

# SEA Statement for the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019

February 2013



Wexford County Council  
Planning & Development





## Table of Contents

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<b>Section 1: Introduction and Background</b> .....	1
1.1 Introduction to SEA and Legislative Context .....	1
1.2 Summary of SEA Process .....	2
1.3 Purpose of SEA Statement.....	4
<b>Section 2: Summary of how environmental considerations and the Environmental Report were integrated into the Plan</b> .....	5
2.1 Scoping and Statutory Consultation .....	5
2.2 Preparation of Baseline and Environmental Report .....	6
2.3 Assessment of Alternatives .....	12
2.4 Mitigation .....	13
2.5 Monitoring.....	18
<b>Section 3: Summary of how submissions, observations and consultations and the Environmental Report were integrated into the Plan</b> .....	20
3.1 Introduction .....	20
3.2 Pre Draft Consultation .....	21
3.3 SEA Scoping Consultation.....	21
3.4 Public Consultation at Draft Plan Stage.....	23
3.5 Consultation on Proposed Amendments.....	29
<b>Section 4: Consideration of Alternatives</b> .....	31
4.1 Identification and Development of Alternatives .....	31
4.2 Description of Planning Scenarios.....	31
4.3 Assessment of Plan Scenarios .....	34
4.4 Preferred Strategy.....	37
4.5 Wind Energy Alternatives.....	37
4.6 Evaluation of Wind Energy Alternatives .....	41
4.7 Preferred Wind Energy Strategy Option .....	43

<b>Section 5: Monitoring Measures</b> .....	45
<b>5.1 Introduction</b> .....	45
<b>5.2 Monitoring Indicators</b> .....	45
<b>5.3 Monitoring Programme</b> .....	45
<b>5.4 Monitoring Sources and Responsible Sections</b> .....	46
Table 1 Key Stages of SEA.....	3
Table 2 Summary of Environmental Issues/Problems.....	7
Table 3 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEO's) .....	10
Table 4 Mitigation Measures .....	14
Table 5 Breakdown of issues raised in the submissions and observations received on the Draft Plan .....	24
Table 6 Lists of persons and bodies who made submissions and observations on the Proposed Amendments.....	29
Table 7 Assessment of Alternatives against SEOs .....	36
Table 8 Assessment of Wind Energy Alternatives against SEOs.....	41
Table 9 Monitoring Indicators and Targets .....	47

## **Section 1: Introduction and Background**

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The Wexford County Development Plan was adopted by Wexford County Council on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013. In accordance with S.I. no. 436 of 2004 Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended), the Planning Authority is required to prepare an SEA Statement as soon as may be following the making of the Plan.

### **1.1 Introduction to SEA and Legislative Context**

SEA is a formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme, before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme. SEA in Ireland is based on *Directive 2001/42/EC (Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment)*, more commonly known as the 'SEA Directive'. The main objective of the SEA Directive is to “*provide for a high level of protection for 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.*” The Directive requires all European Union Member States to systematically evaluate the likely significant effects of implementing a plan or programme prior to its adoption. Directive 2001/42/EC came into force in Ireland in 2004.

The Directive has been transposed into Irish Law through two sets of Regulations as set out hereunder;

- *European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004); and*
- *Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004).*

Land-use plans are evaluated in accordance with the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended).

There are four main requirements of the SEA Regulations and these include;

1. The preparation of an Environmental Report, where the likely significant environmental effects of the Plan are identified and evaluated. The Environmental Report is the key document in the SEA process and will summarise the likely significant environmental effects and mitigation measures to minimise any adverse impacts.
2. Consultation with the public, environmental authorities, and any EU Member State affected, on the Environmental Report and Draft Plan.
3. Consideration of the findings in the Environmental Report and the outcome of the consultations in deciding whether to adopt or modify the Draft Plan.
4. Publicising the decision on adoption of the Plan and how the SEA influenced the outcome.

On adoption of the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 the authority is required under Section 13I of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004) as amended to make this SEA Statement available to the environmental authorities and the public.

## **1.2 Summary of SEA Process**

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires the Planning Authority to prepare a Development Plan every six years for its jurisdiction. The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended), require that SEA be carried out in respect of County Development Plans. There was no requirement therefore for screening the Plan for SEA.

**Table 1 Key Stages of SEA**

<p><b>Scoping</b></p>	<p>The purpose of scoping is to determine the level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report. A Draft Scoping Report was sent to the Environmental Authorities and they were given a five week period to make submissions and observations. Two submissions were received and are summarised in Section 2.2 of the Environmental Report.</p>
<p><b>Baseline Data</b></p>	<p>This involved collating information on the current state of the environment and identifying any existing environmental problems relevant to the plan area. The baseline data is described in Section 4 of the Environmental Report.</p>
<p><b>Environmental Report</b></p>	<p>Next step was the preparation of the Environmental Report. The purpose of this report is to identify, evaluate and describe the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Plan and identify appropriate mitigation measures.</p>
<p><b>Consultation on the Environmental Report</b></p>	<p>The Minister, the Board, the prescribed authorities and the public were consulted on the Draft Plan. This was followed by a 10 week consultation period. Following the public consultation period, material alterations were made to the Draft Plan and there followed a further submission period during which time submissions or observations were made on the proposed alterations. A number of further modifications were made which were screened.</p>
<p><b>Making the Decision Public</b></p>	<p>Following adoption of the Plan an SEA Statement must be prepared giving a summary of how environmental considerations were factored into the Plan, how submissions and consultations were taken into account and the reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives considered. It also outlined a list of monitoring measures to be carried out during the plan period.</p>

<b>Monitoring</b>	Monitoring will be undertaken for the duration of the Plan up until its review. The overall objective of this stage is to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Plan so as to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.
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### **1.3 Purpose of SEA Statement**

The main purpose of the SEA Statement is to document how environmental considerations, the views of statutory consultees and other submissions and observations received during the consultation phases have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan and the arrangements put in place for monitoring. The SEA Statement provides transparency and accountability, by informing the public of how environmental effects were considered in the decision-making process. The SEA Statement must be sent to the prescribed authorities with a copy of the Plan as adopted and be made available to the public.

The SEA statement includes a summary of the following information:

1. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan.
2. How;
  - i. the Environmental Report prepared pursuant to article 13C
  - ii. submissions and observations made to the planning authority in response to a notice under section 12(1) or (7) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, and
  - iii. any consultations under article 13F have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan.
3. The reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with.
4. The measures decided upon to monitor, in accordance with article 13J, the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan.



## **Section 2: Summary of how environmental considerations and the Environmental Report were integrated into the Plan**

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The environment has been a key consideration throughout the preparation of the Plan. This initially comprised of detailing of the baseline situation and identification and mapping of environmental constraints and sensitivities so as to ensure that the strategy for development of the county was either diverted away from the most sensitive areas or that appropriate mitigation measures were integrated into the Plan as it was prepared. As the Plan developed, environmental considerations were directly considered at a number of stages in the SEA process.

### **2.1 Scoping and Statutory Consultation**

Statutory scoping of the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 was carried out in accordance with Article 5(4) of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC). The principal purpose of the scoping stage is to decide upon the range of issues and level of detail to be included in the Environment Report. It helps the SEA to become focused upon the important issues such as those relating to existing environmental problems.

The designated SEA consultees for the purposes of the Wexford County Development Plan are as follows:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Minister for the Environmental, Community and Local Government
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine
- Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
- Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs
- The Manager of Adjoining Planning Authorities ; Wexford Borough Council, Enniscorthy Town Council, New Ross Town Council, Wicklow County Council, Waterford County Council, Kilkenny County Council, Carlow County Council.

Initial scoping took place with the prescribed Environmental Authorities in March 2012. A Draft Scoping Report was sent to the Authorities and they were given a five week period to make submissions and observations. Submissions were received

from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the information to be contained in the Environmental Report.

## **2.2 Preparation of Baseline and Environmental Report**

Baseline data was collected from available and relevant data sources, based on the environmental topics described in the SEA Directive i.e. biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climate factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage and landscape. The Directive requires that information be focused upon relevant aspects of the environmental characteristics of the area likely to be significantly affected by the plan and the likely change, in either positive or negative terms. The process allowed for early identification of potential environmental issues/pressures requiring attention in the formulation of the Plan.

The preparation of an Environmental Report on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Plan included documenting the following:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the Plan, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;
- A description of relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the evolution of the environment without implementation of the Plan;
- A description of the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;
- Identification of any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the Plan, particularly those relating to European protected sites;
- A list of the environmental protection objectives at international, EU and national level, which are relevant to the Plan and a description of how they have been taken into account in the formulation of the Plan;
- A description of the likely significant effects on the environment (biodiversity, human health, cultural heritage, air, soil, water etc);
- Mitigation measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment caused by implementing the Plan;

- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives considered and a description of how the assessment was undertaken, including any difficulties encountered in compiling the required information;
- A description of proposed monitoring measures;
- A non-technical summary of the above information.

The purpose of the Environmental Report is to document the likely environmental implications or consequences of decisions regarding the future accommodation of growth in the plan area. The Environmental Report is presented as an appendix to the Plan.

**Table 2 Summary of Environmental Issues/Problems**

1. Biodiversity, Fauna, Flora	
Existing problems	Within Wexford the protection of coastal areas, wetlands and the avoidance of the spread of invasive species are important issues. Invasive species pose a serious threat to biodiversity and are regarded as the second biggest threat to biodiversity after direct habitat destruction. There has been significant loss of species rich hedgerows, particularly in more intensively farmed areas and in the periphery of urban centres. Other developments and activities such as forestry, agricultural activities, urban developments, windfarms, quarries, tourism, commercial fishing, ports and a wide range of infrastructural works can give rise to significant environmental pressures.
2. Population and Human Health	
Existing problems	Pressure on the existing drinking water infrastructure and water quality poses a threat to the population of the county. The increase in the rate of unemployment presents a serious challenge for the future of both the national and local economy. Challenges for the future include retaining the young working population of County Wexford to prevent high levels of emigration by facilitating the provision of future employment and

	<p>housing. Additionally, there is an increasing trend of elderly age cohorts and their future needs must be planned for. A high vacancy rate for housing in smaller serviced centres, and an increase in demand for housing in the north of the county, needs to be balanced. A variety of dwelling types and mix of tenures is required to reflect the needs of the population and changes in household size.</p>
<p><b>3. Soil and Geology</b></p>	
<p>Existing problems</p>	<p>Of concern is the physical, biological and or/chemical degradation of soils, which can cause direct loss of soil, and indirectly impair ecologically essential soil processes, reduce productive capacity and deplete soil quality and biodiversity. Human activity can lead to soil degradation including loss of organic matter, decline in soil fertility, acidification, loss of soil stability, increasing soil erosion, soil compaction, contamination, loss of biodiversity and loss of soil to buildings and infrastructure.</p>
<p><b>4. Water and Flooding</b></p>	
<p>Existing problems</p>	<p>A number of water bodies within the county are under pressure from various sources of pollution. Urban and rural development including wastewater and surface water disposal, landfills, quarries, contaminated lands, illegal dumping, agricultural activity, water recreational activities and afforestation can have significant impacts on water quality. Many existing effluent systems provide inadequate treatment before discharge to surface waters. The cumulative effect of discharges from these is of most concern. Flood risk to residences is also of concern within the county.</p>
<p><b>5. Air, Noise and Climatic Factors</b></p>	
<p>Existing problems</p>	<p>Air quality within the plan area is generally good. Increased greenhouse gas emissions have been linked with climate change resulting in increases in the intensity and frequency of</p>

	<p>flooding. Of particular concern is the high dependency on the use of the private car within the county. Climate change is a cross cutting issue which impacts on habitats, species, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, water quality, water safety, flood risk and people. Of increasing concern is the issue of flooding of rivers, estuaries and coastal areas. Coastal erosion is an inevitable and necessary element of any healthy functioning beach and sand dune system. Coastal development and resultant shoreline defences can pose a significant risk to the entire beach resulting in loss of important bird and wetland habitats.</p>
<p><b>6. Material Assets</b></p>	
<p>Existing problems</p>	<p>There is currently a challenge to provide sufficient wastewater treatment infrastructure in the county to serve the existing and future population. The residents of County Wexford rely heavily on the use of private cars for transport. Travel patterns show that a high proportion of residents travel by car to school and work.</p>
<p><b>7. Cultural Heritage (including Architectural and Archaeological Heritage)</b></p>	
<p>Existing problems</p>	<p>Development of infrastructure, in addition to development resulting from economic growth and increasing population, can potentially impact on the integrity of sites or features of architectural, archaeological or cultural heritage interest.</p>
<p><b>8. Landscape</b></p>	
<p>Existing problems</p>	<p>In upland areas, concentrations of one-off housing developments are having adverse and visual impacts on the landscape due to its low capacity to absorb development. Recently constructed windfarms are becoming dominating features on the skyline. In the future it is likely that afforestation will become the dominant landuse in upland areas. The coastal area experiences greatest pressure for tourism and holiday homes development.</p>

Key issues were identified in the Environmental Report across each of the environmental areas. These were largely based on the key environmental factors as identified at the scoping stage. The full review of key issues are set out in Section 4 of the Environmental Report. The SEA Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessment Screening Report were used to evaluate the policies and objectives formulated to address the issues identified at the scoping stage, in order to maximise potential positive impacts and reduce potential negative impacts on the environment.

The Environmental Report includes a set of Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) which were developed from international, national and regional policies which generally govern environmental protection. The SEOs were used as standards against which the policies and objectives of the Plan were evaluated in order to highlight those with the potential for environmental impact. The SEOs are shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEO's)**

<b>Environmental Parameter</b>	<b>SEO</b>	<b>Objective</b>
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	B1	Conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats and species within the county, and support the sustainable management of these areas.
	B2	Ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive with regard to protection of Natura 2000 sites and habitats and species listed under Annexes I and II of the Directive and prevent the loss of ecological networks and stepping stones or parts thereof which provide important connectivity for species.
	B3	To ensure compliance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to the protection of wildlife corridors and contiguous areas of habitat which are important on a County level for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic

		exchange of wild species.
	B4	Protect aquatic and terrestrial habitats from the spread of invasive species.
Population & Human Health	PH1	Protect and enhance peoples quality of life based on high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments.
	PH2	Protect human health through minimising the risk of polluting emissions including noise and vibrations from incompatible land-uses and emissions to air/water/soil from traffic, industrial processes and extractive industry.
Soil/Geology	S1	Prevent pollution or contamination of soils.
	S2	Give preference to the use and regeneration of derelict, disused and infill sites, rather than greenfield sites.
	S3	Minimise the amount of waste to landfill.
	S4	Protect and conserve important geological sites.
Water	W1	To ensure the protection from pollution/contamination and/or improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground water quality throughout the county.
	W2	Ensure new development will not be permitted within flood zones other than development which satisfies the justification test, as outlined in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for Planning Authorities.
Air & Climate	AC1	Facilitate measures which seek to reduce all forms of air pollution and reduce dependence on travel by private car.
	AC2	Promote use of renewable energy sources and support energy conservation initiatives.
	AC3	Avoid development within flood risk areas and protect the marine and coastal environment from inappropriate

		works or development, and promote Integrated coastal zone management strategies.
Material Assets	MA1	Ensure that zoned land within town plans will not be developed if such development will lead to overcapacity of Wastewater Treatment Plants in order to ensure protection of the water resources within the plan area.
	MA2	Maintain and improve the quality of, and access to, material assets such as open spaces, drinking water supply, and all other physical and social infrastructure.
Cultural Heritage	C1	Promote the protection and conservation of the county's cultural heritage including the built environment and settings; archaeological (Recorded Monuments and archaeological zones), architectural (Protected Structures, vernacular buildings, materials and urban fabric), and manmade landscape features (e.g. field walls, footpaths, gate piers).
Landscape	L1	To avoid adverse impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscapes which are the most valuable and sensitive to change, including seascapes, coastal scapes, and landscapes of historical and cultural importance.

The Environmental Report was updated in light of the consultation process and submissions received by the Planning Authority, from the Elected Members, the public, the Environmental Authorities and other interested parties.

### 2.3 Assessment of Alternatives

Three development alternatives were considered and are summarised in Section 4 of this Statement. The alternatives were evaluated to determine how they would likely affect the status of the SEOs. After deciding on the preferred development strategy a number of mitigation measures were subsequently outlined in the Environmental Report. Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent,



reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the Plan. The mitigation measures are shown in Table 4.

## **2.4 Mitigation**

The mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Plan and the policies and objectives refined and refocused where necessary. Table 4 below identifies the policies and objectives in the Plan which have been influenced by the mitigation measures contained in the Environmental Report.

**Table 4 Mitigation Measures**

Environmental Parameter	Mitigation Measure	Plan Policy/Objective
<b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</b>	<b>MM1</b>	Objective NH01 - To conserve and protect the integrity of sites designated for their habitat/wildlife or geological/geomorphological importance and prohibit development which would damage or threaten the integrity of these sites, including SACs, cSAC, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, Nature Reserves and Refuges for Fauna.
	<b>MM2</b>	Objective NH03 - To ensure that any plan or project and any associated works, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, are subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening to ensure there are no likely significant effects on the integrity (defined by the structure and function) of any Natura 2000 site(s) and that the requirements of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive are fully satisfied. Where the plan/project is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site it shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment. The plan/project will proceed only after it has been ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site or where in the absence of alternative solutions, the plan/project is deemed imperative for reasons of overriding public interest, all in accordance with the provisions of article 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive.
	<b>MM3</b>	Objective NH04 - To ensure the protection and conservation of areas, sites and species and ecological networks/corridors of local biodiversity value outside the designated sites throughout the county.

	<b>MM4</b>	Objective NH08 - To ensure, where appropriate, applications for development include proposals for native planting and leave a suitable ecological buffer zone between the development works and areas or features of ecological importance. Where hedgerows are required to be removed require the applicant/developer to reinstate the hedgerows with a suitable replacement of native species to the satisfaction of the Council.
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	<b>MM5</b>	Objective CF09 - To promote the development of sustainable communities on the basis of a high quality of life where people can live, work and enjoy access to a wide range of community, health and educational facilities suitable for all ages, needs and abilities.
	<b>MM6</b>	Mitigation also included in objectives under Water, Air and Climate Sections which will address any potential impacts on air, and water quality.
<b>Soil and Geology</b>	<b>MM7</b>	Objective WM01 - To implement the provisions of the Joint Waste Management Plan for the South-East Region 2006-2011, and any updated version published during the lifetime of the Plan, subject to compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.
	<b>MM8</b>	Objective NH02 - To recognise the importance of recommended proposed NHAs and County Geological Sites identified by the Geological Survey of Ireland and protect the character and integrity of these sites where appropriate.
	<b>MM9</b>	Objective WM04 - To encourage the development of waste minimisation strategies for domestic, commercial and industrial waste.

<b>Water and Flooding</b>	<b>MM10</b>	Objective WQ05 - To ensure that development permitted would not have an unacceptable impact on water quality and quantity, including surface water, ground water, designated source protection areas, river corridors and associated wetlands, estuarine waters, coastal and transitional waters.
	<b>MM11</b>	Objective FRM01 - To carry out flood risk assessment for the purpose of regulating, restricting and controlling development in areas at risk of flooding and to minimise the level of flood risk to people, business, infrastructure and the environment through the identification and management of existing and potential future flood risk.
<b>Air , Noise and Climate</b>	<b>MM12</b>	Objective CC04 - To minimise emissions of greenhouse gases in order to contribute to a reduction and avoidance of human induced climate change in accordance with the Kyoto agreement. The Council supports and is committed to the National Climate Change Strategy and in general to facilitating measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.
	<b>MM13</b>	Objective AQ05 - To encourage a modal change from private car use towards other types of travel and to promote the use of public transport as a means of reducing vehicle emissions and improving air quality.

	<b>MM14</b>	Objective EN07 - To encourage and favourably consider proposals for renewable energy developments and ancillary facilities in order to meet national, regional and county renewable energy targets and to facilitate a reduction in CO <sub>2</sub> emissions and the promotion of a low carbon economy, subject to development management standards and compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.
	<b>MM15</b>	Objective EN22 - To promote innovative building design and layout that demonstrates a high level of energy conservation, energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources.
	<b>MM16</b>	Objective CZM04 - To prohibit development within areas liable to coastal flooding, other than in accordance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Office of Public Works, 2009).
<b>Material Assets</b>	<b>MM17</b>	Objective SS07 - To ensure the zoning of lands for residential use is in accordance with the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy. The development of this zoned land is subject to adequate capacity being available in the relevant wastewater treatment facilities in the interests of the protecting water resources in the area.
	<b>MM18</b>	Objective WS05 - To ensure the delivery of an adequate and reliable public water supply which serves the domestic, commercial and industrial needs of the County.

<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<b>MM19</b>	Objective PS01 - To protect the architectural heritage of County Wexford and to include structures considered to be of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest in the Record of Protected Structures
	<b>MM20</b>	Objective AH01 - To conserve and protect archaeological sites, monuments (including their settings), underwater archaeology and objects within the jurisdiction of Wexford County Council including those listed on the Record of Monuments and Places, the Register of Historic Monuments or newly discovered sub-surface archaeological remains.
<b>Landscape</b>	<b>MM21</b>	Objective RH07 - To minimise the individual or cumulative adverse visual impacts that local concentrations of one-off housing, outside of settlements, may have on Upland, River Valley and Coastal landscape character units or Landscapes of Greater Sensitivity. In this regard, in locations where the Council considers that there is a risk of individual or cumulative adverse impacts, the Council will only consider proposals for housing developments where the applicant has demonstrated an overriding need to reside in the particular location in accordance with the criteria contained in Table No. 12.

## 2.5 Monitoring

Monitoring of the implementation of the Wexford County Development Plan will be undertaken during the lifetime of the Plan. The overall objective of this stage of the SEA process is to monitor the significant environmental effects during the implementation of the Plan so as “to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action” (Article 10(1) of the

SEA Directive 2001/42/EC). See Section 5 of this SEA Statement for the monitoring Indicators and targets.

## Section 3: Summary of how submissions, observations and consultations and the Environmental Report were integrated into the Plan

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### 3.1 Introduction

Environmental considerations were integrated into the development plan making process at all stages. This section sets out the significant issues that were raised prior to, during and after the preparation of the Draft Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019. Formal submissions were made at the following stages;

<b>Stage of Consultation</b>	<b>Submissions and Observations received</b>
<p><b>Pre-draft Consultation Stage</b> Wexford County Council gave notice of the review on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011. The first public consultation phase ran from 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011 - 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2011.</p>	<p>38 submissions and observations received.</p>
<p><b>SEA Scoping Consultation</b> Draft Scoping Report circulated to the Environmental Authorities with a five week consultation phase starting from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012.</p>	<p>Two submissions from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Environmental Protection Agency.</p>
<p><b>Draft Plan Stage</b> The Draft Plan was made by the Members of Wexford County Council on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012. The Draft Plan was placed on public display from Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2012 until Monday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2012.</p>	<p>The Planning Authority received 131 submissions and observations within the statutory consultation period. A further 16 submissions and observations were received after the end of this period. Table 5 provides a breakdown of the issues raised. The majority of the submissions and observations (93) related to the Record of Protected Structures.</p>



<p><b>Proposed Amendments Stage</b></p> <p>The Proposed Amendments were placed on public display from Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012 to Friday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013.</p>	<p>The Planning Authority received 12 submissions and observations within the statutory consultation period and one outside this period. Table 6 below lists the persons and bodies who made submissions or observations and the main issue(s) raised therein.</p>
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### 3.2 Pre Draft Consultation

Pre-draft public consultation regarding the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 commenced in April 2011 with the publication of the 'Issues Paper' outlining the review of the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019. A public notice was published in the local newspapers on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011 announcing the review of the County Development Plan 2007-2013 and the preparation of a new Plan for the County. The notice invited the public and interested persons and bodies to make pre-draft submissions. The public consultation period commenced on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011 and concluded on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2011. During this period the Forward Planning team carried out extensive consultations in order to stimulate submissions on the review. The papers were also circulated to the Members, prescribed bodies and a variety of interest groups, stakeholders and infrastructure providers.

A series of consultation evenings were held during the pre-draft public consultation period. The purpose of the evenings was to encourage and facilitate further public discussion on the review of the existing Plan and preparation of the new Plan. The evenings were drop-in events with the Forward Planning team available to discuss on a one-to-one basis the issues raised. The meetings were held in the four main towns in May 2011.

### 3.3 SEA Scoping Consultation

Initial scoping took place with the prescribed Environmental Authorities in March 2012. A Draft Scoping Report was sent to the Authorities and they were given a five week period to make submissions and observations. Submissions were received from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) and the

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the information to be contained in the Environmental Report. The points raised in the submissions were factored into the Environmental Report where appropriate.

### **Submission 1**

The Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, submission is summarised as follows:

Underwater Archaeological Heritage: The Department made reference to the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Resource. The Department made reference to the rich coastal, freshwater and maritime heritage associated with Wexford and stated that any development plan should include looking into the diversity of underwater cultural heritage found in lakes, rivers and coastal waters. It was noted that Wexford's maritime heritage means that there is an extremely high potential for shipwreck archaeology along the coastline, with the record of shipwrecks being significant for this county.

### **Submission 2**

EPA submission is summarised as follows;

The identification of existing environmental issues under each of the SEA topics was noted and acknowledged. There was also reference made to the integration of the following:

- Provision of adequate and appropriate water service infrastructure including drinking water and waste water treatment infrastructure.
- Protection of ground and surface water quality.
- Protection of biodiversity including Natura 2000 sites, pNHAs and local biodiversity features.
- Protection of designated shellfish waters designated salmonid waters, freshwater pearl mussel catchments and bathing water quality.

In addition, an SEA Scoping Guidance Document and SEA Pack was enclosed.

An SEA Scoping meeting was also held with the EPA on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 during the Environmental Authorities consultation period. Various items were discussed in relation to the scope of the Environmental Report and baseline data sources and can be summarised as follows;

- Reference made to Floods Directive and South Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study (CFRAMS)
- Integrated Biodiversity Action Impact Assessment on Draft for consultation
- Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine as a data source
- Compare previous baseline with the new baseline data on infrastructure and water quality for example
- Alternatives for the Plan where there is no zoning of lands involved
- Freshwater Pearl Mussel Sub Basin Management Plans still at draft.

#### **3.4 Public Consultation at Draft Plan Stage**

In accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended), consultation took place with the Minister, the Board, the prescribed authorities (including environmental authorities) and the public. Copies of the Draft Plan and Environmental Report were sent to the Minister, the Board and prescribed authorities and were placed on public display for a period of ten weeks. During this time submissions were made to the Planning Authority. All of the submissions received within the public display period were taken into account and Amendments to the Draft Plan were subsequently proposed by the Members.

**Table 5 Breakdown of issues raised in the submissions and observations received on the Draft Plan**

<b>Submissions and observations received within statutory consultation period</b>	
Protected Structures	94
Transport	5
Energy and Wind Energy Strategy	6
Rural Housing	3
Flooding	3
Tourism	2
Landscape Character Assessment	2
Retail	1
Recreation	1
Quarries	1
Heritage	1
Education	1
Other/various Issues (including some of the issues above)	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Submissions and observations received outside statutory consultation period</b>	
Protected Structures	13
Wind Energy Strategy	1
Rural Development	1
Landscape Character Assessment	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

The Proposed Amendments comprised of the following:

### **Volume 1 - Written Statement**

A number of amendments were proposed to provide clarity and strengthen the objectives in the Draft Plan. The key amendments can be summarised as follows;

- Encourage residential development to occur in towns and villages subject to the availability of adequate waste water treatment and drinking water capacity.
- Ensure that extractive industry developments are sited, designed and operated in accordance with best practice guidelines.
- Facilitate the sustainable development of forestry provided that it does not result in significant adverse impacts on natural waters, wildlife habitats, conservation areas or significant visual impacts on the landscape.
- Give consideration to visual impacts on the landscape in the provision of informative signage on tourist routes and accesses to the County.
- Support and facilitate the development of enhanced transport infrastructure at New Ross Port, in addition to Rosslare Europort.
- With regard to the development of national road schemes, adopt a flexible approach where extensions of a limited scale to existing developments are proposed, where development is proposed on the margins of identified corridors, or where development is proposed within corridors that are removed from critical areas, such as crossing points with the existing road network (the overall objective is to generally retain required lands free from development).
- Use an evidence based approach in the assessment of the impacts of development and zoning proposals on the safety, current and future capacity and function of national roads.

A number of new objectives were also proposed and can be summarised as follows:

- Local Area Plans and Development Plans shall be screened and/or assessed for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment and Flood Risk.

- Regard will be had to Local Area Plan/Development Plan Guidelines when preparing Local Area Plans and Development Plans.
- The Council will seek to ensure that site security and health and safety is given high priority in extractive industry developments.
- Support and facilitate the development of sustainable agriculture practices.
- Support and facilitate public transport initiatives which reduce reliance on the private car.
- Control signage on and adjoining national roads.
- Require Road Safety Audits for development proposals which require a new access or significant intensification of an existing access onto a national road.
- Provide water treatment facilities and potable water supply in settlements.
- Continue the commitment to water conservation and leakage reduction for drinking water systems and promote awareness of water conservation measures and techniques.
- Facilitate the provision of adequate wastewater services to serve the existing and future needs of the populations of towns, villages and settlements and ensure that all foul water generated is collected and discharged after treatment in a safe and sustainable manner.
- Raise awareness of the need to reverse fossil fuel dependency and mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Promote the development of coastal routes as tourism attractions and local amenities in co-operation with statutory and relevant organisations.
- Engage with Coillte in the investigation of the suitability of developing off-road cycling trails provided that they do not negatively impact on residential amenity, landscape, heritage or the environment.

Other minor proposed amendments to the Written Statement as follows:

- An update of CSO figures in Section 2.
- Amendment to rural housing section to allow, in principle, housing for people with exceptional health and/or family circumstances building permanent residences for their own use in the Coastal Zone/NHA rural area type.

- Amendment to rural housing section to confirm that the policies on accesses to national roads apply to all developments, including dwellings.
- Identification of additional key tourist attractions in Table No. 16.
- An update of road schemes and reference to the new Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Spatial Planning and National Roads in Section 8.
- An update of the list of Seveso sites in Table 23.
- Reference to rising oil prices in Section 11.2.
- Reference to Guidelines for a Sustainable Energy Community (SEAI, 2011) in Section 11.3.
- Amendments to the development management standards relating to extractive industry, retail development, advertising signs and structures, car parking and enforcement.

The Proposed Amendments mainly sought to strengthen the objectives of the Plan, to maximise potential impacts and mitigate potential negative impacts on the environment. Many of the Proposed Amendments were not material but sought to provide clarity to points or objectives in the Draft Plan. A number of the amendments proposed were to take account of national guidelines which were published since the preparation of the Draft Plan.

### **Volume 2 – Record of Protected Structures**

Following consideration of submissions and observations, it was proposed not to add 41 of the structures identified in the Draft Plan as “Structures proposed for addition to the Record of Protected Structures”. The most common reason for not adding these structures relate to the number and extent of alterations carried out and/or the deterioration in structural condition of the structures or parts thereof.

### **Volume 3 – Landscape Character Assessment**

It was proposed to include Lacken Hill as a Landscape of Greater Sensitivity. The inclusion of Lacken Hill, which is identified as having historical and visual significance, will have positive impacts on the environment.

#### **Volume 4 – Retail Strategy**

It was proposed to amend the Retail Strategy to include estimates of the retail floorspace requirements for the retail catchments of the four main towns.

#### **Volume 5 – Wind Energy Strategy**

It was proposed to reduce the target from 300 MW to 255 MW. Following consideration of the submissions, it was considered that the area identified as Acceptable in Principle and Open for Consideration for wind farm development could not accommodate the additional megawatts (99 megawatts or approximately 33 turbines) proposed in the Draft Plan in the short-term without the potential for negative impacts.

#### **Volume 6 – Joint Housing Strategy**

Minor amendments were proposed to further emphasise the Council's commitment that accessibility is integral to housing policy and to amend some of the figures shown in the Draft Strategy.

#### **Volume 7 – Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

Maps were updated to include a small number of areas which were omitted in the Draft Plan.

#### **Volume 8 – Environmental Report**

A number of amendments to the Environmental Report were proposed as a result of the submissions received. The amendments include:

- Additional information to be inserted in the Non Technical Summary.
- Maps of proposed roads, existing and permitted wind farms and other services such as grid and broadband networks, where available, to be included in the material assets baseline section.
- Environmental objectives W1 and W2 to be merged and wording amended.
- A more detailed description of the assessment of the plan alternatives against the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) to be included in order to clearly demonstrate the justification of the selection of the preferred alternative.



- Mitigation measures to be linked to the relevant likely significant effects.
- Details such as frequency of monitoring, the department which will be responsible for collating data and the threshold levels at which corrective action will be taken to be included in the Monitoring Programme.
- Targets (B1, MA1 and L1) and indicators (MA1 and L1) to be amended to more measurable targets and indicators.

### 3.5 Consultation on Proposed Amendments

The Proposed Amendments were screened for SEA and AA. The SEA Screening Report concluded that the Proposed Amendments would not have any likely significant effects on the environment in addition to those identified in the Environmental Report for the Draft Plan. Copies of the Proposed Amendments and SEA and AA Screening Report were sent to the Minister, the Board and prescribed authorities and were placed on public display for a period of four weeks. During this time submissions were made to the Planning Authority. All of the submissions received during the public display period were taken into account and further modifications to these material amendments were proposed.

**Table 6 Lists of persons and bodies who made submissions and observations on the Proposed Amendments**

Submission No.	Name of person/body	Issues
01	South East Regional Authority	Compliance with SEA/AA and relevant EU Directives and national legislation and Core Strategy
02	South Tipperary County Council	No comments
03	Keep Ireland Open	Various
04	Dublin Airport Authority	No comments
05	National Roads Authority	National roads
06	Mervyn Jones	Record of Protected Structures
07	Geological Survey of Ireland	Reference to County Geological

Submission No.	Name of person/body	Issues
		Sites
08	RGDATA	Retail
09	Environmental Protection Agency	Various
10	Dept Environment, Community and Local Government	Compliance with relevant SEA and AA, national roads and telecommunications
11	GVA on behalf of Tesco Ireland	Retail
12	Irish Wind Energy Association	Wind Energy
13	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Cycling trails on Forth Mountain

The Proposed Modifications mainly sought to provide clarity and strengthen the objectives in the Draft Plan. The Proposed Modifications were not material but sought to provide clarity to points or objectives contained in the Draft Plan. These further modifications were subject to an SEA Screening exercise which determined they would not have any likely significant effects on the environment in addition to those identified in the Environmental Report for the Draft Plan. Submissions and observations in relation to the Draft Plan and Proposed Amendments were taken into consideration before the making of the Plan. The Elected Members were required by legislation to take into account the Environmental Report before the making of the Plan.

The Plan was adopted with the Proposed Amendments and modifications by the Elected Members on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

## **Section 4: Consideration of Alternatives**

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### **4.1 Identification and Development of Alternatives**

One of the critical roles of SEA is to facilitate an evaluation of the likely environmental consequences of a range of alternative scenarios for accommodating future growth in County Wexford. These alternative development scenarios must be realistic, capable of implementation and should represent a range of different approaches within the statutory and operational requirements of the County Development Plan.

The Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 is framed within a policy context set by a hierarchy of national and regional level strategic plans as well as the Irish and European legislative framework. Therefore, the options for alternatives are limited, and a scenario such as the 'do nothing' situation has not been included as it is neither reasonable nor realistic.

### **4.2 Description of Planning Scenarios**

A number of reasonable alternative development plan strategies for the county which were considered during the drafting process for the preparation of the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 were identified and described taking into account the vision, objectives and the geographical scope of the plan area.

The overall vision in the Plan seeks to develop a county;

- where people want to live, work and play
- which offers high quality sustainable employment opportunities and residential developments
- with high quality urban and rural environments supported by excellent sustainable physical and social infrastructure
- which values its natural environment, built and cultural heritage

### **Alternative Scenario 1 – Market Driven Planning**

In this scenario development is dominated by residential development, as trends have historically occurred. In this scenario there is little strategic focus as to where housing should occur. Housing development would continue to concentrate in the north, northeast and east (coastal areas) of the county at growth rates as previously experienced. Gorey and Wexford would experience high levels of urbanisation, some at elevated densities.

In this scenario little emphasis is placed on economic development as the driver of building critical mass within the principal town of Wexford. This scenario allows for sporadic economic development in both rural and urban locations, placing uneconomic pressures on public services such as roads, water and wastewater. Extensive areas of rural housing would occur along the strategic and regional routes throughout the county. There are weak measures to protect the environment.

The following are the key elements of this development strategy:

- No adherence to a settlement strategy based on Regional Planning Guidelines, Town Plans and Local Area Plans;
- No creation of critical mass at strategic locations within the County;
- Uncontrolled development of existing rural settlements and rural housing, particularly in the north and east (coastal areas) of the County;
- Dispersed development in the rural settlements and rural countryside; and,
- Natural resource enterprises (extractive industries, forestry and wind energy) are developed on an individual basis through out the County.

### **Alternative Scenario 2 – Dispersed Settlement Led Approach**

This scenario envisages uncontrolled growth of all settlements within the county with heavy emphasis on accommodating housing within settlements as opposed to any rural areas and appropriate environmental protection measures for designated environmental protection zones such as aquifers, SACs, NHAs and SPAs. This approach does not give any hierarchy or settlement network indicating which settlements should develop as priority. There would be no structure for prioritising

infrastructure and service provision, leading to an uncoordinated approach to the delivery of public services such as public water and wastewater treatment.

The following are the key elements of this development strategy:

- Towns would be competing against each other to attract development and there would be no identified settlement network to allow for planned future development;
- Unbalanced growth of the more attractive villages or towns which have better services or are more desirable from location point of view, with possible stagnation of the hub's population and the smaller more remote settlements;
- There is likely to be significant long-term adverse impacts on the quality of life within the county due to the loss of viability of services in settlements;
- Little involvement in terms of determining the future development strategy of the county;
- Rural isolation in the more remote areas with declining populations and diminishing services in the nearby smaller settlements;
- Pressure for growth would lead to urban sprawl and ribbon development radiating from some existing towns and villages in the north of the county;
- Concentration of private effluent systems in settlements where there are no public wastewater treatment infrastructure.

### **Alternative Scenario 3 – Strategic Planning Approach**

This scenario is a planned sustainable development approach to planning in the county. Development will be focused within zoned and serviced areas. This scenario places emphasises on strengthening the rural villages particularly in the west and south of the county and controlling rural one-off development in the eastern and northern sections of the county where pressure for residential development is channelled into the designated settlements, in order to protect the strategic infrastructure, which is key to the economic development of the county.

Environmental protection zones such as aquifers, SACs, NHAs and SPAs are protected. The housing needs of rural communities will be supported where considered appropriate. The rural areas of the county will have a characterisation in accordance with the recommendations of the Rural Housing Guidelines with a

number of further policy areas added based on the assessment of the potential for impact on areas of greater sensitivity.

The following are the key elements of this development strategy:

- Adherence to a settlement strategy based on the National Spatial Strategy Regional Planning Guidelines, Town Plans and Local Area Plans;
- Creation of critical mass at strategic locations within the county;
- Balanced growth with a strategic sustainable development strategy for the county which will assist in the economic and coordinated delivery of public services;
- Controlled development of existing rural settlements and rural housing, particularly in the northeast, east and south east of the county;
- Natural resource enterprises (extractive industries and forestry) are developed in an individual basis throughout the county;
- Development of a Wind Energy Strategy to coordinate the approach to the development of individual wind farms.

### **4.3 Assessment of Plan Scenarios**

**Scenario 1 ‘Market Driven Planning Approach’** involves minimal intervention in terms of any planning with short-term economic and social benefits. This approach seeks to follow a non-planned approach and allows development in all areas dictated by the market; with little control there would be a huge impact on the environment of County Wexford. This approach would not allow for the orderly and sustainable development of the county and is therefore not considered a desirable option.

**Scenario 2 ‘Dispersed Settlement Led Planning Approach’** places more emphasis on growing existing settlements with less protection offered to the wider environment but very restricted rural development. This approach would lead to unbalanced growth of the more attractive settlements in the more desirable locations with stagnation or population decline in the more remote or less attractive settlements. There would a poor settlement structure or hierarchy within which public service provision could be planned and provided which could lead to impacts on the

environment. The housing needs of rural communities would not be met which would have wider social implications.

**Scenario 3 'Strategic Planning Approach'** allows for a planned sustainable development approach to planning in the county. Development will be focused within zoned and serviced areas. Significant controls will be put in place for development in environmentally sensitive areas and designated sites such as SACs, SPAs and NHAs as well as areas of archaeological potential or where threats to natural resources prevail such as groundwater protection zones and surface water. In conclusion a strategic planned approach to the future development of the county incorporating the principles of sustainable development emerges as the most environmentally sustainable option for County Wexford for the period 2013-2019.

**Table 7 Assessment of Alternatives against SEOs**

	Likely to Improve status of SEOs	No likely Interaction	Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated	Potential Conflict with status of SEOs - would be mitigated
<b>Strategic Plan Options</b>				
<b>Scenario 1</b> Market Driven Planning		AC2, S3, MA1	L1, AC1, S2, PH1, PH2, MA2,	B1, B2, B3,B4 PH2, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC3, C1
<b>Scenario 2</b> Dispersed Settlement Led Planning	AC1, S2	S3, MA1, AC2	L1, MA2	B1, B2, B3,B4, PH1, PH2, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC3, C1
<b>Scenario 3</b> Strategic Planning Approach	B1, B2, B3,B4, PH1, PH2, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC1, AC3, S2, L1, MA2, C1	S3, MA1, AC2		

The alternatives that were examined were produced and evaluated at an early - more embryonic - stage to facilitate the evaluation and selection of a plan - having regard, inter alia to environmental consequences. The Alternative Scenario for the Development Plan which emerged from the Plan preparation process, Scenario 3 Strategic Planning Approach –achieves a good balance between environmental protection and conformance with relevant national and regional planning objectives.



#### **4.4 Preferred Strategy**

With the integration of appropriate mitigation measures potential adverse environmental effects which could arise as a result of implementing the chosen development plan scenario would be likely to be avoided, reduced or offset.

Alternative Scenario 3 was chosen to be developed having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects which were identified by the Strategic Environmental Assessment; and,
2. Planning - including social and economic - effects.

Section 7 of the Environmental Report evaluates the policies and objectives which have been prepared to realise Scenario 3 (the selected Development Plan Scenario). Some of these provisions are likely to have a range of beneficial effects with regard to the protection of the environment while some are likely to have a range of potential adverse effects which will be mitigated by other provisions which have been integrated into the Plan, including those which have emerged through the SEA process.

Mitigation measures which attempt to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing Scenario 3 as the preferred development strategy are recommended in Section 8 of the Environmental Report following evaluation of the Plan objectives in Section 7 of the Environmental Report.

#### **4.5 Wind Energy Alternatives**

The SEA addressed a number of alternatives for wind energy and these are presented below. The alternatives are divided into Strategic Energy Options which identify alternative renewable energy options and Spatial Wind Energy Options which consider the location of new wind farms. The SEA and AA Screening Report and associated processes helped to define areas for wind energy development and ensured that highly sensitive environmental resources were avoided or potential negative impacts highlighted and addressed through mitigation measures.

## **Strategic Energy Options**

### **Option 1: Do Nothing Scenario**

This option would involve retaining the existing Wind Energy Strategy. However, it was decided early on in the SEA process that the existing Wind Energy Strategy should be reviewed to:

- Take account of updated national and regional policy in relation to climate change, renewable energy and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Assess the cumulative impacts of existing and permitted wind farms in the county and adjoining counties
- Set a target for renewable energy in line with the 40% target set by Government, as recommended in the RPGs
- Take account of technological advances in wind turbine development and improvements to the National Grid

### **Option 2: Ad-hoc Planning for Wind Farm Development**

This option would involve wind energy applications being assessed on a case-by-case basis without an overall strategic framework to guide wind farm development. This is not in line with existing planning guidance for wind energy development and would not facilitate an evaluation of cumulative impacts associated with wind farm development. In addition, the lack of strategic evaluation of this land use would not be in keeping with the SEA Directive.

### **Option 3: Alternative Renewable Energy Sources**

This option would involve planning for alternative renewable energy sources such as biomass or tidal power in seeking to achieve a target that reflects the national target of 40% renewable energy production by 2020. The reason this is not being pursued as a means to meet this target in this Plan is, that whilst other renewable energies can and will contribute to this target, in practice County Wexford has a significant wind resource and, at national level, Ireland has experience in planning and managing this technology. The East Coast of Wexford is identified in the Draft OREDP as being suitable for tidal development, however further research and development will be required before this type of renewable energy is developed. There is also some uncertainty regarding the economic viability of anaerobic

digesters. The Bioenergy Action Plan for Ireland (Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, 2007) notes that, in general, it would not be economic for farmers to transport manures any great distance to an anaerobic digestion plant for treatment and subsequent land spreading. High capital costs are another inhibiting factor. Hence, this option was not considered to be a realistic alternative for the lifetime of this Plan. Other renewable energies will, however, be supported by Wexford County Council in conjunction with the Wind Energy Strategy.

#### **Option 4: Offshore Wind Energy Development**

This scenario would see the direction of wind farms to the offshore areas of County Wexford as a means of achieving renewable energy targets. The Draft OREDP identifies the south and east coasts of Wexford as being suitable for wind energy development and Grid 25 anticipates the future capacity for offshore wind farm development off the coast of County Wexford to be in the region of 445 MW. To date, no connection offers have been made for offshore wind farm developments in this area.<sup>1</sup> The 3900 MW of wind developments which received an offer as part of Gate 3 will provide for the 40% national renewable generation target by 2020 if all the generators to receive an offer are built. It is unlikely that the County will achieve significant renewable energy production from offshore wind energy development within the lifetime of this Plan.

#### **Option 5: Alternative Targets and Alternative Timeframes**

This scenario would assess different renewable energy targets and timeframes as a means of achieving the 2020 renewable energy target of 40% electricity production from renewable energy resources. The target of 255 MW in this Wind Energy Strategy will enable County Wexford to generate the equivalent of 70% of its electricity needs from wind energy by 2019. The target of 70% has been chosen as the County has significantly more wind availability (i.e. higher wind speeds over a larger geographical area) than the other four counties in the South East Region. Having regard to this resource, electricity demand forecasts and subject to the

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<sup>1</sup> Eirgrid's *Connection Offer: Disclosure of Applications – 24 October 2011* shows that there is an application for grid connection for a 600 MW offshore wind farm at Glassgorman Banks off the coast of County Wexford. The application, made in 2008, is still in progress.

delivery of necessary transmission infrastructure, County Wexford has the potential to absorb additional wind energy developments and make a significant contribution to the national target of 40%.

### **Option 6: Strategic Approach to Onshore Wind Energy Development**

This approach recognises where the principal wind resources are and matches them to existing infrastructure – two critical considerations for wind energy development. It seeks to protect designated sites and existing settlements while maximising the potential of local renewable energy resources. This approach would allow potential applicants a means to progress wind energy developments within robust strategic areas in the County, thus assisting the County in meeting its renewable energy targets. It would also encourage clustering or sharing of infrastructure associated with wind energy development.

### **Spatial Wind Energy Options**

#### **Option 7 – Consolidate Wind Energy Development in a Single Large Cluster**

This option would allow for the clustering of new wind farm developments in a single location based on strategic analysis of the most suitable area in terms of wind resources, environmental, landscape and other factors. This approach would potentially lead to significant effects in a particular location, particularly in terms of landscape and environmental impacts. However, these effects would be localised rather than dispersed throughout the County. This option would have the greatest potential to meet the wind energy targets for the County whilst limiting the extent of environmental, visual and amenity impacts.

#### **Option 8: Disperse Wind Energy Development throughout County**

This option would allow for the dispersal of wind farm developments throughout the County within potentially suitable areas. This approach would not realise opportunities for clustering wind farm developments in the most strategic locations and would result in widespread environmental and visual impacts around the County.

## Option 9 – Larger Wind Farm Clusters in Suitable Areas and Smaller Wind Farm Developments in Potentially Suitable Areas

This option would allow for the concentration of larger wind farm developments in the most suitable areas together with smaller wind farms or groupings of wind farms in other acceptable areas, subject to environmental and visual assessment. This option would result in dispersed environmental and visual impacts around the County when compared with Option 7.

### 4.6 Evaluation of Wind Energy Alternatives

**Table 8 Assessment of Wind Energy Alternatives against SEOs**

<b>Evaluation of Wind Energy Strategy Alternatives</b>				
	<b>Likely to Improve status of SEOs</b>	<b>No likely Interaction</b>	<b>Probable Conflict with status of SEOs – unlikely to be mitigated</b>	<b>Potential Conflict with status of SEOs - would be mitigated</b>
<b>Strategic Energy Options</b>				
<b>Option 1: Do Nothing Scenario</b>	AC1, AC2	B4, S2, S3, MA1	L1	B1, B2, B3, PH1, PH2, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC3, MA2, C1
<b>Option 2: Ad-hoc Planning for Wind Farm Development</b>	AC1, AC2	B4, S2, S3, MA1	L1	B1, B2, B3, PH1, PH2, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC3, MA2, C1
<b>Option 3: Alternative Renewable Energy Sources</b>	AC1, AC2	B4, S2, S3, MA1		B1, B2, B3, B4, PH1, PH2, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC3, MA2, C1, L1

<b>Option 4: Offshore Wind Energy Development</b>	AC1, AC2	B4, PH1, PH2, S1, S2, S3, W1, W2, MA1, MA2, C1		B1, B2, B3, S4, AC3, L1
<b>Option 5: Alternative Targets and Alternative Timeframes</b>	AC1, AC2 (depending on targets and timeframes)	B4, S2, S3, MA1	AC1, AC2 (depending on targets and timeframes)	B1, B2, B3, PH1, PH2, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC3, MA2, C1, L1
<b>Option 6: Strategic Approach to Onshore Wind Energy Development</b>	AC1, AC2	B4, PH1, PH2, S2, S3, MA1		B1, B2, B3, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC3, MA2, C1, L1
<b>Spatial Wind Energy Options</b>				
<b>Option 7: Consolidate Wind Energy Development in a Single Large Cluster</b>	AC1, AC2	B4, PH1, PH2, S2, S3, MA1		B1, B2, B3, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC3, MA2, C1, L1
<b>Option 8: Disperse Wind Energy Development throughout County</b>	AC1, AC2	B4, PH1, PH2, S2, S3, MA1	L1	B1, B2, B3, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC3, MA2, C1
<b>Option 9: Larger Wind</b>	AC1, AC2	B4, PH1, PH2, S2,	L1	B1, B2, B3, S1, S4, W1, W2, AC3,

<b>Farm Clusters in Suitable Areas and Smaller Wind Farm Developments in Potentially Suitable Areas</b>		S3, MA1		MA2, C1
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#### 4.7 Preferred Wind Energy Strategy Option

The preferred alternative is a combination of Option 6 Strategic Approach to Onshore Wind Energy Development and Option 7 Consolidate Wind Energy Development in a Single Large Cluster. Together these options form the basis for the Wind Energy Strategy, allowing for the strategic development of wind in areas where there are high wind speeds and grid connections while seeking to avoid or reduce impacts on the environment and ensuring the protection of residential and visual amenity

The SEA helped to define areas for wind energy development and ensured that highly sensitive environmental resources were avoided or potential negative impacts highlighted and addressed through mitigation measures. Designated sites were avoided by excluding them from the Acceptable in Principle and Open for Consideration areas. Landscape Character Areas were also excluded where they were considered to be sensitive to wind farm development.

It was not possible to avoid Recorded Monuments due to the large number of sites dispersed throughout the county. Similarly, it was not possible to avoid all breeding areas, roosting grounds and flight paths for protected bird species as detailed data was not available at the time of preparing the Strategy. Therefore, measures have been incorporated into the development management standards contained in Section 5 of the Strategy to mitigate potential adverse impacts of wind farm development on archaeological heritage and potential impacts on birds in terms of collision, disturbance and any other impacts on the environment.

The county has been divided into the following three areas for the purposes of wind energy development: Acceptable in Principle, Open for Consideration and Not Normally Permissible.

To avoid disproportionate visual impacts and considering the open, flat and often regular nature of the landscape in County Wexford, it was decided that wind farm developments should be confined to a specific area of the region. Hence, cumulative visual impacts should be restricted to those locations and their surrounding environs and not affect view sheds throughout the rest of the County. Whilst there may be scope for small, locally based projects on carefully selected sites in the County, the potential for new larger commercial wind farms is much more limited due to the scale and nature of the landscape.



## **Section 5: Monitoring Measures**

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### **5.1 Introduction**

Article 10 of the SEA Directive requires that monitoring be carried out in order to identify at an early stage any unforeseen adverse effects due to the implementation of the Plan and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action. Monitoring is a key element of the effective implementation of the Wexford County Development Plan. Its purpose is to cross check significant effects which arise during the implementation stage of the Plan against those predicted during the plan preparation stage. Monitoring shall be based on the environmental objectives, target and indicators set out in the SEA monitoring table below.

### **5.2 Monitoring Indicators**

The purpose of indicators is to monitor the effectiveness of the Plan in meeting the environmental objectives and targets identified in this Report. The methodology for the development and selection of the SEA indicators for the Wexford County Development Plan 2013-2019 has been informed by the scoping process, the baseline assessment and the identification of existing environmental problems.

Table 9 lists indicators and targets which may be amended during the life of the Plan, subject to the availability of resources, data and relevance of the indicators to monitor the environmental baseline. The indicators allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the SEOs used in the evaluation. Focus is given to indicators which are relevant to the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan and existing monitoring arrangements shall be used in order to monitor the selected indicators where possible.

### **5.3 Monitoring Programme**

Under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, the County Manager is required to prepare a progress report on the implementation of the Plan. Given that the environment is a significant consideration, the progress report should include the

key findings of the environmental monitoring programme as outlined in this section of the SEA Statement and Section 9 of the Environment Report.

#### **5.4 Monitoring Sources and Responsible Sections**

CDB – County Development Board

CSO – Central Statistics Office

DAHG – Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

DECLG – Department of Environment, Communities and Local Government

DoT – Department of Transport

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

Failte – Failte Ireland

GSI – Geological Survey of Ireland

HC – Heritage Council

MI – Marine Institute

NTA – National Transport Authority

NPWS – National Parks & Wildlife Service

NBDC – National Biodiversity Data Centre

NRA – National Roads Authority

WCC – Wexford County Council (Various Sections)

WEMA - Wexford Energy Management Agency

**Table 9 Monitoring Indicators and Targets**

<b>Strategic Environmental Objectives, Indicators and Targets</b>				
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Indicative Indicators</b>	<b>Responsible Authority and frequency</b>	
<b>Biodiversity</b>	B1 Conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats, species within the county, and support the sustainable management of these areas.	No reduction in habitat diversity or loss of species in non-designated sites.	Conservation status of habitats and species as reported by NPWS.	WCC (Planning & Environment Sections), NPWS. Dependant on the availability of information from relevant statutory authorities
	B2 Ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive with regard to protection of Natura 2000 sites and habitats and species listed under Annexes I and II of the Directive and prevent the loss of ecological networks, and stepping stones or parts there of which provide important connectivity for species.	Protect Natura 2000 sites and habitats and species under Annex I and II of Habitats Directive. No ecological networks or parts there of which provide significant connectivity between local areas of biodiversity to be lost without remediation by implementation of the CWDP.	Conservation status of the Qualifying Interests of Natura 2000 sites and protected habitats and species as reported by NPWS and other conservation organisations.	WCC (Planning & Environment Sections), NPWS. Dependant on the availability of information from relevant statutory authorities.
	B3 To ensure compliance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to the protection of wildlife corridors and contiguous areas of habitat which are important on a County level for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.	No ecological networks or parts there of which provide significant connectivity between local areas of biodiversity to be lost, once mapping complete, without remediation by implementation of the CWDP.	Percentage loss of mapped ecological networks.	WCC (Planning & Environment Sections), HC Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)

	<p>B4 Protect aquatic and terrestrial habitats from the spread of invasive species</p>	<p>Prevent introduction of new invasive species. Control or manage current invasive species to prevent a spread in their distribution.</p>	<p>Number and types of invasive species identified. Number of submissions or observations. Distribution of invasive species as listed on National Biodiversity Data Centre website and updates from other invasive species related sites and organisations.</p>	<p>WCC (Planning &amp; Environment Sections), NPWS, NBDC Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>
<p>Population and Human Health</p>	<p>PH1 Protect and enhance peoples quality of life based on high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments.</p>	<p>Increased employment opportunities. Increases and improvements in quality of services, amenities and 'green spaces' available to the public.</p>	<p>Provision of employment. Provision of services, amenities and 'green spaces'.</p>	<p>Central Government, IDA, Enterprise Ireland, County Enterprise Board, WCC (Housing, Planning, Enterprise, Community Sections) Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>
	<p>PH2 Protect human health through minimising the risk of polluting emissions including noise and vibrations from incompatible land-uses and emissions to air/water/soil from traffic, industrial processes and extractive industry</p>	<p>No significant deterioration in human health as a result of environmental factors. No spatial concentrations of health problems resulting from incompatible land-uses. No designated Shellfish Growing Areas to be of Class C standard and implementation of Pollution Reduction Programmes for designated areas.</p>	<p>Number of occurrences of declines in human health relating to environmental issues in County Wexford. Occurrence (if any) of spatial concentrations of deterioration of human health. Quality of designated Shellfish Growing areas in the County as listed by DEHLG.</p>	<p>WCC(Planning, Environment Sections) CSO MI Water Quality Section of DECLG Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>

<b>Soil and Geology</b>					
S1 Prevent pollution or contamination of soils	Maintenance and conservation of soil quality, especially in regard to organic matter content.	EPA/ Teagasc National Soils Mapping Project.	EPA/Teagasc Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)		
S2 Give preference to the use and regeneration of derelict, disused and infill sites, rather than greenfield sites.	Develop as many derelict, disused and infill sites as appropriate and possible.	Location and area of developed derelict, disused and infill sites over the duration of the plan.	WCC (Planning Section) Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)		
S3 Minimise the amount of waste to landfill	Reduce the amount of waste to landfill by increasing recycling and composting initiatives.	Amount and nature of waste going to landfill sites.	WCC (Environment Section) Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)		
S4 Protect and conserve important geological sites	Retain or increase the conservation status of important geological sites throughout the county	Conservation status of important geological sites mapped by gsi.ie.	GSI Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)		

Water and Flooding	
<p>W1 To ensure, the protection from pollution/contamination and/or improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground water quality throughout the county</p>	<p>Protect and restore areas identified in River Basin District Management plan required to achieve "good" status i.e. 4+ for water quality by 2015 in line with WFD Objectives. No deterioration of quality of drinking water in the County. No deterioration of good quality surface waters and ground waters. Improvements in quality of those waters failing to reach WFD objectives.</p>
<p>W2 Ensure new development will not be permitted within flood zones other than development which satisfies the justification test, as outlined in the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for Planning Authorities.</p>	<p>In accordance with OPW/DEHLG Risk Assessments, require all applications within designated Flood Risk zones A and B to undertake a flood risk assessment as part of the planning application.</p>
<p>Water quality monitoring results from the EPA for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drinking water quality</li> <li>• Surface water ecological and chemical status</li> <li>• Status of estuarine and coastal waters</li> <li>• Bathing water quality</li> <li>• Ground water quality</li> <li>• Number of Public Water Supplies on EPA Remedial Action List.</li> <li>• Number of Discharge Licences granted by EPA.</li> </ul>	<p>Water quality monitoring results from the EPA for: EPA WCC(Water Services/Irish Water, Environment Section) Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>
<p>Number of permitted development in flood risk zones A and B.</p>	<p>WCC (Planning Section) OPW Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>

<b>Air, Noise and Climate</b>			
<p>AC1 Facilitate measures which seek to reduce all forms of air pollution and reduce dependence on travel by private car.</p>	<p>20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2020. Increase investment in cycle-ways and footpaths</p>	<p>Results of local Air Quality monitoring. Proportion of public travel modes used.</p>	<p>EPA, DoT, NTA, WCC (Environment Section) Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>
<p>AC2 Promote use of renewable energy sources and support energy conservation initiatives</p>	<p>Increase in renewable energy development and research and development in the county. Address the county's contribution to the national targets on renewable energy set out in policy documents.</p>	<p>Installed capacity from renewable energy resources. Number of renewable energy developments granted planning permission. Meet or exceed county's contribution to national targets on renewable energy.</p>	<p>WCC (Planning Section, Energy Officer) Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>
<p>AC3 Avoid development within flood risk areas and protect the marine and coastal environment from inappropriate works or development, and promote integrated coastal zone management strategies</p>	<p>In accordance with OPW/DoEHLG Risk Assessment, require all applications within designation Flood Risk zones A and B to undertake a flood risk assessment as part of the planning application. No vulnerable development in flood risk or areas risk of coastal flooding.</p>	<p>Number of permitted developments in flood risk or coastal zones.</p>	<p>WCC (Planning Section) OPW Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>

<p><b>Material Assets</b></p>	<p>MA1 Ensure that zoned land within town plans will not be developed if such development will lead to overcapacity of Wastewater Treatment Plants in order to ensure protection of the water resources within the plan area.</p>	<p>New development should be served by a public wastewater treatment system or an approved site wastewater treatment plant designed, constructed and managed in accordance with the EPA Guidelines.</p>	<p>Number of permissions granted without connection to a public wastewater treatment system or an approved on site wastewater treatment plant designed, constructed and managed in accordance with the EPA Guidelines.</p>	<p>WCC (Planning, Environment Sections) EPA Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>
	<p>MA2 Maintain and improve the quality of, and access to, material assets such as open spaces, drinking water supply, and all other physical and social infrastructure.</p>	<p>Increase numbers of visitors to cultural heritage sites and other public amenities. Maintain or enhance access to public amenities. No deterioration in public water supplies.</p>	<p>Quality of access to public amenities and visitor numbers.  Quality and accessibility of public water supply.</p>	<p>WCC (Community, Water Services) OPW Fáilte Ireland Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>



<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<p>C1 Promote the protection and conservation of the county's cultural heritage including the built environment and settings; archaeological (Recorded Monuments and archaeological zones), architectural (Protected Structures, vernacular buildings, materials and urban fabric), and manmade landscape features (e.g. field walls, footpaths, gate piers)</p>	<p>No damage occurring to structures or monuments due to development. Maintain and increase the number of archaeological features recorded and protected. To increase the number and range of ACAs in the county to conserve both townscapes and demesne landscapes. To increase the number of protected structures in line with Ministerial recommendations arising from NIAH surveys.</p>	<p>Number of structures or monuments damaged due to development. Number of monuments on the RPS and areas of archaeological potential recorded or subject to exploration as a result of development. Number and range of ACAs designated in the county (townscape and demesne landscape). Number of structures in RPS in relation to Ministerial recommendations arising from NIAH county inventory.</p>	<p>DAHG National Monuments Service DAHG NIAH, WCC (Planning Section) Owners Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>
<b>Landscape</b>	<p>L1 To avoid adverse impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscapes which are the most valuable and sensitive to change, including seascapes, coastal scapes, and landscapes of historical and cultural importance</p>	<p>No diminution in the quality of important landscapes</p>	<p>The number of permissions granted in "Landscapes of Greater Sensitivity".</p>	<p>WCC (Planning Section) Initial monitoring to commence within two years of adoption as part of the County Manager's Report on progress (subject to available resources)</p>
	<p>In all instances monitoring will be subject to availability of data and resources.</p>			