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ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE &
PLANNING

LOCAL AUTHORITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement

Prepared for:
Laois County Council



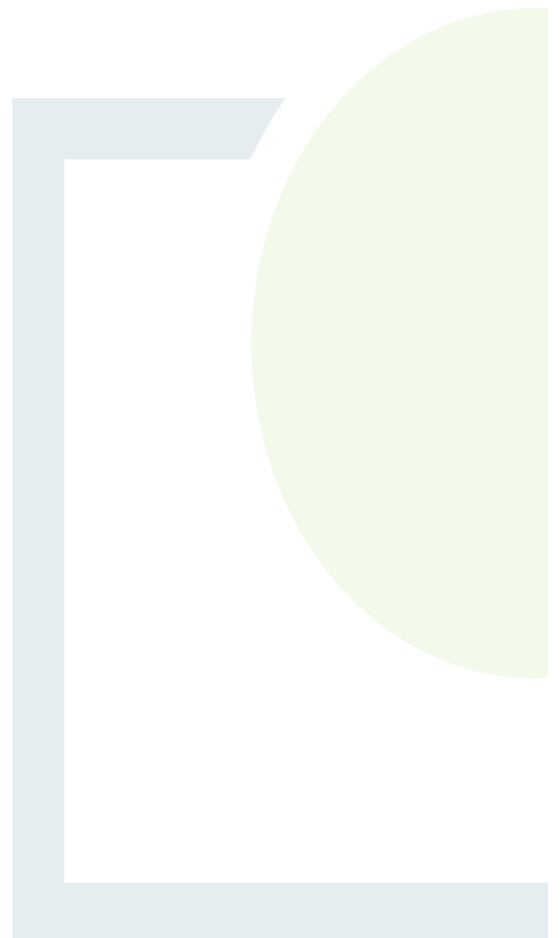
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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement for the Laois Local Authority Climate Action Plan to Laois for publication alongside the Plan. This Statement provided information on the decision in accordance with Article 16 of S.I. No. 435/2004 - European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (as amended).

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Laois County Council (LCC) have adopted the Laois Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) 2024 - 2029. This is the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement for the LACAP. This SEA Statement provides information on the following:

1. How Environmental Considerations were integrated into the LACAP.
2. How the SEA Environmental Report and consultation submissions and observations on it have been taken into account during the preparation of the LACAP
3. The reasons for choosing the LACAP as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives considered.
4. The measures decided concerning monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementation of the LACAP.

The EPA in their Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statements and Monitoring (2023) succinctly summarize the role SEA Statement have under the SEA process, as follows: *'SEA Statements have the potential to play a central role in summarising the effectiveness of the SEA process. They can capture how environmental considerations have shaped the plan/programme (e.g., through policy wordings, revisited zonings and other measures) and how the process has contributed to making the plan or programme more sustainable'*

1.2 Legislative Context

SEA is required under the EU Council Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (the SEA Directive)¹. The SEA Directive requires that an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The overarching objective of the SEA 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....with a view to promoting sustainable development'*²

SEA is described within the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government's (2004) Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities on the Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) as the *'formal systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme'*.

¹ Transposing Irish Regulations: S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011). S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

² Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment – Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004)



Article 16 of S.I. No. 435/2004 - European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (as amended) requires that a competent authority provide information on the decision to approve a Plan that has been subject to SEA. Article 16(2)(b) requires that a statement is produced summarized, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme subject to SEA.



2. HOW ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS WERE INTEGRATED INTO LOCAL AUTHORITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2024 - 2029

2.1 SEA Scoping

The first stage of the SEA process was to carry out SEA Screening to determine the requirement for SEA of the LACAP. It was determined the LACAP was a statutory Plan and had the potential to give rise to likely significant environmental effects and therefore SEA is required for the Plan.

The second stage of the SEA process was carrying out SEA Scoping. The purpose of SEA Scoping is to establish the spatial and temporal scope of the SEA and a decision-making framework that can be used to evaluate impacts of the LACAP. A SEA Scoping Report was produced to document the scoping process. The SEA Scoping Report outlined information on the emerging LACAP, including the need for the LACAP, its temporal and geographical area and overall objectives. It facilitated scoping the Environmental Components and understanding the environmental issues to be considered under the SEA process.

A copy of this report was made available to the statutory Environmental Authorities. Environmental Authorities made scoping submissions on the SEA Scoping Report. The SEA Scoping Report was finalized in light of these submissions. The SEA Scoping Report, along with SEA scoping consultation submissions and consideration of these submissions by the SEA process, helped communicate and define the scope of the environmental issues which are to be dealt with by the SEA, the methods which will be used to address these issues, and the level of detail required to address these issues, as per the SEA Guidelines³. Summary detail on the scoping consultation submissions received from Environmental Authorities and how these were taken into account during the SEA process is presented in Table 2-1.

³ Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2004), Page 18: "It is recommended that at the end of the scoping procedure, the plan-making authority should prepare a brief scoping report of its conclusions as to what information is to be included in the environmental report, taking account of any recommendations from the environmental authorities."



Table 2-1: Summary Detail on Scoping Consultation Submissions Received from Environmental Authorities

Environmental Authority	Summary on the Scoping Consultation Submission	How was this submission taken into account during the SEA?
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	<p>An overview on how climate resilience could be promoted in agriculture setting was provided (e.g., maintaining a fodder reserve, measures to promote biodiversity and carbon sequestration, measures to improve soil structure and function). An overview on invasive species risk associated with climate change and the need for appropriate need to promote resilience was provided</p>	<p>The content of this submission served to inform the focus of the environmental assessment of agriculture related action defined in the LACAP. It informed the nature and focus of mitigation measures defined for related climate mitigation and adaptation action defined in the LACAP. A number of Environmental Governance principles defined in the LACAP specifically reflect the recommendations contained in this submission.</p>
EPA	<p>An overview of the nature of climate change challenges was provided. The EPA acknowledged the nature, focus and goals of the emerging LACAP was made. It was advised the SEA should seek to maximize climate action co-benefits for air quality, human health, biodiversity, water quality and other interrelated areas (i.e. win-win solutions).</p> <p>Other measures advised on which were relevant to the SEA included: the need to consider the Plan influence on Greenhouse Gas (GHG emissions) the need to manage climate change influenced invasive species spread, the need to have regard to the receiving water quality and air quality environment during the plan-making process.</p> <p>In relation to the SEA specifically, commentary was provided on the approach to mitigation, and on how the plan should consider impacts on air and water quality, water resource, soils/geology, landscape and material assets.</p> <p>The EPA recommended integrating the environmental mitigation defined under the SEA into the Plan and advised on other interrelated plans and programmes to consider during plan-making and SEA processes.</p>	<p>The recommendation to ensure climate action defined in the Plan created co-benefits underpinned the SEA process and the defined mitigation measures. Where relevant, mitigation measures ultimately defined serve to holistically maximize environmental benefits. The promotion of climate action co-benefits is embedded into the Environmental Governance Principle framework defined for the Plan.</p> <p>Appropriate regard was had to the need to consider the climate change influenced invasive species spread. This was considered when shaping defined climate action and also within the Environmental Governance principle framework defined under the Plan.</p> <p>The receiving water and air quality environmental were appropriately considered and evaluated during the SEA process, in light of the EPA's commentary on baseline water quality and air quality data and information.</p> <p>The nature, focus and level of mitigation measures defined in the SEA Environmental Report were informed by the EPA's commentary. All mitigation measures defined were integrated into the Plan itself. The wording of climate action defined in the Plan was shaped having regard to relevant environmental considerations. A set of Environmental Governance Principles were included in the Plan.</p>
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications	<p>Background information on the Geological Survey of Ireland was provided initially in this submission. An overview of county level geoheritage and groundwater assets and databases were provided. Information was provided on geological, geotechnical, geothermal, natural resources, geochemistry and geophysical data sources.</p>	<p>Appropriate regard was had to these baseline geological and hydrogeological data sources and considerations during the preparation of the SEA Environmental Report for the LACAP.</p>



Environmental Authority	Summary on the Scoping Consultation Submission	How was this submission taken into account during the SEA?
	<p>Specific advice on geological/hydrogeological considerations that need to be taken into account during the making of the Plan was provided, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proposed developments need to consider any potential impact on specific groundwater abstractions and on groundwater resources in general. 2. Geohazards should be considered during the Plan-making and development processes. 3. Sustainable development of our natural resources should be an integral part of all development plans from a national to regional to local level to ensure that the materials required for our society are available when required. 	
<p>Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government</p>	<p>The Department welcomed various approaches to the SEA for the LACAP e.g. various SEOs defined for Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna; the proposal to carefully examine the impacts of linear projects on biodiversity; the proposal to consider potential for invasive species spread.</p> <p>The Department advised on other biodiversity related plans, policies, objective and guidelines (EU and national) to consider during the plan-making process.</p> <p>The Department made recommendations in relation to wording and focus of a number of Biodiversity related SEOs (promoting better alignment with the National Biodiversity Action Plan).</p> <p>The Department advised on various other impact assessment related matters, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The potential impact linear infrastructure, including active travel, greenway and green infrastructure projects, may have on biodiversity and the water environment. - The need to consider greenway impacts on biodiversity, flora and fauna during project design and planning. - The potential impact of development or activities that may cause nitrogen deposition. 	<p>All relevant biodiversity related plans, policies, objectives and guidelines were considered during the carrying out of the SEA.</p> <p>Biodiversity related SEOs have been updated and shaped to reflect the observations of the Department, where appropriate. For example, SEO B5 has been reworded to the following text - 'No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration in response to the biodiversity emergency' - which is more measurable and defined and incorporates the idea of compensation for negative impacts to biodiversity which is sometimes unavoidable. Similarly, SEO B4 was updated to consider potential effects of the Plan on non-designated locally important sites (the indicators and targets for this SEO were also updated appropriately).</p> <p>All advice with respect to the potential impacts of the LACAP was considered during the environmental assessment process. The need to assess and mitigate the effects of infrastructure including active travel, greenways and drainage works supported by the Plan was one aspect that underpinned the SEA. With the adoption of the proposed mitigation, including the Environmental Governance Principles, the LACAP does not support the carrying out of activity that would result in the nitrogen deposition. Climate action co-benefits including opportunities for utilizing naturebased solutions in development projects and for flood risk management were promoted through the environmental mitigation measures defined in the SEA and AA.</p>



Environmental Authority	Summary on the Scoping Consultation Submission	How was this submission taken into account during the SEA?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilizing Nature Based Solutions for the management of rainwater and surface water runoff. - Utilizing Nature Based Solutions to reduce flooding associated with river catchments, specifically the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. - The potential impact of increased drainage and river/bridge maintenance intensity on biodiversity and Annex IV species, in which any impact must be environmentally assessed. - The potential impact of increased drainage works in areas of managed carbon-rich soils on the air environment. <p>The Department advised that monitoring indicators should be linked back to environmental effects and proposed mitigation measures. They stated that 'SEA monitoring should reflect the nature and level of detail of the LACAP. Monitoring of local-level plans should focus on both local issues (e.g. habitat loss) and particular aspects of larger scale problems that are relevant to the LACAP area'.</p> <p>The Department provided advise on biodiversity management requirements relating to renewable energy development.</p> <p>The Department recommended clarifying and confirming some baseline biodiversity related information contained in the Scoping Report during the production of the SEA Environmental Report.</p> <p>They advised the Plan should be Screened for AA and subject to full AA if necessary. They also recommended consulting AA related guidelines, as appropriate. The also advise that the cumulative effects of the Plan should be considered in the SEA and AA.</p>	<p>The SEOs indicators and targets defined in the LACAP SEA Monitoring Programme were shaped to ensure they were appropriately reflective of potential environmental effects (positive and negative) that may arise in the local authority functional area due to the implementation of the Plan.</p> <p>The Plan was subject to AA Screening which determination full AA was required. Full AA was undertaken in parallel with the SEA (using an Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Approach). The suite of environmental mitigation measures defined for the Plan will also serve to prevent significant adverse effects on European sites.</p> <p>All advise in relation to the management of biodiversity when planning renewable energy development was considered and served to shape the renewable energy development related mitigation measures defined under the SEA and AA, including the Environmental Governance Principles.</p> <p>The cumulative environmental effects of the Plan were considered as appropriate during both the SEA and AA processes.</p>



2.2 Environmental Assessment and Mitigation

Taking into account the scope detailed in the SEA Scoping Report which was produced for the initial draft version on the LACAP, the environmental effects associated with the implementation of the LACAP were identified, evaluated and described in a SEA Environmental Report.

This report defined mitigation measures to prevent adverse environmental effects due to the implementation of the LACAP. The following forms of mitigation have been adopted to ameliorate the negative environments of the LACAP and maximize potential positive effects of the plan:

- Mitigation through consideration of alternatives.
- Mitigation through integration of environmental considerations into the LACAP.
- Mitigation through consideration of development management standards/environmental protection objectives contained in the CDP.

2.2.1 Mitigation through consideration of alternatives

A number of alternatives were considered at an early stage in the process. The environmental effects of these alternatives were evaluated during the SEA process. Detail on how Plan alternatives and their environmental effects were considered during plan-making is provided in Section 3.

2.2.2 Mitigation through integration of environmental considerations into the LACAP

The plan making process was carried out in parallel with the SEA and AA processes. Regular communication and interaction took place between the environmental assessment team and the plan making team. Environmental considerations that came to light during the SEA and AA processes, including consultation processes, were regularly communicated to the plan making team during the plan making process. As necessary, environmental mitigation measures to ameliorate the potential negative environmental effects of implementing the LACAP were developed and then integrated into the LACAP. Much of the environmental mitigation was embedded in the plan early on in the process as a result of this. This process was carried out in an iterative manner to ensure optimal plan making and environmental outcomes. Environmental considerations were also integrated into the plan so as to facilitate maximizing identified positive environmental effects of the LACAP.

Mitigation measures were suggested that maximize the co-benefits of climate action for other environmental components such local air quality, human health, biodiversity, water quality and other interrelated areas (i.e., win-win solutions).

Additional text clarifying environmental protection related obligations and environmental enhancement opportunities has been attached to a variety of defined actions in the plan. This text has been shaped to ensure that environmental considerations are appropriately taken into account during plan implementation. This text has also been shaped to ensure plan implementation generates the minimum level of negative environmental effects and the maximum level of positive environmental effects. These text additions are presented in Table 2-2.

Several environmental governance principles were established to ensure plan implementation generates the minimum level of negative environmental effects and the maximum level of positive environmental effects. These environmental governance principles shall underpin and guide plan implementation and shall apply to and be integrated into all actions/activities which result due to the implementation of the plan. These principles are defined in Table 2-3. The principles were incorporated into the plan itself.



These environmental mitigation measures were integrated into the LACAP and will prevent negative effects and maximize positive effects associated with the LACAP.

Table 2-2: Proposed Environmental Mitigation Measures - Additional text included in Plan actions relating to environmental protection related obligations and environmental enhancement opportunities

LACAP Action Reference	LACAP Action	Mitigation Measure
Countywide Actions		
23	Establish a baseline of derelict and vacant properties in prioritised locations under Town Centre First Programme and promote the redevelopment of same through engagement with the owners and use of legislative powers if required.	Establish a baseline of derelict and vacant properties in prioritised locations under Town Centre First Programme and promote the sustainable redevelopment of same through engagement with the owners and use of legislative powers if required.
28	Laois County Council will retrofit from its existing social housing and voids to a B2 standard, subject to the availability of national funding.	Laois County Council will retrofit from its existing social housing and voids to a B2 standard, subject to the availability of national funding; having due regard to all relevant environmental sensitivities, as appropriate.
32	Laois County Council will complete three Local Transport Plans for largest urban centres population over 5,000 in County Laois i.e. Portlaoise, Mountmellick and Portarlinton.	Laois County Council will complete three Local Transport Plans for largest urban centres population over 5,000 in County Laois i.e. Portlaoise, Mountmellick and Portarlinton - whilst having appropriate regard to environmental sensitivities and opportunities to promote climate action co-benefits.
34	By the year 2029, Laois County Council aims to transition a further 30% of its public lighting inventory to higher efficiency (lower energy) lighting sources and bringing the overall percentage of its public lighting stock using higher efficiency lighting sources to 94%.	By the year 2030, Laois County Council aims to transition 94% of its public lighting inventory to lower energy lighting sources having due regard to environmental sensitivities and bringing the overall percentage of its public lighting stock using higher efficiency lighting sources to 94%.
36	Considering the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will propose a real term increase of 1% per annum above inflation over the life of this plan for masonry bridge works.	Considering the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will propose a real term increase of 1% per annum above inflation over the life of this plan for masonry bridge works. During the execution of these works, the Council will continue to have due regard to the need to appropriately protect and conserve protected structures in accordance with relevant protected structures regulations, and the need to not negatively impinge on any protected species or European sites.
37	Laois County Council will continue to support the development of flood protection schemes in the towns of Mountmellick, Portarlinton and Clonaslee; these schemes will make these settlements more resilient to flooding.	Laois County Council will continue to support (subject to statutory processes and adherence to environmental standards) the development of OPW flood protection schemes in the towns of Mountmellick, Portarlinton and Clonaslee; these schemes will make these settlements more resilient to flooding.
38	In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will prepare a three-year forward plan for maintenance of river channels (together with	In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will prepare a three-year forward plan for river maintenance of river channels (together with associated bridges) under its jurisdiction every two years. This comprehensive maintenance plan will be subject to statutory procedures (including



LACAP Action Reference	LACAP Action	Mitigation Measure
	associated bridges) under its jurisdiction every two years. This comprehensive maintenance plan will be subject to its own Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures, recognizing the sensitivity of the sites involved.	Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures, if and as required) recognizing the sensitivity of the sites involved. The design process, the Plan, together with any statutory procedures will have due regard to environmental sensitivities such as the receiving water environment, biodiversity, European sites, protected species, local air quality, and cultural heritage including engagement with relevant statutory bodies as require.
39	In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will propose, in its annual budgets, a real term increase of 1% per annum above inflation over the life of this plan for river drainage maintenance works.	In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will propose, in its annual budgets, a real term increase of 1% per annum above inflation over the life of this plan for river drainage maintenance works. During the execution of these works, the Council will continue to have due regard to environmental sensitivities at these locations, including water quality, biodiversity, European sites, riparian corridors and aquatic ecology.
44	By 2027 at least one of Laois County Councils' HGV fleet will be upgraded to use either waste HVO or CNG to reduce CO2 emissions.	By 2027 at least one of Laois County Councils' HGV fleet will be upgraded to use either sustainably sourced waste HVO or CNG to reduce CO2 emissions.
46	Building on the experience of solar powered public lighting at Ballyfin, Laois County Council will pilot LED PV solar street lights at two further locations.	Building on the experience of solar powered public lighting at Ballyfin, Laois County Council will pilot LED PV solar street lights at two further locations; having due regard to environmental sensitivities.
48	Over the lifetime of this plan Laois County Council will carry out a Renewable Electricity Strategy (RES) for the County, based on revised national guidance.	Over the lifetime of this plan Laois County Council will carry out a Renewable Electricity Strategy (RES) for the County, based on revised national guidance. Such a strategy would be appropriately shaped by planning and environmental protection requirements associated with renewable energy development.
49	Laois County Council will conduct a feasibility study for Solar Farm at Kyletalesha landfill.	Laois County Council will conduct a feasibility study for Solar Farm at Kyletalesha landfill, ensuring this study has appropriate regard to planning and environmental protection considerations.
55	Laois County Council will pilot a Transport Mobility Hub at Portlaoise train station, evaluating its success, and conducting a feasibility assessment for potential expansion to other train stations in the County.	Laois County Council will pilot a Transport Mobility Hub at Portlaoise train station, evaluating its success, and conducting a feasibility assessment for potential expansion to other train stations in the County. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
58	Laois County Council will work with other agencies to assist the installation of designated bus cages, where bus pull in bays are unattainable; priority bus corridors in main towns where viable; bus hubs in main towns where feasible to allow for driver rest/comfort stops.	Laois County Council will work with other agencies to assist the installation of designated bus cages, where bus pull in bays are unattainable; priority bus corridors in main towns where viable; bus hubs in main towns where feasible to allow for driver rest/comfort stops. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
59	Laois County Council will continue engagement with, and support roll out of the Safe Routes to School Programme in conjunction with An Taisce.	Laois County Council will continue engagement with, and support roll out of the Safe Routes to School Programme in conjunction with An Taisce - Active travel developments will continue to be carried out in a manner that has due regard to environmental sensitivities (such as local human receptors, Biodiversity, European sites, water quality and hydrology, existing traffic and transport conditions and amenity value).



LACAP Action Reference	LACAP Action	Mitigation Measure
61	Laois County Council will examine suitable locations Park n Ride / Park n Stride facilities away from town centre locations	Laois County Council will examine suitable locations Park n Ride / Park n Stride facilities away from town centre locations. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
63	Laois County Council will formulate a Fleet Decarbonation Roadmap	LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL will formulate a Fleet Decarbonation Roadmap, to provide a "roadmap" to the sustainable decarbonisation of the fleet.
68	Laois County Council will carry out a review of older masonry bridges on upper stretches of rivers that may be impacted by increased scour due to the higher intensities of rainfall. It is acknowledged that such River maintenance plan will be subject to its own AA and SEA procedures given the sensitivity of the sites in question.	Laois County Council will carry out a review of older masonry bridges on upper stretches of rivers that may be impacted by increased scour due to the higher intensities of rainfall. It is acknowledged that any Plan arising from such a Review will be subject to statutory procedures (including Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures, if and as required) recognizing the sensitivity of the sites involved. Due regard will be given to environmental sensitivities such as the receiving water environment, biodiversity, European sites, protected species, local air quality, and cultural heritage within such a Plan.
69	Laois County Council will collaborate with neighbouring local authorities to develop a comprehensive Electric Vehicle (EV) charging strategy, ensuring a seamless and regionally integrated charging infrastructure to support the widespread adoption of electric vehicles.	Laois County Council will collaborate with neighbouring local authorities to develop a comprehensive Electric Vehicle (EV) charging strategy, ensuring a seamless and regionally integrated charging infrastructure to support the widespread adoption of electric vehicles, having due regard to environmental sensitivities (such as material assets, the receiving water environment, biodiversity, European sites, local air quality, and cultural heritage).
70	Laois County Council will develop a Tree Strategy to provide the vision and direction for long-term planning, planting, protection and maintenance of trees, hedgerows and woodlands within County Laois.	Laois County Council will develop a Tree Strategy to provide the vision and direction for long-term planning, planting, protection and maintenance of trees, hedgerows and woodlands within County Laois whilst taking measures to promote the use of native species over non-natives and having due regard for water quality and soil stability issues whilst undertaking the planning process.
72	Laois County Council will carry out shade related tree planting in 10 previously constructed housing estates, subject to need and local agreement.	Laois County Council will carry out shade-related tree planting in 10 previously constructed housing estates, subject to need and local agreement. There will be a commitment under this measure to plant native trees.
76	Laois County Council will develop and implement a good practice document for the reduction in use of chemical pesticides and herbicides lands and areas managed by the Council.	Laois County Council will develop and implement a good practice document for the reduction in use of chemical pesticides and herbicides lands and areas managed by the Council. Laois County Council will adopt defined good practice guide in the use of such products to reduce the risk of unintended adverse effects on the receiving environment.
91	Laois County Council will continue to support further education institutes in providing third level courses locally in County Laois.	Laois County Council will continue to support further education institutes in providing third level courses locally in County Laois whilst promoting and supporting the use of active travel a preferred means of transport to/from any further education institutions.
100	Laois County Council will pilot replicable, scalable demonstration projects during the lifetime of this plan (Community Climate Action Fund projects).	Laois County Council will pilot replicable, scalable demonstration projects during the lifetime of this plan (Community Climate Action Fund projects), Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.



LACAP Action Reference	LACAP Action	Mitigation Measure
111	Laois County Council will, in partnership, apply, over the period 2024-2026, for feasibility and eco tourism concept development through Just Transition Regenerative Tourism Fund	Laois County Council will, in partnership, apply, over the period 2024-2026, for feasibility and eco tourism concept development through Just Transition Regenerative Tourism Fund, while also promoting the need for such a project to consider environmental protection requirements and climate action co-benefit opportunities.
Decarbonisation Zone Actions		
2.12	Implement tree management strategies to maximize canopy cover in the area.	Implement tree management strategies to maximize canopy cover in the area with a focus on promoting native trees; having due regard to environmental sensitivities such as European sites and biodiversity.
2.10	Enhance the town's green infrastructure to bolster biodiversity.	Enhance the town's green infrastructure to bolster biodiversity. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
3.1	Develop a Playful School Active Travel Zone to promote safe and active commuting.	Develop a Playful School Active Travel Zone to promote safe and active commuting. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
3.5	Progress with Phases 2 and 3 of the Triogue Way project.	Progress with Phases 2 and 3 of the Triogue Way project. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
3.9	Implement Local Transport Plan to improve active travel infrastructure, road safety and modal shift to sustainable transport option	Implement Local Transport Plan to improve active travel infrastructure, road safety and modal shift to sustainable transport option; Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
3.12	Identify and construct new cycle and pedestrian routes, including Tyrrells-Borris Rd-Dublin Rd via HSE lands at St. Fintan's, connecting to Block Rd.	Identify and construct new cycle and pedestrian routes, including Tyrrells-Borris Rd-Dublin Rd via HSE lands at St. Fintan's, connecting to Block Rd. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
3.14	Provide protected cycle lanes to ensure cyclist safety.	Provide protected cycle lanes to ensure cyclist safety. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
3.15	Develop a program to upgrade roundabouts, giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles.	Develop a program to upgrade roundabouts, giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
3.16	Enhance bus service infrastructure by establishing a bus terminal and related facilities.	Enhance bus service infrastructure by establishing a bus terminal and related facilities; whilst promoting adherence to planning and environmental protection requirements, where appropriate.
3.17	Create park and ride/stride designated sites linked with bike rental locations.	Create park and ride/stride designated sites linked with bike rental locations. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
3.18	Install EV chargers and mobility hubs at the Train station to promote electric vehicle use.	Install EV chargers and mobility hubs at the Train station to promote electric vehicle use. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
3.21	Support the development of EV charging points throughout the town.	Support the development of EV charging points throughout the town, having due regard to planning and environmental protection requirements, as normal, and available grid capacity.



LACAP Action Reference	LACAP Action	Mitigation Measure
4.7	Facilitate a District Heating Feasibility Study to investigate effective heating solutions.	Facilitate a District Heating Feasibility Study to investigate effective heating solutions, ensuring the study has appropriate regard to planning and environmental protection constraints and considerations.
4.9	Develop office hubs and co-working spaces in Portlaoise to facilitate remote working and reduce commuting.	Develop office hubs and co-working spaces in Portlaoise to facilitate remote working and reduce commuting. Development supported by this action will, as normal, be carried out in line with planning and environmental protection requirements.
4.10	Upgrade all public lighting to energy-efficient LED technology.	Upgrade all public lighting to energy-efficient LED technology, having due regard to environmental sensitivities

Table 2-3: Proposed Environmental Mitigation Measures - Environmental Governance Principles included in the plan

Support the National Climate Action Plan (which itself supports international climate obligations) in a manner which will assist in addressing the causes of climate change the impacts of which affect humans, flora, fauna, habitats, heritage and the broader environment.
Support the National Climate Action Plan (which itself supports international climate obligations) in addressing the local impacts of climate change which has the potential to impact humans, flora, fauna, habitats, heritage and the broader environment.
Within the context of the range of Plans, Strategies and similar documents produced by the Council, to further provide for environmentally positive measures within the actions undertaken pursuant to this plan.
Promote climate action projects that support habitats such as protected trees, hedgerows wetlands, flood zones which contribute to green infrastructure.
In the context of advancing climate action, to support opportunities to improve ecological connectivity of non-designated habitats and sites to improve overall ecosystem resilience and functioning
To support community led projects (such as Abbeyleix Bog Project) which support peatland restoration, rehabilitation and maintenance and similar carbon improvement projects.
Within the context of European, National and Regional policy instruments (such as the Water Framework Directive, River Basin Management and similar) to seek to have co-benefits with such instruments within the actions arising from this plan
Within areas such as biodiversity protection and enhancement; improved air, water or soil quality; or enhanced recreation, amenity and cultural heritage value to seek to have co-benefits with such areas within the actions arising from this plan
That developments by the Council and their partners continue to have regard to the potential for potential environmental impacts and environmental protection requirements.
Having regard to climate change potentially affecting the rate of spread of invasive species, to continue within the Council's own infrastructural projects to take precautions and carry out the appropriate management to avoid spreading invasive species, particularly in regard to Schedule III species.

2.2.3 Mitigation through consideration of development management standards/environmental protection objectives contained in the CDP

In addition to the environmental mitigation measures integrated into the LACAP, the development management standards and environmental protection measures defined in the CDP will serve to mitigate the environmental effects of any development proposals supported by the LACAP. These development management standards/environmental protection measures have been defined for the express purpose of ensuring proper planning and sustainable development in the County. The CDP has been subject to its own SEA and AA. The LACAP has been prepared having appropriate regard to the policies and objectives contained in the County Development Plan.



2.3 Appropriate Assessment

The environmental assessment for the Plan undertaken was carried out in accordance with an Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment based methodology in accordance with EPA's guidance document entitled '*Final Report: Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment, Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes. Best Practice Guidance.*' (2012).

The methodology employed facilitated the integration of SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) processes relating to biodiversity impact assessment to ensure the effective and streamlined assessment of biodiversity impacts. The plan-making, SEA and AA processes - including scoping, baseline evaluation, impact assessment and mitigation/monitoring measure development processes - were carried out concurrently to facilitate holistic and complete assessment of biodiversity impacts. The effective communication and integration of scientific knowledge and analysis between assessments took place. The SEA was suitably informed by the analysis and conclusions in AA.

2.4 Consultation on SEA Environmental Report

A draft version of the SEA Environmental Report accompanied a draft version of the LACAP on public display as part of the statutory public consultation required under Article 13 of S.I. No. 435/2004 - European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004. A draft version of the Natura Impact Report (NIR) produced under the AA process for the Draft LACAP also accompanied the Draft LACAP on public display. Environmental Authorities, relevant interested stakeholder and members of the public were notified of the Draft LACAP being placed on display and the opportunity to make consultation submissions in relation to the Draft LACAP. Members of public were made aware of the Draft LACAP and associated environmental reports through a notification published by the local authority on its website. Environmental Authorities and interested stakeholders were notified through notification correspondence.

Various parties made consultation submissions and observations on the Draft LACAP and associated environmental reports. Detail on submissions received relevant to SEA and AA issues and documentation, responses to these submissions, and any changes made to SEA Environmental Report (ER) and NIR documents on foot of these submissions, is provided in Table 2-4. Updates were made to the SEA and AA documentation where relevant following on from receipt and consideration of the consultation submissions.



Table 2-4: Responses to Consultation Submissions

Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
EPA	<p>You should also consider taking into account the EPA’s ‘Climate Change in the Irish Mind’ project in finalising the Plan. This research is part of the National Dialogue on Climate Action.</p> <p>We suggest that the Plan include a specific action to carry out “implementation monitoring” to ensure that progress achieving the actions and measures across the Plan is being monitored and reported on. The SEA should also assist in identifying ways to maximise the potential co-benefits of climate-related measures for air quality, human health, biodiversity, water quality and other interrelated areas (i.e. win-win solutions)</p>	<p>Noted and agreed. It was noted that the SEA Environmental Report (ER) has defined Environmental Governance Principles and action amendment suggestions to ensure climate action co-benefit opportunities are maximized. Various defined mitigation measures serve to promote win-win solutions. The SEA Monitoring Programme established for the LACAP is contained in the SEA ER. This monitoring programme was developed in accordance with EPA guidelines entitled 'Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring' (2020).</p> <p>The monitoring programme is multi-facetted, broad in scope and has been designed to allow for a flexible and adaptive approach to SEA monitoring during Plan implementation.</p> <p>The SEA monitoring is a statutory obligation which does not have to be called out within the plan.</p>	None.	None.
	<p>We recommend that the findings of the SEA ER and NIS are fully reflected in the Plan, to ensure that the relevant recommendations are fully considered and integrated as appropriate.</p>	<p>Noted and agreed. Environmental mitigation measures in the form of Environmental Governance Principles and climate action amendment suggestions were fully integrated into the Plan itself.</p>	None	None
	<p>Environmental Authorities Under the SEA Regulations, you should consult with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Protection Agency; • Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage; • Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications; • Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. <p>If you have any queries or need further information in relation to this submission, please contact me directly at c.omahony@epa.ie. I would be grateful if you could send an email confirming receipt of this submission to: sea@epa.ie.</p>	<p>Noted. All listed Environmental Authorities were consulted with as part of the SEA process.</p> <p>It was recommended the Council confirm receipt of this submission with Cian O’ Mahony, if this wasn’t done already.</p>	None	None
	<p>Non-Technical Summary</p> <p>You should ensure that the Non Technical Summary includes the relevant information as required under Schedule 2 of S.I No. 434 Of 2004, as amended.</p>	<p>It was assumed that SI No. 434 is a typo and SI No. 435 is what was intended to be addressed with this statement.</p> <p>The requirements of Schedule 2 of SI No 435 were noted and amendments to the NTS were made as appropriate.</p>	None	Updated the NTS to reflect the relevant information as required under Schedule 2 of SI No 435 of 2004 as amended.



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	<p>Relationship with other plans and programmes</p> <p>We acknowledge that the Plan has been prepared taking account of the key National plans including the National Climate Action Plan 2023. We also acknowledge that the Plan sets out the key plans, programmes and policies considered in preparing the SEA. The Plan should include a commitment to remain aligned with high level plans and programmes, Guidelines, and legislation over its lifetime. The Climate Action Plan 2024 is currently being prepared and work will be commencing on the review of the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies also. Any relevant updates of these plans/strategies should be integrated as appropriate into the Plan as relevant and appropriate.</p> <p>The Plan should include a commitment to consider any relevant updated actions, measures or recommendations that may arise in updates to the National Climate Action Plan (or the National Planning Framework) over the lifetime of the Plan.</p>	<p>Noted and agreed. It was noted that this is in reference to the LACAP and not the SEA ER or AA NIR documentation.</p> <p>It was recommended the Council includes a commitment in the Plan to remain aligned with high level plans and programmes if this isn't the case already.</p> <p>It was recommended the plan includes a commitment in the Plan to consider and appropriately integrate relevant updates to the national Climate Action Plan and National Planning Framework over the lifetime of the Plan.</p>	None	None
	<p>Strategic Environmental Objectives</p> <p>We recommend that in considering strategic environmental objectives, they should where possible reflect the plan being prepared, rather than use more generic environmental objectives. This will help both in considering more specific monitoring and mitigation measures, when required.</p>	<p>Noted. The Strategic Environmental Objectives defined have been very specifically defined to reflect the themes, goals, objectives and climate action contained in the plan and in light of the potential environmental effects associated with Plan implementation.</p>	None	None
	<p>Alternatives</p> <p>We note the alternatives considered in the SEA and acknowledge the preferred option selected.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	None	None.
	<p>Mitigation Measures</p> <p>Where the potential for likely significant effects has been identified, you should provide appropriate mitigation measures to avoid or minimise these. You should also ensure that the Plan includes clear commitments to implement the relevant mitigation measures.</p>	<p>The SEA produced recommended a suite of mitigation measures in response to climate actions considered to have potentially significant environmental effects.</p> <p>Environmental Governance Principles were defined for the purpose of underpinning and framing the defined climate actions.</p> <p>All activities and development supported by the defined climate actions shall be undertaken or influenced by the local authority, as appropriate, in accordance with these Environmental Governance Principles.</p>	None	None.



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
		<p>Mitigation has also been achieved by the integration of environmental considerations into the defined LACAP climate actions.</p> <p>These mitigation measures have been wholly integrated into the LACAPs.</p> <p>Section 8 of the SEA ER provides full detail of these environmental mitigation measures.</p> <p>It was recommended the Plan provides a clear commitment to implement these mitigation measures, if this wasn't the case already.</p>		
	<p>Monitoring, Implementation & Reporting</p> <p>The Monitoring Programme should be flexible to take account of specific environmental issues and unforeseen adverse impacts should they arise. It should consider and deal with the possibility of cumulative effects. Monitoring of both positive and negative effects should be considered. The monitoring programme should set out the various data sources, monitoring frequencies and responsibilities. If the monitoring identifies adverse impacts during the implementation of the Plan, you should ensure that suitable and effective remedial action is taken. Guidance on SEA-related monitoring is available on the EPA website at https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategicenvironmental-assessment/06695-EPA-SEA-Statements-and-Monitoring-Report.pdf</p>	<p>The SEA Monitoring Programme established for the LACAP is contained in the SEA ER. This monitoring programme was developed in accordance with EPA guidelines entitled 'Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring' (2020).</p> <p>The monitoring programme is multi-faceted, broad in scope and was designed to allow for a flexible and adaptive approach to SEA monitoring during Plan implementation.</p> <p>The monitoring programme was designed to inherently measure cumulative effects that may arise due to the implementation of the Plan.</p> <p>This plan considers both positive and negative effects, as per the following statement from the SEA text:</p> <p>'Where monitoring identifies that the implementation of the LACAP is having a significant negative environmental effect, an in-depth review of the LACAP should take place and the LACAP should be updated in a manner that satisfactorily mitigates these environmental effects (i.e., through the adoption of additional environmental mitigation measures.). Similarly, where monitoring indicates that potential positive environmental effects associated with LACAP implementation are not being adequately realized, the LACAP should be reviewed and updated in a manner that supports the realization of all potential positive environmental effects, having regard to the overall vision and high-level objectives of the plan.'</p> <p>It was noted however that additional opportunities exist in relation to monitoring the positive environmental effects of defined climate action.</p>	None	<p>Updated the SEA monitoring programme to ensure SEOs accommodate the monitoring of positive effects arising due to plan implementation.</p> <p>Provided additional detail on monitoring programme data sources</p>



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
		<p>The SEA monitoring programme was updated to ensure more SEOs accommodate the monitoring of positive effects arising due to plan implementation, as appropriate.</p> <p>The monitoring programme includes detail on the indicators, targets and data sources to be used to monitor and measure progress. Some additional detail on data sources has however been provided to better guide the SEA monitoring to be carried out across plan implementation.</p> <p>A commitment to remedial action in the event of SEA monitoring shows the implementation of the Plan is having adverse environmental effects was made in the SEA.</p>		
	<p>EPA State of the Environment Report</p> <p>Our State of Environment Report, Ireland’s Environment - An Integrated Assessment 2020 (SOER2020) identifies thirteen ‘Key Messages for Ireland’. Delivering Ireland’s long-term sustainable development and environmental objectives will involve many different stakeholders to address these key actions. The report recognises the need for full implementation of existing environmental legislation and review of governance/coordination on environmental protection across public bodies. The EPA are currently preparing the next iteration of the SOER report, which will be published in 2024. We recommend that a commitment is made in the Plan, to take account of any relevant recommendations in the SOER 2024 report, once published, in implementing the Plan over its lifetime.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>It was recommended the Council make a commitment to take account of any relevant recommendations in the SOER 2024 report, once published, in implementing the Plan over its lifetime.</p>	None	None
	<p>SEA Statement – “Information on the Decision”</p> <p>Once the Plan is adopted, you should prepare an SEA Statement that summarises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan; • How the Environmental Report, submissions, observations and consultations have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan; • The reasons for choosing the Plan adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and, • The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Plan. 	<p>Noted. An SEA statement is produced and circulated to any environmental authority consulted during the SEA process.</p>	None	None



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	You should send a copy of the SEA Statement with the above information to any environmental authority consulted during the SEA process.			
	Future Amendments to the Plan You should screen any future amendments to the Plan for likely significant effects, using the same method of assessment applied in the “environmental assessment” of the Plan	Noted.	None	None
Sea Fisheries coordination DAFM	Ireland’s seafood industry (fishing and aquaculture) is one of the key stakeholders operating in the marine area and plays a vital role in the sustainability of our coastal communities. Over 15,000 people are employed around our coast both directly and indirectly. Many of these communities have very limited alternative employment and economic activity options. It is therefore essential that the socio-economic reliance on the seafood sector is fully recognised and is factored into any Climate Change Action plan. Fishing and food security is as key a part of Government Policy. Food Vision 2030 recognises and values the role of primary food producers.	Noted. It was noted that Laois is a non-coastal county.	None	None
	The Seafood industry is experiencing a period of difficult change, arising from the ongoing consequences of the EU UK Trade and Co-operation agreement which are specific and impactful on Ireland’s seafood sector. There is now ever-increasing demand on the marine space from Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE), Marine Spatial Planning, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and other environmental measures.	Noted. It was noted that defined Climate Action in Laois’ LACAP does not promote or support marine development. The county is non-coastal.	None	None
	Our coastal communities and maritime sectors will continue to play a significant role in contributing to our climate goals and will continue to be consulted and supported in the transition to carbon neutrality. The seafood industry, through both the Sectoral Adaptation Plan (Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan) and the annual Climate Action Plan (CAP23) continue to support initiatives to improve understanding of our marine area and ensure sustainable resource use, including through bio and circular economy initiatives. These plans require consideration in the SEA process.	The National Climate Action Plan (2023) and Sectoral Adaptation Plans was considered in the SEA Process. The relationship of the Plan with other relevant Plans and Programmes was defined in Appendix 1 of the SEA. Inter-plan cumulative effects were evaluated in Section 7 of the SEA ER.	None	None



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	<p>Also for consideration in the SEA process is the European Commission’s Communication on the energy transition of the fisheries and aquaculture sector as part of its Fisheries Policy Package. This proposes the establishment of an Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) to develop a roadmap for the energy transition of the sector towards climate neutrality by 2050. The roadmap will set out investment needs, sector initiatives and inform policy decisions to help achieve this transition. The ETP is a multi-stakeholder platform intended to promote co-operation, knowledge sharing and dialogue between private and public stakeholders in order to accelerate the energy transition in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. This Partnership will help to shape the development of future transitional actions for Ireland’s seafood sector. Local authorities should include relevant steps to support a Just Transition for the sea fisheries and aquaculture sectors in their Climate Action Plans.</p>	<p>It was noted that Laois is a non-coastal which does not have a seafood sector.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage</p>	<p>The Heritage Division of the Department (National Monuments Service and National Built Heritage Service) is engaged with the local authorities through the departmental Climate Change Advisory Group and established Working Groups to ensure a consistent approach to protection and adaptation of heritage assets across the country and an alignment of policies, plans and actions across national, regional and local climate action. The Department anticipates ongoing engagement with the local authorities throughout the implementation of current and future sectoral adaptation plans.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>
	<p>In the preparation and implementation of the local authority adaptation strategy, there are a number of issues regarding protection of built and archaeological heritage that we recommend be taken into account to identify the heritage assets at risk in its area, assess their vulnerability to climate change, increase their resilience and develop disaster risk reduction policies for direct and indirect risks. For example, it is recommended that the strategies should consider:</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	Identifying the built and archaeological heritage assets in the local authority area including, but not restricted to, structures and sites subject to statutory protection under the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014, or the Planning and Development Acts;	The SEA scoping report and SEA Environmental Report identified the built and archaeological heritage assets in the LA including structures and sites subject to statutory protection under the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014, and the Planning and Development Act (as amended). Exhaustive detail on built and archaeological heritage is held on record by the local authority and provided in the Country Development Plan already.	None.	None.
	Including objectives to carry out climate change risk assessments, including condition assessments, for the historic structures and sites in its area;	It was recommended the local authority consider including a specific action to conduct climate change risk assessments of heritage assets within its remit.	None.	None.
	Including objectives to develop disaster-risk reduction policies addressing direct and indirect risks to the built and archaeological heritage in its area;	Noted. The Plan defines actions that will serve to minimize and manage climate related disaster risk (e.g., flood risk) generally. It was recommended the local authority consider developing actions specific to the mitigation of risk to built and heritage assets within its remit, as appropriate.	None.	None.
	Including objectives to develop resilience and adaptation strategies for the built and archaeological heritage in its area;	Noted. The Plan defines actions that will serve to minimize and manage climate related disaster risk (e.g., flood risk) generally. It was recommended the local authority consider developing actions specific to the mitigation of risk to built and heritage assets within its remit, as appropriate.	None.	None.
	Developing the skills capacity within the local authority to address adaptation / mitigation / emergency management issues affecting heritage assets in order to avoid inadvertent loss or damage in the course of climate change adaptation or mitigation works.	Noted. It was recommended that the local authority consider this as appropriate.	None.	None.
	DHLGH will shortly be publishing a new guidance document Improving Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings. This guidance will assist retrofitting installers and specifiers in how best to choose and apply energy efficiency measures to the historic building stock. The guidance is also intended to assist building owners and occupants in making decisions about upgrading their buildings, many of which are of architectural heritage significance. It is recommended that all proposed retrofitting projects undertaken or supported by the local authority to buildings of traditional construction should follow the principles and practice set out in that guidance.	Noted. It was recommended that the local authority consider this as appropriate. The SEA Environmental Report has defined mitigation measures within the plan to ensure that any retrofitting of buildings including protected structures is carried out in a manner that doesn't impinge on built heritage or protected structures.	None.	None.



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	<p><u>Nature Conservation</u> Matters relating to the Draft Climate Action Plan 2024-2029: The following observations are made by the Department in its role as a statutory authority with overarching responsibility for nature conservation and the nature directives (i.e. the Bird Directive (2009/147/EC) and Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)). Specifically, the Department would like to make observations in relation to the following Built Environment / Transport climate adaptation actions:</p>	Noted.	None.	None.
	<p>Action 37: In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will propose, in its annual budgets, a real term increase of 1% per annum above inflation over the life of this plan for river drainage works. During the execution of these works, the Council will continue to have due regard to environmental sensitivities at these locations, including water quality, biodiversity, European sites, riparian corridors and aquatic ecology. o Tracking measure: budget allocated o Lead Department: Roads</p>	Noted.	None.	None.
	<p>Action 39: In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will prepare a three-year forward plan for river maintenance of river channels (together with associated bridges) under its jurisdiction every two years. This comprehensive maintenance plan will be subject to statutory procedures (including Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures, if and as required) recognising the sensitivity of the sites involved. The design process, the Plan, together with any statutory procedures will have due regard to environmental sensitivities such as the receiving water environment, biodiversity, European sites, protected species, local air quality, and cultural heritage. • Tracking measure: metres of river maintained • Lead Department: Roads</p>	Noted.	None.	None.



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	<p>Drainage Districts are areas where drainage schemes were constructed under the Arterial Drainage Acts for agricultural purposes. The statutory duty for maintaining these schemes, that include 4,600km of river channel nationwide, rests with the Local Authorities, and is funded by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.</p> <p>The Local Authorities of Laois, Kildare and Offaly (formerly acting through the joint committee known as the Barrow Drainage Board (established under the Barrow Drainage Acts 1927 and 1933)) are responsible for maintaining arterial drainage within the River Barrow and its tributaries from its source in the Slieve Bloom mountains in Co. Laois to the Horse Bridge in Athy, Co. Kildare. As a result, the River Barrow and its tributaries have been heavily modified and channelised. Arterial drainage involves straightening and deepening the natural channel to create a larger, more efficient cross-section that will contain flood flows without over-spill onto the floodplain – reducing natural floodplain connectivity. It also alters natural river flow and can give rise to the accumulation of sediment, often leading to substantial vegetation growth in-stream. This, in turn, can lead to a cycle of repeat maintenance and of repeat vegetation growth</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>
	<p>The historical aim of the Barrow Drainage District Scheme was to improve land for agriculture and not to protect the built environment / transport infrastructure from fluvial flooding. In accordance with statutory guidance on development of LACAPs, this plan must be evidence-based. Therefore, the Department advises that evidence must be provided showing that all of the proposed drainage is required for the primary purpose of reducing the impact fluvial flooding on transport infrastructure/ build environment.</p> <p>This could include historical evidence of impacts of fluvial flooding on transport infrastructure/ build environment, excluding areas proposed for Flood Relief Schemes by the OPW. Evidence should also be provided that despite the significant threat of ecological damage outlined below, all such drainage is justified due to the level of risk to the built environment / transport infrastructure from fluvial flooding.</p>	<p>Noted. The Laois LACAP defines Climate Adaptation Action at Plan level. No specific river drainage works or river maintenance projects were defined under the Plan. It was recommended Laois County Council provide evidence that all river drainage works or river maintenance projects being progressed at project level are required for the primary purpose of addressing flood risk, prior to the carrying out of such projects.</p> <p>It was noted the following action had been defined to assist with building an evidence base for flood risk measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 40 - Laois County Council will implement the use of a flood and incident recording system, such as WIRE app or similar, to enhance real-time data collection, reporting, and monitoring of flood events and incidents. 	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	<p><u>Conflict with European and National Legislation:</u></p> <p>The River Barrow and its tributaries are designated as part of the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation and is part of the European-wide Natura 2000 network. The SAC is protected under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 – 2021. Natura 2000 sites are important, not only for their scientific significance, but for the natural ecosystem services they provide and the economic activities that they support. Inappropriate dredging of rivers or streams, while well intentioned, could cause severe damage to elements of river ecology, including salmon spawning grounds and freshwater fisheries, which are protected under the Directive within this SAC. This, in turn, could harm the angling industry and undermine local tourism.</p>	Noted.	None.	None.
	<p>A conservation objective target for salmon within the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, is that Conservation Limit (CL) for each system is consistently exceeded (i.e. adult spawning salmon numbers consistently exceed the Conservation Limit on the system). Unfortunately, the Barrow has consistently failed to even reach 50% of the Conservation Limit Figure for decades and in recent years the percentage figure has been in the teens only. Physical alteration of waterbodies is listed as a pressure and threat of high importance for salmon and the overall Conservation Status of Atlantic salmon is Inadequate. Additionally, the following qualifying interest species and habitats, likely to occur within the zone of influence of the drainage works, have bad, inadequate or unknown conservation status nationally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White-clawed crayfish (Conservation status = Bad) • River Lamprey (Conservation status = Unknown) • Sea Lamprey (Conservation status = Bad) • Desmoulin's whorl snail (Conservation status = Inadequate) • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculus fluitantis and • Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation (Conservation status = Unfavourable Inadequate) 	Noted.	None.	None.



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels (Conservation status = Bad) Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) (Conservation status = Inadequate) Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) (Conservation status = Unfavourable-Bad) 			
	<p>Ireland has obligations under the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Habitats Directive to manage the physical condition of all natural and artificial waters in order to protect and improve their status. Overall, hydromorphological pressures are the second most significant category of pressures on our waters as identified in the Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022 - 2027. They impact by causing damage to natural processes and to the structure and functions of habitats and species. Conventional engineering responses to meteorological disturbance, such as increasing arterial drainage, will amplify the effect on river biota by reducing their ecological resilience, highlighting the need for a management response that integrates ecological and societal benefits simultaneously</p>	Noted.	None.	None.
	<p>The Local Authority Climate Action Plan is a key instrument that strengthens the links between national and international climate policy and the delivery of effective climate action at local and community levels, through place-based climate action. The Department recommends that Actions 37 and 39 are screened for maladaptation impacts. Maladaptation is defined by the IPCC as “a negative outcome that arises not only from inadvertent badly planned adaptation actions, but also from a deliberate decision where wider considerations place greater emphasis on short-term outcomes ahead of longer-term threats, or that discount, or fail to consider, the full range of interactions arising from the planned actions.” This is in line with Objective 4.1 of the Biodiversity Sectoral Adaptation Plan which states ‘All relevant sectors to consider nature based solutions as potential low cost win-win climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions, screen for maladaptation and report on relevant action as part of the review of this and other sectoral adaptation strategies’.</p>	<p>Unintended, adverse environmental effects associated with Actions 37 and 39 were comprehensively identified and evaluated under Appendix 3.2 – Detailed Evaluation of Environmental Effects - SEA Environmental Report and also the Natura Impact Report produced for the LACAP. Appropriate plan level mitigation measures were defined to prevent potential adverse environmental effects associated with the implementation. A set of Environmental Governance Principles were defined which will serve to underpin and guide all activities and development supported by plan action. Further, an environmental protection framework for Flood Risk Management activities were provided for in the Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (See Flood Risk Management Policy Objective 9 – ‘Ensure that where flood risk management works take place that the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams and watercourses are protected and enhanced.’ The Laois CDP was subject to SEA and AA.</p>	None.	None.



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	<p>As outlined in the Department’s comments at SEA scoping stage, increased river drainage works in areas of managed carbon-rich soils in County Laois could lead to increased CO2 emissions. IPCC guidelines indicate that drained organic soils can emit 5.3 tonnes C/ha per year</p>			
	<p>Increasing drainage in such areas may not align with the Climate Action Plan 2023 which aims to reduce the management intensity of at least 80,000 ha of drained, agricultural, managed, carbon-rich soils by 2030. The Climate Action Plan states that ‘Reducing the management intensity of drained, agricultural, managed carbon-rich soils offers significant potential for reducing the carbon dioxide emissions from the land-use sector. There are also co-benefits in terms of improved water quality, increased biodiversity, and enhanced resilience to changing weather patterns.’</p> <p>There are opportunities to reduce drainage intensity or even restore rivers, particularly in areas where intact but degraded raised bogs and Bord na Móna cutaway bog complexes are being fully restored/rewetted, which should be explored. These would be very appropriate climate mitigation actions for the climate impacts of any arterial drainage of peat soils carried out by Laois Co. Co. as part of the River Barrow Drainage District Scheme in the past.</p>	<p>All Plan action is underpinned by a set of Environmental Governance Principles, which align with the national Climate Action Plan and promote climate action co-benefits, including carbon sequestration opportunities.</p> <p>Environmental Governance Principle EG C.4 is expressly supportive of peatland restoration, rehabilitation and maintenance and carbon improvement projects generally. The framework of plan action as defined appropriately balances the need for climate change induced flood risk management activities, carbon sequestration potential and opportunities, and environmental protection.</p>	None.	None.
	<p>Nature-based Catchment Management Solutions:</p> <p>The Department recommends that Laois County Council should work in conjunction with the OPW and EPA, as well as LAWPRO and Inland Fisheries Ireland to identify Nature-based Catchment Management Solutions to reduce flooding impacts to Transport Infrastructure/ Built Environment associated with these river catchments as an alternative to river drainage. Such solutions aim to protect water resources and reduce flood risk by restoring or maintaining ecosystems, natural features and characteristics of water bodies using natural means and processes. They also offer a wide range of other benefits including water quality improvement, habitat creation and climate change adaptation and mitigation and would likely assist the Department in achieving the SAC’s conservation objectives.</p>	<p>Noted. It was recommended Laois County Council consider including an action to engage with these bodies in relation to catchment management within its remit.</p>	None.	None.



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	<p>National and international research has shown that slowing the flow of rivers and implementing nature-based solutions in upper catchment areas are effective measures in reducing the extent of flood risks in lower catchment areas and increasing catchment resilience. The proposed maintenance as outlined in Actions 37 and 39 run contrary to this approach by increasing the rate of water conveyance through the straightened and drained channels upstream, thus delivering the water more quickly to the lower lying areas downstream. In this regard, Laois County Council should consider the unintended consequences of increasing flooding impacts in the downstream counties and consult with these Local Authorities in relation to the proposed increased drainage works.</p>	<p>All river drainage works and river maintenance projects will be carried out having appropriate regard to environmental sensitivities, including hydrological considerations, and in accordance with a defined set of Environmental Governance Principles which underpin Plan action and serve to promote climate action co-benefits and environmental protection.</p> <p>Environmental Governance Principle EG-C.2 is expressly supportive of utilizing nature-based solutions to achieve Plan goals, including flood risk management related goals.</p> <p>Further, all flood risk management activities supported by Plan action will take place in accordance with defined Flood Risk Policy Objective defined in the Laois CDP. The Policy Objective FRM 7 in the Laois CDP expressly supports utilizing nature based solutions to manage flood risk.</p> <p>FRM7 - Protect and enhance the County's floodplains and wetlands as 'green infrastructure' which provides space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, enabling flood risk to be more effectively managed and reducing the need to provide flood defences in the future, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria</p> <p>The Laois CDP was subject to SEA and AA.</p>	None.	None.
	<p>As advised in the Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan, a cost benefit analysis of employing nature-based solutions should always be undertaken before any major operations such as arterial drainage works are embarked on.</p>	<p>Noted. It was recommended Laois County Council consider this in advance of designing and planning major arterial drainage works, as appropriate.</p>	None.	None.
	<p>Matters related to Strategic Environmental Assessment: This section of the submission is made in the context of this Department's role as an environmental authority under SEA legislation. The SEA Environmental Report states that the evaluation is strategic and high level in nature given the strategic nature of the Draft LACAP. The Department considers that the only opportunity to assess the proposed drainage as outlined in ACTION 37 and 39 in its totality at a strategic level is as part of the SEA.</p>	<p>No specific river drainage works or river maintenance projects were defined under the Plan. The effects of Action 37 and 39 were adequately assessed under the SEA and AA at plan level. Appropriate plan level mitigation were defined for these actions.</p> <p>Under Action 39, Laois County Council propose developing a comprehensive River Maintenance Plan and have noted that this plan, which will include more specific detail on maintenance activities and the location of such activities, will be subject to its own SEA and AA.</p>	None.	None.



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	<p>Both the SEA ER and Plan should include the details along with a specific description of what maintenance activities will be undertaken in what river channels under its jurisdiction for the duration of the plan (5 years) and the impacts of all drainage works in their entirety must be assessed as part of SEA.</p>	<p>Further, an environmental protection framework for Flood Risk Management activities has been provided for in the Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (See Flood Risk Management Policy Objective 9 – ‘Ensure that where flood risk management works take place that the natural and cultural heritage, rivers, streams and watercourses are protected and enhanced.’ The Laois CDP was subject to SEA and AA.</p> <p>It was noted all drainage works supported by plan actions will be specifically defined and environmentally assessed (under AA or EIA, as appropriate) at project level.</p>		
	<p>Spatial data should be provided showing the location of the drainage works overlain with environmental data (i.e. water quality, qualifying interest habitats and species data, invasive species data) to identify specific environmental issues of concern. The impacts of drainage works on hydromorphology must also be included considering that hydromorphological pressures are the second most significant category of pressures on our waters as identified in the Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022 - 2027. A similar process must be carried out in relation to Action 39.</p>	<p>No specific river drainage works or river maintenance projects have been defined under the Plan. Notwithstanding this, at plan level, all potential environmental effects associated with Action 37 and 39 were evaluated and mitigated against.</p> <p>It was noted all drainage works supported by plan actions will be specifically defined and environmentally assessed (under AA or EIA, as appropriate) at project level.</p>	None.	None.
	<p>The SEA should investigate GHG emissions from drained organic soils which overlap with proposed areas to be arterially drained under Action 37 and 39.</p>	<p>No specific river drainage works or river maintenance projects were defined under the Plan. At plan level, the effects of Actions 37 and 39 were adequately assessed and characterized, having regard to the level of detail available in relation to these actions. Notwithstanding this, it was noted a set of Environmental Governance Principles were defined in the Plan. These principles promote alignment with the national Climate Action Plan and promote climate action co-benefits, including carbon sequestration opportunities.</p> <p>It was noted all drainage works supported by plan actions will be specifically defined and environmentally assessed (under AA or EIA, as appropriate) at project level.</p>	None.	None.
	<p>SEA Mitigation: In relation to Action 37, the mitigation arising from the SEA embedded into the LACAP states ‘During the execution of these works, the Council will continue to have due regard to environmental sensitivities at these locations, including water quality, biodiversity, European sites, riparian corridors and aquatic ecology.’</p>	<p>No specific river drainage works or river maintenance projects were defined under the Plan. At plan level, the effects of Actions 37 and 39 were adequately assessed, characterized and mitigated against.</p> <p>It was noted all drainage works supported by plan actions will be specifically defined and environmentally assessed (under AA or EIA, as appropriate) at project level.</p>	None.	None.



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	<p>The Department considers that this mitigation is far too vague given the likely impacts of the specific drainage maintenance works which could have been ascertained from a review of existing environment data.</p>			
	<p>SEA Monitoring: SEA is a stepped process that involves collating baseline data, setting strategic environmental objectives, as well as the monitoring of the effects of the LACAP on the environment. This final step is essential to the process and should underpin subsequent LACAPs.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>
	<p>The monitoring programme should be clearly set out and developed in such a manner as to ensure it will identify the effects (both positive and negative) on the environment that are likely to arise, or will arise, and to monitor the effectiveness of any mitigation, if required, on which the assessment relies. While it may be considered efficient to use monitoring programmes that are already in place and run by other authorities, it is important to establish that the monitoring programmes are designed in such a way that they will identify the effects anticipated from the plan. As such, it is important to understand the objectives, methodologies, parameters, and assumptions etc. of any existing monitoring programme that is proposed to be used in such a way. Monitoring methods and frequency must be defined and provisions for carrying out remedial action, as appropriate and aligned to the scope of the plan.</p>	<p>The SEA Monitoring Programme established for the LACAP is contained in the SEA ER. This monitoring programme was developed in accordance with EPA guidelines entitled 'Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring' (2020).</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>
	<p>The Department advises that monitoring should focus on measures to monitor the identified potential significant environmental effects and the implementation of mitigation measures (and their effectiveness), not the full range of environmental criteria used to assess the plan/programme. In this regard, the Department recommends that indicators should be linked back to environmental effects and proposed mitigation measures.</p>	<p>The SEA Monitoring Programme established for the LACAP is contained in the SEA ER. This monitoring programme was developed in accordance with EPA guidelines entitled 'Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring' (2020).</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>Noted</p>



Consultee	Submission Text	Detailed Response	Changes to NIR	Changes to SEA ER
	It is advisable to clearly set out where responsibilities for monitoring programmes lie, their frequency, their reporting/publication arrangements, as well as the procedures that will be put in place to ensure that there is a response mechanism to any unforeseen or undesirable negative effects/results and an undertaking of remedial action, if necessary.	These procedures were set out in the SEA ER.	Noted.	Noted.
	<p>Matters related to the Natura Impact Report</p> <p>Similar to the observations on the SEA, the recommendations integrated into the plan in relation to Action 27 and 29 as outlined on page 50 and 51 of the Natural Impact Report are entirely too vague given that the location, specifications and impacts of the drainage works, which are on-going, are known to Laois County Council. The Appropriate Assessment (AA) is an opportunity to assess the impacts of arterial drainage on the site specific conservation objectives for the River Barrow and River Nore SAC at a strategic level.</p>	<p>No specific river drainage works or river maintenance projects were defined under the Plan. At plan level, the effects of Actions 37 and 39 were adequately assessed, characterized and mitigated against.</p> <p>It was noted all drainage works supported by plan actions will be specifically defined and environmentally assessed (under AA or EIA, as appropriate) at project level.</p>	None.	None.
	In conclusion, the Natura Impact Report states that the AA process is ongoing and will inform and be concluded at adoption of the Plan. The Department advises Laois County Council that AA determination must be based on complete, precise and definitive findings which rule out adverse effects to the integrity of the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation. Particular attention must be paid to the impacts of arterial drainage as outlined in Actions 37 and 39 when coming to this conclusion.	<p>No specific river drainage works or river maintenance projects were defined under the Plan. At plan level, the effects of Actions 37 and 39 were adequately assessed, characterized and mitigated against.</p> <p>It was noted all drainage works supported by plan actions will be specifically defined and environmentally assessed (under AA or EIA, as appropriate) at project level.</p>	None.	None.



2.5 SEA and Plan Modifications

LCC prepared a Chief Executive (CE) Report responding to consultation submissions from Environmental Authorities, interested stakeholders and members of the public.

The CE Report recommended Plan modifications in light of the consultation's submissions received in relation to the Plan and associated environmental reports and subsequent consideration of these submissions. The CE Report was appropriately informed by recommendations made by the SEA (and AA) team on foot of their review of consultation submissions relating to SEA (and AA) issues and documentation. Recommendations were taken on board by the plan-making team as appropriate.

Plan modifications made were screened for SEA and AA. All Plan modifications made during the plan-making process were determined to be non-material and did not introduce any additional environmental effects not previously considered and mitigated during the SEA and AA processes.

An earlier draft version of the SEA Environmental Report was finalized having appropriate regard to the consultation submissions made during the SEA consultation period, recommendations made in the CE Report on consultation submissions, and the modifications made to the original draft version of the LACAP that was put on display for consultation. The updates made to the report were clerical or minor and non-material in nature and did not materially change the parameters of the environmental assessment undertaken or the environmental mitigation defined.

The CE Report on consultation submissions received on the Plan and associated environmental reports accompany the adopted Plan and this SEA Statement and provides exact detail on how consultation submissions were considered by the local authority during the plan-making process. This CE Report also documents the Plan modifications made by the local authority following its consideration of consultation submissions relating to both the content, focus and goals of the Plan and the environmental assessment of the Plan presented in the associated SEA and AA documentation. All Plan Action modifications are presented in Table 2-5. No further modifications affecting the SEA and AA processes were made upon Plan Adoption.

Table 2-5: Plan Action Modifications

Action	Summary of Revision
15	<p>The action below has been amended to include the words “and to encourage local informed climate actions” after the word “achievements”:</p> <p>Laois County Council will publicise and communicate progress on implementing this Climate Action Plan, both to the public and internally within the Council. Laois County Council will utilise a range of communication mechanisms, appropriate for each audience, to highlight climate action achievements and to encourage local informed climate actions.</p>
38	<p>The action below has been amended by adding "including engagement with relevant statutory bodies as required" to the end of the action:</p> <p>In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will prepare a three-year forward plan for river maintenance of river channels (together with associated bridges) under its jurisdiction every two years. This comprehensive maintenance plan will be subject to statutory procedures (including Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures, if and as required) recognising the sensitivity of the sites involved. The design process, the Plan, together with any statutory procedures will have due regard to environmental sensitivities such as the receiving water environment, biodiversity, European sites, protected species, local air quality, and cultural heritage including engagement with relevant statutory bodies as require.</p>



Action	Summary of Revision
39	<p>The action below has been amended by replacing "river drainage works" with "river drainage maintenance works":</p> <p>In response to the predicted frequency of higher intensity rainfalls, Laois County Council will propose, in its annual budgets, a real term increase of 1% per annum above inflation over the life of this plan for river drainage maintenance works. During the execution of these works, the Council will continue to have due regard to environmental sensitivities at these locations, including water quality, biodiversity, European sites, riparian corridors and aquatic ecology.</p>
83	<p>The action below has been amended to include the words "to encourage local informed climate actions" after the words "guidance documentation":</p> <p>Laois County Council will continue to deliver countywide climate related educational and awareness information events, communication campaigns and guidance documentation to encourage local informed climate actions.</p>
111	<p>The action below has been amended to include the words "over the period 2024-2026" after the word "apply":</p> <p>Laois County Council will, in partnership, apply, over the period 2024-2026, for feasibility and eco tourism concept development through Just Transition Regenerative Tourism Fund, while also promoting the need for such a project to consider environmental protection requirements and climate action co-benefit opportunities.</p>
NA	<p>An additional action will be inserted: "LCC will develop initiatives aimed at supporting resource efficiency, waste minimisation and the circular economy across the county".</p>
NA	<p>An additional action will be inserted: "Support community based food growing initiatives through the development of community gardening advice guidelines".</p>



3. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

3.1 Introduction

Article 5(1) of the SEA Directive states that: *'Where an environmental assessment is required under Article 3(1), an environmental report shall be prepared in which the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated.'*

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternative means of achieving the strategic goals of the LACAP (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of a plan or programme) are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment. Such reasonable alternative must be realistic and capable of implementation.

Reasonable alternatives to the LACAP were initially explored and examined during the SEA Scoping stage of the SEA process, having regard to the scope, function and strategic aims and main objectives of the LACAP, as defined in the Local Authority Climate Action Plan. This process facilitated the accurate identification of reasonable alternatives to the LACAP and also suitably informed the plan-making process, ensuring optimal environmental outcomes.

Reasonable alternatives were assessed against the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) established for the aspects of the baseline environment which are likely to be significantly affected by the LACAP.

3.2 Approach to Developing Reasonable Alternatives

A range of alternatives to the LACAP were considered during the plan-making process. The approach for identifying reasonable alternatives to the LACAP is defined below:

1. Iterative communication was held between the plan-making and environmental assessment teams to identify the various alternative approaches and options being considered to achieve the vision of the plan - the reduction of GHG emissions at Local Authority organizational level and within the Community in support of Climate Action policy. This communication commenced early on during the plan-making process.
2. Reasonable alternatives considered were identified. For an alternative to be considered reasonable, it must be practical/functional, realistic and implementable. An evaluation of whether each alternative was practical/functional, reasonable and implementable took place. This evaluation considered the following factors:
 - 2.1. The vision of high-level objectives of the LACAP.
 - 2.2. The geographic scope of the LACAP.
 - 2.3. The actual powers and functions of the Local Authority.
 - 2.4. The climate action merits of the alternative.
 - 2.5. The genuine ability of the alternative to achieve the plan vision and high-level objectives.
 - 2.6. The technical feasibility of the alternative.
 - 2.7. The availability of resources, including financial resources to deliver the plan within the required timeframe.
 - 2.8. The policy hierarchy and the parameters placed around the LACAP by higher-level policy.



2.9. The legislative context and the parameters placed around the LACAP by climate action and environmental related legislation.

The toolkit contained in the EPA's guidelines entitled 'Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment Good Practice Guidance' (2015) was utilized when identifying reasonable alternatives. The 'Why? What? Where? When?' Model defined in the guidelines were used when framing reasonable alternatives, as shown in Figure 3-1.

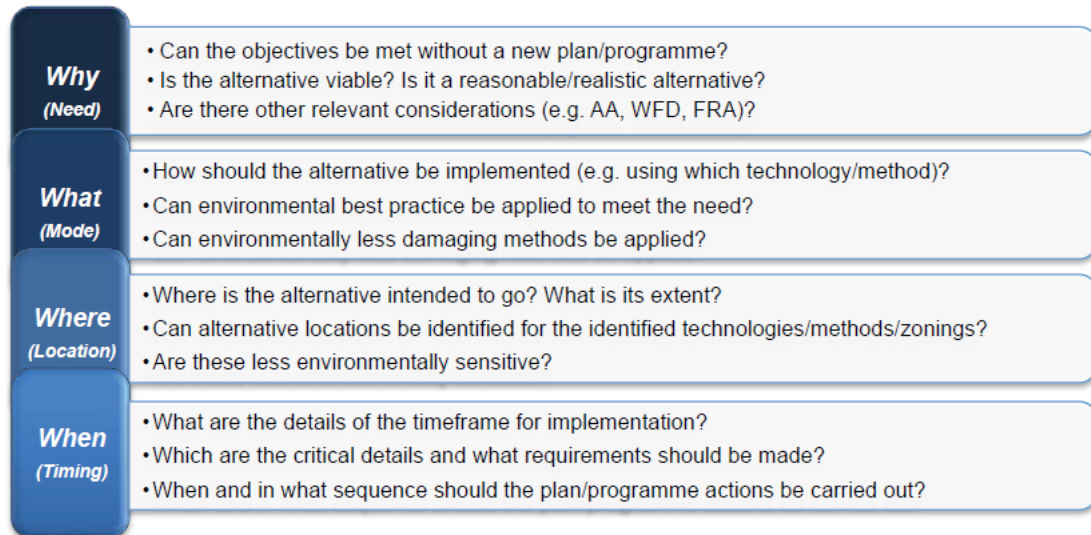


Figure 3-1: 'Why? What? Where? When?' Model for framing alternatives - Adapted from Figure 4.3 Developing and Assessing Alternatives in the Strategic Environmental Assessment Process (EPA, 2015).

3.3 Identification and Description of Reasonable Alternatives

Reasonable alternatives to the LACAP were identified. A description of these reasonable alternatives and the reasons for selecting these reasonable alternatives are presented in Table 3-1.

A 'Do Nothing' or 'Do Minimum' alternative was not a reasonable alternative in this instance as the preparation of an effective LACAP is a statutory requirement under Section 16 of the Climate Act.



Table 3-1: Reasonable Alternatives to the LACAP

Reasonable Alternative	Description of Reasonable Alternative	Reasoning for selecting this Reasonable Alternative
<p>Alternative 1 - The Pareto Approach: Prioritize reducing GHG emissions from largest GHG emitting sectors to mitigate against climate change impacts.</p>	<p>This alternative involved developing a LACAP that primarily focusses on climate mitigation and reducing GHG emissions associated with the largest GHG emitting sectors in the County that a local authority can reasonable influence having regard to the functions of a local authority - the Residential and Transport sectors.</p>	<p>This was a viable alternative that could achieve a significant reduction in GHG emissions by prioritizing and supporting climate mitigation related action for the Residential and Transport sectors. The alternative would cover the period from 2024 to 2029 (the duration of the prospective LACAP).</p>
<p>Alternative 2 - The Holistic Approach: Adopt a multi-pronged approach and focus on a range of priority areas to mitigate against and adapt to climate change impacts.</p>	<p>This alternative involved developing a LACAP that has a balanced focus on both climate mitigation and adaptation across several theme areas and all socio-economic sectors.</p>	<p>This was a viable alternative that would have enhanced potential to reduce GHG emissions across multiple sectors, potential to offset GHG emissions, and greater potential to protect the local community and the environment from climate change related risks. Climate mitigation and adaptation actions across a wide breath of theme areas would be supported by the LACAP. The alternative would cover the period from 2024 to 2029 (the duration of the prospective LACAP).</p>
<p>Alternative 3 - The Holistic and Participatory Approach (Current LACAP): Adopt a multi-pronged approach - that has a strong community engagement emphasis - and focus on a range of priority areas to mitigate against and adapt to climate change impacts.</p>	<p>This alternative involved developing a LACAP that has a balanced focus on both climate mitigation and adaptation across several theme areas and all socio-economic sectors, and which has a strong community engagement emphasis, which underpins, supports and drives the climate action contained in the plan.</p>	<p>This was a viable alternative that would have enhanced potential to reduce GHG emissions across multiple sectors, potential to offset GHG emissions, and greater potential to protect the local community and the environment from climate change related risks. Climate mitigation and adaptation actions across a wide breath of theme areas would be supported by the LACAP. The range of climate mitigation and adaptation actions defined in the LACAP is likely to have better community level and organizational support given its strong community engagement emphasis. The alternative would cover the period from 2024 to 2029 (the duration of the prospective LACAP).</p>



3.4 Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives and Reasons for Choosing the Preferred Plan

An evaluation of the potential effects of the reasonable alternatives on the baseline environment was carried out in accordance with the SEA Directive and best practice guidelines. This evaluation is documented in the SEA Environmental Report for the LACAP. A summary of this evaluation and the reason for choosing the preferred Plan is presented below.

Alternative 1 - The Pareto Approach - would of lead to some positive environmental effects and would of resulted in the reduction of GHG emissions in the sectors that the local authority can control or exert substantial influence on that contribute most in terms of GHG emission in the County - the Residential and Transport sectors. It is less likely that this alternative would have delivered the wide-ranging climate mitigation and offsetting related action required to fully realize GHG emission reduction potential in the County. It is also less likely this alternative would have defined a wide range of climate adaptation measures that would fully protect biodiversity, heritage resources, environmental receptors and people from climate change risks. This alternative approach may have generated several negative environmental effects, which would not be counterbalanced by the positive environmental effects associated with Alternatives 2 and 3.

Alternative 2 - The Holistic Approach - and Alternative 3 - The Holistic and Participatory Approach - would have both broadly delivered suitably wide ranging and effective climate action. These alternatives have the potential to generate multiple positive environmental effects, including a reduction in GHG emissions at organizational, community and sectoral levels, in addition to a variety of other environmental benefits. These alternatives would have placed a balanced emphasis on both climate mitigation and adaptation action, ensuring climate change related environmental risks are adequately understood and managed at community level.

Alternative 3 had the best potential to deliver effective climate action given its holistic, wide encompassing nature; and given its strong community engagement emphasis, which supports better participation in climate action at community level. Alternative 3 had better potential therefore to fully realize potential environmental effects than Alternative 2.

Reasonable Alternative 3 - The Holistic and Participatory Approach - therefore constituted the preferred alternative or preferred plan.



4. SEA CONCLUSION

The reasonable alternative evaluation presented in the preceding section resulted in the development of a LACAP that achieves the best environmental outcomes in comparison to other reasonable alternative considered.

The adoption of the mitigation measures to be integrated into the LACAP, in combination with the continued adoption of the development planning and control related environmental protection measures defined in the CDP will prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any potential negative environmental effects due to the implementation of the LACAP. No further mitigation measures are required for the LACAP.

With the adoption of the defined mitigation measures, the implementation of the adopted LACAP will not result in any likely, significant, adverse environmental effects.



5. SEA MONITORING

The SEA Directive requires that the environmental effects of the implementation of a plan are monitored in order 'to identify at an early stage unforeseen effects, and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.'

A series of indicators and targets were established for identified SEOs to enable ongoing monitoring and measurement of LACAP implementation performance, the environmental effects of the implementation of the LACAP and the efficacy of environmental mitigation measures. Such monitoring will be carried out regularly to support plan implementation.

SEO indicators are simple and effective quantifiable indicators used to measure the environmental effects of implementing the LACAP and the progress of SEO objectives and targets. SEO targets set focussed, measurable aims and thresholds that the LACAP can support the achievement of.

LCC are responsible for implementation of the SEA monitoring programme. The environmental effects (including positive, negative and cumulative effects) of LACAP implementation will be monitored once every year over the course of the plan's five-year lifetime. This monitoring will be carried out by the Climate Action team of Laois County Council who will report on progress and performance to the relevant SPC annually. A monitoring report will be prepared to document monitoring outcomes. This report shall be made available for public inspection.

Where monitoring identifies that the implementation of the LACAP is having a significant negative environmental effect, an in-depth review of the LACAP should take place and the LACAP should be updated in a manner that satisfactorily mitigates these environmental effects (i.e., through the adoption of additional environmental mitigation measures.). Similarly, where monitoring indicates that potential positive environmental effects associated with LACAP implementation are not being adequately realized, the LACAP should be reviewed and updated in a manner that supports the realization of all potential positive environmental effects, having regard to the overall vision and high-level objectives of the plan.

The SEA Monitoring Programme established for the LACAP is contained in Table 5-1. This monitoring programme has been developed in accordance with EPA guidelines entitled 'Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring' (2020). The monitoring programme includes detail on the indicators, targets and data sources used to monitor and measure progress.

A stand-alone monitoring report on the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Plan will be prepared in advance of the plan review process. The Council is responsible for the ongoing review of indicators and targets, collating existing relevant monitored data, the preparation of monitoring evaluation report(s), the publication of these reports and, if necessary, the carrying out of remedial action.



Table 5-1: SEA Monitoring Programme

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective	Indicators	Targets	Data Source
Overall	O1	Ensure, where appropriate, that lower-level plans and projects contribute to overall environmental monitoring processes within the County.	Lower-level plan and project accordance with the plan.	Require all lower-level plans and projects have appropriate regard to and appropriately support all action and development proposals defined in the Plan. Ensure planning policy and climate action policy is aligned.	Review of Local Area Plans. Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects. Review of lower-level plan SEA documentation.
Population & Human Health	PHH1	Avoid or minimise impacts to population and human health.	Number of spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan.	No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan.	Consultation with the Health Service Executive (HSE)/Health Atlas Ireland and the EPA.
	PHH2	Ensure the Decarbonising Zone avoids and minimises impacts to the existing economic activities within the area and does not compromise/conflict with existing land use objectives.	Compliance of action and development supported by the plan with policies and land use objectives protective/supportive of economic development in the county defined in the County Development Plan (CDP) or County Local Area Plans.	No contravention of policies and land use objectives protective/supportive of economic development in the county defined in the CDP or County Local Area Plans. Planning consent for development proposals supported by the plan only to be granted where development will be carried out in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.	Internal monitoring of compliance with CDP Policy Objectives. Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects.
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	B1	Ensure Climate Action does not conflict with biodiversity protection, restoration and rehabilitation.	Compliance of action and development supported by the plan with policies providing for the protection and enhancement of Biodiversity and flora and fauna defined in the CDP. Condition of habitats impacted by climate change (Area km ² /length metres).	No contravention of policies providing for the protection and enhancement of Biodiversity and flora and fauna defined the CDP. Ensure no habitats are impacted by the effects of climate change. Ensure no reduction in the number of geographic distribution of species as a result of climate change effects.	Internal monitoring of compliance with CDP Policy Objectives. Internal monitoring of compliance with the County Heritage and Biodiversity Action Plan. Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects.



Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective	Indicators	Targets	Data Source
			<p>Number and geographical distribution of Species or Species population trends impacted by climate change.</p> <p>Compliance of action and development supported by the plan with policies providing for the protection and enhancement of Biodiversity and flora and fauna defined in the County's Heritage and Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>	<p>No contravention of policies providing for the protection and enhancement of Biodiversity and flora and fauna defined in the County's Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>Planning consent for development proposals supported by the plan only to be granted where development complies with policy supporting biodiversity protection and enhancement.</p>	
	B2	Ensure compliance with Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to protection of European Sites and Annexed habitats and species ⁴ .	Condition of European Sites and annexed species.	No adverse impacts on the condition of European Sites and Annexed habitats and species as a result of plan implementation.	<p>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects.</p> <p>Consultation with the NPWS.</p> <p>Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive.</p> <p>Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's National Birds Directive Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12.</p>

⁴ 'Annexed habitats and species' refer to those listed under Annex I, II & IV of the EU Habitats Directive and Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.



Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective	Indicators	Targets	Data Source
	B3	Support Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to the management of features of the landscape which - by virtue of their linear and continuous structure or their function as stepping stones (designated or not) - are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.	<p>Condition of features of the landscape which - by virtue of their linear and continuous structure or their function as stepping stones (designated or not) - are of major importance for wild fauna and flora.</p> <p>Linear meters of riparian corridors enhanced with native planting.</p> <p>Fragmentation or breaks in continuity of habitats and loss of wildlife corridors, stepping stones and connectivity (km²).</p> <p>Number of developments consented that have significant greenspace proposals.</p>	<p>No adverse impacts on the condition of features of the landscape which - by virtue of their linear and continuous structure or their function as stepping stones (designated or not) - are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as a result of plan implementation.</p> <p>Increase linear metres of riparian corridor enhanced with native planting.</p> <p>Reduce habitat fragmentation or breaks.</p> <p>Increase number of developments consented that have significant greenspace proposals.</p>	<p>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects.</p> <p>Mapping of LR important habitats and species as part of the County Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>
	B4	To avoid or minimize significant impacts on semi-natural habitats, species, environmental features, or other sustaining resources in designated national sites, non-designated locally important sites, and sites proposed for designation; and to comply with the Wildlife Acts 1976-2012 with regard to listed species.	<p>Condition of semi-natural habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated national sites, non-designated locally important sites, and sites proposed for designation.</p> <p>Status of listed species in the Wildlife Acts 1976 - 2012.</p>	<p>No adverse impacts on condition of semi-natural habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated national sites, non-designated locally important sites, and sites proposed for designation, as a result of plan implementation.</p> <p>No adverse impacts on listed species in the Wildlife Acts 1976 - 2012 as a result of plan implementation.</p>	<p>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects.</p> <p>Mapping of LR important habitats and species as part of the County Heritage and Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>
	B5	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration in response to the biodiversity emergency.	Compliance of development supported by the plan with policies providing for the protection and enhancement of Biodiversity and flora and fauna defined the CDP.	No contravention of policies providing for the protection and enhancement of Biodiversity and flora and fauna defined in the CDP.	<p>Internal monitoring of compliance with CDP Policy Objectives.</p> <p>Internal monitoring of compliance with the County Heritage and Biodiversity Action Plan</p>



Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective	Indicators	Targets	Data Source
			<p>No. of developments consented that have significant greenspace proposals.</p> <p>Improved biodiversity areas (Area km² /length metres).</p> <p>Compliance of development supported by the plan with policies providing for the protection and enhancement of Biodiversity and flora and fauna defined in the County's Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>	<p>Increase number of developments consented that have significant greenspace proposals.</p> <p>Increase quantum of improved biodiversity areas.</p> <p>No contravention of policies providing for the protection and enhancement of Biodiversity and flora and fauna defined in the County's Heritage and Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>Planning consent for development proposals supported by the plan only to be granted where development complies with policy supportive of biodiversity protection and enhancement.</p>	<p>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects.</p> <p>Mapping of LR important habitats and species as part of the County Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>
Landscape & Visual Amenity	L1	Avoid or, minimise impacts to statutory landscape designations defined in the CDP.	<p>Status of Landscape Character Areas, High Amenity Zones, Historic Landscape Character Areas and Views and Prospects.</p> <p>Number of developments consented that result in avoidable adverse impacts on Landscape Character Areas, High Amenity Zones, Historic Landscape Character Areas and Views and Prospects.</p> <p>Number of areas in the local authority functional area designated for their landscape character.</p>	<p>All action and development proposals supported by the plan must comply with policy objectives relating to the protection of Landscape Character Areas, High Amenity Zones, Historic Landscape Character Areas and Views and Prospects defined in the CDP.</p> <p>No development supported by the plan should have an adverse impact on Landscape Character Areas, High Amenity Zones, Historic Landscape Character Areas and Views and Prospects.</p>	<p>Internal monitoring of compliance with CDP Policy Objectives.</p> <p>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects.</p> <p>Review of future iterations of the Landscape Character Assessment.</p>



Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective	Indicators	Targets	Data Source
	L2	Avoid or minimise adverse visual effects on residential receptors or other sensitive visual receptors.	Number of developments consented that result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on residential receptors or other sensitive visual receptors.	No development supported by the plan should have a significant adverse visual impact on residential receptors or other sensitive visual receptors. All development supported by the plan should adhere to relevant Development Management Standards defined in the CDP, in particular standards defined in relation to physical and visual impacts.	Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects. Review of future iterations of the Landscape Character Assessment.
Cultural Heritage - Archaeology & Architectural	CH1	Avoid impacts upon archaeological heritage (including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)) and architectural heritage (including entries to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAHs)).	Percentage of features contained in the RMP (and, where relevant, the associated surrounding context) protected from adverse effects due to action and development occurring as a result of this plan. Percentage of features contained in the RPS and NIAH (and, where relevant, the associated surrounding context) protected from adverse effects due to action and development occurring as a result of this plan.	No features contained in the RMP (nor the associated surrounding context) should be significantly adversely affected as a result of the implementation of this plan. No features contained in the RPS and NIAH (nor the associated surrounding context) should be significantly adversely affected as a result of the implementation of this plan.	Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects. Consultation with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. Review of Heritage Plan and Environmental effect monitoring.
Soils	S1	Avoid or minimise effects on mineral resources or soils.	Number of instances of significant adverse impacts on mineral resources or soils occurring, including the pollution, loss or degradation of mineral resources or soils, as a result of action and development supported by the plan.	No instances of significant adverse impacts on mineral resources or soils occurring as a result of action and development supported by the plan.	Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects. Consultation with Geological Survey of Ireland and review of published data on the soil's environment.



Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective	Indicators	Targets	Data Source
Land Use	LU1	Avoid or minimise effects on existing land use.	Number of instances of significant adverse impacts on existing land use as a result of plan implementation.	No instances of significant adverse impacts on existing land use as a result of plan implementation.	Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects. Review of Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry related Greenhouse Gas emissions calculated in the Baseline Emission Inventory.
Air Quality and Noise	AQN1	Increase the number of people travelling to work or school via public transport or by non-mechanical means.	% change in modal split. Length of new sustainable transport routes developed.	Reduction in private car use. Extension and improvement of the sustainable transport network in the plan area.	Central Statistics Office (CSO) Population data - Commuting in Ireland. Internal monitoring of length of new sustainable transport routes developed.
	AQN2	Avoid or minimize effects on local air quality.	Number of developments consented that result in avoidable adverse air quality impacts on sensitive receptors. Number of exceedances of ambient air quality standards in the County, as monitored under the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Network. Improvements in air quality status in the county.	No development supported by the plan should have a significant adverse air quality impact on sensitive receptors. All development supported by the plan should adhere to relevant Development Management Standards defined in the CDP relating to the protection of air quality. Minimize ambient air quality standard exceedances in the County.	Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects. Consultation with the EPA. Review of EPA Air Quality Monitoring undertaken in the County. Review of EPA annual 'Air Quality in Ireland' Report.
	AQN3	Avoid or minimize adverse noise impacts.	Number of sensitive receptors exposed to noise nuisance.	No sensitive receptors exposed to nuisance noise in the County.	Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects. Monitoring of internal noise complaint investigations undertaken. Consultation with the EPA.
Water	W1	Maintain and/or improve, the quality and status of surface waters	Status of surface water bodies as reported by the EPA Water Monitoring Programme for the Water Framework Directive (WFD).	Number of Pollution Incidents detected due to poor bathing water quality results.	EPA surface water monitoring data and reports. EPA bathing water monitoring data and reports.



Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective	Indicators	Targets	Data Source
			<p>Status of bathing waters as monitored under the Bathing Water Directive.</p> <p>Number of water bodies achieving High or Good Ecological Status as defined by the WFD within the life-cycle of the Climate Action Plan.</p>	<p>Not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status.'</p> <p>No deterioration in the status of any bathing waters, having appropriate regard to bathing water mandatory and guidelines values defined in the Bathing Water Directive.</p> <p>Implementation of the objectives of the second cycle of the national River Basin Management Plan.</p> <p>Increase in number of water bodies achieving High or Good Ecological as defined by the WFD within the life-cycle of the Climate Action Plan.</p>	<p>Review of environmental quality data detailed in the EPA Maps Application.</p>
	W2	Maintain and/or improve, the chemical and quantitative status of groundwaters.	Status of groundwater bodies as reported by the EPA National Groundwater Monitoring Programme for the WFD.	No deterioration in the status of groundwater quality, having appropriate regard to Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values defined under Directive 2006/118/EC.	<p>EPA groundwater monitoring data and reports.</p> <p>Review of environment quality data detailed in the EPA Maps Application.</p>
	W3	Prevent impact upon the WFD status of surface waters and groundwater in line with the requirements of the WFD.	<p>Number of instances of significant adverse impact on surface water or groundwater bodies resulting in a reduction in water quality or the ability of a water body to achieve 'good' water quality status.</p> <p>Number of water bodies achieving High or Good Ecological Status as defined by the WFD within the life-cycle of the Climate Action Plan.</p>	<p>No instances of significant adverse impact on surface water or groundwater bodies resulting in a reduction in water quality or the ability of a water body to achieve 'good' water quality status.</p> <p>Increase in number of water bodies achieving High or Good Ecological Status as defined by the WFD within the life-cycle of the Climate Action Plan.</p>	<p>Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects. Consultation with the EPA.</p>



Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective	Indicators	Targets	Data Source
	W4	Comply as appropriate with the provisions of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines.	Number of incompatible developments (supported by the plan) consented within flood risk areas.	Minimise developments (supported by the plan) granted consent on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk, having appropriate regard to the Flood Risk Management guidelines.	Internal monitoring of development projects granted planning consent
	W5	Prevent impact upon drinking water quality	Number of non-compliances with Drinking Water Quality Standards defined in the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2023.	No non-compliances with Drinking Water Quality Standards defined in the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2023.	EPA Drinking Water Quality Reports. Review of environmental quality data detailed in the EPA Maps Application.
Material Assets	MAI1	Avoid or minimise effects on built/amenity assets and infrastructure	Number of incompatible developments (supported by the plan) adversely affecting built/amenity assets and infrastructure.	No incompatible development (supported by the plan) adversely affecting built/amenity assets and infrastructure.	Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects.
	MAI2	Avoid or minimise effects on existing and (where known) planned infrastructure.	Number of incompatible developments (supported by the plan) adversely affecting existing or planned infrastructure, including water supply, wastewater management, energy and transport infrastructure.	No incompatible development (supported by the plan) adversely affecting existing or planned material assets infrastructure.	Internal monitoring of likely significant environmental effects of development projects, including monitoring of effects on other future planned or committed material asset infrastructure projects. Consultation with Irish Water, Gas Networks Ireland, ESB Networks and Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
	MAI3	Promote sustainable transportation.	% change in modal split. Kilometres of permanent segregated cycling network. Kilometres of permanent integrated cycling network. Number of Electric Vehicle charging points in the county. Total Area of road reallocated for sustainable alternatives (m ²).	Percentage increase in the number of public transport users in the County. Increase kilometres of permanent segregated cycling network. Increase kilometres of permanent segregated cycling network. Increase number of Electric Vehicle charging points in the county.	CSO Population data - Commuting in Ireland. Internal monitoring of length of new sustainable transport routes developed.



Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective	Indicators	Targets	Data Source
				Increase Total Area of road reallocated for sustainable alternatives.	
	MAI4	Promote sustainable waste management.	Tonnes of hazardous waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually. Tonnes of W.E.E.E. waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually. Tonnes of Bulky waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually. Tonnes of garden waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually.	Increase waste recycling in the County. Reduce waste generation in the County.	EPA Waste Statistics. Consultation with the EPA.
	MAI5	Promote sustainable water use and drainage management.	Level of water use in the County. Compliance with Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) related development management standards defined in the CDP.	Reduced water use in the county. All development (supported by the plan) must comply with SuDS related development management standards defined in the CDP.	CSO water consumption data. Internal monitoring of flood risk associated with of development projects and development project compliance with relevant flood risk and management related development management standards.
Tourism & Recreation	TR1	Avoid or minimise effects upon tourism and recreation amenities.	Visitor trips to local authority functional area	Stable or increasing number of visitor trips to local authority functional area	Fáilte Ireland Data on Tourism Performance
Climate Change	CF1	Delivery of the necessary action to support the national target of 80% electricity from renewable sources by 2030.	Level of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in the County. Level of renewable energy infrastructure in the County.	Reduce GHG emissions associated with the Energy sector in the County. Increase the level of renewable energy infrastructure in the County.	EPA National Emission Inventory. Baseline Emission Inventory for the County. Megawatt hour (MWh) output from renewable energy infrastructure in the county.



Environmental Component	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective	Indicators	Targets	Data Source
	CF2	Actively support the delivery of all national climate policy as appropriate to the county with the prioritisation and acceleration of evidence-based measures.	Level of GHG emissions in the County	Reduce GHG emissions for all sectors in the County.	EPA National Emission Inventory. Baseline Emission Inventory for the County.
	CF3	CF3: Assist in the delivery of the climate neutrality objective at local and community levels.	Level of GHG emissions in the County. Level of GHG emissions in the Decarbonizing Zone. Net addition of tree cover added.	Reduce GHG emission in the County to Net Zero. Reduce Decarbonising Zone GHG emissions to Net Zero. Increase level of tree cover in the County.	EPA National Emission Inventory. Baseline Emission Inventory for the County. Baseline Emission Inventory for the Decarbonizing Zone.
	CF4	Deliver a Decarbonising Zone (DZ) by 2050 within the local authority area to act as a test bed for a range of climate mitigation and adaptation measures in a specifically defined area through the identification of projects and outcomes that will assist in the delivery of the National Climate Objective.	Level of GHG emissions in the Decarbonising Zone.	Reduce Decarbonising Zone GHG emissions to Net Zero.	Baseline Emission Inventory for the Decarbonizing Zone.
Inter-relationships	IR1	Maintain and improve the health of people, ecosystems and natural processes. Actively seek to integrate opportunities for environmental enhancement during adaptation to climate change	Number of blue and green infrastructure measures included as part of development projects that have been granted planning consent	Increase the number of blue and green infrastructure measures included as part of development projects that have been granted planning consent	Review of granted planning consents.



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