

Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021

Volume 3 Environmental Report

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The **Louth County Development Plan 2015 – 2021** was adopted on 28th of September 2015 and in accordance with Article 9 of the **EU SEA Directive, and 13I (1) of S.I. no. 436 of 2004 Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended)**, Louth County Council is now required to prepare an SEA Statement as soon as may be following the making of the Plan.

1.2 Legislation Background

The **EU Directive 2001/42/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council on the **Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes** on the Environment requires each Member State to assess and consider the effects on the environment of implementing a plan or programme, in particular, the consideration of likely significant environmental effects. The Directive, which came into force in July 2001 was transposed into Irish legislation by the following legislation in 2004, both of which were amended in 2011:

- **European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations, 2004 S.I. No. 435 of 2004;**

- **Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004 S.I. No. 436 of 2004;**

- **European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations, 2011 S.I. No. 200 of 2011;**

- **Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations, 2011 S.I. No. 201 of 2011;** and essentially, the Louth County Development Plan is a land use plan and its assessment was in accordance with the **Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations, 2004** for the consideration of effects on the environment in Louth and beyond as a consequence of the County Plan.

1.3 Summary of SEA Process

The SEA process was initiated before the drafting of the Plan with its Step 1 Screening Stage. Essentially, this stage determined whether or not the draft Plan would have significant effects on the environment and whether or not a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was required. In the case of the Louth County Development Plan and other county development plans, it is a mandatory requirement to undertake a SEA (as part of a county or city development plan). Following the Screening Stage, scoping was carried out and incorporated into the preparation of a Scoping Report which was made available for consultation with SEA Environmental Authorities. In this case, the scoping stage was initiated in April 2013, followed by the preparation of the SEA Environmental Report, with monitoring the succeeding steps, the SEA process and concluding with the SEA Statement.

The purpose of SEA Statement is described in **Article 9 of the SEA Directive** as a statutory requirement and should be made available with the adopted plan. In brief, the SEA Statement is a statement summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and how the results of consultations entered into, pursuant to Article 7, have been taken into account in accordance with Article 8 and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with, and the measures decided concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10. This SEA statement is to be issued to the environmental authorities, the public and relevant trans-boundary state authorities, that were previously consulted, with a view to presenting a record of the key elements of the SEA process and illustrating the key decisions taken in the Plan as a consequence of the SEA.

To summarise, the SEA Statement is required under **Article 13I, SI No 436 of 2004 (as amended)**, to include information on:-

1. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan;
2. How the environmental report, any submission or observation to the planning authority in response to a notice under Section 12(1) or (7) of the Act, and any consultations under Article 13 F have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan;
3. The reasons for choosing the plan, as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
4. The measures decided upon to monitor, in accordance with Article 13J, the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan.

1.4 Implications of SEA on the Louth County Development Plan Making Process

As a consequence of the aforementioned legislation, the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** was required to undergo a SEA. The findings of the SEA were presented by way of an SEA Environmental Report which was submitted to the Elected Members with the Draft Plan. The report provided a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the future accommodation of growth and development in County Louth, and how negative effects could be reduced, offset or avoided in all cases. Some proposed amendments / material alterations were made to the draft Plan at stages of the plan making process; these were evaluated for their environmental consequences and / or potential for significant environmental effects on the environment within County Louth and extending 15 km from the County boundary. The findings of these assessments were presented to the Elected Members and placed on public display in the form of an environmental screening and SEA amendments. At each stage of the process the Elected Members were required by the legislation to take into account the Environmental Report and assessments before the adoption of the Plan in order to prevent or offset significant environmental effects.

2.0 Integration of Environmental Considerations which have been integrated into the Plan

2.1 Introduction

The protection and conservation of the environment has been a key consideration throughout the preparation of the Plan. Essentially, the SEA process comprises a series of steps which involved the detailing of the baseline status of a number of environmental elements, location and identification of environmental constraints and sensitivities so as to ensure that the strategy for development of the County was either diverted away from the most sensitive locations within the County or that appropriate mitigation measures were integrated into the Plan, as it was prepared. As the Plan making process developed, environmental considerations were directly considered at a number of stages in the SEA process as listed below.

2.2 Stages of the SEA process in the Plan Making Process

There were four main stages to the drafting and integration of the environmental considerations into the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** which included:

- Screening,
- Scoping,
- Environmental assessment and
- Environmental statement.

The green highlighted area in Table 1 below indicates the previous and current process in the environmental assessment and the remainder in grey details the next steps to be achieved.

Table 1: Stages of the SEA Process in Relation to the Review of the Development Plan

SEA Stage	No.	Actions	Status/ Comments	Timescale
1.Influence of SEA, Integration with Plan Making Process	1a	Ensure that the SEA process begins early in order to allow issues to be identified and appropriately addressed early in the plan-making process.	Stage 1 SEA, AA and SFRA included in the predraft consultation paper for the review of the development plan. Scoping study undertaken at predraft stage.	Nov 2013
	1b	Maximise buy-in to the SEA process from senior managers and decision-makers by communicating at an early stage, the role and importance of SEA	Designated SEA team raising awareness internally of the issues to be highlighted and addressed in the review process.	Ongoing

		and integrating into the Plan preparation and decision making process.		
	1c	The SEA process should be highly integrated with both the plan-making process and the AA and SFRA processes.	Submissions from pre-draft assessed.	
2.Scoping	2a	SEA scoping should focus sufficiently on the critical issues and key likely significant effects-guided by Inter-departmental and environmental authority consultation (including workshop) and review of both measurements for indicators and existing environment were contained in the current SEA.	Stage 2 The environmental authorities are consulted on the scope of the environmental information and considerations to be included in the assessment of the plan.	Complete Jan 2013
	2b	The SEA Scoping Report should include a list of suggested provisions to be integrated into the Plan, thereby reducing potential adverse effects, the need to update the Plan just before public display and the scope of future submissions.	Scoping document currently circulated to the environmental authorities which includes a list of suggested provisions to be integrated into the plan.	Complete 24 th of Jan- 24 th of Feb 2013
	2c	Integrate AA and SFRA scoping into the SEA scoping process.		
	2d	Make reference as appropriate to the potential for cumulative/ in combination effects (taking into account other relevant plans, programmes and projects).		
	2e	Include environmental sensitivity mapping in the scoping report.		
	2f	Use websites to display scoping documents		

3.Exisiting Environment	3a	Take account of existing environment by making changes to the Plan where necessary.	Stage 3	Complete SEA of the Draft Plan on public display 6 th October 2014 to 17 th December 2014.
	3b	Update Environmental Sensitivity Mapping from current SEA.		
	3c	Identify gaps in baseline data.		
4.Plan Description & Review of Other Plans Legislation	4a	Update environmental protection objectives from current SEA.	Stage 4	
	4b	Update summary of other key plans/programmes and how they will be incorporated into the Plan.		
5. Objectives, indicators and Targets	5a	Review current objectives, indicators, targets and identify whether any additional modifications are required.	Stage 5	
	5b	Ensure good linkages between objectives, indicators and targets are retained.		
	5c	Link indicators to existing/proposed data sources.		
6. Alternatives	6a	Review and update alternatives from the current SEA.	Stage 6	
7.Likely Significant Effects	7a	Use Environmental Sensitivity Mapping where relevant for assessing significant effects.	Stage 7	
	7b	Use environmental objectives in order to assess plan policies and objectives and assist in identifying significant effects.		

8.Mitigation Measures	8a	Link potential effects to proposed mitigation measures.	Stage 8	
	8b	Further strengthen plan policies and objectives (achieved by the integration of the <i>List of Suggested Provisions</i> from the SEA Scoping Report) taking into account the environmental sensitivities and the overall objective of the SEA to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into plans.		
9. Environmental Report and Non-Technical Summary (NTS)	9a	Highlight areas of constraints and opportunities by using maps.	Stage 9	
	9b	Ensure NTS is concise and to the point and ensure that it makes decision-makers and non-environmental stakeholders aware of the SEA findings.		
	9c	Document how the SEA and plan-making processes have been integrated and what changes have occurred as a result of the SEA.		
	9d	Assess the full range of environmental effects including, in particular cumulative/ in combination effects associated with other relevant plans, programmes and projects.		
	9e	Link potential effects to proposed monitoring and mitigation measures.		
	9f	Integrate AA and SFRA findings into the SEA Environmental Report.		

10. Consultation on Plan and Environmental Report	10a	Take into account SEA related feedback from submissions and in particular those from environmental or other statutory authorities.	Stage 10 After plan has been on public display.	
11. Amendments to the Plan following integration	11a	Ensure that material alterations are screened in terms of SEA and AA and that full SEA and AA are undertaken where relevant.	Stage 11 After Development Plan	Complete August 2015
12. SEA Statement	12a	Ensure transparency of SEA process by ensuring that SEA statement is correctly prepared.	Stage 12 On adoption of the Development Plan.	Current Adopted Plan 28 th September 2015
	12b	Include information summarising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan, • How the SEA Environmental Report submissions and observations in the SEA have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan, • The reasons for choosing the Plan, as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and • Monitoring measures. 		
13. Post-Plan Adoption Including Monitoring		Ensure monitoring reports are prepared during implementation of the Plan in order to determine whether SEA is having the desired outcomes of environmental protection, and whether intervention is required due to thresholds having been exceeded.	Stage 13 2 year review of the Development Plan.	Proposed October 2017

2.3 Pre-draft Data Gathering

Submissions specific to the environment were received during the pre-draft stage. Eleven submissions were received in total and these provide an element of advice to the planning authority in relation to integration of environmental information and compliance with national legislation, protection of watercourses, Natura 2000 sites protection and overall protection and access to the countryside. A detailed submission from the **Department of Agricultural Heritage and Gaeltacht (DAHG)** recommended that in addition to the SEA and AA a range of measures should be integrated into the draft plan inter alia details on wetlands, invasive species, hedgerows, and surface water treatment.

Pre-draft discussion was also held with the EPA regarding the baseline information to be contained in the Environmental Report. The importance of mapping was highlighted however while the EPA held data on layering it had not progressed to a stage where it could be deemed as useable data. Louth County Council had sufficient environmental data to produce a baseline assessment on the environment of Louth.

2.4 Scoping Study for the Environmental Report

In addition to the information gathering from the predraft stage, statutory scoping of the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021** was carried out in accordance with **Article 5(4) of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC)**. The principal purpose of the scoping stage was to decide upon the range of issues and level of detail to be included in the Environment Report. The statutory SEA environmental authorities for the purposes of the Louth County Development Plan are as follows:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government;
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine; Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
- Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht;
- Northern Ireland Environmental Agency,
- The Chief Executive of adjoining Planning Authorities; Meath County Council, Fingal County Council, Monaghan County Council.

Initial scoping took place with the prescribed Environmental Authorities in April 2013.

A Draft Scoping Report was sent to the aforementioned Authorities and they were given a five week period to make submissions and observations. Section 3 (consultation) below provides a detailed analysis of the submissions received from the scoping exercises.

Scoping submissions as listed in Section 3 raised similar content to those received at predraft stage. Additional comments related to information available on Natura 2000 sites and useable data from Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Transboundary impacts were integrated into the Environmental Report as baseline data. The draft Plan did not propose any significant changes which would have any transboundary effects. The baseline data indicated that shared water was currently in a good state.

It is considered that the submissions received were taken into account when the environmental information was being collated, including baseline data and current issues, in addition to the preparation of the Environmental Report.

The EPA held discussions with Louth County Council representatives at a Regional Environmental Fora and offered ongoing advice on the sources of environmental information and data in and adjacent to Louth. Additionally the EPA offered advice on the use of GIS and the convening of SEA workshops and meetings, public consultation, important legislation and guidance. Further information on water, biodiversity, air, noise and climatic factors, energy conservation, renewable energy, landscape character assessment, geology, geomorphology, human health, quality of life, transportation, tourism, infrastructure, planning, urban waste water discharge licensing, waste management, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), SEA, obligations with respect to national plans and policies and EU environmental legislation and the EPA's report on Ireland's Environment were used. The Development Applications Unit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, (NPWS) included advice at the pre-draft stage namely that the SEA Environmental Report should be undertaken in conjunction with the Natura Impact Report to ensure compliance with legislation. The SEA Environmental Report contains environmental information sourced from NPWS, EPA, and Louth County Council survey data. Environmental sensitivities were investigated prior to zoning or targeting areas for development and the precautionary principle should apply.

Environmental Protection objectives contained in the Environmental Report for all environmental elements integrated with objectives and obligations of all appropriate directives, transposed regulations and other Irish legislation, in addition to the policies for a draft Heritage Plan and draft Biodiversity Plan of Louth County Council and the National Biodiversity Plan.

The environmental considerations were at the forefront of the drafting of the Plan. A draft Green Infrastructure Strategy was subsumed into the draft Plan. This strategy had identified inter alia watercourses, Natura 2000 sites, pNHA sites, NIAH demesnes and large woodlands which were mapped to provide an ecological network of County Louth.

2.5 Evaluation of Draft Plan Policies and Objectives

The SEA process was undertaken using a methodical iterative approach in conjunction with a number of experts in different sectors of the environment and this process was guided strictly by legislation. The Environmental Report, prepared to document the SEA process was guided by **Article 5 of the SEA Directive and by Schedule 2B of S.I. No. 436 of 2004**. The SEA was essentially undertaken to take account of the baseline environmental status, in addition to the evaluation of how the draft Plan (and a number of alternatives, see Section 4 below) would affect the environment by its adoption. Each aspect of the draft Plan was tested for its 'suitability' going forward on the state of each environmental element (biodiversity, flora and fauna, population, human health, soil, water, air, climate factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape). This was undertaken by the setting of objectives, targets and indicators for the protection (conservation and restoration, in some cases) of all aspects of the

environment. Each policy and objective of the Draft Plan was assessed against these objectives or Environmental Protection Objectives (EPOs). This data has subsequently been used as information for the monitoring of the state of the environment in Louth and should feed into the 2 year review process. Additional policies were integrated into a range of chapters of the draft Plan in response to some of the environmental considerations raised from the submissions and to comply with the national and regional legislation. The assessment was undertaken in conjunction with the scoring assessment and evaluation matrix (Appendix 1 SEA/AA, 29th of September 2014).

Table 2: Integration of Environmental Issues within the Draft Plan

Chapter	Mitigation Policies
2: Settlement Strategy	Core Strategy : CS 1-6
3: Rural Development and Natural Resources	Sensitive design and location of development RD 3-10 Protection of countryside RD 13-15 Coastal protection: RD 17-20 Renewable energy RD 22-23
5: Heritage	Natura 200m sites and Appropriate Assessment: HER 3-5 Protected Structures: HER 40-42 Architectural Conservation Areas: HER 45-51 Green Infrastructure: HER 65-75
7: Transport	Cycling and Pedestrian: TC 33-38 Sustainable transportation: TC 30-32 Public Transport: TC 33-38 Natura 2000 sites and Port: TC 41
8: Environment	Climate Change Adaption: ENV 4 Water Framework Directive: ENV 10 Flooding: ENV 30-39
9: Energy & Communications	Renewable Energy Strategy: EnCo 13-18
10: Water Services	SUDS: WS 10-WS13

Where any draft Plan policy or objective was deemed to result in potential conflict with the status of EPOs (relating to one or a number of environmental elements), mitigation measures were proposed during the SEA process to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse effects on the environment. Alternatively, should any policy or objective of the draft Plan be deemed likely to cause probable conflict unlikely to be mitigated by measures, these aspects of the draft Plan were removed or amended as a consequence of the SEA process, to ensure that this conflict would be prevented. Therefore, the first draft of the Plan was evaluated and all amendments, deletions and

insertions recommended during the SEA process were taken into account in the preparation of the draft Plan to prevent significant effects on the environment in Louth and beyond.

2.6 Evaluation of Draft Plan following the consideration of the CE Report by Elected Members

Having considered the CE's Report and the draft Plan at special meetings of Louth County Council, on the 9th June 2015 the members of Louth County Council resolved to amend the Draft Plan in accordance with Section 12 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended). The SEA was updated to assess the implications of changing the text and policies and placed on public display from the 30th June 2015 – 19th August 2014. The CE report on proposed material alterations to the draft plan was sent to the Elected Members in 3rd September 2015. Submissions received which specifically related to the SEA/AA are included below under Table 3.

Essentially, the evaluation followed the same format as the SEA of the entire draft Plan, with all SEA team members representing different environmental elements evaluating the proposed amendments (or material alterations). As a consequence of this exercise, a range of amendments to the draft Plan were predicted and it was concluded that due to the amount of mitigation policies contained in the Plan on foot of submissions, there were no significant effects on the environment predicted. Indeed many of the changes proposed on foot of the draft Plan and submissions provided additional protection to the environment in Louth. The most significant of these proposed changes to the draft plan are summarised below.

Table 3: Changes integrated in to the draft Plan on foot of the Public Consultation process on the draft Plan

Chapter	Environmental protection
3: Rural Development and Natural Resources	Removal of strategic land reserve areas within some Level 3 Settlement. Provided additional protection for the environment due to inclusion of appropriate development.
5: Heritage	Additional proposed amendment to Table 5.8 and Map 5.10 for proposed Tree Preservation Order for One Mile Wood and Newtownstalaban. HER 4 to include additional reference for screening assessments to take cognisance of the control and prevention of invasive species into any Natura 2000 site by mitigation in control methods.
6. Economic	Policies EDE 20-23 in relation to all walkways and cycle ways throughout the County are required to be compliant with all EU policies such as the Water Framework, Habitats and SEA Directive.
7:Transport	TC 41 includes appropriate expansion of Louth ports through the preparation of a masterplan in compliance with EU Habitats Directive. TC 12 referred to any proposed transport routes and compliance with Habitats, EIA and SEA Directives.

8:Environment	Climate Change mitigation and adaptation definition and references included as non material. Alterations to policy ENV 4 (b) where included to support climate change mitigation measures through the implementation of infrastructure to designated settlements.
9: Energy & Communications	Additional new policy ENCO 5 for sensitive rural landscapes. Additional reference to ENCO 12 for any renewable energy strategy to be compliant with the requirements for SEA and Habitats Directive.
10: Water Services	Non material alterations to the water section were included referencing appropriate controls for effluent discharge licensing and compliance with the EPA Code of Practice. Any wastewater should not result in the deterioration of ground or surface water in the County.

In addition to the changes above, the NIS and SEA were amended not only to include reference to those amended policies but also to include additional information provided from the Department of Agriculture, Heritage and Gaeltacht (DAHG), Northern Ireland Environmental Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency. Additional maps were provided for Northern Ireland from the NIEA office for those Natura 2000 sites within 15 km of Louth. Reference to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive was supported at a local level and was linked over to the Green Infrastructure strategy. The Border Midlands and Western Regional Authority, raised concerns as to how the evidence from the environmental report shaped the information in the draft Plan and also raised concerns that there was no specific reference to the Level 4 settlements in the Natura Impact Report. The EPA raised concerns over the Natura Impact Report, one of the SEOs- objective FI, use of mitigation and monitoring, screening if additional amendments are made and reference to the pollution production programme.

3.0 Summary of how the Environmental Report, Submissions and Observations have been taken into account during the Preparation of the Plan

3.1 Introduction

This section deals with how submissions and observations from environmental authorities and members of the public, in addition to the findings of the SEA, as presented in the Environmental Report were taken into account during the preparation of the ***Louth County Development Plan 2015- 2021***.

3.2 Consultation

Consultation was carried out as part of the pre-draft issues paper for the Review of the ***Louth County Development Plan 2009-2015***. Two separate consultation meetings were held in relation to the scoping document for the Plan. The first with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Monaghan on the 18th of September 2013 and the second with Northern Ireland Environmental Agency (NIEA) on

the 20th of January 2014. A number of submissions received (as per Table 4 below) were specifically refer to information which should be contained in the environmental assessment of the Plan. Those submissions have been summarised as follows. Where appropriate this scoping assessment will use available data.

Table 4: Summary of Submissions relating to the Environmental Assessment from the Pre-draft Development Plan Consultation

Submission	Issues raised	Integration
No. 2 EPA	<p>Up to date guidance has been provided and the requirement for compliance with national legislation with regard to Water, Biodiversity, Air, Noise and Climatic Factors, Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy, Landscape Character Assessment.</p> <p>Specific reference has been made to the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment (AA) as per the Habitats Directive. The determination for an AA should be undertaken in conjunction with the statutory authorities.</p> <p>It is recommended that the plan includes specific policies for compliance with certain environmental objectives such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of landscape character assessment, • Habitat mapping, • Control of invasive species, • SUDS and flood mapping, • Enhancement of protected habitats and species and support for ecological connectivity, • Protection of surface and ground water, • Integration of protected areas of the Neagh Bann River Basin Management Plan, • Environmental vulnerabilities 	<p>The Planning Authority integrated the most up to date information available into the SEA of the draft Plan.</p> <p>Mapping and data was included in the SEA and on public display.</p>

	mapping.	
No.3 Border Regional Authority	It is recommended that a specific chapter is included within the development plan outlining the key environmental features and how they will be protected through the policy framework of the plan. Environmental assessment is required under the SEA and Habitats and Birds Directives.	This is not a legal requirement of the Planning Legislation. The appropriate section of the plan making process for the environmental assessment is those documents dedicated for this purpose. The plan was drafted with integration of issues as required.
No 9. Inland Fisheries Ireland	<p>Valuable inland fisheries in Louth include the Boyne, Dee, Glyde, Fane, Castletown, Flurry and Big. These catchments contain Salmonoids and Pike.</p> <p>The provision for and protection of riparian corridors with buffer zones for compliance with the water quality targets as laid out in the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>Potential significant impacts on the following should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality, • Aquatic and associated riparian habitats, • Biological diversity, • Ecosystem structure and functioning, • Fish spawning and nursery areas, • Surface water hydrology, • Passage of migratory fish, • Areas of natural heritage importance including geological heritage sites, • Sport and commercial fishing and angling, • Amenity and recreational areas. 	<p>The Plan was drafted taking cognisance the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy. A Green Infrastructure network linked all those river networks, lakes etc with other environmentally sensitive areas such as the Natura 2000 sites and provided protection for the overall ecological network.</p> <p>Protection of riparian corridors was taken into consideration, as was the requirement for compliance with the Water Framework Directive for good status of all rivers.</p>
No.11 Drogheda Port Company	Submissions to the pre draft Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) consultation requested the retention of open space within the ownership of Drogheda Port.	This will be considered during the review of the Drogheda Development Plan 2011-2017.
No. 14 Fáilte	Fáilte Ireland has submitted proposals for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment in particular for walking trails to ensure	A new development zone was introduced for the overall protection of the Brú na Bóinne

Ireland	<p>access to our natural heritage. Particular attention is given to the requirement of a Management Plan for Brú na Bóinne as a World Heritage Site and other sensitive landscapes.</p> <p>No specific reference has been made to the SEA/ AA or FRA</p>	<p>site and the surrounding sensitive landscapes.</p>
No. 24. Roger Garland	<p>No specific reference has been made to the SEA/ AA or FRA.</p> <p>Comments on chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9 and 12 have been provided.</p> <p>In general support for the protection of the natural environment. Examples of required policies and objectives within the Development Plan have been provided using examples from other Local Authorities. Access to the countryside and provision of public rights of way i.e. walkways and greenways are supported.</p>	<p>A policy of the draft Plan was included to allow the identification of public rights of way as per the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).</p>
No. 25. An Taisce	<p>No specific reference has been made to the SEA/ AA or FRA.</p> <p>Comments have been divided into sections as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning and zoning, • Fossil fuels and climate change, • Sustainable transport and land use patterns, • Economic and employment development, • Water, • Natural capital and ecosystem services, • Social capital and public participation, • Cultural and built heritage, • Implementation and monitoring. 	<p>The plan was drafted to consider a number of environmental elements ranging from the strategic planning, water, heritage and monitoring.</p>
No. 27 Meath County Council	<p>No specific reference has been made to the SEA/ AA or FRA.</p> <p>Reference within the submission to the promotion of waste water treatment systems and shared services</p>	<p>As per reference from Failte Ireland a separate zone has been included for the Brú ná Bóinne site and surrounding</p>

	with Meath County Council. The promotion and protection of the Brú ná Bóinne site and its surrounding buffer zone has been highlighted.	areas.
No. 29 Irish Wind Energy Association (IWEA)	<p>No specific reference has been made to the SEA/ AA or FRA.</p> <p>Support is afforded to the promotion of wind energy within County Louth and the achieved targets on the renewable energy targets. It is argued that the optimum siting of wind farm developments is an area where there is sufficient wind resource and it is requested that the plan is not overly prescriptive.</p>	The draft Plan proposed a draft Renewable Energy Strategy. This will be drafted in line with the requirements for the SEA/ NIR and as per legislative requirements.
No. 30 GVA for Tesco	<p>No specific reference has been made to the SEA/ AA or FRA.</p> <p>It is requested that the development plan does not contain policies which explicitly require that there is a certain form of SUDS in all instances. It is felt that green roofs and other naturalistic solutions are realistic options for some forms of retail and/or commercial developments.</p>	The use of SUDS is required as per the development plan. The plan has not provided an overly prescriptive method of addressing the means to address these requirements.
No.33 Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht	<p>Guidance is provided for the drafting of the AA by the Department. The SEA must take into account the Biodiversity Convention, the Ramsar Convention, the Birds and Habitats Directive, the Wildlife Acts of 1976 to 2010, and the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 (SI No P4 of 1997);</p> <p>Protected species outside and within the designated areas should be accounted for;</p> <p>Article 10 of the Habitats Directive should be supported;</p> <p>Alien invasive species need addressed;</p> <p>Hedgerows should be retained or replaced with native species and mitigation where they must be removed;</p> <p>Wetland habitats and flood plains need to be supported;</p> <p>Surface water and ground water should be protected</p>	<p>The 15 km best practice guidance was used.</p> <p>Article 10 was addressed though the promotion of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.</p> <p>Policies on hedgerows included in the draft Plan.</p> <p>All projects to be screened for impacts on Natura 2000 sites, surface water and ground water</p>

<p>with no negative impacts on Natura 2000 Sites.</p> <p>Specific reference to SEA includes the requirement to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natura 2000 sites, • Other designated areas, • Annex 1 habitats, • Species in Annex II and V, • Habitat for Birds and Birds as a species (Article 10), • Red Book data species and other protected species, • SEOs for water, • Water abstraction schemes, • Impacts on a catchment or aquifer basis. <p>Appropriate Assessment</p> <p>Notice of the judgement ruling C—258/2011- N6 Galway City Outer Bypass should be noted in particular the loss of habitat or habitat of a species for which the site is designated and cannot be ruled out with certainty at screening.</p> <p>Natura 2000 sites within a distance of 15km should be noted</p> <p>Consultation with the teams working on the Plan and SEA should be undertaken.</p> <p>Attributes and targets of each of the Natura 2000 sites should be taken from the correct documents on www.npws.ie and should be referenced accordingly.</p>	<p>was also be included.</p> <p>All the topics above were included in environmental assessments.</p> <p>The precautionary principle is accepted, Louth does not have any habitats the same as those included in this European ruling.</p> <p>The lead member of the SEA team worked closely with the draft Plan team.</p> <p>NPWS were consulted.</p>
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3.3 Scoping for the SEA Report

Under the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 the list of statutory consultees includes the following:

- The Environmental Protection Agency,
- The Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs,
- The Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food,
- The Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources,

- Any adjoining planning authority whose area is contiguous to the area of a planning authority which prepared a plan, (in this case Meath, Monaghan and Northern Ireland).

Table 5: Submissions received in relation to the Scoping Document and Consultations

Submissions	Issues raised on the scoping information	Response
No. 2 EPA	<p>Reference has been provided to the correspondence made to Louth County Council on the pre-draft issues paper and the information contained in this submission.</p> <p>Additional comments on the scoping report include consideration of an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan for the County. Alternatives included in the SEA should be reasonable, realistic and consistent with the Regional Planning Guidelines.</p>	The adjoining information was taken into consideration and integrated into the SEA of the draft Plan.
No. 3 Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.	<p>Site Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO's) should be used in the environmental assessment of the Plan for each of the Natura 2000 sites. Where there are no detailed conservation objectives for one of the sites a similar site with the same qualifying criteria should be used. A list of those sites with the same qualifying criteria for Annex 1 habitat and species has been included to assist the carrying out of the appropriate assessment.</p>	The AA includes site specific objectives for all 11 Natura 2000 sites in County Louth.
No 9. Inland Fisheries Ireland	<p>Valuable inland fisheries in Louth include the Boyne, Dee, Glyde, Fane, Castletown, Flurry and Big. These catchments contain Salmonoids and Pike, trout and Lamprey.</p> <p>The following comments are made in relation to the Issues Paper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population, Settlement and Core Strategy <p>The use of riparian/ buffer zones to protect streams for adjoining land uses. Compliance with the Water Framework Directive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural development and Natural 	<p>The draft Plan integrated protection for watercourses within County Louth. Specific policies relating to riparian corridors were included in addition to the mapping of all watercourses and integration into the Green infrastructure ecological network.</p> <p>The consideration of alternatives for the direction of growth in Louth took</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;">Resources</p> <p>Under the EU Water Framework Directive the ecological status of the rivers, catchments and channels must be considered for all developments. An overall holistic approach is required. Water courses should be maintained in an environmentally and aesthetically sensitive manner in relation to all the following areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development, • Recreation and Amenity, • Transportation, • Communication and Energy, • Water, • Wastewater, • Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), • Natural Heritage, • Management Policies, • Invasive species, • Climate Change, • A Sustainable Development Plan and the Environment. 	<p>cognisance of the requirement for protection of watercourses for both environment and economic provision.</p>
<p>No 9. Northern Ireland Environmental Agency</p>	<p>It is anticipated that any significant adverse effects on the environment of Louth County Council and Northern Ireland will be mitigated against by relevant policies.</p> <p>In addition to those points raised in the scoping report other points for consideration should be:</p> <p>Marine Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carlingford Lough Shellfish Water area, • Cumulative and in-combination effect of the Greencastle ferry proposals • Northern Ireland marine documents 	<p>The SEA/AA was amended to take into consideration those submissions received from the NIEA.</p> <p>The SEA was updated to reference the Carlingford Lough Shellfish water. The Northern Ireland Marine documents were included for consideration.</p>

	Air Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of air quality can be gained from Newry and Mourne District Council, • Quality should be considered in conjunction with land zoning. 	Details of Air quality of Louth were included in the SEA. No significant land use zoning is proposed in the draft plan that would have any impact on the air quality of adjoining counties.
	Biodiversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) can be found on the NIEA website. 	Maps and details were provided by NIEA for use in the SEA/AA and these were further considered in the plan making process.
	Northern Ireland Plans and Programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional and Strategic documents have been made available. 	

3.4 Submissions and Observations on Draft Plan and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The draft Louth County Development Plan and the accompanying environmental reports were placed on public display between the 6th October to the 17th December 2014 inclusive. In addition there were a number of public information events during the month of November in Ardee, Dundalk, Carlingford, Ardee, Drogheda and Dunleer.

There were 5 no submissions received which specifically related to the information in the environmental reports or where linked to that information in the plan which should be linked to the environmental reports. These submissions are summarised In Table 6.

Table 6: Submissions received in relation to the draft plan and draft SEA

Submissions	Issues raised on the draft plan	Response to the issues
No. 61 Border, Midlands and Western Regional Assembly	1. With regard to the draft SEA Environmental Report and NIR there is no clear evidence as to how the outputs of these reports shaped the content of the draft plan.	1.A member of the SEA team fed into the drafting of the policies, integrating mitigation measures were policies were possibly negative and providing constant input into the drafting team. This is documented in the SEA of the draft Plan and clearly stated in this SEA Statement as per

	<p>2. Concerns over NIS and Level 3 settlement. Request that all level 4 settlements are included in the Habitats Assessment.</p>	<p>the Directives.</p> <p>2.NIS considers the scoring of all policies relating to all aspects of the Plan. All assessments are in line with the national guidance.</p>
<p>No 66</p> <p>EPA</p>	<p>1. The non-technical summary should reflect the requirement under the SEA Regulations.</p> <p>2. The assessment of alternatives should be described in greater detail and how the preferred alternative was arrived. It is recommended that there be a table summarising the alternative with the Strategic Environmental Objectives.</p> <p>3. Assessment of the Plan against the Environmental Protection Objectives for Objective B1 this should be linked to the most recent publication from NPWS. Objective F1 should reflect the suitability of land use zonings in areas of significant risk.</p> <p>4. Mitigation; where the assessment table has negative or uncertain environmental effects the appropriate mitigation measures should be included in the plan so the relevant sensitivity and/or vulnerability is protected and / or integrated as appropriate</p> <p>5. Monitoring: the monitoring of the SEA should</p>	<p>1. It is noted that the non-technical summary should reflect the requirement under the SEA Regulations.</p> <p>2. The assessment of alternatives will be expanded in detail to specifically detail how the preferred alternative was arrived. The SEA will contain a table summarising the alternative with the Strategic Environmental Objectives.</p> <p>3. The assessment of the Plan against the Environmental Protection Objectives for Objective B1 will be linked to the most recent publication from NPWS. Objective F1 will reflect the suitability of land use zonings in areas of significant risk where appropriate.</p> <p>4. It is agreed where the assessment table has negative or uncertain environmental effects the appropriate mitigation measures will be included in the Plan to the relevant sensitivity and / or vulnerability is protected and/or integrated as appropriate.</p> <p>5. The monitoring of the SEA will be described in greater detail. There is currently a commitment to link both Plan implementation Review and reporting and SEA related</p>

	<p>be described in greater detail with a commitment to link both Plan implementation Review and reporting and SEA related monitoring.</p> <p>6. Section 3.5.5 Shellfish Waters should include a specific reference for the Pollution Reduction Programme for the Shellfish Waters for Carlingford Lough and Dundalk Bay.</p> <p>7. Section 3.9 overview of baseline environment is noted as a useful summary.</p> <p>8. Section 4.6 should be referenced to an Appendix to include other plans/ programmes which may have the potential for cumulative effects.</p> <p>9. Any amendments to the Plan should be screened for the likely significant effects on the environment and subject to the SEA Regulations.</p> <p>10. An SEA statement is required following the adoption of the Plan and information which is recommended for the document is included in the submission.</p>	<p>monitoring.</p> <p>6. Section 3.5.5 Shellfish Waters will include a specific reference for the Pollution Reduction Programme for the Shellfish Waters for Carlingford Lough and Dundalk Bay.</p> <p>7. Section 3.9 overview of baseline environment is noted as a useful summary.</p> <p>8. Section 4.6 should be referenced to an expanded Table 1 to include other plans/ programmes which may have the potential for cumulative effects.</p> <p>9. All amendments to the Plan will be screened for the likely significant effects on the environment and subject to the SEA Regulations.</p> <p>10. An SEA statement will be produced following the adoption of the Plan.</p>
<p>No 111</p> <p>Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht</p>	<p>1. Any draft Renewable Energy Strategy should take into account bird flight paths. EnCo 13 and/or map 13 may need to be amended to take into account bird flight paths (e.g. between Stabbannon/ Braganstown SPA and Dundalk Bay SPA).</p>	<p>1. As per previous summary from the EPA (submission number 66) any draft Renewable Energy Strategy for Louth will be compliant with the requirements of SEA and Habitats Directives. EnCo 13 shall be</p>

<p>(NPWS)</p>	<p>2. NIR: It is not clear if suggestions at scoping stage are followed where it was advised that detailed conservation objectives from other Natura 2000 sites were used for sites within Louth.</p> <p>3. NIR: Policy TC18 relates to bridge crossing over the River Boyne for the strategic new roads, this should be addressed in the NIR.</p> <p>4. NIR: Bird flight paths for wind energy should be assessed.</p>	<p>amended to make reference to the Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies (SEAI, 2013).</p> <p>2. The comments on the NIR from the scoping stage and those reiterated in this submission. There will be an additional investigation into similar conservation objectives from other Natura 2000 sites outside Louth which may also be applicable to the assessment of impacts on the Natura 2000 sites in Louth.</p> <p>3. Policy TC18 was assessed in conjunction with the SEA and the Natura 2000 sites. The impact as assessed as an unknown given the scale of the proposal for strategic transport. It is acknowledged that at a project level the road will require a full screening for Appropriate Assessment. In this regard it may be appropriate for an additional reference onto the end of the policy such as that above for TC 18 as follows <i>*all proposed transport routes will be required to comply with the Habitats, EIA and SEA Directives.</i></p> <p>4. Like the response to submission No 3 (above) the location and or determination of appropriate sites for wind energy will be included in any draft Renewable Energy Strategy for County Louth and this draft Plan will be subject to the compliance with any AA and SEA</p>
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	<p>5. SEA: Page 78 has targets and indicators missing for B4.</p> <p>6. SEA: Birds Directive and Habitats Directive should be included in European plans and programmes, the Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 should be included</p> <p>7. SEA: Clarity is provided to a submission made within during the scoping stage by DAHG where catchment areas over 15km for AA screening may need to be used where a whole river catchment or groundwater aquifer is to be included.</p> <p>8. SEA: The most recent revision of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 is referenced.</p>	<p>guidance and legislation.</p> <p>5. B4 targets includes: no loss of significant habitat due to invasive species and protection of Natura 2000 sites from the introduction of invasive species. Indicators included % of recorded siting of invasive species in Louth as in http://invasives.biodiversityireland.ie/ and the No. of screening reports with mitigation measures for invasive species in Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>6. This reference will be included.</p> <p>7. Reference to the 15km will be amended to include all other areas where there is an identified ecological connection as identified in the screening.</p> <p>8. Reference to the most recent EC regulations will be referenced.</p>
<p>No 127</p> <p>NIEA</p>	<p>Satisfied to see the transboundary impacts and the Natura 2000 sites in the environment report.</p> <p>2. Draft SEA: The UK Marine Policy Statement for Northern Ireland should be listed. Section 3.5 could refer and consider the MARINE Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive. Maps have</p>	<p>1. Comments on transboundary consultations are noted.</p> <p>2. Section 3.5 of the SEA will consider the MSFD and reference to the Marine Spatial Directive. Maps on the Northern SAC./SPA will be included for the purpose of the SEA where Louth County Council</p>

	<p>not been included with the Northern Ireland SAC/SPA and NIEA can provide these.</p> <p>3. Draft Plan: Section 3.5.2 and Coastal Protection should take into consideration Co. Down coastline and the need for integration of works with the DOE NI for long term strategic coastal management. Section 3.5.4 as foreshore works should acknowledge shared boundaries and the need for integrated working in relation to developments requiring a marine license such as the Greencastle Ferry and Narrow Water Bridge, Section 8.4 "Water" should take into account the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.</p>	<p>are able to source same.</p> <p>3. Section 3.5.2 will be amended to include a reference for any impacts on the County Down Coastline.</p> <p>Section 3.5.4 will acknowledge shared boundaries and the need for integrated workings.</p> <p>Section 8.4 will be amended to take into account the MSFD.</p>
<p>No 222</p> <p>Department of Environment Community and Local Government</p>	<p>Appropriate Assessment: Consultation with NPWS is required for compliance in respect to Appropriate Assessment.</p>	<p>Comments on AA are noted and comments have been received by NPWS as per Submission No 111. Cross referencing between Stabannon- Braganstown SPA and Rogerstown Estuary SPA were included, Clogherhead and Blasket Island and Boyne Coast and Estuary and River Nore SAC. All other Natura 2000 sites had detailed conservation objectives provided from NPWS.</p>

3.5 Submissions and Observations on Proposed Amendments

As the proposed amendments constituted a material alteration of the Draft Plan, they were placed on public display for a further period of public consultation with the supporting environmental assessments from 15th January 2014 until Thursday 13th February 2014. Under **Article 13(H) of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations (SI 436 of 2004)**, the planning authority is required to take account of the environmental report and any submission/observation made in response to a notice issued under Section 12 (7) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, (as amended) i.e. notice of proposed amendments during the preparation of the plan and before it is adopted. Submissions and observations received from environmental authorities and members of the public on proposed amendments as

presented in the Environmental Report (and addendum) were taken into account during the preparation of the **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021**. Main submissions and observations pertaining to environmental considerations and in particular to environmental assessments included those from the OPW, Development Applications Unit of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the EPA. Briefly, the OPW submission focused on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and no change to the draft Plan or Flood Risk Assessment maps were deemed necessary. The DAHG submission dealt primarily with Natura Impact Report for the draft Plan and the absence of a scientific determination.

Essentially, no changes to the draft Plan were proposed in these submissions and therefore this submission was not reflected in either the draft Plan or the Strategic Environmental Assessment or associated documents.

3.6 Submissions on the Material Alterations on the Draft Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021

The period of public consultation for the proposed material amendments ran from 30th of June until the 19th of August 2015. The Chief Executives Report was presented to the elected members on the 3rd September 2015 and a meeting to discuss the recommendations within the report was held on the 28th September 2015. The main issues raised as material amendments included:

- Lands at Greenore to be included as port and related uses,
- NRA with regard to the access from the national road network,
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Gaeltacht with regard information in the environmental report.
- Submission on the strategic lands reserve and the reintroduction of certain zonings under the rural development zones.

Table 7: Submissions received in relation to the Material Alterations

Submissions	Issues raised on material alterations	Response to issues.
No. 2 EPA	<p>Welcome amendment to policies and objectives to strengthen the commitment for the protection of the environment.</p> <p>Request for clarification of the removal of EDE 35 and large scale retail outside of town centres.</p> <p>Additional protection for (former policy TC 39) now TC 41 with regard to the protection of the port expansion.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Compliance with the RPGs is sufficient for the justification of the removal of EDE 35 from the plan.</p> <p>Addition text accompany plan whereas any masterplan must comply with the relevant policies such as the relevant Water</p>

	<p>Requirement for the following to be included in the SEA Statement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan; 2. How the Environmental Report, submissions, observations and consultations have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan; 3. The reasons for choosing the Plan adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and, 4. The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Plan 	<p>framework, SEA/ EIA Directives.</p> <p>Noted and included within this SEA Statement.</p>
<p>No. 5 Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</p>	<p>Unclear if the map for wind energy and bird flight paths has been taken into consideration.</p> <p>Former policy TC 42 now TC 44 and the requirement for additional support for the environmental protection.</p> <p>The assessment of former policy TC 42 now policy 44 was linked to the assessment of former policy TC 39 now TC 41 therefore similar policies and similar issues raised.</p>	<p>A Draft Renewable Energy Strategy for County Louth will be produced during the lifetime of the plan and therefore this information will have to be addressed. In addition an environmental screening assessment of any renewable strategy will have to be included.</p> <p>Addition to Policy TC 44 (former policy TC 42) "Any proposals shall be subject to compliance with all relevant EU policies such as Water Framework, Habitats, SEA and EIA Directive".</p> <p>Both of these policies were independently assessed by the SEA Team and were combined into the environmental assessment.</p>

<p>No 13. Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.</p>	<p>The screening reports for the SEA and NIR are added into one report.</p> <p>Screening exercises are clearly separate and stand alone conclusions.</p> <p>Planning Authorities are satisfied they have fulfilled the requirement of the Habitats and SEA Directives.</p>	<p>These were added into one report only for the environmental determination on the material alterations.</p> <p>The screening of the new altered policies have been included in the SEA scoring matrix and integrated into both the SEA and the NIR conclusion.</p> <p>The Planning Authority is implementing the SEA Directive and Habitats Directive through the national guidance and legislation.</p>
<p>No 9.Greenore</p>	<p>26 No. submissions were received in relation to Greenore with regard to the impact of the additional zoning for port and related uses.</p>	<p>Meeting with the Cllrs to vote on the CE report on 28th of September 2015</p> <p>Land to the North of Greenore retained as Port/Port Related Activity as per CE recommendation.</p> <p>The zoning of lands to be included as port /port related activity was adopted as industrial and a larger area incorporated than recommended by the CE.</p> <p>Any proposed development will be obliged to comply with the SEA/ Habitats Directive and as such appropriate screening assessments will be addressed. In addition to that the cumulative effect will have to be addressed.</p>
<p>No 31</p>	<p>Similar submissions in relation to the reduction of a gap along the edge of settlements from 400m-</p>	<p>Meeting with the Cllrs to vote on the CE report on 28th of</p>

Breffni Martin & No 53 Cllr Mark Dearey and Cllr Marianne Butler	150m. It was submitted that the SEA/ AA determination did not fully assess the implications on the amount of dwellings that would be permitted and would the negative impact they would have on the environment and the Natura 2000 sites of County Louth.	September 2015 the reduction was increased from 150 to 300m. The SEA/ AA determination assessed the change as neutral due to the significance of the impact and the actual possibility of assessing any implications. A screening for AA and EIA will have to be included in any proposals before the planning authority.
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3.7 Conclusion on the Submissions Received on the draft Plan and the Accompanying Environmental Reports

The determination from Louth County Council concluded that, even considering the precautionary principle, an additional environmental assessment was not required and therefore a further period of consultation was not required. The mitigation measures relating to the master planning of the port areas, compliance with the EU Habitats Directives on screening and regional roads policies in the draft plan all provide mitigation measures to the reduction of impacts on the environment, appropriate development and assessment of any future developments. The overlaying environmental principles throughout the Louth County Development Plan are felt to be strong and allow the development management process to be implemented appropriately at a local level. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was undertaken in tandem with the SEA and AA although it was a standalone process and submissions and observations were integrated into this document. Composite Maps for the Level 3 settlements were placed on public display to overlay the draft flood maps produced and the zonings of these settlements. Submissions and observations were relayed on this information and this was addressed through the CE Report. In general Louth County Council felt that the majority of lands illustrated for flooding of residential lands were pluvial and those coastal and fluvial areas could be mitigated against through the development plan process and the use of the draft flood maps. Mitigation measures have been detailed in the NIR which also accompanies the ***County Louth Development Plan 2015-2021***.

Table 8: Inclusion of Policies in the final Development Plan to Mitigate against Significant Adverse Effect on County Louth

Chapter 3: Rural Development & Natural Resources	
RD 3	To secure vibrant and viable rural communities by promoting sustainable development and settlement patterns in rural areas, environmentally friendly agricultural practices and the protection of natural resources, environment, sensitive landscapes and landscapes of the countryside.
RD 5	To ensure that such new developments do not impinge on areas of special amenity value or on areas designated as sensitive landscapes.
RD 8	To facilitate the development of agriculture while ensuring that natural waters, wildlife habitats and conservation areas are protected from pollution.
RD 14	To ensure that agricultural developments provide adequate waste collection and storage facilities and adhere to all legislation on water quality including the <i>Water Framework Directive</i> , <i>Nitrates Directive</i> and <i>Phosphorus Regulations</i> .
RD 15	To ensure that agricultural developments are designed and constructed in a manner that will ensure that watercourses and sources of potable water are protected from the threat of pollution.
RD17	To increase the quality of beaches in the County and in so doing contribute to the development of the tourism industry and to the enjoyment of the facilities, subject to compliance with the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
RD 19	To work closely with the Office of Public Works (OPW) in its work to identify and manage the risks associated with coastal flooding and coastal erosion.
RD 21	To require all proposed developments within 100m of the coastline of Louth, outside the settlements and in Zone 4, to submit supporting documentation on coastal erosion. New development will be prohibited unless it can be objectively established based on the best scientific information at the time of the application, that the likelihood of erosion at a specific location is minimal taking into account, inter alia, any impacts of the proposed development on erosion or deposition.
RD 31	To permit only very limited development appropriate to these sensitive landscapes. This would include limited one-off housing,* active recreational amenities such as pedestrian and cycle paths, equestrian trails, ecological corridors, small scale ancillary recreational facilities, agriculture and related activities. Certain unique, location tied or resource based developments and renewable energy schemes will be open to consideration. Such development will only be considered where it does not adversely impact on the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites.
	*Refer to Section 2.19.1 for Qualifying Criteria

Chapter 5: Heritage

HER 3 To ensure that all proposed developments comply with the DECLG “Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities 2010”.

HER 4 The Local Authority will ensure that a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) on all plans and projects and/or Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (NIS/NIR) where appropriate, is undertaken to make a determination. Natura 2000 sites located outside of the County but within 15km of the proposed development site should also be included in such screenings. All screening assessments submitted to the Planning Authority shall include a written statement indicating control methods proposed to prevent the spread of invasive species onto a Natura 2000 site.

HER 5 Any plans or projects that would have a significant adverse impact (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects) upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site will not be permitted.

HER 6 To co-operate with the Regional Planning Authority and adjoining local authorities, public agencies and community interests to protect regionally significant heritage assets, environmental quality and to identify threats to existing environmental quality in a transboundary context throughout the region.

HER 7 To resist any development that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats or disturbance of species in a pNHA.

HER 10 To afford protection to the landscapes and natural environments of the county, by permitting only those forms of development that are considered sustainable and do not unduly damage or take from the character of the landscape or natural environment.

HER11 To co-operate with adjoining local authorities, both north and south of the border, to ensure that the environment is maintained in a sustainable manner and to support the co-ordinated designation of sensitive landscapes and policy approaches with adjoining areas and on all aspects of environmental protection, particularly where transboundary environmental vulnerabilities are identified.

HER 15 To require an assessment of the implications of any proposed development on significant trees and hedgerows and streams located on lands that are being considered for development. Survey and protection procedures detailed in the Appendix 16 will be required by the council.

HER 16 Where in exceptional circumstances trees and or hedgerows are required to be removed, in order to facilitate development, there shall be a requirement that each tree felled is replaced at a ratio of 10:1. and each hedgerow removed is to be replaced with native species where feasible.

HER 29 To maintain the Outstanding Universal Value of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site, Louth County Council will seek to ensure that no development which might have significant, deleterious impacts upon the character of the World Heritage Site is permitted.

HER 36 To require that all planning applications relating to Protected Structures contain the appropriate documentation as described in the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011) or any variation thereof, to enable a proper assessment of the proposed works and their impact on the structure or area.

HER 65 To support the green infrastructure network of County Louth. To implement the green infrastructure network in any assessment of development proposals to prevent adverse impact on the

ecological connectivity of County Louth's core areas.

HER 66 To require the use of the Green Infrastructure Network as a supplementary guide for the protection and conservation of the Natura 2000 sites in County Louth.

HER 69 A minimum of 20m wide riparian corridor shall be kept free from development (except for pathways) along the side of each bank of the river for the purposes of habitat protection, maintenance access requirements, flood alleviation and recreational requirements. Any proposed path should be located a minimum of 6 meters from the top of the river edge. All proposed coastal walkways will be required to comply with the Habitats , EIA and SEA Directives.

HER 75 To require the integration of climate change mitigation measures in any future spatial plans and climate change adaptation measures in proposed developments.

Chapter 6: Economic Development, Tourism & Retail

EDE 20 To promote and facilitate the development of walkways and cycleways at appropriate locations throughout the county utilising disused transport links where feasible.*

EDE 21 To promote and facilitate the development of cycle routes in accordance with The National Cycle Network Scoping Study 2010 *

EDE 22 To protect the integrity and scenic quality of existing and future walking and cycling routes and their setting. *

EDE 23 To work in conjunction with adjoining authorities including Newry Mourne & Down, Monaghan and Meath County Councils to extend and design new walking and cycling routes, including towards Newry , Inniskeen and the eastern coastal route to Drogheda & Balbriggan as well as extending the Brú na Bóinne Greenway. Ensure all proposals include an appraisal of environmental impacts and take full account of the potential for negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites through the process of Habitat Directive Assessment Screening.*

*The above policies EDE 20-EDE 23 shall be subject to compliance with all relevant EU policies such as the Water Framework, Habitats, SEA & EIA Directives.

EDE 25 To co-operate with the relevant authorities and government agencies north and south of the Border in the provision of Narrow Water Bridge. Policy EDE 25 shall be subject to compliance with all relevant EU policies such as the Water Framework, Habitats, SEA and EIA Directives.

Chapter 7: Transport

TC 20 To secure the implementation of the Council's *Road Improvement Programme 2015 – 2021* as detailed in Table 7.7, 7.8, and 7.9 in consultation and agreement with the Department of Transport and National Roads Authority subject to available funding and to keep free from development all lands identified for the construction and improvement of national, regional and local roads within the County. All proposed transport routes will be required to comply with the Habitats , EIA and SEA Directives.

TC 28 To plan and develop a Louth Coastal Walk from the northern to the southern county boundary taking full account of the need to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the coast and the need to avoid significant negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites through the process of

Habitats Directive Assessment Screening.

TC 41 To support the development and expansion of the ports of Drogheda, Greenore and Dundalk and Clogherhead subject to the preparation of a masterplan and compliance with the EU policies such as the Water Framework, Habitats, SEA and EIA Directive.

TC 43 To support the development of smaller ports and harbours many of which are in direct ownership of Louth County Council, through the implementation of capital and maintenance dredging programmes, subject to compliance with the EU Habitats Directive.

TC 44 Louth County Council will explore the potential development of Dundalk Port as a centre for future recreation and leisure use. Any proposals shall be subject to compliance with all relevant EU policies such as the Water Framework, Habitats, SEA & EIA Directives.

Chapter 8: Environment.

ENV 1 To implement European, national and regional policy in relation to the protection of the environment and the pursuance of sustainable development principles in respect of the Council's policies and procedures.

ENV 11 To implement the recommendations contained in the River Basin District Management Plans for the Neagh Bann and the Eastern River Basin Districts, in so far as they relate to County Louth or any subsequent RBDMPs subsequently adopted during the lifetime of the Plan.

ENV 13 To implement the recommendations contained in any Groundwater Protection Scheme prepared under EU Ground Water Directives and to protect ground water resources in County Louth nutrient sensitive area and the designated shellfish growing areas within Carlingford Lough and Dundalk Bay.

ENV 14 To protect fisheries in all rivers in the county, where appropriate, including relevant species as contained in Annex II of the Habitats Directive.

ENV 15 To ensure compliance with and to implement the provisions of the *Nitrate Directive* in so far as it falls within the remit of the council to do so

ENV 31 Development Plans and Local Area Plans should be consistent with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2009, and adopt strategic, integrated, sustainable and proactive approach to catchment management to avoid and reduce flood risk within the Region, managing the risk from:

- tidal effects around estuaries and along the coast including the implications of the latest predictions for sea level rise;
- fluvial flooding along river corridors and other significant watercourses resulting from catchments within and beyond the Region and other sources of flooding; and
- pluvial flooding resulting from surface water runoff and capacity constraints in surface water drainage systems

ENV 32 Where new or upgraded flood/coastal defences are shown to be essential to protect existing development, all such proposals shall be subject to the Floods and Habitats Directive and all other statutory requirements.

Chapter 9: Energy & Communications

EnCo 13 The Council will aim to produce a Renewable Energy Strategy for County Louth during the lifetime of the Development Plan. This strategy shall have regard to “A Methodology for Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies” SEAI and shall be compliant with the requirements of SEA and Habitants Directive.

EnCo 21 To support the development of wave energy in suitable waters off the coast of County Louth subject to the protection of important marine habitats and acceptable visual and environmental considerations.

EnCo 22 To support the development of tidal energy in suitable waters off the coast of County Louth subject to the protection of important marine habitats and acceptable visual and environmental considerations.

3.8 Conclusion on Consultation

The majority of the information provided for in the submissions was integrated into the drafting of the Plan and Table 8 clearly illustrates the use of environmental protection across all themes of the development plan. In addition to this, information relayed during the consultation was integrated into the environmental reports so that assessment of these draft policies could be undertaken in a fully informed manner.

4.0 Consideration of Alternatives

4.1 Introduction

The issue of alternatives is a critical function of the SEA process and is necessary to evaluate the likely environmental consequences of a range of alternative development strategies for the settlements within the constraints imposed by environmental conditions. The alternatives were considered at an early stage of the process and after an iterative process with the drafting, SEA and AA teams, the most appropriate scenario was selected. These alternatives were reassessed following changes proposed for material alterations.

4.2 Legislative context

Article 5 of the SEA Directive requires the consideration of reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme and the significant environmental effects of the alternatives proposed. It states under **Article 5(1)** 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.

In accordance with SEA guidelines the alternatives put forward should be reasonable, realistic and capable of implementation. They should also be in line with the appropriate strategic level at which the Plan will be implemented within the national and county planning hierarchy.

The alternatives proposed have been assessed against the relevant Strategic Environmental Objectives (see Table 18 of the SEA on the draft Plan) and established the key aspects of the environment likely to be affected by the plan implementation. The evaluation process resulted in the identification of potential impacts and informed the selection of the preferred development scenario for the draft plan.

Alternatives which are investigated through the SEA and the drafting of the Plan include:

- Settlement led planning where the population allocation is distributed throughout the County,
- Urban led regulatory development controls,
- Urban based primacy with settlement centres as support centres.

Alternatives considered during the drafting of the Plan are linked to the development of the Core Strategy and other statutory information required under **Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)**.

4.2.1 Settlement Led Planning

This scenario will comply with regulations for restricting development within the countryside yet it directs growth, in the Core Strategy, to all 13 Level 3 settlements, 24 Level 4 settlements. The allocation of population growth would be based on available serviced centres although the consolidation of population in urban areas would not be prioritised.

4.2.2 Urban led Regulatory Development Control

This alternative supports rural based guidelines and restrictions on development outside the designated Level 1 Settlements: Dundalk and Drogheda, Level 2 Settlements: Dunleer and Ardee. These 13 Level 3 settlements and 24 Level 4 settlements would have minimal population allocation under the core strategy. This scenario builds on strong growth centres at key locations and any developments outside of the centres are controlled by rural protection policy. The positive scenario includes the protection of rural countryside and consolidation of critical mass. In this scenario vitality and viability of the rural environment could be compromised due to the lack of agricultural development and rural enterprise and possible negative results including:-

- No natural growth of Level 3 or Level 4 settlements,
- Population decline in rural areas,
- Negative impact on Louth's rural area,
- Decline in vitality and viability of rural based enterprises.

4.2.3 Urban Based Primacy with Settlement Centres as Support Centres

This alternative supports regional planning guidelines and other economic and rural policies. It particularly supports a sustainable core strategy in so far as it allows the growth of Level 1 & 2 settlements for economic development. This complies with **Section 10 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended)** in relation to sustainable transport, economic development and residential growth, integrated support for climate change mitigation (reduction in greenhouse gases GHG) and reduce pressure in rural areas.

By providing levels for population growth in the Level 3 & 4 centres the pressure for rural based dwellings will be reduced which again support the environmental base in Louth. Further regulated growth of these centres provides an element of choice for the residents of County Louth.

This scenario can also be described as a structured “bottom up” approach where strong settlements are supported by a vibrant rural settlement. In this instance the Core Strategy dictates the areas for growth. Based on the Regional Planning Guidelines (2010) the population allocation for County Louth was 10,688 which is 1,781 per annum. An allowance towards both Dundalk and Drogheda was required and therefore the direction of growth to the remaining settlements and rural area was limited. In line with climate change mitigation the remainder of the growth was directed towards currently serviced areas or those which are likely to become serviced “support centres”. Limited growth in the open countryside must comply with local needs criteria.

4.4 Assessment of Alternatives

Scenario 3 was selected as the predicted effects would have a positive effect on some aspects of the environment, with the remainder of the environmental considerations being envisaged to cause mitigatable effects. Therefore it is considered that the draft Plan, as selected, was done so with regard to environmental considerations and supports the County’s considerable natural, built and cultural resources including the protection of the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

5.0 Monitoring

5.1 Introduction

Appendix 1 included below illustrates the information to be contained in the Environmental Report. Monitoring of the environment allows for any adverse effects from the Plan to be identified and therefore remedial action can be undertaken. The information from the SEA has been used and expanded to allow for an in-depth monitoring process to be used. The baseline environmental considerations are utilised in the the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) for this assessment. The SEOs were then used to assess the policies in the drafting of **Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021**. These SEOs are standards against which the policies of the Plan, including the zoning

provisions can be evaluated in order to help identify areas in which significant adverse impacts are likely to occur, if unmitigated against.

In addition to the SEOs targets, indicators are included to provide a benchmark for which the Plan can be assessed against. In future this benchmark can be referred to when looking at the implications of complying with the development plan policies. The use of these targets and indicators is further described below:

- **Targets:** (to achieve) a detailed performance requirement, quantified where practicable, applicable to the facility or parts thereof, that arises from the environmental objectives and that needs to be set and met to achieve those objectives.
- **Indicators:** (of success) are used to illustrate and communicate impacts in a simple and effective manner. Indicators can also be used to form the basis of a monitoring programme for the Plan, the results of which will inform the next review.

The use of some of the targets and indicators are drawn from the Councils obligation to comply with legislation whilst others are based on data available from internal Council sources. These are useful as tools for monitoring of the baseline environment and therefore any deterioration of the environmental receptors would indicate that the plan is not providing sufficient environmental protection.

They will be used at the 2 year review process as per the planning legislation.

Table 9: List of Indicators for analysis at 2 year Review of the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021

Environmental Receptors	SEO	Indicators
Population and Human Health (P) Aim: Improve people's quality of life based on high- quality residential, working and recreational environments and on sustainable travel patterns.	P 1: Facilitate a high level of living for County Louth's population by ensuring high quality residential, recreational and working environments and sustainable travel patterns.	CSO data on population trends (LCC) www.cso.ie
	P 2: Protect human health by adhering to the County Emergency Plan.	Number of public amenities provided during the plan period. www.louthcoco.ie Recreation and Amenity Section. Water quality (WFD) www.nbirbd.com www.erbd.ie

		New and expanding civic amenity scheme in Louth www.louthcoco.ie Environment Section.
Air & Climatic Factors (AC) Aim: Reduce all forms of air pollution and control greenhouse gas emissions	AC 1 Minimise greenhouse gas emissions in line with the National standards and targets.	Use of public transport www.louthcoco.ie Infrastructure Section. Provision of cycle lanes and walking routes www.louthcoco.ie Infrastructure Section. Number of permissions granted for renewable energy projects www.louthcoco.ie Energy/ Planning Section.
	AC 2 Improve ambient air quality	Air quality indicators www.epa.ie
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna (BFF) Aim: Maintain and enhance biodiversity.	B1 Conserve protected habitats and species.	Percentage of unique habitats and species recorded by the EPA in the 6 year review "The State of our Nation" . www.epa.ie
	B2 Protect Natura 2000 sites in the planning process using the Habitats Directive Article 6 assessment methodology.	Provision of Article 6 assessments with development proposed for sites overlaying or potentially impacting Natura 2000 sites. Article 17 reporting to the EU www.npws.ie
	B3 Conserve the diversity of habitats and species in non designated sites.	Biodiversity Action Plans of settlements www.louthcoco.ie Heritage Section No. of biodiversity plans submitted with planning applications. www.louthcoco.ie Planning Section
Soil (S) Aim: Maintain the quality of soils and conserve geological resources.	S1 Maximise the sustainable re-use of brownfield sites and maximise the use of the existing built environment.	Number of planning developments on brownfield sites www.louthcoco.ie Planning Section
Water (W)	SW 1 (Surface Water).	Changes in receiving water

Aim: Prevent any deterioration in the status of any water and to achieve at least “good status” in all waters by 2015.		quality as identified during the water quality monitoring for the WFD, by EPA and LCC www.epa.ie & www.nbdirb.com
	GW 1 (Ground water).	Changes in the status of groundwater monitoring by LCC and the EPA for compliance for the WFD www.epa.ie & www.nbdirb.com
	DW 1 (Drinking Water).	Drinking water quality and bacterial counts and frequency of boil water notices.
	WS 1 (Water Supply).	Number of water shortage notices.
		Number of schemes implemented from Irish Water Services Capital Investment Programme.
	F1 (Flooding).	Number and type of developments which have flooded over the Plan life
Material Assets (MA) Aim: Maximise the use of existing infrastructure and plan for future needs.	MA 1 (Transportation).	Number of cars on the road as a percentage www.cso.ie number of registered vehicles.
	MA 2 (Waste Management).	To reduce household waste going to the landfill and increase the amount of waste going for recycling. www.louthcoco.ie Environment Section
	MA3 (Wastewater infrastructure).	Completion of all WWTP included within the Irish Water Capital Investment Programme. www.water.ie
Cultural and Built Heritage (CBH) Aim: Promote the protection and conservation of cultural heritage including architecture, archaeology, history and industrial features.	CH1 Promote best proactive in archaeology and heritage conservation and management.	Number of unauthorised developments recorded over the lifetime of the Plan which results in the loss or partial loss of protected structures or sites of archaeological status. Amount of funding that is drawn down by the Planning Authority and private individuals.

		www.louthcoco.ie Built Heritage Section Conservation Grants.
<p>Landscape (L)</p> <p>Aim: Conserve and enhance valued natural and historic landscape and features within them. Appendix 1:</p> <p>EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF CERTAIN PLANS AND PROGRAMMES) REGULATIONS 2004</p>	<p>L1 Designate and protect views and prospects within the study area as detailed in the main body of the Plan.</p>	<p>Number of developments located close to or adjacent to identified views and prospects.</p> <p>www.louthcoco.ie Planning Section.</p>

Appendix 1 :European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans & Programmes) Regulations 2004

	The following information shall be contained in an environmental report—	
		(a) An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans or programmes;
		(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme,
		(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;
		(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to the Birds Directive or the Habitats Directive;
		(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, European Union or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;
		(f) the likely significant effects ¹ on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;
		(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme;
		(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;
		(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring of the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme;
		(j) a non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings