
2. SEA METHODOLOGY

2.1. Introduction

This section of the Environmental Report sets out and describes how the SEA was undertaken. The SEA process began with the scoping exercise in August 2007 when Fehily Timoney and Co. (FTC) was appointed. In August 2007 an environmental scoping report was prepared in collaboration with members of Carlow County Council. The scoping report formed part of the official consultation documentation, which was sent for comment to the official consultees and other interested parties in August 2007. Following from this a scoping meeting for the environmental report was conducted between FTC and Carlow County Council representatives in September 2007. The outcomes of this exercise are detailed in Chapter 6 of this report.

An Environmental Report on the draft Carlow Town Environs LAP was put on public display between December 2007 and January 2008. A Managers Report was prepared on the submissions received and FTC conducted an environmental assessment of the proposed amendments.

The draft LAP was put on public display for a second consultation and a Managers Report was prepared and presented to the Elected Members at the March County Council meeting. FTC conducted an environmental assessment of the proposed amendments.

At the June Special Meeting of Carlow County Council proposed alterations to amendments 20-39 of the LAP were resolved and the Plan was adopted by the Council. An environmental assessment of the alterations to the Plan was undertaken by FTC.

2.2. Screening

The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004) requires that a SEA is carried out in the preparation or review of City and County Development Plans. The draft Carlow Town Environs LAP was automatically screened for a SEA.

The draft LAP was put on public display for a second consultation and a Managers Report was prepared and presented to the Elected Members at the March County Council meeting. FTC conducted an environmental assessment of the proposed amendments.

2.3. Scoping

In consultation with the statutory authorities, the LAP making team and the consultees opinions and comments were sought as to the scope of the environmental issues pertinent

to the LAP and the appropriate level of detail required to assess these environmental issues. The result of the scoping exercise has been to focus on the environmental issues which are most likely to be significantly impacted upon as a result of implementing the LAP. These include, but are not limited to:

- Water including surface water bodies (rivers and lakes) and groundwater
- Biodiversity, flora and fauna within designated wildlife sites and non-designated sites and terrestrial habitats.
- Landscape
- Population and human health
- Material assets (existing infrastructure and services)
- Cultural heritage (archaeology, architecture and industrial heritage)
- Soils and geology

The scoping process also considered the LAP alternatives, environmental objectives, targets, indicators and monitoring arrangements. The overall outcome of the scoping process was to focus attention and resources on the most important environmental issues facing the county as a result of implementing the LAP.

The results of the scoping exercise are set out in Chapter 6 of this report.

2.4. The Environmental Report methodology

The methodology and sources used to gather baseline information, consider alternatives, develop objectives, targets, indicators and complete the environmental assessment are detailed at the beginning of the relevant chapters throughout this report and are detailed in Table 2.1 below. In addition, Chapter 6 of this report summarizes the initial consultation process.

Table 2-1: Sources of baseline data for the preparation of the Environmental Report

Key SEA Stages	Chapter of Environmental Report
1. Contextual review to identify links with other International and National policies, LAPs and programmes and their potential influence on the LAP. Identify environmental objectives of relevance to the LAP	Chapter 4
2. Describe the environmental baseline; identification of the most significant environmental issues and problems to be assessed and consider the likely evolution of the baseline in the absence of the LAP review	Chapter 5
3. Identify SEA objectives, targets and indicators against which to test the performance of the LAP and provide the basis for monitoring	Chapter 7

4. Identify alternatives for dealing with the problems and implementing the LAP objectives	Chapter 8
5. Predict, evaluate and mitigate significant impacts of the LAP on the environment	Chapters 9 & 10
6. Compile an Environmental Report containing the above information	
7. Consultation: decide who to consult with, how to respond to comments and integrate them into the final LAP	Chapter 6
8. Monitor the environmental impact of implementing the LAP	Chapter 11

(Adapted from Therivel, 2004)

2.5. Difficulties encountered

The SEA Regulations requires any difficulties encountered during the preparation of the Environmental Report to be recorded. Information gaps were recorded in relation to the following:

- Biodiversity – No biodiversity plan or study for the area was available for review. However Carlow County Council (CCC) is committed to completing a county-wide biodiversity plan during the County Development Plan (CDP) process.
- Landscape – There has been no Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) completed to date. CCC is committed to undertaking a county-wide LCA in preparation for the CDP process.

These information gaps are addressed in the proposed monitoring programme (Chapter 11) for the LAP.