

# Kilkenny Destination & Experience Development Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement

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**Brady Shipman  
Martin**

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Environment**

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## Glossary

### Appropriate Assessment

The obligation to undertake Appropriate Assessment derives from Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action or project, alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

### Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

Biodiversity is the variability among living organisms from all sources including inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems' (United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity 1992).

Flora is all of the plants found in a given area.

Fauna is all of the animals found in a given area.

### Environmental Problems

Annex I of Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27th June 2001, on the assessment of the effects of certain Plans and programmes on the environment (the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive) requires that information is provided on 'any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme', thus, helping to ensure that the proposed strategic action does not make existing environmental problems worse.

Environmental problems arise where there is a conflict between current environmental conditions and ideal targets. If environmental problems are identified at the outset they can help focus attention on important issues and geographical areas where environmental effects of the plan or programme may be likely.

### Environmental Vectors

Environmental vectors are environmental components, such as air, water or soil, through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported so that they come into contact with human beings.

### Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing a human action, be it a plan, programme or project. Mitigation involves ameliorating significant negative effects. Where there are significant negative effects, consideration should be given in the first instance to preventing such effects or, where this is not possible, to lessening or offsetting those effects.

### Protected Structure

Protected Structure is the term used in the Planning and Development Act and Regulations (as amended) to define a structure included by a planning authority in its Record of Protected Structures. Such a structure shall not be altered or demolished in whole or part without obtaining planning permission or confirmation from the planning authority that the part of the structure to be altered is not protected.

#### **Recorded Monument**

A monument included in the list and marked on the map which comprises the Record of Monuments and Places that is set out County by County under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. The definition includes Zones of Archaeological Potential in towns and all other monuments of archaeological interest which have so far been identified. Any works at or in relation to a recorded monument requires two months' notice to the former Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (now Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994.

#### **SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment)**

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt it.

#### **SEA Scoping**

Scoping is the process of determining what issues are to be addressed, and setting out a methodology in which to address them in a structured manner appropriate to the plan or programme. SEA coping is carried out in consultation with appropriate environmental authorities.

#### **Strategic Actions**

Strategic actions include: Policies / Strategies, which may be considered as inspiration and guidance for action and which set the framework for Plans and programmes; Plans, sets of coordinated and timed objectives for the implementation of the policy; and Programmes, sets of projects in a particular area.

#### **Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO)**

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Masterplan and the alternatives can be evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if - in the case of adverse effects – unmitigated

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

This is the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement for the Kilkenny Destination & Experience Development Plan (hereafter referred to the 'Plan' or the 'KDEDP').

This SEA Statement, which should be read in conjunction with the KDEDP, has been prepared by Brady Shipman Martin, environmental, planning and landscape consultants, on behalf of Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority.

The following report has been prepared to comply with the provisions of Article 16(2)(b) of S.I. 435 of 2004 – European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations – as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011 – European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011.

*Directive 2001/42/EC<sup>1</sup> on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment* (the 'SEA Directive') requires EU Member States to assess the 'likely significant environmental effects' of plans and programmes prior to their adoption. This provides for the assessment of strategic environmental considerations at an early stage in the decision-making process. SEA is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental quality and consequences of Plans or Programmes (P/Ps). The purpose is to ensure that the environmental consequences of P/Ps are assessed both during their preparation and prior to their adoption. The SEA process also gives specified environmental authorities, interested parties and the general public, an opportunity to comment on the environmental impacts of the proposed P/P and to be kept informed during the decision-making process.

Article 1 of the SEA Directive states that:

*"The objective of this directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment."*

The SEA Directive was transposed into Irish law through:

- Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 435 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011); and
- S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011).

The former regulations, (S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011), relate to SEA as it applies to plans or programmes prepared for *"agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism and town and country planning or land use"*, and these provisions are applicable to the KDEDP as a tourism sector plan.

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<sup>1</sup> SEA Directive: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

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The latter regulations (S.I. No. 436 of 2004 as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011) relate to SEA as it applies to plans or programmes where the context requires, “a development plan, a variation of a development plan, a local area plan (or an amendment thereto), regional planning guidelines or a planning scheme”, and are not applicable to the KDEDP.

This SEA Statement is a reflective document that looks back on the SEA process, what has been achieved and it also sets out what monitoring will be done in the future.

## 1.2 Destination & Experience Development Plans

A Destination & Experience Development Plan (DEDP) is a five year commercial destination and experience development plan prepared for an area.

The role of the KDEDP is to support the development of unique and compelling destination experiences focused on a number of immediate and strategic destination opportunities and catalyst projects in Kilkenny City and County. The KDEDP has been prepared through a consultative process involving tourism industry representatives, members of the local community and Kilkenny County Council.

## 1.3 Appropriate Assessment

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires an Appropriate Assessment (AA) to be carried out where a plan or project is *likely to have a significant impact* on a Natura 2000 site. Natura 2000 sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA).

Stage 1 is to establish whether AA is required for the particular plan or project. This stage is referred to as ‘screening for the requirement for AA’, and its purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site, in view of the site’s conservation objectives.

As set out in Department Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08<sup>2</sup> (15 February 2008), Screening for AA is of relevance to SEA screening in that “*where following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting the precautionary approach:*

- *An AA of the plan must be carried out, and*
- *In any case where SEA would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out.”*

Hence, where a plan requires AA, it shall also require SEA.

A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) and the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the KDEDP and the SEA Environmental Report.

The AA has concluded that the KDEDP will not affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

## 1.4 Content of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement

In accordance with Article 16(2)(b) of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, (as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011), the SEA Statement will summarise the following:

- (i) *how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme;*

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<sup>2</sup> NPWS SEA letter: <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>

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- (ii) how:
- (I) the environmental report prepared pursuant to article 12,
  - (II) submissions and observations made to the competent authority in response to a notice under article 13, and
  - (III) any consultations under article 14.
- have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme,
- (iii) the reasons for choosing the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with, and
- (iv) the measures decided upon to monitor, in accordance with article 17, the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan or programme or modification to a plan or programme.

## 1.5 SEA Stages and Process

The key focus of SEA is to take environmental issues, and in particular ‘likely significant environmental effects’ of a P / P, into consideration during the plan or programme making process. The key stages in the SEA process as they relate to the KDEDP are outlined in **Table 1.1** below.



**Table 1.1 Outline of the SEA Process**

Stage	Description	Status
1. Screening	<p>The requirement to undertake a SEA is mandatory for certain Plan / Programme (P / P). Where SEA is not a mandatory requirement, the P / Ps is subject to a ‘Screening process’, to consider if it is <i>likely to have significant effects</i> on the environment, and therefore, if SEA is required.</p> <p>The preparation of the <i>Draft KDEDP</i> has been screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) and it has been concluded that potential for effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt and is required to undergo Appropriate Assessment.</p> <p>Therefore, in accordance with <i>Circular Letter SEA 1/08 &amp; NPWS 1/08</i> the <i>Draft KDEDP</i> was also required to undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with <i>Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment</i> (known as the SEA Directive).</p>	<p>Completed</p> 
2. Scoping	<p>Preparation of a SEA Scoping Report highlighting that the Environmental Report is required to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ methods of assessment;</li> <li>■ contents and level of detail in the Plan / Programme;</li> <li>■ the stage in the Plan or Programme-making process; and</li> <li>■ the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in the decision-making process in order to avoid duplication of environmental assessment.</li> </ul> <p>Scoping provides for consultation with the Environmental Authorities specified in Article 13 of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by Regulations S.I. No. 200 of 2011, and the process allows for incorporation of the views of the environmental authorities within the P / P and the SEA Environmental Report.</p>	<p>Completed</p> 



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Stage	Description	Status
<b>3. Environmental Report</b>	<p>Preparation of a systemic identification and evaluation of alternatives and assessment of the <i>likely significant environmental effects</i> of implementing the P / P.</p> <p>The findings of the assessment, which is carried out at various stages in the P / P making (<i>e.g.</i> Draft, Amended Draft <i>etc.</i>), are provided in the SEA Environmental Report in accordance with Article 12 (including Schedule 2) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by Regulations S.I. No. 200 of 2011.</p> <p>The output from this stage is an Environmental Report which accompanied the draft P / P required on public display.</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p> 
<b>4. SEA Statement</b>	<p>Completion / adoption of the Final KDED, taking account of <i>likely significant environmental effects</i>, any submissions or observations received from consultations and integration of mitigation and monitoring measures within the Plan.</p> <p>The Environmental Report is concluded and an SEA Statement is prepared in accordance with Article 16(2)(b) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by Regulations S.I. No. 200 of 2011, summarising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan / Programme;</li> <li>▪ how the environmental report, and any submissions /observations or consultations have been taken into account in the preparation of the Plan / Programme;</li> <li>▪ the reasons for choosing the Plan / Programme in light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and</li> <li>▪ the measures decided for monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Plan / Programme.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Completed</b></p> 
<b>5. SEA Monitoring</b>	<p>The Plan is adopted and implemented, and the environmental effectiveness of the implementation of the Plan is monitored and reported on through the life of the Plan.</p>	<p><b>On-going</b></p>

## 2 Integration of Environmental Considerations into the Plan

### 2.1 Introduction

This section details how both the SEA Environmental Report and submissions and observations made to the planning authority on the Environmental Report and SEA process have been taken into account during the preparation of the KDEDP.

The SEA and AA team worked with the Plan-preparation team at Fáilte Ireland in order to integrate requirements for environmental protection and management into the Plan. Consideration has been given to the requirement to undertake environmental assessment of this Plan in order to ensure full legal compliance and to further integrate protection, enhancement and promotion of the environment in developing and implementing the Plan. The key findings of the SEA and AA Process for the Plan and key requirements for Environmental Protection and Management are included in Appendix 1 of the KDEDP.

### 2.2 SEA Consultation

A number of opportunities are integrated into the plan-making process to allow for consultation with the environmental authorities and the general public on the plan and SEA. Submissions and observations were made at each of these stages, and these informed the preparation and finalisation of the Plan and the SEA process.

#### 2.2.1 SEA Scoping Consultation

SEA Scoping (Stage 2) consultation with the Environmental Authorities specified in Article 9(5) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by Regulations S.I. No. 200 of 2011 and for incorporation of the views of the Environmental Authorities within the Plan or Programme and the SEA Environmental Report.

The consultation was undertaken with the following Environmental Authorities specified in Article 9(5) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended, on 13 July 2023:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- The Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications;
- The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine;
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

Submissions / observations on the scoping of the Environmental Report were received from the environmental authorities and comments have been incorporated into the Plan and Environmental Report as set out in **Table 2.1**.

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Table 2.1 SEA Scoping Submissions / Observation from Environmental Authorities

Environmental Authority	Outline of Nature of the Submission	Response to consideration of nature of submission
<p><b>Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)</b></p>	<p>The submission from EPA includes the following comments and recommendations:</p> <p>EPA highlights several key environmental issues to consider in preparing the Plan and SEA. The Plan should set out the implementation arrangement and governance structures, document synergy between the Plan and key national plan and programmes, reflect objective of the SEA Directive. The SEA shall address climate &amp; biodiversity issues.</p>	<p>The information provided has informed the preparation of the Plan and the Environmental Report.</p>
	<p>Recommendations from the SEA &amp; AA including mitigation measures and monitoring proposals should be integrated into the Plan. SEA Environmental Report and the Plan should include a chapter on how the recommendations and mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Plan.</p>	
	<p>EPA recommend that the SEA Environmental Report includes summary tables outlining the key findings of the SEA and linking the significant environmental effects identified to the proposed mitigation measures, monitoring programme and Plan policies/measures.</p>	
	<p>EPA recommend that the Plan should include summary tables outlining the key findings of the SEA and linking the significant environmental effects identified to the proposed mitigation measures, monitoring programme and, where relevant, Plan policies/measures.</p>	
	<p>EPA highlight their recently published guidance note to help provide guidance and ideas on how to carry out strategic environmental assessments (SEA) of tourism sectoral plans and programmes in Ireland - 'Good Practice Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Tourism Sector'.</p>	
	<p>The submission describes the key findings and chapters of the 'State of the Environment Report- Ireland's Environment An Integrated Assessment 2020'. The report recognises the need for full implementation of existing environmental legislation and review of governance/coordination on environmental protection across public bodies.</p>	
	<p>EPA highlights the requirement under the SEA Regulations to consult with Environmental Authorities (EPA, Minister of Housing, Local Government &amp; Heritage, Department of Environment, Climate &amp; Communications, Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine)</p>	

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### Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement

Environmental Authority	Outline of Nature of the Submission	Response to consideration of nature of submission
	Appendix I to the EPA submission includes comments on the SEA Scoping Report - scope of the SEA, data and knowledge gaps, range of effects, monitoring, implementation & reporting, SEA statement, integration with other key Plans and Programmes, available guidance & resources, webtools.	
<a href="#">Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI)</a>	GSI encourage use of and reference to their datasets attached to their submission. These include geoheritage (county geological sites), culture & tourism, groundwater, geological mapping, geohazards, natural resources, geochemistry of soils, surface waters and sediments, historic mines, physiographic units. GSI also includes a list of publicly available datasets relevant to planning, EIA & SEA processes.	The information and datasets provided have informed the preparation of the Environmental Report.

### 2.2.2 Draft Plan Consultation

The Draft KDEDP, together with the SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) were placed on public display. No submissions were received from the public.

Consultation was also undertaken with the Environmental Authorities as specified in Article 13 of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by Regulations S.I. No. 200 of 2011 and for incorporation of the views of the Environmental Authorities within the Plan or Programme and the SEA Environmental Report.

Submission was received by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), refer to **Table 2.2** below.

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**Table 2.2 SEA Consultation Response from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**

Outline of Nature of the Submission from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Response to consideration of nature of submission
<p>The submission from EPA includes the following comments and recommendations:</p> <p>Ensure the Plan aligns with key relevant higher-level plans and programmes and is consistent with the relevant objectives and policy commitments of the National Planning Framework and the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.</p>	<p>The information provided has informed the preparation of the Plan and the Environmental Report.</p>
<p>Visitor Numbers</p> <p>EPA note that central to the Plan is the aim of increasing visitor numbers. This increase has the potential to disturb or damage the natural environment, if not carefully managed. Where the expected increase in tourist numbers materialises, there may be a need for additional or expanded tourism and tourism-related developments. Such developments may have implications for changes to land use, loss of green field sites, disturbance to natural or cultural heritage (including designated sites and protected species, etc.). It is important that tourism offerings are developed at suitable locations and in an environmentally sustainable manner, which minimises potential adverse environmental impacts.</p>	<p>The Plan and the Environmental Report take into account integrating requirements for environmental protection and management under Appendix 1. Visitor management is specifically addressed on page 40 and also considered throughout the Plan.</p>
<p>Critical Infrastructure Provision</p> <p>In the context of increased visitor numbers and any potential development, the Plan should recognise the need for adequate and appropriate wastewater and drinking water services to be put in place to service any infrastructural development associated with Plan-related projects, in the interests of protecting both the environment and public health. In this context, Fáilte Ireland should liaise with Úisce Éireann in terms of future needs for provision of adequate critical services.</p>	<p>This is already referenced in the introduction paragraph in Appendix 1 of the Plan and specifically included in the table of bulletpoints at the end of page 38. As such this is already included and no further change is required.</p>
<p>Biodiversity Considerations</p> <p>We note the various important ecosystem services and designated sites / protected species within the Plan area. This should be considered carefully, to ensure that any additional tourism developments are sited, designed, operated and maintained in an appropriate manner. In seeking to enhance tourism developments, the need to maintain and protect the significant environmental resources of the area should also be a clear objective.</p> <p>EPA suggest that key findings of the SEA and AA processes are incorporated into the Plan, as shown in Appendix A. It may be useful to include a map in the Appendix A also, showing the key elements of environmental sensitivity in the area.</p>	<p>The following reference has been added to the final Plan:</p> <p><i>“Identification and mapping of the key environmental sensitivities of relevance to the Plan as detailed in the SEA Environmental Report and in the AA Natura Impact Statement.”</i></p>

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Outline of Nature of the Submission from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Response to consideration of nature of submission
<p>EPA note the commitment to working closely with stakeholders such as the Local Authority, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Coillte, Community Groups, etc., in delivering many of the projects included in the Plan. Those projects should take into account the requirements of the EIA, Birds and Habitats Directives, as appropriate. The potential for cumulative effects that may arise from multiple tourism initiatives needs to be a key consideration also. It will be important that environmental management plans are prepared as appropriate, to ensure that important environmental and cultural resources are afforded significant protection.</p>	<p>The information provided has informed the preparation of the Plan and the Environmental Report.</p>
<p>EPA advise to refer to the following guidance document- Good practice guidance on SEA for the tourism sector (EPA, 2023), Good practice guidance on SEA and landscape (EPA, 2023), EPA Guidance on the Tiering of environmental assessments – The influence of Strategic Environmental Assessment on Project level Environmental Impact Assessment (EPA, 2021), Ireland’s Climate Change Assessment (ICCA),</p>	<p>The information provided has informed the preparation of the Plan and the Environmental Report.</p>
<p>The Monitoring Programme should be flexible to take account of specific environmental issues and unforeseen adverse impacts should they arise. It should consider and deal with the possibility of cumulative effects. Monitoring of both positive and negative effects should be considered. The monitoring programme should set out the various data sources, monitoring frequencies and responsibilities.</p> <p>Guidance on SEA-related monitoring is available on the EPA website.</p>	<p>The information provided has informed the preparation of the Plan and the Environmental Report.</p>
<p>The Submission refers to the State of the Environment Report – Ireland’s Environment 2020, which should be considered as relevant. EPA also brings to the attention that the next iteration of the report will be published later in 2024.</p>	<p>The information provided has informed the preparation of the Plan and the Environmental Report.</p>
<p>EPA advises on the preparation of the SEA statement and to send a copy of the SEA Statement with the above information to any environmental authority consulted during the SEA process.</p>	<p>The SEA statement will be prepared as the next step in the SEA process</p>

### 3 SEA Environmental Report

The SEA Environmental Report has been prepared to comply with the provisions of Article 12 of S.I. 435 of 2004 – European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations – as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011 – European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011.

Article 5(1) and Annex I of the *SEA Directive* provides detail on the information to be included in an Environmental Report. **Table 3.1** provides a checklist of the information referred to in Article 5(1) with a confirmation of where the relevant information is contained within the SEA. Refer to the standalone SEA Environmental Report prepared for the KDEDP.

**Table 3.1 Information required under Annex I of the SEA Directive**

Information referred to in Article 5(1)	Environmental Report Section
(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Section 2 & Section 4
(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;	Section 5
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	Section 5
(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	Section 5
(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	Section 6
(f) the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	Section 8 and Appendix 8.1
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	Section 9
(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;	Section 7
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10;	Section 10
(j) a non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.	Refer to Non-technical Summary Report



### 3.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives

The SEA Directive requires that ‘the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.’ Given the position of the KDEDP beneath the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021-2027 in the land use planning hierarchy, the measures identified in the SEA for the Development Plan have also been considered in this assessment, with some modification where appropriate.

A series of Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) have been prepared in line with current guidance and also with specific reference to the SEA for the KDEDP (refer to **Table 3.2**). The SEOs provide a basis for the assessment of the environmental effects of the KDEDP and are framed in such a manner as to enable the KDEDP to be fully assessed in environmental terms.

SEOs are distinct from the strategic objectives within the KDEDP, although they often overlap and are developed from international, national and regional policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives.

**Table 3.2 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) for KDEDP**

Theme	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective
Biodiversity (Flora & Fauna) (B)	B_1	Ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annex habitats and species <sup>3</sup> and no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function.
	B_2	Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites, habitats and protected species.
	B_3	Ensure KDEDP does not contradict biodiversity protection, restoration and rehabilitation objectives in the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027.
Population & Human Health (PHH)	PHH_1	Promote sustainable high quality tourism within the County that supports economic development and maximises potential for employment and investment.
	PHH_2	Improve health and wellbeing by provision of recreational and tourism-related activities.
Land, Soils & Geology (LSG)	LSG_1	Minimise green field development and protect land and soil resources from pollution and degradation.
Water Quality (WQ)	WQ_1	Protect, maintain and where necessary improve water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.
	WQ_2	Implement and comply with the provisions of the Flood Risk Management and Sustainable Drainage Systems Guidelines to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.
Air Quality, Noise & Climate (ANC)	ANC_1	Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality and noise emissions through the reduction of emissions.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Annexed habitats and species’ refer to those listed under Annex I, II & IV of the EU Habitats Directive and Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

Theme	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective
	ANC_2	Contribute towards climate adaptation and mitigation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with National targets, including Ireland's commitment to realising a climate neutral economy by 2050.
Material Assets (MA)	MA_1	To contribute towards the protection of public assets and infrastructure, ensure new developments are served with adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure with sufficient capacity (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) that does not present a danger to human health.
	MA_2	Promote sustainable waste management, minimisation and recovery.
	MA_3	Promote sustainable transportation including increased use of public transport and active travel measures.
Cultural Heritage (CH)	CH_1	Protect and avoid impact on places, features and landscapes of cultural and archaeological importance, including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).
	CH_2	Protect and avoid impact on places, features, buildings and landscapes of architectural heritage, (including entries to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAHs)).
Landscape & Visual (LV)	LV_1	To protect landscape character, minimise the loss of historic landscape features such as mature trees and hedgerows and scenic views.
	LV_2	Avoid impacts on the statutory landscape & visual designations as identified in the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027.

### 3.2 Assessment of Effects of the Kilkenny Destination & Experience Development Plan

The KDEDP has been subject to an assessment for potential effects arising from the implementation of the Plan on the baseline environment as characterised. The assessment was carried out having regard to the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) established for the aspects of the baseline environment which have potential to be impacted by the KDEDP.

The *Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027* states that it is Council policy to ‘support the delivery of Destination Experience Development Plans through continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland’. It is noted that during its preparation the *Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027*, was subject to full SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)<sup>4</sup>.

The environmental assessment of the ‘Strategic Objectives’ and of the ‘Catalyst Projects’ of the KDEDP were set out separately in the Environmental Report. The finding of the assessment is that 22 no. objectives will have either potential positive effects or no effects on the environment. The finding of the assessment is that 20no. strategic objectives will have potential for either negative effects or for uncertain effects on the environment. Of these only one action has potential for negative effects.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/planning/development-plans/city-and-county-development-plan/adopted-city-and-county-development-plan.html>

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There are 5no. catalyst projects and 7no. destination enablers in total and projects 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and destination enablers 1, 5, 6 & 7 in the absence of mitigation, could have the potential to result in uncertain environmental effect on cultural heritage. The projects where there is a requirement for development of existing and new infrastructure might also give rise to uncertain environmental effects on other environmental themes and SEOs that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.

Where potential negative or uncertain environment effects have been identified appropriate mitigation has been provided as set out in **Section 3.3** of this Report.

In working with the SEA process, the Plan acknowledges the requirement for any development to adhere to best practice in terms of environmental governance. Indeed protection and enhancement of the environment is a critical pillar underpinning the core objectives and success of the KDEDP. In this context any proposals for development arising from the KDEDP must meet the proper planning and sustainable development policies, objectives and development management provisions of the statutory *Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027*.

Following the consultation stage, a number of minor amendments were made to the list of catalyst projects and destination enablers. Refer to the Environmental Report.

### 3.3 Mitigation Measures

The finding of the environmental assessment in the Environmental Report is that, if unmitigated, a number of the actions of the Kilkenny Destination & Experience Development Plan have potential for uncertain or negative effects on aspects of the environment. These potential negative and / or uncertain effects, which derive from potential works resulting from the relevant action, focus primarily on biodiversity, water, cultural heritage, material assets and landscape. This section of the Environmental Report identifies measures for the mitigation and avoidance of potential uncertain or negative environmental effects.

This Plan sits at the lower level of the hierarchy and must comply with relevant higher-level strategic actions / plans. These documents include plans and programmes, which have also been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant.

The projects included in this Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which this Plan is not part and does not contribute towards. The Plan includes requirements for environmental protection and management including the ones set out in the *Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027* especially the *Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy*. As stated in the KDEDP these include:

- **Infrastructure Capacity** - *With respect to infrastructural capacity (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) the potential impact on existing infrastructure as well as the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourism-related traffic volumes along any routes resulting from the relevant initiative shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate, where relevant. The promotion of developing visitor friendly infrastructure where it is required will also be encouraged.*
- **Visitor Management** - *Those receiving funding shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat*

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*and disturbance, including ensuring that new projects are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities.*

*Extensive research by Fáilte Ireland has shown improved environmental outcomes (including improved attainment of conservation objectives) in areas with visitor management strategies. Visitor management strategies will be required for proposed plans, programmes and projects that are to receive funding as relevant and appropriate.*

- **Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services** - *Those receiving funding shall contribute towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and its ecosystem services, taking into account the output of the Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services project being undertaken by the NPWS. Proposals for the development of any green infrastructure should demonstrate the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the: provision of open space amenities; sustainable management of water; protection and management of biodiversity; protection of cultural heritage; and protection of protected landscape sensitivities.*

The majority of the mitigation measures are achieved through the detailed environmental protective policies and objectives as set out in the *Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021-2027*. The Development Plan provides for sustainable planning and management control of all development in County Kilkenny – including the delivery of Destination & Experience Development Plans through continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland.

Proposals for development within the KDEDP area must comply as appropriate with the relevant provisions included within the *Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027*. Given that the KDEDP sits within and at a lower level in the planning hierarchy, the measures contained to the Development Plan, and in its Natura Impact Report (NIR), SEA Environmental Report / SEA Statement and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) are applicable to the KDEDP.

Therefore, the key environmental protection measures included in the *Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027*, provide for appropriate and detailed mitigation of potential uncertain environmental effects of the KDEDP. These measures include the following selected aims / policies / objectives:

#### Strategic Aims:

- **Climate Change** – *‘To provide a policy framework with objectives and actions in this City and County Development Plan to facilitate the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County with an emphasis on reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change.’*
- **Economic Development** - *‘To provide a framework for the implementation of the Council’s economic strategy by fostering competitiveness and innovation in all sectors within a high-quality physical environment while having due regard to the protection of the environment and heritage, in order to position the county for sustainable economic growth.’*
- **Rural Development** – *‘To manage rural change and guide development to strengthen the rural economy and community through the network of towns and villages ensuring vibrant, sustainable and resilient rural areas whilst conserving and sustainably managing our environment and heritage.’*
- **Open Space and Recreation** – *‘To ensure the provision of open space and recreational facilities in order to maintain, and improve open spaces that contribute to the well-being and making of place for the benefit of residents, workers and visitors to the County while protecting and enhancing biodiversity.’*
- **Heritage, Culture and the Arts** – *‘To seek the protection and sustainable management of the arts, culture and heritage of Kilkenny for the benefit of current and future generations; to encourage the collection of knowledge to inform its protection; and to promote access to, awareness of and*

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*enjoyment of Heritage, Arts and Culture, to further develop the infrastructure and actively support engagement with communities. throughout Kilkenny.'*

- **Infrastructure & Environment** – *'To ensure a sufficient level of water services within the county for the implementation of the core strategy, provide a framework for the protection of the environment, including water quality, the avoidance of flood risk and the provision of a high-quality telecommunications infrastructure.'*
- **Movement and Mobility** – *'To co-ordinate transport and land use planning, reducing the demand for travel and the reliance on the private car in favour of public transport, cycling and walking by providing for a greater mix of suitable uses and by promoting and facilitating the transition to electrification of our transport modes moving away carbon intensive modes to new technologies such as electric vehicles.'*

### Key Environmental Protective Policies in the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021-2027:

- **Rural Development** –

*It is the policy of the Council to facilitate the sustainable development of forestry in appropriate areas of the county, where it will not significantly impact upon designated habitats and biodiversity, archaeology, and that it does not have a significant adverse visual impact on the local landscape.*

Policy objectives includes:

- *Protect the quality of the environment, including the prevention, limitation, abatement and/or reduction of environmental pollution and the protection of waters, groundwater and the atmosphere.*
- *Protect features of the landscape and areas of major importance for biodiversity.*
- *Protect the character of the landscape, including views and prospects listed in this Plan and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.*

- **Heritage, Culture and the Arts** –

*It is Council policy to ensure the protection of architectural heritage by including all structures considered to be of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest in the Record of Protected Structures.*

- **Infrastructure & Environment-**

*It is Council policy to adopt a comprehensive risk-based planning approach to flood management to prevent or minimise future flood risk. In accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, the avoidance of development in areas where flood risk has been identified shall be the primary response.*

*It is the Council's policy to have regard to the waste produced by proposed developments including the nature and amount of waste produced and proposed method of disposal.*

- *To have regard to the waste produced by proposed developments including the nature and amount of waste produced and proposed method of disposal.*
- *For all significant construction/demolition projects, the developer shall include an Environmental Management Plan. These plans should seek to focus on waste minimisation in general and optimise waste prevention, re-use and recycling opportunities, and shall provide for the segregation of all construction wastes into recyclable, biodegradable and residual wastes.*
- *Construction and demolition waste management plans, to be prepared in accordance with the Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects. These plans should seek to focus on waste minimisation in general and optimise waste prevention, re-use and recycling opportunities,*

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*and shall provide for the segregation of all construction wastes into recyclable, biodegradable and residual wastes.*

#### ■ Renewable Energy -

*It is the policy of this Plan to:*

- *Support the implementation of the NECP and associated adaptation & mitigation measures.*
- *Support the implementation of Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future.*
- *Support the implementation of the All of Government Climate Action Plan (CAP) and associated adaptation and mitigation measures*

#### Key Environmental Protective Objectives in the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021-2027:

##### ■ Protection of Natura 2000 Sites -

*Objective 1A - To implement the provisions of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive and ensure that any plan or project within the functional area of the Planning Authority is subject to appropriate assessment in accordance with the Guidance Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, 2009 or any subsequent version, and is assessed in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive in order to avoid adverse impacts on the integrity and conservation objectives of the site.*

##### ■ Climate Action –

*Objective 2C - To promote, support and direct effective climate action policies and objectives that seek to improve climate outcomes across the settlement areas and communities of County Kilkenny helping to successfully contribute and deliver on the obligations of the State to transition to low carbon and climate resilient society.*

*Objective 2D - To integrate appropriate mitigation and adaptation considerations and measures into all forms of development.*

*Objective 2F - To adopt nature-based approaches and green infrastructural solutions as viable mitigation and adaptation measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions where feasible. The Council will promote and support physical activity, active recreation and an active lifestyle.*

*Objective 2G - To reduce energy related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of Kilkenny County Council.*

##### ■ Natural Heritage –

*Objective 9A - Continue to identify and map habitats and green infrastructure of county importance, and raise awareness and understanding of the county's natural heritage and biodiversity identifying green corridors and measures to connect them.*

*Objective 9B - To identify and map green infrastructure assets and sites of local biodiversity value over the lifetime of the Plan.*

*Objective 9C - To protect archaeological sites and monuments (including their setting), underwater archaeology, and archaeological objects, including those that are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places, and in the Urban Archaeological Survey of County Kilkenny or newly discovered sub-surface and underwater archaeological remains.*

*Objective 9J - To ensure the preservation of the special character of each ACA listed in this Plan (See Table 9.2 and Volume 2 Heritage Strategy) with particular regard to building scale, proportions, historical plot sizes, building lines, height, general land use, fenestration, signage, and other appendages such as electrical wiring, building materials, historic street furniture, paving and shopfronts.*

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Objective 9K - *To designate ACAs where appropriate and provide a local policy framework for the preservation of the character of these area.*

Objective 9M - *To provide a shared space facility for the creative sector within the Abbey Quarter.*

Objective 9N - *To implement the Kilkenny County Council Cultural Strategy.*

#### ■ Infrastructure and Environment -

Objective 10 A - *To facilitate Irish Water and to assist, subject to service level agreements, with the provision of water and wastewater infrastructure provision in accordance with the water services strategic plan, made in accordance with the Water Services Act 2007*

Objective 10B - *To implement the measures of the River Basin Management Plan, including continuing to work with communities through the Local Authority Waters Programme to restore and improve water quality in the identified areas of action.*

Objective 10E - *To continue to update noise mapping in accordance with revised or updated thresholds for noise mapping.*

Objective 10F - *Develop priority list of actionable works to mitigate against excessive noise and implement subject to cost benefit analysis*

Objective 10G - *To implement the Southern Region Waste Management Plan.*

Objective 10H - *It is an objective of the Council to, with due regard to the provisions of the Major Accidents Directive and Regulations, give effect to the Directive by controlling development with respect to—*

- *The siting of Major Accident Hazard sites*
- *The modification of an existing Major Accident Hazard site*
- *Development in the vicinity of a Major Accident Hazard site*

Objective 10I - *To support and facilitate the delivery of high capacity Information Communications Technology Infrastructure, broadband connectivity and digital broadcasting, throughout the County, in order to ensure economic competitiveness for the enterprise and commercial sectors and in enabling more flexible work practices e.g. remote working subject to other relevant policies and objectives of the Plan.*

#### ■ Movement and Mobility –

Objective 12 - *To plan for and progressively implement a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system by enhancing the existing transport infrastructure in terms of road, bus, rail, cycling and pedestrian facilities and interfacing different modes as the opportunity arises.*

Objective 12B - *To plan for a transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes, through the promotion of alternative modes of transport, and ‘walkable communities’ together with promotion of compact urban forms close to public transport corridors to encourage more sustainable patterns of movement in all settlements.*

Objective 12E - *To deliver on sustainable mobility with an accompanying investment in infrastructure to provide for integration between all modes of transport to support the use of sustainable travel choices.*

Objective 12G - *To achieve a modal shift from the private car to walking or cycling in accordance with the targets in Table 12.1 for County Kilkenny.*

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Objective 12I - *To develop a network of cycling and pedestrian routes within Kilkenny city to provide connectivity and provide an alternative to car-based transport.*

Objective 12P - *To provide connections to the Kilkenny Greenway to settlements along its route as the need arises and resources permit.*

#### ■ Historic Environment –

Objective xi - *Ensure all new development respects and enhances the historic environment.*

#### Development Management Requirements:

- *To ensure that development proposals, where relevant, improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and encourage the retention and management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora as per Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.*
- *To protect and where possible enhance wildlife habitats and landscape features which act as ecological corridors/networks and stepping stones, such as river corridors, hedgerows and road verges, and to minimise the loss of habitats and features of the wider countryside (such as ponds, wetlands, trees) which are not within designated sites.*
- *To ensure that appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures to conserve biodiversity, landscape character and green infrastructure networks are required in developments where habitats are at risk or lost as part of a development.*
- *To protect existing woodlands, trees and hedgerows which are of amenity or biodiversity value and/or contribute to landscape character of the county, and to ensure that proper provision is made for their protection and management, when undertaking, approving or authorising development.*
- *To have regard to, and seek the conservation of identified trees and woodlands from a) the National Survey of Ancient and Long-Established Woodlands, b) the Tree Register of Ireland (c) sites of significance identified in the Kilkenny Woodlands Survey 1997, (d) the National Survey of Native Woodlands, and (e) Survey of Mature Trees in Kilkenny City and Environs, in the assessment of planning applications.*
- *To retain hedgerows, and other distinctive boundary treatment such as stone walls, when undertaking, authorising or approving development; where the loss of the existing boundary is unavoidable as part of development, to ensure that a new hedgerow is planted using native species, and species of local provenance to replace the existing hedgerow and/or that the wall is re-built using local stone and local vernacular design.*
- *To discourage the felling of mature trees to facilitate development and, where appropriate make use of Tree Preservation Orders to protect important trees and groups of trees which may be at risk or have an amenity, biodiversity or historic value.*
- *To require the planting of native broadleaved species, and species of local provenance, in new developments as appropriate*
- *To require relevant development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan where such a species exists to comply with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.*
- *For proposals connected to surface water systems, risks associated with the spread of crayfish plague shall be considered and applicants should submit a crayfish plague management strategy where appropriate.*
- *To protect the landscape character, quality and local distinctiveness of County Kilkenny, and have regard to the guidance set out in the Landscape Character Assessment.*



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- *Where necessary, to require that applications are accompanied by a visual impact assessment, particularly in upland areas, river valleys and areas of greater sensitivity.*
- *To endeavour to preserve in situ all archaeological monuments, whether on land or underwater, listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), and any newly discovered archaeological sites, features, or objects by requiring that archaeological remains are identified and fully considered at the very earliest stages of the development process and that schemes are designed to avoid impacting on archaeological heritage.*
- *To require archaeological assessment, surveys, test excavation and/or monitoring for planning applications in areas of archaeological importance if a development proposal is likely to impact upon in-situ archaeological monuments, their setting and archaeological remains.*
- *To ensure that development within the vicinity of a Recorded Monument is sited and designed appropriately so that it does not seriously detract from the setting of the feature or its zone of archaeological potential. Where upstanding remains of a Recorded Monument exist a visual impact assessment may be required to fully determine the effect of any proposed development.*
- *To require the retention of surviving medieval plots and street patterns and to facilitate the recording of evidence of ancient boundaries, layouts etc. in the course of development.*
- *To seek the protection and sustainable management of historic gardens, parklands and designed landscapes in the Kilkenny County and City, their setting and their visual amenity.*
- *To request visual impact and /or an architectural heritage impact assessment where development is considered to, have a potential impact on a historic landscape or protected structure.*
- *To protect elements of designed landscapes within the attendant grounds of Protected Structures, including boundary features.*
- *To have regard to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines<sup>28</sup> when assessing proposals for development affecting a protected structure and buildings listed in the NIAH.*
- *To encourage the sympathetic retention, reuse and rehabilitation of protected structures and their setting, while ensuring the involvement of suitably qualified professionals.*
- *To ensure proposed service upgrades undertake an initial assessment of current services, to ensure the internal environment and fabric is not impacted on by such works. Energy assessments and Architectural Heritage Impact Assessments may be required where energy and service upgrades are proposed.*
- *To ensure proposed development within the curtilage or attendant grounds of a protected structure respects the protected structure and its setting.*
- *To require an architectural impact assessment where appropriate for developments within the grounds of country house estates which are Protected Structures.*
- *To promote principles of best practice in conservation in terms of use of appropriate materials, repair techniques, and thermal upgrades by adhering to the guidelines as set out in Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's Advice Series publications.*
- *To promote best conservation principles and practice when assessing proposals for Kilkenny's architectural heritage.*
- *To ensure that energy upgrades for buildings constructed from traditional materials are respectful of architectural features, form, and environmental requirements necessary to maintain breathability in the structure.*
- *To require an assessment, including mitigation measures, of the potential environmental, visual, and heritage impacts of proposals to floodlight buildings and structures.*
- *To ensure the protection of the special character and setting of protected structures, ACAs and Recorded Monuments, and protected species when considering proposals for floodlighting.*

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- *To seek to minimise noise and dust through the planning process by ensuring that the design of developments incorporate measures to prevent or mitigate the transmission of dust, noise and vibration, where appropriate.*
- *To ensure that that appropriate mitigation measures to counter noise impact are implemented at all new developments to limit exposure to high noise areas.*
- *Where flood risk may be an issue for any proposed development, a detailed flood risk assessment should be carried out appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and the risks arising. In particular, any area within or adjoining flood zone A or B, or flood risk area, shall be the subject of a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment appropriate to the type and scale of the development being proposed. This shall be undertaken in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment accompanying this Plan.*
- *To have regard to the waste produced by proposed developments including the nature and amount of waste produced and proposed method of disposal.*
- *For all significant construction/demolition projects, the developer shall include an Environmental Management Plan. These plans should seek to focus on waste minimisation in general and optimise waste prevention, re-use and recycling opportunities, and shall provide for the segregation of all construction wastes into recyclable, biodegradable and residual wastes.*
- *Construction and demolition waste management plans, to be prepared in accordance with the Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects. These plans should seek to focus on waste minimisation in general and optimise waste prevention, re-use and recycling opportunities, and shall provide for the segregation of all construction wastes into recyclable, biodegradable and residual waste*

## 4 Assessment of Alternatives

### 4.1 Introduction

Article 5(1) of the SEA Directive requires the Environmental Report to consider reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme and the significant environmental effects of the alternatives selected.

Alternatives put forward should be reasonable, realistic and capable of implementation. They should also be in line with the appropriate strategic level at which the plan will be implemented within the national planning hierarchy. As preparation of the Kilkenny Destination & Experience Development Plan is a non-statutory plan, the 'do-nothing' or 'do-minimum' scenarios are viable alternatives, as is the 'do-something' scenario.

### 4.2 Alternative 1: Do-nothing / Do-Minimum

Tourism operations in Kilkenny City and County would continue to operate as at present outside of a plan, whose objective is to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate the various stakeholders involved in tourism activities and interest.

### 4.3 Do-something (Alternatives 2A and 2B: Prepare a Plan)

The do-something scenario sees the preparation of a Plan that seeks to better manage tourism in Kilkenny City and County. The Plan will facilitate, promote, support and coordinate the various stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging plans that have been subject to environmental assessment.

While the Plan would co-ordinate activities and stakeholders in the tourism area, it would not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent (such frameworks fall under the remit of other public authorities). Therefore, any projects arising from the Plan would be required to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of documents that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

In essence the Plan would present a five year sustainable tourism development plan for Kilkenny City and County. The key objectives of the Plan would be:

- Ensure local experiences are brought to life through the development of the optimal mix of hero and ancillary tourism products that attract visitors and retain them for longer in the destination.
- Unlock the economic growth potential of an area by progressing a range of key initiatives that will motivate tourists to explore the wider destination.
- Develop a sustainable basis for commercial tourism development centred on creating strong signature, supporting and ancillary experiences that are commoditised through the creation of saleable experiences that excite consumers and buyers alike.
- Create the conditions to attract leisure visitors on a year round basis to Cork to immerse themselves actively in the community, interacting with local people.
- Strengthen the value of tourism to the local community by providing sustainable employment opportunities.

There are two separate alternatives under the 'do-something' (prepare a Plan) scenario.

#### **Alternative 2A: A Plan with Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management**

Fáilte Ireland provides funding for sustainable tourism projects including land use and infrastructural development and land use activities. In order to achieve funding (including promotion) for land use or infrastructural development or land use activities, Alternative 2A would require stakeholders to demonstrate compliance with measures relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management contained within the relevant Fáilte Ireland published guidance and documents.

In order to be realised, projects included in the Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) would have to demonstrate compliance, as relevant, with various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

Further environmental requirements would be integrated into the Plan under Alternative 2A, relating to infrastructure capacity, visitor management and green infrastructure and ecosystem services.

#### **Alternative 2B: A Plan without Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management**

Alternative 2B would not include the requirements for environmental protection and management described under Alternative 2A. Projects would continue to be required to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of documents that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

### **4.4 Assessment of Alternatives**

Three reasonable alternatives for the Kilkenny DEDP have been identified and assessed as set out in **Table 7.1**. The potential effects of the reasonable alternatives on the SEOs categorised as follows:

- Potential Positive Environmental Impact (indicated by '+')
- Potential Negative Environmental Impact (indicated by '-')
- Potential Positive and Negative Environmental Impacts (indicated by '+/-').
- Uncertain Environmental Impact ((indicated by '?').
- Neutral, No or Insignificant Environmental Impact (indicated by '0')

### **4.5 Reasoning for Selection of the Preferred Alternative**

Whilst unlikely to have negative environmental effects, Alternative 1 does not deliver positive benefits for tourism in Kilkenny City and County.

Alternative 2A will deliver effective benefit and response for tourism in Kilkenny City and County, whilst at the same providing for sustainable development and environmental protection.

Alternative 2B will deliver effective benefit and response for tourism in Kilkenny City and County, but without ensuring environmental protection.

Given the tourism and environmental benefits, Alternative 2A is selected as the preferred approach.

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Table 4.1 Assessment of Alternatives for the Kilkenny DEDP

Reasonable Alternative	Description	SEO	Environmental Assessment	Environmental Evaluation
<b>Alternative 1</b> Do-nothing / Do-Minimum	Tourism operations in Kilkenny City and County would continue to operate as at present outside of a plan, whose objective is to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate the various stakeholders involved in tourism activities and interest.	All SEOs	+/-	In comparison to other alternatives, this alternative could give rise to potential uncertain or unplanned environmental effects across all environmental factors.  It is likely that this alternative will not realise the wider stakeholder benefits that would be achieved with from a coordinated plan approach.  In comparison to other alternatives, this approach may generate uncertain or negative environmental effects, which would not be counterbalanced by the positive environmental effects associated with other alternatives.
<b>Alternative 2A</b> Do-something Prepare a Plan with Environmental Considerations	Tourism operations in Kilkenny City and County would be facilitated, promoted, supported and coordinated through the preparation of a Plan, with environmental considerations, that seeks to better manage tourism in Kilkenny City and County	All SEOs	+	In comparison to other alternatives, this alternative could give rise to protection of the environment across all environmental factors.  At the same time this alternative will also realise the wider stakeholder benefits that would be achieved with from a coordinated plan approach.  In comparison to other alternatives, this approach would generate positive environmental effects.
<b>Alternative 2B</b> Do-something Prepare a Plan without Environmental Considerations	Tourism operations in Kilkenny City and County would be facilitated, promoted, supported and coordinated through the preparation of a Plan, without environmental considerations, that seeks to better manage tourism in Kilkenny City and County	All SEOs	+/- or -	While it is likely that this alternative will realise the wider stakeholder benefits that would be achieved with from a coordinated plan approach, in comparison to other alternatives, this alternative could give rise to potential uncertain, unplanned or negative environmental effects across all environmental factors.  In comparison to other alternatives, this approach would generate negative environmental effects.

## 5 Monitoring

Monitoring of the KDEDP and its implications on the environment is important to ensure that the environment is not adversely affected through the implementation of the Plan. In accordance with Article 10 of the SEA Directive, monitoring must be carried out of the significant environmental effects directly related to the implementation of the Plan *“in order to, inter alia, identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.”*

Monitoring is based around indicators which allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives used in the assessment. Each indicator to be monitored is accompanied by the targets. The monitoring programme may be updated to deal with specific environmental issues - including unforeseen effects - as they arise. Such issues may be identified by the Council or identified to the Council by other agencies.

Fáilte Ireland is responsible for monitoring and the preparation of monitoring evaluation report(s), the publication of these reports and, if necessary, the carrying out of corrective action. It is recommended that the monitoring for the KDEDP and review is undertaken in parallel with monitoring and review of the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan for efficiency and given that similar data sets will be used to measure the progress of each plan.

Environmental indicator assessment during monitoring can show positive / neutral impacts or negative impacts on the environment. Where an indicator value highlights a positive / neutral impact on the environment, it is likely that the objectives of the KDEDP are well-defined with regard to the environment. Conversely where the objectives of the KDEDP have a negative impact on the environment, it may be necessary to review the objectives of the KDEDP or to take some other form of intervention. For example, if an objective is having a significant adverse impact, an amendment may be considered during the lifetime of the KDEDP.

Refer to **Table 5.1** below for the monitoring programme set for the SEA which includes details on the indicators, targets and data sources to monitor the progress of the KDEDP.

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Table 5.1 Environmental Monitoring Programme

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
<b>Biodiversity (Flora &amp; Fauna) (B)</b>				
<b>B1</b>	Ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annex habitats and species <sup>5</sup> and no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function.	Conservation status of habitats and species protected under European and International legislation.	Maintenance of favourable conservation status for habitats and species protected under European and International legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the Plan.	National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every 3 years). Consultation with NPWS (every 3 years). EPA State of the Environment reporting. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
<b>B2</b>	Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites, habitats and protected species.	Conservation status of habitats and species protected under International and National legislation.	Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under International and National legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the Plan.	Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years). Consultation with NPWS (every 3 years). EPA State of the Environment reporting. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
<b>B3</b>	Ensure KDEDP does not contradict biodiversity protection, restoration and rehabilitation objectives in the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027.	To comply with the biodiversity policies and objectives of the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan	No contravention of the biodiversity policies and objectives of the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan	Kilkenny County Council monitoring likely significant environmental effects of the developments and compliance with policies and objectives of the CDP.

<sup>5</sup> 'Annexed habitats and species' refer to those listed under Annex I, II & IV of the EU Habitats Directive and Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

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SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
<b>Population &amp; Human Health (PHH)</b>				
PHH1	Promote sustainable high quality tourism within the County that supports economic development and maximises potential for employment and investment.	To comply with the tourism and economic development policies and objectives of the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan	No contravention of the tourism and economic development policies and objectives of the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan	Central Statistics Office (CSO) census data. Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years). Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
PHH2	Improve health and wellbeing by provision of recreational and tourism-related activities.	Occurrence of a spatially concentrated deterioration in human health arising from environmental factors resulting from the KDEDP, as identified by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and / or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).	No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of the KDEDP.	Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years). Consultations with the HSE and EPA (every 3 years). EPA State of the Environment reporting. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
<b>Land, Soils &amp; Geology (LSG)</b>				
LSG1	Minimise green field development and protect land and soil resources from pollution and degradation.	Extent of conversion of land cover / green field to developed / artificial surfaces.	Contribute towards the target of the SEA for the National Planning Framework's (2018) to " <i>Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4%.</i> "	CORINE mapping surveys (every 5 years). Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years). EPA State of the Environment reporting. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.



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SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
<b>Water Quality (WQ)</b>				
<b>WQ1</b>	Protect, maintain and where necessary improve water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	<p>Classification of Overall Status (comprised of ecological and chemical status) under the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (S.I. No. 272 of 2009).</p> <p>Groundwater compliance with Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC, subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD.</p> <p>Reference to EPA WFD Monitoring programme and status of surface waterbodies, groundwater bodies reported.</p>	No deterioration in the status of any groundwater or surface water, or adverse effect upon the ability of any groundwater or surface water to achieve 'good status' as a result of the KDEDP.	<p>Consultations with the OPW, EPA and Inland Fisheries (every 3 years).</p> <p>Information issued under the Water Framework Directive Monitoring Programme for Ireland (multi-annual).</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years).</p> <p>EPA State of the Environment reporting.</p> <p>Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.</p>
<b>WQ2</b>	Implement and comply with the provisions of the Flood Risk Management and Sustainable Drainage Systems Guidelines to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.	Flood-related incidences related to the KDEDP.	Compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and to ensure that any new developments granted planning permissions are on appropriately zoned lands.	<p>Consultations with OPW (every 3 years).</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years).</p> <p>Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.</p>

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SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
<b>Air Quality, Noise &amp; Climate (ANC)</b>				
<b>ANC1</b>	Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality and noise emissions through the reduction of emissions.	Demonstration of compliance with air quality and noise provisions.  Number of exceedances of ambient air quality standards in the County, as monitored under the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Network.	To maximise the amount of measures relating to air quality and noise minimisation being implemented.	Consultations with EPA (every 3 years).  Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years).  EPA State of the Environment reporting.  Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years).  Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
<b>ANC2</b>	Contribute towards climate adaptation and mitigation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with National targets, including Ireland's commitment to realising a climate neutral economy by 2050.	Demonstration of compliance with provisions relating to climate adaptation and mitigation.	To maximise the amount of measures relating to climate adaptation and mitigation being implemented.	Consultations with EPA (every 3 years).  Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years).  EPA State of the Environment reporting.  Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years).  Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
<b>Material Assets (MA)</b>				
<b>MA1</b>	To contribute towards the protection of public assets and infrastructure, ensure new developments are served with adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure with sufficient capacity (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) that does not present a danger to human health.	Number of incompatible developments (supported by the plan) adversely affecting existing or planned infrastructure, including water supply, wastewater management, energy and transport infrastructure.	No incompatible development (supported by the plan) adversely affecting existing or planned material assets infrastructure.	Consultations with Uisce Éireann and EPA (every 3 years).  Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years).  EPA State of the Environment reporting.

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SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
				Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
<b>MA2</b>	Promote sustainable waste management, minimisation and recovery.	<p>Tonnes of hazardous waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually.</p> <p>Tonnes of W.E.E.E. waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually.</p> <p>Tonnes of Bulky waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually.</p> <p>Tonnes of garden waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually.</p>	<p>Increase waste recycling in the County.</p> <p>Reduce waste generation in the County.</p>	<p>Consultations with Regional Waste Authority and EPA (every 3 years).</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years).</p> <p>EPA State of the Environment reporting.</p> <p>Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.</p>
<b>MA3</b>	Promote sustainable transportation including increased use of public transport and active travel measures.	<p>% change in modal split.</p> <p>Kilometres of permanent segregated cycling network.</p> <p>Kilometres of permanent integrated cycling network.</p> <p>Number of Electric Vehicle charging points in the county.</p> <p>Total Area of road reallocated for sustainable alternatives.</p>	<p>Percentage increase in the number of public transport users in the County</p> <p>Increase kilometres of permanent segregated cycling network.</p> <p>Increase kilometres of permanent segregated cycling network.</p> <p>Increase number of Electric Vehicle charging points in the county. Increase Total Area of</p>	<p>Consultations with TII and NTA (every 3 years).</p> <p>Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years).</p> <p>Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.</p>

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SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
			road reallocated for sustainable alternatives	
<b>Cultural Heritage (CH)</b>				
<b>CH1</b>	Protect and avoid impact on places, features and landscapes of cultural and archaeological importance, including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).	Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places protected from significant adverse effects arising from the Plan.	No adverse effects on archaeological or cultural heritage resulting from implementation of the Plan.	Consultations with National Monuments Section of Department (every 3 years). Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years). Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
<b>CH2</b>	Protect and avoid impact on places, features, buildings and landscapes of architectural heritage, (including entries to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAHs)).	Percentage of entries to the Records of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from the Plan.	No adverse effects on architectural heritage resulting from implementation of the Plan.	
<b>Landscape &amp; Visual (LV)</b>				
<b>LV1</b>	To protect landscape character, minimise the loss of historic landscape features such as mature trees and hedgerows and scenic views.	Number of unmitigated conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in Development Plans and other statutory land-use plans.	No unmitigated conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in Development Plans and other statutory land-use plans.	Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years). Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
<b>LV2</b>	Avoid impacts on the statutory landscape & visual designations as identified in the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027.	Status of High Amenity Zones and Views and Prospects.	All action and development proposals supported by the plan must comply with policy objectives relating to the protection of High Amenity	Kilkenny County Council Environmental Monitoring (every 3 years). Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.

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SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
		Number of developments permitted that result in avoidable adverse impacts on High Amenity Zones and Views and Prospects.	Zone and Views and Prospects defined in the CDP. No development supported by the plan should have an adverse impact on High Amenity Zones and Views and Prospects.	

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## Brady Shipman Martin

### **DUBLIN**

Mountpleasant Business Centre  
Ranelagh  
Dublin 6  
D06 X7P8  
+353 1 208 1900

### **CORK**

Penrose Wharf Business Centre  
Penrose Wharf  
Cork  
+353 21 242 5620

### **LIMERICK**

11 The Crescent  
Limerick  
+353 61 315 127

[mail@bradyshipmanmartin.com](mailto:mail@bradyshipmanmartin.com)  
[www.bradyshipmanmartin.com](http://www.bradyshipmanmartin.com)

