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# Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report of the Draft Wexford Destination 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 - SEO contained in this ER - Refer to Section 6
BFF	Biodiversity Flora and Fauna - EPO contained in this ER- Refer to Section 6
C	Climate - SEO 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
FWPM	Freshwater Pearl Mussel
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GSI	Geological Survey of Ireland
IFI	Inland Fisheries Ireland
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IROPI	Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest
L	Landscape - SEO 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 - SEO contained in this SEA- Refer to Section 6
LULUCF	Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry
MA	Material Assets - SEO 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)
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 - SEO 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)
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
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
SRSEs	Southern Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032
SSFRA	Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UWWT	Urban Waste Water Treatment
W	Water - SEO contained in this ER - Refer to Section 6
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WHO	World Health Organisation
WHS	World Heritage Site
WwTP	Waste water Treatment Plant
WCC	Wexford County Council

## 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	The direct and indirect benefits that ecosystems can provide for human health and wellbeing.
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 new 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 be 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 WDEDP. 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 Wexford Destination & 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 *Wexford Destination & Experience Development Plan* (Wexford DEDP) is a five-year tourism development plan for county Wexford developed by Fáilte Ireland through a programme of research and consultation guided by the V.I.C.E. (Visitor, Industry, Community, Environment) model for sustainable tourism. The framework presented within the plan is based on the views of visitors, the tourism industry and community stakeholders.

The DEDP is a non-statutory tourism plan that has been informed by national, regional and local plans, but it does not influence decision making of either plans or projects.

The destination development strategy for county Wexford adopts a spatial approach designed to develop the county's coastal, rural and urban experience. Three areas of focus will guide destination and experience development in Wexford namely, the: Coastal Experience, Tourism Axis Towns and County Wexford which represent the three strategic objectives that will guide product and experience development illustrated below.

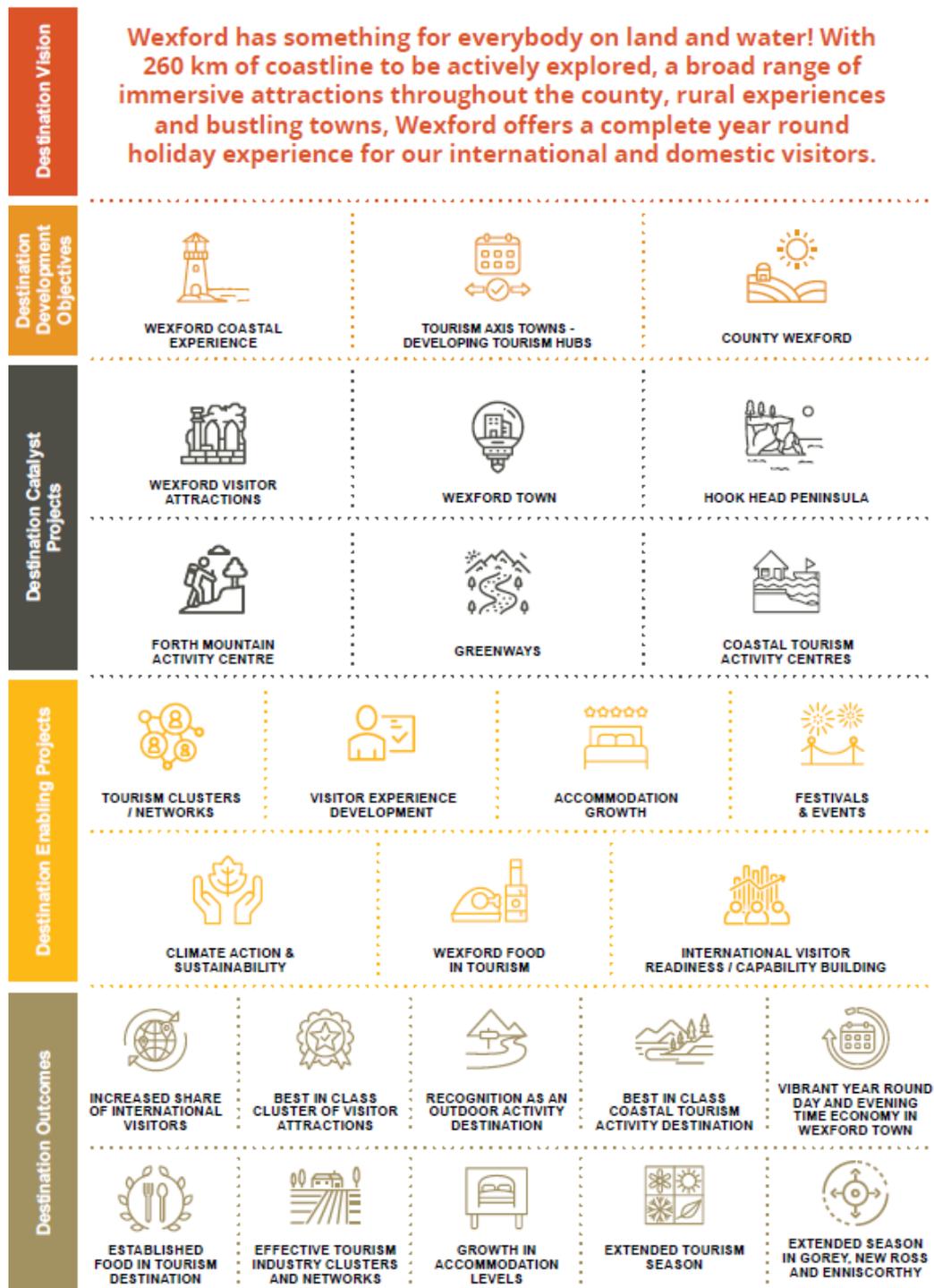


Figure 2-1 Visitor destination experiences in County Wexford (Source: Draft Wexford DEDP, 2025).

The key objectives of the DEDP are:

- Ensure the visitor experience in county Wexford is brought to life through a mix of tourism products and experiences that will attract domestic and international visitors and retain them in the destination for longer.
- Unlock the economic potential of tourism by progressing key initiatives that will disperse tourists across the county.
- Strengthen the value of tourism to local communities by providing sustainable employment opportunities.
- Develop a sustainable basis for commercial tourism development by enhancing and creating compelling destination experiences that excite consumers and buyers alike.
- Create more reasons to attract leisure visitors on a year-round basis to Wexford and providing the opportunity for visitors to interact with local people as part of an authentic Wexford experience.
- Develop the role of County Wexford as driver of regional tourism development and influence visitor flows across the South East.

The framework proposed in the DEDP is summarised and illustrated in Figure 2-2 below which identifies the vision, supported by the 'three destination development objectives or the three spatial objectives identifying how the plan proposes to grow Wexford's appeal in the international marketplace and build on the existing tourism product strengths across the county. **Seven Catalyst Projects** are included in the DEDP. These include the delivery of the Wexfordia project visitor attractions in New Ross and Wexford, develop the potential of Hook Head Peninsula and grow the year-round appeal of key urban hubs across the county. The catalyst projects also include a significant focus on strengthening the Wexford outdoor activity product base to grow the county's association as an outdoor destination. These include maximising greenway investment, growing the number of coastal experiences and developing Forth Mountain Activity Centre as a focal point for outdoor activity. **Six Destination Enabling Projects** are identified to strengthen the destination maturity of Wexford. These include initiatives that will activate many of the catalyst projects such as supporting tourism clusters and networks across the county to growing the range and quality of visitor experiences aligned with the coastal, rural and urban proposition. An emphasis on building tourism industry skills and capabilities will maximise product investment in Wexford and grow the destination's appeal to international and domestic visitors. This will include the delivery of international sales programme, a focus on festivals and events and growing the value of food in tourism in the rural and coastal areas. The destination outcomes are also presented.



**Figure 2-2 Proposed Wexford DEDP Framework**

The implementation of the Wexford DEDP is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery and is structured around a multi-annual action plan (refer to Section 5 of the Plan which are assessed in Section 8 of this Report). The stakeholders will take ownership or partner on the delivery of the key tasks required to implement the Wexford DEDP. The Plan represents a five-year operational plan providing a commercial destination development focus that builds on existing project plans and integrating all related activity for a co-ordinated programme of activity. This includes projects that are currently being implemented, projects featured in existing plans, and new concepts to grow the destination’s capacity to increase the value of tourism across Wexford.

### 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

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

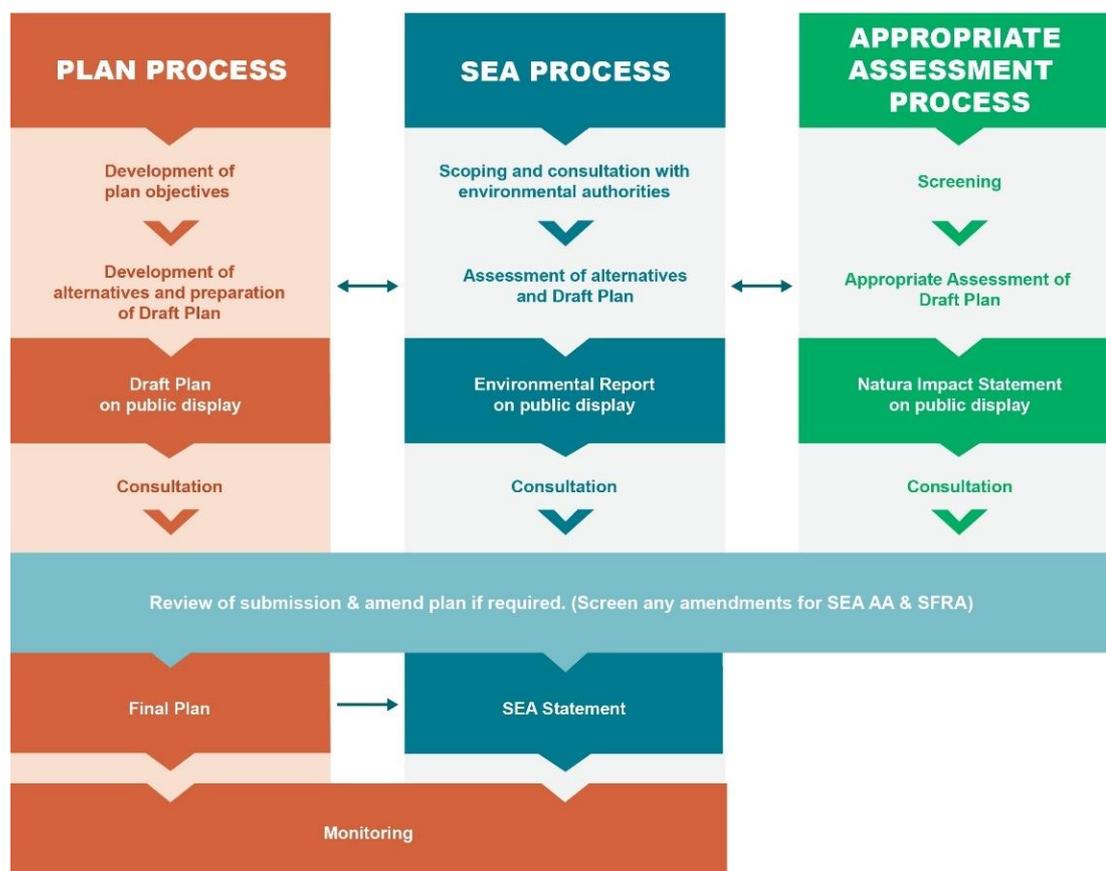
This ER has been prepared having regard to the following guidance documents and resources:

- *SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans EPA Recommendations and Resources* (2024) Environmental Protection Agency;
- *SEA Spatial Information Sources* (2024) Environmental Protection Agency;
- *SEA Pack* (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 Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities* (2022) Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- *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;
- *Second Review of Strategic Environmental Assessment Effectiveness in Ireland* (2020) 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;

### **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, in this case the Draft Plan and other environmental assessments that might be required. Figure 3-1 illustrates the key stages in the development of the Plan process with the SEA and AA highlighting the integration between the processes. This includes the consideration of consultation feedback during the preparation of the Draft Plan, SEA and AA.



**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 a 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 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

The Habitats Directive and Birds Directive 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 (AA) guidance identifies a four-stage process to completing AA. The four steps are summarised in the paragraphs below.

**Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment:** Screening for AA 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.

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 integrity 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 the preparation of an Natura Impact Statement is required.

**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.

The draft NIS has been prepared to support the draft Plan and has been published alongside the draft Plan. The draft NIS has also been issued to the Minister for consultation in advance of final adoption of the Plan and finalisation of the NIS.

**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 examining all alternatives and establishing that adverse effects remain, the process proceeds to Stage 4. **This stage is not considered necessary in this case.**

**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. **This stage is not considered necessary in this case.**

### 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 Draft Plan is a non-statutory plan and does not form a framework for future development consent however, the Draft 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 Draft Plan has the potential, if unmitigated, to affect the ecological integrity of European Sites and that measures to ensure that potential effects are avoided is required. Taking into account the requirements of the Habitats Directive and recent case law, Stage 2 AA (NIS) was therefore carried out for the Draft Plan.

Furthermore, *Department Circular SEA 1/08 and NPWS 1/08 (Feb,2028)* require that plans which require an AA under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) adopting a precautionary approach where SEA would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out. Taking the above into account and in order to ensure environmental considerations are integrated into the Draft Plan, it has been determined that an 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 is 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 of the Draft Plan.

#### **Geographical Scope**

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

#### **Temporal Scope**

The 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 *Wexford County Development Plan (WCDP) 2022-2028* and local area plans in the county.

Implementing the Draft Plan 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 Draft Plan does not provide consent, and/ or establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent. In order to be realised, projects included in this Draft Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for any project level assessment such as: Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, site specific flood risk assessment and/or other licencing requirements, as appropriate) that form part of the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which this Draft Plan is not part of and does not contribute towards.

### 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 on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024. The notice provided background on the key objectives of Draft Plan and how the objectives will relate to County Wexford. 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 Environmental 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
Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)	Yes
<b>Non-statutory consultees</b>	
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	No
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media (DTCAGSM)	No

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.

### **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 County Wexford against a number of comparable international tourism destinations which has informed the development of the Draft 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 Draft Plan. 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 Draft 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 (in Section 8) 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 Draft 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 and 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)
(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 – (separate document)

### 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 during the finalisation of 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 light of other reasonable alternatives.

**Table 3-1 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 Report 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 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 a hierarchy of legislation, plans and programmes. The Draft Plan is a non-statutory plan and does not form a framework for development consent.

### 4.1 National Context

#### 4.1.1 National Planning Framework

“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 is the Government’s long-term strategic planning framework which guides national, regional, and local planning and investment decisions to 2040. The major public investment approved by Government and is 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 of one million people between 2016 and 2040.

The Government approved the *First Revision of the NPF* on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2025. The *First Revision of the NPF* takes into account the changes that have occurred since the preparation of the first NPF in 2018. The First Revision of the NPF is referred to as the ‘NPF’ hereafter.

The *National Planning Framework* (NPF) has a statutory basis and 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 the lower tier, county development plans and associated local area plans (LAPs). The development and implementation of the Draft Plan 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.

The NPF includes consideration of the changes in legislation enacted to strengthen Ireland’s planning system through the new Planning and Development Act 2024, which is planned to be implemented later this year. It focuses on accelerating compact sustainable development and housing delivery and balanced regional development. Regional strategies and county/city development plans will be required to be reviewed and updated to ensure they align with the NPF, accurately reflecting housing need, projected jobs growth and renewable energy capacity allocations. There has also been significant policy development in the area of climate change and the NPF includes new policies in relation to renewable energy development, including the identification of regional renewable electricity capacity allocations in order to facilitate the accelerated roll-out and delivery of renewable electricity infrastructure for on-shore wind and solar generation development and to support the achievement of the 2030 national targets set out in the Government’s *Climate Action Plan 2025*. It acknowledges the clear link between climate action and the potential for investment generation, employment and jobs, including in connection with the offshore wind industry and green technology. It also continues to address changing demographics and digitalisation.

#### County Wexford

Under the NPF county Wexford is located in the Southern Region. The Southern Region is split into the south east (which is influenced by the Greater Dublin Area

(GDA) and mid-west. Within the South East are the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford which experience the largest population increase while the Mid-West area, includes counties Clare, Limerick and Tipperary, had the lower rate of growth. The NPF states that “the Southern Region increased in population by 45,000 persons (6.6%) during the 2016 to 2022 period and all counties in the region increased in population during that time.” The NPF projects an increase of: approximately 330,000 additional people over 2022 levels (c. 450,000 additional people over 2016-2040) i.e. a population of just over 2 million in the Southern Region.

Rosslare Europort is identified as the Tier 2 Port of National Significance, which “has seen very significant growth in direct sailings to continental Europe as a result of Brexit.” The NPF states that “this surge in both passenger and freight traffic is likely to be a permanent feature.” It identifies that there are regional opportunities to leverage growth in Wexford to include national and international connectivity, strengthening Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in the area (e.g. in Waterford, Limerick, Carlow) and further balanced employment and housing development in key settlements and county towns.” It goes on to state that this growth “must be based on infrastructure and quality of life, rather than long distance commuting to Dublin, as is apparent in part of counties Carlow and Wexford in particular.” The NPF also recognises the strong agri-food and tourism sectors which are particularly important for rural economies, employing in excess of 430,000 people (18% of the national workforce). “The emergence of new technologies and improved infrastructural connectivity provide opportunities for diversification into new employment sectors and to build on the success of many Irish and foreign-owned companies supporting employment in rural areas.” These assets are referenced in the actions outlined in the Draft Plan and will support the NPF.

National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) specifically relevant to Wexford includes: *NSO 4 – High Quality International Connectivity* which includes: “Enhance road connectivity to Rosslare Europort and Shannon-Foynes Port”.

The NPF states that key future planning and development and place-making policy priorities for the Eastern and Midland Region include: “Tourism development and promotional branding to ensure that areas such as ‘Ireland’s Ancient East’ are developed and promoted in such a way as to play their full part in tapping the economic potential of regional and rural areas in the region.”

The NPF identifies a number of National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) and Strategic Investment Priorities as illustrated in the figure below, all of the NSOs and investment priorities will directly or indirectly support the tourism sector.



**Figure 4-1 NPF NSO and Strategic Investment Priorities**

The various policies under the NPF are structured under National Policies Objectives (NPOs) which are extensive and far reaching. With regard to tourism, some of the key NPOs include:

- **NPO 30:** Facilitate the development of the rural economy, in a manner consistent with the national climate objective, through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting biodiversity and the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.

- **NPO 34:** 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:
  - A coordinated approach to the sustainable management of outdoor recreation sites;
  - 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.
- **NPO 63:** 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.

Some of the key environmental and sustainable development NPOs that are relevant to County Wexford include:

- **NPO 1:** Ensure that all plans, projects and activities requiring consent arising from the National Planning Framework are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA, SFRA and AA, as appropriate.
- **NPO 50:** Ensure that the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports, ports of regional significance, State Fishing Harbours and smaller harbours are addressed as part of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, and plans at local level to ensure the effective growth and sustainable development of the city regions and regional and rural areas, in accordance with National Ports Policy.
- **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 and the associated legislative provisions, 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 to limit risks to communities and coastal ecosystems from the impacts of coastal change.
- **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 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 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 89:** Protect, conserve and enhance the rich qualities of natural, cultural and built heritage of Ireland in a manner appropriate to their cultural and environmental significance.
- **NPO 92:** Ensure the alignment of planned growth with the efficient and sustainable use and development of water resources and water services infrastructure, in order to manage and conserve water resources in a manner that supports a healthy society, economic development requirements and a cleaner environment.
- **NPO 93:** Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green and blue infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.

#### 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 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. The 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. The policy aims to balance economic development with environmental and social considerations. The Policy Framework includes a total of 61 policy proposals, high level targets 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. The South East Greenway was one of the first to demonstrate the positive tourism effects of such developments. The initiative was supported by Wexford, Kilkenny, and Waterford County Councils, spanning 24km from Waterford City to New Ross. The Government's *Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenway* published in 2018 continues to be support the delivery and connection of new greenways across the country.

## 4.2 Regional Context

### 4.2.1 Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

At a regional level, the *Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region* sets out the strategic regional development framework for the southern region which includes County Wexford. The primary aim of the RSES is to implement the *National Planning Framework* at the regional tier and to support the achievement of balanced regional development. The *Planning and Development Act 2000* (as amended) requires that all city and county development plans and variations be 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.

Wexford Town is identified as a key town with a significant population to be a self-sustaining regional growth driver. Key infrastructural requirements have been identified for Wexford Town which align with the DEDP and support the development of tourism in the area, including improving road infrastructure links in Wexford and investment in Rosslare Europort to improve capacity and services for passengers.

This is supported by Regional Policy Objective 16 which focuses on developing the strategic location and supporting infrastructure to improve capacity, transport and attractiveness of the town. These actions are consistent with the Draft Plan and

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

The *Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027* (IAETDS) 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 the Wexford DEDP.

Strategic Objective 3 of the IAETDS is to “Ensure the region is easy to access, navigate and consume” with a strategic initiative to support development of coastal tourism experiences in coastal areas such as Wexford.

### 4.3 County Context

#### 4.3.1 Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028

At county level, the *Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028* sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Wexford. 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 namely through **Policy Objective TM07 relating to the development and implementation of Destination Experience Development Plans and continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and tourism stakeholders**. The preparation of the Draft Plan supports the implementation of these higher-level plans and policies.

The review of these key plans and programmes ensures the SEA and in turn, the Draft Plan, is aligned with and contributes to the achievement of the environmental protection objectives set in higher level plans and policies. Further detailed review of 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) used to inform the assessment of the Draft Plan.

#### 4.3.2 County Wexford Tourism Development Strategy 2019-2023

The *County Wexford Tourism Development Strategy 2019-2023* seeks to increase tourism revenue by 18.7% and net visitor numbers by 12%. There are a variety of existing natural attractions including mountains, rivers and coastal areas. The strategy also identifies six visitor attractions in which to focus developing a clustered tourism experience, namely: Hook Peninsula; Loftus Hall; The Dunbrody Famine Ship; The Irish National Heritage Park; Tintern Abbey; and JFK Homestead and Arboretum.

The Draft Plan supports these existing plans and promotes sustainable tourism across the county.

## 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 with reference to the latest iteration of the EPA 'Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024', as well as other up-to-date resources and datasets reference throughout.

### 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 report highlights 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 current 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
<b>Water</b>	<p><b>Current Assessment:</b> </p> <p>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 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>The Draft Plan includes numerous actions relating to the use of waterbodies including coastal waters and rivers for the promotion of tourism including but not limited to: Hook Head Peninsula, Curracloe, Rosslare and Courtown and other key coastal areas for tourism development. It will be important for the development of any projects to be developed in accordance with EU and national policies and objectives relating to water quality. The ability for these natural assets to continue to draw tourism going forward will be dependent on the maintenance and improvement of water quality into the future.</p>
<b>Nature</b>	<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 includes actions which rely on maximising the opportunity posed by natural environment to support and drive tourism. The development of any projects will be required to align with EU and national policies including but not limited to the restoration, improvement and protection of all species and habitats that may be affected by tourists and tourism development.</p>
<b>Climate</b>	<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>Wexford's natural and built heritage, as well as the strong agricultural/ food industry are vulnerable to the effects of climate change.</p> <p>The Draft Plan includes a number of actions under 'climate action' which seeks to support and sustainably grow the tourism sector. However, if not managed appropriately it could exacerbate the effects of climate change impacting the social, economic and the natural environment.</p>
<b>Air Quality &amp; Emissions</b>	<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</p>	<p>The Draft Plan outlines objectives to promote throughout the county. The contribution that tourism has on air quality particularly from the</p>

Indicator	Current Assessment & Outlook (EPA Scorecard)	Relevance to the Draft Plan
	<p>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 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>transportation is a key factor to consider in promotional activities. It will be important that the actions in the Draft Plan maintain or do not worsen the current outlook regarding air quality and emissions.</p>
<p><b>Waste &amp; Circular Economy</b></p>	<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 remain 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>A growing tourism sector could result in increased waste generation. EU and national policy and objectives towards the development reduction of waste and supporting the circular economy including is likely to continue to influence all sectors including the tourism sector.</p>
<b>Legend:</b>		
    	<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>	
<p>Source: Adapted from EPA Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024</p>		

## 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 Wexford 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 EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) was adopted by the EU in 1992. The *European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations (S.I. 94 of 1997)* transposed the Habitats Directive into Irish law in 1997. *The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011) as amended* transpose the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive.

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 is 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).

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

Within County Wexford there are 10 SPAs and 17 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 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) must be established. Similarly, the Birds Directive lists 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 Wexford**

Code	Name
<b>Special Area of Conservation</b>	
000696	Ballyteige Burrow SAC
000697	Bannow Bay SAC
000770	Blackstairs Mountains SAC
002953	Blackwater Bank SAC
000700	Cahore Polders and Dunes SAC
002269	Carnsore Point SAC
000764	Hook Head SAC
001741	Kilmuckridge–Tinnaberna Sandhills SAC
001742	Kilpatrick Sandhills SAC
000704	Lady's Island Lake SAC
002161	Long Bank SAC
000710	Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC
000707	Saltee Islands SAC
000708	Screen Hills SAC
000781	Slaney River Valley SAC
000709	Tacumshin Lake SAC
<b>Special Protection Area</b>	
004020	Ballyteige Burrow SPA
004033	Bannow Bay SPA
004143	Cahore Marshes SPA
004118	Keeragh Islands SPA
004009	Lady's Island Lake SPA
004002	Saltee Islands SPA
004237	Seas off Wexford SPA
004092	Tacumshin Lake SPA
004019	The Raven SPA
004076	Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA

The *Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 (as amended)* makes legal provision for the designation and protection of a national network of Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) among other things. There is one NHA and 33 proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) which are listed in Table 5-3 below. All designated sites described above including Ramsar sites and nature reserves are illustrated in Figure 5-1.

**Table 5-3 NHAs and pNHAs within County Wexford**

Code	Name
<b>Natural Heritage Area</b>	
000703	Keeragh Islands
<b>Proposed National Heritage Areas</b>	
000696	Ballyteige Burrow
001930	Ballyteige Marsh
000697	Bannow Bay
000698	Barrow River Estuary
000741	Ballyconnigar Sand Pits
000742	Ballyconnigar Upper
000695	Ballyhack
000744	Ballykelly Marsh
000745	Ballymoney Strand
000746	Ballynabarney Wood
000747	Ballyroe Fen and Lake
000699	Boley Fen
000750	Bunclody Slate Quarries
001736	Cahore Point North Sandhills
000700	Cahore Polders and Dunes
000755	Clone Fox Covert
000757	Courtown Dunes and Glen
001737	Donaghmore Sandhills
001738	Duncannon Sandhills
000761	Forth Mountain
001834	Kilgorman River Marsh
000765	Killoughrum Forest
001741	Kilmuckridge – Tinnaberna Sandhills
001742	Kilpatrick Sandhills
000704	Lady's Island Lake
000702	Leskinfere Church, Clogh
000774	Oaklands Wood
000812	Pollmounty River Valley

Code	Name
<b>Natural Heritage Area</b>	
000703	Keeragh Islands
000708	Screen Hills
000781	Slaney River Valley
000782	St. Helen's Burrow
000709	Tacumshin Lake
000711	Tintern Abbey
000712	Wexford Slobs and Harbour

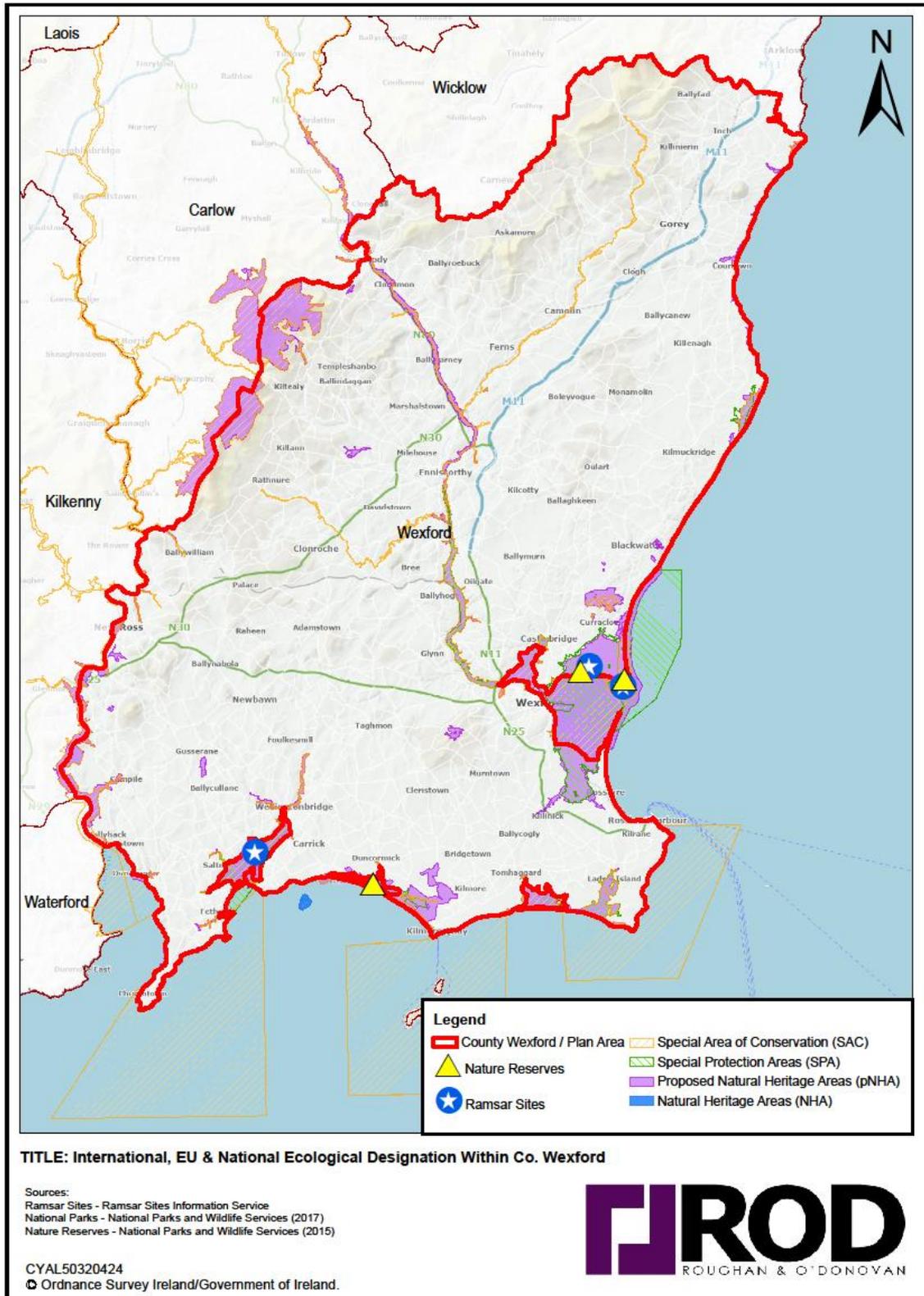


Figure 5-1 International, EU & National Ecological Designations within County Wexford

### 5.2.2 Other ecological designations

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

**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 Wexford that are recognised as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, The Raven (Ramsar ID:333), The Wexford Wildfowl Reserve (Ramsar ID:291), and Bannow Bay (Ramsar ID: 840).

**Nature Reserves and Parks:** The Wexford Wildfowl Reserve and The Raven Nature Reserve, in addition to Ballyteige Burrow, are also designated as Statutory Nature Reserves. The Raven and Ballyteige Burrow are under state ownership, while the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve is under joint ownership with Birdwatch Ireland. As Nature Reserves these locations enjoy protection under ministerial order. There are no sites in County Wexford designated as National Parks.

**Salmonid Rivers:** Salmonid Waters are waterbodies which are capable of supporting salmon, trout, char and whitefish, and as such their quality and health must be maintained under the *Salmonid Regulations 1988* (SI No. 293 of 1988). Within County Wexford, only the River Slaney (IE\_SE\_040\_0300) is a designated Salmonid Water. 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 Wexford Harbour Outer (IE\_SE\_040\_0000), Wexford Harbour Inner (IE\_SE\_040\_0200), and Bannow Bay (Bannow Bay) have been designated as Shellfish Waters.

**Margaritifera Sensitive Areas:** Margaritifera Sensitive Areas are protected under Annex II and Annex V of the 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 is one Margaritifera Sensitive Areas within County Wexford: Slaney-Dereen. Margaritifera Sensitive Areas are protected under Annex II and Annex V of the *EU Habitats Directive*. 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). In the latest cycle, The Barrow Estuary (SE\_100\_0300) and Barrow Estuary Lower (SE\_100\_0250), the Slaney Estuary Upper (IE\_SE\_040\_0300) and Slaney Estuary Lower (IE\_SE\_040\_0200), and Wexford Harbour (IE\_SE\_040\_0000) were classified as Nutrient Sensitive Areas for Urban Wastewater Treatment. These water bodies pass through the towns of Wexford, New Ross and Enniscorthy. Tourism in County Wexford has potential to increase the stress on urban wastewater systems, and in turn increase stress on the sensitive areas.

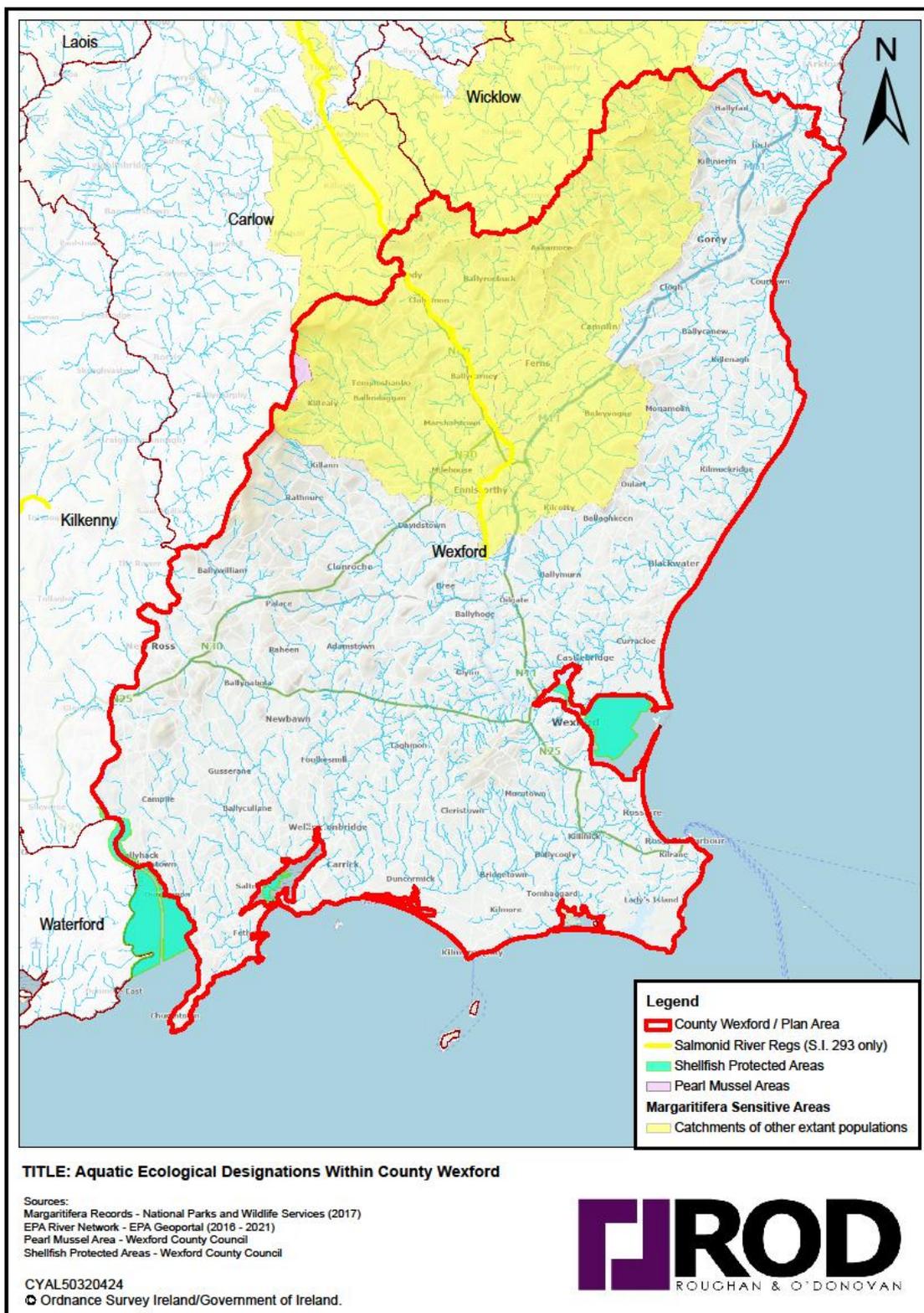


Figure 5-2 Aquatic Ecological Designations within County Wexford

### 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 can be introduced

both intentionally, such as grey squirrel and Himalayan Balsam, and accidentally in the case of Crayfish Plague.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (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 in relation to biodiversity include:

- 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 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

Census 2022 reported the population of the Republic of Ireland is 5,149,139 million people up 8% since the last Census in 2016. The NPF projects that between 2022 and 2040, approximately one million additional people will be living in the country. County Wexford was reported to have a population of 163,527 (CSO, 2023a). Between Census 2016 and 2022, the population of County Wexford experienced a growth rate of 9%, which is above the national average of 8% (CSO, 2023b). Population growth in County Wexford has the potential to aid in the delivery of tourist-oriented industry and services across the county. Wexford Town is the largest settlement in the county, comprising 13% of the county population.

Increasing levels of tourism development without appropriate planning and management can impact the environment in a variety of ways including changes in land use and increased demand on infrastructure such as accommodation including housing, transportation infrastructure, water supply and waste water treatment facilities and supporting service sector.

Ireland, including County Wexford, is currently experiencing a significant housing shortage. *Housing For All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland* (Government of Ireland, 2021) describes a multi-annual, multi-billion-euro plan which aims to improve Ireland's housing system and deliver more homes of all types for people with different housing needs. The Plan notes that in recent years, previously long-term accommodation has been changed to short-term tourism letting. The effects of this include, but are not limited to, both a reduction in the availability and affordability of the housing for the general population which is exacerbating the housing crisis. The Government's Plan states, it will bring forward revised regulatory controls in this area with a view to ensuring the availability of residential accommodation for the population, balanced with the needs of the tourism sector, as appropriate. It includes *Housing Policy Objective 20* to, "*Develop new regulatory controls requiring Short-Term and Holiday Lets to register with Fáilte Ireland with a view to ensuring that homes are used to best effect in areas of housing need.*" At the time of writing the *Housing for All – Q2 2024 Progress Report* (Government of Ireland, 2024d), states that Action 20 has been delayed to Q4 2024. The update includes: "*The Short Term Tourist Letting (STTL) Bill remains the subject of ongoing engagement with the EU Commission in accordance with the Technical Regulations Information System (TRIS) EU Directive 2015/1535 and with specific regard to alignment between the STTL Bill and EU law, in particular the new Short Term Rental (STR) Regulation. The General Scheme is currently being revised and the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport hopes to be in a position to bring this to Government shortly for approval. In parallel with this, the Department of Housing is currently developing Planning Guidance for the STTL sector to provide clarity and certainty on the planning permission requirements in respect of STTL properties.*"

The Draft Plan which includes the objective to increase the numbers of tourists and also extend the tourism season has the potential to impact and exacerbate the availability and affordability of housing in County Wexford, if not managed appropriately. It also has the potential to restrict the growth of the tourism sector due to lack of availability of accommodation and/or increasing cost base for visitors impacting negatively on the sector.

### 5.3.1 Human Health

There is extensive EU and Irish laws which 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

between human health and other environmental factors e.g. water, air quality, climate, etc. which have been considered separately in their respective sections of this ER.

The 2022 Census indicates the majority of self-reported health in Wexford's to 'Very Good' (52.7%), with only 1.7% and 0.4% reporting 'Bad' or 'Very Bad' general health, respectively, these figures are broadly consistent with the national trends as shown in Table 5-4.

**Table 5-4 Self-Reported Health in County Wexford Compared to National Figures (CSO, 2023d)**

General Health self-reported (%)	Very Bad	Bad	Fair	Good	Very good	Not stated
County Wexford	0.4	1.7	9.7	30.0	52.7	5.1
National	0.3	1.4	8.6	29.7	53.2	6.7

The average age of the population of County Wexford is trending older faster than is seen nationally. The average age of the population within County Wexford grew from 38.1 years of age to 40 years between census 2016 and 2022. Nationally, this figure increased from 37.4 years of age to 38.8 (CSO, 2023b). Rosslare Town is reported as one of the oldest populations in the country, with an average age of 44 years (CSO, 2023c). As the national average age is set to increase, it can be expected that there will be a higher frequency of health issues related to an aging population which is likely to result in increased pressure on health services. However, an aging population also presents opportunities for the tourism industry. Older individuals often have more time to travel during off-season periods and more disposable income, which can benefit the tourism sector. There will likely be implications for the delivery and management of tourism-related infrastructure and services to cater to the ageing population/ visitors and their specific needs/wants. The Draft Plan provides an opportunity to target this market and deliver tourism-related infrastructure and services/experiences to cater to more tourists including older visitors which would also support the achievement of a year-round tourism sector.

### 5.3.1.1 Radon

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas, it is produced in the ground during the radioactive decay of uranium in rocks and soils. Radon is the principal source of radiation exposure in Ireland. The average indoor radon concentration in Ireland is 89 becquerels per cubic metre (Bq/m<sup>3</sup>). This is the eighth-highest average concentration in the world. Some of the highest radon concentrations found anywhere in Europe have been found in homes and workplaces in Ireland. Some areas in Ireland have higher radon levels more frequently than in other areas (HPSC). *The National Radon Control Strategy Phase 2: 2019-2024* (EPA, 2019) considers Wexford to have higher levels of radon in the county compared to the national average. Long term exposure to radon has been shown to increase the risk of lung cancer.

### 5.3.1.2 Noise

The *Environmental Noise Directive* (2002/49/EC) requires that member states assess noise pollution levels and act to manage it. This is transposed into 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 Wexford is from road traffic.

The *Wexford County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028* (Wexford County Council, 2025) and the *Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028* identify major roads in the county as noise sources, including the N11, M11, N25, N30, N80, R730, R733, R741 and R769. These roads are major national and regional roads that connect Wexford to neighbouring towns/cities and counties.

Noise pollution (during the day and night) can cause disturbance to people and businesses and may also detract visitors to an area. Wexford has designated 'Quiet Areas' which are areas whereby the landscape characteristic is partially defined by the lack of ambient noise. These 'Quiet Areas', are designated in the *Wexford County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028* and the *Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028*.

### 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 quality, wastewater management, and the effects of climate change, including the increase of extreme weather events, sea level rise, flood risk and coastal erosion. Air quality is discussed in Section 5.5 of this report, Climate in Section 5.6. The tourism sector and associated infrastructure, including water and wastewater management, is discussed in more detail in the material assets section of this ER.

Existing pressures and threats to population and human health include:

- Effects to residential and visitor accommodation (availability and affordability);
- Effects to populations in high radon areas;
- Effects due to flood events and landslide events (refer to Section 5.7 of this ER);
- Pressure on critical infrastructure if not planned and managed appropriately (refer to Section 5.8 Material Assets);
- Exacerbating effects of climate change (refer to Section 5.6 Climate);
- Effects on all other environmental factors depending on the nature of tourism activity e.g. water environment, air quality, land use change, etc.

The tourism industry offers potential positive opportunities for social and economic benefits, including supporting and diversifying the rural economy and ecosystem services.

## 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 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 states 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 (EPA, 2024b).

#### 5.4.1 Waterbody Status and Quality

The *Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EU* (referred to hereafter as the 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 WFD objectives. 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.

Good water quality is important for drinking water resources, enjoyment of beaches, and bathing waters for residents and visitors. At the same time, the increased pressure from the tourist industry and the associated supporting development could threaten to diminish this quality, if unmanaged. County Wexford covers five water catchments, Owenavorrhagh, Ovoca-Vartry, Barrow, Ballyteigue-Bannow, and Slaney & Wexford Harbour. It contains 24 subcatchments, as detailed in Table 5-5 (EPA Maps, 2024).

**Table 5-5 Catchments and Subcatchments within County Wexford**

Catchment Name	Catchment_ID	Classification
<b>Ovoca-Vartry</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Catchment</b>
DerryWater_SC_010	10_2	Subcatchment
Avoca_SC_020	10_9	Subcatchment
<b>Owenavorrhagh</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Catchment</b>
Cahore_SC_010	11_1	Subcatchment
Owenavorrhagh_SC_010	11_2	Subcatchment
Inch [Wexford]_SC_010	11_3	Subcatchment
<b>Slaney &amp; Wexford Harbour</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Catchment</b>
Slaney_SC_070	12_1	Subcatchment
Tinnokilla [Stream]_SC_010	12_2	Subcatchment
Slaney_SC_060	12_3	Subcatchment
Slaney_SC_080	12_4	Subcatchment
Forth_Commons_SC_010	12_5	Subcatchment
Slaney_SC_040	12_6	Subcatchment
Urrin_SC_010	12_7	Subcatchment
Slaney_SC_050	12_8	Subcatchment

Catchment Name	Catchment_ID	Classification
Derry [Slaney]_SC_010	12_11	Subcatchment
Bann [Wexford]_SC_010	12_13	Subcatchment
Boro_SC_010	12_14	Subcatchment
Whitefort_SC_010	12_15	Subcatchment
<b>Ballyteige – Bannow</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Catchment</b>
Owenduff [Wexford]_SC_010	13_1	Subcatchment
Bridgetown [Wexford]_SC_010	13_2	Subcatchment
Curraghmore_SC_010	13_3	Subcatchment
Kisha_SC_010	13_4	Subcatchment
Corock_SC_010	13_5	Subcatchment
<b>Barrow</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Catchment</b>
Barrow_SC_140	14_10	Subcatchment
Barrow_SC_150	14_19	Subcatchment

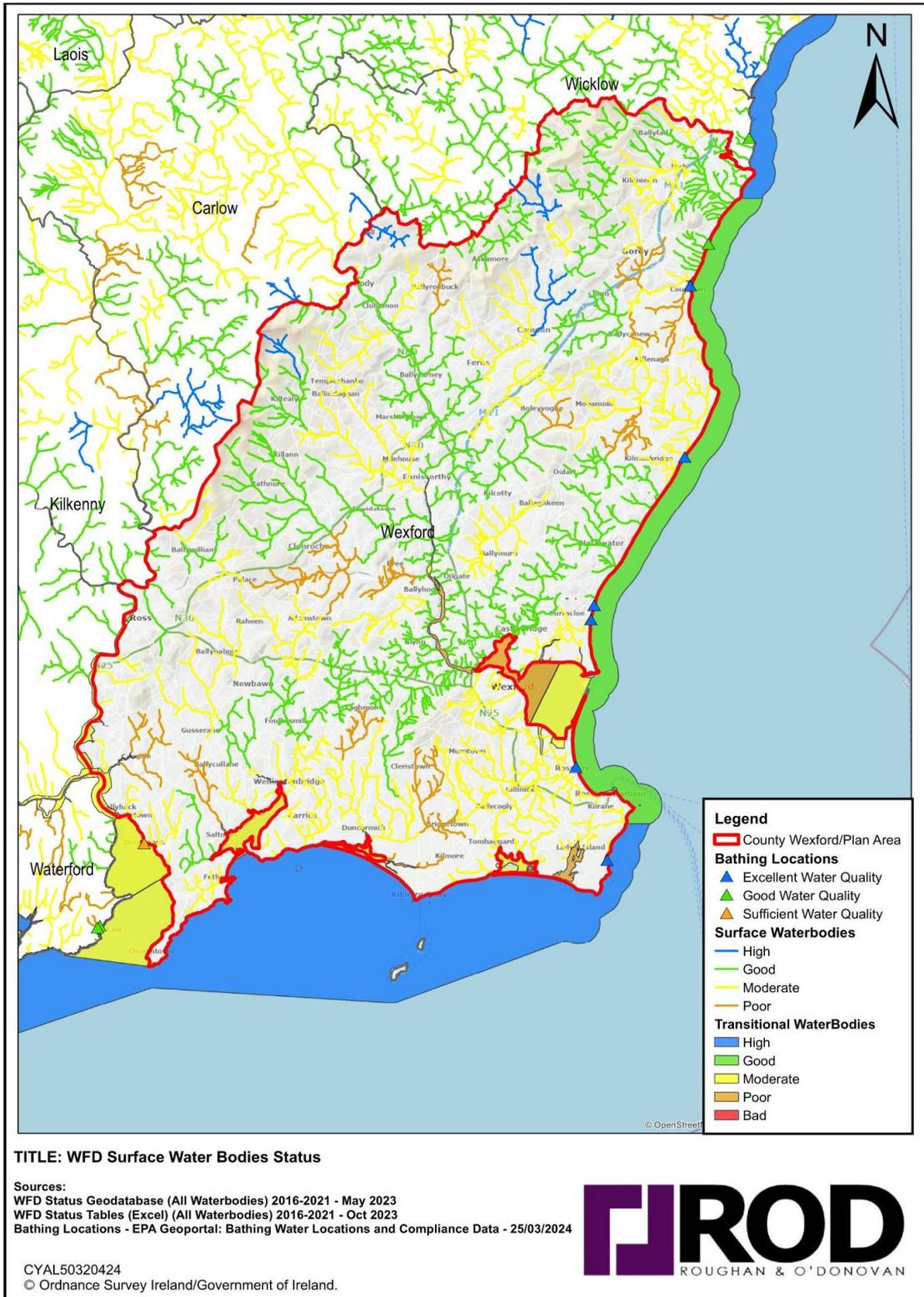
The extent of these catchments is defined as follows.

- Ovoca-Vartry: The area drained by the Rivers Avoca and Vartry, and by all streams entering tidal water between Sorrento Point, Co. Dublin and Kilmichael Point, Co. Wexford.
- Owenavorragh: The area drained by the River Owenavarragh and all streams entering tidal water between Kilmichael Point and Raven Point.
- Slaney & Wexford Harbour: The area drained by the River Slaney and all streams entering tidal water between Raven Point and Greenore Point
- Ballyteigue-Bannow: The area drained by the streams entering tidal water between Greenore Point and Railway Bridge.
- Barrow: The area drained by the River Barrow upstream of the River Nore confluence and all streams entering tidal water between the Barrow railway bridge at Great Island and Ringwood, Co. Kilkenny.

As previously stated, water quality status, as defined by the WFD, considers the ecological and chemical status of a given waterbody. Through successive WFD reports, the quality of water within these catchments has remained relatively stable. 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, 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 within County Wexford.**

**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 Wexford for their ability

to attract tourists. For this reason, their management and maintenance within the county are of significance to the Draft Plan.

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

The 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 the 1<sup>st</sup> of June to the 15<sup>th</sup> of September each year. The bathing waters include beaches and lakes and can be classified as 'excellent', 'good', 'sufficient', or 'poor'.

The *2023 Bathing Water Quality Report* (EPA, 2024c) indicates that there are eight bathing water locations that are monitored within County Wexford. Bathing water locations and its accompanying quality are shown on Figure 5-3 above. In 2023, all bathing location met the minimum standard of 'sufficient'. Six are rated as 'excellent', while Ballymoney and North Beach are rated as 'good' quality and Duncannon as "Sufficient" quality. The quality of these waterbodies is of particular significance for County Wexford given the extent and quality of beaches along the coast and also the level of sunshine and dry days it gets when compared with the west and northern coasts, colloquially known as the 'sunny south east'. Wexford's beaches attract both domestic and international tourism and provide significant locations for water based activities.

#### 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 in Ireland is considered to be of 'good' chemical quality, and 99.6% of the groundwater nationally is of 'good' quantitative status under the WFD (EPA, 2024a). This is reflected within the plan area, in which groundwater quality for the monitoring period of 2013-2018 is considered predominantly 'good' apart from portions of Wexford Town, Enniscorthy, the area of Castlebridge North and the River Slaney, where it is considered 'poor' (EPA, 2024b). The quality and quantity of groundwater is vital for human health and can have an impact on attractiveness to tourists.

One ground waterbody within the county is classified as karstic, Fardystown (EPA code IE\_SE\_G\_064). 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.

Most of County Wexford is underlain by 'Locally Important Aquifer - Bedrock which is Moderately Productive only in Local Zones' or 'Poor Aquifer - Bedrock which is Generally Unproductive except for Local Zones' as classified by GSI and EPA maps (last revised in 2017). 'Regionally Important Aquifer' underlie the areas from Waterford City to Gorey, from Ballyteige Burrow to Rosslare, and from the Slaney Estuary to Curraclloe.

Aquifer vulnerability varies within County Wexford. GSI reports predominantly low vulnerability within the area approximately between Rosslare, Bannow Bay, and Wexford Harbour, and the area approximately between Kilmuckridge and Arklow (GSI, 2024). The remaining area of County Wexford is predominantly high vulnerability.

#### 5.4.4 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

waters or groundwater, or to conserve habitats or species that directly depend on those waters. The plan area contains the following RPAs:

- The water dependent SPAs and SACs, which includes rivers, cliffs and valleys
- The surface water in areas which the *Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive* (91/271/EEC) denotes as being Nutrient Sensitive Areas, that being Wexford Harbour, and the Slaney Estuary (Lower)
- Surface and ground waterbodies designated for drinking water (under *Article 7 Abstraction for Drinking Water*);
- All bathing water areas and the groundwater zones associated with these areas;
- Areas which must be protected in order to sustain shellfish life: Bannow Bay, Waterford Harbour, and Wexford Harbour Outer and Inner.

#### 5.4.5 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).

Within County Wexford, the Rivers Slaney, and Barrow have experienced numerous historic flood events. Settlements such as Enniscorthy (on banks of the River Slaney) and New Ross (River Barrow), are at continued risk of flooding. The coastal settlements of Courtown, Rosslare, and Wexford Town are also prone to coastal flooding (OPW Flood Maps, 2024). The increased incidence and magnitude of coastal flooding expected due to climate change and rising sea levels threatens to disrupt the ability of coastal regions to support traditional tourism. This is significant given the regional importance of Wexford Town and Rosslare Europort and Rosslare Town. Flooding puts pressure on the stormwater systems and the water infrastructure, which is critical to accommodate the demands of a sustainable tourism sector. Various flood protection measures and projects are identified in the *Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028* and there are also a variety of policies and objectives including that new developments are developed to be climate resilient. The WCDP also limit tourism development in areas of known flooding, except for cases of water-based activities or experiences.

#### 5.4.6 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 interacts with many different sectors and therefore, can influence water quality and quantity particularly during peak periods.

## 5.5 Air Quality

Clean air is essential for our quality of life and supports the tourism industry. While recent decades have seen significant improvements in air quality in Ireland, air pollution continues to cause damage to both the population's health and the environment.

Air quality standards are set out in EU and Irish legislation. *S.I. No. 739 of 2022 Air Quality Standards Regulations 2022* (hereafter referred to as the Air Quality Regulations), incorporates 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.

*Directive (EU) 2024/2881 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe* addresses air pollution challenges by building on the previous policies and aligning EU air quality standards more closely with scientific recommendations.

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 Draft 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 Monitoring

The EPA monitors various air pollutants in Ireland and report the results annually. The latest report '*Air Quality in Ireland Report 2023*' (EPA, 2024d) reports monitoring results for Ireland in 2023. Ireland's latest monitoring indicates compliance with current EU standards, however, Ireland is not on track to achieve its ambition set out in the *National Clean Air Strategy*, to meet the health-based WHO air quality guideline limits in 2026. It is recognised that achieving future targets will be very challenging. The main pollutants of concern are fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) from solid fuel combustion and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) from vehicle emissions/traffic.

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.

Wexford Town is classified into Zone C as a large town, and the rest of the county falls under Zone D. There are currently three active national air quality monitoring station in Wexford: (1) at the Wexford Opera House in Wexford Town, (2) Parnell Road in Enniscorthy and (3) at Carnsore Point. Carnsore Point records ozone gas levels every 1-3 months, and the stations at the Opera House and Parnell Road record PM<sub>2.5</sub> particles and PM<sub>10</sub> particles continuously.

The AQHI indices are available for the Opera House and Parnell Road stations, and values are updated hourly through continuous monitoring. Scores range from 1-10 with 1-3 being classified as 'Good' quality. Both stations' live readings indicate 'Good' air quality (as of 13/11/2024), with AQHIs of 1 at both live monitoring stations. The

quality of air can influence the appeal of an area for tourists, and even disqualify those with breathing difficulties in extreme cases.

### 5.5.2 Existing Pressures and Threats

Nationally, emissions for all air pollutants, except ammonia, have been decreasing. The EPA (2024d) reports that the two largest pollutants in Ireland are particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, arising from domestic use of solid fuel and petrol or diesel vehicles, respectively. The ability to further reduce these emissions is threatened by the continued growth of industry, particularly in the areas of agriculture and transport. 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.

Poor air quality can lead to health problems for the population such as respiratory and cardiovascular system diseases, which can lead to other major long-lasting health problems. It also negatively affects biodiversity, aquatic environments, and ecosystems as atmospheric NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> can change the characteristics of water bodies and harm 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 (IPPC, 2023) 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 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.

#### 5.6.1.1 European Travel Commission

Tourism plays a vital role in the global economy, generating employment, driving economic growth, supporting local communities, and improving the quality of life in many destinations. However, it is also a significant source of GHG emissions, accounting for nearly 9% of global totals (ETC,2025). This dual role makes tourism both a contributor to and a casualty of the climate crisis. Climate change poses a serious threat to Europe's status as a premier travel destination, as increasingly

extreme weather events endanger its cultural and natural heritage. Without action to curb emissions, the long-term sustainability of tourism itself is at risk.

The European Travel Commission (ETC) published the “*Roadmap for National Tourism Organisations Towards Climate Action in Tourism Destinations – Climate Action Planning Framework*”, a critical resource designed to inspire and guide climate action across European destinations. The roadmap includes a step-by-step guide for National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) to create climate action plans tailored to their needs. It serves as a comprehensive toolkit to help destinations achieve sustainability and climate resilience, maintaining global competitiveness. ETC’s Climate Action Planning Framework is designed as an intuitive, comprehensive, and practical guide that aligns seamlessly with the five pathways of the *Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism: Measure, Decarbonise, Regenerate, Collaborate, and Finance* as illustrated in the figure below. Frameworks such as this will help Ireland and our EU counterparts take practical steps to reduce emissions associated with the tourism sector, ensuring tourism becomes more sustainable and adapts to the effects of climate change.



Figure 5-4 The Five Pathways of the Glasgow Declaration (ETCb, 2025)

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

The *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021* builds on the 2015 Climate Act and commits Ireland to 2030 and 2050 targets for reducing GHG emissions and provides a governance framework. The Act commits Ireland to a legally binding path to net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030.

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’ defined in the Act as the National Climate Objective. 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.

### 5.6.1.3 Climate Action Plan

The first *Climate Action Plan* (CAP) was published in 2019 and is reviewed annually. The Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25) builds upon actions taken over previous years since Ireland committed to reducing GHG emissions by 51% by 2030 (compared to 2018 levels) and its commitment to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

CAP25 outlines what Ireland needs to achieve in 2025, so the nation is prepared to take on the challenges of climate change and meeting the requirements of the second carbon budget period 2026-2030. CAP25 “reaffirms Ireland’s position as a leader when it comes to addressing the challenges posed by climate change and reinforces the Government’s commitment to delivering on ambitious emission reduction targets.” According to the EPA’s latest data, Ireland’s emissions fell to a level below the 1990 baseline for the first time in 2023, this milestone was reached with a 50% increase in population levels, compared to 1990 population statistics.

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 (provisional)</b>	151 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq	Reduction in emissions of 3.5% per annum for the third provisional budget.

CAP25 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

Environment, Climate and Communications, 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, CAP25 puts in place ambitious activity targets for the sector reflecting an EU-type approach.			
Total	68				
Unallocated Savings	-	-	26	-5.25	-
Legally Binding Carbon Budgets and 2030 Emission Reduction Targets	-	295	200	-	51

CAP25 (Government of Ireland, 2025) reports that Ireland expended 64.1% of its carbon budget for the period of 2021-2023. *Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2023-2050* (EPA, 2024f) reports that Ireland is expected to exceed its 2021-2025 and 2026-2030 carbon 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.

CAP25 provides a corrective path for Ireland to meet its national emissions targets through the introduction of corrective measures across all sectors and industries. Tourism is influenced by and influences all sectors. Some of the key relevant actions in CAP25 include relevant to the tourism sector are in the transport sector and include:

- *TR/25/7: Advance roll-out of walking/cycling infrastructure in line with National Cycle Network and CycleConnects plans;*
- *TR/25/23: Prioritise the delivery of further phases of the BusConnects Network Design Plan.*

These actions will contribute to a reduction in fuel usage and total vehicle kilometres, and their associated GHG emissions.

#### **5.6.1.4 National Adaptation Framework**

The Governments' second *National Adaptation Framework (NAF)* published in 2024 provides a 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.

#### **5.6.1.5 Tourism Policy Framework**

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

#### **5.6.1.6 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

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

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.

## 5.6.2 Local Context

### 5.6.2.1 Wexford County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

The *Wexford County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029* (WCCCAP) sets out how the Council will work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from their operations in line with commitments in the Climate Act and in the services that they provide to the people of Wexford. The 5 year plan 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 WCCCAP Vision and Mission is to transition County Wexford to a 'climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy'. Through the reduction of GHG emissions by 51% by 2030 and implementing the actions within the plan, advocating, co-ordinating and facilitating climate action with communities and the various sectors within the County. The WCCCAP identifies a structured approach to the arrangement of the climate actions that will be implemented.

The WCCCAP reports that activity within County Wexford was responsible for GHGs amounting to 2,460.1 ktCO<sub>2</sub>eq in 2018. Agriculture was the predominant contributor, accounting for 39.4% of GHG emissions. Residential, transport and manufacturing made up the next highest sectors with 17.6%, 17.4% and 16.4%, respectively. The actions outlined within the LACAP aim to align activity within the county with the CAP25 to reduce emissions by 51% by 2030.

Enniscorthy is identified as a 'Decarbonization Zone' for the county, 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 86.8 ktCO<sub>2</sub>eq of GHGs in 2018, with the predominant contributors being the transport, commercial and residential sectors, which account for 35.5%, 34.9%, and 21.4% of emissions, respectively. Tourism is development contributes to all of these sectors.

### 5.6.3 Existing Pressures and Threats

Tourism is a cross-cutting sector that depends on all other sectors (e.g. biodiversity, water, agriculture, transport, energy, waste, etc.). Tourism plays a vital role in the global economy, generating employment, driving economic growth, supporting local communities, and improving the quality of life in many destinations. However, it is also a significant source of GHG emissions this dual role makes tourism both a contributor to and a casualty of the climate crisis. Climate change poses a serious threat Wexford's status as a leading domestic and international travel destination, as increasingly extreme weather events, coastal erosion endanger its extensive beaches and coastal communities, as well as its extensive cultural and natural heritage. It is generally accepted that without meaningful action to curb emissions, the long-term sustainability of tourism itself is at risk. The implementation of adaptation and resilience measures across all sectors will require significant collaboration. The current pace of delivery of actions detailed in the Governments CAP25 is slow.

Climate change poses serious risks to tourism, including coastal erosion, flooding, and extreme weather—especially in vulnerable areas like Wexford. These impacts can damage attractions, infrastructure, and agriculture, disrupting the visitor experience. Since many tourism sites are tied to natural landscapes, protecting nature will be essential for adaptation. While some regions may benefit from longer seasons or shifts in visitor preferences toward cooler climates, this could also strain local resources. Overall, climate change will significantly affect tourism, requiring coordinated action across sectors and stakeholders.

## **5.7 Land and Soils**

Consideration of land and soil management is essential to sustainable 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.

### **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, resulting in 3.3 million tonnes net emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in 2018.

The CORINE 2018 land cover survey of County Wexford is illustrated in Figure 5-5 below. The county's land cover is predominately composed of Pastures and Arable Lands. Other common land cover type in the county includes beaches, dunes and sand along coastal areas, inland wetlands, mixed forests, coniferous forests, moors and heathlands, peat bogs, complex cultivation patterns, discontinuous urban fabric, and non-irrigated arable land.

### **5.7.2 Soil Types**

The most dominant soils in County Wexford include Lithosols/Regosols, Brown Podzolics, Ground/surface water gleys and Alluvium, as identified by Teagasc Soils (GSI, 2024). The north-east of the county features large stretches of gleys originating from limestone till, while the south of the county is composed of gleys derived from sandstones and shales. Alluvium deposits are present in the flood plains of the rivers and streams. Sloblands are present in Wexford Harbour and Kilmore Quay, which are not found elsewhere in Ireland. Slobs are areas of land that were reclaimed for agricultural use, the lands now serve as important nature reserves for birds.

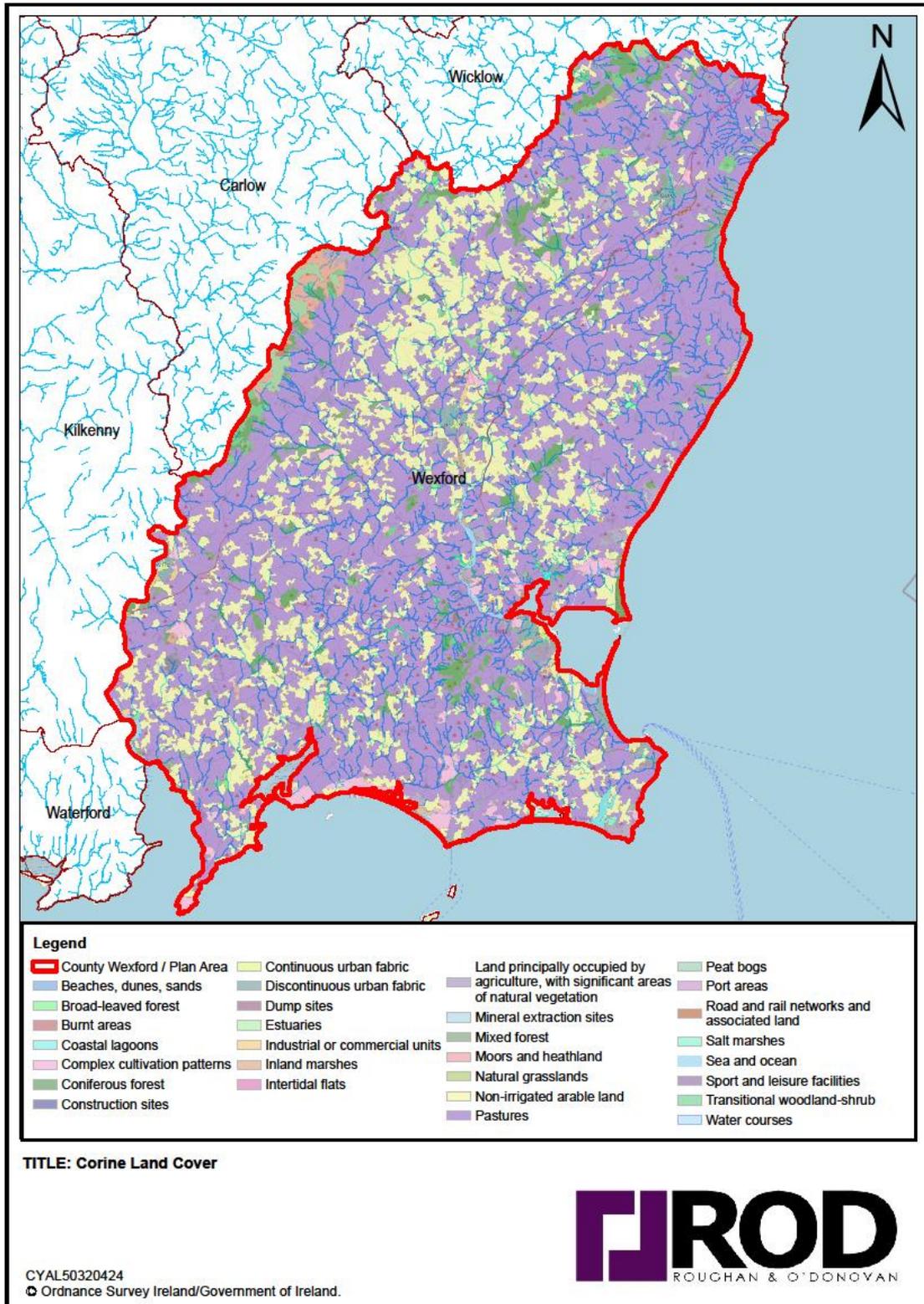


Figure 5-5 CORINE 2018 Land Cover within the Plan Area

### 5.7.3 Landslides and Coastal Erosion

According to GSI, the majority of County Wexford has 'low landslide susceptibility', which is consistent with the landslide history for the county. Within Ireland, much of the east coast is vulnerable to coastal erosion, and this has put many coastal communities and settlements at risk. The following areas have been identified within the *Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028* as prone to erosion: Kilpatrick, Ardamine,

Glascarrig, Killincooly to Ballinesker, Rosslare, Tacumshin to Kilmore Quay, Ballyteige Burrow to Cullenstown and Fethard. Figure 5-6 below illustrates areas along the Wexford coast which are vulnerable to coastal erosion. Flooding also present risks to Ireland's tourism infrastructure, including vulnerable historic sites, settlements, beaches, transport infrastructure and world-renowned golf courses some of which are located near coastlines, which attract tourism.

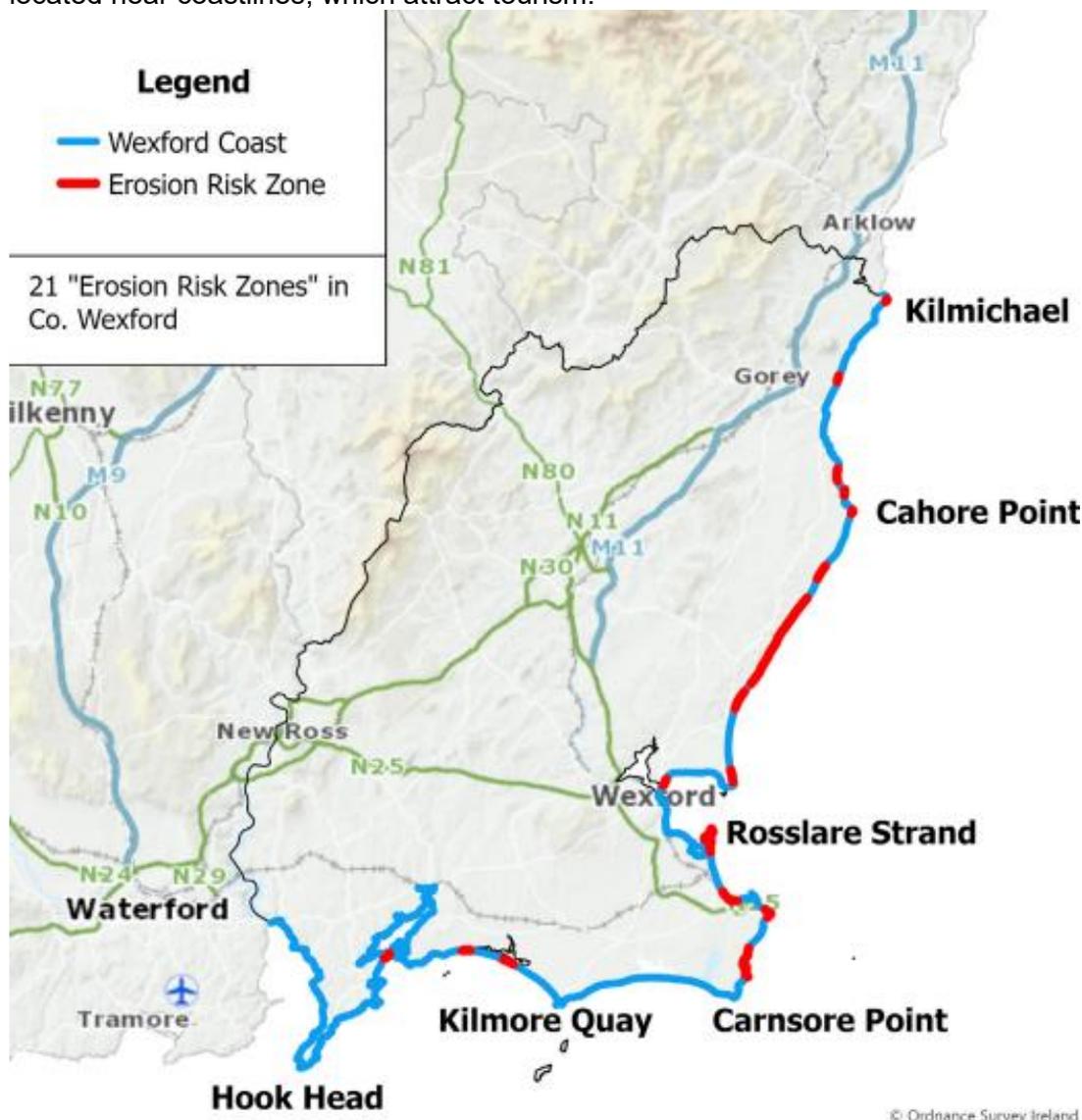


Figure 5-6 Areas at Risk of Coastal Erosion in County Wexford. Source: Wexford CAP 2024-2029 (WCC, 2004)

#### 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. GSI 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.

County Wexford has several sites of geological heritage including Wexford Harbour (WX043), the Screen Hills (WX036), the Blackstairs Mountains (WX006), Curracloe Beach and The Raven Point (WX016), Hook Head (WX023) and several sites other along the southern coastline.

### 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 soils due to direct land use change, creating soil sealing and/or impacting geological heritage sites.

## 5.8 Material Assets

Material assets, encompassing both human-made infrastructure and natural resources, play a pivotal role in supporting tourism and broader economic development. These assets include essential utilities such as water supply, wastewater treatment, drainage systems, transportation networks (including Ports), and coastal defences, as well as land and marine resources that underpin agriculture, aquaculture, energy, and tourism.

In tourism-intensive regions, such as those in County Wexford, the sector can exert considerable pressure on existing infrastructure—particularly water, waste management, and road systems (EPA, 2024a). This pressure highlights the need for sustainable planning and investment in resilient infrastructure to accommodate seasonal population surges.

A significant opportunity, nationally and within the plan area, is the reuse of the numerous brownfield sites and regeneration opportunities. The *Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028* has identified a number of these brownfield sites within the Plan area. These sites offer potential for sustainable development without encroaching on sensitive natural areas.

### 5.8.1 Natural Assets

Some of the key natural assets within the county are its productive agricultural lands, forests and the beaches. The beaches along the coastline, are central to the county's tourism appeal. The Marine Institute (Reilly et al., 2023) reports that tourism in marine and coastal environments is by far the largest employer within Ireland's ocean industries. Coastal towns like Rosslare, Wexford Town, Kilmore Quay, and Courtown benefit economically from marine and coastal tourism, however, increased tourism can threaten ecological integrity through overdevelopment and infrastructure expansion. Balancing tourism growth with the protection of these natural assets is essential.

Tourism in these areas significantly contributes to the growth of neighbouring towns, villages, and the wider rural economy. However, it can also put pressure on scenic and often ecologically sensitive environments. The development of tourism-related accommodation and critical infrastructure—if not carefully planned and managed—can negatively impact both natural and social assets.

Safeguarding the coastline through ongoing maintenance and protection is essential to preserving its environmental value and ensuring the long-term wellbeing of the communities that depend on it. In addition to its tourism value, the coastline supports the fishing industry, which remains a vital component of the regional economy. Areas such as Bannow Bay are particularly notable for their unique aquaculture activities, including the cultivation of oysters and mussels.

## 5.8.2 Public Infrastructure

### 5.8.2.1 Water and wastewater supply

The existing public assets of County Wexford include public spaces, buildings, and recreational areas, as well as public utilities such as electrical, water and wastewater infrastructure. Public spaces within the region have potential to be drivers of tourism, and the supporting infrastructure and services can impact the quality of the experience for visitors.

Irish Water (2023a) monitors Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs) across the country and reports that while the larger settlements within County Wexford currently have capacity, many of the WWTPs that support smaller settlements have little to no headroom remaining. Irish Water (2023b) also reports that much of the water supply infrastructure within the county will need improvements to meet the demands of population targets, particularly in larger settlements such as Enniscorthy, Bunclody and New Ross. Approximately 64% of households in Wexford receive water from a public supply source, which is substantially lower than the national average of 77% (Wexford County Council, 2022). The county aims to increase the use of public water sources to preserve water resources, develop sustainability, and maximise investment into water-related infrastructure.

### 5.8.2.2 Broadband

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 across the island and in particular in rural areas to function and compete nationally and internationally. National Broadband Ireland (NBI) (2024a) has facilitated the roll-out of broadband and reports that high speed fibre broadband is available to order or pre-order in 63% of premises within the county. NBI (2024b) reports that the deployment areas of Coolkenno and Hollyfort are not yet fully connected but are expected to all be connected by December 2026, at the latest. The completion of this work will support the ability of all areas of County Wexford to be connected, supporting social and economic development.

### 5.8.2.3 Transport

The transport infrastructure within County 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:

- M11: Connecting Wexford Town to Enniscorthy, Gorey and on to Dublin through major towns along the east coast.
- N25: Connecting Wexford Town to Rosslare Harbour, New Ross and Waterford City.
- N80: Connecting Enniscorthy to Carlow and large towns within the midlands.

County Wexford is also served by Irish-Rail, which connects Rosslare, Wexford Town, Enniscorthy and Gorey to major towns along the south-eastern line and to Dublin. Public and private bus services also operate throughout the County, providing local and national connectivity. The *Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028* outlines numerous objectives supporting the development of public transport within the county and supporting the population to adopt it as a preferred mode of transport.

A major asset within County Wexford is Rosslare Harbour and Europort. Rosslare Europort provides passenger ferry connections to Wales, France and Spain and is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest passenger port in the country in terms of passengers (Wexford County

Council, 2022). Several freight routes also operate from it. The arrival of tourists through the Europort provides significant opportunities to County Wexford and indeed the country. Improving the connectivity to the area via roads and public transport will support and promote the tourism sector.

#### **5.8.2.4 Energy**

Wexford is strategically positioned to be a hub for renewable energy generation in Ireland, leveraging its coastline and proximity to the UK. The Greenlink Interconnector, a 500MW high-voltage direct current submarine cable linking Great Island in Wexford to Wales, facilitates the exchange of clean energy and strengthens energy security for both nations. Wexford County Council is actively promoting energy efficiency and renewable technologies, aiming to achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Wexford's coastline is a potential site for offshore wind farms balancing the environmental impacts with energy production and sustainability will be key consideration as part of these developments.

#### **5.8.2.5 Tourism**

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 919,000 domestic trips to Wexford, accounting for 2.3 million of the total 34 million overnight stays in 2023 (CSO, 2023c).

Nationally, tourism from foreign visitors increased by approximately 0.8% in the month of July 2023 compared to July 2024 (CSO, 2024). The total foreign visitor spending in Ireland increased by 5% from 2023 to 2024, totalling €919.2 million. Tourism is a strong economic driver in the county, bringing in an estimated €157 million from domestic tourists and €104 million from international tourism in 2018 in County Wexford (Wexford County Council, 2022).

Tourism has historically been an important sector of the Wexford economy. Wexford's diverse natural landscape, including mountains, rivers, and extensive coastline enhances its appeal. Its coastal towns and long sandy beaches draw large numbers of visitors, particularly during the summer peak. The WCDDP 2022-20228 states that in 2018, Wexford accounted for approximately 7% of all domestic trips, and 3% of overseas visits.

In 2023, Wexford's main tourism attraction were the Johnstown Castle Estate with 178,000 visitors, making it Ireland's 46<sup>th</sup> most popular visitor destination that year (FI, 2024b). Other popular destinations in the county included the John F. Kennedy Arboretum (119,612 visitors) and the Irish National Heritage Park (59,096 visitors) (FI, 2024b). Overall, 'Historic Sites' and 'Visitor Gardens' are the biggest attractions, representing 47% and 27% of visitors, respectively.

The Draft Plan seeks to increase tourism from domestic and overseas visitors particularly due the presence of the Europort providing connectivity with mainland Europe.

### **5.8.3 Existing Pressures and Threats**

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

- Access to and management of 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 periods;
- 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 have developed and how customs, practices, places, objects, traditions, and values were passed on from generation to generation. Ireland's heritage legislation and policy sits within a broad range of international and EU conventions, legislation, policy and programmes.

The protection of Ireland's diverse heritage is included within existing legislation and policy. *'Heritage Ireland 2030* published in 2022 is Ireland's national heritage plan promoting the protection, conservation and management of national heritage, it also fully supports the *National Biodiversity Action Plan*. The *Heritage Act 1995 (as amended)* promotes public interest, knowledge, appreciation, and protection of national heritage. Table 5-8 of this report identifies the different types of heritage designations and their associated descriptions.

Heritage is a critical consideration the planning and development process including tourism development. Statutory provision is made in the development plan and development consent processes to address the potential for heritage impacts. Local authorities work to preserve and raise awareness about heritage in their local areas. 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.

Sites of archaeological or architectural significance are both invaluable and irreplaceable and can define the fabric of smaller settlements. Heritage assets are a major driver of tourism within Ireland and are likely to continue to attract tourists. In *Heritage Ireland 2030 A Framework for Heritage (DHLGH, 2022)* it states 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 are registered highly.

**Table 5-8 Heritage Designations**

Type of Heritage Designation	Description
<b>Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)</b>	<p>The RMP comprises a list of monuments and places and includes associated maps indicating their location. They are afforded legal protection under the National Monuments Act (as amended) and are published as a record.</p> <p>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.</p>
<b>National Monuments in State care database</b>	<p>A database that lists all of the National Monuments in State guardianship or ownership. Each is assigned a National Monument number whether in guardianship or ownership and has a brief description of the remains of each Monument.</p> <p>The Minister for the DoHLGH may acquire national monuments by agreement or by compulsory order. The state or local authority may assume guardianship of any national monument (other than dwellings). The owners of national monuments (other than dwellings) may also appoint the Minister or the local authority as guardian of that monument if the state or local authority agrees. Once the site is in ownership or guardianship of the state, it may not be interfered with without the written consent of the Minister.</p>
<b>National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)</b>	<p>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).</p>
<b>Record of Protected Structures (RPS)</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS)</b>	<p>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.</p>

### 5.9.1 Architectural Heritage

The *Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended*, provides protection status to buildings and structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest. It requires each planning authority to compile and maintain a Record of Protected Structures (RPS) that forms part of each

planning authority's development plan. While the objective of the RPS is to protect the structure and its setting, proposals for the sensitive restoration, extension and alteration of protected structures is positively encouraged by Planning Authorities.

The purpose of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is to identify, record, and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland, 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).<sup>3</sup>

The *Planning and Development Act* defines Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) which denote zones or groups of structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures. Figure 5-7 illustrates the sites and monuments record zones, entries of the RPS and NIAH within the county. Many of the RPS and ACAs within County Wexford are within settlements, as shown in Figure 5-8. This presents an opportunity for the development of these settlements as attractions while also adding to the preservation and appreciation of architectural and cultural heritage.

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<sup>3</sup> [National Inventory of Architectural Heritage \(NIAH\) National Dataset - Dataset - data.gov.ie](https://data.gov.ie)

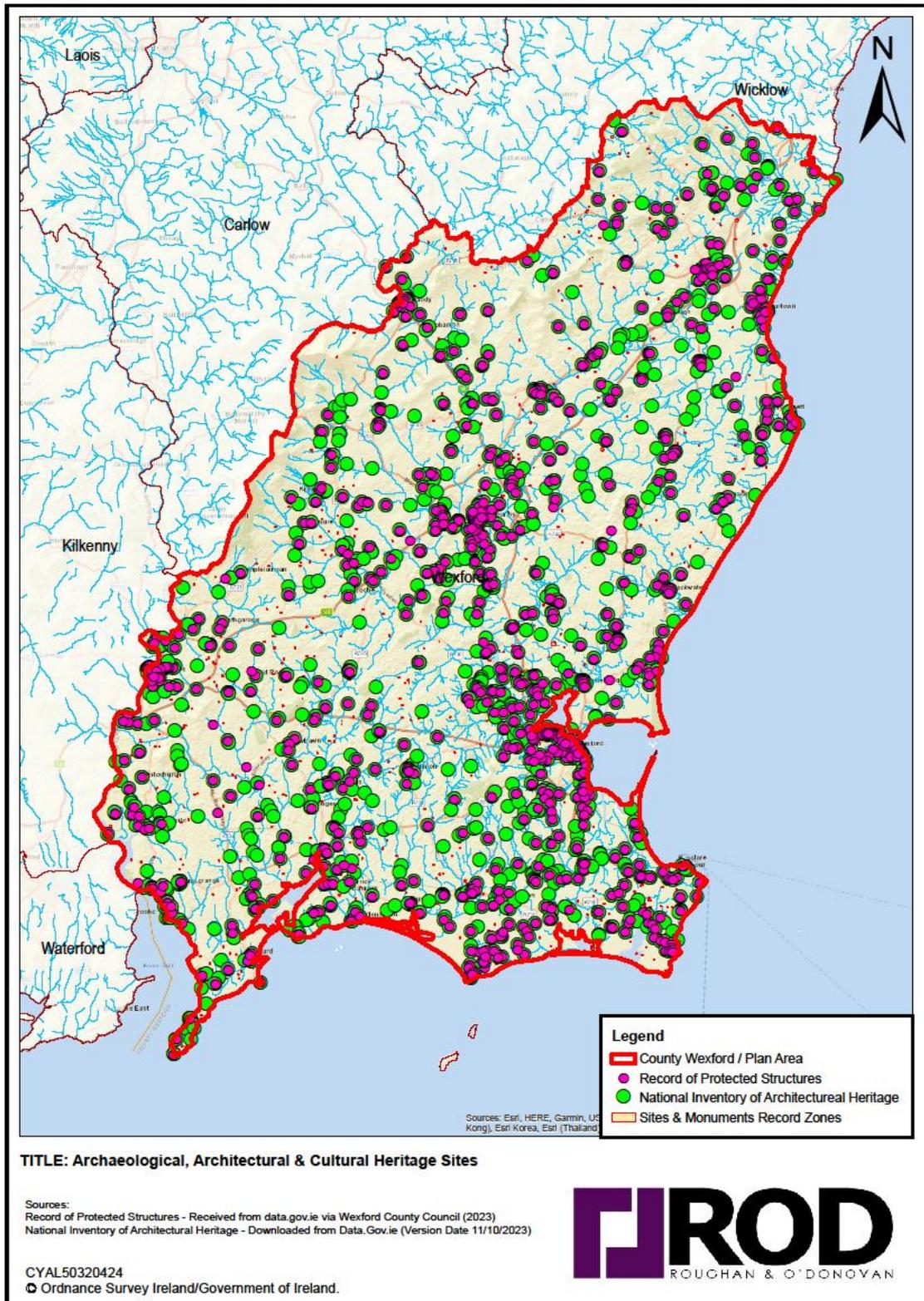
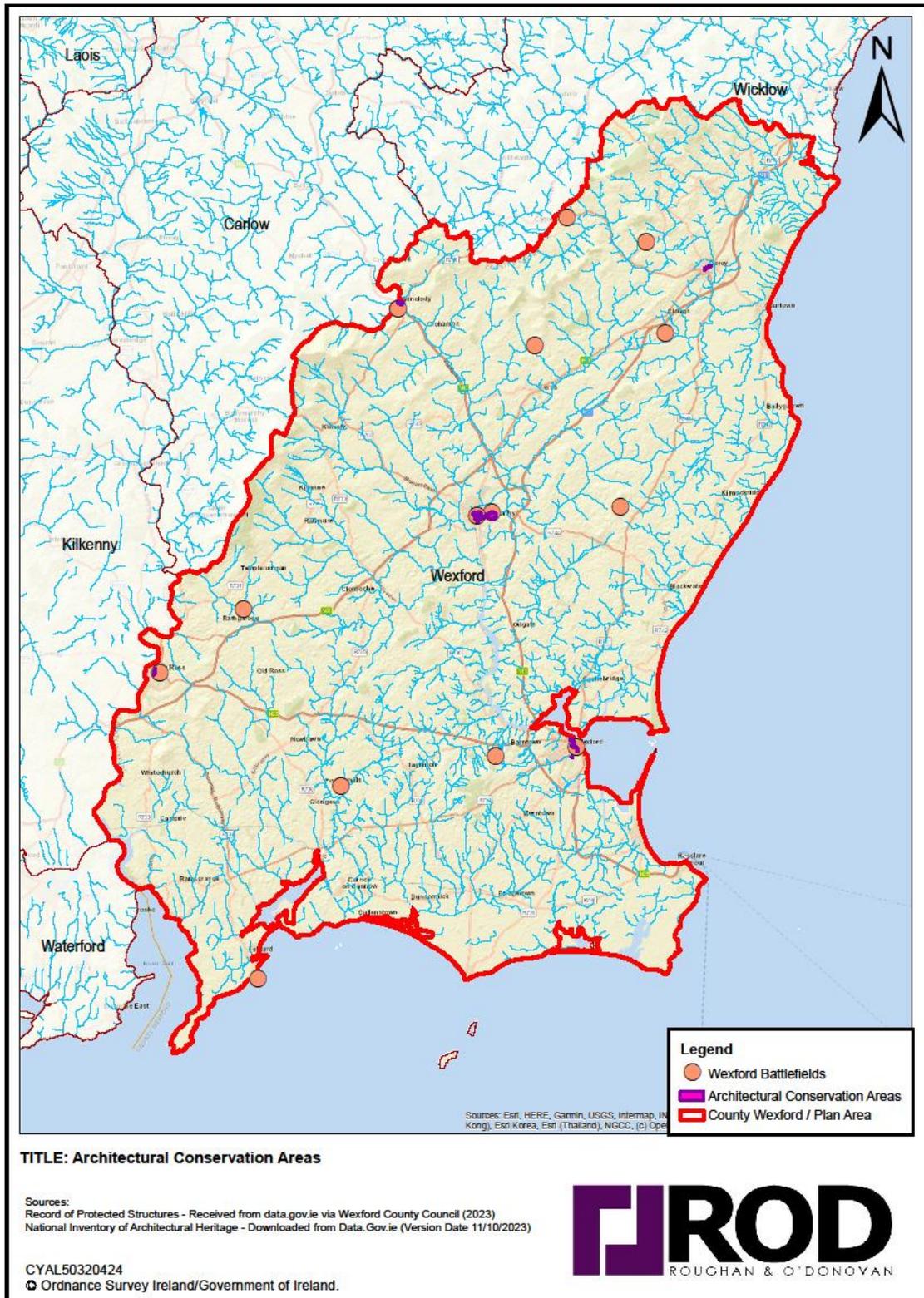


Figure 5-7 Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Sites within the Plan Area



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

The *National Planning Framework - First Revision* (Government of Ireland (2024a)) recognises that revitalising rural towns and villages across the country is required by investing in projects which support economic activity, increasing footfall, encouraging town centre living, and combatting vacancy and dereliction. Addressing vacancy and dereliction in Ireland’s towns and villages is a key objective of the *Town Centre First – A Policy Approach for Irish Towns*.

The Wexford County Development Plan states that “Any works that would have a material effect on the special character of an ACA require planning permission and so the normal exemptions from planning will no longer apply where they are considered to impact on the unique or special features and elevations of an ACA.”

Owners of RPSs and properties within ACAs have stricter planning controls and due to the specialist nature of some conservation works it can lead to higher redevelopment costs. *Heritage Objective BHO5* in the Wexford CDP supports the protection of architectural heritage including RPS and ACA from dereliction and support their reuse, specifically, BH05 states:

*“To protect our Architectural Heritage in the form of the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and identify important groups of buildings/localities suitable for designation as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). Wexford County Council will also endeavour to undertake monitoring and review of the RPS and ACAs which may result in recommendations for additions or deletions and enlist measures to prevent dereliction and to support re-use of built heritage.”*

There are a variety of incentives and grant supports available to owners from local authorities to support the conservation of architectural heritage, subject to meeting certain criteria.

### 5.9.2 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. The legislative framework for archaeological heritage protection in Ireland includes the *National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended)*, *Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2023* and the *Planning and Development Act (as amended)*.

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is the statutory list of recorded monuments and are afforded legal protection under the National Monuments Act. Zones of Notification are areas which indicate archaeological potential and are defined under the same act. A Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was issued for all counties in the State between 1984 and 1992. The SMR formed the basis for issuing the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). Figure 5-7 illustrates the sites and monuments record zones within the county.

The National Monuments Service (NMS) is responsible for the archaeological management, regulation, and protection of Ireland’s archaeological heritage. This includes maintaining the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), which lists known archaeological sites protected under the National Monuments Acts. Once a site is identified and assessed, it may be added to the RMP, which provides statutory protection. There are seventeen National Monuments in State care in County Wexford. These sites pose an opportunity for the development of tourism within the plan area and are listed in Table 5-9 below.

The planning system is required to consider and assess the likely significant effects that plans or projects could have on archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage sites and their settings. The consideration of disturbing or impacting potentially unknown, undesignated archaeological and architectural heritage remains is also required to be considered including effects on underwater archaeology.

**Table 5-9 National Monuments under State care within the Plan Area<sup>4</sup>**

Nat. Mon. No.	Name (Description)	Legal Status
516	Ballyhack Castle	Ownership
375	Ballymoty (Motte)	Ownership
521	Ferns Castle	Guardianship
665	Clone (Church)	Ownership
644	Coolhull Castle (Fortified House)	Ownership
192	Dunbrody Abbey (Cistercian)	Ownership
668	Duncannon (Artillery fort)	Guardianship
457	Tacumshane (Windmill)	Guardianship
133	Ferns (St. Peters) (Church)	Ownership
133	Ferns Abbey (Priory Augustinian)	Ownership
443	St. Mary's Church	Guardianship
434	Rathmackee Castle	Guardianship
229	Rathumney Castle	Ownership
429	Slade Castle	Guardianship
392	Vinegar Hill (Windmill)	Guardianship
506 & 614	Tintern Abbey (Cistercian - Church & bridge)	Ownership
445	St. Selsker's ((Augustinian -Priory Church)	Guardianship

### 5.9.3 Existing Pressures and Threats

Development is the greatest threat to archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage. Sites and features of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, social, scientific or technical importance can be lost through development on, adjacent to, and/ or their setting impacted.

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 areas 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 numbers at these sites, which could intensify the threat of recreational damage to heritage 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.

<sup>4</sup> [Monuments in State Care](#)

The *National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025* ensures compliance with the ELC and provides a framework for the State, public authorities, stakeholders, and 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.

Wexford County Council has prepared a Landscape & Seascape Character Assessment as part of the *Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028* that details scenic routes and protected views across the county. The plan area, while largely consisting of lowlands, is most known for its southern and eastern coastline. The lowlands are divided by the course of the Slaney, which originates from Mount Leinster in the uplands to the north-west. The Landscape & Seascape character assessment identifies 4 types of landscapes within the plan area: coastal, lowlands, river valleys, uplands (Wexford County Council, 2022). Also identified are 'Distinctive Landscapes', which are features within landscapes and seascapes of visual interest. Within County Wexford, the Distinctive Landscapes identified were hills, waterbodies, coastal promontories, peninsulas, sloblands, islands, and 'Kettle and Kame' landscapes. Many of the sites of these Distinctive Landscapes are features of the area's unique coastal form. As a result, County Wexford encompasses many areas which hold a natural beauty and attractive views of these landscapes. Natural beauty has historically been a source of tourism throughout the south and west of the country. However, the changing land use within these areas threaten the continued beauty and value of such regions. The landscape types and Distinctive Landscapes within Wexford are illustrated in Figure 5-9 below.

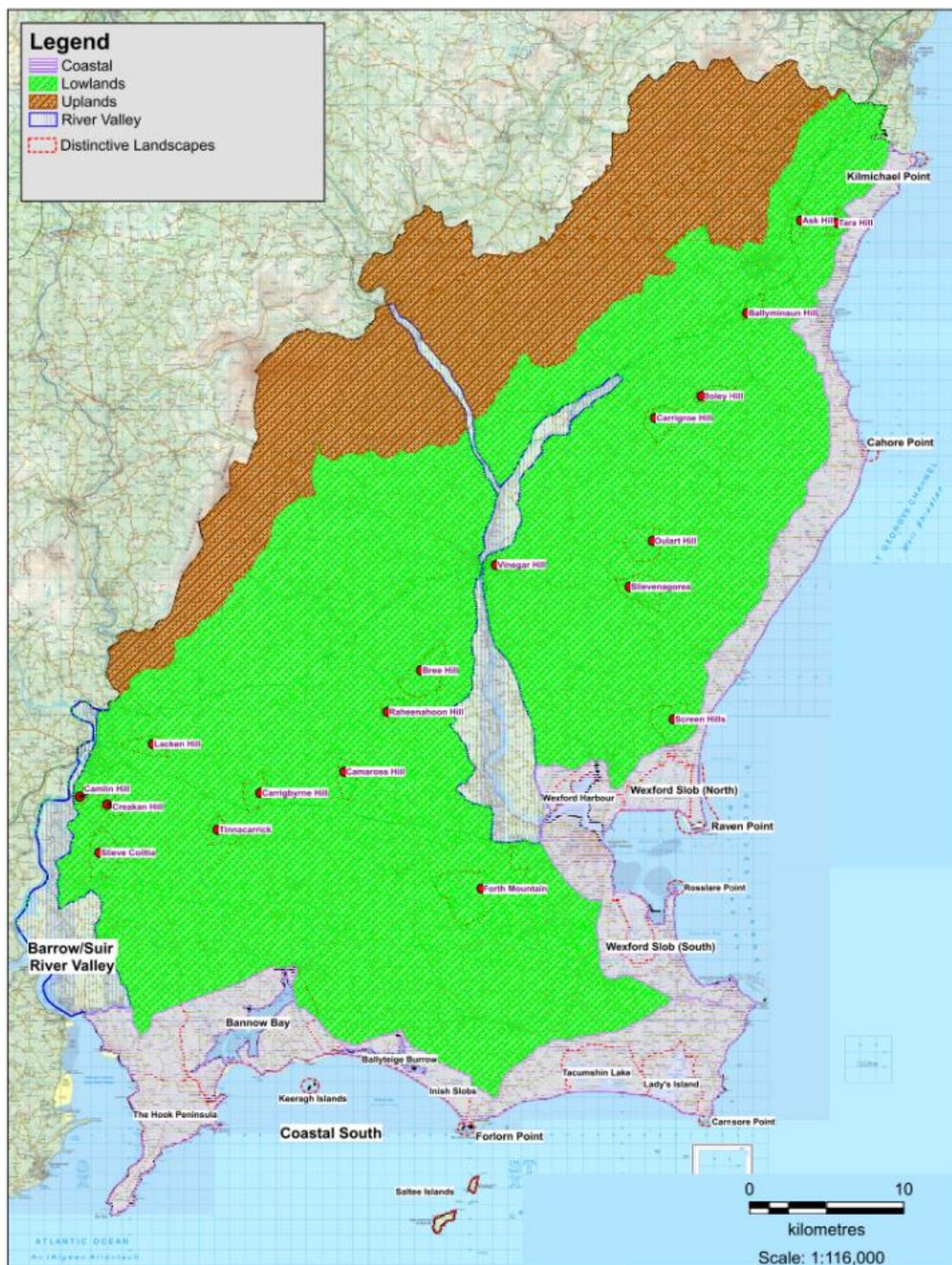


Figure 5-9 Landscape Types Within the Plan Area (Wexford County Council, 2022)

### 5.10.1 Existing Pressures and Threats

Development, including tourism development, has the potential to change the landscape character of a County's distinct landscapes. Developments, in a manner which is inconsistent with the landscape character or type, can impact the sensitivity of these landscapes 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 off-shore), 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 (such as heritage sites), will remain a challenge.

Wexford County Council judge the ability of areas within the County to undergo visual changes and maintain their overall character, denoted as 'Landscape Sensitivity'. The assessment finds the uplands, coastal landscapes, and distinctive landscapes to be areas of high sensitivity, the river valleys are of moderate to high sensitivity, and the lowlands are of low to moderate sensitivity.

## 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, landscape and material assets.

For example, the increase in tourism numbers, particularly from international tourists, is likely to lead to an increase in GHG emissions impacting climate targets, and the increased potential to negatively affect biodiversity, architectural heritage, etc. The likely interactions between environmental factors, given the implementation of the Draft Plan, are set out in Table 5-10. The table below indicates with a tick (✓), the interactions across the environmental factors.

**Table 5-10 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 Draft Plan. Without the Draft Plan, the environment is likely to progress in an ad-hoc manner as described in the Do-nothing alternative presented in Section 7. In the absence of the Draft Plan, tourism development in the county is likely to follow the policies and objectives detailed in the *Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028*, and more broadly, higher level EU Directives and Irish Regulations.

However, in the absence of a coordinated tourism strategy such as the DEDP, tourism growth is likely to occur in an ad-hoc and unstructured manner.

This uncoordinated growth would likely result in:

- **Increased pressure on popular destinations**, particularly during peak tourist seasons, leading to overcrowding and strain on local infrastructure and services.
- **Environmental degradation** in sensitive areas, such as coastal zones, Natura 2000 sites, and protected landscapes, due to unmanaged visitor numbers and lack of targeted mitigation measures.
- **Loss of biodiversity**, as habitats may be disturbed or fragmented by unregulated development or increased human activity in ecologically sensitive areas.
- **Deterioration of built heritage**, where historic sites may suffer from overuse, lack of maintenance, or inappropriate development in their vicinity.
- **Water and air quality issues**, particularly in areas with limited capacity to absorb increased waste, emissions, or traffic associated with tourism.
- **Reduced opportunities for sustainable tourism**, as the absence of a strategic framework may hinder the development of eco-tourism, green infrastructure, and community-led initiatives.

While existing statutory planning and consent frameworks would continue to provide some level of environmental protection, the absence of a local comprehensive tourism plan may result in missed opportunities for positive environmental outcomes. Conversely, the risk of negative impacts such as cumulative environmental degradation and loss of cultural assets, would likely increase.

## 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 methodological measures which set the desired environmental outcome for the assessment of the Draft Plan and thus, are developed to inform 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.

Each project or action contained within the Draft Plan has 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
<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>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 economic development of the population supporting positive health outcomes.	   
<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.	  

Environmental Factor	Strategic Environmental Objective	Relevant SDGs
<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>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>Land &amp; Soils (L&amp;S)</b>	Safeguard existing land and soil resources, protect and improve soil quality, conserve soil, and prevent soil contamination and erosion.	 
<b>Material Assets (MA)</b>	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.	  
<b>Architectural, Archaeological, 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>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.	 

## 6.1 Assessment Approach

The assessment of the likely significant effects on the environment from 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 project and/or actions 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 and actions in the Draft Plan, the SEA team recommended text amendments. The plan team reviewed these recommendations and proposed edits, and decided whether to incorporate them into the Draft 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 Action).

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 Actions identified in the Draft Plan on each environmental factor.

**Table 6-3 Assessment Questions**

SEOs	Assessment Criteria/Questions
<b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</b>	<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 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>
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	<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> <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>

SEOs	Assessment Criteria/Questions
<b>Water</b>	<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>• Increased 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>
<b>Air Quality</b>	<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>
<b>Climate</b> (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>• Contribute to reducing emissions and meeting future emission reduction targets?</li> <li>• Increase vulnerability to climate change of the environment to climate change?</li> <li>• Increase resilience and adaptation of the environment to climate change?</li> </ul>
<b>Land and Soils</b>	<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 land use zoning?</li> </ul>
<b>Material Assets</b>	<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>• The increase and/or avoidance/minimisation of resource consumption (i.e. does it support the circular economy)?</li> </ul>
<b>Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage</b>	<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>
<b>Landscape</b>	<p>Is there potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affect sensitive landscapes such as seascapes, townscapes and river views or visual amenity, for example are there impacts to landscape protection zones or scenic views or routes?</li> <li>• Cause any significant landscape changes or new viewpoints made available?</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 are proposed to the Draft Plan, if deemed necessary. When more detailed information is available for the specific plan, project or action, 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 site-specific Flood Risk Assessments (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 SFRA or other assessments 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 are required to be set at the appropriate level at which the Draft 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 Wexford County Council, taking into account the objectives and geographic scope of the Draft Plan.

The alternatives considered by Fáilte Ireland are:

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

County Wexford’s current tourism development has been guided by key points outlined in the *County Wexford Tourism Strategy 2019-2023*. These are:

- Create new tourism-related employment opportunities;
- Extend the tourism season and promote year-round sustainable tourism;
- Diversify incomes sources in the county;
- Build and improve local infrastructure and amenities;
- Create and foster a sense of community.

#### 7.1.1 Alternative 1: Do-nothing

The socio-economic benefits of tourism in Wexford have yet to be fully realised. Most tourism in Wexford is concentrated in key towns, mainly Wexford Town. This current direction of development is likely to continue in the absence of a plan.

Tourism-related development would continue in a business-as-usual approach, with planning and consent obtained through existing statutory planning and consent framework under the local authority development plan process. Potential negative impacts on environmental factors 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 popular locations within the county, namely Wexford Town and known visitor destinations.

The option continues to support and realise the objectives set in the *Wexford County Tourism Strategy 2019-2023* and the WCDP, but neglects to address the environmental impacts of the implementation of these plans. The do-nothing option does not provide additional or specialised training and guidance for the development of tourism in Wexford.

### 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 Wexford. This alternative 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 Draft Plan would explore and propose solutions to the following development challenges:

- Increase tourism employment across the county.
- Unifying Wexford's tourism destinations to create a destination hot spot.
- Support on-going tourism in Wexford, in part by providing 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 Draft 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 2B includes the consideration of environmental mitigation as part of the Draft Plan. Under this option, Fáilte Ireland would require stakeholders to develop projects in a coordinated manner considering environmental protection, environmental management, and sustainable development from the outset. Environmental requirements would include requirements under existing legislation, plans and policies but would also consider the assessment of existing environmental pressures and threats which in turn informs the development of the Plan and specific projects.

This alternative would have a more robust procedure where the Plan is developed to consider environmental protection and sustainability in a holistic manner and from the outset. Projects would be developed in a coordinated approach to ensure adequate environmental considerations and mitigation is applied, where necessary, including those outside of the planning system. These include:

- Embedded mitigation (changes to the plan/text itself);
- Development of visitor management strategies.
- Integration of blue and green infrastructure and ecosystem services.

## 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 and/or positive impacts on the environment 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 option is 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, which is 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 Wexford 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 and resulting in 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 Draft 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 Draft 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 Draft Plan.

There are unknown environmental impacts with Alternative 2A. The Draft Plan would promote novel experiences in Wexford 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 County Wexford at an accelerated rate compared to Alternative 1, potentially resulting in increases 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 Wexford. 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 Draft Plan itself.

The implementation of a plan is expected to increase tourism seasonality, regionality and overall visitor numbers across County Wexford. The general growth of tourism in the county will increase the potential for negative environmental impacts. However, the integration of mitigation measures into the Draft 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 Draft Plan more closely aligns with the objectives of the Draft Plan, 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 Draft Plan objectives. It also considers potential for unintended consequence and the inclusion of mitigation measures as a result of the implementation of the Plan.

### **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 on supporting infrastructure in these areas. This will lead to potential 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 Draft Plan 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 Wexford, 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 Draft Plan 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 for the Wexford DEDP**

Alternative	Description	Environmental Assessment of All SEOs	Environmental Evaluation
Alternative 1: Do-nothing	No plan is developed, tourism development would continue business as usual. Tourism development would follow the WCDP.	+/-	This alternative would lead to uncoordinated tourism development across the county. With no plan, the objectives of the Draft Plan and the full economic potential for tourism across the county and throughout the year <b>would likely not be realised</b> .  Furthermore, the potential environmental effects of this alternative are expected to result in <b>more negative environmental effects than positive</b> .
Alternative 2A: Prepare a plan <b>without</b> Environmental Consideration	Tourism in County Wexford will be actioned through the preparation of a plan, <b>without</b> environmental considerations.	+/- ?	Alternative 2A will deliver on many aspects of the Draft Plan 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 environmental consideration.  It is likely this Alternative will have 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.

Alternative	Description	Environmental Assessment of All SEOs	Environmental Evaluation
Alternative 2B: Prepare a plan <b>with</b> Environmental Consideration	Tourism in County Wexford will be actioned through the preparation of a plan, <b>with</b> environmental considerations.	+/-	Alternative 2B supports the objectives of the Draft Plan by encouraging the sustainable growth of tourism and economic potential of Wexford  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 effects. Alternative 2B is <b>the preferred option</b> from an environmental perspective and delivery of the Draft 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, neutral or unknown effects, as defined in Table 6-2.

Following the assessment of the projects and Actions contained 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 Draft 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**

Vision & DEDP Target Outcomes	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<p><b>Vision 2034</b> Wexford has something for everybody on land and water! With 250km of coastline to be actively explored, a broad range of immersive attractions throughout the county, rural experiences and bustling towns, Wexford offers a complete year-round holiday experience for our international and domestic visitors.</p> <p><b>DEDP Target Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased share of international visitors.</li> <li>• Collective tourism industry targeting of international visitors.</li> <li>• Best in class cluster of visitor attractions driving growth in international visitor numbers.</li> <li>• Recognition as an outdoor activity destination among domestic and international visitors.</li> <li>• Best in class coastal tourism activity destination.</li> <li>• Wexford Town is a vibrant year-round destination with a thriving day and evening time tourism economy.</li> <li>• Wexford is an established food in tourism destination animated by meet the producers' experiences.</li> <li>• Effective county wide tourism industry clusters and networks.</li> <li>• Growth in accommodation levels across the county.</li> <li>• Extended tourism season removing a dependency on peak season business.</li> <li>• New Ross, Enniscorthy and Gorey has extended the length of the tourism season based on an enhanced visitor offering.</li> </ul>	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
<p><b>Assessment Commentary:</b></p> <p>The Vision of the Draft Plan includes a focus on activities and attractions in rural and coastal areas for all visitors. Existing and future development of attractions and experiences for the tourism sector has the potential to positively and/or negatively affect the majority of the SEOs depending on the specifics of each Action, particularly Biodiversity (BFF), Water (W), Air Quality (AQ), Climate (C), Land and Soils (L&amp;S), and Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage (AACH).</p> <p>The vision is expected to positively influence the economic development of the area and support positive effects to the Population and Human Health (PHH) SEO. The Target Outcomes reference how the Vision will be delivered, referencing Actions that are individually identified in the Draft Plan and are 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 designated sites (SACs/SPAs) or heritage sites that include Record of Protected Structures (RPSs)). However, the Actions 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), and water quality (W) due to an increase of coastal activities. However, recognition of County Wexford as an outdoor activity destination may integrate biodiversity initiatives and management, increasing awareness of local biodiversity and as a result, also promote/enhance biodiversity. The support for and proposed increase in international tourists is likely to have negative effects on AQ and C due to the increase in greenhouse gases (GHGs) from international travel and current overreliance on private car travel.</p>									

Note: Many of the catalyst and enabling projects are included as part of the Strategic Goals objectives which are assessed in more detail under the respective catalyst and enabling project tables below.

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

- Relevant key mitigation includes requirement to consider WCDP policies as part of a planning application and associated necessary environmental assessments.
- Development of visitor management plans for sites - this shall include consideration of the availability of capacity of critical infrastructure at these sites.

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

Strategic Objective 1: Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Wexford and Ireland's Ancient East.	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<p><b>Strategic Goals (SGs)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a clear and consistent approach to the sales and marketing of Wexford domestically and internationally by Visit Wexford, state agencies and industry.</li> <li>• Extend the traditional tourism season to become a year-round destination supported by a mix of compelling urban, coastal and rural experiences which motivate domestic and international visitors to visit Wexford.</li> <li>• Strengthen the appeal of our urban tourism hubs to attract domestic and international visitors to Wexford.</li> <li>• Build on Wexford's profile for coastal tourism to grow the appeal of our coastal communities to international visitors.</li> <li>• Develop the capacity of the Wexford industry to collectively grow annual visitor numbers through experience innovation, collaboration and a collective international sales focus.</li> <li>• Maximise future capital investment in visitor attractions to deliver best in class visitor experiences.</li> <li>• Maximise the opportunity for the destination through the Rosslare EuroPort as major international access point.</li> <li>• Develop the appeal of Wexford as an outdoor activity destination.</li> </ul>	+/-	+ ?	- ?	+	+/-	?	?	?	?
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>Due to the nature of Strategic Objective 1 and its associated Strategic Goals, there is the potential for unknown, positive and/or negative effects on many of the environmental factors. The Strategic Goals are wide reaching across the tourism and development sector and likely to affect the county and further afield including 'Ireland's Ancient East'. There is potential for unknown effects on many of the environmental factors as not all the Strategic Goals reference specific locations or specific projects. However, references to potential future developments, such as new experiences (including outdoor activities etc.) and building on existing opportunities (such as through the Rosslare EuroPort) have the potential to directly and indirectly impact all environmental factors to some degree or another.</p> <p>The Strategic Goals have the potential for negative effects on BFF and W due to increased tourism numbers including in sensitive sites as a result of the enhancement and promotion of outdoor activities and water-based tourism attractions near waterbodies (W). This includes the potential increased operation and/or enhancement of the Rosslare EuroPort, which would support the NPF designation as a Tier 2 Port of National Significance. The port has seen significant growth in direct sailings to continental Europe since</p>									

Brexit (Government of Ireland, 2024a). The assessment recognises the importance of the connectivity of Rosslare EuroPort for tourism in Wexford and nationally, especially on PHH and MA SEOs. However, there is potential for negative effects on C due to the increase of international tourists which result in increased emissions from the freight and aviation sector and other unsustainable modes of travel.

**Proposed Mitigation:** 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.

Strategic Objective 2: Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism in Wexford.	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
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<p><b>Strategic Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement clear action plans to help Wexford Town and New Ross to become key tourism towns through collaboration of stakeholders, businesses and communities supported by a new vision in how they attract and retain visitors.</li> <li>Focus on experience development with new and existing operators to maximise the potential of outdoor activities - trails, South East Greenway, coastal and on water activities.</li> <li>Maximise the potential of the investment in walking trails, the Norman Way and Eurovelo through a new focus on experience development.</li> <li>Maximise the quality of the coastal and river environment to create an expanded range of sustainable water based and slow adventure experiences.</li> <li>Develop destination clusters (New Ross and Hook Peninsula, Wexford Town, Enniscorthy/Gorey) to grow the volume of saleable experiences across Wexford and accelerating new ways of working together. This will be monitored through key accounts and feedback from cluster groups.</li> <li>Develop and implement the Wexford Food in Tourism Strategy to leverage the food heritage of Wexford and increase economic impact of tourism for producers and food businesses.</li> <li>Grow the accommodation base in destination towns while exploring the opportunity to increase the volume of niche visitor accommodation options in rural destinations.</li> <li>Grow the activity tourism enterprise base linked to coastal activities and experiences.</li> <li>Undertake a programme of continuous improvement and innovation in how cultural venues and attractions are used during the day and evening time.</li> <li>Develop the potential of the destination's existing outdoor trails infrastructure to animate the trails through a new experience led approach.</li> </ul>	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
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**Assessment commentary:**  
 These Strategic Goals have an overall aim to enhance Wexford's appeal as a sustainable tourism destination through improving visitor experiences, supporting cultural heritage, expanding outdoor recreation while also boosting local economy.  
 Many of the Goals under Strategic Objective 2 are related to developing experiences for visitors to increase economic return, which is likely to have a positive effect on economic development and employment and would directly, indirectly and cumulatively result in positive effects to the PHH SEO. One of the 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 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 in Wexford and across Ireland.

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 include: potential for positive effects to C as a result of the investment to improving active travel infrastructure (trails and greenways, etc). The delivery of Eurovelo 1 linking Ireland with mainland Europe by bike is a significant positive regarding sustainable travel and reducing emissions from the transport sector. Maximising the quality of the coastal and river environment for sustainable water-based activities and experiences integrates water and biodiversity initiatives and management, increasing awareness of local water quality and biodiversity which may result in potential significant positive impacts on BFF and W. However, these activities can also lead to potential risks to designated sites including disturbance effects, water pollution and biodiversity, if unmitigated. These may be relevant to the adjacent Slaney River Valley SAC [000781], Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA [004076], Raven SPA [004019], Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC [000710], Seas off Wexford SPA [004237], Bannow Bay SAC [000697], Hook Head SAC [000764], and River Barrow And River Nore SAC [002162].

The assessment recognises that there are wider potential social, economic, and environmental benefits to PHH and AACH as a result of investing in heritage trails (such as the Norman Route and Wexford's food heritage) and the use of cultural venues, attractions and their associated saleable experiences. This would support heritage preservation and cultural sustainability (AACH), as well as support local economic development, local employment, and social cohesion (PHH). There are potential significant positive effects on 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 developed. Developing niche visitor accommodation options in rural destinations could impact greenfield sites and could reduce soil resources, negatively impacting L&S. However, the objective to grow the accommodation base in destination towns will support compact sustainable development and use of L&S within existing settlements.

**Proposed Mitigation:** 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.

Strategic Objective 3: Ensure the destination is easy to access, navigate and consume.	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<p><b>Strategic Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise the potential of existing accommodation hubs to act as gateways into the rural and coastal Wexford experience.</li> <li>Realise the potential of Rosslare EuroPort to become the main access hub for international visitors to the county.</li> <li>Develop an experience led approach to enable visitors to easily explore the county through the development of activity/ walking trails, the Norman Way, Eurovelo, and Greenways.</li> <li>Achieve regional connectivity through regional product opportunities such as Greenways, coastal routes and Eurovelo in addition to the development of enhanced product connections in areas such as food, culture and activities.</li> <li>Develop the Greenway product to introduce visitors to a blend of urban and rural community experiences and contribute to the development of the South-East Greenway in the medium term and the Dublin Cork Greenway Project in the longer term.</li> <li>Explore the potential of a regional Coastal Blueway through the development of pilot sites in Wexford.</li> <li>Develop a necklace of coastal walking trails throughout Wexford that introduce visitors to innovative approaches to sustainable coastal tourism activity.</li> </ul>	+/-	+	+/-	+	+/-	?	+	+/?	+/-

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine the opportunities for international product linkages with pilgrim routes and trails linked to other regional and international routes.</li> <li>Highlight the ease of access into Wexford via Dublin by road and rail, direct ferry access and proximity to regional clusters in Waterford, Kilkenny and Wicklow through the development of industry supports e.g. sales toolkit including routes/trails, Tourism Towns, increased local linkages with TFI Local Link Wexford and Rosslare Harbour.</li> </ul>									
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>Due to the nature of Strategic Objective 3 and its associated Strategic Goals, 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 Strategic Goals have an overall aim of enhancing visitor orientation, increasing regional connectivity and dispersion across Wexford 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 and L, however, it may also have potential positive effects on MA, as a result of new recreational and amenity infrastructure while also supporting sustainable transport modes for locals and visitors alike. There are potential significant negative effects for BFF and W, particularly for the Strategic Goal relating to activities and developments in coastal areas such as the Wexford coast walking trail. These activities and developments may be located in close proximity to the existing European designated sites, including the Slaney River Valley SAC [000781], Wexford Harbour and Slobbs SPA [004076], The Raven SPA [004019], Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC [000710], Seas off Wexford SPA [004237], Bannow Bay SAC [000697], Hook Head SAC [000764] and River Barrow And River Nore SAC [002162], and therefore, have the potential to create disturbance to aquatic species or other wildlife, or water, if unmitigated. 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>The development of walking trails including those along coastal areas will need to ensure that the proposals do not lead to the spread or introduction of invasive species. The WCDP includes various objectives to ensure that if developments are proposed on sites where invasive species are or were previously present, the applicants will be required to submit a control and management program for the particular invasive species carried out by a competent and appropriately qualified expert as part of the planning process (Objective NH25). It will also be important for the development of appropriate facilities at sites to minimise the spread of invasive species along blueways and greenways (Objective NH226).</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>									
<p><b>Strategic Objective 4: Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure that it can thrive and create sustainable jobs in local communities.</b></p>	<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>
<p><b>Strategic Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen the tourism industry's approach to county wide collaboration by creating destination clusters that will motivate visitors to explore Wexford's urban, rural and coastal communities.</li> <li>Grow the value of international tourism to Wexford through tactical initiatives such as International Sales Ready Programme and the development of new experiences across the destination.</li> <li>Build the tourism industry's capacity to align with future niche destination positioning opportunities such as coastal and rural tourism, visitor attractions innovation, the outdoors and food.</li> <li>Grow the tourism enterprise base to support the coastal tourism opportunity for Wexford.</li> </ul>	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure tourism is integrated into future urban and rural regeneration activity in developing Wexford as a great place to live, work and visit.</li> </ul>									
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b> These Strategic Goals 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</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>									
<p><b>Strategic Objective 5: Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development.</b></p>	<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>
<p><b>Strategic Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve low carbon and sustainable growth in the development of new urban and rural visitor experiences that contribute to the county's ambition to become a sustainable tourism destination.</li> <li>Develop Wexford to become renowned for its approach to sustainable coastal tourism.</li> <li>Develop the Hook Head cluster as a best-in-class eco-tourism destination supported by a destination wide approach to sustainable tourism development.</li> <li>Develop and encourage increased consideration of sustainable transport options.</li> <li>Explore the rural tourism opportunity to develop sustainable and regenerative Wexford community experiences.</li> <li>Integrate the Wexford food story as a key element of communicating the destination's approach to sustainability.</li> <li>Develop a county wide approach to grow access to slow tourism experiences as a key element of sustainable tourism development for Wexford.</li> </ul>	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b> These high-level Strategic Goals are generally related to improving the consideration of sustainability by stakeholder and industry partnerships with the aim of reducing carbon footprint and supporting a sustainable tourism approach. As a result, there will be potential positive effects to the PHH and C SEOs. While indirect positive effects are likely to all other SEOs, the lack of project specifics of these Strategic Goals results in a neutral effect.</p> <p>Generally, the Goals encourage new and existing collaborations with stakeholders to increase the tourism industry's capacity to deliver sustainable tourism experiences effectively across current and future destinations, while considering low carbon and sustainable growth and reducing potential GHGs as well as other negative emissions environment.</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>									

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

Guiding Principles	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All projects are self-sustainable, meaning they have access to capital and are not relying solely on grant aid to be developed or maintained.</li> <li>All projects are on-message with the Wexford DEDP experiences and are aligned to the broader mission of Ireland's Ancient East proposition and regional brand.</li> <li>All projects focus on setting the area apart from its competitors, contributing actively to creating a strong sense of place with a unique feel and ensuring visitor needs are catered for across the day and evening time.</li> <li>All projects add value to the area and provide a direct and demonstrable link to either extend visitors' length of stay, extend the length of the tourist season or develop new markets.</li> <li>Principles of responsible and sustainable tourism development are embedded in each action, creating better places to live in and to visit.</li> <li>All stakeholders will demonstrate a strong and sustained willingness to work as a collaborative network.</li> </ul>	+?	+	+?	+?	+?	+?	+?	+?	+?
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>Due to the nature of the Guiding Principles, there is the potential for positive and or unknown effects across all SEOs. The incorporation of self-sustainable projects and strong collaborative networks is likely to result in potential positive effects on PHH by creating more established and long-lasting projects with better experiences for visitors.</p> <p>Positive and uncertain effects are identified for all other SEOs as the Guiding Principles have no specific reference to any activities or developments. However, if projects implement the United Nations Guiding Principles, there is likely to be more positive than negative effects with specific project level mitigation developed to address any potential negative effects.</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>									

**Table 8-4 Assessment of the Key Destination Catalyst and Enabling Projects**

CATALYST PROJECTS											
Wexford Attractions – Large Scale Capital Investment											
1: Wexford Visitor Attractions		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
1.1	<b>Wexford Visitor Attractions</b>	Develop the appeal and commercial potential of Wexford visitor attractions to grow the value of tourism in the county, retain visitors for longer and encourage them to explore other attractions.									
1.2	<b>Wexford RRDF Projects</b>	Deliver the projects under the successful Wexford County Council RRDF application (RRDF project submission 'Wexfordia'). The basis of the RRDF application is large scale investment projects to include the Norman Experience in New Ross, Irish National Heritage Park - Viking Village and the enhanced interpretation in the Dunbrody Ship project.									
1.3	<b>Irish National Heritage Park - Viking Village</b>	Establish the Viking Village “Vykingar” on the shores of the River Slaney as part of the existing Irish National Park to create a best in class visitor experience.									
1.4	<b>Dunbrody Ship – New Ross</b>	Enhance the visitor interpretation at the Dunbrody Famine Ship (including visitor centre) experience in New Ross supported by a town wide development programme to link the urban experience with the key attractions in the town.	+/- ?	+	- ?	0	0	0	+/0	+/- ?	+/- ?
1.5	<b>Norman Experience – New Ross</b>	Develop the Norman Experience visitor attraction (including visitor centre) linked with the world’s greatest knight William Marshall on the quay in New Ross.									
1.6	<b>New Ross Tourism Transformation</b>	Deliver the New Ross Tourism Transformation Project to link the ‘Wexfordia’ projects investment with the public realm, elevating the Norman story and how it motivates visitors to explore the wider New Ross area.									
1.7	<b>Johnstown Castle Estate Museum and Gardens</b>	Implement the Johnstown Castle, Estate, Museum and Gardens Commercial Plan combined with a phased product development approach maximising the day and evening time economy.									
1.8	<b>Johnstown Castle Estate Museum and Gardens Experience Innovation</b>	Examine the opportunity for Johnstown Castle, Estate, Museum and Gardens to develop a range of premium experiences linked to the Estate, Gardens and Castle experience.									

1.9	<b>Wells House Experience Innovation</b>	Examine the opportunities to enhance the visitor experience at Wells House and additional site use opportunities such as new accommodation.								
1.10	<b>Enniscorthy Attractions Experience</b>	Examine the product and experience development requirements for Enniscorthy Castle and the National 1798 Rebellion Centre to develop a cohesive visitor experience that integrates both sites as part of a coherent attraction base in for Enniscorthy. Build on the opportunities identified within the Enniscorthy Tourism Plan 2020 and the vision for the enhancement of Enniscorthy as a visitor destination.								
1.11	<b>Athenaeum Building Assessment</b>	Explore the opportunity for the Athenaeum to complement the Enniscorthy Castle experience. Undertake a site options assessment to realise the potential of the site and how it can support tourism development in Enniscorthy.								

**Assessment commentary:**

These Actions include the potential for physical development/works and/or large scale capital investment and therefore, have the potential to have significant positive and/or negative effects on the environment at both the construction and operation stages, which will be required to be assessed as part of project level assessments.

There is potential for positive and/or negative effects on BFF, W and AACH particularly as most of the sites contain heritage features including protected structures and national monuments. Many are also located in sensitive environments including EU designated sites. For example, the Irish National Heritage Park is located adjacent to the Slaney River Valley SAC [000781]. Should development occur in the river, there is potential for impacts to the marine environment (W), disturbance to aquatic species or other wildlife, and potential to encounter unknown archaeology all of which would be required to be assessed at project level. There is also potential landscape effects.

There is potential for positive, negative and/or unknown effects on AACH due to the potential for capital works to occur at sites that have heritage protections including: the Norman Experience, Irish National Heritage Park, and Dunbrody Famine Ship, etc. The potential for positive effects are likely to include protection and conservation of these sites.

The Dunbrody Famine Ship is located in the River Barrow which is designated as part of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC [002162] and Barrow River Estuary pNHA [000698]. If the enhancement of the visitor interpretation at the Dunbrody Famine Ship includes any renovation works to the ship, there is potential to create disturbance to aquatic species or other wildlife, or water, if unmitigated. The Actions have the potential for positive effects on AACH and MA through sustainable management of visitor movement in key cultural heritage locations, e.g. Enniscorthy Castle and the National 1798 Rebellion Centre, and enhancing cultural experiences and nighttime experiences. Enhancement of additional sites with public realm, and way finding improvements will positively influence MA, PHH and AACH. For example, through increased connectivity of key attractions, heritage sites and experiences, use of the Norman Way and the Johnstown Castle Estate Museum and Gardens.

Many of the Actions are related to developing experiences for visitors to increase economic return which is likely to have a positive effect on economic development and employment, which would directly, indirectly and cumulatively resulting in positive effects to the PHH SEO. In summary, depending on the project specifics, there is potential for positive and/or negative effects at all the locations identified in the Actions particularly where there is construction required which may affect sensitive features of the environment.

**Proposed Mitigation:** 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.

2: Wexford Town		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
2.1	<b>Wexford Town Tourism Hub Development</b>	Develop a tourism roadmap for Wexford Town aligned with a vision for the town to become a regional tourism hub animated by a vibrant day and evening time economy and ensuring tourism is a key economic sector for the town.									
2.2	<b>Wexford Heritage Town Plan</b>	Devise a roadmap for the implementation of the Wexford Town Heritage Plan.									
2.3	<b>Wexford Town Visitor Orientation</b>	Develop a new approach to wayfinding and visitor orientation and a sense of welcome to Wexford Town.									
2.4	<b>Wexford Town Events Hub</b>	Develop Wexford Town as a regional events hub supported by the creation of a five year event plan to grow existing events and develop off peak cultural / event activity.	0	+	0	0	-	0	0	+	0
2.5	<b>Wexford Arts Centre</b>	Examine the development of Wexford Arts Centre as a cultural attractor for Wexford Town on a year round basis.									
2.6	<b>Wexford Town Night Time Economy</b>	Maximise the investment in public realm and the associated night time economy opportunity for Monck Street to establish Wexford Town as a night time economy hub. This will be completed with the stakeholders and cluster developments.									
2.7	<b>Trinity Wharf</b>	Examine how future plans for Trinity Wharf will incorporate tourism activity and become a catalyst for future tourism development in Wexford Town.									
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>Many of the Actions are mainly oriented around improving understanding, wayfinding and plan development. As such the assessment for these are not significant and are rated as neutral effects across many of the SEOs. PHH is rated as positive as the Actions are likely to result in direct and indirect benefits to employment, associated with the tourism industry and associated economic development.</p> <p>The Actions have the potential for positive effects on AACH and MA due to sustainable management of visitor movement in key cultural heritage locations in Wexford Town and the enhancement of cultural experiences year round, e.g. regional events hub and the Wexford Arts Centre. These Actions are to build on inclusiveness and growth for the cultural sector, increasing economic opportunities including new nighttime experiences and growing off-peak events, resulting in a potential positive effects on PHH SEO. Public realm and way finding improvements will positively influence MA, PHH and AACH, for example, through increased linkages and the development of the Wexford Arts Centre and other public realm areas, such as Monck Street and Trinity Wharf.</p> <p>The increase in levels of tourism in Wexford Town is likely to increase domestic/ regional tourism and thus, increasing transport emissions which will negatively affect climate SEO. The implementation of the Wexford Town Heritage Plan is likely to promote and protect heritage features resulting in positive AACH effects.</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>											

3: Hook Head Peninsula		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
3.1	Hook Head Peninsula Master Plan	Deliver the Hook Head Peninsula Master Plan adopting a sustainable tourism approach and examining the opportunity to link to the wider destination e.g. Norman Way, Tourism Axis Towns and the Wexford Attractions Network.									
3.2	Hook Head Peninsula Experience	Develop a signature visitor experience at Hook Head Lighthouse with the advancement of the Visitor Centre and the creation of a best-in-class lighthouse experience.									
3.3	Hook Head Peninsula Lighthouse	Explore the opportunity for Hook Head Lighthouse to develop a role as a coastal tourism activity hub within the national network of lighthouses.									
3.4	Hook Head Peninsula - Duncannon Fort	Examine the potential for Duncannon Fort to become a key attraction on Hook Head Peninsula examining the options of a visitor experience, accommodation and cultural space.									
			+/-	+	0	0	0	0	0/+	+	0

**Assessment commentary:**

The Actions are predominantly based on the development of plans relating to sustainable tourism experiences at Hook Head. The Actions do not refer to any specific projects or likely physical works therefore the majority of the SEOs are rated as neutral. The development of plans are likely to include consideration of the social, economic and natural environment ensuring the sensitive aspects of the environment are protected.

Hook Head is designated as both an SAC and SPA, depending on the development of plans for these sites there is the potential to affect biodiversity SEO either positively or negatively. There are several Protected Structures which are also listed on the NIAH including: Duncannon Fort [Reg. No: 15618011], Hook Head Lighthouse [Reg. No: 15705414], Hook Head Lighthouse keeper's house [Reg. No: 15705416 and 15705415], and the signal station at Baginbun Martello tower (WX050-027001- for signal station; and Martello tower [NIAH Reg. No. 15705009]. Depending on the project specifics, there is potential for positive and/or negative effects at these locations particularly where there is construction required which may affect sensitive features of the environment. Any construction works on or near these sites will require appropriate planning permission including associated environmental assessments. The development of these plans require consideration of the management of visitor numbers in these areas to sustainably manage the carrying capacities of the sites

The potential of developing visitor experiences, accommodation and cultural space for Duncannon Fort has the potential to positively affect PHH, MA and AACH. *Duncannon Fort Strategic Masterplan exploring the future use of Duncannon Fort*<sup>5</sup> states that the additional added value of the Duncannon Fort to the Wexford economy is estimated to range from circa €870k to €1.2m based on additional people employed at the attraction, and over a 20-year period could amount to as much as €23m in sustaining an additional 40 fulltime equivalent jobs under the investment of the Masterplan therefore having positive effects on the PHH SEO.

**Proposed Mitigation:** 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.

<sup>5</sup> [Duncannon Fort Masterplan](#)

4: Forth Mountain Activity Centre		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
4.1	<b>Forth Mountain Activity Centre</b>	Develop the Forth Mountain Activity Centre as a regional sustainable adventure education activity centre combining existing facilities with new opportunities such as biking, extended walking activity infrastructure and water activities.	+/-	+	+/-	0	0	+/-	+	?	+/-
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>Forth Mountain is a rock outcrop rising to a height of 235m south west of Wexford town. It is a disused quarry reclaimed by nature, offering a scenic area with exposed cliff faces, rocky outcrops, a lake, and a pine forest. There are current walking trails offering views of the Wexford coastline. The proposed Forth Mountain Activity Centre is part of a wider project under development by Wexford County Council in partnership with Waterford &amp; Wexford Education &amp; Training Board's. There are existing facilities in the area such as existing trails and a carpark. A separate Part 8 planning application for the development of a boathouse and external toilet facility was approved by Wexford County Council in February 2023 and is planned to commence construction in Q3 2025. A Part 8 planning application was advanced for an Activity Centre/Park at Carrigfoyle in March 2022; however, it was withdrawn in October 2022. It was proposed to create a hub for outdoor activities in Wexford and throughout the southeast. It is understood that an EIAR is currently being prepared for the activity centre as part of a new planning submission.</p> <p>While project specifics are not currently available about the project the development of an activity centre Forth Mountain is a NHA [Site code: 000761]. There is potential for positive and/or negative effects on many environmental factors due to the construction of an activity centre in Forth Mountain including its associated works related to sewage and water connections, etc. Depending on the development of the project, there is potential for positive and/or negative effects at this location particularly at construction stage due to land use change. The Action has the potential for negative effects on BFF and W due to construction activities taking place in rural locations and water-based tourism activities in and near the waterbody of Carrigfoyle Lake (W). There is also the Forth Mountain pNHA [000761] located in the area and site specific Appropriate Assessments will need to be undertaken, to ensure any construction works will not significantly impact this designated site.</p> <p>The assessment recognises that there is potential for wider social, economic and environmental benefits as a result of developing facilities for physical activity in rural areas. The construction works will likely result in temporary effects to the environment including disturbance effects to biodiversity, potential for effect to WQ and L&amp;S. Operational effects are also likely to L&amp;S due to change use change and also due to increase visitors potentially affecting BFF and W SEO. Project level environmental assessments will be required as part of the planning process. Measures to control the introduction and/or spread of invasive species will also be important and awareness raising to the public about the threats of the spread of invasive species.</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>											

5: Greenways & The Outdoors		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
5.1	<b>Greenways - South East Greenway</b>	Complete the New Ross (Mount Elliott) to Waterford Greenway to deliver a 24km route. Create a support programme of greenway activation for the New Ross (Mount Elliott) to Waterford Greenway to develop new opportunities for communities along the Greenway.									
5.2	<b>New Ross Greenway Trail Head</b>	Deliver Greenway readiness training to maximise the opportunity for New Ross as a greenway trail head and the ability to combine experiences on the water and on the bike with Waterford City.									
5.3	<b>Greenways - New Ross to Rosslare</b>	Undertake a feasibility assessment to link New Ross with Rosslare through future greenway investment or route alternatives pending the final outcomes of the All Island Strategic Rail Review.									
5.4	<b>Greenways – Wexford to Rosslare Strand Greenway</b>	Develop the Wexford to Rosslare Strand Greenway as part of the network of Wexford Greenways.									
5.5	<b>National Greenways Trail</b>	Undertake an assessment of the requirements to link the Dublin to Cork Greenway and potential linkages to Wexford Greenways and trails.									
5.6	<b>Bree Hill MTB – Mountain Bike Trail</b>	Undertake a feasibility assessment of Bree Hill examining its potential to become a mountain bike trail head.	+/-	+	-?	+/-	+	?	+	+/-	?
5.7	<b>North Wexford Walking &amp; Cycling Trails</b>	Undertake an assessment of the requirement to strengthen the walking and cycling trails product in North Wexford to contribute to its development of Wexford as an outdoor recreation destination.									
5.8	<b>Eurovelo</b>	Conduct an assessment of the opportunity to link the Eurovelo route with key destination attractions and experiences to motivate visitors to explore the route influenced by inspirational itineraries and leveraging the Norman Way.									
5.9	<b>Enniscorthy Outdoor Experience / Riverside Trail</b>	Examine the requirements to develop the Enniscorthy Riverside Trail to Blueway standards linked to adjoining forests and amenities and heritage sites.									
5.10	<b>Enniscorthy Outdoor Experience / River Walk</b>	Undertake an assessment of the requirements to develop the walk along the River Slaney to Edermine Water Activity Hub and the adjoining Coillte owned forests of Ringwood and Borodale to develop a 10 km loop.									
5.11	<b>Greenway Training and Capability Building</b>	Deliver a programme of training and capability building to enable the communities and local businesses along existing and future Greenways develop visitor experiences and ancillary services for greenway users.									

**Assessment commentary:** The Actions are oriented around assessing, exploring and examining a variety of outdoor activities such as cycling and walking through developing greenways, as well as increasing linkages to existing outdoor visitor experiences. Some of the Actions also involve delivering training programmes to support these outdoor activities. The assessments and programmes themselves are likely to have a neutral effect, however, once implemented, there is potential for positive or negative effects on many of the SEOs.

The development of sustainable transport infrastructure improving regional connectivity of new and existing greenways, blueways, heritage routes, walking and bike trails 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 and PHH. 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 Bree Hill, the Norman Way, Enniscorthy riverside, the River Slaney, Ringwood and Borodale forests) through green infrastructure and particularly the New Ross (Mount Elliott) to Waterford Greenway, Wexford to Rosslare Strand Greenway, and Dublin to Cork Greenway, which aims to increase regional connectivity.

Potential positive and negative effects on BFF and W are envisaged due to water activities and/or construction of infrastructure, such as the walking and cycling trails associated with the Wexford greenways which may include potential developments along the River Slaney and Enniscorthy Riverside. Any works undertaken in these areas may be in proximity to sensitive sites including: Slaney River Valley SAC [000781], Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA [004076] and Slaney River Valley pNHA [000781]. 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 New Ross to Waterford Greenway has completed and opened Phase 1 to the public in 2023. The Wexford to Rosslare Strand Greenway is currently in Phase 2 Options Selection Stage. Construction of any new infrastructure is likely to have temporary negative impacts on the environment and will be required to be assessed at project stage.

**Proposed Mitigation:** 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.

6: Coastal Activity Centres		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
6.1	<b>Curraclloe Water sports facility</b>	Establish Curraclloe as a centre of a coastal tourism excellence maximising the investment in a watersport facility (Under Fáilte Irelands Platforms for Growth Investment Programme) and the opportunity to stimulate new tourism enterprise associated with the investment. The development of Curraclloe as an activity base will also include future assessment of greenway access, extended visitor facilities and a base for outdoor activity enterprise development.									
6.2	<b>Coastal Destination Courtown Project</b>	Enhance and reposition Courtown as a key destination resort for coastal activity through assessing the feasibility of projects such as beach enhancement, marina development, public realm and swimming facilities.	+/-	+	+/-	+	+	-	+	+	?
6.3	<b>Coastal Tourism Centre of Excellence Coastal Experiences</b>	Examine the requirements to create a coastal activity cluster to include Hook Head Peninsula, Curraclloe, Rosslare and Courtown with a focus on developing the sustainable coastal tourism activity base for Wexford.									
6.4	<b>Wexford Coastal Trail Feasibility</b>	Explore the feasibility of a Wexford Coastal Trail linking local communities and the network of Wexford coastal experiences showcasing the coast, lagoons, peninsulas and cliff walks across Wexford.									

6.5	<b>Coastal Blueway</b>	Examine the feasibility of developing a Coastal Blueway experience linking Wexford with regional coastal blueway experiences in Waterford and Wicklow.								
6.6	<b>Coastal Tourism Fishing Heritage Experience</b>	Develop a range of coastal tourism visitor experiences linked to the county's fishing heritage and provide accessible fishing experiences.								
6.7	<b>Rosslare &amp; Rosslare EuroPort Opportunity</b>	Examine the requirements to maximise the opportunity provided by international access into Rosslare EuroPort by developing local tourism experiences that motivate more visitors to consider Rosslare as an overnight destination.								

**Assessment commentary:**

Many of the Actions are oriented around examining the feasibility or likely requirements to improve experiences associated with the development of coastal resources such as blueways, local trails and coastal activities. The various coastal Actions will be required to have regard to existing environmental sensitivities and designated at each of the sites including: Raven SPA [004019], Wexford Slobs And Harbour pNHA [000712] at Curracloe; Courtown Dunes And Glen pNHA [000757]; Seas off Wexford SPA [004237] at Rosslare; Hook Head SAC [000764] and Seas off Wexford SPA [004237] at Hook Head. The EPA report that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) coastal water body risk status of the coastal water body at these locations are 'Not at Risk' of achieving WFD objectives for the Southwestern Irish Sea and Eastern Celtic Sea; however, the Waterford Harbour at Hook Head is 'At Risk' of not achieving the WFD objectives. All of the projects/Actions are located in sensitive ecological marine environments some of which also include RPS and other heritage sites therefore depending on the project specifics there is potential for positive and negative effects on BFF, W and ACCH. Depending on the project specifics, there is potential for temporary positive and/or negative effects at construction stage across all SEOs and also long-term effects due to potential land use change.

The development of outdoor activities such as new blueways and coastal trails, and the development of outdoor facilities such as a seaside public realm, swimming facilities, marina development and beach enhancement at Courtown has the potential for positive and negative effects on BFF, L&S, W due to potential habitat disturbance, altered natural sediment flow patterns and risk of water pollution. Mitigation measures are essential during development to ensure protection of the local coastal environment. There are also potential significant negative effects due to coastal erosion along these areas which would need project specific mitigation and/or may result in a significant investment and therefore a barrier to the achievement of these Actions. All Actions are likely to have positive effects on PHH SEOs.

There is potential for indirect positive effects to AQ and C due to improving sustainable transport infrastructure in the area, which supports the tourism sector and local communities. 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 Hook Head Peninsula, Curracloe, Rosslare, and Courtown, are likely to result in positive effects PHH, AQ, C, MA, and AACH SEOs. The consider of carrying capacities will also be an important factor for these Actions.

The Curracloe Water sports facility Action references the investment in the Platforms for Growth facilities which falls under the 'Platform 2: Facility Centres for Water Sports Activities' which focuses on the development facilities such as the provision of a hub for local water sport operators including additional changing facilities, showers, toilets, secure storage, and enclosed spaces in the area resulting in positive effects on MA SEO.

**Proposed Mitigation:** 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.

Wexford DEDP Destination Enabling Projects											
7: Tourism Clusters / Networks		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
7.1	<b>Wexford Tourism Clusters &amp; Networks</b>	Develop the capabilities of Wexford tourism clusters and tourism networks aligned with the spatial and thematic opportunities within the Wexford DEDP.									
7.3	<b>Wexford Attractions Network</b>	Identify commercial partners within Wexford visitor attractions to develop a collaborative network with a collective focus on sustainably growing the value of international visitors to Wexford.	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+/0	0
7.4	<b>Visitor Experience Development</b>	Undertake a review of the current visitor experience within the Wexford Attractions Network as the basis for an experience enhancement programme for each attraction to adopt.									
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>The assessment has found that there is potential for neutral or not significant effects on many of the SEOs due to the strategic nature of the Actions which are primarily related to organisational improvements, however, also resulting in likely positive effects on PHH. The Wexford tourism clusters and networks will promote regional accessibility and strengthen rural economies and communities positively influencing PHH. The development of an experience enhancement programme for the Wexford Attractions Network will promote and link key local heritage locations in Wexford and has the potential to further promote the understanding and protection of cultural heritage and natural assets (AACH). Way finding improvements has the potential to positively influence PHH, MA and AACH. The projects will gain a greater appreciation of visitor experiences linking key locations and outdoor activities across the county, which is likely to support a greater understanding of the social, economic as well as environmental effects of the sites.</p> <p>The assessment indicates that there is potential for neutral or not significant effects on many of the environmental factors namely BFF, W, AQ, C, L&amp;S, MA, and L as there are no specific projects identified that would have the potential to directly or indirectly significantly impact those environmental factors.</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>											

8: Visitor Experience Development		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
8.1	<b>Evening Time Experiences – Tourism Axis Towns</b>	Grow the range of evening time experiences across the Tourism Axis Towns to appeal to domestic and international visitors. This will include the exploration of a pilot programme linking evening economy activity with a number of heritage sites and scheduled evening time activity.									
8.2	<b>OPW Visitor Experience</b>	Examine the opportunity to enhance the visitor experience in OPW sites through existing experience development supports.									
8.3	<b>Enniscorthy Urban Experience</b>	Examine the opportunity to enhance the Enniscorthy visitor experience through the Urban Regeneration programme taking into consideration wayfinding and visitor orientation and connecting the towns heritage and cultural sites.									
8.4	<b>Vinegar Hill</b>	Assess the Vinegar Hill visitor experience to evaluate how the site story is delivered and potentially integrated more closely into the Enniscorthy town experience without compromising the integrity of the site experience.									
8.5	<b>Ferns Community Experience</b>	Review the requirements to develop a Ferns community experience linking Ferns Castle site with the existing Ferns community visitor experience and the National 1798 Rebellion Centre.	0	+	0	0	0	+	0	+	0
8.6	<b>Norman Way Experience Innovation</b>	Undertake an assessment of how the Norman Way experience can be developed by linking key sites and experiences to create itineraries that encourage multi day trips on the Norman Way.									
8.7	<b>Wexford Garden Trail Experience Innovation</b>	Undertake an assessment of the requirements to develop the quality and range of visitor experiences on the Wexford Garden Trail.									
8.8	<b>Value Proposition of Leisure Tourism</b>	Examine the opportunity to develop a new packaging approach among the accommodation sector for leisure tourism growing the value of activities such as golf, walking and coastal activities.									
8.9	<b>Wexford Craft Trail</b>	Develop an experience led approach to develop the Wexford Craft Trail by growing the capabilities of the craft industry and introducing them to the tourism opportunity for their business.									
<p><b>Assessment commentary:</b></p> <p>Many of the projects are oriented around analysis, increasing understanding, improving wayfinding, connectivity between existing sites and plan development. As such, the assessment has found there is potential neutral effect across the majority of the SEOs. Positive effects are likely to PHH,L&amp;S, MA and AACH SEOs</p> <p>The projects have the potential for positive effects on L&amp;S, MA and AACH through urban regeneration programme, actions to promote sustainable management of visitor movement in key cultural heritage locations. For example, OPW sites and Tourism Axis Towns, enhancing cultural experiences including evening time experiences, craft and</p>											

garden trails. These Actions are likely to positively influence the tourism industry and associated economic development. Enhancement of sites with way finding improvements will positively influence PHH, MA and AACH, due to improved linkages to key heritage sites and experiences.

**Proposed Mitigation:** 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.

9: Accommodation Growth		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
9.1	County Wexford Accommodation Audit	Undertake an accommodation audit of County Wexford to understand current gaps and opportunities to incorporate into a Wexford Accommodation Growth Plan for the county reflecting all types of visitor accommodation.	0	+/-	0	0	0	0	+/-	+/-	0
9.2	Wexford Accommodation Growth	Build on the County Wexford Accommodation Audit to develop and sustainably manage accommodation stock levels across the county and with an immediate focus on New Ross and Wexford Town.									

**Assessment commentary:**

The assessment recognises that there is potential for social and economic benefits to PHH SEO as a result of ensuring a greater understanding of the accommodation across the County. However, it is not clear from the actions whether the actions relate solely for the tourism sector or if it will also consider accommodation available to the general population.

There are potential significant positive effects on 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. Ensuring adequate critical infrastructure will need to be addressed so as not to negatively affect areas that have existing capacity issues.

Given that the Actions include an accommodation growth plan and audit, the direct potential impacts are not likely to be significant to the environment.

**Proposed Mitigation:** Refer to Section 9 – Housing Pressure – recommended migration measures.

10: Festivals & Events		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
10.1	Festivals & Events	Create a five year cultural events and festivals strategy for the county.									
10.2	Festivals & Events Pilot Programme – Event Space Innovation	Undertake a pilot programme to partner key attractions and heritage / cultural sites with events and festivals to deliver an innovative approach to programme delivery and explore a new International Festival.	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+ / -	0

**Assessment commentary:**

Due to the nature of the Actions being the development of a strategy and a programme for festival/events, the assessment is rated as neutral or not significant effects on the majority of the SEOs. These Actions will build on the 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 Actions will also support the unique heritage of Wexford's key attractions and heritage/cultural sites resulting in a positive effect on cultural heritage (AACH). 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.

**Proposed Mitigation:**

- 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.
- Promoters seeking funding from FI should demonstrate compliance with the *Sustainable Festival Guidelines* developed by Fáilte Ireland (2023).

11: Climate Action & Sustainability		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
11.1	<b>Carbon Footprint Reduction</b>	Develop a shared programme for the tourism industry to reduce the annual carbon footprint of tourism in Wexford.									
11.2	<b>Sustainable Tourism Excellence</b>	Develop the capabilities of the tourism industry to continuously improve their approach to sustainability and the collective goal of Wexford being recognised for sustainable tourism excellence.									
11.3	<b>Wexford Biodiversity Experiences</b>	Develop a network of biodiversity experiences linking the marine, ornithology and nature reserve experiences that exist within the county linked to coastal destinations.									
11.4	<b>Seal Rescue Ireland</b>	Examine the opportunity for a coastal education experience linking marine biodiversity with the activities of Seal Rescue Ireland.									
11.5	<b>Sustainable Transport – TFI Local Link Wexford</b>	Examine the opportunity to expand the TFI Local Link Wexford service to access key attractions and the rural/coastal Wexford experience.									

**Assessment commentary:**

Due to the nature of the Actions, which focus primarily on developing programmes, education experiences and examining opportunities, there is potential for neutral or no significant effects on the majority of the SEOs. However, the Actions associated with reducing carbon footprint, sustainable tourism and expansion to TFI Local Link are likely to result in positive effects to PHH, C, AQ and MA SEOs. The Actions related to developing a network of biodiversity experiences and working with Seal Rescue Ireland are likely to result in indirect positive effects to biodiversity. These actions may also have wider social, economic, and environmental benefits as a result of integrating sustainable tourism approaches to projects and experiences.

**Proposed Mitigation:**

- 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.

12: Wexford Food Experiences		Projects	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
12.1	<b>Wexford Food in Tourism Plan implementation</b>	Implement the actions from the Wexford Food in Tourism plan to sustainably grow the number of food, drink and agri-food experiences accessible throughout the county.	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12.2	<b>Food in Tourism capability building</b>	Develop a programme of capability building and co-ordinated agency support to build on the coastal, rural, agri-food and urban food opportunities identified in the Wexford Food in Tourism plan.									

**Assessment commentary:**

The assessment indicates that there is potential for neutral or no significant effects on the majority of the environmental factors as there are no specific projects identified that would have the potential to directly impact those environmental factors.

The Actions have the potential for positive effects on PHH, for both locals and visitors through encouraging new and existing collaborations with stakeholders, including the expansion of food and drink events, experiences, and destinations. Implementing the Actions in line with the Wexford Food in Tourism plan, may have potential for positive effects on PHH and AACH due to strategic management and planning of the Wexford food experiences, connecting and co-ordinating on food opportunities, increasing economic development, and greater appreciation of heritage.

**Proposed Mitigation:** 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.

13: International Visitor readiness / capability building		Actions	BFF	PHH	W	AQ	C	L&S	MA	AACH	L
13.1	<b>International Sales Focus</b>	Develop an international sales training programme for the Wexford tourism industry to develop their capabilities to become market ready and develop sales plans to sustainably grow the value of international visitors to Wexford.	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13.2	<b>Capacity Building Supports - Agency Alignment</b>	Undertake a periodic review of capacity building requirements for the tourism industry with Wexford Leader Company and other relevant training agencies to ensure alignment of training investment with the delivery of the DEDP.									

**Assessment commentary:**

The assessment has found there is potential for neutral or not significant effects on many of the SEOs due to the strategic nature of the Actions which are primarily related to organisational improvements and delivery of training programmes. However, these improvements may result in positive effects on PHH SEO.

**Proposed Mitigation:** 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.

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

The Draft Plan takes a destination approach aiming to connect all tourism-related investment and activities through building on existing tourism projects. Key outputs of the Draft Plan include growing the value of tourism as a key economic sector in Wexford, growing tourism employment, dispersing visitors across the destination, and increasing their length of stay. This will be achieved through seven Catalyst Projects, in addition to six Destination Enabling Projects, delivered through a series of Actions detailed in the Wexford DEDP which is a five year action plan.

The 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.

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

Environmental factor	Potential Positive	Potential negative	Unknown Effects
<b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</b>	<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 influencing tourism behaviour and visitor numbers and in turn, affecting biodiversity.</li> <li>• Unknown effects to ecologically sensitive sites due to year-round tourism activity.</li> <li>• Unknown effects to ecosystems.</li> </ul>
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	<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>
<b>Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance or improvement in bathing water quality due to the focus on blue flag beach status and co-ordinated management of tourism activities across water bodies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased eutrophication from urban development and agriculture which can be associated with the tourism sector/expansion.</li> <li>• Increasing flood risk from inappropriately sited existing tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in bathing water quality from increased year-round visitor numbers.</li> <li>• Cumulative impacts from additional pressure on waterbodies.</li> <li>• Effects due to coastal erosion affecting water resources and amenities.</li> </ul>

Environmental factor	Potential Positive	Potential negative	Unknown Effects
		development in flood plains and/or flood risk zones.	
<b>Air Quality</b>	<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>
<b>Climate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution towards climate adaptation and mitigation through measures relating to public transport, walking and cycling.</li> <li>The protection and preservation of 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 potentially 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>
<b>Land and Soils</b>	<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 Wexford that is spread across the region and may contradict EU Soil Strategy land take targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential discovery of contaminated land as part of the plan projects.</li> <li>The <i>NPF Strategy</i> and <i>EPA State of the Environment</i> note the need for compact development planning to limit soil sealing from sprawling developments.</li> </ul>
<b>Material Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Draft Plan supports the continued investment in infrastructure, services and facilities that support the tourism industry.</li> <li>Continued promotion of the tourism industry supports economic development of the county.</li> <li>The Draft Plan supports the development of infrastructure such as walking, cycling, public realm enhancements and museum, festivals,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased number of visitors have the potential to increase traffic levels.</li> <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> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pressure on utilities and services if numbers during peak season increases unexpectedly, and through year-round tourism expansion.</li> <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>

Environmental factor	Potential Positive	Potential negative	Unknown Effects
	<p>etc., that support the economic development of the area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The promotion of sustainable transportation and travel options may cause overcrowding on public transport and greenways, if not managed appropriately during peak and through year-round tourism.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural Heritage</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased connectivity to cultural heritage and historical destinations in Wexford 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>
<p><b>Landscape</b></p>	<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 viewpoints 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>Potential changes to the landscape of the area and 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 Draft Plan made during the SEA process are known as embedded mitigation - mitigation that is incorporated into the text of the Draft 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 to inform the Draft Plan as presented for public consultation. **Appendix 1** of the Draft Plan details some of these measures to include:

#### 9.1.1 Integration of environmental protection and management in to the Plan

The Draft Plan 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 Draft Plan will be required to be consistent and conform with the higher-level plans and policies (including land use plans such as NPF and RSES, and county level land use plans) including provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and 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.

##### 9.1.1.1 Sustainability Principles for Sustainable Tourism

The Draft Plan has included the United Nation's Sustainability Principles which refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and provide a guidance to create a suitable balance between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

Thus, the UN states sustainable tourism should:

- *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.*
- *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.*
- *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. (UN Tourism, 2025)*

These principles have been included as part of the DEDP Guiding Principles as suggested by the SEA team.

##### 9.1.1.2 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.

### **9.1.1.3 Visitor Management**

Those receiving funding 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.

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

Those receiving funding shall contribute towards the maintenance and enhancement of existing blue and green infrastructure and its ecosystem services. Proposals for the development of any blue and green infrastructure or activities in these areas should demonstrate the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the: provision of open space amenities; sustainable management of water; protection and management of biodiversity; protection of cultural heritage; and protected landscape sensitivities.

### **9.1.1.5 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 Draft Plan and integration of mitigation will continue during the statutory consultation period as stakeholder feedback is received.

## **9.2 Existing Mitigation as part of the Wexford County Development Plan**

A review of the key mitigation measures contained in the *Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028* has been undertaken. 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 are 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 action policies.

Key planning and environmental protection objectives contained within the Development Plan that may be relevant, include:

**Key general strategic objectives include:**

**It is the objective of the Council:**

- **Objective EM01:** To ensure that proposed projects/developments comply with the requirements of EIA Directive 2014/52/EU [.....] In accordance with Article 3 of Directive 2014/52/ EU, where EIA is required the environmental impact assessments presented in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) shall identify, describe and assess in an appropriate manner, the direct, indirect and cumulative significant effects of a project....[...].
- **Objective EM02:** To ensure that planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that, either individually or in combination with existing and/or proposed plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on a European site, or where such a development proposal is likely or might have such a significant effect (either alone or in combination), the planning authority will, as required by law, carry out an appropriate assessment as per requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC of the 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, as transposed into Irish legislation. Only after having ascertained that the development proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, will the planning authority agree to the development and impose appropriate mitigation measures in the form of planning conditions. A development proposal which could adversely affect the integrity of a European site may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive as transposed into Irish legislation.
- **Objective EM03:** To ensure that proposed plans and programmes comply with the requirements of the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, as transposed into Irish law under national legislation.
- **Objective EM04:** To ensure that plans, including land use plans, will only be adopted, if they either individually or in combination with existing and/or proposed plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on a European Site, or where such a plan is likely or might have such a significant effect (either alone or in combination), Wexford County Council will, as required by law, carry out an appropriate assessment as per requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC of the 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, as transposed into Irish legislation. Only after having ascertained that the plan will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, will Wexford County Council adopt the plan, incorporating any necessary mitigation measures. A plan which could adversely affect the integrity of a European site may only be adopted in exceptional circumstances, as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive as transposed into Irish legislation.
- **Objective EM05:** To implement the provisions of EU and National legislation and other relevant legislative requirements on protecting and improving surface and ground water quality, air quality and climate, and on reducing adverse noise and light nuisance, as appropriate and in conjunction with all relevant stakeholders in the interests of the protection of the environment, public health and the sustainable development of the county.

- **Objective NH24** To raise awareness in relation to invasive species, including making landowners and developers aware of best practice guidance in relation to the control of invasive species and leave them to adhere to same and, to ensure, in so far as possible, that proposals for development do not lead to the spread of invasive species. The Council will inform landowners of any invasive species found or reported on their property and request the landowners to take appropriate action in accordance with best practice guidance.
- **Objective NH25** To ensure that proposals for development do not lead to the spread or introduction of invasive species. If developments are proposed on sites where invasive species are or were previously present, the applicants will be required to submit a control and management program for the particular invasive species carried out by a competent and appropriately qualified expert as part of the planning process.

**Key tourism development objectives** are contained in Chapter 7 of the Development Plan and include:

- **Objective TM01:** To protect and sustain the natural, built and cultural features that form the basis of the county's tourism industry including landscapes, historic buildings and structures, habitats, species and areas of natural heritage value and water quality.
- **Objective TM03:** To facilitate the development of a sustainable diversified tourism industry at appropriate locations and at a suitable scale, subject to compliance with the objectives of this chapter and normal planning and environmental criteria.
- **Objective TM05:** To continue to develop tourism products and tourist related infrastructure and to carry out enhancements to the public realm in towns and villages and environmental improvements to ensure that the county is an attractive place to visit and stay.
- **Objective TM06:** To engage with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, the Arts Council, National Parks and Wildlife, Wexford Local Economic Office and other key stakeholders to promote and maximise the tourism potential of the county and to support the development of niche tourism sectors such as Geo-tourism, Eco-tourism, Food tourism and community-based tourism, while ensuring the protection of the natural, cultural and built heritage of the county.
- **Objective TM07:** To support the future development of Destination Experience Development Plans which may be developed by Fáilte Ireland during the lifetime of this plan and to ensure continued collaboration and alignment with Fáilte Ireland and tourism stakeholders to ensure successful implementation and delivery of these plans subject to compliance with the Habitats, SEA, EIA and Water Framework Directives and normal planning and environmental criteria.
- **Objective TM08:** To develop 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.
- **Objective TM09:** To deliver the Ireland's Ancient East Programme and facilitate the phased rollout of the branding strategy, orientation signage and the enhancement of the visitor experience at the chosen programme sites.
- **Objective TM11:** To develop Wexford Town's profile as a unique and vibrant Maritime town which encompasses its natural environment, its history and heritage, water-based activities, festivals, innovation and food offering subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive and normal planning and environmental criteria.

- **Objective TM12:** To balance the development of tourism facilities, infrastructure and accommodation in our towns, villages and rural areas with the needs of the communities, the need to provide for housing and year round facilities and vitality for the resident population and the sustainable year round use of existing infrastructure such as wastewater treatment infrastructure.
- **Objective TM14:** To support and develop our towns and villages and rural heritage sites including our beaches for tourism purposes through the facilitation of links by public transport, greenways, blueways and associated infrastructure subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive and normal planning and environmental criteria.

**Key transport related objectives** are contained in Chapter 8 of the Development Plan and include:

- **Objective TS29:** To provide cycling and walking routes as resources allow within and between settlements, and between settlements and rural trip generators (including places of employment, sports facilities, tourism assets including greenways and other amenities). The Council will provide a cycle way, segregated where possible, between County Wicklow, Gorey, Camolin, Ferns and Enniscorthy, with a view to extending this cycle way towards Rosslare Europort and New Ross. The provision of such cycling and walking routes shall be subject to the protection of habitats, environment, amenity and heritage and Appropriate Assessment in accordance with the requirement of the EU Habitats Directive to ensure the protection and preservation of all designated SACs and SPAs. Green infrastructure and sustainable drainage shall be designed into such routes where possible.

**Key recreation and open space strategy objectives** are contained in Chapter 14 of the Development Plan and include:

- **Objective ROS37:** To facilitate sustainable outdoor recreation in the form of walking and cycling at appropriate locations in the county and maximise the recreational and tourist potential of walking and cycling routes subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive, the protection of natural heritage, the character of rural areas, the amenities of host communities and normal planning and environmental criteria.
- **Objective ROS45:** To support investment in the development of universally accessible (including by mobility scooters) walking and cycling facilities and greenways and to explore the potential to develop greenway corridor linkages between settlements to create interregional greenways subject to complying with the relevant objectives in Chapter 7 Tourism Development, Chapter 8 Transportation Strategy, the Habitats Directives and normal planning and environmental criteria.

### 9.3 Recommended mitigation measures

Following the assessment of the Draft Plan, several potentially significant negative effects have been identified that require further mitigation. These include:

- **Housing Pressure:** Ongoing tourism development may exacerbate the already limited availability of long-term residential accommodation, negatively impacting local residents and seasonal workers. The existing shortage of both residential and tourist accommodation is also likely to continue affecting affordability and limiting options for visitors and growth in the sector.

- **Climate Impact:** An increase in both international and domestic tourist numbers is expected to result in higher greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This could contribute to climate change and pose challenges to meeting national and regional climate targets.
- **Sustainable Travel:** There is currently inadequate access to, and availability of, sustainable modes of transport—particularly in rural and remote areas—limiting environmentally friendly travel options to key destinations and sites.
- **Sustainable Festivals:** There is a need to increase the adoption and implementation of Fáilte Ireland's *Sustainable Festival Guidelines* to ensure that festivals and events are planned and delivered in a more environmentally responsible manner.

Fáilte Ireland and the plan team will concurrently address the proposed additional mitigation measures raised by the SEA team during the statutory consultation period. The proposed mitigation measures to address the likely significant effects are detailed in Table 9-1. The mitigation measures will require a coordinated and collaborative approach involving stakeholders at all levels—from national policy-makers to local project implementers.

While existing legislation, policies, and plans incorporated into the Development Plan address many of the likely and significant environmental effects at the project level, it is essential that both the Plan and its associated projects/actions proactively consider the broader implications of increased tourism activity. This includes addressing the cumulative impacts of sectoral growth on local communities and the environment.

**Table 9-1 Proposed Mitigation Measures**

Negative effects	Proposed Mitigation	Lead & Stakeholders
<p><b>Housing Pressure:</b> Tourist accommodation is reducing the availability of, and affordability of long-term housing, adversely affecting both local residents and seasonal workers, as well as limiting accommodation options for visitors.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 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 STTL.</li> <li>2. Implement <i>Housing Policy Objective 20</i> of The <i>Housing for All – a new Housing Plan for Ireland</i></li> </ol> <p><b>Background:</b> 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.</p>	<p>Fáilte Ireland, local authority and the Department.</p>
<p><b>Climate Impact:</b> Increasing international and domestic tourists resulting in an increase in GHG emissions, affecting climate change and the ability to meet climate targets.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Implement the actions in the Climate Action Plan 2025 and the Local Authority CAP and subsequent updates.</li> <li>4. Work with partners to improve access and availability of sustainable modes of transport and travel to key destinations.</li> <li>5. Work with partners to reduce carbon emissions from their operations.</li> <li>6. Work with partners to implement the relevant actions in the <i>National Adaptation Framework</i>.</li> <li>7. Implement the relevant actions in the <i>Sectoral Adaptation Plan for the Tourism Sector</i> (once developed).</li> <li>8. Work with partners to implement relevant targets contained in the <i>Tourism Policy Framework</i> including to include:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) establishing a baseline figure for tourism associated emissions and subsequent shorter term Tourism Action Plans will contain tourism specific emission reduction and biodiversity targets.</li> <li>b) Work with partners to ensure that the average carbon emissions associated with each visitor bed night is reduced by 60% by 2030.</li> <li>c) Focus on overseas markets that generate greatest revenue for lowest carbon footprint. Supporting the Government's target to achieve an average annual 5.6% year-on-year growth in the revenue generated by overseas visitors in the period to 2030.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Fáilte Ireland, project promoters, as appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Sustainable travel:</b> Inadequate access and availability to sustainable modes of transport to access key destinations/ sites</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Develop of a tourist transport strategy/plan containing an inventory of the key destination sites in the county together with a plan to increase the availability of sustainable transport options/infrastructure and services, where appropriate.</li> </ol>	<p>Project promoter(s) including Fáilte Ireland, and local authority, as appropriate.</p>

Negative effects	Proposed Mitigation	Lead & Stakeholders
particularly in rural or in remote areas.	10. Develop sustainable travel promotional material for each key destination site and work with stakeholders and partners to provide sustainable modes of infrastructure and transport to the site(s).	
<b>Sustainable Festivals:</b> Potential for festivals & events to impact the environment.	11. All project promoters receiving funding from Fáilte Ireland to demonstrate compliance with <i>The 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 Draft 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 Draft 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 Draft Plan is focused on monitoring the identified potential significant negative effects on the environment as a result of implementing the Draft Plan.

### 10.1.1 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 Draft 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 Wexford County Development Plan and Ireland’s Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy, all of which have been subject to SEAs. 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 used to monitor the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Draft Plan. The source of data collection and frequency is also identified. Proposed remedial measures are identified to address any likely 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.

### 10.1 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 Draft 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 the 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
<p><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.</p>	<p><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.</p> <p><b>BFF2:</b> Decline in habitat (quantity or quality) and/or loss of functional connectivity without remediation resulting from projects arising from the Plan.</p>	<p><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.</p> <p><b>BFF2:</b> No habitats or ecological networks, or parts thereof to be impacted/ lost without remediation resulting from projects arising from the Plan.</p>	<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>• 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>	<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>

Environmental Factor and SEO	Indicator	Target	Source and Frequency	Remedial Measures
<p><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 economic development of the population supporting positive health outcomes.</p>	<p><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(c):</b> Reduction in safety incidences at sites under the Plan.</p>	<p><b>PHH1:</b> Sustainably manage visitors to the area.</p>	<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>
	<p><b>PHH2:</b> Improved accessibility to recreational areas and public health amenities (e.g., parks, coastal areas, greenways, blueways, other trails).</p>	<p><b>PHH2:</b> Ensure that visitors have appropriate access to recreational areas and public health amenities.</p>	<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>	

<p><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.</p>	<p><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).</p>	<p><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).</p>	<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>
	<p><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).</p>	<p><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.</p>	<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>	
	<p><b>W3:</b> Compliance with regards to Flood Risk Management Guidelines.</p>	<p><b>W3:</b> Compliance with statutory plans and decision-making process relating to developments in flood risk zones.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan.</li> </ul>	
<p><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.</p>	<p><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>).</p>	<p><b>AQ:</b> Maintain air quality.</p>	<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>

<p><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.</p>	<p><b>C1(a):</b> Demonstrate compliance with provisions relating to climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation have been integrated into the plan/project, as appropriate.</p> <p><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.</p>	<p><b>C1:</b> Monitor and reduce emissions associated with tourism activities.</p>	<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>
	<p><b>C2:</b> Number of projects participating in Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme (FI CAP) or similar under the Plan.</p>	<p><b>C2:</b> All tourism activities/promoters to have a link to FI CAP (or similar) to demonstrate climate change resilience and adaptation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FI CAP accreditation (annual review).</li> <li>Wexford County 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>
	<p><b>C3:</b> Improve provision of public transport links in the region and 'last mile' transport links in partnership with National Transport Authority together with improved e-car charging infrastructure.<sup>6</sup></p>	<p><b>C3:</b> Reduction in transport emissions emanating from the tourism sector.</p>	<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> <li>Wexford County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029.</li> <li>National Transport Authority</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>
<p><b>Land and Soils (S)</b> Safeguard existing land and soil resources, protect and improve soil quality, conserve soil, and prevent soil</p>	<p><b>S1:</b> The area of soil that is sealed or artificialised in square km.<sup>7</sup></p>	<p><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.</p>	<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>

<sup>6</sup> Note: C3 monitoring indicator is taken from (KPI 5 from Ireland's Ancient East RDS 2023-2027).

<sup>7</sup> Note S1 indicator and target stems from the Revised & updated National Planning Framework SEA ER Monitoring.

contamination and erosion.	<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> <li>Consult utility and energy providers as appropriate.</li> </ul>
	<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>	
<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 Wexford County Council, if required.</li> </ul>

<p><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.</p>	<p><b>L:</b> Number of negative landscape or visual impacts resulting from projects developed under the Plan.</p>	<p><b>L:</b> Avoid negative landscape and visual impacts on the environment, particularly protected landscapes or protected views.</p>	<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>
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## 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 Draft Plan by Fáilte Ireland, an SEA Statement will be prepared that includes information on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Draft Plan, highlighting the main changes to the Draft 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 effects resulting from the implementation 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 Review of key legislation, policy, plans and programmes**

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	
<b><u>International</u></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 draft plan aligns with the UN SDGs. 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><u>EU</u></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 (e.g., long-distance railway lines, motorways and express roads, airports, nuclear installations, wastewater treatment plants, etc.). 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 take into account the criteria laid down in Annex III of the EIA Directive. Projects stemming down 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

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<p>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 &amp; 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.</p>
<p>Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC)</p>	<p>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 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.</p>
<p>EU Sustainable Development Strategy 2006</p> <p>Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>European Green Deal (European Commission, 2020)</p>	<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>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<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>
<p>EU 8<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme 2020-2030</p>	<p>The European Commission published its 8th Environmental Action Programme (EAP) in 2020 which will guide environmental policy to 2030 and builds on the long-term objective identified in the 7th EAP to “live well, within the planetary boundaries” by 2050 at the latest. The proposal for an 8th 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> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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).</li> <li>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).</li> </ol>
<p>European Council Directive 2003/35/EC</p>	<p>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</p>
<p><b>National</b></p>	
<p>Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)</p>	<p>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</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
<p>Planning and Development Act 2024</p>	<p>hierarchy. The principal regulations underpinning the Planning and Development Act is the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).</p> <p>The Planning and Development Act 2024 was signed into law on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024 and provides a new legislative framework and revised policy framework for development in Ireland. The Act seeks to achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the planning system supports and regulates the development of land and infrastructure, enhances assets and amenities and preserves and protects the quality of the environment.</li> <li>• When making statutory plans and consent decisions, that decision makers have due regard to the appropriate balance between the social, economic and environmental considerations in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development and the common good.</li> <li>• Ensure there is transparent and timely decision-making within the framework of policy, strategies, plans and consents.</li> <li>• Facilitate consistency and quality in decision-making that is proportionate and sound.</li> <li>• Integrate the pursuit of the national climate objective with the plan-led development of the State.</li> </ul> <p>The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) will remain in effect until the new Act is commenced, which will be on a phased basis.</p>
<p>Our Sustainable Future, a Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (2012)</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Building on Recovery; Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021</p>	<p>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".</p>
<p>'Project Ireland 2040': The National Planning Framework 2040 – The National Development Plan 2021-2030 (2021)</p>	<p>Project Ireland 2040 is the government's long-term overarching strategy to transition Ireland towards a more sustainable future. Project Ireland 2040 incorporates both the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP). The NPF has a statutory basis. The Government has approved the First Revision of the NPF on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025. 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 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> <p>The National Development Plan (NDP) details the major public investment which will help Ireland to address projected population growth. The First Revision of 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 climate transition, regional development, demographics, digitalisation, investment, and</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	prioritisation. There are several national policies objectives (NPO) which relate to County Wexford and tourism development more generally.
<b>Tourism Specific Plans</b>	
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.
Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways	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.
Tourism policy statement “People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025”	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.
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> </ul>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider Government Policy</li> <li>• International Context</li> <li>• Co-ordination Structures</li> </ul>
<p>Actions to Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices 2021-2023</p>	<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>
<u>Regional</u>	
<p>Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region 2020-2032</p>	<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>Rural Development Programme 2014-2022</p>	<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</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<p>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>
<p>Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025</p>	<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 thinking in relation to rural development at EU and OECD level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Draft Plan is aligned with policy measures of Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025, such as:</li> <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>
<p>Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027</p>	<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>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
County Wexford Tourism Development Strategy (2019 – 2023)	<p>The County Wexford Tourism Development Strategy (2019 – 2023) was published by Wexford County Council and outlines the tourism strategy for the County, which has been developed in line with the local, regional and national strategies including those of the People, Place and Policy-Growing Tourism to 2025 and Irelands Ancient East plans. The strategy has defined five key areas of focus and development and outlined their respective strategic goals and key strategies. These are the core foundations upon which future growth will be founded. These key areas are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target Markets and Segments</li> <li>• Visitor Experience Development</li> <li>• Capacity Building</li> <li>• Partnership Development</li> <li>• Brand &amp; Marketing Communications</li> </ul>
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> <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>
Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028	<p>The Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Wexford and informs the goals of the Local Area Plans within the 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>
Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2024-2029	<p>The Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2024-2029 (LECP) was developed by Wexford County Council and sets out the objectives and actions needed to promote the economic development and community development of County Wexford, both by the local authority directly, and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. The LECP focuses on areas relating to economic growth such as job creation, further development of a sustainable tourism sector and the regeneration of towns and villages, as well as community development in areas such as wellbeing, inclusion, education and employment.</p>
Kilkenny County Development Plan 2022-2028	<p>The Kilkenny County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Kilkenny, which borders County Wexford.</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028	The Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Carlow, which borders County Wexford.
Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028	The Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Wicklow, which borders County Wexford.
Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028	The Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out the strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Waterford City & County, which borders County Wexford.
Enniscorthy Town Centre First Plan	The Enniscorthy Town Centre First Plan was published in 2023 and provides a roadmap for the sustainable regeneration of the Town Centre of Enniscorthy. It sets out a broad strategy for a longer-term and more holistic approach to social, economic and environmental regeneration. The plan is non-statutory but it will nevertheless play a central role in informing statutory plans and priorities for transformative regeneration actions and projects.
New Ross Town Centre First Plan	The New Ross Town Centre First Plan was published in 2023 and provides a roadmap for the sustainable regeneration of the Town Centre of New Ross. It sets out a broad strategy for a longer-term and more holistic approach to social, economic and environmental regeneration. The plan is non-statutory but it will nevertheless play a central role in informing statutory plans and priorities for transformative regeneration actions and projects.
Draft Wexford Town local Area Plan 2024-2030	<p>Wexford County Council is currently preparing a new Local Area Plan for Wexford Town. This plan will set out the spatial planning strategy for the town to ensure the town can grow, support employment and homes and can do so sustainably and successfully</p> <p>The Local Area Plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform the Council's and An Bord Pleanála's assessment of planning applications.</li> <li>• Provide clarity and guidance on land use and development for the general public, private sector developers and other public bodies.</li> <li>• Guide the Council's work and the work of other service providers including those who provide infrastructure, educational facilities and transportation infrastructure and services.</li> <li>• Stimulate and inform regeneration in the town and support funding applications including to the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.</li> <li>• Inform other land management functions including the Residential Zoned Land Tax.</li> </ul>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
<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 May 1992 in Nairobi and was opened to signature on 5 June 1992, during the Rio "Earth Summit". Within a year, it had received 168 signatures. It entered into force on 29 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 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	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

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Implementation Plan for the period 2019 – 2024	<p>through cooperation of six Governments and 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> </ul> <p>Each jurisdiction develops Implementation Plans detailing measures to be taken over five-year periods in relation to three areas of concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>
<u>EU</u>	
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>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
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> <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	<p>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</p>
<b><u>National</u></b>	
Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000	<p>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.</p>
European Communities (Quality of Salmonid Waters) Regulations, 1988. (S.I. No. 293/1988)	<p>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.</p>
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>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<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>
<p>Prioritised Action Framework 2021-2027 (NPWS)</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (2019)</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Management Plans for Natura 2000 sites</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025</p>	<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>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
<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>
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>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Creating a Green Infrastructure for Ireland- Enhancing Natural Capital for Human Wellbeing 2010	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.
<b>Noise</b>	
<u>EU</u>	
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>
<u>Local Level</u>	
Wexford Noise Action Plan 2019-2023 Wexford County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028	<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. Wexford County Council has identified their noise-sensitive locations, which may involve drawing up a shortlist of potential areas for action. This list includes areas that are above the recommended onset values for noise mitigation measures, and those that are below the 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).</p> <p>Wexford County Council has developed a Noise Action Plan for the period of 2024-2028 which provides up to date noise mapping for future noise management.</p>
<b>Water</b>	
<u>International</u>	
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 March 1998. It was adopted together with a Final Declaration and an Action Plan. In this decade, the Convention will be implemented

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<p>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.</p>
<u>EU</u>	
<p>Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)</p>	<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>
<p>Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)</p>	<p>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</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	(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 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 December 2020 and entered into force on 12 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

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	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.
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.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
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.
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 22nd of 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	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.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Systems Regulations 2012) (S.I. 223/2012)	
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.
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	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

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Pearl Mussel) Regulations 2009 (S.I. 296/2009), as amended	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.
Quality of Shellfish Waters Regulations 2006 (S.I. 268/2006), as amended	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.
Water Action Plan: River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 (DHLGH)	<p>The third cycle draft 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 1st and 2nd 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>
<p>Water Services Strategic Plan, A Plan for the Future of Water Services 2015</p> <p>Draft Water Services Strategic Plan 2050</p>	<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>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<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	<p>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.</p>
The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)	<p>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.</p>
Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment - Guidelines (IFI, 2020)	<p>The Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment - Guidelines developed by 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 &amp; 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.</p>
Environmental River Enhancement Programme	<p>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.</p>
Environmental Guidance: Drainage Maintenance & Construction (OPW, 2019)	<p>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.</p>

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> </ul>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a plan to ensure that all customers have access to safe, secure, reliable and sustainable water supplies, wherever they live.</li> </ul>
<p>Water Services Policy Statement 2018 – 2025 (Irish Water, 2018)</p> <p>Water Services Policy Statement 2024-2030 (DHLGH)</p>	<p>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 Water Services Policy Statement 2024-2030 builds on the work of the previous Policy Statement 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>
<p>Ireland’s Fifth Nitrates Action Programme 2022-2025 (DAFM)</p>	<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 4th NAP will run until the end of 2021. The 5th NAP is currently in preparation and will cover the period 2022-2027.</p>
<p>Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024</p>	<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> </ul>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving compliance with the UWWTD; and</li> <li>Eliminating raw sewage discharges from agglomerations.</li> </ul>
Irish Water Strategic Funding Plan (2019 – 2024)	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 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 frameworks 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	<p>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.</p> <p>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>.</p>
<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
Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFÉ) (2008/50/EC)	

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	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.
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 January 2011 and had to be transposed by Member States by 7 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).
<b>National</b>	
Air Pollution Act 1987	The Air Pollution Act 1987, as amended on 31 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 (DCCA, 2023)	. The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DCCA) 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)	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 (NOx), non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs), sulphur dioxide (SO2), ammonia (NH3) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5). It also mandates the development of a NAPCP

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<p>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><u>International</u></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 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	<p>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.</p>
IPPC Sixth Assessment Report	<p>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.</p>
<b><u>EU</u></b>	
European Climate Law (Regulation 2021/1119)	<p>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.</p>
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>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<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>
<p>Forging a Climate Resilient Europe – A new EU Strategy on Adaption to Climate Change 2021</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework</p>	<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>
<p><b>National</b></p>	
<p>Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021</p>	<p>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 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.</p>

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The Climate Action Plan 2025	<p>The Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25), published in April 2025, is the third Climate Action Plan to be prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, thus making CAP25 the fifth iteration, building upon actions taken over previous years since Ireland committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 (compared to 2018 levels) and achieving climate neutrality by signing the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022.</p> <p>The Plan will be updated annually to ensure alignment with the 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.</p> <p>Relevance to the DEDP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAP 25 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	<p>In accordance with the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action Regulation, Ireland's National Energy &amp; 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. 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.</p>
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><u>Regional</u></b>	
Wexford County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029	<p>The Wexford County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 is a plan which specifies the mitigation and adaptation measures to be adopted by the Wexford County Council during the period of 2024-2029. The plan is prepared every 5 years and is consistent with</p>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<p>the most recently approved national climate 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: Wexford County Council will show leadership in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation through its structures, processes and policies.</li> <li>• Built Environment and Transport: Reduce Wexford County Councils greenhouse gas emissions by 51% in our Built Environment and transport and increase the resilience of our assets</li> <li>• Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure: Wexford County Council will support and facilitate the protection, management, and enhancement of the natural environment of County Wexford</li> <li>• Communities, Resilience and Just Transition: Support communities in co-creating a vision for low carbon and climate resilience and empower them to follow through on meaningful and impactful climate action.</li> <li>• Sustainability and Resource Management: Embed sustainable resource management and the circular economy in all functions and services throughout the organisation and across the county.</li> </ul>
<b>Land &amp; Soils</b>	
<u>EU</u>	
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>	
<u>EU</u>	
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 be 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>

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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 December 2021.</p>
<b>National</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 –	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.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Ireland's National Waste Policy (DECC, 2020)	
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.
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>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
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.
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 south coast of Wexford for proposed offshore wind development.
<b>Cultural Heritage including Archaeological and Architectural 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.

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada 1985)	<p>The Granada Convention was adopted on 3 October 1985 in Granada (Spain) and came into force on 1 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<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.
National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended), Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2023	The National Monuments Act (as amended), Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2023 and Planning and Development Act are the primary means of ensuring protection of archaeological heritage in Ireland.
Heritage Ireland 2030	Ireland's national heritage plan legislated for the creation of a Heritage Framework to value and protect heritage under three themes: National leadership and heritage Heritage partnerships Communities and heritage.
Places for People the National Policy on Architecture (2022)	<p>The national Policy on Architecture focuses on actions on five key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing for climate resilience and sustainability</li> <li>• Designing quality places for public benefit</li> <li>• Respecting our past, shaping our future</li> </ul>

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Knowledge and Innovation.</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.
<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,

Name	Summary of the policy/plan/programme
	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>National</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	Fáilte Ireland (FI) Response
<b>Development Applications Unit (DAU) received on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2024</b>		
<b>Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage - Development Applications Unit (DAU)</b>	<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>		
<b>The Planning Advisory Division of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)</b>	<b>Planning Advisory Division</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The division asserts the critical importance of using the latest climate and environmental figures for quantitative data and analysis to ensure the Draft Plan appropriately supports the State's climate goals and legally binding targets.</li> </ul>	The DECC's submission and guidance is welcomed. The ER considers the latest quantitative data and analysis which is contained in the Section 5.6 Climate of the ER.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>	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

Environmental Authority	Summary of Submission Received	Fáilte Ireland (FI) Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Clean Air Strategy</li> <li>○ The Climate Action Plan 2024</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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><b>The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) Division of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)</b></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.</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> <li>○ National coastal change assessments; and</li> <li>○ Physiographic units.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The Geological Survey 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	Fáilte Ireland (FI) Response
<b>Environmental Protection Agency received on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024</b>		
<b>Environmental Protection Agency</b>	<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, National Planning Frameworks, etc. should be documented, as appropriate.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	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
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> </ul>	The SEA team have included in section 8 summary tables linking impacts of the Draft Plan and their respective mitigation and monitoring measures in the ER as appropriate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> </ul>	The guidance in the EPA's good practice guidelines has informed the SEA team's development of the ER, as appropriate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>	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.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPA notes requirements to contact statutory environmental authorities.</li> </ul>	The SEA team confirms that all relevant statutory environmental authorities have been contacted, as per SEA requirements.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EPA requests confirmation of receipt of their scoping feedback submission.</li> </ul>	Confirmation of receipt of this submission was confirmed by Fáilte Ireland.

## **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 Wexford Destination and Experience Development Plan**

Fáilte Ireland as the Competent Authority for the proposed Wexford 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.

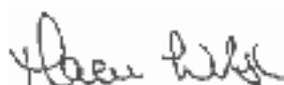
This determination has been made following consideration the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to S.I. 435/2004, as amended, and following consultation with the Statutory Environmental Authorities for SEA.

The principal reason the Plan requires 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: 21/05/25



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