

# Habitats Directive Article 6 Screening Assessment

Waterford Local Economic & Community Plan 2015-2020



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## 1. Introduction to the Habitats Directive and Article 6 Assessment

The aim of the European Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of wild habitats and of wild fauna and flora) is to create a network of protected wildlife sites in Europe, maintained at a favourable conservation status<sup>1</sup>. Each member state must designate their most important natural areas as Special Areas of Conservation. The Directive specifies the scientific criteria on the basis of which SAC sites must be selected and very strictly curtails the grounds that can be used as justification for damaging a site. The network of sites is referred to as NATURA 2000 and includes SACs (Special Areas of Conservation) for protected habitats and species and SPAs (Special Protection Areas) for protected birds.

The European Habitats Directive (Council of the European Communities 1992) was transposed into Irish legislation by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 and amended in 1998, 2005 and 2011. The Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 and (Part XAB) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), set out the obligations of planning authorities under the Birds and Habitats Directives.

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive provides a strict assessment procedure for any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a designated European site but which has the potential to have implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2020, therefore, falls under the remit of Article 6.

## 2. Guidance on the Implementation of Article 6

The European Commission's guidance on the provisions of article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive sets out four stages for Appropriate Assessment.<sup>2</sup>

**Stage 1. Screening** — the process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant;

**Stage 2. Appropriate assessment** — the consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts;

**Stage 3. Assessment of alternative solutions** — the process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site;

**Stage 4. Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain** — an assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

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<sup>1</sup> The conservation status of a species can be taken as "favourable" when population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future and there is and will continue to be a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis. Article 1 (i) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC  
The conservation status of a habitat can be taken as "favourable" when its natural range and area it covers within that range is stable or increasing and the ecological factors that are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future.

<sup>2</sup> Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites- methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6 (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Managing Natura 2000 sites The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission (2002)

### 3. Procedure for stage one screening

This report consists of a screening for a Habitats Directive Assessment of the Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2020. This stage examines the likely effects of the LECP on Natura 2000 sites in Waterford and within a 15km radius of the county and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these sites will not be significantly impacted. This assessment comprises four steps:-

**Step 1: determining whether the project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site: -**

The Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2020 is an economic and community planning framework for Waterford City and County and is not directly connected to the management of any Natura 2000 sites.

**Step 2: describing the project or plan and the description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the Natura 2000 site;**

The Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2020 provides a socio-economic framework structure within which all local and regional stakeholders can work collaboratively to achieve the objectives contained therein. It is not a spatial plan but a strongly action focussed plan. The objectives and actions in the Economic Plan focus on stimulating demand for employment through attracting investment in new business from inward investment and through promotion of entrepreneurship and the growth of indigenous business. The key objectives of the Community Plan are to develop Community of Place Plans and provide coherent services to communities.

With a total population in excess of 113,000, Waterford City and County encompasses over 2% of the state population. One of the key assets of the county is its diversity of natural heritage and landscapes providing for a strong tourism base. Waterford contains two main waterway corridors, the River Blackwater and River Suir and a number of other smaller rivers. The county has 147km of coastline and mountain ranges in the Comeraghs and Knockmealdowns. Waterford contains several sites designated for their nature conservation value especially along the coast. There are 14 Natura 2000 sites within Waterford and 1 site within 15km of the Waterford boundary with other counties.

**Step 3: Identifying the potential effects on the Natura 2000 site;**

The DoEHLG Guidance on Appropriate Assessment on Plans and Projects in Ireland (December 2009) states that all N2000 sites within or adjacent the county must be mapped and tabulated, and site integrity and site conditions necessary to support the site integrity must be indicated.

The information presented in Table 1 comprises a breakdown of Natura 2000 sites within Waterford. The N2000 sites are listed by designation; Special Areas of Conservation / Special Protection Areas. The following information is listed for each N2000 site:

- ◆ Site code
- ◆ Site name
- ◆ Qualifying interests
- ◆ Conservation objectives
- ◆ Threats to site integrity

Table 2 details sites outside Waterford but within a 15km buffer zone of the county.

**Step 4: Assessing the significance of any effects on the Natura 2000 site.**

The screening stage involves application of the precautionary principle proportional to the policy/objective and the Natura 2000 site in question. Objectives and actions from the LECP and their impact on the N2000 have been screened to ascertain if the objectives are likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites, using the following framework.

- ◆ LECP objective
- ◆ N2000 site
- ◆ Qualifying interests
- ◆ Threats to site integrity
- ◆ Potential impacts from LECP
- ◆ Risk of significant impact (Y/N)
- ◆ Potential 'in combination' impacts
- ◆ Risk of significant impacts (Y/N)
- ◆ Avoidance and (then) mitigation measures
- ◆ Action required: objective/action change needed / rewording / additional LECP objective

Where no significant effects are found, then objectives or actions are accepted. If all the objectives/actions in the LECP are found not to have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 site then a Finding of no Significant Effects Report is concluded and no further HDA assessment is required.

Where an objective/action as worded does have a significant effect, then the objective/action needs to be amended or rejected. The local authority understands that if it still wishes to proceed with the objective/action even though it may have a significant effect, then a Stage 2 extended HDA assessment is required.

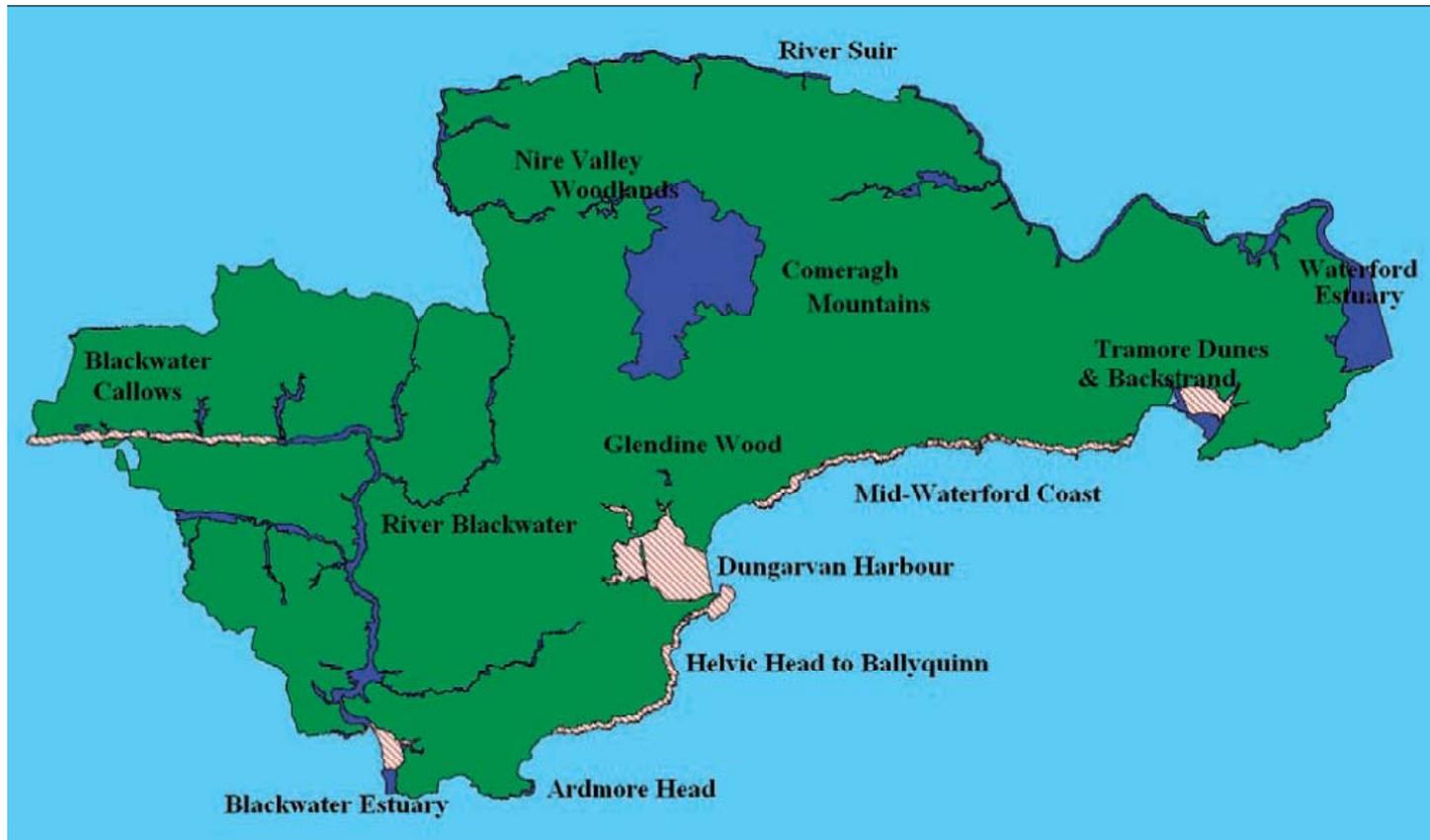


Figure 1: SACs and SPAs in County Waterford

Table 1: Natura 2000 sites within Waterford

Waterford Site code & Site name	Qualifying interests	Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Conservation objectives	Threats to site integrity
0002137 Lower River Suir	Alluvial Wet Woodlands and Yew Wood, Floating River Vegetation, Atlantic Salt Meadows, Old Oak Wood and Eutrophic Tall Herbs Sea Lamprey, Brook Lamprey, River Lamprey, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Crayfish, Twaite Shad, Atlantic Salmon, Otter	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	Obstructions, impassable weirs, gross pollutants, specific pollutants, channel maintenance, man-made barriers to migration, eutrophication, leisure fishing drift netting, use of pesticides, fertilisation, removal of hedges and copses, removal of scrub, felling of native or mixed woodland, professional fishing(including lobster pots and fyke nets)hunting, trapping, poisoning, poaching, sand and gravel extraction, mechanical removal of peat, urbanised areas, human habitation, continuous urbanisation, industrial or commercial areas, discharges, disposal of household waste, industrial waste, inert materials, other discharges, routes, autoroutes, bridge, viaduct, water pollution, other forms of pollution, infilling of ditches, dykes, pods, pools, marshes or pits, drainage, management of aquatic and bank vegetation for drainage purposes, removal of sediments, canalisation or modifying structures of inland water course Overgrazing, infilling and reclamation, inappropriate grazing levels and invasive species, clearance for agriculture or felling for timber, planting of non-native conifers, Increased development
002123 Ardmore Head	Dry coastal heath and vegetated sea cliffs.	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	Amenity use, residential and other development in adjacent areas, encroachment of scrub
000072 Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford)	Estuary, Mudflats, Shingle Banks, Salt Meadows, Floating River Vegetation, Old Oak Woods, Alluvial Woodland, Yew Woodland, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, White-clawed Crayfish, Shad, Lampreys, Salmon, Otter, Killarney Fern	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.  To restore the favourable conservation condition	Professional fishing, taking of flora, fauna, Water pollution, climate change, change in species composition, aquaculture, bait digging, aggregate extraction, industrialisation, port/marina, communications networks, water pollution, reclamation of land, coastal protection

Waterford Site code & Site name	Qualifying interests	Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Conservation objectives	Threats to site integrity
		of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel in the Blackwater River SAC.	works, invasion by a species, erosion and accretion, overgrazing, infilling and reclamation, inappropriate grazing levels, clearance for agriculture or felling for timber, increased development Obstructions, impassable weirs, channel maintenance, barriers, eutrophication, leisure fishing, drift netting use of pesticides, fertilisation, removal of hedges and copses, removal of scrub, felling of native or mixed woodland, professional fishing(including lobster pots and fyke nets)hunting, trapping, poisoning, poaching, sand and gravel extraction, mechanical removal of peat, urbanised areas, human habitation, continuous urbanisation, industrial or commercial areas, discharges, disposal of household waste, industrial waste, inert materials, other discharges, routes, autoroutes, bridge, viaduct, water pollution, other forms of pollution, infilling of ditches, dykes, pods, pools, marshes or pits, drainage, management of aquatic and bank vegetation for drainage purposes, removal of sediments, canalisation or modifying structures of inland water course Collection of samples, outdoor recreation, woodland clearance, overgrazing, hydrocarbons, global warming, climate change, modifications to the hydrology of sites through afforestation, road development or hydro-electric engineering. Air pollution
<b>001952 Comeragh Mountains</b>	Blanket bog, Dry, Wet and Alpine Heath, Rocky Slopes, Oligotrophic Lakes, Floating River Vegetation, Shining Sicklemoss	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	Agriculture, burning, sand and gravel extraction, urbanisation, industrialisation, acidification, tropospheric ozone and nitrogen enrichment caused by atmospheric deposition Abandonment, overgrazing, burning, quarrying, outdoor recreation

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Waterford Site code & Site name	Qualifying interests	Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Conservation objectives	Threats to site integrity
002324 Glendine Wood	Semi-natural Woodland with rare assemblages of Ground Flora.	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	Collection of samples, outdoor sport and leisure, human disturbance in localities used for recreational purposes. Woodland clearance, overgrazing, natural processes such as wind felling of trees. Modifications to the hydrology of a site through afforestation, road development or hydro-electric engineering, water pollution, air pollution, hydrocarbons, global warming, climate change
000665 Helvick Head	Vegetated Sea Cliffs and Dry Heath.	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	Agriculture, burning, sand and gravel extraction, urbanisation, industrialisation, acidification, tropospheric ozone and nitrogen enrichment caused by atmospheric deposition
000668 Nire Valley Woods	Old Oak Woodlands and Dry Heath	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	Inappropriate grazing levels and invasive species, clearance for agriculture or felling for timber, planting of non-native conifers Agriculture, burning, sand and gravel extraction, urbanisation, industrialisation, acidification, tropospheric ozone and nitrogen enrichment caused by atmospheric deposition
002162 River Nore and River Barrow (Waterford Estuary)	Estuary, Mudflats, Salt Meadows, Floating River Vegetation, Dry Heath, Marginal River Vegetation, Petrifying Springs, Old Oak Woods, Alluvial Woods, White-clawed Crayfish, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Whorl snail, Shad, Lampreys, Salmon, Otter, Killarney Fern	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	See above under County Carlow
00671 Tramore Dunes and Back Strand	Mudflats and sandflats, shingle banks, salt meadows, embryonic, white and fixed dunes.	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	Erosion, walking, horse riding and non motorised vehicles, trampling, overuse, sea defence or coastal protection works, under grazing, invasion by a species, camping and caravans, agricultural improvement, stock feeding, overgrazing, paths, tracks, cycle routes, golf

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Waterford Site code & Site name	Qualifying interests	Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Conservation objectives	Threats to site integrity
			courses, restructured agricultural land holding, disposal of household waste, sand and gravel extraction, other pollution or human activities, aquaculture, professional fishing, bait digging, removal of fauna, aggregate extraction, removal of beach material, industrialisation, port/marina, communication networks, water pollution, reclamation of land,
<b>Tramore Backstrand</b>	Brent Geese, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Lapwing, Dunlin, Sanderling,	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.	Disturbance, Water Quality, Invasive Species
<b>Dungarvan Bay</b>	Brent Goose, Black-tailed Godwit , Bar-tailed Godwit, of international importance Nationally important numbers of Shelduck, Wigeon, Red-breasted Merganser, Grey Plover, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin, Redshank and Turnstone	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.	Disturbance, Water pollution, climate change, change in species composition, aquaculture, bait digging, aggregate extraction, industrialisation, port/marina, communications networks, water pollution
<b>Blackwater Callows</b>	Whooper swan, Bewick's Swan, Golden Plover, Kingfisher	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.	Disturbance, change in agricultural practices
<b>Blackwater Estuary</b>	Little Egret, Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Sandwich Tern, Roseate Tern, Common Tern	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.	Disturbance, Water pollution
<b>Helvick Coast</b>	<b>Head</b> Peregrine, Chough Kittiwake and Guillemot	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.	Development, Change in agricultural practices, agricultural abandonment, encroachment of scrub, loss of close-sward grazing,
<b>Mid-Waterford Coast</b>	Peregrine, Chough	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.	Development, Change in agricultural practices, agricultural abandonment, encroachment of scrub, loss of close-sward grazing,

Table 2: Natura 2000 sites within 15km of Waterford

County Cork		Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	
Site code & Site name	Qualifying interests	Conservation objectives	Threats to site integrity
<b>Ballymacoda Bay SPA</b>	Estuaries, salt meadows, mudflats and sandflats	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	Professional fishing, taking for fauna, taking for flora, water pollution, climate change, change in species composition, Invasive Species, Erosion and accretion, Aquaculture, professional fishing, bait digging, removal of fauna, aggregate extraction;(removal of beach material, industrialization, Port/Marina, communications networks, water pollution, reclamation of land, coastal protection works, invasion by a species
<b>000072 Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford)</b>	Estuary, Mudflats, Shingle Banks, Salt Meadows, Floating River Vegetation, Old Oak Woods, Alluvial Woodland, Yew Woodland, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, White-clawed Crayfish, Shad, Lampreys, Salmon, Otter, Killarney Fern	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.	See County Waterford above

4. Screening Assessment

Table 3 presents issues concerning the conservation status of the larger Natura 2000 sites and species where they occur in Waterford

Table 3. Habitats Directive Assessment Matrix to determine nature of risk of significant effects on SACs and SPAs.

Natura 2000 Site SAC	Pressure Topic	Possible Impacts from LERP	Risk of Significant Impact	Mitigation measure
Lower River Suir	Water quality and Waste Water Treatment (EPA classify Lower Suir Estuary trophic status as Intermediate, Upper Suir Estuary as Eutrophic) <sup>3</sup>	Increase in economic growth and population in Waterford City along River Suir, increase in development on lands adjacent to SAC.	Adequate WWT capacity to ensure required water quality standards due to construction of secondary WWTP in Gorteen in 2011 with a p.e. of 190,000	<b>No mitigation required for WWT</b> <b>South-East River Basin District Management Plan Standards will guide monitoring and restoration measures.</b>
Blackwater River	Water Quality and Waste Water Treatment (EPA classify trophic status as eutrophic in both Upper and Lower Blackwater Estuary)	Increase in economic growth and population in settlements along River Blackwater and tributaries River Bride and River Licky including Ballyduff West, Lismore, Cappoquin, Villierstown and Tallow.	Waste Water Treatment Plant planned for Cappoquin with a population equivalent of 2,556 under the 7 Villages Scheme  Waste Water Treatment Plant planned for Tallow with a population equivalent of 2,527 under the 7 Villages Scheme	<b>Adequate WWT infrastructure will be in place.</b> <b>South-East River Basin District Management Plan Standards will guide monitoring and restoration measures.</b>
River Nore and River Barrow including Waterford Estuary	Water quality and Waste Water Treatment (EPA list trophic status as Intermediate)	Increase in population in settlements along Waterford Estuary including Cheekpoint and Passage East and Dunmore East	Waste Water Treatment Plant is constructed in Cheekpoint  Waste Water Treatment Plant planned for Dunmore East under the 7 Villages scheme.	<b>7 Villages scheme</b>
Tramore Dunes and Back Strand	Recreational Pressure	Increased visitors and recreational pressure on Tramore Dunes SAC	Degradation of habitat	<b>Action 4.2.6 proposes sustainable development of the coast and proposals will be subject to EIA and AA Screening at the Project level.</b>

<sup>3</sup> Ireland's Environment 2008 (EPA)

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Natura 2000 Site SAC	Pressure Topic	Possible impacts from LECP	Risk of Significant Impact	Mitigation measure
				Tramore Beach Bye-Laws and the 2011 Birds and Habitats Regulations.
Comeragh Mountains	Recreational Pressure	Increased visitors and recreational pressure on Comeragh Mountains SAC	Degradation of habitat	Action 4.2.4 proposes sustainable <sup>4</sup> development of the Comeragh Mountains and proposals will be subject to EIA and AA Screening at the Project level.
Helvick Head Coast	Disturbance	Tourism development along coastline	Disturbance	Action 4.2.6 proposes sustainable development of the coast and proposals will be subject to EIA and AA Screening at the Project level.
Mid-Waterford Coast	Disturbance	Tourism development along coastline	Disturbance	Action 4.2.6 proposes sustainable development of the coast and proposals will be subject to EIA and AA Screening at the Project level.
Dungarvan Bay	Water quality Waste Water Treatment (EPA classify trophic status as Intermediate. SERBDMP state the area requires restoration to reach good status under the WFD by 2015).	Increase in population in Dungarvan, Ballinroad, Helvick and Baile na Gall	Secondary treatment with a population equivalent to serve 20,000 is available at Dungarvan	Action 4.2.6 proposes sustainable development of the coast and proposals will be subject to EIA and AA Screening at the Project level.
Tramore Back Strand	Disturbance	Extension of Runway Waterford Airport	Extension application PD 14/89 was subject to a NIS and granted approval.	<b>NIS found no adverse impact on integrity of Tramore Back strand SPA.</b>

<sup>4</sup> Sustainable development includes development that is in compliance with European Habitats and Environmental Legislation

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Annex II species	National Conservation Status <sup>5</sup>	Threats to Conservation Status on a national level	Comment/ Mitigation measure
Freshwater Pearl Mussel	Bad	Water quality	There are no LECP actions proposed specifically for FPM catchments. Project level AA.
Killarney Fern	Good	Modifications to the hydrology of Killarney Fern sites through afforestation, road development	There are no LECP actions proposed specifically for Killarney Fern sites. Project level AA.
Salmon	Bad	Water quality	Programme of Measures under WFD and River Basin District Management Plans. Project level AA.
Crayfish	Poor	Water quality	River Basin District Management Plans. Project level AA.
Twaite Shad	Bad	Water quality	River Basin District Management Plans. Project level AA.
Otter	Poor	Water quality Clearance of riparian vegetation	Infrastructure projects will be subject to AA at the project level
River Lamprey	Good	Water quality	River Basin District Management Plans. Project level AA.
Sea Lamprey	Poor	Weirs and Channel maintenance	Infrastructure projects will be subject to AA at the project level.

<sup>5</sup> The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland DoEHLG 2008

## 4.2 Potential Impacts and Mitigation

### 4.2.1 Strategic Objectives

The Waterford Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2020 provides a socio-economic framework within which all local and regional stakeholders can work collaboratively to achieve the objectives contained therein. It is not a spatial plan but a strongly action focussed plan. The objectives and actions in the Economic Plan focus on stimulating demand for employment through attracting investment in new business from inward investment and through promotion of entrepreneurship and the growth of indigenous business. The key objectives of the Community Plan are to develop Community of Place Plans and provide coherent services to communities.

In the context of Habitats Directive Assessment, potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites may arise where increased economic and population growth cannot be served by water and wastewater infrastructure leading to deterioration of water quality standards and pollution which may compromise habitat quality and thereby affect the favourable conservation status of habitats and species. Eutrophication in some instances may provide richer feeding grounds for bird life in SPAs but in the main, water pollution is considered a threat to site integrity in the Natura 2000 network.

Economic growth in Waterford City and in towns and villages near rivers, estuaries and along coastlines which are designated SAC/SPA requires the provision of adequate waste water treatment capacity and appropriate level of treatment to reduce the threat of deteriorating water quality. There is adequate WWT infrastructure in Waterford, Dungarvan and Tramore to cater for increased population that may arise as a result of economic growth. Progress is also being made in smaller settlements under the 7 Villages Scheme. Tourism development along the coastline will be subject EIA and AA Screening at the Project level.

### 4.2.2 LECP Objectives and Actions

Potential impacts on the Natura 2000 network from all objectives and actions in the Waterford LECP 2015-2020 were assessed. Appendix 1 details amendments proposed to those objectives and actions found to have potential for impacts. While some goals and objectives set a framework for future development that may impact on SACs/SPAs, the strategic nature of the goal/objective may not contain sufficient detail to accurately assess the significance of the impact and thus it is considered that the impacts will be more appropriately assessed at project level if and when that project is progressed. Amendments were accordingly proposed to ensure any LECP objectives and actions that could impact on SACs/SPAs would be screened for appropriate assessment where relevant and progressed in compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. Any potential impacts at project level should also be mitigated by the range of planning policies contained in Section 8 of the County Development Plan and Chapter 10 of the City Development Plan relating to Natural Heritage. With regard to action 4.5 to extend the runway at Waterford Airport this was subject to a planning application in 2014 and impacts on Tramore Back Strand were assessed by a NIS.

Mount Congreve lands (adjacent to River Suir SAC) are zoned for Rural Tourism in the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017 and were subject to SEA and AA at the plan level. Project level proposals will be subject to EIA and AA Screening on inception. The Dungarvan- Kilmeaden and Kilmeaden- Bilberry Greenways were subject to AA and EIA Screening through the Part 8 process at the Project level in 2014 and found not to pose significant effects on Natura 2000 sites.

## 5. Impacts on Natura sites within 15km of County Waterford

There is one Natura 2000 site located within 15km of County Waterford- Ballymacoda Bay in Co. Cork and it will not be directly affected by objectives and actions in the LECP.

All the River SACs within Waterford (Blackwater, Lower River Suir, Barrow and Nore,) traverse the county boundary with Counties Cork, South Tipperary and Kilkenny. No significant impacts arising from the LECP are anticipated upstream in these river corridors.

### 6. Conclusion

A Habitats Directive Screening Assessment was carried out on the Waterford LECP 2015-2020. A review of conservation objectives and threats to site integrity for the range of Natura 2000 sites in Waterford was undertaken to identify sites that may be impacted by objectives and actions in the LECP. Objectives for economic growth and potential for impacts on settlements that are located adjacent to river and coastal SACs and SPAs were considered to be the key areas for assessment. Pressure topics such as waste water treatment and tourism development were assessed for their impacts on SACs and SPAs such as Dungarvan Bay, Tramore Dunes and Back Strand, Comeragh Mountains, Lower River Suir, Rivers Nore and Barrow, River Blackwater, Helvic Head and the Mid-Waterford Coast. The screening assessment found that adequate waste water treatment infrastructure is in place to cater for increased economic and population growth.

Screening for impacts on Annex II species occurring within Waterford was also carried out. All these species are water dependant species and thus, protecting the habitat in which they occur will by association enable protection of their conservation status. Conservation status for the Killarney Fern and River Lamprey is considered good.<sup>6</sup> Species such as the Freshwater Pearl Mussel are already the subject of a range of environmental targets laid out in Sub-Basin Catchment Plans and Program of Measures under the Water Framework Directive. These targets involve participation by local authorities and thus it is not considered that there are additional impacts arising from objectives in the LECP that will exacerbate these impacts. Species such as Salmon, Crayfish, Twaite Shad and Otter are considered to hold bad and poor conservation status reflecting the need to address water pollution and management of riparian zones. These issues are subject to provisions of the River Basin District Management Plans and 2009 Surface Water Regulations.

Any objectives/actions that may impact on Natura 2000 sites will be subject project level AA in keeping with the requirements of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and Section 177(v) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

It is not considered the Waterford LECP will give rise to significant effects on Natura 2000 sites in Waterford City and County. This assessment should be read in conjunction with the Waterford LECP 2015-2020 and the accompanying SEA Screening Statement prepared in fulfilment of the SEA process.

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<sup>6</sup> The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (DoEHLG 2008)

**Appendix 1. Screening Assessment of Waterford LECP Objectives and Actions to ensure compliance with Article 6**

Reference No. Objective	Draft LECP Objective 2015-2020 Action	Comment /Amended Objective following screening of Draft Plan
3.3 To revitalise, regenerate and improve the urban environment	Realise the economic potential of the North Quays (Completion of Phase 1)	Demolition of North Quays Flour Mills were subject to EIA and AA Screening in 2014 at the project level.
3.4 Enhance the connectivity between and within our urban centres	Link the three main urban centres by Greenway and seek to become part of a strategic national trail	Dungarvan- Kilmeaden and Kilmeaden- Bilberry Greenways were subject to AA and EIA Screening through the part 8 process at the Project level in 2014.
4.2 Develop a world class tourism product	Develop a world class garden and estate at Mount Congreve	Mount Congreve lands zoned for Rural Tourism in the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017 and subject to SEA and AA at the plan level. Project level proposals will be subject to EIA and AA Screening on inception.
	Harness potential of the UNESCO GeoPark	Projects will be subject to EIA and AA Screening on inception.
	Develop the activity tourism potential of the Comeragh Mountains and Munster Peaks.	Develop the <del>activity</del> <sup>7</sup> sustainable tourism potential of the Comeragh Mountains and Munster Peaks.
	Development of the Waterford Greenway.	<b>Sustainable</b> development of the Waterford Greenway
	Support coastal tourism by developing the network of beaches, harbours and piers along the estuary and developing Tramore as Ireland's premier seaside destination.	Support coastal tourism by <b>sustainably</b> developing the network of beaches, harbours and piers along the estuary and developing Tramore as Ireland's premier seaside destination
	Develop Infrastructure in Waterford City and Dunmore East to support cruise tourism.	Develop Infrastructure in Waterford City and Dunmore East to support <b>sustainable</b> cruise tourism.
4.5 Ensure the viability of Waterford Airport	Support the expansion of the runway	Support the <b>sustainable</b> expansion of the runway.  Extension application PD 14/89 was subject to a NIS and granted approval.
5.2 Seek to realise value from our unique marine environment and drive forward the maritime economy while preserving the environmental and ecological stability of the coast	Support development of mari/aquaculture opportunities.	Support the <b>sustainable</b> development of mari/aquaculture opportunities.
5.3 Promote and support agricultural and food economic opportunities	Promote and support agricultural and food economic opportunities.	Promote and support <b>sustainable</b> agricultural and food economic opportunities.

<sup>7</sup> Sustainable development includes development that is compliant with European Environmental and Habitats legislation.

Reference No. Objective	Draft LECP Objective 2015-2020 Action	Comment /Amended Objective following screening of Draft Plan
	Support the development of forestry and biomass as an alternative agricultural land use.	Support the <u>sustainable</u> development of forestry and biomass as an alternative agricultural land use
6.5 Develop a European Centre in Intelligence and Analytics	Develop the Mercyhurst Campus , Dungarvan	Within an existing urban environment. No anticipated significant effects on Dungarvan Bay SPA.