

Draft Westmeath County
Development Plan
2021 - 2027

SEA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

FOR THE

DRAFT WESTMEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

for: Westmeath County Council

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List of Abbreviations

AA	Appropriate Assessment
ACA	Architectural Conservation Area
CAFE	Cleaner Air for Europe
CFRAM	Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management
CORINE	Co-ORDinated INformation on the Environment
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
DCCA	Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment
DCHG	Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
DEHLG	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
DHPLG	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EQS	Environmental Quality Standard
EU	European Union
GFC	Gross Final Consumption
GSI	Geological Survey of Ireland
NHA	Natural Heritage Area
NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
OPW	Office of Public Works
pNHA	proposed Natural Heritage Area
PAS	Priority Action Substance
RAL	Remedial Action List
RBD	River Basin District
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
RPA	Register of Protected Areas
RPS	Record of Protected Structures
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEO	Strategic Environmental Objective
SI No.	Statutory Instrument Number
SPA	Special Protection Area
TPOs	Tree Preservation Orders
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation
WFD	Water Framework Directive

Glossary

Appropriate Assessment

The obligation to undertake Appropriate Assessment (AA) derives from Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action (such as a plan or programme) or project, alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of a European Site in view of its conservation objectives.

Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

Biodiversity is 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 a part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems' (United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity 1992).

Flora is all of the plants found in a given area.

Fauna is all of the animals found in a given area.

Environmental Problems

Annex I of Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27th June 2001, on the assessment of the effects of certain Plans and programmes on the environment (the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive) requires that information is provided on 'any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme', thus, helping to ensure that the proposed strategic action does not make existing environmental problems worse.

Environmental problems arise where there is a conflict between current environmental conditions and ideal targets. If environmental problems are identified at the outset they can help focus attention on important issues and geographical areas where environmental effects of the plan or programme may be likely.

Environmental Vectors

Environmental vectors are environmental components, such as air, water or soil, through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported, coming into contact with human beings.

Mitigate

To make or become less severe or harsh.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing a human action, be it a plan, programme or project. Mitigation involves ameliorating significant negative effects. Where there are significant negative effects, consideration should be given in the first instance to preventing such effects or, where this is not possible, to lessening or offsetting those effects. Mitigation measures can be roughly divided into those that: avoid effects; reduce the magnitude or extent, probability and/or severity of effects; repair effects after they have occurred; and compensate for effects, balancing out negative impacts with other positive ones.

In the context of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, mitigation measures are clearly distinguished from compensatory measures. Compensatory measures are intended to offset the negative effects of the plan or project so that the overall ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 Network is maintained.

Natural Heritage

The Heritage Act (1995) defines natural heritage as including flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, inland waterways, heritage gardens and parks.

Protected Structure

Protected Structure is the term used in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and associated Regulations (as amended) to define a structure included by a planning authority in its Record of Protected Structures. Such a structure shall not be altered or demolished in whole or part without obtaining planning permission or confirmation from the planning authority that the part of the structure to be altered is not protected.

Recorded Monument

A monument included in the list and marked on the map which comprises the Record of Monuments and Places that is set out county by county under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. The definition includes Zones of Archaeological Potential in towns and all other monuments of archaeological interest which have so far been identified. Any works at or in relation to a recorded monument requires two months' notice to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994.

Scoping

Scoping is the process of determining what issues are to be addressed, and setting out a methodology in which to address them in a structured manner appropriate to the plan or programme. Scoping is carried out in consultation with appropriate environmental authorities.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

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 it.

Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO)

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives established at International, Community or Member State level and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Draft Plan and the alternatives can be evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if - in the case of adverse effects - unmitigated.

Section 1 SEA: Introduction and Benefits

1.1 Introduction

This is the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report for the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027. It has been undertaken by CAAS Ltd. on behalf of Westmeath County Council. The purpose of this report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the adoption and implementation of the Plan.

Environmental assessment is a procedure that ensures that the environmental implications of decisions are taken into account before such decisions are made. *Environmental Impact Assessment*, or EIA, is generally used for describing the process of environmental assessment for individual projects, while *Strategic Environmental Assessment* or SEA is the term which has been given to the environmental assessment of plans and programmes, which help determine the nature and location of individual projects taking place. SEA is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a proposed plan or programme, in order to ensure that these effects are adequately addressed at the earliest appropriate stages of decision-making in tandem with economic, social and other considerations.

The SEA is being undertaken in order to comply with European SEA Directive¹, which introduced the requirement that SEA be carried out on plans and programmes that are

prepared for a number of sectors, including land use planning.

1.2 Implications for the Planning Authority

SEA identifies the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan. The findings of the SEA are expressed in this Environmental Report, which accompanies the Draft Plan on public display and identifies how environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan and how alternatives for the Plan were considered. This report may be updated in order to take account of recommendations contained in submissions and/or in order to take account of any changes which are made to the Draft Plan on foot of submissions.

The planning authority must take into account the findings of this report and other related SEA output during their consideration of the Draft Plan and before it is adopted.

When the Draft Plan is finalised, an SEA Statement must be prepared which will summarise, *inter alia*, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan.

1.3 Why SEA? The Benefits

SEA is the planning authority's and the public's guide to what are generally the best areas for development in the County.

SEA enables the planning authority to direct development towards robust, well-serviced and connected areas in the County – thereby facilitating the general avoidance of incompatible areas in the most sensitive, least well-serviced and least well-connected areas.

SEA provides greater to the public and to developers. Plans are more likely to be adopted without delays or challenges and planning applications are more likely to be granted permission. Environmental mitigation is more likely to cost less.

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27th June 2001, on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, transposed into Irish Law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 435 of 2004), as amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 200 of 2011), and the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004), as amended by the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 201 of 2011).

An overlay of environmental sensitivities in County Westmeath are shown on Figure 1.1. Sensitivities include designated ecological sites, the status of rivers and lakes, flood risk, cultural heritage and high amenity areas. The Plan generally directs development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation.

Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.

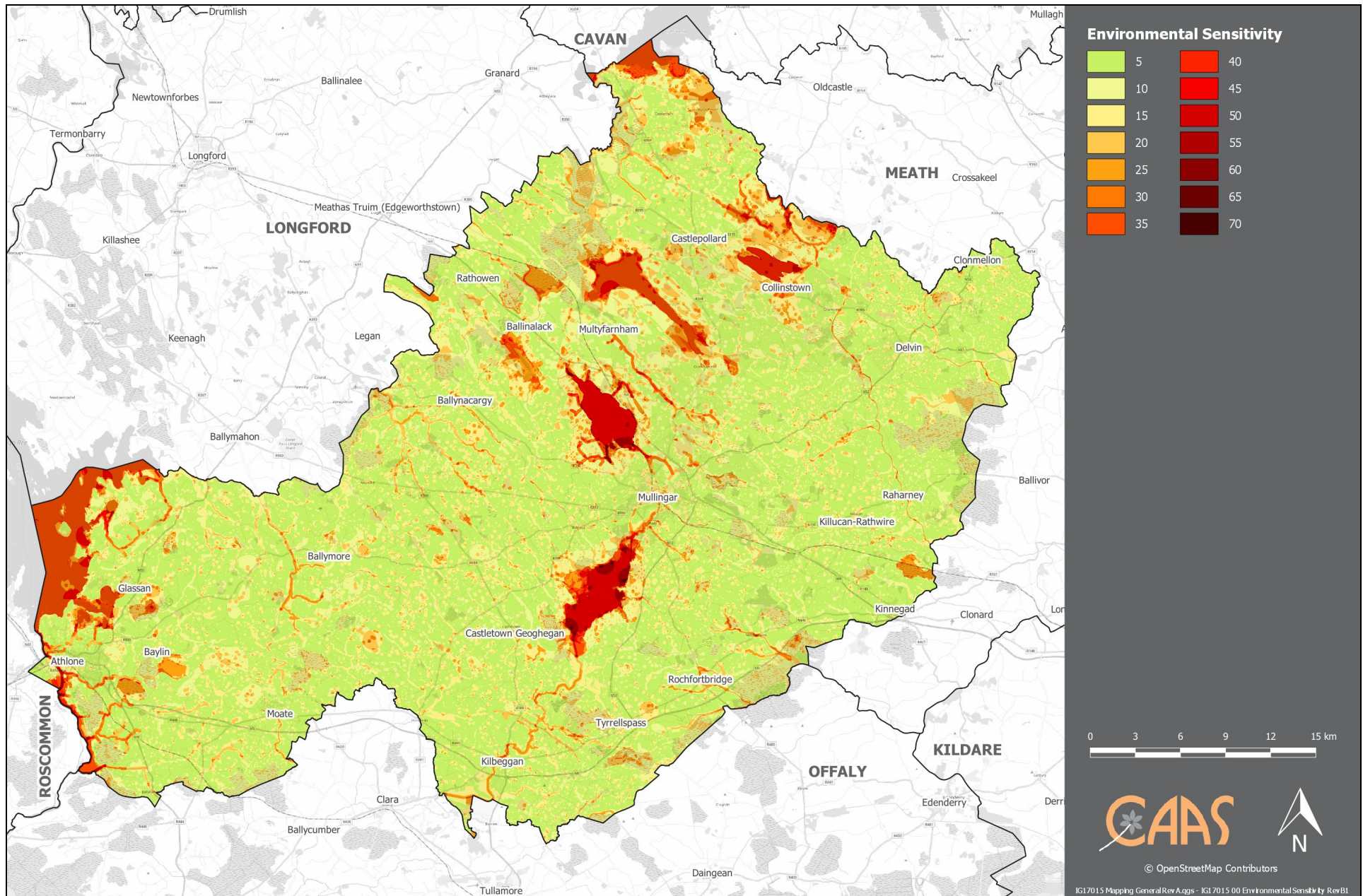


Figure 1.1 Overlay of Environmental Sensitivities in County Westmeath

Section 2 The Draft Plan

2.1 Introduction

The Westmeath Draft County Development Plan provides an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Westmeath for six years. It sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and development of County Westmeath in terms of social, cultural, economic and physical development.

2.2 Content of the Draft Plan

The Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out the Council's proposed policies and objectives for the development of the County over the Plan period. The Development Plan seeks to develop and improve, in a sustainable manner, the social, economic, environmental and cultural assets of the County.

The Draft Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). This Plan, once adopted, replaces the Westmeath Development Plan 2014 – 2020 and consists of a Written Statement including specific policy objectives supported with Maps and Appendices.

The Written Statement is divided into 16 separate chapters setting out the vision, strategic context, aims, goals and the settlement and core strategies for the County. The format of the plan is as follows:

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Core Strategy
- Chapter 3 Housing Strategy
- Chapter 4 Sustainable Communities
- Chapter 5 Economy & Employment
- Chapter 6 Tourism
- Chapter 7 Urban Centres & Place-making
- Chapter 8 Settlement Plans
- Chapter 9 Rural Westmeath
- Chapter 10 Transport, Infrastructure & Energy
- Chapter 11 Climate Action
- Chapter 12 Natural Heritage & Green Infrastructure
- Chapter 13 Landscape & Lake Amenities
- Chapter 14 Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 15 Land Use Objectives

- Chapter 16 Development Management Standards

The Appendices include the Council's Housing Strategy, a statement detailing implementation of Ministerial Guidelines, County Westmeath Retail Strategy, List of Protected Views, List of Public Rights of Way, Trees & Woodland subject to Tree Preservation Orders, and Map Based Local Objectives (to be read in conjunction with the Development Plan Maps).

2.3 Draft Plan Strategic Vision and Aims

The Draft Plan's Strategic Vision is:

To create and facilitate sustainable competitive growth throughout the County that supports the health and wellbeing of the people of Westmeath, providing an attractive destination, as a place in which to live, work, invest, do business and visit, offering high quality employment and educational opportunities within sustainable communities whilst safeguarding the environmental, cultural, heritage and tourism assets of the County.

The Draft Plan's Strategic Aims are:

- **Sustainable Communities:** To develop and support vibrant sustainable communities in Westmeath where people can live, work and enjoy access to a wide range of community, health and educational facilities and amenities, suitable for all ages and needs, in both urban and rural areas, thereby supporting a high quality of life for all to enjoy.
- **Economic Development and Employment:** To promote and assist in Westmeath's economic development and encourage increased resilience in the County's enterprise, underpinned by talent and innovation, thereby ensuring that Westmeath is best placed to excel in the long-term delivery of sustainable jobs and an enhanced standard of living for all.
- **Tourism:** To provide for the continued expansion of the tourism sector, with a focus on creating strong visitor destination towns and sufficient high-quality visitor services and the continued development and enhancement of visitor attractions and activities to provide memorable, immersive visitor experiences, capitalising on our natural and cultural heritage assets, whilst safeguarding these resources for future generations.
- **Urban Centres & Placemaking:** To protect and enhance the unique identity and character of Westmeath's towns and villages and improve

quality of life and wellbeing through the application of Healthy Placemaking, underpinned by good urban design, with the creation of attractive public spaces that are vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate positive social interaction.

- **Settlements:** To create a network of attractive, liveable towns and villages in the County with increased levels of population, employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity which support a high quality of life and well-being.
- **Rural:** To support the role of rural areas and the countryside in sustaining the rural economy and improved connectivity, broadband and rural economic development opportunities through the development of the agricultural and agri-food sector, agricultural related developments and enterprises, including diversification of the rural economy, forestry, energy production, tourism, recreation, mineral extraction and/or other new and emerging rural based enterprises, all within the context of the sustainable management of land and resources, thereby increasing the competitiveness of the rural economy, which will sustain and strengthen rural communities.
- **Transport, Infrastructure and Energy:** To achieve a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with excellent connectivity within and to Westmeath by enhancing existing strategic transportation infrastructure in the County. To provide, improve and extend water, wastewater, surface water and flood alleviation services throughout the County and to prioritise the provision of water services infrastructure, to achieve improved environmental protection and to protect public health. To provide for the development of indigenous energy resources, with an emphasis on renewable energy supplies.
- **Climate Action:** To transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County, with an emphasis on reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change.
- **Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure:** Continue to protect and enhance the County's natural heritage and biodiversity and ensure that networks of green infrastructure are identified, created, protected and enhanced to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.
- **Landscape and Lake Amenities:** To improve the knowledge and understanding of the County's landscape and lakelands, and enhance the overall characteristics, qualities and diversity of landscape character, its sense of place and local distinctiveness in recognition of the amenity potential of the County.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Westmeath County Council recognises the importance of identifying, valuing and safeguarding our archaeological,

architectural and cultural heritage for future generations and aims to do so by means of proper management, sensitive enhancement and/or appropriate development of this resource.

2.4 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development

Far in advance of both the submission of the pre-Draft Plan to the Elected Members for approval and the placing of the Draft Plan (and associated environmental assessment documents) on public display, Westmeath County Council undertook various works in order to inform the preparation of the Plan.

The findings of this strategic work have been integrated into the Plan and will contribute towards both environmental protection and management and sustainable development within the County.

Strategic work undertaken by the Council includes background work in relation to Plan Strategies and other provisions for a variety of sectors including:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment;
- Appropriate Assessment;
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment;
- Protected Views;
- Housing;
- Core Strategy;
- Housing Strategy;
- Geological Audit; and
- Wetlands Survey.

The undertaking of this SEA process and associated Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment processes were part of this strategic work and contributed towards the integration of environmental considerations into individual Plan provisions as detailed in Section 9 of this report.

2.5 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

It is acknowledged that many of the major issues affecting the County's development are contingent on national policy and government funding.

The Draft Plan sits within a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for, among other things, land use planning, infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism, environmental protection and environmental management. The Plan must comply with relevant higher-level strategic actions and will, in turn, guide lower level strategic actions. These documents include plans and programmes such as those detailed in Appendix I² (see also, Section 4 "Environmental Baseline", Section 5 "Strategic Environmental Objectives", Section 6 "Description of Alternatives" and Section 9 "Mitigation Measures"). These documents have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out Ireland's planning policy direction for the next 22 years. The NPF is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans. The RSES for the Eastern & Midlands Region sets out objectives for land use planning, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been subject to environmental assessment and must be implemented through the County Development Plan.

As required by the Planning and Development Act, the Draft County Development Plan is consistent with and conforms with national and regional policies, plans and programmes, including the NPF and the RSES for the Eastern & Midlands Region. The County Development Plan may, in turn, guide lower level strategic actions, such as the Athlone and

Mullingar Local Area Plans that will be subject to lower-tier environmental assessments.

In order to be realised, projects included in the County Development Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

² Appendix I is not intended to be a full and comprehensive review of EU Directives, the transposing regulations or the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management. The information is not exhaustive and it is recommended to consult the Directive, Regulation, Plan or Programme to become familiar with the full details of each.

Section 3 SEA Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the Iterative Approach

Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the integrated Plan preparation, SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes. The preparation of the Plan, SEA, AA and SFRA have taken place concurrently and the findings of the SEA, AA and SFRA have informed the Plan. The process is currently at a stage where the findings of this report will be placed on public display as part of the required statutory public consultations. AA and SFRA documents will also accompany the Plan on public display. Submissions made on the Plan and associated documents, including SEA and AA documents,

will be responded to and updates made to the documents where relevant.

Submissions made on the Plan will be responded to and the Plan will be updated as appropriate. When the Plan is finalised, the SEA, AA and SFRA documents will be finalised. Final documents will include an SEA Statement, which will include information on how environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan, and an AA Conclusion Statement. The Plan will be implemented and environmental monitoring – as well as planning and project development and associated environmental assessments and administrative consent of projects – will be undertaken.

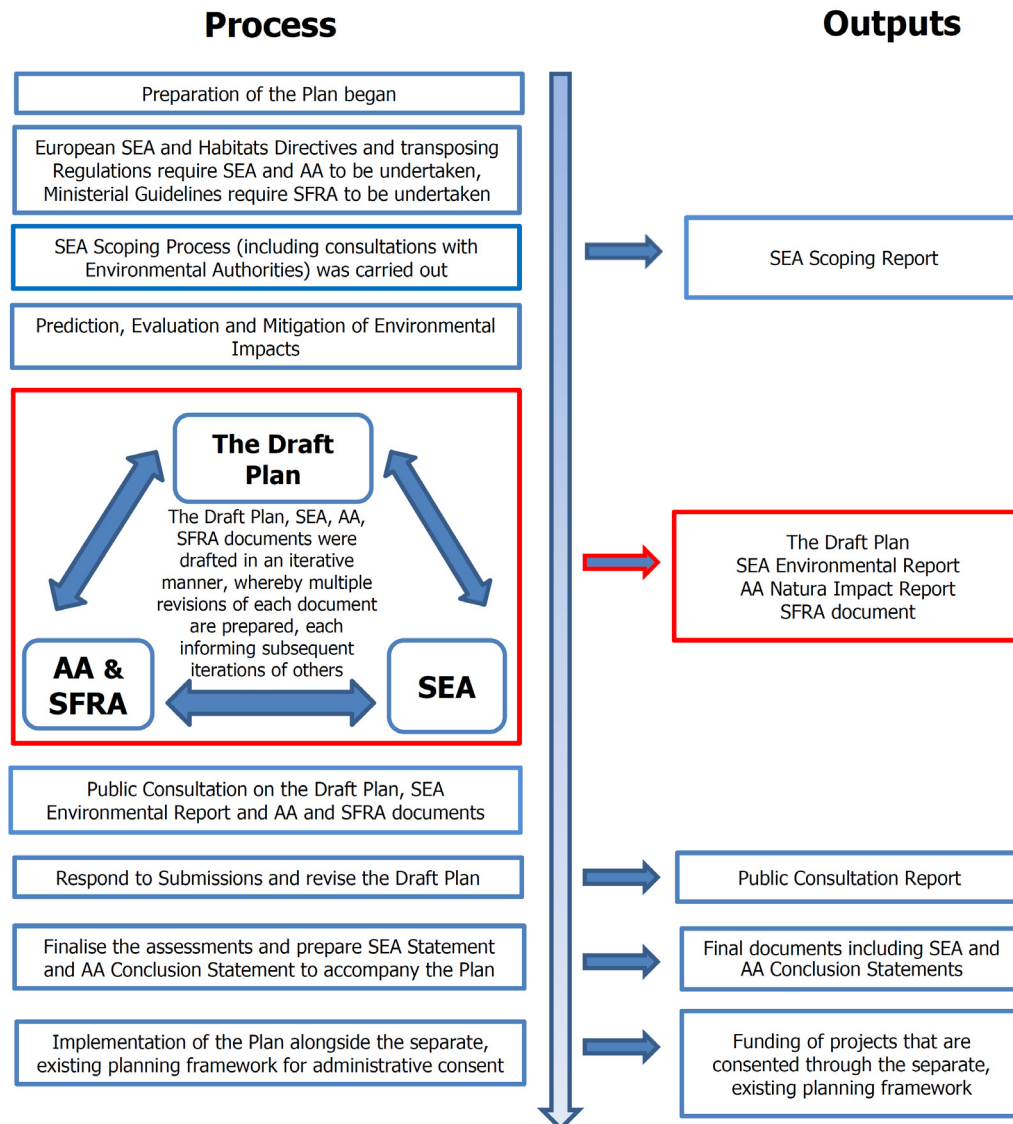


Figure 3.1 Overview of the SEA/AA/SFRA Plan-preparation Processes

3.2 Appropriate Assessment and Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment

3.2.1 Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening and Stage 2 AA are being undertaken alongside the Plan. The requirement for AA is provided under the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 1992/43/EEC).

The emerging conclusion of the AA is that the Plan will not affect the integrity of the European Sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.³

The preparation of the Plan, SEA and AA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA have informed the SEA.

3.2.2 Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment

Many elements of Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment as detailed in the EPA's (2013) Practitioner's Manual have been aligned with in the undertaking of the SEA for the Plan. These include:

Scoping

- Biodiversity-relevant issues were identified for consideration at scoping stage and these are now detailed in Section 4.
- Reference to a zone of influence is provided at Section 4.

Baseline

- Biodiversity data sources relevant for this local level assessment have been identified and datasets collated/gathered.
- The biodiversity baseline addresses designated sites and other habitats and species of ecological value.
- AA information has been incorporated into the SEA baseline.

Alternatives

- Impacts upon biodiversity are considered under each of the alternatives and potential conflicts can be mitigated.

Impact assessment

- Effects on biodiversity are identified and assessed and the AA considers the interrelationship between biodiversity and potential effects on European Sites.

Mitigation and monitoring

- Taking into account all measures contained within the Plan, all the proposed mitigation measures deriving from the various processes were generally consistent and compatible.
- Indicators and associated targets have been included in SEA for monitoring European Sites.

Reporting

- This SEA ER addresses all biodiversity-related considerations relevant for this level of assessment.
- This SEA ER contains all biodiversity-relevant information, data, figures and maps relevant for this level of assessment.
- This SEA ER has been informed by the AA findings.

Communication and consultation

- Submissions received have been taken on board.
- The preparation of the Plan, SEA and AA have taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA have informed the SEA.

3.3 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is being undertaken alongside the Plan. The requirement for SFRA is provided under 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014. The recommendations from the SFRA have generally been integrated into the Draft Plan.

3.4 Scoping

The scope of environmental issues to be dealt with by the SEA together with the level of detail to which they are addressed was broadly decided upon taking into account the collection of environmental baseline data and input from environmental authorities. Scoping allowed the SEA to become focused upon key issues relevant to the environmental

³ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

(a) no alternative solution available,
(b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and
(c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

components that are specified under the SEA Directive⁴.

All relevant environmental authorities identified under the SEA Regulations as amended, were sent SEA scoping notices by the Council indicating that submissions or observations in relation to the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report could be made to the Council⁵.

As the Plan is not likely to have significant effects on the environment in another Member State, transboundary consultations as provided for by Article 7 of the SEA Directive were not undertaken.

A submission made by the Environmental Protection Agency influenced the scope of the assessment undertaken, the findings of which are included in this report.

3.5 Alternatives

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme) are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment. In accordance with this requirement, alternatives for the Plan are identified and assessed in Sections 6 and 7.

⁴ These components comprise biodiversity, fauna, flora, population, human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.

⁵ The following authorities were notified: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht; Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment; Environmental Protection Agency; Roscommon County Council; Offaly County Council; Meath County Council; Cavan County Council; and Longford County Council.

3.6 Preparation of the Draft Plan and Members' Amendments

The preparation of a pre-Draft Plan, for the consideration of Members in advance of public display was informed by the SEA, AA and SFRA processes.

Advice relating to Members' Motions to amend the pre-Draft Plan was provided to the Members for their consideration in advance of agreeing amendments.

Taking into account, inter alia, the advice on Motions and the SEA, AA and SFRA documentation for the Draft Plan, the Members agreed to amend the pre-Draft Plan by resolution.

An earlier version of this SEA Environmental Report was updated to take account of these amendments.

Information on Motions that were advised against, subsequently agreed upon as amendments to the pre-Draft Plan and which would have potential for likely significant negative environmental effects is provided in Section 8.4.

3.7 Environmental Report

In this SEA Environmental Report, which is placed on public display alongside the Draft Plan, the likely environmental effects of the Draft Plan and the alternatives are predicted and their significance evaluated.

The Environmental Report provides Westmeath County Council, stakeholders and the public with a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of implementing the Draft Plan.

Mitigation measures to prevent or reduce significant adverse effects posed by the Draft Plan are identified in Section 9 – these have been integrated into the Plan.

This Environmental Report will be updated in order to take account of recommendations contained in submissions and in order to take account of changes that are made to the

original, Draft Plan that is being placed on public display. Changes to the Draft Plan will be examined for the need to undertake SEA and AA.

The Environmental Report is required to contain the information specified in Schedule 2B of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004), as amended (see Table 3.1).

No significant difficulties have been encountered during the undertaking of the assessment to date. There was limited water services information available for some settlements within the County however objectives requiring the provision of appropriate levels of water services alongside new development have been integrated into the Draft Plan.

3.8 SEA Statement

On finalisation of the Plan, an SEA Statement will be prepared that will include information on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan, highlighting the main changes to the Plan that resulted from the SEA process;
- How the SEA Environmental Report and consultations have been taken into account, 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 of implementing of the Plan.

Table 3.1 Checklist of Information included in this Environmental Report

Information Required to be included in the Environmental Report	Corresponding Section of this Report
(A) Outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	Sections 2, 5 and 8
(B) Description of relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the evolution of that environment without implementation of the plan or programme	Section 4
I Description of the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	Sections 4, 7 and 8
(D) Identification of any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme, particularly those relating to European protected sites	Section 4
I List environmental protection objectives, established at international, EU or National level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and describe how those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account when preparing the Plan	Sections 5, 7, 8, 9 and Appendix I
(F) Describe the likely significant effects on the environment	Sections 7 and 8
(G) Describe any measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse environmental effects of implementing the plan or programme	Section 9
(H) Give an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives considered, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken (including any difficulties)	Sections 3, 6, 7 and 8
(I) A description of proposed monitoring measures	Section 10
(J) A non-technical summary of the above information	Non-Technical Summary
(K) Interrelationships between each environmental topic	Addressed as it arises within each Section

Section 4 Environmental Baseline

4.1 Introduction

Reflecting the specifications in the SEA Directive, the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment for the following environmental components are described in this section: biodiversity and flora and fauna, population and human health, soil, water, air and climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.

This description includes information that is relevant to lower tier planning, environmental assessments and decision-making⁶.

Given the potential for impacts beyond the boundary of the Plan Area, the spatial scope of the SEA takes into account the zone of influence (15km or greater where relevant) of the Plan area.

4.2 National Reporting on the Environment

The EPA's "*Ireland's Environment – An Assessment 2016*" report provides an integrated assessment of the overall quality of Ireland's environment, the pressures being placed on it and the societal responses to current and emerging environmental issues. This report has informed various parts of the environmental baseline provided below. The key environmental challenges or messages identified by the report are:

Environment and Health and Wellbeing

Recognising the benefits of a good quality environment to health and wellbeing.

Climate Change

Accelerating mitigation actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement adaptation measures to increase resilience in dealing with adverse climate impacts.

⁶ Note that Article 5 of the SEA Directive, in accordance with the established European principle of subsidiarity, requires that the Environmental Report includes the information that may reasonably be required taking into account, inter alia, the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process in order to avoid duplication of the assessment.

Implementation of Legislation

Improving the tracking of plans and policies and the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation to protect the environment.

Restore and Protect Water Quality

Implementing measures that achieve ongoing improvement in the environmental status of water bodies from source to the sea.

Sustainable Economic Activities

Integrating environmental sustainability ideas and performance accounting across economic sectors and sectoral plans should be a key policy for growth.

Nature and Wild Places

Protecting pristine and wild places that act as biodiversity hubs, contributing to health and wellbeing, and providing tourism opportunities

Community Engagement

Informing, engaging and supporting communities in the protection and improvement of the environment.

The report highlights that high-quality green and blue spaces are not just for nature but are for peoples' health and wellbeing, particularly in the context of an increasingly urban society and increasing settlement densities.

4.3 Sustainable Development Goals

Implementation of the Plan will contribute towards efforts to achieve a number of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which were adopted by world leaders in 2015 at a United Nations Summit and came into force in 2016. These Goals include:

- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

4.4 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of a new Plan

In the absence of a new Plan it is uncertain how permission for new development would be applied for and considered.

The 2014-2020 Plan has contributed towards environmental protection within County Westmeath. If the 2014-2020 Plan was to expire and not be replaced by the 2021-2027 Plan, this would result in a deterioration of the County's planning and environmental protection framework. Although higher level environmental protection objectives – such as those of various EU Directives and transposing Irish Regulations – would still apply, the deterioration of this framework would mean that new development would be less coordinated and controlled.

As a result, there would be a decreased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of positive effects occurring, including:

- Contribution towards protection of ecology (including designated sites, ecological connectivity, habitats) by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- Contribution towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and associated ecosystem services, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats.
- Contribution towards protection and/or maintenance of biodiversity and flora and fauna by contributing towards the protection of natural capital including the environmental vectors of air, water and soil. Biodiversity and flora and fauna includes biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species (including birds and bats), listed/protected species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats (including terrestrial and aquatic habitats), and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna – including terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity and flora and fauna.
- Sustains existing sustainable rural management practices – and the communities who support them – to ensure the continuation of long-established managed landscapes and the flora and fauna that they contain.
- Promotion of economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management.
- Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond
- Contribution towards the protection of human health by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- Contributes towards protection of human health as a result of contributing towards the protection of natural capital including environmental vectors, including air and water.
- Contribution towards the protection of soils (including those used for agriculture) and designated sites of geological heritage by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- Contribution towards the protection of the environment from contamination the highest standards of remediation, and where appropriate to consultations with the EPA and other relevant bodies, will be required to resolve any instances of environmental pollution created by contaminated land.
- Contribution towards the protection of water by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- Contributions towards the protection of water resources including the status of surface and groundwaters and water-based designations.
- Contribution towards flood risk management and appropriate drainage.
- Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- Contribution towards compliance with national and regional water services and waste management policies.
- Contribution towards increase in renewable energy use by facilitating renewable energy and electricity transmission infrastructure developments.
- Contribution towards limits in increases in energy demand from the transport sector by facilitating sustainable compact growth.
- Contribution towards reductions in average energy consumption per capita including promoting energy efficient buildings, retrofitting, smart buildings, cities and grids.

- Contribution towards climate mitigation and adaptation by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- In combination with other plans, programmes etc., contribution towards the objectives of the wide policy framework relating to climate mitigation and adaptation, and associated contribution towards maintaining and improving air quality and managing noise levels, including through measures relating to:
 - Sustainable compact growth;
 - Sustainable mobility, including walking, cycling and public transport;
 - Drainage, flood risk management and resilience;
 - Sectors including agriculture, residential heating and infrastructure;
- Sustainable infrastructure design solutions including energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure).
- Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage elsewhere in the County by facilitating development within existing settlements.
- Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage within existing settlements by facilitating brownfield development and regeneration.
- Contributes towards protection of wider landscape and landscape designations by facilitating development within existing settlements.

As a result, there would be an increased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of adverse effects on all environmental components occurring, including:

- Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure:
 - Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna;
 - Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and
 - Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.
- Potential adverse effects arising from flood events.
- Potential interactions if effects arising from environmental vectors.
- Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands.
- Potential for riverbank erosion.
- Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology.
- Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.
- Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water

(water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).

- Increases in waste levels.
- Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.
- Interactions between agricultural waste and soil, water, biodiversity and human health – including as a result of emissions of ammonia from agricultural activities (e.g. manure handling, storage and spreading) and the production of secondary inorganic particulate matter.
- Potential conflict between development under the Plan and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives.
- Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality.
- Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors.
- Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.
- Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities.
- Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.

4.5 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services⁷

County Westmeath's **natural capital** comprises its renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a flow of ecosystem services that provide benefits to people. These benefits can include clean air and water, a stable climate, protection from floods, food, resources for fuel, building materials, clothes and medicines, recreation. Managing natural capital so that it can continue to deliver the ecosystem services that give us these benefits is important in order to ensure sustainable development. Unmanaged natural capital risks the continued degradation and depletion of these assets, and in turn, of their capacity to provide the economy and society with the ecosystem benefits that they depend on. These services also regulate climate, regulate water flows (e.g. through wetlands and forests), sequester and store carbon in peatlands and improve soil quality for crops.

In recognition of the need to manage natural capital, provisions have been integrated into the Plan that will contribute towards management of air quality, noise pollution, light pollution, water quality and integrated catchment management.

⁷ This section includes content taken from the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, 2019)

Ecosystems are multifunctional communities of living organisms interacting with each other and their environment. Ecosystems provide a series of services for human well-being (ecosystem services) either directly or indirectly contributing towards human wellbeing. There are four main types; provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services. Provisioning services are the products obtained from ecosystems such as food, fresh water, wood, fibre, genetic resources and medicines. Regulating services are defined as the benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes such as climate regulation, natural hazard regulation, water purification and waste management, pollination or pest control. Support services highlight the importance of ecosystems to provide habitat for migratory species and to maintain the viability of gene-pools. Cultural services include non-material benefits that people obtain from ecosystems such as spiritual enrichment, intellectual development, recreation and aesthetic values⁸.

In preparing the Draft Plan and developing policy objectives, the Council have followed these ecosystem services approach principles:

- a) Consideration of natural systems - by using knowledge of interactions in nature and how ecosystems function (including at Plan Chapters 6 "Tourism", 10 "Transport and Infrastructure", 11 "Climate Change and Energy", 12 "Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure" and 13 "Landscape and Lake Management");
- b) Taking into account of the services that ecosystems provide - including those that underpin social and economic well-being, such as flood and climate regulation (including at Plan Chapters 11 "Climate Change and Energy"), resources for food, fibre or fuel (including at Chapter 9 "Rural Westmeath"), or for recreation, culture and quality of life (including at Plan Chapters 12 "Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure", 13 "Landscape and Lake Management" and 14 "Cultural Heritage"); and
- c) Involving people - those who benefit from the ecosystem services and those managing them need to be involved in decisions that affect them.

Public consultation has informed the preparation of the Draft Plan which will be further refined before adoption, taking into account submissions/observations made on the Draft Plan during public display.

The following natural capital and ecosystem services issues are relevant to this SEA and have been taken into account in the provisions of the Draft Plan:

- Pollination;
- Air quality;
- Noise pollution;
- Light pollution;
- Water quality and integrated catchment management including interactions with soil;
- Soil and vegetation carbon, which helps to regulate greenhouse gas emissions;
- Soil/geological storage of water, contributing towards flood control;
- Land supporting food production; and
- Natural resources supporting energy production and recreation.

4.6 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

4.6.1 Overview

Information on biodiversity and flora and fauna which is relevant to project planning and development and associated environmental assessment and administrative consent of projects includes available information on designated ecological sites and protected species, ecological connectivity (including stepping stones and corridors) and non-designated habitats.

Ecologically rich areas in Westmeath include peatlands, lakes, canals, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, eskers and hedgerows. These habitats support a variety of species and ecosystems that contribute to the unique biodiversity of Westmeath.

Ecological designations include:

- Special Protection Areas⁹;

⁸ <https://biodiversity.europa.eu/topics/ecosystem-services>

⁹ SPAs have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild

- Special Areas of Conservation¹⁰;
- Natural Heritage Areas¹¹ and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas¹²;
- Nature Reserves¹³;
- Certain entries to the Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas¹⁴;
- RAMSAR sites¹⁵;
- Flora Protection Order¹⁶ sites;

Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - by the DECLG due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the European Union.

¹⁰ Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) - referred to as the Habitats Directive - by the DEHLG due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union.

¹¹ NHAs are designated due to their national conservation value for ecological and/or geological/geomorphological heritage. They cover nationally important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms or geomorphological features, wildlife plant and animal species or a diversity of these natural attributes. NHAs are designated under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. Proposed NHAs were published on a non-statutory basis in 1995, but have not since been statutorily proposed or designated. These sites are of significance for wildlife and habitats.

¹² pNHAs were published on a non-statutory basis in 1995, but have not since been statutorily proposed or designated. These sites are of significance for wildlife and habitats.

¹³ A Nature Reserve is an area of importance to wildlife, which is protected under Ministerial order. There are currently 78 Statutory Nature Reserves. Most are owned by the State but some are owned by organisations or private landowners. **There is one Nature Reserve in County Westmeath: Scragh Bog.**

¹⁴ In response to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive a number of water bodies or parts of water bodies which must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by wildlife have been listed on Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs). RPAs include those for Protected Habitats or Species, Shellfish, Salmonid, Nutrient Sensitive Areas, Recreational Waters and Drinking Water.

¹⁵ The Convention of Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Water Fowl Habitat, was established at Ramsar in 1971 and ratified by Ireland in 1984. The main aim of the Convention is to secure the designation by each contracting state of wetlands in its territory for inclusion in a list of wetlands of international importance for waterfowl. This entails the commitment of each contracting state to a policy of protection and management of the designated wetlands, and of formulating and implementing planning so as to promote the conservation of designated wetlands and, as far as possible, the wise use of wetlands in its territory. Ireland presently has 45 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance, with surface areas of 66,994 hectares. **There are five Ramsar Sites in County Westmeath: Lough Owel, Lough Iron, Lough Derravaragh, Lough Glen and Lough Ennell.**

¹⁶ The current list of plant species protected by Section 21 of the Wildlife Act, 1976 is set out in the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999.

- Certain entries to the Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas¹⁷;
- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)¹⁸;
- Ecological connectivity and networks;
- EPA Ecological Network Classes¹⁹;
- CORINE Landcover²⁰.
- Peatlands, lakes, canals, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, eskers and hedgerows; and
- Other sites of high biodiversity value or ecological importance.

The Zone of Influence of the Plan beyond the County area with respect to impacts upon ecology via surface waters upon ecological resources – including designated ecology – can be estimated to be areas within 15km of the County boundary and all downstream areas of catchments which drain the County.

¹⁷ In response to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive a number of water bodies or parts of water bodies which must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by wildlife have been listed on Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs). RPAs include those for Protected Habitats or Species, Shellfish, Salmonid, Nutrient Sensitive Areas, Recreational Waters and Drinking Water.

¹⁸ TPOs are a planning mechanism whereby individual trees or groups of trees can be identified as important and protected by a TPO.

¹⁹ This is an EPA dataset identifying a national spread of Ecological Network Classes which have been informed by CORINE land cover data. The study developed criteria to classify the relative importance of different areas within an Ecological Network. Five Classes of areas were defined on the basis of naturalness.

²⁰ Land cover is the observed physical cover, as seen from the ground or through remote sensing, including for example natural or planted vegetation, water and human constructions which cover the earth's surface.

4.6.2 European Sites

European Sites in the Plan area occur in the greatest concentrations along the in upland areas. European Sites comprise:

- Special Areas of Conservation²¹ (SACs); and
- Special Protection Areas²² (SPAs).

The SEA uses the same zone of influence cited in the AA; a 15 km buffer around the Plan area (see sites within this zone listed on Table 4.1 and mapped on Figure 4.1). The AA review of all sites within this zone has allowed a determination to be made that in the absence of significant hydrological links the characteristics of the Plan will not impose effects beyond the 15 km buffer.

There are number of SACs designated within and adjacent to the Plan area including: River Shannon Callows SAC²³, Lough Ree SAC²⁴, White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo SAC²⁵, River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC²⁶ and Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs SAC²⁷.

²¹ SACs have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. The Habitats Directive seeks to establish Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the EU. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SACs to protect habitats and species, which, together with the SPAs designated under the 1979 Birds Directive, form Natura 2000. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010. The Regulations have been prepared to address several judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) against Ireland, notably cases C-418/04 and C-183/05, in respect of failure to transpose elements of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive into Irish law.

²² SPAs have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the EU.

²³Sensitive features include: molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils, lowland hay meadows, limestone pavements, alluvial forests and Otter.

²⁴Sensitive features include: natural eutrophic lakes with magnopotamion or hydrocharition - type vegetation, semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates, important orchid sites, active raised bogs, degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration, alkaline fens, limestone pavements, old sessile oak woods, bog woodland and otter.

²⁵Sensitive features include: hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation and white-clawed crayfish.

Table 4.1 European Sites within the Plan area

European Sites		
Designation	Site Code	Site Name
SAC (18 sites)	000216	River Shannon Callows
	000440	Lough Ree
	000679	Garriskil Bog
	000685	Lough Ennell
	000688	Lough Owel
	000692	Scragh Bog
	001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo
	001831	Split Hills and Long Hill Esker
	002120	Lough Bane and Lough Glass
	002121	Lough Lene
	002201	Derragh Bog
	002205	Wooddown Bog
	002299	River Boyne And River Blackwater
	002313	Ballymore Fen
	002336	Carn Park Bog
	002337	Crosswood Bog
	002340	Moneybeg And Clareisland Bogs
	002342	Mount Hevey Bog
SPA (12 sites)	004043	Lough Derravaragh
	004044	Lough Ennell
	004045	Glen Lough
	004046	Lough Iron
	004047	Lough Owel
	004061	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough
	004064	Lough Ree
	004065	Lough Sheelin
	004096	Middle Shannon Callows
	004102	Garriskil Bog
	004232	River Boyne and River Blackwater

There are number of SPAs designated within and adjacent to the Plan area including: Glen Lough SPA²⁸, Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA²⁹, Lough Sheelin SPA³⁰, Garriskil Bog SPA³¹ and Lough Owel SPA³².

²⁶Sensitive features include: alkaline fens, alluvial forests, river lamprey, salmon and otter.

²⁷Sensitive features include: active raised bogs, degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration.

²⁸Sensitive features include: whooper swan.

²⁹Sensitive features include: pochard, tufted duck, wetland and waterbirds.

³⁰Sensitive features include: great crested grebe, pochard, tufted duck, goldeneye, wetland and waterbirds.

³¹Sensitive features include: Greenland white-fronted goose.

Table 4.2 Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas within the Plan area

41 NHAs and pNHAs		
Designation	Site Code	Site Name
NHA (9)	000565	Clonydonn Bog
	000674	Ballynagrenia and Ballinderry Bog
	000677	Cloncrow Bog (New Forest)
	000684	Lough Derravaragh
	000694	Wooddown Bog
	000985	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough
	001725	Nure Bog
	001812	Lough Garr
	002323	Milltownpass Bog
pNHAs (32)	000216	River Shannon Callows
	000440	Lough Ree
	000556	Lough Shesk
	000672	Aghalasty Fen
	000673	Ballynafid Lake and Fen
	000676	Carn Park Bog
	000678	Crosswood Bog
	000679	Garriskil Bog
	000681	Hill of Mael and The Rock of Curry
	000685	Lough Ennell
	000686	Lough Glore
	000687	Lough Iron
	000688	Lough Owel
	000689	Lough Sewdy
	000690	Lough Sheever Fen/Slevin's Lough Complex
	000692	Scragh Bog
	000896	Derrygolan Esker
	000918	Rahugh Ridge (Kiltober Esker)
	000987	Lough Sheelin
	001584	Mount Hevey Bog
	001687	Glen Lough
	001711	Ardan Wood
	001713	Ballynagarbry
	001721	Lough Bane
	001731	Walshestown Fen
	001732	Waterstown Lake
	001775	Murphy's Bridge Esker
	001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo
	001814	Lough Naneagh
	001831	Split Hills and Long Hill Esker
	002103	Royal Canal
	002104	Grand Canal

For more detail on European Sites please refer to the AA document that accompanies the Draft Plan and this SEA Environmental Report.

³²Sensitive features include: shoveler, coot, wetland and waterbirds.

4.6.3 Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated due to their national conservation value for ecological and/or geological/geomorphological heritage. They cover nationally important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms or geomorphological features, wildlife plant and animal species or a diversity of these natural attributes. NHAs are designated under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. Proposed NHAs (pNHAs) were published on a non-statutory basis in 1995, but have not since been statutorily proposed or designated.

There are number of NHAs and pNHAs designated within or adjacent to the area to which the Plan relates including those listed on Table 4.2 and mapped on Figure 4.2.

4.6.4 Land Cover Mapping

CORINE³³ land cover mapping for the Plan area is shown on Figure 4.3. The most dominant land cover types are pastures and peat bogs.

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas likely to contain Annex I habitats, in the area to which the Plan relates, include:

- Peat bogs;
- Natural grassland;
- Water bodies;
- Mixed forests;
- Coniferous forest;
- Broad-leaved forests;
- Intertidal flats;
- Inland marshes;
- Stream courses;

³³ The CORINE (Coordinated Information on the Environment) land cover data series was devised as a means of compiling geo-spatial environmental information in a standardised and comparable manner. CORINE has become a key data source for informing environmental and planning policy on a national and European level. The main land cover type in Ireland is agricultural land including forestry, which accounts for two-thirds of the national landmass. Most of this is permanent grassland pastures. Peatlands and wetlands are the second most widespread land cover type, covering almost one-fifth of the country. While forested areas cover about one-tenth of the country. Despite rapid development in the past two decades, Ireland's landscape is predominantly rural and agricultural.

- Water bodies;
- Transitional woodland and scrub; and
- Land principally occupied by agriculture with areas of natural vegetation.

4.6.5 Register of Protected Areas

In response to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive a number of water bodies or parts of water bodies that must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by people and by wildlife have been listed on Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs).

There are various water bodies within the County that are used for drinking water abstraction in accordance with European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations 2007 (SI No. 278/2007). These water bodies are identified on the RPAs for Drinking Water Ground or Surface Water Bodies (as shown on Figure 4.4). Lakes listed include: Lough Lene, Lough Owel (main) and Lough Kinale. Rivers listed include River Inny, Lough Lene- Adeel Stream, Gaine, Brosna, Castlejordan, Gageborough and Shannon Upper.

The groundwater underlying the Plan area is part of the wider groundwater area relating to drinking water sources (shown on Figure 4.4)

Nutrient Sensitive Areas in the Plan area include lakes and rivers, such as Lough Ree on the River Shannon, Lough Ennell and River Brosna and River Shannon³⁴ (also shown on Figure 4.4).

The number of bathing locations around the Plan area, as shown on Figure 4.4, are also listed on the RPA for bathing waters, including: the Cut (Lough Lene), Portnashangan (Lough Owel) and Lilliput (Lough Ennell).

³⁴ Nutrient sensitive areas are those waterbodies listed in accordance with the Urban Waste Water Treatment (UWWT) Directive 91/271/EEC on Urban Waste Water Treatment and transposing Regulations. The waterbody containing the sensitive area is used to represent the nutrient sensitive area.

4.6.6 Other Sites of High Biodiversity Value

A fen is a wetland system with a permanently high-water level at or just below its surface. Its principal source of nutrients is from surface or groundwater and the substrate is an alkaline to slightly acidic peat soil. There are 88 fens in the County (Figure 4.2), located in a broad band stretching from the north-east to south-west.³⁵

An esker is a long narrow ridge comprising of sand, gravel and boulders, which were deposited by a stream flowing on, within, or beneath a glacier. Eskers cover a significant 91% of land of County Westmeath, comprising of a total of 46 esker systems. The eskers in the County are of high habitat diversity with many supporting the priority type species rich calcareous grassland.³⁶

Peatlands are unique systems comprising of peat soil providing as significant carbon stores and supporting a range of unique species. The total peatlands area covers c. 9% of the County land cover, comprising of 24 intact raised bog sites, 27 cutover raised bog sites and 24 cutaway raised bog sites, including 69 fen sites.³⁷

Hedgerows are a valuable resource in the countryside, benefiting agriculture, wildlife, the environment, tourism, and the general community. The network of hedges across the country provides links between surviving fragments of other wildlife habitats, thereby allowing the movement and dispersal of species through otherwise hostile agricultural landscapes. Westmeath has an abundant network of hedgerows, that are well distributed around the County, with total length of c.10,481km.³⁸

³⁵ *Study to Establish the Extent, Location and Biodiversity Value of Fens in County Westmeath* (2007), by Natura Consultants for WMCC.

³⁶ *Study to establish the extent, location of eskers and associated habitats in Co. Westmeath* (2006), by Mary Tubridy and Associates for WMCC.

³⁷ *Study to establish the location, nature and extent of peatlands in Co. Westmeath*, (2005), by Natura Consultants for WMCC.

³⁸ *County Westmeath Hedgerow Survey Report*, (2004), by WMCC.

4.6.7 Existing Problems

Ireland's Article 17 report on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (DCHG, 2019) identifies various Irish, EU-protected habitats and species to be of unfavourable status and many to be still declining, although it also identifies that a range of positive actions are underway. Categories for pressures and threats on Ireland's habitats and species identified by the report comprise:

- Agriculture;
- Forestry;
- Extraction of resources (minerals, peat, non-renewable energy resources);
- Energy production processes and related infrastructure development;
- Development and operation of transport systems;
- Development, construction and use of residential, commercial, industrial and recreational infrastructure and areas;
- Extraction and cultivation of biological living resources (other than agriculture and forestry);
- Military action, public safety measures, and other human intrusions;
- Alien and problematic species;
- Mixed source pollution;
- Human-induced changes in water regimes;
- Natural processes (excluding catastrophes and processes induced by human activity or climate change);
- Geological events, natural catastrophes;
- Climate change; and
- Unknown pressures, no pressures and pressures from outside the Member State.

The Plan includes measures to contribute towards the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna and associated ecosystem services.

Previous changes in land uses arising from human development have resulted in a loss of biodiversity and flora and fauna however, legislative objectives governing biodiversity and fauna were not identified as being conflicted with.

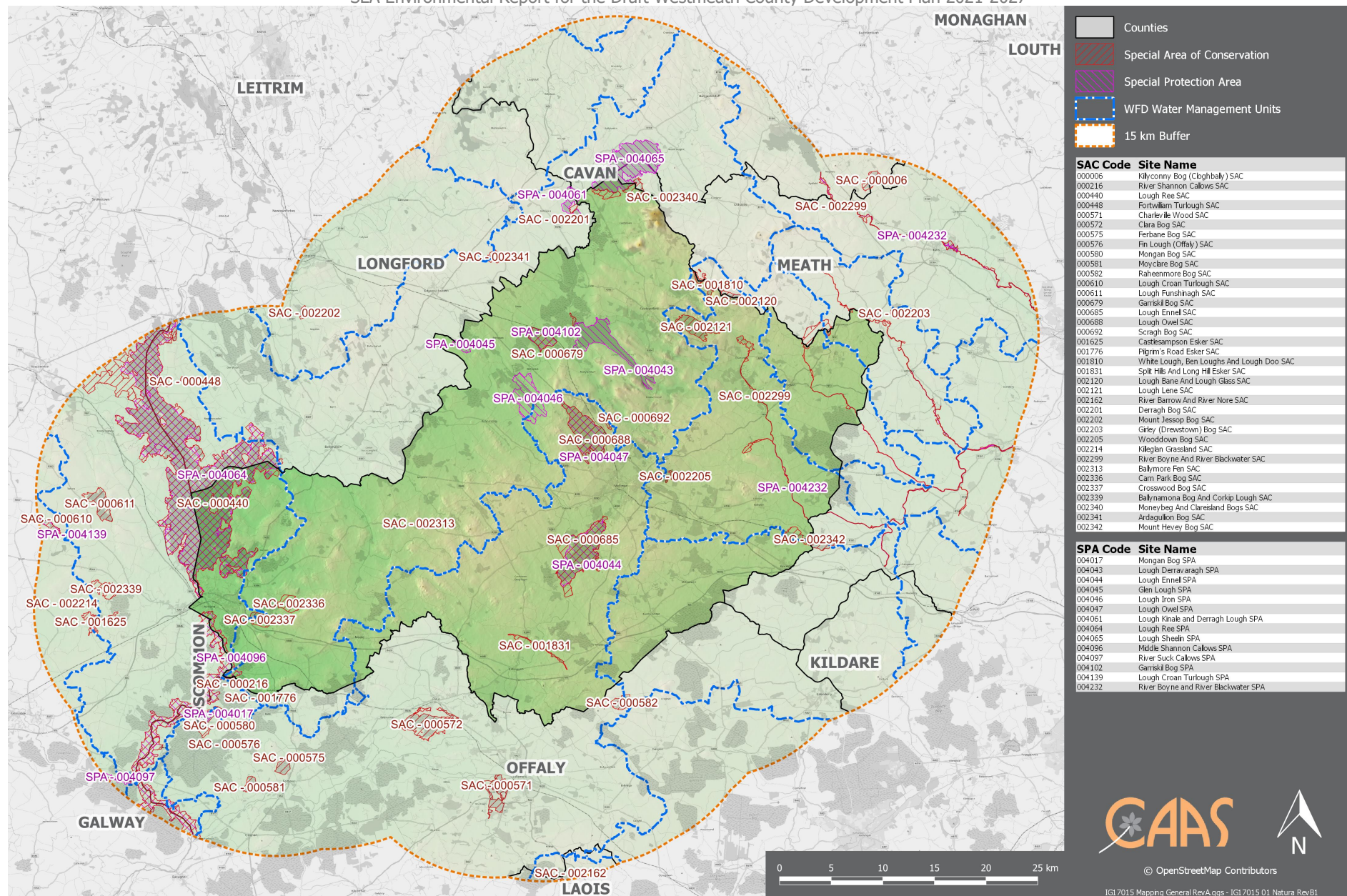


Figure 4.1 European Sites within and adjacent to the Plan area

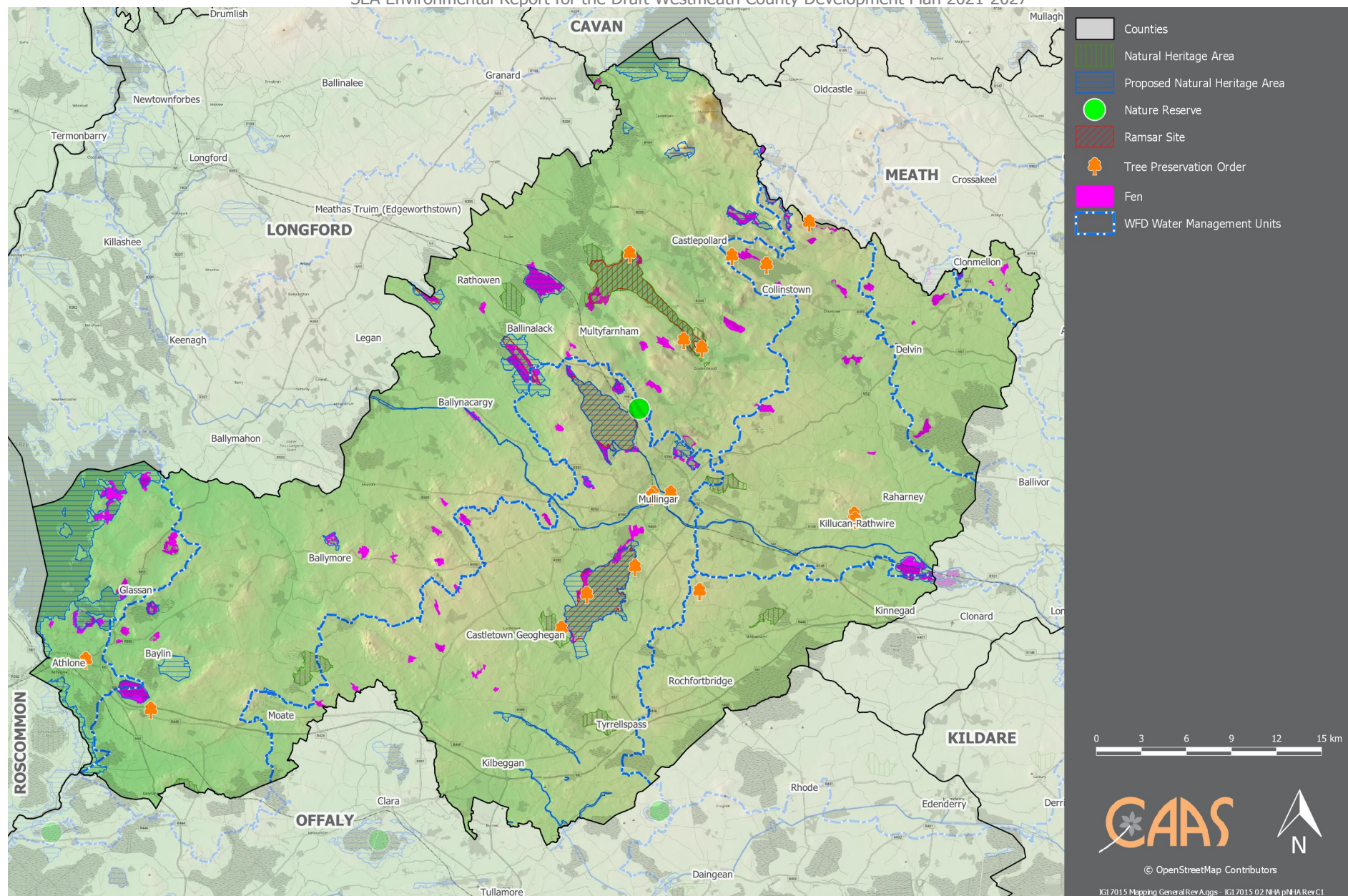


Figure 4.2 Other Ecological Designations within and adjacent to the Plan area

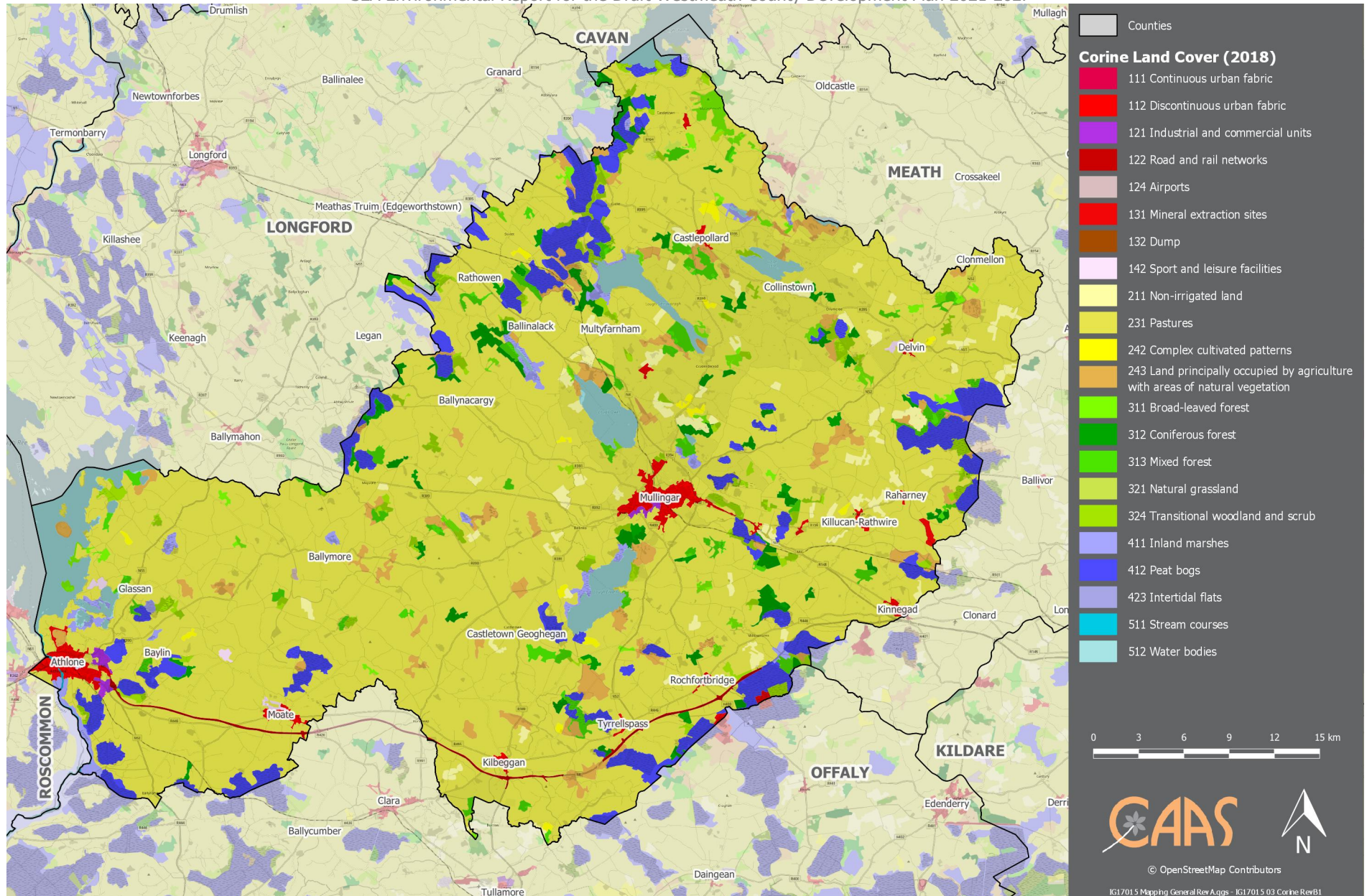


Figure 4.3 CORINE Land Cover 2018

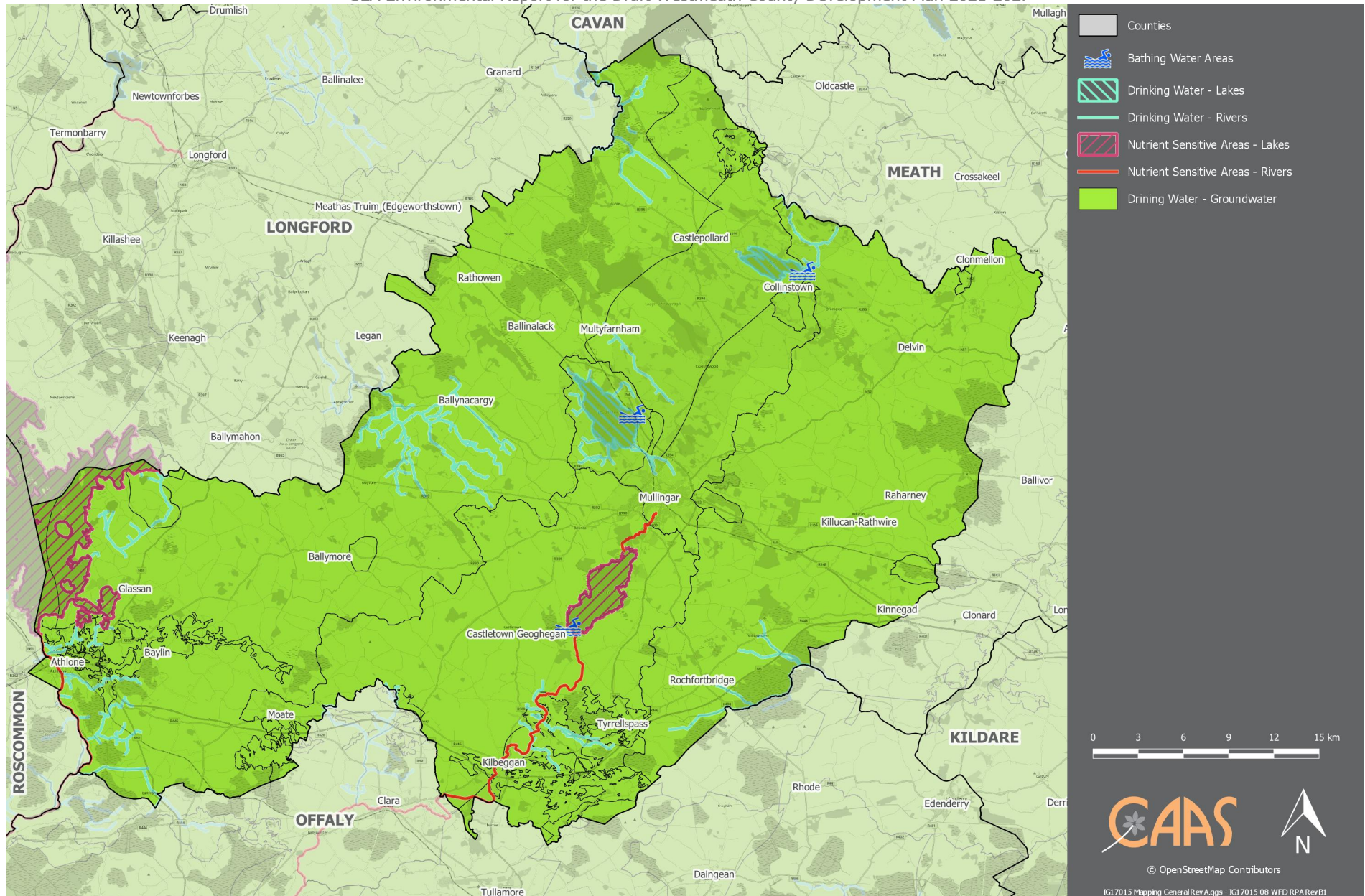


Figure 4.4 WFD Register of Protected Areas

4.7 Population and Human Health

4.7.1 Population

The Census 2016 results show that Westmeath's population has grown by 2,606 persons, or by 3%, since Census 2011, to 88,770 persons (Central Statistics Office, 2017). The provision of additional housing over the Plan period is dictated by the Core Strategy that guides where new development should be allocated in accordance with national and regional strategies and policies, including the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

County Westmeath contains a hierarchy of settlements which includes two gateway towns, the two largest towns (Athlone and Mullingar) and various smaller settlements. It is also considered as being a rural county with a number of international and national environmental designations, most of which are associated with lakeland and peatland areas within the county.

The unprecedented growth in population and development in the last two decades in the County has placed a significant pressure on the environmental and landscape quality of the lakes. Population of the County grew by c. 40% between the years 1996 and 2016, increasing from 63,314 persons in 1996 to 88,770 persons in 2016. This increase in the population was significantly above the State increase of c. 31% and the Leinster increase of c. 39% (Source: CSO data 1996-2016).

The new population provided for in the Draft Plan will interact with various environmental components. Potential interactions include:

- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and landscapes;
- Increase in demand for waste water treatment at the municipal level;
- Increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction from Lough Owel, Lough Lene and Lough Bane;
- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality.

4.7.2 Human Health

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

4.7.3 Existing Problems

There is historic and predictive evidence of flooding in various locations across the County (see information on Strategic Flood Risk Assessment at Section 4.9.8).

The greatest health risk from radiation in Ireland is caused by radon. The presence of radon gas, a naturally occurring radioactive gas that originates from the decay of uranium in rocks and soils, occurs across the country. It accounts for more than half of the total radiation dose received by the Irish population. As a known carcinogen, in the same category as tobacco smoke and asbestos it is a cause of lung cancer. Exposure to radon for long periods or at high concentrations can lead to lung cancer.

The number of homes within the area to which the Plan relates with radon levels above the reference level is within the normal range experienced in other locations across the country³⁹.

Also refer to the other sections of this report referred to above with respect interactions with other environmental components.

Information on the status of groundwaters and surface waters is provided under Section 4.9 while compliance issues in relation to water services are detailed under Section 4.11.2.

³⁹ Mapping available at <http://www.epa.ie/radiation/radonmap>

4.8 Soil

Soil is the top layer of the earth's crust. It is formed by mineral particles, organic matter, water, air and living organisms. Soil can be considered as a non-renewable natural resource because it develops over very long timescales. It is an extremely complex, variable and living medium and performs many vital functions including: food and other biomass production, storage, filtration and transformation of many substances including water, carbon, and nitrogen. Soil has a role as a habitat and gene pool, serves as a platform for human activities, landscape and heritage and acts as a provider of raw materials. Such functions of soil are worthy of protection because of their socio-economic as well as environmental importance. Soils in any area are the result of the interaction of various factors, such as parent material, climate, vegetation and human action.

To date, there is no legislation which is specific to the protection of soil resources. Although a proposal for a Soil Framework Directive was withdrawn in 2014, the importance of sustainable soil management was recognised in the Seventh Environment Action Programme, where sustainable land management is to be achieved by 2020.

Luvisols⁴⁰ and peat soils are the two most dominant soil types across the Plan area (see Figure 4.5). Other soil types identified include:

- Alluvial soils⁴¹ (in the flood plains of the rivers and streams);
- Groundwater and Surface Water Gleys⁴² (in depressions in the upper reaches of river valleys in both uplands and lowlands); and
- Brown earths⁴³ (in the south, south-west and north of the Plan area).

Peatlands are a very characteristic habitat in County Westmeath, with groundwater and rain fed peat soils being a prominent and typical feature in the landscape. They presently

account for about 9% of the total area of the County⁴⁴ and they are significant sinks of carbon.

Esker systems within the county provide for high habitat diversity⁴⁵ and their thin, alkaline soils support rare plants species⁴⁶. The bedrock underlying County Westmeath is composed almost entirely of carboniferous limestone.

Rain-fed (ombrotrophic) and groundwater-fed (minerotrophic) peat soils occurring in the Plan area are subject to ecological designations (see Section 4.6).

4.8.1 County Geological Sites

Geological Survey Ireland coordinate the Irish Geological Heritage Programme, whereby an objective has been set to identify and select sites of geological interest within each county across the country. The audit of County Geological Sites in County Westmeath was completed in 2019. There are 28 County Geological Sites across the Plan area.⁴⁷

4.8.2 Potentially contaminated lands and landfill sites

In the absence of mitigation, contaminated materials have the potential to adversely impact upon human health, water quality and habitats and species.

As is the case with other urban and semi-urban areas across the country, there is potential for contamination at sites within County Westmeath, especially where land uses occurred in the past in the absence of environmental protection legislation.

4.8.3 Existing Problems

Legislative objectives governing soil were not identified as being conflicted with.

⁴⁰ Luvisol soils are generally fertile, widely used for agriculture and associated with significant accumulation of clay.

⁴¹ These are associated with alluvial (clay, silt or sand) river deposits.

⁴² Surface Water Gleys are wetland soils with slowly permeable horizons resulting in seasonal waterlogging.

⁴³ Brown earths are well drained mineral soils, associated with high levels of natural fertility.

⁴⁴ *Westmeath Peatlands Study* (November 2005)

⁴⁵ *Esker Study of the County of Westmeath* (2005) has identified the nature, extent and condition of eskers and their conservation value.

⁴⁶ *Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020*

⁴⁷ Individual audited site reports for County Westmeath is available from the GSI (www.gsi.ie).

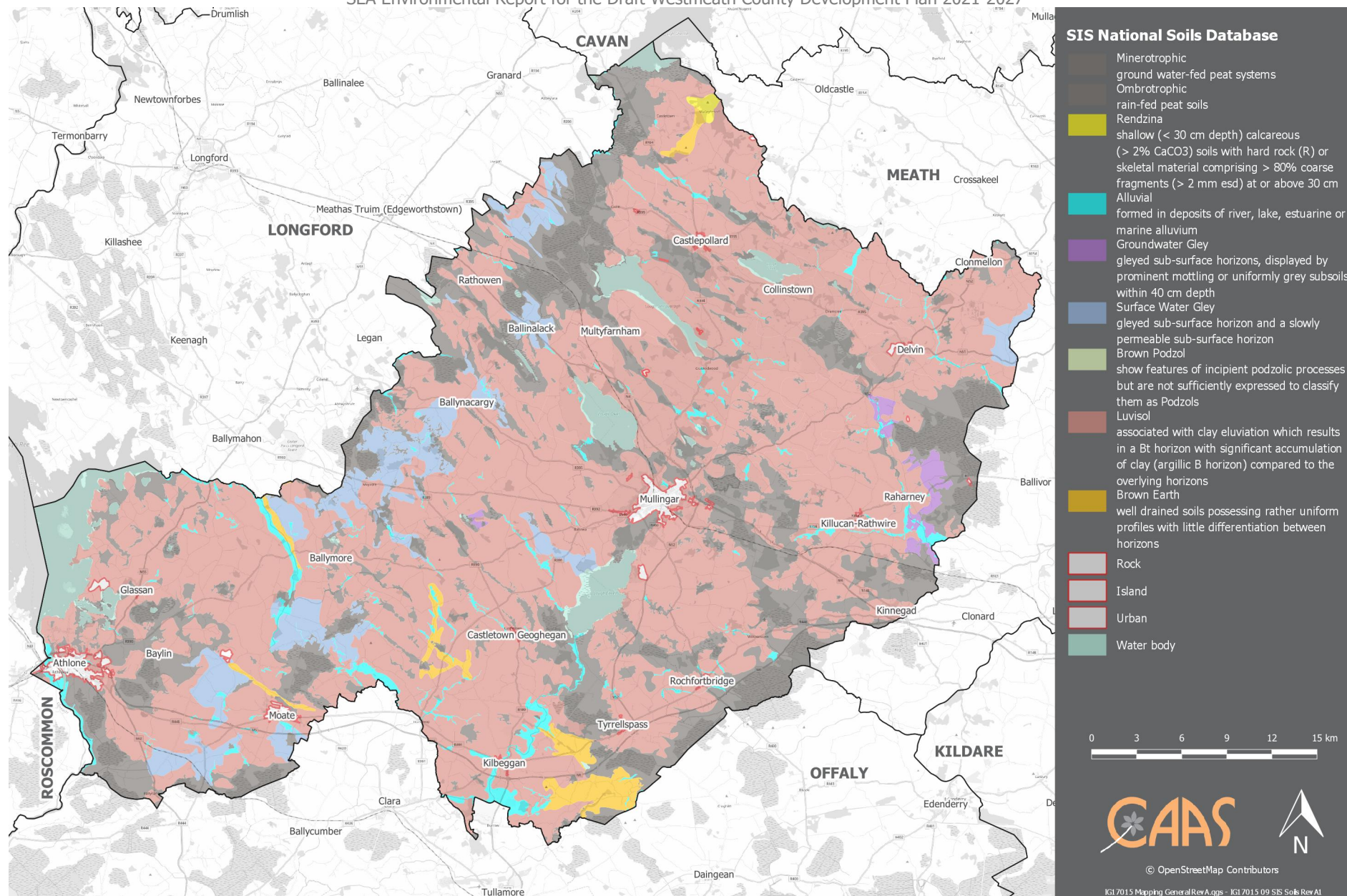


Figure 4.5 Soils

4.9 Water

4.9.1 The Water Framework Directive

Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD). The WFD requires that all Member States implement the necessary measures to prevent deterioration of the status of all waters - surface, ground, estuarine and coastal - and protect, enhance and restore all waters with the aim of achieving good status. All public bodies are required to coordinate their policies and operations so as to maintain the good status of water bodies which are currently unpolluted and improve polluted water bodies to good status.

Article 4 of the WFD sets out various exemptions for deterioration in status caused as a result of certain physical modifications to water bodies. This is provided: all practicable mitigation measures are taken; there are reasons of overriding public interest or the benefits to human health, safety or sustainable development outweigh the benefits in achieving the WFD objective; there are no better alternatives; and the reasons for the physical modification are explained in the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP).

The EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Documents No. 20 and 36 provide guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the WFD.

For the purpose of assessment, reporting and management, water is divided into groundwater, rivers, lakes, estuarine waters and coastal waters that are in turn divided into specific, clearly defined water bodies.

4.9.2 Zone of Influence

The Zone of Influence of the Plan beyond the Plan area, with respect to impacts upon waters can be estimated to be all bodies of groundwater and all surface waters downstream areas of catchments which drain Plan area.

4.9.3 Surface Water Drainage

A catchment is an area of land contributing to a waterbody, with all the water ultimately running off to a single outlet. The WFD requires water quality management to be based on natural river catchments i.e. by reference to the natural, environmental unit rather than by reference to administrative or legal boundaries, which often fragment river catchments.

The surface water from the area to which the Plan relates drains into a number of catchments including: Boyne, Lower Shannon, Upper Shannon and Barrow.

County Westmeath has a number of large lakes (including Lough Ree), most of which are part of the River Shannon catchment which also includes the Rivers Inny and Brosna. Lough Lene, a limestone lake, is situated in the Upper Boyne catchment in the County.

4.9.4 Surface Water Status

The WFD defines 'overall surface water status' as the general expression of the status of a body of surface water, determined by the poorer of its ecological status and its chemical status. Thus, in order to achieve 'good surface water status' both the ecological status and the chemical status of a surface water body need to be at least 'good'.

Ecological status is an expression of the structure and functioning of aquatic ecosystems associated with surface waters. Such waters are classified as of 'good ecological status' when they meet Directive requirements.

Chemical Status is a pass/fail assignment with a failure defined by a face-value exceedance of an Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) for one or more Priority Action Substances (PAS) listed in Annex X of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The EQS values for individual PAS substances are set at European level. Good surface water chemical status means that concentrations of pollutants in the water body do not exceed the environmental limit values specified in the Directive.

The WFD surface water status (2013-2018) of rivers, lakes, coastal and transitional waters,

within and surrounding the area to which the Plan relates is shown on Figure 4.6.

Lakes, rivers and their tributaries in the Plan area range in status from *high* (Lough Killinure) to *good* (including Rivers Inny, Boor, Gageborough and Mullenmeehan Stream; and Loughs Ree, Ennell, Owel, Derravaragh, Sheelin, Bane Noggin Hill and Annagh White) to *moderate* (including Rivers Stonyford, Breensford, Riverstown, Rath and Lough Lene-Adeel Stream; and Loughs Lene and Kinale) and *poor* (including Rivers, Shannon Upper, Gaine, Glore, Dungolman and Rochforbridge Stream). Status of the River Brosna varies from *good* (in the downstream sections of the river) to *moderate* and *poor* (in the upstream sections of the river). In addition, there are a number of *unassigned*⁴⁸ rivers and lakes across the Plan area.

4.9.5 Ground Water

Groundwater is stored in the void spaces in underground layers of rock, or aquifers. These aquifers are permeable, allowing both the infiltration of water from the soils above them and the yielding of water to surface and coastal waters. Groundwater is the part of the subsurface water that is in the saturated zone - the zone below the water table, the uppermost level of saturation in an aquifer at which the pressure is atmospheric, in which all pores and fissures are full of water.

For groundwater bodies, the approach to classification is different from that for surface water. For each body of groundwater, both the chemical status and the quantitative must be determined. Both have to be classed as either *good* or *poor*. The WFD sets out a series of criteria that must be met for a body to be classed as good chemical and quantitative status.

The WFD status (2013-2018) of most of groundwater underlying the Plan area is identified as being of *good status*, meeting the objectives of the WFD (as shown on Figure 4.7). There is an area in the north-east of the County, underlying an industrial facility, identified as being of *poor* groundwater status.

⁴⁸ There is a data gap relating to WFD surface water status data. Overall status is currently not assigned and the term "unassigned status" applies in respect of these waterbodies.

4.9.6 Aquifer Vulnerability and Productivity

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) rates groundwaters according to both their productivity and vulnerability to pollution.

Aquifer vulnerability refers to the ease with which pollutants of various kinds can enter into groundwater. The aquifers underlying most the area to which the Plan relates are generally classified as being of *high and moderate vulnerability* and *extreme vulnerability* and *rock at or near surface or Karst* in the north of the county stretching south-west (shown on Figure 4.8).

The GSI also rates aquifers based on the hydrogeological characteristics and on the value of the groundwater resource. This is referred to as aquifer productivity. Much of County Westmeath is underlain by Locally Important Aquifer, with moderately productive bedrock in local zones. A band of Karstified Locally Important Aquifer is found in the north of the Plan area stretching south-west and Regionally Important Aquifer of diffuse karstification in the north of the Plan area.

4.9.7 WFD Registers of Protected Areas

The WFD requires that Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs) are compiled for a number of water bodies or part of water bodies which must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by people and by wildlife.

The WFD requires that these RPAs contain: areas from which waters are taken for public or private water supply schemes; designated shellfish production areas; bathing waters; areas which are affected by high levels of substances most commonly found in fertilizers, animal and human wastes - these areas are considered nutrient sensitive; areas designated for the protection of habitats or species e.g. Salmonid areas; Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

Entries to the RPAs within and adjacent to the area to which the Plan relates include:

- All groundwater and surface waters sustaining areas designated as SACs and SPAs (as mapped on Figure 4.1);

- The number of bathing locations are listed on the RPA for bathing waters (as shown on Figure 4.4);
- A number of rivers and lakes are designated as Nutrient Sensitive Areas (as shown on Figure 4.4)
- Groundwater across the area to which the Plan relates is included on the RPA for Groundwater Drinking Water (see Figure 4.4); and
- A number of lakes are included on the RPA for Drinking Water Rivers and Drinking Water Lakes (see Figure 4.4).

4.9.8 Flooding

Certain areas across the area to which the Plan relates are at risk from groundwater, pluvial and fluvial flooding.

Historical flooding is documented at various locations across the Plan area, including the settlements of Mullingar and Athlone.

Predictive flood risk mapping is available from the Office of Public Works (OPW) for rivers across the Plan area.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), as required by 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DEHLG and OPW, 2009), is being undertaken alongside the preparation of the SEA and the preparation of the Plan. This assessment will consider available and emerging information on flood risk indicators including the OPW's Flood Hazard and Risk Mapping.

4.9.9 Existing Problems

Subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD, based on available water data, certain surface and groundwater bodies will need improvement in order to comply with the objectives of the WFD.

The Draft Plan includes provisions that will contribute towards improvements in the status of waters.

There is historic and predictive evidence of elevated levels of flood risk from fluvial and coastal sources at various locations across the Plan area.

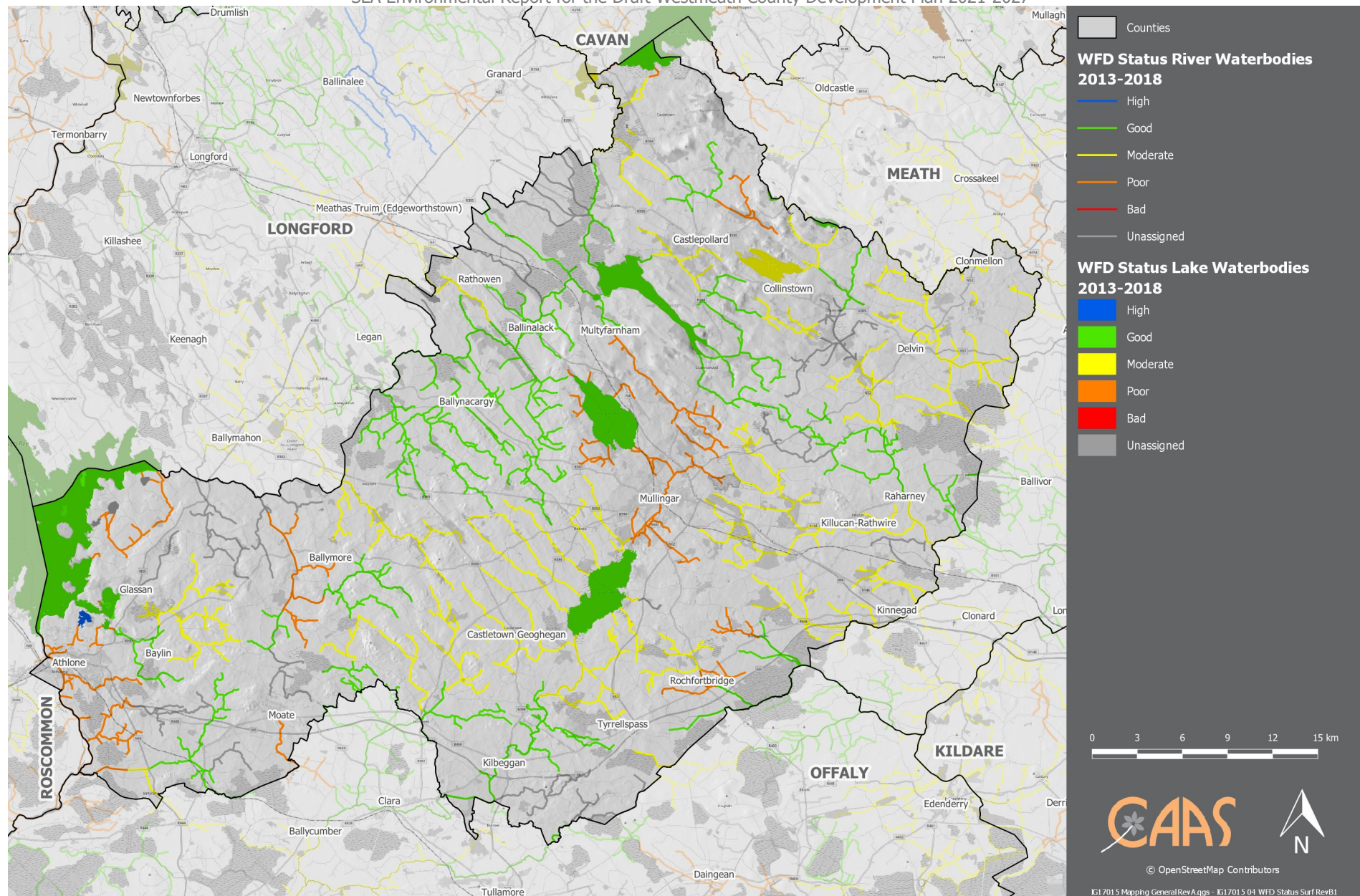


Figure 4.6 WFD Surface Water Status (2013-2018)

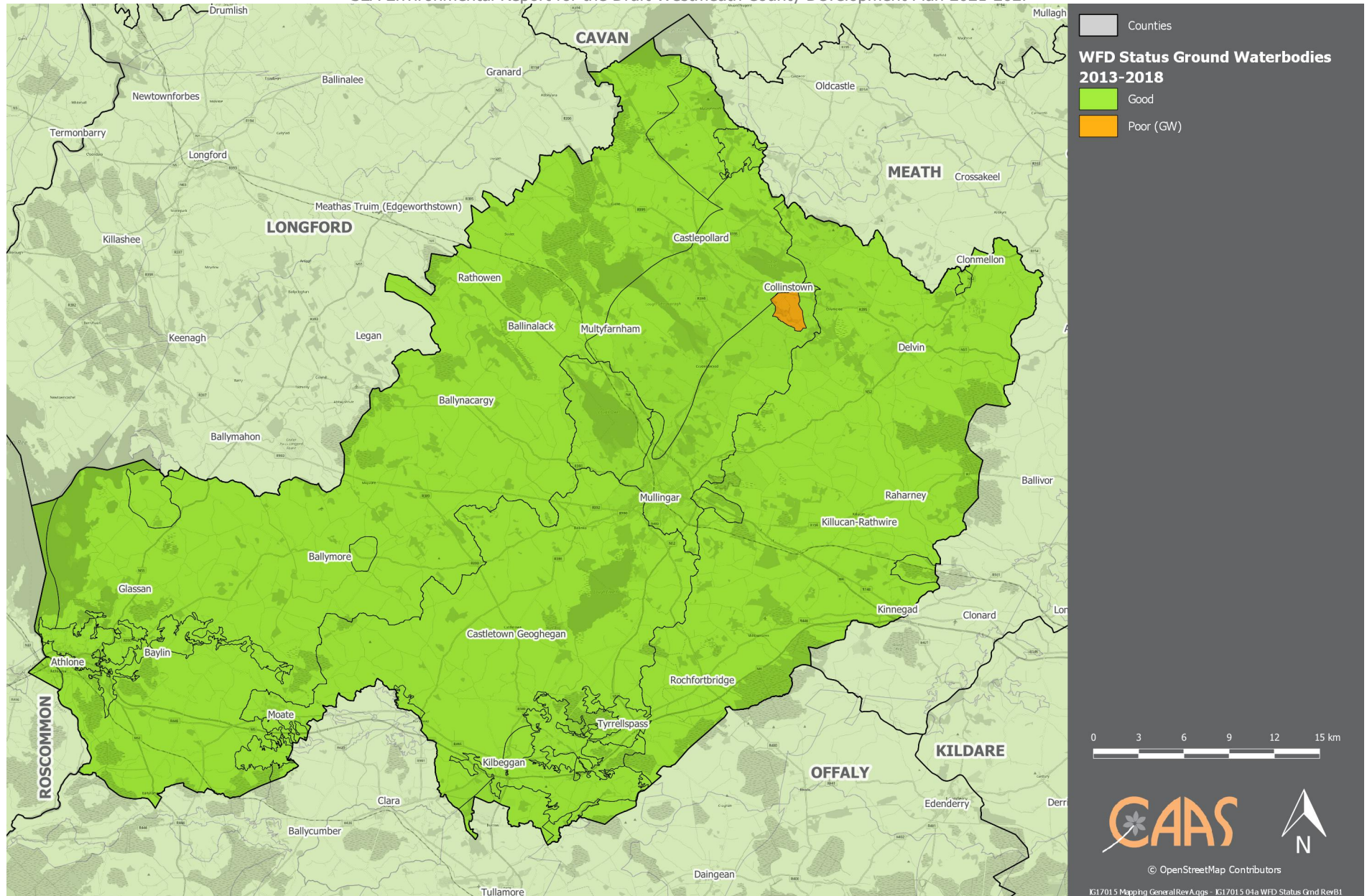


Figure 4.7 WFD Groundwater Status (2013-2018)

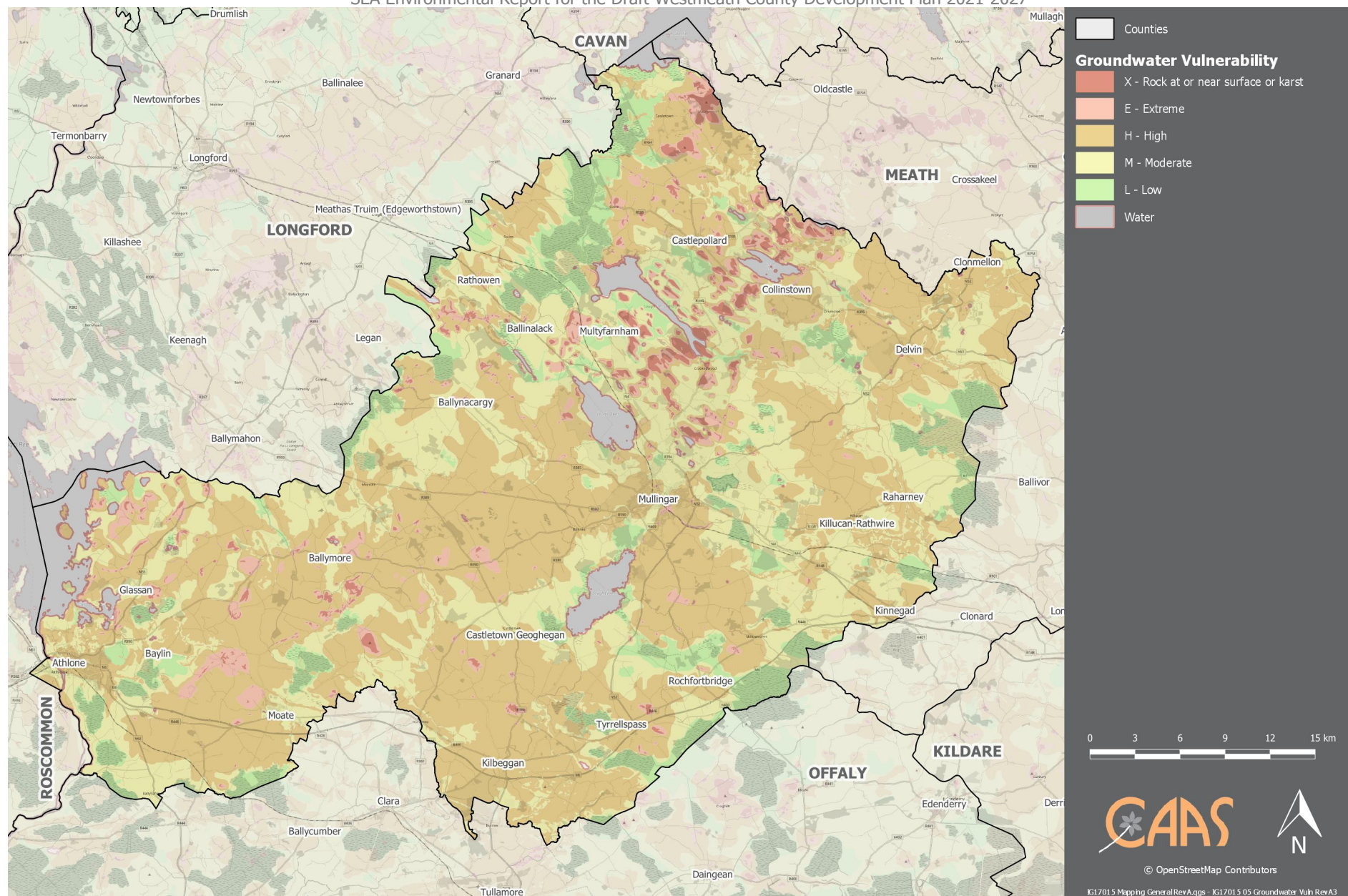


Figure 4.8 Groundwater Vulnerability

4.10 Air and Climatic Factors

4.10.1 Introduction

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

Ireland's Provisional Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990-2017 (EPA, 2018) details provisional estimates of greenhouse gas emissions for the period 1990-2017. For 2017, total national greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to be 60.75 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO₂eq). This is 0.9% lower (0.53 Mt CO₂eq) than emissions in 2016.

The EPA's 2019 publication *Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections 2018-2040* provides an assessment of Ireland's progress towards achieving its emission reduction targets set down under the EU Effort Sharing Decision (Decision No 406/2009/EC) for the years 2013-2020 and a longer-term assessment based on current projections. Ireland's 2020 target is to achieve a 20% reduction of non-Emission Trading Scheme (non-ETS) sector emissions (i.e. agriculture, transport, the built environment, waste and non-energy intensive industry) on 2005 levels with annual limits set for each year over the period 2013-2020.

The report on *Ireland's Final Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990-2017* (EPA, 2019) identifies that:

- For 2017, the total national GHG emissions are estimated to be 60.74 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO₂eq), 0.9% lower than 2016.
- In the last 3 years, national total emissions have increased by 6.4%. In

the same period, emissions in the ETS⁴⁹ sector have increased by 5.9%.

- Agriculture emissions increased by 2.9% in 2017 (driven by higher dairy cow numbers and increases in milk production)
- GHG emissions from the Transport sector decreased by 2.4% in 2017. This is the first year of decreased emissions after four successive years of increases in transport emissions.
- Agriculture and Transport accounted for 73.5% of total ESD emissions in 2017.
- Emissions in the Energy Industries sector show a decrease of 6.9% which is attributable to a 5.9% decrease in fossil fuel consumption and an increase of 21.1% and 1.6% in electricity generated from wind and hydro, respectively, in 2017. Renewables now account for 30.1% of electricity generated in 2017, an increase of 3.3% from 2016 figures. Ireland continued to be a net exporter of electricity in 2017. However, exported electricity saw a 4.7% reduction in 2017 to previous 2016 figures.
- Emissions from the Manufacturing Combustion⁵⁰ sector increased by 3.1% in 2017.
- The Industrial Processes sector emissions increased by 4.1%, mainly from increased cement production. Cement process emissions increased by 2.6% in 2017.
- GHG emissions from the Residential sector decreased by 5.0%. This can be attributed to a milder winter.
- Emissions from the Waste sector decreased by 2.5% in 2017.

The EPA 2019 publication *Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections 2018-2040* provides an assessment of Ireland's total projected greenhouse gas emissions out to 2040 which includes an assessment of progress towards achieving its emission

⁴⁹ The EU emissions trading system (EU ETS) was launched in 2005 as the world's first international company-level 'cap-and trade' system for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases cost-effectively. The cap makes sure that CO₂ becomes a product and, thus, CO₂ is valued at a price, which is determined by the supply and demand at the (trading) market.

⁵⁰ Manufacturing Combustion; includes combustion of fuels in Industry and Construction, both in ETS and non-ETS

reduction targets out to 2020 and 2030 set under the EU Effort Sharing Decision (Decision No 406/2009/EU) and Effort Sharing Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2018/842). Ireland's 2020 target is to achieve a 20% reduction of non-Emission Trading Scheme (non-ETS) sector emissions (i.e. agriculture, transport, the built environment, waste and non-energy intensive industry) on 2005 levels with annual limits set for each year over the period 2013-2020. Ireland's 2030 target under the Effort Sharing Regulation is a 30% reduction of emissions compared to 2005 levels by 2030. There will be binding annual limits over the 2021-2030 period to meet that target. Key Insights identified as part of the report's package of documents are that:

- There is a long-term projected decrease in greenhouse gas emissions as a result of inclusion of new climate mitigation policies and measures that formed part of the 2018-2027 National Development Plan, which was published in 2018. This is evident in the With Additional Measures scenario which assumes full implementation of the programmes, policies and measures included in the National Development Plan.
- Fossil fuels such as coal, peat and gas continue to be key contributors to emissions from the power generation sector. However, a significant reduction in emissions over the longer term is projected as a result of the expansion of renewables (e.g. wind), assumed to reach 41-54% by 2030, with a move away from coal and peat.
- A growth in emissions from the transport sector continues to be projected which is largely attributed to fuel consumption from diesel cars and diesel freight. A decrease in emissions over the longer term, most notably in the With Additional Measures scenario, is largely attributed to assumed accelerated deployment of 500,000 electric vehicles and the impact of greater biofuel uptake.
- Agriculture emissions are projected to continue to grow steadily over the period which is mainly a result of an increase in animal numbers particularly for the dairy herd.
- The implementation of additional energy efficiency measures included in the National Development Plan will see a significant reduction in emissions in

the residential, commercial/public services and manufacturing sectors over the projected period.

4.10.2 Climate Mitigation

The National Mitigation Plan (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, 2017), represents an initial step to set Ireland on a pathway to achieve the level of decarbonisation required. It is a whole-of-Government Plan, reflecting in particular the central roles of the key Ministers responsible for the sectors covered by the Plan – Electricity Generation, the Built Environment, Transport and Agriculture, as well as drawing on the perspectives and responsibilities of a range of other Government Departments.

The National Adaptation Framework (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, 2018), 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. The National Adaptation Framework outlines a whole of government and society approach to climate adaptation. Under the Framework, a number of Government Departments will be required to prepare sectoral adaptation plans in relation to a priority area that they are responsible for.

The National Climate Action Plan 2019 is an all of Government plan to tackle climate change and bring about a step change in Ireland's climate ambition over the coming years. The plan sets out an ambitious course of action over the coming years to address the diverse and wide-ranging impacts climate disruption is having on Ireland's environment, society, economic and natural resources. The Climate Action Plan sets out clear 2030 targets for each sector with the ultimate objective of achieving a transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient, and environmentally sustainable society and economy by 2050.

The use of alternative fuels, including electricity, forms a significant part of government policy to reduce emissions, including from transport. Greater use of alternative fuels, including renewable energy, has the potential to further contribute towards energy security.

The 2019 emission projections do not consider the impact of new policies and measures that

will be included in the forthcoming Government Climate Plan. It is anticipated that emission projections prepared later in 2019 to inform the preparation of Ireland's final National Energy and Climate Plan (due by 31st December 2019) will include the additional impact of the Government Climate Plan.

The Climate Change Advisory Council's Annual Review 2019 identifies that the most recent projections demonstrate that, under different assumptions, Ireland will not meet its emissions reduction targets, even with the additional policies and measures included in the National Development Plan. The projections also show that progress on reducing emissions is sensitive to the future path of fuel prices. A significant and sustained rate of emissions reduction of approximately - 2.5% per year is required to meet our objectives for 2050. However, it must be noted that additional measures within the recent Climate Action Plan are not included in the analysis to date.

4.10.3 Ambient Air Quality

In order to protect human health, vegetation and ecosystems, EU Directives set down air quality standards in Ireland and the other Member States for a wide variety of pollutants. These pollutants are generated through fuel combustion, in space heating, traffic, electricity generation and industry and, in sufficient amounts, could affect the well-being of the areas inhabitants. The EU Directives include details regarding how ambient air quality should be monitored, assessed and managed.

The principles to this European approach are set out in the Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC) (which replaces the earlier Air Quality Framework Directive 1996 and the first, second and third *Daughter Directives*; the fourth *Daughter Directive* will be included in CAFE at a later stage).

In order to comply with the directives mentioned above, the EPA measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants. For the purposes of monitoring in Ireland, four zones are defined in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2002 (SI No. 271 of 2002).

The EPA's (2019) *Air Quality in Ireland 2018* identifies that:

- Levels at monitoring sites in Ireland were below the EU legislative limit values in 2018;
- Ireland was above World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guideline value levels at a number of monitoring sites for fine particulate matter, ozone and nitrogen dioxide;
- Ireland was above the European Environment Agency reference level for PAH, a toxic chemical, at three monitoring sites.

Problem pollutants identified by the EPA include particulate matter from burning of solid fuel and nitrogen dioxide from transport emissions in urban areas. Indications that Ireland will exceed EU limit values for nitrogen dioxide in the near future.

With regards to solutions, the report identifies that:

- To tackle the problem of particulate matter, clean ways of heating homes and improve energy efficiency of homes can be progressed; and
- To reduce the impact of nitrogen dioxide, transport options in the Government's Climate Action Plan can be implemented and transport choices can be considered by individuals

In order to apply with European Directives relating to air quality, the EPA manages the National Ambient Air Quality Network and measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants at locations across the country. The current⁵¹ air quality in the Leinster Air Quality Region is identified by the EPA as being *good*.

4.10.4 Existing Problems

Legislative objectives governing air and climatic factors in County Westmeath were not identified as being conflicted with.

⁵¹ 12/12/2019 (<http://www.epa.ie/air/quality/>)

4.11 Material Assets

Other material assets, in addition to those detailed below, covered by the SEA include archaeological and architectural heritage (see Section 4.12) natural resources of economic value, such as water and air (see Sections 4.9 and 4.10).

4.11.1 Public Assets and Infrastructure

Public assets and infrastructure that have the potential to be impacted upon by the Plan, if unmitigated, include; settlements; resources such as public open spaces, parks and recreational areas; public buildings and services; transport and utility infrastructure (electricity, gas, telecommunications, water supply, waste water infrastructure etc.); forestry; and natural resources that are covered under other topics such as water and soil.

4.11.2 Water Services

4.11.2.1 Waste Water

The EPA's 2019 report '*Urban Waste Water Treatment in 2018*' identified that:

- Waste water treatment at 21 large urban areas did not meet European standards;
- Raw sewage is released into the environment from 36 urban areas;
- Waste water from 57 areas is the sole threat to waters at risk of pollution;
- Waste water contributed to poor quality bathing waters at three beaches in 2018;
- Discharges from 13 areas must improve to protect freshwater pearl mussels;
- Disinfection systems must be installed at two villages to safeguard shellfish; and
- Eight waste water collection systems have been found non-compliant with European Union requirements.

Based on the EPA's assessment of monitoring information provided by Irish Water and the enforcement activities carried out by the EPA, this report identifies urban areas with the most important environmental issues with respect to waste water infrastructure that must be addressed.

There are five urban areas in County Westmeath, listed currently as Priority Areas where improvements are required to resolve

urgent environmental issues with respect to waste water treatment (EPA, 2019):

- Athlone (inadequate collection systems) - Westmeath County Council are seeking up to date information on the Athlone Main Drainage Scheme;
- Ballymore (waste water discharges are sole significant pressure on the upstream section of the River Dungolman) - Westmeath County Council have identified that a new storm tank to prevent these discharges was installed during 2019 and completed in June 2019;
- Kinnegad (not meeting the secondary treatment requirements - treatment equipment broke down occasionally or did not perform appropriately) - Westmeath County Council have identified that the equipment failures referred to have been remedied and there is adequate additional capacity within the plant and appropriate treatment process to meet the treatment requirements. In addition, a new storm tank was recently installed and commissioned to deal with storm overflow;
- Multyfarnham (waste water discharges causing sole significant pressure on the upstream section of the River Gaie) - Westmeath County Council have identified that the treatment processes within the plant are adequate to provide appropriate treatment and there is adequate spare capacity within the plant; and
- Tyrrellspass (waste water discharges causing sole significant pressure on the River Brosna) - Westmeath County Council have identified that the air diffusion system has been upgraded and additional mixers have been added to the aeration basin to address the previous treatment issues.

Irish Water, working in partnership with Westmeath County Council, is making investments to undertake essential upgrade works to wastewater treatment plants in towns and villages across the County. Capacity and performance improvements will help to support new development in these areas.

The upgrading of infrastructure will contribute towards compliance with the Water Framework Directive, EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and Drinking Water Regulations and will help to protect human

health and maintain the quality of surface and ground waters.

4.11.2.2 Waste Water Infrastructure

Westmeath County Council operates 23 waste water treatment plants in the County, with the foul sewer network collecting effluent collecting effluent from c. 14,800 premises. These vary in size from Athlone Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) which has a capacity of 36,000 population equivalent (p.e.)⁵² to plants such as Ballynacarrigy WWTP which has a capacity of 600 p.e.

Table 4.3 shows currently available information on waste water treatment plant capacity, loads and headroom provided by Irish Water in 2019. Headroom is identified as being available in all but one of the settlements, Ballymore.

Table 4.4 provides information on waste water treatment plant performance sourced from the EPA's 2018 Annual Environmental Reports (published in February 2019) on waste water compliance for four licenced agglomerations⁵³ that are on EPA's 'Priority Areas List'. Three of the four settlements for which there is information failed on at least one parameter tested.

In unserviced areas and outside of the main towns and villages, the main method of sewage treatment is by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary systems. There are c. 12,000 domestic onsite waste water treatment systems in Westmeath of varying age and condition.⁵⁴

Since January 2014, Irish Water is the State body responsible for the delivery, integration and implementation of strategic water and waste water projects and infrastructural improvements. Westmeath County Council no longer has a direct role in this area, however the Council works with Irish Water to help to ensure that the land use plans and water services investment plans align.

4.11.2.3 Water Supply

Over 60% of the public drinking water supply in Westmeath is sourced from Lough Owel and Lough Lene, with many private homes in the County relying on individual wells for drinking water supply.⁵⁵

Under Section 58 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992, the EPA is required to collect and verify monitoring results for all water supplies in Ireland covered by the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2000. The EPA publishes their results in annual reports that are supported by Remedial Action Lists (RALs). The RAL identifies water supplies that are not in compliance with the Regulations mentioned above.

The Mullingar Regional Public Supply Scheme is listed on the most recent EPA Remedial Action List (Q3 of 2019) due to inadequate treatment for cryptosporidium, and treatment and management issues. This Water Supply Scheme has a supply volume of 18,315 m³/day, serving a population of 48,952 people. The supply feeds homes and businesses in Mullingar, Kinnegad, Moate, Rochfortbridge, Kilbeggan, Tyrrellspass and surrounding areas. Lough Owel, a spring-fed lake, is the raw water source for the Mullingar Regional Water Supply Scheme.⁵⁶ Westmeath County Council have identified that the Mullingar Regional Public Water Supply Scheme was entered onto the RAL due to a process issue in relation to the dosing of chlorine at the treatment plant, which is operated on behalf of Irish Water by Murphy Process. It is understood by the Council that this matter has been resolved and an EPA audit on foot of this remedial action is imminent.

In 2018, under a Service Level Agreement with Irish Water, Westmeath County Council produced an average of 33,393m³ (7.3 million gallons) per day of drinking water from three water supply sources (Lough Owel, Lough Lene and the River Shannon) to serve a population of approximately 75,400 in the

⁵² Population equivalent is defined in the Regulations as 'a measurement of organic biodegradable load and a population equivalent of 1 (1 p.e.) means the organic biodegradable load having a five-day biochemical oxygen demand (BOD5) of 60g of oxygen per day'.

⁵³ Athlone, Tyrrellspass, Collinstown and Multyfarnham Village and Environs.

⁵⁴ Westmeath CDP 2021-2027

⁵⁵ Draft Westmeath CDP 2021-2027

⁵⁶ In 2019 rainfall levels were below average, impacting on water levels in Lough Owel. Coming after the drought of last year this has had a significant impact on the amount of water Irish Water has been able to abstract from the Lough to feed the water supply (<https://www.water.ie>). Irish Water working in partnership with Waterways Ireland and Westmeath County Council continue to manage the water level in the lake.

major towns and villages in the County as well as a wide rural area, through an extensive network of public water mains and public group water supply scheme extensions to the public mains.⁵⁷

Irish Water has identified key projects for the county which are included in Project Ireland 2040 to support planned development and maintain and improve existing services. The South Westmeath Regional Water Supply scheme will address water quality and capacity issues with the existing water supply for South Westmeath including Athlone Town and Environs, Moate and extending east towards Rochfortbridge and Mullingar. The project is due for commencement by 2020, to be completed by 2022.

The Council will continue to engage with Irish Water to ensure that the future demands of the County are provided for and will continue to promote water conservation in conjunction with Irish Water.

⁵⁷ Draft Westmeath CDP 2021-2027

Table 4.3 Waste Water Treatment Plant Capacity, Loads and Headroom⁵⁸

Plant	Capacity (PE) 2018	Load (PE) 2017	Headroom (PE) (est.)	Plant	Capacity (PE) 2018	Load (PE) 2017	Headroom (PE) (est.)
Athlone	36,000	23,422	12,578	Delvin	1,250	1,035	215
Mullingar	55,000	27,091	27,909	Clonmellon	1,500	888	612
Kinnegad	4,800	3,540	1,260	Tyrrellspass	2,000	583	1,417
Moate	5,000	3,568	1,432	Ballymore	500	553	0
Rochfortbridge	4,500	2,110	2,390	Multyfarnham	700	466	234
Killucan	2,500	1,753	747	Collinstown	600	504	96
Kilbeggan	2,250	1,829	421	Ballynacarrigy	600	480	120
Castlepollard	6,500	1,529	4,971				

Table 4.4 Waste Water Treatment Plant Performance⁵⁹

Plant name and Reference	Treatment Provided	Overall Compliance (Pass/Fail)	Parameter Failed	Cause of Exceedances and Significance of Results (Water Quality)	Organic Capacities (PE)		
					As Constructed	Collected Load (peak week)	Remaining
Multyfarnham Village and Environs D0510-01	Secondary (Activated Sludge) and Nutrient Removal (Alum Dosing)	Fail ⁶⁰	Ammonia-Total (as N)	Cause: Plant or equipment breakdown at Plant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWTP discharge was not compliant with ELVs set in the discharge licence. Ambient monitoring results meet the required EQS as related to Oxygenation and Nutrient Conditions set out in the Surface Water Regulations 2009. The discharge from the WWTP does not have an observable negative impact on the water quality. The discharge from the WWTP has no observable negative impact on the Water Framework Directive status. 	700	402	298
Athlone D0007-01	Preliminary (Screening), Secondary (Extended Aeration with Anoxic Zone) and Nutrient Removal (Alum Dosing)	Fail	Ammonia-Total (as N) mg/l	Cause: At the time of the ELV breach the plant was undergoing upgrade works and was in the process of being commissioned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWTP discharge was not compliant with ELVs set in the discharge licence. Based on the effluent complaint results 2018, it is considered that the discharge is not impacting on water quality. The discharge from the WWTP has no observable negative impact on the WFD status. It is not considered that the WWTP is impacting upon the downstream drinking water abstraction point at Banagher, circa 36 km downstream. 	30000	22200	7800
Tyrrellspass D0099-01	Secondary and Nutrient Removal	Pass (all parameters compliant)	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WWTP is compliant with the ELV's set in the Waste Water Discharge Licence. 	2000	542	1548
Collinstown D0485-01	Preliminary (Screening), Secondary (RBC) and Nutrient Removal (Alum dosing for phosphorous)	Fail	Ortho-Phosphate (as P) unspecified mg/l Ammonia-Total (as-N) mg/l	Cause: WWTP upgrade required to meet ELV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWTP discharge was not compliant with ELVs set in the discharge licence. There were 9 samples non-complaint with the Ammonia-N ELV. One sample exceeded the Ortho-P Condition 2 ELV. Based on the 2018 ambient monitoring results, a deterioration in water quality in terms of Ammonia has been identified d/s of the WWTP Based on the effluent compliance results the WWTP is likely to be contributing to this deterioration. The discharge from the WWTP has no observable negative impact on the WFD status. The status is Moderate both u/s and d/s of the WWTP discharge. It is noted that consistent achievement with the ELVs would benefit the quality of the receiving water. 	600	504	96

⁵⁸ Source: Irish Water (November 2019)⁵⁹ Source: EPA Annual Environmental Reports for 2018, 2019⁶⁰ Westmeath County Council have identified that the treatment processes within the plant are adequate to provide appropriate treatment and there is adequate spare capacity within the plant

4.11.3 Waste Management

The Eastern Midlands Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 provides the framework for solid waste management in the region and sets out a range of policies and actions to meet specified mandatory and performance-based targets.

The Eastern and Midlands Waste Region comprises 12 local authority areas of Dublin City, Fingal, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Kildare, Laois, Longford, Louth, Offaly, Meath, Wicklow, Westmeath and South Dublin.

4.11.4 Transport⁶¹

Transport infrastructure in the County has the potential to support reductions in energy demand from the transport sector, including through electrification of modes.

Due to its strategic location in the middle of the country, Westmeath and its main urban centres are particularly well served by a hierarchy of roads including sections of motorways, national roads, regional roads, local roads and urban roadways. The M6/N6 and M4/N4 motorways and the N51, N52, N55 and N62 national primary routes traverse the County providing important linkages and networks within, into and out of the County. Both regional and local roads provide vital links between the towns and villages to retail, service and employment centres throughout the County and to adjoining counties.

Athlone and Mullingar are both accessible by rail and are positioned on the Galway/Dublin /Westport and the Dublin/Sligo rail lines respectively. Trains operate on each route several times daily. Westmeath is also well serviced by Bus Éireann expressway services, which primarily mirror the national primary routes and traverse the county on an east-west axis. Local Link Longford Westmeath Roscommon provides public transport for rural people living, working and visiting rural areas.

4.11.5 Existing Problems

There are a number of challenges with respect to the provision of transport and water

services infrastructure which are described under Section 4.11 above.

Recent restrictions on water supply have been enforced in Athlone and surrounding areas including Mount Temple and Baylin.

Irish Water is currently preparing a National Water Resources Plan to address issues with the supply and demand for drinking water in Ireland over the short, medium and long term.

The provisions of the new County Development Plan will contribute towards protection of the environment with regard to impacts arising from material assets.

4.12 Cultural Heritage

4.12.1 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeology is the study of past societies through the material remains left by those societies and the evidence of their environment. Archaeological sites and monuments vary greatly in form and date; examples include earthworks of different types and periods, (e.g. early historic ringforts and prehistoric burial mounds), megalithic tombs from the Prehistoric period, medieval buildings, urban archaeological deposits and underwater features.

Archaeological heritage is protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), Natural Cultural Institutions Act 1997 and the Planning Acts.

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is an inventory, put on a statutory basis by amendment to the National Monuments Act 1994, of sites and areas of archaeological significance, numbered and mapped. It is available from the National Monuments Service and at archaeology.ie.

The term 'monument' includes all man-made structures of whatever form or date except buildings habitually used for ecclesiastical purposes. All monuments in existence before 1700 A.D. are automatically considered to be historic monuments within the meaning of the Acts. Monuments of architectural and historical interest also come within the scope of the Acts. Monuments include: any artificial or partly artificial building, structure or erection

⁶¹ Draft Westmeath CDP 2021-2027

or group of such buildings, structures or erections; any cave, stone or other natural product, whether or not forming part of the ground, that has been artificially carved, sculptured or worked upon or which (where it does not form part of the place where it is) appears to have been purposely put or arranged in position; any, or any part of any, prehistoric or ancient tomb, grave or burial deposit, or, ritual, industrial or habitation site; and any place comprising the remains or traces of any such building, structure or erection, any such cave, stone or natural product or any such tomb, grave, burial deposit or ritual, industrial or habitation site, situated on land or in the territorial waters of the State', but excludes 'any building or part of any building, that is habitually used for ecclesiastical purposes' (National Monuments Acts 1930-2004).

A recorded monument is a monument included in the list and marked on the map, which comprises the RMP set out county by county under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. The definition includes Zones of Archaeological Potential in towns and all other monuments of archaeological interest, which have so far been identified.

County Westmeath archaeological monuments include the royal site of Uisneach⁶², prehistoric barrow burials, wooden trackways, such as the Bronze Age road way at Mayne, earthworks, crannógs and ringforts. There are many fine examples of mottes (and baileys), tower houses, and several deserted medieval settlements. The ecclesiastical heritage includes church and abbey ruins, graveyards, high crosses and holy wells, including those in Fore.

Archaeological heritage includes artefacts, the earliest of which are stone tools dating from the Mesolithic period (c.9,000 - 5,000 years ago). Some of the more famous artefacts

found in Westmeath include gold ear-spools (from the Mullingar area), the Lough Lene Bell, the Balinderry Gaming Board, and several Viking hoards.

Figure 4.9 shows the spatial distribution of recorded monuments in the Plan area. Clusters of monuments are indicated within already developed urban and suburban areas and in other locations. Currently there are over 4,000 archaeological monuments recorded in County Westmeath, including 13 Monuments in State Care⁶³:

- Athlone Castle;
- Delvin Castle;
- Dunnamona Motte;
- Mortimer's Castle;
- Fore Town Gates;
- Fore Abbey (Benedictine) and Hermitage;
- Taghmon Church;
- Inchbofin Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Site;
- Ushnagh Hill, Catstone;
- Portlick Motte;
- Raherney Ringfort;
- Bealin Cross High Cross; and
- Wattstown Two Barrows.

The Urban Archaeological Survey for County Westmeath conducted in 1985 identified a number of 'Zones of Archaeological Potential' within the County, including those in Ardnurcher, Athlone, Ballymore, Fore, Kilbeggan, Kilbixy, Mullingar and Athlone old town.

The Underwater Archaeology Unit was established within the National Monuments Service to manage and protect Ireland's underwater cultural heritage, including the quantification of the underwater resource and assessing development impacts in order to manage and protect this aspect of Ireland's heritage. The Shipwreck Inventory is principally a desktop survey with information gathered from a broad range of cartographic, archaeological and historical sources, both documentary and pictorial. Wrecks over 100 years old and archaeological objects found underwater are protected under the National Monuments (Amendment) Acts 1987 and 1994. Significant wrecks less than 100 years old can be designated by Underwater Heritage Order on account of their historical, archaeological or artistic importance. Such Orders can also be used to designate areas of seabed or land covered by water to more

⁶² The Hill of Uisneach is one of the most sacred and historic sites in Ireland. The roots of Uisneach lie beyond recorded history but its surviving monuments and relics range in date from the Neolithic, early Bronze Age to the medieval period. Given its archaeological significance, the Hill of Uisneach is on the tentative list for future nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List as one of the five Royal Sites of Ireland.

⁶³ This list of National Monuments in State care includes those which are in the ownership and guardianship of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

clearly define and protect wreck sites and archaeological objects. Under the legislation all diving on known protected wreck sites or with the intention of searching for underwater cultural heritage is subject to licensing requirements.

Rivers and lakes within the Plan area may contain many features and finds associated with riverine heritage such as shipwrecks, piers, quay walls, fords, stepping stones and associated archaeological objects and features.

4.12.2 Architectural Heritage

The term architectural heritage is defined in the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act 1999 as meaning all: structures and buildings together with their settings and attendant grounds, fixtures and fittings; groups of structures and buildings; and, sites which are of technical, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest.

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

In relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, the following are encompassed:

- The interior of the structure;
- The land lying within the curtilage⁶⁴ of the structure;
- Any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors; and,
- All fixtures and features that form part of the interior or exterior of any structure or structures referred to in subparagraph (i) or (iii).

⁶⁴ Curtilage is normally taken to be the parcel of ground immediately associated with the Protected Structure, or in use for the purposes of the structure. Protection extends to the buildings and land lying within the curtilage. While the curtilage sometimes coincides with the present property boundary, it can originally have included lands, features or even buildings now in separate ownership, e.g. the lodge of a former country house, or the garden features located in land subsequently sold off. Such lands are described as being attendant grounds, and the protection extends to them just as if they were still within the curtilage of the Protected Structure.

Similar to the general spatial spread of archaeological heritage, clusters of architectural heritage are indicated within already developed villages, urban and suburban areas as shown on Figure 4.10. The examples of architectural heritage include castles, fine historic houses, their associated demesne lands and follies and vernacular buildings, such as Tullynally Castle, Moydrum Castle and Belvedere House and Gardens.

The army barracks in Athlone and Mullingar are noteworthy sites of built heritage significance, representing a variety of industrial heritage sites within the County, which include our canals, bridges, railways, mills and distilleries.

In addition to Protected Structures, the Planning and Development Act, 2000 provides the legislative basis for the protection of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). An ACA is a place, area or group of structures or townscape that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value, or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures, whose character it is an objective to preserve in a development plan. The ACA designation requires that planning permission must be obtained before significant works can be carried out to the exterior of a structure in the ACA that might alter the character of the structure or the ACA. There are over 20 ACAs designated within the Plan area (shown on Figure 4.10), including the ACAs in the following settlements:

- Athlone;
- Mullingar;
- Tyrrellspass;
- Ballynacarrigy;
- Castlepollard;
- Clonmellon;
- Kilbeggan;
- Multyfarnham;
- Rochfortbridge;
- Moate; and
- Glasson.

4.12.3 Existing Problems

The context of archaeological and architectural heritage has changed over time within County Westmeath, however no existing conflicts with legislative objectives governing archaeological and architectural heritage have been identified.

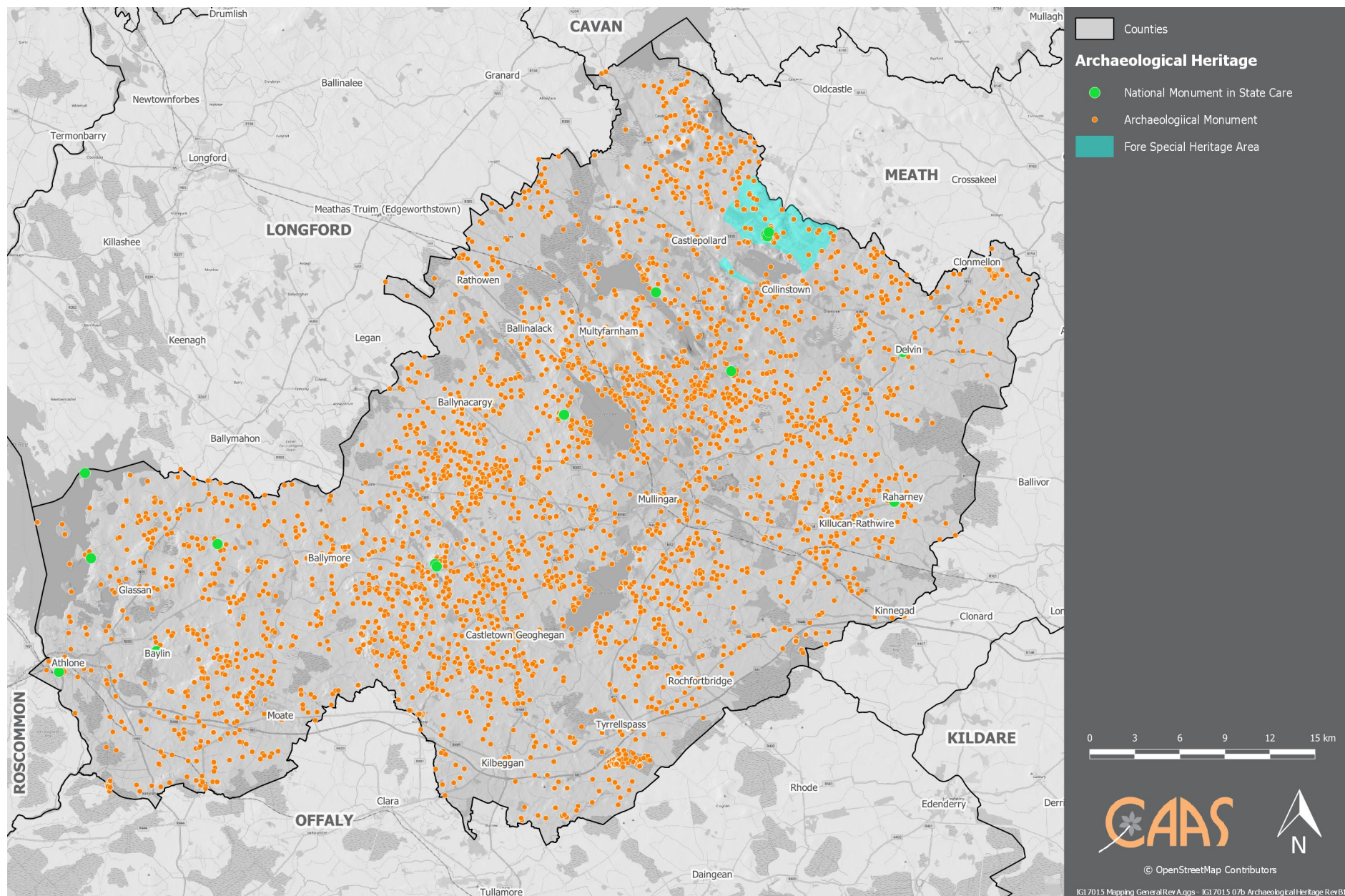


Figure 4.9 Archaeological Heritage

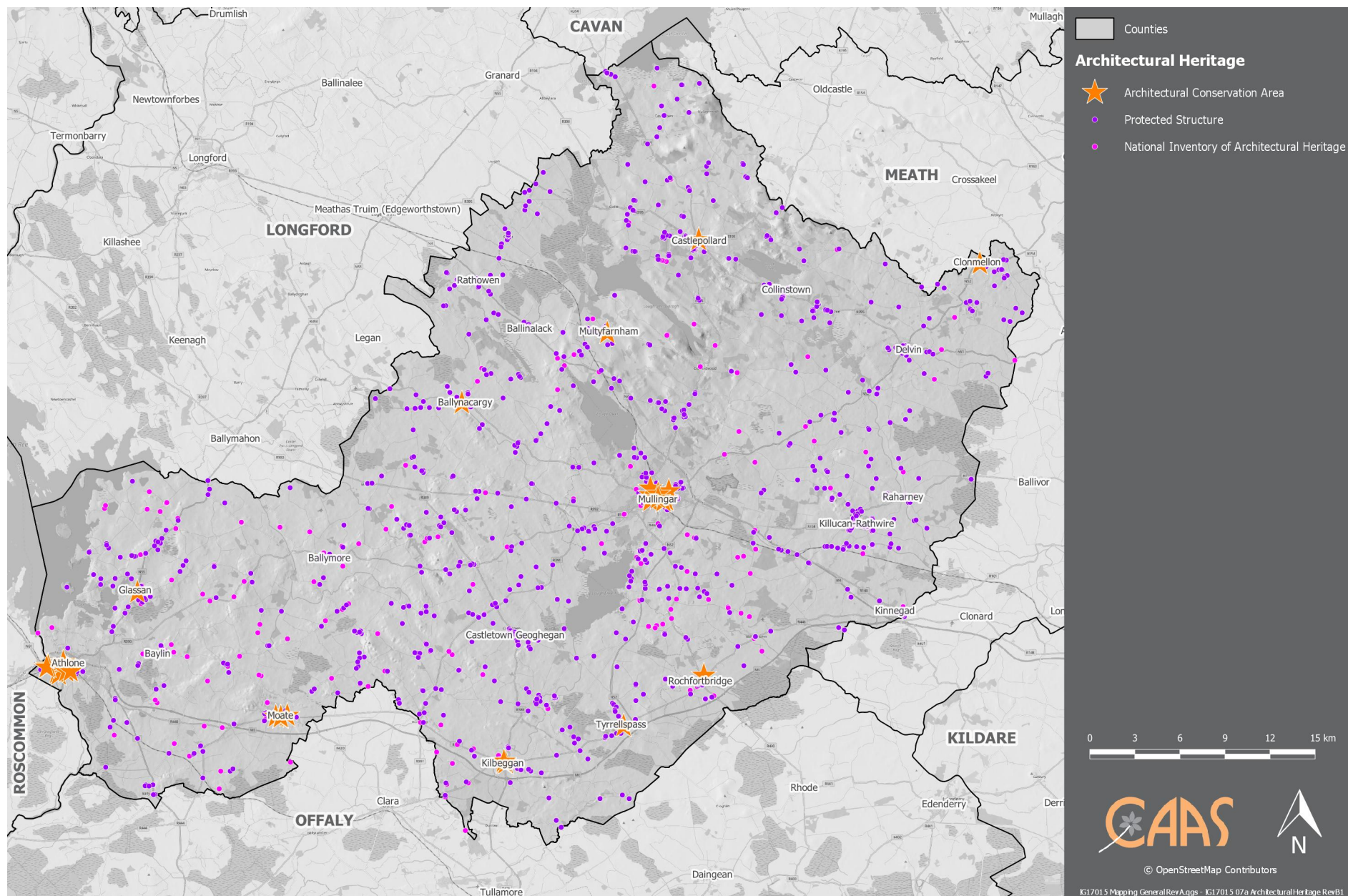


Figure 4.10 Architectural Heritage

4.13 Landscape

4.13.1 Introduction

Article 1 (a) of the European Landscape Convention provides a definition of landscape as follows; "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural/or human factors". The importance of landscape and visual amenity and the role of its protection are recognised in the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, which requires that Development Plans include objectives for the preservation of the landscape, views and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty.

Westmeath has a very diverse landscape, ranging from rolling hills and lakes to peatlands, grasslands, woodlands, eskers and wetlands. There are a range of different landscapes found in Westmeath, each with varying visual and amenity values, topography, exposure levels and contain a variety of habitats. Each landscape type has varying capacity to absorb development related to its overall sensitivity.

The lakes of Westmeath are of local, national and international status and are a significant asset and resource to the county. The five most important lakes in Westmeath are Lough Ennell, Lough Owel, Lough Derravaragh, Lough Lene and Lough Ree. All of the identified lakes are within designated High Amenity Areas, SACs, SPAs and NHAs. Lough Ree is one of the largest lakes in Ireland and is shared between Westmeath and neighbouring counties Roscommon and Longford. Lough Owel, Lough Lene and Lough Bane have a particularly important function as public water supply sources.

4.13.2 Landscape Character Areas

The European Landscape Convention was ratified in Ireland in 2002, this required EU Member States to adopt national measures to promote landscape, planning, protection and management.

The purpose of landscape character assessment is to provide the foundation for

policy formulation and decision making for landscape management. County Westmeath Landscape Character Assessment identified the following 11 Landscape Character Areas (as shown on Figure 4.11):

- Northern Hills and Lakes;
- Inny River Lowlands;
- River Deel Lowlands;
- Central Hills and Lakes;
- Royal Canal Corridor;
- Lough Ree/Shannon Corridor;
- Western Lowlands;
- South Central Hills;
- Hill of Uisneach;
- Lough Ennell and SE Corridor; and
- South Westmeath Esker.

1. Northern Hills and Lakes

This area comprises prominent hills topped with cherty limestone, with enclosed lakes and areas of peat deposits. The area is of particularly high scenic value, including Lough Lene Area of High Amenity Value and Fore Special Heritage Area, with several NHA and SAC designations.

2. Inny River Lowlands

The Inny River Lowlands cover the low-lying ground of the Inny River, including pastoral landscapes, extensive areas of cutaway bog, industrial peat production and conifer plantations. The area is also location to the N4 corridor and wetland areas of nature conservation interest, including Glen Lough, Lough Iron, Lough Garr and Garriskil Bog. In addition, the area holds some important panoramic views of the Westmeath countryside and important sites of historical significance, namely Tristernagh Abbey and Kilbixy remains.

3. River Deel Lowlands

This landscape character area comprises the River Deel, the Stonyford River and their surrounding hinterland which form part of the River Boyne and Blackwater SAC. The area consists of low-lying pastures, with small lakes flanked by scrub and wet woodland, with areas of intact, cutover and cutaway bogs. The area is noted as having strong historic associations, with several demesne landscapes. In addition, the area is traversed by the N51 and N52.

4. Central Hills and Lakes

This area can be typified by undulating hills and lakes, most dominant being Lough Derravaragh and Lough Owel, which both hold

SAC and SPA designations, and are both Areas of High Amenity. A number of fens, including Scragh Bog of international importance, are located in the area. The area is noted for its high scenic quality and amenity value and preserved views. A number of demesne landscapes and areas of semi-natural woodland are located in the area, including oak, such as in Lough Derravaragh at Knockeyon and Crookedwood. The area reflects a historic landscape from the Bronze Age with monastic associations.

5. Royal Canal Corridor

The Royal Canal has been a historic feature of the Westmeath landscape since the 1800's. The surrounding area to the Canal is typically grassland, peatland with some areas of conifer plantations. Apart from the Mullingar area, the corridor is largely rural in nature. West of Mullingar the Canal traverses a rural landscape of high scenic quality, with a mature cover of hedgerows and trees. The Canal includes features of vernacular architecture and industrial heritage.

6. Lough Ree/Shannon Corridor

This area comprises of Lough Ree and the Shannon, and associated callows, both north and south of Athlone, including Waterstown Lake, Lough Mareegan and the lakeside villages of Ballykeeran, Glassan and Tubberclare to the east. The remainder of the land consists of pastures, inland marshes and forestry. A significant area of intact bog remains southeast of Athlone, with some areas of worked out peatlands in both the north and south of the area. A number of designated SPAs, SACs and NHAs are located within the area.

7. Western Lowlands

A variety of characters are located in this area including eskers, lakes and bogs. Although the landscape is generally low-lying, the character of the area can be attributed to its gently undulating topography. Visual containment in the landscape is created by elevated areas and glacial kames, irregular ridges or mounds of gravel deposited by melting glacial features. Low lying areas are generally contained by high quality species rich hedges that dominate field boundaries in the area, limiting the extent of views.

8. South Central Hills

This area consists of hilly pasture land east of Ballymore as far north of the Royal Canal Corridor, bounded to the south by an area

characterised by Eskers. The area consists of smooth gentle hills and undulating pastures with occasional ridges. The highest point in the area, a volcanic outcrop south of the Hill of Uisneach has a height of 200m. The hilltops in the area provide for panoramic views across neighbouring counties. Although the area contains a number of small villages, it maintains quite rural in its nature.

9. Hill of Uisneach

The area, known to be both a nationally significant archaeological landscape an internationally important cultural landscape, is located west of Mullingar. The area includes the deserted 'famine village' and a number of recorded monuments. The surrounding area is predominantly pasture land with species rich hedged field boundaries.

10. Lough Ennell and South East Corridor

This area comprises pasture land of mixed productivity. Lough Ennell, designated as an Area of High Amenity, SAC and SPA, is located west of the area, with a number of preserved views. The area surrounding Lough Ennell can be characterised by scrub land with a mixture of marsh, bog and poor pasture land. The bog areas are largely exploited but some have been left intact. A large number of old demesnes comprise the area, with existence of fine mature hardwood trees and estate walls. Settlements in the area have mainly developed along the road network. The M6 and N52 both traverse the area.

11. South Westmeath Esker

The South Westmeath Esker is located in the southernmost area of the county. The area is dissected by the former N6 and the new M6. The area is traversed by a network of tertiary roads which run along the esker formations, creating an enclosed and intimate landscape. There are approximately 37 habitats associated with the eskers in this area, namely orchid rich grasslands and esker woodland. Both the Brosna river and the Silver river are located in the area. Another notable feature of the area includes kettle holes, which are now occupied by wetlands of local habitat interest. Areas of peatland, some of which are planted with conifers, are located between Ballynagore and Tyrrellspass. Quarrying is the main industry in the area, with approximately ten sizable extractive sites in operation. A number of habitats in the area are designated pNHAs and SACs. There are a number of eskers in the area that, despite not having statutory

designations, are considered of national importance.

4.13.3 High Amenity Areas

Westmeath is rich with varying landscape and recreational amenities. The areas which are highly regarded for their landscape are protected through designation as Areas of High Amenity. These include the following lakes:

- Lough Ree Area;
- Lough Lene Area;
- Lough Owel Area;
- Lough Ennell Area; and
- Lough Derravaragh Area.

High Amenity Areas are mapped on Figure 4.11.

4.13.4 Protected Views

County Westmeath has a number of important scenic routes. The review of County Westmeath Protected Views and Prospects is currently being undertaken alongside the preparation of the new County Development Plan. The review has identified 35 Protected Views in the County, which are categorised according to their significance, at a regional, county and local level.

In addition, a number of different and distinctive types of scenic routes categorised as both road based and off road have been identified as follows:

- Lough Ree Driving Route;
- Mullingar Cycling Hub;
- The Táin Trail;
- Old Rail Trail/ Greenway;
- Royal Canal Way; and
- Fore Walking Routes.

Existing Protected Views and Vistas are mapped on Figure 4.11.

4.13.5 Existing Environmental Problems

New developments have resulted in changes to the visual appearance of lands within the County however legislative objectives governing landscape and visual appearance were not identified as being conflicted with.

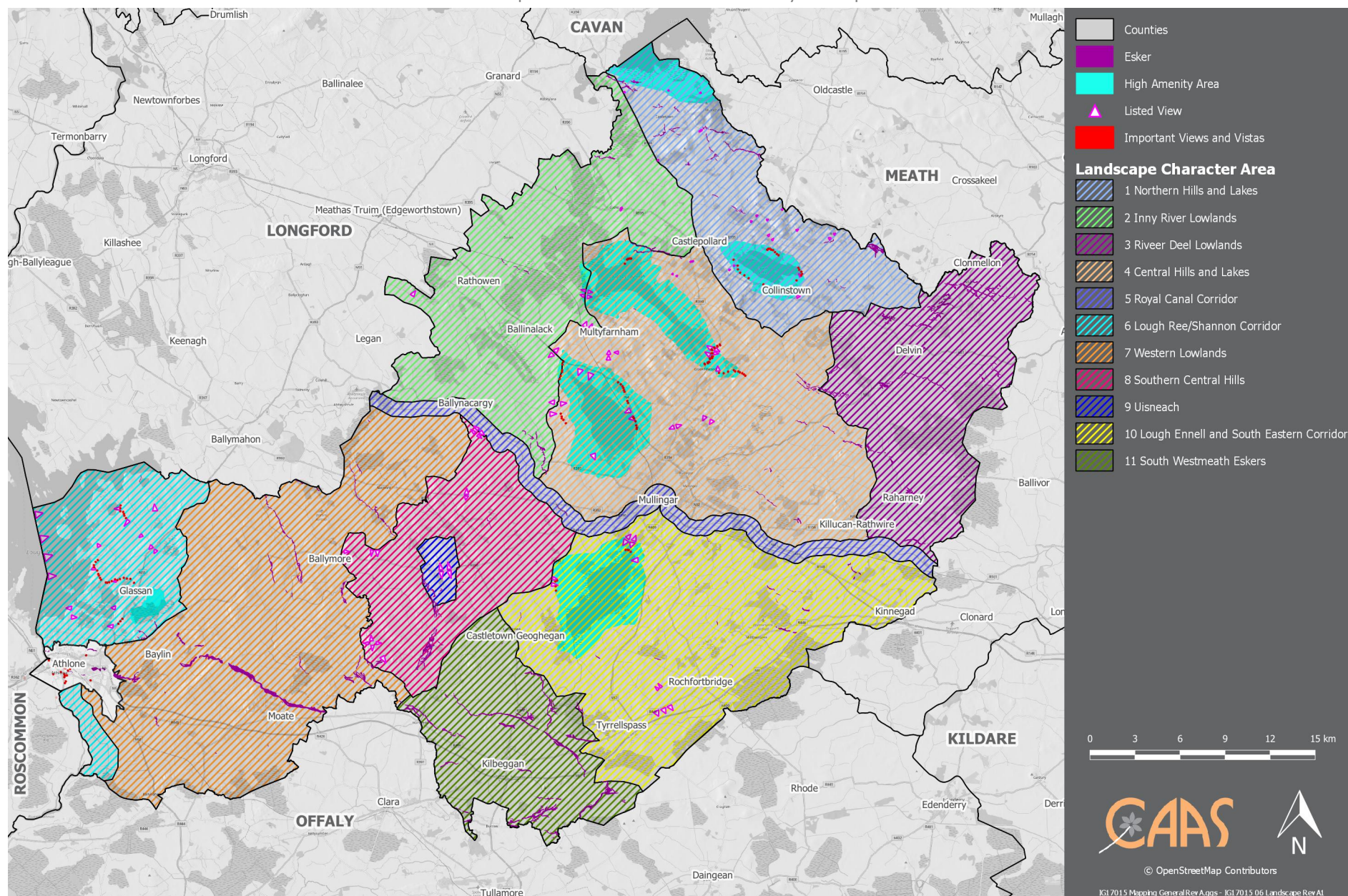


Figure 4.11 Landscape Designations

4.14 Overlay of Environmental Sensitivity Mapping

In order to identify where most sensitivities within the County occur, a number of the environmental sensitivities described above were weighted and mapped overlapping each other.

Figure 4.12 provides an Overlay of Environmental Sensitivities in the County. Environmental sensitivities are indicated by colours which range from higher to lower sensitivity, on a scale from 5 to 70. The map was prepared using Geographical Information System (GIS) software that allowed for a weighting system to be applied with differentiation in certain layers as follows:

- European Sites – SACs and SPAs (10 points);
- Other Ecological designations – NHAs, pNHAs and Fens (5 points);
- Sensitive Landcover Categories (10 points);
- WFD Status of Surface unassigned and moderate ecological status (5 points);
- WFD Status of Surface water poor ecological status (10 points);
- WFD Status of Surface water bad ecological status (15 points);
- WFD Status of Groundwater water poor ecological status (10 points);
- Groundwater vulnerability ("extreme" or "extreme – rock at or near surface or karst" 10 points, "high" 5 points);
- WFD RPA Nutrient Sensitive and Drinking Water Rivers and Lakes, Bathing Water Areas;
- Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Fluvial and Pluvial mapping highest (10 points) and moderate risk (5 points);
- Cultural Heritage including Architectural Conservation Areas, entries to the Record of Protected Structures, entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and Fore Special Heritage Area (5 points);
- High Amenity Areas (10 points); and
- Scenic routes and views (10 points, 650m radius).

Where the mapping shows a concentration of environmental sensitivities there is an increased likelihood that development will conflict with these sensitivities and cause environmental deterioration. However, the occurrence of environmental sensitivities does not preclude development; rather it flags at a strategic level

that the mitigation measures - which have been integrated into the Plan - will need to be complied with in order to ensure that the implementation of the Plan contributes towards environmental protection.

Most of the Plan area is identified as having low levels of sensitivity.

The most sensitive areas/features within the County are shown to be:

- The County's lakes including Lough Owel, Lough Ennell, Lough Lene, Lough Ree, Lough Derravaragh, Lough Bane and Lough Glass (on account of sensitivities including ecological, drinking water supply, land cover, high amenity area and/or nutrient sensitivity);
- The Shannon and its callows in the west of the County (on account of sensitivities including ecological, drinking water supply, land cover, high amenity area and nutrient sensitivity);
- Individual rivers throughout the County
- An area around Lough Sheelin, Moneybeg and Clareisland at the Westmeath, Cavan and Meath borders (on account of ecological, land cover, high amenity area and nutrient sensitivity considerations)
- Areas in the north east of the County around the Westmeath-Meath border (on account of higher levels of groundwater vulnerability and poor groundwater status).

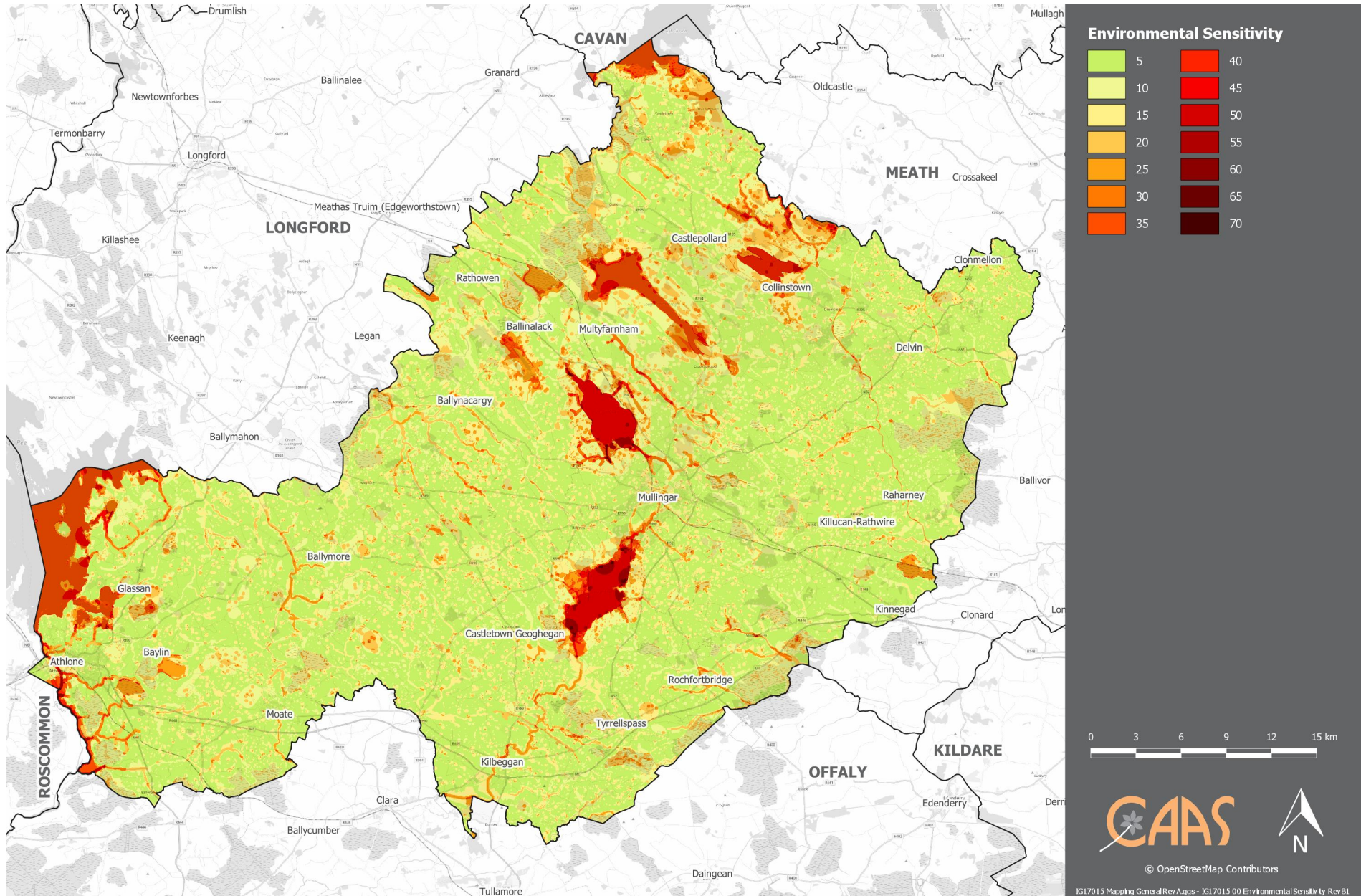


Figure 4.12 Environmental Sensitivity

CAAS for Westmeath County Council

Section 5 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies that generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level e.g. the environmental protection objectives of various European Directives that have been transposed into Irish law and which are required to be implemented.

The SEOs are set out under a range of topics and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Draft Plan and the alternatives are evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if – in the case of adverse effects – unmitigated.

The SEOs are linked to indicators which can facilitate monitoring the environmental effects of the Plan as well as identifying targets which the Plan can help work towards.

All SEOs, indicators and targets are provided on Table 5.1 overleaf.

Further detail on legislation, plans and programmes are provided under Section 2 (and associated Appendix I “Relationship with Legislation and Other Policies, Plans, and Programmes”) and Section 4.

Given the position of the Development Plan in the land use planning hierarchy beneath the Eastern and Midlands RSES, the measures identified in that RSES SEA have been used – as they are or having been slightly modified – in most instances in order to ensure consistency, where appropriate.

Table 5.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs), Indicators and Targets

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicators	Targets
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	BFF	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To preserve, protect, maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, particularly EU designated sites and protected species Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function Safeguard national, regional and local designated sites and supporting features which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets To protect, maintain and conserve the County's natural capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition of European sites Number of spatial plans that have included ecosystem services content, mapping and policy to protect ecosystem services when their relevant plans are either revised or drafted SEA and AA as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc. Status of water quality in the County's water bodies Compliance of planning permissions with Plan measures providing for the protection of Biodiversity and flora and fauna – see Chapter 12 "Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions in their land use plans and as a minimum, to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species Implement and review, as relevant, the County Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan For planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that they comply with all Plan measures providing for the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna – see Chapter 12 "Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure"
Population and Human Health	PHH	Improve quality of life for all ages and abilities based on high-quality, serviced, well connected and sustainable residential, working, educational and recreational environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management Ensure that existing population and planned growth is matched with the required public infrastructure and the required services Safeguard the County's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by Chapter 5 "Economy and Employment" Number of spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors resulting from development permitted under the Plan Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures Number of spatial plans that include specific green infrastructure mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by Chapter 5 "Economy and Employment" No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures. Implementation of Green Infrastructure
Soil (and Land)	S	Ensure the long-term sustainable management of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield within the County Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of population growth occurring on infill and brownfield lands compared to greenfield Volume of contaminated material generated from brownfield and infill Number of AA determinations and environmental assessments undertaken to support applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4%. Achieve the 40% target for growth on infill as per NPF.

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Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicators	Targets
Water	W	Protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive • Ensure that economic growth of the marine resource and its ecosystems are managed sustainably • Ensure water resources are sustainably managed to deliver proposed regional and County growth targets in the context of existing and projected water supply and wastewater capacity constraints ensuring the protection of receiving environments • Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion • Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status of water bodies as reported by the EPA Water Monitoring Programme for the WFD • Number of incompatible developments permitted within flood risk areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status' • Implementation of the objectives of the second cycle of the River Basin Management Plan by 2021 (and subsequent objectives as relevant) • Minimise developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk
Material Assets	MA	Sustainable and efficient use of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimise existing infrastructure and provide new infrastructure to match population distribution proposals in the County • Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all which encourages a broad energy generation mix to ensure security of supply – wind, wave solar, tidal, biomass, energy from waste and traditional fossil fuels • Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies • Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development • Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of road and rail transport modes • Encourage the transition to a zero-carbon economy by facilitating the development of a grid infrastructure to support renewables and international connectivity. Reduce the average energy consumption per capita including promoting energy efficient buildings, retrofitting, smart- buildings, cities and grids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmed delivery of Irish Water infrastructure for all key growth towns in line with Irish Water Investment Plan and prioritisation programme to ensure sustainable growth can be accommodated • Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan • Proportion of population within who report regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To map brownfield and infill land parcels across the County. • All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately and appropriately served by waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan • Where septic tanks are proposed, for planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that the outfall from the septic tank will not – in- combination with other septic tanks– contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive • Increased budget spends on water and wastewater infrastructure • By 2020 all citizens will have access to speeds of 30Mbps, and that 50% of citizens will be subscribing to speeds of 100Mbps

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicators	Targets
Air	A	Support clean air policies that reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole resulting from emissions to air from all sectors with particular reference to emissions from transport, residential heating, industry and agriculture. Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency. Promote continuing improvement in air quality. Reduction of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter which are responsible for acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health — Air Quality Directive Significantly decrease noise pollution by 2020 and move closer to WHO recommended levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 National Travel Survey levels of 74% NO_x, SO_x, PM10 and PM2.5 as part of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 National Travel Survey levels. Improvement in Air Quality trends, particularly in relation to transport related emissions of NO_x and particulate matter
Climatic Factors	C	Achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy that is cognisant of environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise emissions of greenhouse gasses. Integrate sustainable design solutions into the County's infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure). Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets. Promote development resilient to the effects of climate change Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Plan measures relating to climate reduction targets as provided for by Plan provisions including those provided for and referenced in Chapter 11 "Climate Change and Energy" Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 levels Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures climate reduction targets as provided for by Plan provisions including those provided for and referenced in Chapter 11 "Climate Change and Energy" Increase in the proportion of people resident in the County reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures Decrease in the proportion of journeys made by residents of the County using private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 levels Contribute towards transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 Contribute towards the target of the Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC), for all Member States to reach a 10% share of renewable energy in transport by 2020 Contribute towards the target of aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors To promote reduced energy consumption and support the uptake of renewable options and a move away from solid fuels for residential heating

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Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicators	Targets
Cultural Heritage	CH	Safeguard cultural heritage features and their settings through responsible design and positioning of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological or architectural heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, protected from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan • Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context of these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan • Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan
Landscape	L	Protect and enhance the landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To implement the Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan

Section 6 Description of Alternatives

6.1 Introduction

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme) are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment.

Whether or not alternatives for the County Development Plan are available has been identified by Westmeath County Council under Tiers 1 to 5 detailed below.

6.2 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The Plan is required to be prepared by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which specifies various types of objectives that must be provided for by the Plan.

The alternatives available for the Plan are limited by the provisions of higher-level planning objectives, including those of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Region. These documents set out various requirements for the content of the Plan including on topics such as land use zoning and the sustainable development of rural areas.

6.3 Tier 1: Alternatives for Settlement Hierarchy

The Council have confirmed that no realistic alternatives are available for placing of individual settlements under alternative typologies, taking into account the objectives of the higher-level NPF and Eastern and Midlands RSES.

6.4 Tier 2: Population Projection Scenarios

Population Projection Scenarios were examined for the County Development Plan and only one was identified as fully aligning with the NPF and RSES. Nonetheless, as these scenarios were considered by the Plan-preparation process they are given a high-level assessment by the SEA.

Scenario 1: Non-Intervention Scenario

This scenario utilises a projection of population developed using the Cohort Component Method (CCM). It is called 'Non-Intervention' as it does not assume a policy-based interaction on the modelled trajectory of population growth across Westmeath. CCM is used internationally as the best-in-class methodology for demographic projection, including by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to produce the Irish National & Regional population and labour force projections. It closely examines the interactions between the three key components driving changes in the population: *mortality, fertility and migration*.

This scenario assumes a continuation of the prevailing trends in mortality, fertility and migration (with respect to the CSO's highest migration assumption). It specifically examines the impacts of inter-regional migration and the influence of a return to high net outward migration from Dublin (as set out by the CSO). This scenario reflects what might happen should growth continue to develop as assumed. It does not account for settlement capacity or non-demographic factors (beyond the inherent motivation of why people migrate). Athlone is not projected to reach its RSES target of 30,000 by 2031 (coming to 28,055 instead) under this scenario.

Scenario 2: Proportional Intervention Scenario A

Under this proportional intervention scenario, Athlone's population will increase to achieve the 30,000 RSES target by 2031. It further intervenes by assuming proportional levels of growth elsewhere. All settlements increase in population in line with their demographic trajectory, with Mullingar and Athlone increasing in proportion to the latter's target. The county targets (NPF high) for 2026 and 2031 are reached (approximately) with 98,518 people in 2026 (compared to 98,500 NPF high) and 102,501 people in 2031 (compared to 102,500 NPF high). However, the rural remainder of the county declines. This scenario, while meeting county targets and the target in relation to Athlone, damaged rural viability and as such is contrary to the objectives of the NPF.

Scenario 3: Proportional Intervention B

This proportional intervention scenario intervenes by assuming Athlone's RSES target of 30,000 by 2031 is achieved, and that all settlements will grow in proportion to Athlone's overall growth rate, i.e. its percentage increase between 2016 and 2031. Under this scenario, all settlements increase in population in line with a proportion of Athlone's overall growth rate. The county targets (NPF high) for 2026 and 2031 are reached (approximately) with 98,555 people in 2026 (vs. 98,500 NPF high) and 102,558 people in 2031 (vs. 102,500 NPF high). Similarly, this scenario does not achieve the stated NPF objective of supporting the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades.

Scenario 4: Proportional Intervention C

This proportional intervention scenario utilises an interpolated forecast⁶⁵ of population. This scenario ensures that Athlone's RSES target of 30,000 by 2031 is achieved and envisages growth rates that are proportional to each tier of the settlement hierarchy. This aligns with the approach to settlement typologies detailed in the NPF and considers the scale and location of settlements and accordingly the requisite nature and scale of development appropriate at these locations. Within this scenario, Westmeath's NPF county targets are exceeded by 5.8% in 2026 and 8.3% in 2031. This scenario also ensures the achievement of the NPF's objectives around supporting the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades. These targets envisage a 10% growth rate in the rural remainder of the county between 2016 and 2027 and a 12% growth rate in serviced rural areas.

6.5 Tier 3: Consideration of Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure

These two alternatives both provide for urban and rural growth in the County, however they have different approaches to managing development in areas surrounding urban settlements that are under strong urban pressure:

- A.** One includes a "Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure" policy that restricts development in areas surrounding urban settlements; and
- B.** The other does not include a "Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure" policy that restricts development in these areas.

⁶⁵ A forecast is based upon assumptions reflecting conditions expected to exist, i.e. the impact of policy, whereas a projection is prepared to present one or more hypothetical courses which might develop, should the trajectory of growth align with the key assumptions used.

6.6 Tier 4: Densities

The Council have confirmed that no realistic alternatives are available for proportionate densities across the settlement hierarchy, taking into account the objectives of the higher-level NPF and Eastern and Midlands RSES.

6.7 Tier 5: Land Use Zoning

Land use zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF and Eastern and Midlands RSES.

The Council have identified realistic alternatives for certain settlements, where these are available taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF and Eastern and Midlands RSES.

The findings of the examination of available reasonable land use zoning alternatives for settlements is provided at Table 6.1.

Land use zoning in Athlone and Mullingar will be provided in Local Area Plans to be prepared in the future.

Requirements relating to land use zoning provided for by the NPF and RSES limit the availability of alternatives for various settlements – these settlements are generally comparatively smaller to others and are on the two lower tiers of the hierarchy provided on Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 Screening for Available Reasonable Alternatives

Settlement Typology	Settlements	Available Reasonable Alternatives		
		Not applicable	Not available – taking into account high-level objectives (see Section 6)	Assessable Alternatives
Regional Growth Centre	Athlone	✓ LAP to be prepared		
Key Towns	Mullingar	✓ LAP to be prepared		
Self-sustaining growth towns	Castlepollard			✓
	Moate			✓
	Kinnegad			✓
	Kilbeggan		✓	
Self-Sustaining Towns	Rochfortbridge			✓
	Kilucan /Rathwire			✓
Towns and villages	Clonmellon		✓	
	Tyrrellspass		✓	
	Delvin		✓	
Rural (Serviced)	Multyfarnham		✓	
	Ballymore		✓	
	Ballynacarrigy		✓	
	Milltownpass		✓	
	Collinstown		✓	
	Glasson		✓	
	Ballinalack		✓	
	Castletown-Geoghegan		✓	

A description of assessable alternatives available are provided on Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Description of Assessable Alternatives Available

Settlement Typology	Settlements	Available Reasonable Alternatives Set 1	Available Reasonable Alternatives Set 2
Self-sustaining growth towns	Castlepollard	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. North of town and/or B. East of town and/or C. South West of town	n/a
	Moate	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. West of town or B. East of town	A. Include or B. Do not include: Provision for future Educational Uses
	Kinnegad	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. West of town to north of M4 or B. East of town, adjacent to River Side	A. Include or B. Do not include: Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space
Self-Sustaining Towns	Rochfortbridge	A. Include or B. Do not include: Additional Enterprise and Employment zoning to south of town between R446 and R400	n/a
	Kilucan /Rathwire	Joining or not of these settlements A. Strategy to join the built development envelope of both settlements or B. Strategy to keep the built development envelope of both settlements separate	n/a

Section 7 Evaluation of Alternatives

7.1 Introduction

This section provides a comparative evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects⁶⁶ of implementing available alternatives that are described in Section 6. This determination sought to understand whether each alternative was likely to improve conflict with or have a neutral interaction with the receiving environment.

7.2 Methodology

The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (see Section 4) and the Strategic Environmental Objectives (see Section 5 and Table 7.1) are used in the assessment of alternatives.

The degree to which effects can be determined is limited as implementation of the Plan will involve assessment, consideration and decision-making associated with lower tier plans and individual projects. Nonetheless a comparative evaluation of the various alternatives can be provided.

Table 7.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives⁶⁷

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	BFF	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To preserve, protect, maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, particularly EU designated sites and protected species Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function Safeguard national, regional and local designated sites and supporting features which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets To protect, maintain and conserve the County's natural capital
Population and Human Health	PHH	Improve quality of life for all ages and abilities based on high-quality, serviced, well connected and sustainable residential, working, educational and recreational environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management Ensure that existing population and planned growth is matched with the required public infrastructure and the required services Safeguard the County's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being
Soil (and Land)	S	Ensure the long-term sustainable management of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield within the County Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites
Water	W	Protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive Ensure that economic growth of the marine resource and its ecosystems are managed sustainably Ensure water resources are sustainably managed to deliver proposed regional and County growth targets in the context of existing and projected water supply and wastewater capacity constraints ensuring the protection of receiving environments Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals

⁶⁶ These effects include secondary, cumulative (see also Section 8.2), synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

⁶⁷ See also Section 5

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Material Assets	MA	Sustainable and efficient use of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimise existing infrastructure and provide new infrastructure to match population distribution proposals in the County • Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all which encourages a broad energy generation mix to ensure security of supply – wind, wave solar, tidal, biomass, energy from waste and traditional fossil fuels • Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies • Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development • Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of road and rail transport modes • Encourage the transition to a zero-carbon economy by facilitating the development of a grid infrastructure to support renewables and international connectivity. Reduce the average energy consumption per capita including promoting energy efficient buildings, retrofitting, smart- buildings, cities and grids
Air	A	Support clean air policies that reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole resulting from emissions to air from all sectors with particular reference to emissions from transport, residential heating, industry and agriculture. • Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency. • Promote continuing improvement in air quality. • Reduction of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter which are responsible for acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution • Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health — Air Quality Directive • Significantly decrease noise pollution by 2020 and move closer to WHO recommended levels.
Climatic Factors	C	Achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy that is cognisant of environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To minimise emissions of greenhouse gasses. • Integrate sustainable design solutions into the County's infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure). • Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets. • Promote development resilient to the effects of climate change • Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport
Cultural Heritage	CH	Safeguard cultural heritage features and their settings through responsible design and positioning of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological or architectural heritage
Landscape	L	Protect and enhance the landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To implement the Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention

7.3 Detailed Assessment of Alternatives

7.3.1 Effects Common to all Alternatives

Each of the alternatives envisage – in compliance with the robust policy framework in place at national, regional and local level – sustainable development and compact growth in County Westmeath. As such, various potential environmental effects are common to each of the alternatives. The environmental effects detailed on would be present, some to varying degrees, under the different alternatives.

Table 7.2 Effects Common to All Alternatives

Environmental Component	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated
Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution towards protection of ecology (including designated sites, ecological connectivity, habitats) by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Sustains existing sustainable rural management practices – and the communities who support them – to ensure the continuation of long-established managed landscapes and the flora and fauna that they contain. 	<p>Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna; • Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and • Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management. • Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond • Contribution towards the protection of human health by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential adverse effects arising from flood events. • Potential interactions if effects arising from environmental vectors.
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution towards the protection of soils (including those used for agriculture) and designated sites of geological heritage by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands. • Potential for riverbank erosion.

Environmental Component	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution towards the protection of water by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology. Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. Contribution towards limits in increases in energy demand from the transport sector by facilitating sustainable compact growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). Increases in waste levels. Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure. Interactions between agricultural waste and soil, water, biodiversity and human health – including as a result of emissions of ammonia from agricultural activities (e.g. manure handling, storage and spreading) and the production of secondary inorganic particulate matter.
Air and Climatic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution towards climate mitigation and adaptation by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential conflict between development under the Plan and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives. Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality. Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors. Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage elsewhere in the County by facilitating development within existing settlements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities.
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributes towards protection of wider landscape and landscape designations by facilitating development within existing settlements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.

7.3.2 Assessment of Tier 2: Alternatives for Allocation of Population

Population Projection Scenarios were examined for the County Development Plan and only one was identified as fully aligning with the NPF and RSES. Nonetheless, as these scenarios were considered by the Plan-preparation process they are given a high-level assessment by the SEA.

Scenario 1: Non-Intervention Scenario

Scenario 1 “Non-Intervention Scenario” would result in higher levels of potential environmental conflicts and lower levels of environmental improvements as:

- It does not take into account settlement capacity; and
- There would be higher levels of development in rural areas, in comparison to the other scenarios.

Athlone (the largest settlement in the County which is well served by infrastructure and settlements) would not meet the RSES target.

More resources would be required to service development with appropriate levels of water services under this scenario. This scenario would present the highest levels of potential non-conformances with the Habitats and Water Framework Directives. This scenario would present the highest levels of commuting, potentially conflicting with greenhouse gas emission reduction targets the most.

Scenario 2: Proportional Intervention A

In comparison with Scenario 1 “Non-Intervention Scenario”, Scenario 2 “Proportional Intervention Scenario A” would generally result in lower levels of potential environmental conflicts and higher levels of environmental improvements as:

- Athlone (the largest settlement in the County which is well served by infrastructure and services) would meet the RSES target, with proportional levels of growth in other settlements; and
- There would be lower levels of development in rural areas.

A decline/failure to arrest decline in the rural population under this scenario would not be consistent with the NPF and could potentially conflict with sustaining existing rural management practices that ensure the continuation of long-established managed landscapes and the flora and fauna that they contain.

Provisions integrated into a Plan under this scenario would ensure that development was serviced by appropriate levels of water services and that the Habitats and Water Framework Directives were complied with. This scenario would contribute towards the achievement of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Scenario 3: Proportional Intervention B

In comparison with Scenario 1 “Non-Intervention Scenario”, Scenario 3 “Proportional Intervention Scenario B” would generally result in lower levels of potential environmental conflicts and higher levels of environmental improvements as:

- Athlone (the largest settlement in the County which is well served by infrastructure and services) would meet the RSES target, with proportional levels of growth in other settlements; and
- There would be lower levels of development in rural areas.

A decline/failure to arrest decline in the rural population under this scenario would not be consistent with the NPF and could potentially conflict with sustaining existing rural management practices that ensure the continuation of long-established managed landscapes and the flora and fauna that they contain.

Provisions integrated into a Plan under this scenario would ensure that development was serviced by appropriate levels of water services and that the Habitats and Water Framework Directives were complied with. This scenario would contribute towards the achievement of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Scenario 4: Proportional Intervention C

In comparison with Scenario 1 “Non-Intervention Scenario”, Scenario 4 “Proportional Intervention Scenario C” would generally result in lower levels of potential environmental conflicts and higher levels of environmental improvements as:

- Athlone (the largest settlement in the County which is well served by infrastructure and services) would meet the RSES target, with proportional levels of growth in other settlements; and
- The rural remainder of the County would increase in line with planning objectives.

Provisions integrated into a Plan under this scenario would ensure that development was serviced by appropriate levels of water services and that the Habitats and Water Framework Directives were complied with. This scenario would contribute towards the achievement of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Tier 2 alternatives are assessed against Strategic Environmental Objectives on Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Assessment⁶⁸ of Tier 2 Alternatives against Strategic Environmental Objectives

Alternative Scenario	Likely to Improve status of SEOs		Potential Conflict with status of SEOs – likely to be mitigated	
	to a Greater degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Greater degree
Scenario 1: Non-Intervention Scenario		BFF PHH S W MA A A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L
Scenario 2: Proportional Intervention Scenario A	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	
Scenario 3: Proportional Intervention B	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	
Scenario 4: Proportional Intervention C	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	

Selected Scenario

Scenario 4: “Proportional Intervention C” was selected for the Plan however the environmental mitigation measures that have been integrated into the Plan through the SEA and AA processes could be applied and would be adequate under each of the four scenarios considered.

⁶⁸ The alternatives are evaluated using compatibility criteria in order to determine how they would be likely to affect the status of the existing environment and the SEOs. The SEOs and the alternatives are arrayed against each other to demonstrate which interactions would cause effects on specific components of the environment. Where the appraisal identifies an interaction with the status of an SEO the relevant SEO code is entered into the relevant column.

The interactions identified are reflective of likely significant environmental effects:

1. Interactions that would be likely to improve the status of a particular SEO would be likely to result in a significant positive effect on the protection/management of the environmental component/issues to which the SEO relates.
2. Interactions that would potentially conflict with the status of an SEO and would be likely to be mitigated would be likely to result in a potential significant negative effect however these effects would be likely to be mitigated by measures which have been integrated into the Plan.

These effects include secondary, cumulative (see also Section 8.2), synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

7.3.3 Assessment of Tier 3: Consideration of Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Influence

These two alternatives both provide for urban and rural growth in the County, however they have different approaches to managing development in areas surrounding urban settlements that are under strong urban pressure:

- A.** One includes a “Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure” policy that restricts development in areas surrounding urban settlements.

Restricting development in rural areas that are under strong urban influence would positively impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The restrictions would help to both reduce levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and encourage brownfield development within existing centres.

Rural development would be directed towards appropriate rural areas and urban development would be directed towards established settlements. This alternative would prevent low density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components.

- B.** The other does not include a “Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure” policy that restricts development in these areas.

Not restricting development in rural areas that are under strong urban influence would adversely impact upon the protection and management of the environment and sustainable development. The absence of restrictions would result in increased levels of greenfield development in areas immediately surrounding existing centres and less demand for brownfield development within existing centres.

Urban generated development would occur within rural areas outside of established settlements. This alternative would result in low density urban sprawl and associated adverse effects upon sustainable mobility, climate emission reduction targets and various environmental components.

Tier 3 alternatives are assessed against Strategic Environmental Objectives on Table 7.4.

Table 7.4 Assessment of Tier 3 Alternatives against Strategic Environmental Objectives

Alternative	Likely to Improve status of SEOs		Potential Conflict with status of SEOs – likely to be mitigated	
	to a Greater degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Lesser degree	to a Greater degree
A. Include a Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	
B. Do not include a Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L

Selected Alternative

Alternative A. “Include a Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure” was selected for the Plan.

7.3.4 Assessment of Tier 5: Land Use Zoning Alternatives

Tier 5 alternatives are assessed on Table 7.4.

Table 7.5 Assessment of Tier 5 Alternatives

Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Likely to <u>Improve</u> status of SEOs			<u>Potential Conflict</u> with status of SEOs – likely to be mitigated			Comments
		to a <u>Greater</u> degree	to a <u>Moderate</u> degree	to a <u>Lesser</u> degree	to a <u>Lesser</u> degree	to a <u>Moderate</u> degree	to a <u>Greater</u> degree	
Castlepollard	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. North of town	BFF PHH S MA A C CH L			PHH MA A C L	BFF S W CH		Lands adjacent to both Alternative A and B lands are already developed for similar uses and zoning these would allow for consolidation and efficient use of infrastructure. Existing access is already available at Alternative A and B lands. Alternative A and B lands are adjacent to the Castlepollard's existing built envelope. Alternative C lands are removed from the town's existing built envelope, not already developed in part for similar uses, would not allow for consolidation. Alternative C lands would conflict with emission reduction targets, air quality and human health.
	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: B. East of town			BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	PHH MA A C L	BFF S W CH		
	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: C. South West of town					BFF S W CH	PHH MA A C L	
Moate (Set 1)	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. West of town		BFF PHH S A C CH	MA L		BFF PHH S A C CH	MA L	Alternative B lands are already developed in part for similar uses and zoning these would allow for consolidation. Alternative A lands are not already developed in part for similar uses and zoning these would not allow for consolidation.
	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: B. East of town	MA L	BFF PHH S A C CH		MA L	BFF PHH S A C CH		
Moate (Set 2)	A. Include Provision for future Educational Uses				PHH A C MA		BFF S CH L	Development of lands for educational uses would potentially conflict with various environmental components however facilitating meeting future educational needs of the population would benefit the sustainable development of the town and would contribute towards sustainable mobility (and associated interactions with emission reduction targets and air quality) and efficient use of infrastructure in the future.
	B. Do not include: Provision for future Educational Uses				BFF S CH L		PHH A C MA	
Kinnegad (Set 1)	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. West of town to north of M4	W PHH MA A C	BFF S CH L		W PHH MA A C	BFF S CH L		These alternatives seek to provide for Enterprise and Employment zoning needs. Alternative A lands are better connected to proximate strategic roads infrastructure (M4 Motorway) than Alternative B lands. Alternative A lands would not have to be accessed through residential areas. Alternative B lands are adjacent to a waste water treatment plant. Alternative B lands are close to the river and may be at elevated levels of flood risk.
	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: B. East of town, adjacent to River Side		BFF S CH L	W PHH MA A C		BFF S CH L	W PHH MA A C	

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Town	Alternative (selected alternatives in bold)	Likely to <u>Improve</u> status of SEOs			<u>Potential Conflict</u> with status of SEOs – likely to be mitigated			Comments
		to a <u>Greater</u> degree	to a <u>Moderate</u> degree	to a <u>Lesser</u> degree	to a <u>Lesser</u> degree	to a <u>Moderate</u> degree	to a <u>Greater</u> degree	
Kinnegad (Set 2)	A. Include: Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space	PHH MA A C		BFF S CH L	PHH MA A C		BFF S CH L	Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space would benefit emission reduction targets, air quality and human health. Development of lands adjacent to the M4 for Commercial uses would involve land-take, loss of non-designated biodiversity. The lands adjacent to the M4 are close to the river and may be at elevated levels of flood risk.
	B. Do not include: Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space	BFF S CH L		PHH MA A C	BFF S CH L		PHH MA A C	
Rochfortbridge	A. Include Additional Enterprise and Employment zoning to south of town between R446 and R400			BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L			BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	Development of the identified lands for Enterprise and Employment uses would potentially conflict with various environmental components. The lands would provide an excess of zoned land in the settlement would result in land-take and loss of non-designated biodiversity. The southern portion of these lands are close to the river and may be at elevated levels of flood risk.
	B. Do not include: Additional Enterprise and Employment zoning to south of town between R446 and R400	BFF PHH S MA A C CH L			BFF PHH S MA A C CH L			
Kilucan /Rathwire	A. Strategy to join the built development envelope of both settlements		PHH MA A C	BFF S CH L		PHH MA A C	BFF S CH L	Recent developments in both Kilucan and Rathwire have been identified as resulting in a blurring of the once distinctive boundaries of these two villages. There are a number of mature trees and hedgerows in the surrounding area. Merging of the two centres would be likely to change the distinct forms of these settlements and would have the potential to impact upon landscape character and cultural heritage designations.
	B. Strategy to keep the built development envelope of both settlements separate	BFF S CH L	PHH MA A C		BFF S CH L	PHH MA A C		

7.4 Selected Alternatives

Selected alternatives for the Plan from each of the three tiers of alternatives that emerged from the planning/SEA process are indicated on Table 7.6 below.

These alternatives have been selected and developed by the Planning Team and placed on public display by the Council having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects which were identified by the SEA and are detailed above; and
2. Planning – including social and economic – effects that also were considered by the Council.

Table 7.6 Selected Alternatives for the Draft Plan

Tier	Alternatives Considered	Selected Alternative
Tier 1: Alternatives for Settlement Hierarchy	Not available – refer to Section 6	
Tier 2: Population Projection Scenarios	Scenario 1: Non-Intervention Scenario, Scenario 2: Proportional Intervention Scenario A, Scenario 3: Proportional Intervention B or Scenario 4: Proportional Intervention C	Scenario 4: Proportional Intervention C
Tier 3: Consideration of Policy for Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure	A. Include a “Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure” policy that restricts development in areas surrounding urban settlements or B. Do not include a “Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure” policy that restricts development in these areas	A. Include a “Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure” policy that restricts development in areas surrounding urban settlements
Tier 4: Densities	Not available – refer to Section 6	
Tier 5: Land Use Zoning	<u>Castlepollard</u> Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. North of town and/or B. East of town and/or C. South West of town	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. North of town and B. East of town
	<u>Moate – Alternatives Set 1</u> Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. West of town or B. East of town	Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: B. East of town
	<u>Moate – Alternatives Set 2</u> A. Include or B. Do not include: Provision for future Educational Uses	A. Include: Provision for future Educational Uses
	<u>Kinnegad – Alternatives Set 1</u> Zoning for Enterprise and Employment needs: A. West of town to north of M4 or B. East of town, adjacent to River Side	A. West of town to north of M4
	<u>Kinnegad – Alternatives Set 2</u> A. Include or B. Do not include: Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space	A. Include: Moving park and ride from centre of town to north of M4 and facilitating re-routing of bus and development of shared office space
	<u>Rochfortbridge</u> A. Include or B. Do not include: Additional Enterprise and Employment zoning to south of town between R446 and R400	B. Do not include: Additional Enterprise and Employment zoning to south of town between R446 and R400
	<u>Kilucan /Rathwire</u> A. Strategy to join the built development envelope of both settlements or B. Strategy to keep the built development envelope of both settlements separate	B. Strategy to keep the built development envelope of both settlements separate

Section 8 Evaluation of Plan Provisions

8.1 Introduction

This section provides an assessment of environmental effects using the information on the current state of the environment (provided in Section 4) and the Strategic Environmental Objectives (see Table 8.1) from implementation of the Plan.

The degree of significance of effects occurring cannot be fully determined at this level of decision making due to the lack of exact detail available with regard to the type or scale of development that will be permitted under the Plan. However, a strategic assessment can be undertaken.

Table 8.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives⁶⁹

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	BFF	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To preserve, protect, maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, particularly EU designated sites and protected species Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function Safeguard national, regional and local designated sites and supporting features which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets To protect, maintain and conserve the County's natural capital
Population and Human Health	PHH	Improve quality of life for all ages and abilities based on high-quality, serviced, well connected and sustainable residential, working, educational and recreational environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management Ensure that existing population and planned growth is matched with the required public infrastructure and the required services Safeguard the County's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being
Soil (and Land)	S	Ensure the long-term sustainable management of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield within the County Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites
Water	W	Protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive Ensure that economic growth of the marine resource and its ecosystems are managed sustainably Ensure water resources are sustainably managed to deliver proposed regional and County growth targets in the context of existing and projected water supply and wastewater capacity constraints ensuring the protection of receiving environments Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals
Material Assets	MA	Sustainable and efficient use of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimise existing infrastructure and provide new infrastructure to match population distribution proposals in the County Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all which encourages a broad energy generation mix to ensure security of supply – wind, wave solar, tidal, biomass, energy from waste and traditional fossil fuels Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of road and rail transport modes Encourage the transition to a zero-carbon economy by facilitating the development of a grid infrastructure to support renewables and international connectivity. Reduce the average energy consumption per capita including promoting energy efficient buildings, retrofitting, smart- buildings, cities and grids

⁶⁹ See also Section 5

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Air	A	Support clean air policies that reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole resulting from emissions to air from all sectors with particular reference to emissions from transport, residential heating, industry and agriculture. Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency. Promote continuing improvement in air quality. Reduction of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter which are responsible for acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health — Air Quality Directive Significantly decrease noise pollution by 2020 and move closer to WHO recommended levels.
Climatic Factors	C	Achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy that is cognisant of environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise emissions of greenhouse gasses. Integrate sustainable design solutions into the County's infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure). Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets. Promote development resilient to the effects of climate change Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport
Cultural Heritage	CH	Safeguard cultural heritage features and their settings through responsible design and positioning of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological or architectural heritage
Landscape	L	Protect and enhance the landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To implement the Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention

8.2 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects are one of the types of effects which have been considered by the assessment of the alternatives. Cumulative effects can be described as the addition of many small impacts to create one larger, more significant, impact.

There are two types of potential cumulative effects that have been considered, namely:

- Potential *intra-Plan* cumulative effects - these arise from the interactions between different types of potential environmental effects resulting from a plan, programme, etc. Where there are elevated levels of environmental sensitivities (such as those identified under Section 4), future development could result in environmental conflicts and lead to a deterioration in environmental integrity. The interrelationships between environmental components that help determine these potential effects are identified on Table 8.5 e.g. interrelationships between: human health and water quality; human health and air quality; human health and flood risk; and ecology and water quality.
- Potential *inter-Plan* cumulative effects - these arise when the effects of the implementation of one plan occur in combination with those of other plans, programmes, developments, etc.

Effects that may arise as a result of implementing the Plan have been mitigated to the extent that the only residual adverse effects likely to occur as a result of implementation of the Plan are those which are identified under Table 8.2.

Other policies, plans and programmes that have been considered by the assessment of effects include those which are detailed under Section 2.5 (and associated Appendix I "Relationship with Legislation, Plans and Programmes"), Section 4 and Section 5. Plans and programmes from various sectors will interact with the Plan, including those relating to land use planning. These plans and programmes are subject to their own environmental assessment requirements as relevant. Examples include:

- Land use policy, plans and programmes (e.g. the National Planning Framework, the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, adjoining County Development Plans and Local Area Plans)

- Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plans of adjoining counties;
- Energy policy, plans and programmes (e.g. Grid25 and associated Implementation Programme, Ireland's National Renewable Energy Action Plan 2010, Strategy for Renewable Energy 2012-2020, Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan, Draft National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030, Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework,
- Climate relates policy, plans and programmes (e.g. National Climate Policy Position and Climate Action 2014, Low Carbon Development Act 2015 and White Paper Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015, Climate Action Plan 2019, National Mitigation Plan 2017 and National Adaptation Framework 2018);
- Water services, waste management, transport and energy infrastructure plans (e.g. Irish Water's Water Services Strategic Plan and associated Capital Investment Plan, Eastern Regional Waste Management Plan and Transportation Policies and Strategies); and
- Environmental protection and management plans (e.g. River Basin Management Plans, and Flood Risk Management Plans).

Potential cumulative/in combination effects include:

- Contributions towards reductions in travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air, reductions in consumption from non-renewables and associated achievement of legally binding targets (in combination with plans and programmes from all sectors, including energy, transport and land use planning) as a result of facilitating:
 - sustainable compact growth;
 - sustainable mobility/a shift from motorised transport modes to more sustainable and non-motorised transport modes;
 - renewable energy development
- Contributions towards travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air (in combination with plans and programmes from all sectors, including transport and land use planning) as a result of facilitating development which must be accompanied by road capacity;
- Facilitation of new development that is accompanied by appropriate levels of water services thereby contributing towards environmental protection;
- Need for and use of water and wastewater treatment capacity arising from new developments and associated potential adverse effects;
- Potential cumulative effects upon surface and ground water status as a result of housing, employment, agricultural and forestry – loadings and abstractions;
- Potential cumulative effects (habitat damage, enhancing ecological connectivity, contributing towards sustainable mobility) arising from linear developments, such as those relating to Green Infrastructure, including beyond the County border;
- Potential cumulative effects on flood risk by, for example, development of greenfield lands or obstruction of flood paths; and
- In combination with plans and programmes from all sectors potential adverse effects on all environmental components arising from all development in greenfield and brownfield areas (e.g. infrastructural, residential, economic, agricultural etc.). The type of these effects are consistent with those described on Table 8.2. These plans and programmes are required to comply with environmental legislation and undergo SEA and AA as relevant comply with environmental legislation while projects are subject to EIA and AA, as relevant.

These effects would have the potential, if unmitigated, if they occurred, to result in changes in the environment within and beyond County Westmeath.

A variety of the issues covered by the Plan provisions are regional issues which are considered: at Regional Assembly level, in the Eastern and Midlands RSES and by planning authorities across the Region. The solutions to these issues are often regional solutions which are subject their own consenting procedures. Works arising outside of the Plan as a result of providing for new development within the Plan area including those arising as a result of the cumulative provision of development in the wider Eastern and Midlands region would potentially conflict with a number of environmental components, across the wider Eastern and Midlands region and beyond, including: ecology, soil function, the status of water bodies and the landscape. Some of these conflicts would be

mitigated by measures which will be integrated into the Plan while some will be mitigated by measures arising out of separate consent procedures.

8.3 Overall Evaluation

Westmeath County Council have integrated various recommendations arising from the SEA, AA and SFRA processes into the Draft Plan (see Section 9). Table 8.2 provides a detailed overall evaluation of the environmental effects arising from the Plan. The effects encompass all in-combination/cumulative effects arising from implementation of the Plan. The potentially significant adverse environmental effects (if unmitigated) arising from implementation of the Plan are detailed as are residual effects, taking into account mitigation through both provisions integrated into the Plan – see Section 9.

Environmental impacts which occur will be determined by the nature and extent of multiple or individual projects and site-specific environmental factors. Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO) codes taken from Table 8.1.

Table 8.2 Overall Evaluation – Effects arising from the Draft Plan

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework			SEO Codes
	Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP 2018, the Eastern and Midlands RSES, adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans.			
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated	Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects	
Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contribution towards protection of ecology (including designated sites, ecological connectivity, habitats) by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.• Contribution towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and associated ecosystem services, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats.• Contribution towards protection and/or maintenance of biodiversity and flora and fauna by contributing towards the protection of natural capital including the environmental vectors of air, water and soil. Biodiversity and flora and fauna includes biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species (including birds and bats), listed/protected species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats (including terrestrial and aquatic habitats), and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna – including terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity and flora and fauna.• Sustains existing sustainable rural management practices – and the communities who support them – to ensure the continuation of long-established managed landscapes and the flora and fauna that they contain.	<p>Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna;• Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and• Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of an extent of non-protected habitats and species arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces.• Losses or damage to ecology (these would be in compliance with relevant legislation).	BFF

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP 2018, the Eastern and Midlands RSES, adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans.			SEO Codes
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated	Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects	
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management. Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond Contribution towards the protection of human health by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. Contributes towards protection of human health as a result of contributing towards the protection of natural capital including environmental vectors, including air and water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential adverse effects arising from flood events. Potential interactions if effects arising from environmental vectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential interactions with residual effects on environmental vectors – please refer to residual adverse effects under "Soil", "Water" and "Air and Climatic Factors" below. 	PHH
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution towards the protection of soils (including those used for agriculture) and designated sites of geological heritage by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. Contribution towards the protection of the environment from contamination the highest standards of remediation, and where appropriate to consultations with the EPA and other relevant bodies, will be required to resolve any instances of environmental pollution created by contaminated land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands. Potential for riverbank erosion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces. 	S

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP 2018, the Eastern and Midlands RSES, adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans.			SEO Codes
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated	Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects	
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution towards the protection of water by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. Contributions towards the protection of water resources including the status of surface and groundwaters and water-based designations. Contribution towards flood risk management and appropriate drainage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology. Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any increased loadings as a result of development to comply with the River Basin Management Plan. Flood related risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to extreme weather events – however such risks will be mitigated by measures that have been integrated into the Plan. 	W
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. Contribution towards compliance with national and regional water services and waste management policies. Contribution towards increase in renewable energy use by facilitating renewable energy and electricity transmission infrastructure developments. Contribution towards limits in increases in energy demand from the transport sector by facilitating sustainable compact growth. Contribution towards reductions in average energy consumption per capita including promoting energy efficient buildings, retrofitting, smart buildings, cities and grids. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). Increases in waste levels. Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure. Interactions between agricultural waste and soil, water, biodiversity and human health – including as a result of emissions of ammonia from agricultural activities (e.g. manure handling, storage and spreading) and the production of secondary inorganic particulate matter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exceedance of capacity in critical infrastructure risks remain, including due to uncertainty with regard to climate – however, such risks will be mitigated by: measures, including those requiring the timely provision of critical infrastructure, and compliance with the Water Framework Directive and associated River Basin Management Plan. Residual wastes to be disposed of in line with higher-level waste management policies. Any impacts upon public assets and infrastructure to comply with statutory planning/consent-granting framework. 	MA

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP 2018, the Eastern and Midlands RSES, adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans.			SEO Codes
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated	Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects	
Air and Climatic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution towards climate mitigation and adaptation by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to the County's settlements) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-served lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • In combination with other plans, programmes etc., contribution towards the objectives of the wide policy framework relating to climate mitigation and adaptation, and associated contribution towards maintaining and improving air quality and managing noise levels, including through measures relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sustainable compact growth; ○ Sustainable mobility, including walking, cycling and public transport; ○ Drainage, flood risk management and resilience; ○ Sectors including agriculture, residential heating and infrastructure; ○ Sustainable infrastructure design solutions including energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential conflict between development under the Plan and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives. • Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality. • Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors. • Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extent of travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air. This has been mitigated by provisions which have been integrated into the Plan, including those relating to sustainable compact growth and sustainable mobility. • Interactions between noise emissions and sensitive receptors. Various provisions have been integrated into the Plan to ensure that noise levels at sensitive receptors will be minimised. 	AC
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage elsewhere in the County by facilitating development within existing settlements. • Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage within existing settlements by facilitating brownfield development and regeneration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential effects on known architectural and archaeological heritage and unknown archaeology however, these will occur in compliance with legislation. 	CH
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes towards protection of wider landscape and landscape designations by facilitating development within existing settlements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscapes will change overtime as a result of natural changes in vegetation cover combined with new developments that will occur in compliance with the Plan's landscape protection measures. 	L

8.4 Members' Amendments and Environmental Consequences

The preparation of a pre-Draft Plan, for the consideration of Members in advance of public display was informed by the SEA, AA and SFRA processes.

Advice relating to Members' Motions to amend the pre-Draft Plan was provided to the Members for their consideration in advance of agreeing amendments.

Taking into account, inter alia, the advice on Motions and the SEA, AA and SFRA documentation for the Draft Plan, the Members agreed to amend the pre-Draft Plan by resolution.

An earlier version of this SEA Environmental Report was updated to take account of these amendments.

Motions that were advised against, subsequently agreed upon as amendments to the pre-Draft Plan and which would have potential for likely significant negative environmental effects are identified on Table 8.3 below.

Table 8.3 Motions advised against, subsequently agreed upon as amendments and which would have potential for significant negative environmental effects

Motion No.	Chapter	Theme	Motion adopted as amendment	Potential for Likely Significant Negative Environmental Effects
10	8	Transport in Kinnegad	NEW CPO 8.103 Support the construction of a link road between the Killucan Road L1015 and the roundabout at the junction of the R446-2 and N4-1120, thereby creating a bypass of the Main Street, Kinnegad.	There is no planning justification to make provision for a new link road in the absence of development on the associated lands and accordingly it is therefore considered that the motion is premature within the timeframe of the Plan. Consequently, such a road would present unnecessary potential for likely significant adverse effects on various environmental components. Mitigation of these effects would be contributed towards by measures relating to environmental protection and sustainable development that have been integrated into the Draft Plan.
21 and 62	9	Areas under Strong Urban Influence	Amended CPO 9.1 Areas Under Strong Urban Influence To accommodate demand from individuals for permanent residential development in defined 'Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence' who have strong links to the area and who are an intrinsic part of the rural community, subject to good planning practice, environmental carrying capacity and landscape protection considerations. Local Housing Need Permit residential development in areas defined 'Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence and Stronger Rural Areas' subject to the following circumstances: 1. Persons who are actively engaged in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, bloodstock and peat industry, 2. Members of farm families seeking to build on the family farm, 3. Landowners and members of landowners' families (landowner for this purpose being defined as persons who owned the land in question since the year 2000); 3. Landowners for this purpose	This amendment dilutes the circumstances outlined in this particular Policy Objective and has the potential to result in more housing in Areas Under Strong Urban Influence and associated potential for likely significant adverse environmental effects including landscape, biodiversity, surface and ground water, human health and emissions from transport. Other rural housing and environmental provisions from the Plan would apply to any proposals for residential development and these would contribute towards the mitigation of such effects.

Motion No.	Chapter	Theme	Motion adopted as amendment	Potential for Likely Significant Negative Environmental Effects
			<p>being defined as persons who own the land 5 years prior to the date of planning application.</p> <p>4. Persons employed locally whose employment would provide a service to the local community,</p> <p>5. Persons who have personal, family or economic ties within the area, including returning emigrants</p> <p>6. Persons who wish to return to farming and who buy or inherit a substantial farm-holding which is kept intact as an established farm unit, will be considered by the Council to be farmers and will be open to consideration for a rural house, as farmers. Where there is already a house on the holding, refurbishment or replacement of this house is the preferred option.</p> <p>The local area for the purpose of this policy is defined as the area generally within a 10km radius of the applicant's family home.</p>	
22	9	High Amenity Areas	<p>Amended CPO 9.22 Restrict development not related to farming practices and tourism in all High Amenity Areas, with the exception of housing for the immediate family (son/daughter) of established residents living on landholdings, who demonstrate a housing need and have long-term intrinsic links with the area. The entire landholding will be demonstrated to have been in the resident's ownership since 2000. No more than three additional dwellings to be permitted on any such holding and provided there is no alternative site on the holding outside the Area of High Amenity. The entire landholding will be demonstrated to have been in the resident's ownership 5 years prior to the date of application.</p>	<p>This proposal would dilute the level of protection provided for High Amenity Areas in the County, encourage more housing in these areas and ultimately result in adverse effects upon the factors for which these areas of landscape have been designated. The proposal would also be likely to result in potential for likely significant adverse environmental effects on components other than landscape including biodiversity, surface and ground water, human health and emissions from transport.</p>
Various	10	Wind Energy Policy	<p>NEW CPO 10.132 Provide the following separation distances between wind turbines and residential dwellings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 metres, where height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 25 metres but does not exceed 50 metres. • 1000 metres, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 50 metres but does not exceed 100 metres. • 1500 metres, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 100 metres but does not exceed 150 metres. • More than 2000 metres, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 150 metres. 	<p>This is not consistent with the approach in the Draft Statutory Guidelines on Wind Energy Development and would not provide the most evidence-based framework for development. The Draft Guidelines include a suite of environmental related measures that have been arrived at following detailed consideration of, inter alia: the current policy context in relation to climate action and reliance on fossil fuels (this has changed since the adoption of the 2014); and the most recent up to date scientific knowledge in relation to environmental interactions associated with wind energy developments. This amendment has the potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undermine and negate practical measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions climate change in compliance with high-level climate action policy; and • Restrict the potential for wind energy development in the County, which is contrary to national energy policy that supports reductions in the reliance on fossil fuels and the development of renewable energy resources including wind energy infrastructure.

Motion No.	Chapter	Theme	Motion adopted as amendment	Potential for Likely Significant Negative Environmental Effects
1	13	A change to the High Amenity Area Maps	NEW Change to Draft Plan required to change the High Amenity Area at west end of Lough Lene, as shown on the maps submitted with the motion.	This amendment would remove the buffer zone and place the boundary within the landscape that defines the character of Lough Lene. Furthermore, the piecemeal erosion of important High Amenity designations would reduce the protection of the overall landscape and undermine the long-term protection of these important assets.
2 (2 & 4)			NEW Change to Draft Plan required to change the High Amenity area at east end of Lough Derravaragh, as shown on the maps accompanying the motion.	The current boundary around the amendment is already within the landscape that begins to define the character of Lough Derravaragh and not within a buffer zone. The amendment would remove landscapes that are part of the appearance of Lough Derravaragh. Furthermore, the piecemeal erosion of these important High Amenity designations would reduce the protection of the overall landscape and undermine the long-term integrity of these important assets.
3			NEW Change to Draft Plan required to change the High Amenity Area at northern side of Lough Derravaragh, as shown on the maps accompanying the motion.	This amendment would remove protection given to this area which influences the appearance of the landscape around Lough Derravaragh. Furthermore, the piecemeal erosion of these important High Amenity designations would reduce the protection of the overall landscape and undermine the long-term integrity of these important assets.
4 (4 & 2)			NEW Change to Draft Plan required that the area marked on map at Whitehall Castlepollard be removed from High Amenity Area.	The current boundary around the amendment is already within the landscape that begins to define the character of Lough Derravaragh and not within a buffer zone. The amendment would remove landscapes that are part of the appearance of Lough Derravaragh. Furthermore, the piecemeal erosion of these important High Amenity designations would reduce the protection of the overall landscape and undermine the long-term integrity of these important assets.
5			NEW Change to Draft Plan required that the area marked on map at Ballinakill, Multyfarnham be removed from High amenity area.	The amendment would remove the buffer zone and place the boundary on the ridgeline, within view from the lough. Furthermore, the piecemeal erosion of these important High Amenity designations would reduce the protection of the overall landscape and undermine the long-term protection of these important assets.
70	Zoning maps	Glasson Zoning	NEW Change required to Draft Plan to zone one site for residential development along the high road to Ballykeeran (see attached map shaded purple).	<p>There is no established planning justification for zoning at this settlement above that which was already included in the pre-Draft Plan at this settlement.</p> <p>It is an objective of the Plan, in line with national and regional policy, to facilitate infill and brownfield development within the existing built footprint of urban settlements. This greenfield site outside the established settlement boundary does not provide for brownfield or the sequential development of Glasson, considering the existence of alternative suitable sites within the existing village envelope.</p> <p>Glasson is a quaint rural village occupying a picturesque setting near Lough Ree. The Draft Plan promotes the consolidation of the village and protection of its architectural heritage, including form and character. The proposed motion would constitute a piecemeal extension to the settlement and accordingly would detract from its attractive form and setting, thereby undermining the unique character of the village.</p>

8.5 Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) are being undertaken alongside the preparation of the Draft Plan.

The requirement for AA is provided under the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 1992/43/EEC). The AA assesses the effects of the Plan on European Sites designated for certain habitats and species. The emerging conclusion of the AA is that the Plan will not affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 network⁷⁰.

SFRA is required by 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014. The recommendations from the SFRA have generally been integrated into the Draft Plan.

Various policies and objectives have been integrated into the Plan through the SEA, SFRA and AA processes. The preparation of the Plan, SEA, AA and SFRA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA and SFRA have informed both the Plan and the SEA.

8.6 Interactions with Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

Table 8.4 summarises how considerations relating to climate have been incorporated into the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Table 8.4 How Climate Action has been integrated into the Draft Plan

Chapter	Contribution towards Climate Action	Focus of Climate Action
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies climate change as one of the cross-cutting themes influencing the content of the Plan 	Mitigation and Adaptation
2. Core Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on sustainable settlement patterns and compact urban growth along public transport corridors, thus minimising need to travel. Alignment provided between the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the National Planning Framework's National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in areas such as climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, economic growth, reduced inequalities and innovation and infrastructure, as well as education and health with a focus on compact, smart and sustainable development that have accessible services to all. 	Mitigation and Adaptation
3. Housing Chapter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on sustainable settlement patterns and compact urban growth along public transport corridors, thus minimising need to travel. Promotes energy efficiency in future housing stock 	Adaptation
4. Sustainable Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out parameters for building sustainable communities in terms of sustainable housing, sustainable economic development and sustainable amenities 	Mitigation and Adaptation
5. Economy and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the development of a low carbon economy and promotes the economic benefits associated with this transition Considers as mechanism to align our climate targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Action Plan 2019 Climate Action Fund, Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. 	Mitigation and Adaptation

⁷⁰ Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

- (a) no alternative solution available;
- (b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan/programme/project to proceed; and
- (c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

Chapter	Contribution towards Climate Action	Focus of Climate Action
6. Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides for climate resilience to be taken into consideration in future tourism plans and projects. Requires best-practice environmental management and climate proofing of tourism related developments. 	Mitigation
7. Urban Centre & Placemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides for the consideration of climate adaptation measures in both place-making strategies and projects 	Mitigation and Adaptation
8. Settlement Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides for compact urban form, green infrastructure, increased permeability across the network of towns and rural villages in the County 	Mitigation and Adaptation
9. Rural Westmeath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes development in viable rural settlements with access to rural transport links, sustainable rural diversification (Smart Villages) as well as sustainable agricultural/ forestry practices etc. Provides for rural housing policy including guiding principles for "Rural Areas under Strong Urban Pressure" in the context of a shift towards reduced travel demand. The environmental benefits of this approach, including contributing towards climate mitigation and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, has been demonstrated in the accompanying SEA. 	Mitigation and Adaptation
10. Transport, Infrastructure and Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes reduced carbon usage and encouragement of modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport. Encourages the use of Sustainable urban drainage measures to reduce surface water run-off. Promotion of renewable energy and sustainable building design Recognised the importance of renewable (wind/solar etc.) development Provides for a shift to EVs cars Provides for less transport intensive growth through better planning, remote and home-working and modal shift to public transport. Provides for climate change as a key consideration under flood risk policy. Provides policy in relation to SUDS and climate change. Facilitates measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and supports the implementation of actions identified in the Westmeath County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024. 	Mitigation and Adaptation
11. Climate Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides policy context in relation to developing a climate resilient society 	Mitigation
12. Natural Heritage & Green Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of a green infrastructure network and nature-based approach to climate 	Mitigation and Adaptation
13. Landscape & Lake Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measure to protect and enhance the existing landscape character areas, lakes, amenity areas, scenic routes and promotion of nature-based approach to climate change 	Mitigation
14. Built & Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on climate-proofing protected structures, with emphasis on educating the public with regard to best practice. 	Mitigation and Adaptation
15. Land Use Zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consolidated Land Use Zoning strategy informed by the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 	Mitigation and Adaptation
16. Development Management Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out criteria for new development in relation to building design and performance, energy efficiency and low carbon development. 	Mitigation and Adaptation

8.7 Interrelationship between Environmental Components

The SEA Directive requires the Environmental Report to include information on the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, fauna, flora, population, human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.

Likely significant effects on environmental components which are identified include those which are interrelated; implementation of the Plan will not affect the interrelationships between these components. The presence of significant interrelationships between environmental components is identified on Table 8.5.

Table 8.5 Presence of Interrelationships between Environmental Components

Component	Biodiversity, flora and fauna	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Air and Climatic factors	Material assets	Cultural heritage	Landscape
Biodiversity, flora and fauna		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Population and Human Health			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Soil				Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Water					No	Yes	No	No
Air and Climatic Factors						Yes	No	No
Material Assets							Yes	Yes
Cultural Heritage								Yes
Landscape								

8.8 Detailed Evaluation⁷¹

For an explanation of SEO codes e.g. **BFF**, **PHH**, **S**, **W**, etc. refer to Table 8.1 on page 71.

The following applies to each of the sub-sections 8.8.1 to 8.8.16 below:

The Plan is situated in a hierarchy of documents setting out public policy setting out public policy for, among other things, land use planning, infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism, environmental protection and environmental management, such as the National Planning Framework, the National Development Plan, the National Mitigation Plan, the National Adaptation Framework, the Climate Action Plan and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region (for additional detail please refer to Section 2.5 "Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes" in this report).

These other existing policies, plans etc. have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant, and already provide for various measures that have been compiled into the Plan. The Plan aligns with these documents and will be incorporated into the review and preparation of these documents.

Lower tier plans and projects must be consistent and comply with the provisions of the Plan and of these other policies, plans etc. and will be subject to their own project level EIA and AA requirements as relevant. An assessment of cumulative effects is provided at Section 8.2 of this report.

8.8.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
Strategic Vision: <i>To create and facilitate sustainable competitive growth throughout the County that supports the health and wellbeing of the people of Westmeath, providing an attractive destination, as a place in which to live, work, invest, do business and visit, offering high quality employment and educational opportunities within sustainable communities whilst safeguarding the environmental, cultural, heritage and tourism assets of the County.</i>	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	
Strategic Aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustainable Communities: To develop and support vibrant sustainable communities in Westmeath where people can live, work and enjoy access to a wide range of community, health and educational facilities and amenities, suitable for all ages and needs, in both urban and rural areas, thereby supporting a high quality of life for all to enjoy. ▪ Economic Development and Employment: To promote and assist in Westmeath's economic development and encourage increased resilience in the County's enterprise, underpinned by talent and innovation, thereby ensuring that Westmeath is best placed to excel in the long-term delivery of sustainable jobs and an enhanced standard of living for all. ▪ Tourism: To provide for the continued expansion of the tourism sector, with a focus on creating strong visitor destination towns and sufficient high-quality visitor services and the continued development and enhancement of visitor attractions and activities to provide memorable, immersive visitor experiences, capitalising on our natural and cultural heritage assets, whilst safeguarding these resources for future generations. ▪ Urban Centres & Placemaking: To protect and enhance the unique identity and character of Westmeath's towns and villages and improve quality of life and wellbeing through the application of Healthy Placemaking, underpinned by good urban design, with the creation of attractive public spaces that are vibrant, 				

⁷¹ The Plan's provisions are evaluated using compatibility criteria in order to determine how they would be likely to affect the status of the existing environment and the SEOs. The SEOs and the Plan provisions are arrayed against each other in order to demonstrate which interactions would cause effects on specific components of the environment. Where the appraisal identifies an interaction with the status of an SEO the relevant SEO code is entered into the relevant column.

The interactions identified are reflective of likely significant environmental effects:

1. Interactions that would be likely to improve the status of a particular SEO would be likely to result in a significant positive effect on the protection/management of the environmental component/issues to which the SEO relates.
2. Interactions that would potentially conflict with the status of an SEO and would be likely to be mitigated would be likely to result in a potential significant negative effect however these effects would be likely to be mitigated by measures which have been integrated into the Plan.

These effects include secondary, cumulative (see also Section 8.2), synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

<p>distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate positive social interaction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Settlements: To create a network of attractive, liveable towns and villages in the County with increased levels of population, employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity which support a high quality of life and well-being. ▪ Rural: To support the role of rural areas and the countryside in sustaining the rural economy and improved connectivity, broadband and rural economic development opportunities through the development of the agricultural and agri-food sector, agricultural related developments and enterprises, including diversification of the rural economy, forestry, energy production, tourism, recreation, mineral extraction and/or other new and emerging rural based enterprises, all within the context of the sustainable management of land and resources, thereby increasing the competitiveness of the rural economy, which will sustain and strengthen rural communities. ▪ Transport, Infrastructure and Energy: To achieve a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with excellent connectivity within and to Westmeath by enhancing existing strategic transportation infrastructure in the County. To provide, improve and extend water, wastewater, surface water and flood alleviation services throughout the County and to prioritise the provision of water services infrastructure, to achieve improved environmental protection and to protect public health. To provide for the development of indigenous energy resources, with an emphasis on renewable energy supplies. ▪ Climate Action: To transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County, with an emphasis on reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change. ▪ Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure: Continue to protect and enhance the County's natural heritage and biodiversity and ensure that networks of green infrastructure are identified, created, protected and enhanced to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities. ▪ Landscape and Lake Amenities: To improve the knowledge and understanding of the County's landscape and lakelands, and enhance the overall characteristics, qualities and diversity of landscape character, its sense of place and local distinctiveness in recognition of the amenity potential of the County. ▪ Cultural Heritage: Westmeath County Council recognises the importance of identifying, valuing and safeguarding our archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage for future generations and aims to do so by means of proper management, sensitive enhancement and/or appropriate development of this resource 				
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Commentary

The assessment of the Plan's Strategic Vision and Aims against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:

- Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and
- Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report.

Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-served and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy.

The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:

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

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan contribute towards the sustainable development and the protection and management of the environment, for example:

- Strategic Vision: Sustainable Communities: "...health and wellbeing of the people of Westmeath... whilst safeguarding the environmental, cultural, heritage and tourism assets of the County"
- Strategic Aim: Sustainable Communities: "vibrant sustainable communities... in both urban and rural areas, thereby supporting a high quality of life for all to enjoy."
- Strategic Aim: Urban Centres & Placemaking: "To protect and enhance the unique identity and character of Westmeath's towns and villages..."
- Strategic Aim: Settlements: "To create a network of attractive, liveable towns and villages in the County with increased levels of population, employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity which support a high quality of life and well-being."
- Strategic Aim: Rural: "all within the context of the sustainable management of land and resources, thereby increasing the competitiveness of the rural economy, which will sustain and strengthen rural communities."
- Strategic Aim: Transport, Infrastructure and Energy: "To achieve a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with excellent connectivity within and to Westmeath by enhancing existing strategic transportation infrastructure in the County. To provide, improve and extend water, wastewater, surface water and flood alleviation services throughout the County and to prioritise the provision of water services infrastructure, to achieve improved environmental protection and to protect public health. To provide for the development of indigenous energy resources, with an emphasis on renewable energy supplies."
- Strategic Aim: Climate Action: "To transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County, with an emphasis on reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change."
- Strategic Aim: Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure: "Continue to protect and enhance the County's natural heritage and biodiversity and ensure that networks of green infrastructure are identified, created, protected and enhanced to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities."
- Strategic Aim: Landscape and Lake Amenities: "To improve the knowledge and understanding of the County's landscape and lakelands, and enhance the overall characteristics, qualities and diversity of landscape character, its sense of place and local distinctiveness in recognition of the amenity potential of the County."
- Strategic Aim: Cultural Heritage: "Westmeath County Council recognises the importance of identifying, valuing and safeguarding our archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage for future generations and aims to do so by means of proper management, sensitive enhancement and/or appropriate development of this resource."

8.8.2 Chapter 2: Core Strategy

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>Strategic Aims</p> <p>I. To guide the future development of Westmeath in line with national and regional objectives set out in the NPF and RSES and other national guidelines and policies</p> <p>II. To promote and facilitate the development of the County in accordance with the provisions of the Core Strategy, including directing development in line with the settlement hierarchy and promoting development at an appropriate scale that is reflective of the terms of the Core Strategy Table and zoning maps.</p> <p>III. To apply the Settlement Hierarchy to determine the scale, rate and location of proposed developments and apply appropriate development management measures to ensure compliance with the Settlement Hierarchy including the population targets for the County.</p> <p>IV. To promote the delivery of at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements within their existing built-up footprints</p> <p>V. To support the achievement of more self-sustaining towns and villages through residential and employment opportunities together with supporting social and community facilities</p> <p>VI. To monitor and maintain a record of residential development permitted in settlements designated under the Settlement Hierarchy in order to ensure compliance with the population allocations defined by the Core Strategy and to adjust the approach to permitting development proposals in instances where Core Strategy objectives are not being met.</p> <p>Regional Growth Centre – Athlone</p> <p>CPO 2.1: To support the continued growth of Athlone, with a focus on quality of life and securing the investment to fulfil its role as a key Regional Growth Centre and economic driver in the centre of Ireland, with a target population of 30,000 up to 2031</p> <p>CPO 2.2: To prepare a joint statutory Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) for Athlone with Roscommon County Council in collaboration with EMRA and NWRA.</p> <p>CPO 2.3: To Promote Athlone as a sustainable transport hub, of national and regional importance and support the preparation of a joint Transport Plan between Westmeath and Roscommon County Councils in collaboration with transport agencies and key stakeholders to improve sustainable mobility in the town</p> <p>Key Town – Mullingar</p> <p>CPO 2.4: To support the continued growth and sustainable development of Mullingar to act as a growth driver in the region and to fulfil its role as a Key Town.</p> <p>CPO 2.5: To prepare a Local Area Plan (LAP) for Mullingar to align with the RSES and this Core Strategy.</p> <p>Self-Sustaining Growth Towns</p> <p>CPO 2.6: To promote consolidation in Self-Sustaining Growth Towns coupled with targeted investment where required to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options and to become more self-sustaining settlements.</p> <p>CPO 2.7: To promote commensurate population and employment growth in the designated Self-Sustaining towns, providing for natural increases and to become more economically self-sustaining, in line with the quality and capacity of public transport, services and infrastructure available.</p> <p>Towns and Villages</p> <p>CPO 2.8: To promote consolidation coupled with targeted rural housing and investment policies in Towns and Villages where required to improve local employment, services and sustainable transport options and to become more self-sustaining.</p> <p>Rural Areas</p> <p>CPO 2.9: To support the sustainable development of rural areas in Westmeath by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.</p> <p>CPO 2.10: To support the servicing of rural villages (serviced sites) to provide an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside, in line with RSES Objective RPO 4.78.</p> <p>Core Strategy Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 2.11 Ensure that the future spatial development of Westmeath is in accordance with the National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF) including the population targets set out under the Implementation Roadmap, and the Regional, Spatial and the Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031.</p> <p>CPO 2.12 implement all land use planning policy and objectives in a manner which takes account of and is consistent with the Core Strategy in order to accelerate a transition to a greener, low carbon and climate resilient county with a focus on reduced travel demand through the promotion of sustainable settlement patterns.</p> <p>CPO 2.13 In the assessment of development proposals, to take account of transport corridors, environmental carrying capacity, availability and/or capacity to provide waste water and water supply services, potential to conflict with Water Framework Directive objectives, potential to impact on the integrity of European sites and Annexed Habitats and species, features of biodiversity value including ecological networks, impact on landscape and visual characteristics, education and other socioeconomic objectives</p> <p>CPO 2.14 Promote the integration of land use and transportation policies and to prioritise provision for cycling and walking travel modes and the strengthening of public transport.</p> <p>CPO 2.15 Support the regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield / infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands to facilitate population growth and achieve sustainable compact growth targets of 30% of all new housing to be built within the existing urban footprint of targeted settlements in the county.</p> <p>CPO 2.16 Promote measures to reduce vacancy and the underuse of existing building stock and support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings within urban centres and targeted settlements in the county.</p> <p>CPO 2.17 Incorporate, in the content of the County Development Plan, measures in accordance with section 10 (n) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to— (i) reduce energy</p>	<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>		<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>	

<p>demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources, (ii) reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and (iii) address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.</p> <p>Core Strategy Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 2.18 To monitor development for compliance with the objectives of the Core Strategy and adjust, where necessary, the approach taken to the consideration of development proposals in order to ensure effective alignment with National and Regional policy and objectives.</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Core Strategy against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</p> <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy.</p> <p>The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised. <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan contribute towards the sustainable development and the protection and management of the environment, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Aim IV "To promote the delivery of at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements within their existing built-up footprints" CPO 2.1 "To support the continued growth of Athlone, with a focus on quality of life..." CPO 2.4 To support the continued growth and sustainable development of Mullingar..." CPO 2.6 "To promote consolidation in Self-Sustaining Growth Towns coupled with targeted investment..." CPO 2.8 To promote consolidation coupled with targeted rural housing and investment policies in Towns and Villages CPO 2.9 "To support the sustainable development of rural areas in Westmeath..." CPO 2.12 "...transition to a greener, low carbon and climate resilient county with a focus on reduced travel demand through the promotion of sustainable settlement patterns..." CPO 2.13 "In the assessment of development proposals, to take account of transport corridors, environmental carrying capacity, availability and/or capacity to provide waste water and water supply services, potential to conflict with Water Framework Directive objectives, potential to impact on the integrity of European sites and Annexed Habitats and species, features of biodiversity value including ecological networks, impact on landscape and visual characteristics, education and other socioeconomic objectives." CPO 2.17 "Incorporate, in the content of the County Development Plan, measures in accordance with section 10 (n) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to— (i) reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources, (ii) reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and (iii) address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development." 				

8.8.3 Chapter 3: Housing Strategy

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>Housing Strategy Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 3.1 To reserve sufficient lands to facilitate and implement the Housing Strategy and its policies, as informed by the HNDA undertaken as part of this Development Plan</p> <p>CPO 3.2 To ensure that settlements grow in a manner that is self-sustaining with sufficient social and economic infrastructure, and to a scale which aligns with the Settlement Hierarchy prescribed in the Core Strategy.</p> <p>CPO 3.3 To secure the provision of social and affordable housing accommodation, to meet the needs of all households and the disadvantaged sectors in the county, including the elderly, first time buyers, single person households on modest incomes, people with disabilities, and special needs etc.</p> <p>CPO 3.4 To ensure in accordance with Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended that arrangements for the provision of Social and Affordable Housing are made in accordance with the current Housing Strategy.</p> <p>CPO 3.5 To ensure that a suitable variety and mix of dwelling types and sizes is provided in developments to meet different needs, having regard to demographic and social changes.</p>	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	

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<p>CPO 3.6 To support independent living for people with disabilities and the elderly and where possible, to ensure that housing is integrated within proposed or existing residential developments and located close to existing community facilities.</p> <p>CPO 3.7 To apply higher densities to the higher order settlements of Athlone and Mullingar to align with their roles as Regional Growth Centre and Key Town, subject to good design and development management standards being met.</p> <p>CPO 3.8 To apply graded densities in towns and villages having regard to their role in Settlement Hierarchy and that are commensurate to the existing built environment.</p> <p>CPO 3.9 To secure the implementation of the Council's Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 and to review this programme if required and/or deemed to be necessary, during the Plan period.</p> <p>CPO 3.10 To continue to reflect household size and composition, including the accommodation needs of single parent families, single homeless persons, persons with disabilities and the elderly, etc. in accommodation provisions.</p> <p>CPO 3.11 To co-operate with Voluntary Housing Associations and other providers of social housing</p> <p>CPO 3.12 To monitor and maintain a record of residential development permitted in settlements designated under the Settlement Hierarchy in accordance with forthcoming Departmental guidance around the establishment of a HNDA coordination and monitoring unit and related implementation of a centralised spatial database for Local Authority Housing</p> <p>CPO 3.13 To support the ongoing monitoring and review of the HNDA in conjunction the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Housing Strategy against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-served and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</p> <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc., including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy that designates Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre and Mullingar as a Key Town – this designation has informed the Housing Strategy.</p> <p>Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy.</p> <p>The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised. <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan contribute towards the sustainable development and the protection and management of the environment, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPO 3.1 "To reserve sufficient lands to facilitate and implement the Housing Strategy and its policies, as informed by the HNDA undertaken as part of this Development Plan" CPO 3.2 "To ensure that settlements grow in a manner that is self-sustaining with sufficient social and economic infrastructure, and to a scale which aligns with the Settlement Hierarchy prescribed in the Core Strategy. " CPO 3.7 "To apply higher densities to the higher order settlements of Athlone and Mullingar... " CPO 3.8 "To apply graded densities in towns and villages having regard to their role in Settlement Hierarchy and that are commensurate to the existing built environment. " 				

8.8.4 Chapter 4: Sustainable Communities

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>Sustainable Communities Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 4.1 Support sustainable transport infrastructure, by developing mixed use schemes, higher densities close to public transport hubs, safe walking routes in developments, promoting alternative modes of transport and reduce the need to travel.</p> <p>CPO 4.2 Support and promote the development of socially inclusive, sustainable communities in the County and seek to ensure that all citizens enjoy optimal health and wellbeing along with associated mental health supports and youth services.</p> <p>CPO 4.3 Encourage inclusive and active sustainable communities based around a strong network of community facilities.</p>	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	

<p>Sustainable Communities - Sustainable Economy Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 4.4 Enhance the well-being and quality of life of the people of Westmeath through sustainable economic and community development.</p> <p>CPO 4.5 Support the implementation of Local Authority Local Economic and Community Plans, in collaboration with Local and Economic Development Committees (LDCs) and through the use of spatial planning policies and seek to reduce the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the County.</p> <p>Sustainable Communities – Sustainable Housing Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 4.6 Secure the provision of social and affordable housing accommodation, to meet the needs of all households and the disadvantaged sectors in the County, including the elderly, first time buyers, single person households on modest incomes, people with disabilities, and special needs etc.</p> <p>CPO 4.7 Achieve densities for new housing that respect the local character of surrounding areas, whilst making efficient use of land.</p> <p>CPO 4.8 Provide for housing that is accessible for older people, the very young and people with disabilities and that residential buildings together with non-residential buildings are accessible and usable by people with disabilities.</p> <p>Sustainable Communities – Lifetime Housing/Housing for Older People Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 4.9 Support the Westmeath Age Friendly Programme and the Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2018-2022 aimed at improving the quality of life of older people throughout the County.</p> <p>CPO 4.10 Deliver a sufficient supply of housing over the period of the Plan that is reflective of current and future demographic trends.</p> <p>CPO 4.11 Ensure that a suitable variety and mix of dwelling types and sizes is provided in developments to meet different needs, having regard to demographic and social changes.</p> <p>CPO 4.12 Ensure that suitable dwellings are provided in all housing developments to cater for people with disabilities and the elderly.</p> <p>CPO 4.13 Ensure that all new housing developments represent 'Sustainable Neighbourhoods' which are inclusive and responsive to the physical or cultural needs of those who use them, are well located relative to the social, community, commercial and administrative services which sustain them and are integrated with the community within which it will be located.</p> <p>CPO 4.14 Ensure all new residential schemes are designed so that units are easily adaptable in the future to accommodate housing for life.</p> <p>CPO 4.15 Identify and encourage development of age friendly accommodation, including independent living accommodation within walking distance to existing towns and villages, and close to primary health care facilities.</p> <p>Sustainable Communities Policy Objectives - Healthcare and Wellbeing Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 4.16 Support the provision of new health care facilities which are well located in terms of their accessibility in settlement centres serving a sufficient catchment population and are appropriately well served by public transport and accessible on foot/cycle and are consistent with the size, scale and character of the area.</p> <p>Sustainable Communities - Community Facilities Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 4.17 Maintain and, where possible, improve the provision of community facilities in the County to ensure that facilities are adequate to meet the needs of the communities they serve, are physically integrated with residential and employment areas and are provided concurrently with new residential development.</p> <p>CPO 4.18 Consider development proposals for new social and community infrastructure/service related development at;</p> <p>a. Locations within the settlement boundaries which are within walking distance of local services whereby social inclusion is promoted. An alternative location may be considered where it is clearly demonstrated that there are no suitable sites available within the settlement and strong justification is given to the development of such a particular site.</p> <p>b. In rural locations in close proximity to existing rural infrastructure (schools, sports facilities, churches etc.) where it is demonstrated that the development is intended to serve an exclusive rural need or where there is no site available which meet the locational criteria set out in (a) above.</p> <p>CPO 4.19 Consider cultural diversity and ethnic minorities in planning for the needs of communities and ensure community facilities and social services provided are accessible for all individuals, communities and sectors of society, including people with disabilities, people with special needs, elderly, youth, marginalised and disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>CPO 4.20 Consider proposals for primary Healthcare Facilities in association with the HSE's Programme for Delivery. The siting of these facilities in existing town centres and neighbourhood centres will be encouraged.</p> <p>CPO 4.21 Ensure that proposals for the change of use of residential accommodation for use by doctors, dentists and other medical practitioners does not negatively impact on residential amenity and is in keeping with the character of the area.</p> <p>CPO 4.22 Support and encourage the provision by voluntary and state agencies, of a wide range of appropriate community facilities and premises to meet the needs and demands of new and existing communities, especially in areas where there are deficiencies.</p> <p>Sustainable Communities - Childcare and Educational Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 4.23 Encourage and support the provision of childcare facilities, with consideration given to proper siting and design, in appropriate locations including residential areas, town and local centres, areas of employment and close to public transport throughout the County and in accordance with the needs identified by Westmeath County Childcare Committee (WCC). All planning applications for childcare facilities shall be assessed in consultation with Westmeath County Childcare Committee.</p> <p>CPO 4.24 Support the provision of childcare facilities and new and refurbished schools on well located sites within or close to existing built-up areas, that meet the diverse needs of local populations.</p> <p>CPO 4.25 Support play policies to address the play and recreation needs of children and young people and ensure the integration of play provision and child-friendly neighbourhoods.</p> <p>CPO 4.26 Reserve sites for educational use in those areas where the younger population has increased and there is a demographic demand for further school places.</p> <p>CPO 4.27 Ensure the needs of communities including education facilities are appropriately provided for in newly developed areas.</p> <p>CPO 4.28 Encourage the use of existing educational facilities and school playing fields for other community purposes. In new schools, it will be a requirement in the design of the school to provide dual use facilities and take account of community requirements.</p> <p>CPO 4.29 Reduce the need to travel by car to schools. Applications for extensions to an existing school or a new school must be accompanied by a sustainable travel plan. The plan should indicate how pupils will access the school and provide for sustainable modes of travel to school and encourage alternatives to the car and have regard to road safety, good design and efficiency in accordance with the Department of Environment's code of Practice on the Provision of Schools and the Planning System July</p>				
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<p>2008.</p> <p>CPO 4.30 Support in conjunction with the relevant agencies, the provision of Third Level facilities, Youth Outreach, Adult and Further Education facilities within the County.</p> <p>CPO 4.31 Support the provision of community infrastructure and require that development proposals involving the loss or change of use of land or buildings for community purposes to demonstrate:</p> <p>a) There are adequate facilities in the vicinity to cater for the needs of the area.</p> <p>b) The use is no longer viable.</p> <p>c) Alternative community uses are being provided elsewhere, or as part of the development, in association with the proposal.</p> <p>CPO 4.32 Promote links with Athlone Institute of Technology (A.I.T.) and the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUI Maynooth) in the educational, research and enterprise sector.</p> <p>CPO 4.33 Provide for the development of dedicated youth spaces in key urban areas such as Athlone and Mullingar and the development of multifunction spaces in smaller communities/rural areas.</p> <p>Sustainable Communities - Recreation, Amenity and Open Space Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 4.34 Ensure sufficient land is allocated to provide a variety of open spaces on a hierarchical basis throughout the County in order to achieve a choice of open space, recreational and amenity facilities.</p> <p>CPO 4.35 Develop public open spaces that have good connectivity and are accessible by safe, secure walking and cycling routes.</p> <p>CPO 4.36 Increase the use and potential of existing public open space, parks and recreational areas, both passive and active, by integrating existing facilities with proposals for new development and by seeking to upgrade existing facilities where appropriate.</p> <p>CPO 4.37 Support the development of appropriately located allotments, in areas which have good access to and are proximate to built-up and residential areas.</p> <p>CPO 4.38 Facilitate and encourage open space to be planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating ecosystem services, climate change measures, green infrastructure and key landscape features in their design.</p> <p>CPO 4.39 Promote the value of the County's recreational and amenity resources as a key asset to the local economy and to the health and wellbeing of the community and continue to support the expansion of existing amenities.</p> <p>CPO 4.40 Seek a greater variety of provision of recreation and amenity facilities to reflect the demands of an increasingly diverse population.</p> <p>CPO 4.41 Support the implementation of actions contained in the "Westmeath Recreation & Sports Strategy", subject to compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives.</p> <p>CPO 4.42 Support the development of regional scale Recreational facility in Mullingar to complement the Regional Sports Centre in Athlone.</p> <p>Sustainable Communities - Libraries, Arts & Culture Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 4.43 Support the development of the library service in County Westmeath and the implementation of the actions set out in the Library Development Plan which includes expanded services and the delivery of a new library to serve the community of Kinnegad.</p> <p>CPO 4.44 Promote the provision of Art Galleries, Museums and Exhibition Halls in the County and ensure where possible such facilities are accessible by public as well as private transport.</p> <p>CPO 4.45 Facilitate and encourage the use of Public Spaces in Towns for Art events, performances and festivals.</p> <p>CPO 4.46 Encourage the provision of new or improved arts, cultural and entertainment facilities, particularly in the parts of the County where there is a deficiency in such provision.</p> <p>Sustainable Communities – Burial Ground Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 4.47 Support the provision of burial grounds together with necessary extensions to existing burial grounds.</p> <p>CPO 4.48 Protect and maintain historic graveyards within the County.</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Sustainable Communities Policy Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-served and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</p> <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc., including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy that requires, for example, local authorities to "...seek to support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve" (Regional Planning Objective 9.14).</p> <p>Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy.</p> <p>The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and 				

- The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised.

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan contribute towards the sustainable development and the protection and management of the environment, for example:

- CPO 4.1 "Support sustainable transport infrastructure, by developing mixed use schemes, higher densities close to public transport hubs, safe walking routes in developments, promoting alternative modes of transport and reduce the need to travel."
- CPO 4.35 "Develop public open spaces that have good connectivity and are accessible by safe, secure walking and cycling routes."
- CPO 4.38 "Facilitate and encourage open space to be planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating ecosystem services, climate change measures, green infrastructure and key landscape features in their design."

8.8.5 Chapter 5: Economic Development and Employment

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>Location of Employment - Economic Development Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 5.1 Maximise the sustainable economic potential of Westmeath, and its nationally strategic central location through sustainable means, being the County's unique strengths and its advantageous position within the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly</p> <p>CPO 5.2 Facilitate the economic development of Westmeath to create a viable and favourable economic environment for business and enterprise whilst delivering sustainable jobs, employment opportunity and an enriched standard of living for everyone, both within the County and beyond.</p> <p>CPO 5.3 Facilitate and support the continuation of balanced population and employment growth, with a focus on strengthening the County's urban structure in accordance with the County's settlement hierarchy.</p> <p>CPO 5.4 Collaborate with key agencies in the identification, scope, development and promoting of sites as potential enterprise landing spaces throughout the County.</p> <p>CPO 5.5 Ensure that there is a sufficient quantum of zoned lands to facilitate a range of enterprise across the County in line with the Settlement Hierarchy.</p> <p>CPO 5.6 Support economic development at locations that maximise existing infrastructural provision, particularly in relation to locating high employee generating enterprise and industry proximate to high capacity public transport networks and links.</p> <p>CPO 5.7 Identify locations for strategic employment development within Athlone and Mullingar as part of any future Urban Area Plan/Local Area Plan and support the economic development of the remaining settlements of the County in line with the relevant settlement plan for their area.</p> <p>CPO 5.8 Promote quality employment and residential developments in proximity to each other in order to reduce the need to travel and ensure that suitable local accommodation is available to meet the needs of workers in the County.</p> <p>CPO 5.9 Support existing successful clusters in Westmeath, such as those in the ICT, manufacturing and agri-food sectors, and promote new and emerging clustering opportunities across all economic sectors within the County.</p> <p>CPO 5.10 Accommodate valid propositions for enterprise development that may emerge for which there are strong locational or asset-based drivers that do not apply to the same extent elsewhere.</p> <p>Athlone Regional Growth Centre Economic Development Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 5.11 Provide for, as part of any future Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) for Athlone, the development of Athlone as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible Regional Centre and economic driver for the Region.</p> <p>CPO 5.12 Promote Athlone as a key location for regional economic development supporting the provision of increased employment through the expansion of the existing enterprise ecosystem in Athlone and smart specialisation and support the provision of physical infrastructure and zoned lands to realize the delivery of strategic employment lands in central accessible locations.</p> <p>CPO 5.13 Support the role of Athlone Institute of Technology as a center of excellence for education and in achieving its status as a Technological University.</p> <p>CPO 5.14 Support the development of a cross sectoral approach to promote Athlone as a key tourism destination in the Midlands, building on Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand and the forthcoming Shannon Tourism Masterplan to develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree and the development of a greenway network including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.</p> <p>CPO 5.15 Support the development of Joint Economic, Transport and Retail Plans in collaboration with Roscommon County Council and all other relevant agencies, to facilitate the growth of Athlone as a regional economic driver.</p> <p>Mullingar Key Town Economic Development Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 5.16 Provide for, as part of any future Local Area Plan (LAP) for Mullingar, the development of Mullingar as an attractive, vibrant and highly accessible Key Town and economic base for the Region.</p> <p>CPO 5.17 Support Mullingar's role as an important employment hub by promoting economic development and clustering of related enterprises. And continue to build resilience within Mullingar's enterprise base, to allow businesses to withstand new challenges and realize sustained growth and employment creation for the longer-term.</p> <p>CPO 5.18 Support Mullingar's role as a tourism hub having regard to its accessibility to key tourist destinations in the Region including proximity to natural amenities and recreational opportunities including the Galway to Dublin Greenway.</p> <p>CPO 5.19 Promote the plan led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks in Mullingar for employment, education, community, cultural and recreational opportunities and to support the economic development and regeneration of the town centre.</p> <p>CPO 5.20 Support the development and expansion of the Midlands Regional Hospital, Mullingar, including any necessary supporting infrastructure.</p> <p>Self-Sustaining Towns - Economic Development Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 5.21 Seek to encourage investment in self-sustaining towns by identifying and establishing new economic roles and functions and enhancement of local</p>	<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>		<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>	

infrastructure and amenities; facilitating amenities and services catch-up, jobs and/or improved sustainable transport links to surrounding settlements.

CPO 5.22 Support the proportionate economic growth of and appropriately designed development in self-sustaining towns that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal.

CPO 5.23 Seek to target investment and location of new business in the core areas of the County's settlements through sustainable targeted measures that address vacancy, encourage economic development and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.

CPO 5.24 Promote development that encourages more jobs and activity within existing settlements throughout the County.

Self-Sustaining Towns Economic Development Policy Objectives

CPO 5.25 To promote commensurate population and employment growth in the designated Self-Sustaining towns, providing for natural increases and to become more economically self-sustaining, in line with the quality and capacity of public transport, services and infrastructure available.

CPO 5.26 Seek to support the sustainability of remaining towns and villages, by supporting appropriately scaled economic development and services together with the enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities and improved sustainable transport links.

CPO 5.27 Support the proportionate economic growth of and appropriately designed development in rural towns and villages that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal.

CPO 5.28 Support the regeneration of the core areas of the County's settlements through sustainable targeted measures that address vacancy, encourage economic development and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.

CPO 5.29 The Council will favourably consider proposals for enterprise and employment uses on their merits in rural locations and where their specific location offers amenity, environmental and economic advantage. Such enterprises or considered industrial projects, new or expanded, may sometimes require sites outside settlements because of their size or other specific site requirements. Such projects will be assessed taking account of:

- The contribution of the proposed development to the county's economy;
- The contribution of the proposed development to the county's environment and the principles of sustainable development;
- Assessment of any potential environmental effects
- The economic viability and availability of alternative sites; and
- National planning policy

It will be the responsibility of the developer to explore all environmental impacts, both local and of wider consequence. The Council will consider not only the immediate needs and benefits, but the wider long-term environmental effects of the proposal.

Availability of Land and Supporting Infrastructure Economic Development Policy Objectives

CPO 5.30 Support value proposition in the potential delivery of 'remote working hubs' and enterprise landing space for the Midlands Region.

CPO 5.31 Engage with key stakeholders and assist in leveraging opportunities in big data and data analytics, where appropriate.

CPO 5.32 Support and facilitate delivery of the National Broadband Plan as a means of developing further opportunities for enterprise, employment, education, innovation and skills development for those who live and work in rural areas throughout Westmeath, where appropriate.

CPO 5.33 Liaise and engage with all relevant public service providers to ensure that zoned lands for economic development purposes are serviced in a timely fashion to facilitate opportunities for employment and enterprise creation.

Skills and Innovation - Smart Economy Economic Development Policy Objectives

CPO 5.34 Engage and collaborate with key stakeholders, relevant agencies, and sectoral representatives to develop the ICT sector in Westmeath and to ensure that the economic potential of the sector is secured for the benefit of the local economy, and national economy.

CPO 5.35 Promote and support County Westmeath as an advanced manufacturing centre of excellence.

CPO 5.36 Support a multi-partner approach to the provision of a 'Midlands Technology Campus' to AIT. The delivery and implementation of this campus will assist in building regional competitiveness and innovation capacity within the region.

CPO 5.37 Assist where possible in developing a coordinated approach to advanced manufacturing, enabling deeper links with Institutes of Technology, Universities, IMR Mullingar, STREAM Creative Suite, LEO and the research and business community in its entirety.

CPO 5.38 Engage with innovative industries and networks to leverage the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund and support and identify flagship projects that would benefit from public-private partnerships involving experiments with emerging technologies.

CPO 5.39 Support and foster the collaboration of industry and research to identify areas of research, development and innovation, and to identify projects for funding.

CPO 5.40 Support the development of sites where high-tech and high potential start-ups (HPSU29) can thrive, in conjunction with IoTs and Universities, to create collaborative and innovative growth.

CPO 5.41 Support the development of Smart City initiatives in Athlone and Mullingar

CPO 5.42 Promote the development of Smart Villages to develop and diversify the rural economy to build on local enterprise and infrastructure assets to drive innovations around energy, transport, agri-food, tourism, e-services, remote working.

Promoting Economic Development and Local Enterprise - Economic Development Policy Objectives

CPO 5.43 Promote the need to build resilience within the County's enterprise base, to allow businesses to withstand new challenges and realise sustained growth and employment creation for the longer-term.

CPO 5.44 Support the establishment of a network of 'remote working' hubs and enterprise landing spaces within the County.

CPO 5.45 Assist in collaboration with other Local Authorities, State Agencies, local industry and other regional partners in the development of a digital marketing strategy for the region, for use domestically and internationally highlighting the attractiveness of the area as a place to live, work, study and invest.

CPO 5.46 Provide for the creation of a formal network of linked e-hubs to leverage economies of scale in research, advanced manufacturing, collaboration, training and funding applications.

CPO 5.47 Support key stakeholders, relevant agencies, sectoral representatives and local communities in sustainably developing the agri-food sector in Westmeath to ensure that the economic potential of the sector is secured for the benefit of the local economy, and national economy.

CPO 5.48 Support social enterprise practices, with a strong emphasis on collaboration.

<p>CPO 5.49 Encourage synergy between development of agri-food sector elements of the rural economy such as rural based tourism, rural economic diversification, and enterprise in rural villages.</p> <p>Transition to a Low Carbon Economy/Green Economy - Economic Development Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 5.50 Ensure that the County is well positioned to capitalize on the economic benefits associated with the transition to a low carbon economy.</p> <p>CPO 5.51 Support enterprise development and employment creation across all sectors of the Westmeath economy in accordance with the Green Economy national frameworks relevant to each sector.</p> <p>CPO 5.52 Engage with all relevant government stakeholders, enterprise agencies and sectoral representatives in pursuing 'green' approaches to economic development, and actively collaborate with key industry and educational bodies to promote Westmeath based initiatives across the economic sectors.</p> <p>CPO 5.53 Support the establishment of clusters regionally and sectorally to become centres of excellence for the adoption of low carbon technologies.</p> <p>CPO 5.54 Support the delivery of quality employment and enterprise in the emerging areas of opportunity.</p> <p>CPO 5.55 Support the development of industries that create and employ green technologies and take measures to accelerate the transition towards a low carbon economy and circular economy.</p> <p>CPO 5.56 Support homebased economic activity that allows employers, enterprises and entrepreneurs the option of working from home or local hubs to reduce commuting and congestion.</p> <p>CPO 5.57 Support rural diversification through sustainable rural development practices, investment in rural towns and villages, providing for access to technology and skills-development networks.</p> <p>CPO 5.58 Support Renewable energy initiatives that supports a low carbon transition.</p> <p>Quality of Life - Economic Development Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 5.59 Facilitate and enhance the collective offering of Westmeath as an attractive place to live work and invest in.</p> <p>CPO 5.60 Encourage local partnership, town team or community organisations to develop and implement local economic initiatives which enhance towns and villages.</p> <p>CPO 5.61 Build on Westmeath profile as a county that exemplifies the essential components of Quality of Life factors, including live-work balance, strong education structures, amenity and leisure attractions combined with economic opportunity.</p> <p>CPO 5.62 Realize the full potential of the County by providing for places that are attractive for business investment and for people to live and work.</p> <p>Tourism - Economic Development Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 5.63 Promote Tourism as an integral part of Westmeath's economic profile supporting urban and rural enterprise, recognising the key strategic location of the County and access to tourist sites and attractions.</p> <p>CPO 5.64 Promote the development of sustainable tourism as part of our economy, that recognises our landscapes, our cultural heritage, our environment and our linguistic heritage.</p> <p>Strategic Retail Policy - Economic Development Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 5.65 Ensure that all retail development permitted accords with the relevant requirements and criteria as established within the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012 and the Westmeath County Retail Strategy 2019-2026 (or any subsequent update).</p> <p>CPO 5.66 Permit retail development of a size and scale which is appropriate to the level of the town/settlement area, including its population, as defined within the County Retail Hierarchy. This policy will aim to consolidate and reinforce all existing retail enterprises within the County and permit the development of additional retail floorspace where such development is deemed to be appropriate by Westmeath County Council.</p> <p>CPO 5.67 Support and promote the sustainable development of the retailing sector throughout the County, with a recognition of the importance of SMEs to this domestic sector of the local economy.</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Economic Development and Employment Policy Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and • Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</p> <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc., including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy identifies the key elements of the growth strategy identified within the NPF and RSES, which establish the baseline for the economic development strategy for Westmeath and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional concentration toward cities and some regionally important larger settlements. • A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills • Sequential provision of infrastructure with some critical infrastructure in place to promote investment • A comprehensive approach to rural fabric supporting sustainable growth and reversing decline <p>Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy.</p> <p>The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation</p>				

Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:

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

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan contribute towards the sustainable development and the protection and management of the environment, for example:

- CPO 5.51 "Support enterprise development and employment creation across all sectors of the Westmeath economy in accordance with the Green Economy national frameworks relevant to each sector."
- CPO 5.52 "Engage with all relevant government stakeholders, enterprise agencies and sectoral representatives in pursuing 'green' approaches to economic development, and actively collaborate with key industry and educational bodies to promote Westmeath based initiatives across the economic sectors."
- CPO 5.58 "Support Renewable energy initiatives that supports a low carbon transition."
- CPO 5.64 "Promote the development of sustainable tourism as part of our economy, that recognises our landscapes, our cultural heritage, our environment and our linguistic heritage. "

8.8.6 Chapter 6: Tourism

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>General Tourism Development Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 6.1 Engage and collaborate with key stakeholders, relevant agencies, sectoral representatives and local communities to develop the tourism sector in Westmeath, to ensure that the economic potential of the tourism sector is secured for the local economy.</p> <p>CPO 6.2 Promote the development and strengthening of the overall value of Westmeath as a tourist destination by encouraging the enhancement and development of sustainable and high-quality visitor attractions, activities and infrastructure, enabling an increase in the overall capacity and long-term development of the county's tourism industry, subject to appropriate siting and design criteria and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.</p> <p>CPO 6.3 Continue to work closely with Fáilte Ireland to maximise the benefit of national and regional initiatives for the county, with a particular emphasis on initiatives which will increase the economic benefit from tourism, support local business development and encourage new enterprise opportunities.</p> <p>CPO 6.4 Identify all opportunities for funding, including LEADER, national and European funding schemes and seek to maximise the benefit of such funding opportunities to the county.</p> <p>CPO 6.5 Continue to support the implementation of the County's Tourism Strategy in line with national and regional policy, tourism trends and identified challenges, in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, tourism businesses and communities and other supporting agencies.</p> <p>CPO 6.6 Utilise the region's natural and heritage resources to foster the development of tourism as a viable sector of the economy in a sustainable manner which complements the scale, quality and unique features of the region.</p> <p>CPO 6.7 Protect and conserve the natural, built and cultural heritage features which add value to the visitor experience in Westmeath and seek to restrict developments which would damage or detract from the quality of scenic areas and identified natural and cultural heritage assets.</p> <p>CPO 6.8 Support actions to increase access to state and semi-state lands such as National Parks, Forest Parks, Waterways, etc., together with Monuments and Historic Properties, for recreation and tourism purposes, subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive, National Monuments Act and other provisions and policies to protect and safeguard these resources and subject to the ability of local infrastructure to support the resulting increased tourism.</p> <p>CPO 6.9 Continue to support the development and expansion of tourism-related enterprise including visitor attractions, services and accommodation and food and craft businesses, particularly those offering a visitor experience, such as tastings, tours and demonstrations.</p> <p>CPO 6.10 Encourage local industry and community engagement with all relevant Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland initiatives to maximise benefit to the county and continue to work with Fáilte Ireland to build our visitor offering in line with established regional experience brands.</p> <p>CPO 6.11 Improve the quality of visitor data collection, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland and the county's attractions and accommodation providers, including visitor numbers, footfall and origin and characteristics of visitors, to enable monitoring of trends and better provision for tourism growth into the future.</p> <p>CPO 6.12 Prepare and update a comprehensive tourism signage plan for the county, in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland, ensuring that old and obsolete signage is removed and new signage is consistent and complementary to signage associated with Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Experience Brands.</p> <p>CPO 6.13 Support opportunities for increased tourism as a result of warmer summers, within limits of existing infrastructure and sensitive habitats.</p> <p>CPO 6.14 Integrate climate change adaptation measures into future tourism plans.</p> <p>CPO 6.15 Monitor and manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.</p> <p>Destination Towns Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 6.16 Continue to support the promotion of Athlone and Mullingar as urban tourism destinations, providing memorable and high-quality visitor experiences in their own right and providing services for visitors to the range of attractions and activities in the surrounding region.</p> <p>CPO 6.17 Support industry collaboration in Athlone and Mullingar to collectively promote these destination towns, maximising the impact of marketing through sharing resources.</p> <p>CPO 6.18 Support the development of a cross sectoral approach to promote Athlone as the principle visitor services centre and hub for Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and the forthcoming Shannon Tourism Masterplan, to develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree and the development of a greenway network including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.</p> <p>CPO 6.19 Support Mullingar to become an important destination for visitors to Ireland's Ancient East, having regard to its accessibility to natural amenities and</p>	<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>		<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>	

recreational opportunities such as the Royal Canal, Dublin Galway National Cycle Network and nearby lakes, together with focussing on its proud musical heritage, along with legends associated with local heritage attractions.

CPO 6.20 Encourage the celebration of the unique attributes of towns and villages in the design and delivery of all visitor interpretation, signage and public realm schemes in order to provide tourists with a strong 'Sense of Place' and a more memorable visit.

CPO 6.21 Support industry-led collaborative tourism initiatives and community projects which aim to enhance and promote the visitor offering in towns and villages.

CPO 6.22 Facilitate the enhancement and development of Athlone's Cultural Quarter, as a location where cultural heritage and artistic visitor attractions are clustered, offering a unique and marketable tourism proposition.

CPO 6.23 Support the development of a strong evening and night-time tourism economy, in collaboration with arts and music venues, festivals and events committees and local Chambers of Commerce, including support for the Purple Flag initiative, currently successfully delivered in Mullingar.

Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Services Policy Objectives

CPO 6.24 Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.

CPO 6.25 Collaborate with tourism industry and Fáilte Ireland to identify future visitor accommodation and service requirements, taking account of existing provision and projected growth and support initiatives to proactively meet any identified requirements, subject to development management standards.

CPO 6.26 Facilitate the development of high-quality tourist accommodation such as hotels, hostels, B&B's / guesthouses, caravan and camping etc. at suitable locations, in both urban and rural settings throughout the county, subject to ensuring a high standard of design, layout, landscape and environmental protection, the provision of adequate infrastructure and compliance with best practice planning considerations.

CPO 6.27 Encourage the upgrade of existing accommodation facilities to meet Fáilte Ireland Quality and 'Welcome Standards' as appropriate, subject to development management standards, ensuring that new and existing developments do not negatively impact on sensitive environments.

CPO 6.28 Encourage that certain tourism accommodation developments comply with Fáilte Ireland quality standards, in particular caravan and camping facilities, to ensure such developments can contribute to the development of the tourism sector to their maximum potential.

CPO 6.29 Ensure that the development of visitor infrastructure linked to natural and heritage environments, does not detract from the quality and value of these environments.

CPO 6.30 Support, implement or require best-practice environmental management and climate proofing of tourism related developments and activities, such as accommodation, restaurants, activity providers, festivals and events and tourism enterprises, to include energy efficiency, waste management, procurement and recycling.

CPO 6.31 Support rural tourism initiatives such as agri-farm tourism, trekking and trails together with new opportunities to promote nature tourism, in order to sustain employment in rural areas.

History, Heritage and Ancient Sites Policy Objectives

CPO 6.32 Identify locations where heritage interpretation would add to the visitor experience and take account of Fáilte Ireland's Toolkit for Storytelling Interpretation in the design and delivery of interpretation media, with a focus on animating stories and encouraging greater engagement with our heritage.

CPO 6.33 Encourage sustainable enterprise development associated with heritage sites to gain benefit from increased visitors, subject to development management standards.

CPO 6.34 Continue to promote the Hill of Uisneach as a sustainable visitor offering and enhanced access to the site, including the creation of walking and cycling connections with the Old Rail Trail (Galway to Dublin) Greenway.

CPO 6.35 Promote the enhancement and development of Belvedere House, Gardens and Park and Athlone Castle Visitor Centre as world-class visitor attractions, enabling visitors to have an enjoyable and engaging experience, while protecting the cultural heritage, natural environment and landscape value.

CPO 6.36 Support appropriate conservation works to structures at Belvedere House, Gardens and Park and other built heritage assets, in order to safeguard these amenities for the long term.

CPO 6.37 Support the conservation of estates and demesnes by way of facilitating appropriate development that contributes to their economic viability.

CPO 6.38 Investigate the feasibility of re-locating the Tourist Information Office in Athlone, currently located in the Castle Grounds, to a suitable alternative location, in collaboration with Athlone Arts and Tourism and Fáilte Ireland.

CPO 6.39 Support the local community, the OPW and local businesses to expand and enhance the visitor offering at Fore, taking account of the archaeological heritage at this location, to animate the stories of this historical site and increase visitor dwell time.

CPO 6.40 Support sustainable initiatives and projects that enable visitors to enjoy and connect with our natural heritage, including walking or cycling trails, viewing points, facilities for bird-watching and angling, tours and events, subject to the requirement.

CPO 6.41 Support enhanced access to state and semi-state lands such as National Parks, Forest Parks, Waterways, etc., together with Monuments and Historic Properties, for recreation and tourism purposes. Access should be planned and managed in a sustainable manner that protects environmental sensitivities, ecological corridors, and the ability of local infrastructure to support increased tourism.

CPO 6.42 Continue to engage with the NPWS, Coillte, ESB, Bord Na Mona and other stakeholders and agencies with regard to tourism related uses of cut-away bogs and support the development of peatways at appropriate locations.

CPO 6.43 Support the diversification and innovation of our tourism offerings with opportunities arising for the development of new tourism offerings such as nature tourism.

Lakes and Waterways Policy Objectives

CPO 6.44 Facilitate increased access to Westmeath's lakes and waterways, from towns and villages where visitor services are located, with an emphasis on providing a strong visitor experience associated with the lakes and waterways and their heritage and amenity value, including trails, bird hides, watersports facilities etc., subject to the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

CPO 6.45 Support the provision of infrastructure to enable increased tourism activity associated with Westmeath's lakes, including boating, canoeing and angling while ensuring that such provision does not negatively impact on sensitive environments and subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

CPO 6.46 Provide for small-scale enterprise development that will provide for visitor engagement in water-based activities, subject to development management principles, the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the protection of sensitive environments.

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<p>CPO 6.47 Prioritise development proposals which utilise existing infrastructure and disused structures adjacent to Westmeath's lakes and waterways for the provision of visitor services, including changing facilities, boat storage etc., where appropriate.</p> <p>CPO 6.48 Support the provision of walking and cycling links between lakes and nearby villages, towns and visitor attractions, provided such developments do not negatively impact on sensitive environments.</p> <p>CPO 6.49 Continue to work with Waterways Ireland and local communities in the enhancement and promotion of the Royal Canal, including the provision of ancillary infrastructure and services for Blueway and Greenway users, such as water access, bike and boat storage, rest areas, shelters, toilets, changing and other facilities which will enhance the user experience.</p> <p>CPO 6.50 Continue to work closely with Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and neighbouring counties to realise the potential of Athlone, Lough Ree and the Mid-Shannon region for tourism, taking account of recommendations arising from the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands 'Shannon Masterplan' and 'Spirit Level' and the Athlone Waterfront Strategy.</p> <p>CPO 6.51 Identify the potential for development of canoe trails on the inner lakes of Lough Ree and work with Waterways Ireland to develop facilities where appropriate.</p> <p>CPO 6.52 Harness the tourist potential of Lough Ree Biosphere.</p> <p>CPO 6.53 Seek to acquire and maintain Blue Flag status for water amenity areas throughout the county as an accolade for use in promoting the quality of these facilities.</p> <p>CPO 6.54 Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>Greenways, Cycling and Walking Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 6.55 Continue to augment the visitor experience on the county's greenways, through the provision of ancillary infrastructure as required, having regard to the DTTAS 'Greenways and Cycle Routes Ancillary Infrastructure Guidelines', along with high quality signage and links to nearby visitor attractions and places of interest.</p> <p>CPO 6.56 Support the provision of visitor services within existing towns and villages, such as cafes, accommodation etc, by providing linkages with greenways, trails etc where appropriate.</p> <p>CPO 6.57 Continue to support the development of the Galway to Dublin Cycleway, completing the connection to the west of the River Shannon in Athlone and working with neighbouring counties and national bodies to complete and promote the entire route.</p> <p>The development of the cycleway shall comply with the provisions of the Habitats Directive and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's Dublin to Galway Greenway Plan 2017 and associated measures relating to environmental management and sustainable development.</p> <p>CPO 6.58 Support increased opportunities for off-road walking, including looped walks and longer distance trails, taking account of 'positive control points' in trail design, such as areas of natural beauty, lakeshores or rivers, bogs, built heritage and archaeological features and with links to towns and villages where services may be provided for walkers and hikers. In designing walking trails, the Sport Ireland Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails will be consulted.</p> <p>CPO 6.59 Continue to maintain and further enhance the County's walking and cycling trails, striving to achieve National Trails accreditation and other standards as set by Sport Ireland, in partnership with local communities and land owners.</p> <p>CPO 6.60 Support the re-routing and upgrade the Westmeath Way walking trail, bringing it off-road and linked to scenic areas where possible, ensuring its status as an accredited National Waymarked way in the long term and exploring options such as the Walks Scheme for future maintenance.</p> <p>CPO 6.61 Support the provision of visitor interpretation along walking and cycling trails, including storyboards, artworks and other media, to create a greater sense of place, connecting and immersing visitors in our local heritage and stories.</p> <p>CPO 6.62 Support the provision of services for visitors using walking and cycling trails which are appropriate to the location and activity, including bike service points, picnic benches at scenic locations, public toilets in remote areas etc.</p> <p>CPO 6.63 Support the provision of a greenway link from Mullingar to the Lough Ennell shoreline and to Belvedere House, Gardens and Park, subject the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>CPO 6.64 Seek to improve and upgrade signage and trail infrastructure at Portlick Millennium Forest and Mullaghmeen Forest and promote these scenic looped walks.</p> <p>CPO 6.65 Support the delivery of a River Shannon walking and / or trail, from Athlone to Clonmacnoise in collaboration with local communities and Offaly County Council and from Athlone to the Royal Canal at Ballymahon in collaboration with Longford County Council.</p> <p>CPO 6.66 Promote the principles of 'Leave no Trace' in all trail information panels, promotional materials and events and use all statutory procedures to deter negative environmental impact resulting from use of our trails and outdoor recreation amenities.</p> <p>Arts, Culture and Festivals Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 6.67 Support the continued expression of local culture, visual and performing arts and craft through the various arts, music and cultural centres, galleries and craft shops.</p> <p>CPO 6.68 Continue to support activities, events and evolving visitor experiences such as the Luan Gallery as important tourist offerings.</p> <p>CPO 6.69 Continue to support events and festivals in the county, with a particular focus on events which have the potential to attract a wider audience and spotlight the county as a visitor destination.</p> <p>CPO 6.70 Continue to provide supports to indigenous enterprises and organisations which create locally made products and offering visitors a chance to sample our local produce and talent, through visitor centres, food and craft fairs and cultural events.</p> <p>CPO 6.71 Support the 'Green your Festival' initiative and encourage and support festival and event organisers to incorporate green principles in their event planning and management.</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Tourism Policy Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and</p>				

sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-served and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc., including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy specifically highlights the region as a "key destination for tourism, leisure and recreation activities", with a policy to support the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways, while ensuring that high value assets and amenities are protected and enhanced. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy emphasises Athlone as a visitor destination town with particular potential as a base to explore the Hidden Heartlands, while Mullingar is described as a potential 'tourism hub'.

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan land use activities and developments relating to tourism – and would be likely to contribute towards an increase in the number and dwell time of visitors and associated potential adverse effects. Such effects would include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, including tourism. Examples may include developments/operation of developments relating to water services, transport, energy, access or accommodation. The mitigation of potential adverse effects arising would be contributed towards by Plan provisions including those relating to infrastructure capacity, visitor management, green infrastructure and ecosystem services.

The development of new and existing greenways, blueways, trails and walking and cycling routes, including those between County Westmeath, adjoining counties and beyond has the potential to contribute towards sustainable mobility and a better management of tourism in sensitive areas, thereby benefitting various environmental components including habitats at certain locations. The development of these projects, however, presents a variety of potentially adverse environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure. These types of infrastructure are often constructed in ecologically and visually sensitive areas adjacent to the banks of rivers and streams. Potential adverse effects would be mitigated both by measures which have been integrated into the Plan which provide for and contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development (including those identified at Section 9 of this report) and by measures arising from lower tier assessments (including those for the preparation of lower tier plans and projects).

The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:

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

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan contribute towards the sustainable development and the protection and management of the environment, for example:

- CPO 6.2 "...protection of environmentally sensitive areas..."
- CPO 6.6 "Utilise the region's natural and heritage resources..."
- PO 6.7 "Protect and conserve the natural, built and cultural heritage features..."
- CPO 6.14 "Integrate climate change adaptation measures into future tourism plans."
- CPO 6.15 "Monitor and manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate."
- CPO 6.35 "...while protecting the cultural heritage, natural environment and landscape value"
- CPO 6.44 "...subject to the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and the requirements of the Habitats Directive."
- CPO 6.54 "Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term."
- CPO 6.57 "...measures relating to environmental management and sustainable development"

8.8.7 Chapter 7: Urban Centres and Placemaking

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
Public Realm and Place making Policy Objectives CPO 7.1 Provide for a high-quality public realm and public spaces by promoting quality urban design that accommodates creative patterns of use having regard to the physical, cultural, and social identities of individual settlements. CPO 7.2 Apply the following key attributes when considering public realm and public space enhancements: Accessible - connected and linked permeable spaces to ensure ease of movement. Functional - safe, adaptable and social environments to attract and foster activity. Attractive - visually pleasing spaces with high quality design, materials and installations (lighting, furniture and signage) based on a singular common design theme. Distinctive - reference to local context and building on the character and identity of place. Healthy Placemaking Policy Objectives CPO 7.3 Encourage transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes through the promotion of alternative modes of transport and 'walkable communities' whereby a range of facilities and services will be accessible within short walking or cycling distance. CPO 7.4 Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, through integrating such policies, where	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	

appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policies contained in development plans.

CPO 7.5 Support the vision and objectives of the National Sports Policy, including working with local sports partnerships, clubs, communities and partnerships within and beyond sport, to increase sport and physical activity participation levels locally

CPO 7.6 Promote the development of healthy and attractive places by ensuring:

- Good urban design principles are integrated into the layout and design of new development;
- Future development prioritises the need for people to be physically active in their daily lives and promote walking and cycling in the design of streets and public spaces
- New schools and workplaces are linked to walking and cycling networks
- The provision of open space considers different types of recreation and amenity uses with connectivity by way of safe, secure walking and cycling routes.
- Developments are planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating ecosystem services, climate change measures, Green Infrastructure and key landscape features in their design.

Sustainable Communities Policy Objectives

CPO 7.7 Enhance the well-being and quality of life of the people of Westmeath through sustainable economic and community development.

CPO 7.8 Support the implementation of Local Authority Local Economic and Community Plans, in collaboration with Local and Economic Development Committees (LDCs) and through the use of spatial planning policies, to seek to reduce the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the County.

CPO 7.9 Support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve.

CPO 7.10 Support the development of sport and recreational facilities and community-related projects through the Council's Capital Programme.

Universal Design Policy Objectives

CPO 7.11 Require proposals for public realm enhancements to include inclusive universal design principles.

CPO 7.12 Require that new social infrastructure developments are accessible and inclusive for a range of users and provide for an age friendly society in which people of all ages and abilities can live full, active, valued and healthy lives.

CPO 7.13 Require that all new developments, including public open spaces, cater for disability needs by way of appropriate design of the built environment.

Placemaking for Climate Change Policy Objective

CPO 7.14 Require the incorporation of adaptable multi-functional and sensitive design solutions that supports the transition to low carbon, carbon resilient, sustainable and attractive environments.

Town Centres Policy Objectives

CPO 7.15 Support the use of targeted financial incentives to re-establish the role of town centres and encourage a greater take up of town centre development opportunities for retail, residential, commercial and leisure uses.

CPO 7.16 Seek funding to support the preparation of site-specific Public Realm Strategies to enhance the unique characteristics and assets of Westmeath's towns and villages.

Town Centre Management and Place-making Policy Objectives

CPO 7.17 Prepare and deliver Place-making and Visual Appearance Strategies for Athlone and Mullingar, in order to support their roles as a Regional Centre and Key Town respectively.

CPO 7.18 Promote the value of placemaking in town centres, by preparing a Placemaking Strategy for the towns of Castlepollard, Kilbeggan, Moate and Kinnegad.

CPO 7.19 Provide for improvements to the appearance of streetscapes and revitalising of public spaces for example with cost effective, temporary uses that build on the longer-term vision for space.

CPO 7.20 Support investment in town and village centres so that they can become more diverse, sustainable and thriving places for communities to live, work and enjoy.

CPO 7.21 Ensure the best quality of design is achieved for all new commercial and residential development and that design respects and enhances the specific characteristics of the different towns and villages in the County.

CPO 7.22 Provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of town centres, through consolidating development, encouraging a mix of uses and maximising the use of land.

CPO 7.23 Support and sustain the vitality and viability of town and village centres by ensuring that retail proposals enhance and positively reinforce the public realm.

CPO 7.24 Support the key attributes and strategies as detailed in the Framework for Town Centre Renewal 2017.

Urban Regeneration and Sustainable Development in Urban Areas Policy Objectives

CPO 7.25 Support and facilitate the ambitious regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield/infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands.

CPO 7.26 Facilitate the delivery of sustainable, compact, sequential growth and urban regeneration in the town core of Key Towns by consolidating the built footprint through a focus on regeneration and development of identified key town centre infill/brownfield/back land sites promoting sustainable higher densities.

CPO 7.27 Combine active land management with best practice planning policies to deliver compact urban growth through the delivery of innovative adaptable urban schemes.

CPO 7.28 Facilitate higher and increased building heights at suitable locations and in accordance with settlement hierarchy.

CPO 7.29 Promote regeneration and revitalisation of small towns and villages and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for their surrounding rural areas.

Vacant Site Policy Objective

CPO 7.30 Maintain and update a Vacant Sites Register in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 to include Tier 1 – Tier 3 settlements within Westmeath.

CPO 7.31 Facilitate the implementation of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, in particular, by way of utilising site activation measures, including the provision of the Vacant Site Levy, as appropriate to assist in bringing forward vacant and/or underutilised 'residential' zoned land and 'regeneration' land into beneficial use within

<p>lands identified and zoned within the town boundary of all towns contained within Tier 1 – Tier 3 of the settlement hierarchy for Co. Westmeath.</p> <p>Urban Regeneration Development Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 7.32 Promote the consolidation of town centres with a focus on the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites and the establishment of a mix of uses to encourage greater vibrancy outside of business hours.</p> <p>CPO 7.33 Promote the utilisation of available funding to support the plan led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks.</p> <p>CPO 7.34 Work with the National Land Development Agency in co-ordinating and developing large, strategically located landbanks, particularly publicly owned lands in Athlone and Mullingar.</p> <p>CPO 7.35 Require all development proposals for strategic brownfield and infill sites be accompanied by a site brief and/or masterplan that sets out a phased programme for the regeneration of the site and demonstrates how the proposal will comply with National Guidelines that seek to integrate principles of good urban design, planning and placemaking.</p> <p>CPO 7.36 Set out measures to reduce vacancy and the underuse of existing building stock and support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings within urban centres.</p> <p>CPO 7.37 Use specific powers, such as the Vacant Sites register, to address issues of vacancy and underutilisation of strategic lands in town centres, including the implementation of the Vacant Sites Levy for all vacant development sites in the County.</p> <p>CPO 7.38 Encourage pilot projects for the re-use of brownfield sites and encourage active temporary uses where feasible to encourage activation of vacant sites that require longer lead in time for regeneration.</p> <p>Rural Regeneration Policy Objective</p> <p>CPO 7.39 Support the regeneration of rural towns and villages through identification of regeneration projects for rural villages and rural areas and promoting the utilisation of investment opportunities such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.</p> <p>CPO 7.40 Support the viability of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacant premises and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes targeted in core areas.</p> <p>Urban-Rural Interface Policy Objective</p> <p>CPO 7.41 Protect the unique setting of towns and villages by providing for the maintenance of strong defined urban edges.</p> <p>Place making for Business and Enterprise Policy Objective</p> <p>CPO 7.42 Require Design Statements for all new business and enterprise development proposals to present a strong and positive visual presence underpinned by sustainable and energy efficient development principles.</p> <p>CPO 7.43 Require planning applications for business and enterprise proposals to be accompanied with a Mobility Management Plan to include a site-specific programme to facilitate and promote sustainable operational practices including the use of public transport services and an emphasis on walking and cycling.</p> <p>Place making for Residential Respite and Retirement Homes Policy Objective</p> <p>CPO 7.44 Implement the following criteria when designing proposals for residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/Placemaking - Locate new developments close (walking distance) to services and amenities. • Physical Considerations – Employment of Universal Design standards. • Technology - Integrate technology into developments, enhancing safety and security, health monitoring, comfort and social connectedness. • Social Supports - Integrate social supports into developments, access to information, find non-health service-based solutions. • The potential impact on residential amenities of adjoining properties. • Adequate provision of open space informed by the need to cater for all levels of disability and in particular the needs of an ageing population and mobility impaired users, in line with Ministerial and Departmental guidelines. • Apply standards outlined in the Housing Options for Our Ageing Population and the Housing Agency document 'Thinking Ahead: Independent and Supported Housing Modes for an Aging Population'. • Provision of adequate parking facilities. • Innovative high quality design and materials. <p>Quality of Place Policy Objective</p> <p>CPO 7.45 Promote the utilisation of the available funding e.g. Regional Enterprise Development Funds, Urban Development Fund and EU Regional Development Funds to support an attractive, healthy economic environment in the County.</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p><i>The assessment of the Plan's Urban Centres and Placemaking Policy Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and</i> • <i>Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report.</i> <p><i>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</i></p> <p><i>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy.</i></p>				

The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:

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

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan contribute towards the sustainable development and the protection and management of the environment, for example:

- CPO 7.1 "Provide for a high-quality public realm and public spaces by promoting quality urban design that accommodates creative patterns of use having regard to the physical, cultural, and social identities of individual settlements."
- CPO 7.13 "...appropriate design of the built environment..."
- CPO 7.14 "Require the incorporation of adaptable multi-functional and sensitive design solutions that supports the transition to low carbon, carbon resilient, sustainable and attractive environments."
- CPO 7.25 "Support and facilitate the ambitious regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield/infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands."

8.8.8 Chapter 8: Settlement Plans

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
This Chapter includes Settlement Plan provisions (including zonings and local objectives) for Kilbeggan, Kinnegad, Moate, Killucan-Rathwire, Rochfortbridge, Clonmellon, Delvin, Tyrrellspass, Ballinalack Village, Ballymore Village, Ballynacarrigy Village, Castletown-Geoghegan Village, Collinstown Village, Glasson Village, Milltownpass Village, Multyfarnham Village and nodes and settlements as part of the Rural Remainder. For full detail on zonings and local objectives please refer to Chapter 8 of the main Draft Plan document.	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Settlement Plans against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and • Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Where alternatives were identified by the Planning Team as being available (for Castlepollard, Moate, Kinnegad, Rochfortbridge and Kilucan /Rathwire), these were considered by the SEA process, the findings of which informed the selection of the Plan.</p> <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</p> <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy.</p> <p>The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and • The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised. <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan contribute towards the sustainable development and the protection and management of the environment, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castlepollard CPO 8.20 "Promote cycling and walking" and CPO 8.34 "Protect and maintain the Architectural Conservation Area in Castlepollard and the buildings within the ACA". • Kilbeggan CPO 8.52 "Work with Irish Water and landowners in providing for serviced sites for residential development within Kilbeggan" and CPO 8.56 "Promote cycling and walking" • Kinnegad CPO 8.85 "Support the regeneration of infill and brownfield sites in the town core" and CPO 8.114 "Public Realm Strategy for Kinnegad". 				

8.8.9 Chapter 9: Rural Westmeath

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>Rural Housing Need Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.1 Areas Under Strong Urban Influence</p> <p>To accommodate demand from individuals for permanent residential development in defined 'Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence' who have strong links to the area and who are an intrinsic part of the rural community, subject to good planning practice, environmental carrying capacity and landscape protection considerations.</p> <p>Local Housing Need</p> <p>Permit residential development in areas defined 'Rural Areas Under Strong Urban Influence and Stronger Rural Areas' subject to the following circumstances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Persons who are actively engaged in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, bloodstock and peat industry, Members of farm families seeking to build on the family farm, Landowners for this purpose being defined as persons who own the land 5 years prior to the date of planning application. Persons employed locally whose employment would provide a service to the local community, Persons who have personal, family or economic ties within the area, including returning emigrants Persons who wish to return to farming and who buy or inherit a substantial farm-holding which is kept intact as an established farm unit, will be considered by the Council to be farmers and will be open to consideration for a rural house, as farmers. Where there is already a house on the holding, refurbishment or replacement of this house is the preferred option. <p>The local area for the purpose of this policy is defined as the area generally within a 10km radius of the applicant's family home.</p> <p>Rural Housing Need - Structurally Weak Areas Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.2 Accommodate demand from individuals for permanent residential development within defined structurally weak areas, subject to good planning practice.</p> <p>Rural Nodes Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.3 Within the designated development limits of the rural nodes (Map Nos 33-37 Volume 2), development will be permitted where it involves infilling, conversion, single site housing development, or the use of derelict or underused land or premises, subject to siting, design, protection of residential amenities and normal development management criteria.</p> <p>CPO 9.4 In addition to complying with the most up-to-date EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses, proposals for development in rural nodes shall include an assessment undertaken by a qualified hydrologist, that demonstrates that the outfall from the septic tank will not, in combination with other septic tanks within the node and wider area, contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>CPO 9.5 Continue to monitor and review rural nodes in the County, across the lifetime of the Plan, in order to ensure compatibility with environmental protection objectives.</p> <p>CPO 9.6 Support the roll out of sustainable transport options within the boundaries of rural nodes including segregated walking and cycle paths and provisions for rural public transport.</p> <p>Rural Housing Criteria Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.7 Ensure that, in permitting one-off rural housing, key rural assets such as water, natural and cultural heritage and landscape quality are protected and maintained.</p> <p>CPO 9.8 Protect the natural assets of the county including ground and surface water and ensure that physical standards are met including soil conditions suitable for effluent disposal and the avoidance of flood areas.</p> <p>CPO 9.9 Protect the integrity of the landscapes as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment and protected views.</p> <p>CPO 9.10 Seek that all proposed on-site wastewater treatment systems for single dwellings and extensions which will increase the population equivalent loading shall comply with the EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and disposal Systems serving Single Houses (2009) and any revision thereof.</p> <p>CPO 9.11 Seek to ensure that waste water treatment systems are installed by competent persons with regular monitoring and testing carried out on the treatment system, in accordance with the planning permission.</p> <p>CPO 9.12 Have regard to the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government's Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005, and any subsequent amendment in the assessment of applications for rural housing.</p> <p>Development within the hinterland of Settlements Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.13 It is a policy objective of Westmeath County Council that development within the hinterland of settlements will be assessed having regard to the following: Promote the clustering of houses particularly on the same landholding or for the same family and promote shared accesses to minimise hedgerow removal.</p> <p>CPO 9.14 Control ribbon development, particularly on approach roads into the county's regional centre, self-sustaining growth towns and self-sustaining towns.</p> <p>CPO 9.15 Generally, resist new accesses for single houses onto regional roads, where the 80km per hour limit applies, to safeguard the carrying capacity and safety of these roads.</p> <p>CPO 9.16 Ensure that the road network is adequate to cater for the development and that the traffic movements generated by the development will not give rise to a traffic hazard.</p> <p>CPO 9.17 Retain, insofar as practicable, existing hedgerows and trees on new house sites. Replacement trees and hedgerows should be of native species.</p> <p>CPO 9.18 Generally, resist urban generated and speculative residential development outside the settlement hierarchy.</p> <p>CPO 9.19 Encourage innovative design, and layouts that promote solar gain subject to protecting the character of the landscape.</p>	<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>		<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>	

<p>CPO 9.20 Undertake a review of the Westmeath Rural Housing Design Guidelines.</p> <p>Water Catchment Areas Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.21 Restrict residential development not related to farming or forestry practices in defined water catchment areas of Lough Owel and Lough Lene, with the exception of the erection of a house for a member of an existing residential farm family who will inherit the farm, or another member of the family, provided that not more than two dwellings (existing and proposed) be permitted on any farm holding within the water catchment and only where this relates to the first dwelling for the applicant and no alternative site is available outside the water catchment.</p> <p>Where there is a conflict with CPO 9.22 below, this policy shall take precedence.</p> <p>Areas of High Amenity Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.22 Restrict development not related to farming practices and tourism in all High Amenity Areas, with the exception of housing for the immediate family (son/daughter) of established residents living on landholdings, who demonstrate a housing need and have long-term intrinsic links with the area. The entire landholding will be demonstrated to have been in the resident's ownership 5 years prior to the date of application.</p> <p>Refurbishment and Extension of Existing Structures Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.23 Assess the refurbishment and extensions of existing structures having regard to the following:</p> <p>To favourably consider applications for the conversion and reuse of existing traditional farm buildings or rural houses, without applying the local housing need requirement. These properties should be structurally intact and exhibit the essential physical characteristics of a dwelling house.</p> <p>CPO 9.24 To generally resist the demolition and replacement of traditional or vernacular rural housing, whose character merits retention, in order to protect the varied types of housing stock in the rural area and to preserve the rich built heritage in rural parts of the county.</p> <p>CPO 9.25 To require an assessment of the existing waste water treatment system by an assessor in the event of a large extension to a property, to ensure the system meets the EPA Code of Practice for wastewater treatment 2009 and any revisions thereof.</p> <p>Farm Diversification Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.26 Support agricultural development as a contributory means of maintaining population and sustaining the rural economy, whilst maintaining and enhancing the standing of the rural environment and through application of the EU Water Framework Directive and EU Habitats Directive.</p> <p>CPO 9.27 Protect the viability of farms and best quality land for agricultural and related uses, whilst at the same time supporting alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.</p> <p>CPO 9.28 Encourage the development of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices, to ensure that development does not impinge on the visual amenity of the countryside and that watercourses, wildlife habitats and areas of ecological importance are protected from the threat of pollution.</p> <p>CPO 9.29 Facilitate the development of agriculture while ensuring that natural waters, wildlife habitats and conservation areas are protected from pollution.</p> <p>CPO 9.30 Ensure that all agricultural activities comply with legislation on water quality, such as the Phosphorous Regulations, Water Framework Directive and Nitrates Directive.</p> <p>Support the horticulture and nursery stock industry as a means of diversifying agriculture and contributing to the maintenance of population in the rural area.</p> <p>CPO 9.31 Encourage and facilitate agricultural diversification into agri-businesses such as organic foods, rural tourism and small to medium sized enterprises, subject to the retention of the holding for primarily agricultural use and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.</p> <p>CPO 9.32 Support the rural economy and initiatives in relation to diversification, agri business, rural tourism and renewable energy so as to sustain employment opportunities in rural areas.</p> <p>CPO 9.33 Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.</p> <p>CPO 9.34 The development and expansion of appropriate new businesses in rural areas will normally be encouraged where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scale and nature of the proposed new business are appropriate to the rural area and are in areas of low environmental sensitivity. • The development will enhance the strength and diversification of the rural economy. • The development involves the use of redundant or underused buildings that are of value to the rural area. <p>Agricultural Waste Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.35 Assess agricultural developments and associated agricultural waste matters within the County in accordance with the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017 and Westmeath County Council Water Pollution (Agricultural) Bye-Laws for the purpose of preventing or eliminating the entry of polluting matters to waters.</p> <p>Horticulture Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.36 Promote the continued development and expansion of the Agri-Food Sector.</p> <p>CPO 9.37 Protect agricultural or agri-business uses from incompatible urban development.</p> <p>CPO 9.38 Implement at county level provisions set out in Food Harvest 2025 subject to environmental carrying capacity constraints.</p> <p>CPO 9.39 Maintain a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector based on the principles of sustainable development whilst at the same time finding alternative employment in or close to rural areas to sustain rural communities.</p> <p>CPO 9.40 Protect the economic and social benefits of local country markets committed to the sale of local agricultural and craft produce and to support their role as visitor attractions.</p> <p>CPO 9.41 Work with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc and all other stakeholders to support the agricultural and agri-business sector, as appropriate, to continue participation in what is likely to be a more challenging export market post Brexit.</p> <p>CPO 9.42 Work with the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly and other relevant stakeholders in identifying areas of high value agricultural land in the County to address the need for sustainable food supplies. The consideration of future climate scenarios and water availability for agricultural purposes shall form part of this assessment.</p> <p>Equine Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.43 Support equine related activities (e.g. farriers, bloodstock sales etc.) of an appropriate size and at suitable locations.</p>				
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<p>CPO 9.44 Ensure that equine based developments are located on suitable and viable landholdings and are subject to normal planning, siting and design considerations and related establishments.</p> <p>CPO 9.45 Protect the equine industry from inappropriate development which would adversely affect its continued operation.</p> <p>CPO 9.46 Protect the Kilbeggan Racecourse from any development that would interfere with its amenity value and environmental quality whilst, at the same time, promoting the enhancement of facilities for racegoers.</p> <p>Forestry Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.47 Encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector, which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites (SACs and SPAs) and is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality.</p> <p>CPO 9.48 Encourage the development of forestry to a scale and in a manner, which maximises its contribution to the economic and social well-being of the County on a sustainable basis.</p> <p>CPO 9.49 Encourage forestry and forestry related development, as a means of diversifying from traditional farming activity.</p> <p>CPO 9.50 Promote forestry development of appropriate scale and character whilst ensuring that the development does not detract substantially from visual amenity on the countryside or cause pollution or degradation to wildlife habitats, natural waters or areas of ecological importance.</p> <p>CPO 9.51 Encourage access to forestry and woodlands, including private forestry, in cooperation with stakeholders for walking routes, bridle paths, mountain biking, nature walks, orienteering, hiking, recreational areas and other similar facilities.</p> <p>CPO 9.52 Retain existing public rights of way through forest lands.</p> <p>CPO 9.53 Promote in co-operation with the Forest service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine the preparation and adoption of an Indicative Forest Strategy for the County, as an important means of contributing to the protection and enhancement of the county's biodiversity, natural resources and landscape, as resources permit.</p> <p>CPO 9.54 Promote the planting of native broadleaves of local provenance and seek to maintain a broadleaf planting target of 30-50% for the county.</p> <p>CPO 9.55 Promote and continue to be involved in the NeighbourWood Scheme (2017) and to identify areas at local level that are suitable for such schemes.</p> <p>CPO 9.56 Promote the avoidance of deforestation or commercial afforestation within Natura 2000 sites unless directly relating to the management of the site for its qualifying interests.</p> <p>CPO 9.57 Support the development of appropriate and sustainable tourism development within forestry locations, while retaining adequate tree cover in the general area.</p> <p>Extractive Industry Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.58 Ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Geological interest as identified in the County Esker Survey • Existing and Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) • Special Protection Areas (SPAs) • Existing and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) • Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna • High Amenity Areas • Zones of archaeological potential, • Important aquifers and sensitive groundwater resources • The vicinity of a recorded monument • Sensitive landscape areas • Established rights of way and walking routes. <p>CPO 9.59 Facilitate adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet the future growth needs of the County and the wider region where there is a proven need for a certain mineral/aggregate and to exercise appropriate control (including ongoing consideration of environmental impacts) while addressing key environmental, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation.</p> <p>CPO 9.60 Facilitate the exploitation of the County's natural resources and to exercise appropriate control over the types of development, including rural housing, taking place in areas containing proven deposits, whilst also ensuring that such developments are carried out in a manner which would not unduly impinge on the visual amenity or environmental quality in the area.</p> <p>CPO 9.61 Ensure that extractions (quarries / sand and gravel pits) which would result in a reduction of the visual amenity of areas of high amenity or damage to designated sites, habitat types or species shall not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 9.62 Ensure that extractive developments do not adversely impact on environmental quality, including water quality, tourism value, existing infrastructure, residential amenity or the amenity value of neighbouring lands.</p> <p>CPO 9.63 Ensure that all extractions shall be subjected to landscaping requirements and that worked out quarries should be rehabilitated to a use agreed with the Planning Authority which could include recreational, biodiversity, amenity or other end-of-life uses. The use of these rehabilitated sites shall be limited to inert waste and sites shall be authorised under the appropriate waste regulations.</p> <p>CPO 9.64 Ensure that the extractive industry and associated development minimises adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the full cost of road improvements, including during operations and at time of closure, which are necessary to facilitate those industries are borne by the industry itself.</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Rural Westmeath Policy Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and • Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. 				

SEA Environmental Report for the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-served and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities in rural areas, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc., including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy.

Many of these provisions are essential to the sustenance of rural populations and associated existing sustainable rural management practices, which can often sustain biodiversity.

Pressures on water resources and the biodiversity and human health that they sustain in rural areas include those arising from agriculture, forestry and domestic waste water treatment systems. Provisions have been integrated into the Plan to help ensure compliance with the strict environmental obligations provided for European Directives, including the Birds, Habitats and Water Framework Directives. In some locations, due to the soils and drainage, certain domestic treatment systems do not provide the necessary level of treatment – Chapter 10 of the Plan identifies the need to develop a local site selection plan in relation to domestic waste water treatment systems and provides for the servicing of rural villages (served sites) to provide an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside.

The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:

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

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan contribute towards the sustainable development and the protection and management of the environment, for example:

- CPO 9.4 "...contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive."
- CPO 9.6 "Support the roll out of sustainable transport options within the boundaries of rural nodes including segregated walking and cycle paths and provisions for rural public transport."
- CPO 9.7 "Ensure that, in permitting one-off rural housing, key rural assets such as water, natural and cultural heritage and landscape quality are protected and maintained."
- CPO 9.10 "Seek that all proposed on-site wastewater treatment systems for single dwellings and extensions which will increase the population equivalent loading shall comply with the EPA Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and disposal Systems serving Single Houses (2009) and any revision thereof."
- CPO 9.21 "Restrict residential development not related to farming or forestry practices in defined water catchment areas of Lough Owel and Lough Lene..."
- CPO 9.22 "Restrict development not related to farming practices and tourism in all High Amenity Areas..."
- CPO 9.26 "...whilst maintaining and enhancing the standing of the rural environment and through application of the EU Water Framework Directive and EU Habitats Directive."
- CPO 9.35 "Assess agricultural developments and associated agricultural waste matters within the County in accordance with the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017 and Westmeath County Council Water Pollution (Agricultural) Bye-Laws for the purpose of preventing or eliminating the entry of polluting matters to waters."
- CPO 9.47 "Encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector, which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites (SACs and SPAs) and is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality."
- CPO 9.58 Ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following:
 - Areas of Geological interest as identified in the County Esker Survey
 - Existing and Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
 - Special Protection Areas (SPAs)
 - Existing and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)
 - Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna
 - High Amenity Areas
 - Zones of archaeological potential,
 - Important aquifers and sensitive groundwater resources
 - The vicinity of a recorded monument
 - Sensitive landscape areas
 - Established rights of way and walking routes.

8.8.10 Chapter 10: Transport, Infrastructure and Energy

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
Transport Infrastructure and Energy– Transport Policies CPO 10.1 Promote and deliver a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with ease of movement throughout County Westmeath by enhancing the existing transport infrastructure in terms of road, bus, rail, cycling and pedestrian facilities. CPO 10.2 Support the development of a low carbon transport system by continuing to promote modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as cycling, walking and public transport. CPO 10.3 Support the implementation of the following national and regional transport policies as they apply to Westmeath: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The National Planning Framework - The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region - Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 – 2020 - Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) 2019 - Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012 - National Cycling Policy Framework and National Cycle Manual 	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	

<p>- Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, 2018</p> <p>The Council also supports the implementation of sustainable transport solutions.</p> <p>CPO 10.4 Seek to ensure primacy for transport options that provide for unit reductions in carbon emissions. This can most effectively be done by promoting public transport, walking and cycling, and by actively seeking to reduce car use in circumstances where alternative options are available.</p> <p>Transport, Infrastructure and Energy Policy Objectives - Integration of Land Use Planning and Transportation Policy</p> <p>CPO 10.5 Encourage transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes, through the promotion of alternative modes of transport, and 'walkable communities' together with promotion of compact urban forms close to public transport corridors to encourage more sustainable patterns of movement.</p> <p>CPO 10.6 Support the enhancement of the County's existing transport infrastructure in order to ensure its optimal use and seek to undertake appropriate traffic management measures to reduce congestion and minimise travel times.</p> <p>CPO 10.7 Integrate the County's transport and tourism strategies to promote increasingly sustainable travel patterns and improved linkages between Athlone, Mullingar and other towns and villages.</p> <p>CPO 10.8 Prepare in conjunction with Roscommon County Council and relevant agencies, An Area Based Transport Plan for Athlone to facilitate the growth of Athlone as a regional economic driver.</p> <p>CPO 10.9 Prepare an Area based Transport Plan for Mullingar in conjunction with relevant agencies, to support the growth of Mullingar as a Key Town.</p> <p>Infrastructure and Mobility Policy Objectives - Walking and Cycling</p> <p>CPO 10.10 Promote walking and cycling as efficient, healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transport by securing the development of a network of direct, comfortable, convenient and safe cycle routes and footpaths, particularly in urban areas and in the vicinity of schools.</p> <p>CPO 10.11 Improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to stations and other public transport interchanges.</p> <p>CPO 10.12 Design pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in accordance with the principles, approaches and standards set out in the National Cycle Manual, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and international best practice.</p> <p>CPO 10.13 Encourage and seek sustainable transport movement at the earliest design stage of development proposals, to ensure accessibility by all modes of transport and all sections of society and promote the provision of parking space for bicycles in development schemes.</p> <p>CPO 10.14 Improve the streetscape environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with special mobility needs by providing facilities to enhance safety and convenience, including separation for pedestrian infrastructure from vehicular traffic.</p> <p>CPO 10.15 Provide better sign posting and public lighting where considered appropriate and ensure that the upgrading of roads will not impact negatively on the safety and perceived safety of cyclists.</p> <p>CPO 10.16 Work with the National Trails Office, Coillte, the Department of Planning, Housing and Local Government, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking and cycling.</p> <p>Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – Greenways</p> <p>CPO 10.17 Continue to develop an integrated and connected network of sustainable greenways and green routes within Westmeath and to adjoining counties, in accordance with the "Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways".</p> <p>CPO 10.18 Progress the expansion of the National Cycle Network westwards from Athlone to the Roscommon County boundary.</p> <p>CPO 10.19 Support the development of a greenway extending northwards of Athlone, along Lough Ree to the Longford County border, in accordance with a habitat management plan for Lough Ree.</p> <p>CPO 10.20 Support the development of a greenway extending northwards from the River Brosna in Kilbeggan along the Westmeath Way via Ballinagore, linking into the southern end of Lough Ennell at Lilliput. In this regard, due cognisance will be given to the habitat management plan prepared for Council owned land at Lilliput.</p> <p>CPO 10.21 Support the development of a greenway linking the Hill of Uisneach to the Old Rail Trail, subject to the protection of the archaeological significance of Uisneach.</p> <p>CPO 10.22 Support and promote the development of additional greenway links from the various towns/villages to the Old Rail Trail and Royal Canal Cycleways, subject to Environment and Habitats Requirements.</p> <p>CPO 10.23 Maximise both pedestrian and cycle connectivity to the network of existing greenways within the County.</p> <p>CPO 10.24 Protect established Greenways within the County against inappropriate new vehicular accesses and increased traffic movements.</p> <p>Transport and Infrastructure - Public Transport Policies</p> <p>CPO 10.25 Support the continued integration of national, regional and local bus and rail services to ensure the delivery of a seamless and fully integrated public transport service.</p> <p>CPO 10.26 Promote the use of and facilitate improvements to existing public transport services to support initiatives designed to improve bus/coach/rail interchange facilities.</p> <p>CPO 10.27 Support public transport improvements by reserving corridors for any such improvements free of development, including provision of setbacks along public transport corridors.</p> <p>CPO 10.28 Continue to work with the relevant transport providers, agencies and stakeholders to facilitate the integration of active travel (walking, cycling etc.) with public transport, thereby making it easier for people to access and use the public transport system.</p> <p>CPO 10.29 Support the improvement of existing rail transport infrastructure, including the provision of increased frequency of services on the Dublin to Sligo and Dublin to Galway Lines.</p> <p>CPO 10.30 Safeguard all existing rail infrastructure and encourage the re-opening of rail stations including Killucan and preserve disused stations/halts and track appropriate to future strategic and public transport needs.</p> <p>CPO 10.31 Support the reopening of the Mullingar to Athlone Rail Line and Moate Railway Station, thereby increasing connectivity between these Towns.</p> <p>CPO 10.32 Support the operation of existing bus services and facilitate the provision of improved facilities for bus users in towns and villages, including the provision, in collaboration with the relevant agencies, of set down areas for coaches and bus shelters for passengers. Such provision is particularly required in towns and villages bypassed by National Routes.</p> <p>CPO 10.33 Support bus priority measures on existing and planned road infrastructure, where appropriate, in collaboration with the National Transport Authority, Bus</p>				
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Éireann and the Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

CPO 10.34 Support and encourage public transport providers and rural community transport initiatives to enhance the provision of public transportation services linking the rural villages to the main towns within Westmeath.

CPO 10.35 Support the Rural Transport Initiative and the provision of an integrated rural community public transport system as a means of reducing social isolation and as a viable long-term sustainable public transport option.

CPO 10.36 Investigate the potential of providing a number of 'Park and Ride' facilities in appropriate locations in the County, subject to environmental assessment of identified locations.

CPO 10.37 Investigate the potential of providing a number of 'Park and Stride' facilities in appropriate locations in the County, subject to environmental assessment of identified locations.

CPO 10.38 Investigate the feasibility of providing a 'Bike Sharing Scheme' for Athlone Town and Mullingar Town to facilitate and encourage Modal Shift.

Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – Electric Vehicles

CPO 10.39 Facilitate the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electric vehicles both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards prescribed in Development Management Standards Chapter 16 of this plan.

CPO 10.40 Support the growth of Electric Vehicles with support facilities, through a roll-out of additional electric charging points in collaboration with relevant agencies at appropriate locations.

CPO 10.41 Support the prioritisation of parking for Electric Vehicles in town centre locations.

Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – National Roads

CPO 10.42 Maintain and protect the safety, capacity and efficiency of National roads and associated junctions in accordance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG, (2012) and the Trans-European Networks (TEN-T) Regulations.

CPO 10.43 Protect national roads from inappropriate access in order to protect the substantial investment in the national road network, to preserve the carrying capacity and safety of the National Road Network and to prevent the premature obsolescence of the network.

CPO 10.44 Support and provide for improvements to the national road network, including reserving corridors for proposed routes, free of development, so as not to compromise future road scheme.

CPO 10.45 Prevent, except in exceptional circumstances, the creation of additional access points from new developments or the generation of increased traffic from existing accesses to national roads, to which speed limits greater than 60 kph apply.

CPO 10.46 Require all applications for significant development proposals to be accompanied by a Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) and Road Safety Audit (RSA), carried out by suitably competent persons, in accordance with the TII's Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines.

CPO 10.47 Seek to implement the Road Improvement Schemes indicated in Table 10.1. The corridor and route selection process for such schemes shall be undertaken in accordance with Section 10.6 of the Plan.

Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – Non-National Roads

CPO 10.48 Safeguard the carrying capacity and safety of the County's regional and local road network.

CPO 10.49 Implement the recommendations of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS 2019) in relation to urban streets and roads within the 50/60 kph zone.

CPO 10.50 Improve the standards and safety of our Regional and Local roads and to protect the investment of public resources in the provision, improvement and maintenance of this public road network.

CPO 10.51 Seek the reduction of through-traffic passing through town centres.

CPO 10.52 Increase the safety of children at schools by assessing safe routes to schools for school children and by the installation of traffic management measures. Require School Travel Plans to be submitted with applications by schools or colleges in accordance with actions as set out under Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 – 2020.

CPO 10.53 Promote road safety measures throughout the County, including traffic calming, road signage and parking.

CPO 10.54 Ensure that environmental improvements, traffic calming, and parking provision are provided for, which will respect and enhance the urban form and create a well-designed public realm in towns and villages.

CPO 10.55 Protect strategic regional roads listed in Table 10.2, against development where a maximum speed limit applies, except in exceptional circumstances, in order to protect the carrying capacity and safety of such roads.

CPO 10.56 Seek to implement Regional Road Improvement Schemes as indicated in Table 10.3.

CPO 10.57 Require all applications for significant development proposals affecting Regional or Local Roads to be accompanied by a Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) and Road Safety Audit (RSA), carried out by suitably competent persons, in accordance with the TII's Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines.

Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – Mobility Management Plans

CPO 10.58 Require mobility management plans to be submitted with applications for trip intensive developments.

Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – Parking

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council to:

CPO 10.59 Allow for the reduction in car parking standards in suitable town centre locations in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking.

CPO 10.60 Manage on-street and off-street car-parking to accommodate longer term parking in less convenient and under-utilised off street car parks.

CPO 10.61 Facilitate and support purpose built off-street car parks including multi-storey car parks, in preference to on-street parking.

CPO 10.62 Ensure that applications for surface car parking are accompanied by landscaping proposals.

CPO 10.63 Seek and promote the provision of Aged Friendly parking arrangements and further provide for the improvement of parking arrangements for people with disabilities.

<p>Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – Bicycle Parking Facilities</p> <p>CPO 10.64 Ensure the provision of appropriate Bicycle parking facilities as part of any new applications in urban areas to assist with supporting modal shift away from private cars to more sustainable modes of transport i.e. Cycling, Walking, Public Transport.</p> <p>Water Supply Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.65 Support Irish Water in the implementation of their capital investment programme to ensure the timely delivery of water and waste-water infrastructure for the County.</p> <p>CPO 10.66 Collaborate with Irish Water in relation to the preparation of their Investment Plans in order to align the supply of water services with the County Settlement Hierarchy.</p> <p>CPO 10.67 Ensure 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.</p> <p>CPO 10.68 Assist Irish Water in their commitment to water conservation and support efforts to tackle leakage through find and fix (active leakage control) and water mains rehabilitation.</p> <p>CPO 10.69 Support Irish Water in the implementation of Capital Projects to strengthen the Regional Water Supply Scheme, subject to environmental assessment.</p> <p>CPO 10.70 Support the implementation of the Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midland Region, subject to environmental assessment.</p> <p>CPO 10.71 Support the implementation of the Rural Water Programme.</p> <p>CPO 10.72 Minimise wastage of water supply and promote water conservation measures by requiring, where appropriate, water conservation measures and the installation of water meters in all new developments.</p> <p>CPO 10.73 Ensure that delivery and phasing of water services are subject to the required appraisal, planning and environmental assessment processes and avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.</p> <p>CPO 10.74 Protect, safeguard and strictly control development within the water catchment areas of Lough Owel and Lough Lene, and other major sources of public water supply that would give rise to pollution of these water sources.</p> <p>CPO 10.75 Ensure that new development proposals connect into the existing public water mains, where available.</p> <p>Water Quality and Groundwater Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.76 Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the relevant River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021, and associated Programme of Measures, or any such plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of the plan. Development proposals shall not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface waters, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated woodlands.</p> <p>CPO 10.77 Collaborate with Irish Water in contributing towards compliance with the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations Drinking Water Regulations 2014 (as amended) and compliance of water supplies with the parameters identified in these Regulations.</p> <p>CPO 10.78 Contribute towards, as appropriate, the protection of existing and potential water resources, and their use by humans and wildlife, including rivers, streams, wetlands, groundwater and associated habitats and species in accordance with the requirements and guidance in the EU Water Framework Directive 2000 (2000/60/EC), the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (as amended), the Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC and the European Communities Environmental Objectives (groundwater) Regulations 2010 (as amended) and other relevant EU Directives, including associated national legislation and policy guidance (including any superseding versions of same).</p> <p>CPO 10.79 In conjunction with Irish Water, have regard to the EPA 2019 publication "Drinking Water Report for Public Water Supplies 2018" (and any subsequent update) in the establishment and maintenance of water sources in the County.</p> <p>CPO 10.80 In conjunction with Irish Water, support recommendations made by the EPA arising from any failure to meet drinking water standards and any enlistment on the EPA's Remedial Action List.</p> <p>CPO 10.81 Ensure that in assessing applications for developments, that consideration is had to the impact on the quality of surface waters having regard to targets and measures set out in the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 and any subsequent local or regional plans.</p> <p>CPO 10.82 Ensure that development would not have an unacceptable impact on water quality and quantity including surface water, ground water, designated source protection areas, river corridors and associated wetlands.</p> <p>CPO 10.83 Discourage the over-concentration of individual septic tanks and treatment plants to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution.</p> <p>CPO 10.84 Support the preparation of Drinking Water Protection Plans and Source Protection Plans to protect sources of public water supply, in accordance with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>Wastewater Policy Objectives</p> <p>It is a policy of Westmeath County Council to:</p> <p>CPO 10.85 Collaborate with Irish Water in contributing towards compliance with the relevant provisions of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations 2001 and 2004 and the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007 as amended.</p> <p>CPO 10.86 Ensure that development will only be permitted in instances where there is sufficient capacity for appropriate collection, treatment and disposal (in compliance with the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan) of waste water.</p> <p>CPO 10.87 Liaise with and work in conjunction with Irish Water during the lifetime of the plan for the provision, extension and upgrading of waste water collection and treatment systems in all towns and villages of the County to serve existing populations and facilitate sustainable development of the County, in accordance with the requirements of the Settlement Strategy and associated Core Strategy.</p> <p>CPO 10.88 Support strategic wastewater treatment infrastructure investment and provide for the separation of foul and surface water networks to accommodate future growth in the County.</p> <p>CPO 10.89 Resist the discharge of additional surface water to combined sewers and promote Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) and solutions to maximise the capacity of towns with combined drainage systems.</p> <p>CPO 10.90 Promote the changeover from septic tanks to collection networks in all cases where this is feasible (subject to connection agreements with Irish Water) and that all new developments utilise and connect to the public wastewater infrastructure.</p>				
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<p>CPO 10.91 Protect against development proposals, involving individual treatment systems, which would increase effluent loading within existing housing clusters located within areas of high groundwater vulnerability.</p> <p>CPO 10.92 Ensure that private wastewater treatment plants, where permitted, are operated in compliance with EPA's Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (PE. ≤10) (EPA 2009), as may be amended.</p> <p>CPO 10.93 Support the implementation of the Athlone Main Drainage Project subject to appropriate environmental assessment.</p> <p>CPO 10.94 Support appropriate options for the extraction of energy and other resources from sewerage sludge in the County.</p> <p>CPO 10.95 Support the servicing of rural villages (serviced sites) to provide an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside, in line with RPO 4.78 of the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.</p> <p>Flood Risk Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.96 Implement and comply fully with the recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment prepared as part of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>CPO 10.97 Have regard to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management (DoEHLG/OPW 2009) and Circular PL2/2014, through the use of the sequential approach and application of the Justification Tests in Development Management.</p> <p>CPO 10.98 Ensure that a flood risk assessment is carried out for any development proposal, in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management (DoEHLG/OPW 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to the potential development.</p> <p>CPO 10.99 Support the implementation of recommendations in the CFRAM Programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.</p> <p>CPO 10.100 Support the implementation of recommendations in the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP's), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk.</p> <p>CPO 10.101 Consult with the OPW in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible, and to retain a strip on either side of such channels where required, to facilitate maintenance access thereto.</p> <p>CPO 10.102 Assist the OPW in developing catchment-based Flood Risk Management Plans for rivers in County Westmeath and have regard to their provisions/recommendations.</p> <p>CPO 10.103 Protect and enhance the County's floodplains and wetlands as 'green infrastructure' which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed and reducing the need to provide flood defenses in the future, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.</p> <p>CPO 10.104 Protect the integrity of any formal (OPW or Westmeath County Council) flood risk management infrastructure, thereby ensuring that any new development does not negatively impact any existing defense infrastructure or compromise any proposed new infrastructure.</p> <p>CPO 10.105 Ensure that where flood risk management works take place that the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams and watercourses are protected and enhanced.</p> <p>CPO 10.106 Ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.</p> <p>CPO 10.107 Consult, where necessary, with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies in the provision of flood alleviation measures in the County.</p> <p>Stormwater Management Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.108 Support in conjunction with Irish Water the improvement of storm water infrastructure to improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in urban environments.</p> <p>CPO 10.109 Implement policies contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS) in relation to SUDS and climate change.</p> <p>CPO 10.110 Ensure new development is adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure which meets the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, associated River Basin Management Plans and CFRAM Management Plans.</p> <p>CPO 10.111 Require that planning applications are accompanied by a comprehensive SUDs assessment that addresses run-off quantity, run-off quality and its impact on the existing habitat and water quality.</p> <p>CPO 10.112 Ensure that in public and private developments in urban areas, both within developments and within the public realm, seek to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.</p> <p>CPO 10.113 Ensure appropriate maintenance of surface water drainage infrastructure to avoid flood risk.</p> <p>Waste Management Policy Objectives</p> <p>It is a policy of Westmeath County Council to:</p> <p>CPO 10.114 Support the implementation of the Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 and any updates made thereto.</p> <p>CPO 10.115 Encourage and support waste prevention, minimisation, reuse, recycling and recovery as methods of managing waste.</p> <p>CPO 10.116 Facilitate the transition from a waste management economy to a green circular economy to increase the value recovery and recirculation of resources.</p> <p>CPO 10.117 Encourage and support the provision of separate collection of waste in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulations 2009, the Waste Framework Directive Regulations, 2011 and other relevant legislation.</p> <p>CPO 10.118 Promote and facilitate communities to become involved in environmental awareness activities and community based recycling initiatives or environmental management initiatives that will lead to local sustainable waste management practices.</p> <p>CPO 10.119 Ensure that the Council fulfills its duties under the Waste Management (certification of historic unlicensed waste disposal and recovery activity) Regulations 2008 (S.I. No 524 of 2008), including those in relation to the identification and registration of closed landfills.</p> <p>Air Quality Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.120 Promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and</p>				
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<p>Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/5/0/EC) and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 201) (or any updated/superseding documents).</p> <p>Noise Pollution Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.121 Support the implementation of the Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006.</p> <p>CPO 10.122 Support the Implementation of the Westmeath Noise Action Plan 2013-2018 (and any revision made thereto)</p> <p>CPO 10.123 Require all developments to be designed and operated in a manner that will minimise and contain noise levels.</p> <p>Light Pollution Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.124 Control lighting in urban and rural areas and in particular in sensitive locations, in order to minimise impacts on residential amenity, habitats and species of importance.</p> <p>CPO 10.125 Require the use of energy efficient public lighting in all new development proposals.</p> <p>Major Accidents – Seveso Sites Policy Objectives</p> <p>It is a policy of Westmeath County Council to:</p> <p>CPO 10.126 To have regard to the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive, relating to the control of major accident hazards involving dangerous substances, and the recommendations of the Health and Safety Authority in the assessment of all planning applications located within the consultation distance of such sites.</p> <p>CPO 10.127 Require developers to submit a detailed consequence and risk assessment with all Environmental Impact Statements and/or legislative licence applications for all Seveso sites.</p> <p>Energy Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.128 Support local, regional, national and international initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources which make use of the natural resources in an environmentally acceptable manner and having particular regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>CPO 10.129 Facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and support the implementation of actions identified in the Westmeath County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and any future amendments.</p> <p>CPO 10.130 Promote and support the use of renewable forms of energy as a contribution to the energy demand of all new buildings where it is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of an area.</p> <p>Wind Energy Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.131 Have regard to the principles and planning guidance set out in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publications relating to 'Wind Energy Development' and the DCCAE Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland and any other relevant guidance which may be issued in relation to sustainable energy provisions.</p> <p>CPO 10.132 Provide the following separation distances between wind turbines and residential dwellings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 metres, where height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 25 metres but does not exceed 50 metres. • 1000 metres, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 50 metres but does not exceed 100 metres. • 1500 metres, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 100 metres but does not exceed 150 metres. • More than 2000 metres, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 150 metres. <p>CPO 10.133 Ensure the security of energy supply by supporting the potential of the wind energy resources of the County in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the area.</p> <p>CPO 10.134 Encourage and support the development of small-scale wind energy development and single turbines in urban and rural areas and Industrial Parks, provided they do not negatively impact upon environmental quality, landscape, wildlife and habitats or residential amenity.</p> <p>CPO 10.135 Encourage large-scale energy production projects, in the form of Wind Farms, onto cutover cutaway peatlands in the County, subject to environmental, landscape, habitats and wildlife protection requirements being addressed.</p> <p>In the context of this policy, industrial scale/large-scale energy production projects are defined as follows:</p> <p>Projects that meet or exceed any of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Height: over 100m to blade tip, or - Scale: More than five turbines - Output: Having a total output of greater than 5MW <p>Developments sited on peatlands have the potential to increase overall carbon losses. Proposals for such development should demonstrate that the following has been considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peatland stability; and • Carbon emissions balance. <p>CPO 10.136 Ensure that proposals for energy development demonstrate that human health has been considered, including those relating to the topics of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise (including consistency with the World Health Organisation's 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region); • Shadow Flicker (for wind turbine developments, including detailed Shadow Flicker Study); • Ground Conditions/Geology (including landslide and slope stability risk assessment); • Air Quality; and Water Quality; • Assessment of impacts on collision risk species (bird and bats). <p>CPO 10.137 With regard to wind energy developments, to ensure that the potential for visual disturbance should be mitigated by applying an appropriate setback distance, which, where relevant, complies with available Ministerial Guidelines.</p> <p>CPO 10.138 Support the preparation of a Management Plan for the Industrial Peatlands in the County, in consultation with stakeholders and adjacent Local Authorities. The Plan should focus on recreational opportunities, renewable energy, hydrological and ecological considerations subject to environmental assessment and the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.</p>				
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<p>Solar Energy Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.139 Support Ireland's renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating solar power where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment, landscape, historic buildings or local amenities.</p> <p>CPO 10.140 Encourage and support the development of solar energy infrastructure, including solar PV, solar thermal and seasonal storage facilities.</p> <p>CPO 10.141 Ensure that proposals for solar farms consider the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Landscape Character of the County. • Visual impact particularly on raised/elevated sites. • Zone of visual influence and visual impact of the structures. • Glint and glare report and potential impact on adjoining road networks and dwellings. • Road access and impact on road network serving the site during the construction phase (A pre and post construction impact report may be required). • Archaeological Impact. • Incorporation of security measures – use of CCTV/surveillance cameras and security fencing. • The suitability/strength of the grid and accessibility to it. • The suitability of the site, having regard to other land use policies, including the need to protect areas of important built and natural heritage. • Decommissioning of obsolete infrastructure and after-use. <p>Geothermal Energy Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.142 Support Ireland's renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating the exploitation of geothermal energy where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment, landscape, biodiversity or local amenities.</p> <p>CPO 10.143 Ensure that any proposal for geothermal technologies or any other subsurface exploration does not impact on groundwater quality.</p> <p>Sustainable Building and Design Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.151 Support the implementation of National and County initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases by incorporating energy efficiency measures into the design of new buildings.</p> <p>CPO 10.152 Inform and encourage new developments to mitigate against, and adapt to, where possible the impacts of climate change through the location, layout and design of the development.</p> <p>CPO 10.153 Encourage low-energy design through measures including information provision (in conjunction with other Directorates) and through the development of Westmeath specific standards/guidelines in respect of spatial requirements within the remit of planning (e.g. solar orientation) especially during planning process including pre-planning consultations.</p> <p>CPO 10.154 Encourage improved energy efficiency of existing building stock and to promote energy efficiency and conservation in the design and development of all new buildings, including Local Authority dwellings.</p> <p>CPO 10.155 Develop guidelines and standards to assist property owners in respect of energy retrofitting and planning considerations.</p> <p>CPO 10.156 Support and promote the development and use of passive solar design principles in all new developments taking account of national guidelines and development management policies for rural and urban areas.</p> <p>Electricity/Gas Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.157 Support and promote the sustainable improvement and expansion of the electricity transmission and distribution network that supply the County, subject to landscape, residential, amenity and environmental considerations.</p> <p>CPO 10.158 Support the provision of electricity and gas transmission networks to Athlone and Mullingar to provide for the medium to long-term future needs of these towns, subject to landscape, residential, amenity and environmental considerations.</p> <p>CPO 10.159 Support and promote the improvement and extension of gas infrastructure to serve the County.</p> <p>CPO 10.160 Co-operate and liaise with statutory and other energy providers in relation to power generation, in order to ensure adequate power capacity for the existing and future needs of the County.</p> <p>CPO 10.161 Support the implementation of EirGrid's Grid 25 Investment Programme, subject to landscape, residential, amenity and environmental considerations.</p> <p>CPO 10.162 Support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, which do not negatively impact on environmental quality, landscape, wildlife, habitats or residential amenity and which are critical to the economic development of the County.</p> <p>CPO 10.163 Support roll-out of the Smart Grids and Smart Cities Action Plan enabling new connections, grid balancing, energy management and micro grid development.</p> <p>CPO 10.164 Support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Strategy including the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity and gas transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process</p> <p>ICT and Broadband Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.165 Support and facilitate delivery of the National Broadband Plan</p> <p>CPO 10.166 Promote and facilitate the sustainable development of a high-quality ICT network throughout the County in order to achieve balanced social and economic development, whilst protecting the amenities of urban and rural areas</p> <p>CPO 10.167 Support the national objective to promote Ireland as a sustainable international destination for ICT infrastructures such as data centres and associated economic activities at appropriate locations.</p> <p>CPO 10.168 Support the delivery of high capacity Information Communications Technology Infrastructure, broadband connectivity and digital broadcasting, throughout the County, in order to ensure economic competitiveness for the enterprise and commercial sectors and in enabling more flexible work practices e.g.</p>				
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<p>teleworking.</p> <p>CPO 10.169 Seek to provide public Wi-Fi zones in public spaces where possible.</p> <p>CPO 10.170 Support the co-ordinated and focused development and extension of broadband infrastructure throughout the County.</p> <p>CPO 10.171 Co-operate with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and public and private agencies where appropriate, in improving high quality broadband infrastructure throughout the County.</p> <p>CPO 10.172 Achieve a balance between facilitating the provision of telecommunications infrastructure in the interests of social and economic progress and sustaining residential amenity and environmental quality.</p> <p>CPO 10.173 Ensure that the location of telecommunications structures should minimise and /or mitigate any adverse impacts on communities, public rights of way and the built or natural environment.</p> <p>CPO 10.174 Encourage co-location of antennae on existing support structures and to require documentary evidence as to the non-availability of this option in proposals for new structures. The shared use of existing structures will be required where the numbers of masts located in any single area is considered to have an excessive concentration.</p> <p>CPO 10.175 Facilitate the provision of telecommunications infrastructure throughout the County in accordance with the requirements of the "Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures – Guidelines for Planning Authorities".</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Transport, Infrastructure and Energy against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and • Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-served and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</p> <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other higher-level planning and sectoral plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy.</p> <p>The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and • The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised. <p>The Transport Policy Objectives in this Chapter contribute towards the planning framework for the future development of sustainable transport and movement in County Westmeath and will, in combination with the implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans and programmes, contribute towards the overall development of the County. Many of these provisions would primarily contribute towards maximising sustainable mobility and associated interactions with emissions to air (including noise and greenhouse gas emissions), energy usage, air quality and human health. The facilitation of journeys by car, in particular, would give rise to emissions to air.</p> <p>The development of new and existing greenways, blueways, trails and walking and cycling routes, including those between County Westmeath, adjoining counties and beyond has the potential to contribute towards sustainable mobility and a better management of movements in sensitive areas, thereby benefitting various environmental components including habitats at certain locations. The development of these projects, however, presents a variety of potentially adverse environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure. These types of infrastructure are often constructed in ecologically and visually sensitive areas adjacent to the banks of rivers and streams. Potential adverse effects would be mitigated both by measures which have been integrated into the Plan which provide for and contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development (including those identified at Section 9 of this report) and by measures arising from lower tier assessments (including those for the preparation of lower tier plans and projects).</p> <p>Policy Objectives relating to water resources and services would, by protecting water resources, appropriately treating waste water and providing safe drinking water, contribute towards the protection of various environmental components including: human health, biodiversity and flora and fauna, the status of waters, flood risk management and soil. There would be potential for significant adverse environmental effects upon various environmental components to arise during construction of water services infrastructure. Such potential significant adverse effects could also arise during operation: the protection of human health, biodiversity and flora and fauna and the status of waters, could all be conflicted with by outflows and abstractions.</p> <p>Subsection 10.13.1 identifies the need to develop a local site selection plan in relation to domestic waste water treatment systems and Policy Objective CPO 10.95 provides for the servicing of rural villages (served sites) to provide an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside.</p> <p>Policy Objectives relating to the management of flood risk and surface water drainage would benefit the protection of human health, biodiversity, flora and fauna, cultural heritage, water status and existing infrastructure and services. Flood risk management infrastructure (if required) has the potential to result in significant adverse environmental effects during construction and operation on most environmental components. These types of infrastructure are often constructed in ecologically and visually sensitive areas and adjacent to the banks of rivers and streams. Potential adverse effects will be mitigated both by measures which have been integrated into the Plan (including those identified at Section 9 of this report) and by measures arising from lower tier assessments.</p>				

Policy Objectives contained in this Chapter relating to energy, would contribute towards achieving various government objectives and targets including those relating to climate mitigation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the amount of energy to be consumed from renewable sources. Further general commentary on the types of potential effects arising from certain renewable energy types is provided below.

Wind Energy

Positive Effects: Contribution towards renewable energy and minimisation of greenhouse gases targets

Potential Negative Effects, if unmitigated:

- Potential impacts include those associated with construction and operation of the turbines and ancillary facilities and infrastructure (including roads and electrical infrastructure)
- Potential human health impact: shadow flicker, noise, and impacts arising from bog bursts and landslides
- Potential impact upon designated and non-designated biodiversity and flora and fauna including birdlife
- Potential interactions leading to change in structure of soil and geology and changes to drainage
- Potential impacts on water status during construction – this could interact with drinking water sources and biodiversity
- Potential impacts upon the context of protected archaeological and architectural heritage – including the context of this heritage – as well as unknown archaeological heritage
- Potential impacts upon traffic during construction due to transportation of turbine components
- Changes to the character of areas would be likely to occur however visual impacts would depend on various factors including the size, number and spacing of the turbines, perception of the relevant areas and any cumulative effect arising from multiple wind farms

Solar Energy and Solar Thermal Energy

Positive Effects: Contribution towards renewable energy and minimisation of greenhouse gases targets

Potential Negative Effects, if unmitigated:

- Potential impacts on architectural heritage – including the context of this heritage – at micro scale
- Potential impacts on habitats and species and micro scale
- Large scale installations may have visual impacts – these would depend on perception of the relevant area -, however these are unlikely to be provided for

Geothermal Energy

Positive Effects: Contribution towards renewable energy and minimisation of greenhouse gases targets

Potential Negative Effects, if unmitigated:

- Potential impacts upon the status of waters and ecology contained within, especially arising from changes in the temperature of groundwater which can impact upon the structure and ecology of the aquifer and any dependent surface waters - this could interact with drinking water sources
- Potential interactions leading to change in structure of soil and geology
- Potential impacts upon archaeology, including unknown underground archaeology
- Potential impacts upon on site water services
- Potential impacts upon context of archaeological and architectural heritage arising from surface installation
- Large scale installations may have visual impacts – these would depend on perception of the relevant area

8.8.11 Chapter 11: Climate Action

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
Climate Action Policy Objectives CPO 11.1 Support the implementation and achievement of European, national, regional and local objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the following documents, taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage) and having regard to the Climate mitigation and adaptation measures which have been outlined through the policy objectives in this Development Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Action Plan (2019 and any subsequent versions); • National Mitigation Plan (2017 and any subsequent versions); • National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions); • Any Regional Decarbonisation Plan prepared on foot of commitments included in the emerging Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region; • Relevant provisions of any Sectoral Adaptation Plans prepared to comply the requirements of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, including those seeking to contribute towards the National Transition Objective, to pursue, and achieve, the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the end of the year 2050; and • Westmeath County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024. CPO 11.2 Provide for a reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions by providing for consolidated future development which supports sustainable travel patterns in line with the County Core Strategy. CPO 11.3 Promote the benefits to quality of life, public health and biodiversity arising from implementation of policies promoting climate change adaptation and	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	

<p>mitigation.</p> <p>CPO 11.4 Encourage innovation and facilitate the development of pilot schemes that support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.</p> <p>CPO 11.5 Provide training on climate mitigation measures.</p> <p>CPO 11.6 Support collaboration between local authorities, the Bord na Móna Transition Team and relevant stakeholders and the development of partnership approaches to integrated peatland management for a just transition that incorporate any relevant policies and strategies such as the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Plan 2016-2021 and the national Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans. This shall include support for the rehabilitation and/or re-wetting of suitable peatland habitats.</p> <p>CPO 11.7 Work in collaboration with the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland and relevant stakeholders to deliver a number of sustainable energy communities throughout the County.</p> <p>CPO 11.8 Consider the use of heat mapping to support developments which deliver energy efficiency and the recovery of energy that would otherwise be wasted. A feasibility assessment for district heating in Local Authority areas shall be carried out and statutory planning documents shall identify local waste heat sources.</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Climate Action Policy Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</p> <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Climate Action Plan that allocates the following three actions to local authorities: Action 64 Introduce minimum BER standards in the Local Authority social housing stock as part of retrofit works being carried out on older stock or refurbishment of vacant dwellings; Action 65 Develop and establish a climate-action toolkit and audit framework for Local Authority development planning to drive the adoption of stronger climate action policies in relation to the patterns and forms of future development.; and Action 66 Roadmap to develop supply chain to support the phase out of fossil fuel boilers in new dwellings. The National Planning Framework, which has identified National Strategic Outcome Objectives 8 "Build Climate Resilience" and 9 "Support the transition to low carbon and clean energy" under National Strategic Outcome 8 "Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society". The Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy that has identified various Regional Policy Objectives relating to climate action, including 7.32 "With the assistance and support of the Climate Action Regional Offices, local authorities shall develop, adopt and implement local climate adaptation and mitigation strategies which shall address issues including local vulnerability to climate risks and identify and prioritise actions, in accordance with the guiding principles of the National Adaptation Framework, National Mitigation Plan.", 7.35 "EMRA shall, in conjunction with local authorities in the Region, identify Strategic Energy Zones as areas suitable for larger energy generating projects, the role of community and micro energy production in urban and rural settings and the potential for renewable energy within industrial areas. The Strategic Energy Zones for the Region will ensure all environmental constraints are addressed in the analysis. A regional landscape strategy should be developed to support delivery of projects within the Strategic Energy Zones." and "Local authorities shall include policies in statutory land use plans to promote high levels of energy conservation, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in existing buildings, including retro fitting of energy efficiency measures in the existing building stock and energy efficiency in traditional buildings. All new buildings within the Region will be required to achieve the Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings (NZEB) standard in line with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD)." <p>The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised. <p>Please also refer to Section 8.6 "Interactions with Climate Mitigation and Adaptation".</p>				

8.8.12 Chapter 12: Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>Natural Heritage Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.1 Contribute as appropriate towards the protection of designated sites in compliance with relevant EU Directives and applicable national legislation.</p> <p>CPO 12.2 Support the implementation of any relevant recommendations contained in the National Biodiversity Plan, the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and the National Peatlands Strategy.</p> <p>CPO 12.3 Support the implementation of the Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020 and any revisions made thereto.</p> <p>Natura 2000 Sites Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.4 Protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation, candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and candidate Special Protection Areas,</p>	<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>		<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>	

<p>designated under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives respectively.</p> <p>CPO 12.5 Ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European Sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects).</p> <p>CPO 12.6 Ensure that any plan or project that could have a significant adverse impact (either by themselves or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site or would result in the deterioration of any habitat or any species reliant on that habitat will not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 12.7 Assess any plan or project in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive to determine whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the site either individually or cumulatively upon the integrity, conservation objectives and qualifying interest of any Natura 2000 Site.</p> <p>CPO 12.8 Require an ecological appraisal for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of Natura Sites, or a proposed Natura Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively.</p> <p>CPO 12.9 Identify and provide appropriate buffer zones between Designated Sites and local biodiversity features and areas zoned for development.</p> <p>CPO 12.10 Prepare Strategic Habitat Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites in Council ownership in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>CPO 12.11 Promote the maintenance and as appropriate, achievement of favourable conservation status of habitats and species and to improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, by maintaining and where appropriate, developing features in the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora.</p> <p>CPO 12.12 Require that new development proposals affecting designated sites have regard to the sensitivities identified in the SEA Environmental Report prepared in respect of this plan.</p> <p>Rare and Protected Sites Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.13 Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</p> <p>CPO 12.14 Require all new developments in the early pre-planning stage of the planning process to identify, protect and enhance ecological features by making provision for local biodiversity (e.g. through provision of swift boxes, bat roost sites, green roofs, etc.) and provide links to the wider Green Infrastructure network as an essential part of the design process.</p> <p>CPO 12.15 Support the protection of all native woodlands listed in the National Survey of Native Woodlands 2003 to 2008.</p> <p>CPO 12.16 Apply the precautionary principle in relation to development proposals in areas identified as being of national nature conservation interest, by requiring a Scientific/ Ecological Risk Assessment to ensure that the development will not impact on the integrity and habitat value of the site.</p> <p>CPO 12.17 Support and cooperate with Statutory Authorities and other relevant bodies in support of measures taken to manage designated nature conservation sites, in order to achieve their conservation objectives. Specific regard shall be had to Conservation Management Plans and their conservation objectives/ management practices, where they exist.</p> <p>CPO 12.18 Consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in regard to any developments (those requiring permission and those not requiring planning permission) which the Council proposes to carry out within pNHAs, NHAs, SACs, SPAs, and other important ecological sites.</p> <p>CPO 12.19 Maintain the conservation value of Council owned land within NHAs and pNHAs and promote the conservation value of Council owned lands adjoining NHAs.</p> <p>CPO 12.20 Protect and conserve NHAs and pNHAs including NHAs that become designated and notified to the Local Authority during the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>CPO 12.21 Lighting fixtures should provide only the amount of light necessary for personal safety and should be designed so as to avoid creating glare or emitting light above a horizontal plane. Lighting fixtures should have minimum environmental impact, thereby contributing towards the protection of amenity and the protection of light sensitive species such as bats.</p> <p>Sites of Biodiversity Value and Non-designated Sites Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.22 Seek to create and enhance ecological linkages and buffer zones from development.</p> <p>CPO 12.23 Protect and where possible enhance biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive. Appropriate mitigation and/or compensation to conserve biodiversity, landscape character and green infrastructure networks will be required where habitats are at risk or lost as part of a development.</p> <p>CPO 12.24 Recognise that nature conservation is not just confined to designated sites and acknowledge the need to protect non-designated habitats and landscapes and to conserve the biological diversity.</p> <p>Invasive Species Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.25 Prevent the spread of invasive species within the plan area, including requiring landowners and developers to adhere to best practice guidance in relation to the control of invasive species.</p> <p>CPO 12.26 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 applicant will be required to submit a control and management program for the particular invasive species as part of the planning process and to comply with the provisions of the European Communities Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011).</p> <p>CPO 12.27 Support, as appropriate, the National Parks and Wildlife Service's efforts to seek to control and manage the spread of non-native invasive species on land and water. Where the presence of non-native invasive species is identified at the site of any proposed development or where the proposed activity has an elevated risk of resulting in the presence of these species, details of how these species will be managed and controlled will be required.</p> <p>Geological Heritage Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.28 Contribute towards the appropriate protection and maintenance of the character, integrity and conservation value of features or areas of geological interest listed in Table 12.3.</p> <p>CPO 12.29 Support the implementation of recommendations made in the County Westmeath Geological Audit.</p>		
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<p>CPO 12.30 Consult with the Geological Survey of Ireland when undertaking, approving or authorising developments which are likely to impact on County Geological Sites or involve significant ground excavations.</p> <p>CPO 12.31 Protect geological NHA's as they become designated during the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>CPO 12.32 Encourage and promote, where appropriate, public access to geological and geomorphological sites and avoid inappropriate development through consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland, subject to environmental and habitats assessment.</p> <p>CPO 12.33 Favour the retention of new rock exposures created as a result of major new carriageways or in other major infrastructural work, where feasible and safe to do so.</p> <p>CPO 12.34 Consider in consultation with the NPWS, Offaly County Council and the Geological Survey of Ireland the potential designation of the south Westmeath esker landscape as a UNESCO geo-park, to promote the unique geological heritage of the area.</p> <p>Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.35 Preserve and enhance the amenity and biodiversity value of the County, by promoting the protection of trees, groups of trees and ancient woodlands, of significant amenity value, especially native and broadleaf species.</p> <p>CPO 12.36 Protect trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders and seek to designate additional Tree Preservation Orders, where appropriate.</p> <p>CPO 12.37 Discourage the felling of mature trees and hedgerow, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows to facilitate development and seek Tree Management Plans to ensure that trees are adequately protected during development and incorporated into the design of new developments.</p> <p>CPO 12.38 Protect and preserve existing hedgerows in new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, and where their removal is necessary during the course of road works or other works seek their replacement with new hedgerows of native species indigenous to the area.</p> <p>CPO 12.39 Encourage the development of proposals for new woodlands and community woodlands in urban/urban fringe areas utilising funding available through schemes such as the NeighbourWood and Native Woodland Schemes.</p> <p>CPO 12.40 Encourage the protection of the trees which are considered an important component of demesne landscapes.</p> <p>Wetlands Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.41 Resist development that would destroy, fragment or degrade any wetland in the County.</p> <p>CPO 12.42 Support the implementation of recommendations made in the County Westmeath Wetlands Survey 2019 and subsequent versions thereof.</p> <p>CPO 12.43 Require an Ecological Impact Assessment where it is proposed to fill or reclaim a wetland area.</p> <p>CPO 12.44 Protect floodplains, wetlands and watercourses, for their biodiversity and flood protection value.</p> <p>CPO 12.45 Ensure that all proposed land zonings take cognisance of appropriate riparian setback distances that support the attainment of high ecological status for water bodies, the conservation of biodiversity and good ecosystem health, and buffer zones from flood plains.</p> <p>CPO 12.46 Implement the relevant parts of the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011 and the European Communities (Amendment to Planning and Development) Regulations 2011, which require planning permission to be applied for where the area impacted by works relating to the drainage or reclamation of a wetland exceeds 0.1 hectares or where such works may have a significant effect on the environment. Such applications for permission would need to be supported by an Appropriate Assessment where necessary.</p> <p>Waterways Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.47 Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</p> <p>CPO 12.48 Provide for public access to waterways where feasible and appropriate, in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Waterways Ireland and other relevant stakeholders, whilst maintaining them free from inappropriate development, subject to Ecological Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment, as appropriate.</p> <p>CPO 12.49 Protect the biodiversity of rivers, streams and other water courses and maintain them in an open state and discourage culverting and realignment.</p> <p>CPO 12.50 Consult with Waterways Ireland and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Government, Inland Waterways Association of Ireland and local communities on development proposals that may affect inland waterways, rivers, lakes, canals or water courses.</p> <p>CPO 12.51 Ensure that the County's watercourses are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values and to conserve and enhance where possible, the wildlife habitats of the County's rivers and riparian zones, lakes, canals and streams which occur outside of designated areas to provide a network of habitats and biodiversity corridors throughout the county.</p> <p>CPO 12.52 Consult, as appropriate, with Inland Fisheries Ireland in relation to any development that could potentially impact on the aquatic ecosystems and associated riparian habitats.</p> <p>CPO 12.53 Ensure that run off from a proposed development does not result in a deterioration of downstream watercourses or habitats.</p> <p>CPO 12.54 Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that any new projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</p> <p>CPO 12.55 Protect waterbodies and watercourses from inappropriate development, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains. This will include the preservation habitat features/structure, such as treeline density, and protection buffers in riverine and wetland areas, as appropriate.</p> <p>Peatlands Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.56 Protect the county's designated peatland areas and landscapes, including any ancient walkways through bogs and to conserve their ecological, archaeological, cultural, and educational heritage.</p> <p>CPO 12.57 Require the preparation of Hydrological Reports for significant developments within and in close proximity to peatlands, and to take account of same in the assessment of impacts on the integrity of peatland ecosystems.</p> <p>CPO 12.58 Exercise control of peat extraction, both individually and cumulatively, which would have significant impacts on the environment.</p> <p>CPO 12.59 Work in partnership with relevant stakeholders on suitable peatland site(s) to demonstrate best practice in sustainable peatland conservation, management and restoration techniques and to promote their heritage and educational value subject to Ecological Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment, where relevant.</p> <p>CPO 12.60 Work with relevant agencies such as Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, Bord na Mona, NPWS, Coillte and adjacent Local Authorities to prepare an</p>				
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afteruse framework plan for the peatlands and related infrastructure, to provide for the future sustainable and environmentally sensitive use of large industrial peatlands sites when peat harvesting finishes. Such plans should have regard to both National and Regional frameworks concerning the future use of peatlands, including cutaway bogs.

CPO 12.61 Support collaboration between Local Authorities, the Bord na Mona Transition Team and relevant stakeholders in the development of partnership approaches to integrated peatland management for a just transition having regard to relevant policies and strategies such as the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Plan 2016-2021 and the national Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans. This shall include support for the rehabilitation and/or re-wetting of suitable peatland habitats.

CPO 12.62 Consider designating peatlands at Coolnagun, Corlanna, Lower Coole, Mayne, Ballinealoe and Clonsura as archaeological heritage areas, where it is considered ancient trackways or road may have been constructed.

CPO 12.63 Support the preparation of a Sustainable Holistic Management Plan for the future use of the Industrial Peatlands in the County, which recognises the role of peatlands in carbon sequestration.

CPO 12.64 Support the designation of a National Park for the peatlands area in the Midlands in conjunction with adjoining Local Authorities.

CPO 12.65 Undertake a feasibility study to identify peatways, where appropriate and examine the tourist potential of same.

Green Infrastructure Policy Objectives

CPO 12.66 Identify, protect and enhance existing and planned Green Infrastructure assets and to facilitate, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, the development of Green Infrastructure that recognises the benefits that can be achieved with regards to the following:

- Provision of open space amenities
- Sustainable management of water
- Protection and management of biodiversity
- Protection of cultural heritage
- Protection of protected landscape sensitivities

CPO 12.67 Ensure green infrastructure responds to and reflects landscape character including historic landscape character, conserving and enhancing the existing landscapes and townscapes of Westmeath which contribute to a distinctive sense of place.

CPO 12.68 Prepare and implement a 'Green Infrastructure Strategy' for the County, to raise awareness of the importance of environmentally designated sites, river and canal corridors, and green spaces to adapting to climate change and enhancing opportunities for recreation and tourism.

CPO 12.69 Facilitate and promote the provision of a green infrastructure network serving the settlement hierarchy and its environs in tandem with projected population growth.

CPO 12.70 Prepare specific Green Infrastructure Strategies for the designated settlements of Athlone and Mullingar and implement green infrastructure networks within these towns.

CPO 12.71 Work collaboratively with other neighbouring Local Authorities in facilitating and supporting the development of green infrastructure networks.

CPO 12.72 Support and increase investment in the provision and on-going maintenance of existing green infrastructure and support the provision of new public parks, greenway and blueway corridors and other public open spaces to create green, healthy settlements throughout Westmeath by accessing relevant EU funding mechanisms and national funding opportunities including tourism related funding.

Greenways Policy Objectives

CPO 12.73 Support the development of an integrated Strategic Greenway Network of national and regional routes and maximise connectivity to existing greenways and link with cycling and walking infrastructure.

CPO 12.74 Support the delivery of sustainable strategic greenways, blueways and peatways projects in the County in accordance with the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways.

CPO 12.75 Develop the Mullingar Greenway incorporating a pedestrian/cycle link connecting Mullingar to Lough Ennell and Belvedere subject to environmental and habitats requirements.

CPO 12.76 Enhance and link the Westmeath Way through Mullingar via the Royal Canal Feeder and further along the waterside via Tullaghan and to the north eastern side of Lough Owel, consistent with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the lake.

Blueways Policy Objectives

CPO 12.77 Develop an integrated network of blueways both within Westmeath and to adjoining counties.

CPO 12.78 Support the development of blueways and associated infrastructure as part of the tourist offering of the County.

Public Rights of Way Policy Objectives

CPO 12.79 Cooperate with Coillte in the establishment of access ways, nature trails etc. with a view to opening up state forests for recreational use, compatible with forestry requirements.

CPO 12.80 Review and protect existing public rights of way for the common good and bring forward proposals for the creation of public rights of way. Where appropriate, links to established public rights of way in adjoining counties will be identified.

CPO 12.81 Ensure that Public Rights of Way are well marked and signposted.

Commentary

The assessment of the Plan's Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure Policy Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:

- Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and
- Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report.

Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and

services.

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc., including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy that includes objectives relating to, for example, the Galway to Dublin Greenway (Regional Policy Objective 4.64), the consideration of a National Park for the peatlands area in the Midlands (Regional Policy Objective 7.22) and the delivery of sustainable strategic greenways, blueways and peatways projects (Regional Policy Objective 7.25).

The development of green infrastructure would facilitate: contributions towards increases in sustainable mobility and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; increases in flood risk management and protection of human health; protection and management biodiversity and water quality; and protection cultural heritage and landscape sensitivities. The development of green infrastructure also potentially conflicts with most environmental components. This type of infrastructure is often constructed in ecologically and visually sensitive areas adjacent to the banks of rivers and streams. Potential adverse effects (including in-combination effects across County borders) would be mitigated by measures that have been integrated into other provisions within the Plan (see Section 9 of this report) and any additional requirements arising through lower tier assessments or granting of permission. The preparation of a lower-tier Green Infrastructure Strategy or network would have to be subject to lower-tier environmental assessment processes as relevant.

The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 “Mitigation Measures” of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:

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

The focus of most of the provisions in this Chapter is the protection and management of the environment.

8.8.13 Chapter 13: Landscape and Lake Amenities

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>Landscape and Lake Amenities Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 13.1 Support the implementation of the National Landscape Strategy.</p> <p>CPO 13.2 Protect the distinctiveness, value and sensitivity of County Westmeath’s landscapes and lakelands by recognising their capacity to sustainably integrate development.</p> <p>CPO 13.3 Support and implement objectives contained in any Regional Landscape Character Assessment.</p> <p>CPO 13.4 Conserve and enhance the high nature conservation value of the Landscape Character Areas in order to create/protect ecologically resilient and varied landscapes.</p> <p>CPO 13.5 Identify and integrate new green and blue infrastructure networks within the existing landscape character areas in the interests of biodiversity and climate change and in recognition of the tourism potential of these assets.</p> <p>CPO 13.6 Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</p> <p>Landscape Character Assessment Policy Objectives</p> <p>It is a policy objective of Westmeath County Council to:</p> <p>CPO 13.7 Protect the landscapes and natural environments of the County by ensuring that any new developments do not detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of their area. Any development which could unduly impact upon such landscapes will not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 13.8 Ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character type by having regard to the character, value and sensitivity of a landscape in new development proposals.</p> <p>CPO 13.9 Ensure development reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types, including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements which contribute to their distinctiveness.</p> <p>CPO 13.10 Explore the potential for natural resource tourism, such as fishing, boating, walking, cycling, nature trails, natural and cultural resource tourism etc., in conjunction with relevant tourism bodies such as Waterways Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Community Development Agencies and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.</p> <p>CPO 13.11 Require a Visual Impact Assessment for proposed developments with the potential to impact on significant landscape features within the County.</p> <p>CPO 13.12 Landscape Character Area 1: Consider the provision of walkways around Lough Lene, subject to impacts on biodiversity being fully addressed and subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment.</p> <p>CPO 13.13 Landscape Character Area 2: Explore the potential for funding to examine the feasibility of developing the River Inny basin as a biodiversity heritage area.</p> <p>CPO 13.14 Landscape Character Area 5: Continue to work with Waterways Ireland to enhance and protect the visual corridor of the Royal Canal, by incorporating a visual buffer zone on each side of the bank of the canal.</p> <p>CPO 13.15 Landscape Character Area 6: Explore the feasibility of promoting Lough Ree and its islands as a model for a living Biodiversity Reserve.</p> <p>CPO 13.16 Minimise impact on the ecological, archaeological, biodiversity and visual amenity surrounding quarry sites and quarrying of sensitive sites within the Landscape Character Areas including the lake valley landscape, eskers and canal corridor.</p> <p>CPO 13.17 Protect and enhance the setting of the Hill of Uisneach and support increased public access to the site. Only sensitive development that does not undermine the archaeological and cultural significance of the site will be permitted.</p>	<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>		<p>BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L</p>	

<p>CPO 13.18 a. Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views associated with the High Amenity Area around the Hill of Uisneach.</p> <p>b. Require any development proposals within the High Amenity Area around the Hill of Uisneach to demonstrate that no adverse effects will occur on the established appearance or character of this feature as viewed from either the Protected Panoramic Views or from surrounding public roads.</p> <p>High Amenity Areas Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 13.19 Protect High Amenity areas from inappropriate development and reinforce their character, distinctiveness and sense of place.</p> <p>CPO 13.20 Protect and preserve designated High Amenity Areas from inappropriate urban generated housing development or any other development which would be injurious to or detract from the natural amenity of Areas of High Amenity.</p> <p>CPO 13.21 Protect lakeshores from any inappropriate development which would detract from the natural amenity of the area.</p> <p>CPO 13.22 Protect and enhance the special landscape character and exceptional landscape value of the Lough Ree Islands, including their significant archaeological, cultural and natural heritage value. Support the preparation for a Plan for the Islands in conjunction with the National Monuments Service and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.</p> <p>CPO 13.23 Cooperate with adjoining Local Authorities in the preparation of Habitat Management Plans to guide future development in relation to Lough Ree and Lough Sheelin Areas of High Amenity.</p> <p>CPO 13.24 Promote, in association with Fáilte Ireland, the sustainable tourism potential of Areas of High Amenity centered around the Lakelands.</p> <p>CPO 13.25 Protect existing public rights of way in Areas of High Amenity.</p> <p>CPO 13.26 Cooperate with Coillte, Bord na Mona, Waterways Ireland and other state agencies in establishing access ways, nature trails, etc. with a view to opening up state lands for recreational use.</p> <p>CPO 13.27 Maintain existing navigation channels within Areas of High Amenity for the benefit of recreation and amenity related uses.</p> <p>Lake Amenities Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 13.28 Protect the County's lakes and their shorelines, islands, amenity and biodiversity from inappropriate development.</p> <p>CPO 13.29 Protect the scenic quality of lakes from any inappropriate development between public roads and lakeshores that would interrupt a view of the lake or adversely affect its setting or its wildlife habitat. Any development in such instance must be sensitively sited and designed and screened from the lake by existing topography or vegetation.</p> <p>CPO 13.30 Improve access to the lakes and around the lakeshore and increase public accessibility, subject to ecological sensitivities and constraints being addressed.</p> <p>CPO 13.31 Continue to develop, in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Westmeath Way to include the lakes of the County. Any proposed route in the vicinity of the White Lake will be subject to prior agreement with the NPWS and in connection with Irish Trails.</p> <p>CPO 13.32 Continue to develop a connected network of greenways to the principal lakes in the County and their respective lakeshores subject to ecological sensitivities and constraints being addressed.</p> <p>CPO 13.33 Continue to advance a network of navigable blueways within the County subject to ecological assessment.</p> <p>Lough Ree Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 13.34 Promote and support the designation of Lough Ree and Lough Key as an UNESCO Biosphere Nature Reserve.</p> <p>CPO 13.35 Maintain and preserve the aesthetic value of the main lake (Lough Ree) and its shoreline from the impacts of inappropriate dispersed, highly visible development.</p> <p>CPO 13.36 Consolidate and improve the existing recreational and sustainable tourism service role of the inner lakes in the Killinure Lough area, consistent with Habitat Management Plans for the area.</p> <p>CPO 13.37 Promote the rural landscape northwards of Hare Island, Rinardoo Bay and Portlick for more passive amenity and recreational cycle/walking routes.</p> <p>CPO 13.38 Protect the shoreline of Lough Ree from the proliferation of unregulated private jetties and similarly haphazard development.</p> <p>CPO 13.39 Support the preparation of a sustainable tourism plan for existing and future tourist and recreational facilities at Lough Ree and Killinure Lough.</p> <p>CPO 13.40 Explore options for a lakeside walkway from Meehan Point to Coosan Point, incorporating local features such as Bog Lough.</p> <p>CPO 13.41 Improve non-car dependent accessibility to the lake and encourage access for sustainable modes of transport by supporting and facilitating walking and cycling trails to the lake.</p> <p>CPO 13.42 Consolidate the existing facilities at Killinure Marina and Glasson Golf Course, consistent with Habitat Management Plans for the lake area.</p> <p>CPO 13.43 Examine the possibility for a recreational link from Killinure to Portlick, consistent with Habitat Management Plans for these lake areas.</p> <p>CPO 13.44 Improve the amenity area at Portlick, consistent with Habitat Management Plans for the lake areas and accessibility at Killeenmore, together with incorporating passing bays and viewing points along the Slí tour route, where feasible.</p> <p>CPO 13.45 Support the preparation of a Heritage Management Plan for Lough Ree including the islands, in cooperation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, National Monuments Service, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and landowners.</p> <p>CPO 13.46 Prepare a Habitat Management Plan for lands in Council ownership at or close to Lough Ree and improve access to the lake, in consultation with the National Parks Wildlife Service and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</p> <p>CPO 13.47 Prepare a Village Design Statement for Ballykeeran, in consideration of its lakeside setting.</p> <p>CPO 13.48 Investigate the potential of developing a greenway from Athlone along Lough Ree to the Longford County border, consistent with a Habitat Management Plan for Lough Ree.</p> <p>CPO 13.49 Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views over Killinure Lake and Lough Ree and beyond.</p> <p>CPO 13.50 Support the provision and maintenance of facilities, including safe pedestrian access and/or car parking, and, where appropriate, associated seats and signs in the immediate vicinity of the amenity area at Portlick, Killeenmore and along the Slí tour route.</p> <p>CPO 13.51 Ensure that development and activities that are immediately adjacent to the Lough Ree driving route, sustain the established appearance and character of views that contribute to the distinctive quality of the landscape.</p> <p>CPO 13.52 Ensure that development proposals avoid significant adverse effects in the foreground of views from the Lough Ree Driving Route.</p> <p>CPO 13.53 Sustain the established appearance and character of views over the surrounding countryside while facilitating the continued development of uses that sustain</p>				
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the activities that give rise to the appearance and character of the landscape.

Lough Owel Policy Objectives

CPO 13.54 Enhance and link the Westmeath Way through Mullingar via the Royal Canal Feeder and further along the waterside via Tullaghan and to the north eastern side of Lough Owel, consistent with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the lake.

CPO 13.55 Support the extension of existing greenway from Lough Owel to Scragh Bog, Ballinafid and Multyfarnham, subject to addressing ecological sensitivities.

CPO 13.56 Upgrade existing and incorporate the provision of new green infrastructure as part of any future infrastructural upgrades which are within proximity to Lough Owel.

CPO 13.57 Upgrade facilities at the sailing club access and at the bathing area, consistent with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the lake.

CPO 13.58 Develop a recreational route through Coillte lands at Tullaghan, in consultation with Coillte, consistent with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the lake.

CPO 13.59 Provide a small-scale access at the Portloman side of the lake. Any development at this location needs to be extremely visually sensitive.

CPO 13.60 Examine the possibility of an informal lakeside shore walk along the eastern perimeter of Lough Owel, in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Coillte.

CPO 13.61 Explore the possibility of negotiating a recreational link from Tormey's Pub (Bunbrosna) to the lakeside and a link with Coillte lands, subject to consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Service, Coillte and landowners.

CPO 13.62 Develop Ballinafid lake and surrounding lands as an amenity facility, incorporating links through lands in the ownership of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Coillte, consistent with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the Lough Owel lake area. The feasibility of providing a recreational link to lands on the western side of the rail line will also be investigated.

CPO 13.63 Support the conversion of the Waterways Ireland sluice building at Lough Owel and develop the adjacent area for the provision of tourism activities associated with the lake, capitalising on its direct access to Mullingar by greenway and scenic location, subject to the protection of environmentally sensitive areas, the protection and conservation of protected structures and the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

CPO 13.64 Establish a viewing point at Frewin Hill overlooking Lough Owel.

CPO 13.65 Sustain the established appearance and character of views from the N4 to the lake and upgrade the viewing point and bathing area accessed off the N4.

Lough Ennell Policy Objectives

CPO 13.66 Support the development of a greenway from Mullingar to Belvedere and Lough Ennell in accordance with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the lake.

CPO 13.67 Support the implementation of the Habitat Management Plan prepared for Council owned lands at Belvedere, Ladestown, Lilliput.

CPO 13.68 Prepare and implement a Lough Ennell Interpretive Plan to develop a consistent brand and messaging about the Lough and its wildlife, including the identification of a viewing hide for wildlife.

CPO 13.69 Support the preparation and implementation of a visitor management destination plan for Lilliput Adventure Centre taking account of the existing Habitat Management Plan prepared for Lough Ennell.

CPO 13.70 Continue to enhance use of the Lilliput Amenity Area and Adventure Centre, providing activities accessible to general visitors in addition to pre-booked groups, subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the protection of sensitive environments.

CPO 13.71 Sustain the established appearance and character of views of Lough Ennell from the N52, Butler's Bridge and La Mancha.

Lough Derravaragh Policy Objectives

CPO 13.72 Develop the cultural and recreational aspects of the Children of Lir Legend as a tourist attraction for the area.

CPO 13.73 Enhance the amenity facilities and public access areas to Lough Derravaragh and improve the access point at Faughalstown, consistent with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the area.

CPO 13.74 Support the implementation of actions contained in the Coolure Habitat Management Plan.

CPO 13.75 Sustain the established appearance and character of views of Lough Derravaragh from the adjacent road network.

Lough Lene Policy Objectives

CPO 13.76 Consider the establishment of walking routes along the northern shore of the lake, to link with Harte's Rock, Fore and Coillte lands, consistent with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the area.

CPO 13.77 Develop an amenity woodland/wetland conservation area at Lough Lene, in consultation with landowners and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, subject to ecological sensitivities being addressed and consistent with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the lake.

Lough Slevin Policy Objectives

CPO 13.78 Investigate the potential of developing as part of a wider green infrastructure network access from Mullingar to Lough Sheever to Lough Owel.

CPO 13.79 Continue to promote the amenity value of Lough Sheever.

Protected Views Policy Objectives

CPO 13.80 Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views listed in Appendix 5 of this plan that contribute to the distinctive quality of the landscape from inappropriate development.

CPO 13.81 Provide and maintain facilities, including safe pedestrian access and/or car parking, and where appropriate, associated seats and signs in the immediate vicinity of views that are identified in this plan

CPO 13.82 Support the restoration of derelict sites and removal of derelict structures adjacent to scenic and tourist routes, using mechanisms such as the Derelict Sites Act 1990.

Commentary

The assessment of the Plan's Landscape and Lake Amenities Policy Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:

- Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and
- Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report.

Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-served and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.

The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, access and visitor accommodation.

The development of green infrastructure would facilitate: contributions towards increases in sustainable mobility and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; increases in flood risk management and protection of human health; protection and management biodiversity and water quality; and protection cultural heritage and landscape sensitivities. The development of green infrastructure also potentially conflicts with most environmental components. This type of infrastructure is often constructed in ecologically and visually sensitive areas adjacent to the banks of rivers and streams. Potential adverse effects (including in-combination effects across County borders) would be mitigated by measures that have been integrated into other provisions within the Plan (see Section 9 of this report) and any additional requirements arising through lower tier assessments or granting of permission. The preparation of a lower-tier Green Infrastructure Strategy or network would have to be subject to lower-tier environmental assessment processes as relevant.

The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:

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

The focus of most of the provisions in this Chapter is the protection and management of the landscape and lakes of the County.

8.8.14 Chapter 14: Cultural Heritage

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
Cultural Heritage Policy Objectives CPO 14.1 Improve accessibility to our cultural heritage and maximise its potential as a learning resource. CPO 14.2 Promote the understanding of cultural heritage in terms of its inherent and unique character and to recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced. CPO 14.3 Support the implementation of objectives and actions of the Westmeath County Heritage Plan 2018-2023 and update during the lifetime of the Plan. CPO 14.4 Support the growth of cultural tourism in the County, including the potential for niche heritage based tourism products by facilitating the development of heritage events, festivals and infrastructure in a sustainable manner. Archaeology Policy Objectives CPO 14.5 Seek to ensure the protection and sympathetic enhancement of archaeological heritage, and in this regard applications will be referred to the National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht for comment. CPO 14.6 Seek to ensure the protection of archaeological sites and monuments and their settings and archaeological objects that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places, in the ownership/guardianship of the State, or that are the subject of Preservation Orders or have been registered in the Register of Historic Monuments. Seek to ensure the protection and preservation of archaeological sites, which have been identified subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monuments and Places. CPO 14.7 Ensure that any development adjacent to an archaeological monument or site shall not be detrimental to the character of the archaeological site, or its setting and shall be sited in a manner which minimises the impact on the monument and its setting. Development which is likely to detract from the setting of such a monument or site will not be permitted. CPO 14.8 Seek to ensure the protection and preservation of underwater archaeological sites in riverine or lacustrine locations. CPO 14.9 Encourage and promote the appropriate management and maintenance of the County's archaeological heritage, including historical burial grounds, in accordance with conservation principles and best practice guidelines. CPO 14.10 Consult with the National Monuments Service in relation to proposed developments adjoining archaeological sites. CPO 14.11 Ensure that archaeological excavation is carried out according to best practice as outlined by the National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht, The National Museum of Ireland and the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland. CPO 14.12 Prepare conservation plans for the management of archaeological sites and monuments in Council ownership. CPO 14.13 Encourage increased awareness of and public access to monuments within Council ownership. Fore Special Heritage Area Policy Objectives CPO 14.14 Continue to protect and enhance the Fore Special Heritage Area in accordance with the Fore Special Heritage Management Study adopted in 2010, and any update made thereto. CPO 14.15 Support the development of sustainable tourist initiatives in Fore subject to appropriate archaeological and ecological assessment. CPO 14.16 Ensure that new development proposals which have the potential to impact on Archaeological Heritage must be accompanied by an Archaeological Assessment	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	

<p>in accordance with requirements of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</p> <p>CPO 14.17 Ensure that development proposals that would detrimentally impact upon the setting and interpretation of archaeological monuments, historic landscape or buildings of architectural value at Fore will not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 14.18 Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views over the surrounding countryside at Fore, while facilitating the continued development of uses that sustain the activities that give rise to the appearance and character of the landscape.</p> <p>CPO 14.19 Ensure that development and activities that are immediately adjacent to the scenic off-road walking routes of Fore, sustain the established appearance and character of views, that contribute to the distinctive quality of the landscape.</p> <p>Hill of Uisneach Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.20 Continue to support the promotion of Uisneach as one of the Royal Sites of Ireland under the proposal for its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and/or other appropriate initiatives.</p> <p>CPO 14.21 Support the development of a greenway from the Old Rail Trail to the Hill of Uisneach, subject to the protection of the archaeological significance of the site.</p> <p>CPO 14.22 Endeavour to improve public access to the Hill of Uisneach, with the involvement of landowners and relevant stakeholders, in consultation with the National Monument Service.</p> <p>CPO 14.23 Seek funding to prepare and implement a Conservation Management Plan for Uisneach in consultation with landowners, the National Monument Service and the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht.</p> <p>Protected Structures Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.24 Protect and conserve buildings, structures and sites contained in the Record of Protected Structures and to encourage the sympathetic re-use and long-term viability of such structures without detracting from their special interest and character.</p> <p>CPO 14.25 Protect the architectural heritage of Westmeath through the identification of Protected Structures, the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), the safeguarding of designed landscapes and historic gardens, and the recognition of structures and elements that contribute positively to the vernacular and industrial heritage of the County.</p> <p>CPO 14.26 Applications for modifications, alterations, or extensions to a Protected Structure will be assessed in accordance with the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2011 and should be sensitively sited and designed, compatible with its special character, and appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout, and materials so that the integrity of the structure and its curtilage is preserved.</p> <p>CPO 14.27 Seek that the form and structural integrity of Protected Structures is retained as part of any redevelopment proposal and that the relationship between the Protected Structure and any complex of adjoining buildings, designed landscape features, or designed views or vistas from or to the structure is considered.</p> <p>CPO 14.28 Encourage rehabilitation, renovation and re-use of existing Protected Structures for their own economic benefit and that of the area in which they are located.</p> <p>CPO 14.29 Carry out an audit and assess the condition of Protected Structures within the Council's ownership and devise a Conservation Management Plan/maintenance regime for these structures.</p> <p>CPO 14.30 Carry out an audit of Protected Structures within the Council's ownership to identify any Protected Structures that are under threat directly or indirectly due to climate change.</p> <p>CPO 14.31 Integrate climate change adaptation measures into future heritage management plans.</p> <p>CPO 14.32 Provide guidance for owners of protected structures or historic buildings on upgrading for energy efficiency and climate resilient measures and promote the principles of sustainable building design in conservation.</p> <p>CPO 14.33 Ensure a sustainable future for Protected Structures and buildings sited within ACAs by encouraging and supporting works to upgrade the environmental performance of such structures together with the implementation of measures to address the impacts of climate change. Such works should not adversely affect the special character of the structure including impact on historic fabric, traditional construction, visibility, siting and design. The installation of renewable energy measures and equipment will be acceptable where sited and designed to minimise the visual impact, where it does not result in any significant loss of historic fabric or otherwise affect the significance of the structure.</p> <p>CPO 14.34 Incentivise the restoration of Protected Structures in towns and villages.</p> <p>CPO 14.35 Facilitate contemporary and innovative designs providing that they are of a sufficient high quality and do not detract from the character of the historic fabric of the Protected Structure.</p> <p>Vernacular Building and Structures Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.41 Encourage the retention and appropriate re-use of vernacular buildings, including vacant traditional farm buildings, where appropriate and encourage the retention of the original fabric such as windows, doors and other significant features of historic buildings.</p> <p>CPO 14.42 Require that the size, scale, design, form, layout and materials of extensions to vernacular dwellings or conversions of historic outbuildings are in keeping and sympathetic with the existing structure.</p> <p>CPO 14.43 Ensure that works to existing buildings and structures of architectural merit maintain and enhance their character and distinctiveness.</p> <p>CPO 14.44 Ensure wherever possible that proposed infrastructural and public utility works within the County do not remove historic street furniture such as limestone kerbs, cobblestones, cast-iron post boxes, street lamps etc</p> <p>CPO 14.45 Promote, where feasible the retention of surviving historic plot sizes and street patterns in the villages and towns of Westmeath and have regard to ancient boundaries or layouts, such as burgage plots and townland boundaries in new development proposals.</p> <p>CPO 14.46 Ensure that works to existing buildings and structures of architectural merit maintain and enhance their character and distinctiveness.</p> <p>Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.47 Support the economic viability of parks, gardens and demesnes by encouraging high quality development that does not lead to the loss of, or cause harm to the character, the principal components of, or the setting of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest.</p> <p>CPO 14.48 Support the preparation and implementation of a Conservation Management Plan for Belvedere House, Gardens & Park.</p> <p>CPO 14.49 Require a masterplan to be prepared for development proposals within historic designed and demesne landscapes. Such a plan should include an appraisal of the designed landscape together with an architectural appraisal, in order to inform design proposals, which must be sensitive to and respect the built heritage elements and</p>				
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<p>green space values of the site.</p> <p>Industrial Heritage Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.50 Protect, where appropriate, industrial heritage structures or elements of significance identified in the Inventory of Industrial Heritage and any subsequent surveys by adding them to the Record of Protected Structures.</p> <p>CPO 14.51 Utilise the information provided within the Inventory of Industrial Heritage Sites in Westmeath, and any subsequent surveys when assessing development proposals for industrial heritage sites.</p> <p>CPO 14.52 Support the retention and appropriate repair/maintenance of historic bridges and other significant industrial heritage features in the County.</p> <p>Language Heritage Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.53 Promote the naming of new residential developments in bi-lingual format. The naming of new estates should reflect local place names, townlands, history, folklore and/or cultural features in the area.</p> <p>CPO 14.54 Preserve historic place and street names and ensure that new street names should reflect appropriate local historical or cultural associations.</p> <p>CPO 14.55 Support the use of the Irish language on shopfronts.</p> <p>CPO 14.56 Support the establishment of a naming committee within one year of adoption of the Plan, to evaluate naming proposals for new residential and/or mixed-use developments.</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Cultural Heritage Policy Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-served and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</p> <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, access and visitor accommodation.</p> <p>The development of green infrastructure would facilitate: contributions towards increases in sustainable mobility and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; increases in flood risk management and protection of human health; protection and management biodiversity and water quality; and protection cultural heritage and landscape sensitivities. The development of green infrastructure also potentially conflicts with most environmental components. This type of infrastructure is often constructed in ecologically and visually sensitive areas adjacent to the banks of rivers and streams. Potential adverse effects (including in-combination effects across County borders) would be mitigated by measures that have been integrated into other provisions within the Plan (see Section 9 of this report) and any additional requirements arising through lower tier assessments or granting of permission. The preparation of a lower-tier Green Infrastructure Strategy or network would have to be subject to lower-tier environmental assessment processes as relevant.</p> <p>The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised. <p>The focus of most of the provisions in this Chapter is the protection and management of the County's cultural heritage.</p>				

8.8.15 Chapter 15: Landuse Zoning Objectives

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Established Residential</p> <p>CPO 15.1 Support high quality residential consolidation and sustainable intensification at appropriate locations in a manner that does not impact negatively on the amenities or character of an area.</p> <p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Proposed Residential</p> <p>CPO 15.2 Provide for high quality residential development and associated services in line with the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure.</p> <p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Rural Consolidation</p> <p>CPO 15.3 Provide for self-sustaining development which seeks to support and improve the rural fabric of the settlement and its surrounding area.</p> <p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Community, Educational & Institutional</p> <p>CPO 15.4 Protect, provide and improve community, civic and educational facilities and to preserve the open character of institutional lands and the setting of heritage</p>	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	

<p>buildings contained within such lands.</p> <p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Consolidation Site</p> <p>CPO 15.5 Strengthen and consolidate existing settlements by encouraging the development of infill and brownfield lands through providing for a range of uses including residential development, retail, commercial and community uses.</p> <p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Mixed Use</p> <p>CPO 15.6 Provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of town centres, through consolidating development, encouraging a mix of uses and maximising the use of land.</p> <p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Enterprise & Employment</p> <p>CPO 15.7 Provide for Enterprise & Employment and related uses including industrial and service uses including compatible uses such as office and distribution.</p> <p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Commercial</p> <p>CPO 15.8 Provide for appropriately scaled commercial development that compliments the town centre.</p> <p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Expanded Settlement Centre</p> <p>CPO 15.9 Provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of town centres, through encouraging a mix of uses and maximising the use of land.</p> <p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Sport Recreational</p> <p>CPO 15.10 Provide for, protect and improve the provision, attractiveness, accessibility and amenity value of sporting and recreational facilities.</p> <p>Land Zoning Policy Objective – Open Space</p> <p>CPO 15.11 Provide for, protect and enhance the provision, attractiveness, accessibility and amenity of public open space.</p>				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Landuse Zoning Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Where alternatives in relation to the application of land use zoning were identified by the Planning Team as being available (for Castlepollard, Moate, Kinnegad, Rochfortbridge and Kilucan /Rathwire), these were considered by the SEA process, the findings of which informed the selection of the Plan.</p> <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</p> <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions (including those within Chapter 8 "Settlement Plans") and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc.</p> <p>The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised. 				

8.8.16 Chapter 16: Development Management Standards

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Mitigated Conflicts	No Likely interaction with status of SEOs
<p>Development Management is the statutory process undertaken in the assessment of planning applications and is an essential tool utilised in implementing the Development Plan. This Chapter sets out the development management standards and criteria and is intended to provide a 'toolkit' towards achieving high standards of design, enhance the character of an area and facilitate sustainable development. All planning proposals should comply with the standards applicable to particular development types, be consistent with the policy objectives set out within preceding chapters and be compliant with legislative requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design Standards for Urban Development Residential Development Roads and Transportation Retail Development Community Infrastructure and Facilities Enterprise and Employment Tourism Agricultural Buildings and Structures 	BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L		BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extractive Industry (Quarries/Sand and Gravel Pits) • Telecommunications • Architectural Conservation and Archaeology • Climate • Implementation of Planning Permission 				
<p>Commentary</p> <p>The assessment of the Plan's Landuse Zoning Objectives against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.7 of this report; and • Assessments of the selected alternatives for the Plan provided at Section 7 of this report. <p>Where alternatives in relation to the application of land use zoning were identified by the Planning Team as being available (for Castlepollard, Moate, Kinnegad, Rochfortbridge and Kilucan /Rathwire), these were considered by the SEA process, the findings of which informed the selection of the Plan.</p> <p>Implementing the Plan will help to generally direct development away from the most sensitive areas in the County, focusing on: compact, sustainable development within the existing envelopes of the County's towns and villages; and sustainable development elsewhere, including in rural areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas of the County will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the County's towns and villages to become more desirable places to live – so that they maintain populations and services.</p> <p>The provisions in this Chapter of the Plan would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities, and sustainable development of the County, in combination with other Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc.</p> <p>The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan has brought about various changes to the emerging Plan through an iterative process. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating SEA recommendations into the Plan, Westmeath County Council is helping to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and • The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised. <p>Environmental considerations have been integrated into various Development Management provisions, with those under the headings of Architectural Conservation and Archaeology and Climate focusing on protection of the environment and sustainable development.</p>				

Section 9 Mitigation Measures

9.1 Introduction

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the Plan. Various environmental sensitivities and issues have been communicated to the Council through the SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes. By integrating all related recommendations into the Plan, the Council have ensured that both the beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan have been and will be maximised and that potential adverse effects have been and will be avoided, reduced or offset.

Mitigation was achieved through the:

- Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development;
- Considering alternatives for the Plan;
- Integration of environmental considerations into zoning provisions of the Plan; and
- Integration of individual SEA, AA and SFRA provisions into the text of the Plan.

9.2 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development

Far in advance of both the submission of the pre-Draft Plan to the Elected Members for approval and the placing of the Draft Plan (and associated environmental assessment documents) on public display, Westmeath County Council undertook various works in order to inform the preparation of the Plan.

The findings of this strategic work have been integrated into the Plan and will contribute towards both environmental protection and management and sustainable development within the County.

Strategic work undertaken by the Council includes background work in relation to Plan Strategies and other provisions for a variety of topics including:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment;
- Appropriate Assessment;
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment;
- Protected Views;
- Housing;
- Core Strategy;
- Housing Strategy;
- Geological Audit; and
- Wetlands Survey.

9.3 Consideration of Alternatives

Although strategic alternatives in relation to the content of the Plan were significantly limited for the Plan (see Section 6), as part of the Plan preparation/SEA process, the Council considered a number of alternatives for the Plan.

These alternatives were assessed by the SEA process (see Section 7) and the findings of this assessment informed the selection of preferred alternatives, facilitating an informed choice with respect to the type of Plan that was prepared and placed on public display.

9.4 Integration of environmental considerations into Zoning of the Plan

Environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan's zoning through an interdisciplinary approach.

Zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF and Eastern and Midlands RSES.

The detailed Plan preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department combined with specialist input from the SFRA process facilitated zoning that avoids inappropriate development being permitted in areas of high flood risk. Various provisions have been inserted into the Plan which provide for flood risk management at project level.

Also taken into account were environmental sensitivities relating to ecology, cultural heritage, landscape and water, as well as the overlay mapping of environmental sensitivities.

9.5 Integration of individual SEA, AA and SFRA provisions into the text of the Plan

Various provisions have been integrated into the text of the Plan through the Plan-preparation and SEA, SFRA and AA processes. Both the Planning and the assessment teams contributed towards the mitigation which was developed over multiple iterations and was informed by, inter alia, various communications through the SEA, AA and SFRA processes.

Table 9.1 links key mitigation measure(s) to the likely significant effects of implementing the Plan, if unmitigated. The measures generally benefit multiple environmental components i.e. a measure providing for the protection of biodiversity, flora and fauna could beneficially impact upon the minimisation of flood risk and the protection of human health, for example.

Table 9.1 Integration of Environmental Considerations into the Plan

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Draft Plan Provisions
All	All	<p>CPO 10.47 and subsection 10.5.3</p> <p>Corridor and Route Selection Process</p> <p>The Council will preserve a corridor to enable design options for road improvements and upgrades to be advanced. In this regard, the following Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken for relevant new infrastructure:</p> <p>Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental constraints (including those identified in Section 4 of the SEA Environmental Report) and opportunities (such as existing linear infrastructure) will assist in the identification of possible route corridor options; Potentially feasible corridors within which infrastructure could be accommodated will be identified and these corridors assessed. The selection of the preferred route corridor will avoid constraints and meet opportunities to the optimum extent, as advised by the relevant specialists; and In addition to the constraints identified above, site-specific field data may be required to identify the most appropriate corridors. <p>Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially feasible routes within the preferred corridor will be identified and assessed. The selection of preferred routes will avoid constraints and meet opportunities to the optimum extent, as advised by the relevant specialists, taking into account project level information and potential mitigation measures that are readily achievable; In addition to the constraints identified above, site specific field data may be required to identify the most appropriate routes; and <p>In addition to environmental considerations, the identification of route corridors and the refinement of route lines is likely to be informed by other considerations.</p>
All	All	<p>Core Strategy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 2.11 Ensure that the future spatial development of Westmeath is in accordance with the National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF) including the population targets set out under the Implementation Roadmap, and the Regional, Spatial and the Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031.</p> <p>CPO 2.12 implement all land use planning policy and objectives in a manner which takes account of and is consistent with the Core Strategy in order to accelerate a transition to a greener, low carbon and climate resilient county with a focus on reduced travel demand through the promotion of sustainable settlement patterns.</p> <p>CPO 2.13 In the assessment of development proposals, to take account of transport corridors, environmental carrying capacity, availability and/or capacity to provide waste water and water supply services, potential to conflict with Water Framework Directive objectives, potential to impact on the integrity of European sites and Annexed Habitats and species, features of biodiversity value including ecological networks, impact on landscape and visual characteristics, education and other socioeconomic objectives</p> <p>CPO 2.14 Promote the integration of land use and transportation policies and to prioritise provision for cycling and walking travel modes and the strengthening of public transport.</p> <p>CPO 2.15 Support the regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield / infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands to facilitate population growth and achieve sustainable compact growth targets of 30% of all new housing to be built within the existing urban footprint of targeted settlements in the county.</p> <p>CPO 2.16 Promote measures to reduce vacancy and the underuse of existing building stock and support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings within urban centres and targeted settlements in the county.</p> <p>CPO 2.17 Incorporate, in the content of the County Development Plan, measures in accordance with section 10 (n) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) for the promotion of sustainable settlement and transportation strategies in urban and rural areas including the promotion of measures to— (i) reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources, (ii) reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and (iii) address the necessity of adaptation to climate change; in particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new development.</p>
Biodiversity and flora and fauna	<p>Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European 	<p>Natural Heritage Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.1 Contribute as appropriate towards the protection of designated sites in compliance with relevant EU Directives and applicable national legislation.</p> <p>CPO 12.2 Support the implementation of any relevant recommendations contained in the National Biodiversity Plan, the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and the National Peatlands Strategy.</p> <p>CPO 12.3 Support the implementation of the Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020 and any revisions made thereto.</p> <p>Natura 2000 Sites Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.4 Protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation, candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and candidate Special Protection Areas, designated under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives respectively.</p> <p>CPO 12.5 Ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European Sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction,</p>

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Draft Plan Provisions
	<p>Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats. 	<p>operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects).</p> <p>CPO 12.6 Ensure that any plan or project that could have a significant adverse impact (either by themselves or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site or would result in the deterioration of any habitat or any species reliant on that habitat will not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 12.7 Assess any plan or project in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive to determine whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the site either individually or cumulatively upon the integrity, conservation objectives and qualifying interest of any Natura 2000 Site.</p> <p>CPO 12.8 Require an ecological appraisal for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of Natura Sites, or a proposed Natura Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively.</p> <p>CPO 12.9 Identify and provide appropriate buffer zones between Designated Sites and local biodiversity features and areas zoned for development.</p> <p>CPO 12.10 Prepare Strategic Habitat Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites in Council ownership in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>CPO 12.11 Promote the maintenance and as appropriate, achievement of favourable conservation status of habitats and species and to improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, by maintaining and where appropriate, developing features in the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora.</p> <p>CPO 12.12 Require that new development proposals affecting designated sites have regard to the sensitivities identified in the SEA Environmental Report prepared in respect of this plan.</p> <p>Rare and Protected Sites Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.13 Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</p> <p>CPO 12.14 Require all new developments in the early pre-planning stage of the planning process to identify, protect and enhance ecological features by making provision for local biodiversity (e.g. through provision of swift boxes, bat roost sites, green roofs, etc.) and provide links to the wider Green Infrastructure network as an essential part of the design process.</p> <p>CPO 12.15 Support the protection of all native woodlands listed in the National Survey of Native Woodlands 2003 to 2008.</p> <p>CPO 12.16 Apply the precautionary principle in relation to development proposals in areas identified as being of national nature conservation interest, by requiring a Scientific/ Ecological Risk Assessment to ensure that the development will not impact on the integrity and habitat value of the site.</p> <p>CPO 12.17 Support and cooperate with Statutory Authorities and other relevant bodies in support of measures taken to manage designated nature conservation sites, in order to achieve their conservation objectives. Specific regard shall be had to Conservation Management Plans and their conservation objectives/ management practices, where they exist.</p> <p>CPO 12.18 Consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in regard to any developments (those requiring permission and those not requiring planning permission) which the Council proposes to carry out within pNHAs, NHAs, SACs, SPAs, and other important ecological sites.</p> <p>CPO 12.19 Maintain the conservation value of Council owned land within NHAs and pNHAs and promote the conservation value of Council owned lands adjoining NHAs.</p> <p>CPO 12.20 Protect and conserve NHAs and pNHAs including NHAs that become designated and notified to the Local Authority during the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>CPO 12.21 Lighting fixtures should provide only the amount of light necessary for personal safety and should be designed so as to avoid creating glare or emitting light above a horizontal plane. Lighting fixtures should have minimum environmental impact, thereby contributing towards the protection of amenity and the protection of light sensitive species such as bats.</p> <p>Sites of Biodiversity Value and Non-designated Sites Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.22 Seek to create and enhance ecological linkages and buffer zones from development.</p> <p>CPO 12.23 Protect and where possible enhance biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive. Appropriate mitigation and/or compensation to conserve biodiversity, landscape character and green infrastructure networks will be required where habitats are at risk or lost as part of a development.</p> <p>CPO 12.24 Recognise that nature conservation is not just confined to designated sites and acknowledge the need to protect non-designated habitats and landscapes and to conserve the biological diversity.</p> <p>Invasive Species Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.25 Prevent the spread of invasive species within the plan area, including requiring landowners and developers to adhere to best practice guidance in relation to the control of invasive species.</p>

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Draft Plan Provisions
		<p>CPO 12.26 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 applicant will be required to submit a control and management program for the particular invasive species as part of the planning process and to comply with the provisions of the European Communities Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011).</p> <p>CPO 12.27 Support, as appropriate, the National Parks and Wildlife Service's efforts to seek to control and manage the spread of non-native invasive species on land and water. Where the presence of non-native invasive species is identified at the site of any proposed development or where the proposed activity has an elevated risk of resulting in the presence of these species, details of how these species will be managed and controlled will be required.</p> <p>Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.35 Preserve and enhance the amenity and biodiversity value of the County, by promoting the protection of trees, groups of trees and ancient woodlands, of significant amenity value, especially native and broadleaf species.</p> <p>CPO 12.36 Protect trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders and seek to designate additional Tree Preservation Orders, where appropriate.</p> <p>CPO 12.37 Discourage the felling of mature trees and hedgerow, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows to facilitate development and seek Tree Management Plans to ensure that trees are adequately protected during development and incorporated into the design of new developments.</p> <p>CPO 12.38 Protect and preserve existing hedgerows in new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, and where their removal is necessary during the course of road works or other works seek their replacement with new hedgerows of native species indigenous to the area.</p> <p>CPO 12.39 Encourage the development of proposals for new woodlands and community woodlands in urban/urban fringe areas utilising funding available through schemes such as the NeighbourWood and Native Woodland Schemes.</p> <p>CPO 12.40 Encourage the protection of the trees which are considered an important component of demesne landscapes.</p> <p>Wetlands Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.41 Resist development that would destroy, fragment or degrade any wetland in the County.</p> <p>CPO 12.42 Support the implementation of recommendations made in the County Westmeath Wetlands Survey 2019 and subsequent versions thereof.</p> <p>CPO 12.43 Require an Ecological Impact Assessment where it is proposed to fill or reclaim a wetland area.</p> <p>CPO 12.44 Protect floodplains, wetlands and watercourses, for their biodiversity and flood protection value.</p> <p>CPO 12.45 Ensure that all proposed land zonings take cognisance of appropriate riparian setback distances that support the attainment of high ecological status for water bodies, the conservation of biodiversity and good ecosystem health, and buffer zones from flood plains.</p> <p>CPO 12.46 Implement the relevant parts of the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011 and the European Communities (Amendment to Planning and Development) Regulations 2011, which require planning permission to be applied for where the area impacted by works relating to the drainage or reclamation of a wetland exceeds 0.1 hectares or where such works may have a significant effect on the environment. Such applications for permission would need to be supported by an Appropriate Assessment where necessary.</p> <p>Lighting</p> <p>CPO 10.124 Control lighting in urban and rural areas and in particular in sensitive locations, in order to minimise impacts on residential amenity, habitats and species of importance.</p> <p>Habitat and Visitor Management</p> <p>CPO 6.2 Promote the development and strengthening of the overall value of Westmeath as a tourist destination by encouraging the enhancement and development of sustainable and high-quality visitor attractions, activities and infrastructure, enabling an increase in the overall capacity and long-term development of the county's tourism industry, subject to appropriate siting and design criteria and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.</p> <p>CPO 6.15 Monitor and manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.</p> <p>CPO 6.24 Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</p> <p>CPO 6.29 Ensure that the development of visitor infrastructure linked to natural and heritage environments, does not detract from the quality and value of these environments</p> <p>CPO 6.54 Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>Lakes</p> <p>CPO 6.45 Support the provision of infrastructure to enable increased tourism activity associated with Westmeath's lakes, including boating, canoeing and angling while ensuring that such provision does not negatively impact on sensitive environments and subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Forestry Policy Objective</p> <p>CPO 9.47 Encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector, which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites (SACs and SPAs) and is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines</p>

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Draft Plan Provisions
		<p>for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality.</p> <p>CPO 9.53 Promote in co-operation with the Forest service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine the preparation and adoption of an Indicative Forest Strategy for the County, as an important means of contributing to the protection and enhancement of the county's biodiversity, natural resources and landscape, as resources permit.</p> <p>Extractive Industry Policy Objective</p> <p>CPO 9.58 Ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Geological interest as identified in the County Esker Survey • Existing and Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) • Special Protection Areas (SPAs) • Existing and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) • Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna • High Amenity Areas • Zones of archaeological potential, • Important aquifers and sensitive groundwater resources • The vicinity of a recorded monument • Sensitive landscape areas • Established rights of way and walking routes. <p>Extractive Industry Policy Objective</p> <p>CPO 9.63 Ensure that all extractions shall be subjected to landscaping requirements and that worked out quarries should be rehabilitated to a use agreed with the Planning Authority which could include recreational, biodiversity, amenity or other end-of-life uses. The use of these rehabilitated sites shall be limited to inert waste and sites shall be authorised under the appropriate waste regulations.</p> <p>CPO 9.62 Ensure that extractive developments do not adversely impact on environmental quality, including water quality, tourism value, existing infrastructure, residential amenity or the amenity value of neighbouring lands.</p>
<p>Population and human health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential adverse effects arising from flood events. • Potential interactions if effects arising from environmental vectors. 	<p>Also see measures under other environmental components including Soil, Water and Air and Climatic Factors.</p> <p>Noise Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.121 Support the implementation of the Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006.</p> <p>CPO 10.122 Support the Implementation of the Westmeath Noise Action Plan 2013-2018 (and any revision made thereto)</p> <p>CPO 10.123 Require all developments to be designed and operated in a manner that will minimise and contain noise levels.</p> <p>Human Health and Energy Development</p> <p>CPO 10.136 Ensure that proposals for energy development demonstrate that human health has been considered, including those relating to the topics of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise (including consistency with the World Health Organisation's 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region); • Shadow Flicker (for wind turbine developments, including detailed Shadow Flicker Study); • Ground Conditions/Geology (including landslide and slope stability risk assessment); • Air Quality; and Water Quality; • Assessment of impacts on collision risk species (bird and bats). <p>Seveso Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.126 To have regard to the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive, relating to the control of major accident hazards involving dangerous substances, and the recommendations of the Health and Safety Authority in the assessment of all planning applications located within the consultation distance of such sites.</p> <p>CPO 10.127 Require developers to submit a detailed consequence and risk assessment with all Environmental Impact Statements and/or legislative licence applications for all Seveso sites.</p> <p>Subsection 10.13.1 Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses</p> <p>In unserviced areas and outside the main towns and villages, the main method of sewage disposal is by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary systems. In order to protect human health and water quality from the risks posed by domestic waste water treatment systems the EPA's National Inspection Plan for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems 2018-2021 now requires each local authority to develop a local site selection plan, which documents the application of the site selection methodology and outlines the justification for the selection of priority areas and individual sites. The Local Authority should retain the associated documents to facilitate future auditing by the EPA.</p>

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Draft Plan Provisions
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands. Potential for riverbank erosion. 	<p>Also see measures under other environmental components including Water.</p> <p>Peatlands Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.56 Protect the county's designated peatland areas and landscapes, including any ancient walkways through bogs and to conserve their ecological, archaeological, cultural, and educational heritage.</p> <p>CPO 12.57 Require the preparation of Hydrological Reports for significant developments within and in close proximity to peatlands, and to take account of same in the assessment of impacts on the integrity of peatland ecosystems.</p> <p>CPO 12.58 Exercise control of peat extraction, both individually and cumulatively, which would have significant impacts on the environment.</p> <p>CPO 12.59 Work in partnership with relevant stakeholders on suitable peatland site(s) to demonstrate best practice in sustainable peatland conservation, management and restoration techniques and to promote their heritage and educational value subject to Ecological Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment, where relevant.</p> <p>CPO 12.60 Work with relevant agencies such as Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, Bord na Mona, NPWS, Coillte and adjacent Local Authorities to prepare an afteruse framework plan for the peatlands and related infrastructure, to provide for the future sustainable and environmentally sensitive use of large industrial peatlands sites when peat harvesting finishes. Such plans should have regard to both National and Regional frameworks concerning the future use of peatlands, including cutaway bogs.</p> <p>CPO 12.61 Support collaboration between Local Authorities, the Bord na Mona Transition Team and relevant stakeholders in the development of partnership approaches to integrated peatland management for a just transition having regard to relevant policies and strategies such as the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Plan 2016-2021 and the national Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans. This shall include support for the rehabilitation and/or re-wetting of suitable peatland habitats.</p> <p>CPO 12.62 Consider designating peatlands at Coolnagun, Corlanna, Lower Coole, Mayne, Ballinealoe and Clonsura as archaeological heritage areas, where it is considered ancient trackways or road may have been constructed.</p> <p>CPO 12.63 Support the preparation of a Sustainable Holistic Management Plan for the future use of the Industrial Peatlands in the County, which recognises the role of peatlands in carbon sequestration.</p> <p>CPO 12.64 Support the designation of a National Park for the peatlands area in the Midlands in conjunction with adjoining Local Authorities.</p> <p>CPO 12.65 Undertake a feasibility study to identify peatways, where appropriate and examine the tourist potential of same.</p> <p>Geological Heritage Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 12.28 Contribute towards the appropriate protection and maintenance of the character, integrity and conservation value of features or areas of geological interest listed in Table 12.3.</p> <p>CPO 12.29 Support the implementation of recommendations made in the County Westmeath Geological Audit.</p> <p>CPO 12.30 Consult with the Geological Survey of Ireland when undertaking, approving or authorising developments which are likely to impact on County Geological Sites or involve significant ground excavations.</p> <p>CPO 12.31 Protect geological NHA's as they become designated during the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>CPO 12.32 Encourage and promote, where appropriate, public access to geological and geomorphological sites and avoid inappropriate development through consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland, subject to environmental and habitats assessment.</p> <p>CPO 12.33 Favour the retention of new rock exposures created as a result of major new carriageways or in other major infrastructural work, where feasible and safe to do so.</p> <p>CPO 12.34 Consider in consultation with the NPWS, Offaly County Council and the Geological Survey of Ireland the potential designation of the south Westmeath esker landscape as a UNESCO geo-park, to promote the unique geological heritage of the area.</p> <p>Identification and registration of closed landfills</p> <p>CPO 10.119 Ensure that the Council fulfills its duties under the Waste Management (certification of historic unlicensed waste disposal and recovery activity) Regulations 2008 (S.I. No 524 of 2008), including those in relation to the identification and registration of closed landfills.</p> <p>Wind Farms on Peatlands</p> <p>CPO 10.135 Encourage large-scale energy production projects, in the form of Wind Farms, onto cutover cutaway peatlands in the County, subject to environmental, landscape, habitats and wildlife protection requirements being addressed.</p> <p>In the context of this policy, industrial scale/large-scale energy production projects are defined as follows:</p> <p>Projects that meet or exceed any of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Height: over 100m to blade tip, or - Scale: More than five turbines - Output: Having a total output of greater than 5MW <p>Developments sited on peatlands have the potential to increase overall carbon losses. Proposals for such development should demonstrate that the following has been</p>

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Draft Plan Provisions
		<p>considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peatland stability; and - Carbon emissions balance.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology. • Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events. 	<p>Also see measures under other environmental components including Soil and Material Assets.</p> <p>Core Strategy Objective CPO 2.13 In the assessment of development proposals, to take account of transport corridors, environmental carrying capacity, availability and/or capacity to provide waste water and water supply services, potential to conflict with Water Framework Directive objectives, potential to impact on the integrity of European sites and Annexed Habitats and species, features of biodiversity value including ecological networks, impact on landscape and visual characteristics, education and other socioeconomic objectives</p> <p>Waterways Policy Objectives CPO 12.47 Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof. CPO 12.48 Provide for public access to waterways where feasible and appropriate, in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Waterways Ireland and other relevant stakeholders, whilst maintaining them free from inappropriate development, subject to Ecological Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment, as appropriate. CPO 12.49 Protect the biodiversity of rivers, streams and other water courses and maintain them in an open state and discourage culverting and realignment. CPO 12.50 Consult with Waterways Ireland and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Government, Inland Waterways Association of Ireland and local communities on development proposals that may affect inland waterways, rivers, lakes, canals or water courses. CPO 12.51 Ensure that the County's watercourses are retained for their biodiversity and flood protection values and to conserve and enhance where possible, the wildlife habitats of the County's rivers and riparian zones, lakes, canals and streams which occur outside of designated areas to provide a network of habitats and biodiversity corridors throughout the county. CPO 12.52 Consult, as appropriate, with Inland Fisheries Ireland in relation to any development that could potentially impact on the aquatic ecosystems and associated riparian habitats. CPO 12.53 Ensure that run off from a proposed development does not result in a deterioration of downstream watercourses or habitats. CPO 12.54 Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that any new projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones. CPO 12.55 Protect waterbodies and watercourses from inappropriate development, including rivers, streams, associated undeveloped riparian strips, wetlands and natural floodplains. This will include the preservation habitat features/structure, such as treeline density, and protection buffers in riverine and wetland areas, as appropriate.</p> <p>Water Quality and Groundwater Policy Objectives CPO 10.76 Support the implementation of the relevant recommendations and measures as outlined in the relevant River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021, and associated Programme of Measures, or any such plan that may supersede same during the lifetime of the plan. Development proposals shall not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface waters, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated woodlands. CPO 10.77 Collaborate with Irish Water in contributing towards compliance with the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations Drinking Water Regulations 2014 (as amended) and compliance of water supplies with the parameters identified in these Regulations. CPO 10.78 Contribute towards, as appropriate, the protection of existing and potential water resources, and their use by humans and wildlife, including rivers, streams, wetlands, groundwater and associated habitats and species in accordance with the requirements and guidance in the EU Water Framework Directive 2000 (2000/60/EC), the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (as amended), the Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC and the European Communities Environmental Objectives (groundwater) Regulations 2010 (as amended) and other relevant EU Directives, including associated national legislation and policy guidance (including any superseding versions of same). CPO 10.79 In conjunction with Irish Water, have regard to the EPA 2019 publication "Drinking Water Report for Public Water Supplies 2018" (and any subsequent update) in the establishment and maintenance of water sources in the County. CPO 10.80 In conjunction with Irish Water, support recommendations made by the EPA arising from any failure to meet drinking water standards and any enlistment on the EPA's Remedial Action List. CPO 10.81 Ensure that in assessing applications for developments, that consideration is had to the impact on the quality of surface waters having regard to targets and measures set out in the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 and any subsequent local or regional plans. CPO 10.82 Ensure that development would not have an unacceptable impact on water quality and quantity including surface water, ground water, designated source protection areas, river corridors and associated wetlands.</p>

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		<p>CPO 10.83 Discourage the over-concentration of individual septic tanks and treatment plants to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution.</p> <p>CPO 10.84 Support the preparation of Drinking Water Protection Plans and Source Protection Plans to protect sources of public water supply, in accordance with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>Flood Risk Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.96 Implement and comply fully with the recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment prepared as part of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.</p> <p>CPO 10.97 Have regard to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management (DoEHLG/OPW 2009) and Circular PL2/2014, through the use of the sequential approach and application of the Justification Tests in Development Management.</p> <p>CPO 10.98 Ensure that a flood risk assessment is carried out for any development proposal, in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management (DoEHLG/OPW 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to the potential development.</p> <p>CPO 10.99 Support the implementation of recommendations in the CFRAM Programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.</p> <p>CPO 10.100 Support the implementation of recommendations in the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP's), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk.</p> <p>CPO 10.101 Consult with the OPW in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible, and to retain a strip on either side of such channels where required, to facilitate maintenance access thereto.</p> <p>CPO 10.102 Assist the OPW in developing catchment-based Flood Risk Management Plans for rivers in County Westmeath and have regard to their provisions/recommendations.</p> <p>CPO 10.103 Protect and enhance the County's floodplains and wetlands as 'green infrastructure' which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed and reducing the need to provide flood defenses in the future, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.</p> <p>CPO 10.104 Protect the integrity of any formal (OPW or Westmeath County Council) flood risk management infrastructure, thereby ensuring that any new development does not negatively impact any existing defense infrastructure or compromise any proposed new infrastructure.</p> <p>CPO 10.105 Ensure that where flood risk management works take place that the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams and watercourses are protected and enhanced.</p> <p>CPO 10.106 Ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.</p> <p>CPO 10.107 Consult, where necessary, with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies in the provision of flood alleviation measures in the County.</p> <p>Stormwater Management Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.108 Support in conjunction with Irish Water the improvement of storm water infrastructure to improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in urban environments.</p> <p>CPO 10.109 Implement policies contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) in relation to SUDS and climate change.</p> <p>CPO 10.110 Ensure new development is adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure which meets the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, associated River Basin Management Plans and CFRAM Management Plans.</p> <p>CPO 10.111 Require that planning applications are accompanied by a comprehensive SUDs assessment that addresses run-off quantity, run-off quality and its impact on the existing habitat and water quality.</p> <p>CPO 10.112 Ensure that in public and private developments in urban areas, both within developments and within the public realm, seek to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.</p> <p>CPO 10.113 Ensure appropriate maintenance of surface water drainage infrastructure to avoid flood risk.</p> <p>Blue Flag</p> <p>CPO 6.53 Seek to acquire and maintain Blue Flag status for water amenity areas throughout the county as an accolade for use in promoting the quality of these facilities.</p>

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Air and Climatic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential conflict between development under the Plan and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives. • Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality. • Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors. • Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management. 	<p>Also refer to the overall approach to land use zoning and sustainability provided by the Plan and Table 8.4 from this SEA Environmental Report "How Climate Action has been integrated into the Draft Plan".</p> <p>Climate Action</p> <p>CPO 11.1 Support the implementation and achievement of European, national, regional and local objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the following documents, taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage) and having regard to the Climate mitigation and adaptation measures which have been outlined through the policy objectives in this Development Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Action Plan (2019 and any subsequent versions); • National Mitigation Plan (2017 and any subsequent versions); • National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions); • Any Regional Decarbonisation Plan prepared on foot of commitments included in the emerging Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region; • Relevant provisions of any Sectoral Adaptation Plans prepared to comply the requirements of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, including those seeking to contribute towards the National Transition Objective, to pursue, and achieve, the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the end of the year 2050; and • Westmeath County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024. <p>CPO 11.2 Provide for a reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions by providing for consolidated future development which supports sustainable travel patterns in line with the County Core Strategy.</p> <p>CPO 11.3 Promote the benefits to quality of life, public health and biodiversity arising from implementation of policies promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation.</p> <p>CPO 11.4 Encourage innovation and facilitate the development of pilot schemes that support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.</p> <p>CPO 11.5 Provide training on climate mitigation measures.</p> <p>CPO 11.6 Support collaboration between local authorities, the Bord na Móna Transition Team and relevant stakeholders and the development of partnership approaches to integrated peatland management for a just transition that incorporate any relevant policies and strategies such as the Bord na Móna Biodiversity Plan 2016-2021 and the national Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plans. This shall include support for the rehabilitation and/or re-wetting of suitable peatland habitats.</p> <p>CPO 11.7 Work in collaboration with the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland and relevant stakeholders to deliver a number of sustainable energy communities throughout the County.</p> <p>CPO 11.8 Consider the use of heat mapping to support developments which deliver energy efficiency and the recovery of energy that would otherwise be wasted. A feasibility assessment for district heating in Local Authority areas shall be carried out and statutory planning documents shall identify local waste heat sources.</p> <p>Air Quality and Noise Pollution Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.120 Promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/5/0/EC) and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 201) (or any updated/superseding documents).</p> <p>CPO 10.121 Support the implementation of the Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006.</p> <p>CPO 10.122 Support the Implementation of the Westmeath Noise Action Plan 2013-2018 (and any revision made thereto)</p> <p>CPO 10.123 Require all developments to be designed and operated in a manner that will minimise and contain noise levels.</p> <p>Energy efficient public lighting</p> <p>CPO 10.125 Require the use of energy efficient public lighting in all new development proposals.</p> <p>Greenways</p> <p>CPO 12.73 Support the development of an integrated Strategic Greenway Network of national and regional routes and maximise connectivity to existing greenways and link with cycling and walking infrastructure.</p> <p>CPO 12.74 Support the delivery of sustainable strategic greenways, blueways and peatways projects in the County in accordance with the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways.</p> <p>CPO 12.75 Develop the Mullingar Greenway incorporating a pedestrian/cycle link connecting Mullingar to Lough Ennell and Belvedere subject to environmental and habitats requirements.</p> <p>CPO 12.76 Enhance and link the Westmeath Way through Mullingar via the Royal Canal Feeder and further along the waterside via Tullaghan and to the north eastern side of Lough Owel, consistent with Habitat Management Plan objectives for the lake.</p>

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		<p>Green Infrastructure</p> <p>CPO 12.66 Identify, protect and enhance existing and planned Green Infrastructure assets and to facilitate, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, the development of Green Infrastructure that recognises the benefits that can be achieved with regards to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of open space amenities • Sustainable management of water • Protection and management of biodiversity • Protection of cultural heritage • Protection of protected landscape sensitivities <p>CPO 12.67 Ensure green infrastructure responds to and reflects landscape character including historic landscape character, conserving and enhancing the existing landscapes and townscapes of Westmeath which contribute to a distinctive sense of place.</p> <p>CPO 12.68 Prepare and implement a 'Green Infrastructure Strategy' for the County, to raise awareness of the importance of environmentally designated sites, river and canal corridors, and green spaces to adapting to climate change and enhancing opportunities for recreation and tourism.</p> <p>CPO 12.69 Facilitate and promote the provision of a green infrastructure network serving the settlement hierarchy and its environs in tandem with projected population growth.</p> <p>CPO 12.70 Prepare specific Green Infrastructure Strategies for the designated settlements of Athlone and Mullingar and implement green infrastructure networks within these towns.</p> <p>CPO 12.71 Work collaboratively with other neighbouring Local Authorities in facilitating and supporting the development of green infrastructure networks.</p> <p>CPO 12.72 Support and increase investment in the provision and on-going maintenance of existing green infrastructure and support the provision of new public parks, greenway and blueway corridors and other public open spaces to create green, healthy settlements throughout Westmeath by accessing relevant EU funding mechanisms and national funding opportunities including tourism related funding.</p> <p>Wind Farms on Peatlands</p> <p>CPO 10.135 Encourage large-scale energy production projects, in the form of Wind Farms, onto cutover cutaway peatlands in the County, subject to environmental, landscape, habitats and wildlife protection requirements being addressed.</p> <p>In the context of this policy, industrial scale/large-scale energy production projects are defined as follows:</p> <p>Projects that meet or exceed any of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Height: over 100m to blade tip, or - Scale: More than five turbines - Output: Having a total output of greater than 5MW <p>Developments sited on peatlands have the potential to increase overall carbon losses. Proposals for such development should demonstrate that the following has been considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peatland stability; and - Carbon emissions balance. <p>Energy Policy Objectives (other Policy Objectives include those relating to Wind Energy, Solar Energy, Geothermal Energy, Renewable Energy and Sustainable Building and Design Policy Objectives)</p> <p>Support local, regional, national and international initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources which make use of the natural resources in an environmentally acceptable manner and having particular regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and support the implementation of actions identified in the Westmeath County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and any future amendments.</p> <p>Promote and support the use of renewable forms of energy as a contribution to the energy demand of all new buildings where it is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of an area.</p> <p>Transport Infrastructure and Energy– Transport Policies</p> <p>CPO 10.1 Promote and deliver a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with ease of movement throughout County Westmeath by enhancing the existing transport infrastructure in terms of road, bus, rail, cycling and pedestrian facilities.</p> <p>CPO 10.2 Support the development of a low carbon transport system by continuing to promote modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as cycling, walking and public transport.</p> <p>CPO 10.3 Support the implementation of the following national and regional transport policies as they apply to Westmeath:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The National Planning Framework

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region - Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 – 2020 - Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) 2019 - Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012 - National Cycling Policy Framework and National Cycle Manual - Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, 2018 <p>The Council also supports the implementation of sustainable transport solutions.</p> <p>CPO 10.4 Seek to ensure primacy for transport options that provide for unit reductions in carbon emissions. This can most effectively be done by promoting public transport, walking and cycling, and by actively seeking to reduce car use in circumstances where alternative options are available.</p> <p>Transport, Infrastructure and Energy Policy Objectives - Integration of Land Use Planning and Transportation Policy</p> <p>CPO 10.5 Encourage transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes, through the promotion of alternative modes of transport, and 'walkable communities' together with promotion of compact urban forms close to public transport corridors to encourage more sustainable patterns of movement.</p> <p>CPO 10.6 Support the enhancement of the County's existing transport infrastructure in order to ensure its optimal use and seek to undertake appropriate traffic management measures to reduce congestion and minimise travel times.</p> <p>CPO 10.7 Integrate the County's transport and tourism strategies to promote increasingly sustainable travel patterns and improved linkages between Athlone, Mullingar and other towns and villages.</p> <p>CPO 10.8 Prepare in conjunction with Roscommon County Council and relevant agencies, An Area Based Transport Plan for Athlone to facilitate the growth of Athlone as a regional economic driver.</p> <p>CPO 10.9 Prepare an Area based Transport Plan for Mullingar in conjunction with relevant agencies, to support the growth of Mullingar as a Key Town.</p> <p>Infrastructure and Mobility Policy Objectives - Walking and Cycling</p> <p>CPO 10.10 Promote walking and cycling as efficient, healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transport by securing the development of a network of direct, comfortable, convenient and safe cycle routes and footpaths, particularly in urban areas and in the vicinity of schools.</p> <p>CPO 10.11 Improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to stations and other public transport interchanges.</p> <p>CPO 10.12 Design pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in accordance with the principles, approaches and standards set out in the National Cycle Manual, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and international best practice.</p> <p>CPO 10.13 Encourage and seek sustainable transport movement at the earliest design stage of development proposals, to ensure accessibility by all modes of transport and all sections of society and promote the provision of parking space for bicycles in development schemes.</p> <p>CPO 10.14 Improve the streetscape environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with special mobility needs by providing facilities to enhance safety and convenience, including separation for pedestrian infrastructure from vehicular traffic.</p> <p>CPO 10.15 Provide better sign posting and public lighting where considered appropriate and ensure that the upgrading of roads will not impact negatively on the safety and perceived safety of cyclists.</p> <p>CPO 10.16 Work with the National Trails Office, Coillte, the Department of Planning, Housing and Local Government, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking and cycling.</p> <p>Transport and Infrastructure - Public Transport Policies</p> <p>CPO 10.25 Support the continued integration of national, regional and local bus and rail services to ensure the delivery of a seamless and fully integrated public transport service.</p> <p>CPO 10.26 Promote the use of and facilitate improvements to existing public transport services to support initiatives designed to improve bus/coach/rail interchange facilities.</p> <p>CPO 10.27 Support public transport improvements by reserving corridors for any such improvements free of development, including provision of setbacks along public transport corridors.</p> <p>CPO 10.28 Continue to work with the relevant transport providers, agencies and stakeholders to facilitate the integration of active travel (walking, cycling etc.) with public transport, thereby making it easier for people to access and use the public transport system.</p> <p>CPO 10.29 Support the improvement of existing rail transport infrastructure, including the provision of increased frequency of services on the Dublin to Sligo and Dublin to Galway Lines.</p> <p>CPO 10.30 Safeguard all existing rail infrastructure and encourage the re-opening of rail stations including Killucan and preserve disused stations/halts and track appropriate to future strategic and public transport needs.</p> <p>CPO 10.31 Support the reopening of the Mullingar to Athlone Rail Line and Moate Railway Station, thereby increasing connectivity between these Towns.</p> <p>CPO 10.32 Support the operation of existing bus services and facilitate the provision of improved facilities for bus users in towns and villages, including the</p>

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		<p>provision, in collaboration with the relevant agencies, of set down areas for coaches and bus shelters for passengers. Such provision is particularly required in towns and villages bypassed by National Routes.</p> <p>CPO 10.33 Support bus priority measures on existing and planned road infrastructure, where appropriate, in collaboration with the National Transport Authority, Bus Éireann and the Transport Infrastructure Ireland.</p> <p>CPO 10.34 Support and encourage public transport providers and rural community transport initiatives to enhance the provision of public transportation services linking the rural villages to the main towns within Westmeath.</p> <p>CPO 10.35 Support the Rural Transport Initiative and the provision of an integrated rural community public transport system as a means of reducing social isolation and as a viable long-term sustainable public transport option.</p> <p>CPO 10.36 Investigate the potential of providing a number of 'Park and Ride' facilities in appropriate locations in the County, subject to environmental assessment of identified locations.</p> <p>CPO 10.37 Investigate the potential of providing a number of 'Park and Stride' facilities in appropriate locations in the County, subject to environmental assessment of identified locations.</p> <p>CPO 10.38 Investigate the feasibility of providing a 'Bike Sharing Scheme' for Athlone Town and Mullingar Town to facilitate and encourage Modal Shift.</p> <p>Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – Electric Vehicles</p> <p>CPO 10.38 Facilitate the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electric vehicles both on street and in new developments in accordance with car parking standards prescribed in Development Management Standards Chapter 16 of this plan.</p> <p>CPO 10.39 Support the growth of Electric Vehicles with support facilities, through a roll-out of additional electric charging points in collaboration with relevant agencies at appropriate locations.</p> <p>CPO 10.40 Support the prioritisation of parking for Electric Vehicles in town centre locations.</p> <p>Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – Mobility Management Plans</p> <p>CPO 10.58 Require mobility management plans to be submitted with applications for trip intensive developments.</p> <p>Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – Bicycle Parking Facilities</p> <p>CPO 10.64 Ensure the provision of appropriate Bicycle parking facilities as part of any new applications in urban areas to assist with supporting modal shift away from private cars to more sustainable modes of transport i.e. Cycling, Walking, Public Transport.</p> <p>Tourism Links</p> <p>CPO 6.45 Support the provision of infrastructure to enable increased tourism activity associated with Westmeath's lakes, including boating, canoeing and angling while ensuring that such provision does not negatively impact on sensitive environments and subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>CPO 6.48 Support the provision of walking and cycling links between lakes and nearby villages, towns and visitor attractions, provided such developments do not negatively impact on sensitive environments.</p> <p>CPO 6.57 Continue to support the development of the Galway to Dublin Cycleway, completing the connection to the west of the River Shannon in Athlone and working with neighbouring counties and national bodies to complete and promote the entire route. The development of the cycleway shall comply with the provisions of the Habitats Directive and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's Dublin to Galway Greenway Plan 2017 and associated measures relating to environmental management and sustainable development.</p> <p>Placemaking for Climate Change Policy Objective</p> <p>CPO 7.14 Require the incorporation of adaptable multi-functional and sensitive design solutions that supports the transition to low carbon, carbon resilient, sustainable and attractive environments.</p> <p>Development Management Standards Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 16.59 Assess applications for development, having consideration to any national guidelines and criteria set out under the sub-headings below in respect of sustainable building practices and renewable energy that serve to reduce energy demand, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change in accordance with national and regional policy.</p> <p>All new development proposals will be required to include measures that incorporate sustainable building practices in accordance with the following criteria:</p> <p>Low Energy Buildings:</p> <p>Include design measures which minimise energy use, including by passive solar design, energy-efficient building design and emission reduction measures;</p> <p>Design measures which promote renewable and low carbon energy;</p> <p>Is designed for flexible use throughout its lifetime;</p> <p>Promote the use of green roofs and natural ventilation;</p> <p>Promote the use of permeable surfaces to decrease runoff rates;</p> <p>Institute grey-water recycling schemes to decrease abstraction of potable surface water resources, thus reducing water stress during periods of low rainfall;</p>

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		<p>Maximise water conservation; Avoids internal overheating and excessive heat generation; Supplies energy efficiently and incorporates decentralised energy systems such as District Heating and uses renewable energy where feasible; Procures materials sustainably using local suppliers wherever possible ensuring designs make the most of natural systems both within and around the building; Manages flood risk, including through sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and flood resilient design for infrastructure and property; Enhance flood resilience of buildings, e.g. elevated work surfaces and storage facilities, raised sockets and electrical infrastructure, enhanced flood boards; Ensures developments are comfortable and secure for users; Conserves and enhances the natural environment, particularly in relation to biodiversity, and enables easy access to open spaces; Avoids the creation of adverse local climatic conditions; Reduces air and water pollution; Promotes sustainable waste behaviour in new and existing developments.</p>
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). Increases in waste levels. Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure. Interactions between agricultural waste and soil, water, biodiversity and 	<p>Waste Management Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.114 Support the implementation of the Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 and any updates made thereto. CPO 10.115 Encourage and support waste prevention, minimisation, reuse, recycling and recovery as methods of managing waste. CPO 10.116 Facilitate the transition from a waste management economy to a green circular economy to increase the value recovery and recirculation of resources. CPO 10.117 Encourage and support the provision of separate collection of waste in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulations 2009, the Waste Framework Directive Regulations, 2011 and other relevant legislation. CPO 10.118 Promote and facilitate communities to become involved in environmental awareness activities and community based recycling initiatives or environmental management initiatives that will lead to local sustainable waste management practices. CPO 10.119 Ensure that the Council fulfills its duties under the Waste Management (certification of historic unlicensed waste disposal and recovery activity) Regulations 2008 (S.I. No 524 of 2008), including those in relation to the identification and registration of closed landfills.</p> <p>Wastewater Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.85 Collaborate with Irish Water in contributing towards compliance with the relevant provisions of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations 2001 and 2004 and the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007 as amended. CPO 10.86 Ensure that development will only be permitted in instances where there is sufficient capacity for appropriate collection, treatment and disposal (in compliance with the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan) of waste water. CPO 10.87 Liaise with and work in conjunction with Irish Water during the lifetime of the plan for the provision, extension and upgrading of waste water collection and treatment systems in all towns and villages of the County to serve existing populations and facilitate sustainable development of the County, in accordance with the requirements of the Settlement Strategy and associated Core Strategy. CPO 10.88 Support strategic wastewater treatment infrastructure investment and provide for the separation of foul and surface water networks to accommodate future growth in the County. CPO 10.89 Resist the discharge of additional surface water to combined sewers and promote Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) and solutions to maximise the capacity of towns with combined drainage systems. CPO 10.90 Promote the changeover from septic tanks to collection networks in all cases where this is feasible (subject to connection agreements with Irish Water) and that all new developments utilise and connect to the public wastewater infrastructure. CPO 10.91 Protect against development proposals, involving individual treatment systems, which would increase effluent loading within existing housing clusters located within areas of high groundwater vulnerability. CPO 10.92 Ensure that private wastewater treatment plants, where permitted, are operated in compliance with EPA's Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (PE. ≤10) (EPA 2009), as may be amended. CPO 10.93 Support the implementation of the Athlone Main Drainage Project subject to appropriate environmental assessment. CPO 10.94 Support appropriate options for the extraction of energy and other resources from sewerage sludge in the County. CPO 10.95 Support the servicing of rural villages (serviced sites) to provide an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside, in line with RPO 4.78 of the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.</p> <p>Water Supply Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 10.65 Support Irish Water in the implementation of their capital investment programme to ensure the timely delivery of water and waste-water infrastructure for the County. CPO 10.66 Collaborate with Irish Water in relation to the preparation of their Investment Plans in order to align the supply of water services with the County</p>

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Draft Plan Provisions
	human health – including as a result of emissions of ammonia from agricultural activities (e.g. manure handling, storage and spreading) and the production of secondary inorganic particulate matter.	<p>Settlement Hierarchy.</p> <p>CPO 10.67 Ensure 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.</p> <p>CPO 10.68 Assist Irish Water in their commitment to water conservation and support efforts to tackle leakage through find and fix (active leakage control) and water mains rehabilitation.</p> <p>CPO 10.69 Support Irish Water in the implementation of Capital Projects to strengthen the Regional Water Supply Scheme, subject to environmental assessment.</p> <p>CPO 10.70 Support the implementation of the Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midland Region, subject to environmental assessment.</p> <p>CPO 10.71 Support the implementation of the Rural Water Programme.</p> <p>CPO 10.72 Minimise wastage of water supply and promote water conservation measures by requiring, where appropriate, water conservation measures and the installation of water meters in all new developments.</p> <p>CPO 10.73 Ensure that delivery and phasing of water services are subject to the required appraisal, planning and environmental assessment processes and avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.</p> <p>CPO 10.74 Protect, safeguard and strictly control development within the water catchment areas of Lough Owel and Lough Lene, and other major sources of public water supply that would give rise to pollution of these water sources.</p> <p>CPO 10.75 Ensure that new development proposals connect into the existing public water mains, where available.</p> <p>Agricultural Waste Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.35 Assess agricultural developments and associated agricultural waste matters within the County in accordance with the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017 and Westmeath County Council Water Pollution (Agricultural) Bye-Laws for the purpose of preventing or eliminating the entry of polluting matters to waters.</p> <p>Horticulture Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.37 Protect agricultural or agri-business uses from incompatible urban development.</p>
Cultural Heritage	Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities.	<p>Cultural Heritage Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.1 Improve accessibility to our cultural heritage and maximise its potential as a learning resource.</p> <p>CPO 14.2 Promote the understanding of cultural heritage in terms of its inherent and unique character and to recognise what elements should be preserved, conserved or enhanced.</p> <p>CPO 14.3 Support the implementation of objectives and actions of the Westmeath County Heritage Plan 2018-2023 and update during the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>CPO 14.4 Support the growth of cultural tourism in the County, including the potential for niche heritage based tourism products by facilitating the development of heritage events, festivals and infrastructure in a sustainable manner.</p> <p>Archaeology Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.5 Seek to ensure the protection and sympathetic enhancement of archaeological heritage, and in this regard applications will be referred to the National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht for comment.</p> <p>CPO 14.6 Seek to ensure the protection of archaeological sites and monuments and their settings and archaeological objects that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places, in the ownership/guardianship of the State, or that are the subject of Preservation Orders or have been registered in the Register of Historic Monuments. Seek to ensure the protection and preservation of archaeological sites, which have been identified subsequent to the publication of the Record of Monuments and Places.</p> <p>CPO 14.7 Ensure that any development adjacent to an archaeological monument or site shall not be detrimental to the character of the archaeological site, or its setting and shall be sited in a manner which minimises the impact on the monument and its setting. Development which is likely to detract from the setting of such a monument or site will not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 14.8 Seek to ensure the protection and preservation of underwater archaeological sites in riverine or lacustrine locations.</p> <p>CPO 14.9 Encourage and promote the appropriate management and maintenance of the County's archaeological heritage, including historical burial grounds, in accordance with conservation principles and best practice guidelines.</p> <p>CPO 14.10 Consult with the National Monuments Service in relation to proposed developments adjoining archaeological sites.</p> <p>CPO 14.11 Ensure that archaeological excavation is carried out according to best practice as outlined by the National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht, The National Museum of Ireland and the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland.</p> <p>CPO 14.12 Prepare conservation plans for the management of archaeological sites and monuments in Council ownership.</p> <p>CPO 14.13 Encourage increased awareness of and public access to monuments within Council ownership.</p>

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		<p>Fore Special Heritage Area Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.14 Continue to protect and enhance the Fore Special Heritage Area in accordance with the Fore Special Heritage Management Study adopted in 2010, and any update made thereto.</p> <p>CPO 14.15 Support the development of sustainable tourist initiatives in Fore subject to appropriate archaeological and ecological assessment.</p> <p>CPO 14.16 Ensure that new development proposals which have the potential to impact on Archaeological Heritage must be accompanied by an Archaeological Assessment in accordance with requirements of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</p> <p>CPO 14.17 Ensure that development proposals that would detrimentally impact upon the setting and interpretation of archaeological monuments, historic landscape or buildings of architectural value at Fore will not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 14.18 Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views over the surrounding countryside at Fore, while facilitating the continued development of uses that sustain the activities that give rise to the appearance and character of the landscape.</p> <p>CPO 14.19 Ensure that development and activities that are immediately adjacent to the scenic off-road walking routes of Fore, sustain the established appearance and character of views, that contribute to the distinctive quality of the landscape.</p> <p>Hill of Uisneach Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.20 Continue to support the promotion of Uisneach as one of the Royal Sites of Ireland under the proposal for its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and/or other appropriate initiatives.</p> <p>CPO 14.21 Support the development of a greenway from the Old Rail Trail to the Hill of Uisneach, subject to the protection of the archaeological significance of the site.</p> <p>CPO 14.22 Endeavour to improve public access to the Hill of Uisneach, with the involvement of landowners and relevant stakeholders, in consultation with the National Monument Service.</p> <p>CPO 14.23 Seek funding to prepare and implement a Conservation Management Plan for Uisneach in consultation with landowners, the National Monument Service and the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht.</p> <p>Protected Structures Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.24 Protect and conserve buildings, structures and sites contained in the Record of Protected Structures and to encourage the sympathetic re-use and long-term viability of such structures without detracting from their special interest and character.</p> <p>CPO 14.25 Protect the architectural heritage of Westmeath through the identification of Protected Structures, the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), the safeguarding of designed landscapes and historic gardens, and the recognition of structures and elements that contribute positively to the vernacular and industrial heritage of the County.</p> <p>CPO 14.26 Applications for modifications, alterations, or extensions to a Protected Structure will be assessed in accordance with the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2011 and should be sensitively sited and designed, compatible with its special character, and appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout, and materials so that the integrity of the structure and its curtilage is preserved.</p> <p>CPO 14.27 Seek that the form and structural integrity of Protected Structures is retained as part of any redevelopment proposal and that the relationship between the Protected Structure and any complex of adjoining buildings, designed landscape features, or designed views or vistas from or to the structure is considered.</p> <p>CPO 14.28 Encourage rehabilitation, renovation and re-use of existing Protected Structures for their own economic benefit and that of the area in which they are located.</p> <p>CPO 14.29 Carry out an audit and assess the condition of Protected Structures within the Council's ownership and devise a Conservation Management Plan/maintenance regime for these structures.</p> <p>CPO 14.30 Carry out an audit of Protected Structures within the Council's ownership to identify any Protected Structures that are under threat directly or indirectly due to climate change.</p> <p>CPO 14.31 Integrate climate change adaptation measures into future heritage management plans.</p> <p>CPO 14.32 Provide guidance for owners of protected structures or historic buildings on upgrading for energy efficiency and climate resilient measures and promote the principles of sustainable building design in conservation.</p> <p>CPO 14.33 Ensure a sustainable future for Protected Structures and buildings sited within ACAs by encouraging and supporting works to upgrade the environmental performance of such structures together with the implementation of measures to address the impacts of climate change. Such works should not adversely affect the special character of the structure including impact on historic fabric, traditional construction, visibility, siting and design. The installation of renewable energy measures and equipment will be acceptable where sited and designed to minimise the visual impact, where it does not result in any significant loss of historic fabric or otherwise affect the significance of the structure.</p> <p>CPO 14.34 Incentivise the restoration of Protected Structures in towns and villages.</p>

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		<p>CPO 14.35 Facilitate contemporary and innovative designs providing that they are of a sufficient high quality and do not detract from the character of the historic fabric of the Protected Structure.</p> <p>Architectural Conservation Areas Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.35 Promote development that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the Architectural Conservation Area. New development or alterations to existing building(s) in an ACA shall respect the special character of the ACA and reflect the historic architecture in terms of scale, design and materials used. Regard shall be had to any guidance contained in the Statement of Characters prepared for ACAs.</p> <p>CPO 14.36 Consider development proposals within ACAs in accordance with the Statements of Character prepared for ACAs in Castlepollard, Kilbeggan, Moate, Tyrrellspass, Mullingar and Athlone.</p> <p>CPO 14.37 Prepare Statements of Character and guidance in relation to development within each of the identified Architectural Conservations Areas (ACAs) in the County.</p> <p>CPO 14.38 Ensure that Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), including any associated public realm area, are protected and ensure that any new development or alteration of a building within or adjoining an ACA positively enhances the character of the area and is appropriate in terms of the plot size, proposed design, including: scale, mass, height, proportions, density, layout, materials, plot ratio, and building lines.</p> <p>CPO 14.39 Avoid the removal of structures and distinctive elements (such as boundary treatments, street furniture, paving and landscaping) that positively contribute to the character of Architectural Conservation Areas.</p> <p>Vernacular Building and Structures Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.41 Encourage the retention and appropriate re-use of vernacular buildings, including vacant traditional farm buildings, where appropriate and encourage the retention of the original fabric such as windows, doors and other significant features of historic buildings.</p> <p>CPO 14.42 Require that the size, scale, design, form, layout and materials of extensions to vernacular dwellings or conversions of historic outbuildings are in keeping and sympathetic with the existing structure.</p> <p>CPO 14.43 Ensure that works to existing buildings and structures of architectural merit maintain and enhance their character and distinctiveness.</p> <p>CPO 14.44 Ensure wherever possible that proposed infrastructural and public utility works within the County do not remove historic street furniture such as limestone kerbs, cobblestones, cast-iron post boxes, street lamps etc</p> <p>CPO 14.45 Promote, where feasible the retention of surviving historic plot sizes and street patterns in the villages and towns of Westmeath and have regard to ancient boundaries or layouts, such as burgage plots and townland boundaries in new development proposals.</p> <p>CPO 14.46 Ensure that works to existing buildings and structures of architectural merit maintain and enhance their character and distinctiveness.</p> <p>Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.47 Support the economic viability of parks, gardens and demesnes by encouraging high quality development that does not lead to the loss of, or cause harm to the character, the principal components of, or the setting of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest.</p> <p>CPO 14.48 Support the preparation and implementation of a Conservation Management Plan for Belvedere House, Gardens & Park.</p> <p>CPO 14.49 Require a masterplan to be prepared for development proposals within historic designed and demesne landscapes. Such a plan should include an appraisal of the designed landscape together with an architectural appraisal, in order to inform design proposals, which must be sensitive to and respect the built heritage elements and green space values of the site.</p> <p>Industrial Heritage Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.50 Protect, where appropriate, industrial heritage structures or elements of significance identified in the Inventory of Industrial Heritage and any subsequent surveys by adding them to the Record of Protected Structures.</p> <p>CPO 14.51 Utilise the information provided within the Inventory of Industrial Heritage Sites in Westmeath, and any subsequent surveys when assessing development proposals for industrial heritage sites.</p> <p>CPO 14.52 Support the retention and appropriate repair/maintenance of historic bridges and other significant industrial heritage features in the County.</p> <p>Language Heritage Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 14.53 Promote the naming of new residential developments in bi-lingual format. The naming of new estates should reflect local place names, townlands, history, folklore and/or cultural features in the area.</p> <p>CPO 14.54 Preserve historic place and street names and ensure that new street names should reflect appropriate local historical or cultural associations.</p> <p>CPO 14.55 Support the use of the Irish language on shopfronts.</p> <p>CPO 14.56 Support the establishment of a naming committee within one year of adoption of the Plan, to evaluate naming proposals for new residential and/or mixed-</p>

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Draft Plan Provisions
		<p>use developments.</p> <p>Development Management Standards Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 16.57 In the assessment of applications for development within an Architectural Conservation Area, the following considerations will be taken into account:</p> <p>Guidelines contained within the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2004) (DAHG).</p> <p>Development Works within an ACA</p> <p>Proposals for development within an ACA that involves a new building, reuse or change of use and extensions will generally be required to: - Conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the ACA; - Respect the scale, massing, proportions, design and materials of existing structures; - Retain important exterior architectural features that contribute to the character and appearance of the ACA.</p> <p>Demolition Works within an ACA</p> <p>The demolition of a building within an ACA will generally not be permitted unless the Council is satisfied that the structure or building does not contribute positively to the character or appearance of the ACA or the building /structure is beyond viable renewal.</p> <p>CPO 16.58 In the assessment of any application for development which is sited within the designated zone of archaeological potential and/or on sites on or abutting monuments identified by the Sites and Monuments Record, any may affect archaeological remains due to ground and sub-surface works and disturbance., the following considerations will be taken into account: (i)Development proposed within designated Zones of Archaeological Potential and in sites on or abutting Monuments identified by the Sites and Monuments Record, the Council will refer applications for proposed developments to National Monuments Service of the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, to ascertain their requirements and consider their response to same. (ii) A preliminary archaeological investigation by a licensed archaeologist will normally be required where a proposed development would result in significant ground disturbance within a Zone of Archaeological Potential. (iii) A comprehensive archaeological report from a licensed archaeologist will normally be required to be submitted to the Council and to National Monuments Service of DoECLG, for their assessment, prior to the commencement of any development on site, or where considered appropriate prior to the decision by the Council on a Planning Application. (iv) Where a proposed development would result in significant ground disturbance leading to potentially significant archaeological implications in a Zone of Archaeological Potential or in sites on or abutting Monuments identified by the Sites and Monuments Record it will be a requirement that a licensed archaeologist be retained on site to monitor all site works, and in appropriate circumstances the preservation of all or part of any archaeological material so discovered will be required.</p>
Landscape	Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.	<p>Landscape and Lake Amenities Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 13.1 Support the implementation of the National Landscape Strategy.</p> <p>CPO 13.2 Protect the distinctiveness, value and sensitivity of County Westmeath's landscapes and lakelands by recognising their capacity to sustainably integrate development.</p> <p>CPO 13.3 Support and implement objectives contained in any Regional Landscape Character Assessment.</p> <p>CPO 13.4 Conserve and enhance the high nature conservation value of the Landscape Character Areas in order to create/protect ecologically resilient and varied landscapes.</p> <p>CPO 13.5 Identify and integrate new green and blue infrastructure networks within the existing landscape character areas in the interests of biodiversity and climate change and in recognition of the tourism potential of these assets.</p> <p>CPO 13.6 Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</p> <p>Landscape Character Assessment Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 13.7 Protect the landscapes and natural environments of the County by ensuring that any new developments do not detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of their area. Any development which could unduly impact upon such landscapes will not be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 13.8 Ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character type by having regard to the character, value and sensitivity of a landscape in new development proposals.</p> <p>CPO 13.9 Ensure development reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types, including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements which contribute to their distinctiveness.</p> <p>CPO 13.10 Explore the potential for natural resource tourism, such as fishing, boating, walking, cycling, nature trails, natural and cultural resource tourism etc., in conjunction with relevant tourism bodies such as Waterways Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Community Development Agencies and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.</p> <p>CPO 13.11 Require a Visual Impact Assessment for proposed developments with the potential to impact on significant landscape features within the County.</p> <p>CPO 13.12 Landscape Character Area 1: Consider the provision of walkways around Lough Lene, subject to impacts on biodiversity being fully addressed and subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment.</p> <p>CPO 13.13 Landscape Character Area 2: Explore the potential for funding to examine the feasibility of developing the River Inny basin as a biodiversity heritage area.</p>

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		<p>CPO 13.14 Landscape Character Area 5: Continue to work with Waterways Ireland to enhance and protect the visual corridor of the Royal Canal, by incorporating a visual buffer zone on each side of the bank of the canal.</p> <p>CPO 13.15 Landscape Character Area 6: Explore the feasibility of promoting Lough Ree and its islands as a model for a living Biodiversity Reserve.</p> <p>CPO 13.16 Minimise impact on the ecological, archaeological, biodiversity and visual amenity surrounding quarry sites and quarrying of sensitive sites within the Landscape Character Areas including the lake valley landscape, eskers and canal corridor.</p> <p>CPO 13.17 Protect and enhance the setting of the Hill of Uisneach and support increased public access to the site. Only sensitive development that does not undermine the archaeological and cultural significance of the site will be permitted.</p> <p>CPO 13.18 a. Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views associated with the High Amenity Area around the Hill of Uisneach.</p> <p>b. Require any development proposals within the High Amenity Area around the Hill of Uisneach to demonstrate that no adverse effects will occur on the established appearance or character of this feature as viewed from either the Protected Panoramic Views or from surrounding public roads.</p> <p>High Amenity Areas Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 13.19 Protect High Amenity areas from inappropriate development and reinforce their character, distinctiveness and sense of place.</p> <p>CPO 13.20 Protect and preserve designated High Amenity Areas from inappropriate urban generated housing development or any other development which would be injurious to or detract from the natural amenity of Areas of High Amenity.</p> <p>CPO 13.21 Protect lakeshores from any inappropriate development which would detract from the natural amenity of the area.</p> <p>CPO 13.22 Protect and enhance the special landscape character and exceptional landscape value of the Lough Ree Islands, including their significant archaeological, cultural and natural heritage value. Support the preparation for a Plan for the Islands in conjunction with the National Monuments Service and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.</p> <p>CPO 13.23 Cooperate with adjoining Local Authorities in the preparation of Habitat Management Plans to guide future development in relation to Lough Ree and Lough Sheelin Areas of High Amenity.</p> <p>CPO 13.24 Promote, in association with Fáilte Ireland, the sustainable tourism potential of Areas of High Amenity centered around the Lakelands.</p> <p>CPO 13.25 Protect existing public rights of way in Areas of High Amenity.</p> <p>CPO 13.26 Cooperate with Coillte, Bord na Mona, Waterways Ireland and other state agencies in establishing access ways, nature trails, etc. with a view to opening up state lands for recreational use.</p> <p>CPO 13.27 Maintain existing navigation channels within Areas of High Amenity for the benefit of recreation and amenity related uses.</p> <p>Lake Amenities Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 13.28 Protect the County's lakes and their shorelines, islands, amenity and biodiversity from inappropriate development.</p> <p>CPO 13.29 Protect the scenic quality of lakes from any inappropriate development between public roads and lakeshores that would interrupt a view of the lake or adversely affect its setting or its wildlife habitat. Any development in such instance must be sensitively sited and designed and screened from the lake by existing topography or vegetation.</p> <p>CPO 13.30 Improve access to the lakes and around the lakeshore and increase public accessibility, subject to ecological sensitivities and constraints being addressed.</p> <p>CPO 13.31 Continue to develop, in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Westmeath Way to include the lakes of the County. Any proposed route in the vicinity of the White Lake will be subject to prior agreement with the NPWS and in connection with Irish Trails.</p> <p>CPO 13.32 Continue to develop a connected network of greenways to the principal lakes in the County and their respective lakeshores subject to ecological sensitivities and constraints being addressed.</p> <p>CPO 13.33 Continue to advance a network of navigable blueways within the County subject to ecological assessment.</p> <p>Protected Views Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 13.80 Protect and sustain the established appearance and character of views listed in Appendix 5 of this plan that contribute to the distinctive quality of the landscape from inappropriate development.</p> <p>CPO 13.81 Provide and maintain facilities, including safe pedestrian access and/or car parking, and where appropriate, associated seats and signs in the immediate vicinity of views that are identified in this plan</p> <p>CPO 13.82 Support the restoration of derelict sites and removal of derelict structures adjacent to scenic and tourist routes, using mechanisms such as the Derelict Sites Act 1990.</p> <p>Areas of High Amenity Policy Objectives</p> <p>CPO 9.22 Restrict development not related to farming practices and tourism in all High Amenity Areas, with the exception of housing for the immediate family (son/daughter) of established residents living on landholdings, who demonstrate a housing need and have long-term intrinsic links with the area. The entire landholding will be demonstrated to have been in the resident's ownership 5 years prior to the date of application.</p>

Section 10 Monitoring Measures

10.1 Introduction

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. This section details the measures which will be used in order to monitor the likely significant effects of implementing the Plan.

Monitoring can both demonstrate the positive effects facilitated by the Plan and can enable, at an early stage, the identification of unforeseen adverse effects and the undertaking of appropriate remedial action.

The occurrence of significant adverse environmental effects not predicted and mitigated by this assessment, which are directly attributable to the implementation of the Plan, would necessitate consideration of these effects in the context of the Plan and potential remediation action(s) and/or review of part(s) of the Plan.

10.2 Indicators and Targets

Monitoring is based around indicators which allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives identified in Section 5 and used in the evaluation. Each indicator to be monitored is accompanied by the target(s) which were identified with regard to the relevant strategic actions. Given the position of the Development Plan in the land use planning hierarchy beneath the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), the measures identified in that RSES SEA have been used – as they are or having been slightly modified – in most instances in order to ensure consistency, where appropriate.

Table 10.1 overleaf shows the indicators and targets which have been selected for monitoring the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan, if unmitigated.

Monitoring is an ongoing process and the programme allows for flexibility and the

further refinement of indicators and targets. The Monitoring Programme may be updated to deal with specific environmental issues – including unforeseen effects – as they arise.

10.3 Sources

The Draft Plan will form part of the wider land use planning framework comprising a hierarchy of policies, plans, programmes, etc. This wider framework, including the National Planning Framework and the Eastern and Midlands RSES, is subject to its own SEA (and associated monitoring) requirements. At lower tiers of the hierarchy, Local Area Plans and individual projects will be subject to their own monitoring requirements as relevant.

In implementing the Monitoring Programme the Council will take into account this hierarchy of planning and environmental monitoring.

Sources for indicators may include existing monitoring databases (including those maintained by planning authorities and national/regional government departments and agencies) and the output of lower-tier environmental assessment and decision making (including a review of project approvals granted and associated documents and the output of any EIA monitoring programmes).

Internal monitoring of the environmental effects of grants of permission in the Council would provide monitoring of certain indicators on a *grant of permission*⁷² basis. Where significant adverse effects as a result of the development to be permitted are identified, such effects could be identified, recorded and used to inform monitoring evaluation.

⁷² The likely significant effects of development proposals on environmental sensitivities are further determined during the development management process. Documenting any identified effects as a result of a development to be permitted can help to fulfill monitoring requirements.

10.4 Reporting

A stand-alone Monitoring Report on the significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan will be prepared in advance of the beginning of the review of the Plan. This report should address the indicators set out on Table 10.1. The Council is responsible for the ongoing review of indicators and targets, collating existing relevant monitored data, the preparation of monitoring evaluation report(s), the publication of these reports and, if necessary, the carrying out of remedial action.

Table 10.1 Indicators, Targets, Sources and Remedial Action

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	BFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condition of European sites • Number of spatial plans that have included ecosystem services content, mapping and policy to protect ecosystem services when their relevant plans are either revised or drafted • SEA and AA as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc. • Status of water quality in the County's water bodies • Compliance of planning permissions with Plan measures providing for the protection of Biodiversity and flora and fauna – see Chapter 12 "Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions in their land use plans and as a minimum, to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species • Implement and review, as relevant, the County Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan • For planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that they comply with all Plan measures providing for the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna – see Chapter 12 "Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years). • Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs' National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every 3 years) • Internal monitoring of preparation of local land use plans • Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant). • Consultations with the NPWS (at monitoring evaluation - see Section 10.4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where condition of European sites is found to be deteriorating this will be investigated with the Regional Assembly and the DACG (and the DHPLG for water) to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance. • Where water bodies are failing to meet at least good status this will be investigated with the DHPLG Water Section, the Regional Assembly, the EPA Catchment Unit and, as relevant, Irish Water to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance.
Population and Human Health	PHH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by Chapter 5 "Economy and Employment" • Number of spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors resulting from development permitted under the Plan • Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures • Number of spatial plans that include specific green infrastructure mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by Chapter 5 "Economy and Employment" • No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan • Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures. • Implementation of Green Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives • Consultations with the Health Service Executive and EPA • CSO data • Internal monitoring of preparation of local land use plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where planning applications in key growth towns are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the wastewater treatment plant or failure of the wastewater treatment plant to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will contribute towards a response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Irish Water to achieve the necessary capacity. • Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHPLG, DCCAE and NTA to develop a tailored response.
Soil (and Land)	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of population growth occurring on infill and brownfield lands compared to greenfield • Volume of contaminated material generated from brownfield and infill • Number of AA determinations and environmental assessments undertaken to support applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4%. • Achieve the 40% target for growth on infill as per NPF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Geoportal • Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the proportion of growth on infill and brownfield sites is not keeping pace with the targets set in the NPF and the RSES, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly to establish reasons and coordinate actions to address constraints to doing so.

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
Water	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status of water bodies as reported by the EPA Water Monitoring Programme for the WFD • Number of incompatible developments permitted within flood risk areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status' • Implementation of the objectives of the second cycle of the River Basin Management Plan by 2021 (and subsequent objectives as relevant) • Minimise developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPA Monitoring Programme for WFD compliance • Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where water bodies are failing to meet at least good status this will be investigated with the DHPLG Water Section, the EPA Catchment Unit, the Regional Assembly and, as relevant, Irish Water to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance. • Where marine water bodies are failing to meet good ecological status, this will be interrogated with the Marine Institute and the DHPLG to establish if the pressures are related to RSES activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with the MI and DHPLG in such a circumstance. • Where planning applications in key growth towns are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the Wastewater treatment Plant (WwTP) or failure of the WwTP to meet Emission Limit Values (ELV), EMRA will coordinate a response between the relevant LA, EPA and Irish Water to achieve the necessary capacity. • Where planning applications in key growth towns are being permitted on flood zones, EMRA will work with OPW to educate and inform the relevant local / planning authority on the negative effects of the practice.
Material Assets	MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmed delivery of Irish Water infrastructure for all key growth towns in line with Irish Water Investment Plan and prioritisation programme to ensure sustainable growth can be accommodated • Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan • Proportion of population within who report regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To map brownfield and infill land parcels across the County. • All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately and appropriately served by waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan • Where septic tanks are proposed, for planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that the outfall from the septic tank will not – in combination with other septic tanks – contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive • Increased budget spends on water and wastewater infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) • CSO data • Consultations with the Irish Water (at monitoring evaluation - see Section 10.4) • Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in conjunction with Local Authorities • Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment • Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where planning applications in key growth towns are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the wastewater treatment plant or failure of the wastewater treatment plant to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will coordinate a response between the Regional Assembly, EPA and Irish Water to achieve the necessary capacity. • Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHPLG and NTA to develop a tailored response.

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Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2020 all citizens will have access to speeds of 30Mbps, and that 50% of citizens will be subscribing to speeds of 100Mbps 		
Air	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 National Travel Survey levels of 74% NO_x, SO_x, PM10 and PM2.5 as part of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 National Travel Survey levels. Improvement in Air Quality trends, particularly in relation to transport related emissions of NO_x and particulate matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSO data Data from the National Travel Survey EPA Air Quality Monitoring Consultations with Department of Transport Tourism and Sport, Transport Trends and Department of Communication Climate Action and Environment (at monitoring evaluation - see Section 10.4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHPLG, DCCAE and NTA to develop a tailored response. See also entry under Population and human health above
Climatic Factors	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Plan measures relating to climate reduction targets as provided for by Plan provisions including those provided for and referenced in Chapter 11 "Climate Change and Energy" Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 levels Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures climate reduction targets as provided for by Plan provisions including those provided for and referenced in Chapter 11 "Climate Change and Energy" Increase in the proportion of people resident in the County reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above 2016 CSO figures Decrease in the proportion of journeys made by residents of the County using private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 levels Contribute towards transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 Contribute towards the target of the Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC), for all Member States to reach a 10% share of renewable energy in transport by 2020 Contribute towards the target of aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors To promote reduced energy consumption and support the uptake of renewable options and a move away from solid fuels for residential heating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPA Annual National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory reporting Climate Action Regional Office Consultations with Department of Communication Climate Action and Environment (at monitoring evaluation - see Section 10.4) CSO data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where trends toward carbon reduction are not recorded, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly to establish reasons and develop solutions. Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above CSO 2016 figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHPLG and NTA to develop a tailored response

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action
Cultural Heritage	CH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, protected from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context of these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) Consultation with Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (at monitoring evaluation - see Section 10.4). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where monitoring reveals visitor pressure is causing negative effects on key tourist features along these routes, the Council will work with Regional Assembly, Fáilte Ireland and other stakeholders to address the pressures through additional mitigation tailored to the plans.
Landscape	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of grants of permission (grant by grant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where monitoring reveals developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, the Council will re-examine Plan provisions and the effectiveness of their implementation

Appendix I Relationship with Legislation and Other Policies, Plans and Programmes

This appendix is not intended to be a full and comprehensive review of EU Directives, the transposing regulations or the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management. The information is not exhaustive and it is recommended to consult the Directive, Regulation, Plan or Programme to become familiar with the full details of each.

Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan
European Level			
SEA Directive (2001/42/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development. Provide for a high level of protection of the environment by carrying out an environmental assessment of plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out an environmental assessment for plans or programmes referred to in Articles 2 to 4 of the Directive. Prepare an environmental report which identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme and reasonable alternatives that consider the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme. Consult with relevant authorities, stakeholders and public allowing sufficient time to make a submission. Consult other Member States where the implementation of a plan or programme is likely to have transboundary environmental effects. Inform relevant authorities and stakeholders on the decision to implement the plan or programme. Issue a statement to include requirements detailed in Article 9 of the Directive. Monitor and mitigate significant environmental effects identified by the assessment. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EIA Directive (2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the assessment of the environmental effects of public and private projects which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. Aims to assess and implement avoidance or mitigation measures to eliminate environmental effects, before consent is given of projects likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue, inter alia, of their nature, size or location are made subject to a requirement for development consent and an assessment with regard to their effects. Those projects are defined in Article 4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All projects listed in Annex I are considered as having significant effects on the environment and require an EIA. For projects listed in Annex II, a "screening procedure" is required to determine the effects of projects on the basis of thresholds/criteria or a case by case examination. This should take into account Annex III. The environmental impact assessment shall identify, describe and assess in an appropriate manner, in the light of each individual case and in accordance with Articles 4 to 12, the direct and indirect effects of a project on the following factors: human beings, fauna and flora, soil, water, air, climate and the landscape, material assets and the cultural heritage, the interaction between each factor. Consult with relevant authorities, stakeholders and public allowing sufficient time to make a submission before a decision is made. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the preservation, protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, including the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. Contribute towards ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. Maintain or restore to favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of community interest. Promote the maintenance of biodiversity, taking account of economic, social, cultural and regional requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose and protect sites of importance to habitats, plant and animal species. Establish a network of European sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I and habitats of the species listed in Annex II, to enable the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. Carry out comprehensive assessment of habitat types and species present. Establish a system of strict protection for the animal species and plant species listed in Annex IV. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve all species of naturally occurring birds in the wild state including their eggs, nests and habitats. Protect, manage and control these species and comply with regulations relating to their exploitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve, maintain or re-establish a sufficient diversity and area of habitats for all the species of birds referred to in Annex 1. Preserve, maintain and establish biotopes and habitats to include the creation of protected areas (Special Protection Areas). 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and

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Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The species included in Annex I shall be the subject of special conservation measures concerning their habitat in order to ensure their survival and reproduction in their area of distribution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the upkeep and management in accordance with the ecological needs of habitats inside and outside the protected zones, re-establish destroyed biotopes and creation of biotopes. Measures for regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I is required as regards their breeding, moulting and wintering areas and staging posts along their migration routes. The protection of wetlands and particularly wetlands of international importance. 	their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Nitrates Directive (91/676/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing water pollution caused or induced by nitrates from agricultural sources and - preventing further such pollution. 	<p>Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme is designed to prevent pollution of surface waters and ground water from agricultural sources and to protect and improve water quality. Ireland's third NAP came into operation in 2014. Each Member State's NAP must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a limit on the amount of livestock manure applied to the land each year set periods when land spreading is prohibited due to risk set capacity levels for the storage of livestock manure 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Integrated Pollution Prevention Control Directive (2008/1/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of this Directive is to achieve integrated prevention and control of pollution arising from the activities listed in Annex I. It lays down measures designed to prevent or, where that is not practicable, to reduce emissions in the air, water and land from the abovementioned activities, including measures concerning waste, in order to achieve a high level of protection of the environment taken as a whole, without prejudice to Directive 85/337/EEC and other relevant Community provisions. 	<p>The IPPC Directive is based on several principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an integrated approach best available techniques, flexibility; and public participation 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Plant Protection (products) Directive 2009/127/EC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Directive aims at reducing the risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment by introducing different targets, tools and measures such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) or National Action Plans (NAPs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Framework Directive applies to pesticides which are plant protection products. Regarding pesticide application equipment already in professional use, the Framework Directive introduces requirements for the inspection and maintenance to be carried out on such equipment. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Renewables Directive (2009/28/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Renewable Energy Directive establishes an overall policy for the production and promotion of energy from renewable sources in the EU. It requires the EU to fulfil at least 20% of its total energy needs with renewables by 2020 – to be achieved through the attainment of individual national targets. All EU countries must also ensure that at least 10% of their transport fuels come from renewable sources by 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Directive promotes cooperation amongst EU countries (and with countries outside the EU) to help them meet their renewable energy targets. The Directive specifies national renewable energy targets for each country, taking into account its starting point and overall potential for renewables. EU countries set out how they plan to meet these targets and the general course of their renewable energy policy in national renewable energy action plans. Progress towards national targets is measured every two years when EU countries publish national renewable energy progress reports. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Indirect Land Use Change Directive (2012/0288(COD))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article 3(4) of Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (3) requires Member States to ensure that the share of energy from renewable energy sources in all forms of transport in 2020 is at least 10 % of their final energy consumption. The blending of biofuels is one of the methods available for Member States to meet this target, and is expected to be the main contributor. Other methods available to meet the target are the reduction of energy consumption, which is imperative because a mandatory percentage target for energy from renewable sources is likely to become increasingly difficult to achieve sustainably if overall demand for energy for transport continues to rise, and the use of electricity from renewable energy sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit the contribution that conventional biofuels (with a risk of ILUC emissions) make towards attainment of the targets in the Renewable Energy Directive; Improve the greenhouse gas performance of biofuel production processes (reducing associated emissions) by raising the greenhouse gas saving threshold for new installations subject to protecting installations already in operation on 1st July 2014; Encourage a greater market penetration of advanced (low-ILUC) biofuels by allowing such fuels to contribute more to the targets in the Renewable Energy Directive than conventional biofuels; Improve the reporting of greenhouse gas emissions by obliging Member States and fuel suppliers to report the estimated indirect land-use change emissions of biofuels. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan
Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive (2014/94/EU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Directive establishes a common framework of measures for the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure in the Union in order to minimise dependence on oil and to mitigate the environmental impact of transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Directive sets out minimum requirements for the building-up of alternative fuels infrastructure, including recharging points for electric vehicles and refuelling points for natural gas (LNG and CNG) and hydrogen, to be implemented by means of Member States' national policy frameworks, as well as common technical specifications for such recharging and refuelling points, and user information requirements. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes a set of binding measures to help the EU reach its 20% energy efficiency target by 2020. Under the Directive, all EU countries are required to use energy more efficiently at all stages of the energy chain, from production to final consumption. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy distributors or retail energy sales companies have to achieve 1.5% energy savings per year through the implementation of energy efficiency measures EU countries can opt to achieve the same level of savings through other means, such as improving the efficiency of heating systems, installing double glazed windows or insulating roofs The public sector in EU countries should purchase energy efficient buildings, products and services Every year, governments in EU countries must carry out energy efficient renovations on at least 3% (by floor area) of the buildings they own and occupy Energy consumers should be empowered to better manage consumption. This includes easy and free access to data on consumption through individual metering National incentives for SMEs to undergo energy audits Large companies will make audits of their energy consumption to help them identify ways to reduce it Monitoring efficiency levels in new energy generation capacities. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Seveso Directive (2012/18/EU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Directive lays down rules for the prevention of major accidents which involve dangerous substances, and the limitation of their consequences for human health and the environment, with a view to ensuring a high level of protection throughout the Union in a consistent and effective manner. 	<p>The Seveso Directive is well integrated with other EU policies, thus avoiding double regulation or other administrative burden. This includes the following related policy areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classification, labelling and packaging of chemicals; The Union's Civil Protection Mechanism; The Security Union Agenda including CBRN-E and Protection of critical infrastructure; Policy on environmental liability and on the protection of the environment through criminal law; Safety of offshore oil and gas operations. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Union Biodiversity Strategy to 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to halt or reverse biodiversity loss and speed up the EU's transition towards a resource efficient and green economy. Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines six targets and twenty actions to aid European Union in halting the loss to biodiversity and eco-system services. The six targets cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full implementation of EU nature legislation to protect biodiversity Maintaining, enhancing and protecting for ecosystems, and green infrastructure Ensuring sustainable agriculture, and forestry Sustainable management of fish stocks Reducing invasive alien species Addressing the global need to contribute towards averting global biodiversity loss 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Green Infrastructure Strategy	Aims to create a robust enabling framework in order to promote and facilitate Green Infrastructure (GI) projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting GI in the main EU policy areas. Supporting EU-level GI projects. Improving access to finance for GI projects. Improving information and promoting innovation. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
UN Kyoto Protocol (2nd Kyoto Period), the Second European Climate Change Programme	The UN Kyoto Protocol set of policy measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Kyoto Protocol is implemented through the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP II). EU member states implement measures to improve on or complement the 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in

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Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan
(ECCP II), Paris climate conference (COP21) 2015 (Paris Agreement)	<p>The Second European Climate Change Programme (ECCP II) aims to identify and develop all the necessary elements of an EU strategy to implement the Kyoto Protocol.</p> <p>At the Paris climate conference (COP21) in December 2015, 195 countries adopted the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal. The 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.</p>	<p>specified measures and policies arising from the ECCP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under COP21, governments agreed to come together every 5 years to set more ambitious targets as required by science; report to each other and the public on how well they are doing to implement their targets; track progress towards the long-term goal through a robust transparency and accountability system. 	combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU 2020 Climate and Energy Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Binding legislation which aims to ensure the European Union meets its climate and energy targets for 2020. Aims to achieve a 20% reduction in EU greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels. Aims to raise the share of EU energy consumption produced from renewable resources to 20%. Achieve a 20% improvement in the EU's energy efficiency. 	<p>Four pieces of complimentary legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform of the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) to include a cap on emission allowances in addition to existing system of national caps. Member States have agreed national targets for non-EU ETS emissions from countries outside the EU. Meet the national renewable energy targets of 16% for Ireland by 2020. Preparing a legal framework for technologies in carbon capture and storage. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A 2030 Framework for climate and energy, including EU-wide targets and policy objectives for the period between 2020 and 2030 that has been agreed by European countries. Targets include a 40% cut in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels, at least a 27% share of renewable energy consumption and at least 27% energy savings compared with the business-as-usual scenario. 	<p>To meet the targets, the European Commission has proposed the following policies for 2030:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reformed EU emissions trading scheme (ETS). New indicators for the competitiveness and security of the energy system, such as price differences with major trading partners, diversification of supply, and interconnection capacity between EU countries. First ideas for a new governance system based on national plans for competitive, secure, and sustainable energy. These plans will follow a common EU approach. They will ensure stronger investor certainty, greater transparency, enhanced policy coherence and improved coordination across the EU. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
<p>The Clean Air for Europe Directive (2008/50/EC) (EU Air Framework Directive)</p> <p>Fourth Daughter Directive (2004/107/EC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CAFE Directive merges existing legislation into a single directive (except for the fourth daughter directive). Sets new air quality objectives for PM_{2.5} (fine particles) including the limit value and exposure related objectives. Accounts for the possibility to discount natural sources of pollution when assessing compliance against limit values. Allows the possibility for time extensions of three years (PM₁₀) or up to five years (NO₂, benzene) for complying with limit values, based on conditions and the assessment by the European Commission. The Fourth Daughter Directive lists pollutants, target values and monitoring requirements for the following: arsenic, cadmium, mercury, nickel and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in ambient air. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets objectives for ambient air quality designed to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole. Aims to assess the ambient air quality in Member States on the basis of common methods and criteria. Obtains information on ambient air quality in order to help combat air pollution and nuisance and to monitor long-term trends and improvements resulting from national and community measures. Ensures that such information on ambient air quality is made available to the public. Aims to maintain air quality where it is good and improving it in other cases. Aims to promote increased cooperation between the Member States in reducing air pollution. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Noise Directive (2002/49/EC)	<p>The Noise Directive - Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise - is part of an EU strategy setting out to reduce the number of people affected by noise in the longer term and to provide a framework for developing existing Community policy on noise reduction from source.</p>	<p>The Directive requires competent authorities in Member States to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw up strategic noise maps for major roads, railways, airports and agglomerations, using harmonised noise indicators and use these maps to assess the number of people which may be impacted upon as a result of excessive noise levels; Draw up action plans to reduce noise where necessary and maintain environmental noise quality where it is good; and Inform and consult the public about noise exposure, its effects, and the measures considered to address noise. <p>The Directive does not set any limit value, nor does it prescribe the measures to be used in the action plans, which remain at the discretion of the competent authorities.</p>	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan
Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes a framework for the assessment and management of flood risks Reduce adverse consequences for human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity associated with floods in the Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess all water courses and coast lines at risk from flooding through Flood Risk Assessment Prepare flood hazard maps and flood risk maps outlining the extent or potential of flooding and assets and humans at risk in these areas at River Basin District level (Article 3(2) (b)) and areas covered by Article 5(1) and Article 13(1) (b) in accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3. Implement flood risk management plans and take adequate and coordinated measures to reduce flood risk for the areas covered by the Articles listed above. Inform the public and allow the public to participate in planning process. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a framework for the protection of water bodies to include inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater and their dependent wildlife and habitats. Preserve and prevent the deterioration of water status and where necessary improve and maintain “good status” of water bodies. Promote sustainable water usage. The Water Framework Directive repealed the following Directives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Drinking Water Abstraction Directive Sampling Drinking Water Directive Exchange of Information on Quality of Surface Freshwater Directive Shellfish Directive Freshwater Fish Directive Groundwater (Dangerous Substances) Directive Dangerous Substances Directive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect, enhance and restore all water bodies and meet the environmental objectives outlined in Article 4 of the Directive. Achieve “good status” for all waters. Manage water bodies based on identifying and establishing river basins districts. Involve the public and streamline legislation. Prepare and implement a River Basin Management Plan for each river basin districts identified and a Register of Protected Areas. Establish a programme of monitoring for surface water status, groundwater status and protected areas. Recover costs for water services. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect, control and conserve groundwater. Prevent the deterioration of the status of all bodies of groundwater. Implements measures to prevent and control groundwater pollution, including criteria for assessing good groundwater chemical status and criteria for the identification of significant and sustained upward trends and for the definition of starting points for trend reversals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet minimum groundwater standards listed in Annex 1 of Directive. Meet threshold values adopted by national legislation for the pollutants, groups of pollutants and indicators of pollution which have been identified as contributing to the characterisation of bodies or groups of bodies of groundwater as being at risk, also taking into account Part B of Annex II. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve and maintain the quality of water intended for human consumption. Protect human health from the adverse effects of any contamination of water intended for human consumption by ensuring that it is wholesome and clean. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set values applicable to water intended for human consumption for the parameters set out in Annex I. Set values for additional parameters not included in Annex I, where the protection of human health within national territory or part of it so requires. The values set should, as a minimum, satisfy the requirements of Article 4(1) (a). Implement all measures necessary to ensure that regular monitoring of the quality of water intended for human consumption is carried out, in order to check that the water available to consumers meets the requirements of this Directive and in particular the parametric values set in accordance with Article 5. Ensure that any failure to meet the parametric values set in accordance with Article 5 is immediately investigated in order to identify the cause. Ensure that the necessary remedial action is taken as soon as possible to restore its quality and shall give priority to their enforcement action. Undertake remedial action to restore the quality of the water where necessary to protect human health. Notify consumers when remedial action is being undertaken except where the competent authorities consider the non-compliance with the parametric value to be trivial. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Directive concerns the collection, treatment and discharge of urban waste water and the treatment and discharge of waste water from certain industrial sectors. The objective of the Directive is to protect the environment from the adverse effects of waste water discharges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban waste water entering collecting systems shall before discharge, be subject to secondary treatment. Annex II requires the designation of areas sensitive to eutrophication which receive water discharges. Establishes minimum requirements for urban waste water collection and treatment systems in specified agglomerations to include special requirements for sensitive areas and certain industrial sectors. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC) as amended by Directive 2006/21/EC, Directive 2009/31/EC and Directive 2013/30/EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a framework of environmental liability based on the 'polluter-pays' principle, to prevent and remedy environmental damage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relates to environmental damage caused by any of the occupational activities listed in Annex III, and to any imminent threat of such damage occurring by reason of any of those activities; damage to protected species and natural habitats caused by any occupational activities other than those listed in Annex III, and to any imminent threat of such damage occurring by reason of any of those activities, whenever the operator has been at fault or negligent. Where environmental damage has not yet occurred but there is an imminent threat of such damage occurring, the operator shall, without delay, take the necessary preventive measures. Where environmental damage has occurred the operator shall, without delay, inform the competent authority of all relevant aspects of the situation and take all practicable steps to immediately control, contain, remove or otherwise manage the relevant contaminants and/or any other damage factors in order to limit or to prevent further environmental damage and adverse effects on human health or further impairment of services and the necessary remedial measures, in accordance with Article 7. The operator shall bear the costs for the preventive and remedial actions taken pursuant to this Directive. The competent authority shall be entitled to initiate cost recovery proceedings against the operator. The operator may be required to provide financial security guarantees to ensure their responsibilities under the directive are met. The Environmental Liability Directive has been amended through a number of Directives. Implementation of the Environmental Liability Directive is contributed towards by a Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAWP) 'Making the Environmental Liability Directive more fit for purpose' that is updated annually to changing developments, growing knowledge and new needs. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta 1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim of this (revised) Convention is to protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study. 	The Valletta Convention makes the conservation and enhancement of the archaeological heritage one of the goals of urban and regional planning policies. The Convention sets guidelines for the funding of excavation and research work and publication of research findings. It also deals with public access, in particular to archaeological sites, and educational actions to be undertaken to develop public awareness of the value of the archaeological heritage. It also constitutes an institutional framework for pan-European co-operation on the archaeological heritage, entailing a systematic exchange of experience and experts among the various States.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Convention of the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada 1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reinforcement and promotion of policies for protecting and enhancing the heritage within the territories of the parties. The affirmation of European solidarity with regard to the protection of the heritage and the fostering of practical co-operation between states and regions. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise that rights relating to cultural heritage are inherent in the right to participate in cultural life, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Recognise individual and collective responsibility towards cultural 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and

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	<p>the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations. 	<p>heritage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasise that the conservation of cultural heritage and its sustainable use have human development and quality of life as their goal. Take the necessary steps to apply the provisions of this Convention concerning the role of cultural heritage in the construction of a peaceful and democratic society. Greater synergy of competencies among all the public, institutional and private actors concerned. 	<p>their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
European Landscape Convention 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The developments in agriculture, forestry, industrial and mineral production techniques, together with the practices followed in town and country planning, transport, networks, tourism and recreation, and at a more general level, changes in the world economy, have in many cases accelerated the transformation of landscapes. The Convention expresses a concern to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment. It aims to respond to the public's wish to enjoy high quality landscapes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote protection, management and planning of landscapes. Organise European co-operation on landscape issues. 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
The Seventh Environmental Action Programme (EAP) of the European Community (2013-2020)	<p>It identifies three key objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to protect, conserve and enhance the Union's natural capital to turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green, and competitive low-carbon economy to safeguard the Union's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and wellbeing 	<p>Four so called "enablers" will help Europe deliver on these objectives (goals):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better implementation of legislation. Better information by improving the knowledge base. More and wiser investment for environment and climate policy. Full integration of environmental requirements and considerations into other policies. <p>Two additional horizontal priority objectives complete the programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make the Union's cities more sustainable. To help the Union address international environmental and climate challenges more effectively. 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
Bern Convention (Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats)	<p>The convention has three main aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats to promote cooperation between states to give particular attention to endangered and vulnerable species including endangered and vulnerable migratory species 	<p>The Parties under the convention recognise the intrinsic value of nature, which needs to be preserved and passed to future generations, they also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to ensure the conservation of nature in their countries, paying particular attention to planning and development policies and pollution control. Look at implementing the Bern Convention in central Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Take account of the potential impact on natural heritage by other policies. Promote education and information of the public, ensuring the need to conserve species is understood and acted upon. Develop an extensive number of species action plans, codes of conducts, and guidelines, at their own initiative or in co-operation with other organisations. Created the Emerald Network, an ecological network made up of Areas of Special Conservation Interest. 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
Bali Road Map (2007)	<p>The overall goals of the project are twofold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase national capacity to co-ordinate ministerial views, participate in the UNFCCC process, and negotiate positions within the timeframe of the Bali Action Plan; and To assess investment and financial flows to address climate change for up to three key sectors and/or economic activities. 	<p>The Bali Action Plan is centred on four main building Blocks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mitigation adaptation technology financing 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
Cancun Agreements (2010)	<p>Set of decisions taken at the COP 16 Conference in Cancun in 2010 which addresses a series of key issues in the fight against climate change. Cancun Agreements' main objectives cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mitigation Transparency of actions 	<p>Among the most prominent agreements is the establishment of a Green Climate Fund to transfer money from the developed to developing world to tackle the impacts of climate change.</p>	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology Finance Adaptation Forests Capacity building 		objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Doha Climate Gateway (2012)	Set of decisions taken at the COP 18 meeting in Doha in 2012 which pave the way for a new agreement in Paris in 2015.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set out a timetable to adopt a universal climate agreement by 2015 (to come into effect in 2020); Complete the work under Bali Action Plan and to focus on new completing new targets; Strengthen the aim to cut greenhouse gases and help vulnerable countries to adapt; Amend Kyoto Protocol to include a new commitment period for cutting down the greenhouse gases emissions; and Provide the financial and technology support and new institutions to allow clean energy investment and sustainable growth in developing countries. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Common Agricultural Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve agricultural productivity, so that consumers have a stable supply of affordable food; and To ensure that EU farmers can make a reasonable living. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring viable food production that will contribute to feeding the world's population, which is expected to rise considerably in the future; Climate change and sustainable management of natural resources; Looking after the countryside across the EU and keeping the rural economy alive. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU REACH Regulation (EC 1907/2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to improve the protection of human health and the environment through the better and earlier identification of the intrinsic properties of chemical substances. 	<p>The aims are achieved by applying REACH, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation; and Restriction of chemicals. <p>REACH also aims to enhance innovation and competitiveness of the EU chemicals industry.</p>	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Stockholm Convention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objective of the Stockholm Convention is to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibit and/or eliminate the production and use, as well as the import and export, of the intentionally produced POPs that are listed in Annex A to the Convention Restrict the production and use, as well as the import and export, of the intentionally produced POPs that are listed in Annex B to the Convention Reduce or eliminate releases from unintentionally produced POPs that are listed in Annex C to the Convention Ensure that stockpiles and wastes consisting of, containing or contaminated with POPs are managed safely and in an environmentally sound manner To target additional POPs Other provisions of the Convention relate to the development of implementation plans, information exchange, public information, awareness and education, research, development and monitoring, technical assistance, financial resources and mechanisms, reporting, effectiveness evaluation and non-compliance 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Ramsar Convention	The Convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".	<p>Under the "three pillars" of the Convention, the Contracting Parties commit to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands; Designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the "Ramsar List") and ensure their effective management; Cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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European 2020 Strategy for Growth	<p>Europe 2020 sets out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century and puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy; Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion. 	<p>In order to reach these priorities, the Commission proposes five quantitative targets to fulfil by 2020:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed; 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D; the "20/20/20" climate/energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right); the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree; 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty. 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
National Level			
Ireland 2040 - Our Plan, the National Planning Framework, (replacing the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020) and the National Development Plan (2018-2027)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Planning Framework is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of to the year 2040. It is a framework to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities for people, and to protect and enhance the environment - from villages to cities, and everything around and in between. The National Development Plan sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the successful implementation of the new National Planning Framework. This will guide national, regional and local planning and investment decisions in Ireland over the next two decades, to cater for an expected population increase of over 1 million people. 	<p>National Strategic Outcomes as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Compact Growth Enhanced Regional Accessibility Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities Sustainable Mobility A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills High-Quality International Connectivity Enhanced Amenity and Heritage Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
Planning, Land Use and Transport Outlook 2040 [in preparation]	<p>The PLUTO will take account of forecasted future economic and demographic scenarios, affordability considerations and relevant Government policies and will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Quantify in broad terms the appropriate scale of financial investment in land transport over the long term; Consider how fiscal, environmental and technological developments might impact on this investment; and, Identify strategic priorities for future investment to ensure land transport infrastructure provision facilitates the objectives of Project Ireland 2040. 	<p>In preparation</p>	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The core principal objectives of this Act are to amend the Planning Acts of 2000 – 2009 with specific regard given to supporting economic renewal and sustainable development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development, with certain exceptions, is subject to development control under the Planning Acts and the local authorities grant or refuse planning permission for development, including ones within protected areas. There are, however, a range of exemptions from the planning system. Use of land for agriculture, peat extraction and afforestation, subject to certain thresholds, is generally exempt from the requirement to obtain planning permission. Additionally, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for a range of classes and large-scale projects. Under planning legislation, Development Plans must include mandatory objectives for the conservation of the natural heritage and for the conservation of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed. There are also discretionary powers to set objectives for the conservation of a variety of other elements of the natural heritage. 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of these Regulations is to transpose into Irish law Directive 2001/42/EC of 27 June 2001 (O.J. No. L 197, 21 July 2001) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment – commonly known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Regulations cover plans and programmes in all of the sectors listed in article 3(2) of the Directive except land-use planning. These Regulations also amend certain provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to provide the statutory basis for the transposition of the Directive in respect of land-use planning. Transposition in respect of the land-use planning sector is contained in the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004). 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>

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European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011, as amended)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These Regulations provide a new for the implementation in Ireland of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on habitats and protection of wild fauna and flora (as amended) and for the implementation of Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of wild birds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They provide, among other things, for: the appointment and functions of authorized officers; identification, classification and other procedures relative to the designation of Community sites. The Regulations have been prepared to address several judgments of the CJEU against Ireland, notably cases C-418/04 and C-183/05, in respect of failure to transpose elements of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive into Irish law. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Waste Management Act 1996, as amended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make provision in relation to the prevention, management and control of waste; to give effect to provisions of certain acts adopted by institutions of the European communities in respect of those matters; to amend the Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992, and to repeal certain enactments and to provide for related matters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Waste Management Act contains a number of key legal obligations, including requirements for waste management planning, waste collection and movement, the authorisation of waste facilities, measures to reduce the production of waste and/or promote its recovery. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Communities Environmental Objectives (FPM) Regulations 2009 (S.I. 296 of 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of these Regulations is to support the achievement of favourable conservation status for freshwater pearl mussels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set environmental quality objectives for the habitats of the freshwater pearl mussel populations named in the First Schedule to these Regulations that are within the boundaries of a site notified in a candidate list of European sites, or designated as a Special Area of Conservation, under the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 (S.I. No. 94/1997). Require the production of sub-basin management plans with programmes of measures to achieve these objectives. Set out the duties of public authorities in respect of the sub-basin management plans and programmes of measure. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 (S.I. 9 of 2010), as amended (S.I. No. 366 of 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To amend the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No. 9 of 2010) to make further provision to implement Commission Directive 2014/80/EU of 20 June 2014 amending Annex II to Directive 2006/118/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration. 	<p>The substances and threshold values set out in Schedule 5 to S.I. No. 9 of 2010 have been reviewed and amended where necessary, based on existing monitoring information and international guidelines on appropriate threshold values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part A of Schedule 6 has been amended to include changes to the rules governing the determination of background levels for the purposes of establishing threshold values for groundwater pollutants and indicators of pollution. Part B of Schedule 6 has been amended to include nitrites and phosphorus (total) / phosphates among the minimum list of pollutants and their indicators which the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must consider when establishing threshold values. Part C of Schedule 6 amends the information to be provided to the Minister by the EPA with regard to the pollutants and their indicators for which threshold values have been established. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 31 of 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These Regulations, which give effect to Ireland's 3rd Nitrates Action Programme, provide statutory support for good agricultural practice to protect waters against pollution from agricultural sources 	<p>The Regulations include measures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periods when land application of fertilisers is prohibited Limits on the land application of fertilisers Storage requirements for livestock manure; and Monitoring of the effectiveness of the measures in terms of agricultural practice and impact on water quality. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Act to provide for the approval of plans by the Government in relation to climate change for the purpose of pursuing the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. 	<p>When considering a plan or framework, for approval, the Government shall endeavour to achieve the national transition objective within the period to which the objective relates and shall, in endeavouring to achieve that objective, ensure that such objective is achieved by the implementation of measures that are cost effective and shall, for that purpose, have regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ultimate objective specified in Article 2 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change done at New York on 9 May 1992 and any mitigation commitment entered into by the European Union in response or otherwise in relation to that objective, The policy of the Government on climate change, Climate justice, 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any existing obligation of the State under the law of the European Union or any international agreement referred to in section 2; and The most recent national greenhouse gas emissions inventory and projection of future greenhouse gas emissions, prepared by the Agency. 	
The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan (2018 – 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Implementation Plan 2018 - 2020 is in direct response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provides a whole-of-government approach to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Plan provides a 'SDG Matrix' which identifies the responsible Government Departments for each of the 169 targets. It also includes a 'SDG Policy Map' indicating the relevant national policies for each of the targets. 	<p>The Plan identifies four strategic priorities to guide implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness: raise public awareness of the SDGs; Participation: provide stakeholders opportunities to engage and contribute to follow-up and review processes, and further develop national implementation of the Goals; Support: encourage and support efforts of communities and organisations to contribute towards meeting the SDGs, and foster public participation; and Policy alignment: develop alignment of national policy with the SDGs and identify opportunities for policy coherence. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan (2016-2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> €27 billion multi-annual Exchequer Capital Investment Plan, which is supported by a programme of capital investment in the wider State sector, and which over the period 2016 to 2021 will help to lay the foundations for continued growth in Ireland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Capital Plan reflects the Government's commitment to supporting strong and sustainable economic growth and raising welfare and living standards for all. It includes allocations for new projects across a number of key areas and funding to ensure that the present stock of national infrastructure is refreshed and maintained. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Sea-Fisheries) Regulations 2013 (S.I. 290 of 2013)	These regulations have been drafted to implement the responsibilities of the Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine in relation to sea fisheries in Natura 2000 sites, in accordance with the Habitats and Birds Directives as transposed by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation 3 provides for the submission of a Fisheries Natura Plan in relation to planned fisheries; Regulation 4 provides for a screening of a Fisheries Natura Plan to determine whether or not an appropriate assessment is required; Regulation 5 provides for an appropriate assessment of a Fisheries Natura Plan and also provides for public and statutory consultation; Regulation 6 provides for the Minister to make a determination to adopt a Fisheries Natura Plan. The Minister may amend, withdraw or revoke a plan; Regulation 7 provides for publication of the adopted Fisheries Natura Plan; Regulation 8 provides for a Risk Assessment of unplanned fisheries and also provides for public and statutory consultation on the assessment; Regulation 9 provides for the issue of a Natura Declaration to prohibit, restrict including restricting by permit, control, etc. of sea fishing activities; Regulation 10 provides for Natura Permits to be issued where required by Natura Declarations; and Regulations 11 to 31 deal with functions of authorised officers and related matters, offences, etc. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Ireland's National Renewable Energy Action Plan 2010 (Irish Government submission to the European Commission)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP) sets out the Government's strategic approach and concrete measures to deliver on Ireland's 16% target under Directive 2009/28/EC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NREAP sets out the Member State's national targets for the share of energy from renewable sources to be consumed in transport, electricity and heating and cooling in 2020, and demonstrates how the Member State will meet its overall national target established under the Directive. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Strategy for Renewable Energy (2012-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government's overarching strategic objective is to make renewable energy an increasingly significant component of Ireland's energy supply by 2020, so that at a minimum it will achieve its legally binding 2020 target in the most cost-efficient manner for consumers. Of critical importance is the role which the renewable energy sector plays in job creation and economic activity as part of the Government's action plan for jobs. 	<p>This document sets out five strategic goals, reflecting the key dimensions of the renewable energy challenge to 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing on and offshore wind, Building a sustainable bioenergy sector, Fostering R&D in renewables such as wave & tidal, Growing sustainable transport; and Building out robust and efficient networks. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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National Climate Mitigation Plan 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Plan represents an initial step to set Ireland on a pathway to achieve the deep decarbonisation required in Ireland by mid-century in line with the Government's policy objectives. 	<p>The National Mitigation Plan focuses on the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Action Policy Framework Decarbonising Electricity Generation Decarbonising the Built Environment Decarbonising Transport An Approach to Carbon Neutrality for Agriculture, Forest and Land Use Sectors 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Policy Position provides a high-level policy direction for the adoption and implementation by Government of plans to enable the State to move to a low carbon economy by 2050. Statutory authority for the plans is set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. 	<p>National climate policy in Ireland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises the threat of climate change for humanity; Anticipates and supports mobilisation of a comprehensive international response to climate change, and global transition to a low-carbon future; Recognises the challenges and opportunities of the broad transition agenda for society; and Aims, as a fundamental national objective, to achieve transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Clean Air Strategy [in preparation]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Clean Air Strategy will provide the strategic policy framework necessary to identify and promote integrated measures across government policy that are required to reduce air pollution and promote cleaner air while delivering on wider national objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a National Strategy will provide a policy framework by which Ireland can develop the necessary policies and measures to comply with new and emerging EU legislation. The Strategy should also help tackle climate change. The Strategy will consider a wider range of national policies that are relevant to clean air policy such as transport, energy, home heating and agriculture. In any discussion relating to clean air policy, the issue of people's health is paramount and this will be a strong theme of the Strategy. 	Implementation of the Plan need to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EirGrid's Grid25 Strategy and associated Grid25 Implementation Programme 2017-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EirGrid's mission is to develop, maintain and operate a safe, secure, reliable, economical and efficient transmission system for Ireland; <i>"Our vision is of a grid developed to match future needs, so it can safely and reliably carry power all over the country to the major towns and cities and onwards to every home, farm and business where the electricity is consumed and so it can meet the needs of consumers and generators in a sustainable way."</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grid25, EirGrid's roadmap to uprate the electricity transmission grid by 2025, continues to be implemented so as to increase the capacity of the grid, to satisfy future demand, and to help Ireland meet its target of 40 per cent of electricity from renewable energy by 2020. 	Implementation of the Plan as varied needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans, programmes, etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objective of this Strategy is 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 over the next 10 years with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Strategic Greenway network of national and regional routes, with a number of high capacity flagship routes that can be extended and/or link with local Greenways and other cycling and walking infrastructure; Greenways of scale and appropriate standard that have significant potential to deliver an increase in activity tourism to Ireland and are regularly used by overseas visitors, domestic visitors and locals thereby contributing to a healthier society through increased physical activity; Greenways that provide a substantially segregated off road experience linking places of interest, recreation and leisure in areas with beautiful scenery of different types with plenty to see and do; and Greenways that provide opportunities for the development of local businesses and economies, and Greenways that are developed with all relevant stakeholders in line with an agreed code of practice. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Water Resources Plan [in preparation]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NWRP is a plan on how to provide a safe, secure and reliable water supply to customers for the next 25 years, without causing adverse impact on the environment. The objective of the NWRP is to set out how we intend to maintain the supply and demand for drinking water over the short, medium and long term whilst minimising the impact on the environment. 	<p>The key objectives of the plan are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas where there are current and future potential water supply shortfalls, taking into account normal and extreme weather conditions Assess the current and future water demand from homes, businesses, farms, and industry Consider the impacts of climate change on Ireland's water resources Develop a drought plan advising measures to be taken before and during drought events Develop a plan detailing how we deal with the material that is produced 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as a result of treating drinking water Identify, develop and assess options to help meet potential shortfalls in water supplies Assess the water resources available at a national level including lakes, rivers and groundwater 	
National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture Development (2014-2020)	<p>Vision: "Aquaculture in RC is economically, socially and ecologically sustainable, with a developed infrastructure, strong human potentials and an organized market. The consumption of aquaculture products is equal or above EU average, while the technological development of the sector is among the best in the EU."</p>	<p>General development and growth objectives of marine and freshwater aquaculture (2014 – 2020):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the social, business and administrative environment for aquaculture development Increase in the total production to 24,050 tonnes while adhering to the principles of economic, social and ecological sustainability Improvement of the perception and increase in the national consumption of National products 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Construction 2020, A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction 2020 sets out a package of measures agreed by the Government and is aimed at stimulating activity in the building industry. The Strategy aims both to increase the capacity of the sector to create and maintain jobs, and to deliver a sustainable sector, operating at an appropriate level. It seeks to learn the lessons of the past and to ensure that the right structures and mechanisms are in place so that they are not repeated. 	<p>This Strategy therefore addresses issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strategic approach to the provision of housing, based on real and measured needs, with mechanisms in place to detect and act when things are going wrong; Continuing improvement of the planning process, striking the right balance between current and future requirements; The availability of financing for viable and worthwhile projects; Access to mortgage finance on reasonable and sustainable terms; Ensuring we have the tools we need to monitor and regulate the sector in a way that underpins public confidence and worker safety; Ensuring a fit for purpose sector supported by a highly skilled workforce achieving high quality and standards; and Ensuring opportunities are provided to unemployed former construction workers to contribute to the recovery of the sector. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall aim of this Strategy is to ensure that economy and society in Ireland can develop to their full potential within a well-protected environment, without compromising the quality of that environment, and with responsibility towards present and future generations and the wider international community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Strategy addresses all areas of Government policy, and of economic and societal activity, which impact on the environment. It seeks to re-orientate policies as necessary to ensure that the strong growth Ireland enjoys and seeks to maintain will be environmentally sustainable. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025 and National Landscape Character Assessment (pending preparation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Landscape Strategy will be used to ensure compliance with the European Landscape Convention and to establish principles for protecting and enhancing the landscape while positively managing its change. It will provide a high-level policy framework to achieve balance between the protection, management and planning of the landscape by way of supporting actions. Landscape Strategy Vision: "Our landscape reflects and embodies our cultural values and our shared natural heritage and contributes to the well-being of our society, environment and economy. We have an obligation to ourselves and to future generations to promote its sustainable protection, management and planning." 	<p>The objectives of the National Landscape Strategy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the European Landscape Convention by integrating landscape into the approach to sustainable development; Establish and embed a public process of gathering, sharing and interpreting scientific, technical and cultural information in order to carry out evidence-based identification and description of the character, resources and processes of the landscape; Provide a policy framework, which will put in place measures at national, sectoral - including agriculture, tourism, energy, transport and marine - and local level, together with civil society, to protect, manage and properly plan through high quality design for the sustainable stewardship of the landscape; Ensure that we take advantage of opportunities to implement policies relating to landscape use that are complementary and mutually reinforcing and that conflicting policy objectives are avoided in as far as possible. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Hazardous Waste Management Plan (EPA) 2014-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Plan sets out the priorities to be pursued over the next six years and beyond to improve the management of hazardous waste, taking into account the progress made since the previous plan and the waste policy and legislative changes that have occurred since the previous plan was published. <p>Section 26 of the Waste Management Act 1996 as amended, sets</p>	<p>The revised Plan makes 27 recommendations under the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Collection Self-sufficiency Regulation Legacy issues North-south cooperation 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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	<p>out the overarching objectives for the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan. In this context, the following objectives are included as priorities for the revised Plan period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prevent and reduce the generation of hazardous waste by industry and society generally; To maximise the collection of hazardous waste with a view to reducing the environmental and health impacts of any unregulated waste; To strive for increased self-sufficiency in the management of hazardous waste and to minimise hazardous waste export; To minimise the environmental, health, social and economic impacts of hazardous waste generation and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance and awareness Implementation 	
Ministerial Guidelines such as Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines and Flood Risk Management Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department produces a range of guidelines designed to help planning authorities, An Bord Pleanála, developers and the general public and cover a wide range of issues amongst others, architectural heritage, child care facilities, landscape, quarries and residential density. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Minister issues statutory guidelines under Section 28 of the Act which planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála are obliged to have regard to in the performance of their planning functions. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
HSE Healthy Ireland Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The vision is: <i>"A Healthy Ireland, where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility."</i> 	<p>These four goals are interlinked, interdependent and mutually supportive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goal 1: Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life Goal 2: Reduce health inequalities Goal 3: Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing Goal 4: Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Our Sustainable Future: A framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland 2012	A medium to long term framework for advancing sustainable development and the green economy in Ireland. It identifies spatial planning as a key challenge for sustainable development and sets a series of measures to address these challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out the challenges facing us and how we might address them in making sure that quality of life and general wellbeing can be improved and sustained in the decades to come. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines a policy for how a sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved. Sets out five key goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce overall travel demand. To maximise the efficiency of the transport network. To reduce reliance on fossil fuels. To reduce transport emissions. To improve accessibility to transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Others lower level aims include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduce distance travelled by private car and encourage smarter travel, including focusing population growth in areas of employment and to encourage people to live in close proximity to places of employment ensuring that alternatives to the car are more widely available, mainly through a radically improved public transport service and through investment in cycling and walking improving the fuel efficiency of motorised transport through improved fleet structure, energy efficient driving and alternative technologies strengthening institutional arrangements to deliver the targets 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Investing in our Future: A Strategic Framework for Investment in Land Transport (SFILT) – Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFILT sets out a set of priorities to guide the allocation of the State's investment to best develop and manage Ireland's land transport network over the coming decades. 	<p>The three priorities stated in SFILT are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority 1: Achieve steady state maintenance (meaning that the maintenance and renewal of the existing transport system is at a sufficient level to maintain the system in an adequate condition); Priority 2: Address urban congestion; and Priority 3: Maximise the value of the road network. <p>In delivering on the steady state maintenance objective set out in SFILT, the Plan includes for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned replacement programme for the bus fleet operated under Public 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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		Service Obligation ("PSO") contracts; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tram refurbishment and asset renewal in the case of light rail; and • To the extent within the Authority' remit, support for the operation of the existing rail network within the GDA. 	
Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland – The Energy Policy Framework 2007 – 2020 (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White paper setting out a framework for delivering a sustainable energy future in Ireland. • Outlines strategic Goals for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Security of Supply ○ Sustainability of Energy ○ Competitiveness of Energy Supply 	<p>The underpinning Strategic Goals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that electricity supply consistently meets demand • Ensuring the physical security and reliability of gas supplies to Ireland • Enhancing the diversity of fuels used for power generation • Delivering electricity and gas to homes and businesses over efficient, reliable and secure networks • Creating a stable attractive environment for hydrocarbon exploration and production • Being prepared for energy supply disruptions 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Adaptation Framework (NAF) 2018 and forthcoming regional, local and sectoral adaptation plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAF specifies the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different sectors and by local authorities in their administrative areas in order to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of any positive effects that may occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation under this Framework should seek to minimise costs and maximise the opportunities arising from climate change. • Adaptation actions range from building adaptive capacity (e.g. increasing awareness, sharing information and targeted training) through to policy and finance-based actions. • Adaptation actions must be risk based, informed by existing vulnerabilities of our society and systems and an understanding of projected climate change. • Adaptation actions taken to increase climate resilience must also consider impacts on other sectors and levels of governance 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Governments White Paper 'Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future' (2015 – 2030)	The White Paper sets out a vision and a framework to guide Irish energy policy between now and 2030. A complete energy policy update informed by the vision to transform Ireland into a low carbon society and economy by 2050.	<p>2030 will represent a significant milestone, meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced GHG emissions from the energy sector by between 80% and 95% • Ensuring that secure supplies of competitive and affordable energy remain available to citizens and businesses. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Renewable Energy Action Plan (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out the Member State's national targets for the share of energy from renewable sources to be consumed in transport, electricity and heating and cooling in 2020, and demonstrates how the Member State will meet its overall national target established under the Directive. 	Including Ireland's 16% target of gross final consumption to come from renewables by 2020.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Ireland (2009 – 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the second National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Ireland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Plan reviews the original 90 actions outlined in the first Plan and updates/renews/removes them as appropriate. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Wildlife Act of 1976 Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The act provides protection and conservation of wild flora and fauna. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides protection for certain species, their habitats and important ecosystems • Give statutory protection to NHAs • Enhances wildlife species and their habitats • Includes more species for protection 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Actions for Biodiversity (2017-2021) Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out strategic objectives, targets and actions to conserve and restore Ireland's biodiversity and to prevent and reduce the loss of biodiversity in Ireland and globally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To mainstream biodiversity in the decision-making process across all sectors. • To substantially strengthen the knowledge base for conservation, management and sustainable use of biodiversity. • To increase awareness and appreciation of biodiversity and ecosystems 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the

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		<p>services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider countryside. To conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the marine environment. To expand and improve on the management of protected areas and legally protected species. To substantially strengthen the effectiveness of international governance for biodiversity and ecosystem services. 	objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Broadband Plan (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out the strategy to deliver high speed broadband throughout Ireland. 	<p>The Plan sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear statement of Government policy on the delivery of High-Speed Broadband. Specific targets for the delivery and rollout of high-speed broadband and the speeds to be delivered. The strategy and interventions that will underpin the successful implementation of these targets. A series of specific complementary measures to promote implementation of Government policy in this area. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
<p>European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations of 2003 (SI 722 of 2003)</p> <p>European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations of 2003 (SI 350 of 2014)</p> <p>European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface waters) Regulations of 2009 (SI 272 of 2009)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transpose the Water Framework Directive into legislation. Outlines the general duty of public authorities in relation to water. Identifies the competent authorities in charge of water policy (amended to Irish Water in 2013) and gives EPA and the CER the authority to regulate and supervise their actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implements River basin districts and characterisation of RBDs and River Basin Management Plans. Requires the public to be informed and consulted on the Plan and for progress reports to be published on RBDs. Implements a Register of protected areas, Classification systems and Monitoring programmes for water bodies. Allows the competent authority to recover the cost of damage/destruction of status of water body. Outlines environmental objectives and programme of measures and environmental quality standards for priority substances. Outlines criteria for assessment of groundwater. Outlines environmental objectives to be achieved for surface water bodies. Outlines surface water quality standards. Establishes threshold values for the classification and protection of surface waters against pollution and deterioration in quality. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
<p>European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations of 2010 (SI 9 of 2010)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transpose the requirements of the Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC into Irish Legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines environmental objectives to be achieved for groundwater bodies of groundwater against pollution and deterioration in quality. Sets groundwater quality standards. Outlines threshold values for the classification and protection of groundwater. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Water Pollution Acts 1977 to 1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Water Pollution Acts allow Local Authorities the authority regulate and supervise actions relating to water in their division. 	<p>The Water Pollution Acts enable local authorities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prosecute for water pollution offences. Attach appropriate pollution control conditions in the licensing of effluent discharges from industry, etc., made to waters. Issue notices ("section 12 notices") to farmers, etc., specifying measures to be taken within a prescribed period to prevent water pollution. Issue notices requiring a person to cease the pollution of waters and requiring the mitigation or remedying of any effects of the pollution in the manner and within the period specified in such notices; Seek court orders, including High Court injunctions, to prevent, terminate, mitigate or remedy pollution/its effects. Prepare water quality management plans for any waters in or adjoining their functional areas. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Water Services Act 2007 Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012 Water Services Act (No. 2) 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the water services infrastructure. Outlines the responsibilities involved in delivering and managing water services. Identifies the authority in charge of provision of water and waste water 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. 	<p>Key strategic objectives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring Irish Water delivers infrastructural projects that meet key public health, environmental and economic objectives in the water services sector. Ensuring the provision of adequate water and sewerage services in the gateways and hubs listed in the National Spatial Strategy, and in other locations where services need to be enhanced. Ensuring good quality drinking water is available to all consumers of public and group water supplies, in compliance with national and EU drinking water standards Ensuring the provision of the remaining infrastructure needed to provide secondary wastewater treatment, for compliance with the requirements of the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive. Promoting water conservation through Irish Water's Capital Investment Plan, the Rural Water Programme and other measures. Monitoring the on-going implementation of septic tanks inspection regime and the National Inspection Plan for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems. Ensuring a fair funding model to deliver water services. Overseeing the establishment of an economic regulation function under the CER. 	<p>Implementation of the Plan will need to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
Irish Water's Water Services Strategic Plan 2015 and associated Proposed Capital Investment Plan (2014-2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Water Services Strategic Plan sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services over the next 25 years up to 2040. It details current and future challenges which affect the provision of water services and identifies the priorities to be tackled in the short and medium term. 	<p>Six strategic objectives as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet Customer Expectations. Ensure a Safe and Reliable Water Supply. Provide Effective Management of Wastewater. Protect and Enhance the Environment. Support Social and Economic Growth. Invest in the Future. 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
Raised Bog SAC Management Plan and Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to meet nature conservation obligations while having regard to national and local economic, social and cultural needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the implications of management choices for water levels, quantity and quality are fully explored, understood and factored into policy making and land use planning. Review the current raised bog NHA network in terms of its contribution to the national conservation objective for raised bog habitats and determine the most suitable sites to replace the losses of active raised bog habitat and high bog areas within the SAC network and to enhance the national network of NHAs. 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
Food Harvest 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Harvest 2020 is a roadmap for the Irish food industry, as it seeks to innovate and expand in response to increased global demand for quality foods. It sets out a vision for the potential growth in agricultural output after the removal of milk quotas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks for the improvement of all agricultural sectors at all levels in terms of sustainability, environmental consideration and marketing development. 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
Agri-vision 2015 Action Plan	<p>Outlines the vision for agricultural industry to improve competitiveness and response to market demand while respecting and enhancing the environment</p>	<p>not applicable</p>	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.</p>
Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) Agri-Environmental Options Scheme (AEOS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agri-environmental funding schemes aimed at rural development for the environmental enhancement and protection. GLAS is the new replacement for REPS and AEOS which are both expiring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish best practice farming methods and production methods in order to protect landscapes and maximise conservation. Protect biodiversity, endangered species of flora and fauna and wildlife habitats. Ensure food is produced with the highest regard to the environment. Implement nutrient management plans and grassland management 	<p>Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for</p>

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Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan
Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS)		<p>plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and maintain water bodies, wetlands and cultural heritage. 	environmental protection and management.
National Rural Development Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Rural Development Programme, prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, sets out a national programme based on the EU framework for rural development and prioritises improving the competitiveness of agriculture, improving the environment and improving the quality of life in rural areas 	<p>At a more detailed level, the programme also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports structural change at farm level including training young farmers and encouraging early retirement, support for restructuring, development and innovation; Aims to improve the environment, biodiversity and the amenity value of the countryside by support for land management through funds such as Natura 2000 payments etc.; and Aims to improve quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity through the implementation of local development strategies such as non-agricultural activities 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Forestry Programme (2014-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represents Ireland's proposals for 100% State aid funding for a new Forestry Programme for the period 2014 – 2020. 	<p>Measures include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afforestation and Creation of Woodland NeighbourWood Scheme Forest Roads Reconstitution Scheme Woodland Improvement Scheme Native Woodland Conservation Scheme Knowledge Transfer and Information Actions Producer Groups Innovative Forest Technology Forest Genetic Reproductive Material Forest Management Plans 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
River Basin Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> River Basin Management Plans set out the measures planned to maintain and improve the status of waters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to protect and enhance all water bodies in the RBD and meet the environmental objectives outlined in Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive. Identify and manages water bodies in the RBD. Establish a programme of measures for monitoring and improving water quality in the RBD. Involve the public through consultations. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Peatlands Strategy (2015-2025)	<p>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.</p>	<p>Objectives of the Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To give direction to Ireland's approach to peatland management. To apply to all peatlands, including peat soils. To ensure that the relevant State authorities and state-owned companies that influence such decisions contribute to meeting cross-cutting objectives and obligations in their policies and actions. To ensure that Ireland's peatlands are sustainably managed so that their benefits can be enjoyed responsibly. To inform appropriate regulatory systems to facilitate good decision making in support of responsible use. To inform the provision of appropriate incentives, financial supports and disincentives where required. To provide a framework for determining and ensuring the most appropriate future use of cutover and cutaway bogs. <p>To ensure that specific actions necessary for the achievement of its objectives are clearly identified and delivered by those involved in or responsible for peatlands management or for decisions affecting their management.</p>	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Flood Risk Management Plans arising from National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The national Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme commenced in Ireland in 2011 and is being overseen by the Office of Public Works. The CFRAM Programme is intended to deliver on core components of the National Flood Policy, adopted in 2004, and on the requirements of the EU Floods Directive. 	<p>CFRAM Studies have been undertaken for all River Basin Districts. The studies are focusing on areas known to have experienced flooding in the past and areas that may be subject to flooding in the future either due to development pressures or climate change. Flood Risk and Hazard mapping, including Flood Extent Mapping, was finalised in 2017. The final outputs from the studies are the CFRAM Plans, finalised in 2018. The Plans define the current and future flood risk in the River Basin Districts and set out how this risk can be managed.</p>	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan
Draft National Bioenergy Plan 2014 - 2020	<p>The Draft Bioenergy Plan sets out a vision as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bioenergy resources contributing to economic development and sustainable growth, generating jobs for citizens, supported by coherent policy, planning and regulation, and managed in an integrated manner. 	<p>Three high level goals, of equal importance, based on the concept of sustainable development are identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To harness the market opportunities presented by bioenergy in order to achieve economic development, growth and jobs. To increase awareness of the value, opportunities and societal benefits of developing bioenergy. To ensure that bioenergy developments do not adversely impact the environment and its living and non-living resources. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Draft Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework (DCCAE) 2016	<p>Goal: To optimise the opportunities in Ireland for renewable electricity development on land at significant scale, to serve both the All Island Single Electricity Market and any future regional market within the European Union, in accordance with European and Irish law, including Directive 2009/28/EC: On the promotion of the use of energy from renewable resources.</p>	<p>Objective: To develop a Policy and Development Framework for renewable electricity generation on land to serve both the All Island Single Electricity Market and any future regional market within the European Union, with particular focus on large scale projects for indigenous renewable electricity generation. This will, inter alia, provide guidance for planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála.</p>	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for the Transport Sector (DTTAS) 2017- 2030	<p>This Framework sets targets to achieve an appropriate level of alternative fuels infrastructure for transport, which is relative to national policy and Irish market needs. Non-infrastructure-based incentives to support the use of the infrastructure and the uptake of alternative fuels are also included within the scope of the Framework.</p>	<p>Targets for alternative fuel infrastructure include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFV forecasts Electricity targets Natural gas (CNG, LNG) targets Hydrogen targets Biofuels targets LPG targets Synthetic and paraffinic fuels targets 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Food Wise 2025 (DAFM)	<p>Food Wise 2025 sets out a ten-year plan for the agri-food sector. It underlines the sector's unique and special position within the Irish economy, and it illustrates the potential which exists for this sector to grow even further.</p>	<p>Food Wise 2025 identifies ambitious and challenging growth projections for the industry over the next ten years including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% increase in exports to €19 billion. 70% increase in value added to €13 billion. 60% increase in primary production to €10 billion. The creation of 23,000 additional jobs all along the supply chain from producer level to high-end value-added product development. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Cycle Network Scoping Study 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines objectives and actions aimed at developing a strong cycle network in Ireland Sets out 19 specific objectives, and details the 109 actions, aimed at ensuring that a cycling culture is developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets a target where 10% of all journeys will be made by bike by 2020 Proposes the planning, infrastructure, communication, education and stakeholder participations measures required to implement the initiative 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland 2017 to 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport represents the first step in communicating our longer-term national vision for decarbonising transport by 2050, the cornerstone of which is our ambition that by 2030 all new cars and vans sold in Ireland will be zero-emissions capable. By 2030 it is envisaged that the movement in Ireland to electrically-fuelled cars and commuter rail will be well underway, with natural gas and biofuels developing as major alternatives in the freight and bus sectors. 	<p>This policy set out to achieve five key goals in transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce overall travel demand Maximise the efficiency of the transport network Reduce reliance on fossil fuels Reduce transport emissions Improve accessibility to transport <p>These goals remain the cornerstone of transport policy and are fully aligned to the objectives of this National Policy Framework.</p>	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021	<p>The Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 sets out actions that the Tourism Leadership Group has identified as priorities to be progressed until 2021 in order to maintain sustainable growth in overseas tourism revenue and employment. 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.</p>	<p>The Plan contains 27 actions focusing on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy Context Marketing Ireland as a Visitor Destination Enhancing the Visitor Experience Research in the Irish Tourism Sector Supporting Local Communities in Tourism Wider Government Policy International Context Co-ordination Structures 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan
Tourism Policy Statement: People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025	The main goal of this policy statement is to have a vibrant, attractive tourism sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country; is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; helps promote a positive image of Ireland overseas, and is a sector in which people want to work.	The Tourism Policy Statement sets three headline targets to be achieved by 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseas tourism revenue of €5 billion per year net of inflation excluding carrier receipts; 250,000 people employed in tourism; and 10 million overseas visitors to Ireland per year. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Draft Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework (DCCAE)	Goal: To optimise the opportunities in Ireland for renewable electricity development on land at significant scale, to serve both the All Island Single Electricity Market and any future regional market within the European Union, in accordance with European and Irish law, including Directive 2009/28/EC: On the promotion of the use of energy from renewable resources.	Objective: To develop a Policy and Development Framework for renewable electricity generation on land to serve both the All Island Single Electricity Market and any future regional market within the European Union, with particular focus on large scale projects for indigenous renewable electricity generation. This will, inter alia, provide guidance for planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála. Methodology: Development of the Policy and Development Framework is to be informed by the carrying out of an SEA, including widespread consultation with stakeholders and public, and with AA under the Habitats Directive.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for the Transport Sector (DTTAS) 2017- 2030	This Framework sets targets to achieve an appropriate level of alternative fuels infrastructure for transport, which is relative to national policy and Irish market needs. Non-infrastructure-based incentives to support the use of the infrastructure and the uptake of alternative fuels are also included within the scope of the Framework.	Targets for alternative fuel infrastructure include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFV forecasts Electricity targets Natural gas (CNG, LNG) targets Hydrogen targets Biofuels targets LPG targets Synthetic and paraffinic fuels targets 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Regional/ County/Local Level			
Eastern and Midlands Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy,	The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy provides a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the Eastern and Midlands Region in order to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework.	The Eastern and Midlands Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy includes provisions for its 12 constituent local authorities: Fingal County Council; Dublin City Council; South Dublin County Council; Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council; Louth County Council; Kildare County Council; Meath County Council; Wicklow County Council; Longford County Council; Laois County Council; Offaly County Council; and Westmeath County Council.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Integrated Implementation Plan 2019-2024	The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035, which established an overall framework for transport investment over the next two decades and was subject to full SEA and Stage 2 AA, is a key policy shaping the six-year Integrated Infrastructure Plan. The priorities in the Integrated Infrastructure Plan align with the objectives and priorities set out in the Transport Strategy, focused on improving public and sustainable transport.	The Implementation Plan identifies investment proposals for a number of areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus; Light Rail; Heavy Rai; Integration Measures and Sustainable Transport Investment; Integrated Service Plan; and Integration and Accessibility. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
NPWS Conservation Plans and/or Conservation Objectives for SACs and SPAs	Management planning for nature conservation sites has a number of aims. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify and evaluate the features of interest for a site To set clear objectives for the conservation of the features of interest To describe the site and its management To identify issues (both positive and negative) that might influence the site To set out appropriate strategies/management actions to achieve the objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation objectives for SACs and SPAs (i.e. sites within the Natura 2000 network) have to be set for the habitats and species for which the sites are selected. These objectives are used when carrying out appropriate assessments for plans and projects that might impact on these sites. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Groundwater Protection Schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Groundwater Protection Scheme provides guidelines for the planning and licensing authorities in carrying out their functions, and a framework to assist in decision-making on the location, nature and control of developments and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Groundwater Protection Scheme aims to maintain the quantity and quality of groundwater, and in some cases improve it, by applying a risk assessment-based approach to groundwater protection and sustainable development. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and

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Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan
	activities in order to protect groundwater.		their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), including the Westmeath LECP 2015-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overarching vision for each LECP is: “to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of the LECP, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Land Use Plans including those in force in County Westmeath (Lissycawollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024, Creggan Local Area Plan 2010-2025, Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020, and Mullingar Town Development Plan 2014-2020) and those in force in other adjoining planning authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline planning objectives for land use development (including transport and tourism objectives). Strategic framework for planning and sustainable development including those set out in National Planning Framework and Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies. Set out the policies and proposals to guide development in the specific Local Authority area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify future infrastructure, development and zoning required. Protect and enhances amenities and environment. Guide planning authority in assessing proposals. Aim to guide development in the area and the amount of nature of the planned development. Aim to promote sustainable development. Provide for economic development and protect natural environmental, heritage. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Green Infrastructure Plans/Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes the maintenance and improvement of green infrastructure in an area. Aims to protect and enhance biodiversity and habitats. 	not applicable	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018-2023 and Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to highlight the importance of heritage at a strategic level. Aim to protect, conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services across all spectrums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage and promote heritage as well as increase awareness. Aim to conserve and protect heritage. Outline the status of biodiversity and identifies species of importance. Outline objectives and targets to be met to maintain and improve biodiversity. Aims to increase awareness 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Eastern & Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021	These 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.	To manage wastes in a safe and compliant manner, a clear strategy, policies and actions are required.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Westmeath Noise Action Plan 2018-2023	Noise Action Plans are prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006, Statutory Instrument 140 of 2006. These Regulations give effect to the EU Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise. This Directive sets out a process for managing environmental noise in a consistent manner across the EU and the Noise Regulations set out the approach to meeting the requirements of the Directive in Ireland.	<p>The main purpose of Noise Action Plans is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform and consult the public about noise exposure, its effects and the measures which may be considered to address noise problems Address strategic noise issues by requiring competent authorities to draw up action plans to manage noise issues and their effects Reduce noise, where possible, and maintain the environmental acoustic quality where it is good 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection.
Westmeath Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024	Respond to the impact that climate change is having, and will continue to have. Attempt to climate change adaptation and mitigation.	These Plans include actions for: Energy and Buildings, Transport, Flood Resilience, Nature-Based Solutions and Resource Management.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans, programmes, etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan
Fáilte Ireland Tourism plans, strategies etc. relating to the Ireland's Ancient East	Fáilte Ireland's work includes preparing various plans and strategies for the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and other brands and initiatives. These plans are subject to their own environmental assessment processes and any project arising is required to be consistent with and conform with the provisions of all adopted/approved Statutory Policies, Strategies, Plans and Programmes, including provisions for the protection and management of the environment.	Some of Fáilte Ireland's plans and strategies include various projects relating to land use and infrastructural development, including those relating to development of land or on land and the carrying out of land use activities. Many of these projects exist already while some are not currently in existence. The Statutory Policies, Strategies, Plans and Programmes that provide for different projects undergo a variety of environmental assessments. These assessments ensure that environmental effects are considered, including: those arising from new and intensified uses and activities; and those arising from various sectors such as tourism.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection.
Westmeath Tourism Strategy 2016-2020	A strategy designed to deliver one common goal for 2020 and beyond – to develop Westmeath as a first-choice high quality destination that provides an authentic and memorable holiday experience.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Various existing, planned and emerging projects provided for by the above plans and programmes	These projects have been provided for by higher-level plans and programmes.	These projects will contribute towards the development of the area to which the Plan relates and/or wider area and will contribute towards environmental protection and management.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.



WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí

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Draft Westmeath County **Development Plan** **2021 - 2027**

NATURA IMPACT REPORT

IN SUPPORT OF THE **APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT**

FOR THE **DRAFT WESTMEATH COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027**

for: Westmeath County Council

Áras an Chontae
Mount Street
Mullingar
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by: CAAS Ltd.

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FEBRUARY 2020

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This Natura Impact Report (NIR) has been prepared in support of the Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Plan) in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (as amended) (hereafter referred to as the "Habitats Directive").

This report is part of the ongoing AA process that is being undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan. It will be considered, alongside other documentation prepared as part of this process, when Westmeath County Council finalises the AA at adoption of the Plan.

1.2 Legislative Context

The Habitats Directive provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the "favourable conservation status" of habitats and species of European Community Interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds) with Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as European sites and Natura 2000.

AA is required by the Habitats Directive, as transposed into Irish legislation by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act (as amended). AA is an assessment of the potential for adverse or negative effects of a plan or project, in combination with other plans or projects, on the conservation objectives of a European site. These sites consist of SACs and SPAs and provide for the protection and long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

1.3 Approach

The AA is based on best scientific knowledge and has utilised ecological and hydrological expertise. In addition, a detailed online review of published scientific literature and 'grey' literature was conducted. This included a detailed review of the National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) website including mapping and available reports for relevant sites and in particular sensitive qualifying interests/special conservation interests described and their conservation objectives.

The ecological desktop study completed for the AA of the Plan comprised the following elements:

- Identification of European sites within 15km of the Plan boundary with identification of potential pathways links for specific sites (if relevant) greater than 1km from the Plan boundary;
- Review of the NPWS site synopsis and conservation objectives for European sites with identification of potential pathways from the Plan area; and
- Examination of available information on protected species.

There are four main stages in the AA process as follow:

Stage One: Screening

The process that identifies the likely impacts upon a European site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment

The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts. If adequate mitigation is proposed to ensure no significant adverse impacts on European sites, then the process may end at this stage. However, if the likelihood of significant impacts remains, then the process must proceed to Stage Three.

Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions

The process that examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoids adverse impacts on the integrity of the European site.

Stage Four: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain

An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures. This approach aims to avoid any impacts on European sites by identifying possible impacts early in the plan-making process and avoiding such impacts. Second, the approach involves the application of mitigation measures, if necessary, during the AA process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site(s) remain. If potential impacts on European sites remain, the approach requires the consideration of alternative solutions. If no alternative solutions are identified and the plan/project is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effect(s).

The assessment of potential effects on European sites is conducted following a standard source-pathway-receptor¹ model, where, in order for an effect to be established all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the model is sufficient to conclude that a potential effect is not of any relevance or significance.

In the interest of this report, receptors are the ecological features that are known to be utilised by the qualifying interests or special conservation interests of a European site. A source is any identifiable element of the Plan provision that is known to interact with ecological processes. The pathways are any connections or links between the source and the receptor. This report provides information on whether direct, indirect and cumulative adverse effects could arise from the Plan.

The AA exercise has been prepared taking into account legislation including the aforementioned legislation and guidance including the following:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009;
- "Commission Notice: Managing Natura 2000 sites - The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC", European Commission 2018;
- "Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC", European Commission Environment DG, 2002; and
- "Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC", European Commission, 2000.

¹ Source(s) – e.g. pollutant run-off from proposed works; Pathway(s) – e.g. groundwater connecting to nearby qualifying wetland habitats; and Receptor(s) – qualifying aquatic habitats and species of European sites.

2 Description of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out the Council's proposed policies and objectives for the development of the County over the Plan period. The Development Plan seeks to develop and improve, in a sustainable manner, the social, economic, environmental and cultural assets of the County.

The Draft Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). This Plan, once adopted, replaces the Westmeath Development Plan 2014 – 2020 and consists of a Written Statement including specific policy objectives supported with Maps and Appendices.

The Written Statement is divided into 16 separate chapters setting out the vision, strategic context, aims, goals and the settlement and core strategies for the County. The format of the plan is as follows:

- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 Core Strategy
- Chapter 3 Housing Strategy
- Chapter 4 Sustainable Communities
- Chapter 5 Economy & Employment
- Chapter 6 Tourism
- Chapter 7 Urban Centres & Place-making
- Chapter 8 Settlement Plans
- Chapter 9 Rural Westmeath
- Chapter 10 Transport, Infrastructure & Energy
- Chapter 11 Climate Action
- Chapter 12 Natural Heritage & Green Infrastructure
- Chapter 13 Landscape & Lake Amenities
- Chapter 14 Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 15 Land Use Objectives
- Chapter 16 Development Management Standards

The Appendices include the Council's Housing Strategy, a statement detailing implementation of Ministerial Guidelines, County Westmeath Retail Strategy, List of Protected Views, List of Public Rights of Way, Trees & Woodland subject to Tree Preservation Orders, and Map Based Local Objectives (to be read in conjunction with the Development Plan Maps).

The Draft Plan's Strategic Vision is:

To create and facilitate sustainable competitive growth throughout the County that supports the health and wellbeing of the people of Westmeath, providing an attractive destination, as a place in which to live, work, invest, do business and visit, offering high quality employment and educational opportunities within sustainable communities whilst safeguarding the environmental, cultural, heritage and tourism assets of the County.

The Draft Plan's Strategic Aims are:

- **Sustainable Communities:** To develop and support vibrant sustainable communities in Westmeath where people can live, work and enjoy access to a wide range of community, health and educational facilities and amenities, suitable for all ages and needs, in both urban and rural areas, thereby supporting a high quality of life for all to enjoy.
- **Economic Development and Employment:** To promote and assist in Westmeath's economic development and encourage increased resilience in the County's enterprise, underpinned by talent and innovation, thereby ensuring that Westmeath is best placed to excel in the long-term delivery of sustainable jobs and an enhanced standard of living for all.
- **Tourism:** To provide for the continued expansion of the tourism sector, with a focus on creating strong visitor destination towns and sufficient high-quality visitor services and the continued development and enhancement of visitor attractions and activities to provide memorable, immersive visitor experiences, capitalising on our natural and cultural heritage assets, whilst safeguarding these resources for future generations.
- **Urban Centres & Placemaking:** To protect and enhance the unique identity and character of Westmeath's towns and villages and improve quality of life and wellbeing through the application of Healthy Placemaking, underpinned by

good urban design, with the creation of attractive public spaces that are vibrant, distinctive, safe and accessible and which promote and facilitate positive social interaction.

- **Settlements:** To create a network of attractive, liveable towns and villages in the County with increased levels of population, employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity which support a high quality of life and well-being.
- **Rural:** To support the role of rural areas and the countryside in sustaining the rural economy and improved connectivity, broadband and rural economic development opportunities through the development of the agricultural and agri-food sector, agricultural related developments and enterprises, including diversification of the rural economy, forestry, energy production, tourism, recreation, mineral extraction and other new and emerging rural based enterprises, all within the context of the sustainable management of land and resources, thereby increasing the competitiveness of the rural economy, which will sustain and strengthen rural communities.
- **Transport, Infrastructure and Energy:** To achieve a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with excellent connectivity within and to Westmeath by enhancing existing strategic transportation infrastructure in the County. To provide, improve and extend water, wastewater, surface water and flood alleviation services throughout the County and to prioritise the provision of water services infrastructure, to achieve improved environmental protection and to protect public health. To provide for the development of indigenous energy resources, with an emphasis on renewable energy supplies.
- **Climate Action:** To transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County, with an emphasis on reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change.
- **Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure:** Continue to protect and enhance the County's natural heritage and biodiversity and ensure that networks of green infrastructure are identified, created, protected and enhanced to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.
- **Landscape and Lake Amenities:** To improve the knowledge and understanding of the County's landscape and lakelands, and enhance the overall characteristics, qualities and diversity of landscape character, its sense of place and local distinctiveness in recognition of the amenity potential of the County.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Westmeath County Council recognises the importance of identifying, valuing and safeguarding our archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage for future generations and aims to do so by means of proper management, sensitive enhancement and/or appropriate development of this resource.

Westmeath County Council shall ensure that the future spatial development of Westmeath is directed by means of a plan led approach, directing residential and employment generating development to locations in accordance with National and Regional Policy, and with environmental carrying capacity, which can support investment in public infrastructure and services and that is sensitive to the physical character of the built and natural environment.

Section 2 sets out the core strategy for the Plan that states the strategic aims that relate to the advancement of this plan are set out hereunder. These aims are addressed more fully in subsequent chapters within the plan. A series of specific Core Strategy policy objectives are included in Section 2.22.

- To guide the future development of Westmeath in line with national and regional objectives set out in the NPF and RSES and other national guidelines and policies
- To promote and facilitate the development of the County in accordance with the provisions of the Core Strategy, including directing development in line with the settlement hierarchy and promoting development at an appropriate scale that is reflective of the terms of the Core Strategy Table and zoning maps.
- To apply the Settlement Hierarchy to determine the scale, rate and location of proposed developments and apply appropriate development management measures to ensure compliance with the Settlement Hierarchy including the population targets for the County.
- To promote the delivery of at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements within their existing built-up footprints
- To support the achievement of more self-sustaining towns and villages through residential and employment opportunities together with supporting social and community facilities
- To monitor and maintain a record of residential development permitted in settlements designated under the Settlement Hierarchy in order to ensure compliance with the population allocations defined by the Core Strategy and to adjust the approach to permitting development proposals in instances where Core Strategy objectives are not being met.

There are provisions in the Plan relating to supporting accessible community, cultural and recreational facilities, as well as increasing sport, childcare, youth and health/wellbeing initiative.

The Plan, including at Chapter 6, recognises the value of natural resources as a tourism product and provides for a collaborative multiagent approach to managing and developing tourism for the county. The policies focus on expanding and increasing the tourism market within the County and providing increased signage and opportunities for both rural and urban tourism. There are provisions to support initiatives along waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree as well as other waterways within the county. Other provisions include policies to support festivals within the County.

Chapter 7 identified the policies and objectives relating to urban development; these provisions have a focus on infrastructural development and provide for multipurpose developments such as roads, cycle tracks, multipurpose urban centres and streetscaping works etc. Chapter 8 provides various settlement plans for the County while Chapter 9 provides policy objectives for rural areas.

Chapter 10 that aims to achieve a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with excellent connectivity within and to Westmeath by, inter alia, enhancing existing strategic transportation infrastructure in the County. Central to this approach is the promotion of a modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as cycling, walking and public transport.

Chapter 11 provides for climate action policy objectives while Chapter 12 provides for policy objectives relating to the protection enhancement of biodiversity, ecological processes and the environment in general and the development of greenways and blueways.

Chapter 13 addresses landscape and lake amenities, including providing policy objectives that relate to the protection of and facilitation of access to and amenity use of the lakes as well as the establishment and/or protection of viewing points.

Cultural heritage is the focus of Chapter 14 of the Plan, which identifies the need to manage, develop and conserve cultural assets within the county, including language heritage.

3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

3.1 Introduction to Screening

This stage of the process identifies any potential significant affects to European sites from a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans.

An important element of the AA process is the identification of the “conservation objectives”, “Qualifying Interests” (QIs) and/ or “Special Conservation Interests” (SCIs) of European sites requiring assessment. QIs are the habitat features and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive for which each European site has been designated and afforded protection. SCIs are wetland habitats and bird species listed within Annexes I and II of the Birds Directive. It is also vital that the threats to the ecological / environmental conditions that are required to support QIs and SCIs are considered as part of the assessment.

The following NPWS Generic Conservation Objectives have been considered in the screening:

- For SACs, to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected; and
- For SPAs, to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.

Where available, Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) designed to define favourable conservation status for a particular habitat² or species³ at that site have been considered.

3.2 Identification of Relevant European Sites

The Department of the Environment (2009) Guidance on AA recommends a 15 km buffer zone to be considered. A review of all sites within this zone has allowed a determination to be made that in the absence of significant hydrological links the characteristics of the Plan will not impose effects beyond the 15 km buffer.

Details of European sites that occur within 15 km of the Plan is listed in Table 3.1. European sites and EPA Rivers and Catchments are also mapped in Figure 3.1 below. Information on QIs, SCIs and site-specific vulnerabilities and sensitivities (see Appendix I) and background information (such as that within Ireland’s Article 17 Report to the European Commission, site synopses and Natura 2000 standard data forms) has been considered by both the AA screening assessment (provided under this section) and Stage 2 AA (provided under Section 4). Conservation objectives that have been considered by the assessment are included in the following NPWS/ Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht documents:

- (2018) Conservation objectives for Lough Derravarragh SPA [004043]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Lough Ennell SPA [004044]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Glen Lough SPA [004045]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Lough Iron SPA [004046]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Lough Owel SPA [004047]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Lough Ree SPA [004064]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Middle Shannon Callows SPA [004096]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2015) Conservation Objectives: Garriskil Bog SAC [000679]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Middle Shannon Callows SPA [004096]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2016) Conservation Objectives: Lough Ree SAC [000440]. Version 1.
- (2015) Conservation Objectives: Raheenmore Bog SAC [000582]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation Objectives: Lough Ennell SAC [000685]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation Objectives: Lough Owel SAC [000688]. Version 1.

² Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when: its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing; the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

³ The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when: population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats; the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

- (2018) Conservation Objectives: Scragh Bog SAC [000692]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo SAC [001810]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation Objectives: Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC [001831]. Version 1.
- (2016) Conservation Objectives: Crosswood Bog SAC [002337]. Version 1.
- (2016) Conservation Objectives: Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs SAC [002340]. Version 1.
- (2016) Conservation Objectives: Mount Hevey Bog SAC [002342]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Lough Lene SAC [002121]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation Objectives: Ballymore Fen SAC [002313]. Version 1.
- (2015) Conservation Objectives: Carn Park Bog SAC [002336]. Version 1.
- (2015) Conservation Objectives: Garriskil Bog SAC [000679]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Wooddown Bog SAC [002205]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC [002120]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Lough Sheelin SPA [004065]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Mongan Bog SPA [004017]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2016) Conservation Objectives: Mongan Bog SAC [000580]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Girley (Drewstown) Bog SAC [002203]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Derragh Bog SAC [002201]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation Objectives: Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC [001776]. Version 1.
- (2015) Conservation Objectives: Ferbane Bog SAC [000575]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA [004061]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2015) Conservation Objectives: Moyclare Bog SAC [000581]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Charleville Wood SAC [000571]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Castlesampson Esker SAC [001625]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2016) Conservation Objectives: Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC [002339]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation Objectives: Fortwilliam Turlough SAC [000448]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation Objectives: Lough Funshinagh SAC [000611]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for River Shannon Callows SAC [000216]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for River Suck Callows SPA [004097]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for River Shannon Callows SAC [000216]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA [004232]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC [002299]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2018) Conservation Objectives: Lough Croan Turlough SAC [000610]. Version 1.
- (2011) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC [002162]. Version 1.0.
- (2015) Conservation Objectives: Ardagullion Bog SAC [002341]. Version 1.
- (2018) Conservation objectives for Fin Lough (Offaly) SAC [000576]. Generic Version 6.0.
- (2016) Conservation Objectives: Clara Bog SAC [000572]. Version 1.

The assessment considers available conservation objectives. Since conservation objectives focus on maintaining the favourable conservation condition of the QIs/SCIs of each site, the screening process concentrated on assessing the potential effects of the Plan against the QIs/SCIs of each site. The conservation objectives for each site were consulted throughout the assessment process.

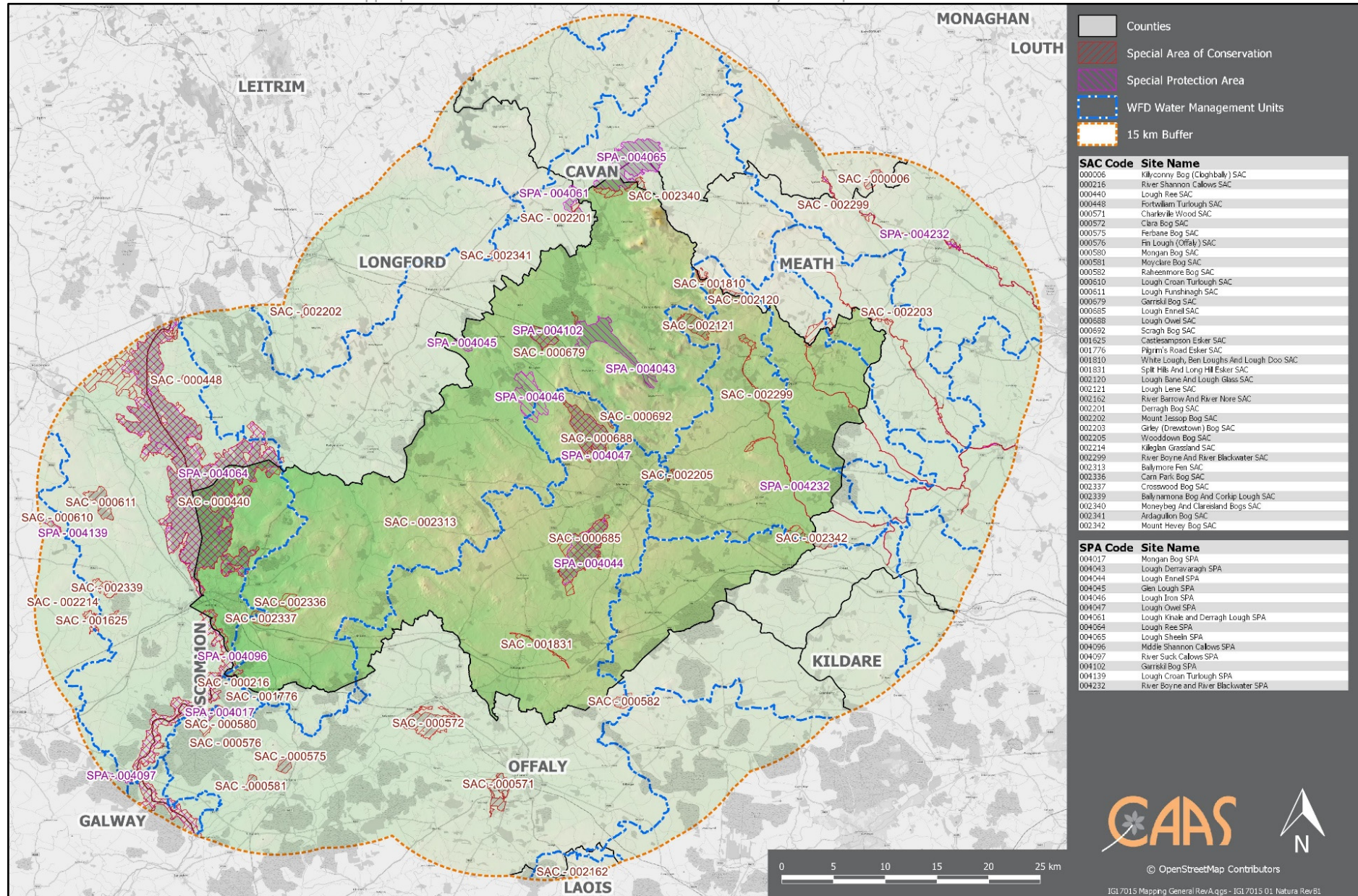


Figure 3.1 European sites within 15 km of the Draft Plan boundary⁴

⁴ Source: NPWS (datasets downloaded November 2019)
CAAS for Westmeath County Council

3.3 Assessment Criteria and Screening

3.3.1 Is the Plan Necessary to the Management of European Sites?

The overarching objective of the Plan is not the nature conservation management of the sites, but to coordinate and plan the future development of County Westmeath. Therefore, the Plan is not considered to be directly connected with or necessary to the management of European sites.

3.3.2 Elements of the Draft Plan with Potential to Give Rise to Effects

The Plan provides a framework for the sustainable development of the Westmeath area. There are a number of environmental sensitivities within the area and an assessment of effects indicates the potential effects relate to the following:

- Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure:
 - Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna;
 - Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and
 - Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species.
- Potential interactions if effects upon environmental vectors such as water and air.
- Adverse effects from tourism, amenity and recreation.
- Damage to the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource.
- Adverse effects upon the status of water bodies arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology.
- Increase in the risk of flooding.
- Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity is needed to ensure the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Emissions to air including greenhouse gas emissions and other emissions.

The elements of the Draft Plan with the highest potential to give rise to the effects indicated above are associated with construction phase elements of the implementation of the plan. The operational phase elements of the plan are consistent with the existing condition of the area. All policies and objectives are considered in this assessment with respect to the ecological integrity of each of the European sites identified. Considering the sensitivities/vulnerabilities of the QIs and SCIs in relation to all potential sources for effects and potential pathways for such effects. Where sources and pathways for effects are identified potential effects will be assessed in relation to the SSCOs.

3.3.3 Screening of Sites

Table 3.1 examines whether there is potential for effects on European sites considering information provided above, including Appendix I. Sites are screened out based on one or a combination of the following criteria:

- Where it can be shown that there are significant pathways such as hydrological links Plan proposals and the site to be screened;
- Where the site is located at such a distance from that area to that the Plan relates that effects are not foreseen; and
- Where it is that known threats or vulnerabilities at a site cannot be linked to potential impacts that may arise from the Plan.

Table 3.1 Screening of European sites within 15 km of the Draft Plan boundary

Site Code	European site	Distance (km)	Qualifying Features (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Potential effects (refer also to Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 above)	Pathway for Significant Effects	Potential for In-Combination Effects
004043	Lough Derravaragh SPA	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
004044	Lough Ennell SPA	Within	Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
004045	Glen Lough SPA	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
004046	Lough Iron Spa	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide</p>	Yes	Yes

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			Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly. This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.		
004047	Lough Owel SPA	Within	Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly. This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.	Yes	Yes
004064	Lough Ree SPA	Within	Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004] Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) [A053] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly. This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.	Yes	Yes
004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>) [A122] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly. This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.	Yes	Yes

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004102	Garriskil Bog SPA	Within	Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
000440	Lough Ree SAC	Within	<p>Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]</p> <p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]</p> <p>Active raised bogs [7110]</p> <p>Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]</p> <p>Alkaline fens [7230]</p> <p>Limestone pavements [8240]</p> <p>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p>Bog woodland [91D0]</p> <p>Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
000582	Raheenmore Bog SAC	Within	<p>Active raised bogs [7110]</p> <p>Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]</p> <p>Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
000685	Lough Ennell SAC	Within	Alkaline fens [7230]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p>	Yes	Yes

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				This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.		
000688	Lough Owel SAC	Within	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] Alkaline fens [7230] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
000692	Scragh Bog SAC	Within	Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] Alkaline fens [7230] Slender Green Feather-moss (<i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i>) [1393]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs And Lough Doo SAC	Within	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
001831	Split Hills And Long Hill Esker SAC	Within	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in</p>	Yes	Yes

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				<p>habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>		
002337	Crosswood Bog SAC	Within	<p>Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
002340	Moneybeg And Clareisland Bogs SAC	Within	<p>Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
002342	Mount Hevey Bog SAC	Within	<p>Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
002121	Lough Lene SAC	Within	<p>Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of</p>	Yes	Yes

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				<p>vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>		
002313	Ballymore Fen SAC	Within	Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
002336	Carn Park Bog SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
000679	Garriskil Bog SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>	Yes	Yes
002205	Wooddown Bog SAC	Within	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development</p>	Yes	Yes

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				<p>of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>This European site exists within the Westmeath Plan boundary, therefore there are pathways for potential direct effects to the ecological integrity of the site from the sources identified above. Therefore, further consideration is required under, Article 6(3), Stage 2 AA.</p>		
002120	Lough Bane And Lough Glass SAC	0.8	<p>Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>	Yes	Yes
004065	Lough Sheelin SPA	1.8	<p>Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>	Yes	Yes
004017	Mongan Bog SPA	1.9	<p>Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]</p>	<p>There will be no direct effects that will arise due to the implementation of the Plan due to the distances between the Plan and the SPA. Bird species are particularly sensitive to disturbances, however the SHN published a Review of Disturbance Distances in Selected Bird Species that indicates distances exceeding 1km are not significant when considering effects. In addition to this, the Plan does not contain provisions for any works that may introduce flight collision risks for birds. The Plan provides for infrastructural developments that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>	Indirect	Unknown
000580	Mongan Bog SAC	2.5	<p>Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such</p>	Indirect	Unknown

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				<p>as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>		
002203	Girley (Drewstown) Bog SAC	2.9	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>This site is designated for terrestrial peatland habitats. They are sensitive to direct land use management action such as drainage and fire management etc. There are no provisions in the plan that introduce any sources for effects to the land use of the SAC and there are no hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. As there are no sources with pathways for effects, no further assessment is required.</p>	No	No
002201	Derragh Bog SAC	3.4	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Bog woodland [91D0]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>	Indirect	Unknown
001776	Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC	3.7	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	<p>This site is designated for terrestrial grassland and scrubland habitats. They are sensitive to direct land use management action such as drainage and graze management etc. There are no provisions in the plan that introduce any sources for effects to the land use of the SAC. These habitats are not influenced by surface water quality of the adjacent aquatic habitats. As there are no sources with pathways for effects, no further assessment is required.</p>	No	No
000575	Ferbane Bog SAC	3.7	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>	Indirect	Unknown
004061	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	3.8	Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural developments that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. The SCI species that the SPA are designated for are sensitive to disturbance</p>	Indirect	Unknown

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				effects, however distances beyond 1km are accepted as the standard to mitigate against potential disturbances ⁵ . There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.		
002341	Ardagullion Bog SAC	3.8	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	This site is designated for terrestrial peatland habitats. They are sensitive to direct land use management action such as drainage and fire management etc. There are no provisions in the plan that introduce any sources for effects to the land use of the SAC and there are no hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. As there are no sources with pathways for effects, no further assessment is required.	No	No
000576	Fin Lough (Offaly) SAC	4.4	Alkaline fens [7230] Geyer's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>) [1013]	The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly. The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.	Indirect	Unknown
000572	Clara Bog SAC	5.5	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Bog woodland [91D0]	This site is designated for terrestrial peatland and grassland habitats. They are sensitive to direct land use management action such as drainage, grazing and fire management etc. There are no provisions in the plan that introduce any sources for effects to the land use of the SAC and there are no hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. As there are no sources with pathways for effects, no further assessment is required.	No	No
000581	Moyclare Bog SAC	6.1	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	This site is designated for terrestrial peatland habitats. They are sensitive to direct land use management action such as drainage and fire management etc. There are no provisions in the plan that introduce any sources for effects to the land use of the SAC and there are no hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. As there are no sources with pathways for effects, no further assessment is required.	No	No
000571	Charleville Wood SAC	6.4	Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) [1016]	This site is designated for terrestrial habitats and the species. They are sensitive to direct land use management action such as drainage and management of invasive species. There are no provisions in the plan that introduce any sources for effects to the land use of the SAC and there are no hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. As there are no sources with pathways for effects, no further assessment is required.	No	No
001625	Castlesampson Esker SAC	8.8	Turloughs [3180] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	This site is designated for terrestrial grassland and scrubland habitats. They are sensitive to direct land use management action such as drainage and graze management etc. There are no provisions in the plan that introduce any sources for effects to the land use of the SAC and there are no surface water pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. As there are no sources with pathways for effects, no further assessment is required.	Unknown	Unknown

⁵ SNH (2007) A review of Disturbance Distances in Selected Bird Species

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				However, turloughs are a groundwater fed system. Therefore, further investigation is required to assess if there are any groundwater interactions that may arise due to the implementation of the Draft Plan.		
002339	Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC	9.0	Turloughs [3180] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Bog woodland [91D0]	<p>This site is designated for terrestrial peatland habitats. They are sensitive to direct land use management action such as drainage and fire management etc. There are no provisions in the plan that introduce any sources for effects to the land use of the SAC and there are no surface water pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. As there are no sources with pathways for effects, no further assessment is required.</p> <p>However, turloughs are a groundwater fed system. Therefore, further investigation is required to assess if there are any groundwater interactions that may arise due to the implementation of the Draft Plan.</p>	Unknown	Unknown
000448	Fortwilliam Turlough SAC	11.4	Turloughs [3180]	<p>Turloughs are a groundwater fed system. Therefore, further investigation is required to assess if there are any groundwater interactions that may arise due to the implementation of the Draft Plan.</p>	Unknown	Unknown
000611	Lough Funshinagh SAC	12.2	Turloughs [3180] Rivers with muddy banks with <i>Chenopodium rubri p.p. and Bidention p.p.</i> vegetation [3270]	<p>This site is designated for freshwater aquatic habitats. They are sensitive hydrological interactions such as drainage, water quality etc. There are no provisions in the plan that introduce any sources for effects to the land use of the SAC and there are no surface water pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. As there are no sources with pathways for effects, no further assessment is required.</p> <p>However, turloughs are a groundwater fed system. Therefore, further investigation is required to assess if there are any groundwater interactions that may arise due to the implementation of the Draft Plan.</p>	Unknown	Unknown
000216	River Shannon Callows SAC	12.6	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caeruleae</i>) [6410] Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] Limestone pavements [8240] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>	Indirect	Unknown
004097	River Suck Callows SPA	13.0	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>	Indirect	Unknown

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004232	River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA	14.0	Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>) [A229]	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>	Indirect	Unknown
002299	River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC	14.0	<p>Alkaline fens [7230] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) [1099] Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) [1106] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>	Indirect	Unknown
004139	Lough Croan Turlough SPA	14.0	<p>Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. The SCI species that the SPA is designated for are sensitive to disturbance effects, however distances beyond 1km are accepted as the standard to mitigate against potential disturbances⁶. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>	Indirect	Unknown
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	14.0	<p>Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Reefs [1170]</p>	<p>The Plan provides for infrastructural development including provisions for transport, urbanisation, streetscape works, education, tourism and recreation facilities. These provisions introduce sources for effects through construction phase such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interactions, disturbance effects etc. Similarly, the further development</p>	Indirect	Unknown

⁶ Scottish Natural Heritage (2007) A review of Disturbance Distances in selected Bird Species.

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		<p>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] European dry heaths [4030] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) [1016] Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) [1029] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092] Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) [1095] Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) [1096] River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) [1099] Twaite Shad (<i>Alosa fallax fallax</i>) [1103] Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) [1106] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355] Killarney Fern (<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>) [1421] Nore Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i>) [1990]</p>	<p>of the County could introduce increased loading pressures for operational phase effects such as tourism. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.</p> <p>The Plan introduces sources for effects that have potential to effect water quality if not mitigated. There are hydrological pathways between the Draft Plan boundary and the European site. This site is sensitive to change to hydrological condition, therefore further assessment is required.</p>		
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3.4 Other Plans and Programmes

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or programmes that might, in combination with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely affect European sites. Appendix II outlines a selection of plans or projects that may interact with the Plan to cause in-combination effects to European sites such as the Westmeath Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 and Westmeath Local Economic & Community Plan 2016-2021. These plans and programmes were considered throughout the assessment.

All projects within the Draft Plan area and receiving environment will be considered in combination with any and all lower tiers projects that may arise due to the implementation of the Plan. Given the uncertainties that exist with regard to the scale and location of developments facilitated by the Draft Plan, it is recognised that the identification of in-combination effects is limited and that the assessment of in-combination effects will need to be undertaken in a more comprehensive manner at the project-level.

Additional information on the relationship with other plans and programmes is provided at Appendix II.

3.5 AA Screening Conclusion

The effects that could arise from the Plan have been examined in the context of several factors that could potentially affect the integrity of any European site. On the basis of the findings of this Screening for AA, it is concluded that the Plan:

- Is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site; and
- May, if unmitigated, have significant adverse effects on 41 (no.) European sites.

Therefore, a Stage 2 AA is required for the Plan (see Section 4 of this report). An AA Screening Determination undertaken by the planning authority accompanies this report and the Draft Plan.

4 Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment

4.1 Introduction

The Stage 2 AA assesses whether the Plan alone, or in-combination with other plans, programmes, and/or projects, would result in adverse impacts on the integrity of the 41 European sites brought forward from screening (see Table 3.1), with respect to site structure, function and/or conservation objectives.

4.2 Characterisation of European sites Potentially Affected

The AA Screening identified 41 European sites with pathway receptors for potential effects arising from the implementation of the Plan.

Appendix I characterises each of the qualifying features of the 41 European sites brought forward from Stage 1 in context of each of the sites' vulnerabilities. Each of these site characterisations were taken from the NPWS website⁷.

4.3 Identifying and Characterising Potential Significant Effects

The following parameters can be used when characterising impacts⁸:

Direct and Indirect Impacts - An impact can be caused either as a direct or as an indirect consequence of a Plan/Project.

Magnitude - Magnitude measures the size of an impact, which is described as high, medium, low, very low or negligible.

Extent - The area over that the impact occurs – this should be predicted in a quantified manner.

Duration - The time that the effect is expected to last prior to recovery or replacement of the resource or feature.

- Temporary: Up to 1 Year;
- Short Term: The effects would take 1-7 years to be mitigated;
- Medium Term: The effects would take 7-15 years to be mitigated;
- Long Term: The effects would take 15-60 years to be mitigated; and
- Permanent: The effects would take 60+ years to be mitigated.

Likelihood – The probability of the effect occurring taking into account all available information.

- Certain/Near Certain: >95% chance of occurring as predicted;
- Probable: 50-95% chance as occurring as predicted;
- Unlikely: 5-50% chance as occurring as predicted; and
- Extremely Unlikely: <5% chance as occurring as predicted.

Ecologically Significant Impact - An impact (negative or positive) on the integrity of a defined site or ecosystem and/or the conservation status of habitats or species within a given geographic area.

Integrity of a Site - The coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, which enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified.

The Habitats Directive requires the focus of the assessment at this stage to be on the integrity of the site as indicated by its Conservation Objectives. It is an aim of NPWS to draw up conservation management plans for all areas designated for nature conservation. These plans will, among other things, set clear objectives for the conservation of the features of interest within a site.

SSCOs have been prepared for a number of European sites. These detailed SSCOs aim to define favourable conservation condition for the qualifying habitats and species at that site by setting targets for appropriate attributes that define the character habitat. The maintenance of the favourable condition for these habitats and species at the site level will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

***Favourable conservation status of a species** can be described as being achieved when: 'population data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced or likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.'*

⁷ Last accessed 8th December 2019; <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>.

⁸ These descriptions are informed by publications including: Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2016) "Guidelines for ecological impact assessment"; Environmental Protection Agency (2002) "Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements"; and National Roads Authority (2009) "Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Roads Schemes".

Favourable conservation status of a **habitat** can be described as being achieved when: 'its natural range, and area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing, and the ecological factors that are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable'.

Generic Conservation Objective for cSACs:

- To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species that the SAC has been selected.

One generic Conservation Objective for SPAs:

- To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.

4.3.1 Types of Potential Effects

Assessment of potential impacts on European sites is conducted utilising a standard source-pathway model (see approach referred to under Sections 1.3 and 3).

The 2001 European Commission AA guidance outlines the following potential changes that may occur at a designated site, which may result in effects on the integrity and function of that site:

- Loss/reduction of habitat area;
- Habitat or species fragmentation;
- Disturbance to key species;
- Reduction in species density;
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.); and
- Climate change.

Each of these potential changes are considered below and in Table 4.1 with reference to the QIs/SCIs of all of the European sites brought forward from Stage 1 of the AA process (see Section 3).

4.3.1.1 Loss/Reduction of Habitat Area

The Plan provides for infrastructural development across the County with specific urban settlement zones identified to facilitate more intensive development in these areas. The Plan provides for accessibility and transport development with a focus on prioritising sustainable travel. The development of all infrastructural works such as water services, energy provisions, residential and commercial structures, facilities, roadways, access tracks and pathways etc. have associated construction phase effects. These potential effects include land take, habitat destruction, disturbance effects, light pollution, dust, hydrological interactions, airborne pollution, excessive noise etc. Therefore, mitigation measures are required to ensure that there are no significant adverse effects due to construction on the ecological integrity of any European site.

CPO 12.5 states that it is Council policy to 'ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, **land take**, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects)'. Similarly, Chapter 12 of the Plan identifies a number of policy objectives that ensure ecological processes and the protection of European sites are considered throughout the planning process (see Section 5 of this report).

These policies ensure that there will be no loss of habitat or supporting habitat for species that are necessary to maintain the ecological integrity of European sites throughout the lifetime of the plan.

4.3.1.2 Habitat or species Fragmentation

The Plan provides for infrastructural development across the County with specific urban settlement zones identified to facilitate more intensive development in these areas. The Plan provides for accessibility and transport development with a focus on prioritising sustainable travel. The development of all infrastructural works such as water services, energy provisions, residential and commercial structures, facilities, roadways, access tracks and pathways etc. have associated construction phase effects. These potential effects include land take, habitat destruction, disturbance effects, light pollution, dust, hydrological interactions, airborne pollution, excessive noise etc. Therefore, mitigation

measures are required to ensure that there are no significant adverse effects due to construction on the ecological integrity of any European site.

The Plan recognises the role of non-designated sites for the maintenance and enhancement of European sites due to the connectivity and accessibility of ecological resources (see measures reproduced at Section 5 of this report).

Further to these provisions there are policy objectives related to specific ecological resources and/or habitats such as waterways, wetlands and peatlands etc. These policies apply to all plans, programmes and/or projects that may arise due to the implementation of the Plan and will ensure that habitat or species fragmentation will not occur in relation to the connectivity of the ecological resources necessary to maintain the ecological integrity of European sites throughout the lifetime of the Plan.

4.3.1.3 Disturbance to Key Species

The Plan provides for infrastructural development across the County with specific urban settlement zones identified to facilitate more intensive development in these areas. The Plan provides for accessibility and transport development with a focus on prioritising sustainable travel. The development of all infrastructural works such as buildings, facilities, roadways, access tracks and pathways etc. have associated construction phase effects. These potential effects include land take, habitat destruction, disturbance effects, light pollution, dust, hydrological interactions, airborne pollution, excessive noise etc. Therefore, mitigation measures are required to ensure that there are no significant adverse effects due to construction on the ecological integrity of any European site.

Chapter 13 addresses landscape and lake amenities, including providing policy objectives that relate to the protection of and facilitation of access to and amenity use of the lakes as well as the establishment and/or protection of viewing points. These policies introduce potential disturbance effects to sensitive and or vulnerable areas during the operational phase.

Similarly, the Plan identifies a focus on tourism, recreation and amenity use. Tourism is identified as a known threat to several of the European sites brought forward to Stage 2. Tourism introduces sources for effects such as trampling, destruction of vegetation, littering, fishing etc. as well as potential infrastructure development to provide facilities and services such as piers, toilets, visitor centres etc. These sources could result in habitat loss, disturbance effects, interactions with water quality and/habitat fragmentation if they are not planned and or managed correctly.

The Plan also contains provisions that recognises the need to consider the carrying capacity of destinations that is reflected in the Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Services Policy Objectives CPO 6.24⁹. Similarly, the General Tourism Development Policy Objective CPO 6.2¹⁰ identifies the need to consider capacity issues and aims to increase capacity while ensuring all future tourism developments are appropriately placed taking account of environmental sensitivities. The Plan addresses the need for the protection of natural assets from over exploitation in the Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Services Policy Objectives CPO 6.29¹¹. The Waterways Policy Objective CPO 12.54¹² specifically addresses potential issues in relation to disturbance effects to sensitive sites.

The operational effects of the CPD in general outside of tourism have potential to cause encroachment, disturbance effects, pollution in the form of littering, light pollution etc. if not managed or maintained in a sensitive manner. The Natura 2000 Sites Policy Objectives CPO 12.10¹³ specifically identifies provisions to prepare strategic management plans for European sites within the County in consultation with the NPWS; this provision will facilitate the identification and prioritisation of resource requirements and sensitivities of the European sites to promote sustainable development. Chapter 12 of the Plan

⁹ Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.

¹⁰ Promote the development and strengthening of the overall value of Westmeath as a tourist destination by encouraging the enhancement and development of sustainable and high-quality visitor attractions, activities and infrastructure, enabling an increase in the overall capacity and long-term development of the county's tourism industry, subject to appropriate siting and design criteria and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

¹¹ Ensure that the development of visitor infrastructure linked to natural and heritage environments, does not detract from the quality and value of these environments..

¹² Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that any new projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones..

¹³ Prepare Strategic Habitat Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites in Council ownership in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant stakeholders.

identifies a number of policy objectives that ensure ecological processes and the protection of European sites are considered throughout the planning process; such as Regional Policy Objective 7.26¹⁴ and/or Natural Heritage Policy Objectives CPO 12.1¹⁵. This Chapter details extensive policy objectives that relate to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, ecological processes and the environment in general. Furthermore, CPO 12.5 states that it is Council policy to *'ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects)'*.

Further details in relation to the full set of mitigation measures integrated into the text of the Plan can be found in Section 5 below.

4.3.1.4 Reduction in species density

Species densities are reliant on species distributions, habitat condition, connectivity of ecological resources and availability of resources such as prey/food. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects to affect these four determinant factors for species densities in the form of construction phase effects such as habitat destruction, light pollution, hydrological interaction or operational effects such as disturbance effects, habitat encroachment, trampling etc. However, the Plan contains provisions to enhance biodiversity, landscape and the environment within Westmeath (CPO12.13)¹⁶.

In addition to this the Plan identifies policy objectives to prepare habitat management plans for European sites in Council ownership in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant stakeholders (CPO 12.10)¹⁷. Similarly, the Plan recognises the role of non-designated sites for the maintenance and enhancement of European sites due to the connectivity and accessibility of ecological resources. Further to these provisions there are policy objectives related to specific ecological resources and/or habitats such as waterways and peatlands. These policies apply to all plans, programmes and projects that may arise due to the implementation of the plan. Furthermore, CPO 12.5 states that it is Council policy to *'ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects)'*. There are also a number of provisions relating to protective buffer zones, further assessment requirements as well as commitments to increasing water quality standards etc. These measures are detailed in Chapter 12 of the Plan and further details in relation to the mitigation measures incorporated into the text of the plan see Section 5 below.

4.3.1.5 Changes of Indicators of Conservation Value

Indicators of conservation value are identified as key ecological resources such as water quality, air quality, habitat quality, population health of ecosystem engineers or 'keystone species' etc.

The Plan identifies policy objectives to prepare habitat management plans for European sites in Council ownership in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant stakeholders (CPO 12.10)¹⁸. These are an invaluable resource for the protection and enhancement of European sites. There are also a number of provisions relating to protective buffer zones, further assessment requirements as well as commitments to increasing water quality standards etc. The Plan specifically recognises the value of lakes and waterways within the County as recreational resources while recognising the sensitivities of these resources. Lakes and Waterways Policy Objectives identify provisions to facilitate and support access to and between waterways within the county; as previously

¹⁴ Support the development of guidance for assessment of proposed land zonings in order to achieve appropriate riparian setback distances that support the attainment of high ecological status for waterbodies, the conservation of biodiversity and good ecosystem health, and buffer zones from flood plains.

¹⁵ Contribute as appropriate towards the protection of designated sites in compliance with relevant EU Directives and applicable National Legislation.

¹⁶ Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.

¹⁷ Prepare Strategic Habitat Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites in Council ownership in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant stakeholders.

¹⁸ Prepare Strategic Habitat Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites in Council ownership in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant stakeholders.

stated these provisions must be considered in compliance with the capacity policies previously stated. However, there are additional provisions made to ensure effects to the natural resources are considered for all infrastructural developments aimed to increase tourism activities around lakes; namely Lakes and Waterways Policy Objectives CPO 6.45¹⁹. Furthermore, the Plan identifies policy objectives to prepare habitat management plans for the lakes of the County and visitor management plans at lakes that are particularly sensitive to visitor pressures (CPO 6.54)²⁰. The protection of habitats, landscapes and waterways are a key focus of the policy objectives within Chapters 12 and 13.

These provisions ensure the protection and enhancement of conservation indicators for biodiversity and Europeans sites is considered throughout the lifetime of the Plan. Further details in relation to the mitigation measures incorporated into the text of the Plan see Section 5 below.

4.3.1.6 Climate change

The Plan includes provisions that potentially conflict with climate mitigation and provisions that will help to contribute towards climate mitigation. CPO 12.5 states that it is Council policy to *'to ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, **emissions** (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects)'*. Greenhouse gas emissions arising from the Plan will not affect changes projected to arise from climate change to the degree that it would affect the QIs or SCIs of the European Sites considered.

¹⁹ Support the provision of infrastructure to enable increased tourism activity associated with Westmeath's lakes, including boating, canoeing, angling, ensuring that such provision does not negatively impact on sensitive environments and subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

²⁰ Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.

Table 4.1 Characterisation of Potential Effects arising from the Plan

Site Code	European site	Distance (km)	Qualifying Features (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Characterisation of Potential Effects ²¹	Pathway for Significant Effects	Mitigation Required
004043	Lough Derravaragh SPA	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>Agriculture, forestry, hunting and leisure fishing are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i> <i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
004044	Lough Ennell SPA	Within	Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>Agriculture, forestry, urbanisation, fishing and recreational activities are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i> <i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
004045	Glen Lough SPA	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038]	<p>Agriculture and forestry are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p>	Yes	Yes

²¹ Informed by, inter alia, The Status of Protected EU Habitats and Species in Ireland, Overview Volume 1 (NPWS, 2013).

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Site Code	European site	Distance (km)	Qualifying Features (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Characterisation of Potential Effects ²¹	Pathway for Significant Effects	Mitigation Required
				<p>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</p> <p>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</p> <p>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
004046	Lough Iron SPA	Within	<p>Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038]</p> <p>Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050]</p> <p>Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052]</p> <p>Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056]</p> <p>Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125]</p> <p>Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]</p> <p>Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]</p> <p>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>	<p>Agriculture and forestry are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</p> <p>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</p> <p>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
004047	Lough Owel SPA	Within	<p>Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056]</p> <p>Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125]</p> <p>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>	<p>Agriculture, forestry and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</p> <p>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</p> <p>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
004064	Lough Ree SPA	Within	<p>Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004]</p>	<p>Agriculture, forestry. Fishing activities, recreation and invasive species are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>	Yes	Yes

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Site Code	European site	Distance (km)	Qualifying Features (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Characterisation of Potential Effects ²¹	Pathway for Significant Effects	Mitigation Required
			Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) [A053] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i> <i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>) [A122] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>Agriculture, forestry. Fishing activities, transportation services and urbanisation are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites. The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i> <i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
004102	Garriskil Bog SPA	Within	Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]	<p>Agriculture, forestry. Fishing activities, transportation services and fire management are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p>	Yes	Yes

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				<p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
000440	Lough Ree SAC	Within	<p>Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]</p> <p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]</p> <p>Active raised bogs [7110]</p> <p>Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]</p> <p>Alkaline fens [7230]</p> <p>Limestone pavements [8240]</p> <p>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p>Bog woodland [91D0]</p> <p>Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]</p>	<p>Land uses within the site include recreation in the form of cruiser hire, angling, camping, picnicking and shooting. Chalet accommodation occurs at a few locations around the lake. Low-intensity grazing occurs on dry and wet grassland around the shore, and some hay is made within the site. Some of these activities are damaging, but in a very localised way, and require careful planning. The main threat to the aquatic life in the lake comes from artificial enrichment of the waters by agricultural and domestic waste, and also by peat silt in suspension that is increasingly limiting the light penetration, and thus restricting aquatic flora to shallower waters. At present Lough Ree is less affected by eutrophication than Lough Derg.</p> <p>Agriculture, forestry, recreational activities, pollution through surface water or groundwater, dumping, drainage, transportation services, inappropriate species introduction and urbanisation are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, fishing, poaching, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
000582	Raheenmore Bog SAC	Within	<p>Active raised bogs [7110]</p> <p>Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]</p> <p>Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]</p>	<p>The structure of the bog habitat has been affected by drainage. This has resulted from peat-cutting along the margins of the bog that has led to the lowering of the water table within the adjoining, intact high bog areas. However, the prospects for the future functioning of the habitat are generally good, as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) own much of the site and an extensive programme of drain blocking has taken place. Although the north-eastern section of the bog suffered from burning in the past, the majority of the site is relatively unaffected by this practice at present. Also, peat extraction has largely discontinued.</p> <p>Agriculture and drainage are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>	Yes	Yes

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				<p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
000685	Lough Ennell SAC	Within	Alkaline fens [7230]	<p>Levels of planktonic algal growth in the lake water continue to fluctuate, in response to the variable efficiency of the phosphate removal facility at the sewage treatment plant and the re-mobilization of phosphate from the lake sediments.</p> <p>Agriculture, forestry, noise, recreational activities, pollution through surface water or groundwater, dumping, drainage and transport infrastructure are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes

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Site Code	European site	Distance (km)	Qualifying Features (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Characterisation of Potential Effects ²¹	Pathway for Significant Effects	Mitigation Required
000688	Lough Owel SAC	Within	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] Alkaline fens [7230] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]	<p>Potential threats to the conservation interest of Lough Owel include the increasing level of water supply to Mullingar, overfishing, eutrophication caused by local farming practices and pressure from amenity uses such as boating and fishing.</p> <p>Agriculture, noise, recreational activities, pollution through surface water or groundwater, dumping, drainage and transport infrastructure are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, poaching, fisheries activities, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i> <i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i> <i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i> <i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i> <i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i> <i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
000692	Scragh Bog SAC	Within	Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] Alkaline fens [7230] Slender Green Feather-moss (<i>Drepanocladus vermicosus</i>) [1393]	<p>Agriculture, pollution through surface water or groundwater, and transport infrastructure (paths and tracks) are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i> <i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i> <i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i> <i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i> <i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p>	Yes	Yes

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				<p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term. Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo SAC	Within	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]	<p>Agriculture, recreational activities, trapping/poisoning/poaching, infilling of drainage ditches, and urbanisation are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, fisheries activities, poaching and invasive species. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i> <i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i> <i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i> <i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i> <i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i> <i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
001831	Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC	Within	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	<p>The main threat to the esker is quarrying for sand and gravel. This activity already occurs on the site at several locations. Grazing is a critical factor affecting esker habitats, and getting a balance right is important. The presence of too many grazers causes damage to the ground vegetation in both woodlands and grasslands and prevents regeneration of woody species. However, if the grazing level is too low, grasslands are vulnerable to the encroachment of scrub at the expense of species that require open conditions. Fertiliser application, associated with agricultural improvement, also leads to a reduction in species-richness of grasslands.</p> <p>Recreational activities, agriculture, floral competition and compositional dynamics are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate development and invasive species. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p>	Yes	Yes

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				<p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
002337	Crosswood Bog SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>Current land use on the site consists of peat-cutting around the edge of the high bog; it is more intensively cut on the western and southern margins. While the northern margin has drains that extend into the intact bog, it is relatively protected from development due to the proximity to the railway. Forestry is found to the south of the site on areas of cutover bog. Some fields on old cutover are used for pasture and are presently undergoing further reclamation. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site (both old and recent) and extensive burning of the high bog. These are activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.</p> <p>Agriculture, invasive species, road infrastructure, urbanisation, fire and drainage issues are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
002340	Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110]	<p>Land use at Moneybeg Bog includes active peat-cutting to the east and west and forestry along the western margin. Current land use at Clareisland Bog includes peat-cutting to the west and north-west of the high bog and forestry along the southern margin. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage and burning. Drainage has occurred on these high bogs in</p>	Yes	Yes

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			Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>the past and at Moneybeg Bog there is evidence of recent and frequent burning of the high bog. These activities have resulted in habitat loss and damage to the hydrological status, and pose a continuing threat to the viability of these high bogs.</p> <p>Agriculture, invasive species, extraction, road infrastructure, urbanisation, fire and drainage issues are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i> <i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i> <i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i> <i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i> <i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i> <i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
002342	Mount Hevey Bog SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>Current land use on the site consists of limited mechanised peat-cutting, mostly on the eastern end of the high bog. There are areas of old peat cuttings all around the site with some very old abandoned regenerating cutover along the edge of the railway. The area to the east of the site has been afforested. Areas of cutover have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site (both old and recent) and burning of the high bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.</p> <p>Agriculture, invasive species, extraction, road infrastructure, urbanisation, fire and drainage issues are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i> <i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p>	Yes	Yes

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002121	Lough Lene SAC	Within	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]	<p>Agriculture, surface water pollution and transport infrastructure are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, and invasive species. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
002313	Ballymore Fen SAC	Within	Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]	<p>Agriculture, surface water pollution and invasive species are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p>	Yes	Yes

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002336	Carn Park Bog SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>Current land use on the site consists of mechanised peat-cutting, forestry and agricultural reclamation around the edge of the high bog. Peat-cutting is carried out along the track and road, which form the northern and north-western site boundaries. Afforestation occurs on the bog margins and extends onto intact or high bog. Some agricultural grassland has been reclaimed from cutover bog to the south and north-west of the site. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site (both old and recent) and extensive burning of the bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and that pose a continuing threat to its viability.</p> <p>Surface water pollution, transport infrastructure, turf cutting and invasive species are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
000679	Garriskil Bog SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>Turf cutting, invasive species, agriculture, as well as interactions with ground and surface water are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>	Yes	Yes

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			Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
002205	Wooddown Bog SAC	Within	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>Current landuse on the site consists of conservation management with the removal of conifer plantations and the blocking of drainage associated with these plantations, both on the high bog and on the cutover. This work was undertaken as part of the Coillte E.U. Life Project Demonstrating Best Practice in Raised Bog Restoration in Ireland. Active peat-cutting and drainage is occurring outside the south-western boundary and to the north-east of the SAC and there is a major drain running through the centre of the adjacent high bog. There is also some dumping around the site. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability. The site is being actively managed for conservation as part of the Coillte E.U. LIFE Project and most of the required restoration measures have already been carried out. However, some significant threats remain and an After-LIFE management plan is being developed for the future conservation management of the SAC.</p> <p>Turf cutting, invasive species, as well as interactions with ground and surface water are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p>	Yes	Yes

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				<p>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</p> <p>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
002120	Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC	0.8	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]	<p>Agriculture is the main threat or pressure identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, and invasive species. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes
004065	Lough Sheelin SPA	1.8	Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>Agriculture, forestry and leisure fishing are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Yes	Yes

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004017	Mongan Bog SPA	1.9	Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]	<p>Agriculture, transport infrastructure, peat extraction and sand/gravel extraction are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Indirect	Yes
000580	Mongan Bog SAC	2.5	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>Extraction, drainage, agriculture and on-site land use activities are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Indirect	Yes
002201	Derragh Bog SAC	3.4	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Bog woodland [91D0]	<p>Invasive species, fire regime and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p>	Indirect	Yes

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				<p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
000575	Ferbane Bog SAC	3.7	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>Agriculture, urbanisation, transport infrastructure and succession processes are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Indirect	Yes
004061	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	3.8	Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>Agriculture, fisheries activities (bottom culture) and forestry are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the</p>	Indirect	Yes

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				<p>waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
000576	Fin Lough (Offaly) SAC	4.4	Alkaline fens [7230] Geyer's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>) [1013]	<p>Current land uses on the site include forestry, peat-cutting and agriculture. The forestry is found on a small section of high bog and adjoining cutover in the southwest of the site. Areas of cutover in the south and west of the site that were previously forested have only recently been clear-felled. Active peat-cutting is taking place in the north-west, east and south-east of the site. Two fields in the north of the site have been reclaimed for agriculture. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site and burning of the high bog. There is also evidence of old burning in the northern part of the high bog. All these activities have resulted in the loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.</p> <p>There are no site-specific threats identified in the standard data form by the NPWS.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Indirect	Yes
001625	Castlesampson Esker SAC	8.8	Turloughs [3180] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (*)	<p>Agriculture, modification to natural processes, hydrological interactions such as drainage, and urbanisation are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>	Unknown	Yes

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			important orchid sites) [6210]	<p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
002339	Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC	9.0	Turloughs [3180] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Bog woodland [91D0]	<p>Current land use on the site consists of limited peat-cutting at the north-east and south-west of the site. There is a small area of commercial forestry at the east of the site. Some areas of cutover bog at the south have been reclaimed for agriculture. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include frequent burning. This recurrent burning is having a serious drying effect on the bog. Drainage, for the most part, is restricted to the cutover areas of the bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.</p> <p>Urbanisation, invasive species, landfill, land reclamation and drying out, general and modification of hydrographic functioning, general are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p>	Unknown	Yes

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				<p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
000448	Fortwilliam Turlough SAC	11.4	Turloughs [3180]	<p>Threats to turloughs stem mainly from drainage and agricultural improvement. Fortwilliam seems largely unaffected by drainage, and standing water may persist throughout the summer. It is an oligotrophic site, that indicates that it has escaped significant nutrient input but renders it sensitive to damage should this occur. The turlough is grazed by cattle and sheep, but is undivided.</p> <p>Agriculture, ground water pollution, landfill, land reclamation and drying out, general and modification of hydrographic functioning, general are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Unknown	Yes
000611	Lough Funshinagh SAC	12.2	Turloughs [3180] Rivers with muddy banks with Chenopodium rubri p.p. and Bidention p.p. vegetation [3270]	<p>Some of the major threats to lakes in Ireland arise from drainage and agricultural intensification. In the case of the latter, the application of fertiliser can lead to eutrophication and a general loss of species diversity. Lough Funshinagh is currently mesotrophic, but it has been described in the past as being full of vegetation. Thus, it may be that it has not been enriched significantly by agricultural run-off in recent times. There are localised eutrophic patches around the shores where grazing animals congregate, but the lake water is strikingly clear. There have been attempts at drainage in the past, most recently in 1990. As yet, this has resulted in little structural damage to the site.</p> <p>Agriculture and transport infrastructure are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation and invasive species. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other</i></p>	Unknown	Yes

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				<p>landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</p> <p>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</p> <p>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</p> <p>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</p> <p>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
000216	River Shannon Callows SAC	12.6	<p>Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>) [6410]</p> <p>Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510]</p> <p>Limestone pavements [8240]</p> <p>Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]</p> <p>Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]</p>	<p>The Shannon Callows are used for summer dry-stock grazing (mostly cattle, with some sheep and a few horses), and permanent hay meadow. About 30 ha is a nature reserve owned by voluntary conservation bodies. The River Shannon is used increasingly for recreational purposes with coarse angling and boating accounting for much of the visitor numbers. Intermittent and scattered damage to the habitats has occurred due to over-deepening of drains and peat silt deposition, water-skiing, ploughing and neglect of hay meadow (or reversion to pasture). However, none of these damaging activities can yet be said to be having a serious impact. Threats to the quality of the site may come from the siting of boating marinas in areas away from centres of population, fertilising of botanically-rich fields, the use of herbicides, reversion of hay meadow to pasture, neglect of pasture and hay meadow, disturbance of birds by boaters, anglers, birdwatchers and the general tourist. The maintenance of generally high-water levels in winter and spring benefits all aspects of the flora and fauna, but in this regard, summer flooding is a threat to breeding birds, and may cause neglect of farming.</p> <p>Forestry, agriculture, tourism, recreation and amenity, hydrological interactions and paths, tracks and trails are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</p> <p>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</p> <p>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</p> <p>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</p> <p>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</p> <p>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</p>	Indirect	Yes

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				For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.		
004097	River Suck Callows SPA	13.0	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>Agriculture, forestry, urbanisation, recreational activities and fisheries activities are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i> <i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Indirect	Yes
004232	River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA	14.0	Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>) [A229]	<p>Urbanisation, transport infrastructure and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as: <i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i> <i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i> <i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Indirect	Yes
002299	River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC	14.0	Alkaline fens [7230] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) [1099] Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) [1106] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]	<p>Fishing is a main tourist attraction on the Boyne and Blackwater and there are a number of Angler Associations, some with a number of beats. Fishing stands and styles have been erected in places. The Eastern Regional Fishery Board have erected fencing along selected stretches of the river as part of their salmonid enhancement programme. Parts of the river system have been arterially dredged. In 1969 an arterial dredging scheme commenced and disrupted angling for 18 years. The dredging altered the character of the river completely and resulted in many areas in very high banks. The main channel from Drogheda upstream to Navan was left untouched, as were a few stretches on the Blackwater. Ongoing maintenance dredging is carried out along stretches of the river system where the gradient is low. This is extremely destructive to salmonid habitat in the area. Drainage of the adjacent river systems also impacts on the many small wetland areas throughout the site. The River Boyne is a designated Salmonid Water under the E.U. Freshwater Fish Directive.</p>	Indirect	Yes

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				<p>Urbanisation, invasive species, human disturbance from recreational pressures particularly nautical activities, storm damage, succession processes, bridge works, and coastal defence works are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		
004139	Lough Croan Turlough SPA	14.0	Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>Agriculture is the only threat/pressure identified in the standard data form for the site. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The SCI species are particularly sensitive to disturbance effects that can be caused by recreational activities etc. that are identified in the plan. Similarly, these species are sensitive to hydrological interactions that may influence the trophic structure of the waterways and thus indirectly effect food availability. Careful considerations are required for the design and placement of infrastructural developments in relation to this site as well as the management of visitors at this destination.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>	Indirect	Yes
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	14.0	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Reefs [1170]	<p>The main threats to the site and current damaging activities include high inputs of nutrients into the river system from agricultural run-off and several sewage plants, over-grazing within the woodland areas, and invasion by non-native species, for example Cherry Laurel (<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>) and Rhododendron (<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>). The water quality of the site remains vulnerable. Good quality water is necessary to maintain the populations of the Annex II animal species listed above. Good quality is dependent on controlling fertilisation of the grasslands, particularly along the Nore. It also requires that sewage be properly treated before discharge. Drainage activities in the catchment can lead to flash floods that can damage the many Annex II species present. Capital</p>	Indirect	Yes

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			<p>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</p> <p>Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]</p> <p>Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]</p> <p>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculum fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260]</p> <p>European dry heaths [4030]</p> <p>Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]</p> <p>Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220]</p> <p>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p>Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]</p> <p>Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) [1016]</p> <p>Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) [1029]</p> <p>White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]</p> <p>Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) [1095]</p> <p>Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) [1096]</p> <p>River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) [1099]</p> <p>Twaite Shad (<i>Alosa fallax fallax</i>) [1103]</p> <p>Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) [1106]</p> <p>Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]</p> <p>Killarney Fern (<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>) [1421]</p> <p>Nore Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i>) [1990]</p>	<p>and maintenance dredging within the lower reaches of the system pose a threat to migrating fish species such as lamprey and shad. Land reclamation also poses a threat to the salt meadows and the populations of legally protected species therein.</p> <p>Urbanisation, invasive species, human disturbance from recreational pressures particularly nautical activities, storm damage, succession processes, bridge works, and coastal defense works are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p> <p>The QIs of the site are sensitive to ground and surface water interactions, direct land use management actions, inappropriate grazing, drainage, compaction of substrate, trampling of vegetation, invasive species, succession processes and fire regime changes. The Plan introduces potential sources for effects through development infrastructure, amenity and land use objectives.</p> <p>Therefore, mitigation measures are required to be integrated into the Plan, such as:</p> <p><i>Contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Require that development is sensitively designed, so as to minimise its visual impact on the landscape, nature conservation, archaeology and groundwater quality.</i></p> <p><i>Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.</i></p> <p><i>Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</i></p> <p><i>Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.</i></p> <p><i>Seek the continued improvement of water quality, bathing facilities and other recreational opportunities in waterways and to protect the ecology and wildlife thereof.</i></p> <p>For a full list of mitigation measures please refer to Section 5 below.</p>		

5 Mitigation Measures

This section outlines measures that have been incorporated into the Draft Plan in order to mitigate against potential effects to European sites as identified above.

The Draft Plan was being prepared in an iterative manner whereby the Plan and AA documents have informed subsequent versions of the other. These mitigation measures also considered all submissions made during the public consultation during the plan making process.

These mitigation measures ensure that there will be no significant adverse effects to the ecological integrity of any European site from implementation of the Plan. The mitigation measures most relevant to the protection of European sites are identified in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Measures most relevant to the protection of European sites

Draft Plan Provisions	
CPO 10.47 and subsection 10.5.3	
Corridor and Route Selection Process	
The Council will preserve a corridor to enable design options for road improvements and upgrades to be advanced. In this regard, the following Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken for relevant new infrastructure:	
Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental constraints (including those identified in Section 4 of the SEA Environmental Report) and opportunities (such as existing linear infrastructure) will assist in the identification of possible route corridor options; Potentially feasible corridors within which infrastructure could be accommodated will be identified and these corridors assessed. The selection of the preferred route corridor will avoid constraints and meet opportunities to the optimum extent, as advised by the relevant specialists; and In addition to the constraints identified above, site-specific field data may be required to identify the most appropriate corridors. 	
Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially feasible routes within the preferred corridor will be identified and assessed. The selection of preferred routes will avoid constraints and meet opportunities to the optimum extent, as advised by the relevant specialists, taking into account project level information and potential mitigation measures that are readily achievable; In addition to the constraints identified above, site specific field data may be required to identify the most appropriate routes; and 	
In addition to environmental considerations, the identification of route corridors and the refinement of route lines is likely to be informed by other considerations.	
Core Strategy Objectives CPO 2.13 In the assessment of development proposals, to take account of transport corridors, environmental carrying capacity, availability and/or capacity to provide waste water and water supply services, potential to conflict with Water Framework Directive objectives, potential to impact on the integrity of European sites and Annexed Habitats and species, features of biodiversity value including ecological networks, impact on landscape and visual characteristics, education and other socioeconomic objectives.	
Natural Heritage Policy Objectives	
CPO 12.1	Contribute as appropriate towards the protection of designated sites in compliance with relevant EU Directives and applicable national legislation.
CPO 12.2	Support the implementation of any relevant recommendations contained in the National Biodiversity Plan, the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and the National Peatlands Strategy.
CPO 12.3	Support the implementation of the Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020 and any revisions made thereto.
Natura 2000 Sites Policy Objectives	
CPO 12.4	Protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation, candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and candidate Special Protection Areas, designated under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives respectively.
CPO 12.5	Ensure that no plans, programmes, etc. or projects giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European Sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes, etc. or projects).
CPO 12.6	Ensure that any plan or project that could have a significant adverse impact (either by themselves or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site or would result in the deterioration of any habitat or any species reliant on that habitat will not be permitted.
CPO 12.7	Assess any plan or project in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive to determine whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the site either individually or cumulatively upon the integrity, conservation objectives and qualifying interest of any Natura 2000 Site.
CPO 12.8	Require an ecological appraisal for development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of Natura Sites, or a proposed Natura Site and which are likely to have significant effects on that site either individually or cumulatively.
CPO 12.9	Identify and provide appropriate buffer zones between Designated Sites and local biodiversity features and areas zoned for development.
CPO 12.10	Prepare Strategic Habitat Management Plans for Natura 2000 Sites in Council ownership in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant stakeholders.
CPO 12.11	Promote the maintenance and as appropriate, achievement of favourable conservation status of habitats and species and to improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, by maintaining and where appropriate, developing features in the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora.
CPO 12.12	Require that new development proposals affecting designated sites have regard to the sensitivities identified in the SEA Environmental Report prepared in respect of this plan.
Rare and Protected Sites Policy Objectives	
CPO 12.13	Protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of County Westmeath, in recognition of its importance as both a non-renewable resource and a natural asset.
CPO 12.14	Require all new developments in the early pre-planning stage of the planning process to identify, protect and enhance ecological features by making provision for local biodiversity (e.g. through provision of swift boxes, bat roost sites, green roofs, etc.) and provide links to the wider Green Infrastructure network as an essential part of the design process.
CPO 12.15	Support the protection of all native woodlands listed in the National Survey of Native Woodlands 2003 to 2008.
CPO 12.16	Apply the precautionary principle in relation to development proposals in areas identified as being of national nature conservation interest, by requiring a Scientific/ Ecological Risk Assessment to ensure that the development will not impact on the integrity and habitat value of the site.

Draft Plan Provisions

- CPO 12.17 Support and cooperate with Statutory Authorities and other relevant bodies in support of measures taken to manage designated nature conservation sites, in order to achieve their conservation objectives. Specific regard shall be had to Conservation Management Plans and their conservation objectives/ management practices, where they exist.
- CPO 12.18 Consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in regard to any developments (those requiring permission and those not requiring planning permission) which the Council proposes to carry out within pNHAs, NHAs, SACs, SPAs, and other important ecological sites.
- CPO 12.19 Maintain the conservation value of Council owned land within NHAs and pNHAs and promote the conservation value of Council owned lands adjoining NHAs.
- CPO 12.20 Protect and conserve NHAs and pNHAs including NHAs that become designated and notified to the Local Authority during the lifetime of the Plan.
- CPO 12.21 Lighting fixtures should provide only the amount of light necessary for personal safety and should be designed so as to avoid creating glare or emitting light above a horizontal plane. Lighting fixtures should have minimum environmental impact, thereby contributing towards the protection of amenity and the protection of light sensitive species such as bats.

Sites of Biodiversity Value and Non-designated Sites Policy Objectives

- CPO 12.22 Seek to create and enhance ecological linkages and buffer zones from development.
- CPO 12.23 Protect and where possible enhance biodiversity and ecological connectivity, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features, natural lighting conditions, and associated wildlife where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors or stepping stones in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive. Appropriate mitigation and/or compensation to conserve biodiversity, landscape character and green infrastructure networks will be required where habitats are at risk or lost as part of a development.
- CPO 12.24 Recognise that nature conservation is not just confined to designated sites and acknowledge the need to protect non-designated habitats and landscapes and to conserve the biological diversity.

Invasive Species Policy Objectives

- CPO 12.25 Prevent the spread of invasive species within the plan area, including requiring landowners and developers to adhere to best practice guidance in relation to the control of invasive species.
- CPO 12.26 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 applicant will be required to submit a control and management program for the particular invasive species as part of the planning process and to comply with the provisions of the European Communities Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011).
- CPO 12.27 Support, as appropriate, the National Parks and Wildlife Service's efforts to seek to control and manage the spread of non-native invasive species on land and water. Where the presence of non-native invasive species is identified at the site of any proposed development or where the proposed activity has an elevated risk of resulting in the presence of these species, details of how these species will be managed and controlled will be required.

Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows Policy Objectives

- CPO 12.35 Preserve and enhance the amenity and biodiversity value of the County, by promoting the protection of trees, groups of trees and ancient woodlands, of significant amenity value, especially native and broadleaf species.
- CPO 12.36 Protect trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders and seek to designate additional Tree Preservation Orders, where appropriate.
- CPO 12.37 Discourage the felling of mature trees and hedgerow, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows to facilitate development and seek Tree Management Plans to ensure that trees are adequately protected during development and incorporated into the design of new developments.
- CPO 12.38 Protect and preserve existing hedgerows in new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, and where their removal is necessary during the course of road works or other works seek their replacement with new hedgerows of native species indigenous to the area.
- CPO 12.39 Encourage the development of proposals for new woodlands and community woodlands in urban/urban fringe areas utilising funding available through schemes such as the NeighbourWood and Native Woodland Schemes.
- CPO 12.40 Encourage the protection of the trees which are considered an important component of demesne landscapes.

Wetlands Policy Objectives

- CPO 12.41 Resist development that would destroy, fragment or degrade any wetland in the County.
- CPO 12.42 Support the implementation of recommendations made in the County Westmeath Wetlands Survey 2019 and subsequent versions thereof.
- CPO 12.43 Require an Ecological Impact Assessment where it is proposed to fill or reclaim a wetland area.
- CPO 12.44 Protect floodplains, wetlands and watercourses, for their biodiversity and flood protection value.
- CPO 12.45 Ensure that all proposed land zonings take cognisance of appropriate riparian setback distances that support the attainment of high ecological status for water bodies, the conservation of biodiversity and good ecosystem health, and buffer zones from flood plains.
- CPO 12.46 Implement the relevant parts of the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011 and the European Communities (Amendment to Planning and Development) Regulations 2011, which require planning permission to be applied for where the area impacted by works relating to the drainage or reclamation of a wetland exceeds 0.1 hectares or where such works may have a significant effect on the environment. Such applications for permission would need to be supported by an Appropriate Assessment where necessary.

Lighting

- CPO 10.124 Control lighting in urban and rural areas and in particular in sensitive locations, in order to minimise impacts on residential amenity, habitats and species of importance.

Draft Plan Provisions

Habitat and Visitor Management

CPO 6.2 Promote the development and strengthening of the overall value of Westmeath as a tourist destination by encouraging the enhancement and development of sustainable and high-quality visitor attractions, activities and infrastructure, enabling an increase in the overall capacity and long-term development of the county's tourism industry, subject to appropriate siting and design criteria and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

CPO 6.15 Monitor and manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.

CPO 6.24 Promote tourism-related developments in existing settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, subject to existing carrying capacity.

CPO 6.29 Ensure that the development of visitor infrastructure linked to natural and heritage environments, does not detract from the quality and value of these environments

CPO 6.54 Prepare Habitat Management Plans for Westmeath's lakes and Visitor Management Plans for particular areas most used by visitors and where particular sensitivities occur, to support the protection and conservation of our natural resources into the long term.

Lakes

CPO 6.45 Support the provision of infrastructure to enable increased tourism activity associated with Westmeath's lakes, including boating, canoeing and angling while ensuring that such provision does not negatively impact on sensitive environments and subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

Forestry Policy Objective

CPO 9.47 Encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector, which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites (SACs and SPAs) and is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality.

CPO 9.53 Promote in co-operation with the Forest service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine the preparation and adoption of an Indicative Forest Strategy for the County, as an important means of contributing to the protection and enhancement of the county's biodiversity, natural resources and landscape, as resources permit.

Extractive Industry Policy Objective

CPO 9.58 Ensure that development for aggregate extraction, processing and associated concrete production does not significantly impact the following: • Areas of Geological interest as identified in the County Esker Survey • Existing and Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) • Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

• Existing and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) • Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna • High Amenity Areas • Zones of archaeological potential • Important aquifers and sensitive groundwater resources • The vicinity of a recorded monument • Sensitive landscape areas • Established rights of way and walking routes.

Extractive Industry Policy Objective

CPO 9.63 Ensure that all extractions shall be subjected to landscaping requirements and that worked out quarries should be rehabilitated to a use agreed with the Planning Authority which could include recreational, biodiversity, amenity or other end-of-life uses. The use of these rehabilitated sites shall be limited to inert waste and sites shall be authorised under the appropriate waste regulations.

CPO 9.62 Ensure that extractive developments do not adversely impact on environmental quality, including water quality, tourism value, existing infrastructure, residential amenity or the amenity value of neighbouring lands.

6 Conclusion

Stage 1 AA Screening and Stage 2 AA of the Draft Westmeath Plan has been carried out. Implementation of the Draft Plan has the potential to result in effects to the integrity of any European sites, if unmitigated.

The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the qualifying interests, special conservation interests and conservation objectives of the European sites have been addressed by the inclusion of mitigation measures that will prioritise the avoidance of effects in the first place and mitigate effects where these cannot be avoided. In addition, all lower level plans and projects arising through the implementation of the Draft Plan will themselves be subject to AA when further details of design and location are known.

This assessment was undertaken with reference to all subsequent staged of the Plan making process, including all submissions made during the process.

In-combination effects from interactions with other plans and projects was considered in the assessment and the mitigation measures incorporated into the plan are seen to be robust to ensure there will be no significant adverse effects as a result of the implementation of the Draft Plan either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects.

Having incorporated mitigation measures, it is concluded that the Draft Westmeath Plan is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effects on designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects²². This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species, for which these sites have been designated.

²² Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

- a) no alternative solution available,
- b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and
- c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

Appendix I Background information on European sites

List of European sites within 15 km of the Plan boundary; including the Qualifying features (Qualifying Interests or Special Conservation Interests) and Site Vulnerability/Sensitivity

Site Name	Site Code	Distance (km)	Qualifying Features (Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests)	Site Description/Vulnerability
004043	Lough Derravaragh SPA	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Lough Derravaragh is located approximately 12 km north of Mullingar town in Co. Westmeath. It is a medium- to large-sized lake of relatively shallow water (maximum depth 23 m). The lake extends along a south-east/north-west axis for approximately 8 km. The Inny River, a tributary of the River Shannon, is the main inflowing and outflowing river. It is a typical limestone lake with water of high hardness and alkaline pH, and is classified as a mesotrophic system. Agriculture, forestry, hunting and leisure fishing are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
004044	Lough Ennell SPA	Within	Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Lough Ennell is a large, limestone lake located south of Mullingar in Co. Westmeath. It has a length of approximately 6.5 km along its long axis and is mostly about 2 km wide. The River Brosna is the principal inflowing and outflowing river. It is a relatively shallow lake, with a maximum depth of c. 30 m. The water is hard, with low colour and markedly alkaline pH. The lake is classified as a mesotrophic system though it has been eutrophic in the past. The lake bottom is of limestone with a marl deposit. Agriculture, forestry, urbanisation, fishing and recreational activities are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
004045	Glen Lough SPA	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038]	Glen Lough is situated about 5 km north-west of Lough Iron on the border of Co. Westmeath and Co. Longford. Extensive drainage in the 1960s has resulted in a dramatic drop in the watertable here, with the result that there is now little open water, except during flooding in the winter months. Sedge-dominated freshwater marsh now occupies the majority of what was once open water. Plant species present include Bottle Sedge (<i>Carex rostrata</i>), Water Horsetail (<i>Equisetum fluviatile</i>) and Canary Reed-grass (<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>). Other habitats present include reedswamp, wet and dry grassland, cutaway bog colonised by heath vegetation, scrub and wet willow (<i>Salix spp.</i>) woodland. Agriculture and forestry are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
004046	Lough Iron SPA	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Lough Iron is a small- to moderately-sized midland lake, located some 12 km northwest of Mullingar. It is situated on the Inny River, which flows from Lough Derravaragh approximately 5 km to the north-east. Lough Owel occurs a few kilometres to the south-east and is connected to Lough Iron by a small stream. The underlying geology is limestone and the lake is mesotrophic in character. Agriculture and forestry are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
004047	Lough Owel SPA	Within	Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Lough Owel is a medium- to large-sized lake in Co. Westmeath, with a length of c. 6 km along its long axis and a maximum width of 3 km. It is fed by a number of small streams and the main outflow is to the Royal Canal. Water is relatively shallow, with a maximum depth of 22 m. Overlying carboniferous limestone, Lough Owel is one of the most important examples of a limestone lake in the Midlands. The water is moderately hard, alkaline and virtually colourless. The lake appears to be relatively unproductive with low levels of orthophosphate and moderate chlorophyll concentrations. The lake is classified as a mesotrophic system and its status has been stable in recent years. Agriculture, forestry and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
004064	Lough Ree SPA	Within	Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004] Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) [A053] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067]	Situated on the River Shannon between Lanesborough and Athlone, Lough Ree is the third largest lake in the Republic of Ireland. It lies in an ice-deepened depression in carboniferous Limestone. Some of its features (including the islands) are based on glacial drift. The main inflowing rivers are the Shannon, Inny and Hind, and the main outflowing river is the Shannon. The greater part of Lough Ree is less than 10 m in depth, but there are six deep troughs running from north to south, reaching a maximum depth of about 36 m just west of Inchmore. The lake has a very long, indented shoreline and hence has many sheltered bays. It also has a good scattering of islands, most of which are included in the site. Agriculture, forestry. Fishing activities, recreation and invasive species are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.

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			Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	
004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	Within	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>) [A122] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>The Middle Shannon Callows SPA is a long and diverse site that extends for approximately 50 km from the town of Athlone to the town of Portumna; it lies within Counties Galway, Roscommon, Westmeath, Offaly and Tipperary. The site averages about 0.75 km in width though in places is up to 1.5 km wide. Water levels on the site are greatly influenced by the very small fall between Athlone and Portumna and by the weir at Meelick. The site has extensive areas of callow, or seasonally flooded, semi-natural, lowland wet grassland, along both sides of the river. The callows are mainly too soft for intensive farming but are used for hay or silage or for summer grazing. Other habitats of smaller area that occur alongside the river include lowland dry grassland, freshwater marshes, reedbeds and wet woodland. The diversity of semi-natural habitats present and the sheer size of the site attract an excellent diversity of bird species, including significant populations of several.</p> <p>Agriculture, forestry, Fishing activities, transportation services and urbanisation are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
004102	Garriskil Bog SPA	Within	Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]	<p>Garriskil Bog SPA, a raised bog, is located 3 km west of Lough Derravaragh and 3 km east of Rathowen in Co. Westmeath. It is bounded to the south-east and southwest by the rivers Inny and Riffey. The bog is underlain by calcareous shales with a low permeability. A substantial area of uncut high bog remains though much of this is classified as degraded raised bog. Old cutaway bog surrounds the high bog and parts of this are dominated by Downy Birch (<i>Betula pubescens</i>) scrub.</p> <p>Agriculture, forestry, Fishing activities, transportation services and fire management are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
000440	Lough Ree SAC	Within	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Bog woodland [91D0] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]	<p>Lough Ree is the third largest lake in Ireland and is situated in an ice-deepened depression in carboniferous limestone on the River Shannon system between Lanesborough and Athlone. The site spans Counties Longford, Roscommon and Westmeath. Some of its features (including the islands) are based on glacial drift. It has a very long, indented shoreline and hence has many sheltered bays. Although the main habitat, by area, is the lake itself, interesting shoreline, terrestrial and semiaquatic habitats also occur.</p> <p>Land uses within the site include recreation in the form of cruiser hire, angling, camping, picnicking and shooting. Chalet accommodation occurs at a few locations around the lake. Low-intensity grazing occurs on dry and wet grassland around the shore, and some hay is made within the site. Some of these activities are damaging, but in a very localised way, and require careful planning. The main threat to the aquatic life in the lake comes from artificial enrichment of the waters by agricultural and domestic waste, and also by peat silt in suspension that is increasingly limiting the light penetration, and thus restricting aquatic flora to shallower waters. At present Lough Ree is less affected by eutrophication than Lough Derg.</p> <p>Agriculture, forestry, recreational activities, pollution through surface water or groundwater, dumping, drainage, transportation services, inappropriate species introduction and urbanisation are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
000582	Raheenmore Bog SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>This raised bog developed in a small basin in the catchment of two major river systems i.e. the Brosna and the Boyne. It is situated about 5 km from Daingean in Co. Offaly. The peat is very deep, up to 15 m in places. The bog has a well-developed hummock and hollow system.</p> <p>The structure of the bog habitat has been affected by drainage. This has resulted from peat-cutting along the margins of the bog that has led to the lowering of the water table within the adjoining, intact high bog areas. However, the prospects for the future functioning of the habitat are generally good, as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) own much of the site and an extensive programme of drain blocking has taken place. Although the north-eastern section of the bog suffered from burning in the past, the majority of the site is relatively unaffected by this practice at present. Also, peat extraction has largely discontinued.</p> <p>Agriculture and drainage are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites</p>
000685	Lough Ennell SAC	Within	Alkaline fens [7230]	<p>Lough Ennell is a large, open, steep-sided lake, located 3 km south of Mullingar in Co. Westmeath. The lake bottom is of limestone with a marl deposit. The water is markedly alkaline and mesotrophic, possibly owing to effluents received from Mullingar town and to fertilizer inputs from farmland surrounding the lake. The River Brosna flows into the lake from the north at Butler's Bridge, and out from the south.</p>

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				<p>Levels of planktonic algal growth in the lake water continue to fluctuate, in response to the variable efficiency of the phosphate removal facility at the sewage treatment plant and the re-mobilization of phosphate from the lake sediments.</p> <p>Agriculture, forestry, noise, recreational activities, pollution through surface water or groundwater, dumping, drainage and transport infrastructure are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
000688	Lough Owel SAC	Within	<p>Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]</p> <p>Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]</p> <p>Alkaline fens [7230]</p> <p>White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]</p>	<p>Lough Owel is a large hard water lake located approximately 4 km north-west of Mullingar in Co. Westmeath. It is a relatively shallow lake with a rocky, marl-covered bottom.</p> <p>Potential threats to the conservation interest of Lough Owel include the increasing level of water supply to Mullingar, overfishing, eutrophication caused by local farming practices and pressure from amenity uses such as boating and fishing.</p> <p>Agriculture, noise, recreational activities, pollution through surface water or groundwater, dumping, drainage and transport infrastructure are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
000692	Scragh Bog SAC	Within	<p>Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]</p> <p>Alkaline fens [7230]</p> <p>Slender Green Feather-moss (<i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i>) [1393]</p>	<p>Scragh Bog lies approximately 10 km north-west of Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. This site comprises a wet transition fen with a floating root mat that has developed in a small oval-shaped depression. The fen is fed by weak surface springs and drains by an artificially defined outlet. The fen becomes open carr in the central area and in places grades into ombrotrophic bog.</p> <p>Agriculture, pollution through surface water or groundwater, and transport infrastructure (paths and tracks) are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
001810	White Lough, Ben Loughs And Lough Doo SAC	Within	<p>Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]</p> <p>White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]</p>	<p>White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo SAC is comprised of four hard water lakes in a small, poorly-drained valley, 4 km east of Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath.</p> <p>Agriculture, recreational activities, trapping/poisoning/poaching, infilling of drainage ditches, and urbanisation are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
001831	Split Hills And Long Hill Esker SAC	Within	<p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]</p>	<p>Split Hills and Long Hill Esker is a 5 km long site that crosses the main Galway-Dublin road mid-way between Kilbeggan and Tyrrellspass in Co. Westmeath. It is a prominent feature on the local landscape.</p> <p>The main threat to the esker is quarrying for sand and gravel. This activity already occurs on the site at several locations. Grazing is a critical factor affecting esker habitats, and getting a balance right is important. The presence of too many grazers causes damage to the ground vegetation in both woodlands and grasslands and prevents regeneration of woody species. However, if the grazing level is too low, grasslands are vulnerable to the encroachment of scrub at the expense of species that require open conditions. Fertiliser application, associated with agricultural improvement, also leads to a reduction in species-richness of grasslands.</p> <p>Recreational activities, agriculture, floral competition and compositional dynamics are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002337	Crosswood Bog SAC	Within	<p>Active raised bogs [7110]</p> <p>Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]</p>	<p>Crosswood Bog is situated approximately 5 km east of Athlone, Co. Westmeath, mainly in the townlands of Crosswood, Glenaghanvoneen, and Creggan Lower. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The northern margin of the bog lies along the southern side of the Dublin-Galway railway line.</p> <p>Current land use on the site consists of peat-cutting around the edge of the high bog; it is more intensively cut on the western and southern margins. While the northern margin has drains that extend into the intact bog, it is relatively protected from development due to the proximity to the railway. Forestry is found to the south of the site on areas of cutover bog. Some fields on old cutover are used for pasture and are presently undergoing further reclamation. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site (both old and recent) and extensive burning of the high bog. These are activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.</p> <p>Agriculture, invasive species, road infrastructure, urbanisation, fire and drainage issues are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>

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002340	Moneybeg And Clareisland Bogs SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>This site is located on the border of Counties Meath and Westmeath, 9 km east of the town of Granard. It is situated mainly in the townlands of Clareisland or Derrymacegan, Williamstown and Moneybeg in Co. Westmeath, and Ross in Co. Meath.</p> <p>Land use at Moneybeg Bog includes active peat-cutting to the east and west and forestry along the western margin. Current land use at Clareisland Bog includes peat-cutting to the west and north-west of the high bog and forestry along the southern margin. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage and burning. Drainage has occurred on these high bogs in the past and at Moneybeg Bog there is evidence of recent and frequent burning of the high bog. These activities have resulted in habitat loss and damage to the hydrological status, and pose a continuing threat to the viability of these high bogs.</p> <p>Agriculture, invasive species, extraction, road infrastructure, urbanisation, fire and drainage issues are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002342	Mount Hevey Bog SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>Mount Hevey Bog is situated approximately 4 km north-east of Kinnegad, in the townlands of Cloncrave, White Island, Aghamore, Kilwarden and Kilnagalliagh. The Meath-Westmeath County boundary runs through the centre of the bog. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The Dublin-Sligo railway runs through the northern part of the bog isolating two northern lobes. The northern lobes are adjacent to the Royal Canal.</p> <p>Current land use on the site consists of limited mechanised peat-cutting, mostly on the eastern end of the high bog. There are areas of old peat cuttings all around the site with some very old abandoned regenerating cutover along the edge of the railway. The area to the east of the site has been afforested. Areas of cutover have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site (both old and recent) and burning of the high bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.</p> <p>Agriculture, invasive species, extraction, road infrastructure, urbanisation, fire and drainage issues are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002121	Lough Lene SAC	Within	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]	<p>This lake is situated 4 km north-east of Castlepollard in Co. Westmeath. It is a deep (20 m maximum depth), clear, hard-water lake with marl deposition (especially noticeable on the margins).</p> <p>Agriculture, surface water pollution and transport infrastructure are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002313	Ballymore Fen SAC	Within	Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]	<p>Ballymore Fen lies approximately 17 km west of Mullingar adjacent to the Mullingar to Ballymore road (R390) in Co. Westmeath. The geology of the area is carboniferous Limestone. The site occupies a relatively wide and deep depression in the surrounding drift that is fed on both the east and west by springs. The area may at one stage have been a lake of some size but at present is occupied by a transition mire complex with a characteristic lagg fen at the edges.</p> <p>Agriculture, surface water pollution and invasive species are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002336	Carn Park Bog SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>Carn Park Bog is situated 8 km east of Athlone, in the townlands of Tullywood, Carn Park, Cappaghbrack, Warren High and Moydrum, Co. Westmeath. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The margins of the site are bounded by roads on the north, west and southern margins and forestry on the east.</p> <p>Current land use on the site consists of mechanised peat-cutting, forestry and agricultural reclamation around the edge of the high bog. Peat-cutting is carried out along the track and road, which form the northern and north-western site boundaries. Afforestation occurs on the bog margins and extends onto intact or high bog. Some agricultural grassland has been reclaimed from cutover bog to the south and north-west of the site. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site (both old and recent) and extensive burning of the bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and that pose a continuing threat to its viability.</p> <p>Surface water pollution, transport infrastructure, turf cutting and invasive species are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
000679	Garriskil Bog SAC	Within	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>Garriskil Bog SAC consists of two areas of raised bog: Garriskil Bog, which covers 324.81 ha and lies 3 km east of Rathowen in Co. Westmeath; and a small outlier, within the townland of Derrya, which covers 22.9 ha and lies 2.2 km to the east on the northern shore of Lough Derravaragh. Both bogs are remnants of the large river floodplain bogs that developed where the River Inny enters and leaves Lough Derravaragh. Garriskil Bog is bounded to the south-east and south-west by the rivers Inny and Riffey and by</p>

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			Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>the Dublin-Sligo railway line to the north. It is considered an exceptional example of a midland raised bog and includes 170.26 ha of uncut raised bog and 154.55 ha of surrounding areas that includes 109 ha of cutover bog. The Section at Derrya (that comprises part of Lough Derravaragh Bog NHA (site code 000684)) has been restored as part of an EU LIFE project. The site consists of 2.5 ha of high bog and 20.4 ha of cutover, all of which, except for a broadleaf woodland fringe along the River Inny, was afforested in the 1970s. All the conifer plantations were recently clear-felled and restored by drain-blocking. It is bordered by open high bog to the north-east, by the River Inny to the west and by cutover bog grading into Lough Derravaragh to the south-east. The bedrock geology of both sites is carboniferous limestone.</p> <p>Turf cutting, invasive species, agriculture, as well as interactions with ground and surface water are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002205	Wooddown Bog SAC	Within	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>Wooddown Bog SAC occurs within the larger raised bog system that is designated as Wooddown Bog NHA (000694). It is situated 5.0 km north-east of Mullingar in the townland of Wooddown, Co. Westmeath. The underlying geology is carboniferous limestone.</p> <p>Current landuse on the site consists of conservation management with the removal of conifer plantations and the blocking of drainage associated with these plantations, both on the high bog and on the cutover. This work was undertaken as part of the Coillte E.U. Life Project Demonstrating Best Practice in Raised Bog Restoration in Ireland. Active peat-cutting and drainage is occurring outside the south-western boundary and to the north-east of the SAC and there is a major drain running through the centre of the adjacent high bog. There is also some dumping around the site. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability. The site is being actively managed for conservation as part of the Coillte E.U. LIFE Project and most of the required restoration measures have already been carried out. However, some significant threats remain and an After-LIFE management plan is being developed for the future conservation management of the SAC.</p> <p>Turf cutting, invasive species, as well as interactions with ground and surface water are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002120	Lough Bane And Lough Glass SAC	0.8	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]	<p>This site is located on the Meath/Westmeath border, about 10 km south of Oldcastle. It comprises three lakes situated in a shallow valley. Lough Bane is by far the largest of the group, with the much smaller Lough Glass occurring immediately to the east and Lough Glass North to the north-west. The lakes occur at the headwaters of the River Deel, with the main outflow at the south-east end of Lough Bane. The outflow is not very substantial and partly overgrown with vegetation. The connection between Lough Glass and Lough Bane has now been severed and the flow from Lough Glass is diverted to the south-west. The water level has dropped over the years and has exposed soft marl along parts of the shore.</p> <p>Agriculture is the main threat or pressure identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
004065	Lough Sheelin SPA	1.8	Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>Lough Sheelin is a medium to large-sized lake, located on the border of Counties Cavan, Westmeath and Meath. It is a relatively shallow alkaline lake with a maximum depth of 14 m. The Inny River, a main tributary of the River Shannon, is the main outflow from the lake.</p> <p>Agriculture, forestry and leisure fishing are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
004017	Mongan Bog SPA	1.9	Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]	<p>Mongan Bog is a midland raised bog of medium size situated immediately east of the monastic site of Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, and 12 km south of Athlone. It is situated in a basin, surrounded on part of its perimeter by high ground on mineral soil.</p> <p>Agriculture, transport infrastructure, peat extraction and sand/gravel extraction are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
000580	Mongan Bog SAC	2.5	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>Mongan Bog is a midland raised bog of medium size situated immediately east of the monastic site of Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, and 12 km south of Athlone. It is situated in a basin, surrounded on 95% of its perimeter by high ground on mineral soil. At two points in the north it shares a common boundary with Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC. Most of the bog is a Statutory Nature Reserve, established in 1987. The bog has been the subject of ongoing intensive research since 1972.</p> <p>Although there have been only low levels of disturbance in the recent past, the hydrology of the bog has been adversely affected by drainage, due mainly to the effects of domestic peat-cutting. The presence of algal mats in many of the pools indicates a serious lowering of water levels due to drainage. Burning is a further threat though there have been no serious fires in recent years. As most of the high bog lies within a Nature Reserve the future prospects for the site are good.</p>

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				Extraction, drainage, agriculture and on-site land use activities are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
002203	Girley (Drewstown) Bog SAC	2.9	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>Girley (Drewstown) Bog SAC occurs within the larger raised bog system that is designated as Girley Bog NHA (001580). It is situated 5.5 km north of Athboy in the townland of Drewstown, Co. Meath. The site is part of a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. It is bordered by open high bog on its northern and eastern margins, by agricultural land on its western margin and by a conifer plantation on cutover bog on its southern side. The underlying geology is carboniferous limestone.</p> <p>Current landuse on the site consists of conservation management with the removal of conifer plantations and the blocking of the drainage associated with these plantations, both on the high bog and on the cutover. However, active drains are still present on the northern and eastern boundaries of the SAC that are adversely impacting on its restoration and need to be blocked in consultation with other stakeholders. In addition, there have been fires on the adjacent bog and within the SAC causing some damage to the recovering vegetation. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability. There is also some dumping around the site.</p> <p>Invasive species, fire regime and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002201	Derragh Bog SAC	3.4	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Bog woodland [91D0]	<p>Derragh Bog SAC includes most of the raised bog system known as Derragh Bog that occurs within Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough NHA (000985). The boundary in the west and south of the site is contiguous with the boundary of Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA (site code 004061). It is a small raised bog situated 2.5 km east of Abbylara in County Longford in the townland of Derragh. This bog is an example of a floodplain raised bog that borders two lakes, Lough Kinale to the west and Derragh Lough to the south, the River Inny to the east and wet agricultural grassland to the north. To the west and south there is a full transition from high bog to cutover bog to semi-natural birch woodland, fen and swamp to Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough. The underlying geology of both lakes and bog is carboniferous limestone.</p> <p>Invasive species, fire regime and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
001776	Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC	3.7	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	<p>Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC is a narrow esker ridge extending 2 km east from Clonmacnoise in Co. Offaly. The site is adjacent to the River Shannon Callows, to the north, and Mongan raised bog, to the south. The western area includes Bunthulla Hill (north of the road) and Hanging Hill (south of the road); the central area runs along both sides of the summit ridge before widening out eastwards to include a substantial area of esker grassland centred on the site of an old ring-fort.</p> <p>Agriculture, urbanisation, transport infrastructure and succession processes are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
000575	Ferbane Bog SAC	3.7	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	<p>Ferbane Bog is a relatively large, domed, raised bog located about 10 km east of Shannonbridge in Co. Offaly. It is underlain by low permeability Waulsortian limestone and clay-rich tills.</p> <p>Drainage is extensive at this site and has caused significant drying out. Past peat cutting and some active peat-cutting have also speeded up water loss. However, although the high bog has suffered some water loss, it is still in restorable condition.</p> <p>Agriculture, turf cutting, forestry, drainage, hydrological interactions, urbanisation, transport infrastructure and succession processes are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
004061	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	3.8	Pochar (Aythya ferina) [A059] Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>Lough Kinale is a relatively small lake that is situated immediately downstream of Lough Sheelin, both lakes being near the top of the catchment of the Inny River, a main tributary of the River Shannon. Derragh Lough, a much smaller system, is connected to Lough Kinale and the Inny River. The site is located on the border of Cos Cavan, Longford and Westmeath. This is a typical limestone system and is very shallow (maximum depth of Lough Kinale is c. 4 m). As with Lough Sheelin, the trophic status of the lake has varied greatly since the 1970s due to pollution. It was recently (1998-2000) classified as a highly eutrophic system. The lake was formerly an important Trout fishery.</p> <p>Agriculture, fisheries activities (bottom culture) and forestry are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002341	Ardagullion Bog SAC	3.8	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	<p>Ardagullion Bog is located 5 km north-east of Edgeworthstown, mainly in the townlands of Cloonshannagh (Coolamber Manor Demesne) and Ardaguillon in Co. Longford. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded in the north-east by the local road running to Coolagherty.</p>

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			Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	Current land uses on the site include forestry, peat-cutting and agriculture. The forestry is found on a small section of high bog and adjoining cutover in the southwest of the site. Areas of cutover in the south and west of the site that were previously forested have only recently been clear-felled. Active peat-cutting is taking place in the north-west, east and south-east of the site. Two fields in the north of the site have been reclaimed for agriculture. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site and burning of the high bog. There is also evidence of old burning in the northern part of the high bog. All these activities have resulted in the loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability. There are no site-specific threats identified in the standard data form by the NPWS.
000576	Fin Lough (Offaly) SAC	4.4	Alkaline fens [7230] Geyer's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>) [1013]	Fin Lough is a shallow limestone lake surrounded by a complex of wetland habitats; 7 km north-east of Shannonbridge in Co. Offaly. The name Fionn Loch, "White Lake", probably derives from the white colour of the lake bottom caused by marl deposits. It is a shallow lake, about 16 ha in extent (in winter) and bounded to the north and east by the Clonfinlough esker ridge, and to the south and west by Blackwater Bog, which is now largely cut-over. The lake and its surrounding wetland communities are arranged in distinct zones reflecting wetness and substrate. They include open water, reedswamp, tall sedge, alkaline fen, fen-bog transition, swamp woodland and bog. The transition from calcium-rich lake to reedbed, to fen, to bog is relatively intact in some areas, which is exceptional for this part of the country. Agriculture, modification to natural processes, hydrological interactions such as drainage, and urbanisation are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
000572	Clara Bog SAC	5.5	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Bog woodland [91D0]	Clara Bog is situated some 2 km south of Clara village in Co. Offaly. Much of it is State-owned and designated a statutory Nature Reserve. Paths, tracks and walkways, agriculture, hydrological interactions, urbanisation, and fisheries activities are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form.
000581	Moyclare Bog SAC	6.1	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	Moyclare Bog is a small raised bog situated 4 km west of Ferbane in Co. Offaly. Its mean height above sea level is 54 m. On the western edge of the bog, a low peat face with no perimeter drain lies adjacent to wet peaty pasture, which has a spring-line at its junction with mineral soil. The water from this spring disappears under the peat dome of the bog. The site occurs in close proximity to a number of important raised bogs close to the floodplain of the River Shannon. Agriculture, turf cutting, forestry, drainage, hydrological interactions, and urbanisation are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
000571	Charleville Wood SAC	6.4	Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) [1016]	Charleville Wood is a large Oak woodland surrounded by estate parkland and agricultural grassland located about 3 km south-west of Tullamore in Co. Offaly. The site, which is underlain by deep glacial deposits, includes a small lake with a wooded island, and a stream runs along the western perimeter. The woodland is considered to be one of very few ancient woodlands remaining in Ireland, with some parts undisturbed for at least 200 years. Recreational activities, fishing, poaching and the removal of vegetation are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
001625	Castlesampson Esker SAC	8.8	Turloughs [3180] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	Castlesampson Esker is a complex site with esker, turlough and raised bog all found. The esker is the most westerly of an important group of eskers centred on Adrnaclon Hill in south-east Co. Roscommon, 9 km west of Athlone. It forms a steep-sided, crescent-shaped hill composed of glacial gravels, situated on the south side of a metalled road. Although gravel is being quarried all around the esker and gravel pits occur within the site, the esker ridge itself is largely intact and fairly undisturbed. Lying to the east of the esker is a raised bog, whilst to its west is a turlough. Removal of material such as gravel/clay is the only threat/pressure identified in the standard data form for the site. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
002339	Ballynamona Bog And Corkip Lough SAC	9.0	Turloughs [3180] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough is situated approximately 9 km west of Athlone, mainly in the townlands of Skeanamuck, Carrowkeeran and Pollalaher, in Co. Roscommon. The site comprises a relatively small portion of what was once a large bog complex, and includes areas of high bog and cutover bog, and also the turlough, Corkip Lough.

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			Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Bog woodland [91D0]	<p>Current land use on the site consists of limited peat-cutting at the north-east and south-west of the site. There is a small area of commercial forestry at the east of the site. Some areas of cutover bog at the south have been reclaimed for agriculture. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include frequent burning. This recurrent burning is having a serious drying effect on the bog. Drainage, for the most part, is restricted to the cutover areas of the bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.</p> <p>Urbanisation, invasive species, landfill, land reclamation and drying out, general and modification of hydrographic functioning, general are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
000448	Fortwilliam Turlough SAC	11.4	Turloughs [3180]	<p>Fortwilliam Turlough is situated close to the eastern shore of Lough Ree, 6 km south of Lanesborough, in Co. Longford. The surrounding countryside is flat, with a thin cover of drift. The floor of the basin is at two levels, a lower central area with several lakes and ponds, and a higher surrounding area of till with scattered rocks, extending north-westwards into flat fields and woodland. There is a little surface flow into the basin and floodwater appears to be strongly calcareous.</p> <p>Threats to turloughs stem mainly from drainage and agricultural improvement. Fortwilliam seems largely unaffected by drainage, and standing water may persist throughout the summer. It is an oligotrophic site, which indicates that it has escaped significant nutrient input but renders it sensitive to damage should this occur. The turlough is grazed by cattle and sheep, but is undivided.</p> <p>Agriculture, ground water pollution, landfill, land reclamation and drying out, general and modification of hydrographic functioning, general are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
000611	Lough Funshinagh SAC	12.2	Turloughs [3180] Rivers with muddy banks with <i>Chenopodium rubri p.p.</i> and <i>Bidentia p.p.</i> vegetation [3270]	<p>Lough Funshinagh is located approximately 12 km north-west of Athlone, in Co. Roscommon. The lake, which is underlain by carboniferous limestone, is classified as a turlough because it fluctuates to a significant extent every year and occasionally dries out entirely (approximately two to three times every ten years). In most years, however, an extensive area of water persists. This is filled with vegetation, providing excellent breeding habitat for wildfowl, and the site is designated a Wildfowl Sanctuary. The lake is fed by springs and a small catchment to the west. It is mesotrophic in quality, with some marl (calcium carbonate) deposition, and is surrounded by pastures.</p> <p>Some of the major threats to lakes in Ireland arise from drainage and agricultural intensification. In the case of the latter, the application of fertiliser can lead to eutrophication and a general loss of species diversity. Lough Funshinagh is currently mesotrophic, but it has been described in the past as being full of vegetation. Thus, it may be that it has not been enriched significantly by agricultural run-off in recent times. There are localised eutrophic patches around the shores where grazing animals congregate, but the lake water is strikingly clear. There have been attempts at drainage in the past, most recently in 1990. As yet, this has resulted in little structural damage to the site.</p> <p>Agriculture and transport infrastructure are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
000216	River Shannon Callows SAC	12.6	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>) [6410] Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] Limestone pavements [8240] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]	<p>The River Shannon Callows is a long and diverse site that consists of seasonally flooded, semi-natural, lowland wet grassland, along and beside the river between the towns of Athlone and Portumna. It is approximately 50 km long and averages about 0.75 km wide (reaching 1.5 km wide in places). Along much of its length the site is bordered by raised bogs (many, but not all, of which are subject to large-scale harvesting), esker ridges and limestone-bedrock hills. The soils grade from siltyalluvial to peat. This site has a common boundary, and is closely associated, with two other sites with similar habitats, River Suck Callows and Little Brosna Callows.</p> <p>The Shannon Callows are used for summer dry-stock grazing (mostly cattle, with some sheep and a few horses), and permanent hay meadow. About 30 ha is a nature reserve owned by voluntary conservation bodies. The River Shannon is used increasingly for recreational purposes with coarse angling and boating accounting for much of the visitor numbers. Intermittent and scattered damage to the habitats has occurred due to over-deepening of drains and peat silt deposition, water-skiing, ploughing and neglect of hay meadow (or reversion to pasture). However, none of these damaging activities can yet be said to be having a serious impact. Threats to the quality of the site may come from the siting of boating marinas in areas away from centres of population, fertilising of botanically-rich fields, the use of herbicides, reversion of hay meadow to pasture, neglect of pasture and hay meadow, disturbance of birds by boaters, anglers, birdwatchers and the general tourist. The maintenance of generally high-water levels in winter and spring benefits all aspects of the flora and fauna, but in this regard, summer flooding is a threat to breeding birds, and may cause neglect of farming.</p>

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				Forestry, agriculture, tourism, recreation and amenity, hydrological interactions and paths, tracks and trails are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.
004097	River Suck Callows SPA	13.0	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>The River Suck Callows SPA is a linear, sinuous site comprising a section of the River Suck from Castlecoote, Co. Roscommon to its confluence with the River Shannon close to Shannonbridge, a distance of approximately 70 km along the course of the river. The river forms part of the boundary between Counties Galway and Roscommon. The site includes the River Suck itself and the adjacent areas of seasonally-flooded semi-natural lowland wet callow grassland. The River Suck is the largest tributary of the River Shannon.</p> <p>Agriculture, forestry, urbanisation, recreational activities and fisheries activities are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
004232	River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA	14.0	Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>) [A229]	<p>The River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA is a long, linear site that comprises stretches of the River Boyne and several of its tributaries; most of the site is in Co. Meath, but it extends also into Cos Cavan, Louth and Westmeath. It includes the following river sections: the River Boyne from the M1 motorway bridge, west of Drogheda, to the junction with the Royal Canal, west of Longwood, Co Meath; the River Blackwater from its junction with the River Boyne in Navan to the junction with Lough Ramor in Co. Cavan; the Tremblestown River/Athboy River from the junction with the River Boyne at Kilnagross Bridge west of Trim to the bridge in Athboy, Co. Meath; the Stoneyford River from its junction with the River Boyne to Stonestown Bridge in Co. Westmeath; the River Deel from its junction with the River Boyne to Cummer Bridge, Co. Westmeath. The site includes the river channel and marginal vegetation.</p> <p>Urbanisation, transport infrastructure and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002299	River Boyne And River Blackwater SAC	14.0	Alkaline fens [7230] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) [1099] Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) [1106] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]	<p>This site comprises the freshwater element of the River Boyne as far as the Boyne Aqueduct, the Blackwater as far as Lough Ramor and the Boyne tributaries including the Deel, Stoneyford and Tremblestown Rivers. These riverine stretches drain a considerable area of Meath and Westmeath, and smaller areas of Cavan and Louth. The underlying geology is carboniferous Limestone for the most part, with areas of Upper, Lower and Middle well represented. In the vicinity of Kells Silurian Quartzite is present while close to Trim are carboniferous Shales and Sandstones. There are many large towns adjacent to but not within the site, including Slane, Navan, Kells, Trim, Athboy and Ballivor.</p> <p>Fishing is a main tourist attraction on the Boyne and Blackwater and there are a number of Angler Associations, some with a number of beats. Fishing stands and styles have been erected in places. The Eastern Regional Fishery Board have erected fencing along selected stretches of the river as part of their salmonid enhancement programme. Parts of the river system have been arterially dredged. In 1969 an arterial dredging scheme commenced and disrupted angling for 18 years. The dredging altered the character of the river completely and resulted in many areas in very high banks. The main channel from Drogheda upstream to Navan was left untouched, as were a few stretches on the Blackwater. Ongoing maintenance dredging is carried out along stretches of the river system where the gradient is low. This is extremely destructive to salmonid habitat in the area. Drainage of the adjacent river systems also impacts on the many small wetland areas throughout the site. The River Boyne is a designated Salmonid Water under the E.U. Freshwater Fish Directive.</p> <p>Urbanisation, invasive species, human disturbance from recreational pressures particularly nautical activities, storm damage, succession processes, bridge works, and coastal defence works are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
004139	Lough Croan Turlough SPA	14.0	Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	<p>Situated approximately 6 km east of the River Suck in Co. Roscommon, Lough Croan Turlough is a linear wetland, aligned north-west/south-east, which lies in a flattish area of glacial till. It is split into two main parts - the east functions as a typical turlough, with a wet, reedy centre, while the west is a fen, floating in places, which also floods in winter.</p> <p>Agriculture is the only threat/pressure identified in the standard data form for the site. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
002162	River Barrow And River Nore SAC	14.0	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Reefs [1170] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330]	<p>This site consists of the freshwater stretches of the Barrow and Nore River catchments as far upstream as the Slieve Bloom Mountains, and it also includes the tidal elements and estuary as far downstream as Creadun Head in Waterford. The site passes through eight counties – Offaly, Kildare, Laois, Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Wexford and Waterford. Major towns along the edge of the site include Mountmellick, Portarlinton, Monasterevin, Stradbally, Athy, Carlow, Leighlinbridge, Graiguenamanagh, New Ross, Inistioge, Thomastown, Callan, Bennettsbridge, Kilkenny and Durrow. The larger of the many tributaries include the Lerr, Fushoge, Mountain, Aughavaud, Owenass, Boherbaun and Stradbally Rivers of the Barrow, and the Delour, Dinin, Erkina, Owveg, Munster, Arrigle and King's Rivers on the Nore.</p>

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		<p>Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] European dry heaths [4030] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) [1016] Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) [1029] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092] Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) [1095] Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) [1096] River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) [1099] Twaiite Shad (<i>Alosa fallax fallax</i>) [1103] Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) [1106] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355] Killarney Fern (<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>) [1421] Nore Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i>) [1990]</p>	<p>The main threats to the site and current damaging activities include high inputs of nutrients into the river system from agricultural run-off and several sewage plants, over-grazing within the woodland areas, and invasion by non-native species, for example Cherry Laurel (<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>) and Rhododendron (<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>). The water quality of the site remains vulnerable. Good quality water is necessary to maintain the populations of the Annex II animal species listed above. Good quality is dependent on controlling fertilisation of the grasslands, particularly along the Nore. It also requires that sewage be properly treated before discharge. Drainage activities in the catchment can lead to flash floods that can damage the many Annex II species present. Capital and maintenance dredging within the lower reaches of the system pose a threat to migrating fish species such as lamprey and shad. Land reclamation also poses a threat to the salt meadows and the populations of legally protected species therein.</p> <p>Urbanisation, invasive species, human disturbance from recreational pressures particularly nautical activities, storm damage, succession processes, bridge works, and coastal defense works are the main threats or pressures identified by the NPWS in the standard data form. No other site-specific threats have been identified from the NPWS database of protected sites.</p>
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List of all Qualifying Interests of SACs that have undergone Assessment including Summaries of Current Threats and Sensitivity to Effects

Qualifying Interests	Current threats to Qualifying Interests	Sensitivity of Qualifying Interests
Active raised bogs [7110]	Drainage; burning; peat extraction; overgrazing; afforestation; erosion; and climate change.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Low sensitivity to hydrological changes. Erosion, land-use changes.
Alkaline fens [7230]	Land reclamation, peat extraction; afforestation; erosion and landslides triggered by human activity; drainage; burning and infrastructural development.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Inappropriate management.
Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]	Inappropriate grazing levels; invasive species; and clearance for agriculture or felling for timber.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Changes in management.
Twaite Shad (<i>Alosa fallax fallax</i>) [1103]	Habitat quality, particularly at spawning sites is the most notable threat to this species.	Changes in management. Changes in nutrient or base status. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change.
Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]	Abandonment; overgrazing; burning; outdoor recreation; quarries; communication networks; and wind farm developments.	Changes in management. Changes in nutrient or base status. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change.
Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]	Grazing; sand and gravel extraction; recreational activities; coastal protection works.	Overgrazing and erosion. Changes in management.
Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330]	Overgrazing; erosion; invasive species, particularly common cordgrass (<i>Spartina anglica</i>); infilling and reclamation.	Marine and groundwater dependent. Medium sensitivity to hydrological change. Changes in salinity and tidal regime. Overgrazing, erosion and accretion.
White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]	Poor substrate quality due to increased growth of algal and macrophyte vegetation as a result of severe nutrient enrichment, as well as physical siltation.	Invasive species, disease, surface water dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological change. Very highly sensitive to pollution.
Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]	Land reclamation, peat extraction; afforestation; erosion and landslides triggered by human activity; drainage; burning and infrastructural development.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Inappropriate management.
Bog woodland [91D0]	The introduction of alien species; sub-optimal grazing patterns; general forestry management; increases in urbanisation and human habitation adjacent to oak woodlands; and the construction of communication networks through the woodland.	Changes in management. Changes in nutrient or base status. Introduction of alien species.
Calaminarian grasslands of the (<i>Violetalia calaminariae</i>) [6130]	Land reclamation, afforestation; drainage; and infrastructural development.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Inappropriate management.
Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210]	Overgrazing; extractive industries; recreational activities and improved access.	Erosion, overgrazing and recreation.
Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	Drainage; burning; peat extraction; overgrazing; afforestation; erosion; and climate change.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Low sensitivity to hydrological changes. Erosion, land-use changes.
Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	Drainage; burning; peat extraction; overgrazing; afforestation; erosion; and climate change.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Low sensitivity to hydrological changes. Erosion, land-use changes.
Slender Green Feather-moss (<i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i>) [1393]	Pollution, land use, climate change and invasive species.	Erosion, overgrazing and recreation.
Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170]	Agricultural improvement; overgrazing and inappropriate grazing; forestry; recreational activity.	Overgrazing, and erosion. Changes in management.
Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]	Natural erosion processes exacerbated by recreation and sand extraction. Coastal protection interfering with natural processes.	Overgrazing, and erosion. Changes in management.
Estuaries [1130]	Pollution, fishing /aquaculture and habitat quality.	Inappropriate development, changes in turbidity
Marsh Fritillary (<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>) [1065]	Declines in habitat quality lead to species decline.	Habitat management; land use change and drainage.
European dry heaths [4030]	Afforestation, overburning, over-grazing, under-grazing and bracken invasion.	Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Changes in management. Changes in nutrient status.
Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]	Recreation; overgrazing and inappropriate grazing: non-native plant species, particularly sea buckthorn (<i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>).	Overgrazing, and erosion. Changes in management.
Grey Seal (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>) [1364]	Distance to human activities, accidental entanglement in fishing gear competition for prey resources, illegal killing, pollution and habitat degradation.	Prey availability, reduction in available habitat and water quality.
Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]	Hydrological changes, afforestation; waste water; invasive alien species; sport and leisure activities.	Surface and groundwater dependant. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Highly sensitive to pollution.
Humid dune slacks [2190]	Agricultural improvement; overgrazing and inappropriate grazing; forestry; recreational activity.	Overgrazing, and erosion. Changes in management. Sensitive to hydrological change.
River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) [1099]	Channel maintenance, barriers, passage obstruction, gross pollution and specific pollutants.	Surface water dependent Highly sensitive to hydrological change.
Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) [1096]	Channel maintenance, barriers, passage obstruction, gross pollution and specific pollutants.	Surface water dependent Highly sensitive to hydrological change.

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Limestone pavements [8240]	Overgrazing; extractive industries; recreational activities and improved access.	Erosion, overgrazing and recreation.
Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]	Decrease in water quality: Use of pesticides; fertilization; vegetation removal; professional fishing (including lobster pots and fyke nets); unting; poisoning; sand and gravel extraction; mechanical removal of peat; urbanised areas; human habitation; continuous urbanization; drainage; management of aquatic and bank vegetation for drainage purposes; and canalization or modifying structures of inland water course.	Surface and marine water dependent. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Sensitivity to pollution.
Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) [1029]	Poor substrate quality due to increased growth of algal and macrophyte vegetation as a result of severe nutrient enrichment, as well as physical siltation.	Surface water dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological change. Very highly sensitive to pollution.
Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]	Over-grazing by cattle or sheep; infilling and reclamation.	Marine and groundwater dependent. Medium sensitivity to hydrological change. Changes in salinity and tidal regime. Coastal development and reclamation.
Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410]	Agricultural intensification; drainage; abandonment of pastoral systems.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Changes in management. Changes in nutrient status.
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]	Aquaculture, fishing, bait digging, removal of fauna, reclamation of land, coastal protection works and invasive species, particularly cord-grass; hard coastal defence structures; sea-level rise.	Surface and marine water dependent. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Moderate sensitivity to pollution. Changes to salinity and tidal regime. Coastal development.
Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]	Nutrient alterations; management shifts in the associated peatland habitat, afforestation; waste water; invasive alien species; sport and leisure activities.	Surface and groundwater dependant. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Highly sensitive to pollution.
Natural eutrophic lakes with <i>Magnopotamion</i> or <i>Hydrocharition</i> - type vegetation [3150]	Hydrological changes, afforestation; waste water; invasive alien species; sport and leisure activities.	Surface and groundwater dependant. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Highly sensitive to pollution.
Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010]	Reclamation, afforestation and burning; overstocking; invasion by non-heath species; exposure of peat to severe erosion.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Inappropriate management.
Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]	The introduction of alien species; sub-optimal grazing patterns; general forestry management; increases in urbanisation and human habitation adjacent to oak woodlands; and the construction of communication networks through the woodland.	Changes in management. Changes in nutrient or base status. Introduction of alien species.
Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i> [3130]	Nutrient enrichment; afforestation; waste water; invasive alien species; sport and leisure activities.	Surface and groundwater dependant. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Highly sensitive to pollution.
Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i>) [3110]	Nutrient enrichment; afforestation; waste water; invasive alien species; sport and leisure activities.	Surface and groundwater dependant. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Highly sensitive to pollution.
Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]	Disruption of the sediment supply, owing to the interruption of the coastal processes, caused by developments such as car parks and coastal defence structures including rock armour and sea walls. The removal of gravel.	Marine water dependent. Low sensitivity to hydrological changes. Coastal development, trampling from recreational activity and gravel removal.
Petalwort (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>) [1395]	There are no significant impacts affecting this species.	None identified.
Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220]	Ground water interactions, on site management activities.	Surface and groundwater dependant. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Highly sensitive to pollution.
Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) [1095]	Barriers to upstream migration (e.g. weirs), which limit access to spawning beds and juvenile habitat are main threats to this species.	Marine water dependent. Low sensitivity to hydrological changes. Coastal development, trampling from recreational activity.
Reefs [1170]	Professional fishing; taking for fauna; taking for flora; water pollution; climate change; and change in species composition.	Sensitive to disturbance and pollution.
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]	Invasive Species; erosion and accretion.	Marine water dependent. Medium sensitivity to hydrological change. Changes in salinity and tidal regime. Infilling, reclamation, invasive species.
Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) [1106]	Marine survival rates are of concern for the populations.	Disease, parasites and barriers to movement.
Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	Land reclamation, afforestation; drainage; and infrastructural development.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Inappropriate management.
Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]	Drainage; burning; peat extraction; overgrazing; afforestation; erosion; and climate change.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Low sensitivity to hydrological changes. Erosion, land-use changes.
Killarney Fern (<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>) [1421]	Threatened by habitat loss, deliberate collection, encroachment of invasive or vigorous species, or indirectly by water pollution, removal of woodland or alteration of watercourses.	Land use management and direct impacts.
Turloughs [3180]	Nutrient enrichment; afforestation; waste water; invasive alien species; sport and leisure activities.	Surface and groundwater dependant. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Highly sensitive to pollution.
Geyer's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>) [1013]	Loss of riverside and canalside habitat; exploitation of esker sites and drainage of wetlands, and sheep grazing and overexploitation of dune sites.	Groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes.

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Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) [1016]	Loss of riverside and canalside habitat; exploitation of esker sites and drainage of wetlands, and sheep grazing and overexploitation of dune sites.	Groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes.
Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260]	Eutrophication; overgrazing, excessive fertilisation; afforestation; and the introduction of invasive alien species.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Highly sensitive to pollution.
White-clawed crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) [1092]	Poor substrate quality due to increased growth of algal and macrophyte vegetation as a result of severe nutrient enrichment, as well as physical siltation.	Surface water dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological change. Very highly sensitive to pollution.
Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]	Agricultural intensification; drainage; abandonment of pastoral systems.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Changes in management. Changes in nutrient status.
Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510]	Agricultural intensification; drainage; abandonment of pastoral systems.	Surface and groundwater dependent. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Changes in management. Changes in nutrient status.
Rivers with muddy banks with <i>Chenopodium rubri</i> p.p. and <i>Bidens</i> p.p. vegetation [3270]	Aquaculture, fishing, bait digging, removal of fauna, reclamation of land, coastal protection works and invasive species, particularly cord-grass; hard coastal defence structures; sea-level rise.	Surface and marine water dependent. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Moderate sensitivity to pollution. Changes to salinity and tidal regime. Coastal development.

List of all Special Conservation Interest of SPAs that have undergone Assessment including Summaries of Current Threats and Sensitivity to Effects

Special Conservation Interests			Vulnerabilities of Special Conservation Interests
Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]	Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004] Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) [A053] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193]	Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>) [A122] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>) [A229]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bird species are particularly vulnerable to direct disturbance due to noise and/or vibration. These effects are localised, and disturbance effects are foreseen to be low at distances beyond 2km. Direct habitat loss is a serious concern for bird species, as well as the reduction in habitat quality. Habitat degradation could occur through effects such as local enrichment due to agricultural practices or damage to habitat through activities such as trampling. Prey species diversity and availability is a key element of species conservation. Community dynamics and ecosystem functionality are complex concepts and require site specific information. The site synopsis and conservation objectives for the SPAs identified within the ZOI were used to identify any specific prey sensitivities. Availability of nesting/roosting habitat. Vegetation composition, structure and functionality.
Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			Direct land take is a common vulnerability to all sites; as well as significant water quality effects. The conservation objective of all SPAs designated for Wetland and Waterbirds is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat as a resource for the regularly-occurring migratory waterbirds using it.

Appendix II Relationship Other Plans and Programmes

Relationship Other Plans and Programmes	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Relevance to the Plan
Ireland 2040 - Our Plan, the National Planning Framework, (replacing the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020) and the National Development Plan (2018-2027)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Planning Framework is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of to the year 2040. It is a framework to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities for people, and to protect and enhance the environment - from villages to cities, and everything around and in between. The National Development Plan sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the successful implementation of the new National Planning Framework. This will guide national, regional and local planning and investment decisions in Ireland over the next two decades, to cater for an expected population increase of over 1 million people. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan (2016-2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> €27 billion multi-annual Exchequer Capital Investment Plan, which is supported by a programme of capital investment in the wider State sector, that over the period 2016 to 2021 will help to lay the foundations for continued growth in Ireland. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Draft Grid Implementation Plan 2017-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EirGrid's mission is to develop, maintain and operate a safe, secure, reliable, economical and efficient transmission system for Ireland. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objective of this Strategy is 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 over the next 10 years with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture Development (2014-2020)	<i>Vision: "Aquaculture in RC is economically, socially and ecologically sustainable, with a developed infrastructure, strong human potentials and an organized market. The consumption of aquaculture products is equal or above EU average, while the technological development of the sector is among the best in the EU."</i>	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Construction 2020, A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction 2020 sets out a package of measures agreed by the Government and is aimed at stimulating activity in the building industry. The Strategy aims both to increase the capacity of the sector to create and maintain jobs, and to deliver a sustainable sector, operating at an appropriate level. It seeks to learn the lessons of the past and to ensure that the right structures and mechanisms are in place so that they are not repeated. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Marine Spatial Plan for Ireland (in/pending preparation)	It is intended that the Marine Spatial Plan will be finalised in 2020, and forwarded to the European Commission at that time, ahead of the due date for submission by Member States of their plans in March 2021.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021	The Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 sets out actions that the Tourism Leadership Group has identified as priorities to be progressed between now and 2021 in order to maintain sustainable growth in overseas tourism revenue and employment.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Irish Water's Water Services Strategic Plan 2015 and associated Proposed Capital Investment Plan (2014-2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Water Services Strategic Plan sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services over the next 25 years up to 2040. It details current and future challenges that affect the provision of water services and identifies the priorities to be tackled in the short and medium term. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Food Harvest 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Harvest 2020 is a roadmap for the Irish food industry, as it seeks to innovate and expand in response to increased global demand for quality foods. It sets out a vision for the potential growth in agricultural output after the removal of milk quotas. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Rural Development Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Rural Development Programme, prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, sets out a national programme based on the EU framework for rural development and prioritises improving the competitiveness of agriculture, improving the environment and improving the quality of life in rural areas 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

Appropriate Assessment of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

Relationship Other Plans and Programmes	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Relevance to the Plan
Food Wise 2025 (DAFM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Wise 2025 sets out a ten-year plan for the agri-food sector. It underlines the sector's unique and special position within the Irish economy, and it illustrates the potential that exists for this sector to grow even further. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Cycle Network Scoping Study 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines objectives and actions aimed at developing a strong cycle network in Ireland Sets out 19 specific objectives, and details the 109 actions, aimed at ensuring that a cycling culture is developed 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland 2017 to 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport represents the first step in communicating our longer-term national vision for decarbonising transport by 2050, the cornerstone of which is our ambition that by 2030 all new cars and vans sold in Ireland will be zero-emissions capable. By 2030 it is envisaged that the movement in Ireland to electrically-fueled cars and commuter rail will be well underway, with natural gas and biofuels developing as major alternatives in the freight and bus sectors. Outlines objectives and actions aimed at developing a strong cycle network in Ireland 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management. Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies, replacing Regional Planning Guidelines [in preparation] National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland 2017 to 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) provide long-term strategic planning frameworks and will be replaced by Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs). The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies will provide a long-term regional level strategic planning and economic framework in support of the implementation of the National Planning Framework. This National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport represents the first step in communicating our longer-term national vision for decarbonising transport by 2050, the cornerstone of which is our ambition that by 2030 all new cars and vans sold in Ireland will be zero-emissions capable. By 2030 it is envisaged that the movement in Ireland to electrically-fueled cars and commuter rail will be well underway, with natural gas and biofuels developing as major alternatives in the freight and bus sectors. 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management. Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
NPWS Conservation Plans and/or Conservation Objectives for SACs and SPAs	<p>Management planning for nature conservation sites has a number of aims. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify and evaluate the features of interest for a site To set clear objectives for the conservation of the features of interest To describe the site and its management To identify issues (both positive and negative) that might influence the site To set out appropriate strategies/management actions to achieve the objectives 	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies	The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies will provide a long-term regional level strategic planning and economic framework in support of the implementation of the National Planning Framework.	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), including Westmeath LECP 2016-2021	<p>The overarching vision for each LECP is: "to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities"</p> <p>Management planning for nature conservation sites has a number of aims. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify and evaluate the features of interest for a site To set clear objectives for the conservation of the features of interest To describe the site and its management To identify issues (both positive and negative) that might influence the site <p>To set out appropriate strategies/management actions to achieve the objectives</p>	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Westmeath Tourism Strategy 2016-2020	a strategy designed to deliver one common goal for 2020 and beyond – to develop Westmeath as a first-choice high quality destination that provides an authentic and memorable holiday experience	Implementation of the Plan needs to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management



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Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí

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Draft Westmeath County **Development Plan** **2021 - 2027**



STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

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Revision History

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V1.0 December 2019	Draft SFRA for review	Westmeath County Council
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V3.0 January 2020	Minor text	Westmeath County Council
V4.0 February 2020	Zoning/Text	Westmeath County Council
V5.0 February 2020	Zoning/Text	Westmeath County Council

Contract

This report describes work commissioned by Westmeath County Council, by a Notice of Appointment dated 4 July 2019. Ross Bryant, Elizabeth Russell and Jonathan Cooper of JBA Consulting carried out this work.

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Purpose

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1 Introduction

JBA Consulting was commissioned by Westmeath County Council (WMCC) to provide assistance in the preparation of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to inform the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (WMCDP).

The SFRA is a live document that is designed to be updated as further flood risk information becomes available and changes to the development plan are proposed under any future variations.

1.1 SFRA Legacy in County Westmeath

The 2021-2027 WMCDP SFRA represents an update to the previous version of the SFRA under the 2014 WMCDP (Appendix 5).

1.2 Terms of Reference

Under the "Planning System and Flood Risk Management" guidelines, the purpose for a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is detailed as being "to provide a broad (wide area) assessment of all types of flood risk to inform strategic land-use planning decisions. SFRAs enable the LA to undertake the sequential approach, including the Justification Test, allocate appropriate sites for development and identify how flood risk can be reduced as part of the development plan process".

More specifically the SFRA will complete the following tasks;

1. Undertake a flood risk assessment for the settlements within the WMCDP,
2. Review the various sources of potential Flood Zone mapping,
3. Assist WMCC in the review of land use zoning objectives and the application of the sequential approach and justification test,
4. Prepare flood risk management policies, objectives and recommendations.

1.3 Report Structure

Section 2 provides an introduction to the study area. Section 3 provides an introduction to the Planning System and Flood Risk Management and covers important information on the philosophy and approach of the guidelines.

Section 4 provides a review of data collection, flood history and predicted flood extent (including climate change impacts) in each of the settlements. Section 5 discusses the different sources of flooding in Westmeath.

Section 6 provides policy guidance and suggested approaches to managing flood risk and development. Section 7 discusses the settlement review.

2 Westmeath Study Area

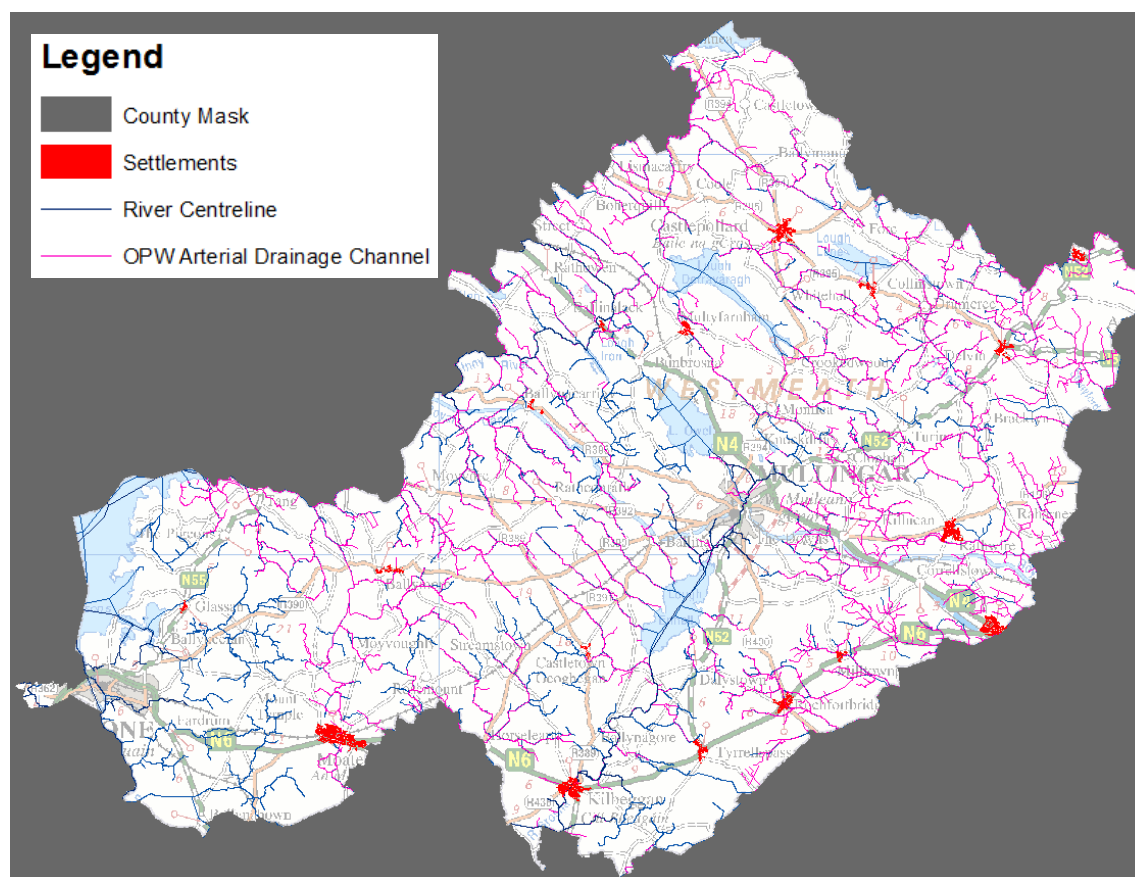
The study area is the County of Westmeath, with a focus on the land use zoning objectives of 17 settlements, which are defined in the plan and identified in Table 2.1. The Regional Growth Centre of

Athlone and the Key Town of Mullingar are excluded from the SFRA as these settlements will be subject to separate Urban Area and Local Area Plans and therefore are not considered in this Draft Plan.

Table 2.1 Settlements contained within the WMCDP 2021-2027

Position	Description	Settlement
Tier 3	Self-Sustaining Growth Towns	Castlepollard, Kilbeggan, Kinnegad, Moate
Tier 4	Self-Sustaining Towns	Rochfortbridge, Killucan/Rathwire
Tier 5	Towns & Villages	Clonmellon, Delvin, Tyrrellspass
Tier 6	Rural (Served)	Ballinalack, Ballinacarrigy, Ballymore, Castletown Geoghegan, Collinstown, Glasson, Milltownpass, Multyfarnham

Figure 2.1 Settlement Map



County Westmeath is geographically central to the island of Ireland. It covers an area of approximately 1,830km² and includes a range of topographies, soil and rock types and water bodies.

Westmeath is known as the Lakeland County, but its landscape includes a diversity of landscape types, ranging from rolling hills and lakes to peatlands, grasslands, woodlands, eskers and wetlands. Westmeath has a number of large lakes including Lough Ree, most of which are part of the River Shannon catchment, which includes the Rivers Inny and Brosna. In addition, Lough Lene, a limestone lake is situated in the Upper Boyne catchment in the county. The Royal Canal is fully navigable through Westmeath. It meanders around Mullingar on its way to the River Shannon, which runs southwards as it passes through the county.

There are two River Basin Districts in Westmeath, namely the Shannon River Basin District and the Eastern River Basin District.

2.1 Planning Policy

2.1.1 Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the National Policy Objectives (NPO) within the Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework was undertaken with the aim of ensuring that flood risk is a key consideration in delivering the proposed strategic sustainable land-use planning decisions. It sets out how all levels of the planning process, from national level strategic assessments to individual planning applications, should follow the sequential approach set out in the 2009 Guidelines on Planning and Flood Risk Management.

The NPF recognises that it is not always possible to avoid developing in flood risk areas due to spatial, economic, environmental and physical constraints. Development should be encouraged to continue, and in flood risk areas should follow the sequential approach and application of Justification Test set out in the Department's Guidelines on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management. These guidelines will facilitate the integration of flood risk and land risk planning in the Eastern and Midland region, at all tiers of the planning hierarchy from national level through regional, city/county and local plans, masterplans and individual planning applications.

2.1.2 Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly)

The Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly included a Regional Flood Risk Appraisal Report, undertaken at a high level, but with a view to informing policy decisions within lower tier development plans. The RSES found that an integrated approach to river catchment management is essential to manage and avoid increasing flood risk. The RSES sets out how Development Plans should include Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and all future zoning of land for development in areas at risk of flooding should follow the sequential approach set out in the 2009 Guidelines on Planning and Flood Risk Management (DoEHLG). The inclusion of policies and actions to support Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems is recommended in future developments as a major component of flood management and prevention.

The settlement hierarchy selected by the RSES takes account of the fact that while Athlone and Mullingar, are vulnerable to fluvial flooding, wider, effective management of flood risk coupled with wider environmental, sustainability and economic considerations mean that it is possible to facilitate the continued consolidation of the development of the existing urban structure of the region. In line with the sequential and justification criteria set out in the Department's Guidelines on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management it is considered that these locations should be encouraged to continue to consolidate and to grow in order to bring about a more compact and sustainable urban development form while at the same time managing flood risk appropriately. These guidelines outline measures through which both the flood risk and the continued development of Westmeath's Gateway towns of Athlone and Mullingar, and county towns can be reconciled.

The RSES included a number of development plan implications:

- An integrated approach to river catchment management is essential to manage and avoid increasing flood risk. Local authorities should fully support the completion of CFRAM studies and jointly implement any actions identified.
- Development Plans shall include Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and all future zoning of land for development in areas at risk of flooding should follow the sequential approach set out in the 2009 Department Guidelines on Planning and Flood Risk Management.
- Development Plans should include policies on the requirement for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in future developments as a major component of flood management and prevention.

2.1.3 Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020

As part of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was undertaken. The purpose of the SFRA was to present and analyse flood related data at appropriate scales to identify flood risk management priorities for the county. Parts of County Westmeath are vulnerable to flooding and are mapped as part of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020. The vulnerability of these areas can be increased due to human actions such as clearing of vegetation and increased development in flood plains.

As flooding cannot be completely eliminated, the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 proposed to minimise its impacts through proactive and careful management of catchments and identified flood risk areas and by ensuring that any development does not individually or cumulatively give rise to new flood risk. The SFRA proposed this be completed by following the sequential approach and application of the Justification Test set out in the 2009 Guidelines on Planning and Flood Risk Management (DoEHLG) throughout the planning process.

3 The Planning System & Flood Risk Management

3.1 Introduction

Prior to discussing the management of flood risk, it is helpful to understand what is meant by the term. It is also important to define the components of flood risk in order to apply the principles of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management in a consistent manner.

The Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities, published in November 2009, describe flooding as a natural process that can occur at any time and in a wide variety of locations. Flooding can often be beneficial, and many habitats rely on periodic inundation. However, when flooding interacts with human development, it can threaten people, their property and the environment.

This Section will firstly outline the definitions of flood risk and the Flood Zones used as a planning tool; a discussion of the principles of the planning guidelines and the management of flood risk in the planning system will follow.

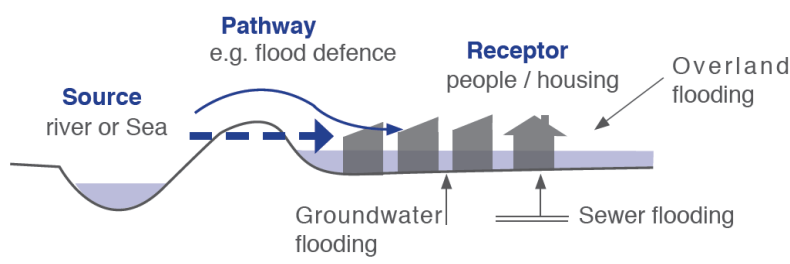
3.2 Definition of Flood Risk

Flood risk is generally accepted to be a combination of the likelihood (or probability) of flooding and the potential consequences arising. Flood risk can be expressed in terms of the following relationship:

Flood Risk = Probability of Flooding x Consequences of Flooding

The assessment of flood risk requires an understanding of the sources, the flow path of floodwater and the people and property that can be affected. The source - pathway - receptor model, shown below in Figure 3.1, illustrates this and is a widely used environmental model to assess and inform the management of risk.

Figure 3.1 Source Pathway Receptor Model



Source: Figure A1 The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines Technical Appendices

Principal sources of flooding are rainfall or higher than normal sea levels while the most common pathways are rivers, drains, sewers, overland flow and river and coastal floodplains and their defence assets. Receptors can include people, their property and the environment. All three elements must be present for flood risk to arise. Mitigation measures, such as defences or flood resilient construction,

have little or no effect on sources of flooding but they can block or impede pathways or remove receptors.

The planning process is primarily concerned with the location of receptors, taking appropriate account of potential sources and pathways that might put those receptors at risk.

3.3 Likelihood of Flooding

Likelihood or probability of flooding of a particular flood event is classified by its annual exceedance probability (AEP) or return period (in years). A 1% AEP flood indicates the flood event that will occur or be exceeded on average once every 100 years and has a 1 in 100 chance of occurring in any given year.

Return period is often misunderstood to be the period between large flood events rather than an average recurrence interval. Annual exceedance probability is the inverse of return period as shown in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Probability of Flooding

Return Period (Years)	Annual Exceedance Probability (%)
2	50
100	1
200	0.5
1000	0.1

Considered over the lifetime of development, an apparently low-frequency or rare flood has a significant probability of occurring. For example:

- A 1% flood has a 22% (1 in 5) chance of occurring at least once in a 25-year period - the period of a typical residential mortgage;
- And a 53% (1 in 2) chance of occurring in a 75-year period - a typical human lifetime.

3.4 Consequences of Flooding

Consequences of flooding depend on the hazards caused by flooding (depth of water, speed of flow, rate of onset, duration, wave-action effects, water quality) and the vulnerability of receptors (type of development, nature, e.g. age-structure, of the population, presence and reliability of mitigation measures etc).

The Planning System and Flood Risk Management guidelines provide three vulnerability categories, based on the type of development, which are detailed in Table 3.1 of the Guidelines, and are summarised as:

- **Highly vulnerable**, including residential properties, essential infrastructure and emergency service facilities;
- **Less vulnerable**, such as retail and commercial and local transport infrastructure;
- **Water compatible**, including open space, outdoor recreation and associated essential infrastructure, such as changing rooms.

3.5 Definition of Flood Zones

In the Planning System and Flood Risk Management guidelines, Flood Zones are used to indicate the likelihood of a flood occurring. These Zones indicate a high, moderate or low probability of flooding from fluvial or tidal sources and are defined below in Table 3.2.

It is important to note that the definition of the Flood Zones is based on an undefended scenario and does not take into account the presence of flood protection structures such as flood walls or embankments. This is to allow for the fact that there is a residual risk of flooding behind the defences due to overtopping or breach and that there may be no guarantee that the defences will be maintained in perpetuity.

It is also important to note that the Flood Zones indicate flooding from fluvial and tidal sources and do not take other sources, such as groundwater or pluvial, into account, so an assessment of risk arising from such sources should also be made.

Table 3.2 Definition of Flood Zones

Zone	Description
Zone A High probability of flooding.	This zone defines areas with the highest risk of flooding from rivers (i.e. more than 1% probability or more than 1 in 100) and the coast (i.e. more than 0.5% probability or more than 1 in 200).
Zone B Moderate probability of flooding.	This zone defines areas with a moderate risk of flooding from rivers (i.e. 0.1% to 1% probability or between 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000) and the coast (i.e. 0.1% to 0.5% probability or between 1 in 200 and 1 in 1000).
Zone C Low probability of flooding.	This zone defines areas with a low risk of flooding from rivers and the coast (i.e. less than 0.1% probability or less than 1 in 1000).

3.6 Objectives and Principles of the Planning Guidelines

The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines describe good flood risk practice in planning and development management. Planning authorities are directed to have regard to the

guidelines in the preparation of Development Plans and Local Area Plans, and for development control purposes.

The objective of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines is to integrate flood risk management into the planning process, thereby assisting in the delivery of sustainable development. For this to be achieved, flood risk must be assessed as early as possible in the planning process. Paragraph 1.6 of the Guidelines states that the core objectives are to:

- "avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;
- avoid new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface run-off;
- ensure effective management of residual risks for development permitted in floodplains;
- avoid unnecessary restriction of national, regional or local economic and social growth;
- improve the understanding of flood risk among relevant stakeholders; and
- ensure that the requirements of EU and national law in relation to the natural environment and nature conservation are complied with at all stages of flood risk management".

The guidelines aim to facilitate 'the transparent consideration of flood risk at all levels of the planning process, ensuring a consistency of approach throughout the country.' SFRAs therefore become a key evidence base in meeting these objectives.

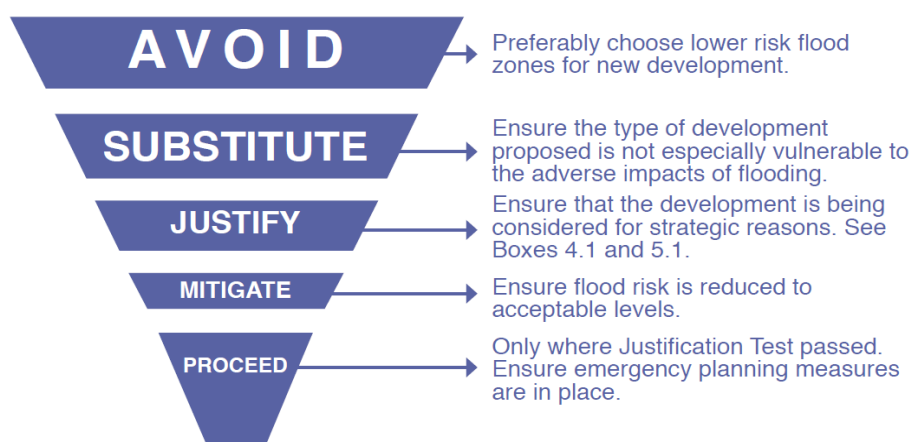
The 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management' works on a number of key principles, including:

- Adopting a staged and hierarchical approach to the assessment of flood risk;
- Adopting a sequential approach to the management of flood risk, based on the frequency of flooding (identified through Flood Zones) and the vulnerability of the proposed land use.

3.7 The Sequential Approach & Justification Test

Each stage of the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) process aims to adopt a sequential approach to management of flood risk in the planning process.

Where possible, development in areas identified as being at flood risk should be avoided; this may necessitate de-zoning lands within the development plan. If de-zoning is not possible, then rezoning from a higher vulnerability land use, such as residential, to a less vulnerable use, such as open space may be required.

Figure 3.1 Sequential Approach Principles in Flood Risk Management

Source: The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (Figure 3.1)

Where rezoning is not possible, exceptions to the development restrictions are provided for through the application of the Justification Test. Many towns have central areas that are affected by flood risk and have been targeted for growth. To allow the sustainable and compact development of these urban centres, development in areas of flood risk may be considered necessary. For development in such areas to be allowed, the Justification Test must be passed.

The Justification Test has been designed to rigorously assess the appropriateness, or otherwise, of such developments. The test is comprised of two processes; the Plan-making Justification Test, and the Development Management Justification Test. The latter is used at the planning application stage where it is intended to develop land that is at moderate or high risk of flooding for uses or development vulnerable to flooding that would generally be considered inappropriate for that land.

Table 3. shows which types of development, based on vulnerability to flood risk, are appropriate land uses for each of the Flood Zones. The aim of the SFRA is to guide development zonings to those which are 'appropriate' and thereby avoid the need to apply the Justification Test.

Table 3.3 Matrix of Vulnerability versus Flood Zone

	Flood Zone A High Probability	Flood Zone B Moderate Probability	Flood Zone C Low Probability
Highly vulnerable development (Including essential infrastructure)	Justification Test	Justification Test	Appropriate
Less vulnerable development	Justification Test	Appropriate	Appropriate
Water-compatible development	Appropriate	Appropriate	Appropriate

3.8 Scales and Stages of Flood Risk Assessment

Within the hierarchy of regional, strategic and site-specific flood-risk assessments, a tiered approach ensures that the level of information is appropriate to the scale and nature of the flood-risk issues and the location and type of development proposed, avoiding expensive flood modelling and development of mitigation measures where it is not necessary. The stages and scales of flood risk assessment comprise of:

- **Regional Flood Risk Appraisal (RFRA)** – a broad overview of flood risk issues across a region to influence spatial allocations for growth in housing and employment and to identify where flood risk management measures may be required at a regional level to support the proposed growth. This should be based on readily derivable information and undertaken to inform the Regional Planning Guidelines.
- **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)** – an assessment of all types of flood risk informing land use planning decisions. This will enable the Planning Authority to allocate appropriate sites for development, whilst identifying opportunities for reducing flood risk. This SFRA will revisit and develop the flood risk identification undertaken in the RFRA and give consideration to a range of potential sources of flooding. An initial flood risk assessment, based on the identification of Flood Zones, will also be carried out for those areas zoned for development. Where the initial flood risk assessment highlights the potential for a significant level of flood risk, or there is conflict with the proposed vulnerability of development, then a site-specific FRA will be recommended, which will necessitate a detailed flood risk assessment.
- **Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)** – site or project specific flood risk assessment to consider all types of flood risk associated with the site and propose appropriate site management and mitigation measures to reduce flood risk to and from the site to an acceptable level. If the previous tiers of study have been undertaken to appropriate levels of detail, it is highly likely that the site-specific FRA will require detailed channel and site survey, and hydraulic modelling.

4 Data Collection and Review

This section reviews the data collection and the flood history for the settlements so that any additional information on flooding can be included within this SFRA. It will confirm the extent of extreme flooding (through the Flood Zone mapping) and key sources of flood risk.

There are a number of valuable sources of flood data for County Westmeath, including major projects such as the CFRAM, and broadscale flood mapping such as the national PFRA study.

The sources of information from the previous iterations of the SFRA have been reviewed and relevant updates have been made using the CFRAM flood mapping.

Table 4.1 Available Flood Risk Data

Description	Coverage	Robustness	Comments on usefulness
Eastern CFRAM Study	<p>Areas for further assessment (AFAs), or settlements falling along modelled lengths, in County Westmeath are: Kilbeggan; (Athlone & Mullingar are not being considered under the WMCDP)</p> <p>Other settlements that are not AFAs but have CFRAM output (Medium Priority Watercourse) are: Ballinagore (no zoning), Glasson,</p>	<p>Flood Zones and flood extents for current and future scenarios provided by OPW.</p> <p>Modelling is 'best available' and outputs will allow informed decisions on zoning objectives. Design water levels will inform decisions relating to raising land and setting finished floor levels.</p>	<p>Very useful but undertaken at a catchment level. In general, CFRAM provides all information needed to apply the Justification Test (JT) for Plan Making under the SFRA.</p> <p>Site specific FRAs will still be required for planning applications, but information on water levels can form the basis of decision in relation to finished floor levels. However, it is important to note that CFRAM outputs should not be relied upon without review and consideration of appropriateness to the site in question, particularly for Medium Priority Watercourses (MPW).</p>
OPW Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) flood maps – Fluvial Used as County Development Plan Flood Map (2015-2021)	<p>The PFRA was a national screening exercise that was undertaken by OPW to identify areas at potential risk of flooding. Fluvial, coastal, pluvial and groundwater risks were identified at an indicative scale.</p> <p>Based on the on the PFRA, no verification or adjustment of this data.</p>	Moderate/Low	<p>Covers nearly all rivers (including non-CFRAM) previously used for development of base Flood Zones for SFRA.</p> <p>For purposes of SFRA and at Development Management level these cannot be used without validation through site. Further investigation may be needed to provide greater confidence in the outlines.</p>
Historical	Various, taken from	Indicative	Used indirectly to

STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

Description	Coverage	Robustness	Comments on usefulness
event outlines and point observations and reports	www.floodmaps.ie		validate flood zones and identify non-fluvial flooding in the SFRA. Useful background information for site specific FRAs, but note the database is not exhaustive, absence of a record does not necessarily mean absence of flood risk.
Arterial Drainage Benefitting land maps	Show land which would (or have) benefitted from a drainage scheme. This is not based on a 'design flood' (i.e. the events do not have a return period), but indicate low-lying, poorly drained land. It is not the same as lands which are protected by a flood relief scheme.	Low	Superseded by the data sources listed above, although may be used to cross check Flood Zones. Limited benefit to site specific FRAs. Given that many of the rivers in Westmeath have been subject to Arterial Drainage by OPW the benefitting lands maps are most likely to be an overestimation of risk.
Flood relief schemes	There are no completed OPW Flood Relief Schemes that are in place within County Westmeath. Athlone Flood Relief Scheme is in construction. Kilbeggan has some OPW embankments but these are part of an arterial drainage scheme and as such provide an agricultural standard of protection.	n/a	n/a
Site Specific FRAs	Settlement or sub-settlement – used in Kilbeggan, Kinnegad, Milltownpass.	Moderate	Helpful for additional verification of PFRA and/or Benefitting Lands mapping.
Site Visits	Castlepollard, Collinstown, Kilbeggan, Kinnegad,	Moderate	Site visits used to verify flood extents where there were potential conflicts

Description	Coverage	Robustness	Comments on usefulness
	Milltownpass, Moate & Rochfortbridge,		with predicted flood extent and undeveloped land uses with highly or less vulnerable land use zoning objectives.

Table 4.2 Other Data Available

Description	Coverage	Robustness	Comment on usefulness
Alluvial Soil Maps	Full Study Area	Low	Used in the Regional FRA Report to provide initial assessment of risks. Not used in SFRA and little or no value to FRA.
Groundwater vulnerability maps	Broadscale, County wide	Moderate	Initial assessment of groundwater vulnerability. Provides a screening tool for use in FRA.
Historic Flood Records including photos, aerial photos and reports.	Broad, spot coverage	Various	Yes, indirectly to validate Flood Zones & identify other flood sources. Review of such sources will be required for all site specific FRAs.

4.1 Flood Zone Development

As set out in the RSES Regional Flood Risk Appraisal Report, and under the Planning Guidelines, the Flood Zone mapping for the County is principally derived from the CFRAM where possible. However, most settlements in the WMCDP are not covered by the CFRAM and in this case a range of other datasets, as shown in Table 4.2 were used as supplementary information to inform this SFRA.

Due to recent guidance from OPW regarding the use of the first generation PFRA mapping and the indicative nature of the flood extents, the approach used under the Westmeath SFRA has been precautionary. All sources of available flood mapping were reviewed in cases where proposed undeveloped lands are zoned for highly or less vulnerable use (where CFRAM was not available). As such, a single dataset of County Flood Zones has not been prepared, but in each settlement specific guidance is provided based on the data review and a JBA site visit.

When the second generation PFRA mapping is issued to Local Authorities the data will be used in conjunction with the other available datasets and site visits to provide a countywide Flood Zone dataset, subject to further verification.

The review of the suite of flood risk data has been developed as a spatial planning tool to guide WMCC in making land-use zoning and development management decisions and it is recognised that site specific information may contradict the Flood Zones, either to demonstrate a greater or lesser level of flood risk. However, the data has been deemed appropriate for the planning decisions being made at this stage of the plan making process.

In general, where CFRAM modelling has been carried out, flood levels are available at selected node points along the watercourse. Once an appropriate level of validation has been undertaken as part of the site-specific FRA, these flood levels may be used to form the basis of the development design.

5 Sources of Flooding

This SFRA has reviewed flood risk from fluvial, pluvial and groundwater sources. Flooding events have become more pronounced in Ireland, and County Westmeath, in recent years. Climate change risks also need to be considered at a strategic and site-specific scale. Climate change is discussed in Section 7 in relation to incorporation of climate change into the flood risk assessment. A comment on the likely impacts of climate change, on a settlement basis, has been provided in Section 8.

5.1 Fluvial Flooding

Flooding from rivers and streams is associated with the exceedance of channel capacity during higher flows. The process of flooding from watercourses depends on numerous characteristics associated with the catchment including; geographical location and variation in rainfall, steepness of the channel and surrounding floodplain and infiltration and rate of runoff associated with urban and rural catchments. Generally, there are two main types of catchments; large and relatively flat or small and steep, both giving two very different responses during large rainfall events.

In a large, relatively flat catchment, flood levels will rise slowly and natural floodplains may remain flooded for several days or even weeks, acting as the natural regulator of the flow. This is typical of the River Shannon and its tributaries. In small, steep catchments local intense rainfall can result in the rapid onset of deep and fast-flowing flooding with little warning. Such “flash” flooding, which may only last a few hours, can cause considerable damage and possible risk to life. This type of catchment is not prevalent within Westmeath.

5.2 Arterial Drainage Schemes

A third form of fluvial regime is much more common within the County and this is related to rivers that have been subject to an OPW Arterial Drainage Scheme (ADS). The OPW carried out a number of Arterial Drainage Schemes on catchments under the Arterial Drainage Act, 1945. The main purpose of the ADSs was to improve land drainage and reduce the frequency and extent of overland flooding. ADSs can involve embankment construction, river straightening, lake storage development, and, most commonly, the deepening and widening of river channels. Through the implementation of ADSs the

hydraulic conveyance efficiency of a catchment is increased, thereby leading to a reduction in overland flood storage. Although it has been found that ADS generally achieve their main objectives, this increase in discharge-carrying capacity leads to an acceleration of the response to rainfall with flood peaks of increased intensity and more rapid recessions.

Three arterial drainage schemes, Brosna, Inny and Boyne, were completed within Westmeath. The Brosna ADS was undertaken between 1948 and 1955, the Inny ADS was undertaken between 1960 and 1968, and the Boyne ADS was undertaken between 1948 and 1955.

5.3 Fluvial Summary

The form of the floodplain, either natural, semi-natural (drained) or urbanised, can influence flooding along watercourses. The location of buildings and roads can significantly influence flood depths and velocities by altering flow directions and reducing the volume of storage within the floodplain. Critical structures such as bridge and culverts can also significantly reduce capacity creating pinch points within the floodplain. These structures are also vulnerable to blockage by natural debris within the channel or by fly tipping and waste.

The watercourses of Westmeath are generally split between those within the low-lying Shannon Basin to the west and those that have Arterial Drainage Schemes (Inny, Brosna and Boyne) which are maintained and managed by the OPW. These watercourses have increased conveyance at lower return periods and present a challenge for the interpretation of existing Benefitting Lands and PFRA fluvial mapping.

Flood risk to specific settlements is discussed in Section 8 and has been used to inform the zoning objectives for the Development Plan.

5.4 Flooding from Defence Overtopping or Breach

Apart from the ongoing work in Athlone and the previous flood relief works in Mullingar (both settlements not considered for zoning within the WMCDP), the only other record of OPW flood embankments protecting a settlement within County Westmeath are the embankments along the River Brosna in Kilbeggan. They are not flood embankments that form part of a Flood Relief Scheme to protect property but are agricultural defences that are guaranteed only as an agricultural standard of protection. In common with many other locations across Ireland, they do provide protection to parts of Kilbeggan.

In addition to the OPW embankments there will also be a number of walls and other structures which, whilst not designed to act as flood defences, provide a level of protection against flood water.

Existing development clearly benefits from the construction of defences, and new defences will be considered as one means of facilitating the redevelopment of the settlements. However, it is against sustainability objectives, and the general approach of the OPW, to construct defences with the intention of releasing green field land for development. It is also not appropriate to consider the benefits of schemes which have not been constructed or which may only be at pre-feasibility or design stage.

Residual risk is the risk that remains after measures to control flood risk have been carried out. Residual risk can arise from overtopping of flood defences and / or from the breach from structural failure of the defences.

The concept of residual risk is explained in 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities and Technical Appendices, 2009' as follows:

"Although flood defences may reduce the risk of flooding, they cannot eliminate it. A flood defence may be overtopped by a flood that is higher than that for which it was designed or be breached and allow flood water to rapidly inundate the area behind the defence. In addition, no guarantee can be given that flood defence will be maintained in perpetuity. As well as the actual risk, which may be reduced as a result of the flood defence, there will remain a residual risk that must be considered in determining the appropriateness of particular land uses and development. For these reasons, flooding will still remain a consideration behind flood defences and the flood zones deliberately ignore the presence of flood defences."

Overtopping of flood defences will occur during flood events greater than the design level of the defences. Overtopping is likely to cause lower levels of inundation of the floodplain than if defences had not been built, but the impact will depend on the duration, severity and volume of floodwater. However, and more critically, overtopping can destabilise a flood defence, cause erosion and make it more susceptible to breach or fail. Recovery time and drainage of overtopping quantities should also be considered. Overtopping may become more likely in future years due to the impacts of climate change and it is important that any assessment of defences includes an appraisal of climate change risks.

Breach or structural failure of flood defences is hard to predict and is largely related to the structural condition and type of flood defence. 'Hard' flood defences such as solid concrete walls are less likely to breach than 'soft' defence such as earth embankments. Breach will usually result in sudden flooding with little or no warning and presents a significant hazard and danger to life. There is likely to be deeper flooding in the event of a breach than due to overtopping.

Whilst it is important that residual risks are recognised and appropriate management measures put in place, it is also important to acknowledge the benefits that a flood relief scheme provides to those living and working behind it. In this regard, although 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities and Technical Appendices, 2009' requires flood zones to be undefended, consideration should be given to the benefit provided by flood defences, but only once the Justification Test has been applied and passed.

5.5 Pluvial Flooding

Flooding of land from surface water runoff is usually caused by intense rainfall that may only last a few hours. The resulting water follows along natural valley lines, creating flow paths along roads and through and around developments and ponding in low spots, which often coincide with fluvial floodplains. Any areas at risk from fluvial flooding will almost certainly be at risk from surface water flooding.

The PFRA study considered pluvial flood risk and produced a national set of pluvial flood maps. This dataset was reviewed and used to identify development areas at particular risk of surface water and pluvial flooding. However, the level of detail contained in the PFRA map, and the widespread distribution of areas at risk did not allow a commentary relating to pluvial flood risk to be developed, or for particularly high risk areas to be identified. Instead, an overall strategy for the management of pluvial risk is presented and should be implemented across all development proposals. This, and recommendations for the assessment of surface water risks, are provided in the Flood Risk Management Policy section.

5.6 Flooding from Drainage Systems

Flooding from artificial drainage systems occurs when flow entering a system, such as an urban storm water drainage system, exceeds its discharge capacity, it becomes blocked or it cannot discharge due to a high water level in the receiving watercourse.

Flooding in urban areas can also be attributed to sewers. Sewers have a finite capacity which, during certain load conditions, will be exceeded. In addition, design standards vary and changes within the catchment areas draining to the system, in particular planned growth and urban creep, will reduce the level of service provided by the asset. Sewer flooding problems will often be associated with regularly occurring storm events during which sewers and associated infrastructure can become blocked or fail. This problem is exacerbated in areas with under-capacity systems. In the larger events that are less frequent but have a higher consequence, surface water will exceed the sewer system and flow across the surface of the land, often following the same flow paths and ponding in the same areas as overland flow.

Foul sewers and surface water drainage systems are spread extensively across the urban areas with various interconnected systems discharging to treatment works and into local watercourses.

5.7 Groundwater Flooding

Groundwater flooding is caused by the emergence of water originating from underground and is particularly common in karst landscapes. This can emerge from either point or diffuse locations. The occurrence of groundwater flooding is usually very local and unlike flooding from rivers and the sea, does not generally pose a significant risk to life due to the slow rate at which the water level rises. However, groundwater flooding can cause significant damage to property, especially in urban areas and pose further risks to the environment and ground stability. Groundwater flooding is not considered to be a significant risk in Westmeath and was screened out by the Regional Flood Risk Appraisal Report. Further investigation at the CDP scale reveals that there are some small areas of predicted groundwater flooding to the south west of Mount Temple and to the north east of Baylin. Neither areas impact any settlements/significant development and the individual risk to settlements is reviewed, in line with other sources, in Section 8.

6 Flood Risk Management Policy

The implementation of the Planning Guidelines throughout the county is achieved through the application of the policies and objectives contained within the WMCDP 2021-2027.

The use and application of the policies and guidelines constitutes the formal plan for flood risk management in County Westmeath. This approach has been achieved in the development plan making process in the settlements contained within the plan and covered in this SFRA.

The specific management of risk is discussed for each settlement in Section 8.

6.1 Flood Risk Policy WMCDP

The policies contained within Section 10.15 of the WMCDP 2021-2027 are as follows:

Flood Risk Policy Objectives	
It is a policy of Westmeath County Council to:	
CPO 10.96	Implement and comply fully with the recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment prepared as part of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.
CPO 10.97	Have regard to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management (DoEHLG/OPW 2009) and Circular PL2/2014, through the use of the sequential approach and application of the Justification Tests in Development Management.
CPO 10.98	Ensure that a flood risk assessment is carried out for any development proposal, in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management (DoEHLG/OPW 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to the potential development.
CPO 10.99	Support the implementation of recommendations in the CFRAM Programme to ensure that flood risk management policies and infrastructure are progressively implemented.
CPO 10.100	Support the implementation of recommendations in the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP's), including planned investment measures for managing and reducing flood risk.
CPO 10.101	Consult with the OPW in relation to proposed developments in the vicinity of drainage channels and rivers for which the OPW are responsible, and to retain a strip on either side of such channels where required, to facilitate maintenance access thereto.

CPO 10.102	Assist the OPW in developing catchment-based Flood Risk Management Plans for rivers in County Westmeath and have regard to their provisions/recommendations.
CPO 10.103	Protect and enhance the County's floodplains and wetlands as 'green infrastructure' which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed and reducing the need to provide flood defenses in the future, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.
CPO 10.104	Protect the integrity of any formal (OPW or Westmeath County Council) flood risk management infrastructure, thereby ensuring that any new development does not negatively impact any existing defense infrastructure or compromise any proposed new infrastructure.
CPO 10.105	Ensure that where flood risk management works take place that the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams and watercourses are protected and enhanced.
CPO 10.106	Ensure each flood risk management activity is examined to determine actions required to embed and provide for effective climate change adaptation as set out in the OPW Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan Flood Risk Management applicable at the time.
CPO 10.107	Consult, where necessary, with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies in the provision of flood alleviation measures in the County.

6.2 Stormwater Policy

The management of surface and storm water is important so as to avoid increased flood or pollution risk in the storm water network, rivers and streams in the county's towns, villages and rural areas. The Council will require compliance with best practice guidance for the collection, reuse, treatment and disposal of surface waters for all future development proposals.

Traditionally, rain falling on impervious surfaces was directed into a receiving watercourse through surface water drainage systems. While such drainage systems are effective at transferring surface water quickly, they provide only limited attenuation causing the volume of water in the receiving watercourse to increase more rapidly, thereby increasing flood risk.

Sustainable Drainage Systems, commonly known as SuDS is an approach that seeks to manage the water as close as possible to its origin by various engineering solutions that replicate natural drainage processes, before it enters the watercourse. The incorporation of SuDS techniques allows surface water to be either infiltrated or conveyed more slowly to water courses using porous surface treatments, ponds, swales, filter drains or other installations.

SuDS provide an integrated approach which addresses water quantity, water quality, amenity and habitat. The Council will require the application of SuDS in development proposals, for example through reducing the extent of hard surfacing, and using permeable pavements. The following stormwater management policies have been included in the WMCDP 2021-2027

Stormwater Management Policy Objectives	
It is a policy of Westmeath County Council to:	
CPO 10.108	Support in conjunction with Irish Water the improvement of storm water infrastructure to improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in urban environments.
CPO 10.109	Implement policies contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDS) in relation to SUDS and climate change.
CPO 10.110	Ensure new development is adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure which meets the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, associated River Basin Management Plans and CFRAM Management Plans.
CPO 10.111	Require that planning applications are accompanied by a comprehensive SUDS assessment that addresses run-off quantity, run-off quality and its impact on the existing habitat and water quality.
CPO 10.112	Ensure that in public and private developments in urban areas, both within developments and within the public realm, seek to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.
CPO 10.113	Ensure appropriate maintenance of surface water drainage infrastructure to avoid flood risk.

For proposed development outside a settlement boundary (not subject to zoning) the Policies and Objectives of the WMCDP still apply.

6.3 CFRAM Recommendations

Following the publication of the final Flood Risk Management Plans for the CFRAM Study in May 2018 a 10 year €1billion programme of works (for 118 schemes) was announced by the OPW.

Viable future schemes in Westmeath were identified as Athlone only, Kilbeggan and Mullingar were investigated as AFAs but no viable scheme was identified in Kilbeggan and Mullingar was previously subject to a scheme. Both Athlone and Mullingar are outside the scope of SFRA for the WMCDP. In the settlements where there are no formal recommendations for a flood relief scheme, more generic measures such as flood forecasting and warning are recommended to assist with planning and preparedness. A National Forecasting Centre is being set up but is not yet fully operational. The

maintenance of Arterial Drainage Schemes are normal procedures that will maintain the existing level of flood risk.

Kilbeggan was investigated as an AFA as part of the CFRAM Study. It found that there is no fluvial flood risk to any properties within Kilbeggan for the 10% AEP, 1% AEP or 0.1% AEP flood events. As the flood risk to the area was deemed as low, no optioneering was carried out for the town, and therefore no viable scheme was identified. Although the level of flood risk is low, this does not infer that undeveloped lands in and around the community are not prone to flooding. The CFRAM recommends that continued monitoring and maintenance of the existing arterial drainage scheme and flood defence embankments in Kilbeggan be undertaken.

7 Development Management and Flood Risk

In order to guide both applicants and relevant council staff through the process of planning for and mitigating flood risk, the key features of a range of development scenarios have been identified (relating the flood zone, development vulnerability and presence or absence of defences). For each scenario, a number of considerations relating to the suitability of the development are summarised below.

It should be noted that this section of the SFRA begins from the point that all land zoned for development has passed the Justification Test for Development Plans, and therefore passes Part 1 of the Justification Test for Development Management – which states that the land has in the first instance been zoned accordingly in a development plan (that underwent an SFRA). In addition to the general recommendations in the following sections, Section 8 should be reviewed for specific recommendations for individual settlements, including details of the application of the Justification Test.

In order to determine the appropriate design standards for a development it may be necessary to undertake a site-specific flood risk assessment. This may be a qualitative appraisal of risks, including drainage design. Alternatively, the findings of the CFRAM, or other detailed study, may be drawn upon to inform finished floor levels. In other circumstances a detailed modelling study and flood risk assessment may need to be undertaken. Further details of each of these scenarios, including considerations for the flood risk assessment are provided in the following sections.

7.1 Requirements for a Flood Risk Assessment

As specified under CPO 10.98 assessment of flood risk is required in support of any planning application where flood risk may be an issue and this may include sites in Flood Zone C (low probability of flooding) where a watercourse or field drain exists nearby. The level of detail will vary depending on the risks identified and the proposed land use. As a minimum, all proposed development, including that in Flood Zone C, must consider the impact of surface water flood risks on drainage design, this is specified in CPO 10.112. In addition, flood risk from sources other than fluvial should be reviewed.

For sites within Flood Zone A or B (high/moderate probability of flooding), a site specific "Stage 2 - Initial FRA" will be required and may need to be developed into a "Stage 3 - Detailed FRA". The extents of Flood Zone A and B are delineated through this SFRA. However, future studies may refine the

extents (either to reduce or enlarge them) so a comprehensive review of available data should be undertaken once an FRA has been triggered.

Within the FRA the impacts of climate change and residual risk (including culvert/structure blockage) should be considered and remodelled where necessary, using an appropriate level of detail, in the design of finished floor levels. Further information on the required content of the FRA is provided in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines.

Any proposal that is considered acceptable in principle shall demonstrate the use of the sequential approach in terms of the site layout and design and, in satisfying the Justification Test (where required), the proposal will demonstrate that appropriate mitigation and management measures are put in place.

7.2 Drainage Design

Under CPO 10.109 all proposed development, whether in Flood Zone A, B or C, must consider the impact of surface water flood risks on drainage design as specified by the surface water management policies in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDS) and this will be considered in the planning process. This may be in the form of a section within the flood risk assessment (for sites in Flood Zone A or B) or part of a surface water management plan.

Areas vulnerable to ponding are indicated on the OPW's PFRA mapping. Particular attention should be given to development in low-lying areas which may act as natural ponds for collection of run-off.

The drainage design should ensure no increase in flood risk to the site, or the downstream catchment. Where possible, and particularly in areas of new development, floor levels should at a minimum be 300mm above adjacent roads and hard standing areas to reduce the consequences of any localised flooding. Where this is not possible, an alternative design appropriate to the location may be prepared.

In addition, for larger sites (i.e. multiple dwellings or commercial units) master planning should ensure that existing flow routes are maintained, through the use of green infrastructure.

7.3 Development Proposals in Flood Zone C

Where a site is within Flood Zone C, but adjoining or in close proximity to Flood Zone A or B there could be a risk of flooding associated with factors such as future scenarios (climate change) or in the event of failure of a defence, blocking of a bridge or culvert. Risk from sources other than fluvial must also be addressed for all development in Flood Zone C. As a minimum in such a scenario, a flood risk assessment should be undertaken which will screen out possible indirect sources of flood risk and where they cannot be screened out, it should present mitigation measures. The most likely mitigation measure will involve setting finished floor levels to a height that is above the 1 in 100 year fluvial flood level, with an allowance for climate change and freeboard, or to ensure a step up from road level to prevent surface water ingress. Design elements such as channel maintenance or trash screens may also be required. Evacuation routes in the event of inundation of surrounding land should also be detailed.

The impacts of climate change should be considered for all proposed developments. A development which is currently in Flood Zone C may be shown to be at risk when 0.5m is added to the extreme (1 in 200 year) tide. Details of the approach to incorporating climate change impacts into the assessment and design are provided in Section 7.6.

7.4 Applications for Developments in Flood Zone A or B

7.4.1 Minor Developments

Section 5.28 of the Planning Guidelines on Flood Risk Management identifies certain types of development as being 'minor works' and therefore exempt from the Justification Test. Such development relates to works associated with existing developments, such as extensions, renovations and rebuilding of the existing development, small scale infill and changes of use.

Despite the 'Sequential Approach' and 'Justification Test' not applying, as they relate to existing buildings, an assessment of the risks of flooding should accompany such applications. This must demonstrate that the development would not increase flood risks, by introducing significant numbers of additional people into the flood plain and/or putting additional pressure on emergency services or existing flood management infrastructure. The development must not have adverse impacts or impede access to a watercourse, floodplain or flood protection and management facilities. Where possible, the design of built elements in these applications should demonstrate principles of flood resilient design (See 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities Technical Appendices, 2009', Section 4 - Designing for Residual Flood Risk).

Generally, the approach to deal with flood protection would involve raising the ground floor levels above the level of extreme river levels. If this leads to floor levels being much higher than adjacent streets it could create a hostile streetscape for pedestrians. This would cause problems for infill development sites if floor levels were required to be significantly higher than those of neighbouring properties. In this regard, it has been recognised that some flexibility could be allowed, in limited circumstances, on a site by site basis, for commercial and business developments. In these cases, the detailed design of the development should reflect the vulnerability of the site in terms of materials, fixtures and fittings and internal layout. For high risk areas, less vulnerable uses are encouraged at ground floor levels. A site-specific FRA will inform appropriate uses and detailed design and layout.

It should be noted that for residential buildings within Flood Zone A or B, bedroom accommodation is more appropriate at upper floor levels.

For commercial operations, business continuity must be considered, and steps taken to ensure operability during and recovery after a flood event for both residential and commercial developments. Emergency access must be considered as in many cases flood resilience will not be easily achieved in the existing built environment.

The requirement for providing compensatory storage for minor developments has been reviewed and can generally be relaxed, even where finished floor levels have been raised. This is because the development concerns land which has previously been developed and would already have limited

capacity to mitigate flooding. However, a commentary to this effect must be substantiated in the site-specific FRA.

7.4.2 Highly Vulnerable Development in Flood Zone A or B

Development which is highly vulnerable to flooding, as defined in The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, includes (but is not limited to) dwelling houses, schools, hospitals, emergency services and caravan parks.

7.4.2.1 New Development

It is not appropriate for new, highly vulnerable development to be located on greenfield land in Flood Zones A or B, particularly outside the core of a settlement and where there are no flood defences. Such proposals do not pass the Justification Test. Instead, a less vulnerable use should be considered.

For extant permissions in Flood Zone A/B if the site remains unconstructed and the planning application lapses, any future planning applications on the site should be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA specific to the new site layout and it may be found that the site cannot be developed as planned. As part of any future variation to the Development Plan or the preparation of a Local Area Plan (as applicable to the relevant settlement) lands with no extant permission should be considered in line with the sequential approach and Justification Test for Plan Making.

7.4.2.2 Existing Developed Areas

The Planning Circular (PL02/2014) states that *"notwithstanding the need for future development to avoid areas at risk of flooding, it is recognised that the existing urban structure of the country contains many well established cities and urban centres which will continue to be at risk of flooding. In addition, development plans have identified various strategically important urban centres ... whose continued consolidation, growth, development or generation, including for residential use, is being encouraged to bring about compact and sustainable growth."*

Minor/small scale infill housing, extensions or changes of use is discussed previously and, subject to site specific flood risk assessment, can generally be considered appropriate.

In cases where development has been justified, the outline requirements for a flood risk assessment and flood management measures have been detailed in this SFRA in the following sections and also the settlement review in Section 8. Of prime importance is the requirement to manage risk to the development site and not to increase flood risk elsewhere. This should give due consideration to safe evacuation routes and access for emergency services during a flood event.

7.4.2.3 Less Vulnerable Development in Flood Zone A or B

Less vulnerable development includes retail, leisure, warehousing, technology, enterprise and buildings used for agriculture and forestry a comprehensive categorisation of land uses and vulnerability is provided in Table 3..

The design and assessment of less vulnerable development should generally begin with 1% AEP fluvial event as standard, with climate change and a suitable freeboard included in the setting of finished floor levels. The site-specific FRA should ensure that the risks are defined, understood, and accepted.

Operability and emergency response should also be clearly defined. In a limited number of cases this may allow construction as low as the 1% AEP level to be adopted, provided the risks of climate change are included in the development through adaptable designs or resilience measures.

7.5 Key Points for FRA for all types of Development

- Finished floor levels to be set above the 1% AEP fluvial (0.5% AEP tide) level, with an allowance for climate change plus a freeboard of at least 300mm. The freeboard allowance should be assessed, and the choice justified.
- Flow paths through the site and areas of surface water storage should be managed to maintain their function and without causing increased flood risk elsewhere.
- Compensatory storage is to be provided to balance floodplain loss as a result of raising ground levels within Flood Zone A. The storage should be provided within the flood cell and on a level for level basis up to the 1% level.
- In a defended site, compensatory storage is not required, but the impact of removing the net reduction in floodplain storage should be assessed, and any impacts to existing development mitigated for the 0.1% event or a breach of these defences.
- A site is considered to be defended if the standard of protection is 1% AEP, within which a freeboard of at least 300mm is included. The FFL of the proposed development needs to take into account the impacts of climate change and other residual risks, including the 0.1% event, unless this has also been incorporated into the defence design. This may be assessed through breach analysis, overtopping analysis or projection of levels from the channel inland.
- For less vulnerable development, it may be that a finished floor level as low as the 1% AEP level could be adopted, provided the risks of climate change are included in the development through adaptable designs or resilience measures. This approach should reflect emergency planning and business continuity to be provided within the development. It may reflect the design life of the development, the proposed use, the vulnerability of items to be kept in the premises, the occupants and users, emergency plan and inclusion of flood resilience and recovery measures.

7.6 Incorporating Climate Change into Development Design

In all developments, climate change should be considered when assessing flood risk and in particular residual flood risk. Climate change may result in increased flood extents and therefore caution should be taken when zoning lands in transitional areas (i.e. on the edge of the floodplain). Consideration of climate change is particularly important where flood alleviation measures are proposed, as the design standard of the proposal may reduce significantly in future years due to increased rainfall and river flows (sea levels are not a pertinent consideration in Westmeath).

The 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management' recommends that a precautionary approach to climate change is adopted due to the level of uncertainty involved in the potential effects. A significant amount of research into climate change has been undertaken on both a national and international front, and updates are ongoing.

Advice on the expected impacts of climate change and the allowances to be provided for future flood risk management in Ireland is given in the OPW draft guidance. Two climate change scenarios are considered; these are the Mid-Range Future Scenario (MRFS) and the High-End Future Scenario (HEFS). The MRFS is intended to represent a "likely" future scenario based on the wide range of future predictions available. The HEFS represents a more "extreme" future scenario at the upper boundaries of future projections. Based on these two scenarios the OPW recommended allowances for climate change are given in the table below. These climate change allowances are particularly important at the development management stage of planning and will ensure that proposed development is designed and constructed to take into account best current knowledge.

Table 7.1 Allowances for Future Scenarios (100-year Time Horizon)

Criteria	MRFS	HEFS
Extreme Rainfall Depths	+20%	+30%
Flood Flows	+20%	+30%
Mean Sea Level Rise	+500mm	+1000mm
Land Movement	-0.5mm / year*	-0.5mm / year*
Urbanisation	No General Allowance - Review on Case by Case Basis	No General Allowance - Review on Case by Case Basis
Forestation	-1/6 Tp**	-1/3 Tp** +10% SPR***
Notes: * Applicable to the southern part of the country only (Dublin - Galway and south of this) ** Reduce the time to peak (Tp) by a third; this allows for potential accelerated runoff that may arise as a result of drainage of afforested land *** Add 10% to the Standard Percentage Runoff (SPR) rate; this allows for increased runoff rates that may arise following felling of forestry		

Through the CFRAM Studies, both MRFS and HEFS model runs have been completed on all study watercourses, providing flood extent and depth maps. This information can be used to support flood risk assessments where the current CFRAM scenario has been deemed appropriate to the location.

For watercourses that are not part of the CFRAM programme, fluvial flood extents can be qualitatively assessed by using the Flood Zone B outline as a surrogate for 'Flood Zone A with allowance for the possible impacts of climate change', as suggested in the 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management'. Quantitative assessment of risks may require an additional model run to fully understand risks.

For most development, including residential, nursing homes, shops and offices, the medium-range future scenario (20% increase in flows) is an appropriate consideration. This should be applied in all areas that are at risk of flooding (i.e. within Flood Zone A and B) and should be considered for sites which are in Flood Zone C but are adjacent to Flood Zone A or B. This is because land which is currently not at risk may become vulnerable to flooding when climate change is taken into account.

Where the risk associated with inundation of a development is low and the design life of the development is short (typically less than 30 years) the allowance provided for climate change may be less than the 20% / 0.5m level. However, the reasoning and impacts of such an approach should be provided in the site-specific FRA.

Conversely, there may be development which requires a higher-level response to climate change. This could include major facilities which are extremely difficult to relocate, such as hospitals, airports, Seveso sites or power stations, and those which represent a high-economic and long-term investment within the scale of development across the county. In such situations it would be reasonable to expect the high-end future scenario (30% increase in flow) to be investigated in the site-specific FRA and used as the design standard.

In general, climate change will be accounted for the setting of finished floor levels to a height which includes an allowance for climate change. However, climate change may also reveal additional flow paths which need to be protected or give rise to flows which exceed culvert capacity or overtop defences. These outcomes will need to be specifically investigated for each site, and an appropriate response provided.

Further consideration to the potential future impacts of climate change is given for each settlement in Section 8.

7.7 Flood Mitigation Measures at Site Design

For any development proposal in an area at moderate or high risk of flooding that is considered acceptable in principle (i.e. has passed the Plan Making Justification Test), the site specific FRA must demonstrate that appropriate mitigation measures can be put in place and that residual risks can be managed to acceptable levels. This may include the use of flood-resistant construction measures that are aimed at preventing water from entering a building and that mitigate the damage floodwater causes to buildings. Alternatively, designs for flood resilient construction may be adopted where it can be demonstrated that entry of floodwater into buildings is preferable to limit damage caused by floodwater and allow relatively quick recovery.

Various mitigation measures are outlined below and further detail on flood resilience and flood resistance are included in the Technical Appendices of the Planning Guidelines, The Planning System and Flood Risk Management.

7.7.1.1 Site Layout and Design

To address flood risk in the design of new development, a risk-based approach should be adopted to locate more vulnerable land use to higher ground while water compatible development i.e. car parking

(with appropriate flood management plan) and recreational space can be located in higher flood risk areas.

The site layout should identify and protect land required for current and future flood risk management. Waterside areas or areas along known flow routes can be used for recreation, amenity and environmental purposes to allow preservation of flow routes and flood storage, while at the same time providing valuable social and environmental benefits.

7.7.1.2 Ground Levels, Floor Levels and Building Use

Modifying ground levels to raise land above the design flood level is a very effective way of reducing flood risk to the site. However, in most areas of fluvial flood risk, conveyance or flood storage would be reduced locally and could increase flood risk off site. There are a number of criteria which must all be met before this is considered a valid approach:

- Development at the site must have been justified through this SFRA based on the existing (unmodified) ground levels.
- The FRA should establish the function provided by the floodplain. Where conveyance is a prime function then a hydraulic model will be required to show the impact of its alteration.
- The land being given over to storage must be land which does not flood in the 1% AEP fluvial event (i.e. Flood Zone B or C).
- Compensatory storage should be provided on a level for level basis to balance the total area that will be lost through infilling where the floodplain provides static storage.
- The provision of the compensatory storage should be in close proximity to the area that storage is being lost from (i.e. within the same flood cell).
- The land proposed to provide the compensatory storage area must be within the ownership / control of the developer.
- The compensatory storage area should be constructed before land is raised to facilitate development.
- Compensatory storage is generally not required for loss of floodplain in locations behind defences.

In some sites it is possible that ground levels can be re-landscaped to provide a sufficiently large development footprint. However, it is likely that in other potential development locations there is insufficient land available to fully compensate for the loss of floodplain. In such cases it will be necessary to reconsider the layout or reduce the scale of development, or propose an alternative and less vulnerable type of development. In other cases, it is possible that the lack of availability of suitable areas of compensatory storage mean the target site cannot be developed and should remain open space.

Raising finished floor levels within a development is an effective way of avoiding damage to the interior of buildings (i.e. furniture and fittings) in times of flood. Alternatively, assigning a water compatible use (i.e. garage / car parking) or less vulnerable use to the ground floor level, along with suitable flood resilient construction, is an effective way of raising vulnerable living space above design flood levels. It can however have an impact on the streetscape. Safe access and egress is a critical consideration in allocating ground floor uses.

Depending on the scale of residual risk, resilient and resistance measures may be an appropriate response, but this will mostly apply to less vulnerable development.

7.7.1.3 Raised Defences

Construction of raised defences (i.e. flood walls and embankments) has traditionally been the response to flood risk. However, this is not a preferred option on an ad-hoc basis where the defences to protect the development are not part of a strategically led flood relief scheme. Where a defence scheme is proposed as the means of providing flood defence, the impact of the scheme on flood risk up and downstream must be assessed and appropriate compensatory storage must be provided.

7.8 'Green Corridor'

It is recommended that, where possible, and particularly where there is greenfield land adjacent to the river, a 'green corridor', is retained on all rivers and streams. This will have a number of benefits, including:

- Retention of all, or some, of the natural floodplain;
- Potential opportunities for amenity, including riverside walks and public open spaces;
- Maintenance of the connectivity between the river and its floodplain, encouraging the development of a full range of habitats;
- Natural attenuation of flows will help ensure no increase in flood risk downstream;
- Allows access to the river for maintenance works;
- Retention of clearly demarcated areas where development is not appropriate on flood risk grounds, and in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management.

The width of this corridor should be determined by the available land, and topographically constraints, such as raised land and flood defences, but would ideally span the fully width of the floodplain (i.e. all of Flood Zone A).

8 Settlement Zoning Review

The purpose of land use zoning objectives is to indicate to property owners and members of the public the types of development the Planning Authority considers most appropriate in each land use category. Zoning is designed to reduce conflicting uses within areas, to protect resources and, in association with phasing, to ensure that land suitable for development is used to the best advantage of the community as a whole.

This section of the SFRA will:

- Outline the strategic approach to flood risk management.
- Consider the land use zoning objectives utilised within the WMCDP settlements and assess their potential vulnerability to flooding.
- Based on the associated vulnerability of the particular use, a clarification on the requirement of the application of the Justification Test is provided.

- The consideration of the specific land use zoning objectives and flood risk will be presented for the settlements. Comment will be provided on the use of the sequential approach and justification test. Conclusions will be drawn on how flood risk is proposed to be managed in the settlement.

8.1 The Strategic Approach to Flood Risk Management

A strategic approach to the management of flood risk is important in County Westmeath as the risks are varied and disparate, with scales of risk and scales of existing and proposed development varying greatly across the county.

Following the Planning Guidelines, development should always be located in areas of lowest flood risk first, and only when it has been established that there are no suitable alternative options should development (of the lowest vulnerability) proceed. Consideration may then be given to factors which moderate risks, such as defences, and finally consideration of suitable flood risk mitigation and site management measures is necessary.

It is important to note that whilst it may be technically feasible to mitigate or manage flood risk at site level, strategically it may not be a sustainable approach.

A summary of flood risks associated with each of the zoning objectives has been provided in the following settlement reviews. The Flood Risk commentary indicates whether a certain land zoning, in Flood Zone A or B, will need to have the Plan Making Justification Test (JT) applied and passed.

When carrying out a site specific FRA, or when planning applications are being considered, it is important to remember that not all uses will be appropriate on flood risk grounds, hence the need to work through the Justification Test for Development Management on a site by site basis and with reference to Table 8.1. For example, a Mixed Use Town / Village Centre zoning objective is "to include for an integrated mix of residential, commercial, community and social uses" which have varying vulnerabilities and would not be equally permissible within Flood Zone A and B.

















Table 8.1 Zoning Objective Vulnerability

Zoning Objective	Indicative Vulnerability	Primary	Flood Risk Commentary
C - Commercial	Less / highly vulnerable		For highly vulnerable development in Flood Zone A or B. For less vulnerable development in Flood Zone A.
IE - Community/Educational/ Institutional	Less / highly vulnerable		Consideration to be given to flood risks and sequential use of land to ensure highly vulnerable uses are located within areas at lowest risk of flooding.
CS - Consolidation Site	Less / highly vulnerable		For highly vulnerable development in Flood Zone A or B. For less vulnerable development in Flood Zone A.
EE - Enterprise & Employment	Less vulnerable		Appropriate use in Flood Zone B, but JT will be needed in Flood Zone A.
ER - Established Residential	Highly Vulnerable		JT required for within Flood Zone A and B.
ESC - Expanded Settlement Centre	Less / highly vulnerable		For highly vulnerable development in Flood Zone A or B. For less vulnerable development in Flood Zone A.
MU - Mixed Use	Less / highly vulnerable		For highly vulnerable development in Flood Zone A or B. For less vulnerable development in Flood Zone A.
OS - Open Space	Water compatible		JT not needed. Land use appropriate and should be retained.
PR - Proposed Residential	Highly Vulnerable		JT required for within Flood Zone A and B.
SSRC - Self Sustaining Rural Consolidation	Highly Vulnerable		JT required for within Flood Zone A and B.
SR - Sporting Recreational	Water compatible		JT not needed. Land use appropriate and should be retained.


The following sections review the land use zoning objectives for each settlement within the plan and provide a comprehensive summary of flood risk and justification where necessary.

The legend and Zoning Objectives are provided below, these apply to all settlements.

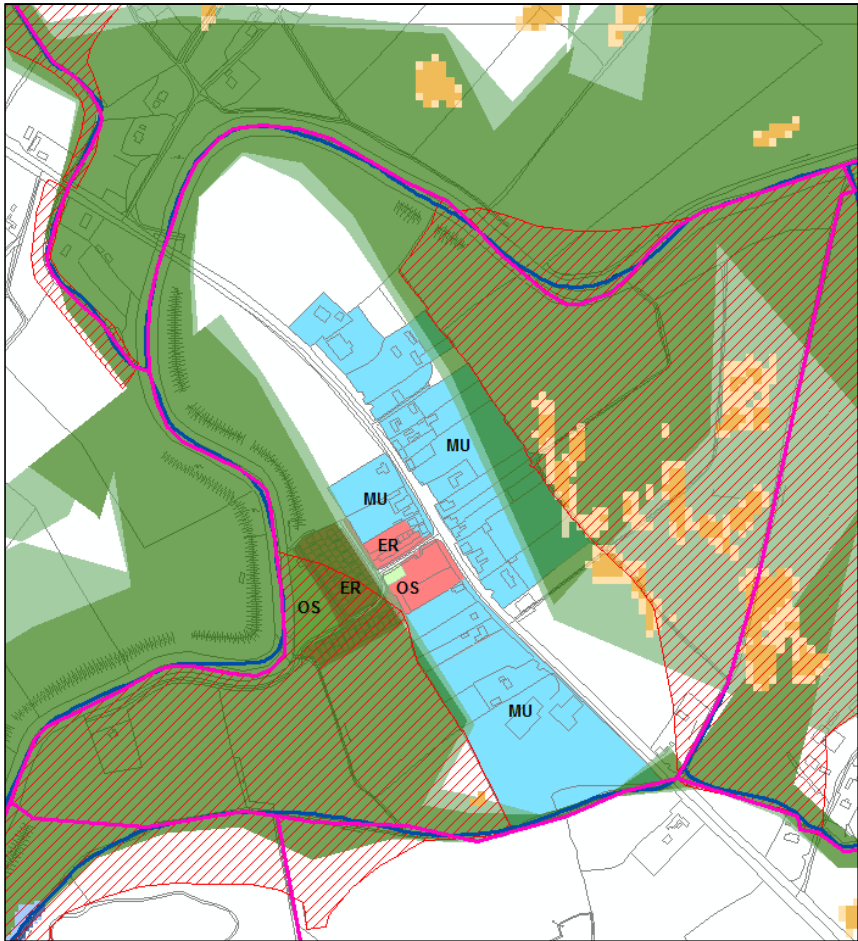
Maps Legend

-  CFRAM Flood Zone A
-  CFRAM Flood Zone B
-  PFRA Pluvial_Indicative
-  PFRA Pluvial_Extreme
-  PFRA 1% AEP Fluvial
-  OPW PFRA 0.1% Fluvial
-  OPW Benefitting Lands
-  Kilbeggan Site - Zone A
-  Kilbeggan Site - Zone B
-  OPW Arterial Drainage Channel
-  Non-Drained River Network
-  OPW Embankments
-  Westmeath Rivers
-  Historic Flood Point
-  Historic Flood Extent
-  WMCC_Lakes

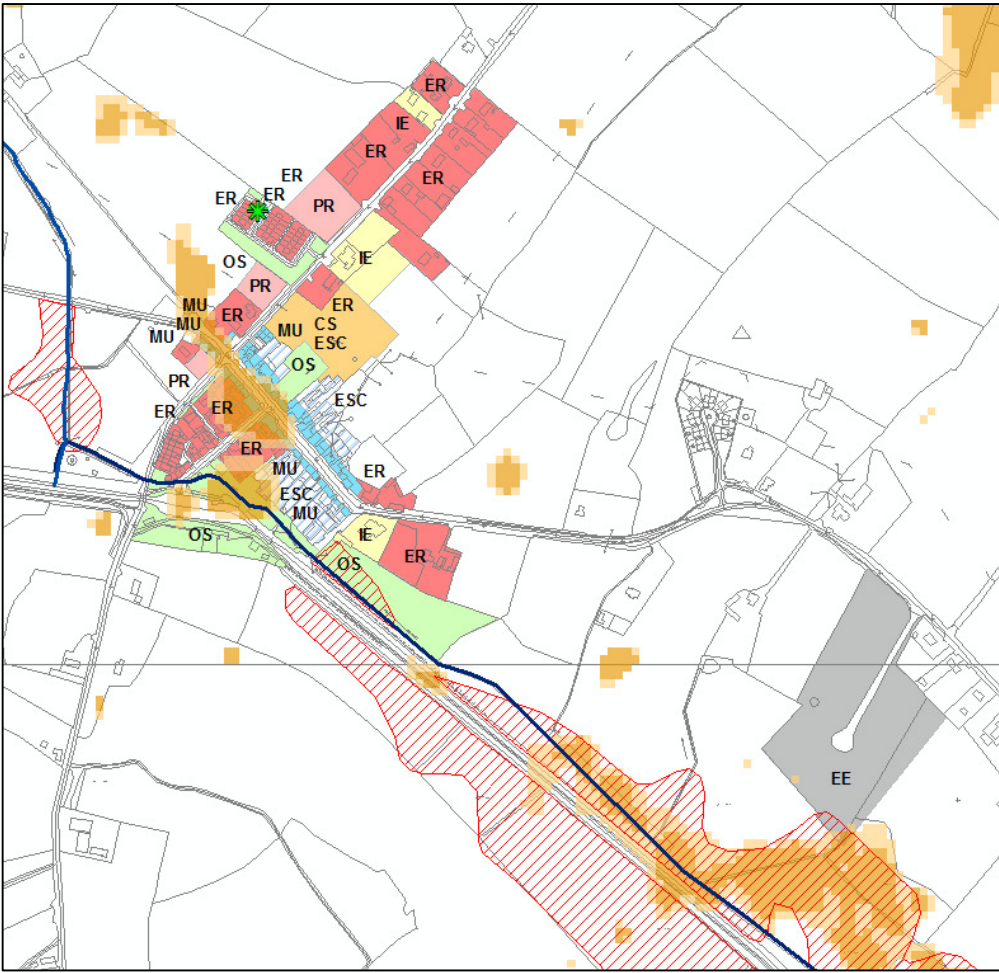
Land Use Zoning Objective

-  C - Commercial
-  CS - Consolidation Site
-  EE - Enterprise & Employment
-  ER - Established Residential
-  ESC - Expanded Settlement Centre
-  IE - Community, Educational & Institutional
-  MU - Mixed Use
-  OS - Open Space
-  PR - Proposed Residential
-  SR - Sporting Recreational
-  SSRC - Self Sustaining Rural Consolidation

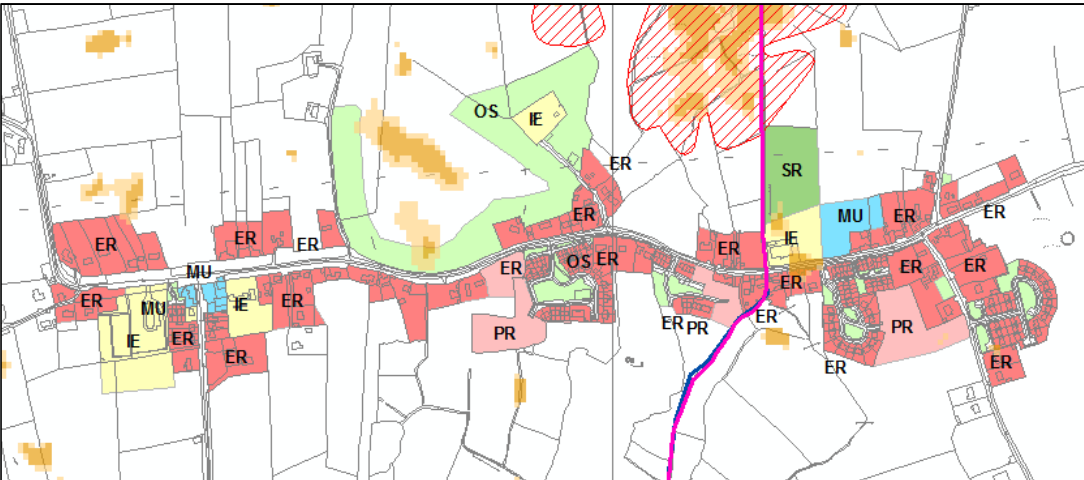
8.2 Ballinalack

Hierarchy/Tier	Rural (Served) Tier 6
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL + FLUVIAL (Flood Zone A/B represented by PFRA fluvial) BENEFITTING LANDS
Historic Flooding	None found
Comment	The River Inny is subject to an OPW Arterial Drainage scheme and meanders around the western and northern periphery of the village. Most of the development is on higher ground circa 4m above the riverbank. The available flood mapping predicts a significant amount of flooding around the periphery of the existing developed lands, within which the Inis Glora Estate is located. It is likely that the flood extents are currently overestimated by the PFRA and Benefitting Lands mapping, but this is currently the best available data.
Climate Change	Sensitive to fluvial increases in flow.
Conclusion	Risk is limited to existing development and should be managed in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

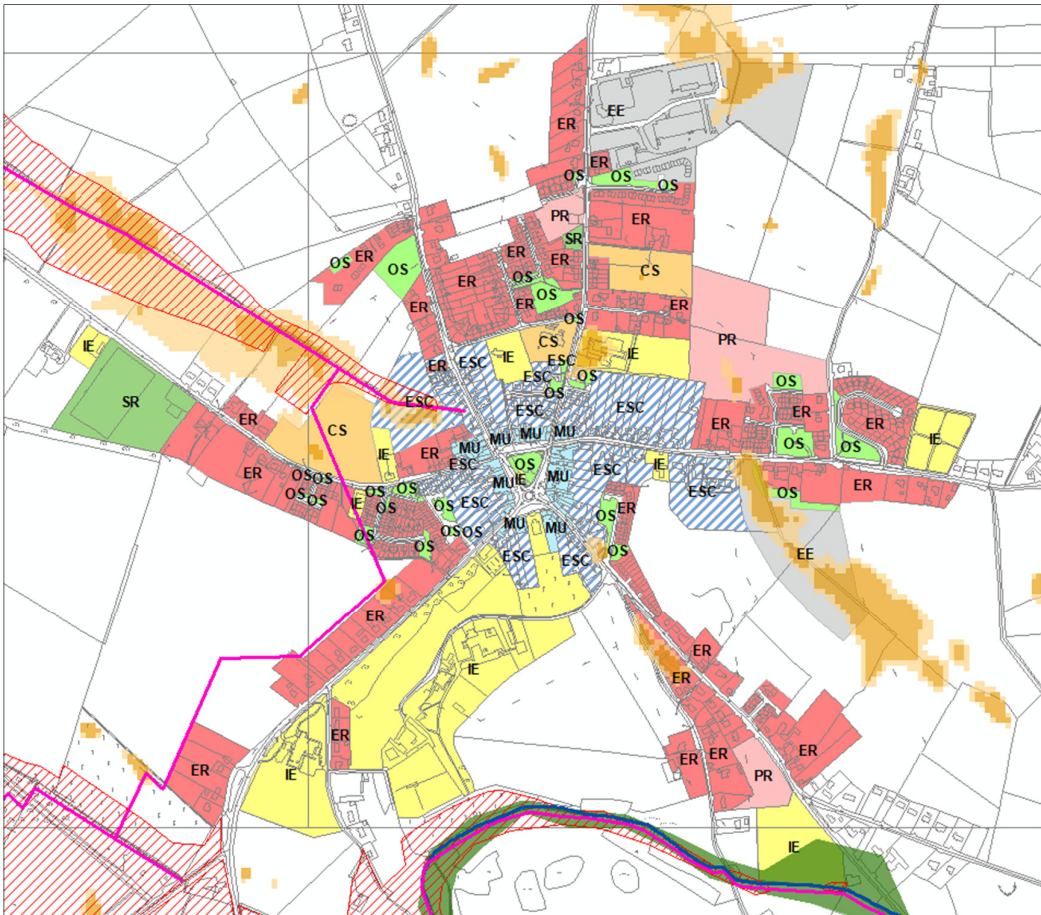
8.3 Ballynacarrigy

Hierarchy/Tier	Rural (Served) Tier 6
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL BENEFITTING LANDS (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)
Historic Flooding	Recurring surface water flooding, Carrickmore Estate, inadequate surface water drainage issue.
Comment	Risk from the canal is low and an adjacent stream is mapped only by Benefitting Lands extents. Risk from the stream is still only predicted to impact adjacent open space and there are no undeveloped zoned lands adjacent to the watercourse. There is some predicted pluvial flooding which is based on an analysis of topographic low points, actual surface water drainage may mitigate these areas. There is recurring surface water flooding following heavy rainfall in Carrickmore Estate and this is acknowledged as a known drainage issue.
Climate Change	Minimal fluvial impacts expected, potential increase in runoff would increase surface water risk.
Conclusion	Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk. Surface water management is a key priority in this settlement.

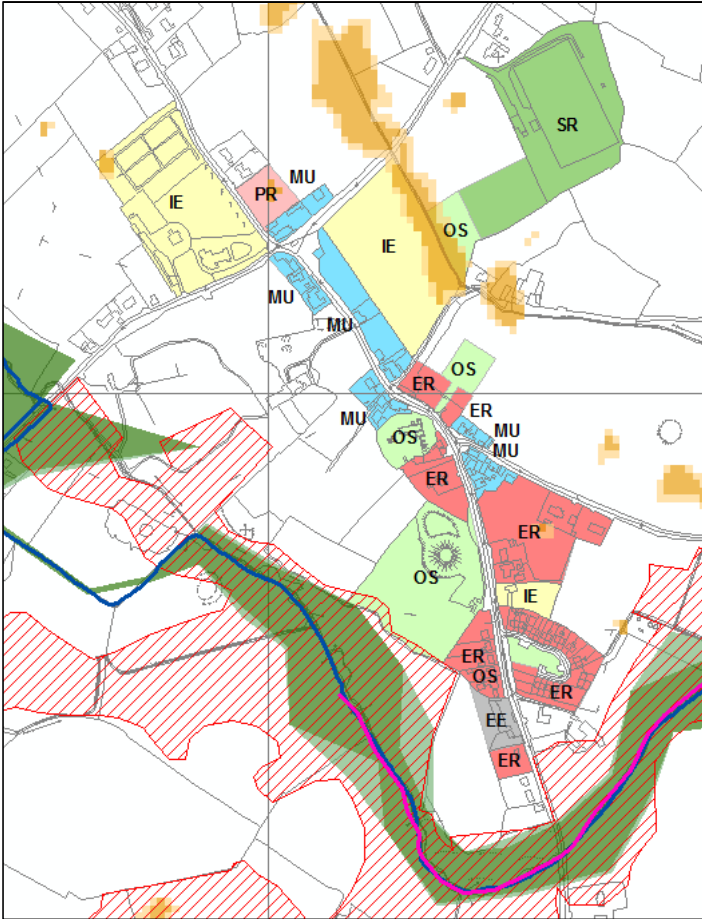
8.4 Ballymore

Hierarchy/Tier	Rural (Served) Tier 6
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL BENEFITTING LANDS (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)
Historic Flooding	None found
Comment	Predicted flood risk from the Benefiting Lands mapping is low and there are no significant undeveloped zoned lands close to the watercourse. Some small areas of pluvial flooding are noted, but there is no recorded flood history.
Climate Change	No fluvial impacts.
Conclusion	Risk is not significant. Any extensions/redevelopment should be managed in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

8.5 Castlepollard

Hierarchy/Tier		Self-Sustaining Growth Town Tier 3
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?		No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL + FLUVIAL (southern watercourse only) BENEFITTING LANDS (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)	
Historic Flooding	None found	
Comment	The principal risk to the settlement is from the Arterial Drainage channel to the west. A site visit confirmed that the watercourse enters a culvert adjacent to the Proposed Residential (PR) zoning and this has a very deep invert (flows to south). The CS zoning does not encroach within Benefitting Lands and the risk from the culverted section of the watercourse is low. Through the length of the culvert under the PR lands the levels gradually rise to the south where it borders the R395 road. Elsewhere in the settlement there are isolated areas of surface water ponding identified by the PFRA.	
Climate Change	Potential increase/sensitivity to fluvial and pluvial risk.	
Conclusion	Risk is not significant. PR zoning is appropriate in the west of the above settlement but must be subject to FRA at Development Management stage. Pluvial flooding is a potential risk to undeveloped Enterprise & Employment (EE) lands but again, the risk can be managed by appropriately designed stormwater systems to be detailed at Development Management stage. Risk can be managed in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.	

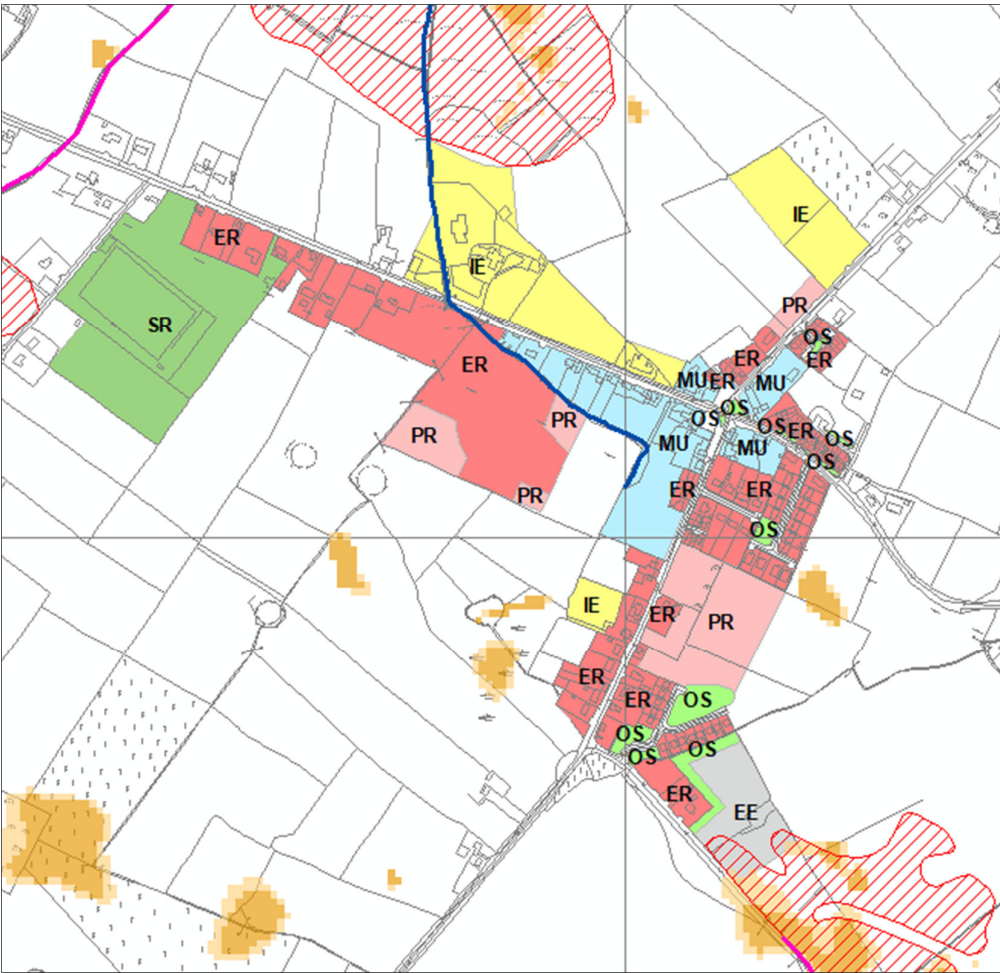
8.6 Castletown Geoghegan

Hierarchy/Tier	Rural (Served) Tier 6
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
	
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL + FLUVIAL BENEFITTING LANDS (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)
Historic Flooding	None found
Comment	An OPW drainage channel meanders around the southern periphery of the settlement and fluvial flood risk is limited to lands that are outside of the settlement. Predicted pluvial flooding impacts undeveloped Community, Educational & Institutional (IE) land.
Climate Change	No fluvial impacts likely to affect settlement, potential increase in runoff.
Conclusion	Pluvial risk to IE land should be managed at Development Management stage by the implementation of an appropriately designed stormwater system in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

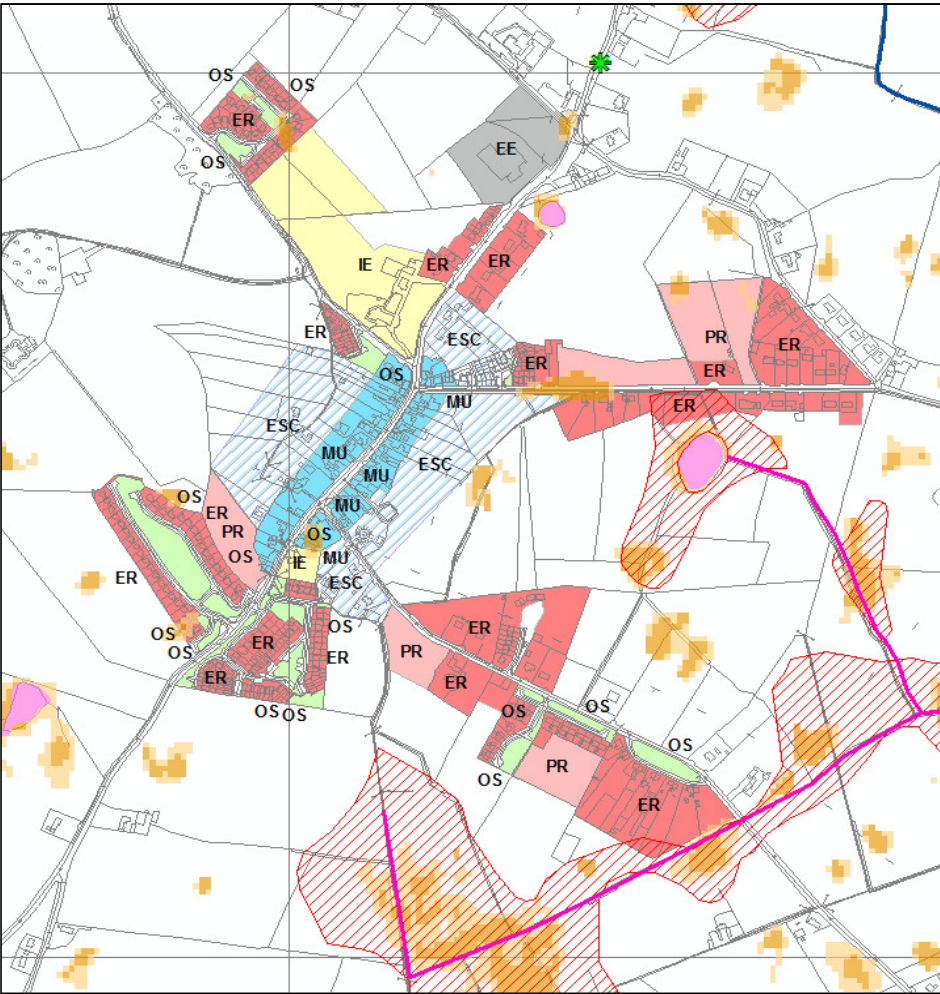
8.7 Clonmellon

Hierarchy/Tier	Towns & Villages Tier 5
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL + FLUVIAL (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B) BENEFITTING LANDS
Historic Flooding	None found
Comment	An OPW drainage channel flows around the southern and eastern periphery of the settlement and fluvial flood risk is limited to lands that are outside of the settlement, with the exception of a small overlap with Existing Residential (ER) land on the southern extent of the land. It is likely that this extent is overestimated given that the watercourse is subject to arterial drainage. Isolated areas are subject to predicted pluvial flooding, these have been identified as small topographic hollows and the modelling does not consider the existing stormwater system. Most development appears to be circa 2m above floodplain levels and fluvial risk is predominantly low. The EE lands are outlying the main settlement and avoid the predicted risk from the OPW PFRA study, a site-specific FRA will be required at planning application stage as per WMCDP Policy.
Climate Change	Potential increase in floodplain but development is on higher ground, low vulnerability. Pluvial risk may increase.
Conclusion	Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

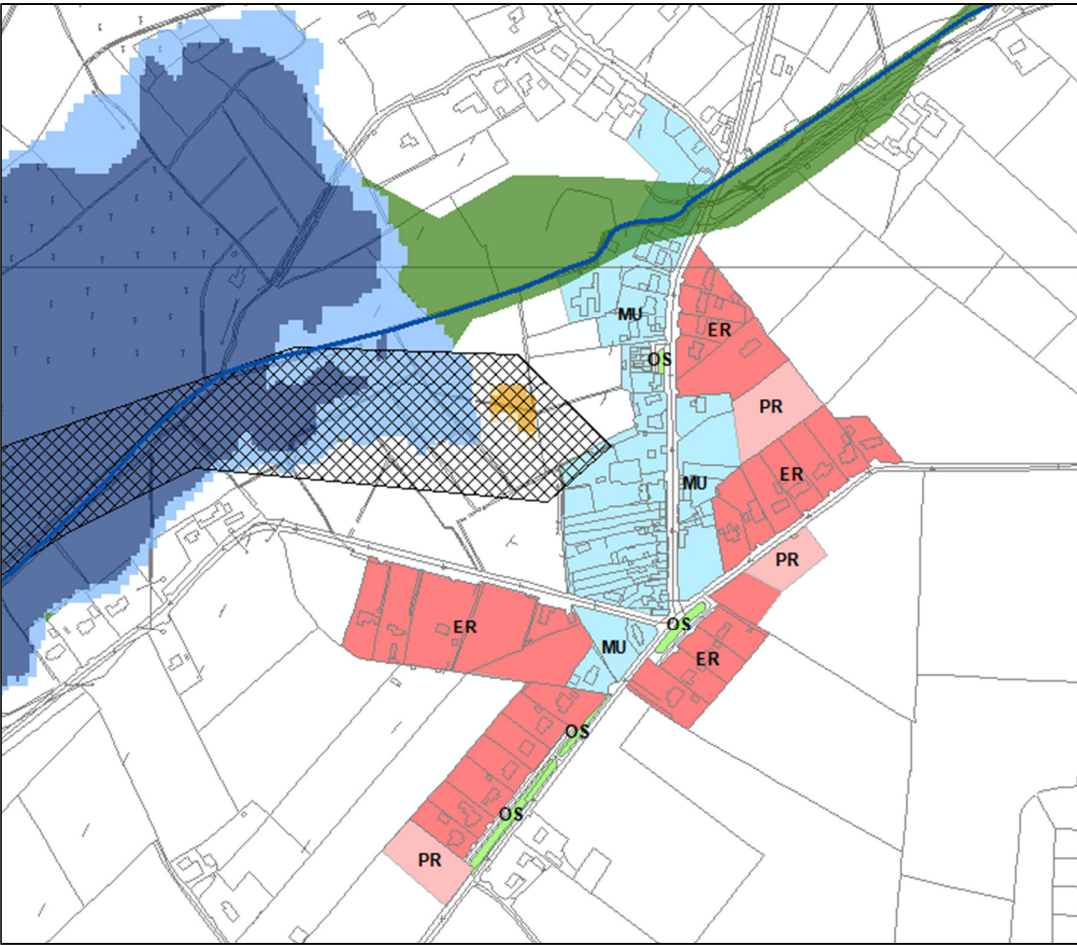
8.8 Collinstown

Hierarchy/Tier	Rural (Served) Tier 6
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL BENEFITTING LANDS (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)
Historic Flooding	None found
Comment	A drainage channel originates just to the west of the village centre (crossroads). The watercourse is subsequently piped under the proposed residential land and new housing estate in a 1m diameter pipe. Site visit has verified the watercourse and risk is low to surrounding development. The only other potential source of risk is predicted by Benefitting Lands mapping to the south and this impacts an undeveloped EE site. An OPW Arterial Drainage channel is located 100m south east of the site and most likely provides effective mitigation to the lands. Prior to any development the extent of flooding should be confirmed by an appropriately detailed site specific FRA and the approach set out in the Development Management and Flood Risk section of this SFRA should be followed.
Climate Change	Minor increase in fluvial risk.
Conclusion	Risk is generally low. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

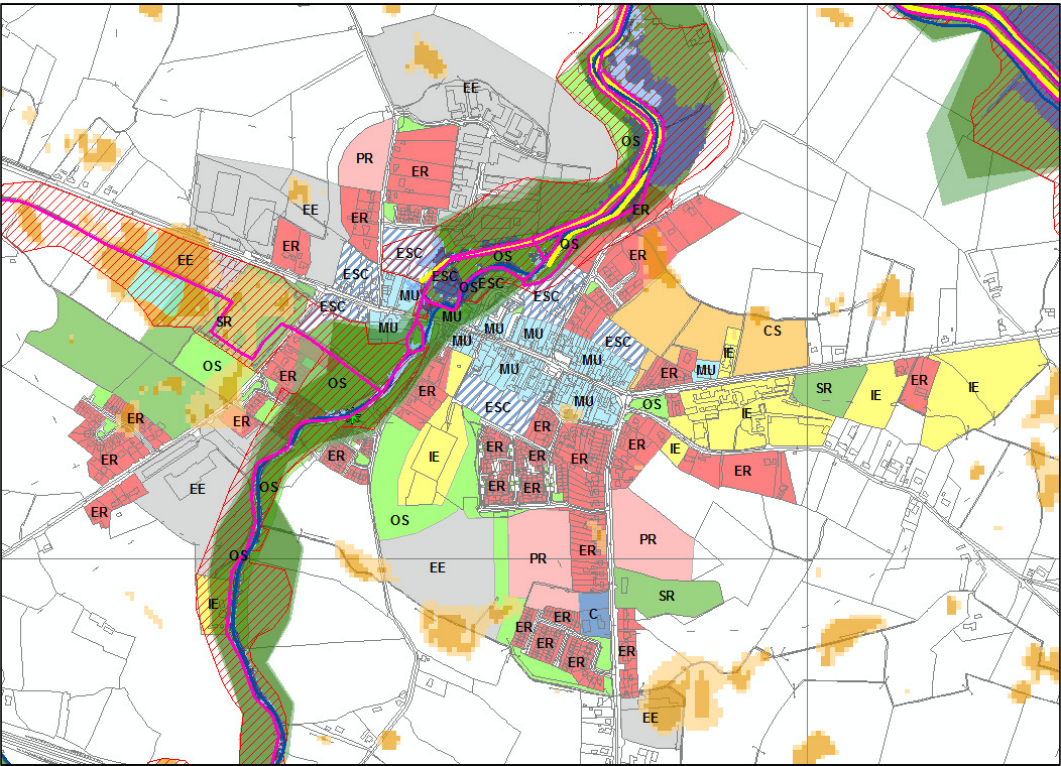
8.9 Delvin

Hierarchy/Tier	Towns & Villages Tier 5
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
	
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL BENEFITTING LANDS (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)
Historic Flooding	Pluvial event in 2009, Mart Junction, Delvin. Surface water from surrounding land and road inundated a dip in the road. No indication of property flooding in the core settlement.
Comment	OPW Arterial Drainage channels are located to the south and east of zoned land. The associated Benefitting Lands flood mapping indicates that there is some overlap with Existing Residential (ER) land. There are some groundwater fed ponds that are located outside of zoned lands in topographic low spots. Given the Arterial Drainage works it is anticipated that the Benefitting lands extents are overestimating risk to the ER lands. Overall the fluvial risk to the settlement is low and the majority of predicted pluvial flooding is outside of the zoned land.
Climate Change	Low sensitivity from fluvial events to current zoned land. Pluvial risk may increase, particularly in isolated low spots, but these are predominantly outside zoned land.
Conclusion	Risk is generally low. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

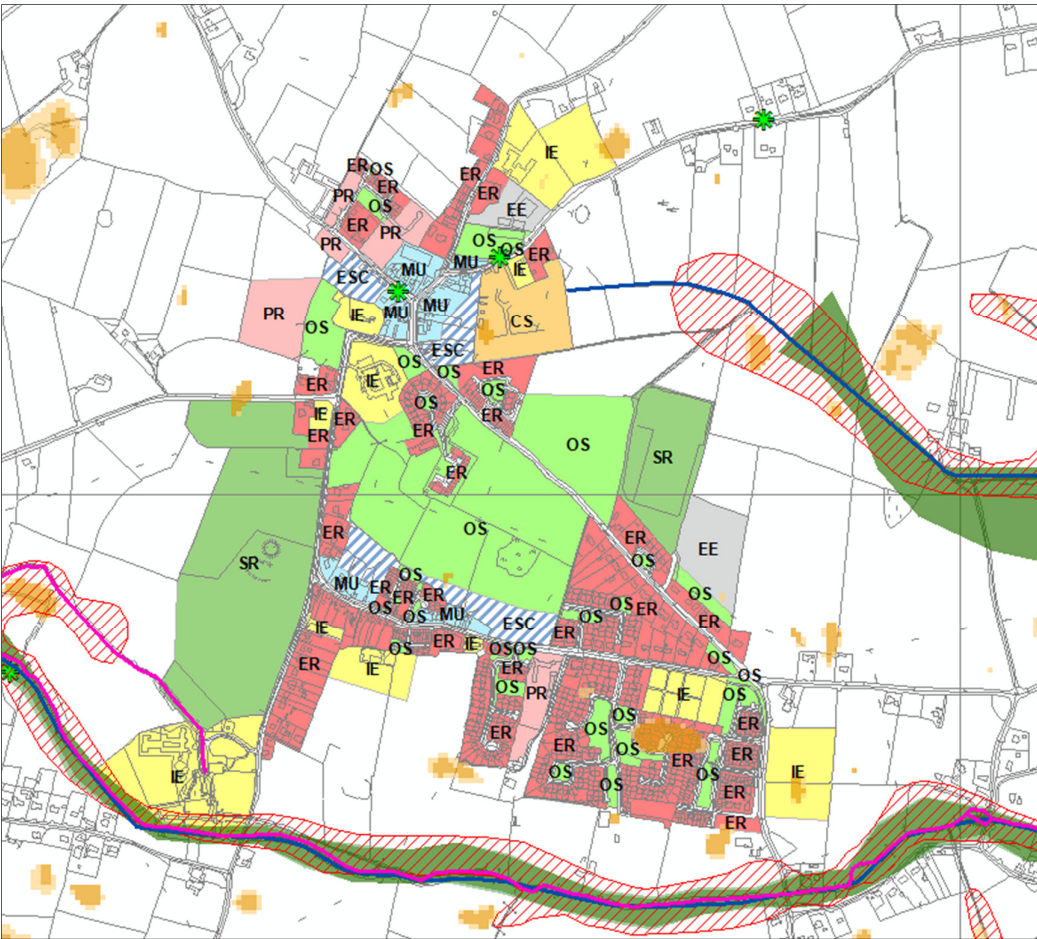
8.10 Glasson

Hierarchy/Tier	Rural (Served) Tier 6
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW CFRAM to west OPW PFRA PLUVIAL & FLUVIAL (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)
Historic Flooding	Hatched polygon represents historic flood extent from the 1954 Shannon flood event.
Comment	Glasson is located to the east of Lough Ree. A watercourse flows in a westerly direction under the road to the north of the Mixed Use (MU) existing developed land. There is a circa 4m drop in ground level to historically flooded areas from the Shannon (Lough Ree) to the west of the site. CFRAM mapping is available from the Shannon (from Lough Ree) to west, the OPW PFRA fluvial extents provide the only estimate moving upstream on the fluvial watercourse. Impacts from the PFRA are limited to a small amount of existing development. There is no undeveloped zoned land at risk of flooding.
Climate Change	Moderate sensitivity from fluvial events to current zoned land. Pluvial risk is generally low.
Conclusion	Risk is generally low with the exception of the developed MU land bordering the single watercourse flowing through the settlement. Any extensions/change of use/redevelopment of these properties must have an appropriately detailed FRA. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WDCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

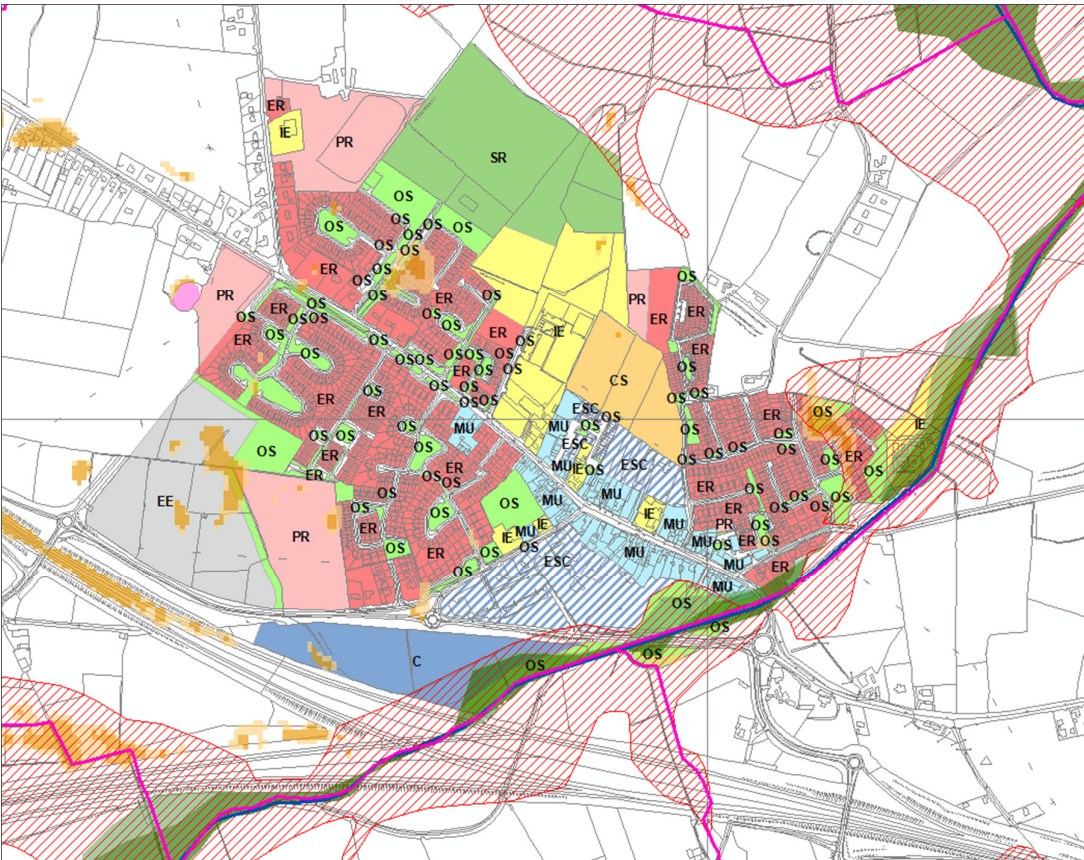
8.11 Kilbeggan

Hierarchy/Tier	Self-Sustaining Growth Towns Tier 3
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	Yes
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Flood Zone Data	<p>OPW CFRAM for River Brosna (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)</p> <p>OPW PFRA PLUVIAL</p> <p>BENEFITTING LANDS</p> <p>SITE SPECIFIC FRA for drain to west of centre</p>
Historic Flooding	Brosna View Estate historic recurring pluvial flooding. The Brosna overflows at Coola Bridge every year (assumed this does not impact property).
Comment	<p>The CFRAM analysis confirmed that there is no fluvial flood risk from the River Brosna to any properties within Kilbeggan for the 10% AEP, 1% AEP or 0.1% AEP flood events, as such there is no requirement for a flood relief scheme. The CFRAM did not map the drain that approaches from the west of the settlement along the R446 Moate Road. Benefitting Lands mapping provides an initial estimate of risk, however a site specific FRA provides a detailed assessment of risk and this is displayed on the map above as supplementary information. EE land is situated within Flood Zone C and is appropriate. Pluvial risk is focussed in the lands subject to the site specific FRA, these have now been raised and the low spot has been removed. Site specific measures will manage pluvial risk here.</p>
Climate Change	Moderate sensitivity from fluvial events on the River Brosna, no significant risk to property. Pluvial risk is generally low but could increase with predicted increases in rainfall intensity.
Conclusion	<p>Risk is generally low as confirmed by the OPW CFRAM. Risk adjacent to the western drain has been more well defined but any development within the Benefitting Lands extents and any extensions/change of use/redevelopment in this area must have an appropriately detailed FRA. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.</p>

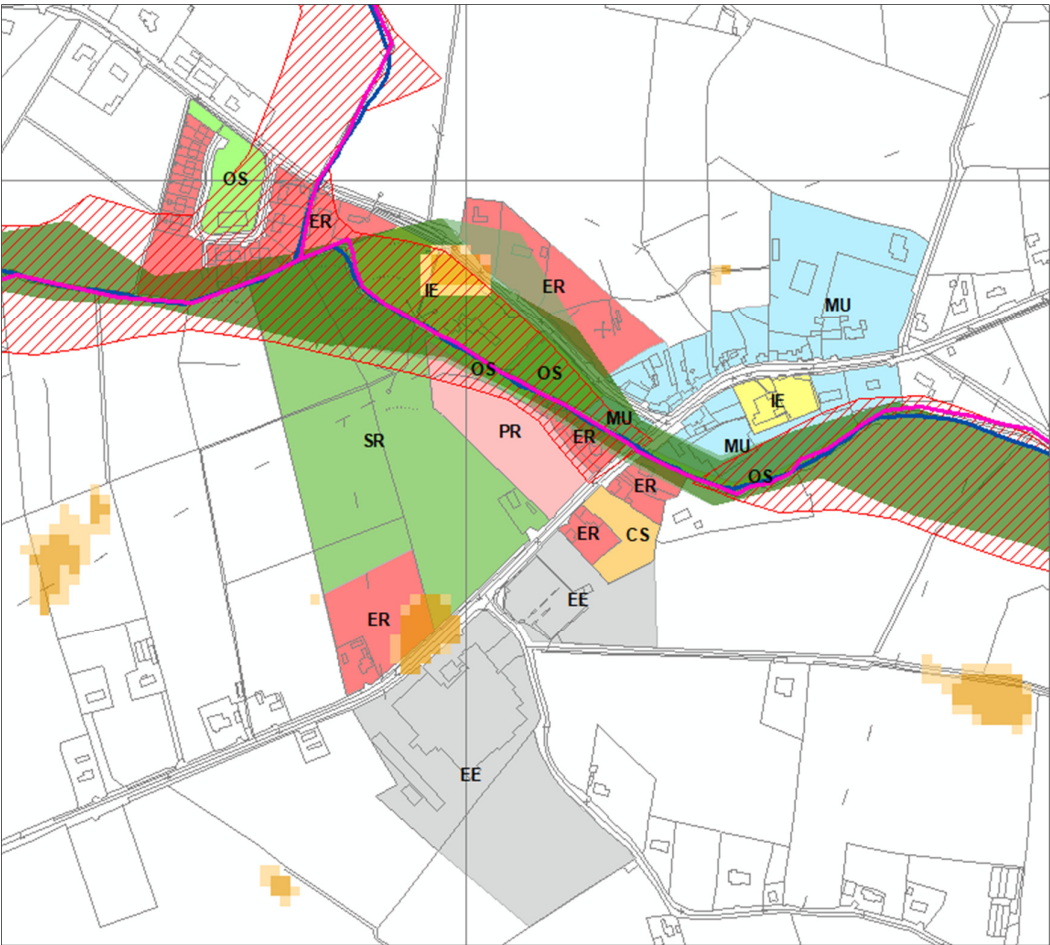
8.12 Killucan/Rathwire

Hierarchy/Tier	Self-Sustaining Towns Tier 4
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL & FLUVIAL BENEFITTING LANDS (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)
Historic Flooding	After heavy rain, every year water flows down the road into the village and the surface water drainage is unable to cope. Road is liable to flood and properties are affected. A stream is also noted to overflow its banks with road and low lying area flooding, no property mentioned.
Comment	Flood extents (from Benefitting Lands) are limited to areas outside of the settlement with the exception of the IE land adjacent to the Riverstown River in the south west of the settlement. The encroachment within the land is not understood to present a significant risk to any vulnerable development. Elsewhere in the settlement there is some issue with pluvial flooding impacting property.
Climate Change	High sensitivity to pluvial flood events. Moderate to low sensitivity to fluvial events.
Conclusion	Risk is generally low, any redevelopment within the IE lands close the river must have an appropriately detailed FRA. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

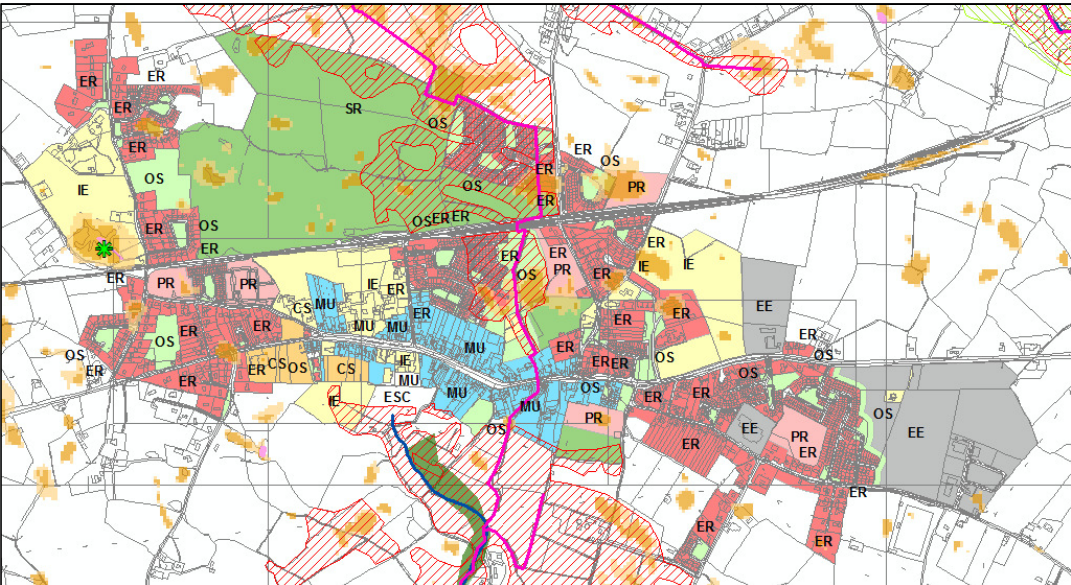
8.13 Kinnegad

Hierarchy/Tier	Self-Sustaining Growth Towns Tier 3
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
	
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL & FLUVIAL (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B) BENEFITTING LANDS
Historic Flooding	None recorded
Comment	The principal risk to Kinnegad is from the Kinnegad River, however this is subject to an OPW Arterial Drainage scheme and the channel here is widened and deepened. It is highly likely that the actual flood extents are much less conservative than the Benefitting Lands and to some extent the PFRA extents as well. There is minor overlap with existing developed land only and there is no significant undeveloped lands at potential risk. New Proposed Residential zoning next to the disused quarry lake to the north west of the town is not a significant risk to the site, but an appropriately detailed FRA should be submitted at development management stage to screen risk further. A more detailed assessment of flood risk from the Kinnegad River would potentially be able to reduce the Flood Zone extent and release further land zoned OS for future zoning and development.
Climate Change	Sensitivity to pluvial flood events. Moderate to low sensitivity to fluvial events.
Conclusion	Risk is generally low and is overestimated by Benefitting Lands and PFRA mapping. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

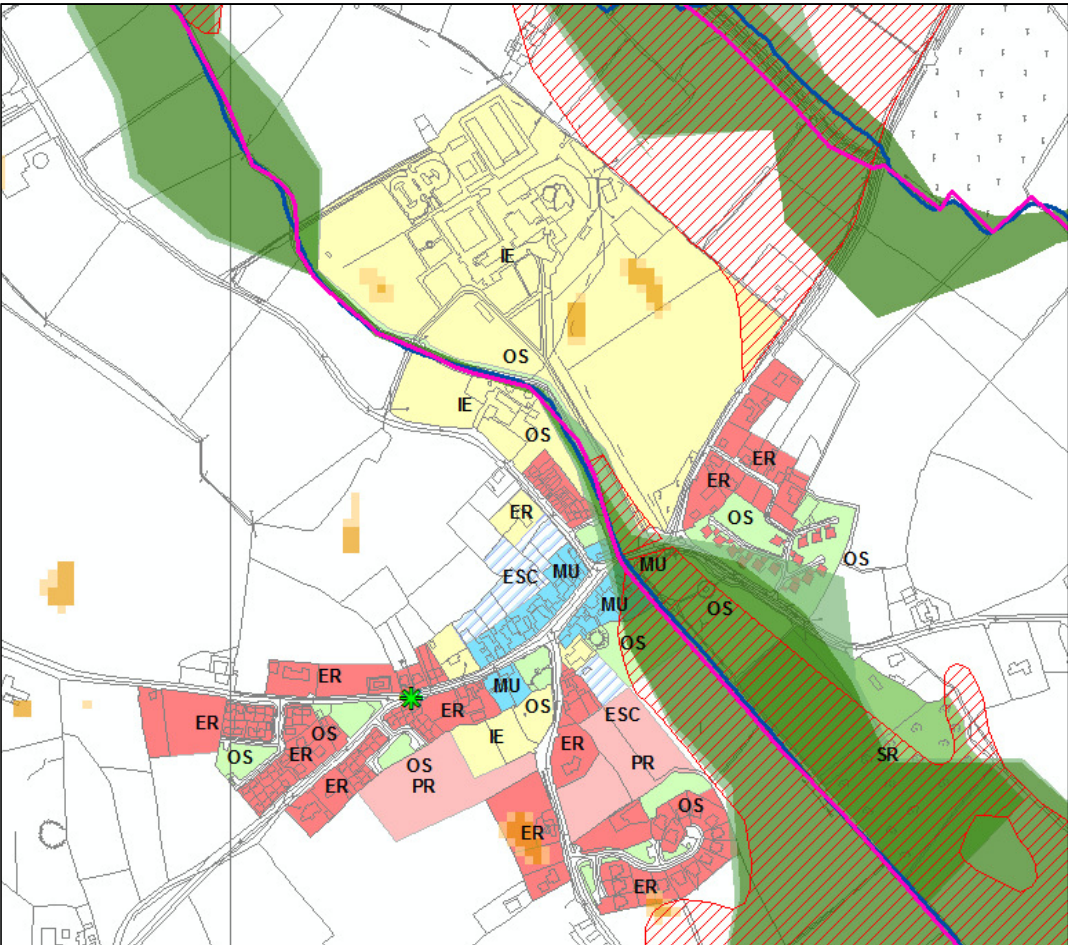
8.14 Milltownpass

Hierarchy/Tier	Rural (Served) Tier 6
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA PLUVIAL & FLUVIAL BENEFITTING LANDS (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)
Historic Flooding	None recorded
Comment	Risk in Milltownpass was reviewed by the OPW under the CFRAM but it was found that the channel capacity is in the order of the 1% AEP event. Site visit from JBA also confirmed that flood risk from the Benefitting Lands and the PFRA is overestimated and the School is not at high risk, other areas of existing residential development is also at lower risk than suggested by the mapping. Undeveloped land includes Sports & Recreational (SR) and Proposed Residential. SR is appropriate within Flood Zone A/B, the PR lands have a small overlap with benefiting lands but a site specific flood risk assessment confirms that land levels are high at this location and channel capacity is also significant.
Climate Change	Moderate to low sensitivity to fluvial events.
Conclusion	Risk is generally low and is overestimated by Benefitting Lands and PFRA mapping. The PR lands must be subject to a detailed FRA at development. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

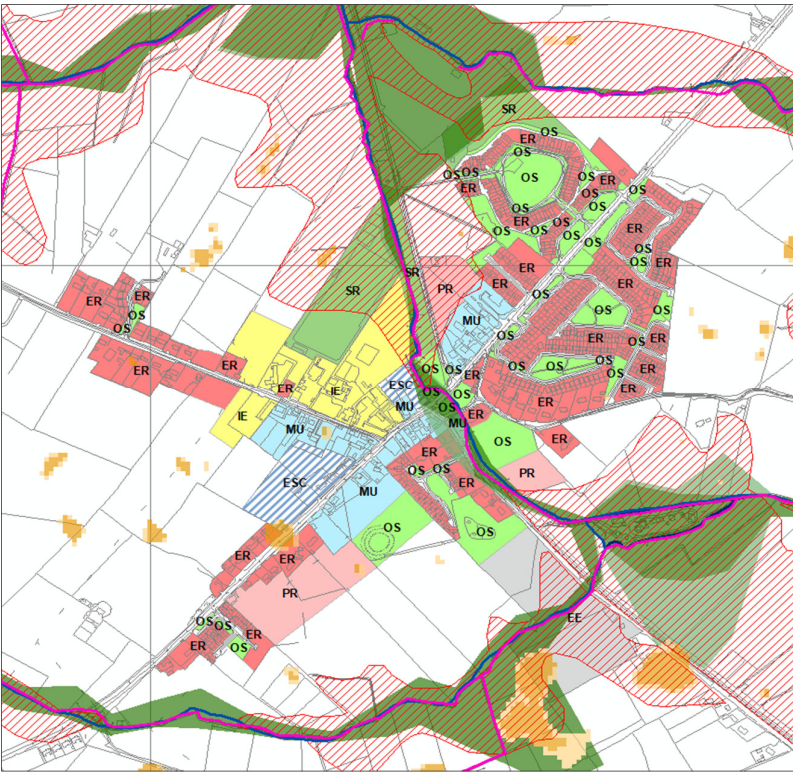
8.15 Moate

Hierarchy/Tier	Self-Sustaining Growth Towns Tier 3
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	BENEFITTING LANDS (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)
Historic Flooding	Turlough (western edge of settlement) floods after heavy rain every year. The flood is of long duration.
Comment	<p>The principal risk within Moate is from an OPW Arterial Drainage channel that flows in a southerly direction through the town. It is culverted beneath an existing housing estate in the north of the settlement, the risk from the Benefitting Lands mapping here is not correct and should be Zone C. The watercourse emerges in the OS land to the north of the railway line before extending through OS land south of the line. PR land here has been located in Flood Zone C and once more it is expected that the actual extent of Flood Zone A would be less than represented by the Benefitting Lands mapping. Most of the pluvial risk is contained within the Benefitting Lands areas and is indicative of low lying areas within the settlement, despite the presence of Benefitting Lands mapping the risk to existing and proposed development is low.</p> <p>Undeveloped IE lands located on the southern extent of the settlement are subject to significant Benefitting Lands flood extent. The lands are separated from the nearest drainage channel by circa 200m and there is a fall of around 2m in vertical height. It is highly unlikely that the lands are at high risk of flooding and prior to any development the extent of flooding should be confirmed by an appropriately detailed site specific FRA and should follow the approach set out in the Development Management and Flood Risk section of this SFRA.</p>
Climate Change	Limited analysis to confirm fluvial sensitivity, but likely to be moderate. Pluvial would be high, particularly adjacent to the Turlough.
Conclusion	Risk is generally low and is overestimated by Benefitting Lands mapping. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

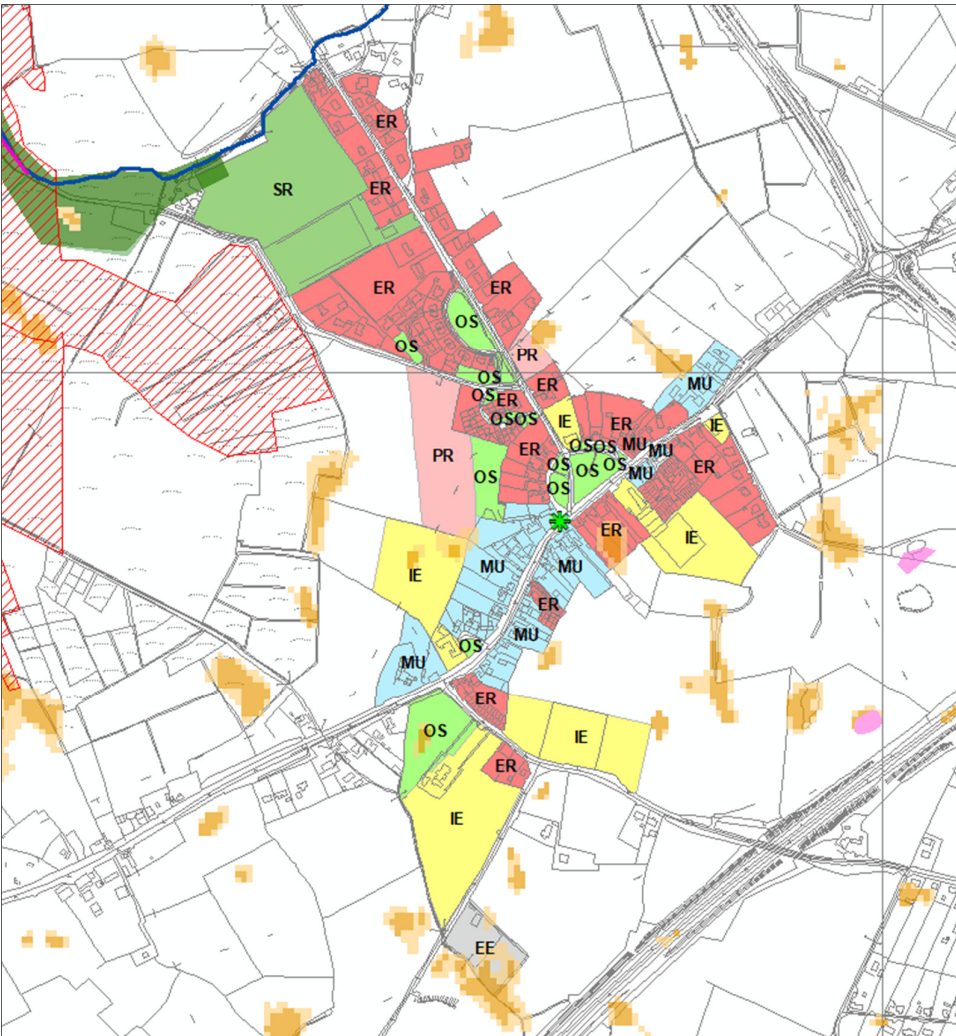
8.16 Multyfarnham

Hierarchy/Tier	Rural (Served) Tier 6
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA Pluvial & Fluvial (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B) BENEFITTING LANDS
Historic Flooding	Low lying area floods after very heavy rain. The road is liable to flood.
Comment	Benefitting Lands and PFRA outlines are similar. The River Gaine passes through the village centre, flood risk is typically avoided by use of OS zoning. Some Existing Residential (ER) in Zone B (PFRA), however the presence of the Arterial Drainage scheme in place on the River Gaine means that the flood extents are most likely to be overestimated.
Climate Change	High fluvial sensitivity. Pluvial flooding is limited in the settlement.
Conclusion	Risk is generally low and is overestimated by Benefitting Lands mapping. All undeveloped zoned lands are within Flood Zone C. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

8.17 Rochfortbridge

Hierarchy/Tier	Self-Sustaining Towns Tier 4
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA Pluvial & Fluvial (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B) BENEFITTING LANDS
Historic Flooding	None found
Comment	The Arterial Drainage channel flows through centre of the town. Extensive Benefitting Lands flood extents are overestimated, and this was confirmed by a site visit. PFRA extents are more representative of risk and should be used as an indicative estimate of Flood Zones. Flood risk predominantly impacts water compatible use except in the centre where there appears to be some risk to existing development ESC, MU & ER. The EE zoning to the south of the settlement has a significant overlap with the PFRA mapping (Flood Zone A & B). At Development Management stage a Stage 3 Detailed Flood Risk Assessment will be required to define the extent of Flood Zone A/B and ensure that open space/water compatible land use is maintained within the areas of the site at risk and that the development can appropriately manage the impacts of flooding both on and off site. Residual risk of culvert blockage will also need to be investigated.
Climate Change	High fluvial sensitivity. Pluvial flooding is limited in the settlement.
Conclusion	Risk is generally low, but any redevelopment within the ESC, MU & ER adjacent to the watercourse must have an appropriately detailed FRA. EE lands to the south overlap Flood Zone A/B and Stage 3 FRA is required at Development Management stage, Flood Zone A/B should be defined and kept as open space/water compatible use. IE lands also have a border with the watercourse and should apply a riparian border and be subject to an appropriately detailed FRA. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.

8.18 Tyrrellspass

Hierarchy/Tier	Towns & Villages Tier 5
Area for Further Assessment under CFRAM programme?	No
	
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Flood Zone Data	OPW PFRA Pluvial & Fluvial (taken to represent Flood Zone A/B) BENEFITTING LANDS (also taken to represent Flood Zone A/B)
Historic Flooding	Low lying land floods after heavy rain every year (pluvial). A property in the village is affected.
Comment	There is limited fluvial flood risk to the northern fringe of the village, this is only predicted to impact Sports and Recreation (SR) zoning, but the risk may extend upstream to impact existing residential land. There is some predicted but isolated areas of pluvial flooding and the historic flood event confirms that one property in the village is impacted by this.
Climate Change	Moderate fluvial sensitivity. Pluvial flooding is limited in the settlement, but given the existing risk it is assumed it would be highly sensitive to further increases in rainfall.
Conclusion	Risk is generally low. Manage flood risk and development in line with approved WMCDP Policy and the guidance provided within the SFRA section on Development Management & Flood Risk.



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