildlife trade.</li> </ul>
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.
<b>National</b>	
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 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.
National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 - 2030	<p>This 2023-2030 Biodiversity Action Plan is the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Biodiversity Action Plan and establishes actions that can aid in achieving Ireland's vision for biodiversity. There are 6 strategic objectives included in the plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity.</li> <li>2. Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs.</li> <li>3. Secure Nature's Contribution to People.</li> <li>4. Embed Biodiversity at the Heart of Climate Action.</li> <li>5. Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity.</li> <li>6. Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives.</li> </ol>
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.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
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.
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.
All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021 - 2025	<p>The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) 2021-2025 is a five-year road map developed to build on the successful delivery of the 81 actions in the first Plan prepared for the 2015 to 2020 period. It aims to take steps to restore pollinator populations to health levels in Ireland. It creates a framework to bring together pollinator initiatives across Ireland, so that through coordination and cooperation to overarching goal can be achieved. The AIPP 2021-2025 has 186 actions spread across the following six objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective 1: Making farmland pollinator friendly.</li> <li>• Objective 2: Making public land pollinator friendly.</li> <li>• Objective 3: Making private land pollinator friendly.</li> <li>• Objective 4: All-Ireland Honeybee Strategy.</li> <li>• Objective 5: Conserving rare pollinators.</li> <li>• Objective 6: Strategic coordination of the Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	
<b><u>International</u></b>	
Johannesburg Plan of Implementation 2002	This international policy initiative sets out an action plan for the implementation of the activities adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. It covers topics such as poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, managing natural resources, sustainable development, and other aspects of the implementation of Agenda 21.
<b><u>National</u></b>	
Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013 - 2025	<p>The Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025 is the Department of Health's roadmap for building a healthier Ireland. It is based around four key goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life.</li> <li>• To reduce health inequalities.</li> </ul>
Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 - 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• To create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland.</li> </ul> <p>The Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025 provides a clear roadmap of how we can continue to work together to bring about good health, access to services, healthy environments, and the promotion of resilience and to ensure that everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing, to their full potential. This action plan will build on the work and progress made to date and focus on the remaining years of the Healthy Ireland Framework from 2021-2025.</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland 2013 - 2025	<p>The National Physical Activity Plan aims to increase physical activity levels across the entire population thereby improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland, where everybody will be physically active and where everybody lives, works and plays in a society that facilitates, promotes and supports physical activity and an active way of life with less time spent being sedentary. The plan sets out eight areas for action areas which are distinct yet complementary building blocks for encouraging greater participation in physical activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Awareness, Education and Communication</li> <li>• Children and Young People</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Workplaces</li> <li>• Sport and Physical Activity in the Community</li> <li>• Research, Monitoring and Evaluation</li> <li>• Implementation through Partnership</li> </ul>
Creating a Green Infrastructure for Ireland- Enhancing Natural Capital for Human Wellbeing 2010	<p>The guidance document sets out a broad definition of Green Infrastructure and explores and proposes an approach and a set of principles that should be followed in Green Infrastructure planning. Integration of the Green Infrastructure approach can be smart and strategic and offer potential ways of effectively integrating natural capital including biodiversity into spatial planning and sectoral considerations. This is a real challenge for biodiversity policy and its implementation, which is crucial in addressing biodiversity loss.</p>
<b>Noise</b>	
Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC)	<p>The END transposed by Environmental Noise Regulations S.I 140 of 2006 as amended by S.I. No. 549 / 2018 is the main EU instrument to identify noise pollution levels and to trigger the necessary action both at Member State and at EU level. To pursue its stated aims, the END focuses on three action areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The determination of exposure to environmental noise.</li> <li>• Ensuring that information on environmental noise and its effects is made available to the public.</li> <li>• Preventing and reducing environmental noise where necessary and preserving environmental noise quality where it is good.</li> </ul> <p>The END applies to noise to which humans are exposed, particularly in built-up areas, in public parks or other quiet areas in an agglomeration, in quiet areas in open country, near schools, hospitals and other noise-sensitive buildings and areas. It does not apply to noise that is caused by the exposed person, noise from domestic activities, noise created by neighbours, noise at workplaces or noise inside means of transport or due to military activities in military areas.</p>
<b>Local level</b>	
Waterford Noise Action Plans 2019 - 2023	<p>Following the preparation of the noise maps, Noise Action Plans are developed by Local Authorities to manage noise issues and effects. They involve the prevention and reduction of environmental noise, for the areas where the Lden (55 dB) and Lnight (50 dB) reporting thresholds have been exceeded. Waterford City &amp; County Council has identified their noise-sensitive locations, which may involve drawing up a shortlist of potential areas for action. This list can which includes areas that are above the recommended onset values for noise mitigation measures, and those that are below the</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	recommended level for preservation (to help identify Quiet Areas –this refers to a space that is not affected by noise from transport, industrial activities or recreational noise). An annual Noise Action Plan progress report is to be submitted Waterford City & County Council by the 28 <sup>th</sup> February each year.
<b>Water</b>	
<b><u>International</u></b>	
OSPAR Convention	The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (the 'OSPAR Convention') was open for signature at the Ministerial Meeting of the Oslo and Paris Commissions in Paris on 22 September 1992 and entered into force on 25 <sup>th</sup> March 1998. It was adopted together with a Final Declaration and an Action Plan. In this decade, the Convention will be implemented through OSPAR's North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030. The overall aim is to tackle marine pollution from all sources. Contained within the OSPAR Convention are Annexes which deal with the following areas: Prevention and elimination of pollution from land-based sources, prevention and elimination of pollution by dumping or incineration, prevention and elimination of pollution from offshore sources, assessment of the quality of the marine environment, on the protection and conservation of the ecosystems and biological diversity of the maritime area.
<b><u>EU</u></b>	
Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	<p>The European Union Water Framework Directive (WFD) was transposed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water Policy Regulations (S.I.722/2003) and Water Policy Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 350 of 2014).</li> <li>• Technical Specifications for the Chemical Analysis and Monitoring of Water Status Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No. 489 of 2011).</li> <li>• Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations, 2022 (S.I. No. 113 of 2022).</li> <li>• Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 9 of 2010).</li> <li>• Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations, 2009 (S.I. No. 272 of 2009).</li> <li>• Water Quality (Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2001.</li> </ul> <p>The WFD was signed into law in October 2000. It requires EU Member States to achieve water quality of at least 'good status' in rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters, by 2027 at the latest. The WFD has been a pioneering piece of legislation because it mandates public participation, recognising the value of local knowledge and community involvement in decision making processes.</p> <p>Member States, are required to comply with the environmental objectives of Article 4 of WFD, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent deterioration of the status of all bodies of surface water and groundwater;</li> <li>• Protect, enhance and restore all bodies of surface water and groundwater with the aim of achieving at least good status by the end of 2027 at the latest;</li> <li>• Protect and enhance all artificial and heavily modified bodies of water, with the aim of achieving at least good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status; and</li> <li>• Achieve compliance with the standards and requirements for designated protected areas.</li> </ul> <p>The WFD is implemented through River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) in three six-year cycles. Each cycle providing an opportunity to assess water conditions at different stages and set out actions to achieve water quality objectives.</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)	The Marine Strategy Framework Directive transposed by European Communities (Marine Strategy Framework) Regulations (S.I. No. 249 of 2011) aims to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of the EU's marine waters by 2020 and to protect the resource base upon which marine-related economic and social activities depend. Good environmental status in the marine environment means that the seas are clean, healthy and productive and that human use of the marine environment is kept at a sustainable level. Under the Directive, marine waters must be assessed against an agreed set of standards across a number of important environmental areas (for example: biodiversity, fish stocks, and contaminants). Based on the assessment, appropriate environmental targets and indicators must be set and programmes of measures put in place to reach GES.
Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)	<p>The Floods Directive transposed by the European Communities Assessment and Management of Flood Risk Regulations, 2010 (SI 122/2010) applies to all kinds of floods (river, lakes, flash floods, urban floods, coastal floods, including storm surges and tsunamis), on all of the EU territory requires Member States to approach flood risk management in a three-stage process whereby: Member States will by 2011 undertake a preliminary flood risk assessment of their river basins and associated coastal zones, to identify areas where potential significant flood risk exists. Where real risks of flood damage exist, they must by 2013 develop flood hazard maps and flood risk maps for such areas. These maps will identify areas with a medium likely hood of flooding (at least a 1 in 100-year event) and extreme events or low likelihood events, in which expected water depths should be indicated. In the areas identified as being at risk the number of inhabitants potentially at risk, the economic activity and the environmental damage potential shall be indicated.</p> <p>Finally, by 2015 flood risk management plans must be drawn up for these zones. These plans are to include measures to reduce the probability of flooding and its potential consequences. They will address all phases of the flood risk management cycle but focus particularly on prevention (i.e. preventing damage caused by floods by avoiding construction of houses and industries in present and future flood-prone areas or by adapting future developments to the risk of flooding), protection (by taking measures to reduce the likelihood of floods and/or the impact of floods in a specific location such as restoring flood plains and wetlands) and preparedness (e.g. providing instructions to the public on what to do in the event of flooding). Due to the nature of flooding, much flexibility on objectives and measures are left to the Member States in view of subsidiarity.</p>
Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC)	The Urban Wastewater Framework Directive transposed by the S.I. No. 254/2001 - Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations 2001 aims to protect inland surface waters by regulating collection and treatment of urban wastewater and discharge of certain biodegradable industrial wastewater. The Directive sets targets dates for the provision of specified level of collection and treatment facilities.
Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)	The Groundwater Directive transposed by the European Communities Environmental Objectives (groundwater) Regulations 2010 S.I. No. 9 of 2010 requires Member States to ensure that groundwater is not polluted by dangerous substances. Member States must establish and apply quality standards to groundwater and while developing measures to minimise groundwater contamination from pollution.
Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC)	The Drinking Water Directive transposed by the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations 2007 establishes strict quality standards for water used for human consumption. The Directive sets out the maximum and guideline values for various different physical, bacteriological and chemical contaminants.
Drinking Water Directive Recast (2020/2184)	Directive (EU) 2020/2184 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2020 on the quality of water intended for human consumption (recast) was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2020 and entered into force on 12 <sup>th</sup> January 2021. The European Union Member States will now have two years to transpose it into national legislation. The new Drinking Water Directive introduces the obligation for Member States to improve or maintain access to water intended for human consumption, with a focus on human health protection and improving access to water for all segments of the population.
Surface Water Directive (75/440/EEC)	The Surface Water Directive transposed by the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations, 2009 (S.I. No. 272 of 2009) lays down nonbinding 'guide' values and binding 'imperative' values and requires Member States to monitor the quality of surface waters from which drinking water is abstracted and to take measures to ensure that it complies with the minimum quality standards.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Shellfish Waters Directive (2006/113/EC)	The aim of the Shellfish Waters Directive transposed by European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006 (SI No 268 of 2006) is to protect or improve shellfish waters to support shellfish life and growth. It is designed to protect the aquatic habitat of bivalve and gastropod molluscs, which include oysters, mussels, cockles, scallops, and clams. The Directive requires Member States to designate waters that need protection to support shellfish life and growth. The Directive sets physical, chemical, and microbiological requirements that designated shellfish waters must either comply with or endeavour to improve. The Directive also provides for the establishment of pollution reduction programmes for the designated waters. Responsibility for the Shellfish Waters Directive in Ireland transferred from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government on 5 November 2008.
Bathing Waters Directive (2006/7/EC)	The overall objective of the Bathing Water Directive transposed by the Bathing Water Quality Regulations S.I. 84/1988 and amended by S.I. No. 79/2008 aims to protect public health whilst bathing, and also offers an opportunity to improve management practices at bathing waters and to standardise the information provided to bathers across Europe. Bathing waters are an important resource, and it is therefore essential that the standards within the Bathing Water Directive are adhered to.
Sewage Sludge Directive (86/278/EEC)	The objective of the Sewage Sludge Directive is to encourage the use of sewage sludge in agriculture and to regulate its use in such a way as to prevent harmful effects on soil, vegetation, animals, and man. To this end, it prohibits the use of untreated sludge on agricultural land unless it is injected or incorporated into the soil. The Directive is given effect in Irish law by the Waste Management (Use of Sewage Sludge in Agriculture) (Amendment) Regulations (S.I. 267/2001).
Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)	The Nitrates Directive has the objective of reducing water pollution caused or induced by nitrates from agricultural sources. Under the regulations, sewage sludge is considered a fertiliser under the definitions of the regulations: 'fertiliser' means any substance containing nitrogen or phosphorus, or a nitrogen compound or phosphorus compound utilised on land to enhance growth of vegetation and may include livestock manure, the residues from fish farms and sewage sludge.
Priority Substances Directive	This Directive amends Directives 2000/60/EC (WFD) and 2008/105/EC (Environmental Quality Standards Directive [EQSD]) regarding priority substances and water policy. Directive 2000/60/EC set out a strategy against water pollution, including the identification of priority substances pose a significant risk to, or through, the aquatic environment. The first list of priority substances (Annex X to the WFD) was established through Decision 2455/2001/EC. This list was replaced by Annex II of the EQSD, also known as the Priority Substances Directive, which also set EQS for the substances in surface waters. The list was replaced again in 2013 by Annex I to Directive 2013/39/EU, which also included EQS and some other provisions on chemical pollutants.
A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's water Resource (COM (2012) 673)	This Communication outlines actions that relate to better implementation of current water legislation, integration of water policy objectives into other policies and filling gaps particularly in relation to water quantity and efficiency. These actions are to ensure that water of sufficient quantity and good quality is available to service the needs of people as well as the environment and the EU's economy. The Blueprint's time horizon is closely related to the EU 2020 Strategy particularly the Resource Efficiency Roadmap, of which the Blueprint is the water milestone. However, the Blueprint covers a longer time span, up to 2050, and is expected to be the driver of long-term EU water policy.
<b>National</b>	
Water Environment (Abstractions and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022	The Water Environment Act provides for the regulation of water abstractions and their associated impoundments so as to give further effect to Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD). The Act provides for a modern registration, licensing, and control regime for water abstractions. The Act confers certain licensing and enforcement functions with regard to water abstractions to the Environmental Protection Agency, with local authorities also maintaining an ongoing enforcement role.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts of 1977 and 1990	The Water Pollution Acts and associated regulations set out quality standards for Phosphorus in surface waters, particularly rivers and lakes and makes provisions for the protection of watercourses. The Phosphorus Regulations require that water quality be maintained or improved by reference to the baseline biological quality rating (rivers), or trophic status (lakes) assigned by the EPA.
Inland Fisheries Act 2010 (No. 10 of 2010)	This act established a body known as Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), as a replacement for the Central Fisheries Board. It sets out the responsibilities of the IFI, for the protection, management, and conservation, of the inland fisheries resource and recreational sea angling.
Dumping at Sea Act 1996 (No. 14 of 1996), (as amended)	An Act to make further provision to control dumping at sea, to give effect to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-east Atlantic done at Paris on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> September 1992, and for those purposes to repeal and re-enact with amendments the Dumping at Sea Act (1981) and to provide for related matters.
Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977 (Water Quality Standards for Phosphorus) Regulations 1998 (S.I. 258/1998)	The Water Quality Standards for Phosphorus Regulations provide for specified improvements in water quality conditions in rivers and lakes based on phosphorus concentrations or related water quality classifications. The Regulations also provide for periodic reporting in relation to progress in implementing the requirements of the Regulations. These Regulations give effect to certain requirements arising under Council Directive 76/46/EC on pollution caused by certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment of the Community.
Water Services Acts 2007-2017 (Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems Regulations 2012) (S.I. 223/2012)	Provides for water services infrastructure. Outlines the responsibilities involved in delivering and managing water services. Identifies the authority in charge of provision of water and wastewater supply. Irish Water was given the responsibility of the provision of water and wastewater services in the amendment act during 2013; therefore these services are no longer the responsibility of the 34 Local Authorities in Ireland.
Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (S.I. No. 272 of 2009)	The Surface Waters Regulations establish legally binding quality objectives for all surface waters and environmental quality standards for pollutants for purposes of implementing provisions of Community legislation on protection of surface waters.
Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007 (S.I. 684/2007), as amended	This has been derived from the Dangerous Substances Directive 2006/11/EC, to address pollution caused by certain toxic substances that are discharged to the aquatic environment and to establish a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.
Water Quality (Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2001(S.I. 12/2001)	The Water Quality Regulations give effect to the Dangerous Substances Directive 76/464/EC and the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC. They prescribe water quality standards and aim to ensure that, in relation to a substance present, where the existing condition of a water body does not meet a specific standard there shall be no dis-improvement in the condition of the water body.
Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Registration) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 220/2012), as amended	Households connected to a DWWTS must register their systems in line with the regulations. Systems are expected to meet basic standards in order to not cause a risk to human health or the environment. Inspections are carried out to identify treatment systems that do not meet this standard.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters Regulations 2022 (S.I. 113/2022)	<p>These Regulations give effect to Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme, provide statutory support for good agricultural practice to protect waters against pollution from agricultural sources and include measures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periods when land application of fertilisers is prohibited.</li> <li>• Limits on the land application of fertilisers.</li> <li>• Storage requirements for livestock manure; and</li> <li>• Monitoring of the effectiveness of the measures in terms of agricultural practice and impact on water quality.</li> </ul> <p>The Regulations give further effect to several EU Directives including Directives in relation to protection of waters against pollution from agricultural sources ('the Nitrates Directive'), dangerous substances in water, waste management, protection of groundwater, public participation in policy development and water policy (the Water Framework Directive).</p>
Environmental Objectives (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) Regulations 2009 (S.I. 296/2009), as amended	<p>The Regulations require the EPA, when classifying surface waters in accordance with the ecological objectives approach of the Water Framework Directive, to assign a status of 'less than good ecological status' where Margaritifera is found to be in unfavourable conservation status. This will trigger further actions as waters classified as less than good must be restored to at least good status within a prescribed timeframe.</p>
Quality of Shellfish Waters Regulations 2006 (S.I. 268/2006), as amended	<p>The Shellfish Waters Directive was transposed into legislation in Ireland by the European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) Regulations 2006 (S.I. 268/2006), which were subsequently amended by the European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (S.I. 55/2009) and subsequently by the Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2009 (S.I. 464/2009). It is noted that at EU level the Shellfish Directive was repealed with shellfish waters being afforded protection under the WFD. At national level, the Shellfish Regulations specifies which waters are designated as Shellfish Waters.</p>
Water Action Plan: River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 (DHLGH)	<p>The third cycle River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland covers the period 2022-2027. The plan sets out the actions that Ireland will take to protect and restore rivers, lakes, estuaries, and coastal waters, building on the work done in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> RBMP cycles, with a view to achieving the objectives of the WFD by 2027 and beyond.</p> <p>In this cycle there is an emphasis on collective efforts and space given to collaborative activities to encourage collaboration and coordination through the governance structures. This plan includes targeted measures for all water bodies, with the objective of either protecting water bodies at good or high status or restoring water bodies to at least good status.</p>
Project Ireland 2040 - National Marine Planning Framework (2021)	<p>The National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) brings together all marine-based human activities for the first time, outlining the Government's vision, objectives and marine planning policies for each marine activity. The NMPF is a long-term strategy for the next 20 years which will set the groundwork for the development of the marine waters surrounding Ireland. The NMPF details how these marine activities will interact with each other in an ocean space that is under increasing spatial pressure, ensuring the sustainable use of our marine resources to 2040.</p> <p>The NMPF is intended as the marine equivalent to the National Planning Framework. This approach will enable the Government to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set a clear direction for managing our seas.</li> <li>• Clarify objectives and priorities.</li> <li>• Direct decision makers, users and stakeholders towards strategic, plan-led, and efficient use of our marine resources.</li> </ul> <p>The NMPF has been prepared with an ecosystem-based approach and informed by best available knowledge. As part of the preparation of the NMPF, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) have been carried out.</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Water Services Strategic Plan, A Plan for the Future of Water Services 2015  Draft Water Services Strategic Plan 2050	<p>The Water Services Strategic Plan prepared by Irish Water provides the opportunity to consider the way water services are delivered at a national level. Effective water services, including the delivery of a sustainable and reliable clean water supply and safe disposal of wastewater, are essential for a modern country. The plan takes a 25-year view towards the vision that "Through responsible stewardship, efficient management and strong partnerships, Ireland has a world class water infrastructure that ensures secure and sustainable water services, essential for our health, our communities, the economy and the environment". The plan has been prepared to comply with Irish Water's statutory obligation and as a basis for broad public and stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>The Draft Water Services Strategic Plan 2050 will replace the 2015 WSSP which covers the period of 2015 to 2040, This plan outlines the desired outcomes for the water sector in Ireland, accounting for the challenges and opportunities it will face from now until 2050. The plan identifies four strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe and Reliable Drinking Water</li> <li>• Support our Customers, Communities and the Economy</li> <li>• Protect and Restore our Environment</li> <li>• Sustainable Services Fit for the Future.</li> </ul>
National Wastewater Sludge Management Plan	Irish Water published the first National Wastewater Sludge Management Plan (NWSMP) outlining its strategy for managing wastewater sludge over the next 25 years. The NWSMP sets out a nationwide standardised approach to ensure that treated wastewater sludge across the country is effectively managed, stored, transported, and re-used or disposed of in a sustainable way, to the benefit of the public and the environment we all live in.
The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)	The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (FRM Guidelines) arise from Ireland's obligations under the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC). Under this Directive, Ireland must assess flood risk and actively take steps to reduce flood risk. The guidelines guide the integration of flood risk management with spatial planning.
Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment - Guidelines (IFI, 2020)	The Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment - Guidelines developed by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) outlines an integrated watercourse protection strategy through consultation with a wide range of experts in the area. Development management standards, policies and objectives are set per watercourse. These are mapped in County Development Plans, Local Area Plans & masterplans and integrated with flood risk, Natura 2000 designated sites, habitat, and amenities mapping. Implementation of this strategy not only protects watercourses and their associated riparian zones in urban areas, but also provides other benefits important for the well-being of people living nearby.
Environmental River Enhancement Programme	The aim of the Environmental River Enhancement Programme (EREP) is to investigate the status of habitats and species, primarily fish, in drained catchments. It aims to develop and implement channel maintenance and management practices and to advise mitigation measures that are appropriate to the channel type, taking hydro-morphology into account.
Environmental Guidance: Drainage Maintenance & Construction (OPW, 2019)	The aim of the Environmental Guidance is to help OPW Drainage Maintenance staff to carry out their activities in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner, and where relevant implement this guidance for construction works. The Environmental Procedures (EPs) contained, are the backbone of how the risk of environmental impact is reduced. The guidance sets out Procedures designed to limit potential impacts and to improve habitats for many species and assist all levels of staff to fulfil their environmental duties in an effective manner. Working in marine or river environments requires careful consideration of potential ecological impacts that can occur. The purpose of this guidance is to manage and substantially reduce potential impacts to the animals and plants that depend on the river corridors, estuaries, lakes, and catchments where drainage maintenance and construction works are carried out.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Code of Best Forest Practice – Ireland and associated Forestry and Water Quality Guidelines (2000)	A framework for the implementation of sustainable forest management in Ireland is described in the Irish National Forest Standard. It has several instruments including the Code of Best Forest Practice, Environmental Guidelines Relating to Water Quality, Archaeology, Landscape, Harvesting and Biodiversity, and the Forest Service Inspection and monitoring systems, particularly in relation to grant-aided forestry. The Code of Best Forest Practice is designed to ensure that forest operations in Ireland are carried out in a way which meets high environmental, social, and economic standards.
Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme	<p>The OPW undertook the National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme in consultation with the Local Authorities and supported by external engineering consultants. One of the key objectives of CFRAM was to identify and map the existing and potential future flood hazard and flood risk in the areas at potentially significant risk from flooding, called Areas for Further Assessment (AFAs). These areas and associated sources of flood risk were identified through the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA), which was a nationwide screening of flood risk. The final report of the PFRA and designation of the AFAs was published in March 2012. The OPW designated 300 areas (AFAs) at potentially significant risk from flooding.</p> <p>The CFRAM Programme studied 80% of Ireland's primary flood risk and included a detailed study of the flood risk for 300 communities, including 90 coastal. These were areas deemed in 2012 to be potentially at risk from flooding and required further assessment through the CFRAM. The CFRAM was a point in time study. The OPW realises that flood risk can change and has an ongoing programme of work to continue to assess the flood risk across the country, from all flooding sources. As well as informing future measures and investment, this programme of work meets Ireland's requirements under the EU Floods Directive.</p>
National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development to 2030	Ireland's National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development 2030 (NSPSA) was published on 5 October 2023. The National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development proposes 58 actions to be implemented over the period up to 2020. Actions address areas such as 'sustainable development' and 'environmental contribution'. The plan builds upon the successes of the previous plan (2015-2020) while also incorporating the lessons learned.
National Water Resources Plan - Framework Plan	<p>The National Water Resources Plan is a strategic plan used to identify deficiencies and needs across an entire water supply, and to develop plan level capital and operational solutions to address these issues. Irish Water's National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) is the first such plan for the entire public water supply in Ireland. It allows for the integration of Government Policy, Legislation and external factors including climate change that have the potential to impact our water supplies, into the planning and operation of our existing and future supply asset base. The objective of the NWRP is to manage customer and communities needs while meeting their requirements over the short, medium and long term, by ensuring safe, secure, sustainable and reliable water supplies.</p> <p>The objectives of the NWRP are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable Irish Water to address need across water supplies in the most effective way over time, through the regulated investment cycles;</li> <li>• Ensure that there is a transparent framework to develop the most appropriate projects/programmes to meet statutory obligations in relation to water supply;</li> <li>• Provide a framework to track outcomes, allowing interventions to be prioritised in order to bring the water supply up to the required standards in the shortest possible timeframe; and</li> <li>• Deliver a plan to ensure that all customers have access to safe, secure, reliable and sustainable water supplies, wherever they live.</li> </ul>
Water Services Policy Statement 2018 - 2025 (Irish Water, 2018) Draft	The statement clarifies the government's expectations for the delivery and development of water and wastewater services for the coming years and will also inform decisions on rural water services. The Draft Water Services Policy Statement 2024-2030 will build on the work of the previous Policy Statement

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Water Services Policy Statement 2024-2030 (DHLGH)	<p>and reflect the significant changes to the landscape of water services in the last number of years. The Policy Statement was prepared in accordance with the Water Services Acts.</p> <p>It outlines three main objectives comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability and Reliability.</li> <li>• Safety and Quality.</li> <li>• Sustainability.</li> </ul> <p>The key underlying principles which inform the development and provision of water services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance with water-related European Union legislation.</li> <li>• Delivery of UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation.</li> <li>• Implementation of the OECD Council Recommendation on Water.</li> </ul>
Ireland's Fifth Nitrates Action Programme 2022-2025 (DAFM)	<p>Ireland's first Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) came into operation in 2006 and gave effect to the Nitrates Directive. The NAP was given effect through a series of regulations, most recently the European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 31 of 2014), known as the Nitrates Regulations. The aim of the NAP is to prevent pollution of surface waters and groundwater from agricultural sources and to protect and improve water quality. In accordance with the Nitrates Directive and Article 28 of the Good Agricultural Practice Regulations, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, in consultation with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine reviewed the NAP for the first time in 2010. Article 28 of the Nitrates Regulations, in line with the Nitrates Directive, requires a review of the NAP every four years. Ireland's 5<sup>th</sup> NAP will run until the end of 2025.</p>
Capital Investment Plan 2020 - 2024	<p>Irish Water has published its Investment Programme covering the period 2020-2024. The estimate is that €13 billion is required to address known deficits. Investment priorities are set out for where improvements are needed urgently, and cover drinking water quality, leaks, water and wastewater compliance and availability and customer service. Irish Water's priorities as set out in the plan include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminating Boil Water Notices in place for more than 200 days.</li> <li>• Reducing the number of schemes on the Remedial Action List to zero.</li> <li>• Compliance with lead in drinking water.</li> <li>• Reducing the volume of network leakage.</li> <li>• Rationalisation of water treatment works.</li> <li>• Improving compliance with the UWWTD; and</li> <li>• Eliminating raw sewage discharges from agglomerations.</li> </ul>
Irish Water Strategic Funding Plan (2019 - 2024)	<p>Under the Water Services Act 2017, Irish Water must prepare a Strategic Funding Plan (SFP) to the Minister within three months of the publication of the WSPS. This SFP covers the principles, themes and policy objectives identified in the WSPS and the strategic objectives outlined in the Water Services Strategic Plan. It outlines the operational and capital costs associated with the arrangements that Irish Water proposes to make and measures that it intends to take to implement the objectives of the WSSP. The strategic funding requirement is €11bn to 2024, comprised of a €6.1bn investment in infrastructure and assets and €4.9bn in operating costs. The funding model for Irish Water is set in context of the WFD, and the Water Services Policy</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	Statement (WSPS) provides the framework within which the utility's funding and investment plans will be agreed. Projects arising from the WFD will be required to have regard to Irish Water's Strategic Funding Plan as appropriate.
<b>Regional</b>	
Regional Water Resource Plan South East	The Regional Water Resource Plan - South East is a regional framework prepared by Irish Water which aims at integrating the goals of the National Water Resource Plan within the South-East region. The plan allows Irish Water to review water supply needs collectively for the entire South East region across the spectrum of risk including quality, quantity, reliability, and sustainability. The plan identifies deficiencies and needs across the water supplies within the region and develop plan level solutions to address these issues.
<b>Air Quality</b>	
<b>International</b>	
WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines 2021	Since WHO's last 2005 global update, there has been a marked increase of evidence that shows how air pollution affects different aspects of health. The WHO air quality guidelines (WHO AQG) are ambitious and reflect the large impact that air pollution has on global health. The guidelines recommend air quality levels to protect the health of populations, by reducing levels of key air pollutants, some of which also contribute to climate change. They recommend aiming for annual mean concentrations of PM <sub>2.5</sub> not exceeding 5 µg/m <sup>3</sup> and NO <sub>2</sub> not exceeding 10 µg/m <sup>3</sup> , and the peak season mean 8-hr ozone concentration not exceeding 60 µg/m <sup>3</sup> .
<b>EU</b>	
Air Quality Framework Directive 96/62/EC	The current Air Quality Standards are contained in the Directive on Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (the CAFE Directive 2008/50/EC; and the fourth Daughter Directive 2004/107/EC). CAFE replaces the Air Framework Directive and the first three daughter directives - 2008/50/EC. These directives also include rules on how Member States should monitor, assess, and manage ambient air quality. The CAFE Directive was transposed into Irish legislation by the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 180 of 2011). It replaces the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2002 (S.I. No. 271 of 2002), the Ozone in Ambient Air Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 53 of 2004) and S.I. No. 33 of 1999. The fourth Daughter Directive was transposed into Irish legislation by the Arsenic, Cadmium, Mercury, Nickel, and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons in Ambient Air Regulations 2009 (S.I. No. 58 of 2009). It is the objective of new EU Directive to take a new approach to the monitoring, assessment, and management of air quality in recent years. The objectives include avoiding, preventing, and reducing the impact of harmful air emissions on human health and the environment.
Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFÉ) (2008/50/EC)	
National Emissions Reduction Commitments (NEC) Directive (2016/2284/EU). Ceilings Regulations 2018	Directive (EU) 2016/2284 (replacing 2001/81/EC) 'on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants' sets national emission reduction commitments for Member States and the EU for five important air pollutants: nitrogen oxides, non-methane volatile organic compounds, sulphur dioxide, ammonia, and fine particulate matter. The new National Emissions Reduction Commitments (NEC) Directive transposed by S.I. No. 232/2018 - European Union (National Emission Ceilings) Regulations 2018, sets 2020 and 2030 emission reduction commitments for five main air pollutants. It also ensures that the emission ceilings for 2010 - set in the earlier directive - remain applicable for Member States until the end of 2019.
Industrial Emissions Directive (2010/75/EU)	Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and the Council on industrial emissions (the Industrial Emissions Directive or IED) is the main EU instrument regulating pollutant emissions from industrial installations. The IED was adopted on 24 November 2010. It is based on a Commission proposal recasting 7 previously existing directives (including in particular the IPPC Directive) following an extensive review of the policy. The IED entered into force on 6 <sup>th</sup> January 2011 and had to be transposed by Member States by 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2013. The IED aims to achieve a high level of protection of human health and the environment taken as a whole by reducing harmful industrial emissions across the EU, in particular through better application of Best Available Techniques (BAT).

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
<b>National</b>	
Air Pollution Act 1987	The Air Pollution Act 1987, as amended on 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2022, defines air pollution limits and enables Local Authorities to take measures to prevent or limit pollution. Under the Air Pollution Act, 1987, certain industrial processes have been identified as having a potential for major emissions and such industries are required under the 1987 Air Pollution Act to obtain a licence from their respective County Council. The Act itself puts a general obligation on the occupier of any premises, other than a private dwelling house, to use the best practicable means to limit and, if possible, to prevent an emission from such premises. It empowers County Councils to serve a notice on the occupier of any premises where complaints of air pollution are received. It is an offence to operate an industrial plant except under and in accordance with a licence. The licensing system applies to all existing and new industrial plant as defined by the 1987 Act.
Clean Air Strategy (DECAC, 2022)	The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DCCAE) published the national Clean Air Strategy in April 2023 with the aim of promoting clean air policies to enhance and protect the quality of the air we breathe. The Clean Air Strategy provides the strategic policy framework necessary to identify and promote the integrated measures across government policy that are required to reduce air pollution and promote cleaner air while delivering on wider national objectives.
National Air Pollution Control Programme DECC, 2024)	<p>The National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP) 2024 is the successor to the NAPCP published in 2019 and updated in 2021. The NAPCP is a technical document that is submitted every four years which outlines the pathway Ireland will follow to achieve compliance with its commitments under the National Emission Ceilings Directive (NEC Directive). The NEC Directive establishes emission ceilings for 2020 and 2030 for five specified pollutants: nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs), sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>). It also mandates the development of a NAPCP for each Member State. The format of the NAPCP is set down by the European Commission in implementing decision (EU) 2018/1522, which was adopted on 11 October 2018. The NAPCP includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An overview of sectors and national policy frameworks in Ireland that impact on emissions of the five NEC pollutants.</li> <li>• An overview of the current outlook for compliance with NEC targets for each pollutant. Projections of relevant pollutant emissions to 2030.</li> <li>• Policy options, measures, and actions across sectors but in particular the residential, transport agricultural and energy sectors aimed at reducing emissions of the five specified air pollutants.</li> </ul>
<b>Climate</b>	
<b>International</b>	
The Kyoto Protocol 1997 and the Climate Change Programme (ECCP II) 2005	<p>The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement which actions the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Kyoto Protocol entered into force on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2005 and commits industrialised countries, including the EU in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets. The Convention itself only asks those countries to adopt policies and measures on mitigation and to report periodically.</p> <p>The Climate Change Programme (ECCP II) objectives seek to develop the necessary elements of a strategy to implement the Kyoto protocol.</p>
Paris Agreement (UNFCCC) 2015	The Paris Agreement sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C by 2050. The Paris Agreement is a bridge between today's policies and climate-neutrality before the end of the century.
IPPC Sixth Assessment Report	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is currently in its Sixth Assessment cycle (AR6) which provides an overview of the state of knowledge on the science of climate change, emphasizing new results since the publication of the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) in 2014.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
<b>EU</b>	
European Climate Law (Regulation 2021/1119)	Regulation 2021/1119 aims at achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions for Member States by 2050, mainly by regulating union-wide greenhouse gas emissions and removals, investing in green technologies and protecting the natural environment. To this end, this Regulation sets out a binding objective of climate neutrality in the Union by 2050 in accordance with the long-term objectives of the Paris Agreement and establishes a framework for the irreversible and gradual reduction of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by sources and enhancement of removals by sinks regulated in Union law. In addition, this Regulation sets out a binding Union target of a net domestic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for 2030 and 2040.
LULUCF Regulation (Regulation 2018/841)	<p>Under current EU legislation, EU Member States have to ensure that accounted greenhouse gas emissions from land use, land use change or forestry are balanced by at least an equivalent accounted removal of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere in the period 2021 to 2030.</p> <p>The Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation (EU) 2018/841 implements the agreement between EU leaders in October 2014 that all sectors should contribute to the EU's 2030 emission reduction target, including the land use sector. The Commission is proposing to increase the carbon removals to -310 million of tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent by 2030 and to achieve climate neutrality in the combined land use, forestry and agriculture sector by 2035 at EU level.</p> <p>This is in line with its more ambitious target of achieving net emission reductions of at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.</p> <p>The objective of the Regulation is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To set ambitious but fair net removal targets for each Member State in order to reverse the trend of the decreasing carbon sink.</li> <li>• To set the EU-wide climate neutrality objective in 2035 for the land use, forestry and agriculture sector and to provide a more integrated policy framework.</li> <li>• To simplify the rules and to enhance the quality of monitoring.</li> </ul>
Forging a Climate Resilient Europe – A new EU Strategy on Adaption to Climate Change 2021	This EU strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change proceeds with the establishing of a pathway to prepare for the unavoidable effects of climate change. While the EU does everything within its power to mitigate climate change, domestically and internationally, we must also get ready to face the unavoidable consequences of climate change.
The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework	<p>The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework includes EU-wide targets and policy objectives to make the EU's economy and energy system more competitive, secure and sustainable for the 2020 to 2030 period. It includes targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing use of renewable energies and proposes a new governance system and performance indicators.</p> <p>The key targets for 2030:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 40% cuts in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels).</li> <li>• At least 32% share for renewable energy.</li> <li>• At least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency.</li> </ul>
<b>National</b>	
Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021	The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act established a legally binding commitment for Ireland to achieve net zero emissions no later than 2050 while achieving a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030. The act provides for certain changes to the Climate Change Advisory Council, namely to provide for carbon budgets and a sectoral emissions ceiling to apply to different sectors of the economy; to provide for reporting by Ministers of the

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	Government to a joint committee of the Houses of the Oireachtas; to provide for local authority climate action plans; for those and other purposes to amend the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015; to provide that local authorities shall, when making development plans, take account of their climate action plans.
The Climate Action Plan 2024	<p>The Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP), published in December 2023, is the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019. It sets out a roadmap of actions in various sectors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51 percent by 2030 (relative to 2018 levels) and reach net zero emissions no later than 2050. The 2023 plan is the second to be prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and builds on the introduction of economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings in Climate Action Plan 2023.</p> <p>The Plan will be updated annually to ensure alignment with legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings. It will put Ireland on a more sustainable development path; cut emissions; create a cleaner, greener economy and society; and help try to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. It includes transitioning to renewable energy including offshore wind; improvements to agriculture; and retrofitting homes. The Plan lists the actions needed to deliver on climate targets. It will be updated annually, to ensure alignment with legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings.</p> <p>Relevance to the Draft Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CAP 24 outlines numerous actions which aim to move Ireland towards a sustainable economy. In doing so, these actions cover several sectors of the economy. Many of these have indirect effects on tourism. This can arise from actions such as those supporting the growth of public transport systems, or those promoting the move away from non-sustainable industries.</li> </ul>
Ireland's National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030	In accordance with the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action Regulation, Ireland's National Energy & Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030 was submitted to the European Commission in July 2024. The NECP considered energy and climate policies developed up to that point, the levels of demographic and economic growth identified in the Project Ireland 2040 process and included all of the climate and energy measures set out in the National Development Plan 2021-2030. The NECP will act to identify gaps and areas that Ireland can improve on, which should be reflected in updated policies and measures in subsequent Climate Action Plans. The policies outlined in the NECP will reflect the ambition of Climate Action Plan 2024. Ireland is currently developing those policies and measures and intends to integrate the revision of the NECP into the process which will be required for increasing the overall EU contribution under the Paris Agreement.
National Adaptation Framework (2024)	<p>Ireland's National Adaptation Framework (NAF) was published on in July 2024 and replaces the first iteration of the NAF set out in 2018. The 2024 NAF introduces a broader set of guiding principles, emphasising the urgency for more intelligent, rapid, and far-reaching adaptation strategies. It advocates for a pathway planning approach, which considers a variety of potential future warming and impact scenarios, to ensure flexible and effective adaptation measures. The NAF sets out the national strategy to reduce the vulnerability of the country to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of positive impacts, including the opportunities and challenges it poses to tourism. The NAF was developed under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.</p> <p>The NAF builds on the work already carried out under the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (NCCAF, 2012). The NAF outlines a whole of government and society approach to climate adaptation in Ireland. It also aims to improve the enabling environment for adaptation through ongoing engagement with civil society, the private sector, and the research community.</p>
<b>Regional</b>	
Waterford City and County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029	The Waterford City and County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 is a plan which specifies the mitigation and adaptation measures to be adopted by the WCCC during the period of 2024-2029. The plan is prepared every 5 years and is consistent with the most recently approved national climate

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<p>action plan. In order to meet the targets set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, the following strategic goals were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance and Leadership - To take on a leadership role in the implementation of climate action measures across Waterford City and County, ensuring cross-departmental collaboration within the Council and influencing external stakeholders to lead by example in their areas of responsibility.</li> <li>• Built Environment and Transport - To reduce Waterford City and County Council's greenhouse gas emissions by reducing reliance on fossil fuels through increased energy efficiency, a move to active and public transport, deployment of renewable energy technologies and influencing behavioural change internally and externally.</li> <li>• Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure - To protect and enhance Waterford's blue and green infrastructure to ensure biodiversity is supported, nourished and expanded upon, to mitigate against climate change risks and to enhance the health and wellbeing of all through enhanced connection with and access to nature.</li> <li>• Communities: Resilience and Just Transition - To give all people of Waterford an opportunity to participate in the transition to a low carbon economy that will build community, develop skills and benefit local businesses.</li> <li>• Sustainability and Resource Management - To ensure waste generated is reduced, removed and reused through the implementation of effective waste management policies and procedures and to shift away from a "take-make-waste" model towards a more sustainable and circular economy to create long-term environmental, economic and social benefits.</li> </ul>
<b>Land &amp; Soils</b>	
<b><u>EU</u></b>	
EU Soil Strategy 2030	<p>The EU Soil Strategy, published in 2021 aims to address the absence of a legal policy framework for the protection of soils. The strategy intends to introduce protection status to soil in the same manner that air and water currently hold. The strategy intends to introduce a soil monitoring law which was published in 2023 and is currently under review.</p> <p>The EU Soil Strategy aims to ensure that, by 2050:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All EU soil ecosystems are healthy and more resilient and can therefore continue to provide their crucial services.</li> <li>• There is no net land take and soil pollution is reduced to levels that are no longer harmful to people's health or ecosystems.</li> <li>• Protecting soils, managing them sustainably and restoring degraded soils is a common standard.</li> </ul>
<b>Material Assets</b>	
<b><u>EU</u></b>	
Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC)	<p>The Waste Framework Directive transposed by the European Union (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011-2020 sets out the definitions of waste and basic management principles for waste to ensure waste is managed to not impact the environment or human health. The Directive lays down some basic waste management principles: it requires that waste be managed without endangering human health and harming the environment, and without risk to water, air, soil, plants, or animals, without causing a nuisance through noise or odours, and without adversely affecting the countryside or places of special interest. The Directive requires that waste legislation and policy of EU Member States is applied according to a waste management hierarchy. The new Directive places responsibility on EU Member States to improve their waste management systems, to improve the efficiency of resource use, and to ensure that waste is valued as a resource.</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
EU Renewable Energy Directive (2023/2413)	The 2018 Renewable Energy Directive established a new binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of at least 32%. The 2023 Amendment raises this target to 42.5% with an additional 2.5% indicative top up to allow the target of 45% to be achieved. All Member States of the European Union (EU) are to contribute to this objective, and specific targets are proposed for renewable energy use in transport, heating and cooling, buildings and industry
Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577	This regulation provides for temporary rules of an emergency nature to accelerate the permit-granting process applicable to the production of energy from renewable energy sources. It particularly focuses on specific renewable energy technologies or types of projects which are capable of achieving a short-term acceleration of the pace of deployment of renewables in the Union.
REPowerEU Plan (2022)	Issued by the EC in May 2022. The development of the REPowerEU Plan was put forward to phase-out Europe's dependency on Russian energy imports as soon as possible. The intention is to achieve this by fast-forwarding the transition from fossil fuels and cleaner energy and joining forces across the EU to achieve a more resilient energy system. The plan is for; saving energy, producing clean energy and diversifying energy supplies across the EU. It includes a range of short and medium-term measures including a range of legislative and regulatory responses required to respond to the challenge.
The Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027	<p>The European Council has formally adopted the new common agricultural policy (CAP) which will apply for the period 2023-2027. The new CAP seeks to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance the contribution of agriculture to EU environmental and climate goals.</li> <li>• Provide more targeted support to smaller farms.</li> <li>• Allow greater flexibility for Member States in adapting measures to local conditions.</li> </ul> <p>The three regulations that make up the CAP reform package were signed by both the Council and the Parliament and were published in the Official Journal on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021.</p>
<b><u>National</u></b>	
Waste Management Acts 1996 (as amended)	The Waste Management Acts provide for a general duty on everyone not to hold, transport, recover or dispose of waste in a manner that causes or is likely to cause environmental pollution.
Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022	The purpose of the Circular Economy Act is to facilitate a shift from the linear 'take-make-waste' model to a more sustainable model where waste and resource use are reduced, and materials and products are used and maintained for as long as possible and regenerated at the end of use. This means less waste. As well as providing a legal basis for the circular economy programme, strategy and fund, the Circular Economy Act provides for a number of significant changes including the imposition of a waste recovery levy, and the use of CCTV and other recording devices for waste enforcement purposes.
Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy – Ireland's National Waste Policy (DECC, 2020)	The Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy is Ireland's new roadmap for waste planning and management. The plan emphasises the need to embed climate action in all strands of public policy. This Plan shifts focus away from waste disposal and looks instead to how we can preserve resources by creating a circular economy.
Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022 - 2023	The Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy is Ireland's first national circular economy strategy. The Strategy is a key addition to Government's drive to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to get on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as per commitments in the Programme for Government and the Climate Act 2021.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland	The Department of Transport prepared the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) in 2021. NIFTI is the Department's strategic framework to support the consideration and prioritisation of future investment in land transport. It represents the Department's contribution to Project Ireland 2040, the Government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more sustainable future. NIFTI has been developed to ensure sectoral investment is aligned with the NPF and supports the delivery of the ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs). NIFTI establishes a common lens through which to consider potential investment. In doing so, NIFTI sits alongside other Government priorities and policy objectives, such as the Programme for Government and Climate Action Plan.
National Peatlands Strategy	<p>The development of an overall National Peatlands Strategy arises from the need to take a broad strategic approach to the future management of Ireland's peatlands. Policy gaps and weaknesses in relation to the regulation of activity on Ireland's considerable peatlands (over 20% of the terrestrial area of the State) have resulted in difficulties in meeting EU legal obligations.</p> <p>The National Peatlands Strategy was published in 2015. This Strategy aims to provide a long-term framework within which all of the peatlands within the State can be managed responsibly in order to optimise their social, environmental and economic contribution to the well-being of this and future generations. This Strategy will guide the Government's approach to peatlands management and conservation in the future, taking into account current and potential uses of this key resource.</p>
Forests, Products and People - Ireland's Forest Policy, a Renewed Vision (2014)	This important renewed policy Forests, Products and People - Ireland's Forest Policy, a Renewed Vision (2014) composed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine sets out an updated national forest policy strategy which is fit for purpose, reflects and takes account of the substantial changes that have occurred in Irish forestry since the publication of its forerunner Growing for the Future in 1996; and which will steer and guide the expansion of the forest sector out to 2046 in a sustainable and cost efficient manner.
National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland 2017 - 2030	<p>The National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland 2017-2030 aims to establish a framework through which Ireland can transition to a low carbon economy by 2050. This policy sets out to achieve this through 5 key goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce overall travel demand.</li> <li>• Maximise the efficiency of the transport network.</li> <li>• Reduce reliance on fossil fuels.</li> <li>• Reduce transport emissions.</li> <li>• Improve accessibility to transport.</li> </ul>
National Cycle Network Plan	Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) initiated a project to develop a plan for a new National Cycle Network. The development of a national-scale cycle network has taken on greater significance in the context of the subsequent publishing of the Climate Action Plan which calls for a significant reduction in transport emissions by 2030 with measures aimed at enabling 500,000 extra walking, cycling and public transport journeys per day.
Moving Together – A Strategic Approach to the Improved Efficiency of the Transport System in Ireland	Moving Together – A Strategic Approach to the Improved Efficiency of the Transport System in Ireland is a strategic framework which provides the high-level direction required at a national level to achieve improvements in carbon emissions associated with transport, as well as to address issues of congestion, road safety, and air quality. The strategy aims to supply more sustainable transport alternatives to the public with a view to meeting the target of reducing transport emissions by 50% by 2030.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
National Sustainable Mobility Policy	The National Sustainable Mobility Policy was published in April 2022 and sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport journeys to help Ireland meet its climate obligations. It includes demand management and behavioural change measures to manage daily travel demand more efficiently and to reduce the journeys taken by private car.
<b>Regional</b>	
Southern Region Waste Management Plans 2015-2021	Waste management planning is the responsibility of local authorities under Part II of the Waste Management Act, 1996. In line with a key objective in A Resource Opportunity – Waste Management Policy in Ireland, the three regions of Connacht-Ulster, Southern, and Eastern-Midlands were established in June 2013, and in May 2015, three waste management plans were published for each. The plans give effect to national and EU waste policy, and address waste prevention and management (including generation, collection, and treatment) over the period 2015-2021.
Draft South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan for Offshore Renewable Energy	The South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan for Offshore Renewable Energy (SCD-MAP) is document which, when published, will inform future decision-making processes and assessments by relevant competent authorities regarding the development permissions for proposed Offshore renewable energy projects. The Draft SCD-MAP identifies a number of marine areas off the coast of Waterford for proposed offshore wind development.
<b>Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage</b>	
<b>EU</b>	
European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1992 (the Valletta Convention)	The aim of the Valetta Convention is to 'protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study'. It requires that appropriate consideration be given to archaeological issues at all stages of the planning and development process.
Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada 1985)	The Granada Convention was adopted on 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 1985 in Granada (Spain) and came into force on 1 <sup>st</sup> December 1987 (Council of Europe Treaty Series no. 121). It is open for signature by Member States and for accession by non-Member States and the European Community.  The main purpose of the Convention is to reinforce and promote policies for the conservation and enhancement of Europe's heritage. It also affirms the need for European solidarity with regard to heritage conservation and is designed to foster practical co-operation among the Parties. It establishes the principles of "European co-ordination of conservation policies" including consultations regarding the thrust of the policies to be implemented.
<b>National</b>	
Heritage Act 1995 (as amended)	The Heritage Act established the Heritage Council as a statutory body. The council was established to propose policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation, and enhancement of national heritage. National heritage includes monuments archaeological objects, heritage objects such as art and industrial works, documents and genealogical records, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens, parks, and inland waterways.
Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999	The Architectural Heritage and Historic Monuments Act established the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and imposes a greater protection in respect of registered historic monuments upon authorities in Ireland.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
National Monuments Act 1930 - 2004 Cultural Institutions Act 1997	Both the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2004 and relevant provisions of the Cultural Institutions Act 1997 are the primary means of ensuring protection of archaeological monuments, the latter of which includes all man-made structures of whatever form or date.
Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023	The principle national legislation addressing built heritage is the Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023. The Act replaces the existing National Monuments Act 1930 to 2014, and other related legislation. This new legislation underpins the protection of Ireland's historic heritage. It includes strengthened protection for archaeological finds, additional licensing requirements, provisions for ratification of a number of treaties including the UNESCO convention on protection of underwater archaeology
Heritage Ireland 2030	Ireland's national heritage plan legislated for the creation of a Heritage Framework to value and protect heritage under three themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National leadership and heritage;</li> <li>• Heritage partnerships; and</li> <li>• Communities and heritage.</li> </ul>
Places for People the National Policy on Architecture (2022)	Places for People – the National Policy on Architecture was published in 2022. It sets out various ways to promote and embed design quality in architecture and the built and natural environment in Ireland, and aims to boost engagement with the public regarding architecture. Places for People aims to boost public engagement with architecture as well as improve data and research on the built environment. It contains a suite of actions aiming to “create, sustain and regenerate local areas as vibrant, welcoming and sustainable places in which communities can flourish”.
Archaeology 2025 Strategy: A Strategic Pathway for Ireland	The Archaeology 2025 Strategy: A Strategic Pathway for Ireland is an initiative of the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) and was launched by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in 2017. It sets out the long-term strategy for the practice and resource of archaeology in Ireland. Its vision is The promotion of archaeology in understanding the past and as a valuable resource shared by all. It includes six key pillars covering: Delivering archaeology; sustaining practice; modernising legislation; expanding research horizons; developing education and skills; and maximising impact.
Historic Towns Initiative (HTI) 2024	The HTI 2024 is a joint undertaking by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council, and it supports the Town centre First' policy approach. It aims to promote heritage-led regeneration of Ireland's historic towns. The 2024 initiative has a particular interest in projects that aim to address town centre vacancy and the reuse of historic structures which can then act as demonstrator projects
Strategy for World Heritage in Ireland 2024 – 2034	A Strategy for World Heritage in Ireland 2024 – 2034 published for consultation in 2004 sets out a vision for World Heritage in Ireland and aims to ensure that World Heritage in Ireland is developed and managed in line with the requirements of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. It commits to reviewing Ireland's approach to World Heritage, putting in place revised procedures for proper protection, conservation, management, interpretation, and presentation of Ireland's World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites. There will be explicit provision for the protection of World Heritage sites, including, for the first time, a definition in Irish law for “World Heritage Property”.
Guidelines for Planning Authorities: Architectural Heritage Protection (2004)	In December 2004, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government published guidelines under S.52 (1) entitled Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities which incorporated the S.52 (2) guidelines. The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities were formally issued to the planning authorities in February 2005. These include guidelines under S.52 (1) for the protection of structures, or parts of structures, and the preservation of the character of architectural conservation areas, and guidelines under S.52 (2) with respect to protected structures which are regularly used as places of public worship.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
<b>Landscape and Visual</b>	
<b><u>EU</u></b>	
European Landscape Convention 2000	The European Landscape Convention established by Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is the first international treaty to provide for the protection, management, and planning of all landscapes in Europe. The convention applies to rural, urban, and semi urban areas. The convention provided the foundation for the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which focuses on identifying the features that give an area a sense of place and can help. The LCA is a planning tool aimed at protecting sustainable development and biodiversity.
<b><u>National</u></b>	
National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015 - 2025	The National Landscape Strategy established by The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is used to ensure compliance with the European Landscape Convention as ratified by Ireland in 2002 and establishes principles for protecting and enhancing the landscape while positively managing its change. It provides a high-level policy framework to achieve balance between the management, planning and protection of the landscape by way of supporting actions.
Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines 2000	The Guidelines favour a method of characterisation which is the discernment of the character of the landscape based initially on land cover – trees, vegetation, settlement, water etc. and landform which results from geological and geomorphologic history and secondly, the value of the landscape is assessed in terms of historical, cultural, religious, and other understandings of the landscape. A Landscape Character Assessment allows for a proactive approach to landscape management. It aids the development management process as it gives indicators of development types which would be suited to certain locations using certain design criteria and consequently the character of the landscape remains intact.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **SEA Scoping Responses from Environmental Authorities**

**Table B-1 Responses received from Environmental Authorities following SEA Scoping Consultation**

Environmental Authority	Summary of Submission Received	Response
<b>Development Applications Unit (DAU) received on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2024</b>		
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage - Development Applications Unit (DAU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The DAU have no comments at present.</li> </ul>	The project team thank the DAU for their submission.
<b>Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) received on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2024</b>		
The Planning Advisory Division of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)	<p><b>Planning Advisory Division</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The department asserts the critical importance of using the latest climate and environmental figures for quantitative data and analysis to ensure the Plan appropriately supports the State's climate goals and legally binding targets.</li> <li>A list of national and sectoral policy, plans and strategies are provided for reference while preparing the SEA. These sources could also to be used as baseline data sources for the ER, where applicable. The following documents are listed for these purposes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA's report on Ireland's Provisional Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990-2022</li> <li>SEAI's report on the National Energy Projections 2023 and associated article</li> <li>Ireland's Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030</li> <li>Sectoral Emissions Ceilings</li> <li>The National Adaptation Framework (NAF) 2024</li> <li>Sectoral Adaption Plans made under the NAF</li> <li>The outputs from the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA)</li> <li>EPA's report on Climate Change in the Irish Minds (CCIM)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The DECC's submission and guidance is welcomed. The ER considers the latest quantitative data and analysis which is contained in Section 5-6 Climate of the ER.</p> <p>These documents listed have informed the preparation of the relevant baseline sections contained in the ER. Appendix A contains a review of the plans and programmes which have informed the preparation of this SEA and the Draft Plan.</p>

Environmental Authority	Summary of Submission Received	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Clean Air Strategy</li> <li>○ The Climate Action Plan 2024</li> <li>• The division suggests that the impacts of Draft Plan on the projections of the above reports should be assessed to underpin how the Draft Plan contributes to or works against national climate objectives and policy.</li> <li>• The division recommend referring to the following EU Legislation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Directive (EU) 2023/2413;</li> <li>○ Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577;</li> <li>○ the EIA Directive 2014/52/EU; and</li> <li>○ the Public Participation Directive 2003/35/EC.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The SEA team have considered climate policy and targets during the assessment of the Draft Plan as appropriate.</p> <p>The SEA team have considered the recommended legislation, as appropriate. These are included in Appendix A of the SEA ER.</p>
<p>The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) Division of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)</p>	<p><b>GSI Division</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GSI encourages the promotion of geological value of popular tourist destinations and offer their assistance with any geological tourism initiatives. The Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark which falls within the area covered by this Draft Plan is highlighted by the GSI.</li> <li>• The division recommends the consultation of publicly available datasets prepared by GSI that are relevant to SEA processes, and provides links to such datasets including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Geological heritage;</li> <li>○ Culture and tourism;</li> <li>○ Dimension Stone/Stone Built Ireland;</li> <li>○ Groundwater;</li> <li>○ Geological mapping;</li> <li>○ Geohazards;</li> <li>○ Historic mines;</li> <li>○ Marine and coastal unit;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The Geological Survey of Ireland's submission is noted. The GSI's capacity for input into geological tourism initiatives is also acknowledged.</p> <p>The publicly available GSI datasets and maps have informed the preparation of various chapters of the ER baseline as appropriate.</p>

Environmental Authority	Summary of Submission Received	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ National coastal change assessments; and</li> <li>○ Physiographic units</li> </ul>	
<b>Environmental Protection Agency received on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024</b>		
Environmental Protection Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EPA notes the Draft Plan should clearly set out the implementation arrangements and governance structures, including relationships between the Draft Plan and existing national, regional and local plans/programmes and authorities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Any synergies between the Draft Plan and key national policies such as the Climate Action Plan 2024, National Planning Frameworks, etc. should be documented, as appropriate.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The integration of the SEA process into the Draft Plan should be clearly explained. The EPA recommends using summary tables in the ER and the Draft Plan to highlight links between the identified environmental impacts and monitoring/mitigation measures proposed as a result of the SEA process.</li> <li>• The EPA provided general guidance on the SEA process from scoping to SEA Statement, and links to online resources relevant to the preparation of the Plan and ER.</li> <li>• The EPA states that the SEA ER should incorporate and consider as appropriate, the findings of the EPA's State of the Environment Report 2024.</li> </ul>	<p>The SEA team acknowledges the EPA's submission and guidance. The ER has been prepared in accordance with relevant and most recent planning policy on national, regional and local levels. Appendix A contains a review of the plans and programmes which have informed the preparation of this SEA. The synergies between these plans and policies and the Draft Plan have been identified and documented in section 4.</p> <p>The SEA team have included in sections 8 and 9 summary tables linking impacts of the Draft Plan and their respective mitigation and monitoring measures in the ER as appropriate.</p> <p>The guidance in the EPA's good practice guidelines has informed the SEA team's development of the ER, as appropriate.</p> <p>The findings of the EPA's State of the Environment Report 2024 have been incorporated by the SEA team as appropriate in the development of the ER.</p>

Environmental Authority	Summary of Submission Received	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>EPA notes requirements to contact statutory environmental authorities.</li><li>The EPA requests confirmation of receipt of their scoping feedback submission.</li></ul>	<p>The SEA team confirms that all relevant statutory environmental authorities have been contacted, as per SEA requirements.</p> <p>Confirmation of receipt of this submission was confirmed by Fáilte Ireland.</p>

## **APPENDIX C**

### **SEA Screening Determination**

**Screening Determination for Strategic Environmental Assessment under SEA Directive 2001/42/EC  
as transposed into Irish law under S.I. 435/2004, as amended**

**Concerning the proposed Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan**

Fáilte Ireland as the Competent Authority for the proposed Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan has undertaken screening for SEA under Directive 2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law under S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011.

The screening assessment was carried out using the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects as set out in Schedule 1 of S.I. 435/2004, as amended and having regard to Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08<sup>1</sup>, which directs that:

*"In any case where, following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting a precautionary approach-*

*- an appropriate assessment of the plan must be carried out and*

*- in any case where a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out."*

Following assessment of the criteria and having regard to the nature of the Plan and the potential for likely significant environmental effects from implementation of the Plan, including on the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites, Fáilte Ireland has determined that the Plan will require SEA.

This determination has been made following consideration of the information contained in the SEA Screening Report, the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to S.I. 435/2004, as amended, the conclusion of the AA Screening Report, and following consultation with the statutory Environmental Authorities for SEA.

The principal reason the Plan does require SEA is as follows:

- As directed under Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08: because the potential for likely significant environmental effects on European sites could not be ruled at Appropriate Assessment screening stage.

Signed on behalf of Fáilte Ireland:



Dated: December 2024

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>