



Clare County  
Development Plan  
**2023–2029**

Volume 10b(iii)  
**Strategic Environmental  
Assessment**  
SEA Statement

**Interim Version**

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COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR  
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL





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## Abbreviations

ACA	<i>Architectural Conservation Area</i>
AA	<i>Appropriate Assessment</i>
CCDP	<i>Clare County Development Plan</i>
cSAC	<i>Candidate Special Area of Conservation</i>
CSO	<i>Central Statistics Office</i>
DoECC	<i>Department of Environment, Climate and Communications</i>
DoTCAGSM	<i>Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media</i>
EDEN	<i>Environmental Data Exchange Network</i>
EEA	<i>European Environmental Agency</i>
EIA	<i>Environmental Impact Assessment</i>
EIAR	<i>Environmental Impact Assessment Report</i>
ER	<i>Environmental Report</i>
EU	<i>European Union</i>
GHG	<i>Green House Gas Emissions</i>
GIS	<i>Geographical Information Systems</i>
GSi	<i>Geological Survey of Ireland</i>
HAD	<i>Habitats Directive Assessment</i>
IGHP	<i>Irish Geological Heritage Programme</i>
IPC	<i>Integrated Pollution Control</i>
LCEA	<i>Limerick Clare Energy Agency</i>
MASP	<i>Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan</i>
NDP	<i>National Development Plan</i>
NGO	<i>Non-Governmental Organisation</i>
NHA	<i>Natural Heritage Area</i>
NIAH	<i>National Inventory of Architectural Heritage</i>
NPWS	<i>National Parks and Wildlife Service</i>
NRA/NTA	<i>National Roads Authority/National Transport Authority</i>
NREAP	<i>National Renewable Energy Action Plan</i>
NEEAP	<i>National Energy Efficiency Action Plan</i>
NSS	<i>National Spatial Strategy</i>
NTS	<i>Non-Technical Summary</i>
OPW	<i>Office of Public Works</i>
P/P	<i>Plan/Programme</i>
PE	<i>Population Equivalent</i>
pNHA	<i>Proposed Natural Heritage Area</i>
PPP	<i>Public Private Partnership</i>
PRP	<i>Pollution Reduction Programmes</i>
RBD	<i>River Basin District</i>
RBMP	<i>River Basin Management Plans</i>
RMP	<i>Record of Monuments and Places</i>
RSES	<i>Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy</i>
RA	<i>Regional Assembly</i>
RPS	<i>Record of Protected Structures</i>

<i>S.I. No.</i>	<i>Statutory Instrument Number</i>
<i>SA</i>	<i>Shannon Airport</i>
<i>SCP</i>	<i>Shannon Commercial Properties</i>
<i>SG</i>	<i>Shannon Group</i>
<i>SAC</i>	<i>Special Area of Conservation</i>
<i>SDZ</i>	<i>Strategic Development Zone</i>
<i>SEA</i>	<i>Strategic Environmental Assessment</i>
<i>SEO</i>	<i>Strategic Environmental Objective</i>
<i>SFRA</i>	<i>Strategic Flood Risk Assessment</i>
<i>SO<sub>2</sub></i>	<i>Sulphur dioxide</i>
<i>SRA</i>	<i>Southern Regional Assembly</i>
<i>SPA</i>	<i>Special Protection Area</i>
<i>SuDS</i>	<i>Sustainable Drainage Systems</i>
<i>TII</i>	<i>Transport Infrastructure Ireland</i>
<i>WFD</i>	<i>Water Framework Directive</i>
<i>WMU</i>	<i>Water Management Units</i>
<i>WSIP</i>	<i>The Water Services Investment Programme</i>
<i>WWTP</i>	<i>Wastewater Treatment Plant</i>
<i>WTP</i>	<i>Water Treatment Plant</i>

## Glossary

<b>Alternatives (Reasonable)</b>	Alternatives should consider the objectives and geographical scope of the Plan or project (P/P). There can be different ways of fulfilling the P/P objectives, or of dealing with environmental problems. The alternatives should be realistic, capable of implementation and should fall within the legal and geographical competence of the authority concerned.
<b>Appropriate Assessment</b>	An assessment of the effects of a plan or project on the Natura 2000 network. The Natura 2000 network comprises Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive, Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive and Ramsar sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (collectively referred to as European sites).
<b>Baseline environment</b>	A description of the present state of the environment of the P/P area.
<b>Baseline Survey</b>	Description of the existing environment against which future changes can be measured.
<b>Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna</b>	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 the plants found in a given area. Fauna is all of the animals found in a given area.
<b>Biotic Index Values (Q Values)</b>	The Biotic Index Values, or Q values, are assigned to rivers in accordance with biological monitoring of surface waters - low Q ratings, as low as Q1, are indicative of low biodiversity and polluted waters, and high Q ratings, as high as Q5, are indicative of high biodiversity and unpolluted waters. Good status as defined by the Water Framework Directive equates to approximately Q4 in the national scheme of biological classification of rivers as set out by the Environmental Protection Agency.
<b>Birds Directive</b>	Council Directive of 2nd April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC).
<b>Built Environment</b>	Refers to both architectural heritage and archaeological heritage.
<b>Cumulative Effects</b>	Effects on the environment that result from incremental changes caused by the strategic action together with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. These effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time or space
<b>Data</b>	Includes environmental data, proxy data, and any other relevant statistical data.
<b>Ecology</b>	The study of relationships between living organisms and between organisms and their environment (especially animal and plant communities), their energy flows and their interactions with their surroundings.
<b>Environmental Assessment</b>	The preparation of an environmental report, the carrying out of consultations, consideration of the environmental report and the results of the consultations in decision-making and the provision of information on the decision (in accordance with Articles 4 to 9 of the SEA Directive).
<b>Environmental Characteristics</b>	Environmental resources, issues and trends in the area affected by the P/P.
<b>Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)</b>	An ordered exercise designed to enable the environmental impacts of a proposed development/project to be anticipated before the project is carried out.
<b>Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)</b>	A statement of results from the ordered exercise which focuses on anticipating all environmental impacts of significance of a proposed development, prior to implementation or construction, and which specifies those measures which should be taken to eliminate or mitigate such impacts to an acceptable level.

<b>Environmental indicator</b>	An environmental indicator is a measure of an environmental variable over time, used to measure achievement of environmental objectives and targets.
<b>Environmental objective</b>	Environmental objectives are broad, overarching principles which should specify a desired direction of environmental change.
<b>Environmental Problems</b>	Annex I of Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27 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.
<b>Environmental Receptors</b>	Include biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological) and landscape as listed in the SEA Directive. This list is not exhaustive, and can include other receptors which may arise for a particular P/P.
<b>Environmental Report (ER)</b>	A document required by the SEA Directive as part of an environmental assessment which identifies, describes, and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan or programme.
<b>Environmental Targets</b>	A target usually underpins an objective often having a time deadline that should be met and should be accompanied by limits or thresholds.
<b>Environmental Vectors</b>	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 so that they come into contact with human beings.
<b>Evolution of the Baseline</b>	A description of the future state of the baseline in the absence of a plan or programme assuming 'business as usual' or 'do nothing' scenarios, depending on which is more reasonable for the P/P being proposed.
<b>Geographical Information System (GIS)</b>	is a computer system that collects, stores, views, and analyses geographical information and commonly creates maps as an output
<b>Geology</b>	Science of the earth, including the composition, structure, and origin of its ROCKS
<b>Habitat</b>	Area in which an organism or group of organisms live.
<b>Habitats Directive</b>	Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.
<b>Habitats Directive Assessment</b>	An assessment of the effects of a plan or project on the Natura 2000 network. The Natura 2000 network comprises Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive, Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive and Ramsar sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (collectively referred to as European sites)
<b>Hierarchy of Plans</b>	Both higher and lower-level P/P relevant to the P/P being assessed.
<b>Indirect effect</b>	Any aspect of a P/P that may have an impact (positive or negative) on the environment, but that is not a direct result of the proposed P/P. May also be referred to as a secondary effect
<b>Interrelationships</b>	Associations or linkages related to environmental impact of the proposed P/P usually on environmental receptors.
<b>Issues Paper</b>	Paper produced as part of the consultation process, usually for Land Use Plans, to facilitate consultation with stakeholders on key issues.
<b>Key environmental issues</b>	Those significant environmental issues, which are of relevance and significance within a P/P area and/or the zone of influence of that P/P. These issues should be identified during the SEA Scoping process.

<b>Key environmental receptors</b>	Aspects of the environment likely to be significantly impacted by the proposed P/P.
<b>Material Assets</b>	Critical infrastructure essential for the functioning of society such as: electricity generation and distribution, water supply, wastewater treatment transportation etc.
<b>Member States</b>	Those countries that belong to the European Union.
<b>Mitigate</b>	To make or become less severe or harsh
<b>Mitigation Measures</b>	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.
<b>Monitoring</b>	A continuing assessment of environmental conditions at, and surrounding, the plan or programme. This determines if effects occur as predicted or if operations remain within acceptable limits, and if mitigation measures are as effective as predicted. The primary purpose of monitoring is to identify significant environmental effects which arise during the implementation stage against those predicted during the plan preparation stage.
<b>Monitoring Programme</b>	A detailed description of the monitoring arrangements to be put in place to carry out the monitoring of the impact of the proposed P/P on the environment including frequency of monitoring, who has responsibility for monitoring, and responses if monitoring identifies significant negative impacts.
<b>Natura 2000 Site</b>	Designated European Site. In combination Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas will constitute Natura 2000 network of protected sites for habitats and species across the EU.
<b>Natural Heritage</b>	Refers to habitats and species of flora and fauna.
<b>Non-technical summary</b>	A summary of the findings of the ER, summarized under the headings listed in Annex 1 of the SEA Directive, can be readily understood by decision-makers and by the public. It should accurately reflect the findings of the ER.
<b>Plan or Programme</b>	Including those co-financed by the European Community, as well as any modifications to them: - which are subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at national, regional, or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government, and - which are required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions. In accordance with the SEA Directive, P/P that require SEA are those that fulfil the conditions listed in Article 2(a) and Article 3 of the SEA Directive.
<b>Post-mitigation residual impacts</b>	Environmental effects that remain after mitigation measures have been employed.
<b>Protected Structure</b>	Protected Structure is the term used in the Planning Act of 2000 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.
<b>Proxy data</b>	Is a measure of activity resulting from a P/P which provides information on environmental impact without the need for a direct measure of an environmental receptor. For example, an increase in the number of vehicles (activity resulting from a P/P) can provide information on the impact on air

	quality and greenhouse gases without having to measure the concentration of these parameters in the receiving environmental receptor.
<b>Public</b>	One or more natural or legal persons and, in accordance with national legislation or practice, their associations, organisations or groups.
<b>Recorded Monument</b>	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 the Environment, Heritage and Local Government under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994.
<b>Scoping</b>	The process of deciding the content and level of detail of an SEA, including the key environmental issues, likely significant environmental effects and alternatives which need to be considered, the assessment methods to be employed, and the structure and contents of the Environmental Report.
<b>Screening</b>	The determination of whether implementation of a P/P would be likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment. The process of deciding whether a P/P requires SEA.
<b>SEA Directive</b>	Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment'.
<b>SEA Statement</b>	A statement summarising: - how environmental considerations have been integrated into the P/P - how the ER, the opinions of the public and designated authorities, and the results of transboundary consultations have been considered - the reasons for choosing the P/P as adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives.
<b>Secondary effect</b>	Effects that are not a direct result of the P/P, same as indirect effect.
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Potential for significant change to any element in the environment that is subject to impacts.
<b>Short-term effects</b>	These are typical of those effects that may occur during construction stage of a development, for example, the increased traffic going to and from a site during construction, or the noise associated with construction activities.
<b>Significant effects</b>	Effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape, and the interrelationship between the above factors.
<b>SPA</b>	Special Protection Area under Birds Directive (79/409/EEC), designated for bird species listed in Annex I of the Directive, internationally important concentrations of migratory and wetland birds. Designation is focused on habitats of these species.
<b>Statutory Authority</b>	The authority by which or on whose behalf the plan or programme is prepared.
<b>Statutory Instrument</b>	Any order, regulation, rule, scheme, or byelaw made in exercise of a power conferred by statute.
<b>Strategic Actions</b>	Strategic actions include Policies, which may be considered as inspiration and guidance for action, and which set the framework for plans and programmes; Plans, sets of co-ordinated and timed objectives for the implementation of the policy; and Programmes, sets of projects in a particular area.
<b>Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)</b>	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. The objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting

	sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment
<b>Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO)</b>	Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures which are developed from international, national and regional policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives and against which the environmental effects of the County Development Plan can be tested. The SEOs are used as standards against which the objectives of the County Development Plan can be evaluated to help identify areas in which significant adverse impacts are likely to occur, if not mitigated.
<b>Synergistic effect</b>	Effects that, when totaled, result in a greater or lesser effect than the sum of the individual effects.
<b>Threshold</b>	Magnitude of a project, which if exceeded, will trigger the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment.
<b>Transboundary Consultation</b>	If a plan or programme is being prepared that is likely to have significant effects on the environment in another Member State, or where a Member State likely to be significantly affected so requests, the Member State in whose territory the plan or programme is being prepared shall, before the plan or programmes adoption or submission to the legislative procedure, forward a copy of the Plan or programme and the relevant environmental report to the other Member State.
<b>Zone of Influence</b>	The area over which a plan can impact on the environment.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

This is the SEA Statement for the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (CCDP) and forms the final stage of the SEA process for the development plan. The Plan was made by Clare County Council on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2016.

### 1.2 Purpose of the SEA Statement

The main purpose of the SEA Statement is to provide information on the decision-making process and to document how environmental considerations, the views of statutory consultees and other submissions received during consultation and the recommendations of the Environmental Report have been taken into account in the adopted CCDP and the arrangements in place for monitoring.

The SEA Statement is available to the public, along with the Final Environmental Report and the adopted CCDP. The Plan was also subject to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive the associated Natura Impact Report is also available to download from the Clare County Council web-site at the following location; <http://www.clarecoco.ie/planning/planning-strategy/development-plans/clare-county-development-plan-2017-2023/>

The SEA Statement includes the following information:

Summary of how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan (**Section 3.0**)

Summary of how submissions received during consultation have been taken into account in the plan (**Section 3.4**).

Reasons for choosing the recommended strategy, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered (**Section 5.0**).

Measures that are to be undertaken to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Plan (**Section 6.0**).



**Figure 1.0 Summary of SEA Stages**

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluation, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental effects of plans or programmes before they are adopted. It also gives the public and other interested parties an opportunity to comment and to be kept informed of decisions and how they were made. An early consideration of environmental concerns in the planning process

creates an opportunity for environmental factors to be considered explicitly alongside other factors such as social, technical, or economic aspects.

The preparation of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 required a full SEA as outlined in **Chapter 1** of the **SEA ER**. The SEA process can be categorised into several stages as summarised in **Table 1.0**.

**Table 1.0 Summary of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Process**

Stage	Comments
<b>Screening</b>	A screening was undertaken to determine the need for environmental assessment of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 taking account of relevant criteria set out in schedule 2A.
<b>Scoping</b>	Scoping was conducted to determine the baseline environmental parameter data and issues to be considered further in the Environmental Report. Submissions received from Environmental Authorities will be incorporated into the Environmental Report.
<b>Consultation with the Environmental Authorities</b>	Consultation will be conducted throughout the SEA process and Plan making process.
<b>Preparation of Environmental Report Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 including:</b>	A multi disciplinary team is established to create policy consistent documents and to examine the effects on the environment of implementing the Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental baseline data</li> <li>• Environmental Objectives</li> <li>• Development Plan Objectives and zoning assessment</li> <li>• Consultation with EPA, etc.</li> <li>• Assessment of Alternatives</li> <li>• Mitigation measures identified.</li> <li>• Monitoring measures identified</li> </ul>	<p>Objectives and land-use zoning included in the Plan will be assessed through- out the Plan making process.</p> <p>Alternative options will be identified and assessed culminating in defining a preferred alternative for the Development Plan.</p> <p>Feedback from on-going Plan preparation process and Environmental Report preparation.</p> <p>Mitigation measures will be discussed and chosen.</p> <p>Monitoring will be incorporated with any existing methods.</p>
<b>Non-Technical Summary</b>	A summary of the findings of the Environmental Report, summarised under the headings listed in Annex 1 of the SEA Directive, which can be readily understood by decision-makers and by the public. It should accurately reflect the findings of the Environmental Report.
<b>Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement (Current Stage in the process)</b>	An outline of how environmental considerations are integrated into the Plan; how the Environmental Report, the opinions of the public and statutory authorities and the results of trans-boundary consultations are considered, and the reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives.
<b>Monitoring the Plan</b>	Monitoring environmental effects over the lifetime of the Plan

### 1.3 Legislative Context

SEA is required under *EU Council Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment* (the SEA Directive) and transposing Irish Regulations (*the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004* (SI No. 435 of 2004)) as amended by SI 200 of 2001; and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI 436 of 2004), as amended by SI 201 of 2011. Its

purpose is to enable plan-making authorities to incorporate environmental considerations into decision-making at an early stage and in an integrated way throughout the plan-making process.

#### 1.4 Publication

To meet the requirements of Article 16(1) and Article 16(2) of S.I 435 of 2004, and Section 13(8) of S.I 30 of 2000; the Clare County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 including the SEA Environmental Report and the Natura Impact Report together with the SEA Statement are available for inspection at the venues listed below during normal opening hours. Notice of the adoption of the Plan and copies of it and the SEA Statement were issued to the environmental authorities and prescribed bodies specified in the legislation. Notice of the adoption of the Plan was also published in the Clare Champion newspaper on Tuesday the 24<sup>th</sup> of January. In addition, the documentation is available for download on Clare County Council's website: <http://www.clarecoco.ie/planning/planning-strategy/development-plans/clare-county-development-plan-2017-2023/>

- Planning and Enterprise Development Section, Clare County Council, Áras Contae on Chláir, New Road, Ennis, County Clare
- De Valera Public Library, Harmony Row, Ennis, County Clare;
- Local Studies Centre, The Mense, Harmony Row, Ennis, County Clare;
- All Municipal District Offices in County Clare;
- All public libraries
- Clare County Council website [www.clarecoco.ie](http://www.clarecoco.ie)

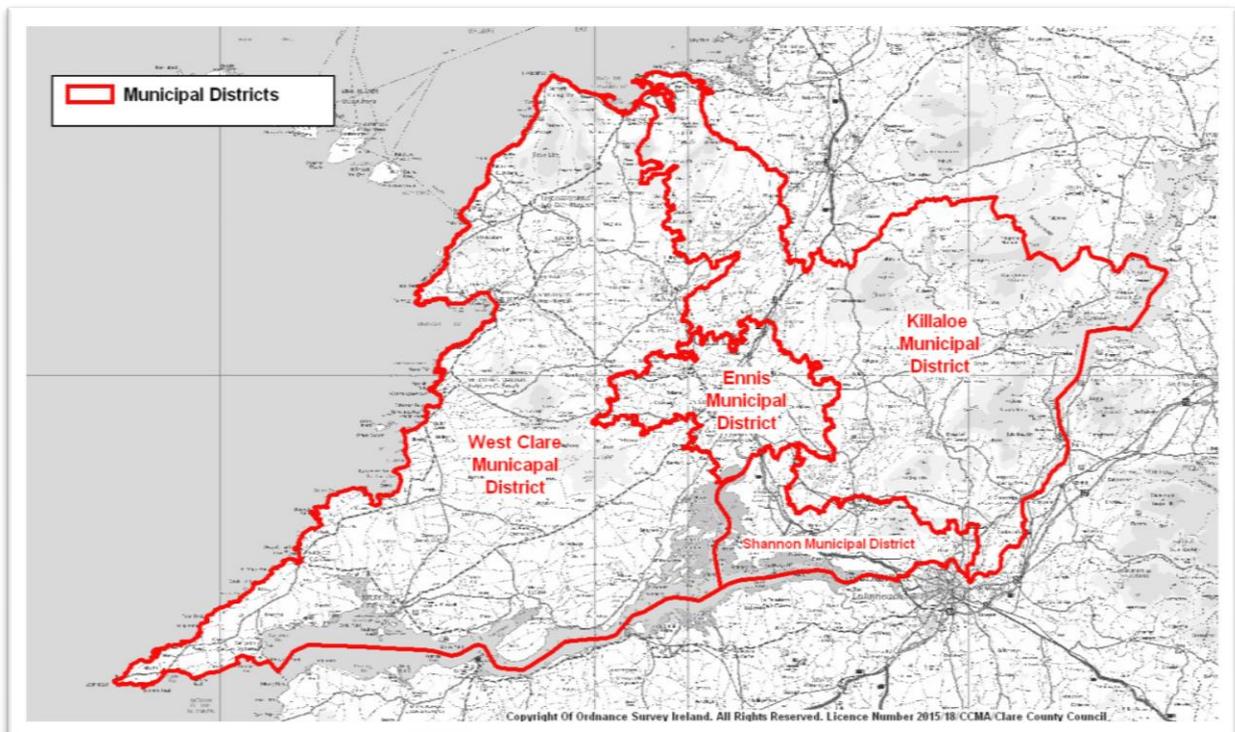


Figure 2.0 County boundary showing geographical extent of study area and Municipal Districts

## 1.4 Structure and Content of SEA Statement

### 1.4.1 Purpose and content of the SEA Statement

The main purpose of the SEA Statement is to provide information on the decision-making process for the County Development Plan 2023-2029 to illustrate how decisions were taken, thereby making the process more transparent. In doing so, the SEA Statement documents how the recommendations of both the Environmental report and the Natura Impact Report, as well as the views of the statutory consultees and all other submissions received during consultation, have influenced the preparation of the final plan. The SEA Statement is available to the public, along with the Environmental Report, the Natura Impact Report, and the adopted Plan (See **Section 1.3**).

In accordance with Article 9 of the SEA Directive, Article 16(1) and 16(2) of the SEA Regulations, and with section 13Q of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004 (SI 436 of 2004) (As amended); this SEA Statement has been prepared to outline ‘Information on the Decision’. This document summarizes the information required as outlined in Table 2.0.

**Table 2.0 Summary of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Process**

SEA Legislative Requirement	Section of SEA Statement
How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan (Article 16(2)(b)(ii))	Section 3
How the SEA Environmental Report has been considered during the preparation of the plan (Article 16(2) (b)(ii)(I)).	Section 3,5 & 6
How the submissions and observations have been considered during preparation of the plan (Article 16(2) (b)(ii)(II)).	Section 3.4
The reasons for choosing the plan adopted considering other reasonable alternatives dealt with (Article 16(2) (b) (iii)).	Section 4
The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan (Article 16(2)(b)(iv))	Section 5

### 1.4.2 Structure of the SEA Statement

The SEA Statement consists of eight sections as outlined in Table 1.2

**Table 3.0 Structure of SEA Statement**

Section	Contents
1.0	Introduction
2.0	Implications of the SEA for the CCDP process
3.0	Summary of how Environmental Considerations and the SEA Environmental Report have been integrated into the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029
3.4	Integration of consultation responses into the final plan
4.0	Reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted considering other alternatives considered
5.0	Monitoring
6.0	Conclusions

## 2.0 Implications of the SEA for the CCDP process

The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 was required to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment in accordance with the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011.

Article 13B of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulation 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004), as amended by S.I. 201 of 2011, makes SEA mandatory for development plans where the population or the target population of the area of a development plan is 10,000 persons or more. The findings of the SEA were presented in the Environmental Report which was submitted to the elected Members alongside the Draft CCDP. The purpose of the report was to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the future development of County Clare over the lifetime of the plan.

The Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 with associated Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report were placed on public display from the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2022, and submissions were invited. In total, 1,015 submissions/observations were received (inclusive of 16 in relation to the Record of Protected Structures and 408 in relation to Public Rights of Way). Each submission was fully considered and was summarised in the Chief Executives Report (July 2022).

Following consideration of the Draft Plan, the Chief Executive’s Report on submissions and the Chief Executives Report on Members Resolutions (November 2022), it was resolved by the Elected Members at a Special Council Meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022 to amend the Draft Development Plan. As a number of these amendments constitute a Material Alteration to the Draft Development Plan, the Council resolved to place the Material Amendments back on public display for a period of not less than 4 weeks, in accordance with Section 12(7)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

A “*Addendum of Environmental Assessments to Proposed Amendments*” to Volume 10a and 10b together with Volume 5 RES SEA of the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 was prepared and put on public display in December 2022. This addendum supplements the Environmental Report contained in Volume 10b and the Natura Impact Report contained in Volume 10a together with the RES Environmental Report contained in Volume 5 as per the Draft Plan 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2021 - [Stage 2 - Public Display of Draft Plan | Stage 2 - Draft | Clare County Council \(clarecoco.ie\)](#).

**Section 2.0** of the Addendum assessed the new and/or revised objectives of the Draft Clare County Development Plan against the set of Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) as previously identified in Chapter 10 (Table 10.1) of the SEA Environmental Report. The Chief Executives Report indicated a change would be made to Strategic Environmental Objective CC4 with respect to the inclusion of a specific reference to “*Peatland and Wetlands*”. Upon the assessment of the proposed material amendment, it was considered that the most effective approach would be to recognise the role of wetlands/peatlands by way of an update to the baseline context in the respective CDP/RES Strategic Environmental Assessments and by including them as part of an SEA *monitoring* objective which would better reflect the requirement to protect these habitat types.

It also includes an assessment of the likely significant effects in accordance with the Habitats Directive.

Section 3.0-6.0 of the Addendum included an assessment of the proposed amendments to the land use zonings within the Draft Clare County Development Plan. As part of this assessment both the likely

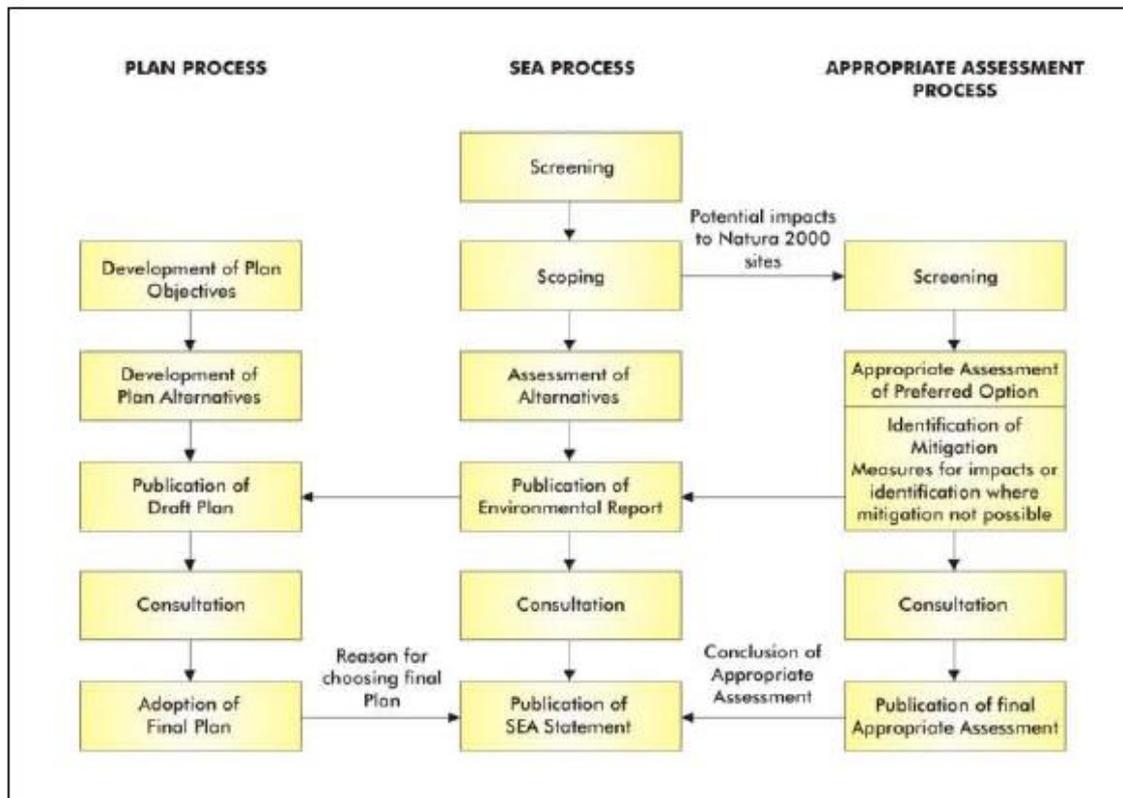
environmental effects in accordance with the Strategic Environmental Directive and the likely significant effects in accordance with the Habitats Directive are addressed. Where it is not possible to screen the proposed amendment out the changes are assessed further as per the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

On adoption of the CCDP, the addendum report was used to update the original Environmental Report into the final Environmental Report (ER) which accompanies the adopted Plan. At each stage of the process the Elected Members were required by the legislation to take into account the Environmental Report including the Addendum at each stage of the decision-making process. The SEA has run in parallel with the development plan review process and has informed and influenced the preparation of the draft and final Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. This is expanded on further within the following sections.

### **3.0 Summary of how Environmental Considerations and the SEA Environmental Report have been integrated into the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this section is to present a summary of how environmental considerations and consultation have informed the plan preparation process. The involvement of external parties (both stakeholders and the public) has been essential to the development of the Clare County Development Plan (Volume 1 – Written Statement) 2023-2029 together with the accompanying Volumes. It has been important to both meet the statutory requirements for consultation with relevant parties and to ensure that the knowledge, experience and views of the stakeholders and the public were taken into account throughout the process. Legislation and guidance relating to SEA recommends that the process of plan preparation, SEA, and Appropriate Assessment (AA) should be integrated and prepared in an iterative process to facilitate the ongoing assessment and evaluation of environmental considerations during plan preparation.



**Figure 3.0 Integration of Plan, SEA, and AA Processes**

**Table 3.1** further demonstrates how the processes have been integrated throughout the lifetime of the plan preparation. The iterative nature of the SEA process is such that the County Development Plan 2023-2029 is informed by environmental considerations throughout the preparation of the Plan and the development of the Plan objectives and land-use zonings. The Natura Impact Report is a separate document to the Environmental Report both of which accompany the County Development Plan 2023-2029.

**Table 4.0 The integrated processes of preparation and consultation for the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Appropriate Assessment**

Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA)	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)
Commence preparation of Draft Plan  Pre-Draft Consultation Period  <b>18<sup>th</sup> September 2020 – 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020</b>	Commence review and preparation of SEA Scoping Process  Pre-Draft Consultation Period  <b>18<sup>th</sup> September 2020 – 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020</b>	Commence review and preparation of flood maps.  Pre-Draft Consultation Period  <b>18<sup>th</sup> September 2020 – 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020</b>
Commencement of public display and invitation of submissions on Draft Plan, Environmental Report, Natura Impact Report and Stage 2 Flood Risk Assessment <b>December 2021</b>  Closing date for public submissions on Draft Plan <b>March 2022</b>		
Chief Executives Report on Submissions received to Draft Plan, Environmental Report, Natura Impact Report and Stage 2 Flood Risk Assessment (for Elected Members) <b>March – July 2022</b>		
Consideration of Chief Executive's Report by Elected Members (resolve to alter or make, amend, or revoke Draft Plan, Environmental Report, Natura Impact Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment) <b>July – October 2022</b>		
	Determination of Requirement for SEA/AA in accordance with S.12 of the Planning & Development Act (within 2 weeks of resolution) <sup>1</sup>	
Public Display of Amendments to Draft Plan and consultation period.  <b>November 2022 – January 2023</b>	Public Display of Amendments to Environmental Reports and consultation period  <b>November 2022 – January 2023</b>	Public Display of Amendments to Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and consultation period  <b>November 2022 – January 2023</b>
Submission of Chief Executive's Report to Members on submissions on the proposed material alterations to the Draft Plan, Environmental Report Addendum, Natura Impact Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment <b>January 2023</b>		
Consideration of Chief Executives Report by Elected Members (resolve to make, amend or revoke Draft Plan, Environmental Report, Natura Impact Report, and strategic Flood risk Assessment)  <b>January – March 2023</b>		
Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 comes into effect 4 weeks after adoption, accompanied by the Environmental Report and SEA Statement and the Natura Impact Report <b>April 2023</b>		

### 3.2 Baseline Information

**Chapter 5** of the **SEA ER** describes the environmental baseline for the development plan area. The baseline information presents the environmental context within which the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 will operate, and the opportunities, constraints and targets placed on the Plan in this

regard. The environmental data is described in line with the legislative requirements of the SEA Directive and Regulations, as amended, under the following environmental parameter headings:

- Biodiversity and Climate Change Adaptation
- Population, Human Health, and Quality of Life
- Soil and Geology
- Air and Climate
- Water
- Material Assets
- Cultural Heritage
- Landscape

Each parameter and its interrelationships with the other environmental parameters are discussed under each parameter section. SEA baseline data required for the Plan review or assessment was collated under the following headings.

- Key Legislation
- Description of the parameter in the Plan Area
- Issues and Threats in the Plan area
- Evolution of the parameter in the absence of the Plan
- Data gaps/difficulties
- Inter-relationship with Other Environmental Parameters
- SEA Recommendations

A considerable amount of data was gathered, collated and reviewed in preparing the SEA Environmental Report and Non-Technical Summary associated with the Plan. However, there were several areas where data did not exist, was dated, was not freely available or it was not possible to extract it to a county level. Significant gaps in the environmental parameters data are discussed under each parameter section. Maps relating to each environmental parameter are in Chapter 5 of the Environmental Report. This was also supported by targeted fieldwork carried out by the SEA and AA Team throughout the life span of the plan preparation.

#### *Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Webtool*

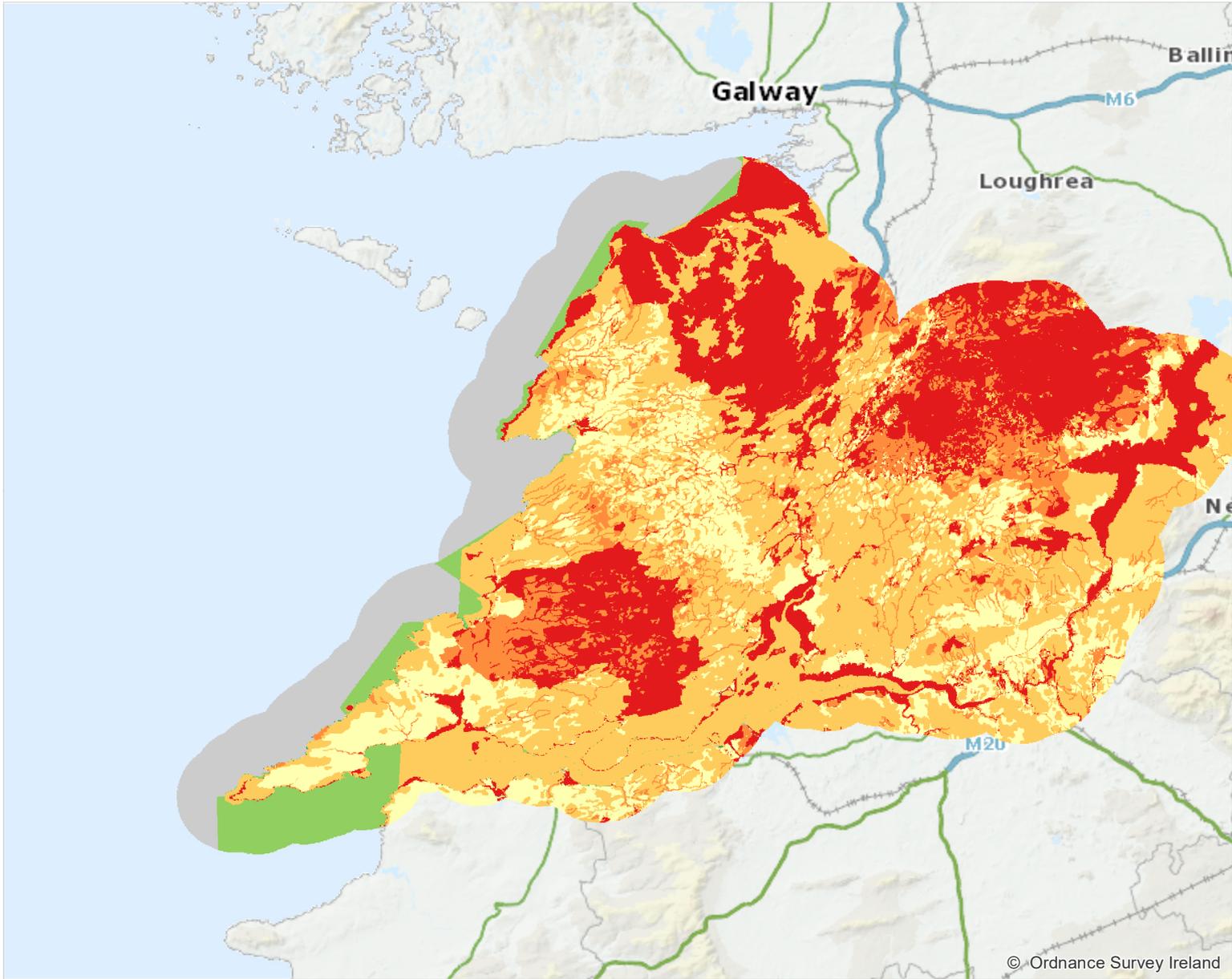
The ESM Webtool is a new decision support tool to assist SEA and planning processes in Ireland. The tool brings together over 100 datasets and allows users to explore environmental considerations within a particular area and create plan-specific environmental sensitivity maps. These maps can help planners anticipate potential land-use conflicts and help identify suitable development locations, while also protecting the environment. The ESM Webtool is available at [www.enviromap.ie](http://www.enviromap.ie). Sensitivity mapping is a means of assessing the overall vulnerability of the County using the key baseline datasets collated as part of the SEA ER. As part of the SEA process, the Environmental Sensitivity Map prepared through the ESM webtool provided spatial evidence to support the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) across several sectors. The mapping assisted in achieving environmental sustainability by providing a thematic map which could assist the assessment in directing development/zoning/identification of objectives and policies away from environmentally sensitive

areas thereby informing on cumulative/in-combination effects and supporting the formulation of spatially specific mitigation measures.

The map effectively reflects where the key concentrations of sensitivity are situated within the plan area. These include:

- The Northern area of the Plan (North Clare) – in and around the Burren which contains several NHAs, wetlands, rock at or near the surface and a heritage landscape.
- The Southern area of the Plan (along and including the Shannon Estuary)– This includes the Cloon River (FPM SAC), the Gaurus River and flood plain, River Fergus and flood plain (to the east), Ballybeg Lough, Newhall and Edenvale Estate (south-west) and the Shannon Estuary containing heritage landscapes and surface waters that are nutrient sensitive.
- The central area of the plan (including Ennis and on to Northeast Clare) – this includes key SPAs and NHAs which are protected for the Hen Harrier, moderate to poor river status, a high number of protected bat roosts, high to extreme groundwater vulnerability and areas of heritage landscape to the east.

# ESM Results



## ESM Sensitivity Index



Date: 11/29/2021 Time: 10:14:04 PM Author: Sheila Downes

\*This map is an aggregate result based on the variables and user defined weights listed below.

Warning: Please note that weights are only to be used to emphasize the relative significance of an environmental aspect - applying weights to more than two themes would magnify, and possibly overstate, the overall sensitivity.

**Air & Climactic** **Weight: 2** **Variables:** Flood Extents Current Scenarios (Coastal and fluvial) (High)

**Biodiversity, flora and fauna** **Weight: 2** **Variables:** Margaritifera Sensitive Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas

**Cultural Heritage** **Weight:** **Variables:**

**Population and Human Health** **Weight: 1** **Variables:** WFD RPA Groundwater Drinking Water, WFD RPA Surface Water Drinking Water (Lakes), WFD RPA Surface Water Drinking Water (Rivers)

**Soils and Geology** **Weight: 1** **Variables:** Peat Bogs

**Water** **Weight: 2** **Variables:** Aquifer Vulnerability, Wetlands, WFD Groundwater Status, WFD Lake Status, WFD River Status

The key datasets used to inform this sensitivity mapping were as follows;

- Ecological Designations (SAC, SPAs, NHAs)
- Freshwater pearl mussel
- Aquifer Vulnerability
- Source Protection Areas/Register of Protected Areas
- Flood Extents
- WFD River and Groundwater and TraC status
- Wetland Habitats
- Peat Bogs

Having set out the environmental baseline for the Plan area it highlighted the potential challenge for the plan makers in identifying the required quantum of appropriate lands to meet future growth needs. This assisted and informed the development of alternatives as set out in **Chapter 7** and summarised in **Section 4.0** of this SEA Statement.

### **3.3 Strategic Environmental Objectives**

Having established the environmental baseline under each of the environmental parameters, the key environmental issues were therefore identified. Taking account of these issues a series of Strategic Environmental Objectives were compiled as a mechanism for ensuring environmental protection. The SEOs are applied as follows:

1. As measures against which the implementation of the Plan and zoning objectives can be assessed for potential environmental impacts.
2. As measures for monitoring any actual environmental impacts because of implementing the Plan, by devising a series of targets and indicators for each of the SEOs.

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures against which the environmental effects of the implementation of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 can be tested. If complied with in full, SEOs would result in an environmentally neutral impact from the implementation of the Plan. The SEOs are set out under a range of topics and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Plan can be evaluated to help identify areas in which significant adverse impacts are likely to occur, if unmitigated.

SEOs are distinct from the objectives of the Plan, although they will often overlap and are developed from International, National and Regional policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives. Such policies include those of various European Directives which have been transposed into Irish law, all of which are intended to be implemented at County level and integrated into any Plan for the County.

The overall aim of the SEA is to facilitate environmental protection and to allow the integration of environmental considerations into the development of the Clare CDP. To that end, the SEA process assesses the Clare CDP as it evolves in terms of its environmental impacts, positive, negative, neutral, cumulative and synergistic and also in terms of duration i.e., short, medium, long terms, temporary, permanent and secondary effects. The SEA process highlights how improvements can be integrated into the Clare CDP to increase its environmental performance and maintain environmental resources

such as soils. The Strategic Environmental Objectives were therefore used to assess all the policies, objectives and landuse zonings within the CDP and were also used as the basis for the monitoring programme which is outlined in **Section 5.0** of the SEA Statement.

### **3.4 Integration of consultation responses into the final plan**

#### **3.4.1 Consultation on Pre-Draft Clare CDP**

Clare County Council gave formal notice (Section 11 Notice) of the commencement of the review of the existing Plan and the preparation of a new Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 in accordance with section 11 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. An Issues Paper together with a video was prepared to encourage public participation with submissions sought from the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 to the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2020. The 'Issues Paper' was made available in all libraries and offices of Clare County Council and on the Council website. The Issues Paper set out what were considered the main development issues facing County Clare between 2023-2029, while acknowledging this list was non exhaustive. The Issues Paper welcomed public debate on what the broad planning, development and environmental matters should be. The Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions on public gatherings created an unprecedented challenge to the consultation process. In accordance with public health guidance in place at the time an Informal Open Evening was held on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2020 in Áras Contae an Chláir by appointment only, however no further public events were possible after this time.

During this period the Planning Authority utilised social media platforms by providing a series of updates including the video of the strategic issues facing the county to ensure the public were both kept informed and encouraged in the process. The social media posts reached a total of 28, 777 people. The Acting Senior Planner was interviewed on Clare FM on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September to highlight the Development Plan process and to make the public aware of the public consultation period.

Several virtual presentations were also carried out with various groups as follows:

- Clare PPN – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- Loop Head Together – 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020
- North Clare Group – 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Appendix A of the 'Chief Executives Report' to the Elected Members on submissions arising from the Pre-draft consultation stage (15<sup>th</sup> January 2021) lists the persons, bodies and public access points which were furnished with copies of the Issues Paper. In total, 194 written submissions were made relating to the preparation of the Pre-Draft plan, some of which had an environmental aspect. Submissions were made from a variety of contributors including individuals, groups or companies representing industries, landowners and other state agencies.

### ***Other Relevant Meetings***

The Elected Members of Clare County Council are responsible for making the Development Plan under Section 12 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and are required to consider each stage of the plan review process. Presentations were given to the Elected Members on the review process in advance of the Section 11 notice being issued.

The Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development & Enterprise also plays an important role in the preparation of the new Development Plan and a presentation was given to the SPC on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 informing them of the process and the key aspects of the Development Plan and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk SFRA).

A virtual meeting took place with the Southern Regional Assembly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October and with the Office of the Planning Regulator on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October to discuss strategic and legislative issues.

Due to Covid-19 public health restrictions face-to-face meetings with national and local stakeholders were not feasible. Alternatively, a significant number of consultations occurred via phone, email and virtually. This allowed stakeholders to raise any issues or advise on updates at this pre-draft stage as they saw fit. A list of those consulted in this regard was included in Appendix D to the Chief Executives Report.

Several meetings took place with relevant departments of the Local Authority to discuss their respective priorities for the forthcoming County Development Plan.

Notwithstanding the restrictions placed on holding public events and meetings due to Covid 19, the level of engagement at this stage of the process was high with a total of 212 submissions received; twelve of these related to zoning and were therefore considered invalid and 6 were received after the closing date. Thus, a total of 194 valid submissions were received and considered in the Chief Executives report. The SEA Team reviewed the relevant submissions and provided input in terms of opinion and recommendations for the Chief Executive to consider. The submissions were split into those received from the Office of the Planning Regulator and the Southern Regional Assembly both of which will heavily influence the preparation of the SEA and therefore the Plan itself and all other valid submissions received. The following **Table 5.0** provides a summary of the key topics contained in the submissions. Given the high number of submissions received it is not possible to provide a complete summary within the SEA Statement however, the full summary together with the recommendations can be accessed through the Chief Executives Report through the following link; <https://clarecdp2022-2028.clarecoco.ie/stage1-predraft/report-consultation/> .

**Table 5.0 Summary of submissions received at Pre-Draft Stage in relation to consultation on the Issues Paper**

Issues Paper Submission Analysis		
Topic	No. of Submissions	% of Submissions
Towns & Villages	70	36%
Transport	67	34.50%
Wind Energy	Total = 59	Total = 30%
Community Facilities Inclusive Communities	55	28%
Other Renewable Energy	36	18.50%
Housing	35	18%
Economic Development (General - Ch 4)	33	17%
Tourism	32	16.50%
Climate Change, Climate Action & Low Carbon	32	16.50%
Water Resources Wastewater Treatment	Water Supply & 31	16%
Biodiversity, Natural Heritage & Green Infrastructure	28	14.50%
Core Strategy	28	14%
Greenway	25	13%
Design & Built Environment	24	12.40%
Active Travel	23	12%
Communications	22	11%
Land-Use Zoning Definitions Indicative Matrix	20	10.30%
Flooding	17	8.80%
Rural Development	16	8%
Waste Management	14	7%
Single Rural House	11	6%
Archaeology, Architecture & Cultural Heritage	11	5.70%
Moneypoint	9	4.60%
Development Management Guidelines	8	4.10%
Landscape & Visual Impact	8	4%
Vision	6	3%
Settlement Hierarchy	6	3%
Energy Network	6	3%
Shannon Estuary	6	3%
Marine & CZM	6	3%
Infrastructure General	5	2.50%

### 3.4.2 Consultation on Draft Clare CDP

The SEA Scoping exercise for the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 was undertaken between 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2020 in response to observations received from environmental bodies. Scoping helps to focus the SEA on important issues such as those relating to existing and potential environmental issues and problems, therefore minimising the waste of resources on unnecessary data collection. This scoping facilitated the selection of issues relevant to the environmental components which are specified under the SEA Directive and Regulations (as amended), namely, biodiversity, flora and fauna; population, human health and quality of life; soil and geology; water; air and climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage; and landscape.

In accordance with legislation, separate scoping notification was issued to the prescribed environmental authorities in October 2020, as well as to adjoining local authorities. Three submissions were received on the SEA and AA specifically as part of the consultation with the environmental authorities. A summary of the scoping submissions received, and how the issues are addressed in this SEA is provided in **Table 6.0** below.

No	Submission	Environmental Issue	To be addressed in SEA
1	<p><i>David Galvin, SEA Section, Office of Evidence and Assessment, Environmental Protection Agency.</i></p>	<p><i>SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plan – EPA Recommendations and Resources</i></p> <p>The EPA highlighted the provision of the attached guidance document which sets out the EPA's key recommendations for integrating environmental considerations into Local Authority land use Plans.</p> <p>The Plan should align with key relevant higher-level plans and programmes and be consistent with the relevant objectives and policy commitments of the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region.</p> <p><i>State of the Environmental Report</i></p> <p>In preparing the Plan and SEA, the recommendations, key issues, and challenges described within the most recent State of the Environment Report (EPA, 2016) should be</p>	<p>The EPA guidance document will be considered in preparing the Plan and associated SEA.</p> <p>The new County Development Plan 2023-2029 is being prepared in accordance with the national Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region. All objectives arising from this national and regional policy have framed the preparation of the Plan.</p>

		<p>considered, as relevant and appropriate to the Plan. (Note, State of the Environment Report 2020 has since been released)</p> <p><i>Community Engagement</i> In preparing the Plan and carrying out the SEA (including developing alternatives), the need to proactively engage local communities should be a core consideration.</p> <p><i>Sustainable Development Goals</i> Describing the links with the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would help to frame the Plan (and SEA) within the context of the wider sustainable development agenda and ensure that the Plan is consistent with achieving the SDGs. Relevant targets and actions in Ireland’s SDG Implementation Plan (DCCAE, 2018) should be integrated as appropriate into the Plan.</p> <p><i>Critical service infrastructure</i> In proposing and in implementing the Plan, you should ensure that the Plan is consistent with the need for proper planning and sustainable development. Adequate and appropriate critical service infrastructure should be in place, or required to be put in place, to service any development proposed and authorised during the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p><i>Integration of transport and land-use planning</i> The Plan should support the need for compact growth and better integration of transport and land-use planning, including walking and cycling infrastructure, public transport, park-and-ride facilities, etc.</p> <p><i>Biodiversity</i> The Plan should include specific actions/objectives and commitments to protect designated habitats and protected species (and associated ecological corridors/linkages) within, and adjacent to, the Plan area. The EPA has published guidance on <i>Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment - Streamlining AA, SEA, and EIA Processes. Best Practice Guidance</i>. The aim of this guidance is to inform practitioners, plan/project proponents and consent authorities on integrating SEA, EIA and AA processes and requirements to streamline biodiversity</p>	
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		<p>considerations. This may be useful to consider in preparing the Plan and SEA.</p> <p><i>Coastal Zone Management</i></p> <p>The Plan should include specific coastal zone management objectives and should consider future climate scenarios in terms of predicted higher sea levels and periods of increased frequency of storm conditions and associated flooding. The Plan should ensure the protection of ecological buffers/marshlands/estuaries, in order that the effects of coastal squeeze on protected species/designated habitats can be managed appropriately where possible. The role which estuaries and marshes play in terms of flood alleviation could also be highlighted.</p> <p><i>Climate Action</i></p> <p>The Plan should align with national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, including those set out in the <i>Climate Action Plan 2019</i>, as well as incorporating any relevant recommendations and measures in sectoral, regional, and local climate adaptation and mitigation plans.</p> <p>Key climate-related aspects to consider in the Plan and SEA include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct and indirect impacts of the Plan on greenhouse gas emissions and removals (Mitigation);</li> <li>• Direct and indirect impacts of climate change on the implementation of the Plan, e.g., the resilience of critical water service infrastructure to flooding and drought (Adaptation);</li> <li>• The linkages between mitigation and adaptation (inter-relationships).</li> </ul> <p>A list of the key resources, guidance, plans and programmes (national, regional, and sectoral) which may be of assistance in incorporating the factors raised in the submission into the Plan and SEA were provided.</p> <p><u><i>Tools &amp; Applications</i></u></p> <p><i>Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Webtool</i></p> <p>The ESM Webtool is a new decision support tool to assist SEA and planning processes in Ireland. The tool brings together over one hundred datasets and</p>	
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		<p>allows users to explore environmental considerations within a particular area and create plan-specific environmental sensitivity maps. These maps can help planners anticipate potential land-use conflicts and help identify suitable development locations, while also protecting the environment. The ESM Webtool is available at <a href="http://www.enviromap.ie">www.enviromap.ie</a></p> <p><i>EPA SEA WebGIS Tool</i> Our SEA WebGIS Tool, available through the EDEN portal (<a href="https://gis.epa.ie/EIS_SEA/">https://gis.epa.ie/EIS_SEA/</a>), allows public authorities to produce an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in a specific geographic area. It is intended to assist in SEA screening and scoping exercises.</p> <p><i>EPA WFD Application</i> Our WFD Application provides a single point of access to water quality and catchment data from the national WFD monitoring programme. The Application is accessed through EDEN <a href="https://wfd.edenireland.ie/">https://wfd.edenireland.ie/</a> and is available to public agencies. Publicly available data can be accessed via the <a href="http://Catchments.ie">Catchments.ie</a> website</p>	
2	<p><i>Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (Development Application Unit)</i></p>	<p>Summary of Issues raised in Submission.</p> <p>Biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include objectives to conserve and maintain key elements of biodiversity.</li> <li>• To include commitments to undertake scientific research to improve and expand understanding of the significant effects that may arise.</li> <li>• Regarding Regulation 27 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 to incorporate such obligations into their plans and assessments.</li> <li>• To draw attention to Part 5 of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations (and to S177AE of the Planning and Development Acts) and the obligations these places in relation to screenings for appropriate assessment.</li> <li>• Significant publications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2007, 2013 and 2019 Report on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species (also known as the Article 17 Report).</li> <li>○ 2013 Article 12 (Birds Directive) Reports.</li> <li>○ 2014 Ireland’s Prioritised Action Framework (PAF).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Key recommendations arising from the submission;</p> <p>In the preparation of the draft Development Plan that Biodiversity and the National Biodiversity Action Plan, the principles of sustainable development, no net loss of biodiversity, low carbon society, the importance of an integrated approach to understanding the role of the environment and natural landscapes play in the quality of life indices, water quality, economic prosperity, food production,</p>



		<p>be submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NDBC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A specific objective should be included in the Plan requiring that surveys for species protected under the Wildlife Acts, are included in all development and maintenance proposals (e.g road maintenance) where there is a reasonable likelihood of these species being present and affected by the development.</li> </ul> <p>Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism is a key economic pillar for Clare and so it should be a key objective of the County Development Plan Tourism Strategy to protect the environmental resource that tourism in Clare is reliant on.</li> <li>• The inclusion of requirements for screening for EIA and AA for traditional tourism related infrastructure (car parks, interpretive centres, walks) should be considered together with sustainable transport options (e.g., Park and ride from local village) and defined visitor carrying capacity.</li> <li>• The Plan includes policy to regulate activities of power propelled vehicles for recreational purposes that launch from council property within designated sites (SAC, SPA, NHAs and Wildfowl Reserves).</li> <li>• Furthermore, cumulative and in combination effects are particularly important in the assessment of effects to water catchments and their dependant species and the Plan should make it clear that these need to be accounted for in the environmental and ecological assessment of plans and projects.</li> <li>• The Plan recognises the potential for tourism and recreation related proposals to impact on habitats and species, and to ensure that these issues are addressed in both the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) for the Plan.</li> <li>• In the current Plan it states that tourism proposals should clearly identify the spatial extent of any tourism activities and should address the implications of increased recreational disturbance on any European</li> </ul>	<p>Specific objectives relating to the Burren National Park, drainage and infilling of wetland sites, water quality, lighting and Invasive Alien Species are considered for inclusion in the draft Development Plan.</p>
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		<p>sites. This should be highlighted and emphasised further in the new Plan.</p> <p><b>Wetland Sites</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To highlight the importance of wetland (incl. blanket bogs, turloughs, lakes and fens) habitats within Clare.</li> </ul> <p><b>Lighting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommends that ‘Lighting’ objectives are included within the plan both for town and rural areas where incorrect types or inappropriate use of LEDs can have an impact on bat species and other wildlife.</li> <li>• To highlight the EUROBATS10 and Dark Sky lighting recommendations which provide further information on reducing the impact of lighting on wildlife and can also reduce carbon emissions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Invasive Alien Species (IAS)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To highlight the threat of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) as one of the key pressures which increase biodiversity loss in Ireland.</li> <li>• Recommends that specific objectives in relation to the containment and control of IAS in the context of development proposals is included in the plan which reference to the EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011.</li> <li>• Continued initiatives to build on the work done as part of the Clare Invasive Alien Species Project (2009) should be considered within the objectives of the Plan.</li> </ul> <p><b>Renewable Energy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An objective is included in the Plan that outlines commitments to undertake scientific research to improve and expand understanding of the significant effects that may arise.</li> <li>• That the Plan acknowledges that the citing of wind energy other renewable developments in upland areas and renewable energy opportunities offshore</li> </ul>	<p>The Council will prepare a new Renewable Energy Strategy in the context of the progress in renewable energy technologies since the current strategy was developed and review of the</p>
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		<p>may be subject to significant environmental constraints.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The on-going development of wind turbine sites in Mid-West Clare is a concern regarding ecological impacts on Hen Harrier (Annex I Bird).</li> <li>• The Plan should have an objective to assess and gather all monitoring data for these sites so that the impacts can be assessed and made available for future projects which would contribute to the environmental assessment process.</li> </ul> <p>Unauthorised Developments and Planning Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should have a clear objective where the planning enforcement system works effectively to ensure that sites are restored as required.</li> <li>• A clear objective regarding monitoring of planning conditions should be set out within the Plan.</li> </ul> <p>Improving And Developing Ecological Expertise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It should be an objective of the plan to strengthen ecological expertise in the Council so that ecological understanding of threats and pressures are understood, and appropriate management considered.</li> <li>• That the integrated environmental assessments in relation to the Plan review apply the precautionary principal to ensure there is no further deterioration of habitats and species both within and outside designated sites across the county and in its zone of influence.</li> </ul> <p>Ecological Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An objective for roads and transportation is included that all road maintenance and development shall have environmental quality measure that includes ecological integrity and no net biodiversity loss.</li> <li>• It should also be an objective that any roads maintenance programme should undergo AA and EclA as appropriate.</li> <li>• Greenway development can present threats and pressures to biodiversity through</li> </ul>	<p>potential for marine based renewable energy technologies. A review of the Wind Energy Strategy is proposed subject to revised Wind Energy Guidelines being issued. In any review of the post consent monitoring and compliance data is to be used to inform the identification and designation of sites for future development.</p> <p>That the Council practice in terms of the maintenance and management of hedgerows and trees along the road network and the requirement for Nature Based Solutions in relation to road maintenance and development will</p>
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		<p>removal of vegetation during trail development. Would recommend that such proposals are subject to route/site selection processes to ensure that impacts to biodiversity and nature conservation interests are avoided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also notes the need to apply the precautionary principle when screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) and/or undertaking AA for Greenways and Blueways.</li> <li>• The inclusion of a policy where all public buildings within the County incorporate positive biodiversity measures as standard practice. Actions can include simple measures, e.g., all new public buildings incorporate nesting boxes for swifts and/or bat boxes, etc.</li> <li>• An opportunity for the Council to enhance biodiversity by including policy objectives, for example, to map the extent of hedgerows in the County using the ecosystems scoring approach to identify gaps in these corridors and include a pollinator plan for the County with particular attention to roadside verges, roundabouts, and Council lands.</li> <li>• That flood protection and alleviation works must be subject to environmental assessment.</li> <li>• Provide for flood protection measures to be delivered in a planned and strategic manner subject to environmental assessment.</li> <li>• Acknowledge that climate change mitigation and adaptation actions can, at times, conflict with nature conservation interests and due consideration to environmental constraints should be given.</li> <li>• A clear and specific monitoring plan to be included with the Strategic Environmental Report that would clearly outline how it is proposed to record the impacts of plan implementation on biodiversity.</li> </ul>	<p>be considered in preparation of the draft Development Plan and objectives incorporated where appropriate.</p> <p>That the distinction between Green Infrastructure and Greenways and Blueways will be addressed in the plan together with objectives relating to them.</p> <p>The inclusion of a policy which will support all public buildings within the County to incorporate positive biodiversity measures as standard practise.</p> <p>That policy support for Agricultural and Forestry related schemes which provide a biodiversity benefit to the county are considered in the context of protecting ecological corridors in the County.</p> <p>That Climate Change and Flood Alleviation inform all chapters, policies and objectives within the County Development Plan and will be at the heart of its vision.</p> <p>That the objectives relating to Climate Adaptation take precedence in the plan over mitigation</p>
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			<p>as outlined in the Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and also within the Department’s Biodiversity Climate change Sectoral Adaptation Plan – 2019.</p> <p>That a more robust and meaningful approach to monitoring the effectiveness or otherwise of the plan is developed as part of the draft Development Plan process.</p> <p>Best available information and data held by Clare County Council and/or obtained through the data collection exercise was utilized to inform the SEA assessment of the land use zonings and based on the precautionary principle proposed recommended alterations and/or exclusions to zonings to avoid significant negative effects.</p> <p>Additional environmental protection objectives were included in Chapter 14</p>
03	<i>Geological Survey of Ireland</i>	<p>Geoheritage</p> <p>Welcomes the mention of geological sites within the ‘Built and Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure’ section of the issues paper. Would encourage the inclusion of County Geological Sites</p>	<p>Utilise the GSI data sources to inform the review of the County Development Plan</p>

		<p>(CGSs) as specific policy objectives within the new County Development Plan.</p> <p>CGS's have been included in the <i>Clare County Council Development Plan 2017- 2023 Chapter 14</i>, and more specifically 'Objective CDP14.5'.</p> <p>The following points are suggestions to protect geological heritage:</p> <p>As a minimum, would like to include a policy objective with wording such as:  <i>"to protect from inappropriate development the scheduled list of geological heritage sites."</i>  Or  <i>"to protect from inappropriate development the following list of County Geological Sites"</i></p> <p>Listing in the CDP provides protection of the sites against potentially damaging developments that normally require planning permission, such as building, quarrying, landfilling or forestry.</p> <p>CGSs have been adopted in the National Heritage Plan and will form a major strand of geological nature conservation to complement the various ecological and cultural conservation measures.</p> <p>Important to note that management issues for the majority of geological heritage sites may differ from ecological sites. Consultation at the earliest stages can identify any issues relevant to an individual site or proposed development.</p> <p>Include a policy objective to protect geological NHAs.  Culture and Tourism</p> <p>Ireland currently has three UNESCO Global Geoparks, including the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark, which has retained its UNESCO Global Geopark status for another four years. Would encourage continued use of geological audit information making it available to the public. Encourage geology to be part of any tourism initiative such as the Loop Head Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) on which GSI recently made a statutory submission (our ref 20/220).</p> <p>Dimension Stone/Stone Built Ireland</p>	<p>and the associated Environmental Assessments.</p> <p>The draft Development Plan will support partnerships with landowners, local communities, and other relevant stakeholders where appropriate.</p>
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		<p>There is a research collaboration agreement between GSI, TCD &amp; OPW, to run for a 2-year period to document building and decorative stone in Ireland. Also aid the public in complying with part 4 of the P&amp;D Act 2000, which requires owners to conserve protected structures. Also assists with Section 57 Declarations.</p> <p><b>Geological Mapping</b> The geological mapping programme creates maps that depict the rocks and subsoils of the onshore area of Ireland. These data sets include depth to bedrock data and subsoil classifications. We would encourage you to use this data in any planned SEA reports and for your future CDP.</p> <p><b>Groundwater</b> Recommend the use of our National Aquifer, Vulnerability and Recharge maps within the CDP. Further information is available on our Map viewer. Regarding Flood Risk Management, there is a need to identify areas for integrated mitigation and management. Our GW Flood project is a groundwater flood monitoring and mapping programme aimed at addressing the knowledge gaps surrounding groundwater flooding in Ireland. This is primarily focused on karst areas such as those located in Co. Clare, which will provide vital information to benefit the CDP. We recommend using our GW Flood tools found under our programme activities (in conjunction with OPW data) to this end. The Geological Survey Ireland has established the GW Climate project in January 2020. This will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Establish a long-term strategic groundwater level monitoring network and</li> <li>b) Develop modelling and analytical approaches for evaluating the impacts of Climate Change to Irish groundwater systems.</li> </ol> <p><b>Geohazards</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Geohazards can cause widespread damage to landscapes, wildlife, human property, and human life. Information available on past landslides for viewing as a layer on our Map Viewer.</li> <li>b) Also engages in national projects such as Landslide Susceptibility Mapping and Groundwater Flooding (GW Flood), and in</li> </ol>	
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		<p>international projects, such as the Tsunami Warning System, coordinated by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO. Recommend that geohazards and particularly flooding be taken into consideration and encourage the use of our data when doing so.</p> <p><b>Geothermal Energy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geothermal energy harnesses the heat beneath the surface of the Earth for heating applications and electricity generation. Recommend use of our Geothermal Suitability maps to determine the most suitable type of ground source heat collector for use with heat pump technologies. The Geothermal Suitability maps could also be considered in as part of the Renewable Energy Potential for the CDP.</li> <li>• Ireland also has recognised potential for 'deep' (&gt;400m) geothermal resources. Currently completing a roadmap for geothermal energy use in Ireland which is expected to be published in 2020.</li> </ul> <p>We welcome the reference to mineral locations and aggregate potential in Section 3.7.</p> <p>The Active Quarries, Mineral Localities and the Aggregate Potential maps are available on our Map Viewer. Would welcome the consideration of aggregate potential sterilisation included as part of the scoping document.</p> <p><b>Marine and Coastal Unit</b> GSI's Marine and Coastal Unit in partnership with the Marine Institute, jointly manages INFOMAR, Ireland's national marine mapping programme; providing key baseline data for Ireland's marine sector. In relation to tourism have an extensive database of shipwrecks mapped by the INFOMAR programme. INFOMAR also produces a wide variety of seabed mapping products. Would recommend use of our Marine and Coastal Unit datasets available on our website and Map Viewer.</p> <p>The Marine and Coastal Unit also participate in coastal change projects such as CHERISH (Climate,</p>	
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		Heritage and Environments of Reefs, Islands, and Headlands) and are undertaking mapping in areas such as coastal vulnerability and coastal erosion.	
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**Table 6.0 Key Environmental Issues raised in relation to the SEA and appropriate assessment at Scoping Stage**

*Extension of the Plan-making Process*

In accordance with new legislation enacted in July 2021 as set out in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and Section 11D of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, Clare County Council decided by resolution on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2021 to extend the duration of the existing Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied) up to the 29th April 2023. The extension of the current Plan was necessary to ensure it remained in operation until such time as the new Clare County Development Plan came into effect.

The extension of duration provided for a further period of up to 7 months to complete the review of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied), and to prepare and make a new Clare County Development Plan for the functional area of Clare County Council. The plan period of the new Plan has therefore changed from 2022-2028 to 2023-2029. The reason for the initiation of this process was due to the disruption resulting from restrictions introduced because of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the plan preparation process for the making of a new Clare County Development Plan. Further Information on this can be found on the Clare County Council website at: <https://www.clarecoco.ie/services/planning/ccdp2017-2023/>

A Draft Clare County Development Plan was prepared and was discussed at a Special Meeting of Clare County Council on the 30th of November 2021. At this meeting, the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 was finalised.

Public consultation on the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 commenced on the 10th December 2021, commencing [Stage 2-Public Display of the Draft Plan](#) of the plan making process.

In accordance with the requirements of Section 11 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) the Chief Executive prepared a report on the outcome of the statutory consultation process which included his opinion on the issues raised in the submissions received and his recommendations on the policies to be included in the development plan. The Chief Executive’s Report was submitted to the Elected Members on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2022 for their consideration. This report listed the persons or bodies who made submissions or observations and summarised the issues raised in both the submissions and during the consultation process. The Chief Executive’s Report also set out his recommendations on the policies to be included in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

After considering the Chief Executive’s Report, the Elected Members issued directions to the Chief Executive regarding the preparation of the development plan. This process continued until the October 2022 pursuant to Section 11(4)(e) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 was prepared having regard to the directions of the Elected Members. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 12(2) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) the draft development plan, together with the Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report and the Natura Impact Report, was made.

Pursuant to Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) the planning authority also undertook the preparation of a Natura Impact Report. In conjunction and pursuant to Article 13E of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations S.I.436) 2004-2011 the planning authority also prepared an SEA Environmental Report of the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Draft Plan.

A copy of Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 with associated Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report were available for inspection from **10th December 2021 to 28th March, 2022** (excluding bank holidays) at the following locations:

- Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis;
- De Valera Library, Ennis and Local Study Centre, Harmony Row, Ennis;
- All public libraries;
- All Municipal District Offices.

It was also available to download through the following link;

- [Stage 2 - Public Display of Draft Plan | Stage 2 - Draft | Clare County Council \(clarecoco.ie\)](#)

Public consultation events took place throughout the County at the following venues, dates, and times.

VENUE	DATE	TIME
Lisdoonvarna Pavillion, Lisdoonvarna	Tuesday 25th January 2022	4.00 - 8.00pm
Scouts Hall (beside Ennis Parish Office), Station Road, Ennis	Wednesday 26th January 2022	4.00 - 8.00pm
Clonlara Community Sports & Leisure Centre, Clonlara	Thursday 27th January 2022	4.00 - 8.00pm
Kilkee Community Hall, Kilkee	Tuesday 1st February 2022	4.00 - 8.00pm
Killaloe Hotel & Spa, Killaloe	Wednesday 2nd February 2022	4.00 - 8.00pm
Clarecastle Community Hall, Clarecastle	Thursday 3rd February 2022	4.00 - 8.00pm
Kilmihil Community Hall, Kilmihil	Tuesday 8th February 2022	4.00 - 8.00pm
Tulla Cultural Centre, Tulla	Wednesday 9th February 2022	4.00 - 8.00pm
Newmarket on Fergus Community Hall, Newmarket on Fergus	Thursday 10th February 2022	4.00 - 8.00pm

Following this period of public consultation, a Chief Executives Report (10<sup>th</sup> July 2022) was prepared summarizing this step in the process. This Chief Executive's Report was divided into 4 separate parts:

**Part I** – related to submissions or observations received on Volume 1 -Written Statement of the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, submissions received relating to Rights of Way and the associated SEA Environmental Report, Appropriate Assessment Natura impact Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which form part of the draft plan.

**Part II** –related to submissions received for Ennis and Shannon Municipal Districts

**Part III** – related to submissions received for Killaloe and West Clare Municipal Districts

**Part IV** – related to submissions received for proposed Record of Protected Structures

Part I of the overall Chief Executive’s Report comprised a summary of each of the 1,015 submissions/observations received (inclusive of 16 in relation to the Record of Protected Structures and 408 in relation to Public Rights of Way). Each submission was fully considered and was summarised in the Chief Executives Report (July 2022).

Following consideration of the Draft Plan, the Chief Executive’s Report on submissions and the Chief Executives Report on Members Resolutions (November 2022), it was resolved by the Elected Members at a Special Council Meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022 to amend the Draft Development Plan. As a number of these amendments constitute a Material Alteration to the Draft Development Plan, the Council resolved to place the Material Amendments back on public display for a period of not less than 4 weeks, in accordance with Section 12(7)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

These proposed amendments were required to have regard to and be informed by the SEA and appropriate assessment processes. These proposed amendments, including the “Addendum to the Environmental Assessments and Report (Volume 10 (a) Natura Impact Report & 10 (b) Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report)” went on public display from the 28<sup>th</sup> of November to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2023. The process commenced with a notice in the local newspapers and the subsequent commencement of 4 weeks public consultation having regard to the provisions of Section 12(7) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development SEA Regulations together with the Habitats Directive.

A Chief Executives Report on submissions received in relation to the proposed amendments together with the associated Addendum to the Environmental Assessment was submitted to the Elected Members on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2022 for their consideration. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2023 following a series of workshops and meetings the Elected Members resolved to adopt the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. The Plan will therefore come into effect on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2023, 4 weeks after its adoption.

### 3.5 Integration of SEA into the plan

The SEA process involves several very defined stages of assessment as dictated by the SEA Directive and as already discussed in **Section 1.0** of the SEA Statement. **Table 7.0** below outlines the stages of the SEA and how they informed the plan preparation.

**Table 7.0 Stages of SEA and how they informed the plan preparation.**

SEA Stage	Comment
Screening	Screening of the plan was not required as SEA is mandatory for all County Development Plans
Scoping	Scoping report prepared in response to submissions received on pre draft plan; scoping meetings were held with the relevant statutory authorities together with the forward planning team. Internal consultations were also undertaken with the roads and water services section of both Clare County Council and Irish Water.
SEA Environmental Report	Accompanied the draft plan and provided evidence based for environmental assessment

SEA Stage	Comment
	of draft policies, objectives, and zonings in the Clare CDP. Prepared in tandem with the AA to ensure full integration of AA considerations.
<b>Amendments to the Clare CDP</b>	All submissions made on the draft plan and subsequent amendments to same were reviewed and assessed for SEA and AA impacts. SEA and AA informed the Manager’s Report and Recommendations.
<b>Making of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and final SEA ER and NIR</b>	Review of final amendments for impacts on the environment. Review of final amendments for impacts on the environment. Finalizing SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Report (NIR) Preparation of SEA Statement (this document)
<b>Monitoring of Clare CDP 2023-2029</b>	SEA Monitoring provides for monitoring of significant effects on the environment over the plan lifetime.

### 3.6 Summary of how environmental considerations have been integrated into the CCDP 2023-2029

#### 3.6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section of the Environmental report is to predict and evaluate as far as possible the environmental effects of this plan for County Clare. This section of the SEA Statement is a summary of the detailed assessment of the objectives, land-use zonings and volumes contained within the Clare County Development Plan, which have identified where, if any, effects on the environment may occur. These may be positive or negative effects, direct, indirect, synergistic, cumulative and/or in-combination effects.

Three elements of assessment were undertaken which included:

1. An assessment of the objectives of the Plan (See **Appendix A of the SEA ER**);
2. An assessment of the land-use zonings and site-specific development objectives (See **Appendix B of the SEA ER**);
3. An assessment of cumulative and in-combination effects (See **Appendix C Tables 8.2 – 8.5 of the SEA ER**).

The assessment process has been undertaken using matrix assessments which reflect ratings in relation to potential significant effects on the environment because of implementation. The matrix assessment ratings used are as follows:

<b>(+)</b>	reflects a potential positive effect
<b>(-)</b>	reflects a potential negative effect
<b>(+/-)</b>	reflects that positive and negative effects are likely or that in the absence of further detail the effect is unclear
<b>(0)</b>	reflects a neutral or uncertain effect

Where there is a combination of these symbols (0/+ or 0/-) this indicates that any effect maybe neutral or positive, or neutral or negative depending on how the objective is delivered.

Where negative effects are identified mitigation measures are recommended to either include new objectives, or to amend or include additional text within the Plan objectives and/or zoning objectives.

### 3.6.2 Assessment of Plan Objectives

By assessing the Plan objectives in Volume 1 of the Clare County Development Plan against the environmental objectives it identified where there were any incompatibilities and/or conflicts between them and where environmental considerations needed to be strengthened. Where considered necessary the assessment resulted in recommended mitigation for some objectives. The assessment matrix of all the objectives together with the recommended mitigation is included in **Appendix A** of the **SEA ER**.

Each Chapter of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 list the objectives relating to the topic of that Chapter as outlined below;

<b>1</b>	Introduction & Vision
<b>2</b>	Climate Action
<b>3</b>	Core Strategy
<b>4</b>	Urban & Rural Settlement Strategy
<b>5</b>	Housing
<b>6</b>	Economic Development
<b>7</b>	Retail
<b>8</b>	Rural Development & Natural Resources
<b>9</b>	Tourism
<b>10</b>	Sustainable Communities (Community Development & Social Infrastructure)
<b>11</b>	Transport, Service Infrastructure & Energy (Physical Infrastructure, Environment & Energy)
<b>12</b>	Shannon Estuary
<b>13</b>	Marine & Coastal Zone Management
<b>14</b>	Landscape
<b>15</b>	Biodiversity, Natural Heritage & Green Infrastructure
<b>16</b>	Architectural, Archaeological & Cultural Heritage
<b>17</b>	Towns & Villages
<b>18</b>	Design & Placemaking a (design and built environment)
<b>19</b>	Land Use & Zoning
<b>20</b>	Implementation & Monitoring

As outlined in **Appendix A** of the SEA Environmental Report, ninety-five objectives contained recommendations arising from one or other of the SEA stages.

The changes are documented as follows in **Appendix A** of the SEA Environmental Report and are not repeated here:

Green Text = Pre-Draft AA Recommendation

Red Text = Pre-Draft SEA Recommendation

Purple Text = Added at Draft Stage

Blue Text = Pre-Draft Decision

Each Chapter’s objectives were evaluated against the criteria in **Table 8.1**. The criterion considers whether the objectives were likely to improve conflict or have a neutral interaction with the provisions of the Plan.

**Table 8.0 Criteria for Appraising the Effect of the Plan Objectives on the SEOs**

Parameter	Compatibility Criteria				
Climate Change					
Biodiversity, Flora, and Fauna					
Population (incl. Human Health and Quality of Life)	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>+</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>Reflects a potential positive effect</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>-</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>Reflects a potential negative effect</b></td> </tr> </table>	<b>+</b>	<b>Reflects a potential positive effect</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Reflects a potential negative effect</b>
<b>+</b>	<b>Reflects a potential positive effect</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Reflects a potential negative effect</b>		
Soil & Geology	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>0</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Reflects a neutral or uncertain effect</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>+/-</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Reflects that positive and negative effects are likely or that in the absence of further detail the effects are unclear</td> </tr> </table>	<b>0</b>	Reflects a neutral or uncertain effect	<b>+/-</b>	Reflects that positive and negative effects are likely or that in the absence of further detail the effects are unclear
<b>0</b>		Reflects a neutral or uncertain effect	<b>+/-</b>	Reflects that positive and negative effects are likely or that in the absence of further detail the effects are unclear	
Water					
Air Quality and Climatic Factors					
Material Assets					
Waste					
Water Supply					
Waste Supply					
Renewable Energy					
Cultural Heritage					
Landscape					

In total 95 recommendations were made in relation to the County Development Plan objectives. Of this, 78 of these recommendations were taken on board within the Plan. The following section (**Table 9.0**) contains a record of the 17 recommendations which were not incorporated into the final plan.

**Table 9.0 SEA Recommendations not incorporated into CCDP.**



CDP Objective	Commentary/Recommendation	Decision
<p><b>CDP 2.9 Effective Collaboration to Implement River Basin Management Plans and the Water Framework Directive</b></p> <p><b>It is an objective of the development plan:</b></p> <p>a) To ensure a cross-agency collaborative approach to implementing the River Basin Management Plan;</p> <p>b) To ensure effective co-ordination between the requirements of the Floods Directive and the Water Framework Directive;</p> <p>c) To promote a catchment-based approach to water management to facilitate cross boundary collaboration and shared responsibility;</p> <p>d) To support bottom-up community initiatives through the integrated catchment management approach; and</p> <p>e) To support the work of the Local Authority Waters Programme in promoting an integrated approach to catchment management.</p>	<p>Suggested additional sub-objective:</p> <p>The relevant policies and objectives of the National River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027 and associated programme of measures for the relevant catchment management units for the plan area shall be integrated into the Plan through amendment or otherwise.</p> <p>Land uses shall not give rise to the pollution of ground or surface waters during the construction or operation of developments. This shall be achieved through the adherence to best practice in the design, installation, and management of systems for the interception, collection and appropriate disposal or treatment of all surface waters and effluents in accordance with the WFD and associated RBMP.</p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>
<p><b>CDP 4.4 Shannon</b></p> <p><b>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</b></p> <p>a) To ensure that Shannon, in its critical role as a metropolitan town within the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area is a driver of prosperity for the Metropolitan Area, County and Region by harnessing its</p>	<p>Suggest wording addition;</p> <p>Suggested additional sub point:</p> <p>g) All new buildings should provide and include for Sustainable Urban Drainage, green roofs, promote energy-efficient building design throughout the Town Centre, promote renewable energy use throughout</p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>

<p>strategic location on the Atlantic Economic Corridor, its high-quality connectivity and its employment base, international airport, and other competitive advantages;</p> <p>b) To seek investment to regenerate and rejuvenate Shannon, through the preparation and implementation of a new Local Area Plan, the enhancement of transport services, amenity and design quality, and the delivery of smart technologies to sustainably influence and support the Metropolitan Area and the wider County/Region.</p> <p>c) To seek investment and to support the delivery of holistic infrastructure that will facilitate and accommodate sustainable growth in Shannon, subject to the outcome of the planning process and environmental assessments.</p> <p>d) To have regard to the for the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan in the preparation of the local area plan.</p> <p>e) To support and promote placemaking in Shannon which would include public realm regeneration and urban renewal initiatives and public private partnership approaches for town centre regeneration.</p> <p>(f) To cooperate with the NTA, TII and Limerick City and County Council in the delivery of the LSMATS;</p> <p>g) To support the development of housing and ancillary facilities in Shannon to facilitate the growth of Shannon’s population by 30% by 2040; and</p> <p>h) To monitor the cumulative effect of grants of planning permission on available wastewater capacity where connection to a public wastewater treatment plant is included as part of a development proposal.</p>	<p>new builds and for all retrofitting, promote solar panels on rooftops of all commercial buildings.</p>	
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<p><b>CDP 4.8 Small Villages</b>  <b>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</b>  a) To promote the consolidation of the existing small villages through brownfield reuse/redevelopment and compact growth within the designated village growth areas.  b) To ensure that future growth is incremental and small scale in nature, and is relative and appropriate to the scale, size, and character of the villages.  c) To work with the relevant bodies and to seek investment for the timely and sustainable delivery of holistic infrastructures, to enhance the levels of amenity and design quality and to regenerate and rejuvenate the Small Villages throughout the County.  d) To seek investment in the sustainable development of the ‘New Homes in Small Towns and Villages’ initiative in the County and the provision of services and serviced sites to create serviced site build your own home opportunities within the existing footprint of small villages.</p>	<p>b) To ensure that future growth is incremental and small scale in nature, and is relative and appropriate to the scale, size and character of the villages <b>prioritising vacancy within the village centre first.</b></p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>
<p><b>CDP7.3 Ennis Town Centre and Retail Offer</b>  <b>It is an objective of the development plan:</b>  a) To support the improvement of retail accommodation in Ennis town centre to cater for modern retailers, whilst preserving the town’s attractive historic character;  b) To facilitate the need for additional non-bulky comparison goods floorspace within the town centre, ensuring it is integrated into the existing shopping facilities;  c) To harness the retail development potential of any appropriate opportunity/brownfield sites within or adjacent to the town centre;</p>	<p>Suggested additional sub-objective:  g) <b>To promote the sustainable reuse vacant retail spaces in the town prior to the development of new sites.</b></p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>

<p>d) To maintain and expand the attractive network of independent fashion boutiques and other speciality shops in the town centre, which combined with the character of the town and its public spaces, creates a niche shopping experience for residents and tourists;</p> <p>e) To carefully consider qualitative factors in assessing the appropriate nature, scale, and distribution of any future proposals for new retail development in Ennis town; and</p> <p>f) To support the Ennis 2040 Development Activity company to deliver the <i>Ennis 2040</i> strategic objectives and guiding principles.</p>		
<p><b>CDP 7.4 Neighbourhood Centres in Ennis</b>  <b>It is an objective of the development plan:</b></p> <p>To support the development of Neighbourhood Centres in identified areas to provide a mix of uses and services suited to the scale of the local neighbourhood.</p>	<p>Suggested additional sub-objective:</p> <p>Existing, old, or disused centres should be prioritised for re-development opportunities prior to the development of new neighbourhood centres.</p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated</b></p>
<p><b>Chapter 9 Tourism</b>  <b>Goal VIII:</b> A county in which tourism growth continues to play a major role in its future development. A county which is the gateway to the west, delivering tourism experiences which reflect our strong commitment to sustainability, connectivity, innovation, and new approaches to doing business. A place that is globally recognised as a sustainable destination and where the benefits of tourism are spread across the county throughout the seasons.</p>	<p>A County Clare in which tourism growth continues to play a major role in the future development of the County, which is the gateway to the west, which delivers tourism experiences which reflect our strong commitment to sustainability and the “slow travel” movement, connectivity, innovation and new approaches to doing business, a place that is globally recognised as a sustainable destination and where the benefits of tourism are spread across the County throughout the seasons.</p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>
<p><b>CDP 9.6 Tourism Corridors</b></p>		

<p><b>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</b></p> <p>a) To work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure the sustainable improvement and expansion of tourist services, infrastructure, visitor management and interpretative information and transport networks and amenities for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, the Shannon Estuary Way, at the identified Wild Atlantic Way Signature Points and Discovery Points, as well as at appropriate locations along this route, and for all of the key tourism corridors in the County subject to robust feasibility studies to reduce impacts on the environment and required appraisal, planning and environmental assessment processes;</p> <p>b) To provide coordinated signage, navigational aids ( apps etc.) and information on surrounding services, amenities and activities at key points along County Clare's tourism corridors to raise awareness of services and amenities available in close proximity to these routes, to enhance the overall visitor experience, and to ensure that businesses in the wider area benefit from the increased visitor numbers;</p> <p>c) To develop the potential of Loop Head as a key destination on the Wild Atlantic Way and Inis Cealtra (Holy Island) as a key destination for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands;</p> <p>d) To develop the potential of the Cliffs of Moher as a key destination on the Wild Atlantic Way by supporting and facilitating the delivery and implementation of the Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040 in line with the findings of the CoM Strategy Environmental Assessments.</p> <p>e) To work with Fáilte Ireland and other key stakeholders to ensure the sustainable delivery of the Tourism Masterplan for the River Shannon 2020-2030;</p>	<p>Suggested addition:</p> <p><i>f) To implement the <b>Visitor Management Guidelines for the Wild Atlantic Way in relation to all activities associated with it.</b></i></p> <p><i>* These guidelines should be considered and applied having consideration for the <b>"Site Maintenance Guidelines (remedial works guidelines)"</b> which forms part of the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Plan as well as <b>"Wild Atlantic Way Signature Discovery Points- Visitor Management and Design Considerations</b></i></p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>
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<p><b>CDP 11.11 Motorways, National Roads and Strategic Inter-Urban Roads</b></p> <p><b>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</b></p> <p>a) To safeguard the motorway, national roads and strategic regional inter-urban road connections between cities, settlements, ports and airports, and their associated road junctions, in line with national policy;</p> <p>b) To protect the study area, route corridor options and thereafter the preferred route corridor selected for the national road schemes being progressed in the Development Plan and to prohibit development that could prejudice their future delivery;</p> <p>c) To support the upgrade and improvement of motorways, national roads and strategic regional inter-urban road connections and their associated junctions, subject to compliance with requirements of the Habitats Directive and in compliance with the environmental requirements of Objectives CDP11.17 and CDP3.13.3;</p> <p>d) To advocate for and support improved road connectivity and to advocate for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Limerick Northern Distributor Route (LNDR) connecting the N18 to M7;</li> <li>• A new interchange on the M18 at Quin Road Ennis;</li> </ul>	<p>Strict adherence to the mitigation measures identified through the LNDR environmental assessment processes (SEA &amp; AA) and incorporated into the associated variation and the current CDP (2017-2023) and the Draft Plan 2023-2029 will ensure no significant effects on the environment. For completeness and to ensure a thorough incorporation has taken place these detailed mitigation measures have also been incorporated in the SEA and AA for the 2023-2029 CDP.</p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An upgrade of the Ennis to Kilrush N68 National Secondary Route;</li> <li>• An upgrade/extension of the N19 to Shannon International Airport;</li> <li>• Provision of a new bridge crossing at N67/N85 Blakes Corner Ennistymon; and</li> <li>• The N85 Kilnamona Road Improvement Scheme.</li> </ul> <p>e) To sustainably maintain, support and enhance Clare's connectivity on the Trans European Transport Network.;</p> <p>f) To ensure that the national road network drainage regimes in Co. Clare are safeguarded for national road drainage purposes.</p>		
<p><b>CDP 11.32 Wastewater Treatment Disposal</b></p> <p><b>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</b></p> <p>a) To support the implementation of Uisce Éireann Investment Plans and to advocate the provision, by Irish Uisce Éireann, of adequate wastewater treatment facilities to accommodate the target population and employment potential of the County in accordance with the statutory obligations set out in the EU and national policy and in line with the Core Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy set out in this Plan;</p> <p>b) To support the role of Uisce Éireann Investment Plans in taking into account seasonal pressures on critical wastewater treatment service infrastructure and</p>	<p>SEA Mitigation</p> <p>It shall be demonstrated with scientific certainty that the construction, operation, maintenance, monitoring and decommissioning of any such developer led/provided shared use wastewater treatment infrastructure will not give rise to adverse effects on the site integrity of any European sites in view of their conservation objectives and having regard to the characteristics of the species or habitat, including their structure, function, conservation status and sensitivity to change. Where this cannot be demonstrated with certainty, then developer led/provided shared use wastewater treatment infrastructure shall not be permitted. Nature-based solutions such as constructed wetlands (CWs) and integrated constructed wetlands (ICWs) will not be considered for;</p> <p>- Settlements within areas of karst landscape</p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation Not Incorporated.</b></p>

<p>climate change implications in the design of all relevant projects;</p> <p>c) To advocate for the on-going provision, conservation maintenance and upgrade of wastewater treatment infrastructure in the County;</p> <p>d) To maximise the use of the existing capacity of wastewater treatment services in the planning of new development;</p> <p>e) To protect existing way leaves and protection areas around public wastewater treatment services infrastructure through appropriate zoning and to facilitate the provision of appropriate sites for required wastewater treatment services infrastructure;</p> <p>f) To support Uisce Éireann in the promotion of effective management of trade discharges to sewers in order to maximise the capacity of the existing sewer networks and minimise detrimental impacts on sewage treatment works;</p> <p>g) To permit the development of single dwelling houses in unserviced areas only where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the proposed wastewater treatment system is in accordance with the Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses, Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent <math>\leq 10</math>), EPA (2021);</p> <p>To permit the development of single dwelling houses in unserviced areas only where it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the proposed wastewater treatment system is in accordance with the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Areas deemed to be of high nature value or of high biodiversity value</li> <li>- Sites within 60m up-gradient of any well or spring used for potable water</li> <li>- Sites within the inner protection zone of a public groundwater supply source, where the vulnerability rating is classified as extreme</li> <li>- Sites within 300m up-gradient of a public supply (&gt;10m<sup>3</sup>/day or &gt;50 persons) borehole, where an inner protection zone has not been identified</li> <li>- Sites within 25m of a dwelling</li> <li>- Sites where construction of the ICW may negatively impact a site of cultural heritage value</li> <li>- Sites where adequate land area is not available</li> <li>- Sites near a watercourse (no less than 10m from the initial and second ponds and no less than 5 m for subsequent ponds</li> <li>- Sites that cannot be adequately protected from flood damage. A site-specific flood risk assessment will be required as part of any potential planning application for a Nature Based Solution.</li> <li>- An early assessment of a site's overall suitability and the properties/nature of the influent are required to avoid siting such Nature Based Solutions in inappropriate settlements or areas within settlements.</li> <li>- The assessment must determine whether the ICW discharges, either via surface or ground, to any SAC, SPA or NHA.</li> <li>- In addition to the environmental function of an ICW, it is an essential requirement of the ICW concept to explicitly address the social, economic, and ecological considerations of the site, whereby the needs of all stakeholders in the management of the land and water resources that are linked to a site need to be given appropriate consideration. Regard must be given to all</li> </ul>	
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<p>Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses, EPA (2021);</p> <p>(h) Where settlements have no public wastewater treatment infrastructure, and in settlements which have limited or insufficient capacity to facilitate development, to consider alternative developer led/provided shared use wastewater treatment infrastructure, including those incorporating nature-based solutions, to serve development where it can be clearly demonstrated that the system is in compliance with relevant EPA Guidelines on design standards and which will allow connection to a public system when it is provided. Any such consideration will be subject to the following criteria:</p> <p>i. Connection to an existing public wastewater treatment system is not currently available.</p> <p>ii. Environmental and planning requirements are satisfied including plan adequacy, site suitability and a suitable means of sludge and treated effluent disposal.</p> <p>iii. The land on which the treatment plant is located is transferred to Uisce Éireann on their request if/when a public system is provided.</p> <p>iv. The management and maintenance of the shared wastewater treatment and disposal infrastructure following its completion shall be the responsibility of a legally constituted management company. This management company will be responsible for the adequate maintenance, operation and management of the shared infrastructure. It shall be a condition of sale of all elements of the permitted development that the purchaser become a shareholder in the management</p>	<p>water quality discharges, achieving an appropriate landscape-fit and enhancing biological diversity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As the ICW concept is based on integration into the immediate and adjacent environment, site characterisation must investigate how this requirement can be achieved and optimised.</li> <li>- The Management Company must ensure that the nature and properties of the influent are known that adequate land space is available and that the system can operate with low or zero energy requirements.</li> <li>- Given the novel nature of these systems in Ireland potential developers must provide the Planning Authority with sufficient baseline information to enable planning/discharge conditions to be set should the Nature Based Solution be deemed appropriate within the settlement for a specific site.</li> <li>- The Management Company will be required to put in place an Emergency Response Plan for the system which will outline the procedures which must be put in place should monitoring indicate exceedances of emissions limit values, where a failure in the system occurs, where the system becomes inundated due to severe or adverse weather conditions or through inappropriate influent amongst other items</li> </ul>	
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company and include a similar condition on any contract for subsequent disposal of the property.		
<p><b>CDP 13.1 Environmental Designations in Coastal Areas</b></p> <p><b>It is an objective of the Development Plan:</b></p> <p>a) To promote the sustainable development of the potential of the marine environment;</p> <p>b) To foster opportunities for innovation in the maritime economy and drive forward the County as a first mover under the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) while preserving the environmental and ecological conservation status of our marine natural resource. Close interaction between higher education, state agencies, and enterprise is encouraged in this regard; and</p> <p>c) To require proposals for development which may impact on a European site to undertake and submit a Natura Impact Statement as part of any planning application in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p>	<p>Suggested amendment:</p> <p>c) To require proposals for development which may impact on a European site to undertake and submit a Natura Impact Statement <b>and Environmental Impact Assessment Report should it be deemed necessary</b> as part of any planning application in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats <b>and EIA</b> Directives.</p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>
<p><b>CDP 14.7 Scenic Routes</b></p> <p><b>It is an objective of the development plan:</b></p> <p>a) To protect sensitive areas from inappropriate development while providing for development and change that will benefit the rural community;</p>	<p>Suggest amendment to text:</p> <p>a) To protect sensitive areas from inappropriate development while providing for development and change that will benefit the rural community;</p> <p>b) To ensure that proposed developments take into consideration their effects on views from the public road towards scenic features or areas and are designed and located to minimise their impact;</p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>

<p>b) To ensure that proposed developments take into consideration their effects on views from the public road towards scenic features or areas and are designed and located to minimise their impact;</p> <p>c) To ensure that appropriate standards of location, siting, design, finishing and landscaping are achieved.</p>	<p>c) To ensure that appropriate standards of location, siting, design, finishing, and landscaping are achieved.</p> <p>d) Ensure visual impacts, seascapes, sensitive views/vistas, and scenic views are given consideration in the assessment of any Renewable Energy projects being proposed across the county and in particular within the marine environment.</p>	
<p><b>CDP 15.11 Brownfield Site Regeneration and Contaminated Land</b></p> <p><b>It is an objective of the development plan:</b></p> <p>a) To ensure that, prior to the redevelopment of a site previously known to include an operation with the potential for high environmental impact such as petrol stations, gasworks or coal yards, due diligence is carried out on the site to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the ecological aspects of soil and groundwater contamination;</li> <li>• Prepare a site risk assessment and where deemed necessary a waste plan and a site aftercare and remedial action plan; and</li> </ul> <p>b) Ensure that contaminated soil is disposed of in accordance with the Waste Management Regulations (S.I.821 of 2007)</p>	<p>Suggested addition:</p> <p>a) To ensure that, prior to the redevelopment of a site previously known to include an operation with the potential for high environmental impact such as petrol stations, gasworks or coal yards or of an <b>Operational or Transformational site</b>, due diligence is carried out on the site to:</p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not Incorporated.</b></p>
<p><b>CDP 17.10 Derelict Sites</b></p> <p><b>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</b></p>	<p>Suggested additional wording.</p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>

<p>a) To use all mechanisms available to it as appropriate and to work with Derelict Site owners to identify opportunities to bring derelict sites back in to use;</p> <p>b) To use the Derelict Sites, Act 1990 where appropriate to require owners of derelict property to carry out suitable improvements, and to implement the provisions of the Act to prevent or remove injury to amenity arising from derelict sites;</p> <p>c) To prepare improvement plans and design briefs for larger derelict areas; and</p> <p>d) To seek to acquire properties which are appropriate to the Council's Capital Programme to carry out improvements to derelict sites and revitalise the surrounding areas in compliance with the objectives and requirements of the Habitats Directive and in a manner which protects other sites or habitats of national, regional or local importance.</p>	<p>C) To prepare improvement plans and design briefs for larger derelict areas <b>incorporating an Invasive alien species management plan if deemed necessary.</b></p>	
<p><b>Retail Strategy</b></p> <p><b>Objective EN13:</b> Support the delivery of Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy and work with Ennis 2040 Designated Activity Company to deliver on the strategic objectives and guiding principle of the strategy.</p>	<p>Support the delivery of Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy and work with Ennis 2040 Designated Activity Company to deliver on the strategic objectives and guiding principle of the strategy <b>in line with the requirements of the associated SEA Environmental Report, the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report together with the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.</b></p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>
<p><b>Objective EN16:</b> Seek to implement the Strategic Objectives and Guiding Principles set out in Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Plan.</p>	<p>Seek to implement the Strategic Objectives and Guiding Principles set out in Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Plan <b>supporting to the implementation of the</b></p>	<p><b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b></p>

	mitigation measures as identified in the Ennis 2040 SEA, AA and SFRA.	
<b>Objective EY03:</b> Develop a ‘Shopfront Improvement Scheme’ to improve the design and quality of shop signage throughout Ennistymon.	Consider expanding the scope of Objective EY0 to provide guidance on signage in general. Signage can be free standing as well as associated with public infrastructure such as bus shelters. The emergence of digital signage and the wider impacts this can have on the aesthetic of our town centres should also be considered particularly in a historic town such as Ennistymon.	<b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b>
<b>Objective EY07:</b> Support the delivery of the planned West Clare Railway Greenway which will pass through Ennistymon and onto Lahinch	Support the delivery of the planned West Clare Railway Greenway which will pass through Ennistymon and onto Lahinch <b>subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the outcome of the planning process.</b>	<b>SEA Recommendation not incorporated.</b>

### 3.6.3 Assessment of Settlement Zonings

In considering land appropriate for development for uses, SEA has contributed to identifying where sites are unsuitable; those that required amendment in terms of area, nature or extent; those suitable with specific requirements set out in site development objectives; and those which are generally acceptable.

Where the process has identified sites where the impact is uncertain due to location specific issues and where a small number of areas have been identified to have a potential negative effect on the environment, mitigation measures are proposed which are designed to limit or eliminate identified impacts. In addition, monitoring the implementation of the Plan, as discussed in **Chapter 10 of the ER and Section 5.0 of the SEA Statement**, will ensure that if there is any impact it will be identified, and appropriate mitigation can then be put in place.

In zoning land for different land-uses in the Clare County Development Plan, the zonings are categorised in accordance with Myplan.ie<sup>1</sup>. The zoning classifications and definitions are set out in **Section 8.5** of the SEA ER. The Plan contains a land-use zoning matrix which lists the most common forms of development and classifies whether the proposed use is acceptable in principle, or otherwise, on lands that are zoned for a particular use, to promote the orderly development of settlements and to guide future development to the most appropriate locations within the plan area.

In addition to an assessment of the objectives of the Plan, an assessment of the land-use zonings within the Plan area has been undertaken, specifically in relation to residential use including high and low density, Opportunity Sites and other land-uses include industry, enterprise, Tourism, and infrastructure safeguards etc.

The assessment of land-use zonings involved both desktop (GIS, aerial photography, baseline data and all other relevant information) together with on-site assessment. This process resulted in an on-going flow of environmental information regarding site specific land-use zoning proposals. Consequently, the iterative nature of the SEA process has meant that in the evolution of the proposed land-use zonings presented in the Draft Plan and subsequently the final Plan, they have been informed by environmental assessment. This has led to a number of zoning adjustments in the course of its preparation in relation to boundaries, zoning removal, and suggested inclusion of alternative areas and in some cases specific mitigation provisions within specific zoning objectives. The Plan also had the benefit of the outcome of the appropriate assessment process and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, both of which the SEA had regard to in its assessment.

The baseline information presented in **chapter 5 of the SEA ER** shows how the plan area is characterised by several environmental sensitivities. Some of these sensitivities will affect the potential development of all land-uses within the plan area. The sensitivities include:

- High to extreme groundwater vulnerability throughout the plan area presents a significant environmental vulnerability that needs to be considered in all future land-uses within the Plan area.
- Wastewater treatment is a particular issue throughout the County of Clare both from a rural and urban perspective. Wastewater within the county is treated either through wastewater

<sup>1</sup> Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

treatment plants (48%) or individual septic tank units (44%). Many of the buildings which are located outside of the larger towns and villages are not connected to the public wastewater disposal system, and the effluent must be treated by individual proprietary wastewater treatment plants and septic tanks. There are 31 urban wastewater treatment plants in County Clare.

- Irish Water has responsibility for provision and management of wastewater facilities serving sewered towns and villages, including the management of storm water. The maintenance, upgrading and provision of the County’s wastewater drainage system is essential to accommodate future development requirements and to ensure the sustainable development and environmental protection of the county. At present there are significant service and compliance issues in many existing wastewater systems in County Clare. **Figure 5.11.3 of the SEA Environmental Report** summarises the percentage by ‘Types of Wastewater Systems in County Clare’. **Figure 5.11.4 of the SEA Environmental Report** provides the geographical location of Wastewater Treatment Plants across the county. According to the EPA Urban Wastewater Treatment Report, 2019 Kilkee, Kilrush and Ballyvaughan were all found to be discharging untreated wastewater to our seas. In addition, Shannon Town, Ennis South, and Lahinch failed to meet the European Union’s treatment standards in 2019.
- In assessing the potential zoning of lands across all settlements within the county the capacity and availability of appropriate wastewater treatment has been inherently in-built to allocation of zoning from the outset. In addition, the Plan as adopted contains protective measures and objectives such as CDP Objective 3.3 which will further ensure that, prior to the commencement of any development, future development can be serviced by wastewater treatment which complies with the Water Framework, the EU Urban Wastewater and the Birds and Habitats Directive. This issue and others have been highlighted in the assessment of the settlements as part of the SEA process contained in **Appendix B** of the SEA ER.
- It should also be noted that in the case of all settlements and zonings within flood zones identified as part of the Plan process i.e., “Flood Zones A, B and recorded flood events” within the plan area that:
  - Flood defences that have been/are being put in place are based on protecting existing land-uses of any benefitting lands and NOT any potential future change in use or new development.
  - Impacts of climate change in relation to future flooding need to be considered regarding stipulating development specifications which provide for resilience to flood risk and recommendations given accordingly.

All the recommendations made within the SEA Environmental Report associated with the settlement specific zonings were taken on board and incorporated directly in the relevant Volume 3 Written Statement and maps by the Forward Planning Team. However, at the Proposed Amendments stage of the Draft Plan preparation a total of 170 submissions were received. Following further environmental assessment which included Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Appropriate Assessment together with Strategic Environmental Assessment several zoning alterations were identified as having the potential for significant environmental effects to arise. The following table provides a list of those recommendations from the Strategic Environmental Assessment which were not taken on board in terms of excluding the zoning change or alteration but for which mitigation was included in the Plan.

**Table 10.0 Recommendations which were not taken on board.**

Site Reference	Mitigation Measures incorporated into Volume 3 of the County Development Plan
<p><b>Carron (VGA 3)</b> The SEA recommends this zoning is excluded as it is in direct conflict with the following SEOs B1 - B7, S1 together with L1 &amp; L2. The proposal in relation to the identification of these lands as Village Growth Areas at this site does not represent a sustainable location in terms of future development.</p>	<p>VGA3 Lands to the Southwest of the Village Centre Any development application must be accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment and Screening for Appropriate Assessment and/or a Natura Impact Statement, whichever is deemed relevant. The assessments should be informed by detailed ecological surveys and should address, but not be limited to a habitat survey which specifically addresses the presence of the Annex 1 habitat Limestone pavement across the site, hydrogeological assessment specifically addressing the connectivity with the Turloughs in the surrounding hinterland, bat survey in terms of loss of potential foraging areas and roosts. In addition, any future development must be designed to ensure that no development occurs on the scrub/wood habitat area within the site. It must also be demonstrated that any development will not impact upon the water quality of Carran Trough and mitigation in line with NIR Mitigation 2, 3 and 4a set out in Volume 10a of the Plan shall apply.</p>
<p><b>Carron (VGA 4)</b> Development of this site under Village Growth Area should be contingent on the promotion of development on the lands identified as Village Growth Areas within the centre of the Carron settlement being development prior to these lands. This recommendation is to ensure that lands within the settlement are prioritised for development ahead of those on the periphery.</p>	<p>The lands have the potential to impact on the Moneen Mountains SAC &amp; East Burren Complex SAC and the lesser horseshoe bat. There is a narrow parcel of mixed woodland within site which has potential to support bats. Any future development proposals shall be designed to ensure that no development occurs within 25m of the SAC and that linkages to the SAC are not only maintained but enhanced. In addition, mitigation in line with NIR Mitigation 2, 3 and 4a set out in Volume 10a of the Plan shall apply.</p>
<p><b>Liscannor (R3)</b> SEA Recommendation - Until such time as the lands zoned for residential development are fully occupied for permanent residency only then should additional lands be considered within Liscannor for further development and once the new WWTP becomes operational.</p>	<p>R3 Lands to the north of Main Street. This site is located to the rear and north of existing development in the village centre and is located within walking distance of the amenities and services on Main Street. Proposals for permanent occupancy residential development only will be considered on the site. Full account should be taken of the landscape and visual amenity of the area including its coastal and seascape settings, and the enhancement/maintenance of the coastal streetscapes through quality architectural design. A masterplan shall be prepared prior to the submission of any planning application</p>

	demonstrating an integrated approach to the development of this site. Safe pedestrian connectivity to the main street and village centre shall be provided as part of any future development on the lands
<b>Miltown Malbay (R3)</b> Once the lands already zoned within closer proximity to the town centre have been fully developed and realized only at this point should development of these lands for residential use be progressed	Miltown Malbay is served by water from the West Clare Regional Water Supply and there is sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the target population. Irish Water’s latest Wastewater Treatment Plant Capacity Register for County Clare, dated June 2022, confirms that there is spare capacity of 155pe (population equivalent) in the Miltown Malbay Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) which is sufficient to meet the needs of the target population. However, this report also notes that the WWTP is currently not compliant with Wastewater Discharge Licence emission limit values, although it is capable of achieving at least Urban Waste Water (UWW) Treatment Directive standards. Therefore, while there is spare capacity, the potential availability of capacity in Miltown Malbay would be dependent on any additional load not resulting in a significant breach of the combined approach as set out in Regulation 43 of the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007.
<b>Kilrush (R5)</b> Until such time as the lands already identified and zoned for residential development are built out which represent a more sustainable and plan led approach to the development of the settlement the zoning of these lands on the approach to Kilrush are premature.	This is a large site located north of the Ennis Road at the entrance to the Kilrush Settlement. The lands have the potential to impact on the Lower River Shannon cSAC and River Shannon & River Fergus Estuaries SPA. Any future development proposals shall include mitigation to protect water quality (construction and operation), Special Conservation Interest birds and habitats stipulated in line with NIR Mitigation 2, 3 and 4a set out in Volume 10a of the Plan.
<b>Kilrush (Cappa R2)</b> Development of this site for Residential use should be contingent on the promotion of development on the lands identified and zoned for residential use within the core of the settlement being built out accordingly prior to the development of this site. This will provide for a more sustainable approach to development within the settlement, adjacent to other residential developed lands where infrastructure can be directly linked up, services provided in a cost-effective manner and a cohesive approach to the overall development of Kilrush.	Any proposed development must be sensitive to the landscape and shall take account of the elevated nature of the site including the view of the site from Kilrush to the north. Any proposed development must consider future access to lands to the west of the subject site and the provision of safe pedestrian connectivity between Kilrush and Cappa must be integrated into any future development proposal. The lands have the potential to impact on the Lower River Shannon cSAC and River Shannon & River Fergus Estuaries SPA. Any future development proposals shall include mitigation to protect water quality (construction and operation) and Special Conservation Interest birds in line with NIR

	Mitigation 2, 3 and 4a set out in Volume 10a of the Plan.
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### 3.6.4 Cumulative and In-combination effects

This section of the Environmental Report provides an outline of the potential cumulative effects on the environment as a result of implementation of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

Cumulative effects are referred to in a number of SEA Guidance documents and are defined in the EPA SEA Process Checklist as “effects on the environment that result from incremental changes caused by the strategic action together with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions. These effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time or space” (EPA SEA Process Checklist (2011)). These effects can be insignificant individually but cumulatively over time and from several sources can result in the degradation of sensitive environmental resources. The assessment of cumulative effects is a requirement of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).

The 2022 SEA Guidelines produced by the DHLGH outlines that the SEA process is in a good position to address cumulative effects for which the Environmental Impact Assessment process is not equipped to deal with. Due to the strategic nature of the SEA process a forum is provided in which cumulative effects can be addressed.

The EPA Strive Report 2007-2013 on ‘Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment’ describes cumulative effects as incremental effects resulting from a combination of two or more individual effects, or from an interaction between individual effects – which may lead to a synergistic effect (i.e., greater than the sum of the individual effects), or any progressive effect likely to emerge over time.

#### Assessment Approach

The following approach has been undertaken in relation to assessing the potential cumulative and in-combination effects of the County Development Plan. It includes;

- An assessment of International, National, Regional and Local Plans, Policies and Programmes that have the potential for cumulative or in-combination effects.
- An assessment of the County Development Plan Objectives 2023-2029 in relation to the other objectives contained within Volumes 5,6,7,8 & 9.
- An assessment of the key elements of the County Development Plan against one another to identify any internal conflict between the policies and objectives (In-combination effects)

#### Cumulative effects with other plans and programmes

This section focuses on international, national, regional, and local plans, policies and programmes that have the potential for cumulative or in-combination effects with the County Development Plan. The assessment is contained in **Appendix C Tables 8.3** of the **SEA ER**. In addition, an assessment of the in-combination and cumulative effects of Volumes 5, 6 and 7 was undertaken within **Chapter 8** of the **SEA ER** the results of which are documented in **Table 8.2**. Further details in relation to mitigation

measures associated with this assessment of the incorporated volumes can be found in **Chapter 9** of the **SEA ER**.

## 4.0 Reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted in light of other alternatives considered.

The development and assessment of alternatives is a legal requirement under the SEA Directive and Regulations. Article 5(1) of the SEA Directive and 13E (1) of the Planning Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended 2011) requires that the Planning Authority considers within the Environmental Report:

- **Reasonable** alternatives considering the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme;
- The alternatives are **identified, described, and evaluated**;
- An outline of the **reasons** for selecting the alternatives dealt with;
- A **description of how the assessment was undertaken** including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how encountered in compiling the required information).

The SEA Statement, which is required at the end of the plan-making and SEA process, must include, and summarise “the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with” (13I(c) of the SEA Regulations).

In the preparation, consideration and assessment of alternatives regard has been had throughout the process, to the EPA Research Report No. 157 “*Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment*” EPA, 2014<sup>2</sup>.

Arising from good practice guidance, consideration of alternatives is identified as one of the first key steps to be undertaken in the plan preparation and SEA processes, with an introduction to the alternatives presented within the Scoping Report (Clare CDP Scoping Report, October 2020). This allowed for timely consultation with key stakeholders and environmental authorities in this regard. Clare County Council endeavoured throughout the plan making process to undertake the early consideration of alternatives. This allowed for key planning decisions to be fully informed in relation to environmental data and issues relevant to the Plan area. It was recognised that alternatives would be refined, possibly eliminated and/or added to over the duration of the plan making process. Where such decisions did arise the process and reasoning are documented and a comprehensive description of the identification, consideration and selection of alternatives, including the preferred one, is presented within this chapter of the Environmental Report.

### 4.1 Generation and Identification of Alternatives

In generating alternative scenarios, it is considered necessary to identify key components of the Development Plan within the context of considering alternative scenarios. By considering the strategic alternatives for specific plan components it will ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach to identifying a preferred/chosen alternative.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/SEA-Alternatives-157-Published\\_web.pdf](http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/SEA-Alternatives-157-Published_web.pdf)

The approach adopted in the consideration of alternatives for the Development Plan was to identify and describe different scenarios for key components of the Development Plan. This was undertaken within the context of any higher-level strategic actions as well as the geographical scope of the Development Plan area. Environmental sensitivity mapping was used to provide a useful guide in considering the strategic alternatives. Alternatives were derived based on a combination of planning and environmental factors for each component.

Some of the key strategic issues identified which were considered in the formulation of the different alternatives and the different approaches included the following:

#### 4.2 Limitations in available alternatives

In developing alternatives, the ‘do nothing’ approach is not considered a realistic option due to the statutory requirement to review the County Development Plan, taking account of key national and regional guidelines and strategies. The “do nothing” scenario will therefore act as our baseline for the County Development Plan review. 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 on the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern 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. The NPF and implementation Roadmap sets out projections to achieve accelerated urban growth. The NPF projects that the population of the Southern Region will grow from between 340,000 to 380,000 people by 2040.

The RSES vision for the Southern Region is led by the need for transformative change. By 2040, the population of the Region will most likely grow by 380,000 people to reach almost two million. The RSES for the Southern Region includes population projections for each Strategic Planning and Local Authority area in the region to 2031.

Developing combinations incorporating the key elements of the Development Plan, i.e., the plan framework, plan structure and settlement strategy to include zoning provide the foundation for the formulation of alternatives.

- The **plan framework** is set in so far as the administrative area for the County Development Plan covers the geographical area of the County. The internal division of administrative areas within the County remain within the Municipal Districts of Ennis, Killaloe, Shannon, and West Clare as per the 2023-2029 County Development Plan.
- Defining the **plan structure** in terms of developing the core strategy and identifying the settlement hierarchy for the county;
- Defining the **settlement strategy** in relation to all the settlements within the Plan area. The central theme will be to promote sustainable communities throughout the County. Alternatives will be developed considering all the components of the Development Plan which are necessary to facilitate development over the lifetime of the plan. These components are fundamental to

developing a cohesive settlement strategy. Different options will be considered for each to feed into developing the overall strategic alternatives for the Development Plan. The main components include Population and Housing, Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Retail Development, Towns and Villages, rural Development, Transport, and Infrastructure, Built and Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure, Climate change, Renewable Energy and Environment, social, community and Cultural Development

### 4.3 On-going Evolution of Alternatives

A key challenge in the plan preparation process was identifying adequate appropriate land to meet the future needs of the plan area given the level of environmental sensitivities which exist, lack of infrastructure coupled with the requirement for a more rural life. Establishing a balance between environmental protection, integration and meeting future population needs involved an on-going iterative process between the plan-makers and the SEA, AA, and Flood Risk Assessment teams. The presence of both plan making and SEA team members at all CDP meetings was key to the accomplishment of this balance which led to the continued evolution of the alternatives throughout the plan making process. Alternatives have therefore evolved and in some cases have been ‘tweaked’ in the detail as the process has progressed.

### 4.4 Assessment of Alternatives

Having identified the Strategic Environmental Objectives against which the consideration of alternatives, policies and objectives of the Development Plan will be assessed for their potential environmental impacts, the compatibility criteria to be used in the assessments are as follows;

+	Reflects a potential positive effect	-	Reflects a potential negative effect
0	Reflects a neutral or uncertain effect	+/-	Reflects that positive and negative effects are likely or that in the absence of further detail the effects are unclear

In accordance with SEA guidelines, ‘**impact**’ is defined in terms of the quality (positive, negative or neutral), ‘**significance**’ i.e., in terms of the scale/type of development envisaged by the plan and the ‘**sensitivity**’ and/or importance of the receiving environment, and duration (short, medium, long term, permanent or temporary). It should be noted that from the onset throughout the development of both the draft and final plan, team members ensured both environmental and planning considerations were considered as alternatives to the plan and where possible these considerations have been documented in the alternative’s tables here under.

The identification of alternatives first commenced with an exercise in **Mind Mapping** to capture all the competing interests, constraints, opportunities and aspirations which play a part in developing the Clare County Development Plan. A **mind map** is a diagram used to visually organize information. A mind map is hierarchical and shows relationships among pieces of the whole. It is often created around a single concept, drawn as an image in the centre of a blank page, to which associated representations

of ideas such as images, words and parts of words are added. Major ideas are connected directly to the central concept, and other ideas branch out from those major ideas.

Considering the National & Regional policy requirements, coupled with the mandatory requirements in terms of preparing a CDP the key question is how can we come up with or develop realistic, reasonable, viable & implementable alternatives? We can no longer adopt a strategy of broadly equal apportionment of future growth based on historical patterns.

We need to respond to the new policy context for planning set by Government in the NPF which is centred around structured and prioritised plan-led development centred around the locations best equipped for sustainable long-term development.

If we don't do this, then we plan for car-dependent, energy intensive, rural development in locations which aren't serviced. The global COVID pandemic has also changed where people want to live, the amenities & facilities required, and therefore we need to consider the infrastructure to service this change. **Figure 4.1** outlines the key policy drivers from a national level, the priorities for Clare County Council at a corporate level, the key Strategic Economic Initiatives, and the difficulties in sustainably developing our county to become a world class tourist destination all in the knowledge that Climate Change is happening and now more than ever we need to mitigate and adapt our ways in order to build resilience to the impacts.



Figure 4.1 Clare County Development Plan Mind Ma

Alternative Considered	0	+	-	+/-
<p><b>Option 1: Dispersed Settlement led approach (Unrestricted settlement)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This scenario envisages growth of all settlements within the County with heavy emphasis on accommodating housing within all settlements. Other than Ennis and other large towns (such as Shannon and Kilrush) there would be no hierarchy and growth would be envisaged in all settlements).</li> <li>Designated areas (European Sites, Groundwater Protection zones etc.) would be subject to appropriate environmental protection measures in line with the regulatory framework. As per Alternative 1, rural development policies would support agriculture, forestry, renewable energy, and tourism in line with the NPF and RSES.</li> <li>This option is in effect an unrestricted option but overall, not in line with the requirements of the NPF or RSES.</li> </ul>			P1 T1 T2 S1 CH1 CH2 L1 – L2	B1 – B7 W1 – W3 P2 & P3 S2 & S3
<p><b>Principal environmental impacts identified for this scenario/evolution of alternative through Plan &amp; SEA team meetings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This scenario would require significant road infrastructural improvements for Miltown Malbay, Killaloe and many of the large and small villages such as Fanore, Doonbeg and Tubber.</li> <li>More generally, due to dispersed pattern and lack of hierarchy, whole infrastructure would require improvement under this scenario.</li> <li>This scenario could lead to stagnation of rural settlements as lack of housing provision and policy could result in developments in countryside and not existing settlements.</li> <li>Significant increase in rural housing with lack of policy would result in increased private wastewater treatment, potential groundwater impacts and increase in private car trips with resulting issues on road safety.</li> <li>Indirect cumulative impacts on biodiversity especially loss of ecological corridors, stepping-stones and features of local biodiversity importance together with fragmentation of non-designated habitats under this scenario.</li> <li>This scenario could work against the rural economy and result in adverse impacts on rural settlements and areas; there would be less recognition of the strengths and characteristics of rural settlements, in turn, there could be a range of landscape and heritage impacts, and</li> </ul>				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the absence of a county level settlement hierarchy, criteria-based approach to development of infrastructural requirements would be required which may not be formed through a multi-disciplinary approach.</li> </ul>				
Alternative Considered	0	+	-	+/-
<p><b>Option 2: Led by the requirement to provide for Climate Adaptation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It comes to the fore of the Plan’s strategy; preface each Chapter with reference to the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill October 2021 &amp; the Climate Action Plan, 2023.</li> <li>In line with the National Marine Planning Framework which looks to move development away from our coasts and to prioritise Offshore Wind including enabling works and infrastructure together with policies to tackle Climate Change.</li> <li>Avoid flood prone areas; look at Nature Based Solutions as an alternative to hard engineering, Safeguard Natural Storage Areas.</li> <li>Identify decarbonisation zones which will serve multiple purposes to avoid further flooding or dealing with flood events.</li> <li>Greater protection for our wetlands and identification of additional key wetlands inland from the coast.</li> <li>Build a Low Carbon Climate Resilient County</li> </ul>		T2	P1 B1 B6 S2 S5 T1 CH1, CH2 CH3 L1 & L2	
<p>Principal environmental impacts identified for this scenario/evolution of alternative through Plan &amp; SEA team meetings:</p> <p>A key theme across many of the submissions received in relation to the Issues Paper was Climate Change and how the Local Authority needs to take responsibility for how we adapt. Nature Based Solutions – multiple benefits in slowing the flow, reducing flood risk, increasing sustainable use of energy, carbon sequestration, coastal resilience, improving wellbeing in urban areas.</p>				
Alternative Considered	0	+	-	+/-
<p><b>Option 3: Employment led growth.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This scenario looks at employment-led growth which focuses development in key locations where employment growth is more likely to be delivered and differs from previous Plan strategies which spread growth based on the size and scale of the settlement in accordance with the core strategy.</li> </ul>	P3 S2 – S5 W1, W2, W3 – W7 WA1 WS1 WS2 WW1 WW2	P1 RE1	P2 B1 B2 B3 B4 B5 S1 C1 – C3 T1 & T2	B5 CH1 CH2 CH3 L1 L2

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scenario would focus on the Strategic Economic Initiatives (SEI) identified for the County.</li> <li>• Key Economic Initiatives would form the focus of areas for growth within the County. This would see the population allocation and subsequent zoning focused solely within these areas.</li> <li>• Key SEIs such as the South Clare/UL SDZ, Clare MEZ, the LNDR, Ennis 2040, Roche, the Shannon Estuary - Moneypoint which have all been identified as key employment and development opportunities would form the focus of the Plan and therefore growth.</li> </ul>			
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**Principal environmental impacts identified for this scenario/evolution of alternative through Plan & SEA team meetings:**

- This scenario would focus on areas where employment opportunities arise irrespective of the capacity of the physical infrastructure.
- As with scenario one depending on where these employment opportunities arise water treatment would be a key concern. Should the employment opportunity arise outside of a settlement where no water treatment plant exists it is unlikely to be prioritised by Irish Water in this plan cycle for the incorporation of a new plant.
- Through the implementation of this scenario the focus would see higher densities in the larger areas however; many of these areas are already under significant pressure in terms of water supply and wastewater treatment.
- As much of the employment led opportunity focuses on the key urban areas such as the hub town of Ennis and the gateway of Shannon this scenario would see further increased pressures on these towns in terms of transport and in particular traffic congestion at peak hours but also throughout the day.
- Many of the larger towns and villages in County Clare suffer traffic congestion either intermittently or in the case of Ennis town centre on ongoing bases. To address this and other bottleneck issues would require investment in junctions, traffic calming measures, the securing of link roads, ring roads or by-passes as generally the towns and villages in County Clare are limited in the width of the physical streetscape and so addressing this issue would require significant investment and land take leading to impacts on biodiversity, flora and fauna, soil and landscape amongst others.
- This scenario would see higher densities in the larger towns and villages (Ennis, Shannon together with the Service Towns (Kilrush, Ennistymon/Lahinch and Scarriff/Tuamgraney). It would also see the promotion of brownfield development above Greenfield development.
- Smaller towns such as Killaloe, Sixmilebridge, Tulla, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Miltown Malbay, Lisdoonvarna and Kilkee would most likely decline over time with fewer services provided, and this scenario would benefit certain areas above others.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This scenario may also focus on areas with little or no services which will reflect negatively on many of the SEOs.</li> </ul>				
Alternative Considered	0	+	-	+/-
<p><b>Option 4: Strategic Planning for Sustainable Growth in line with the requirements of the NPF and RSES.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NPF &amp; RSES require Compact Growth (Sequential) &amp; the reversal of rural decline in villages (NPO 3,6,7,16,18a &amp; RPO 3,34,35)</li> <li>RPO 34 and RPO 35 specifically support the implementation of NPO 3, requiring that development plans and CORE strategies are supported by specific objectives for urban infill/brownfield development and to provide an evidence base for the availability &amp; deliverability of lands to deliver 30% of new homes within the existing built-up footprint of settlements.</li> <li>Tiered Approach to Land Zoning, Active Land Management Strategy, Rural Regeneration</li> </ul>		P1-P3, S1-S5 W1 – W7 T1 – T2 WA1, WS1, WS2 WW1, WW2 RE1 B2-B6	B1	C1 – C3 CH1 – CH3 L1, L2
<p><b>Principal environmental impacts identified for this scenario/evolution of alternative through Plan &amp; SEA team meetings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This scenario would see the current settlement hierarchy retained subject to serviced provision of lands.</li> <li>The approach provides for rural protection while allowing an appropriate level of growth within lower tier settlements. This approach works with existing and planned delivery of services infrastructure and presents the best option towards sustainable transport.</li> <li>It supports local communities and population, supporting provision of local services and infrastructure, which assists in countering isolation without impact on surrounding environment.</li> <li>The legislation also required that the location of development should be linked to existing wastewater treatment capacity and planned investment in capacity in the future.</li> <li>Planning which is supported by evidence;</li> </ul> <p><i>The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities</i> which were published in 2009 but since then we have CFRAMS and the publication of the associated flood risk maps which will determine the best location for development.</p>				
Alternative Considered	0	+	-	+/-
<p><b>Option 5: Recognizes the diverse range of natural, built, and cultural heritage assets that provide Clare with a strong tourism base.</b></p>		P1-P3 S1-S5	B1 W1 – W7	C1 – C3 CH1 – CH3

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism can be seen as a key economic driver for the future development of the county (WAW, CoM, Bunratty Folk Park, Loophead Lighthouse).</li> <li>• It supports the national and regional policies including: NPO 22 (greenways, blueways), NPO 60 (natural and cultural heritage), RPO 53 (tourism), RPO 54 (tourism and environment) and RPO 173 (tourism corridors).</li> <li>• This Tourism-led approach would see development focused in towns and villages where tourism uses, transport, retail, associated business etc would be accommodated in line with the Active Land Management Strategy.</li> </ul>			<p>T1 – T2 WA1, WS1, WS2 WW1, WW2 RE1 B2-B6</p>	<p>L1, L2</p>
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**Principal environmental impacts identified for this scenario/evolution of alternative through Plan & SEA team meetings:**

- This scenario would see the current settlement hierarchy retained subject to serviced provision of lands;
- Similar wastewater issues remain in this scenario – i.e., many smaller settlements have insufficient treatment and/or capacity to accommodate future growth.
- Creates a rural housing issue for the 20-35 age bracket where they would like to work near where they live in these remote tourist locations.
- This scenario directs development away from town centres.
- This approach allows for less protection of designated sites and achievement of WFD targets as tourism led development is directed to locations predominately in rural areas (such as Loophead and along the Wild Atlantic Way). The Wild Atlantic Way monitoring programme has demonstrated impact at the key Discovery Points in County Clare which to date have not been addressed or ameliorated.
- Uneven population growth in Clare which potentially will not align with the Core Strategy.
- Commuting patterns will change with the key focus away from the hub towns of Ennis and Shannon together with the other large towns.
- The lack of inclusion of Green Infrastructure, no emphasis on carbon reduction and Green House Gas emissions through this option reflects a significant negative on the SEOs.

When discussing this scenario, it was felt that tourism policies focused on certain areas (coupled with the additional pressures which the Wild Atlantic Way would put on the county) may not result in positive impacts as there may be greater disturbance issues on habitats and species particularly around West and North Clare (the Burren and the coastal areas in particular) where there are a higher number of designated sites. Therefore, it is proposed that instead of targeted identified tourism areas, this scenario be altered to ensure tourism policies are open and flexible enough to

accommodate tourism activities within appropriate locations. This excludes reference to existing tourism hot spots such as specific tourism policies for Bunnratty, Shannon and Lough Derg which include protective and precautionary measures.

Alternative Considered	0	+	-	+/-
<p><b>Option 6: Take Alternative 4 but in terms of Water Services put the onus to deliver development in a sustainable manner back on the Government.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Irish Water presents their Investment Plan to Government which lists all the assets which require upgrade, new infrastructure etc. Government decides on spend for which IW need to prioritize the works.</li> <li>IW cannot simply provide adequate infrastructure in all locations without the required financial input.</li> <li>The CDP highlights the absence of the relevant infrastructure for a defined list of settlements within which we would like to zone and formulate objectives within the Plan which says once the finance is made available from central Government to provide for the infrastructure, we will zone the settlement appropriately.</li> <li>Select the most appropriate settlement within which an Integrated Constructed Wetland could be incorporated which would see an existing agglomeration with the appropriate ground conditions receive improved treatment which would subsequently allow for development and zoning of lands.</li> <li>Example Lixnaw ICW</li> <li>Costly to deliver but cheap to run</li> <li>Significant environmental gains</li> <li><a href="https://www.water.ie/projects-plans/lixnaw-integrated-constru/">https://www.water.ie/projects-plans/lixnaw-integrated-constru/</a></li> <li>Funding streams – European Green Deal?</li> </ul>		P1-P3 S1-S5 W1 – W7 T1 – T2 WA1, WS1, WS2 WW1, WW2 RE1 B2-B6	B1	C1 – C3 CH1 – CH3 L1, L2

**Principal environmental impacts identified for this scenario/evolution of alternative through Plan & SEA team meetings:**

- This scenario would see the current settlement hierarchy retained subject to the provision of suitable lands;
- Similar wastewater issues remain in this scenario – i.e., many smaller settlements have insufficient treatment and/or capacity to accommodate future growth.
- Ennis retains its function of a county town and can build on the infrastructural investment in and around the town in recent years e.g. wastewater treatment plant upgrades at Clonroadmore and Clareabbey, together with the Clarecastle sewerage scheme.

- This alternative may serve to combat a small portion of the rural housing demand in discreet areas where conditions allow, and sufficient land can be acquired to provide the necessary space for such treatment systems.
- This approach allows for better protection of designated sites and achievement of WFD targets as serviced led development is directed to settlements in lieu of one-off housing and septic tank usage.
- The CDP would need to assess the success of the implementation of this alternative on a site-by-site basis incorporating water quality analysis to ensure systems are functioning correctly. This will address the success or otherwise of the alternative.
- Commuting patterns will generally remain the same with the key focus towards the hub and gateway together with the large towns if employment is maintained in these areas.

When discussing this scenario, it was felt that based on experiences across the county this was not a very viable option on a board scale. Difficulties associated with finding sufficient land to accommodate the Integrated Constructed Wetland would be challenge. Issues raised included; who would pay for the ICW (the property developer, Local Authority or Irish Water), would Irish Water take over the ICW once constructed – this wasn’t thought to be the case given as Irish Water haven’t taken over other property developed treatment systems in the county. If the system was not taken over by IW or the Local Authority, then how realistic is it to expert the homeowners to maintain such a novel system.

Alternative Considered	0	+	-	+/-
<p><b>Option 7: Prioritize development within the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area</b></p> <p>The Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area (LSMA) covers 387km<sup>2</sup>, and has a population of over 132,400 (CSO, 2016). This is made up of approximately 96,800 residents within the Limerick City and Suburbs boundary as defined by the CSO. Limerick City is the largest urban centre in Ireland’s</p>		P1-P3 S1-S5 W1 – W7 T1 – T2 WA1, WS1, WS2 WW1, WW2 RE1 B2-B6	B1	C1 – C3 CH1 – CH3 L1, L2

**Principal environmental impacts identified for this scenario/evolution of alternative through Plan & SEA team meetings:**

- This scenario would see the prioritisation and development of Shannon, the South Clare/UL Strategic Development Zone, Sixmilebridge (Small Town), Athlunkard, Bunratty, Clonlara, Parteen, Ballycannon North, Meelick (Large Villages), Ardnacrusha, Cratloe, O’Briensbridge (Small Villages)
- There is a clear link between the Settlement Hierarchy and the role of the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area and the Key Town of Ennis, the population target for the County, housing supply targets and residential land requirements for each settlement in the County Clare Settlement Hierarchy.
- Aligns with the requirements of the RSES for the Southern Region where a strategy is pursued that builds on cities and metropolitan areas as engines of growth and seeks in parallel to re-position the region’s strong network of towns, villages and diverse rural areas

in an economically resilient, imaginative and smart manner to create a sustainable competitive advantage for the region.

- Uneven population growth in Clare but with adoption of core strategy that is evidence based. The CDP will be able to assess the success of addressing this issue over the lifetime of the plan.
- Commuting patterns will change with the key focus towards the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area and therefore directed to the east of the county and towards Limerick.
- Prioritising the metropolitan area would perhaps be to the detriment of north and west Clare.

#### 4.5 Evolution of the Alternatives

During development of the County Development Plan an Alternatives workshop was held between the Planning and Environmental Assessment Team on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2021. In addition, meetings with Irish Water and the consultants involved in preparing the Renewable Energy Strategy for the County also assisted in developing the alternatives and selected the preferred option. A presentation was given by the SEA Team on the mind mapping exercise undertaken to identify the key issues which would focus the identification and development of alternatives. Key questions that were posed included;

- Strategically are there alternatives?
- From a policy perspective (NPF, RSES etc) are there alternatives?
- From a Development Management perspective are there alternatives?
- From a Natural Heritage perspective are there alternatives?

The mind mapping exercise looked at the decrease in population allocation and the increase in rural relocation. How tourism is looking to make the Cliffs of Moher a world class visitor experience. The onus/opportunity to provide for the Offshore Renewable Energy sector and its emerging market. Climate Adaptation and the requirement to move development away from our coastline, away from flood risk areas all in the knowledge that pluvial flood risk is increasing. Should we focus on the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area only or on the core Strategic Economic Initiatives within the council?

Through discussions it was felt we can no longer adopt a strategy of broadly equal apportionment of future growth based on these historical patterns. We need to respond as a county to the new policy context for planning by Local Authorities set by Government in the NPF which is centred around structured and prioritised plan-led development centred around the locations best equipped for sustainable long-term development.

If we don't do this then we plan for car-dependent, energy intensive and rural development in locations which aren't serviced.

However, the global pandemic has changed where people want to live and need to live, more amenities and facilities are required together with the infrastructure to service this change.

The NPF and the RSES require Compact Growth (Sequential) and reversal of rural decline in villages (Sustainable Development/Rural Regeneration) this is in line with National Policy Objectives (NPO) 3, 6,7,16 and 18a and Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 3, 34 and 35.

RPO 34 (Active Land Management - Regeneration, Brownfield & Infill Development) and RPO 35 specifically support the implementation of NPO 3, requiring that development plans and core strategies are supported by specific objectives for urban/brownfield development and provide an evidence base for the availability and deliverability of lands to deliver 30% of new homes within the existing built-up footprint of settlements.

#### 4.6 Alternatives and Climate Change

In formulating and considering alternatives regarding the future of the plan area, the importance of incorporating resilience to climate change, through provision of appropriate adaptation measures has been a key consideration. The assessment of alternatives against their resilience to climate change will be a key factor in determining the overall preferred approach to be adopted by the County Development Plan area.

#### 4.7 Preferred Alternative

Following an assessment and evaluation of the alternatives set out in this chapter together with round table discussions between the plan making and environmental teams the preferred way forward in relation to the future land-use plan for the County is a combination of **Alternative 2 (Led by the requirement to provide Climate Adaptation)** and **Alternative 4 (Strategic Planning for Sustainable Growth in line with the requirements of the NPF & RSES combined with Option 6 with respect to Waste Water Infrastructure)**.

The Draft Plan is based on the principles of proper planning and sustainable development which means that development will be promoted in accordance with appropriate international, national, and regional policy and guidance and in particular the NPF and RSES. The central focus of the Core Strategy **Chapter 3** is on residential development in ensuring that there is an acceptable equilibrium between the supply of zoned, serviced land for the projected demand for new housing over the lifetime of the Plan. It details the anticipated population growth for the County (i.e., 8,373), the expected housing supply target (i.e. 4,500), and the network of settlements for the County and the role and function of the settlements.

The Core Strategy considers all aspects of what is needed to deliver sustainable communities having regard also to the availability of infrastructure, the carrying capacity of the environment and the need to support economic development. The key areas considered in the preparation of the Core Strategy for County Clare include the overall Planning Strategy and Climate Change Strategy, population, housing, retail, town centres, transport, infrastructure, employment, economic growth, and the environment.

**Alternative 2** - Alternative 2 represents a balanced recognition of established patterns of development in the county having regard to the requirements of the NPF and RSES and the key objectives, targets and approach to Climate Change, Adaptation and Mitigation. Following the publication of the Climate Action Charter in 2019 it was apparent that Local Government have a lead role to play in providing robust leadership in advancing Irelands commitment to achieving a net zero carbon energy system

objective for Irish society and in the process, create a climate resilient, vibrant, and sustainable country at the local and regional level. Clare County Council recognises this role and as such have developed a County Development Plan which provides for rural protection while allowing an appropriate level of growth within lower tier settlements. This approach works with existing and planned delivery of services infrastructure and presents the best option towards sustainable growth. It provides for an extremely high level of protection and resilience to climate change and flooding through the extensive inclusion of buffer spaces along rivers, streams and ecologically significant hedgerows and wildlife corridors. **Alternative 2** is a balanced sustainable approach to planned development for the county. As such Alternative 2 has been selected as the basis of the preparation of the Draft Development Plan.

**Alternative 4** in conjunction with 6 represents a balanced recognition of established patterns of development in the county having regard to the requirements of the NPF and the RSES. The approach provides for rural protection while allowing an appropriate level of growth within lower tier settlements. This approach broadly works with existing and planned delivery of services infrastructure and represents the best option towards sustainable growth. However, it also seeks to recognise the under investment by Government to allow Irish Water to implement sustainable wastewater treatment infrastructure across our county. It provides an innovative and alternative solution to the lack of wastewater infrastructure in some of our key settlements where growth is anticipated but for which it cannot currently be accommodated due to the lack of wastewater infrastructure.

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## 5.0 Monitoring

Article 10 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EEC) requires that monitoring must be undertaken of the significant environmental effects directly related to the implementation of the Plan. This is to provide for any unforeseen adverse effects to be identified at an early stage in its implementation, allowing for appropriate remedial action to be undertaken.

The primary purpose of monitoring is to allow the actual impacts of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 on adoption to be assessed against the Strategic Environmental Objectives and their associated targets and indicators. The indicators used will show changes that would be attributable to the implementation of the County Development Plan.

Monitoring can use existing sources of information and does not necessarily require new research to be undertaken but can be effective in identifying where additional research should be targeted to supplement where information is deficient. **Table 10.0** sets out the strategic environmental objectives, targets and indicators to applied in monitoring the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan, in accordance with Section 13J (2) of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004, as amended. It is proposed that the SEA monitoring reporting should go parallel with the reviewing of the Clare CDP.

The SEA Objectives formed the basis of the assessment of the Clare CDP, and it includes targets (overall aim), indicators (measurement of monitoring change), data sources and agency/body responsible for the monitoring.

The monitoring programme (to be effective) must be subject to review at each reporting stage to reflect new data. Should the monitoring programme identify significant impacts (such as impacts on designated sites or to the landscape) early in the County Development Plan implementation, this should trigger a review of the plan and monitoring programme. In addition, the identification of positive impacts from monitoring should also be reported as this will assist in determining successful environmental policies.

As several the indicators within the monitoring table relate to the number of planning applications received it is also recommended that data arising from planning applications, particularly in terms of environmental monitoring through the preparation of Screening Reports for Appropriate Assessment, Ecological Reports, Environmental Impact Statements, Environmental Reports etc be integrated into the GIS and a dedicated environmental database. This will assist in assessing cumulative impacts also, in particular ecology and water quality. This is something which Clare County Council Planning Department has partially undertaken but which should be prioritised and driven through the CDP Monitoring Programme.

Finally, it is recommended that the monitoring report be made available to the public upon its completion. It is recommended that this data be shared with neighbouring local authorities to assist in monitoring cross border or transboundary effects should they arise. This will be particularly useful for example in relation to the Shannon Estuary should any Strategic Projects arise from the implementation of the SIFP or perhaps in relation to the Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region should the Parteen Basin option move to planning.

Table 11.0 Monitoring Table

Aim for Monitoring	What is being Monitored?	Target	Indicator	Data Source/Responsibility	Remedial Action
<b>Monitoring Objective 1: Reduce the need to travel/increased use of public transportation and achieve modal shift in transport across the county.</b>	An increase in the percentage of the population travelling to work, school or college by public transport or sustainable modes of transport (walking, cycling). Decrease in proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to 2016 National Travel Survey levels	<i>Decrease in the current known levels of private fossil fuel-based transport and an overall increase in sustainable modes.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % Increase in the number of people reporting regular cycling/walking to school and work above 2022 CSO figures.</li> <li>• Consultations with Department of Communication Climate Action and Environment together with statistics produced by the Regional Assembly as part of the preparation of the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy for the Southern Region.</li> <li>• CSO data – review of statistics as published.</li> </ul>	CCC Forward Planning section review of CSO figures in relation to car journeys and mode of transport. Results from National Travel Survey.	Consultation with the Department of Education, TII and local public transport providers to identify sustainable opportunities for a modal shift in transport. Investigate if awareness of new transport routes, timetables and services is the issue for a lack of progress towards achieving this objective.
<b>Monitoring Objective 2: Decrease the usage of fossil fuels and increase both renewable resource usage with a move towards more low carbon energy sources.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress on implementing CDP objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of climate reduction targets as provided for by Plan provisions including those provided for and referenced in Chapter 1 “Climate Action”, as well as the objectives as set out in the Clare RES 2030.</li> <li>• Contribution to the transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050</li> <li>• Reduced energy consumption and supporting the uptake of renewable options and a move away from solid fuels for residential heating.</li> </ul>	<p>Increasing trend in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the numbers of renewable energy developments and 2) those granted permission and 3) connected to the grid.</li> </ol> <p>Increasing trend in energy efficiency for buildings.</p> <p>Decreasing trend in use of fossil-fuels across sectors.</p> <p>Decreasing trends in fossil-fuel based transport.</p>	<p>No. of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications submitted for renewable energy projects, including no. of MW.</li> <li>• Connected projects (i.e., built-out), including no. of MW.</li> <li>• Successful applications for RESS to capture projects coming forward for power purchase agreements (includes wind, solar and a separate category for community projects).</li> <li>• Monitoring these metrics annually to track whether permissions granted are staying coupled to applications submitted then connected.</li> </ul> <p>No. of solar rooftop connections.</p> <p>Land cover change in hectares – GIS analysis of % land cover change from agricultural uses to others in comparison with 2018 Corine/ National Land Cover (NLC) 2018 figures.</p> <p>Tracking the BER rating average for County Clare, tracked annually for rate of change.</p> <p>No. of Government buildings in Clare meeting the 50% target for public sector bodies.</p> <p>Use EPA Air Quality Monitoring to find areas of high fossil fuel usage in terms of heating homes.</p> <p>No. of SEAI grants for CCC under the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH).</p> <p>No. of:</p>	<p>CCC Forward Planning section in conjunction with the Climate Action Regional Office, Limerick Clare Energy Agency – annual.</p> <p>ESB and EirGrid – Published lists of projects connected to the grid by RES type.</p> <p>EirGrid – RESS applications, updated with every auction, typically annually.</p> <p>SEAI – Grant aid data by county for rooftop solar.</p> <p>EPA Corine database – updated every 6 years, and National Land Cover 2018 dataset (OSi/Tailte Eireann).</p> <p>SEAI – FOI request for BER database annually.</p> <p>SEAI Data, Limerick Clare Energy Agency Data, CARO office.</p> <p>EPA Air Quality Monitoring Maps and Air Quality Reports – checked quarterly to track trends.</p> <p>SEAI SSRH data – available online at aggregate level and</p>	<p>Review of the CDP/RES measures/ objectives if targets are not being achieved, as part of the next CDP and RES review.</p> <p>Where targets are not achieved, CCC will liaise with the Regional Assembly, the EPA, and the Climate Action Regional Office to establish reasons and develop solutions.</p> <p>Where the numbers of consented RES developments are decreasing relative to the number of applications submitted for planning (with a focus on solar projects), CCC Forward Planning will review the decoupling to identify any gaps/ bottlenecks in the planning and consenting and/or grid connection processes, in liaison with ESB/EirGrid and other stakeholders as relevant.</p> <p>Where EPA Air Quality Monitoring indicates</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electric vehicles registered for CCC as a proxy for gauging uptake.</li> <li>• Electric vehicle charging points installed in the county.</li> <li>• New EV car registrations</li> <li>• Other: hydrogen, biomethane, LNG refuelling points.</li> </ul> <p>CCC 'M&amp;R' (monitoring and reporting) system – covers energy consumption and carbon emissions.</p> <p>Local Authority Climate Action Plan (CAP) Data – statutory requirement under the Planning and development Act, as amended, and the Climate Action Plan 2023.</p>	<p>by county level by request to SEAI.</p> <p>SIMI – EVs registered in Clare.</p> <p>ESB charging points map; GLP AutoGas hydrogen refuelling locations map – checked annually.</p> <p>CCC M&amp;R mandatory reporting to SEAI – CCC to review own data annually on trends. FOI request to SEAI will provide data for other public bodies.</p> <p>CCC Forward Planning – review LA CAP for data and monitoring already being (or planned to be) collected to avoid duplication of effort on RES monitoring.</p>	<p>areas of consistently reduced air quality because of solid fuel burning, target with an awareness campaign in association with the implementation of the Climate Action Plan.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring Objective 3: In preparing the spatial plan for our county that we develop ecologically resilient and varied landscapes through the establishment and preservation of ecological networks and stepping-stones as part of our settlement zonings and objectives and foster adaptive management practices in the face of uncertainty, favouring flexible adaptation options and allowing for alterations of the Plan as monitoring and evaluation data become available during its implementation.</b></p>	<p>Usage of areas previously un-surveyed by the Local Authority in terms of their importance as ecological networks and stepping-stones with a particular focus on sites within our key settlements commencing with Ennis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Establish the usage of sites identified within the environmental assessments as potentially having a biodiversity or ecological importance to protected species such as bats in the first instance.</i></li> <li>• No loss of ecological networks or parts thereof which provide connectivity between areas of local biodiversity without remediation (i.e., planting of the same or greater length of compensatory native hedgerow to ensure no net loss of such features).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage of selected sites by bat species as identified through targeted surveys within selected settlements.</li> <li>• The length and area of riparian buffer zones, open space and green infrastructure zoned as part of our County Development Plan.</li> <li>• The net length of hedgerow retained and supplemented as part of individual planning applications or strategic projects undertaken by the council.</li> </ul>	<p>Clare County Council Forward Planning and Development Management sections co-ordinated through the Environmental Assessment Officer.</p>	<p>Where, following survey and assessment by the Local Authority sites zoned for future development are found to provide important stepping-stones and ecological networks the Plan should be altered at the next available opportunity e.g., Variation to protect these sites.</p> <p>Where encroachment is occurring within these areas, ensure enforcement action is taken to reinstate habitat and associated zoning.</p> <p>Where the loss of ecological networks or stepping-stones is as a result of implementation of objectives contained in the Plan the 2-year review should ensure the associated policies are amended.</p>

<p><b>Monitoring Objective 4: Integrate Climate Change mitigation measures into every fabric of spatial planning through the restriction of inappropriate development/land-use zoning in flood risk zones, inclusion of green infrastructure as the status quo and the incorporation of suitable Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) into all developments</b></p>	<p>To ensure each zoning parcel across the county as identified through the CDP process has a Climate Action focus.</p>	<p>Ensure all future development is climate proof or incorporates climate adaptation and mitigation measures where appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporation of measures into Planning Applications and Clare County Council led Plans and Projects.</li> <li>• Implementation of measures on the ground as part of specific projects and developments.</li> <li>• To implement the targets as identified in the Renewable Energy Strategy and incorporated into the Clare County Council Climate Action Plan and County Development Plan with respect to achieving a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to a climate resilient county.</li> </ul>	<p>Clare County Council Forward Planning and Development Management together with all Departments and Sections as part of their work programme.</p> <p>Climate Action Section facilitated by the Climate Action Co-Ordinator.</p>	<p>Enforcement action where measures identified with specific zoning objectives are not incorporated on site.</p> <p>Where SuDs, Nature Based Solutions etc are not being incorporated at project level review consenting process and conditions associated with planning permission.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring Objective 5: Maintain and protect our natural carbon sinks (bogs/marshes/forests/fens/Peatland and Wetlands habitat) as decarbonising areas which can serve a dual purpose in terms of enhancement of biodiversity and mitigation against Climate Change.</b></p>	<p>No loss of wetlands, bogs, fens, marshes, or other carbon sinks across the county through reclamation, infilling or development.</p> <p>Where pressure exists to develop out these areas monitoring should be prioritised to provide the scientific evidence to support the exclusions of these areas from future development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake targeted assessments/surveys/monitoring of identified natural carbon sinks across the county to include groundwater and surface levels in know wetlands.</li> <li>• Avoid situations that limit adaptation to climate change such as zoning lands in close proximity to a known flood risk area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in landuse across the county.</li> <li>• Protection of key areas of flood plains and associated wetland features</li> <li>• Reclamation/Infilling of bogs, fens, and other wetland habitats.</li> <li>• Monitoring change in land use through utilisation of the Clare County Council habitat mapping together with the Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Web-Tool.</li> <li>• Where new areas become at risk from flooding due to climate change, further areas may be required for climate adaptation.</li> </ul>	<p>Forward Planning – SEA Officer to map flood events since the publication of the County Development Plan against planning permissions granted to assess if development has taken place within a flood plain, areas prone to flooding or as a result of climate change in areas which have now become prone to flood and therefore may merit a change to zoning within the County Development Plan as a result of monitoring.</p> <p>CCC – Records obtained as and when flood events occur.</p> <p>OPW – As updated on <a href="http://www.floodinfo.ie">www.floodinfo.ie</a></p> <p>Where resources allow within these Departments (which won't always be available) spot checks of enforcement/mitigation arising from this Plan should be undertaken against the datasets identified (Clare Habitat Mapping/ESM Tool together with the data collated through the Environmental Database (Clare County Council Planning Department internal GIS data arising from Planning Applications, preparation of</p>	<p>Where loss of these important habitats occurs within these areas, ensure enforcement action is taken to reinstate habitat and associated zoning.</p> <p>Review CDP zoning and associated landuse in areas of land directly adjacent to flood prone areas and amend as new information arises.</p>

				Plans and Programmes, ecological studies etc.)	
<b>Monitoring Objective 6: Protect Human Health</b>	Compliance with air quality legislation around the town of Ennis.	To see a marked improvement in the number of exceedance events recorded in the town of Ennis in terms of air quality.  To see a reduction in the exceedance of WHO Air Quality standards in the town of Ennis.  To see a reduction in the number of water supplies needing remedial action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of exceedances of air quality limits as recorded by the EPA.</li> <li>Number of Enforcement Actions taken due to breaches by retailers/distributors and the public Under the Air Pollution Act (Marketing, Sale, Distribution and Burning of Specified Fuels) Regulations 2012.</li> <li>A downward trend in the Ennis Air Quality Index which can be modelled based on freely available public data.</li> <li>Number of water supplies on the EPA Water Supply Remedial Action List.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IQAir Data</li> <li><a href="http://www.airquality.ie">www.airquality.ie</a></li> <li>EPA Ambient Air Quality Monitoring</li> <li>EPA Water Supply RAL (updated twice per year)</li> </ul>	Review awareness campaigns/ initiatives in relation to air quality issues to improve knowledge and awareness locally in terms of dangers of smoky fuels.
<b>Monitoring Objective 7: To achieve the conservation objectives of European Sites (SACs and SPAs).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No loss of protected habitats and species during the lifetime of the Plan.</li> <li>No compromise in the favourable conservation condition of European sites. No compromise or impact on the achievement of the favourable conservation condition objectives (whether maintain or restore) of European sites.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain or restore the conservation status of the habitats and species associated with the designated European sites in County Clare.</li> </ul>	<p>% loss of habitats/displacement of species within European Sites.</p> <p>No negative impacts on sites through the Councils own works or through developments/licenses/permissions/permits granted by the Council.</p> <p>Percentage of Qualifying Interest Features which have achieved their specific objectives of maintain or restore.</p>	<p>Referrals and consultation with NPWS on planning applications and enforcement files.</p> <p>Using GIS query the European sites dataset as provided by the NPWS against planning applications received for the No./% applied for within these areas and the No./% refused/granted.</p> <p>Review the conservation status of the European Sites in Clare against the status as documented in the preparation of the CDP.</p> <p>Where permissions have been granted and/or developments have taken place within European sites are the Qualifying Interest Features achieving their specific objectives.</p> <p>Article 17 Reporting on the Status of Protected Habitats and Species Next report due in 2025.</p> <p>Responsibility; Forward Planning, Development Management, SEA Officer.</p>	<p>Where loss of habitats or species occurs within these areas, ensure enforcement action is taken.</p> <p>Review CDP zoning and associated landuse in areas of land directly adjacent to European Sites.</p>
<b>Monitoring Objective 8: Meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the River Basin Management Plan.</b>	All waters within the plan area to achieve the requirements of the WFD and the relevant River Basin Management Plan by 2027.  Ensure provision of riparian zones at project/site level.	All waters (Surface, Groundwater, Transitional and Coastal) to achieve at least Good Status by 2027.	<p>No. of surface and groundwater bodies achieving "Good Status". No of waterbodies indicating deterioration in status.</p> <p>No. of planning applications with sufficient inclusion of buffer zones and Sustainable urban Drainage Systems</p>	Forward Planning and Development Management. SEA Officer to compare WFD status results to the baseline as used in the preparation of the CDP 2023-2029.	Revise baseline and review CDP Objectives for waterbodies failing to achieve at least good status or waterbodies which have been

			(SuDS) where necessary and applicable (in both urban and rural settings).	Utilise EPA WFD Application and Catchments.ie for CCC-specific information on the significant threats and pressures impacting WFD status and Risk.	identified as Priority Areas for Action.
<b>Monitoring Objective 9: To minimise and, where possible, eliminate threats to biodiversity including invasive species.</b>	Prevent the introduction of new invasive or alien species. Control/manage new invasive species. Control/manage/eradicate invasive species throughout the county.	No increased distribution in the extent of mapped records of alien and invasive species across the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No., type, and location of invasive species identified.</li> <li>No. of actions achieved under the Biodiversity Action Plan.</li> <li>Increase/decrease in coverage of invasive species identified through the Municipal Districts of Ennis, Killaloe, Shannon, and West Clare. Each MD have a programme of invasive species eradication underway in September and October with funding from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Dept. Housing, Local Government &amp; Heritage), National Biodiversity Action Plan Funding 2021.</li> <li>Follow up work will involve further mapping of the problem species, Knotweed and Giant Hogweed and proposed long term management and control measures.</li> <li>No. of submissions/observations submitted through invasive species Ireland “Alien Watch”. <a href="http://www.invasivespeciesireland.com/alien-watch">www.invasivespeciesireland.com/alien-watch</a></li> <li>No of Planning Applications which are accompanied by an Alien/Invasive Species Report and/or requested through the Planning Department to prepare an Alien/Invasive Species Management Plan.</li> <li>The National Biodiversity Data Centre will track success in the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan by measuring increases in the abundance and diversity of pollinators within the Irish landscape as the 81 actions are implemented.</li> </ul>	Environmental Assessment Officer in conjunction with the Heritage Officer in conjunction with the Municipal District Offices on a yearly basis.	Where there is no success in reducing stands of alien/invasive species re-assess treatment method and establish new methods if necessary.
<b>Monitoring Objective 10: To maximise the sustainable re-use of the existing built environment, derelict, disused and infill sites (brownfield sites), rather than greenfield sites. (This is in line with the Active Land Management Strategy RPO34 – Regeneration, Brownfield, Infill Development)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preference for development on brownfield site over green field.</li> <li>Specified % of new applications granted to be on brownfield sites.</li> <li>Limited and controlled development of greenfield sites.</li> <li>Re-use of soil from redeveloped sites where possible.</li> <li>No incidences of soil contamination.</li> </ul>	To see a reduction in the development of greenfield sites and the progressive and planned re-use of derelict and disused properties across the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No/% of new developments on brownfield sites.</li> <li>Area of brownfield land developed over the plan period.</li> <li>% of total greenfield land developed.</li> <li>% landcover in comparison with 2018 Corine figures.</li> <li>Level of urbanization or construction within zoned lands as per the 2023-2029 County Development Plan.</li> <li>Excessive landfilling of quality soil.</li> <li>Incidences of soil contamination.</li> <li>Volume of contaminated material generated in comparison with previous years’ figures.</li> </ul>	Forward Planning and Development Management co-ordinated by the Environmental Assessment Officer. Annual through a review of planning applications utilising GIS.  Work with the derelict teams in Clare County Council to establish the % re-use of existing buildings.	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.  Review of local authority applications for legacy landfill remediation authorisation. Where progress is stalled, CCC to

				CCC Environmental Section in conjunction with the EPA	work with the EPA to identify any bottlenecks in the process.
<b>Monitoring Objective 11: To ensure that all zoned lands (existing and proposed) are connected to the public sewer network ensuring treatment of wastewater which meets EU requirements prior to discharge.</b>	Upgrades to existing wastewater treatment plant infrastructure identified within the plan as being insufficient, based on existing and forecasted population demands to meet EU requirements.	To reduce the number of on-site systems across the county.  Decreasing trends in the numbers of EPA Priority Urban Areas, number of facilities on the Irish Water Remedial Action List, numbers of areas discharging raw sewage and numbers of plants failing EU treatment standards.	No. of Upgraded Wastewater Treatment Plants within the plan area.  No. of EPA Priority Urban Areas.  No. of plants discharging raw sewage.  No. of plants failing to meet EU Sewage Treatment Standards.  Number of plants exceeding the Emission Limit Values (ELVs) for Wastewater Treatment Discharge licence set by the EPA.  No. of plants added/ removed from the Irish Water Remedial Action List to indicate trends.	Irish Water -Achievement of Water Services Strategic Plan objectives.  Irish Water – Remedial Action List (RAL) updated quarterly. CCC Forward Planning Team to check at similar frequency.  EPA – Sewage Treatment Maps for Priority Urban Areas, raw sewage discharges, and locations failing to meet treatment standards – CCC Forward Planning annual check.  CCC Forward Planning Team – granting of permission conditioned based on a future WWTP upgrade.  CCC Forward Planning Team – refusal of permission as no upgrade to WWTP due to take place or due to insufficient capacity in the WWTP or failure of the WWTP to meet Emission Limit Values.	Where planning applications in the settlement strategy are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the Wastewater treatment Plant (WwTP) or failure of the WwTP to meet Emission Limit Values (ELV), CCC will work with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Irish Water to coordinate a response to achieve the necessary capacity.
<b>Monitoring Objective 12: Conserve, protect and enhance valued natural, cultural, and built landscapes, views of local value and features including those of geological and aesthetic value.</b>	No significant visual impact from development.  No damage to designated landscapes or seascapes as a result of the Renewable Energy Strategy.  The important landscapes across the County as outlined in Volume 2 of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.	Ensure no significant disruption of historic/cultural landscapes and features through objectives of the County Development Plan.	No. of developments permitted and their impacts on cultural/historic landscapes.  No. of developments located within Scenic Route or extent of degradation of areas designated as Heritage Landscapes.  No. of developments located within a designated scenic view or high landscape area in County Clare that disrupt views (based on the LCA).  Development and application of framework in relation to the application of LCA and their contribution to SEA.	Forward Planning and Development Management sections of Clare County Council through the SEA Officer. Undertake a GIS analysis of the various landscape types across the county to establish the no of developments permitted within these designations and whether they are since perceived to be causing an impact.	Where landscape is being impacted review CDP objectives for appropriateness and requirement for change.

## 6.0 Conclusion

The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 sets out an overall Vision, goals, policies, and objectives for the period 2023-2029 which seeks to provide for the long-term planning and sustainable development of the county. The SEA Environmental report demonstrates how environmental parameters have been addressed in the plan preparation process. The SEA, AA and SFRA have informed the plan through an ongoing iterative process that incorporated environmental considerations and sensitivities throughout the plan development. The SEA and AA have been undertaken in line with the Planning and Development (Strategic environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 to 2011 (as amended), the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) together with the SEA Guidelines 2023. Subject to the full and proper implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in this SEA Environmental Report and the Natura Impact Report which have been incorporated into the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and adherence to policies, objectives and landuse zonings contained in the CCDP 2023-2029 including appropriate site level investigations it is considered that significant adverse impacts on the environment will be avoided.





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