

Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan

Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Determination

July, 2015

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) place an obligation on competent authorities to consider the effects of every plan and project on the Natura 2000 network of sites through a process known as Appropriate Assessment (AA). An Appropriate Assessment Screening of the Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals has been carried out to determine whether Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive was required. This Screening Report is attached.

The Screening Report was prepared in accordance with the following guidance:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010);
- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, European Commission Environment DG, 2002 and
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, European Commission, 2000.

Determination

It has been determined that Appropriate Assessment of the Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals is not required having regard to conclusions of the Screening Report that the Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is not likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

The AA Screening will be updated at relevant stages throughout the LECP preparation process.

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

IN SUPPORT OF THE
APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT
FOR THE
**Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2015
- 2021**

**DRAFT SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATEMENT
AND HIGH LEVEL GOALS**

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF
ARTICLE 6(3) OF THE EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE

for: Wexford County Council

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Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Wexford County Council has prepared a Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals as part of the County Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) preparation process, in compliance with the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, and the Guidelines for Local Economic and Community Plans.

This is the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report in support of the AA of the Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals for the LECP in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive¹. This report is divided into the following three sections:

Section 1 Introduction

Section 2 Stage 1 Screening

Section 3 Conclusions

1.2 Legislative Context

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as “The Habitats Directive”, provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. These are candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC - codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC as amended), hereafter referred to as European sites.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA):

¹ Directive 92/43/EEC

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the [Natura 2000] site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.”

These requirements are implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. These Regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)².

² Notably cases C-418/04 and C-183/05, in respect of failure to transpose elements of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive into Irish law.

1.3 Stages of Appropriate Assessment

This Appropriate Assessment has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities.* Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010.
- *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, European Commission Environment DG, 2002.
- *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.* European Commission, 2000.

AA comprises up to four successive stages:

Stage One: Screening

The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a European Site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment

The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European Site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the Site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts.

Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions

The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the European Site.

Stage Four: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain

An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures. First, the plan should aim to avoid any impacts on European Sites by identifying possible impacts early in the plan-making process and writing the plan in order to avoid such impacts. Second, mitigation measures should be applied, if necessary, during the AA process to the point where no adverse impacts on the Site(s) remain. If the plan is still likely to result in impacts on European Sites, and no further practicable mitigation is possible, then it must be rejected. If no alternative solutions are identified and the plan is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI test) under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effect.

In the case of this AA Screening Report, it is found that the LECP Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals only requires Stage 1 AA Screening.

Section 2 Stage 1 Screening

2.1 Description of the Plan

2.1.1 Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2021

The purpose of the LECP is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the Local Authority's functional area, both by the Local Authority itself and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

It is the stated intention of 'Putting People First' that local economic and community plans which would encompass all State funded local and community development interventions should be developed for each Local Authority area. The LECP is not intended to be a high level strategy; instead it is an action-focused plan that recognises that delivery will be through a combination of the Local Authority, the Local Community Development Committee and the operational plans and programmes of other stakeholders

The LECP will consist of high level Goals for economic development and local and community development, supported by specific Objectives under the respective economic and community streams. Each objective within the economic and community elements will be achieved through the implementation of specific, time bound and measurable Actions. The implementation of these objectives and actions will be monitored through specified related targets and indicators. The Guidelines require that the LECP is evidenced-based using the best available evidence and relevant, comprehensive, accurate statistical and other data as well as being cognisant of the targets in EU2020.

The LECP is also intended to be the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant actions arising from measures under the Action Plan for Jobs and other statements of Government policy including the report of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA).

The Plan will be laid out as follows:

- Part 1 - Socio Economic Statement and High Level Goals;

- Part 2 - Strategic Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs) and Strategic Community Objectives (SCOs) and the associated Actions to achieve the High Level Goals;
- Part 3 - Monitoring and Implementation.

The AA Screening presented in this report relates to the first stage in the development of the LECP, which develops a socio-economic statement and high level goals for the Wexford LECP following an analysis of the socio-economic evidence base and a review of relevant high level strategies and plans. The LECP Draft Socio-economic Statement and High Level Goals are described in the following section.

2.1.1.1 Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals

2.1.1.2 LECP Vision for County Wexford

In view of the current socio-economic profile of County Wexford and the overarching purpose of local government to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities, the vision for the County and which will frame the high level goals is:

That Wexford will be a county:

- with vibrant, diverse and resilient sustainable urban and rural communities experiencing a high quality of life,
- where people want to live, work and do business, which offers its citizens quality employment opportunities,
- which offers high quality urban and rural environments supported by excellent sustainable physical and social infrastructure and sustainable employment opportunities, and
- which values its natural environment and heritage

2.1.1.3 LECP High Level Goals

The six high level goals that have been set for the county as presented in the Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals document are as follows:

- HLG1 – Foster the culture of educational attainment and lifelong learning in County Wexford and provide opportunities to develop educational and workforce skills, to improve work readiness and access to employment;
- HLG2 – Support and promote the development of socially inclusive sustainable communities in County Wexford;
- HLG3 – Position and market County Wexford as a great place to live, work, visit and do business
- HLG4 – Develop an outstanding business environment for starting, growing and attracting business to County Wexford;
- HLG5 – Continue to protect and enhance our infrastructure and promote resource efficiency in order to create the right conditions for long term sustainable economic growth;
- HLG6 – Protect and sensitively utilise our natural, built and cultural heritage assets and capitalise on their economic potential.

2.2 European sites in and within 15 km of the Plan Area

2.2.1 cSACs and SPAs

This section of the screening process describes the European sites within County Wexford and within a further 15 km buffer of the county. A distance of 15 km is currently recommended in the DoEHLG document *Guidance for Planning Authorities*³ and as a precautionary measure, to ensure that all potentially affected European sites are included in the screening process. Those European sites which occur within the County are presented in Table 1, whilst those sites which occur within a further 15 km of the County are presented in Table 2.

³ DoEHLG (2010). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities.

A map indicating the location of all relevant European sites in relation to County Wexford is presented in Figure 1.

Further information on the relevant European sites is provided in Appendix I of this report. This information includes the previously reported threats to each site. This information was derived from a variety of sources:

- *Ireland's Article 17 Report to the European Commission "Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland" (NPWS 2015);*
- *Site Synopses;*
- *NATURA 2000 Standard Data Forms;*
- *Detailed Site Specific Conservation Objectives and supporting documents (where available).*

Since the conservation objectives for the European sites focus on maintaining and / or restoring the favourable conservation condition of the qualifying interests of each site, the screening process concentrated on assessing the potential implications of the draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals against the qualifying interests of each site.

In summary there are 26 European sites located within County Wexford, all of which require consideration in the AA Screening, these sites are presented in Table 1 below. A further 5 European sites occur within 15 km of the county boundary, these sites are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 1: European sites that occur within County Wexford and their Qualifying Interests (QIs) or Special Conservation Interests (SCIs)

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features
000696	Ballyteige Burrow cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1150 *Coastal lagoons 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand 1320 Spartina swards (<i>Spartinion maritimae</i>) 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 1420 Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (<i>Sarcocornetea fruticosi</i>)

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features
		2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) 2150 *Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>)
000697	Bannow Bay cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 1420 Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (<i>Sarcocornetea fruticosi</i>) 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)
000700	Cahore Polders and Dunes cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)
000704	Lady's Island Lake cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1150 *Coastal lagoons 1170 Reefs 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks
000707	Saltee Islands cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1160 Large shallow inlets and bays 1170 Reefs 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts 8330 Submerged or partly submerged sea caves Annex II Species 1364 Grey Seal (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>)
000708	Screen Hills cSAC	Annex I Habitats 3110 Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) 4030 European dry heaths
000709	Tacumshin Lake cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1150 *Coastal lagoons 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes)
000710	Raven Point Nature Reserve cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features
		1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) 2170 Dunes with <i>Salix repens ssp.argentea</i> (<i>Salix arenariae</i>) 2190 Humid dune slacks
000764	Hook Head cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1160 Large shallow inlets and bays 1170 Reefs 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts
000770	Blackstairs Mountains cSAC	Annex I Habitats 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> 4030 European dry heaths
000781	Slaney River Valley cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in British Isles 91E0 *Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) Annex II Species 1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) 1095 Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) 1096 Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) 1099 River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) 1103 Twait Shad (<i>Alosa fallax</i>) 1106 Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) 1355 Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) 1365 Common Seal (<i>Phoca vitulina</i>)
0001741	Kilmuckridge-Tinnaberna Sandhills cSAC	Annex I Habitats 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)
001742	Kilpatrick Sandhills cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) 2150 *Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>)
002161	Long Bank cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features
002162	River Barrow and River Nore cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculon fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation 4030 European dry heaths 6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels 7220 *Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in British Isles 91E0 *Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) Annex II Species 1016 Desmoulin's whorl snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) 1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) 1092 White-Clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) 1095 Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) 1096 Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) 1099 River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) 1103 Twaite Shad (<i>Alosa fallax</i>) 1106 Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) 1355 Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) 1421 Killarney Fern (<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>) 1990 Irish Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i>)
002269	Carnsore Point cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1170 Reefs
002953	Blackwater cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time
004002	Saltee Islands SPA	Other Species Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>) Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>) Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>) Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>) Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>)
004009	Lady's Island Lake SPA	Annex I Bird Species Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) Sandwich Tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>) Other Species

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features
		Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>) Gadwall (<i>Anas strepera</i>) Wetlands & Waterbirds
004019	The Raven SPA	Annex I Bird Species Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) Other Species Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) Wetlands & Waterbirds
004020	Ballyteigue Burrow SPA	Annex I Bird Species Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) Other Species Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) Wetlands & Waterbirds
004033	Bannow Bay SPA	Annex I Bird Species Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) Other Species Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) Wetlands & Waterbirds
004076	Wexford Harbour & Slob SPA	Annex I Bird Species Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) Bewick's Swan (<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>) Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) Greenland White-fronted goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) Other Species Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>) Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features
		Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>) Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) Wetlands & Waterbirds Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)
004092	Tacumshin Lake SPA	Annex I Bird Species Bewick's Swan (<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>) Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) Other Species Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) Gadwall (<i>Anas strepera</i>) Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) Wetlands & Waterbirds Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)
004118	Keeragh Islands SPA	Other Species Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)
004143	Cahore Marshes SPA	Annex I Bird Species Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) Other Species Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) Wetlands & Waterbirds Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)

Table 2: European sites within 15 km of County Wexford and their Qualifying Interests (QIs) or Special Conservation Interests (SCIs)

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features	Distance and direction from site
002137	Lower River Suir cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation 6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in British Isles 91E0 *Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) 91J0 * <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles Annex I Species 1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) 1092 White-Clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) 1095 Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) 1096 Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) 1099 River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) 1103 Twaite Shad (<i>Alosa fallax</i>) 1106 Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) 1355 Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)	Site located immediately adjacent to County Wexford.
000729	Buckroneys-Brittis Dunes and Fen cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) 2150 *Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>) 2170 Dunes with <i>Salix repens ssp. argentea</i> (<i>Salix arenariae</i>) 2190 Humid dune slacks 7230 Alkaline fens	Ca 8.5 km north of County Wexford
004027	Tramore Backstrand SPA	Annex I Bird Species Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) Other Species Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)	Ca 11 km South-west of County Wexford

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Features	Distance and direction from site
		Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) Wetlands & Waterbirds	
004233	River Nore SPA	Annex I Bird Species Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>)	Ca 7 km west of County Waterford
000671	Tramore Dunes and Backstrand cSAC	Annex I Habitats 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) 2110 Embryonic shifting dunes 2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) 2130 *Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)	Ca 11 km South-west of County Waterford

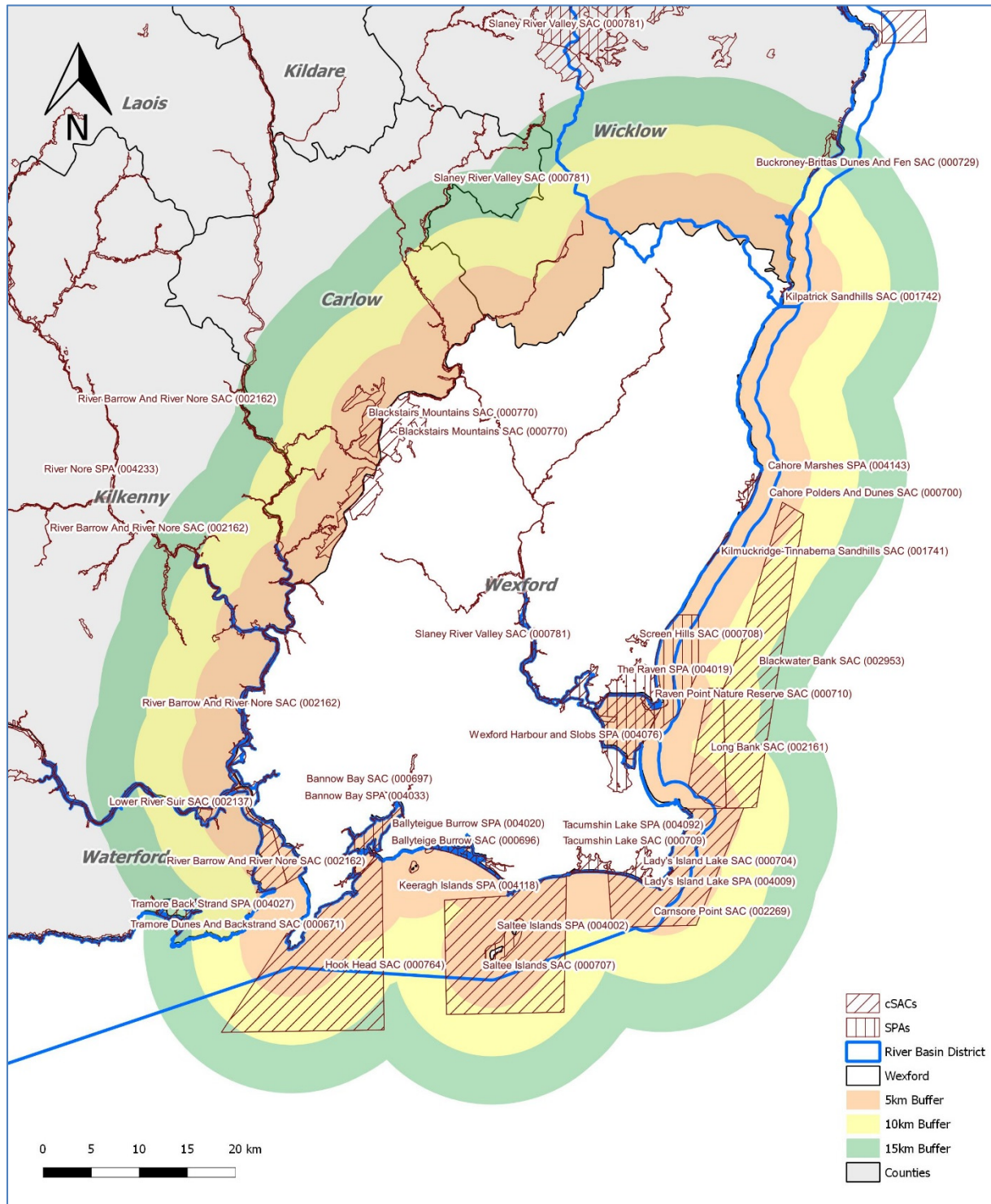


Figure 1: Map showing the distribution of European sites in and within 15km of County Wexford

2.2.1.1 Conservation Objectives

Detailed Conservation Objectives or Site Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) have been prepared for thirteen European sites within County Wexford. Only generic versions have been published for the remaining thirteen sites. Two European sites within 15 km of the County have SSCO published.

The following European sites within County Wexford have SSCO published:

- Bannow Bay cSAC
- Saltee Islands cSAC
- Raven Point Nature Reserve cSAC
- Hook Head cSAC
- Slaney River Valley cSAC
- Long Bank cSAC
- River Barrow cSAC
- Carnsore Point cSAC
- Blackwater Bank cSAC
- Saltee Islands SPA
- Raven SPA
- Bannow Bay SPA
- Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA

European sites within 15 km of the County with SSCO published:

- Tramore Dunes and Backstrand cSAC
- Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SPA

The overall conservation objective for each site is *to maintain or restore the conservation condition of habitats and species for which individual sites are selected*. Conservation Objectives aim to define favourable conservation condition for the qualifying habitats and species at that site. The maintenance or restoration of the favourable condition for these habitats and species at the site level will contribute to the overall maintenance or restoration of favourable conservation status of those

habitats and species at a national level. Favourable conservation status of species and habitats is defined in Article I of the Habitats Directive as:

Favourable conservation status of a species can be described as being achieved when: *‘population data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced or likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.’*

Favourable conservation status of a habitat can be described as being achieved when: *‘its natural range, and area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing, and the ecological factors that are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.’*

2.3 Assessment Criteria

2.3.1 Is the Plan Necessary to the Management of European Sites?

Under the Habitats Directive, plans that are directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site do not require AA. For this exception to apply, management is required to be interpreted narrowly as nature conservation management in the sense of Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive. This refers to specific measures to address the ecological requirements of annexed habitats and species (and their habitats) present on a site(s). The relationship should be shown to be direct and not a by-product of the plan, even if this might result in positive or beneficial effects for a site(s).

The primary purpose Wexford LECP 2015-2021 is not the nature conservation management of European sites, but to promote the well being and quality of life of citizens and communities. Therefore, the LECP is not considered by the Habitats Directive to be directly connected with or necessary to the management of European designated sites.

2.3.2 Elements of the LECP with Potential to Give Rise to Significant Effects

The High Level Goals (HLGs) of the LECP are outlined in Section 2.1.1.3 above. Each of these goals has been assessed in relation to their potential to result in likely significant effects on European sites within the study area (Table 3).

As outlined in the European Commission Environment DG document “*Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*”, impacts that require consideration can be categorised under a number of headings:

- Loss / reduction of habitat area (e.g. due to the development of new projects)
- Disturbance to Key Species (e.g. increased public access to protected sites, or during the construction phase of infrastructure projects)
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Reduction in species density
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value such as decrease in water quality / quantity (e.g. through inadequate wastewater treatment, run-off of pollutants during construction and operation of developments, agricultural runoff)

In summary, it is determined that the HLGs outlined in the Draft Socio-Economic Statement and HLGs document are not expected to result in any significant effects on European sites.

Four of the six goals (HLG1; HLG2; HLG3; HLG4) relate to service delivery, co-ordination, and promotion. The goals are strategic in nature and do not specify a quantum or location for future land use and development (for example HLG5). HLG6 sets out to protect the natural environment. Detailed actions (which may include specifications such as those relating to the location of development) would have to be considered in later in the LECP preparation/AA screening process.

The goals have been devised to work together to ensure the balanced and environmentally sustainable development of County Wexford. They do not conflict with, present alternative or competing proposals set down in the County Development Plan.

The HLGs set out in LECP draft Socio-economic statement do not set the framework for future development consent of projects. In this regard, at this stage in the LECP preparation process they do not place limits on activities or development, influence location, nature, size or operating conditions nor do they dictate or specifically direct the allocation of resources (note that the detailed actions to be prepared later in the process may include specifications such as those relating to the location of development – these will be screened for the need to undertake AA). Specific projects/ developments, yet to be devised will be subject to normal planning requirements including the Habitats Directive Article 6 procedure as appropriate. Similarly plans, programmes and projects related to sectors outside of local authority land use planning will undergo Appropriate Assessment as required. Such procedures associated with this are overseen by the relevant governmental competent authority.

Having regard to the foregoing no significant effects on European Sites have been identified or are currently envisaged. Furthermore, as all of the HLGs have been assessed as not having the potential, in their own right, to result in likely significant effects, there will be no potential for them to combine with other objectives of the statement to result in cumulative negative effects.

The AA Screening will be updated at relevant stages during the process. Detailed actions (which may include specifications such as those relating to the location of development) would have to be considered in later in the LECP preparation/AA screening process.

Table 3: Assessment of potential for the achievement of High Level Goals to result in adverse impact on European sites

High Level Goal	Potential for significant effects on European sites
HLG1 – Foster the culture of educational attainment and lifelong learning in County Wexford and provide opportunities to develop educational and workforce skills, to improve work readiness and access to employment	These HLGs are all strategic in nature and do not relate to the physical environment or land use and are concerned primarily with service delivery.
HLG2 – Support and promote the development of socially inclusive sustainable communities in County Wexford.	Any projects that may be developed in order to achieve these goals will proceed within the framework of the County Development Plan.
HLG3 – Position and market County Wexford as a great place to live, work, visit and do business	It is concluded that there is no potential for adverse effects on European sites.
HLG4 – Develop an outstanding business environment for starting, growing and attracting business to County Wexford	
HLG5 – Continue to protect and enhance our infrastructure and promote resource efficiency in order to create the right conditions for long term sustainable economic growth	<p>This partly relates to the physical environment or land use but is of a broad strategic nature that does not specify a quantum or location for future land use and development.</p> <p>This complements existing policies contained in the CDP and depending on the specific project(s) a variety of existing Development Plan policies and objectives will apply. Specific projects/ developments, yet to be devised will be subject to normal planning requirements including the Habitats Directive Article 6 procedure as appropriate.</p> <p>It is concluded that there is no potential for adverse effects on European sites.</p>
HLG6 – Protect and sensitively utilise our natural, built and cultural heritage assets and capitalise on their economic potential.	<p>This HLG has the potential to result in positive environmental effects and should result in the protection of natural heritage throughout the county, including European sites.</p> <p>While capitalising on the economic potential of natural heritage could potentially lead to adverse effects on EU Sites, the commitment to protect and sensitively utilise these resources provide for their protection together with the safeguards provided for by relevant policies and objectives of the CDP.</p>

2.4 Other Plans and Programmes

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or programmes that might, in combinations with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely impact upon European sites.

The High Level Goals of the LECP draft Socio-Economic Statement are consistent with the existing County Development Plan (CDP), which has undergone Screening for AA. The screening of the CDP found that the Plan was formulated to ensure that uses, developments and effects arising from permissions based upon the Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) shall not give rise to significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites. The policies and objectives of the CDP will apply to LECP Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals as relevant thereby helping to ensure the avoidance of likely significant effects to European Sites⁴.

The LECP does not set a framework for future development consents – this is done by the other set of plans, programmes and processes which are subject to SEA, EIA and/or AA as appropriate - nor does it determine the use of areas within these overarching plans⁷. Plans, programmes and projects related to sectors outside of local authority land use planning will undergo Appropriate Assessment as required. Such procedures associated with this are overseen by the relevant governmental competent authority.

It is a requirement that each LECP is in accordance with, inter alia, the relevant plans/strategies at county and regional level which are subject to their own AA processes⁸.

⁴ It is noted that various sectors (e.g. forestry and agriculture) have their own consent procedures with activities screened for the need to undertake AA when required.

⁷ Each LECP must be consistent, in the first instance, with the existing Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and subsequently with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) to be prepared by the Regional Assemblies and a new National Planning Framework which, it is envisaged, will replace the National Spatial Strategy. The LECP must also be consistent with the statutory City/County Development Plan, (Guidelines on Local Economic and Community Plans Issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government Under Sections 66H and 128E of the Local Government Act 2001, in conjunction with Circular LG 1/2015 / AL 1/2015 21 January 2015)

⁸ The LECP is an important implementation vehicle for national and regional policy on economic development and local/community development. It is required to complement the City/ County Development Plans that set important statutory frameworks in relation to, for example, appropriate locations for new development such as business parks, retail development and industry. The LECP

It is noted that the emerging LECP, currently comprising the Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals, does not currently introduce other activities or processes than those described in plans and programmes that are already in place and it must be consistent with the provisions of such plans and programmes.

Taking into account all of the above it is determined that there are no 'in-combination' effects arising from the Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals. It is noted that AA Screening will be updated at relevant stages throughout the LECP preparation process.

needs to be consistent with the broad locational policies of the Development Plan and not present alternate or competing proposals that would lead to inconsistency, [*ibid*]

Section 3 Conclusions

The requirement for a Stage 2 AA would arise if the Draft LECP were likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site. This screening report evaluates the Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals as part of the County Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) to determine if it needs to be the subject of a Stage 2 AA.

The AA Screening finds that the Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals shall not give rise to significant effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, in accordance with the methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, it is concluded that the Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals of the LECP does not require any further assessment to demonstrate compliance with the Directive.

AA Screening will continue throughout the Draft LECP preparation process, as the Draft LECP becomes more detailed. Key stages of LECP preparation at which further iterations of AA screening will be undertaken are:

- Draft LECP (including adopted Statement and Goals and Draft Objectives and Actions); and
- LECP for adoption (including any changes on foot of consideration by Municipal Districts and Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly).