



Chapter 11

Environment, Natural Resources & the Coast

"Harness the County's natural and coastal resources in a manner that is compatible with the sensitivity of rural areas, the existing quality of life, and the protection and enhancement of the County's natural environment"

11 ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES & THE COAST

11.1 ENVIRONMENT

The quality of our natural environment provides the fundamental components for sustaining human life and the society and economy in which we live. The physical landscapes form our surroundings and everything we see from trees, coastlines, water bodies and countryside forms part of the biodiversity network.



A changing environment demands changing and adapting policies and programmes to meet the challenges posed by the environment at a local, national and international level. The need to maintain water quality is key to conservation of biodiversity and water dependant habitats and species. Biodiversity loss is a serious threat as habitat degradation and species loss are often irreversible. There is an underlying challenge to preserve, enhance and protect the quality of the environment whilst facilitating and encouraging development. A high-quality environment is not only of inherent value in itself but is also crucial for economic development and the health and well-being of our communities.

This Chapter details policy objectives, which will facilitate development in appropriate locations while ensuring the conservation of the natural environment for generations.

11.1.1 Policy Context

The European Environment Agency (EEA) '2020 State of the Environment Report for Europe' concludes that Europe faces environmental challenges of unprecedented scale and urgency. The Report states that achieving the goals of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the Paris Agreement will require urgent action in key areas during the next 10 years. The Report concludes that Europe will not achieve its sustainability vision of 'living well, within the limits of our planet' simply by promoting economic growth and seeking to manage harmful side-effects with environmental and social policy tools. Instead, sustainability needs to become the guiding principle for ambitious and coherent policies and actions across society.

At a national level, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has produced 'Ireland's Environment – An Assessment 2016'. This Report is the latest in the EPA 'State of the Environment' series, which is published every 4 years. The Report outlines at a strategic level the current state of Ireland's environment.

It provides an update on environmental challenges that we face both nationally and globally. The Report concludes that there are many positive aspects associated with Ireland's environment: Air quality is generally classified as good, good-quality water in many rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters and excellent progress has been made in meeting EU waste recycling, recovery and diversion targets.

However, the Report acknowledges that there are challenges and necessary actions, which are important for the delivery of environmental protection and sustainable development.

The seven key environmental actions identified in the report are:

- Recognition of the benefits of a good quality environment to health and wellbeing;
- Implement measures that achieve ongoing improvements in the environmental status of water bodies from source to the sea;
- Accelerate mitigation actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement adaptation measures to increase our resilience in dealing with adverse climate impacts;
- Integrate resource efficiency and environmental sustainability ideas and performance accounting across all economic sectors;
- Inform, engage and support communities in the protection and improvement of the environment;
- Protect pristine and wild places that act as biodiversity hubs, contribute to health and wellbeing and provide sustainable tourism opportunities, and
- Improve the tracking of plans and policies and the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation to protect the environment.

Policy Objective	
ENV 1	To implement European, National and Regional policy in relation to the protection of the environment, climate action and the pursuance of sustainable development principles in respect of the Council’s policies and procedures.

Policy Objective	
ENV 2	To pursue the precautionary and the polluter pays principles in relation to permitted development in the County.

Policy Objective	
ENV 3	To seek to achieve European and National standards in relation to air, noise and water quality in the County and apply BAT standard (Best Available Techniques).

11.1.2 Climate Action

Climate Change is one of the most important and urgent issues at an International, National and Local level. Addressing the issue of climate action requires co-ordinated action at various levels in addition to behavioural changes. The Plan will play an important role in this regard. Climate change adaptation and mitigation measures are required by local authorities as part of their development plan review process and commitments under the *Climate Action Charter, Louth County Council’s Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and the National Climate Action Plan 2019.*

The National Climate Change Adaptation Framework – Building Resilience to Climate Change DECLG 2012 and the National Adaptation Framework provide guidance on adaptation measures. Chapter 12 of the Plan specifically addresses Climate Action and adaptation measures.



Policy Objective

ENV 4	To support the goals and objectives of the <i>EU Green Deal</i> , the <i>Climate Action Plan 2019</i> and the <i>Climate Action Charter</i> in ensuring sustainable development across the County.
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Policy Objective

ENV 5	To promote the future sustainable development of County Louth in such a manner as to support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures through the implementation of infrastructure in designated settlements.
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11.1.3 Noise Emissions

Environmental noise refers to noise emitted by means of road traffic, rail traffic, air traffic and noise in urban agglomerations over a specified size. Noise levels can intrude on the peace and quiet that residents and users of amenities should reasonably expect to enjoy. Louth County Council has produced a *Noise Action Plan*, in accordance with the *European Noise Directive 2002/49/EC*. The *Noise Action Plan* is a 5 year strategic plan covering the period 2018 - 2023.

11.1.3.1 Noise Action Plan 2018 - 2023

The overall aim of managing environmental noise within the framework of the regulations is to avoid, prevent and reduce the harmful effects due to long term exposure to environmental noise. This will in turn promote good health.

The *Noise Action Plan* is therefore designed with the twin aims of:

- Avoiding significant adverse health impacts from noise; and
- Preserving environmental noise quality where good.

In County Louth, the only noise source to be considered by the *Noise Action Plan* relates to major roads carrying in excess of 3 million vehicle passages per year, as defined in the Regulations.

The designated noise mapping agency, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), has produced distinct noise maps for national and regional roads in Co Louth.

The *Noise Action Plan* sets out a list of roads within the County that have exceeded the three million vehicles passages per year threshold. Figure 11.1 illustrates the extent of these routes.

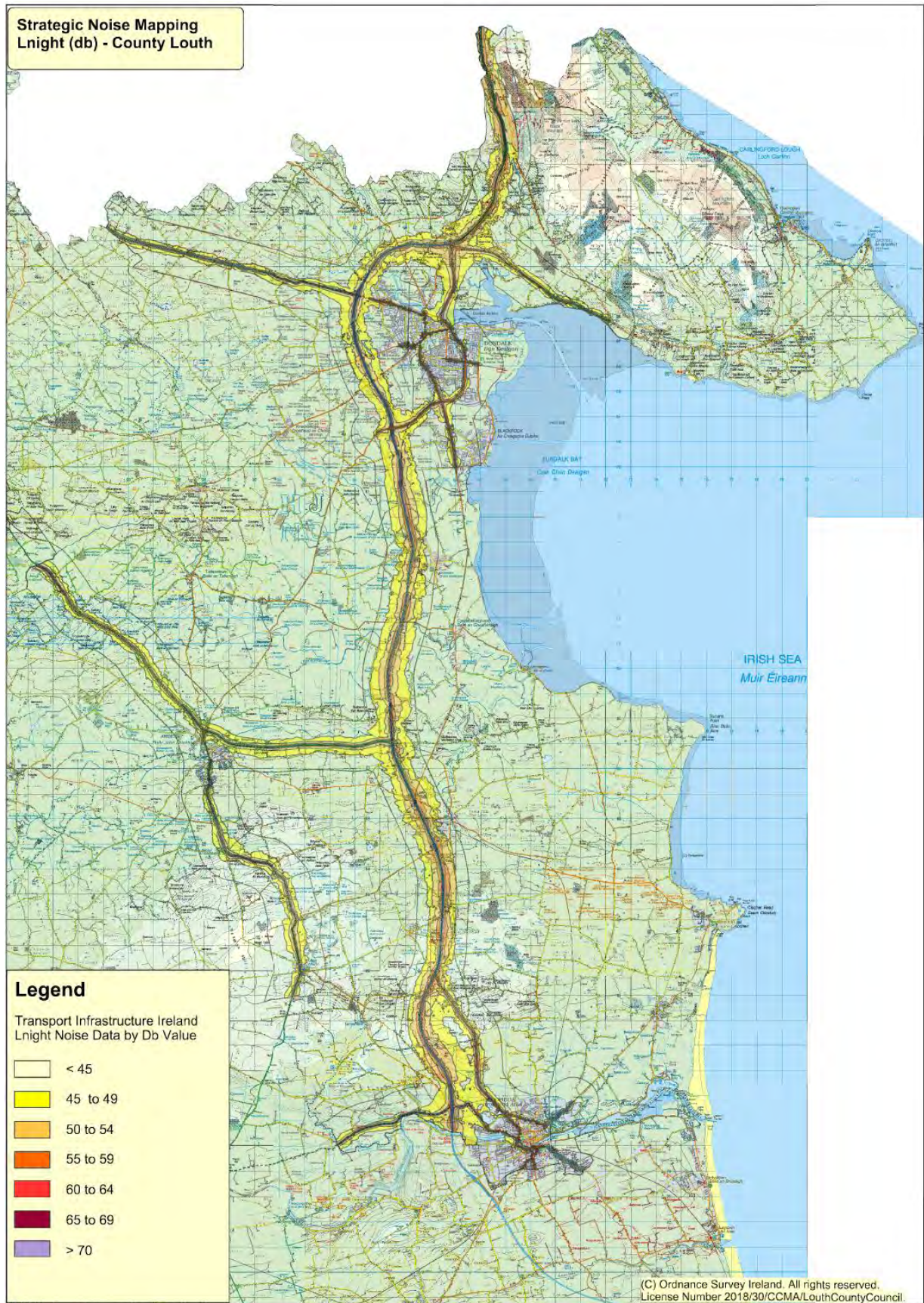
Policy Objective

ENV 6	To implement the Louth County Council <i>Noise Action Plan 2018-2023</i> (and any subsequent Plan) in order to avoid, prevent and reduce the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to environmental noise exposure.
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Policy Objective

ENV 7	To require that where new development is proposed within the limits of the noise maps for the designated sections of roads in the County, appropriate mitigation measures are undertaken so as to prevent harmful effects from environmental noise.
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Figure 11.1: Noise Action Plan - Routes within County Louth



11.1.4 Light Pollution

While artificial lighting is essential for a safe and secure night-time environment, the Council recognises the impacts light pollution, glare and spillage can have on the visual, wildlife and residential amenities of surrounding areas.

Policy Objective

ENV 8	To ensure that all external lighting whether free standing or attached to a building shall be designed and constructed so as not to cause excessive light spillage, glare, or dazzle motorists, and thereby limiting light pollution into the surrounding environment and protecting the amenities of nearby properties, traffic and wildlife.
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Policy Objective

ENV 9	To require all details of on-site lighting associated with all future development are submitted to and agreed with the planning authority.
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Policy Objective

ENV 10	To promote the use of low energy LED (or equivalent) lighting in support of Climate Action.
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Policy Objective

ENV 11	To implement a hierarchy of light intensity zones as required in development schemes to ensure that environmental impact is minimised as far as possible particularly in areas proximate to ecological corridors.
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11.1.5 Air Quality

Poor air quality both in the urban and rural environment has the potential to lead to significant environmental problems.

Similarly, poor air quality is directly linked to poor health amongst the general population. Air quality is monitored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Louth County Council. The Council recognise the need to ensure the highest standards of air quality within the County. The work of the EPA in monitoring air quality is noted and the Plan is supportive of new air quality real time monitoring stations within the County.

Policy Objective

ENV 12	To promote the preservation of best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development in accordance with the <i>EU Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC)</i> and ensure that all air emissions associated with new developments are within Environmental Quality Standards as out in the <i>Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011 (SI No. 180 of 2011)</i> , or any updated/superseding documents.
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11.1.6 Radon

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas. It is formed by the radioactive decay of uranium. Uranium is usually found in igneous rocks and soil, which means that certain areas of the country are at a greater risk from radon. Radon is a colourless, odourless and tasteless radioactive gas. Exposure to radon accounts for over half the total radiation dose received by the Irish population.

Radon problems only begin to arise when the gas is in a confined space such as your home or workplace.

Policy Objective

ENV 13	To ensure the implementation of the specific guidance on radon prevention measures for new homes as contained within the existing Building Regulations including any updated/superseding regulations.
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11.1.7 Soil

Soil is a biologically active mixture of weathered minerals, organic matter, organisms and water which provides the foundation of life in terrestrial ecosystems. Soil supports natural ecosystems and human life by providing raw materials, food production and land for facilitating development. Soil also stores, filters, transforms and acts as a buffer to substances that are introduced to the environment which is particularly important in the production and protection of water supplies and for regulating greenhouse gases.

The Plan recognises the key role that soil plays in many areas including food production, surface water, flooding management and providing the key ingredient for supporting a wide range of ecosystem habitats and enhancing biodiversity.

The EPA’s publication *Code of Practice: Environmental Risk Assessment for Unregulated Waste Disposal Sites (2007)* shall be taken into account as relevant by proposals for development within or adjacent to old landfill sites. All undeveloped, contaminated sites shall be remediated to internationally accepted standards prior to redevelopment.

All applications shall be accompanied by a report from a qualified, expert remediation consultant, incorporating international best practice and expertise on innovative ecological restoration techniques, including specialist planting and green initiatives that create aesthetically improved sites, healthy environments and contribute to the provision of new green open spaces as integral parts of newly created areas.

The treatment/management of any contaminated material shall comply as appropriate with the *Waste Management Act 1996* (waste licence, waste facility permit), as amended, and under the *EPA Act 1992* (Industrial Emissions licensing, in particular the First Schedule, Class 11 Waste), as amended. These measures will ensure that contaminated material will be managed in a manner that removes any risk to human health and ensures that the end use will be compatible with any risk.

Policy Objective

ENV 14	To ensure that adequate soil protection measures are undertaken where appropriate. Adequate and appropriate investigations shall be carried out into the nature and extent of any soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development work, where brownfield development is proposed.
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11.1.8 Water Quality

The economic, social and environmental wellbeing of County Louth requires water quality to be of the highest possible standard. This includes surface water, ground water, estuarine and coastal waters all of which are vital to life and must, therefore, be managed accordingly.

The *EPA Water Quality in Ireland report 2013-2018* published in 2019 indicates that of the 25 monitored river water bodies at the catchment level in Louth, 8 were classified as having ‘Good’ ecological status, 12 were ‘Moderate’ and 5 were ‘Poor’.

11.1.8.1 The Water Framework Directive

The *Water Framework Directive* (WFD) is an initiative aimed at improving water quality throughout the European Union. The Directive was adopted in 2000 and requires governments to take a new approach to managing all their waters; rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, groundwater, protected areas (including wetlands and other water dependent ecosystems), estuaries (transitional) and coastal waters up to 1 nautical mile.

The Directive requires the status of water bodies to be classified as high, good, moderate, poor or bad and the status is defined with respect to its biology, chemistry, quantity and morphology. The WFD brings water related directives under one framework, including those dealing with bathing water, waters used for the abstraction of drinking waters, wastewater disposal and the protection of economically significant aquatic species (shellfish and freshwater fish).

The WFD requires an integrated approach to managing water quality on a river basin basis, with the aim of maintaining and improving water quality. It requires that management plans be prepared on a river basin basis in six year cycles and specifies a structured approach to developing those plans. Ireland is committed to managing all waters through a catchment based process, and the River Basin Management Plan is the mechanism for achieving this.

The Council supports the development of Drinking Water Protection Plans in line with the requirements of the *WFD* and the current and future cycles of RBMP. In this regard, the Council supports mitigation and protection measures for all protected areas, including *Drinking Water Protected Areas* and *associated Source Protection Plans*.

11.1.8.2 River Basin Management

The Government has published the *River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland 2018-2021*.



River Basin Management Plan for Ireland

2018 - 2021

This is the second RBMP (the first cycle covered the period 2009–2015) and it outlines the new approach that Ireland will take as it works to protect its rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters over the next four years. The Plan sets out the actions to improve water quality and achieve ‘good’ ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) by 2027. Ireland is required to produce a river basin management plan under the *Water Framework Directive* (WFD). The majority of the County (predominantly north and mid Louth) is within the Neagh Bann River Basin District, with south Louth being covered by the Ireland River Basin District (previously the Eastern River Basin District).

Louth County Council acknowledges the importance of a collaborative approach to local catchment management, which will assist in the more effective implementation of the RBMPs.

The water quality in County Louth, including surface waters and groundwater, represents an important ecological, recreational, economic, public health and aesthetic resource. The availability of a drinking water supply is essential for public health and the economic development of the County.

However, the need to balance the increasing demand for water with the needs of the environment and those of existing users is crucial. Population growth and increasing pressures for new development will increase the overall demand for water.

Louth County Council has responsibility for the protection of all waters in the County.

The Council also has an important role to play in the protection, maintenance and improvement of water quality through the planning and management of future development.

Policy Objective	
ENV 15	To implement the recommendations contained in the <i>River Basin District Management Plans for Ireland 2018-2021</i> or any subsequent plan. Proposed plans, programmes and projects shall not have an unacceptable impact on the water environment, including surface waters, groundwater quality and quantity, river corridors and associated woodlands. Also, to have cognisance of, where relevant, the <i>EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Document No. 20 and 36</i> which provide guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the <i>Water Framework Directive</i> .

Policy Objective	
ENV 16	To increase awareness through educational and other means so as to inform the public of the need and importance of maintaining the highest possible water quality standards.

11.1.8.3 Groundwater

Groundwater is an important water source for use in a range of commercial activities. Good quality groundwater is a key natural resource, which directly and indirectly contributes to and sustains a variety of important ecosystems.

The groundwater chemistry is continually being modified by the influence of human activity, whether that is through changes in groundwater flow, caused by groundwater abstraction, or the introduction of anthropogenic substances. The presence of purely anthropogenic substances, e.g. hydrocarbons or pesticides, clearly indicates departure from natural conditions. There are certain developments, such as agriculture, mining, solid waste disposal, industries, sewerage schemes, septic tanks, chemical and fuel storage depots, which can generate contaminants that pose a threat to groundwater. Contamination manifests itself in chemical and/or biological form. Approximately 6-8% of Louth's water supply comes from groundwater sources. The protection of this resource is imperative for the Council.

Groundwater protection schemes are County based projects that are undertaken jointly between the Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) and local authorities. The aim of a groundwater protection scheme is to ensure the sustainability of groundwater reserves in addition to meeting the requirements of the Groundwater Directives.

The EPA carry out ground water monitoring at a number of locations around the County.

These are private group water schemes. Groundwater Source Protection Zones have been established at locations around the County.

Policy Objective	
ENV 17	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 areas and the designated shellfish growing areas within Carlingford Lough and Dundalk Bay.

Policy Objective	
ENV 18	To protect fisheries in all rivers in the County, where appropriate, including relevant species as contained in <i>Annex II of the Habitats Directive</i> .

Policy Objective	
ENV 19	To implement the requirements of the Groundwater Protection Scheme to protect known and potential ground water reserves.

Policy Objective	
ENV 20	To ensure compliance with and to implement the provisions of the Nitrates Directive in so far as it falls within the remit of the Council to do so.

Policy Objective	
ENV 21	To assess agricultural developments and associated agricultural waste matters within the County in accordance with the <i>European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017</i> for the purpose of preventing or eliminating the entry of polluting matters to waters.

11.1.8.4 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

Agricultural activities and waste generated from such activities has the potential if not appropriately managed, particularly in respect of storage and management of waste and phosphate control measures, to impact on the environment. S.I. No. 605 of 2017, EU Regulations on Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters (2017) gives effect to Ireland’s Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) for the protection of waters against pollution, caused by agricultural sources. The set of measures in these regulations provides a basic level of protection against possible adverse impacts to waters arising from the agricultural expansion targets.

The *Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)* has been in place since 1991 and it aims to protect water quality from pollution by agricultural sources and to promote the use of good farming practice. All EU Member States are required to prepare National Nitrates Action Programmes (NAP) that outline the rules for the management and application of livestock manures and other fertilisers. Ireland’s NAP is designed to prevent pollution of surface waters and ground water from agricultural sources and to protect and improve water quality. Ireland’s 4th NAP came into operation in 2017 and will be reviewed in 2021.

Policy Objective

ENV 22	To encourage the use of catchment-sensitive farming practices, in order to meet Water Framework Directive targets and comply with the River Basin Management Plan.
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Policy Objective

ENV 23	To implement the relevant provisions of the <i>Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011</i> , and the <i>European Communities (Amendment to Planning and Development) Regulations 2011</i> , which require planning permission be sought where the area impacted by works relating to the drainage or reclamation of a wetland exceeds 0.1 hectares, or where such works may have a significant effect on the environment.
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11.1.9 Waste Management**11.1.9.1 Regional Waste Management Plans**

The Eastern-Midlands Waste Management Region is one of Ireland's three Waste Management Regions. The region comprises of 12 constituent local authorities, including Louth County Council. Dublin City Council is the lead authority within the Region acting on behalf of the other authorities and hosting the Eastern-Midlands Waste Regional Office (EMWRO).

The *Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan* is a statutory document, prepared by the local authorities of the Region. It covers the period from 2015 to 2021, after which time it will be revised or replaced.

It is underpinned by National and European waste legislation and the work carried out will ensure the continued management of waste in a safe and sustainable manner. The plan includes eight Strategic Objectives and three overarching targets:

- A 1% reduction per annum in the quality of household waste generated per capita;

- Reduce to 0% the direct disposal of unprocessed municipal waste to of higher value pre-treatment processes and indigenous recovery practices; and
- A recycling rate of 50% of managed municipal waste by 2020.



The Plan states that the future role of local authorities in waste management will be focused on education, prevention, and resource efficiency activities as well as regulating householders, businesses and waste operators and enforcing waste legislation. Waste infrastructure provided by local authorities will mainly include bring banks and civic amenities.

Policy Objective

ENV 24	To implement and support the provisions of the <i>Eastern-Midlands Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021</i> or any subsequent plan and EU Directives/Policies.
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Policy Objective

ENV 25	To support the development of an additional recycling centre in the Mid-Louth area.
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Policy Objective

ENV 26	To facilitate the provision of adequate waste recovery and disposal facilities in appropriate locations, as deemed necessary in accordance with the requirements of the current ' <i>Eastern Midlands Region Waste Management Plan</i> ' and any subsequent plans.
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11.2 MAJOR ACCIDENTS – SEVESO SITES

The European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2006 transposes the SEVESO II Directive 96/82/EC (relating to the prevention of major accidents involving dangerous substances) into Irish Law.

The Directive aims to prevent major accident hazards involving dangerous substances and limit their consequences for humans and the environment. This is achieved through the following:

- The siting of new establishments;
- Modifications to existing establishments; and
- Development in the vicinity of an establishment which, by virtue of its type or siting is likely to increase the risk or consequence of a major accident.

The Health & Safety Authority (HSA) provides advice to Planning Authorities in respect of planning applications for development within a certain distance of the perimeter of these sites. The document, entitled '*Policy & Approach of the Health & Safety Authority to COMAH Risk-based Land-use Planning*', sets out the policy of the HSA on the land use planning requirements of the European 'Seveso' Directive on the control of major accident hazards.

The SEVESO sites in County Louth are identified in Table 11.1 below (as of November 2019) including the advised consultation distances (with the HSA) to be applied in respect of these sites.

Table 11.1 Notified Seveso Establishments

Establishment	Tier	Consultation Distance
Flogas Ireland Limited, Marsh Road, Drogheda	Upper	600 metres
BAK Bulk Services Red Barns, Drumcar Road, Dunleer	Lower	400 metres
Cooley Distillery, Riverstown, Cooley	Lower	400 metres

Policy Objective

ENV 27	To comply with the <i>SEVESO II Directive</i> in reducing the risk and limiting the potential consequences of major industrial accidents.
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Policy Objective

ENV 28	To ensure that land use policies take account of the need to maintain appropriate distance between future major accident hazard establishments and residential areas, areas of substantial public use and of particular natural sensitivity or interest.
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Policy Objective

ENV 29	To have regard to the advice of the HSA when proposals for a new SEVESO site, modifications to an existing SEVESO site or when proposals for development within the consultation zone of a SEVESO site are being considered (including and as detailed in Table 11.1)
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11.3 VETERINARY SERVICES

The Veterinary Services Section carries out a range of duties involving veterinary public health as well as animal control & welfare. These duties are carried out in conjunction with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

Louth County Council provides food safety duties under a service contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

The County Veterinary Officer and a ‘Temporary Veterinary Inspector’ (TVI) are responsible for the inspection and supervision of Louth’s abattoir (slaughter house) and small meat manufacturing plants.

The animal control & welfare section operates an animal compound in Dromiskin, Co. Louth.

The facility has indoor, individual, heated kennels from where it bases its activities under the *Control of Dogs Act 1986*, and also four stables for housing larger animals taken in under the *Control of Horses Act 1996 or the Animals Act 1985*.

Policy Objective

ENV 30	To support the implementation of the veterinary functions of the Council in partnership with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).
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11.4 NATURAL RESOURCES

There are a number of naturally occurring resources within the County that contribute to its social and economic fabric. The continued sustainable development of these resources at appropriate locations will serve to diversify and strengthen the economy of the County. A balanced approach is required with appropriate policies for the growth and development of these resources while ensuring that the adverse environmental impact is minimised.

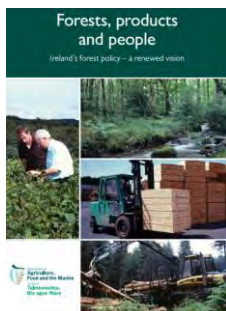
11.4.1 Forestry

Forests and woodlands provide important social, economic and environmental benefits. Forestry is an important natural and renewable resource with a major role to play in sustainable rural development. Forests also have a key role as pollution filters and carbon sinks and their contribution towards climate action.

In addition to the direct benefits of planting, in terms of valuable crops and employment, forestry has an important impact on rural economies through the development of related industries, locally produced sustainable energy and rural tourism opportunities. In 2016, over 5,900 individuals were employed in both forestry and logging or manufacture of wood and wood products sector (CSO). In 2018, exports of forest products from the Republic of Ireland were valued at €450 million, an 8.7% increase on 2017. The national forest estate is an important carbon reservoir, amounting to 311.7 million tonnes of carbon in 2017.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is responsible for ensuring the development of forestry within Ireland in a manner and to a scale that maximises its contribution to national socio-economic well-being on a sustainable basis that is compatible with the protection of the environment.

The Department published a forest policy in 2014, *'Forests, Products and People - Ireland's Forest Policy - A Renewed Vision'*, which sets out Government policy in relation to this sector.



This policy document sets out a strategic goal to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forestry sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society and which accords with the 'Forest Europe' definition of sustainable forest management.

The DoAFM also published *'Forest Statistics Ireland 2019'*. This report indicates that County Louth's land cover comprises approximately 2.9% of forest cover, which is significantly below the national average.

The most significant of the forested areas under public ownership are in Ravensdale Forest and Slieve Foye Woods in the north of the County and Townley Hall in the south of the County. There is also significant privately owned forestry in the areas of Collon, Mullary and Jenkinstown. Ravensdale Forest is the most densely forested area in the County. Figure 11.2 illustrates the extent of forestry located within County Louth (2017).

Forestry is encouraged in appropriate areas, where it will not significantly impact upon designated habitats, archaeology, interfering with high amenity areas, protected views or scenic routes, be obtrusive in the landscape or present a risk to sensitive ecosystems or water quality. The Plan aims to support the sustainable growth of forestry as an economic activity whilst affording maximum protection to the rural environment and landscape.

This Plan acknowledges the tourism and amenity potential of forested lands. The Council will encourage the provision of public access to new forests through walking and bridle paths, recreational areas and other similar facilities.

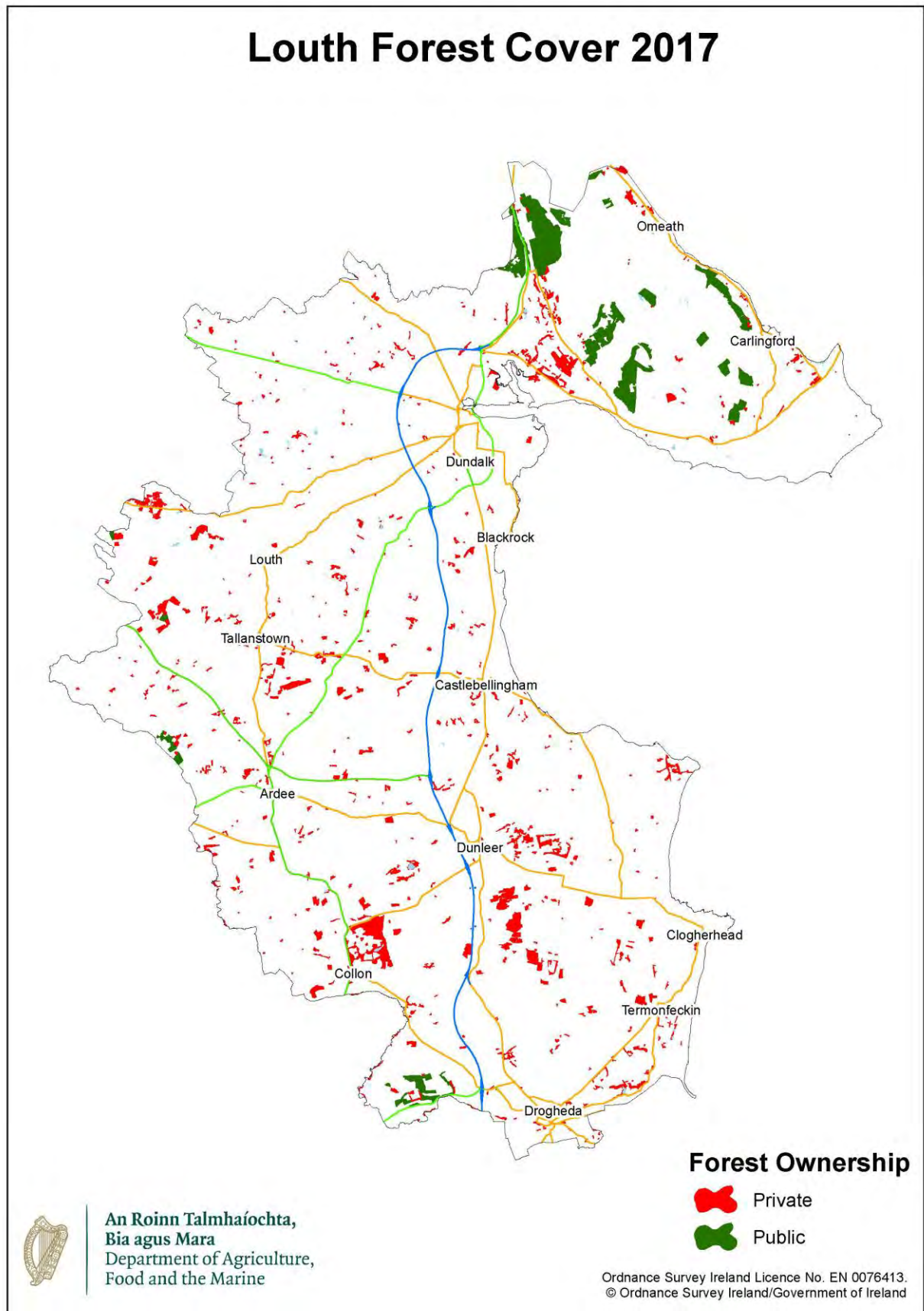
Policy Objective

ENV 31	To support National policy in relation to forestry in order to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forest sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society, subject to normal planning criteria.
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Policy Objective

ENV 32	To encourage the development of a well-managed sustainable forestry sector, which is compatible with the protection of the environment including the avoidance of likely significant effects on European sites (SACs and SPAs) and is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the <i>Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality</i> and any subsequent guidelines.
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Figure 11.2 Forest Cover within County Louth



Policy Objective

ENV 33	To encourage forestry and forestry related development, as a means of diversifying from traditional agriculture activity with a preference for native species.
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Policy Objective

ENV 34	To encourage access to forestry and woodlands, including private forestry, in cooperation with stakeholders for walking routes, bridle paths, mountain biking, nature walks, orienteering, hiking, recreational areas and other similar facilities.
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Policy Objective

ENV 35	To promote the avoidance of deforestation or commercial afforestation within European sites unless directly relating to the management of the site for its qualifying interests.
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Policy Objective

ENV 36	To support the development of appropriate and sustainable tourism development within forestry locations, while retaining adequate tree cover in the general area.
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Policy Objective

ENV 37	To consider the preservation of any tree, trees or groups of trees or woodland of special amenity or environmental value by use of Tree Preservation Orders.
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Policy Objective

ENV 38	To retain and protect significant stands of existing trees/ hedgerows/woodlands, and seek increased planting of native trees, where appropriate, in new developments.
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Policy Objective

ENV 39	Protect and preserve existing hedgerows in new developments, particularly species rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, and where their removal is necessary during the course of road works or other works seek their replacement with new hedgerows of native species indigenous to the area.
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11.4.1.1 Carbon Sequestration

The increase in greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere is considered to be one of the main causes of global warming. Human activity is releasing vast amounts of carbon dioxide. Land-use changes such as the unsustainable exploitation and destruction of tropical forests are also having an impact.

Trees and woodlands play an important role in the removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Through the biochemical process of photosynthesis, carbon dioxide is taken in by trees and stored as carbon in the trunk, branches, leaves and roots. Carbon is also stored in the soil and indeed this is a major sink for carbon in the forest.

Decay of the organic material eventually releases the CO₂ back to the atmosphere, and providing the forests are sustainably managed, it is taken up by replacement trees, thereby maintaining a balance in the carbon budget.

The release of CO₂, however, can be delayed through the harvesting of trees as they mature if the wood is used for construction, furniture and other end uses that prolong its life.



Sustainable forestry is positively contributing to carbon sequestration and is an important management tool in combating climate change. International agreements to regulate carbon emissions such as the Kyoto Protocol recognise the importance of forests as carbon sinks.

Policy Objective	
ENV 40	In accordance with the <i>National Climate Action Plan 2019</i> (or any subsequent Plan) Louth County Council shall promote sustainable forestry development of appropriate scale within the County in order to address climate action directly through carbon sequestration and indirectly through the displacement of fossil fuel.

11.4.2 Extractive Industry

The National Planning Framework (NPF) notes that ‘aggregates and minerals extraction will continue to be enabled where this is compatible with the protection of the environment in terms of air and water quality, natural and cultural heritage, the quality of life of residents in the vicinity, and provides for appropriate site rehabilitation’.

The NPF also states that the ‘planning process will play a key role in realising the potential of the extractive industries sector by identifying and protecting important reserves of aggregates and minerals from development that might prejudice their utilisation’.

County Louth contains a variety of natural resources such as raw materials critical to the construction industry in the form of sand, gravel and stone reserves, with substantial building sand reserves in the Cooley area.

The Council acknowledges the need for extractive industries in terms of supply of aggregate materials for the construction sector. The continual supply of aggregates, including recycled construction and demolition material is necessary for continual economic growth; which is an integral requirement for the implementation of the NPF and private sector development.

Reserves of suitable material are finite and extraction can only take place where these reserves are found. However, the potential for conflict in the operation of these industries with wider environmental issues needs careful consideration.

Quarry extraction works and ancillary activities have the potential to impact on the environment (e.g. noise, dust, vibration, visual intrusion, hydrological disruption, water pollution, loss or fragmentation of habitat, traffic generation, adverse impact on road network and archaeological impacts). In certain instances quarries can also be beneficial to the environment, particularly at the decommissioning phase when opportunities for habitat creation and alternative uses can arise.

Louth County Council acknowledges that a satisfactory balance is required between the needs of the building industry and the need to protect the environment. *Section 261A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)*, afforded Local Authorities an opportunity to regularise the quarry industry, with regard to compliance with Planning Legislation, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and the Habitats Directives. A total of 12 quarries have been registered in County Louth.

The suitability of any extraction enterprise shall be assessed on the basis of the sensitivity of the local environment to such impacts, the scale of the development proposed and the capacity of the road network in the area to accommodate associated traffic.

It is Council policy to ensure that those extractions which would result in a reduction of the visual amenity of areas of high amenity or damage to areas of scientific importance or of geological, botanical, zoological and other natural significance including all designated European Sites shall not be permitted.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) Aggregate Potential Mapping illustrates potential crushed rock and sand and gravel deposits. The areas of high to very high potential for crushed rock deposits are generally focused on the Cooley peninsula, however, an area from Collon to Clogherhead is also identified as having high potential.

Louth County Council recognises the unique importance of these areas (particularly the Cooley Peninsula and Monasterboice) in terms of environmental, archaeological and historical value. Applications for mineral extraction will, therefore, be considered on their merits in terms of potential for impacts on the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. As part of the assessment process, due regard will be given to the Department of Environment Heritage Local Government (DEHLG) publication *“Quarry and Ancillary Activity Guidelines” (2004)*. In addition, proposals will be screened for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) in accordance with current best practice and guidance documents.

Policy Objective

ENV 41	To ensure that all existing and proposed quarries comply with the requirements of the document <i>Quarry and Ancillary Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, (DECLG) 2004</i> or any replacement document and to promote a whole of life plan for an extractive location, including a post-closure remediation plan.
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Policy Objective

ENV 42	To facilitate adequate supplies of aggregate resources to meet the future growth needs of the County and the wider region while addressing key environmental, traffic and social impacts and details of rehabilitation.
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Policy Objective

ENV 43	To prevent development that would hinder the efficient or effective recovery of the County's aggregate resources.
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Policy Objective

ENV 44	To ensure that extractive developments do not adversely impact on environmental quality, including water quality, tourism value, existing infrastructure, residential amenity or the amenity value of neighbouring lands.
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Policy Objective

ENV 45	<p>To ensure that the extraction of stone and mineral materials is carried out in a manner that is sustainable and does not significantly impact on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing and proposed European Sites; • Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna; • Areas of significant archaeological potential; • In the vicinity of a recorded monument; • County Geological Site (CGS); • Sensitive Landscapes; • World Heritage Sites; or • Tentative World Heritage Sites.
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Policy Objective

ENV 46	To ensure that developments associated with the extractive industry minimise adverse impacts on the road network in the area and that the full cost of road improvements, including during operations and at time of closure which were necessary to facilitate such development are borne by the extractive industry.
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Policy Objective

ENV 47	To refer any application for development to the Geological Survey of Ireland, where it relates to mineral extraction, quarrying developments/extensions and any development involving excavations greater than 50,000m ³ in volume or one hectare in area.
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11.5 THE COAST

11.5.1 Introduction

County Louth's coastline extends in excess of 70 kilometres from Drogheda Port in the south of the County to the coastline of Carlingford and Omeath along Carlingford Lough.

In general, Ireland's coastline is of great importance not only for its striking natural beauty, but also in terms of its scientific interest, its wildlife habitats and recreational opportunities. The coast is of great economic value and is the location of ports and many of our major urban areas and industries.

Society continues to place considerable demands on coastal areas. In addition to man's influence the coastline is also subject to continual change resulting from dynamic natural processes.

Louth's coastline is of high intrinsic and special amenity value and is home to a variety of natural habitats, with Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) designations covering much of the coastline. The Coastal Zone is generally defined as the area between Mean High Water Mark and the nearest continuous road.

The natural assets of the coastline including beaches are important economic assets particularly for tourism. They are also valuable amenity resources with significant recreational importance and public health benefits. Port/Lurganboy, Clogherhead, and Shellinghill/Templetown are high value Blue Flag beaches, which have considerable tourism potential. Seapoint beach, Termonfeckin also achieved a Green Coast award in 2020 in recognition of its high environmental quality.



The coastline also contains economically significant sites, which include the ports at Drogheda, Greenore, Dundalk and Clogherhead. Drogheda Port is one of Ireland's premier multi modal ports strategically located on the east coast with direct motorway access to the country's key industrial and commercial centres.

The coastal waters off County Louth provide an important resource, supporting and generating employment and recreational activities.

But this coastline is susceptible to pressure for development, which has the potential to encroach on sensitive sites and cause pollution.

11.5.2 Changing Coast & Coastal Protection

In June 2019 the Government launched a *draft Marine Planning Policy Statement (MPPS)*. The MPPS outlines a programme of legislative reform to modernise the Irish marine planning system. The aim of the legislative reform is to rationalise the planning process for the marine area and provide an appropriate planning system for the sustainable development of the marine environment.

The present planning process is quite convoluted and requires permissions from a number of different bodies. Much of the marine planning reform is being driven by the *European Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (Directive 2014/89/EU)* which sets March 2021 as the date by which member states must have in place a Marine Spatial Plan (MSP). As per Section 5.10 of this Plan, following the preparation of the Marine Spatial Plan the Council will ensure that there is alignment and consistency between land use and ocean based planning. The proposed programme for reform includes the *Marine Planning and Development Management Bill 2019*. The *Marine Planning and Development Management Bill 2019* represents a significant change to the consenting process for marine based developments.

The Bill will amend the existing Foreshore Act and create a new regulatory area and a new single state consent regime for the entire maritime area. The development management process will expand to cover the whole of Ireland's exclusive economic zone and continental shelf.

The Bill will also establish a legal basis for An Bord Pleanála and coastal local authorities to consent to development in the maritime area, while retaining existing foreshore and planning permission provisions for aquaculture and sea fisheries related development. The Bill provides for a single Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and a single Appropriate Assessment (AA), where applicable.

The 2019 Bill will:

- Empower the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to issue statutory marine planning guidelines (parallel to the statutory planning guidelines issued under *Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act (as amended)*);
- Provide an improved statutory basis for marine forward planning; introduce a single State consent system for the maritime area for certain types of projects;
- Eliminate the duplication that presently occurs where some types of developments (e.g. wind farms) are assessed under both the foreshore and the planning systems; and
- Introduce a single development management process for certain project types (including offshore renewable energy development).

Policy Objective

ENV 48 To implement the policies and objectives as set out within the *National Maritime Spatial Plan* to support the effective management of marine activities and more sustainable use of our marine resources.

Policy Objective

ENV 49 To support and accommodate any change to the marine spatial planning system which is proposed under the *Marine Planning and Development Management Bill 2019* (or any subsequent Bill) once enacted into law.

11.5.2.1 - Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

ICZM provides a tool for the integrated management of all policy processes affecting the coastal zone, addressing the land-sea interactions of coastal activities in a coordinated way with a view to ensuring the sustainable development of coastal and marine areas. ICZM will address issues such as coastal tourism development, the fishing industry, coastal settlement patterns, transport, coastal erosion, habitat destruction, protection of coastal zone SACs and SPAs and prevention of pollution.

11.5.3 Coastal Protection and Flooding

By its very nature, the coastal environment is dynamic and is subject to the continuous natural processes of erosion and deposition. While erosion is a normal occurrence in coastal areas, rates of erosion may be accelerated due to storm action, inappropriate development, pressures from leisure or recreational activities or the presence of man-made protection works.



Shifting weather patterns along the Irish coastline have been compounding the issue of coastal erosion in recent times. The intensity and frequency of winter storms has been rapidly increasing.

These storms not only erode the coastline, but cost millions of euro worth of structural damage, flooding, and damage to fishing vessels and operations. Coastline changes, based on satellite data, produced by the European Commission (Maritime Affairs) indicates that large strands of the Louth coastline have been experiencing coastal erosion. Figure 11.3 illustrates the areas along the Louth coastline suffering from the effects of coastal erosion and provides a useful insight into one of the most obvious climate-change effects.

Flood management is a central theme within the *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024* for County Louth which has an overarching objective to manage the risk of flooding through a variety of responses.

At a National level, the *Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study* (ICPSS) was commissioned in 2003 by the OPW and has been updated on a number of occasions for the North-Eastern region. This study identifies locations along the north-east coast at risk of coastal flooding and coastal erosion.

With the realisation of the threat coastal erosion is posing to society and the economy, several preventative measures have been put into place.

These measures can be divided into two categories; hard and soft. Soft engineering generally utilises existing habitats and vegetation such as beaches, salt marshes, mudflats and sand-dunes to soften the land-sea interface while maintaining the integrity of the shoreline.

Hard engineering typically involves the construction of sea walls and/or groins. Sea walls act as a physically resistant barrier to wave and storm action, and can greatly reduce the threat to coastal areas. However, sea walls are expensive to construct and are usually only put in places where the cost of construction is less than that of any potential property damage or losses. Sea walls also have the potential to create long-term issues, such as the reduction of accretion in other coastal areas by depriving them of sediments that would previously have been products of erosion.

Louth County Council intends to carry out coastal protection works at two locations within the Dundalk Bay area, at Seabank, approximately 2km east of Castlebellingham village and at Salterstown, approximately 2km southeast of Annagassan village.

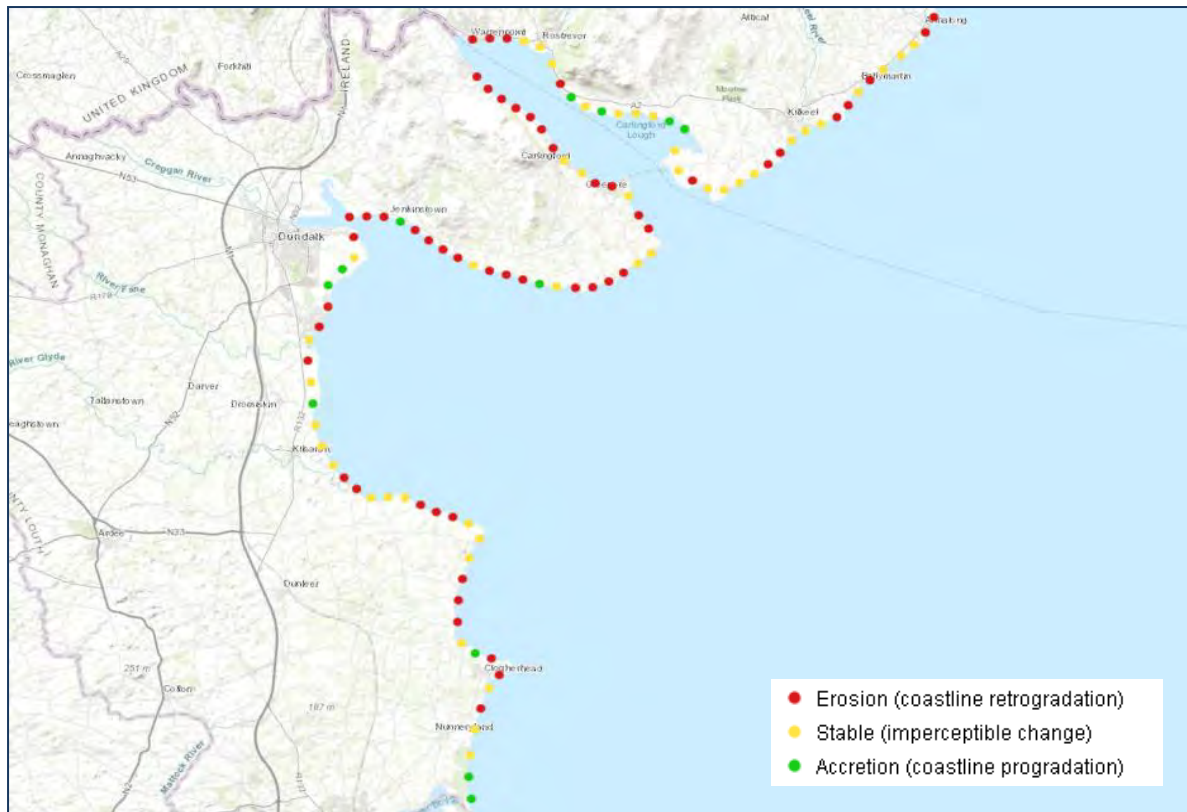
These works will involve the placement of rock armour to form a sloped wall of interlocking rock armour as a form of sea defence.

Coastal erosion is intrinsically linked with coastal flooding as the loss of natural coastal defences due to erosion can increase the risk of flooding in coastal areas.

Areas of County Louth are vulnerable to flooding and this vulnerability can be exacerbated by changes associated with global warming such as increased occurrences of severe rainfall events, sea level rise, increased storm frequency and associated flooding (Refer to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Maps in Volume 5). Local conditions such as low-lying lands and slow surface water drainage increase the risk of flooding. This risk can also be increased by human actions including clearing of natural vegetation to make way for agriculture, draining/rehabilitation of bog and wetland areas, the development of settlements in the flood plains of rivers and low lying or eroding coastlines as well as by changing weather patterns. Inadequately planned infrastructural development, forestry operations and urban development in the floodplain, for example, can also give rise to flooding hazards, coastal erosion/flooding and loss of habitats.

The County Louth SFRA (Stage 1 SFRA including flood maps) contained within the supporting documents of this Plan, provides information on various flood risk indicators that occur within the County.

Figure 11.3: Coastal Erosion along the Louth Coastline



Source: European Atlas of the Seas (2019)

Policy Objective

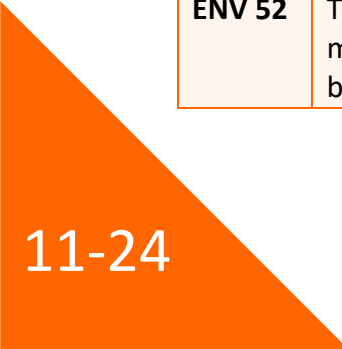
ENV 50 To require that all proposed developments within 100m of the coastline of Louth, outside the main settlements (Levels 1-4) submit a Coastal Erosion Assessment Report. New developments will be prohibited, unless it can be objectively established based on the best scientific information at the time of the application, that the likelihood of erosion at a specific location is minimal taking into account, inter alia, any impacts.

Policy Objective

ENV 51 To recognise the concept of coastal evolution and fluvial flooding as part of our dynamic physical environment, and adopt an adaptive approach to working with these natural processes. The focus of a flood management strategy should not solely be driven by conservation of existing lands. It should recognise that marshes, mud flats and other associated eco-systems evolve and degenerate and appropriate consideration should be given to the realignment of defences and use of managed retreat and sacrificial flood protection lands to maintain such habitats as part of an overall strategy.

Policy Objective

ENV 52 To ensure the County’s natural coastal defences (beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands) are protected and to ensure they are not put at risk by inappropriate works or development.



Policy Objective

ENV 53	To explore, where coastal erosion is considered a threat to existing properties, the technical, environmental and economic feasibility of coastal adaptation and coastal retreat management options.
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Policy Objective

ENV 54	To employ soft engineering techniques as an alternative to hard coastal defence works, wherever possible.
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Policy Objective

ENV 55	To identify, prioritise and implement necessary coastal protection works subject to the availability of resources, whilst ensuring a high level of protection for natural habitats and features, and ensure due regard is paid to visual and other environmental considerations in the design of any such coastal protection works.
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11.5.4 Ports and Harbours

The *National Ports Policy 2013* prepared by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) provides a strategic reform policy and roadmap for the development of Irish ports. Drogheda Port is one of five Ports of Regional Significance, which are state owned and the policy notes that Drogheda Port Company retains an important role in regional freight distribution. Drogheda is the largest of the three commercial ports in County Louth.

Greenore is second largest port in the County. Greenore Port is privately owned. The port handles cargo and is also the terminus for the Carlingford Ferry which provides a connection to Greencastle in Northern Ireland.

Dundalk Port is a general cargo port and forms part of the Dublin Port Company. Clogherhead is a fishing port owned by Louth County Council.

It is an important fishing port and the value of landings at Clogherhead amounted to €8 million in 2018. Further information and policy in relation to Ports and Harbours can be found within Chapter 5, Economy and Employment.

11.5.5 Development in Coastal Areas

Development proposals within coastal areas must take cognisance of the changing and dynamic nature of the coast. The Council acknowledges that hard engineering solutions are the most resource intensive and involve the highest level of interference with natural processes. Consequently, such solutions can only be used in exceptional circumstances.



As a general principle, development in coastal areas should be accommodated wherever possible in previously developed areas before consideration is given to development in greenfield sites.

Policy Objective

ENV 56	To protect the special character of the coast by preventing inappropriate development, particularly on the seaward side of coastal roads. New development, wherever possible, shall be accommodated within existing developed areas and be climate resilient in their design.
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Policy Objective

ENV 57	To strictly control the nature and pattern of development within coastal areas and ensure that it is designed and landscaped to the highest standards, and sited appropriately so as not to detract from the visual amenity of the area. Development shall be prohibited where the development poses a significant or potential threat to coastal habitats or features, and/or where the development is likely to result in altered patterns of erosion or deposition elsewhere along the coast.
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Policy Objective

ENV 58	To prohibit development along the coast outside existing urban areas where such development is not adequately safeguarded over the lifetime of the development without the need to construct additional coastal defences.
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11.5.6 Coastal Tourism and Recreation

Louth’s coastline is a major asset in terms of tourism, recreation and marine leisure activities. Marine leisure facilities should be sited, designed and managed to avoid the visual intrusion, pollution, and conflicts with other uses with which they can otherwise be associated.



It is the policy of Council to maintain its beaches to a high standard and develop their recreational potential as publicly accessible seaside amenity facilities.

Designated bathing areas, Blue Flag beaches and other high quality beaches within the County, are significant local amenities and are also important from a tourism and economic development perspective.

As noted earlier, Port/Lurganboy, Clogherhead, and Shellinghill/Templetown are high value beaches which have considerable tourism potential. Each of these beaches was awarded Blue Flag status in 2020 while Seapoint beach achieved a Green Coast award in 2020 in recognition of its high environmental quality.

Identified bathing waters within the County at all of the aforementioned locations have achieved ‘Excellent’ water quality status for each of the last 4 years. The EPA Bathing Water Quality in Ireland report commented that ‘bathing waters in Co. Louth continue to be of a very high quality with few pollution sources having been identified’.

The coast is a natural amenity for leisure and recreation. The coastal areas of County Louth have significant potential for the tourist sector and help to generate sustainable local employment within coastal communities. At a regional level, the tourism value of the coast is acknowledged in the emerging initiative of the ‘Irish Sea Way’. It is considered that this initiative will further enhance the tourism value of Louth’s coastline and the Council will work with the relevant stakeholders to support this initiative once it is launched. Carlingford is an example of an area within the County, which has seen great benefits from its coastal amenities.

These include land based activities such as walking and cycling on the Carlingford Greenway and water based activities such as bathing, canoeing, paddle boarding, surfing and angling. There is potential for such activities right along the Louth coast. The infrastructure associated with such activities can often conflict with the sensitive nature of the coast, the various environmental designations and the built heritage along the coastline. It will be necessary to identify locations on the coast where these activities can be catered for without being in conflict with other objectives or contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The Council recognises that these activities require a coastal location, but need to be controlled and directed appropriately in view of the sensitive nature of the coast.

Policy Objective

ENV 59	To protect the excellent status classification of identified bathing water areas within County Louth.
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Policy Objective

ENV 60	To encourage proposals that promote sustainable development of water-based sports and marine recreation in coastal areas and on river systems across the County providing there is no cause of significant adverse impacts on the environment, visual amenity and heritage.
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Policy Objective

ENV 61	To support proposals that improve access to marine and coastal resources for tourism activities and sport and recreation, where appropriate, at the applicable scale.
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Policy Objective

ENV 62	To facilitate sustainable tourism and recreation activities where appropriate, particularly where this creates diversification or additional utilisation of related facilities beyond typical usage patterns.
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Policy Objective

ENV 63	To require that new developments take into account the potential for impact on tourism in the area and demonstrate how potential negative impacts to tourism in communities have been minimised. This must include assessment of how the benefits of what is proposed are not outweighed by potential negative impacts identified.
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Policy Objective

ENV 64	To support proposals for sustainable tourism development that seek to optimise facilities and use space whilst minimising environmental impact by taking a cross-sectoral development approach that provides for multiple activities.
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Policy Objective

ENV 65	To resist development along the coast which would detract from its visual appearance or conflict with its recreational and leisure functions.
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11.5.7 Shellfish Waters

There are two areas along the County Louth coastline that are identified as Designated Shellfish Waters:

- Carlingford Lough and
- Dundalk Bay.

In order to protect existing shellfish waters and to ensure the future protection of these areas, the European Union introduced the *Shellfish Waters Directive* (2006/113/EC). The purpose of this Directive is to put in place concrete measures to protect waters, including shellfish waters, against pollution and to safeguard certain shellfish populations from harmful consequences, resulting from the discharge of pollutants into the sea. The Directive applies to the aquatic habitat of bivalve and gastropod molluscs only (includes oysters, mussels, cockles, scallops and clams).



Policy Objective

ENV 66	To continue to work with local communities, relevant stakeholders and with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine to ensure the proper and successful implementation of the Shellfish Waters Directive along County Louth’s coastline.
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Policy Objective

ENV 67	To protect the quality of designated shellfish waters off the Louth coast.
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11.5.8 Aquaculture

Aquaculture includes the culture or farming of fish, aquatic invertebrates, aquatic plants or any aquatic form of food suitable for the nutrition of fish. The vast majority of aquaculture activity takes place in the marine environment on the foreshore. The latest BIM Aquaculture Survey indicates that Irish Aquaculture directly employs 87 people within the County with a production value of over €5.3m annually.

The survey also confirms that there are 7 production units within County Louth, largely comprising of mussel and oyster aquaculture activity.



Commercial fishing and aquaculture represent an important economic activity in rural coastal areas. This Plan supports the provision of appropriate harbour infrastructure that facilitates a modern and innovative fishing industry.

The Council recognises and will continue to support the sustainable development of the aquaculture industry in order to maximise its contribution to employment and the economy. This Plan also recognises the important role aquaculture can play in the diversification of rural areas.

Policy Objective

ENV 68	To support the use of existing port facilities for the catching and processing of fish as an economic activity that contributes to the food industry in the County.
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Policy Objective

ENV 69	To ensure that proposals for economic development associated with the marine sector reflect the environmental sensitivities of the Louth coastline and are considered accordingly.
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Policy Objective

ENV 70	To seek that non-aquaculture proposals in aquaculture production areas demonstrate consideration of and compatibility with aquaculture production and the environment.
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