

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

BSM

Est.
1968

**Brady Shipman
Martin**

**Built.
Environment.**

Strategic
Assessment
**Built
Environment**

Client:

Fáilte Ireland

Date:

22 June 2026

DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

7052_RP01_SEA Environmental Report

Project No. 7052
Client: Fáilte Ireland
Project Name: Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan
Report Name: SEA Environmental Report
Document No. RP01
Issue No. 01
Date: 22/06/2026

This document has been issued and amended as follows:

Issue	Status	Date	Prepared	Checked
01	Draft	22 Jun 2026	JS	TB



Contents

Glossary	i
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Destination & Experience Development Plans	1
1.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment	1
1.4 The Requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan	2
2 Outline Description of the Plan	3
2.1 Introduction.....	3
2.2 Vision	3
2.3 Strategic Objectives	4
2.4 Destination Catalyst Overview	7
3 Strategic Environmental Assessment	9
3.1 Introduction.....	9
3.2 SEA Stages and Process	10
3.3 SEA Screening and Requirement for SEA.....	13
3.4 SEA Scoping	14
3.5 SEA Environmental Report	17
3.6 Consultation	18
3.7 SEA Statement.....	20
3.8 SEA Guidance.....	20
3.9 Appropriate Assessment	21
4 Relationship with Plans and Programmes	23
4.1 Overview	23
4.2 Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework	23
4.2.1 Updated Draft Revised National Planning Framework	24
4.3 Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy	25
4.4 Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028.....	27
4.5 Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	28
4.6 Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027	30
4.7 Other Plans and Programmes.....	31
5 Current State of the Receiving Environment (Environmental Baseline)	34
5.1 Introduction.....	34
5.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Ballyhoura Destination & Experience Development Plan	34
5.3 Description of the Environmental Baseline	35
5.3.1 Biodiversity	35
5.3.2 Population and Human Health	43
5.3.3 Land, Soils & Geology.....	45
5.3.4 Water Quality (including Flooding)	49
5.3.5 Air Quality, Noise & Climate	55
5.3.6 Material Assets.....	59



Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

5.3.7	Cultural Heritage	64
5.3.8	Landscape & Visual	67
6	Strategic Environmental Objectives	72
7	Assessment of Alternatives.....	74
7.1	Introduction.....	74
7.2	Alternative 1: Do-nothing / Do-Minimum.....	74
7.3	Do-something (Alternatives 2A and 2B: Prepare a Plan)	74
7.4	Assessment of Alternatives	75
7.5	Reasoning for Selection of the Preferred Alternative	76
8	Assessment of Effects of the Ballyhoura Destination & Experience Development Plan ..	78
8.1	Introduction.....	78
8.2	Environmental Assessment of the Strategic Objectives of the Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan.....	78
8.3	Environmental Assessment of the ‘Destination Catalyst’, ‘Supporting Projects’ and ‘Destination Projects’ Initiatives listed within the Ballyhoura Destination & Experience Development Plan ...	100
8.4	The Interrelationship between Environmental Factors	100
8.5	Potential Cumulative Effects	101
8.6	Overview	103
9	Mitigation Measures	104
9.1	Overview	104
9.2	Mitigation Measures	104
10	Monitoring.....	135
10.1	Introduction.....	135
11	References	143
12	Appendices	144
	Appendix 1:	145
	Detailed Assessment of Environmental Effects of the Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan Action Plan	145
	Appendix 2: Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination	163



Glossary

Appropriate Assessment

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

Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

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

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

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

Environmental Problems

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

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

Environmental Vectors

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

Mitigation Measures

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

Protected Structure

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

Recorded Monument

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

SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment)

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

SEA Scoping

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

Strategic Actions

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

Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO)

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

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

This is the Environmental Report of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Ballyhoura Destination & Experience Development Plan (hereafter referred to the 'Plan' or the 'Ballyhoura DEDP').

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

1.2 Destination & Experience Development Plans

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

The Plan has identified a range of key initiatives that are designed to raise awareness of the destination, increase the length of stay in the area, expand the range and quality of visitor experiences, strengthen the value of tourism to local communities and protect the quality, character and distinctiveness of the local environment, heritage and culture. The Ireland's Hidden Heartlands *Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027*, Fáilte Ireland's corporate strategy 2026-2029 and the Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030 together provide an overarching strategic framework for the Ballyhoura DEDP.

1.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) stems from *Directive 2001/42/EC*¹ (the 'SEA Directive') of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. Article 1 of the Directive states that:

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

In effect, SEA comprises a systematic assessment process of predicting and evaluating the 'likely significant environmental effects' of implementing a proposed plan or programme, before a decision is made to adopt the plan or programme. The overall aim of SEA is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.

The SEA Directive was transposed into Irish law through two Statutory Instruments (S.I.):

- S.I. No. 435 of 2004 The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011; and
- S.I. No. 456 of 2025 European Union (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025.

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

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

The latter regulations (S.I. No. 456 of 2025) relate to SEA as it applies to plans or programmes where the context requires, “a regional spatial and economic strategy, a development plan, or a planning scheme”, and are not applicable to the Ballyhoura DEDP.

1.4 The Requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan

Article 3(2) of the SEA Directive, introduced the requirement that SEA be carried out on plans and programmes:

- a) *which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive², or*
- b) *which, in view of the likely effect on sites, have been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of the 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive)³ i.e. requires that SEA is undertaken where Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is being undertaken on the plan or programme.*

The Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan is a non-statutory tourism sector plan that does not set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive and does not contain provisions or define rules that must be complied with when consent of other projects is being granted. Therefore, SEA of the Ballyhoura DEDP is not required under Article 3(2)(a) above of the SEA Directive.

The Plan does, however, fall under the definition of a “plan” contained within the *Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (as amended)* and therefore, must be screened for the requirement to undertake Appropriate Assessment (AA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EC). The Screening for AA (BSM, 2026) has found that the Plan has the potential, if unmitigated, to affect the ecological integrity of European sites and that measures to ensure that potential effects are avoided are required. Therefore, in accordance with Article 3(2)(b) above and guidance provided in SEA Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08⁴, a SEA of the Ballyhoura DEDP has been undertaken.

This Environmental Report provides the findings of the SEA and takes account of recommendations contained in submissions from the Environmental Authorities. On finalisation of the Plan, an SEA Statement will be prepared, summarising, *inter alia*, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan.

² Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, *on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment*

³ Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

⁴ <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>

2 Outline Description of the Plan

2.1 Introduction

The Ballyhoura Country Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP) is a five-year sustainable tourism plan for east County Limerick and northeast County Cork up to the border with Tipperary. The plan is centred around the Ballyhoura mountains and builds upon the Hidden Heartlands Regional Experience Development Strategy.

The Ballyhoura area is predominantly rural with key towns includes Mitchelstown, Kilmallock and Charleville. Because of the rural nature, several tourist experiences and local businesses are invisible online and have limited advertisement. The Plan aims to improve the overall awareness of the experiences available.

The region is a sprawling combination of woodlands, hills, mountains and pastures. It builds on predominantly outdoor experiences including kayaking, fishing, mountain biking, horse riding and hiking.

The Ballyhoura Destination Experience Development Plan builds on a previous tourism plan for the Ballyhoura area as established in 1986, which was Ireland's first rural tourism strategy. The area now is managed by two community-led organisations, Ballyhoura CLG and Ballyhoura Fáilte DAC. These organisations work cross-county often in collaboration with local stakeholders and government agencies including Fáilte Ireland to grow and promote tourism to the Ballyhoura area.

The topography of the area is defined by the Ballyhoura Mountains, Galtee Mountains, Slieve Felim Mountains and Lough Gur, which lends itself well to slow adventure activities and sports tourism, in particular mountain biking and walking trails. Key attractions in the area include the Ballyhoura Way (part of the Beara-Breifne Way), Ballyhass Activity Centre, Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trails, Mitchelstown Caves, Doneraile Court and Kilfinane Outdoor Education & Training Centre. The activities are provided by a wide range of locals to the Ballyhoura area.

The National Tourism Policy Statement (December 2025) introduced five strategic pillars for tourism development which have shaped the Ballyhoura DEDP;

1. Delivering the Best Visitor Experiences
2. Promoting a Vibrant and Creative Tourism Enterprise Sector
3. Empowering Communities
4. Growing a Sustainable Future
5. Implementing and Data

The Ireland's Hidden Heartlands *Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027* introduces the principle of regenerative tourism and places it at the heart of the strategy. In the context of an evolving global focus on sustainability and climate action, a regenerative approach to tourism ensures community and place are at the centre of the tourism model, collectively working towards delivering a net positive benefit for all stakeholders – Visitor, Industry, Community and the Environment. A regenerative approach encourages tourism to give back more than it takes through engaging the visitor and industry in protecting and enhancing nature and its habitats, the host communities and local places. Nature will be central to destination development with the environment and sustainability front of mind in all future decision making.

2.2 Vision

The vision for the Ballyhoura Destination and Experience Development Plan sets a vision for 2036:

“It’s 2036 and Ballyhoura has established a reputation as one of Ireland’s leading basecamps for outdoor recreation and rural exploration, with a focus on walking and cycling. Decades of community-based tourism have added a unique flavour to outdoor recreation here, rooted in authentic community engagement and participative events.

As a pioneering sustainable tourism destination, our commitment to regenerative tourism places our community, our stories and our inspiring landscapes at the heart of the Ballyhoura experience. Local stories are embedded into every visitor experience from our food provenance, linked to generations of producers and our rich farming landscapes, to how we connect the story of place with our trails, attractions and outdoor activities.

Implementation of the Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan is well underway, developing a strong network of walking and cycling trails throughout the destination. The mountain-biking trails and the Beara Breifne Way (Ballyhoura Way) have gained a reputation internationally. There are lots of ways for visitors to easily connect with locals in welcoming, authentic and vibrant market towns and villages.

The overall appeal of Ballyhoura has been widened through the development of the destination’s heritage, cultural and food-based visitor experiences which complement its outdoor activities.

Tourism businesses are highly networked and the accommodation base in the destination has been expanded, with accommodation types that meet the needs of our visitors. Every key business has a professional, bookable, and measurable online presence, with all of these businesses cross-promoting digitally.

Ballyhoura has become renowned for its sustainability credentials, and the businesses have reduced their carbon footprint in line with national targets.”

2.3 Strategic Objectives

The Plan is structured around the following strategic objectives and are closely aligned to the Strategic Objectives that are set out for the wider Hidden Heartlands region in the *Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027*:

Strategic Objective 1: To grow market recognition and visitor awareness of the Ballyhoura destination.

Goal: To increase market awareness and recognition of Ballyhoura as a sustainable tourism destination differentiated by its outdoor activity offering, its authentic community tourism story and by placing locals at the centre of all communications.

Strategic Goals:

- Grow the capabilities of Ballyhoura tourism industry, networks and tourism clusters to increase visitor awareness of Ballyhoura.
- Increase the Ballyhoura tourism industry’s engagement with the Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands and Ballyhoura Country brands to collectively grow awareness and recognition of the regional brand to grow its share of the domestic and international market.
- Increase the profile of Ballyhoura as a leading outdoor activity destination and grow its appeal in the family market.
- Differentiate the destinations approach to marketing by placing local people, telling the local story, at the core of destination communications.
- Maximize the potential of festivals and sport tourism events for marketing impact.

- Work with the tourism industry in neighbouring urban destinations such as Limerick and Cork City to encourage visitor flows into the area from the main accommodation hubs.
- Promote access into the Ballyhoura destination from existing and future transport infrastructure such as the M20.

Strategic Objective 2: To establish Ballyhoura as a leading outdoor activity destination, supported by a well-connected series of cultural and heritage-based visitor experiences telling the story of the people and their place.

Goal: To implement the Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan, placing a focus on outdoor adventure and exploration and slow tourism with a strong community flavour, in particular community-walking festivals; to expand the overall appeal of the destination by developing a series of heritage, culture and food-based experiences through the destination to help increase dwell-time, and to foster greater north-south connectivity within the destination.

Strategic Objectives:

- Implement the Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan to unlock the outdoor activity potential of Ballyhoura.
- Deliver the Ballyhoura elements of the Beata Breifne Way to maximise the opportunity presented by the international walking route.
- Grow the level of accessibility between trails and local communities and the creation of community basecamps with a focus on the Ballyhoura Mountains, Galtee Mountains and Slieve Felim.
- Strengthen the appeal of indoor visitor attractions in Ballyhoura through the enhancement of their visitor experiences and approaches to demand generation.
- Develop the appeal of Ballyhoura as an off road cycling destination.
- Grow the year round appeal of Ballyhoura as an outdoor activity destination through sport tourism participation events and festivals.
- Develop Ballyhoura as water-based activity destination to include locations such as Ballyhass, Castleconnell and locations on the River Awbeg and River Maigue and future experience links with the River Blackwater.
- Develop Ballyhoura as 'learn to' activity destination where visitors can access activities that appeal to all abilities and levels of interest in the outdoors.
- Adopt a heritage attractions cluster approach to highlight the range of heritage experiences across Ballyhoura.
- Build on the food and agricultural heritage of Ballyhoura and the Golden Vale and grow the value of food tourism experiences for Ballyhoura and its role in developing the night time economy.
- Develop the leisure tourism potential of golf and equestrian experiences in Ballyhoura.

Strategic Objective 3: To grow the economic impact of tourism by building the capacity and capability of tourism businesses.

Goal: To ensure that businesses are supported to increase their capacity and capability, including the creation of more saleable experiences and improving their online presence.

Strategic Objectives:

- Grow the demand generation capabilities of the Ballyhoura tourism industry based on understanding the needs and motivations of visitors aligned with the Fáilte Ireland Visitor Motivations Framework and Tourism Ireland's visitor segmentation.
- Improve the digital capabilities of the tourism industry to increase the online visibility of the destination.
- Increase the number of saleable Ballyhoura visitor experiences aligned with achieving the destination's tourism vision and focus on the outdoors, rural exploration, nature, culture and heritage.
- Grow the number of rural tourism experiences linked to food, gardens, biodiversity, 'meet the makers' and agri/farm experiences.
- Implement a tourism cluster approach for capability building and new experience development.
- Develop the tourism potential of the urban hubs to grow the value of the day and evening time economy to include Kilmallock, Mitchelstown and Charleville.
- Ensure all education and training agencies align tourism industry training with ongoing and future investment in Ballyhoura.

Strategic Objective 4: To establish Ballyhoura as a leading sustainable and regenerative tourism destination.

Goal: To ensure Ballyhoura continues to be recognised as a national pioneer in community-led tourism development and achieves international recognition in sustainable/regenerative tourism. As such, the destination will be developed to deliver net-positive benefits for communities and for nature, and satisfy a greater demand among visitors for more responsible tourism choices.

Strategic Objectives:

- Implement the Ballyhoura Sustainability Action Plan to guide the development of Ballyhoura as a leading sustainable tourism destination.
- Grow the tourism industry's adoption of sustainable tourism practices reflected in their daily operations and commitment to sustainability.
- Develop the capacity of the tourism industry and community tourism groups to develop sustainable visitor experiences, profiling the destination's commitment to sustainability and embracing the regenerative approach to tourism as a platform for innovation.
- Build on the success of Ballyhoura regenerative tourism training programmes to grow the capabilities of the community tourism sector and realise the socio-economic potential of tourism for their community.
- Work with Ballyhoura communities to prepare them for emerging tourism opportunities arising from the Ballyhoura DEDP and planned investment in the destination.
- Grow the agri and rural tourism opportunity for Ballyhoura through the delivery of farm, meet the maker and food based experiences.
- Ensure responsible visitor engagement with all trails and nature-based amenities through visitor education and in destination awareness building of responsible tourism.
- Collectively achieve the reduction in carbon targets identified through the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism and Development Strategy as part of the destination's ambition to become a leading sustainable tourism destination.

Strategic Objective 5: To build success through new levels of collaboration and partnership approach

Goal: To build on exiting levels of collaboration among businesses to improve cross-promotion and cross-selling (particularly online) by leveraging existing networks, ad to strengthen existing stakeholder partnerships, including linkages with Munster Vales, Limerick.ie, Cork County Council and Pure Cork.

Strategic Objectives:

- Grow participation in the Ballyhoura tourism network and strengthen the collective approach to developing the tourism opportunity for the area.
- Deliver a co-ordinated marketing approach n partnership with Ballyhoura Fáilte, Pure Cork, Cork County Council, Limerick City and County Council and Munster Vales to ensure a coherent destination message is communicated to domestic and international visitors.
- Adopt a partnership approach to future event and product development funding opportunities for the Ballyhoura destination.
- Adopt a multiagency approach in the delivery of catalyst project that will grow the profile of the area as a leading outdoor activity destination e.g. Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan, Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trail Centre, Beara Breifne Way.
- Implement a sustainable model to resource the development of community tourism and grow destination network participation.
- Ensure Local Authority participation in the development of the Ballyhoura destination to include Limerick City and County Council, Cork County Council and Tipperary County Council.
- Adopt a collective stakeholder approach to facilitate the growth of the accommodation product base in Ballyhoura.
- Grow the level of access and transport options for Ballyhoura working with existing providers such as Local Link to enhance visitor access to local communities, attractions and activities.
- Develop a destination wide approach to ensure future placemaking activity in Ballyhoura towns and villages is aligned with the community vision for how the Ballyhoura story is told at every visitor touchpoint e.g. public realm projects, town and village enhancements.
- Align with regional projects or tourism development opportunities such as food and connectivity with the themes of other DEDPs and tourism plans in Cork and Limerick.

2.4 Destination Catalyst Overview

To achieve the above strategic objectives, the Ballyhoura DEDP focuses on a number of ‘destination catalyst projects’ and ‘destination supporting projects’. The catalyst projects and their aims are as follows:

Catalyst Project 1.1: Build Awareness (Marketing & Publicity)

Aim: Increase market awareness and recognition of Ballyhoura as a year-round sustainable tourism destination in domestic and international markets.

Catalyst Project 2.1: Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan including Mountain Bike Centre & Beara Breifne Way

Aim: Deliver the first phase of projects within the Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan to grow the appeal of Ballyhoura as an outdoor activity destination.

Catalyst Project 2.2: Heritage Attractions Cluster

Aim: Grow the capabilities of visitor attractions in the destination to enhance their visitor experience and achieve incremental growth n visitor numbers.

Catalyst Project 2.3: Golden Vale Food Tourism Cluster

Aim: Grow the potential food tourism by increasing the number of saleable food experiences in Ballyhoura and the creation of a destination food trail.

Catalyst Project 4.1: R512- Tourism Route

Aim: Create a tourism to influence visitor flow into and around the destination and connect with local communities.

The catalyst initiatives detailed above will be supported through a significant number of destination supporting projects, which are individually listed in the DEDP Action Plan (Appendix 1).

The complete list of destination catalysts and destination supporting projects are provided and are assessed in **Appendix 1**.

3 Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.1 Introduction

SEA is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental quality and consequences of Plans or Programmes (P/Ps). The purpose is to ensure that the environmental consequences of P/Ps are assessed both during their preparation and prior to their adoption. The SEA process also gives specified environmental authorities, interested parties and the general public, an opportunity to comment on the environmental impacts of the proposed P/P and to be kept informed during the decision-making process.

Directive 2001/42/EC⁵ on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the ‘SEA Directive’) requires EU Member States to assess the ‘likely significant environmental effects’ of plans and programmes prior to their adoption. This provides for the assessment of strategic environmental considerations at an early stage in the decision-making process.

Article 1 of the SEA Directive states that:

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

The SEA Directive was transposed into Irish law through:

- Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 435 of 2004 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011); and
- S.I. No. 456 of 2025 European Union (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025.

S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011, relates to SEA as it applies to plans or programmes prepared for *“agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism and town and country planning or land use, and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive.”*⁶.

S.I. No. 456 of 2025, relates to SEA as it applies to plans or programmes where the context requires, *“a regional spatial and economic strategy, a development plan, or a planning scheme”*⁷.

Given the nature of the Plan, the SEA for the Ballyhoura DEDP is being prepared under the requirements of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011.

The SEA process is designed to ensure that significant environmental effects arising from plans are:

- Properly identified and assessed;
- Subject to public participation;
- Taken into account by decision makers; and

⁵ SEA Directive: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

⁶ See Section 9(1)(a)

⁷ Section 5(c)

- Regularly monitored.

The SEA Directive and SEA Regulations require that competent authorities determine whether the implementation of plans or programmes, or modifications thereof, will be likely to have significant effects on the environment. This determination process is referred to as an Environmental Assessment and defined as:

“...the preparation of an environmental report, the carrying out of consultations, the taking into account of the environmental report and the results of the consultations in decision-making and the provision of information on the decision...”⁸

3.2 SEA Stages and Process

The key focus of SEA is to take environmental issues, and in particular ‘likely significant environmental effects’ of a P / P, into consideration during the plan or programme making process. The key stages in the SEA process as they relate to the Ballyhoura DEDP are outlined in **Table 3.1** and **Figure 3.1** below.

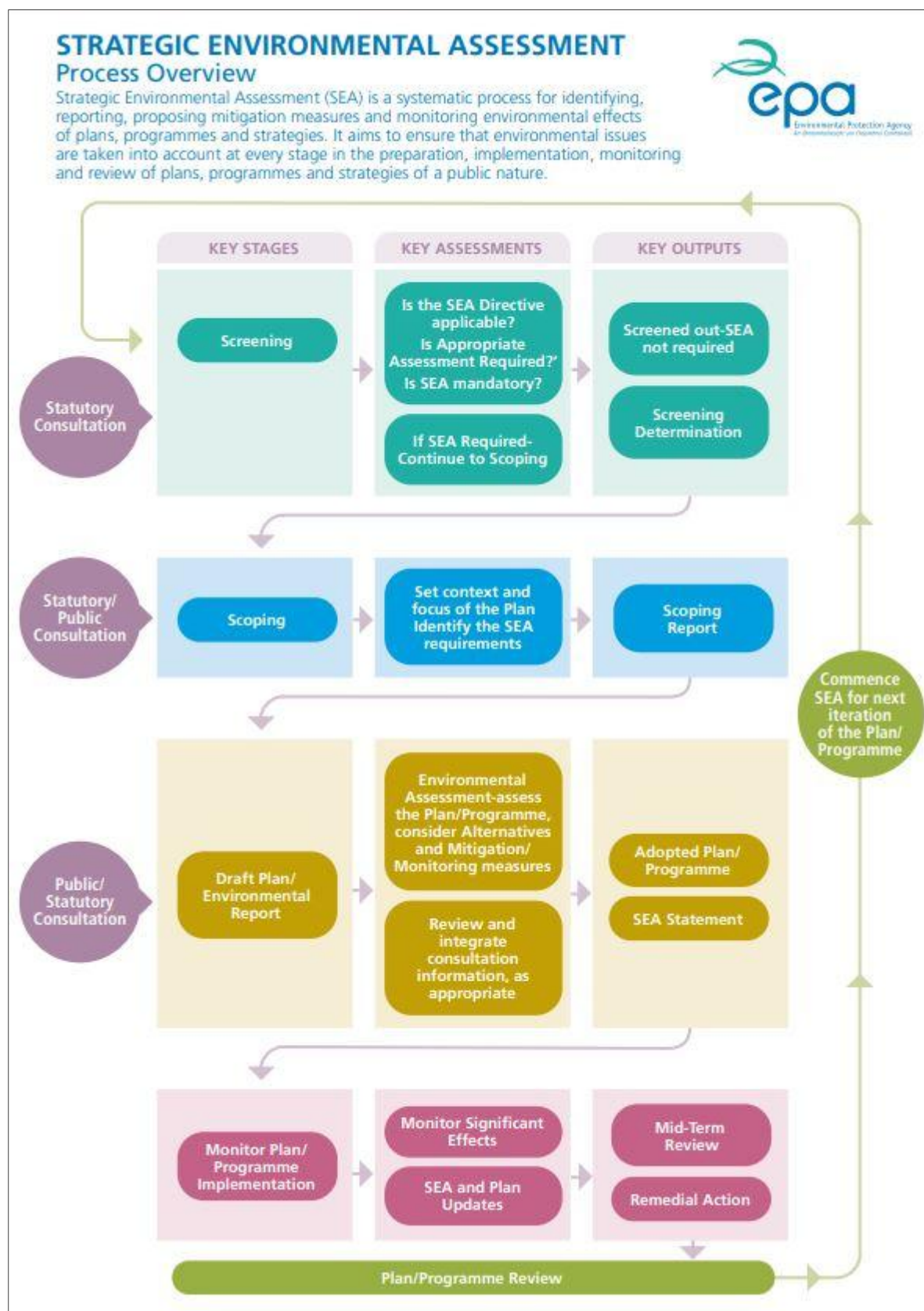
Table 3.1 Outline of the SEA Process

Stage	Description	Status
1. Screening	The requirement to undertake a SEA is mandatory for certain Plan / Programme (P / P). Where SEA is not a mandatory requirement, the P / Ps is subject to a ‘Screening process’, to consider if it is <i>likely to have significant effects</i> on the environment, and therefore, if SEA is required. The preparation of the <i>Draft Ballyhoura DEDP</i> has been screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) and it has been concluded that potential for effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt and is required to undergo Appropriate Assessment. Therefore, in accordance with <i>Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08</i> the <i>Draft Ballyhoura DEDP</i> was also required to undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with <i>Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment</i> (known as the SEA Directive).	Completed 
2. Scoping	Preparation of a SEA Scoping Report highlighting that the Environmental Report is required to include: ■ methods of assessment; ■ contents and level of detail in the Plan / Programme; ■ the stage in the Plan or Programme-making process; and ■ the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in the decision-making process in order to avoid duplication of environmental assessment. Scoping provides for consultation with the Environmental Authorities specified in Article 13 of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by Regulations S.I. No. 200 of 2011, and the process	Completed 

⁸ Article 2(b) of Directive 2001/42/EC, European Union, Article 2 (3) of EC (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 S.I. No. 435 of 2004

Stage	Description	Status
	allows for incorporation of the views of the environmental authorities within the P / P and the SEA Environmental Report.	
3. Environmental Report	Preparation of a systemic identification and evaluation of alternatives and assessment of the <i>likely significant environmental effects</i> of implementing the P / P. The findings of the assessment, which is carried out at various stages in the P / P making (<i>e.g.</i> Draft, Amended Draft <i>etc.</i>), are provided in the SEA Environmental Report in accordance with Article 12 (including Schedule 2) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by Regulations S.I. No. 200 of 2011. The output from this stage is an Environmental Report which accompanied the draft P / P required on public display.	Current Stage
4. SEA Statement	Completion / adoption of the Final Ballyhoura DEDP, taking account of <i>likely significant environmental effects</i>, any submissions or observations received from consultations and integration of mitigation and monitoring measures within the Plan. The Environmental Report is concluded and an SEA Statement is prepared in accordance with Article 16(2)(b) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by Regulations S.I. No. 200 of 2011, summarising: ▪ how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan / Programme; ▪ how the environmental report, and any submissions /observations or consultations have been taken into account in the preparation of the Plan / Programme; ▪ the reasons for choosing the Plan / Programme in light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and ▪ the measures decided for monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Plan / Programme.	Next Stage

Figure 3.1 Overview of SEA Process (EPA SEA Process Flow, 2021⁹)



⁹ EPA: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/SEA%20Process%20Checklist.pdf>

3.3 SEA Screening and Requirement for SEA

The requirement to undertake a SEA is mandatory for certain P / Ps that are above specified thresholds. Where SEA is not a mandatory requirement, the P / P is subject to a 'Screening process', (Stage 1) to consider if it is likely to have significant effects on the environment, and therefore, if SEA is required.

Screening for the purposes of SEA is defined as *"the determination of whether implementation of a P / P [Plan or Programme] would be likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment. The process of deciding whether a P / P [Plan or Programme] requires SEA."*¹⁰ The criteria for screening, i.e. determining whether a particular plan is likely to have significant environmental effects are set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive. These criteria are reproduced in Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011. The criteria are set out under two principal headings, each of which have a number of sub-criteria:

- Characteristics of a Plan / Programme; and
- Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected.

It is also noted that in accordance with Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08¹¹, SEA for a P / P is also a mandatory requirement where the P / P requires Appropriate Assessment (AA) under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

Article 3(2) of the SEA Directive requires that:

"Subject to paragraph 3, an environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes,

(a) which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 85/337/EEC, or

(b) which, in view of the likely effect on sites, have been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of Directive 92/43/EEC."

Article 9(1) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011, states that:

"Subject to sub-article (2), an environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes:

(a) which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism and town and country planning or land use, and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, or

(b) which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but, either individually or in combination with other plans, are likely to have a significant effect on any such site."

Articles 9(2) and 9(3) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011, further state that:

(2) "A plan or programme referred to in sub-article (1) which determines the use of a small area at local level or a minor modification to a plan or programme referred to in sub-article (1) shall

¹⁰ EPA: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/SEA%20Pack%202018.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>

require an environmental assessment only where the competent authority determines that it is likely to have significant effects on the environment and, for this purpose, the competent authority shall make any necessary determination.

(3) A competent authority shall determine whether plans and programmes other than those referred to in sub-article (1), which set the framework for future development consent of projects, are likely to have significant effects on the environment”

The *Draft Ballyhoura DEDP* has been screened for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the *Habitats Directive* (92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42 of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011*, as amended. The AA Screening has concluded that potential for effects on the integrity of European sites cannot be excluded beyond all reasonable scientific doubt and therefore appropriate assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is required.

Therefore, in accordance with *Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08*¹² the Draft Ballyhoura DEDP was also required to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with *Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment*¹³ (the *SEA Directive*).

This Environmental Report has been prepared as the Ballyhoura DEDP is subject to requirements of SEA.

Refer to **Appendix 2** for the SEA Screening Determination.

3.4 SEA Scoping

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

The consultation was undertaken with the following Environmental Authorities specified in Article 9(5) of S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended, on 17 February 2026:

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

Submissions / observations on the scoping of the Environmental Report were received from the environmental authorities and comments have been incorporated into the Plan and Environmental Report as set out in **Table 3.2**.

¹² <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>

¹³ DIRECTIVE 2001/42/EC: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

Table 3.2 SEA Scoping Submissions / Observation from Environmental Authorities

Environmental Authority	Outline of Nature of the Submission	Response to consideration of nature of submission
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	The submission from EPA includes the following comments and recommendations: Governance and implementation – The Plan should set out the implementation arrangements and governance structures including lines of responsibility for implementation, delivery, interim review and progress reporting. The Plan should address the relationship with the National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, existing Local Authority plans/ programmes.	The information provided has informed the preparation of the Plan and the Environmental Report.
	Synergies with key national plan – EPA recommends that the Plan documents the synergies with the key national plans and programmes. The relevant actions of the Climate Action Plan 2025 (and Climate Action Plan 2026 under preparation) and the objectives and policy commitments of the National Planning Framework, River Basin Management Plan, and the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy should be aligned with and considered, as appropriate.	
	Integration of the SEA and the Plan – EPA highlights that the integration of the SEA process into the Plan should reflect the overall objective of the SEA Directive. It is essential for SEA to address climate and biodiversity issues and take account of the Ireland’s climate crisis and biodiversity emergency. Recommendations from the SEA & AA including mitigation measures and monitoring proposals should be integrated into the Plan. SEA Environmental Report and the Plan should include a chapter on how the recommendations and mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Plan.	
	EPA recommend that the SEA Environmental Report includes summary tables outlining the key findings of the SEA and linking the significant environmental effects identified to the proposed mitigation measures, monitoring programme and Plan policies/measures.	
	EPA highlight their recently published guidance note to help provide guidance and ideas on how to carry out strategic environmental assessments (SEA) of tourism sectoral plans and	

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Environmental Authority	Outline of Nature of the Submission	Response to consideration of nature of submission
	programmes in Ireland - 'Good Practice Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Tourism Sector' (EPA, 2023). Consideration should also be given to the Hen Harrier Threat Response Plan 2024-2028 (EPA 2024).	
	The submission describes the key findings and chapters of the 'State of the Environment Report- Ireland's Environment An Integrated Assessment 2020'. The report recognises the need for full implementation of existing environmental legislation and review of governance/coordination on environmental protection across public bodies.	
	EPA highlights the requirement under the SEA Regulations to consult with Environmental Authorities (EPA, Minister of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, Department of Environment, Climate & Communications, Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine)	
	Appendix I to the EPA submission includes comments on the SEA Scoping Report - scope of the SEA, data and knowledge gaps, range of effects, monitoring, implementation & reporting, SEA statement, integration with other key Plans and Programmes, available guidance & resources, webtools.	
Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) - Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment	GSI encourage use of and reference to their datasets attached to their submission. These include geoheritage (county geological sites), culture & tourism (Cuilcagh lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark, PROJECT Belturbet), Dimension Stone / Stone built Ireland, groundwater, geological mapping, geohazards, historic mines, marine and coastal unit, physiographic units. GSI also includes a list of publicly available datasets relevant to planning, EIA & SEA processes. GSI records show that there is a CGS within the proposed DEDP area; the Ballyhoura Mountains, Co. Limerick (GR 163713, 117970), under IGH theme: IGH 7 Quaternary. The Ballyhoura mountains are a high mountain range in southeast County Limerick, with the mountains themselves extending into northeast County Cork.	The information and datasets provided have informed the preparation of the Environmental Report.

3.5 SEA Environmental Report

The current stage of the SEA process (Stage 3) involves the preparation of the Environmental Report for the identification, description, evaluation and mitigation of the potential environmental impacts associated with the Ballyhoura DEDP and the alternatives taking account of the geographical scope of the Plan.

Article 5(1) and Annex I of the *SEA Directive* provides detail on the information to be included in an Environmental Report. **Table 3.3** provides a checklist of the information referred to in Article 5(1) with a confirmation of where the relevant information is contained within the SEA.

The SEA Environmental Report was placed on public display, together with the Draft Ballyhoura DEDP and for comment from statutory bodies, the public and interested parties.

Table 3.3 Information required under Annex I of the SEA Directive

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

3.6 Consultation

The Draft Ballyhoura DEDP, together with the SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be placed on public display during which period submissions can be made on the Draft DEDP and on the environmental reports. Any such submissions will be taken into consideration in the finalisation of the DEDP and associated reports.

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

3.7 SEA Statement

Following approval of the Ballyhoura Destination & Experience Development Plan, an SEA Statement (Stage 4) will be prepared which includes information on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Ballyhoura DEDP, highlighting the main changes to the Ballyhoura DEDP which resulted from the SEA process;
- How the SEA Environmental Report and consultations have been taken into account, summarising the key issues raised in consultations and in the Environmental Report indicating what action was taken in response;
- The reasons for choosing the Ballyhoura DEDP in the light of the other alternatives, identifying the other alternatives considered, commenting on their potential effects and explaining why the Ballyhoura DEDP, as adopted, was selected; and
- The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementing the Ballyhoura DEDP.

3.8 SEA Guidance

The SEA Environmental Report reflects the requirements of *Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment* (the *SEA Directive*) and the national implementing Regulations S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011, and by the PDR 2001, as amended.

The following principal sources of guidance were used in the SEA process including in the preparation of this Environmental Report:

- Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of certain plans and programmes on the environment.
- S.I. No. 435 of 2004 – European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004.
- S.I. No. 200 of 2011 -Environmental Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011.
- Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.
- Guidance on Implementation of Directive 2001/42/EC, European Commission, 2004, at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/pdf/030923_sea_guidance.pdf
- SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans - EPA Recommendations and Resources. EPA, 2026.
- SEA Pack. EPA, 2024.
- SEA Spatial Information Sources Inventory. EPA, 2026.
- SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities. EPA, 2015.
- Good Practice Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Tourism Sector. EPA, 2023.
- Good Practice Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Landscape. EPA, 2023.
- Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statements and Monitoring. EPA, 2023.
- Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment - Environmental Impact Assessment Tiering, EPA, 2021.
- Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines. Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2023.

- EPA Mapping. Environmental Mapping / Geographical Information System (GIS) tools are available at: <http://gis.epa.ie/SeeMaps>
- EPA Water and Air Quality Reports at: <https://www.epa.ie/pubs/legislation/air/quality/>
- EPA Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024, <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/assessment/state-of-the-environment/irelands-state-of-the-environment-report-2024.php>
- EPA Ireland's Environment – An Integrated Assessment 2020 at: <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/irelands-environment/state-of-environment-report/#>
- SEA (EPA) Spatial Information Sources at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/>
- Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment, EPA 2015 at: https://www.epa.ie/publications/research/biodiversity/EPA-157_web.pdf
- Integrating Climate Change into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note. EPA, 2019.
- Climate Action Plan 2025. Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, 2025.
- Circular Letter PL 9/2013: Article 8 (Decision Making) of EU Directives 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as amended. Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013.
- Circular Letter PSSP 6/2011: Further Transposition of EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2011.
- Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08: Appropriate Assessment of Land Use Plans. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008.
- Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment - Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual. Strive Report Series No. 106. Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013.
- Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Strategic Environmental Assessment. European Commission 2013.
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites - The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission, 2000, at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/provision_of_art6_en.pdf
- 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, 2002, at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/natura_2000_asses_s_en.pdf
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. National Parks and Wildlife Service, 2009, at: http://www.npws.ie/publications/archive/NPWS_2009_AA_Guidance.pdf

3.9 Appropriate Assessment

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

Stage 1 is to establish whether AA is required for the particular plan or project. This stage is referred to as 'screening for the requirement for AA', and its purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary

assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

As set out in Department Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08¹⁴ (15 February 2008), Screening for AA is of relevance to SEA screening in that *“where following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation status of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting the precautionary approach:*

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

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

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

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

¹⁴ NPWS SEA letter: <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>

4 Relationship with Plans and Programmes

4.1 Overview

Fáilte Ireland has prepared this Ballyhoura Destination & Experience Development Plan to enhance the visitor experience, promote tourism and support economic growth. The plan is designed to build on the ambition of the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Tourism Development Strategy. Regional Tourism Development Plans, 2023- 2027 (RTDS) have been developed for each of Fáilte Ireland's four Regional Experience Brands (Ireland's Ancient East, Wild Atlantic Way, Dublin and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands). These plans provide the strategic framework for other tourism development strategies, most notably, Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) and County Tourism Strategies. The Ballyhoura DEDP has been developed to contribute to the overarching regional objectives for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

The Ballyhoura is a five-year commercial destination and experience development plan. The role of the Ballyhoura DEDP is to support the development of unique and compelling destination experiences focused on a number of immediate and strategic destination opportunities. The Ballyhoura DEDP was developed through a consultative process involving tourism industry representatives, members of the local community and County Councils. The Ballyhoura DEDP will guide tourism development through a roadmap of projects linked to a number of destination development opportunities. Over the course of the plan implementation, success will be measured by achieving growth across a range of indicators from new experience supply, visitor demand patterns, growing the value per visitor and a number of additional destination competitiveness indicators.

As part of the SEA process, it is necessary to consider the environmental protection objectives, established at the international; European and national level which are relevant to the Ballyhoura DEDP and how they have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan. In its making, the Ballyhoura DEDP sits at the lower level of the hierarchy and must comply with relevant higher-level strategic actions / plans. These documents include plans and programmes, which have also been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant, are detailed below.

4.2 Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework

Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's overarching planning and development policy for the country to 2040. It constitutes a *"strategy to make Ireland a better country for all of its people"* by setting public investment policy at a high level. It comprises two documents: the *National Planning Framework* (NPF), which details the strategy for development to 2040; and the *National Development Plan* (NDP), which outlines the public expenditure required to implement this strategy and identifies priority future projects.

The NPF is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to 2040. It is a framework to guide public and private investment to create and promote opportunities, and to protect and enhance the environment. At its core are ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), *"a shared set of goals for every community across the country"* (p. 10), which the plan aims to deliver:

1. Compact Growth
2. Enhanced Regional Accessibility
3. Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
4. Sustainable Mobility

5. A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
6. High-quality International Connectivity
7. Enhanced Amenity and Heritage
8. Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society
9. Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources
10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

With a view to achieving these NSOs, the NPF identifies a suite of National Policy Objectives (NPOs).

The NPF identifies under NSO 7. Enhanced Amenity and Heritage that-

'This will ensure that our cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It will require investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. It also includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways. This is linked to and must integrate with our built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place.'

The NPF addresses the Plan for Ireland's growing population and economy and to promote new economic opportunities arising from digital connectivity and indigenous innovation and enterprise as well as more traditional natural and resource assets (e.g. food, energy, tourism). Local services sectors, including tourism and small-scale manufacturing, are a significant part of the rural economy and are also important local employers.

The National Policy Objective 22 states to –

'Facilitate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level.'

The NPF emphasises on tourism opportunities for rural Ireland and states that –

'The development of greenways, blueways and peatways offer a unique alternative means for tourists and visitors to access and enjoy rural Ireland. The development of a strategic national network of these trails is a priority and will support the development of rural communities and job creation in the rural economy, as well as the protection and promotion of natural assets and biodiversity.'

The NPF further elaborates on the importance of Ireland's natural heritage, cultural heritage and landscape and their role and contribution towards the tourism industry and economic investment.

4.2.1 Updated Draft Revised National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF), published in 2018 has been revised and updated to take account of changes that have occurred since it was published in 2018 and to build on the framework that is in place. A Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework was published on 10th July 2024 for public consultation. On 5th November 2024, Government agreed to progress and publish a draft schedule of amendments to the First Revision to the National Planning Framework (NPF) arising from this public consultation process.

The Draft Revision focuses on the need to update the Framework in order to appropriately reflect changes to government policy that have taken place since its initial publication six years ago, such as climate transition, regional development, demographics, digitalisation and investment and prioritisation.

The Draft highlights how tourism has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Ireland. The development of greenways, blueways and peatways offer a unique alternative means for tourists and visitors to access and enjoy rural Ireland. The development of a strategic national network of these trails is a priority and will support the development of rural communities and job creation in the rural economy, as well as the protection and promotion of natural assets and biodiversity.

The Draft states that the key future planning and development and place-making policy priorities among others include:

‘Tourism development and promotional branding to ensure that areas such as ‘Ireland’s Ancient East’ and ‘Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands’ are developed and promoted in such a way as to play their full part in tapping the economic potential of regional and rural areas in the region.’

‘Integrated planning, management and development of the areas traversed by the Wild Atlantic Way to maximise both the quality and integrity of the visitor experience and the added benefit in economic terms, especially for rural and local communities.’

The National Policy Objective 34 states-

‘Continue to facilitate tourism development and in particular the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, and a Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of their environmental sustainability, achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level while ensuring their development is compliant with the National Biodiversity Action Plan, the national climate change objective and requirements for environmental assessments.’

The National Policy Objective 63 states-

‘Support the coordination and promotion of all-island tourism initiatives through continued co-operation between the relevant tourism agencies and Tourism Ireland, pursue the further development of sport, and invest in the diverse heritage, arts and cultural and linguistic traditions of the island.’

The draft revised framework retains the original NPF focus on a more balanced distribution of growth across all of Ireland’s regions – emphasising the potential for regional growth to harness the attractiveness and assets of all regions and places to a greater extent than ever before. Once finalised, the revised National Planning Framework will be incorporated into the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and the City and County Development Plans.

4.3 Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

There are three administrative Regions in Ireland: the Northern and Western Region, the Southern Region, and the Eastern and Midland Region. Under national policy, Regional Assemblies are tasked with drafting Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs), which effectively set the agenda for implementing the national level development policy – the NPF – at the Regional level. The Ballyhoura DEDP area is situated in the Southern Region and, therefore, falls under the remit of the Southern RSE.

The RSE provides a high-level development framework for the Southern Region that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant economic policies and objectives of Government. The policies in the RSE are structured under Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) Policy Objectives.

The Southern region supports a diverse and evolving rural economy. The strategy recognises agriculture, forestry, fishing, mariculture, seafood harvesting, and artisanal foods as opportunities for

driving the rural economy in the Southern Region and seeks to integrate these industries into Ireland's transition to a low-carbon economy.

The sustainable development and promotion of a successful well managed tourism industry is critical to the economy of this region. This strategy takes note of the overall Government policy, as set out in People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025. In particular, it takes note of the policy proposal that consideration be given to the contribution that sustainable tourism can make to the protection of heritage assets.

Further, the Regional Policy Objectives states as follows:

RPO 53 - It is an objective to:

- a. Enhance provision of tourism and leisure amenity to cater for increased population in the Region including recreation, entertainment, cultural, catering, accommodation, transport and water infrastructure inter alia;*
- b. Promote activity tourism subject to appropriate site selection and environmental assessment processes;*
- c. Sustainably develop the road network and public transport services and facilities for improved visitor access, longer dwell times due to improved connectivity to ports and airports and tourism growth;*
- d. Sustainably develop walking and cycling trails opening greater accessibility to the marine and countryside environment by sustainable modes and promote the sustainable designation and delivery of Greenway and Blueway Corridors.*
- e. Facilitate appropriate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy, prioritising sustainable projects that achieve maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level;*
- f. Identify and map catchment areas concerning Culture, Heritage and Tourism of regional significance/scale. Such catchments should have the potential to deliver small-scale economic development and using wider local services such as Post Offices and local public transport.*
- g. Support the relevant authorities in the development of specific monitoring protocols for visitor pressure to ensure that tourism activities are maintained within sustainable limits for the European sites in the Region.*

RPO 54 - Development of new or enhanced tourism infrastructure and facilities should include an assessment of the environmental sensitivities of the area including an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) if required in order to avoid adverse impacts on the receiving environment. Where such tourism infrastructure or facilities are developed, the managing authority/agency should ensure that effective monitoring protocols are put in place to monitor and assess the ongoing effect of tourism on sensitive features with particular focus on natural, archaeological and built heritage assets.

RPO 173 - It is an objective to invest in the sustainable development of infrastructure and service improvements on the transport networks along our region's key tourism corridors, subject to robust feasibility studies to reduce impacts on the environment and required appraisal, planning and environmental assessment processes, including the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartland Corridors.

Fáilte Ireland's newest brand destination presents significant opportunities for Ballyhoura Country as 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' as a way to boost tourism in the area.

4.4 Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028

The Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 sets the planning strategy for Limerick city and county through proposed policies and objectives to support sustainable development.

Limerick city is a key employment hub in the Mid-West region and has significant potential for growth and investment. Limerick is well connected, strategically located between other key cities including Dublin, Galway and Cork, and is also home to the international Shannon Airport and a Tier 1 port at Shannon Foynes.

Limerick has a diverse natural landscape that includes the Shannon Estuary, the riverine habitats of Limerick's rivers and their tributaries, including the Shannon, the Abbey, the Deel, the Feale, the Maigue and the Mulkear, the upland areas such as the Ballyhouras, Galtees, the hills of West Limerick, Sliabh Reagh and Sliabh Felim. The County's agricultural lowlands such as the Golden Vale also contribute to the extensive biodiversity, as do natural woodlands such as that found in Curragh Chase and the extensive natural hedgerows throughout Limerick.

Tourism is a key area of economic potential in Limerick and the development plan in partnership with local and national stakeholders, seeks to increase tourist numbers and support sustainable job creation, through targeted tourism initiatives including the development of new tourism products and leveraging natural and built heritage assets to support tourism across Limerick.

Limerick City and County Council continue to engage with Fáilte Ireland and Ballyhoura Fáilte, among other agencies, to support the spread of tourism across the county and seek collaborative opportunities.

It is a development objective of Limerick City and County Council to:

ECON O35 –

- a) Facilitate the development of acceptable rural enterprises and to minimise pollution from agricultural and industrial sources by means of development management and water pollution legislation.*
- b) Encourage the redevelopment of vacant commercial units for enterprise and industry creation including Kantoher Business Park, Castlemahon and other identifiable rural commercial brownfield sites, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.*
- c) Promote the development of our rural Towns and Villages as an important focus of restaurant, leisure and evening uses - subject to the safeguarding of surrounding residential amenity and environmental criteria.*

and

ECON O45 –

- a) Support strong growth in the tourism sector in Limerick ensuring the economic and societal benefits of tourism are effectively distributed throughout the County, through connections between complementary sites and attractions, by encouraging visitors to move around the County and to enable them to do so with ease.*
- b) Support the development of Limerick's capacity for largescale group tourism, through improved transport amenities for bus tours, group tours and cruise ship visitors.*
- c) Recognise the heritage value of Limerick's towns and villages such as Adare, Kilmallock and Askeaton and seek opportunities to enhance their tourism potential.*
- d) Support and harness the tourism potential of existing rural and heritage site amenities/attractions, including The Clare Glens, Lough Gur, Knockfierna, Munster Vales, Ballyhoura Country, Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum, The Shannon Estuary Way,*

Curragh Chase, Fullers Folly and Adare Heritage Centre, in a way that promotes sustainable tourism.

- e) Actively develop Limerick as an Events location with the appropriate infrastructure to attract international conferences, sporting, cultural and commercial events, including the development of an International Conference Centre and improved public realm, which supports outdoor performance and events of scale (Refer to Chapter 3: Spatial Strategy Section 3.4.5.1).*
- f) To adopt a strategic collaborative approach to the delivery of the Ryder Cup in Adare/Limerick in 2027 to leverage the legacy potential of this major event and ensure maximum return on investment for Limerick and the region.*
- g) To work with Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland to develop the water activity sector in Limerick by exploring the potential for increased accessibility to Limerick's waterways for water-based tourism activity (refer also to Chapter 10: Sustainable Communities and Social Infrastructure and Chapter 11: Development Management Standards).*
- h) Support and promote the development of the Shannon River Interpretative Centre in Limerick City.*

The Development Plan has been subject to SEA, AA and SFRA. These are discussed, where relevant, below.

4.5 Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County for the next six years. The Plan seeks to ensure the sustainable physical and social development of the county, ensuring the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment.

Cork is shaped by its geographical position on the southern coast of the country, our geology dominated by sandstone ridges and limestone valley floors combined with the range of native plants, animals, habitats and ecosystems that make up the unique biodiversity of the county.

The tourism policies and objective for Cork emphasis sustainable tourism development that benefits local communities, archaeology, built heritage, landscapes, habitats and the local economy. Cork's natural and built heritage add tourism products including mountains and upland habitats; rivers and lakes, over 1100 km's of scenic rugged coastline and peninsulas with long stretches of sandy beaches, fertile agricultural land and many upland peatlands and forest/woodland areas. These natural assets combined with a rich heritage of archaeological and historical sites, built environment including manor homes and gardens, attractive towns and villages offer a unique tourism experience. Cork County Council seeks to promote the development of tourism in collaboration with neighbouring planning authorities.

It is a development objective of Cork County Council to:

EC: 8-14 – *The development of appropriate new businesses in rural areas will normally be encouraged where:*

- The scale and nature of the proposed new business are appropriate to the rural area and are in areas of low environmental sensitivity.*
- The development will enhance the strength and diversity of the local rural economy.*
- The proposal will not adversely affect the character, appearance, and biodiversity value of the rural landscape.*

- *The existing or planned local road network and other essential infrastructure can accommodate extra demand generated by the proposal.*
- *The proposal has a mobility plan for employees home to work transportation.*
- *Where possible the proposal involves the re-use of redundant or underused buildings that are of value to the rural scene.*
- *The provision of adequate water services infrastructure; and*
- *Provision of a safe access to the public road network.*

And

TO 10-1 – *Promote a sustainable approach to the development of the tourism sector within Cork County while;*

- a) Ensuring the protection of the natural, built and cultural heritage assets of the county, including Natura sites, which are in themselves part of what attracts visitors to the county.*
- b) Having regard to cumulative impacts increased visitor numbers and visitor facilities can have on local infrastructure, sensitive areas and sites, water quality, biodiversity, soils, ecosystems, habitats and species, climate change etc.*
- c) Supporting investment in placemaking and the regeneration of towns and villages in recognition of the role 'People and Place' make in attracting visitors to Ireland; encouraging the development of tourism and other facilities within settlements to support such regeneration and compact growth.*
- d) Work in partnership with public and private sector agencies to implement the key tourism objectives in this Plan, while first ensuring early consultation with landowners around any new proposed routes and facilities.*
- e) Assist community groups to access funding for appropriate, sustainable and beneficial tourism developments.*

And

TO 10-10 –

- a) Encourage tourism related facilities, including accommodation and other developments within existing settlements subject to normal site suitability considerations where they can best support compact growth and the regeneration of settlements, the provision of services and the general economic vitality of the settlement.*
- b) Carefully consider tourism - related developments outside settlements at an appropriate scale and balance having regard to the pertaining environmental conditions and sensitivities, scenic amenity, availability of services and the cumulative impact of such developments on the environment.*
- c) Support sustainable environmentally sensitive small-scale tourism enterprises including Agri-tourism enterprises and other initiatives that are developed in conjunction with established rural activities such as, fishing, walking, cycling, mountain biking, surfing, equestrian sports and other activities where these are compatible with environmental legislation. A limited amount of tourist accommodation could be included in association with such enterprises subject generally to the renovation of existing structures or redundant agricultural farm*

buildings as well as limited new buildings on an appropriate scale (new structures will have regard to the policies of Chapter 5 Rural).

- d) Encourage and facilitate the delivery of suitably scaled tourism related retail developments and initiatives in settlements and established tourist attractions where these are compatible with environmental legislation.*
- e) Support the leisure fishing industry and continue to support golf tourism as positive growth sectors in the sustainable economic development of the County while also maintaining the integrity of the landscape and environment of the county as a valuable asset into the future.*
- f) Encourage the provision of small scale agri tourism accommodation and the reuse of disused/derelict farm buildings, in line with the provisions of objectives RP 5-28 Small Scale Agri Tourism Accommodation and RP5-31 New uses for disused or derelict farm buildings.*

4.6 Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027

Regional Tourism Development Strategies (2023-2027) have been developed for each of Fáilte Ireland's four Regional Experience Brands (Ireland's Ancient East, Dublin, Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands). The purpose of the Regional Tourism Strategies is to identify sustainable tourism development priorities that will unlock the commercial potential of the region and generate socio-economic benefits for all local stakeholders and the tourism industry. These plans provide the strategic framework for the development of the Ballyhoura DEDP.

The Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 - 2027 identifies five strategic objectives to develop the tourism economy in the region. The projects outlined in the Ballyhoura DEDP align to these overall regional objectives. The strategic objectives are as follows:

- Strategic Objective 1: Raise awareness and recognition of the region and brand among domestic and international visitors and increase the duration of visitor stays, particularly within the domestic market.
- Strategic Objective 2: Enhance the range and quality of our visitor experiences to underpin the Hidden Heartlands brand proposition, leveraging the natural and cultural assets of the region in a sustainable way with a focus on eco-tourism.
- Strategic Objective 3: Grow the economic impact of tourism and create jobs in local tourism by supporting the tourism industry (private, public and community sectors) to develop its capacity and capability while reducing its carbon footprint.
- Strategic Objective 4: Establish the region as one of the leading regenerative tourism destinations in Europe in which tourism results in net positive outcomes for communities and nature.
- Strategic Objective 5: Build a committed industry and stakeholder coalition to guide and co-ordinate the sustainable development of destinations across the region.

This Regional Tourism Development Strategy represents a 10-year vision for the sustainable development of tourism in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, together with a 5-year strategy to guide the achievement of that vision. It identifies the elements required at a strategic level to unlock the commercial potential of the region while protecting the environment, enhancing the lives of local communities and exceeding the expectations of our visitors. It is intended that this strategy will be the blueprint for sustainable tourism development in the region ensuring our stakeholders and partners can work together towards a shared vision. It provides a guiding strategic framework for other more detailed tourism development plans that will be prepared within the region over the next five years.

These include, Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs), County Tourism Strategies and the tourism sections of County Development Plans.

The Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027 has been subject to SEA and AA. These are discussed, where relevant, below.

4.7 Other Plans and Programmes

There is a legislative framework for the protection of the environment and our natural resources relevant to the Ballyhoura DEDP. **Table 4.1** below provides a list of the principle legislative framework.

Table 4.2 and **Table 4.3** below provide a working list of the principal plans and programmes influencing the formulation of the Ballyhoura DEDP and the Environmental Report, either directly or through European, National and / or County level policy. The relationship with other plans and programmes is discussed, as appropriate, under the Current State of the Environment in **Section 5** of this Report.

Table 4.1 Legislative Framework

Legislative Framework	
Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended	Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC)
Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended	Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC)
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EEC)	Fourth Daughter Directive (2004/107/EC)
Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU) as amended by (2014/52/EU)	Renewable Energy Directive (2018/2001/EU) as amended by (EU/2023/2413)
Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)	European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations) 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) (as amended)
Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) on the Conservation of Wild Birds, 1979	Renewable Energies in the 21 st Century: Building a More Sustainable Future
Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC)	EU 2020 climate and energy package
Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)	EU Renewable Energy Road Map
Flood Directive (2007/60/EC)	European Landscape Convention 2000
Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC)	Wildlife Acts 1976-2024
Shellfish Waters Directive (2006/113/EC)	The Water Services Act (2007 – 2017)
Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)	Foreshore Act 1933-2024
Urban Wastewater Directive (91/271/EEC)	Aquaculture Act 1997-2006
Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC)	Sea Fisheries & Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006
Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC)	The National Monuments Act 1930-2014
EU Landfill Directive (1999/31/EC)	Roads Act 1993, as amended
Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC)	European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Sea Fisheries) Regulations 2013, as amended
Directive (EU) 2024/2881 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe	Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023

Table 4.2 Relevant National & Regional Plans and Programmes

National & Regional Plans and Programmes	
Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)	National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development
Updated Draft Revised National Planning Framework (November 2024)	Climate Action Plan 2024
National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030	National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)
Regional Planning Guidelines for the South-East Region 2010-2022	Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines (2012)
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Region	The Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines (2014)
Ireland's Environment - An Integrated Assessment 2020	Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042
National Mitigation Plan 2017	Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2019)
Our Sustainable Future - A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland (2012)	Ireland's First National Cycle Policy Framework 2009
Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland (2021)	National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024 - 2030
Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2023)	The National Renewable Energy Action Plan
Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness - 2016	National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2017-2020
National 4 th Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030	Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways 2018
Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland 2012	The National Broadband Plan 2020
National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture Development 2014- 2020	National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025
Draft National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture Development 2030	Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)
National CFRAMS Programme	Heritage Ireland 2030
River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021	Food Harvest 2020
River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027	National Adaptation Framework Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland 2018 and Review of the National Adaptation Framework 2022
The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (2009)	Climate Action Plan 2024
South Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study	Water Services Strategic Plan / Capital Investment Programme (Uisce Éireann)

National & Regional Plans and Programmes	
People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025	Regional Tourism Development Strategies (2023-2027) & Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Tourism Development Strategy 2023 - 2027
Fáilte Ireland Corporate Plan	Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025
Tourism Action Plan 2019 – 2021	Actions to Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices 2021 - 2023
Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways	The Shannon, Mighty River of Ireland, A Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon 2020 – 2030
National Physical Activity Plan 2013 – 2025	Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024

Table 4.3 Relevant Local Plans and Programmes

Local Plans and Programmes	
Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028

Some of the key Plans / Programmes, which were subject to SEA and AA, are discussed further in Section 5 of this report.

5 Current State of the Receiving Environment (Environmental Baseline)

5.1 Introduction

The SEA Directive requires that the information on the baseline environment is focused upon the relevant aspects of the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected and the likely evolution of the current environment in the absence of the Ballyhoura DEDP. Being consistent with the strategic provisions of the Ballyhoura DEDP, this section provides a strategic description of aspects of environmental components which have the greatest potential to be affected by implementation of the Ballyhoura DEDP, if unmitigated.

5.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Ballyhoura Destination & Experience Development Plan

The development plans for Cork and Limerick promote the development and strengthening of the overall value of tourism in this region as stated below.

The Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 states that:

TO 10-1: Promotion of Sustainable Tourism in County Cork Promote a sustainable approach to the development of the tourism sector within Cork County while; a) Ensuring the protection of the natural, built and cultural heritage assets of the county, including Natura sites, which are in themselves part of what attracts visitors to the county. b) Having regard to cumulative impacts increased visitor numbers and visitor facilitates can have on local infrastructure, sensitive areas and sites, water quality, biodiversity, soils, ecosystems, habitats and species, climate change etc. d) Supporting investment in placemaking and the regeneration of towns and villages in recognition of the role 'People and Place' make in attracting visitors to Ireland; encouraging the development of tourism and other facilities within settlements to support such regeneration and compact growth. d) Work in partnership with public and private sector agencies to implement the key tourism objectives in this Plan, while first ensuring early consultation with landowners around any new proposed routes and facilities. e) Assist community groups to access funding for appropriate, sustainable and beneficial tourism developments.

The Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 states that:

Policy ECON P7 Tourism It is a policy of the Council to: a) Promote and facilitate the growth of the tourism industry in Limerick and tourism employment opportunities, through the sustainable development of urban and rural visitor attractions, amenities, facilities, festivals and events. b) Support the Limerick Tourism Development Strategy 2019-2023, the Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick, the River Shannon Tourism Masterplan and the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy, which inform the development of tourism in Limerick. It is a requirement of the SEA Directive to consider – 'the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.'

In the absence of the Ballyhoura DEDP it is envisaged that the baseline environment would primarily evolve in line with the policies and objectives of the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 (CDPs) and Local Area Plans (LAPs) for the Counties. The CDPs detail policies and objectives specific to tourism, however, the standalone Ballyhoura DEDP provides

significant opportunities for specific set of tourism-related mitigation measures and the associated likely positive environmental effects.

The Ballyhoura DEDP will play an important role in promoting and developing tourism in Cork and Limerick help to attract visitors to the counties, enhance the visitor experience and support the growth and sustainability of the tourism industry.

Therefore, while higher level environmental protection objectives – such as those of County Development Plans and various EU Directives and transposing Irish Regulations – would still apply, the absence of the Ballyhoura DEDP would mean that new development would be less coordinated and controlled. Less coordinated and controlled development would be less certain to result in the positive effects provided for by the Ballyhoura DEDP.

5.3 Description of the Environmental Baseline

The baseline data helps to assess the current state of the environment, facilitate the identification, evaluation and subsequent monitoring of the effects of the Plan. Thus, this information creates a platform whereby existing issues relevant to the study area can be quantified, where possible, or qualified thereby ensuring that the implementation of the Ballyhoura DEDP does not exacerbate identifiable problems.

Baseline data collection is a first step in the process of evaluating the sensitivity of the environment. The *SEA Directive* requires that information is provided on ‘*any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the Plan or programme...*’. Information is therefore provided on existing environmental problems which are relevant to the Plan, thus helping to ensure that the Plan does not exacerbate any existing environmental problems in the study area.

The environmental aspects are described in line with the legislative requirements, under the following headings:

- Biodiversity (including Flora & Fauna);
- Population and Human Health;
- Land, Soils and Geology;
- Water Quality;
- Air, Noise and Climate;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Landscape;
- Material Assets;
- Interaction of the foregoing; and
- Cumulative Impacts.

5.3.1 Biodiversity

Biodiversity plays a significant role in the provision of clean air, water, healthy soils and food as well as visually contributing to a plan area with its natural beauty and heritage.

The biodiversity within the study area underpins important economic sectors such as agriculture, tourism and recreation and is a core component of the green infrastructure. A number of areas in study area have been identified as being of exceptional importance for biodiversity at a national and/or international level and are protected through national and European legislation.

5.3.1.1 Designated European Sites

Within the study area, there are a number of areas designated for protection under the Natura 2000 network. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are legally protected under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and are selected for the conservation of Annex I habitats and Annex II species. Special Protection Areas are protected under the European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 2009/147/EC.

All designated Natura 2000 Sites located within the study area and within the potential zone of influence (20km) are shown in **Figure 5.1**.

Conservation objectives for SACs and SPAs have been set for the habitats and species for which the sites have been selected. Site specific detailed conservation objectives are available on the NPWS website¹⁵. Any potential for impact on European Sites has been fully addressed in the NIS that accompanies the Ballyhoura DEDP and SEA Environment Report.

5.3.1.2 Nationally Designated Sites

Nationally Designated Sites in the Ireland include *Natural Heritage Areas* (NHAs) which are legally protected areas that are considered important for their habitats or which holds species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection. *Proposed Natural Heritage Areas* (pNHAs) are also of significance for wildlife and habitats but have not yet been statutorily designated. However, under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000) NHAs are legally protected from damage from the date they are formally proposed for designation¹⁶.

Refer to **Figure 5.2** below for the NHAs and pNHAs located within the study area and within the potential zone of influence of the study area boundary

5.3.1.3 Ecological Networks and Connectivity

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive recognises the importance of ecological networks as corridors and stepping stones for wildlife, including for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species of flora and fauna. The Directive requires that ecological connectivity and areas of ecological value outside the Natura 2000 network of designated ecological sites are maintained and it recognises the need for the management of these areas through land use planning and development policies. Ecological networks are important in connecting areas of local biodiversity with each other and with nearby designated sites so as to prevent islands of habitat from being isolated entities. They are composed of linear features, such as treelines, hedgerows and rivers / streams which provide corridors or stepping stones for wildlife species moving within their normal range.

Ecological corridors are important for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species, particularly for mammals, bats and small birds and facilitate linkages both between and within designated ecological sites, non-designated surrounding countryside and the more urban areas of the study area.

Hedgerows contribute significantly to biodiversity and landscape character. They have an important farming function, they are wildlife habitats, and corridors, between habitats, and they also have historical significance as townland and field boundaries. The rivers provide a rich landscape setting for

¹⁵ NPWS website 2019: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/conservation-management-planning/conservation-objectives>

¹⁶ NPWS website 2019: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/nha>

the towns and village of the study area and are the primary green infrastructure network in the study area.

Wetlands include a wide range of habitats including watercourses, marshes, fens, bogs, turloughs, wet woodlands and estuaries. They support a variety of habitats and species, function in the protection of water quality and flood control, are important carbon stores contributing to climate resilience, and provide open space and recreational opportunities.

5.3.1.4 National Biodiversity Action Plan

Ireland's fourth *National Biodiversity Action Plan* (NBAP) sets national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030. The Plan's vision for Ireland in 2050 is as follows:

Biodiversity in Ireland is valued, conserved, restored and sustainably used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.

The Key objectives of the NBAP are as follows:

1. Adopt a Whole-of Government, Whole of-Society Approach to Biodiversity;
2. Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs;
3. Secure Nature's Contribution to People;
4. Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity;
5. Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives.

5.3.1.5 Water Framework Directive (WFD) Register of Protected Area

Under the requirements of the *Water Framework Directive* (WFD) a number of waterbodies (or parts of) must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by people and by wildlife have been listed on Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs). This register is split into five categories as outlined by the EPA:

1. Areas designated for the abstraction of water intended for human consumption under Article 7;
2. Areas designated for the protection of economically significant aquatic species (i.e. shellfish);
3. Bodies of water designated as recreational waters, including areas designated as bathing waters under Directive 76/160/EEC;
4. Nutrient-sensitive areas, including areas designated as vulnerable zones under Directive 91/676/EEC and areas designated as sensitive areas under Directive 91/271/EEC; and
5. Areas designated for the protection of habitats or species where the maintenance or improvement of the status of water is an important factor in their protection, including relevant European sites (Natura 2000) designated under Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 79/409/EEC.

A number of these protected areas are present within the study area and these are as follows:

- The entire ground waterbody beneath the study area is included on the Drinking Water - Ground Waterbody.
- WFD RPA Nutrient Sensitive Areas (Rivers) - Shannon River (IERI_SH_2001_0018)
- Salmonid Rivers – Aherlow (IE_SE_16A010080)

5.3.1.6 Designated Shellfish Waters

The *EU Shellfish Waters Directive* (2006/113/EC) aims to protect and improve shellfish waters in order to support shellfish life and growth.

Pollution reduction programmes are in operation for these areas. The identified pressures on these designated waters include urban wastewater systems, on-site wastewater treatment systems and port activities. The coastal waters provide an important resource, supporting and generating employment and recreational activities and must be protected.

There is no area of Shellfish waters within the study area. The closest ones are Cork Great Island North Channel, c. 35.5 km south and West Shannon Ballylongford, c. 43.9 km west of the Plan area.

5.3.1.7 Salmonid Waters

The *Salmonid Regulations* (S.I. No. 293 of 1988) designate the waters capable of supporting salmon (*Salmo salar*), trout (*Salmo trutta*), char (*Salvelinus*) and whitefish (*Coregonus*) as protected. Thirty-four rivers, tributaries and lakes are listed and protected under these Regulations that prescribe quality standards for salmonid waters, sampling programmes and methods of analysis and inspection to be used by local authorities to determine compliance with the standards.

There is one designated Salmonid Water under the EU Freshwater Fish Directive within the plan area. The Aherlow River crosses into the Plan area on the Limerick and Tipperary border north of the Carrigeen Mountain.

5.3.1.8 Other Designations

RAMSAR Sites

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention. Wetlands are important ecosystems, which improve water quality, provide storm protection, flood mitigation, stabilise shorelines, maintain biodiversity, and provide natural products such as fish and shellfish. Ireland presently has 45no. RAMSAR sites. Relevant authorities are expected to manage their Ramsar Sites so as to maintain their ecological character and retain their essential functions and values for future generations. There are no Ramsar sites within the Plan area.

Wildfowl Sanctuaries

Wildfowl sanctuaries are areas that have been excluded from the 'Open Season Order' so that game birds can rest and feed undisturbed. There are 68no. sanctuaries in the State¹⁷. Shooting of game birds is not allowed in these sanctuaries. County Cork has five wildfowl sanctuaries; (1) WFS-08 Ballynamona – Shannagarry, (2) WFS-09 Kilcolman Bog, (3) WFS-10 Lough Aderry, (4) WFS-11 The Lee reservoir and (5) WFS-12 The Lough, Cork. Limerick has two wildfowl sanctuaries; WFS-33 Lough Gur and WFS-34 City of Limerick (part).

WFS-09 Kilcolman Bog and WFS-33 Lough Gur are located within the Plan area.

Nature Reserves

Other nature conservation designations are *Statutory Nature Reserves*, which are protected under Ministerial order. The Kilcolman Bog Nature Reserve is located within the Ballyhoura DEDP area, see **Figure 5.3**.

***Margaritifera* Sensitive Area**

Freshwater pearl mussel is a globally threatened, long-lived and extremely sensitive species that can be impacted by many forms of pollution, particularly sediment and nutrient pollution and by hydrological

¹⁷ NPWS (2021).

and morphological changes, which may arise from developments, activities or changes in any part of the catchment. There are two species of freshwater pearl mussel in Ireland (*Margaritifera margaritifera* and *Margaritifera durrovensis*) and both are protected under Annex II and Annex V of the EU Habitats Directive. Within the study area the *Margaritifera* Sensitive Areas are found within the following – Munster Blackwater, Suir – Aherlow, Suir – Tar and Suir.

Refer to **Figure 5.3**.

5.3.1.9 Biodiversity Issues

Ireland is currently experiencing a decline in floral and faunal populations. Implementation of measures to achieve the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the objectives of the WFD are likely to benefit protected sites in the future.

Certain developments and activities associated with urban developments, tourism and recreation that are located within, or close to, ecologically sensitive sites can give rise to significant environmental pressures. Within the study area, the protection of waterways, wetlands and peatlands and the avoidance of the spread of invasive species are major issues.

Existing biodiversity issues / pressures and threats on Ireland's habitats and species, which are also relevant to the study area, include:

- Direct habitat loss within European Sites e.g. developments occurring on undeveloped sites, recreational activity works.
- Indirect effects on the ecological networks supporting European Sites e.g. linear developments forming barriers to movements of mobile species or loss of sites that support an overall population of species.
- Construction and use of commercial and recreational infrastructure and areas. For example, development within watercourses.
- Indirect threat to water quality including changes to surface and groundwater quality and volumes.
- Direct / indirect disturbance of sensitive habitats / species e.g. recreation at coastal sites, riverside walkways, pressure from increased visitor numbers etc.
- Direct / indirect threats to European Sites by invasive species.
- Direct / indirect threats to native flora and fauna from pathogens / diseases.
- Invasive Species and problematic species - continued control and management of invasive species. For example, the loss of biodiversity as native species are shaded out, but also diseases and pathogens.

Figure 5.1 European Sites within the study area and in the surrounding the potential zone of influence

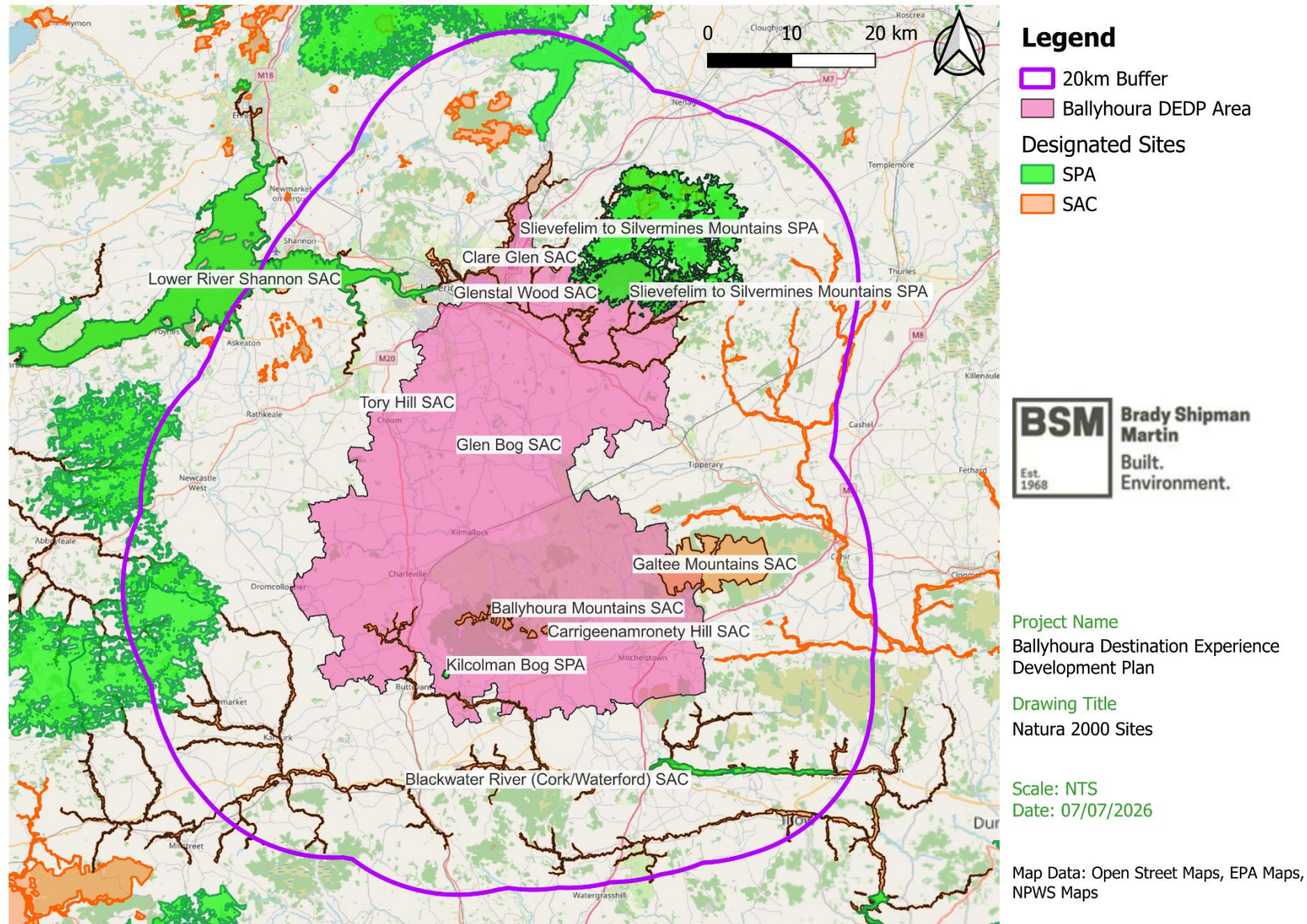


Figure 5.2 Natural Heritage Areas and potential Natural Heritage Areas within study area and in the surrounding area

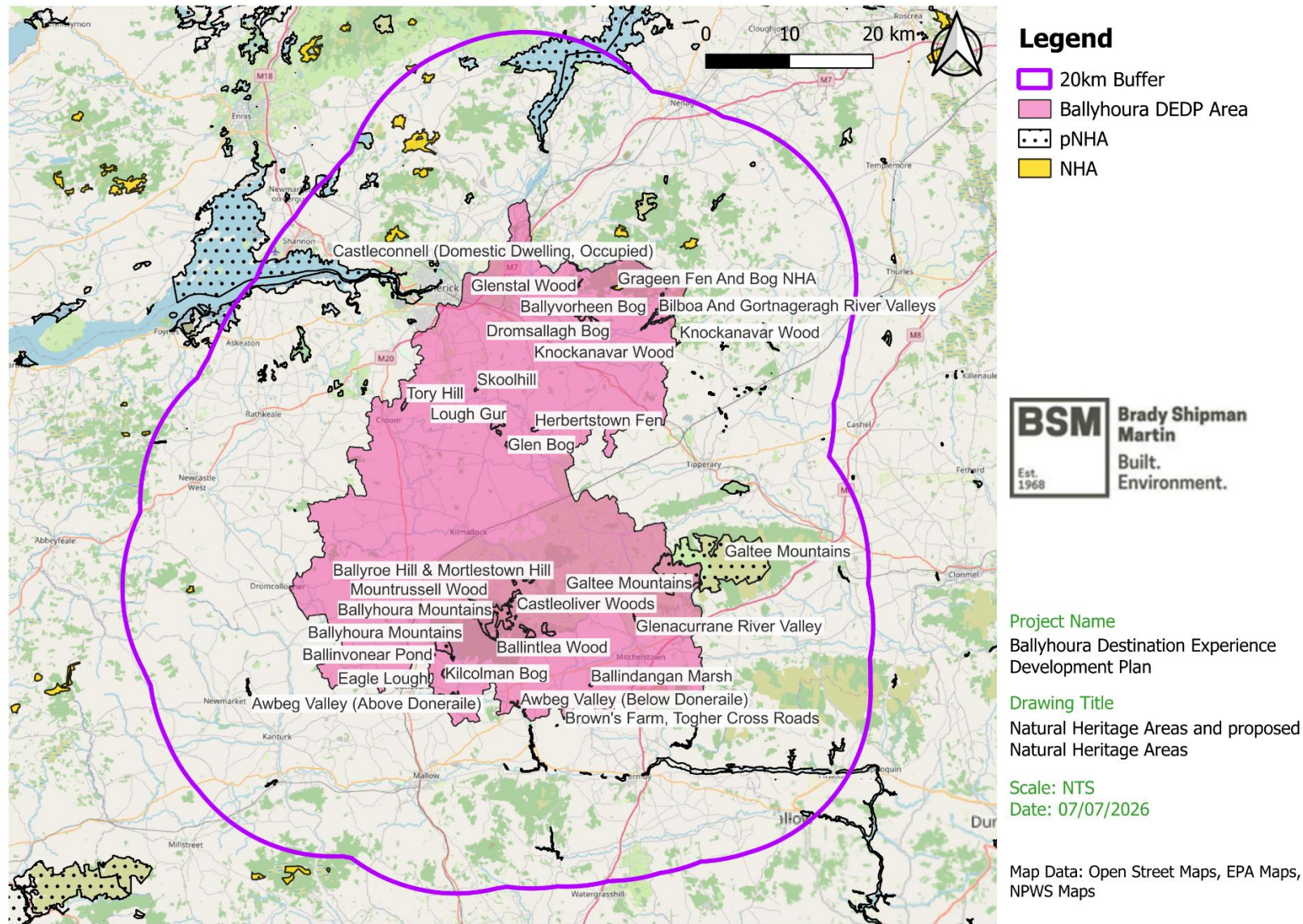
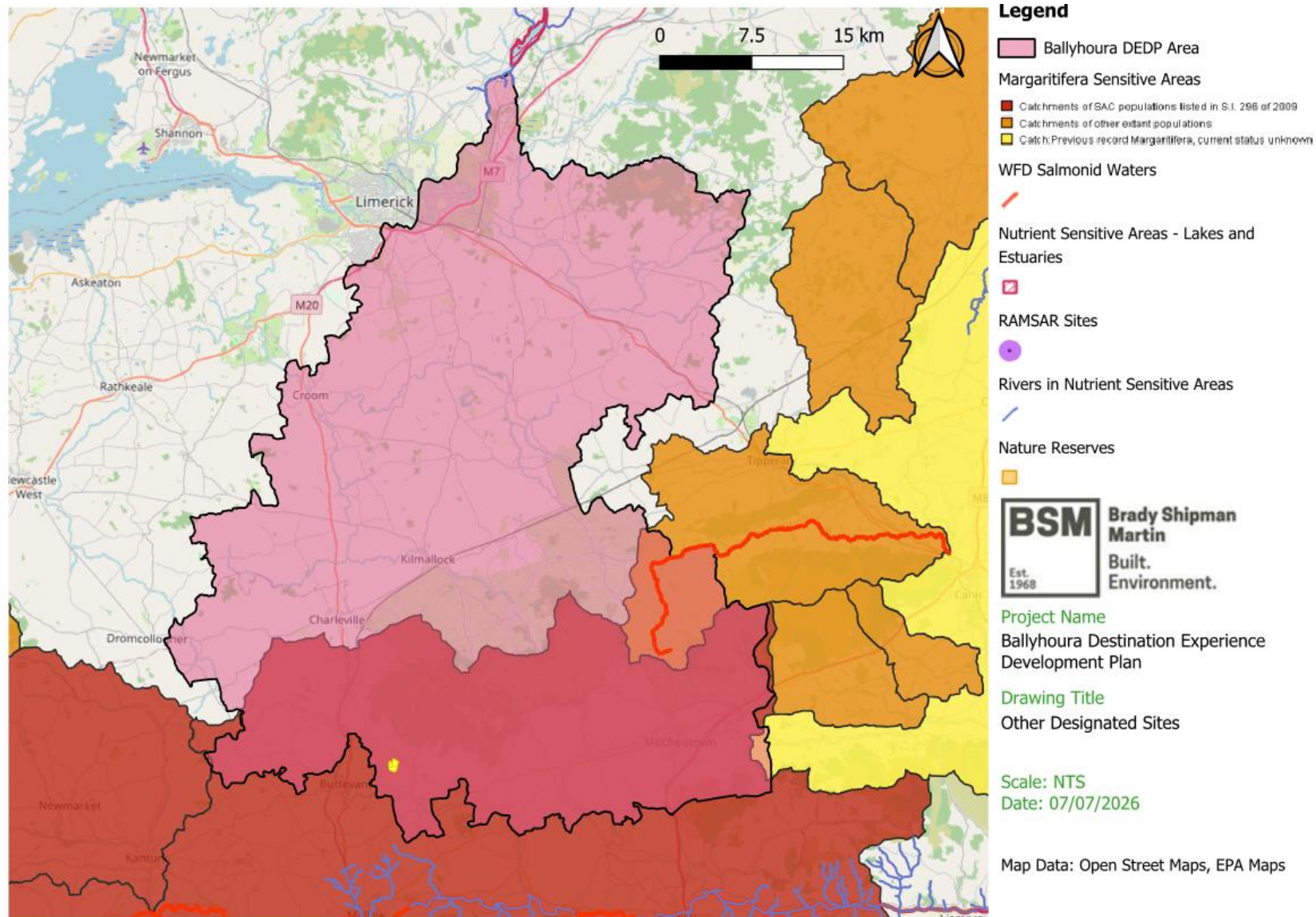


Figure 5.3 Other Designated Sites within study area and in the surrounding area



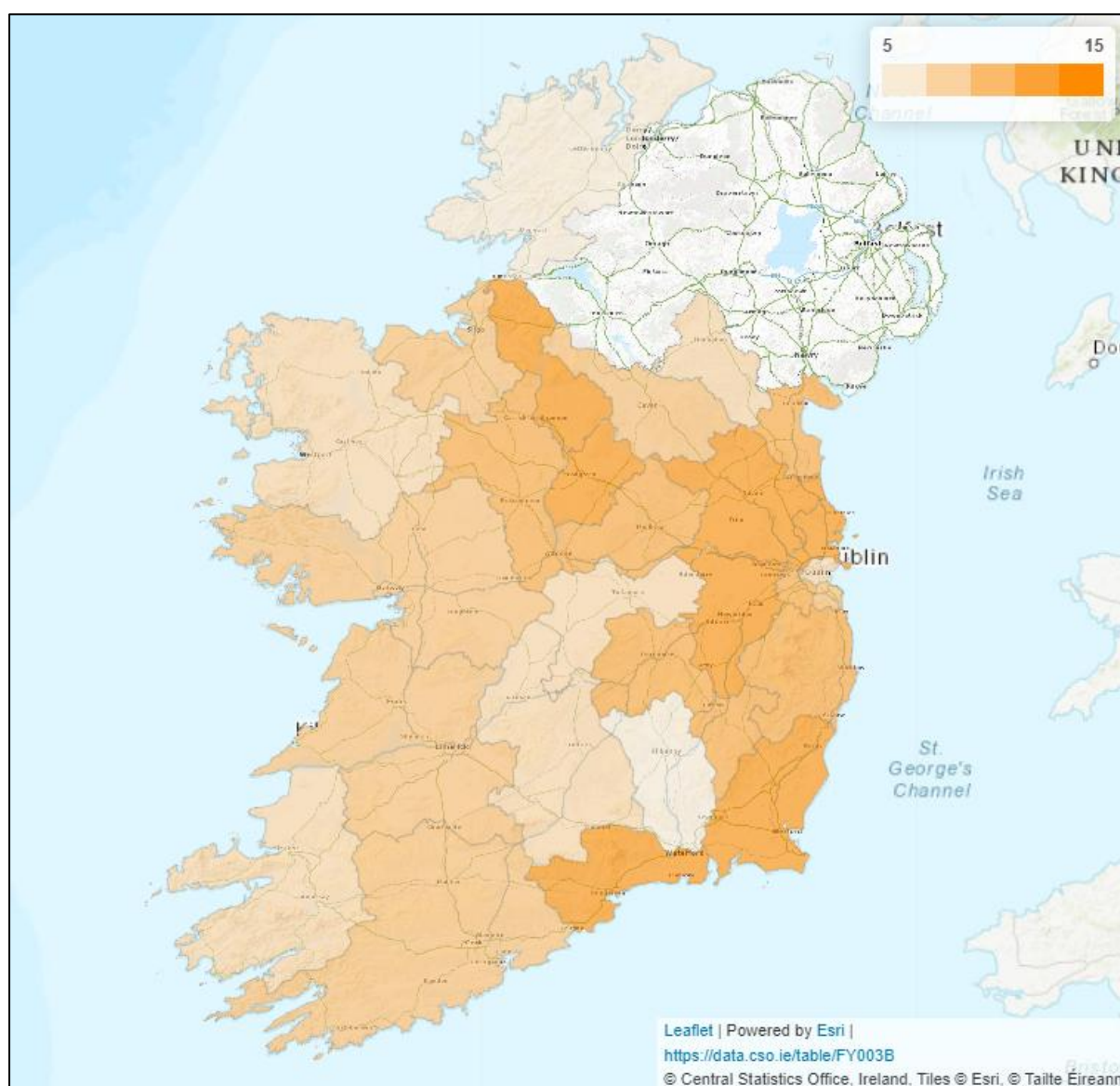
5.3.2 Population and Human Health

5.3.2.1 Population

The study area includes parts of County Limerick and County Cork. The study area is surrounded by Limerick City and Clare to the North, Tipperary to the East, Waterford to the South-east, Cork to the south west and Limerick to the West. The *National Planning Framework* (NPF) outlines that by 2040 there will be roughly an extra one million people living in Ireland.

The 2022 Census results showed that the percentage in population change for County Limerick was 7.5%, and Cork was 7.6%. There has been an increase in the population of the Counties from 2016 to 2022. Refer to **Figure 5.4** below for the overall population change for the Counties between 2016 and 2022.

Figure 5.4 Percentage change of population since the previous census by county and city, 2022¹⁸



¹⁸ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpsr/censusofpopulation2022-summaryresults/populationchanges/>

5.3.2.2 Socio-Economic Trends

Tourism

The tourism industry has long been recognised as an important economic driver for the economy of the State. Tourism is particularly important in that it can assist in providing business and employment opportunities across regions and leads to jobs across the spectrum of skills requirements. The quality and diversity of tourism in the study area is particularly strong in relation to its rich heritage, quality rural landscape and many towns and villages, meaning the study area has a lot to offer as a tourist destination. The development plans for Limerick and Cork promote the development and strengthening of the overall value of tourism in this region as previously stated. The counties have an objective to enhance the potential for economic development in the tourism sector.

Ballyhoura's tourism development began as a flagship rural tourism cooperative, Ballyhoura Fáilte, established in 1986 by Fáilte Ireland. The area has remained community-led, now under Ballyhoura Development CLG and Ballyhoura Fáilte DAC.

Ballyhoura Country joined Ireland's Hidden Heartlands tourism, an initiative driven by Fáilte Ireland, in January 2023 linking the area to a broader network of outdoor activities and tourist attractions in the Midlands. The area is best known for its rural tourism and nature-based regional activities set to the background of the Ballyhoura Mountains.

The current Ballyhoura Destination Experience Development Plan builds on previous plans, focusing on regenerative tourism and economic growth that centres environmental conservation and community-benefit.

5.3.2.3 Human Health

Human health has the potential to be impacted upon by environmental vectors (*i.e.* environmental components such as air, water or soil through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported so that they come into contact with human beings). Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise as a result of exposure to these vectors arising from incompatible adjacent land uses. The impact of development on human health is also influenced by the extent to which new development is accompanied by appropriate infrastructure and the maintenance of the quality of water, air and soil.

Infrastructure / Amenity and Human Health

Sporting, leisure and recreational facilities are essential to promoting good health, social cohesion, a sense of community and enhancing quality of life and well-being. Nationally there has been, in recent years, an increased focus on fitness, sports and recreation generally.

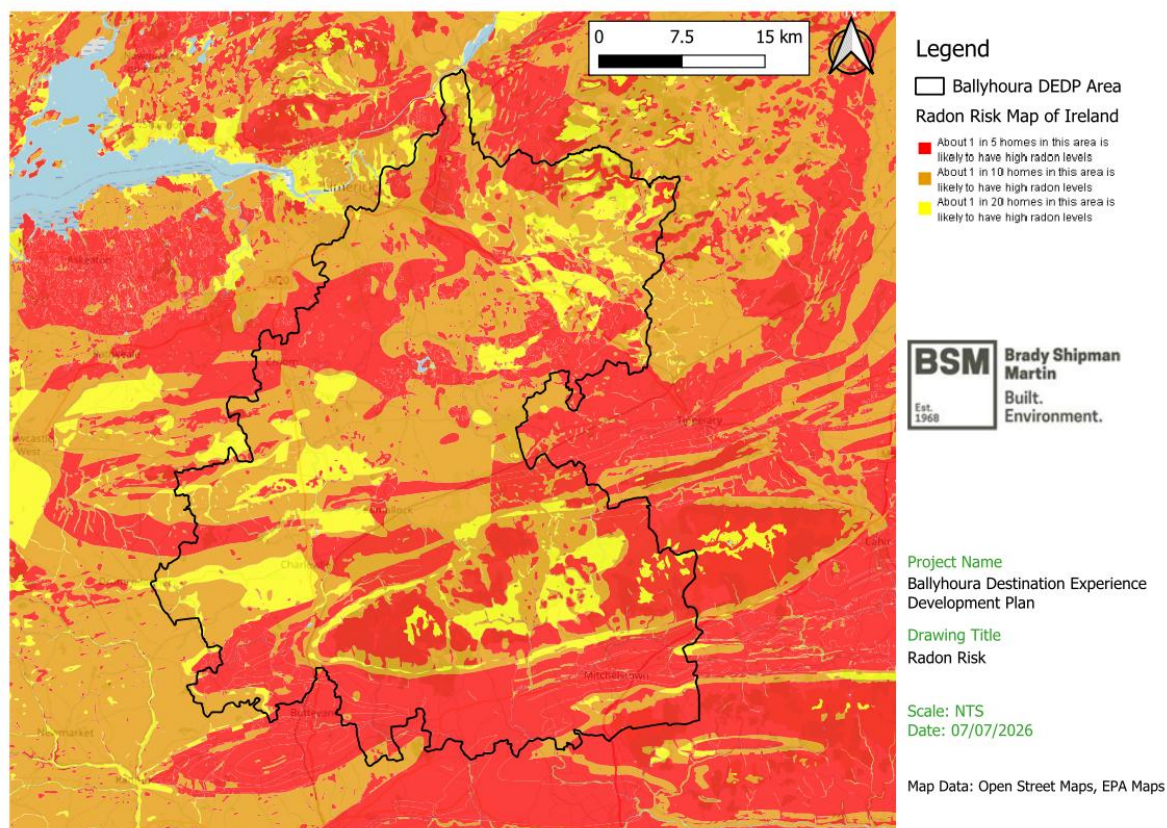
There are a large number of outdoor recreational facilities across Ballyhoura, provided through a mix of private, public and community facilities. Activities provided include extensive walking and hiking trails, rock climbing, mountain biking, horse trekking, swimming, wake boarding, yoga, archery and more. Tours by local and professional guides are available for most activities offered.

Radon and Human Health

Radon is a radioactive gas, which is naturally produced in the ground from the uranium present in small quantities in all rocks and soils. Tiny radioactive particles are produced by the gas which when inhaled can cause lung cancer. The risk of contracting lung cancer as a result of Radon depends on how much Radon a person has been exposed to over a period of time. Radon risk map levels in the study area have been collated from the EPA *Radon Risk Map of Ireland* and are shown in **Figure 5.5** below. Areas in red are most at risk from radon and are called High Radon Areas, the areas of the map in orange and yellow

are areas of medium and low risk respectively. However, a high radon level can be found in any home in any part of the country.

Figure 5.5 Radon Risk Map for the Plan Area



5.3.2.4 Existing Population and Human Health Issues

Existing population and human health issues / pressures on the population of the study area, include:

- Health and Well-being - continue the development of recreation and leisure facilities.
- Support cycle and walking tourism initiatives, in tandem with the development of greenways and blueways in the study area.
- This area is predominantly rural and increased tourism may have a negative impact on the population if unmanaged.
- Radon - Radon risk map levels in the study area have been collated from the EPA Radon Risk Map of Ireland, refer to **Figure 5.5**.
- Information on the status of drinking water, wastewater and climate change are provided in other sections of this Report.

5.3.3 Land, Soils & Geology

Soil is composed of mineral particles, organic matter, water, air and living organisms. Land degradation is a global problem, often caused by a combination of factors such as poor land management and unsustainable development. Land degradation may exacerbate the impacts of natural disasters.

5.3.3.1 Land

Forestry and Woodlands

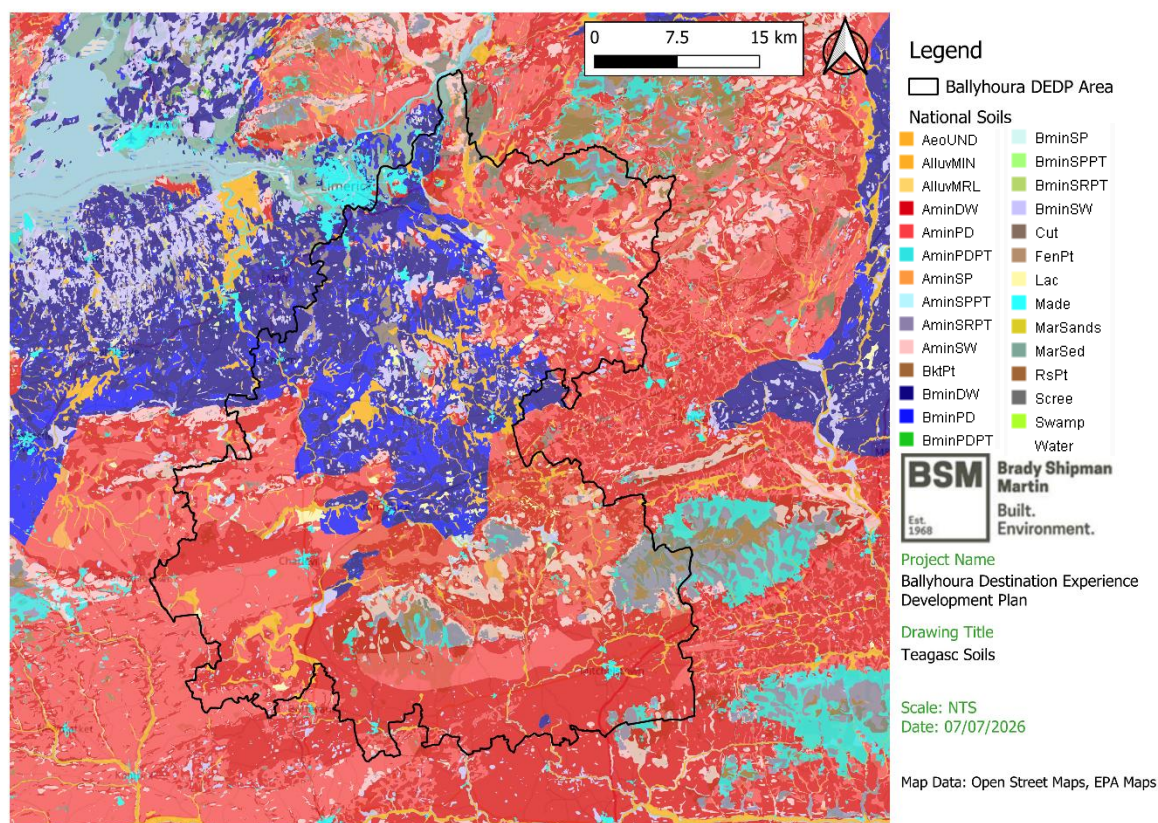
Woodlands provide recreational opportunities in addition to their heritage and economic benefits. They are also important as links in the green infrastructure network. Coillte¹⁹ have provided access to many of their forests and support the use of the forests for recreational uses, and provide access to the following forests in the study area – Corrin Wood, Glen of Aherlow, Galty Castle, Glengarra, Glenanair, Ballinaboola and Glenstal.

5.3.3.2 Soils

Soil is a non-renewable resource that performs many vital functions: food, storage, filtration and transformation of many substances including water, carbon, and nitrogen. Soil has a role as a habitat and gene pool, serves as a platform for human activities, landscape and heritage and acts as a provider of raw materials. The *Irish Soil Information System (SIS)* concludes a 5 year programme, supported by the EPA and Teagasc, to develop a 1:250,000 scale national soil map. The Irish Soil Information System adopted a unique methodology combining digital soil mapping techniques with traditional soil survey application.

The study area contains a range of soils that support various habitats and land uses and provide valuable mineral resource potential. Fertile soils also provide the basis for a thriving agricultural and food sector. The study area comprises a mix of soil types, see **Figure 5.6** below. These soils can be impacted upon by development, land use changes and water quality.

Figure 5.6 Teagasc Subsoils Map for the study area²⁰



Seveso Sites

¹⁹ <https://www.coillte.ie/our-forests/recreation-map/>

²⁰ EPA Maps - <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

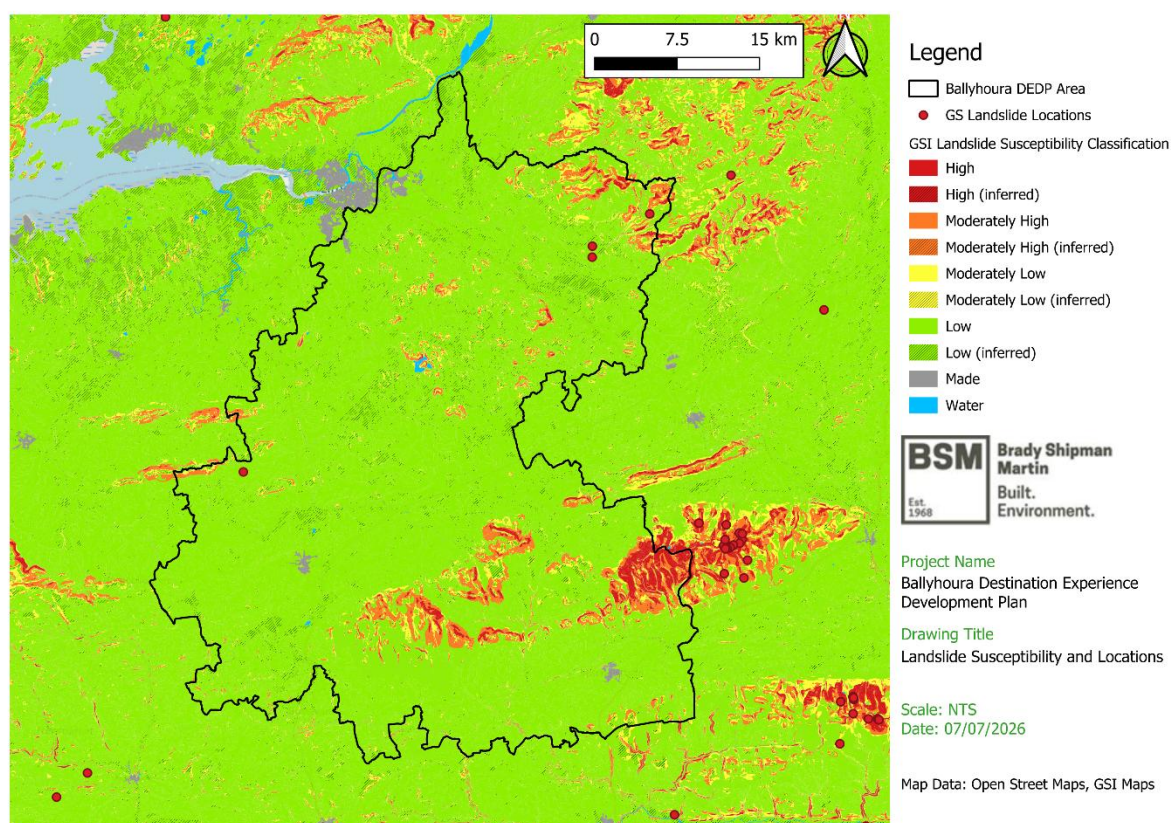
The *Seveso III Directive* (European Directive 2012/18/EU) and the *European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations, 2000* (S.I. No. 476 of 2000) apply to companies where dangerous substances are present in quantities equal to or above specified thresholds. There are two thresholds, a lower one of 50 tonnes ('lower tier sites') and a higher one of 200 tonnes ('upper tier sites'). Lower tier sites are required to have a *Major Accidents Prevention Policy* and a *Safe Work Systems Plan*. Upper tier sites are required to carry out, in conjunction with the local competent authority (which includes the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Local Authority and An Garda Síochána) a *Major Accidents External Emergency Plan*.

Emergency Plans must take full account of objectives established for nearby waters in river basin plans. The legislation deals with the prevention of major accidents. At present there are no Seveso sites within the study area.

Landslides

According to Geological Survey, Ireland landslide susceptibility mapping, the vast majority of the study area has been rated as having 'low' landslide susceptibility, with the risk rising to 'moderately high' and to 'high' near and over the Ballyhoura and Galtee Mountains in the middle of the Plan area. There are four total previous landslide events in the Plan area. Refer to **Figure 5.7**.

Figure 5.7 GSI Landslide Susceptibility for the study area²¹



5.3.3.3 Geology

Geological Heritage

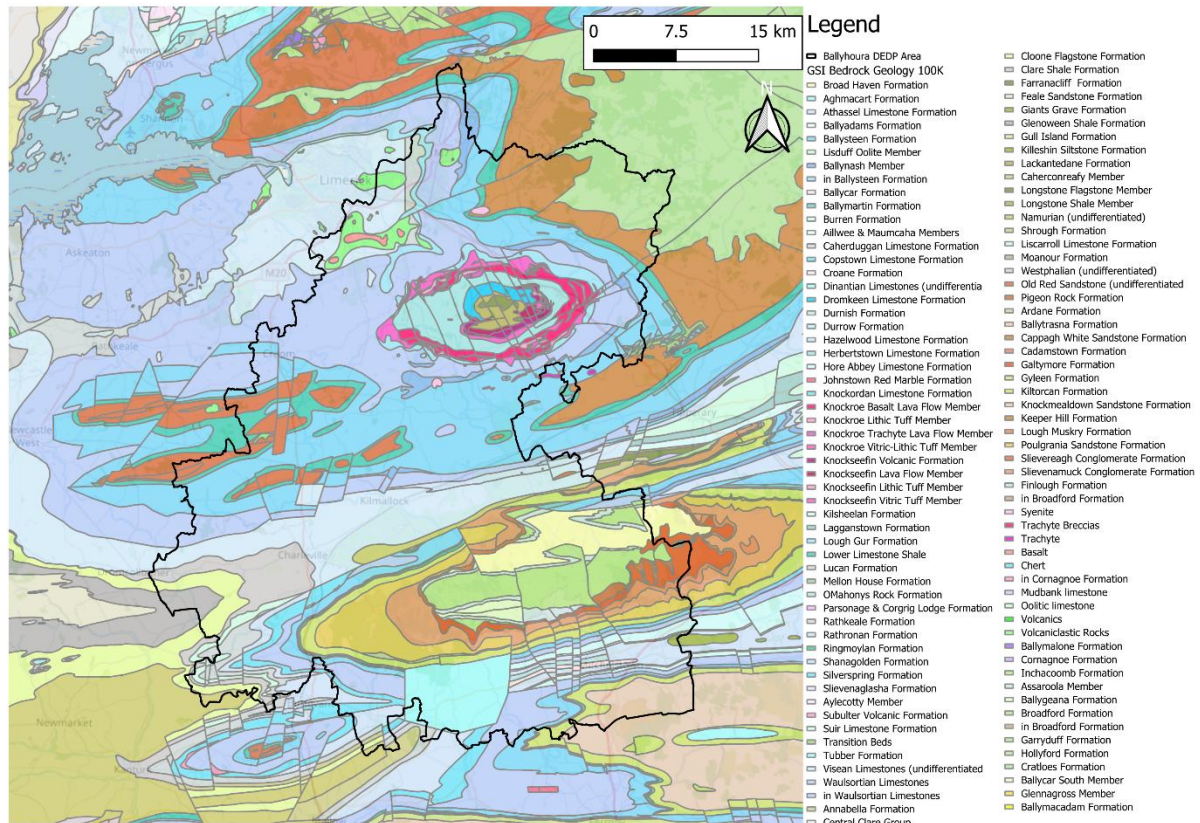
The *Geological Survey of Ireland* (GSI) provides information available on bedrock, subsoil, aquifer classifications and vulnerability. GSI has assessed the geological heritage of the study area and identified

²¹ GSI Spatial Resources - <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228>

sites of geological and geomorphological importance. The bedrock foundation, with hundreds of millions of years in the formation and shaping, and the more recent history of geomorphological processes involving river channels and glaciers are what have created the underlying geological diversity, or geodiversity. The study area has a range of such natural and man-made sites.

The study area is underlain by several different rock formations²² as shown in **Figure 5.8** below.

Figure 5.8 GSI Bedrock Geology (100k) for the study area²³

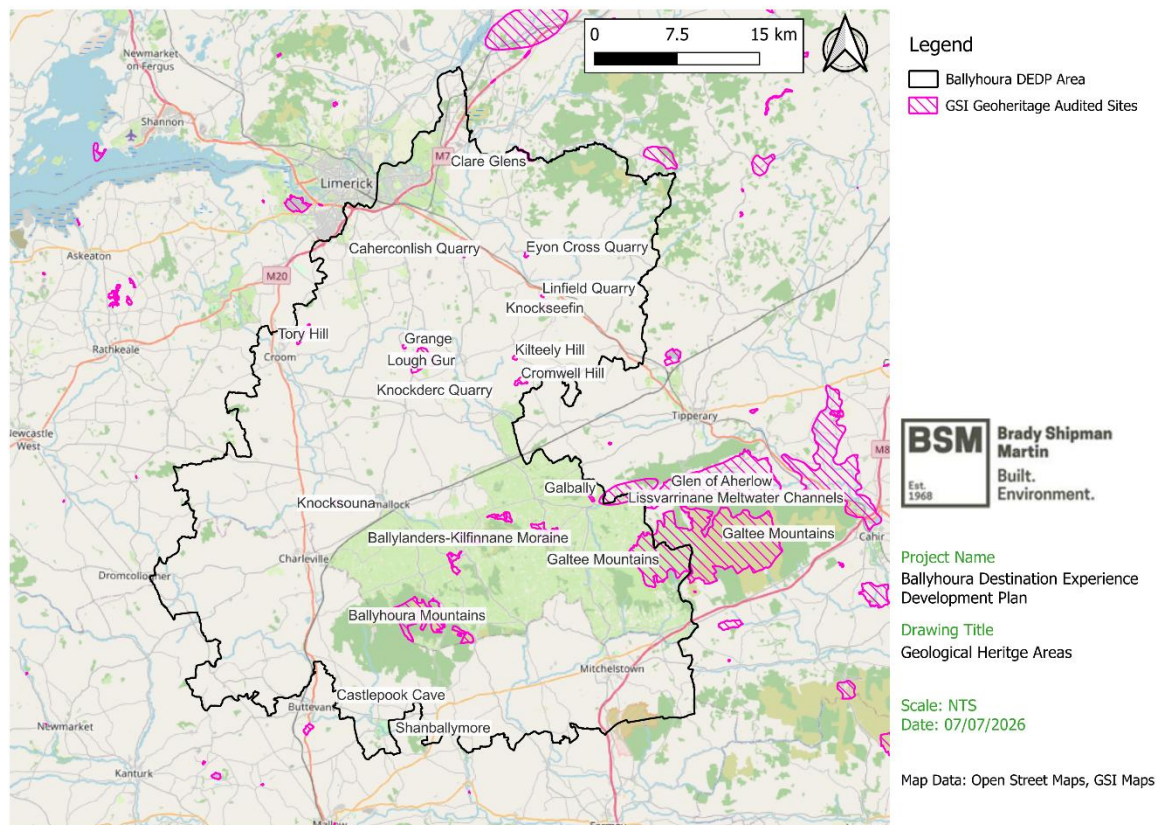


The identified geological sites within the study area which are important Irish Geological Heritage (IGH) sites are shown below in **Figure 5.9**. Geological Sites do not receive statutory protection like Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) but receive an effective protection from their inclusion in the planning system.

²² GSI Bedrock Geology - <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/publications/Pages/Bedrock-Geology-of-Ireland-Map-Scale-1-to-1-Million.aspx>

²³ GSI Spatial Resources - <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228>

Figure 5.9 Geological Heritage Sites in the study area²⁴



5.3.3.4 Existing Land, Soils, Geology & Hydrogeology Issues

Existing land, soil and geology issues / pressures with environmental considerations include:

- Soil - the loss / damage of soil from the construction of greenfield sites for development.
- Land Management - conversion of land / sites can release CO₂ into the atmosphere and further reduce areas of 'carbon sinks'.
- Land - management of woodlands for recreational purposes.
- Presence of mountains and corresponding landslide susceptibility.
- Geological Heritage - the protection of sites of geological importance within the study area, see Figure 5.9.

5.3.4 Water Quality (including Flooding)

Water is fundamental to all life; for humans, plants and animals alike. It is also critical in economic terms in generating and sustaining wealth in a number of key areas such as agriculture, fishing, power generation, industry, transport and tourism. However, it is also a fragile resource requiring continued protection. In general terms Ireland's waters are of good quality, however, preserving the high standard of water is essential for human health and the natural environment.

For the purposes of this section, the water environment is taken to include natural features such as lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater waterbodies. In addition flooding is also dealt with in this section.

²⁴ GSI – The Geological Heritage of the study area -

<https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228>

Wastewater treatment and drinking water are discussed under Material Assets in **Section 5.3.6** below.

5.3.4.1 Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The *EU Water Framework Directive* (WFD) (2000/60/EC) establishes a framework for the protection of both surface water and groundwater waterbodies. Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the WFD 2000/60/EC, which was transposed into Irish law under the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003). This legislation requires governments to take a holistic approach to managing all their water resources based on natural geographic boundaries, *i.e.* the river catchment or basin. The WFD establishes a common framework for the sustainable and integrated management of all waters covering groundwater, inland surface waters, transitional waters and coastal waters. The WFD requires Member States to manage all of their waters and ensure that they achieve at least '*good status*' by 2015 and beyond. The ultimate deadline for Member States for achievement of '*good*' status is 2027 at the latest.

5.3.4.2 Surface Waterbodies

For the purpose of implementing the WFD, Ireland was divided into eight River Basin Districts (RBDs) or areas of land that are drained by a large river or number of rivers and the adjacent estuarine / coastal areas. The first cycle of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) ran from 2009-2015, where the eight RBDs devised separate plans with the objective of achieving at least '*good*' status for all waters by 2015.

The second cycle of the RBMP 2018-2021 merged all eight RBDs to form one national RBD. The RBMP sets out the actions that Ireland will take to improve water quality and achieve '*good*' ecological status in waterbodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) by 2027. The third cycle of the RBMP 2022-2027 is currently being prepared by Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) in line with the *EU Water Framework Directive* (WFD) (2000/60/EC).

Water quality data is also collected by the EPA to provide an overall status of water quality. The monitoring programme, as part of the WFD, assesses water quality but also water trends of rivers in relation to ecological and physio-chemical quality. The WFD status of rivers ranges from '*high*' to '*bad*'. The EPA also undertakes water quality surveys for transitional and coastal waterbodies.

Water quality in Ireland has deteriorated over the past two decades. Overall, the water quality is declining and the number of water bodies in satisfactory condition (high or good status) across rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwaters has decreased under the last WFD monitoring cycle 2016-2021 as compared to the previous assessment which covered the period 2013-2018.

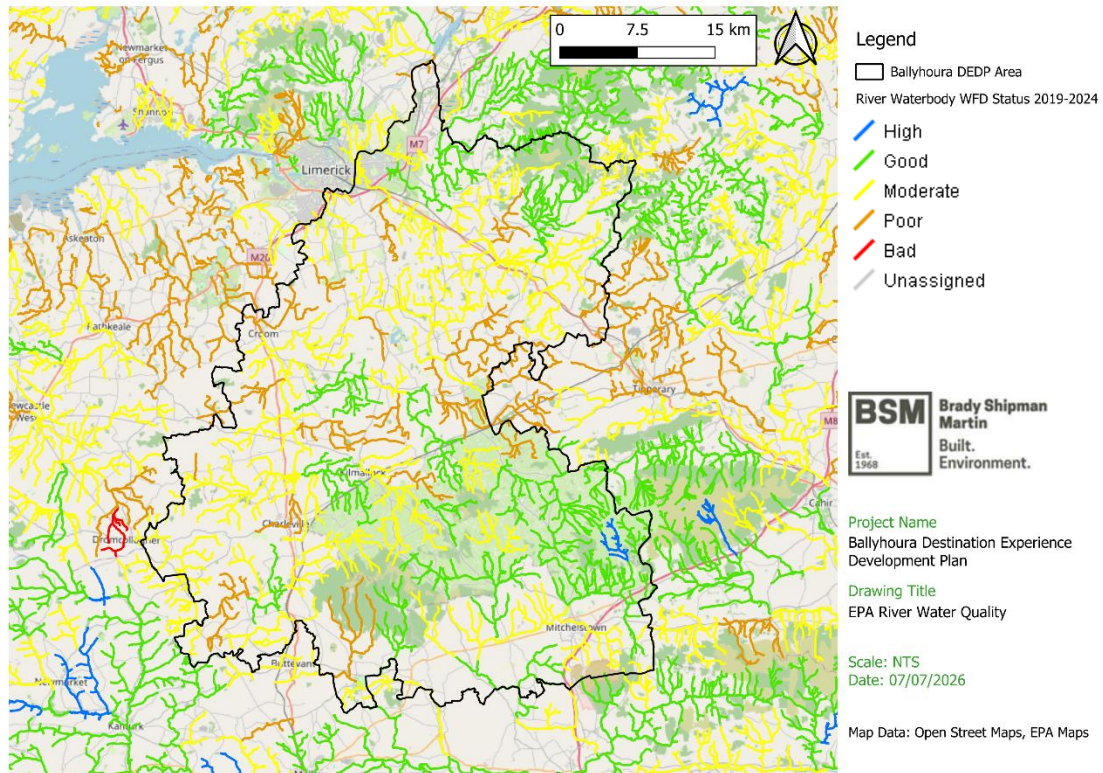
The Plan area covers the following WFD catchments – Blackwater (Munster) (18), Shannon Estuary South (24), Lower Shannon (25D) and Suir (16).

5.3.4.3 Surface Water Quality

The latest *Water Quality in Ireland* report 2016-2021 was published by the EPA in 2022. This report contains the most up-to-date and comprehensive assessment of the ecological health of Ireland's groundwater, rivers, lakes, canals, transitional waters and coastal waters following the completion of the first six-year cycle of the WFD. The results shows that a considerable amount of work is still required to meet the environmental objectives of the WFD.

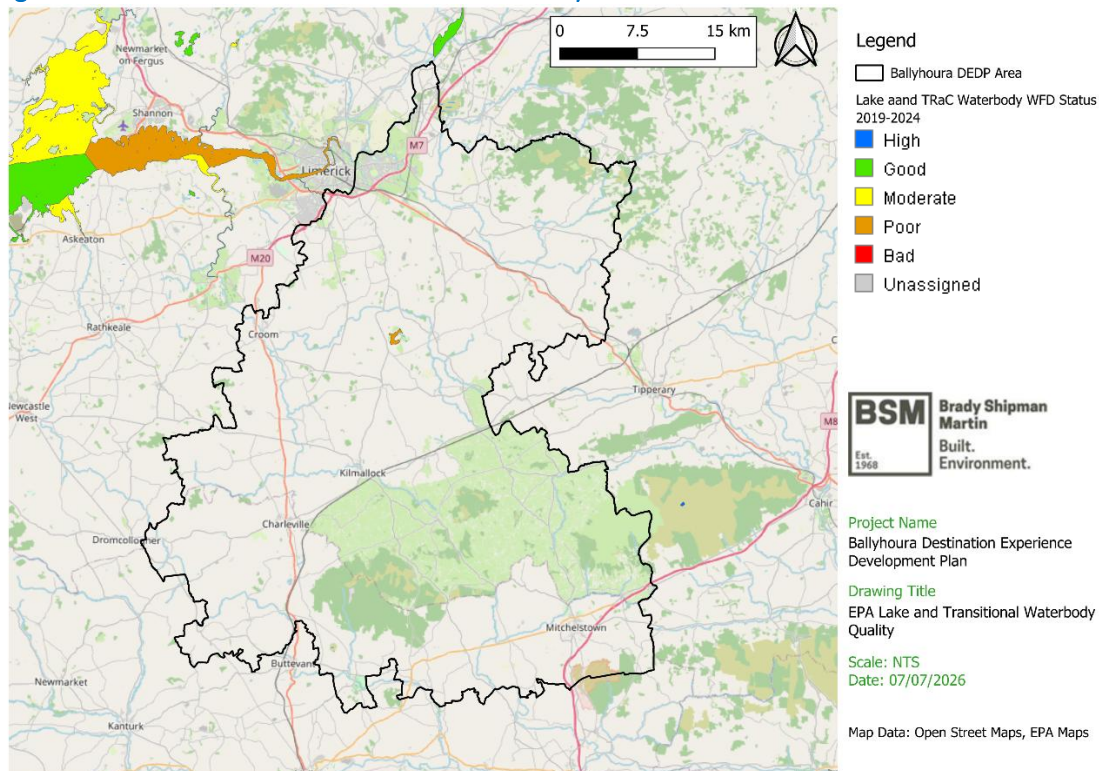
The status of the **river waterbodies** within the study area ranges from '*poor*' to '*high*'. The WFD water quality status of the river waterbodies in the study area is shown in **Figure 5.10** below.

Figure 5.10 WFD River Waterbody Status 2019-2024²⁵



The status of the **lake waterbody** within the study area is ‘*poor*’, and the **transitional waterbody** quality is also ‘*poor*’ as shown in Figure 5.11 below. There are no canal waterbodies within the study area.

Figure 5.11 WFD Lake and Transitional Waterbody Status 2019-2024²⁶



²⁵ <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

²⁶ <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

5.3.4.4 Groundwater and Aquifer Vulnerability

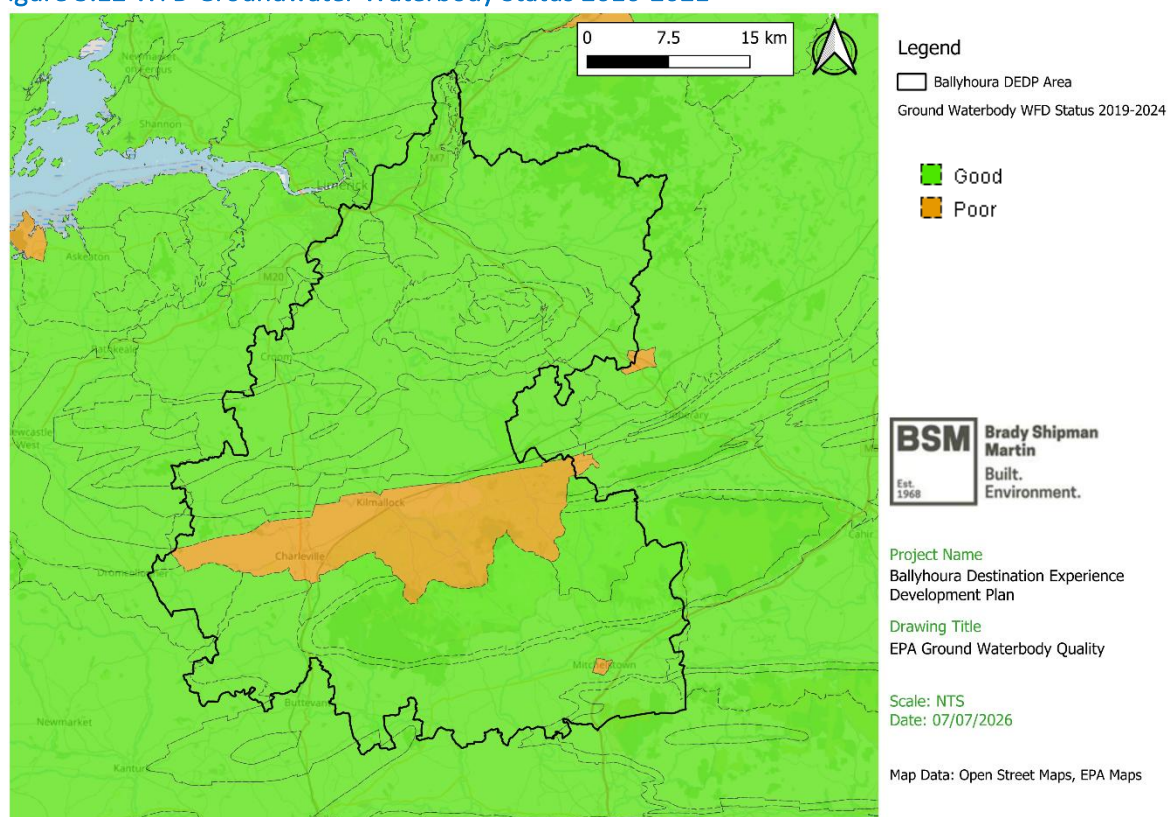
The *EU Groundwater Directive* (2006/118/EC) uses a holistic approach to groundwater by addressing the relationships between groundwater, surface water and ecological receptors.

Groundwater Quality Status between 2016 and 2021 was generally ‘good’²⁷ across the groundwater bodies within the study area as shown in **Figure 5.12** below.

The groundwater vulnerability of study area ranges from ‘low’ to ‘extreme’. The groundwater vulnerability of study area is shown in **Figure 5.13** below.

The GSI rates aquifers according to both their productivity and vulnerability to pollution. Aquifer vulnerability is the ease with which pollutants of various kinds can enter underground water. The study area is underlain with both regionally important and locally important bedrock. There are no gravel aquifers within the study area. Refer to **Figure 5.14**.

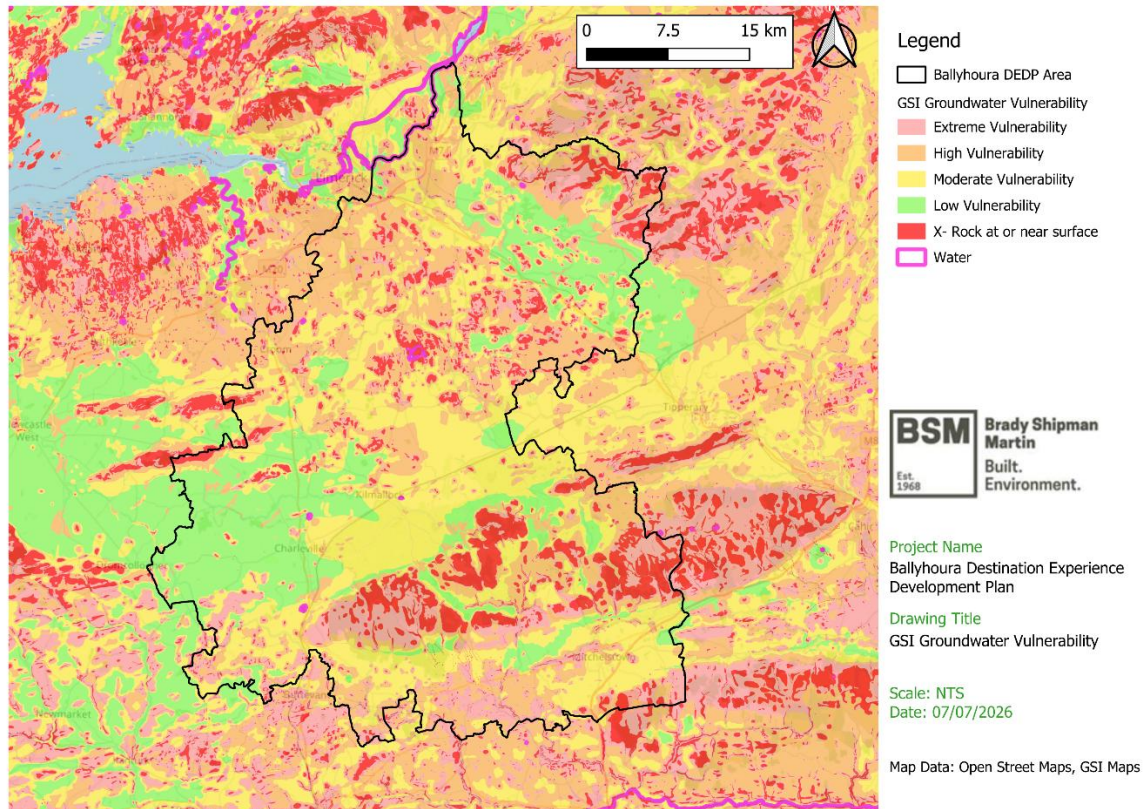
Figure 5.12 WFD Groundwater Waterbody Status 2016-2021²⁸



²⁷ EPA Groundwater Quality Data - <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

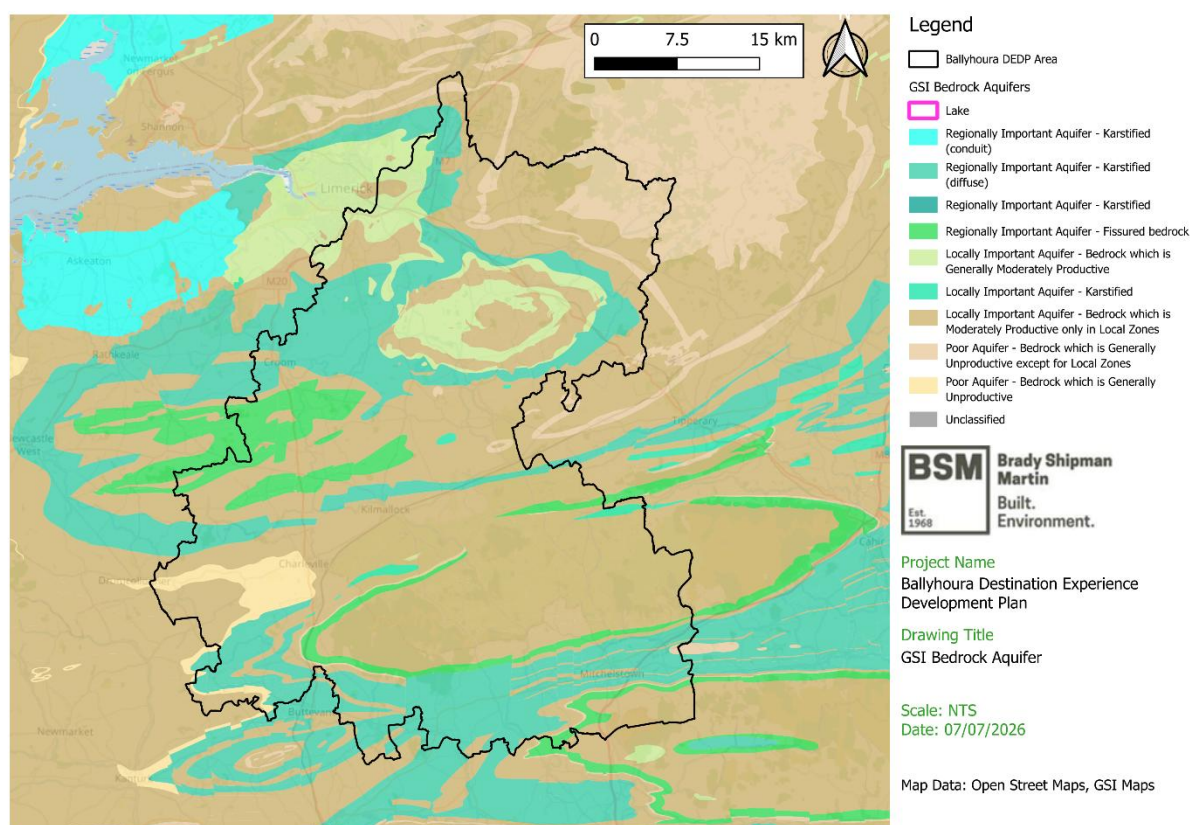
²⁸ <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

Figure 5.13 Groundwater Vulnerability within the study area ²⁹



²⁹ GSI Spatial Resources- <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228>

Figure 5.14 Bedrock Aquifer within the study area³⁰



5.3.4.5 Flooding and Flood Risk

The underlying causes of flooding, heavy rain and high sea levels are, essentially uncontrollable. Floods are usually caused by a combination of events including overflowing river banks, heavy rains, coastal storms or blocked or overloaded drainage systems and an increase in development and impermeable surfacing.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is the lead State body for flood risk management. As part of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied) and the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 (as varied), Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRAs) have been prepared.

In addition to this there is modelled Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and Flood Risk and Hazard mapping available from the OPW including through the National Catchment Flood Risk Management Programme. These mapping sources identify flood risk from various sources, including fluvial, pluvial, coastal and groundwater.

Any proposal that is considered acceptable in principle shall demonstrate the use of the sequential approach in terms of the site layout and design and, in satisfying the Justification Test (where required), the proposal will demonstrate that appropriate mitigation and management measures are put in place.

5.3.4.6 Bathing Waters

The EPA works with the HSE and local authorities to ensure that designated beaches and lakes in Ireland are safe to swim in. Designated beaches and lakes are known as identified bathing waters. This is done

³⁰ GSI Spatial Resources- <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbd2aaac3c228>

under a law called the EU Bathing Water Directive, which is implemented in Ireland by the Bathing Water Regulations. There are no designated bathing areas within the Plan area.

5.3.4.7 Other Recreation Waters

Ballyhass Lake Adventure Centre, located on Ballyhass Lake in Mallow, Cork, is a key tourism destination in the Plan. The centre is fully developed and includes on and off-shore recreation amenities such as high and low ropes courses, rock climbing, kayaking, wakeboarding and an aquapark.

Kilfinane Outdoor Education & Training Centre also offers recreation activities on Lough Gur and the River Shannon in Castleconnell, providing paddleboarding, kayaking and canoeing.

Angling for wild brown trout and salmon is permitted on the rivers Awbeg and Funcheon and at Ballyhass Lakes, pending appropriate fishing permits/licenses.

5.3.4.8 Existing Hydrogeology and Water Quality Issues

The principal threat to water is pollution which can adversely impact on all parts of the water cycle from groundwater to rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters. The Plan must comply with the requirements of the WFD and the Groundwater Directive and aim to drive improvement to water quality in both the short and long-term. Existing water quality issues / pressures with environmental considerations include:

- Water - the surface waterbodies within the study area need to be improved to achieve 'good' ecological status in waterbodies by 2027.
- Water - pressure on water sources include excessive nutrient enrichment which leads to eutrophication;
- Water - pressure on water sources also comes from land-use changes, water-based recreational sports, erosion, industry and urbanisation.
- Sustainable management of waterways and water-based recreation activities to ensure a balance between tourism development and conservation of natural resources and heritage areas.
- Water - water contamination arising through poor working practices, leakages or accidental spillage of materials if efficient pollution control measures are not fully implemented and maintained.
- Surface, ground & transitional waters - are at risk of pollution from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems in the vicinity of waterbodies, potential pressures and impacts on water body status, water usage and flood risk from the construction projects i.e. increased sedimentation, groundwater recharge and accidental spillages. There is growing pressures from increasing population and increasing and sometimes conflicting social, economic and recreational uses.
- Anthropogenic pressures from increased tourism, notably water sports including angling.

5.3.5 Air Quality, Noise & Climate

5.3.5.1 Air Quality

Air quality legislation³¹ in Ireland highlights the need '*to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole*'. In addition, it requires that Local Authorities where appropriate '*shall preserve through appropriate measures the best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development*'.

EU legislation on air quality requires that Member States divide their territory into zones for the assessment and management of air quality. The EPA manages the national ambient air quality

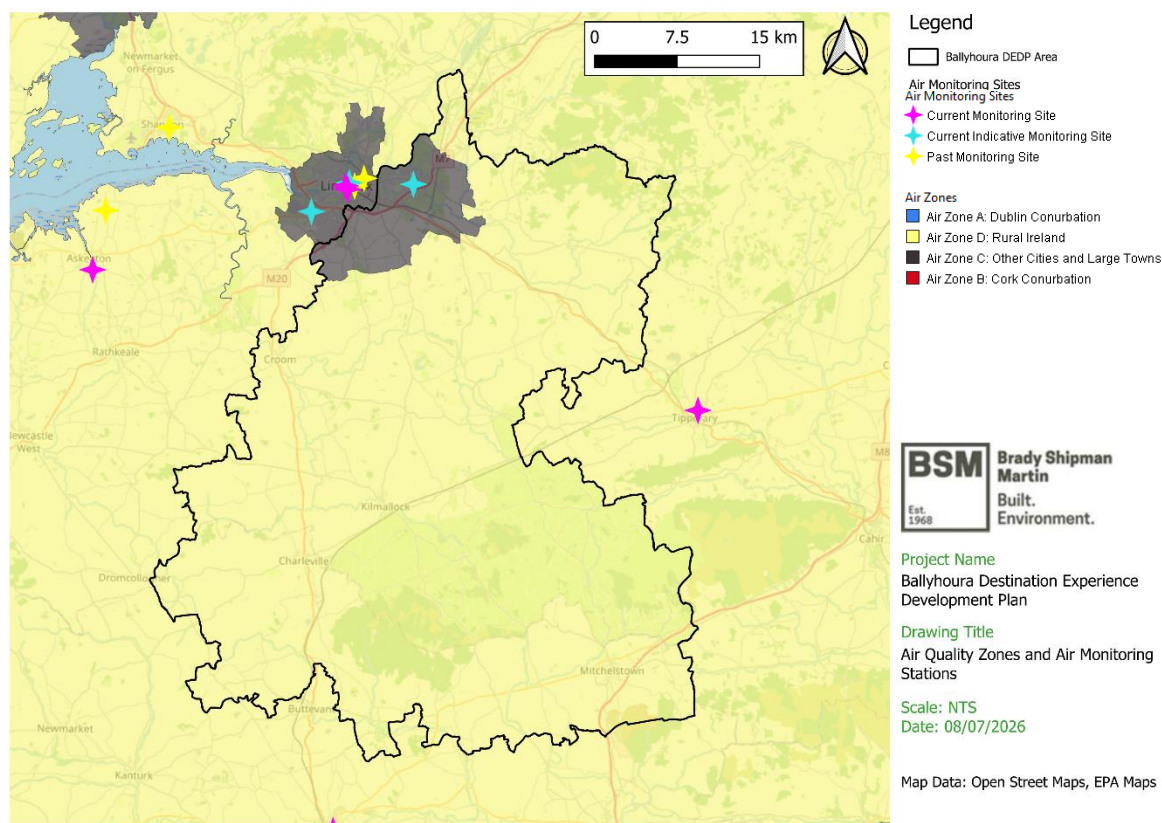
³¹ S.I. No. 739/2022 – Ambient Air Quality Standards Regulations 2022 - <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2022/si/739/made/en/print>

monitoring network and measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants. The current trends in air quality in Ireland are reported in the EPA publication '2022 Annual Report on Air Quality in Ireland' which is currently the most up to date analysis of air quality data for Ireland. Four national air quality zones have been designated in Ireland, these are:

- Zone A is the Dublin conurbation;
- Zone B is the Cork conurbation;
- Zone C comprises of 23 large towns in Ireland with a population of >15,000; and
- Zone D is the remaining area of Ireland.

The study area is located primarily within Zone D, within the 'Rural Ireland' zone, with the area closest to Limerick City in Zone C 'Large Towns with a population >15,000'. The designated zones have been defined to meet the criteria for air quality monitoring, assessment and management as defined in the aforementioned regulations. There is only one air quality monitoring station within the study area located in Castletroy (Station LK4) outside of Limerick City which monitors PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀. Other nearby monitoring stations are located in Limerick City, Tipperary and Mallow, see **Figure 5.15**.

Figure 5.15 Air Quality Zones and Air Monitoring Stations near the Plan Area



The air quality index for health (AQIH) regions are calculated on an hourly basis at various locations around Ireland. The AQIH is based on measurements of air pollutants which can harm health. The five pollutants are:

- Ozone gas;
- Nitrogen dioxide gas;
- Sulphur dioxide gas;
- PM_{2.5} particles; and
- PM₁₀ particles.

Air Quality Map show whether air quality is 'good', 'fair', 'poor' or 'very poor' in each region. The current air quality across the study area is 'good'. Monitoring is done using continuous monitors for ozone and nitrogen oxides in various locations around Ireland. The pollutants of most concern are those whose main source is traffic such as Particulate Matter (PM) and Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). There is need to protect and improve (as appropriate), air quality in the study area, particularly in areas zoned for increased urban and transport related development.

5.3.5.2 Noise

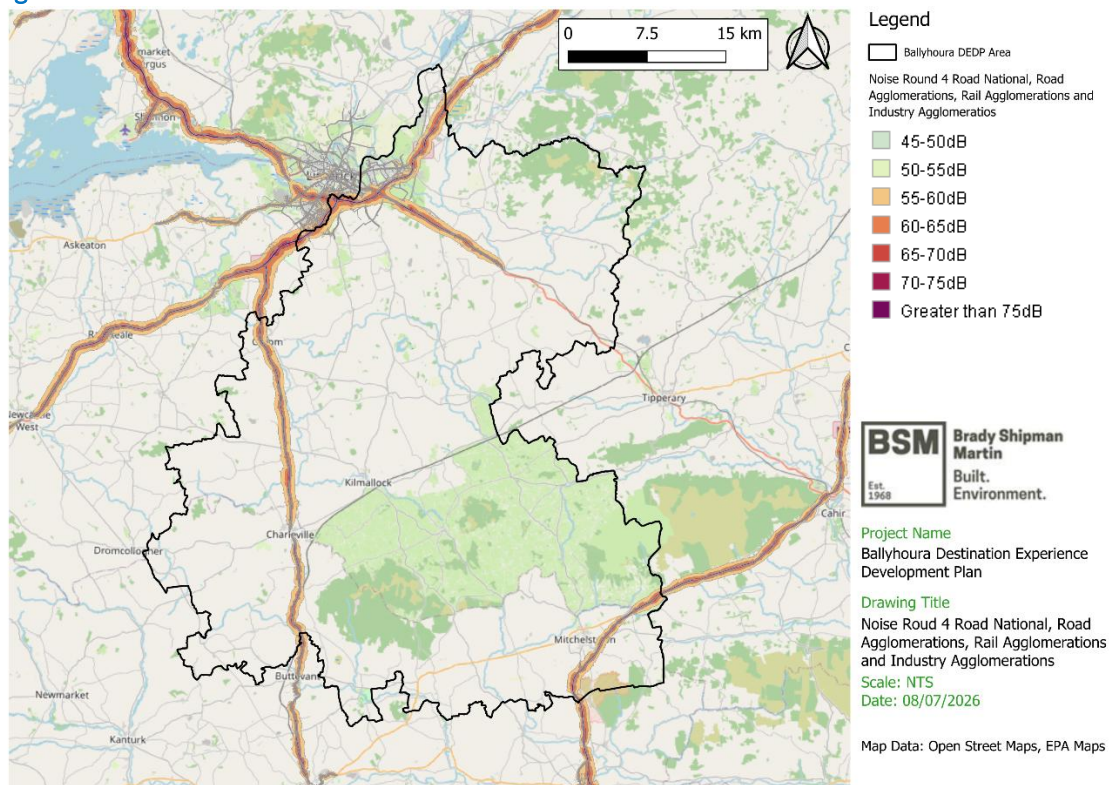
The objectives of EU and Irish noise legislation is *'to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole'*, and this includes noise nuisance. The Noise Directive - Environmental Noise Directive (END) 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise - is part of an EU strategy setting out to reduce the number of people affected by noise in the longer term and to provide a framework for developing existing community policy on noise reduction from source. The Directive requires competent authorities in Member States to:

- Draw up strategic noise maps for major roads, railways, airports and agglomerations, using harmonised noise indicators and use these maps to assess the number of people which may be impacted upon as a result of excessive noise levels; and
- Draw up action plans to reduce noise where necessary and maintain environmental noise quality where it is good; and inform and consult the public about noise exposure, its effects, and the measures considered to address noise.

The Directive does not set any limit value, nor does it prescribe the measures to be used in the action plans, which remain at the discretion of the competent authorities.

During the implementation of the Ballyhoura DEDP, consideration should be given to protect, where relevant, any designated quiet areas in open country. Baseline noise in the Plan area is mainly sourced from national roads, namely the N24, N20 and M8 as shown in **Figure 5.16**.

Figure 5.16 Noise Round 4 dB within the Plan Area



5.3.5.3 Climate

Climate Change is a phenomenon that has widespread economic, health and safety, food production, security, and other dimensions. Climate change refers to a long term, large scale change in global or regional climate patterns. In recent years, global temperatures have been rising. Urgent action is needed to address climate change and to move Ireland towards a low carbon, climate resilient economy and society.

The ever increasing rate of carbon dioxide combustion, and the emission of other greenhouse gases (GHG) such as methane and nitrous oxide since the industrial revolution, has resulted in the 'greenhouse affect'. Most greenhouse gases emissions are related to the energy generation, transport, agriculture, and industry sectors.

In Ireland, the expected effects of Climate Change are increased frequency of extreme weather events within the next century. This will include a 20%-30% increase in precipitation, greater rainfall intensity coupled with flash floods and an average annual temperature increase of ~2°C. The potential impacts of Climate Change could have serious consequences for both people and infrastructure along Ireland's coastal areas as well as its rivers³².

The recent *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021* was established to provide for the approval of plans by the Government in relation to climate change. This aims at pursuing the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich and climate neutral economy by no later than the end of the year 2050. Ireland's *Climate Action Plan 2025* builds on national and sectoral targets by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings in this regard. The purpose of the Climate Action Plan is to lay out a roadmap of actions which will ultimately lead us to meeting our national climate objective of pursuing and achieving, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022.³³

The IPCC Working Group II Report, published in February 2022, assesses the impacts of climate change, looking at ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities at global and regional levels, and is more relevant to reviewing vulnerabilities, and the capacities and limits of the natural world and human societies to adapt to climate change. The report states that economic damage from climate change has been detected in climate-exposed sectors, with regional effects on agriculture, forestry, fishing, energy, and tourism³⁸.

The Action Plan supports the further development of sustainable tourism and sustainable destination management and provides for various measures that will contribute to climate mitigation, such as those relating to sustainable mobility, carbon pricing, electricity, agriculture and the built environment.

Future changes in climate and associated impacts on sea level, rainfall patterns/intensity and river flow will influence flooding frequency and extent in the future. Local Authorities in compliance with the *Regional Planning Guidelines* are attempting to adopt sustainable flood risk strategies in areas likely to be at risk of flooding in the future in the context of climate change and changing weather patterns. Changes to climate could lead to an increase in flooding events in Ireland. The OPW has undertaken a number of *Flood Risk Management Studies* for different River Basin Districts (RBDs) in Ireland. These studies have identified the areas which are most at risk and future management plans have been

³² GOI (2019).

³³ Climate Action Plan 2024- <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/79659-climate-action-plan-2024/>

advised; these are adopted by the OPW. In some cases, mitigation measures will involve the construction of physical flood defences.

The *Climate Action Plan* identifies actions to decarbonise electricity generation, the built environment and transport and to move towards carbon neutrality for agriculture, forest and land use sectors.

5.3.5.4 Existing Issues

In urban areas, concern has clearly shifted to a range of pollutants associated with road traffic which may be considered relatively new in the context of air quality control. The most important of these pollutants are NO₂, particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM₁₀), carbon monoxide (CO) and a wide variety of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), including carcinogens such as benzene. Therefore, it is important that a good quality road infrastructure is provided and alternatives to the private car are encouraged as much as possible. At present, much of the Ballyhoura DEDP is only accessible via car with public transport and active travel routes limited outside of the main townlands.

Tourists contribute to greenhouse gas emissions across the same sources/sectors as local and national populations, e.g. transport, heating and electricity, agriculture/food production and waste generation.

The potential effects of climate change resulting in an increase in the frequency and severity of weather events, including flooding, storms, heavy snowfall, and variation in temperature. Severe rainfall events, or very cold events with or without snowfall could adversely impact upon town's and people in the Plan area leading to water shortages, residential flooding and disruption to infrastructure and to movement. Therefore, it will be important to improve resilience of existing and planned critical infrastructure, systems and procedures to the effects and variability of climate change.

5.3.6 Material Assets

Material assets are resources that are valued and intrinsic to a development and the surrounding area. Material assets may be of either natural or human origin and the value may arise for economic or cultural reasons. Material assets include water supply, wastewater treatment infrastructure, waste disposal including recycling, transport infrastructure, energy, telecommunications and utilities infrastructure. The sustainable growth of the study area is dependent on the provision of services and infrastructure.

5.3.6.1 Water Services and Water Supply

There have been significant changes in responsibilities for water supply and wastewater treatment services. As of January 2014 Uisce Éireann (formerly known as Irish Water) replaced local authorities as a single provider of water supply and wastewater services. Uisce Éireann have prepared the Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP), '*A Plan for the Future of Water Services*' and it provides for the first time at national level an opportunity to consider the way water services are delivered in Ireland. The WSSP sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services up to 2040.

Uisce Éireann is responsible for providing and developing public water services; and ensuring drinking water quality meets the standards in the Drinking Water Regulations. The EPA is the drinking water quality regulator, responsible for enforcing the Drinking Water Regulations. Private bored wells used as a source of water supply to single dwellings are the responsibility of the householder, and are therefore not regulated and Uisce Éireann has no regulatory function in this regard.

The latest *Drinking Water Quality in Public Supplies 2023*³⁴ was published by the EPA in 2024. The report provides a summary of assessment of drinking water quality in public supplies and public group water schemes in Ireland during 2023.

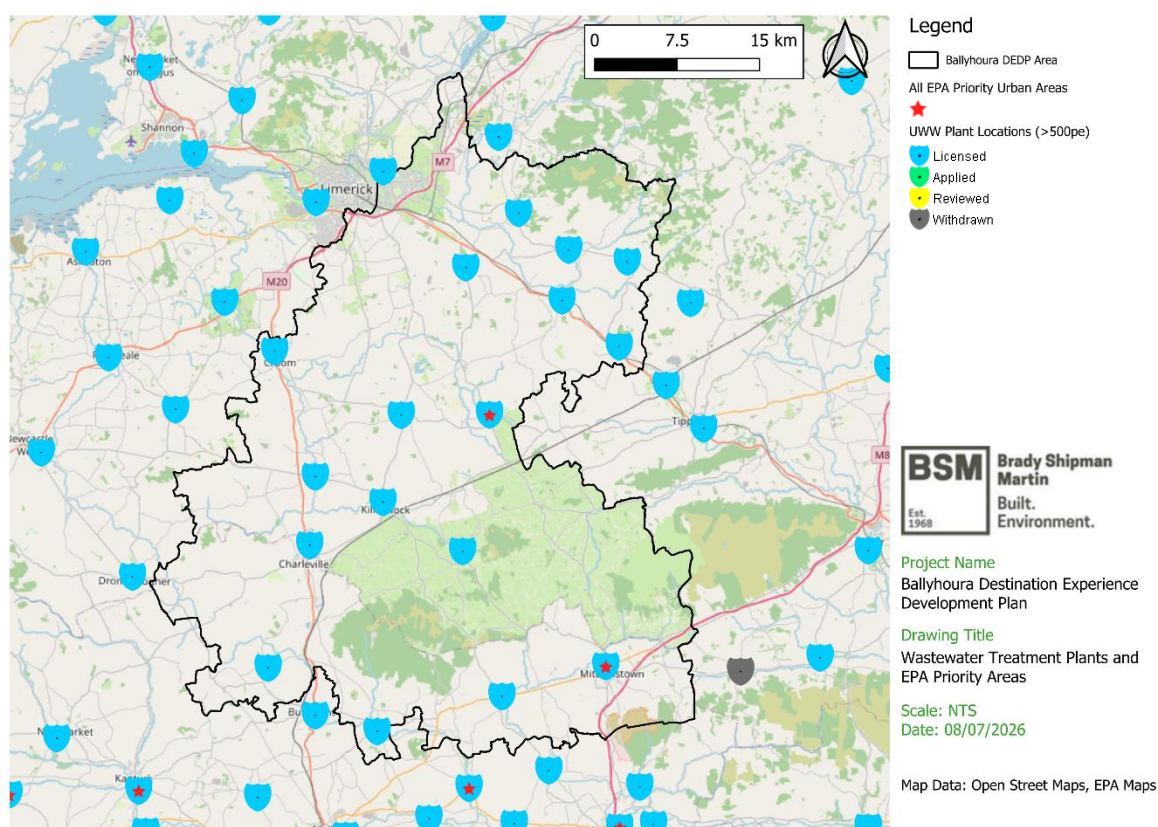
Practical water conservation measures including active leakage detection, demand management and pressure management played and will continue to play a major role in reducing the demand for potable water, thus facilitating additional development and improving the level of service to existing consumers in the study area through the existing watermain networks.

5.3.6.2 Wastewater Services

The Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC) (amended by Directive 98/15/EEC) aims to protect the environment from the adverse effects of wastewater discharges by ensuring that wastewater is appropriately treated before it is discharged to the environment. Such treatment is essential in order to meet the requirements of the WFD.

There are currently 18 public wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) in the study area³⁵, see **Figure 5.17**. Uisce Éireann and County Councils are continually progressing sewer rehabilitation activities, capital maintenance activities, etc, and the Councils will continue to work with Uisce Éireann to monitor the performance of the networks and to advance and realise capital expansions and upgrades of wastewater infrastructure for the continued sustainable growth of the study area.

Figure 5.17 Wastewater Treatment Plants and EPA Priority Areas



Hospital Town and Environs (Reg No. D0314-01) and Mitchelstown (Reg No. D0202-01) within the Plan area are marked as EPA Priority Urban Areas³⁶, and Mitchelstown is also noted as failing to meet EU

³⁴ EPA Drinking Water Quality - <https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/annual-drinking-water-reports/>

³⁵ UWW Plant Locations - <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

³⁶ EPA Priority Areas <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/waste-water/urban-wastewater-treatment-in-2024.php>

sewage treatment standards. Improvements to wastewater and sewage treatment in these areas should precede increases in visitor numbers to ensure the Plan is not negatively contributing to the EPA priority goals of the WWTPs.

In un-serviced areas and outside the main settlements, the main method of sewage disposal is by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary wastewater treatment systems. The requirements for these systems are set out in the EPA *Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment Systems and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses*³⁷.

5.3.6.3 Waste Management

Waste management in Ireland is regulated by the Waste Management Acts 1996 (as amended), which require Local Authorities to prepare detailed plans for the management of waste. Under the Waste Management Acts, a Development Plan is deemed to include the objectives of the Waste Management Plan (WMP) for its area.

EU and National waste management policy can be summarised by the waste hierarchy of prevention, recycling, energy recovery and disposal. For the purposes of waste management planning, Ireland is now divided into three regions: Southern, Eastern-Midlands and Connacht-Ulster. The study area is located within the Connacht-Ulster region. The Regional Waste Management Planning Offices have issued the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy (NWMPCE) 2024 - 2030 in March 2024, which supersedes the Southern Region waste management plan and the two other regional waste management plans. The NWMPCE does not however dissolve the three regional waste areas. The NWMPCE sets the ambition of the plan to have a 0% total waste growth per person over the life of the Plan with an emphasis on non-household wastes including waste from commercial activities and the construction and demolition sector.

The European Commission's Circular Economy Action Plan: A New Circular Economy Action Plan for a Cleaner More Competitive Europe, March 2020, forms one of the main blocks of the European Green Deal. A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy³⁸ was published in 2020 and outlines Ireland's National Waste Policy for 2020-2025.

The Council will continue to promote awareness of and promote an increase in the amount of waste that is re-used and recycled to reflect the objectives of the waste hierarchy.

5.3.6.4 Transport

The maintenance and delivery of an efficient, integrated and coherent transport network in line with national and regional policy is essential to the future economic, social and physical development of the study area. Land-use planning and transport planning are inextricably linked and their proper integration is a key determinant to sustainable development.

'National Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan 2022-2025' is a national document which seeks to achieve a shift to more sustainable means of transport by setting actions and timeline for Modal Change. This policy sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions.

The Policy aims to improve the delivery of sustainable mobility by –

- Implementing the accompanying action plan to 2025 and a reviewed and updated action plan for 2026 to 2030.

³⁷ EPA, 2010: <https://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/water/wastewater/code%20of%20practice%20for%20single%20houses/>

³⁸ DCCA (2020).

- Establishing a Leadership Group to oversee and drive implementation of the Policy and delivery of the action plan, and agree a programme of “pathfinder” projects at local level.
- Introducing a new annual National Household Travel Survey to measure progress against the Policy’s targets.
- Convening a new National Sustainable Mobility Forum to provide a platform for collaborative engagement with national, regional and local stakeholders.
- Increasing public engagement around the benefits of sustainable mobility and raising awareness of the availability of alternative options to the private car.
- Establishing a new National Transport Authority Advisory Council to engage with the NTA around the discharge of its functions.
- Developing a transport research network to support existing research programmes and draw on the sustainable mobility expertise available across academia and industry, both in Ireland and internationally.

The area to which the Plan relates is served by rail, bus, cycle network, regional and strategic roads. Public transport to Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands from Dublin and Galway Cities is strong with regular train and bus services operating. Public transport to facilitate circulation within the region, however, is weaker with relatively poor linkages between towns and the principal visitor attractions. It is very difficult for a visitor to tour the region by public transport. Some Local Link services are currently expanding their routes during the summer months to provide access to key visitor attractions from some towns.

The improved provision of alternatives to the private car should bring about a reduction in demand for private car journeys and a commensurate increase in public transport, walking and cycling. Providing public transport and a network of safe, well-lit and convenient footpaths and cycleways within local neighbourhood centres, public transport stops and workplaces will encourage walking and cycling.

The development of public transport is critical in achieving more sustainable travel patterns and a reduced reliance on the car. Bus Éireann and a number of private operators operate services throughout Cork and Limerick, supported by Local Link services.

The Ballyhoura DEDP sets out to create a new tourism route along the R512 that will connect destinations across the region and to explore large scale transport initiative such as active travel potential along the M20 motorway.

5.3.6.5 Telecommunications

High-speed broadband and telecommunications is core to competitiveness. The National Broadband Plan 2019³⁹ (NBP) sets out the strategy to deliver high speed broadband throughout Ireland. Ireland has made significant progress in recent years in terms of broadband connectivity at all levels: international connectivity, backhaul networks, Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) and local access networks. Since its publication, significant investment has been made in upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of broadband and telecommunications services, with significant additional investment expected over the coming years. The ‘*Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework*’ (2022) is intended to assist Ireland in maximising the socio-economic benefits from the digitisation trend.

Digital Maturity

³⁹ DCCAE, 2019: <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Delivering%20the%20National%20Broadband%20Plan.pdf>

Fáilte Ireland and the Ballyhoura Development CLG conducted a digital maturity survey in 2025 of all businesses present in the Ballyhoura area. The survey showed that the region is behind in its digitalisation with 34% of businesses lacking an independent website⁴⁰. Initiatives include increased marketing analytics, online booking options and an overall modernised digital presence.

5.3.6.6 Utilities

Gas and electricity are the energy utilities which have traditionally supported homes and businesses across Ireland.

ESB Networks and EirGrid are the utility providers responsible for the electricity distribution and transmission systems. EirGrid manages the higher capacity electricity network which supplies power to industry and businesses that use large amounts of energy and electricity, whilst the ESB manages and operates the distribution network supplying electricity to homes, businesses, schools and institutions.

Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) are the utility provider responsible for the supply, transmission and distribution of natural gas.

Public lighting is an important component of placemaking and is essential for the operation of a town or city. While a town or city is generally an illuminated area, excessive light pollution can arise when external lighting is not properly designed or managed. Insensitive lighting can cause light pollution. Light pollution can have a negative impact on biodiversity by affecting the normal diurnal patterns of plants and animals, especially in a rural area such as Ballyhoura Country.

5.3.6.7 Existing Material Asset Issues

The increased tourism at a multi-county level will result in increasing demand for water, wastewater treatment, waste management, transport infrastructure / links and energy and telecommunications services.

Existing material assets issues / pressures within the study area, include:

- Water Supply and Wastewater Services - increased tourist numbers will generate pressure on existing water and wastewater sources to meet demands. Inadequate infrastructure, including inadequate capacity, contribute to the contamination of receiving surface water and groundwater waterbodies. Two WWTPs are already under pressure in the Plan area.
- Energy - there is a need to phase out the reliance on fossil fuels, with a shift to renewable energy resources. Identifying and enabling indigenous renewable energy will also support Ireland's energy security. New developments require excellent energy and power services which create direct and indirect emissions, particularly CO₂, methane and dioxins.
- Transport - the movement of people is key to the success of new development and areas, where adequate transport infrastructure (i.e. road, rail, cycle and pedestrian routes) to these developments and accessibility throughout the development / area (safe footpath and cycle paths) is fundamental to development. Sustainable development of active travel routes and local link buses are essential to promote recreation and tourism.
- Waste - increased tourist numbers will pose challenge in providing sustainable recycling infrastructure and will put pressure on the local authorities to provide better waste management and access to waste services.

⁴⁰ DEDP: Ballyhoura Destination Digital Needs Assessment, July 2025

https://www.interregeurope.eu/sites/default/files/good_practices/Ballyhoura%20DEDP%20-%20Digital%20Needs%20Assessment%20Report.pdf

- Light Pollution - can arise when external lighting is not properly designed or managed which can in turn lead to inappropriate or excessive light spillage.
- Utilities - provide, protect and maintain adequate utilities to support existing and envisaged development.
- Digitisation – continued engagement with local businesses to expand the online presence of the experiences offered in Ballyhoura Country to reach new audiences. This step will also entail better marketing strategies, website redesign and the introduction of online booking systems.

5.3.7 Cultural Heritage

The physical traces left in the landscape by previous generations in archaeological monuments and sites and in historic buildings, townscapes and vernacular structures forms part of the tangible cultural heritage linking the past and present. The study area has a rich and varied built and cultural heritage resource. Archaeological sites and many other buildings and structures such as houses, shops, churches, bridges and mills are features of the study area's built heritage.

The archaeological heritage of an area includes structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, moveable objects, monuments of other types as well as their context, whether situated on or under land or water.

The *National Monuments Acts 1930-2014* provide for the protection of archaeological heritage. The *Record of Monuments and Places* (RMP) was established under *Section 12* of the *National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994* and structures, features, objects or sites listed in this Record are known as Recorded Monuments.

An archaeological landscape is a natural landscape that has been deliberately modified by a group (or groups) of people during a particular archaeological period (or periods).

The term architectural heritage is defined in the *Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act 1999* as meaning all structures and buildings together with their settings and attendant grounds, fixtures and fittings; groups of structures and buildings; and, sites which are of technical, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest.

In 2019, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht published the *Built & Archaeological Heritage Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan* (Prepared under the National Adaptation Framework). The adaptation strategy and accompanying action plan presented in the document aim to:

- Build adaptive capacity within the sector
- Reduce the vulnerability of built and archaeological heritage to climate change
- Identify and capitalise on the various potential opportunities for the sector

A *Protected Structure*, unless otherwise stated in the RPS, includes:

- The interior of the structure;
- The land lying within its curtilage;
- Any other structures within the curtilage, and their interiors; and
- All fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any of these structures.

Owners or occupiers of a protected structure may request the Council to issue a declaration as to the type of works, which may or may not be permitted in their structure. The record of protected structures within the study area are presented in **Figure 5.18** and **Figure 5.19** below. At the time of writing, the Ballyhoura DEDP area contains 257 RPS features, 195 NIAH buildings and 6292 SMR features. Please

note that additional records may be added to the RPS for Limerick and Cork County, contact should be made with the Conservation Officer before planning is sought.

An architectural conservation area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure, and whose character it is an objective of the development plan to preserve. The ACA's located within the study area are as follows:

- Co. Limerick
 - Cappamore
 - Lough Gur
 - Bruff
 - Hospital
 - Killmallock
 - Kilfinane
 - Galbally
 - Croom
- Co. Cork
 - Mitchelstown Centre
 - Convent View
 - Castlewidenham
 - Fermoy
 - Ballyhooly Castle
 - Buttevant
 - Mallow
 - Burton Park
 - Charleville
 - Castlelyons
 - Glenville

Ballyhoura Country promotes several cultural heritage features in the area for tourism, these include Bruff town, Lough Gur, Grange Stone Circle, Medieval Killmallock town, Bruree town and the De Valera Museum, Doneraile Court and St. Legers, and Mitchelstown.

A positive approach to heritage management enhances quality of life and environmental sustainability and ensures that the cultural and natural heritage is a resource that helps the study area to compete as a cultural tourism destination.

Figure 5.18 Sites and Monuments Record in the Plan area⁴¹

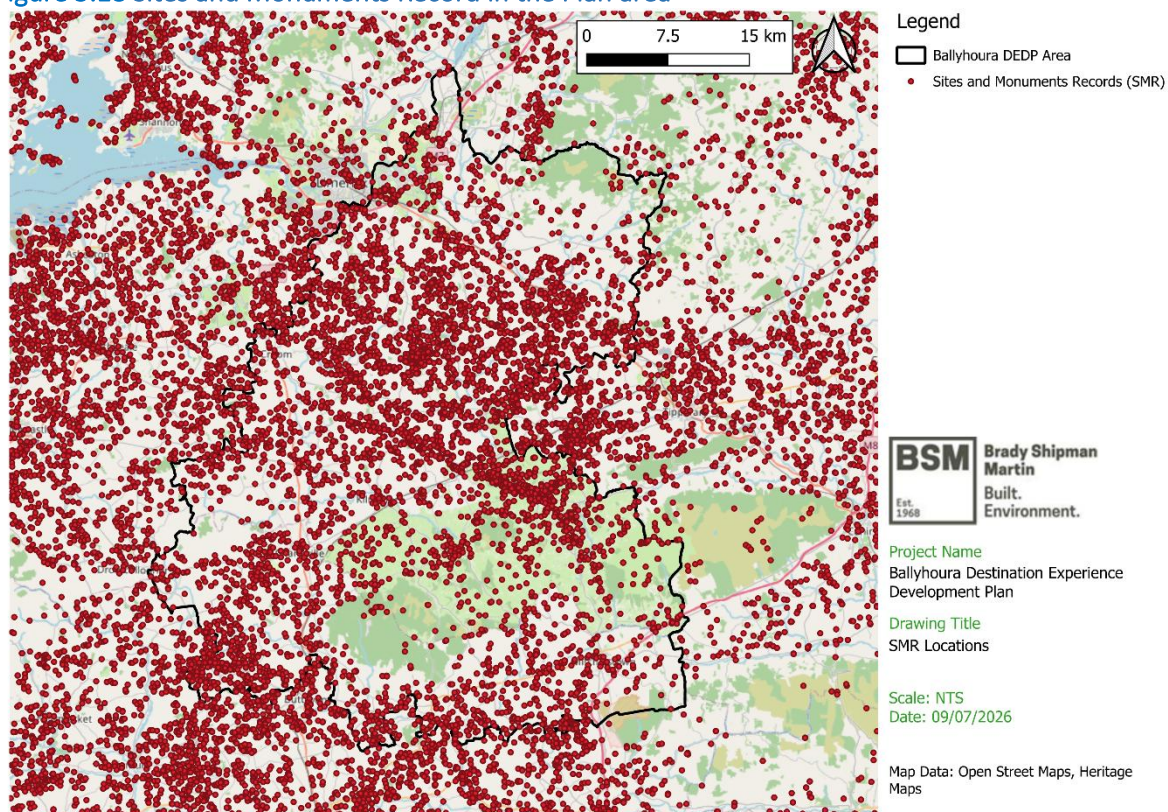
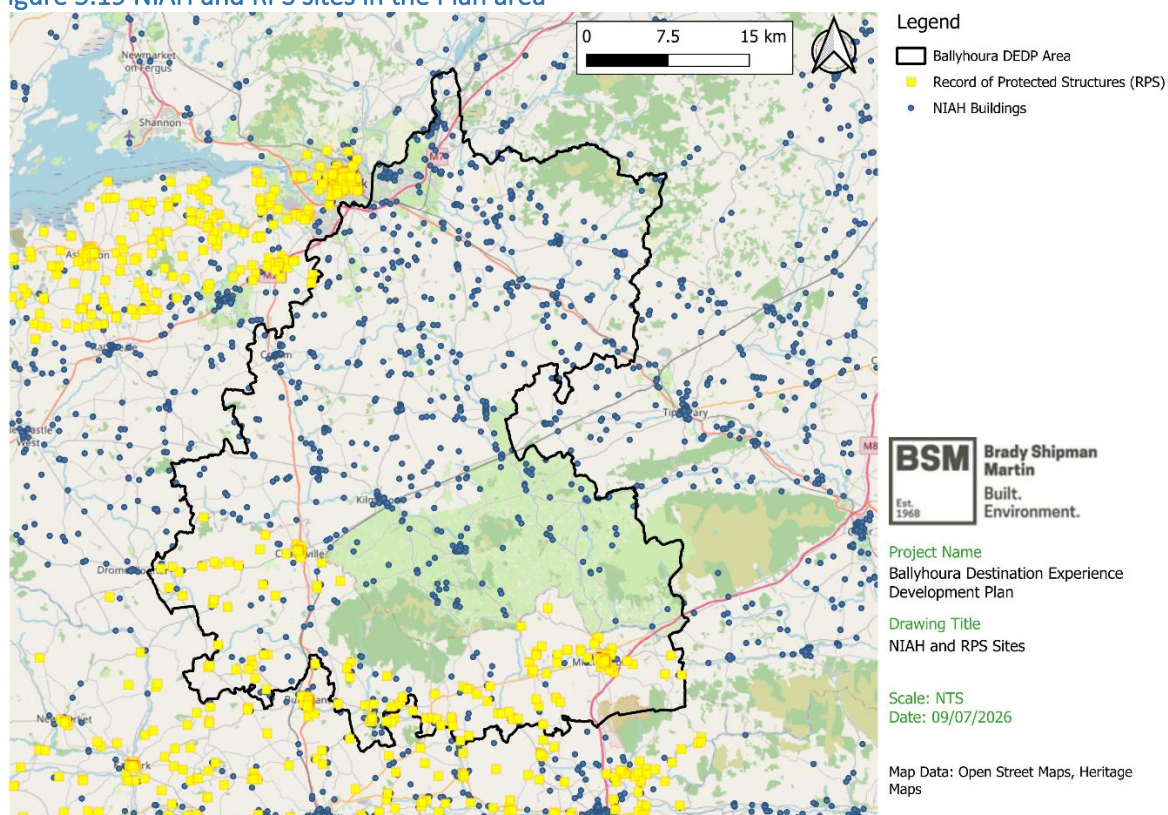


Figure 5.19 NIAH and RPS sites in the Plan area⁴²



⁴¹ National Monuments Service – Archaeological Survey of Ireland - <https://data.gov.ie/dataset/national-monuments-service-archaeological-survey-of-ireland>

⁴² National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) National Dataset - <https://data.gov.ie/dataset/national-inventory-of-architectural-heritage-niah-national-dataset>

5.3.7.1 Cultural Heritage Issues

Increased tourist activities have the potential for direct negative impacts on heritage features and their setting. 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. This could directly impact upon the cultural amenity resource and tourism potential of the study area.

Existing cultural heritage issues / pressures include:

- Development of infrastructure - increased visitor numbers can potentially impact on the integrity of sites or features and their views to / from architectural, archaeological or cultural heritage interest.
- Development in close proximity to sites and areas of cultural heritage may adversely impact upon the cultural landscape setting.
- Development has the potential to impact archaeological heritage which is sub-surface. This includes the insertion of services (e.g. cycleways), landscaping works, ground levelling and tree planting.
- Architecture - impact on heritage streetscapes of regional and local importance.
- Archaeology - impact on archaeological monuments and their settings including undiscovered sites / features.
- Risk - protection of built and archaeological heritage to identify the heritage assets at risk.

5.3.8 Landscape & Visual

Landscapes provide a sense of place and characterises the counties for local residents and visitors alike both in terms of a place to live and also for recreational and tourism purposes.

A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025⁴³ was published, in line with Ireland's obligations under the European Landscape Convention. The key objectives of this Strategy are the recognition of landscape in law and the provision of a policy framework to put measures in place for the management and protection of landscape, the production of a national Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) through data gathering and an evidence-based description of character assessment, raising awareness and public consultation.

5.3.8.1 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process that describes maps and classifies landscapes. Landscape character is defined as '*a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse*'. Defining landscape character enables an understanding to be formed of the inherent value and importance of individual landscape elements and the processes that may alter landscape character in the future. The cultural and ecological aspects of the landscape cannot be divorced from its physical and visual characteristics, so all of these elements are considered.

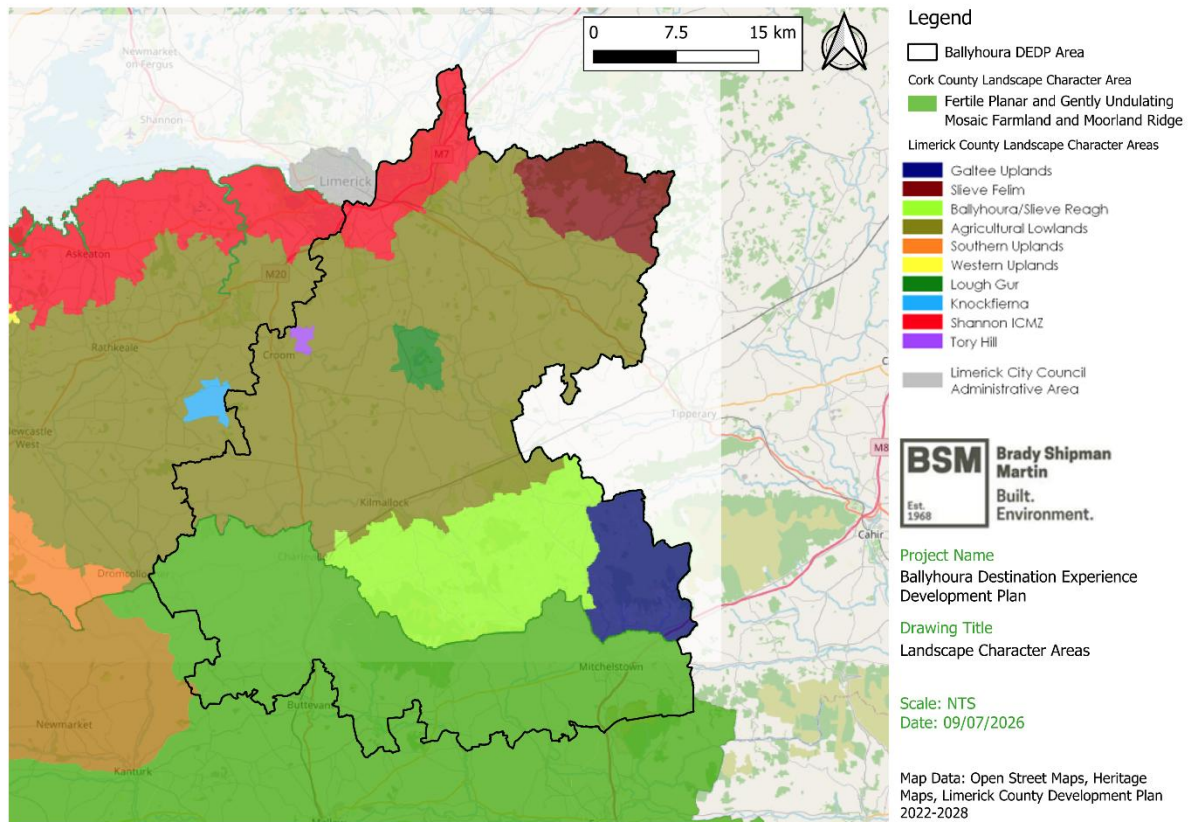
5.3.8.2 Landscape Character Types

Landscape Character Types (LCT) are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character and are generic in nature in that they may occur in different localities throughout the country. Nonetheless, where they do occur, they commonly share similar combinations of geology, topography, land cover and historical land use, e.g. Hills and Upland Areas.

⁴³ National Landscape Strategy: <https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/N-Landscape-Strategy-english-Web.pdf>

Landscape Character Areas are units of the landscape that are geographically specific and have their own character and sense of place. Each has its own distinctive character, based upon patterns of geology, landform, landuse, cultural, historical and ecological features.

Figure 5.20 Landscape Character Areas in the Plan Area



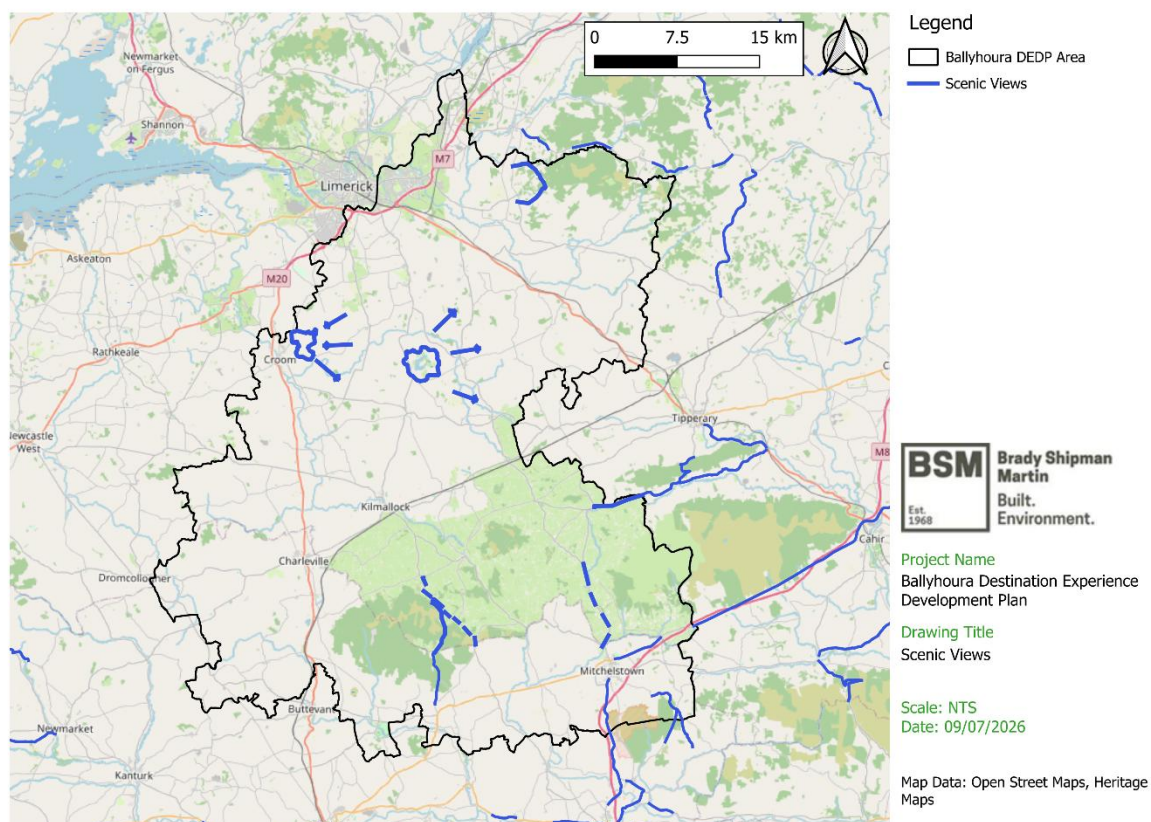
5.3.8.3 Protected Views & Prospects

There is a need to protect and conserve views and prospects adjoining public roads and river valleys throughout the study area where these views are of high amenity value. Landscape objectives of the current Development Plan aims to preserve the views and prospects and to protect views from development which would interfere unduly with the visual amenity and character of the landscape, so far as practically possible.

Many of these views are associated with heritage and tourism sites and provide vantage points over high quality landscapes. These scenic views are of an amenity and tourism value and contribute to our quality of life.

The protected views and prospects with the study area are shown below in **Figure 5.21**.

Figure 5.21 Scenic Views in the Plan Area



High Value Landscapes

Cork County Council has designated High Value Landscapes (HVL) in the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028. HVLs have 1. Very high or High landscape value, 2. Very high or High Landscape sensitivity and 3. are of county or national importance. The Cork County Development Plan requires any developments in these areas to be carefully located and designed so as to avoid obtrusion of the landscape and their views.

Landscape Character Area Specific Objectives

Limerick County Council has outlined specific objectives for the Landscape Character Areas (LCA) and Scenic Views in lieu of identifying High Values Landscape areas. The LCAs in County Limerick that overlap with the Plan area are shown in Figure 5.20. The objectives for the LCAs are outlined in **Table 5.1**.

Table 5.1 Landscape Character Area Objectives as per the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028

Landscape Character Area	Specific Objectives
LCA 01 Agricultural Lowlands	a) Encourage, where housing is permitted, design that reflects existing housing stock, such as the two storey farmhouses which are a feature in the area. b) Encourage retention of existing landscape features such as hedgerows and trees and their incorporation into landscaping for new developments. c) Discourage development of locally prominent sites. d) Encourage the regular arrangement of turbines with equal spacing in proposed wind farm developments, which take field boundaries into account. e) Encourage development within existing settlements.
LCA 02 Ballyhoura / Slieve Reagh	a) Where housing is permitted, encourage appropriate scale and high-quality design for this landscape area, combined with sensitive site location and landscaping. Respect traditional scale particularly on elevated or locally prominent sites.

Landscape Character Area	Specific Objectives
	b) Strongly encourage retention of earth bank field boundaries, particularly in the more upland parts of this area, as the screening abilities of landscape features in this area are limited. c) Encourage use of species native to this particular area in landscaping proposals. Species native to the upland parts of this area could be used, such as mountain ash and birch. d) Ensure that forestry applications subject to planning are confined to infill and below 300m above sea level, as much of the Ballyhouras is a Special Area of Conservation. e) Encourage development within existing settlements.
LCA 03 Galtee Uplands	a) Only permit housing development above the 230m contour line in exceptional circumstances. Where housing is permitted, encourage appropriate scale and high-quality design for this landscape area, combined with sensitive site location and landscaping. Respect traditional scale particularly on elevated or locally prominent sites. b) Ensure that forestry developments, which are subject to planning, are confined to below 300m above sea level, following consultation with the Wildlife Service and National Parks. c) Encourage development within existing settlements.
LCA 05 Lough Gur	a) Safeguard the visual amenity of the area and to have regard to the views and prospects in and out of Lough Gur. b) Restrict development including residential development in the area of Special Development Control, shown on Map 6.3 except in exceptional circumstances. Appropriate tourism development and extensions to existing properties, which respect the special character of Lough Gur will be considered. c) To have regard to the archaeological importance and richness of the area indicated on Map 6.3 as a zone of archaeological amenity. Any developments within the zone will be required to provide for an archaeological examination during the course of excavations, or other ground disturbance. d) To safeguard the existence of Natural Heritage Areas and the Wildfowl sanctuary when assessing applications for development in the area.
LCA 08 Slieve Felim Uplands	a) Not normally permit housing development at or above 220m elevation, in order to protect the scenic amenity of the hills, except in exceptional circumstances. b) Strongly encourage the use of designs based on the existing housing stock of the area and reuse of existing structures. c) Encourage the construction of new agricultural developments as part of existing agricultural complexes where possible.
LCA 09 Tory Hill	a) It is an objective of the Council that there is a presumption against development in this location.

5.3.8.4 Existing Problems

Landscape can be considered a dynamic rather than static asset. It is constantly changing, and its changes are driven by nature itself, by direct human intervention, and indirectly through the consequences of human activity, notably Climate Change. All physical development undertaken by human impacts on the landscape.

Areas of a highly sensitive landscape have a low capacity to absorb new development and this can be a challenge to locate new development in these areas without it becoming unduly obtrusive.

Existing landscape and visual issues / pressures include:

- New development having adverse and visual impacts on the landscape.
- Green Infrastructure - protecting the existing green infrastructure network from fragmentation and loss due to pressures of urban development within and adjoining the network.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

- Ecosystem Services - recognising and promoting the value of ecosystem services that the green infrastructure network provides to the study area.
- Protected views – development has potential to obstruct protected views and scenic routes

6 Strategic Environmental Objectives

The SEA Directive requires that ‘the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.’ Given the position of the Ballyhoura DEDP beneath the *Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028* and the *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028* in the land use planning hierarchy, the measures identified in the SEA for the Development Plans have also been considered in this assessment, with some modification where appropriate.

A series of Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) have been prepared in line with current guidance and also with specific reference to the SEA for the Ballyhoura DEDP (refer to **Table 6.1**). The SEOs provide a basis for the assessment of the environmental effects of the Ballyhoura DEDP and are framed in such a manner as to enable the Ballyhoura DEDP to be fully assessed in environmental terms.

SEOs are distinct from the strategic objectives within the Ballyhoura DEDP, although they often overlap and are developed from international, national and regional policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives. These high-level SEOs are paired with specific targets which can be monitored using indicators (see **Section 10** of this Report).

Table 6.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) for Ballyhoura DEDP

Theme	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective
Biodiversity (Flora & Fauna) (B)	B_1	Ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annex habitats and species ⁴⁴ and no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function.
	B_2	Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites, habitats and protected species.
	B_3	Ensure the Ballyhoura DEDP does not contradict biodiversity protection, restoration and rehabilitation objectives in the <i>Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028</i> and <i>Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028</i> .
Population & Human Health (PHH)	PHH_1	Promote sustainable high-quality tourism within the area that supports economic development and maximises potential for employment and investment.
	PHH_2	Improve health and wellbeing by provision of recreational and tourism-related activities.
Land, Soils & Geology (LSG)	LSG_1	Minimise green field development and protect land and soil resources from pollution and degradation.
Water Quality (WQ)	WQ_1	Protect, maintain and where necessary improve water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.

⁴⁴ ‘Annexed habitats and species’ refer to those listed under Annex I, II & IV of the EU Habitats Directive and Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Theme	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective
	WQ_2	Implement and comply with the provisions of the Flood Risk Management and Sustainable Drainage Systems Guidelines to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.
Air Quality, Noise & Climate (ANC)	ANC_1	Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality and noise emissions through the reduction of emissions.
	ANC_2	Contribute towards climate adaptation and mitigation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with National targets, including Ireland's commitment to realising a climate neutral economy by 2050.
Material Assets (MA)	MA_1	To contribute towards the protection of public assets and infrastructure, ensure new developments are served with adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure with sufficient capacity (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) that does not present a danger to human health.
	MA_2	Promote sustainable waste management, minimisation and recovery.
	MA_3	Promote sustainable transportation including increased use of public transport and active travel measures.
Cultural Heritage (CH)	CH_1	Protect, conserve and avoid impact on places, features and landscapes of cultural and archaeological importance, including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).
	CH_2	Protect, conserve and avoid impact on places, features, buildings and landscapes of architectural heritage, (including entries to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAHs)).
Landscape & Visual (LV)	LV_1	To protect landscape character, minimise the loss of historic landscape features such as mature trees and hedgerows and scenic views.
	LV_2	Avoid impacts on the statutory landscape & visual designations as identified in the <i>Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028</i> and <i>Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028</i> .

7 Assessment of Alternatives

7.1 Introduction

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

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

7.2 Alternative 1: Do-nothing / Do-Minimum

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

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

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

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

In essence the Plan would present a five-year sustainable tourism development plan for Cork and Limerick. The key opportunities to consider for the Plan would be:

- *Adopt the regenerative tourism theme to attract new members to the tourism network and collectively increase the profile of Ballyhoura as a sustainable tourism destination.*
- *Developing food tourism linked to the Golden Vale's food heritage and the regenerative food tourism opportunity.*
- *Destination linkages through north Cork with Cork's ambition to become a World Region of Gastronomy by 2030.*
- *Creation of a new tourism route using the R512 as a means of orientating visitors across the destination and enhancing the links to local communities.*
- *Develop Ballyhoura as a national outdoor activity destination building on the heritage of Ballyhoura and outdoors experiences.*
- *Grow the connectivity with the Beara Breifne Way and the Ballyhoura Way and its links to National Way marked trails product development.*
- *Increase the year round demand for outdoor activities by appealing to visitors who want to 'Learn to' and 'com and try' slow adventure experiences on land and water.*

- *Grow the appeal of the upland areas and enhance visitor management by creating community 'Basecamps' and ensuring responsible engagement with the uplands environment.*
- *Develop the diaspora tourism opportunity building on the success of the inaugural week-long Ireland Canda Peter Robinson Settler Emigration Scheme homecoming commemoration hosted in 2025.*
- *Growing the tourism focus in core destination towns and developing them as gateways to the rural tourism experience.*
- *Developing the night time economy building on the theme of authentic community based evening activities across the destination.*
- *Strengthen the association of Ballyhoura as a mountain bike and off-road cycling destination.*
- *Increase the connection with Ballyhoura and accommodation hubs in Cork and Limerick to motivate visitors to explore the rural Ballyhoura experience.*
- *Develop new visitor experiences in key visitor attractions to create additional indoor experience options.*
- *Grow the appeal of Ballyhoura as a family destination through the range of outdoor activities across the destination.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7.4 Assessment of Alternatives

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

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

7.5 Reasoning for Selection of the Preferred Alternative

Whilst unlikely to have negative environmental effects, Alternative 1 does not deliver positive benefits for tourism in Ballyhoura Country.

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

Alternative 2B will deliver effective benefit and response for tourism in Ballyhoura Country, but without ensuring environmental protection.

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

Table 7.1 Assessment of Alternatives for the Ballyhoura DEDP

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

8 Assessment of Effects of the Ballyhoura Destination & Experience Development Plan

8.1 Introduction

The Ballyhoura DEDP has been subject to an assessment for potential effects arising from the implementation of the Plan on the baseline environment as characterised and described in **Section 5** of this Report. The assessment is carried out having regard to the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) established for the aspects of the baseline environment which have potential to be impacted by the Ballyhoura DEDP. These Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are detailed in **Section 6** of this Report.

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028* both support the delivery of Destination Experience Development Plans through continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland. It is noted that during its preparation the aforementioned development plans, were subject to full SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).

The environmental assessment of the ‘Strategic Objectives’ and of the ‘destination catalyst’ and ‘destination enabling’ initiatives of the Ballyhoura DEDP are set out separately in the following sections of this Report. The SEA Directive requires the Environmental Report to include information on the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, fauna, flora, population, human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.

8.2 Environmental Assessment of the Strategic Objectives of the Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

The finding of the environmental assessment of the overall Vision, Strategic Objectives of the Ballyhoura DEDP is presented in **Table 8.1**.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Table 8.1 Environmental Assessment of Strategic Objectives of the Ballyhoura DEDP

(SEO Key: B – Biodiversity, PHH – Population & Human Health, LSG – Land, Soils & Geology, WQ – Water Quality, ANC – Air Quality, Noise & Climate Change, MA – Material Assets, CH – Cultural Heritage, LV – Landscape & Visual)

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
Vision The vision for the Ballyhoura DEDP is as follows: <i>“It’s 2036 and Ballyhoura has established a reputation as one of Ireland’s leading basecamps for outdoor recreation and rural exploration, with a focus on walking and cycling. Decades of community-based tourism have added a unique flavour to outdoor recreation here, rooted in authentic community engagement and participative events</i> <i>As a pioneer sustainable tourism destination, our commitment to regenerative tourism places our community, our stories and our inspiring landscapes at the heart of the Ballyhoura experience. Local stories are embedded into every visitor experience from our food provenance, linked to generations of producers and our rich farming</i>	This vision statement sets an overall context for destination experience and tourism in Ballyhoura. This will support and underpin the local tourism economy, industry and associated workers. No specific projects are associated with the statement, and therefore the effect on the remaining environmental themes and SEOs will be neutral.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
landscapes, to how we connect the story of place with our trails, attractions and outdoor activities. Implementation of the Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan is well underway, developing a strong network of walking and cycling trails throughout the destination. The mountain-biking trails and the Beara Breifne Way (Ballyhoura Way) have gained a reputation internationally. There are lots of ways for visitors to easily connect with locals in welcoming, authentic and vibrant market towns and villages. The overall appeal of Ballyhoura has been widened through the development of the destination's heritage, cultural and food-based visitor experiences which complement its outdoor activities. Tourism businesses are highly networked and the accommodation base in the destination has been expanded, with accommodation types that meet the needs of our visitors. Every key business has a professional, bookable and						

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
<i>measurable online presence, with all of these businesses cross-promoting digitally.</i> <i>Ballyhoura has become renowned for its sustainability credentials, and the businesses have reduced their carbon footprint with national targets.”</i>						
Strategic Objective 1 : To grow market recognition and visitor awareness of the Ballyhoura destination <i>To increase market awareness and recognition of Ballyhoura as a sustainable tourism destination differentiated by its outdoor activity offering, its authentic community tourism story and by placing locals at the centre of all communications.</i>						
Grow the capabilities of Ballyhoura tourism industry, networks and tourism cluster to increase visitor awareness of Ballyhoura.	This goal is focused on increase visitor awareness of Ballyhoura as a destination but does not propose any projects. As such, no environmental impacts are anticipated.				B (B_1, B_2, B_3), PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No
Increase the Ballyhoura tourism industry's engagement with the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Ballyhoura Country brands to collectively grow awareness and	This goal seeks to increase the awareness and economic potential of Ballyhoura as a tourism	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
recognition of the regional brand to grow its share of the domestic and international market.	destination within the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand. Positive impacts on population and human health objectives are anticipated. No other environmental impacts are likely.				(MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	
Increase the profile of Ballyhoura as a leading outdoor activity destination and grow its appeal in the family market.	This goal is focused on increase visitor awareness of Ballyhoura as a destination but does not propose any projects. As such, no environmental impacts are anticipated.				B (B_1, B_2, B_3), PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No
Differentiate the destinations approach to marketing by placing local people, telling the local story, at the core of destination communication.	This goal is focused on the marketing approach of Ballyhoura as a destination but does not propose any projects. As such, no environmental impacts are anticipated.				B (B_1, B_2, B_3), PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1,	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
					CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	
Maximise the potential of festivals and sport tourism events for marketing impact.	This objective will increase tourism potential for events to draw in new visitors. Positive impacts on population and human health objectives are anticipated. No other environmental impacts are likely.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No
Work with the tourism industry in neighbouring urban destinations such as Limerick and Cork City to encourage visitor flows into the area from the main accommodation hubs.	This objective will increase tourism potential by coordinating with neighbouring destinations. Positive impacts on population and human health objectives are anticipated. However, in the absence of mitigation, additional visitors from neighbouring main accommodation hubs may have uncertain or negative effect on the other environmental objectives.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Promote access into the Ballyhoura destination from existing and future transport infrastructure such as the M20.	This objective aims to increase footfall and through traffic to the Ballyhoura region. Positive impacts on population and human health objectives are	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1,		Yes

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
	anticipated. However, in the absence of mitigation, additional traffic on surrounding infrastructure may have uncertain or negative effect on the other environmental objectives.			ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		
Strategic Objective 2 : To establish Ballyhoura as a leading outdoor activity destination, supported by a well-connected series of cultural and heritage based visitor experiences telling the story of the people and their place. <i>To implement the Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan, placing a focus on outdoor adventure and exploration and slow tourism with a strong community flavour, in particular community-walking festivals; to expand the overall appeal of the destination by developing a series of heritage, culture and food-based experiences through the destination to help increase dwell-time, and to foster greater north-south connectivity within the destination.</i>						
Implement the Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan to unlock the outdoor activity potential of Ballyhoura.	This goal relates to the implementation of a plan that has already been approved in 2024 and is being managed by the Ballyhours CLG. Any plans or projects under the Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan will be subject to individual environmental planning processes. As such, this objective is expected to have positive impacts on the population and human health objectives, however no other environmental impacts are expected.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
Deliver the Ballyhoura elements of the Beara Breifne Way to maximise the opportunity presented by the international walking route.	This goal will continue the developing of the Beara Breifne Way waking trails. This objective is expected to have positive impacts on the population and human health objectives. However, in the absence of mitigation uncertain or negative impacts on other environmental objectives may arise.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Grow the level of accessibility between trails and local communities and the creation of community basecamps with a focus on the Ballyhoura Mountains, Galtee Mountains and Slieve Felim.	This goal will expand walking and camping opportunities in Ballyhoura Country. There are potential positive impacts on population and human health. However, in the absence of mitigation uncertain or negative impacts on other environmental objectives may arise.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Strengthen the appeal of indoor visitor attractions in Ballyhoura through the enhancement of their visitor experiences and approaches to demand generation.	This goal is focused on the marketing approach of Ballyhoura as a destination but does not propose any projects. Any plans or projects proposed to enhance the visitor experiences will be subject to	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1,	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
	individual environmental planning processes. As such, positive impacts on population and human health are expected objectives. No other environmental impacts are expected.				CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	
Develop the appeal of Ballyhoura as an off road cycling destination.	This goal is focused on the marketing approach of Ballyhoura as a destination but does not propose any projects. As such, no environmental impacts are anticipated.				B (B_1, B_2, B_3), PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No
Grow the year round appeal of Ballyhoura as an outdoor activity destination through sport tourism participation events and festivals.	This objective will increase tourism potential for events to draw in new visitors. Positive impacts on population and human health objectives are anticipated. No other environmental impacts are likely.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
Develop Ballyhoura as water-based activity destination to include locations such as Ballyhass, Castleconnell and locations on the River Awbeg and River Maigue and future experience links with the River Blackwater.	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health by provision of enhanced visitor experience. The development of water-based tourism has the potential to contribute to better management of movements in sensitive areas, thereby benefiting various environmental components at certain locations. However, in the absence of mitigation, the objective could have the potential to result in uncertain environmental effect on cultural heritage, land, soils, geology and biodiversity. Increased tourism in these sensitive locations would also require provision of welfare facilities, wastewater and waste management. The development could also potentially result in disturbance due to an increase in human activity and visitor numbers in the vicinity of European sites.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Develop Ballyhoura as 'learn to' activity destination where visitors can access activities that appeal to	This objective will result in positive impacts for population and human health by encouraging active lifestyles for all visitors.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2),		Yes

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
all abilities and levels of interest in the outdoors.	However in the absence of mitigation, there is potential for negative or uncertain environmental effects from either the construction or operation of in activities or their ancillary infrastructure.			ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		
Adopt a heritage attractions cluster approach to highlight the range of heritage experiences across Ballyhoura.	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2)	Yes
Build on the food and agricultural heritage of Ballyhoura and the Golden Vale and grow the value of food tourism experiences for Ballyhoura and its role in developing the night time economy.	This objective will expand the night time scene in Ballyhoura through existing food tourism offerings. Positive impacts on population and human health objectives are anticipated. No other environmental impacts are likely.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
Develop the leisure tourism potential of golf and equestrian experiences in Ballyhoura.	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Strategic Objective 3: To grow the economic impact of tourism by building the capacity and capability of tourism businesses To ensure that businesses are supported to increase their capacity and capability, including the creation of more saleable experiences and improving their online presence.						
Growing the demand generation capabilities of the Ballyhoura tourism industry based on understanding the needs and motivations of visitors aligned with the Fáilte Ireland Visitor Motivations Framework and Tourism Ireland's visitor segmentation.	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry and will not result in adverse environmental consequences.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
Improve the digital capabilities of the tourism industry to increase the online visibility of the destination.	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry and will not result in adverse environmental consequences.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No
Increase the number of saleable Ballyhoura visitor experiences aligned with achieving the destination's tourism vision and focus on the outdoors, rural exploration, nature, culture and heritage.	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Grow the number of rural tourism experiences linked to food, gardens, biodiversity, 'meet the makers' and agri / farm experiences.	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated,	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH		Yes

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
	have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.			(CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		
Implement a tourism cluster approach for capability building and new experience development.	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry and will not result in adverse environmental consequences.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No
Develop the tourism potential of the urban hubs to grow the value of the day and evening time economy to include Kilmallock, Mitchelstown and Charleville.	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Ensure all education and training agencies align tourism industry	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2),	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
training with ongoing and future investment in Ballyhoura.	and will not result in adverse environmental consequences.				ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	
Strategic Objective 4: To establish Ballyhoura as a leading sustainable and regenerative tourism destination <i>To ensure Ballyhoura continues to be recognised as a national pioneer in community-led tourism development and achieves international recognition in sustainable / regenerative tourism. As such, the destination will be developed to deliver net-positive benefits for communities and for nature, and satisfy a greater demand among visitors for more responsible tourism choices.</i>						
Implement the Ballyhoura Sustainability Action Plan to guide the development of Ballyhoura as a leading sustainable tourism destination.	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry and for the environmental objectives.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)				No
Grow the tourism industry's adoption of sustainable tourism practices reflected in their daily operations and commitment to sustainability.	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry and for the environmental objectives.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1,				No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
		ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)				
Develop the capacity of the tourism industry and community tourism groups to develop sustainable visitor experiences, profiling the destination's commitment to sustainability and embracing the regenerative approach to tourism as a platform for innovation.	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry and for the environmental objectives.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)				No
Build on the success of Ballyhoura regenerative tourism training programmes to grow the capabilities of the community tourism sector and realise the socio-economic potential of tourism for their community.	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry and for the environmental objectives.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)				No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
Work with Ballyhoura communities to prepare them for emerging tourism opportunities arising from the Ballyhoura DEDP and planned investment in the destination.	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1, WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Grow the agri and rural tourism opportunity for Ballyhoura through the delivery of farm, meet the maker and food based experiences.	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1, WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Ensure the responsible visitor engagement with all trails and nature-based amenities through visitor education and in destination	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry and for the environmental objectives.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2),				No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
awareness building of responsible tourism.		ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)				
Collectively achieve the reduction in carbon targets identified throughout the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism and Development Strategy as part of the destination's ambition to become a leading sustainable tourism destination.	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry and for the environmental objectives.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)				No
Strategic Objective 5: To build success through new levels of collaboration and a partnership approach <i>To build on existing levels of collaboration among businesses to improve cross-promotion and cross-selling (particularly online) by leveraging existing networks, and to strengthen existing stakeholder partnerships, including linkages with Munster Vales, Limerick.ie, Cork County Council and Pure Cork</i>						
Grow participation in the Ballyhoura tourism network and strengthen the collective approach to developing the tourism opportunity for the area.	This objective will support in the tourism network and also provide economic benefits to the Ballyhoura area population. No negative or uncertain environmental effects arise and therefore, mitigation is not required.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1,	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
					CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	
Deliver a co-ordinated marketing approach in partnership with Ballyhoura Fáilte, Pure Cork, Cork County Council, Limerick City and County Council and Munster Vale to ensure a coherent destination message is communicated to domestic and international visitors.	This objective will support the branding of Ballyhoura as a community-led destination. No negative or uncertain environmental effects arise and therefore, mitigation is not required.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No
Adopt a partnership approach to future event and product development funding opportunities for the Ballyhoura destination.	This objective will support in the tourism network and also provide economic benefits to the Ballyhoura area population. No negative or uncertain environmental effects arise and therefore, mitigation is not required.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No
Adopt a multiagency approach in the delivery of catalyst projects that will grow the profile of the area as a leading outdoor activity destination e.g. Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan,	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated,	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH		Yes

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trail Centre, Beara Breifne Way.	have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.			(CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		
Implement a sustainable model to resource the development of community tourism and grow destination network participation.	This objective would result in positive effects for tourism industry and for the environmental objectives.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2), B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)				No
Ensure Local Authority participation in the development of the Ballyhoura destination to include Limerick City and County Council, Cork County Council and Tipperary County Council.	This objective will support in the tourism network of the Ballyhoura area population. No negative or uncertain environmental effects arise and therefore, mitigation is not required.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No
Adopt a collective stakeholder approach to facilitate the growth of	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2),		Yes

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
the accommodation product base in Ballyhoura.	However, the development of new or existing accommodation facilities presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.			ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		
Grow the level of access and transport options for Ballyhoura working with existing providers such as Local Link to enhance visitor access to local communities, attractions and activities.	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)		B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Develop a destination wide approach to ensure future placemaking activity in Ballyhoura towns and villages is aligned with the community vision for how the Ballyhoura story is told at every visitor touchpoint e.g. public realm	This objective will support the branding of Ballyhoura as a community-led destination. No negative or uncertain environmental effects arise and therefore, mitigation is not required.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1,	No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Strategic Objectives	Potential Environmental Effects	Potential Positive Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Potential Negative Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Uncertain Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	No Likely / Neutral Effects on Environmental Theme & SEO	Mitigation Required? Yes / No
projects, town and village enhancements.					CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	
Align with regional projects or tourism development opportunities such as food and connectivity with the themes of other DEDPs and tourism plans in Cork and Limerick.	This objective will support in the tourism connectivity to the wider DEDP network. No negative or uncertain environmental effects arise and therefore, mitigation is not required.	PHH (PHH_1, PHH_2)			B (B_1, B_2, B_3), LSG (LSG_1), WQ (WQ_1, WQ_2), ANC (ANC_1, ANC_2), MA (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3), CH (CH_1, CH_2), LV (LV_1, LV_2)	No

8.3 Environmental Assessment of the ‘Destination Catalyst’, ‘Supporting Projects’ and ‘Destination Projects’ Initiatives listed within the Ballyhoura Destination & Experience Development Plan

The Ballyhoura DEDP includes a list of destination catalysts, supporting projects and destination enabling initiatives which will be delivered to support the above strategic objectives of the DEDP. The environmental assessment of the effects of the destination catalysts, supporting projects and destination projects are detailed in **Appendix 1**.

There are 5no. destination catalysts initiatives, 7no. supporting projects and 36no. destination projects in total. The projects where there is a requirement for development of existing and new infrastructure might also give rise to uncertain environmental effects on other environmental themes and SEOs that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure. Refer to **Table 8.1A** in **Appendix 1** for the detailed assessment of effects of the catalyst projects, supporting projects and destination projects.

Mitigation measures are presented further in Section 9.

8.4 The Interrelationship between Environmental Factors

An overview of the key and minor / no interaction between environmental factors with potential for effects arising from the Ballyhoura DEDP are set out in the matrix in **Table 8.2**.

Actions within the Plan that give rise to positive or negative environmental effects for one environmental component also have the potential to generate positive or negative environmental effects for inter-related environmental components – e.g. negative effect on soils can have a negative effect on biodiversity, water, and / or landscape. Likewise, actions supporting the delivery of SuDS will improve water quality, which in turn can have a positive effect on aquatic ecology.

An assessment of impact inter-relationships and interactions is already embedded in the evaluation of environmental effects that has been carried out in this environmental report. This ensures that there is adequate coverage of all potential environmental effects associated with the implementation of plan actions. In addition, the mitigation measures set out in **Section 9.0** of this Report.

Table 8.2 Significant Interrelationships between Environmental Factors

Component Effect	Biodiversity	Population & Human Health	Land, Soils & Geology	Water Quality	Air Quality, Noise and Climate	Material Assets	Cultural Heritage	Landscape & Visual
Biodiversity		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Population & Human Health	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Land, Soils & Geology	✓	✓		✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Water Quality	✓	✓	✓		✗	✓	✗	✓
Air Quality, Noise and Climate	✓	✓	✗	✗		✓	✓	✗
Material Assets	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓		✗	✗

Component Effect	Biodiversity	Population & Human Health	Land, Soils & Geology	Water Quality	Air Quality, Noise and Climate	Material Assets	Cultural Heritage	Landscape & Visual
Cultural Heritage	☑	☑	☑	☒	☑	☑		☑
Landscape & Visual	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	
Legend: Key Interaction ☑ Minor/No Interaction ☒								

8.5 Potential Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects can be described as the addition of many small impacts to create one larger, more significant, impact.

There are 2 types of potential cumulative effects that have been considered, namely:

- Potential intra-Plan cumulative effects - these arise from the interactions between different types of potential environmental effects resulting from a plan, programme, etc. The interrelationships between environmental factors that help determine these potential effects are identified on **Table 8.2**.
- Potential inter-Plan cumulative effects - these arise when the effects of the implementation of one plan occur in combination with those of other plans, programmes, projects, etc.

The Ballyhoura DEDP could have a relationship with other plans and programmes. However, these plans and programmes will also be subject to environmental assessment, including SEA and AA, for the purpose of preventing and mitigating potential negative environmental effects. **Table 8.3** lists the relevant plans and programmes that have potential for cumulative effects with the Ballyhoura DEDP.

The assessment of cumulative effects above focused on national, regional and local plans, programmes, strategy and policy documents that have the potential to affect the same receiving environment that could be affected by the Ballyhoura DEDP.

The Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 set out policies and objectives for land use, settlement strategy, sustainable development, transport, infrastructure, environmental protection, and management, cultural heritage, climate change, etc. for the counties. Other higher-level international, national and regional plans are integrated within the County Development Plans and have been assessed as such. The Ballyhoura DEDP will comply with the provisions set within the aforementioned County Development Plans which themselves have been subject to standalone environmental assessment (SEA, NIR, etc.).

The assessment of cumulative effects concludes that the implementation of the Ballyhoura DEDP will not result in direct, indirect or cumulative impacts which would have the potential to adversely affect the environment. Indeed, the implementation of the Ballyhoura DEDP has the potential for positive cumulative interactions in delivering on policies and objectives of higher level plans in relation to increased economic activity and employment and greater appreciation and understanding of natural heritage, cultural heritage and landscape.

Table 8.3 Potential Cumulative Effects with other Plans and Programmes

Plan, Programme etc.	Potential Cumulative effect	Likely Cumulative Effect
National Planning Framework (NPF) Project 2040 National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030 (<i>As part of Project Ireland 2040 the National Development Plan sets out the Government's over-arching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030</i>)	The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the National Planning Framework have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the plan have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No
Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy	The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the RSES have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the RSES have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No
National CFRAMS Programme Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study	Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Studies and their product – Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) – are at the core of national policy for flood risk management and the strategy for its implementation. These studies are required by The Floods Directive [2007/60/EC], which is being implemented in Ireland through the European Communities (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations 2010 [S.I.122/2010]. Each FRMP is accompanied by an associated SEA Environmental Report and Natura Impact Statement. The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the FRMP have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the FRMP have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No
National 4 th Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030	The Biodiversity Action notes the requirements and purposes of AA and SEA and the vision of the plan to conserve and restored for the benefit of all sectors of society.	No
National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)	The policy sets a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by the end of this decade. The projects which will be implemented as a result of this national policy will be subject to their individual environmental impact assessment and appropriate assessment processes (as appropriate) and hence there would be no potential adverse effects on the overall receiving environment.	No

Plan, Programme etc.	Potential Cumulative effect	Likely Cumulative Effect
River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland 2022-2027	The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the RBMP have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Plan have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No
County Development Plans (Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028, Waterford City & County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028)	The County Development Plan (CDP) provides the principal planning strategy document for the development of a local authority area over the statutory time period of the plan. Each of the CDP with Zone of Influence of the study area has been subject to SEA and AA processes to ensure that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Plan have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No
Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027 – Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027	The SEA and AA processes carried out during the preparation of the Strategy have ensured that the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Strategy have been identified and that these impacts have been given appropriate consideration.	No

8.6 Overview

The environmental assessment of the provisions of the Ballyhoura DEDP (**Section 8**) identifies potential uncertain effects on the environment as set out in **Table 8.1**. Much of this relates to uncertainty in the likely outcome of objectives and the potential nature and scope of any development, which may or may not, derive from the implementation of catalyst projects and the Plan. Therefore, measures are detailed in the following which will set the context for the avoidance and / or reduction of any such potential environmental effects.

In working with the SEA process, the Plan acknowledges the requirement for any development to adhere to best practice in terms of environmental governance. Indeed, protection and enhancement of the environment is a critical pillar underpinning the core objectives and success of the Ballyhoura DEDP.

In this context any proposals for development arising from the Ballyhoura DEDP must meet the proper planning and sustainable development policies, objectives and development management provisions of the statutory *Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028* and *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028*.

9 Mitigation Measures

9.1 Overview

The finding of the environmental assessment in **Section 8.0** of this Environmental Report is that, if unmitigated, a number of the actions of the Ballyhoura DEDP have potential for uncertain or negative effects on aspects of the environment. These potential negative and / or uncertain effects, which derive from potential works resulting from the relevant action, focus primarily on biodiversity, water, cultural heritage, material assets and landscape. This section of the Environmental Report identifies measures for the mitigation and avoidance of potential uncertain or negative environmental effects.

9.2 Mitigation Measures

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

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

- **Infrastructure Management** - With respect to infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, surface water, waste and transport) consideration must be given to the available capacity and the potential impact on existing infrastructure, as well as the potential environmental effects arising from the provision of new infrastructure and / or from a likely increase in tourism-related pressures. Any such environmental effects will be appropriately mitigated. The promotion of developing visitor friendly infrastructure where it is required is encouraged.
- **Visitor Management** - Those receiving funding will be requested to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new projects are located at a suitable setback from ecological sensitivities.

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

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

Consideration and implementation for all environmental mitigation measures as set out in Irelands Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy will also be considered a requirement as appropriate.

The majority of the mitigation measures are achieved through the detailed environmental protective policies and objectives as set out in the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028. The Development Plans provides for sustainable planning and management control of all development in the study area– including the delivery of Destination & Experience Development Plans through continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland.

Proposals for development within the Ballyhoura DEDP area must comply as appropriate with the relevant provisions included within the *Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028* and *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028*. Given that the Ballyhoura DEDP sits within and at a lower level in the planning hierarchy, the measures contained within the Development Plans, and in their Natura Impact Report (NIR), SEA Environmental Report / SEA Statement and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) are applicable to the Ballyhoura DEDP.

Therefore, the key environmental protection measures included in the ***Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028*** and ***Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028*** provide for appropriate and detailed mitigation of potential uncertain environmental effects of the Ballyhoura DEDP. These measures include the following selected policies / objectives:

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
Protective Objectives / Policies	
Biodiversity	
BE 15-2 – a) <i>Protect all natural heritage sites which are designated or proposed for designation under European legislation, National legislation and International Agreements. Maintain and where possible enhance appropriate ecological linkages between these. This includes Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Marine Protected Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Statutory Nature Reserves, Refuges for Fauna and Ramsar Sites. These sites are listed in Volume 2 of the Plan.</i> b) <i>Provide protection to species listed in the Flora Protection Order 2015, to Annexes of the Habitats and Birds Directives, and to animal species protected under the Wildlife Acts in accordance with relevant legal requirements. These species are listed in Volume 2 of the Plan.</i> c) <i>Protect and where possible enhance areas of local biodiversity value, ecological corridors and habitats that are features of the County's ecological network. This includes rivers, lakes, streams and ponds, peatland and other wetland habitats, woodlands, hedgerows, tree lines, veteran trees, natural and semi-natural grasslands as well as coastal and marine habitats. It particularly includes habitats of special conservation significance in Cork as listed in Volume 2 of the Plan.</i> d) <i>Recognise the value of protecting geological heritage sites of local and national interest, as they become notified to the local authority, and protect them from inappropriate development</i> e) <i>Encourage, pursuant to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, the protection and enhancement of features of the landscape, such as traditional field boundaries, important for the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.</i>	Policy EH P1 – <i>It is a policy of the Council to:</i> a) <i>Protect and conserve Limerick's natural heritage and biodiversity, in particular, areas designated as part of the European Sites Natura 2000 network, such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservations (SACs), in accordance with relevant EU Directives and national legislation and guidelines.</i> b) <i>Maintain the conservation value of all Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) for the benefit of existing and future generations.</i>

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
BE 15-6 – Provide for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the development management process and when licensing or permitting other activities by: a) Providing ongoing support and guidance to developers on incorporating biodiversity considerations into new development through preplanning communications and the Council’s guidance document ‘Biodiversity and the Planning Process – guidance for developments on the management of biodiversity issues during the planning process’ and any updated versions of this advice; b) Encouraging the retention and integration of existing trees, hedgerows and other features of high natural value within new developments; c) Requiring the incorporation of primarily native tree and other plant species, particularly pollinator friendly species in the landscaping of new developments; d) Fulfilling Appropriate Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment obligations and carrying out Ecological Impact Assessment in relation to development and activities, as appropriate; e) Ensuring that an appropriate level of assessment is completed in relation to wetland habitats subject to proposals which would involve drainage or reclamation. This includes lakes and ponds, watercourses, springs and swamps, marshes, heath, peatlands, some woodlands as well as some coastal and marine habitats; f) Ensuring that the implementation of appropriate mitigation (including habitat enhancement, new planting or other habitat creation initiatives) is incorporated into new development, where the implementation of such development would result in unavoidable impacts on biodiversity - supporting the principle of biodiversity net gain.	Policy EH P2 – It is a policy of the Council to ensure the sustainable management and conservation of areas of natural environmental and geological value within Limerick and to protect, enhance, create and connect, where ecologically suitable, natural heritage, green spaces and high-quality amenity areas for the benefit of biodiversity.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
BE 15-7 – Implement best practice to minimise the risk of spread of invasive alien species, on Council owned or managed land, and require the development and implementation of Invasive Alien Species Management Plans for new developments where required.	Objective EH 01 – It is an objective of the Council to ensure that projects/plans likely to have significant effects on European Sites (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) are subject to an appropriate assessment and will not be permitted under the Plan unless they comply with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. The Council, will through the planning enforcement process where applicable, seek to restore the ecological functions of designated sites, where they have been damaged through inappropriate development.
	Objective EH 03 – It is an objective of the Council to require all developments where there are species of conservation concern, to submit an ecological assessment of the effects of the development on the site and nearby designated sites, suggesting appropriate mitigation measures and establishing, in particular, the presence or absence of the following species: Otter, badger, bats, lamprey and protected plant species such as the Triangular Club Rush, Opposite Leaved Pond Weed and Flora Protection Order Species generally.
Population and Human Health	
SC 6-2 – Recognise the diversity of needs of all citizens of various life stages, cultural and ethnic minorities, and ensure all have the opportunity to contribute to the development of their communities. The Planning Authority will continue to actively engage with all citizens in order to encourage involvement in their community so people have a voice in the decisions that affect their quality of life in their county, where appropriate.	ECON 035 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Facilitate the development of acceptable rural enterprises and to minimise pollution from agricultural and industrial sources by means of development management and water pollution legislation. b) Encourage the redevelopment of vacant commercial units for enterprise and industry creation including Kantoher Business Park, Castlemahon and other identifiable rural commercial brownfield sites, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria. c) Promote the development of our rural Towns and Villages as an important focus of restaurant, leisure and evening uses - subject to the safeguarding of surrounding residential amenity and environmental criteria.

EC 8-2 – Support economic and employment development in appropriate locations in the Main Towns, and Strategic Employment locations and otherwise in accordance with the Employment Network of the County set out in Table 8.4	ECON 045 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Support strong growth in the tourism sector in Limerick ensuring the economic and societal benefits of tourism are effectively distributed throughout the County, through connections between complementary sites and attractions, by encouraging visitors to move around the County and to enable them to do so with ease. b) Support the development of Limerick’s capacity for largescale group tourism, through improved transport amenities for bus tours, group tours and cruise ship visitors. c) Recognise the heritage value of Limerick’s towns and villages such as Adare, Kilmallock and Askeaton and seek opportunities to enhance their tourism potential. d) Support and harness the tourism potential of existing rural and heritage site amenities/attractions, including The Clare Glens, Lough Gur, Knockfierna, Munster Vales, Ballyhoura Country, Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum, The Shannon Estuary Way, Curragh Chase, Fullers Folly and Adare Heritage Centre, in a way that promotes sustainable tourism. e) Actively develop Limerick as an Events location with the appropriate infrastructure to attract international conferences, sporting, cultural and commercial events, including the development of an International Conference Centre and improved public realm, which supports outdoor performance and events of scale (Refer to Chapter 3: Spatial Strategy Section 3.4.5.1). f) To adopt a strategic collaborative approach to the delivery of the Ryder Cup in Adare/Limerick in 2027 to leverage the legacy potential of this major event and ensure maximum return on investment for Limerick and the region. g) To work with Waterways Ireland and Fáilte Ireland to develop the water activity sector in Limerick by exploring the potential for increased accessibility to Limerick’s waterways for water-based tourism activity (refer also to Chapter 10: Sustainable Communities and Social Infrastructure and Chapter 11: Development Management Standards). h) Support and promote the development of the Shannon River Interpretative Centre in Limerick City.
--	---

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
EC: 8-13 – a) Encourage employment growth in County towns to support the population of the towns and their wider rural catchments. b) Strengthen rural economies through the promotion of innovation and diversification into new sectors and services including to ensure economic resilience and job creation. c) New development in rural areas should be sensitively designed and planned to provide for the protection of the biodiversity of the rural landscape.	ECON 051 – It is an objective of the Council to cluster niche tourist/ visitor services and infrastructure, including locations where the service or tourist attraction currently exists.
EC: 8-14 – The development of appropriate new businesses in rural areas will normally be encouraged where: • The scale and nature of the proposed new business are appropriate to the rural area and are in areas of low environmental sensitivity. • The development will enhance the strength and diversity of the local rural economy. • The proposal will not adversely affect the character, appearance, and biodiversity value of the rural landscape. • The existing or planned local road network and other essential infrastructure can accommodate extra demand generated by the proposal. • The proposal has a mobility plan for employees home to work transportation. • Where possible the proposal involves the re-use of redundant or underused buildings that are of value to the rural scene. • The provision of adequate water services infrastructure; and • Provision of a safe access to the public road network.	ECON 052 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Ensure that holiday accommodation including campsite (i.e., static and touring caravans, campervans, glamping pods and tents) developments should be concentrated within or adjoining existing towns, villages and settlements, where they can best support the provision of services and minimise the impact on the open landscape. Such developments should respect the existing fabric of the settlement, both in scale and design. In limited cases, such accommodation may be appropriate in rural locations, where it compliments an existing tourism asset/ service and where there is a justifiable need, such as its proximity to established tourism trails/ routes/ food and craft businesses. In rural locations, structures should be integrated into the existing landscape or proposals should demonstrate that an appropriate landscape will be designed around the structure. b) Proposals to reinstate, conserve and/ or renovate existing, vacant, derelict or disused buildings for holiday accommodation in both urban and rural areas, will be considered subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
TO 10-1 – Promote a sustainable approach to the development of the tourism sector within Cork County while; a) Ensuring the protection of the natural, built and cultural heritage assets of the county, including Natura sites, which are in themselves part of what attracts visitors to the county. b) Having regard to cumulative impacts increased visitor numbers and visitor facilitates can have on local infrastructure, sensitive areas and sites, water quality, biodiversity, soils, ecosystems, habitats and species, climate change etc. c) Supporting investment in placemaking and the regeneration of towns and villages in recognition of the role ‘People and Place’ make in attracting visitors to Ireland; encouraging the development of tourism and other facilities within settlements to support such regeneration and compact growth. d) Work in partnership with public and private sector agencies to implement the key tourism objectives in this Plan, while first ensuring early consultation with landowners around any new proposed routes and facilities. e) Assist community groups to access funding for appropriate, sustainable and beneficial tourism developments.	Policy SSCI P4 – It is a policy of the Council to support the objectives contained in Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 in enhancing public services for rural communities.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
TO 10-10 – a) Encourage tourism related facilities, including accommodation and other developments within existing settlements subject to normal site suitability considerations where they can best support compact growth and the regeneration of settlements, the provision of services and the general economic vitality of the settlement. b) Carefully consider tourism - related developments outside settlements at an appropriate scale and balance having regard to the pertaining environmental conditions and sensitivities, scenic amenity, availability of services and the cumulative impact of such developments on the environment. c) Support sustainable environmentally sensitive small-scale tourism enterprises including Agri-tourism enterprises and other initiatives that are developed in conjunction with established rural activities such as, fishing, walking, cycling, mountain biking, surfing, equestrian sports and other activities where these are compatible with environmental legislation. A limited amount of tourist accommodation could be included in association with such enterprises subject generally to the renovation of existing structures or redundant agricultural farm buildings as well as limited new buildings on an appropriate scale (new structures will have regard to the policies of Chapter 5 Rural). d) Encourage and facilitate the delivery of suitably scaled tourism related retail developments and initiatives in settlements and established tourist attractions where these are compatible with environmental legislation. e) Support the leisure fishing industry and continue to support golf tourism as positive growth sectors in the sustainable economic development of the County while also maintaining the integrity of the landscape and environment of the county as a valuable asset into the future. f) Encourage the provision of small scale agri tourism accommodation and the reuse of disused/derelict farm buildings, in line with the provisions of objectives RP 5-28 Small Scale Agri Tourism Accommodation and RP5-31 New uses for disused or derelict farm buildings.	Objective SCS1 O29 – It is an objective of the Council to support and promote the development of regional and local networks of mountain biking, hiking and walking routes/trails. These should be waymarked/signposted and listed, where feasible and appropriate.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
TO 10-11 – Generally to encourage holiday accommodation to locate within established settlement boundaries and that such development relates sympathetically to the scale and level of development and facilities in the locality. Support the development of commercial motorhome camping facilities, with due regard to the planning and regulatory requirements for such facilities. Emphasis will be placed on developing facilities within settlement boundaries in areas of the County that currently have a lack of suitable facilities.	Objective SCS1 O30 – It is an objective of the Council to support and encourage water-based sports and leisure activities at appropriate locations throughout Limerick, subject to Council Bye-Laws and the Habitats and Birds Directives.
GI 14-4 – a) Support the provision of recreation and amenity facilities in new developments and ensure that the widest range of facilities is provided at locations which can serve the wider community and intergenerational activities, which are accessible to members of the community of all ages and abilities, through initiatives in partnership with community groups and sporting organisations. b) Seek opportunities to improve the quality and capacity of existing recreation and amenity facilities, through initiatives with both public and private sector (sports governing bodies, local community partnerships and private development proposals) and where appropriate the Council will use its powers under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to require development levies to achieve the enhancement of these facilities. c) Ensure the protection, and seek the enhancement and wise management of existing recreational facilities and public open space, and ensure that all new developments make adequate provision for recreational and amenity facilities in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Recreation and Amenity Policy (Interim) and any successor policy and having regard to the Council's policy regarding the management of Green Infrastructure assets. d) To work with the various relevant stakeholders in the preparation of a Metropolitan Cork Open Space, Recreation and Greenbelt Strategy.	
GI 14-7 – Support the diversification of the rural economy through the development of the recreational potential of the countryside in accordance with the National Countryside Recreation Strategy.	
Land, Soils and Geology	

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
BE 15-10 – a) Ensure the protection and conservation of the soils in County Cork by encouraging sustainable management practices and the reuse of brownfield lands. b) Identify areas of poorer soil in the County acknowledge their potential value for wildlife, and respect their limitations, particularly in terms of their assimilative properties to prevent pollution.	Objective EH 09 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Protect from inappropriate development, the County Geological Sites contained in the Limerick Geological Heritage Survey 2021. b) Seek the conservation and protection of features of geological interest within Limerick, particularly those that would have been recognised in the past as Areas of Scientific Interest or by the Geological Survey of Ireland as being of particular value. c) Undertake a survey of such sites during the lifetime of the Plan.
BE 15-11 – a) Require that prior to permitting development on contaminated sites, developers will carry out a full contaminated land risk assessment to demonstrate: - How the proposed land uses will be compatible with the protection of health and safety (including the durability of structures and services) during both construction and occupation; and - How any contaminated soil or water encountered will be appropriately dealt with. b) In the case of development which requires the removal of soil, stones and invasive species, any removal requires the appropriate permits and disposal to authorised sites.	
Water Quality	

WM 11-1 – a) <i>Protect and improve the County’s water resources and ensure that development permitted meets the requirements of the River Basin Management Plan and does not contravene the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive.</i> b) <i>Promote compliance with the River Basin Management Plan and associated environmental standards and objectives set out in the European Communities (Environmental Objectives) Surface Water Regulations, 2009 and the European Communities (Environmental Objectives) Groundwater Regulations, 2010, to prevent deterioration; restore good status; reduce chemical pollution, and achieve water related protected areas objectives in rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters (as applicable).</i> c) <i>Secure the objectives and facilitate the implementation of the associated Programme of Measures of the River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 and any successor plan for ground, surface, estuarine, coastal and transitional waters in the Plan area as part of the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.</i> d) <i>Support an integrated and collaborative approach to local catchment management in order to assist in the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan.</i> e) <i>In acknowledgement of the sustained pressures on ecological status being experienced in Blue Dot catchment waterbodies, additional measures, as deemed necessary to protect and restore these waterbodies to high status may be required for development permitted in such catchments. Measures may include, but are not limited to, a water management plan (including the construction phase), tertiary treatment and appropriate SUDs measures.</i> f) <i>Support the prioritisation of the provision of water services infrastructure in:</i> • <i>Metropolitan Cork, the Key Towns and Main Towns to complement the overall strategy for economic and population growth while ensuring appropriate protection of the environment.</i> • <i>All settlements where services are not meeting current needs, are failing to meet the requirements of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, and where these deficiencies are</i>	Objective EH O15 –<i>It is an objective of the Council to:</i> a) <i>Protect ground and surface water resources and to take into account the requirement of the Water Framework Directive when dealing with planning and land use issues.</i> b) <i>Implement the provisions of the River Basin Management Plan 2022 – 2028 and any succeeding plan. The filling of wetlands, surface water features and modifications and drainage of peatlands shall generally be prohibited.</i> c) <i>Implement the measures put forward in the Limerick Groundwater Protection Plan, in assessing planning applications and their consequences for ground water.</i> d) <i>The Blue Dot Catchments programme is a key action under the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2028. The aim of the programme is to protect and restore high ecological status to a network of rivers and water bodies in Limerick. In Limerick, the following rivers and water bodies are Blue Dot Catchments, Bleach Lough, the Ogeen River and the Behanagh River. The Council will take a precautionary approach to development which might affect water quality in these areas in line with requirements of the Water Framework Directive.</i>
---	---

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
– interfering with Councils ability to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive; or – having negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites; and <i>g) Development may only proceed where appropriate wastewater treatment is available which meets the requirements of environmental legislation, the Water Framework Directive and the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</i>	
WM 11-2 – <i>a) Protect and improve the status and quality of all surface waters throughout the County, including transitional and coastal waters.</i> <i>b) At least secondary treatment should be provided to all wastewater discharges from any new development, to surface waters.</i>	Policy EH P7 – <i>It is a policy of the Council to ensure that water and air quality shall be of the highest standard, to ensure the long term economic, social and environmental well-being of Limerick’s resources. The World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines will be the basis for the air quality guidance in Limerick.</i>
WM 11-3 – <i>a) Preserve and protect groundwater and surface water quality throughout the County.</i> <i>b) Prevent or limit, as appropriate, the input of pollutants into groundwater and prevent the deterioration of the status of all bodies of groundwater.</i> <i>c) Protect, enhance and restore all bodies of groundwater and ensure a balance between abstraction and recharge of groundwater with the aim of achieving good groundwater quantitative status and good groundwater chemical status.</i> <i>d) Reverse any significant and sustained upward trend in the concentration of any pollutant resulting from the impact of human activity in order to progressively reduce pollution of groundwater.</i> <i>e) Achieve compliance with any standards and objectives established for a groundwater dependant protected area included in the register of protected areas.</i>	Objective EH O17 – <i>It is an objective of the Council to support commitments to achieve and maintain ‘At Least Good’ status, except where more stringent obligations are required. There shall be no deterioration of status for all water bodies under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and its programme of measures, the Water Framework Directive and the River Basin Management Plan. Key challenges include, inter alia, the need to address significant deficits in urban waste-water treatment and water supply, addressing flooding and increased flood risks from extreme weather events and increased intense rainfall because of climate change.</i>

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
WM 11-7 – a) <i>The design and planning of water services infrastructure will fully consider the potential impacts of climate change and the need for measures to increase the resilience of this infrastructure to any such impacts.</i> b) <i>Encourage the implementation of rainwater harvesting and water recycling, both in new development or retrospectively, so as to minimise the need for use of drinking standard water for those activities for which it is not required.</i>	Objective IN 07 – <i>It is an objective of the Council to protect both ground and surface water sources, to avoid water quality deterioration and reduce the level of treatment required in the production of drinking water, in accordance with Article 7(2) of the Water Framework Directive.</i> i) <i>New developments which could pose an unacceptable risk to drinking water sources will not be permitted.</i> ii) <i>New development should not conflict with the protection guidelines set out in the Limerick Groundwater Protection Scheme and/ or Groundwater Source Protection Zone reports.</i>

WM 11-14 – a) Support the implementation of • the EU Flood Risk Directive (20010/60/EC) on the assessment and management of flood risks, • the Flood Risk Regulations (SI No 122 of 2010), • the Guidelines on ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management’ (2009) and • the recommendations of the South Western CFRAM study. b) Application of the flood policies of this Plan shall be fully informed by the recommendations contained in the updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (June 2022) accompanying the Plan, including the conclusions of Justification Tests contained therein.	Objective IN O12 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Ensure the separation of foul and surface water discharges in new developments through the provision of separate networks within application site boundaries. b) Work in conjunction with other public bodies towards a sustainable programme of improvement for riverbanks, back drains, etc. c) Maintain, improve and enhance the environmental and ecological quality of surface waters and groundwater, including reducing the discharges of pollutants or contaminants to waters, in accordance with the National River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 (DHPLG) and the associated Programme of Measures and any subsequent River Basin Management Plan. d) Ensure adequate storm water infrastructure to accommodate the planned levels of growth within the Plan area and to ensure that appropriate flood management measures are implemented to protect property and infrastructure. e) Cater for the future developments through public and private driven initiatives where discharge capacity permits. f) Address the issue of disposal of surface water generated by existing development in the area, through improvements to surface water infrastructure, including for example attenuation ponds, the application of sustainable urban drainage techniques, or by minimising the amount of hard surfaced areas, or providing porous surfaces as the opportunity arises. g) Protect the surface water resources of the Plan area and in individual planning applications request the provision of sediment and grease traps and pollution control measures where deemed necessary. h) Require all planning applications to include surface-water design calculations to establish the suitability of drainage between the site and the outfall point and require all new developments to include SuDS, to control surface water outfall and protect water quality in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 11: Development Management Standards of the Plan. i) Promote SuDS and grey water recycling in developments and responsible use of water by the wider community, to reduce the demand for water supply.
--	--

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
	<i>j) Require SuDS schemes to be designed to incorporate the four pillars of water quality, water quantity, biodiversity and amenity to the greatest extent possible within the constraints of a given site.</i> <i>k) Allow sufficient land take for SuDS when planning the site and consider the region as a whole, in association with adjoining lands and their requirements in designing SuDS. Developers may be required to set aside lands to cater for not only their own SuDS but also regional SuDS.</i> <i>l) Promote the provision of suitable blue and green infrastructure and Nature Based Solutions to the surface water disposal in new development, as a means to provide urban flood resilience. This approach capitalises on the potential of urban green spaces and natural water flows, subject to the other planning considerations such as amenity, maintenance, traffic safety, proper planning and sustainable development and environmental requirements.</i> <i>m) To prohibit the discharge of additional surface water to combined (foul and surface water) sewers in order to maximise the capacity of existing collection systems for foul water. In areas where street scape enhancement or resurfacing is planned, seek to introduce NbSUDS to cater for rainfall run-off at source in order to maximize the capacity of existing collection systems for foul water.</i> <i>n) Encourage green roofs for the following types of development:</i> <i>• Apartment developments;</i> <i>• Employment developments;</i> <i>• Retail developments;</i> <i>• Leisure facilities;</i> <i>• Education facilities.</i>
Air Quality, Noise and Climate	

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
BE 15-12 – a) Monitor air quality and air quality trends in accordance with EU policy directives, preserve good air quality where it exists, and take appropriate action, where required, including the provision of additional air quality monitoring infrastructure in urban areas and along major roads. b) Radon barriers should be provided in all new developments in compliance with best practice and relevant Building Regulations. c) Air emissions associated with all new development are to be in line with Environmental Quality Standards as set out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011, or any updated/superseding documents.	Policy EH P3 – It is a policy of the Council to take into account the contents of the National Biodiversity Action Plan and the Biodiversity Climate Adaptation Plan and any forthcoming guidance or legislation on climate action, whether adaptation or mitigation that will emerge during the course of the Plan.
BE 15-13 – a) Seek the minimisation and control of noise pollution associated with activities or development, having regard to relevant standards, published guidance and the receiving environment. b) Ensure noise-sensitive developments are adequately protected from potential sources of noise (e.g. national roads). New developments should take account of, and mitigate against, any existing noise sources. c) Support the implementation of Noise Action Plans prepared for the Cork County area. d) Seek the minimisation and control of light pollution associated with activities of development, having regard to relevant standards, published guidance and the receiving environment and Dark Sky principles. e) Review and update Cork County Council Policy Guidelines for Public Lighting to take account of impacts of public lighting on wildlife and night skies.	Policy EH P7 – It is a policy of the Council to proactively manage environmental noise, where it may have a significant adverse impact on the health and quality of life of communities in Limerick and to support the aims of the Environmental Noise Regulations, through the development and implementation of Noise Action Plans.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
CA 17-2 – In order to achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, an increase in renewable energy production, an increase in energy efficiency and enhanced biodiversity, support the transition to a low carbon, competitive, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 through implementation of the policies of this plan that seek to deliver the following: • compact growth, • integrated land use and transport, • sustainable transport choices, • liveable settlements, • renewable energy production and reduced energy consumption, • enhanced ecological biodiversity and • climate adaptation measures such as through flood risk management, sustainable urban drainage systems and high quality placemaking and design.	Objective EH O23 – It is an objective of the Council to manage entertainment noise from venues and music events, so as not to have an adverse effect on the public.
CA 17-3 – Enhance awareness of climate action issues by promoting and facilitating behavioural change at an individual level.	Objective EH O26 – It is an objective of the Council to implement the provisions of national and EU Directives on air pollution and other relevant legislative requirements in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate.
	Objective IN O1 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Require all infrastructure development, whether above ground or subterranean, to avoid flood risk areas and areas at risk of coastal erosion. b) Require site selection, location, design and materials to have regard to and be resilient to the changing climate (high winds, temperature fluctuations, increased storm intensity and changes in rainfall). c) Collaborate with utility and service providers to ensure their networks are resilient to the impacts of climate change, both in terms of design and ongoing maintenance.
Material Assets	

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
BE 15-14 – a) Support the policy measures and actions outlined in - ‘A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy Ireland’s National Waste Policy 2020-2025’, and - Southern Region Waste Management Plan 2015 – 2021, or any successor plans b) Support circular and climate resilient economy principles and associated strategic infrastructure, prioritising prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery, and to sustainably manage all types of waste by ensuring the provision of adequate waste recovery, recycling and disposal facilities for the county.	ECON 053 – It is an objective of the Council to support digital innovations to facilitate the tourism industry throughout Limerick.
BE 15-16 – Ensure that sludge from drinking water treatment and/or wastewater treatment is appropriately managed, optimising potential for circular economy gains.	Objective TR 08 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Improve and provide clear, safe and direct pedestrian linkages, cycle networks, including the greenways and primary segregated cycle routes, between the employment zones, shopping areas and residential areas throughout Limerick; b) Maintain and expand the pedestrian route network, infrastructure and where possible, retrofit cycle and pedestrian routes into the existing urban road network, to provide for accessible safe pedestrian routes within Limerick.
BE 15-16 – a) Planning applications for infilling of marginal land through soil importation will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the developments accord with proper planning and sustainable development, ensuring that they are compatible with the protection of environmental resources including water quality, Natura 2000 sites, biodiversity, archaeological and landscape resources. b) Support will be provided for locating suitable sites within the county for the safe disposal of construction and demolition waste in conjunction with the Southern Waste Region. c) Construction and Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs)/ Construction and Demolition Management Plans shall be prepared for larger scale projects as set out in paragraph 15.12.24 and this requirement shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis as part of the development management process. d) Support the implementation of the recommendations and policies of the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2014-2020.	Policy TR P9 – It is a policy of the Council to support the objectives contained in Our Rural Future: Government’s Blueprint to Transport Rural Ireland, including investment in public transport and high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure specifically targeted at towns and villages.

TM12-2-1 – <i>Deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking and cycling to promote accessible, attractive, liveable, vibrant and safe settlements to work, live, shop and engage in community life, within a ten minute walk of one’s home. Prioritise development in our settlements that is well located and designed to facilitate walking, cycling and public transport trips. Promote equal access for all through the adherence to universal design in the external built environment to facilitate greater use of public transport, walking and cycling.</i> <i>a) New development areas will be permeable for walking and cycling, via safe, convenient and enjoyable routes, and the retrospective implementation of walking and cycling facilities shall be undertaken where practicable in existing neighbourhoods, to give competitive advantage to these modes. See DMURS (2020 or later revision) and National Cycle Manual and Permeability Best Practice Guide (NTA) for guidance.</i> <i>b) All new developments are to be designed to latest DMURS standards, unless precluded by space or other constraints, to be accessible and permeable for pedestrians, cyclists and those of reduced mobility.</i> <i>c) Applications for all new developments are to be accompanied by a statement of how enhanced and inclusive permeability will be achieved, to include a statement of compliance with DMURS (2020 or later revision) and a quality audit (as referred to in DMURS).</i> <i>d) Development should incorporate the retention of existing routes and linkages which contribute to permeability of an area, particularly those providing access to key services, facilities and public transport infrastructure. Loss of existing links shall not occur if their loss results in more circuitous trips.</i> <i>e) Walkability and accessibility by walking mode will be a central objective in the planning and design of all new transport infrastructure and public transport services.</i> <i>f) Public realm upgrades will be promoted to enhance walking and cycling provision in settlements.</i> <i>g) Deliver settlements that offer a broad range of services as well as diverse and higher density residential development to support walking and cycling.</i>	Policy TR P10 – <i>It is a policy of the Council to continue to support the ‘Local Link’ rural transport service and to encourage operators to improve the service to meet the social and economic needs of the rural communities in Limerick.</i>
---	--

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
<i>h) Support the function of the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy to achieve higher rates of modal shift to sustainable transport.</i> <i>i) Encourage mixed use developments on regeneration-sites within town centres where appropriate.</i>	
TM12-2-5 –New paths and cycleways/ greenways and upgrades to existing paths and cycleways/greenways will be sensitively designed having regard to environmental, nature conservation, landscape and other heritage considerations, and committing, in particular to providing appropriate set-backs from water courses where new paths and cycleways/greenways are proposed along rivers, streams, lakes or other sensitive areas. The development of a greenway strategy for the County is required to guide consideration of future greenway identification and development in a plan-led approach.	Objective TR 038 – It is an objective of the Council to provide for and carry out sustainable improvements to sections of regional roads and local roads, that are deficient in respect of alignment, structural condition, or capacity, where resources permit and to maintain that standard thereafter.

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
TM12-5-3 – Support and prioritise the following key Bus Transport initiatives: a) Encourage both the improvement and extension of services so that they offer a realistic alternative to the private car in providing effective linkages between the main locations where people live and where they work; b) Promote improvements to existing bus services and generally encourage the enhancement of service provision in tandem with planned population growth; c) Promote the introduction of new bus services on routes where they can offer a direct alternative to the routes most popular with private car users; d) Encourage the provision of safe and convenient interchange facilities in all main towns; e) Encourage the better management of road space to secure a journey time advantage for bus services.	Objective IN 06 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Support Irish Water in the provision of water and wastewater infrastructure and services in accordance with the Service Level Agreement, until such time as the Agreement is terminated. b) Collaborate with Irish Water in the protection of water supply sources to avoid water quality deterioration and reduce the level of treatment required in the production of drinking water, in accordance with Article 7(2) of the WFD. Protection and restoration of drinking water at the source can have co-benefits for biodiversity and climate change. c) Liaise with Irish Water during the lifetime of the Plan to secure investment in the provision, extension and upgrading of the piped water distribution network and wastewater pipe network across Limerick City and County, to serve existing population and future population growth and sustain economic growth, in accordance with the requirements of the Core and Settlement Strategies. d) Collaborate with Irish Water to resolve the existing water services infrastructural constraints in Newcastle West – a Key Town designated by the RSES. e) Ensure that development proposals connecting to the public water and/or wastewater networks, now or in the future comply with Irish Water Standard Details and Codes of Practice. Where relevant, ensure developments comply with the EPA Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems 2021. f) Require future developments to connect to public water services and wastewater if available to the site. Combined water and wastewater systems will not be permitted. Consent to connect to Irish Water assets will be requested as part of the planning application process. g) Have regard to Section 28 Guidelines – Draft Water Services Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DHPLG, 2018 and any subsequent guidelines when carrying out the forward planning and development management functions of the Planning Authority.

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
TM12-6 – Support investment in sustainable transport infrastructure that strengthens the connections between rural and urban areas.	
WM 11-9 – a) Require that development in all settlements connect to public wastewater treatment facilities subject to sufficient capacity being available which does not interfere with Council’s ability to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the Habitats Directive. In settlements where no public wastewater system is either available or proposed, or where design, capacity or licensing issues have been identified in existing plants, new developments will be unable to proceed until adequate wastewater infrastructure is provided. b) In assessing proposals for development, it is a requirement that adequate assimilative capacity in the receiving waterbody be retained so as to allow for the overall growth of the settlement. c) Development proposals incorporating proposals for management of wastewater through use of Integrated Constructed Wetlands should be designed to comply with national guidelines. d) Development in and around Wastewater Treatment Plants will not generally be permitted within 100m of a treatment works or 25m of a pumping station. This distance may be increased if significant environmental issues are likely to arise and will be judged on a site by site basis. The buffer area may be used to fulfil open space requirements.	Objective IN 09 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Ensure adequate and appropriate wastewater infrastructure is available to cater for existing and proposed development, in collaboration with Irish Water, to avoid any deterioration in the quality of receiving waters and to ensure that discharge meets the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. b) Require all new developments to connect to public wastewater infrastructure, where available and to encourage existing developments that are in close proximity to a public sewer to connect to that sewer. These will be subject to a connection agreement with Irish Water and evidence of this agreement will be required as part of any planning application. c) Require all new development to provide separate foul and surface water drainage systems, to maximise the capacity of existing collection systems for foul water. d) Apply a presumption against any development that requires the provision of private wastewater treatment facilities (i.e. Developer Provided Infrastructure) other than single house systems and in very exceptional circumstances.

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
	Objective IN O18 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Direct waste management facilities to appropriately zoned lands, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria and the relevant Development Management Standards as set out in Chapter 11 of this Plan. b) Maintain recycling facilities and require the provision of bring banks or other appropriate recycling facilities as part of the overall development in the case of new or extended retail centre development and commercial local/ neighbourhood centres, educational, sports and recreational facilities. These facilities shall be provided and maintained by the developers, operational management companies and occupiers. c) Use the regulatory enforcement powers available to the Council under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and under the Waste Management Act 1996 (as amended), to address unauthorised waste facilities and the illegal disposal of waste in Limerick.
Cultural Heritage	
TO 10-5 – Protect and conserve those natural, built, and cultural heritage features that form the resources on which the County’s tourist industry is based. These features will include areas of important landscape, coastal scenery, areas of important wildlife interest, historic buildings and structures including archaeological sites, cultural sites including battlefields, the Gaeltacht areas, arts and cultural sites, the traditional form and appearance of many built up areas and promote access and interpretation of archaeological sites in State and Local Authority ownership.	ECON O49 – It is an objective of the Council to ensure that tourism facilities, are not located or designed where they would be significantly detrimental to environmentally sensitive areas, such as designated ecological areas, areas of archaeological potential or historic landscapes either existing or which may arise in the future, as a result of any surveys.
TO 10-5 –a) Consider the sustainable development of facilities that enhance the audience capacity of festivals. b) Encourage the development of Cultural trails around the County while having regard for the cultural built heritage and environmental impacts, including the protection of sites designated or proposed to be designated for nature conservation including NHAs and pNHAs and other areas of high biodiversity value.	Policy EH P4 – It is a policy of the Council to place ecological and environmental issues at the centre of planning policies and decisions and in doing so, will adhere to the objectives set out in Limerick’s Heritage Plan 2017-2030.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
HE 16-2 – Secure the preservation (i.e. preservation in situ or in exceptional cases preservation by record) of all archaeological monuments and their setting included in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) (see www.archaeology.ie) and the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and of sites, features and objects of archaeological and historical interest generally. In securing such preservation, the planning authority will have regard to the advice and recommendations of the Development Applications Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage as outlined in the Frameworks and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage policy document or any changes to the policy within the lifetime of the Plan.	Policy EH P4 – It is a policy of the Council to promote high standards for conserving and restoring the built environment and promote its value in improving living standards and its benefits to the economy.
HE 16-9 – All large scale planning applications (i.e. development of lands on 0.5 ha or more in area or 1km or more in length) and Infrastructure schemes and proposed roadworks are subjected to an archaeological assessment as part of the planning application process which should comply with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's codes of practice. It is recommended that the assessment is carried out following pre planning consultation with the County Archaeologist, by an appropriately experienced archaeologist to guide the design and layout of the proposed scheme/development, safeguarding the archaeological heritage in line with Development Management Guidelines.	Objective EH O36 – It is an objective of the Council to seek the preservation of all known sites and features of historical and archaeological interest. This is to include all the sites listed in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. The preferred option is preservation in situ, or at a minimum preservation by record.
HE 16-10 – Where archaeological sites are accommodated within a development it shall be appropriately conservation/ protection with provision for a suitable buffer zone and long-term management plan put in place all to be agreed in advance with the County Archaeologist.	Objective EH O39 – It is an objective of the Council to ensure that no development shall have a negative impact on the character or setting of an archaeological monument.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
HE 16-11 – <i>To protect archaeological landscapes and their setting where the number and extent of archaeological monuments are significant and as a collective are considered an important archaeological landscape of heritage value.</i>	Objective EH O40 – <i>It is an objective of the Council to:</i> <i>a) Ensure early engagement at preplanning stage is undertaken with the Local Authority Archaeologist to promote the ‘preservation in situ’ of archaeological remains and settings in development.</i> <i>b) Adopt a policy of archaeological monitoring of developments where the scale and nature of such developments may, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, have a negative impact on previously unknown archaeological features/ artefacts.</i> <i>c) Require the preparation of an Archaeological Heritage Assessment in cases where it is deemed that Archaeological Heritage would be affected by a proposed development (due to their location, size or nature). The report shall be prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist on the archaeological implications, if any, of the proposed development either prior to a decision on a planning application or prior to commencement of development on site.</i>

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
HE 16-14 – a) The identification of structures for inclusion in the Record will be based on criteria set out in the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011). b) Extend the Record of Protected Structures in order to provide a comprehensive schedule for the protection of structures of special importance in the County during the lifetime of the Plan as resources allow. c) Seek the protection of all structures within the County, which are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. In accordance with this objective, a Record of Protected Structures has been established and is set out in Volume Two Heritage and Amenity, Chapter 1 Record of Protected Structures. d) Ensure the protection of all structures (or parts of structures) contained in the Record of Protected Structures. e) Protect the curtilage and attendant grounds of all structures included in the Record of Protected Structures. f) Ensure that development proposals are appropriate in terms of architectural treatment, character, scale and form to the existing protected structure and not detrimental to the special character and integrity of the protected structure and its setting. g) Ensure high quality architectural design of all new developments relating to or which may impact on structures (and their settings) included in the Record of Protected Structures. h) Promote and ensure best conservation practice through the use of specialist conservation professionals and craft persons. i) In the event of a planning application being granted for development within the curtilage of a protected structure, that the repair of a protected structure is prioritised in the first instance i.e. the proposed works to the protected structure should occur, where appropriate, in the first phase of the development to prevent endangerment, abandonment and dereliction of the structure.	Objective EH 044 – It is an objective of the Council to protect the unique archaeological landscape at Lough Gur and to support the archaeological objectives in the Lough Gur Environment and Management Study 2009.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
<i>HE 16-15 – Protect where possible all structures which are included in the NIAH for County Cork, that are not currently included in the Record of Protected Structures, from adverse impacts as part of the development management functions of the County.</i>	<i>Objective EH O52 – It is an objective of the Council to review and update the RPS on foot of any Ministerial recommendations including the NIAH and any future updates. The Ministerial Recommendations, made under Section 53 of the Planning Act, will be taken into account when the Planning Authority is considering proposals for development that would affect the historic or architectural interest of these structures.</i>

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
HE 16-18 – Conserve and enhance the special character of the Architectural Conservation Areas included in this Plan. The special character of an area includes its traditional building stock, material finishes, spaces, streetscape, shopfronts, landscape and setting. This will be achieved by; (a) Protecting all buildings, structures, groups of structures, sites, landscapes and all other features considered to be intrinsic elements to the special character of the ACA from demolition and nonsympathetic alterations. (b) Promoting appropriate and sensitive reuse and rehabilitation of buildings and sites within the ACA and securing appropriate infill development. (c) Ensure new development within or adjacent to an ACA respects the established character of the area and contributes positively in terms of design, scale, setting and material finishes to the ACA. (d) Protect structures from demolition and non sympathetic alterations. (e) Promoting high quality architectural design within ACAs. (f) Seek the repair and re-use of traditional shopfronts and where appropriate, encourage new shopfronts of a high quality architectural design. (g) Ensure all new signage, lighting advertising and utilities to buildings within ACAs are designed, constructed and located in such a manner they do not detract from the character of the ACA. (h) Protect and enhance the character and quality of the public realm within ACAs. All projects which involve works within the public realm of an ACA shall undertake a character assessment of the said area which will inform a sensitive and appropriate approach to any proposed project in terms of design and material specifications. All projects shall provide for the use of suitably qualified conservation architects/ designers. (i) Protect and enhance the character of the ACA and the open spaces contained therein. This shall be achieved through the careful and considered strategic management of all signage, lighting, utilities, art works/pieces/paintings, facilities etc to protect the integrity and quality of the structures and spaces within each ACA. (j) Ensure the protection and reuse of historic street finishes, furniture and features which contribute to the character of the ACA.	

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
HE 16-20 –a) Recognise the contribution and importance of historic landscapes and their contribution to the appearance of the countryside, their significance as archaeological, architectural, historical and ecological resources. b) Protect the archaeological, architectural, historic and cultural element of the historic/heritage landscapes of the County of Cork. c) All new development within historic landscapes should be assessed in accordance with and giving due regard to Cork County Councils ‘Guidance Notes for the Appraisal of Historic Gardens, Demesnes, Estates and their Settings’ or any other relevant guidance notes or documents issued during the lifetime of the Plan.	
Landscape and Visual	
GI 14-9 – a) Protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Cork’s built and natural environment. b) Landscape issues will be an important factor in all land-use proposals, ensuring that a pro-active view of development is undertaken while protecting the environment and heritage generally in line with the principle of sustainability. c) Ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design. d) Protect skylines and ridgelines from development. e) Discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amounts of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.	ECON 050 – It is an objective of the Council to consider public facilities and amenities of a type and scale that are incidental to tourist attractions and associated services where they would: a) Allow these attractions to be enjoyed and accessed by the public; b) Cater for basic needs of the public, incidental to the enjoyment of these attractions; c) Help to protect sensitive features through information and by appropriate management; d) Be adequately serviced and managed; e) Be inclusive to all members of the community. Applications must be accompanied by a management plan and justified by reference to a coherent, evidence-based tourism and recreational strategy applicable to the area. Such development should not impair the capacity of the road network.
GI 14-10 – Ensure that the management of development throughout the County will have regard for the value of the landscape, its character, distinctiveness and sensitivity as recognised in the Cork County Draft Landscape Strategy and its recommendations, in order to minimize the visual and environmental impact of development, particularly in areas designated as High Value Landscapes where higher development standards (layout, design, landscaping, materials used) will be required.	Objective EH 024 – It is an objective of the Council to ensure that the design of external lighting schemes minimise the incidence of light spillage or pollution in the immediate surrounding environment. In this regard, developers shall submit lighting elements as part of any design, with an emphasis on ensuring that any lighting is carefully directed, not excessive for its purpose and avoids light spill outside the development and where necessary will be wildlife friendly in design.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
GI 14-12 – Preserve the character of all important views and prospects, particularly sea views, river or lake views, views of unspoilt mountains, upland or coastal landscapes, views of historical or cultural significance (including buildings and townscapes) and views of natural beauty as recognized in the Draft Landscape Strategy.	Policy EH P8 – It is a policy of the Council to promote the distinctiveness and where necessary safeguard the sensitivity of Limerick’s landscape types, through the landscape characterisation process in accordance with the Draft Guidelines for Landscape and Landscape Assessment (2000) as issued by the Department of Environment and Local Government, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention (Florence Convention) and with A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland – 2015/2025. The Council shall implement any relevant recommendations contained in the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht’s National Landscape Strategy for Ireland, 2015 – 2025.
GI 14-13 – Protect the character of those views and prospects obtainable from scenic routes and in particular stretches of scenic routes that have very special views and prospects identified in this Plan. The scenic routes identified in this Plan are shown on the scenic amenity maps in the CDP Map Browser and are listed in Volume 2 Heritage and Amenity Chapter 5 Scenic Routes of this Plan.	Policy EH P8 – It is an objective of the Council to: a) Preserve, protect and encourage the enjoyment of views and prospects of special amenity value or special interests and to prevent development, which would block or otherwise interfere with views and/or prospects. b) In areas where scenic views and prospects are listed in the Plan, there will be a presumption against development, except that required to facilitate farming and appropriate tourism and related activities. The development must be appropriately designed so that it can be integrated into the landscape.
GI 14-14 – a) Require those seeking to carry out development in the environs of a scenic route and/or an area with important views and prospects, to demonstrate that there will be no adverse obstruction or degradation of the views towards and from vulnerable landscape features. In such areas, the appropriateness of the design, site layout, and landscaping of the proposed development must be demonstrated along with mitigation measures to prevent significant alterations to the appearance or character of the area. b) Encourage appropriate landscaping and screen planting of developments along scenic routes (See Chapter 16 Built and Cultural Heritage).	
GI 14-15 – Ensure that the approach roads to towns and villages are protected from inappropriate development, which would detract from the setting and historic character of these settlements.	

10 Monitoring

10.1 Introduction

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

Monitoring is based around indicators which allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives (**Section 6**) used in the assessment. Each indicator to be monitored is accompanied by the targets. The monitoring programme may be updated to deal with specific environmental issues - including unforeseen effects - as they arise. Such issues may be identified by the Council or identified to the Council by other agencies.

Fáilte Ireland is responsible for monitoring and the preparation of monitoring evaluation report(s), the publication of these reports and, if necessary, the carrying out of corrective action. It is recommended that the monitoring for the Ballyhoura DEDP and review is undertaken in parallel with monitoring and review of the *Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028* and *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028* for efficiency and given that similar data sets will be used to measure the progress of each plan.

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

Refer to **Table 10.1** below for the monitoring programme set for the SEA which includes details on the indicators, targets and data sources to monitor the progress of the Ballyhoura DEDP.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Table 10.1 Environmental Monitoring Programme

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
Biodiversity (Flora & Fauna) (B)				
B1	Ensure compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 Sites and Annex habitats and species ⁴⁵ and no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function.	Conservation status of habitats and species protected under European and International legislation.	Maintenance of favourable conservation status for habitats and species protected under European and International legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the Plan.	Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every 3 years) Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years) Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS) data. EPA State of the Environment reporting. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes. Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities.
B2	Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, including internationally, EU and nationally designated sites, habitats and protected species.	Conservation status of habitats and species protected under International and National legislation.	Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under International and National legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the Plan.	EPA State of the Environment reporting. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.

⁴⁵ 'Annexed habitats and species' refer to those listed under Annex I, II & IV of the EU Habitats Directive and Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
B3	Ensure the Ballyhoura DEDP does not contradict biodiversity protection, restoration and rehabilitation objectives in the Cork Country Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028.	To comply with the biodiversity policies and objectives of the Cork Country Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028.	No contravention of the biodiversity policies and objectives of the Cork Country Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028.	Cork and Limerick County Council monitoring likely significant environmental effects of the developments and compliance with policies and objectives of the CDPs.
Population & Human Health (PHH)				
PHH1	Promote sustainable high quality tourism within the County that supports economic development and maximises potential for employment and investment.	To comply with the tourism and economic development policies and objectives of the Cork Country Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028.	No contravention of the tourism and economic development policies and objectives of the Cork Country Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028.	Central Statistics Office (CSO) census data. Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
PHH2	Improve health and wellbeing by provision of recreational and tourism-related activities.	Occurrence of a spatially concentrated deterioration in human health arising from environmental factors resulting from the Ballyhoura DEDP, as identified by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and / or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).	No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of the Ballyhoura DEDP.	Publicly available data from HSE and EPA to be reviewed. EPA State of the Environment reporting. Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
Land, Soils & Geology (LSG)				
LSG1	Minimise green field development and protect land and soil resources from pollution and degradation.	Extent of conversion of land cover / green field to developed / artificial surfaces.	Contribute towards the target of the SEA for the National Planning Framework's (2018) to " <i>Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4%.</i> "	CORINE mapping surveys (every 5 years). EPA State of the Environment reporting.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
Water Quality (WQ)				
WQ1	Protect, maintain and where necessary improve water quality and the management of watercourses, groundwater and the marine environment, in compliance with the requirements of the WFD objectives and measures.	Classification of Overall Status (comprised of ecological and chemical status) under the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (S.I. No. 272 of 2009). Groundwater compliance with Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC, subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD. Reference to EPA WFD Monitoring programme and status of surface waterbodies, groundwater bodies reported.	No deterioration in the status of any groundwater or surface water, or adverse effect upon the ability of any groundwater or surface water to achieve 'good status' as a result of the Ballyhoura DEDP.	Information issued under the Water Framework Directive Monitoring Programme for Ireland (multi-annual). Review of WFD status of Bathing Waters, green flag / blue flag for beaches. EPA State of the Environment reporting. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
WQ2	Implement and comply with the provisions of the Flood Risk Management and Sustainable Drainage Systems Guidelines to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.	Flood-related incidences related to the Ballyhoura DEDP.	Compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and to ensure that any new developments granted planning permissions are on appropriately zoned lands.	Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes. Review of planning applications for any new infrastructure to be accompanied by standalone flood risk assessment report in sensitive areas.
Air Quality, Noise & Climate (ANC)				

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
ANC1	Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality and noise emissions through the reduction of emissions.	Demonstration of compliance with air quality and noise provisions. Number of exceedances of ambient air quality standards in the study area, as monitored under the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Network.	To maximise the amount of measures relating to air quality and noise minimisation being implemented.	EPA State of the Environment reporting. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes. Review of Air Quality Dashboard for air quality monitoring data results and EPA data for air quality monitoring. Review of Air Pollution Information System (APIS) for information on impacts of air pollutants, such as NOx, ammonia emissions and the associated Nitrogen deposition on sensitive habitats and species.
ANC2	Contribute towards climate adaptation and mitigation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with National targets, including Ireland's commitment to realising a climate neutral economy by 2050.	Demonstration of compliance with provisions relating to climate adaptation and mitigation.	To maximise the amount of measures relating to climate adaptation and mitigation being implemented.	EPA State of the Environment reporting. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
Material Assets (MA)				
MA1	To contribute towards the protection of public assets and infrastructure, ensure new developments are served with adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure with sufficient capacity (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) that does not present a danger to human health.	Number of incompatible developments (supported by the plan) adversely affecting existing or planned infrastructure, including water supply, wastewater management, energy and transport infrastructure.	No incompatible development (supported by the plan) adversely affecting existing or planned material assets infrastructure.	Review of Annual Environmental Reports prepared by Uisce Éireann. Review of publicly available data from EPA monitoring. EPA State of the Environment reporting. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
MA2	Promote sustainable waste management, minimisation and recovery.	Tonnes of hazardous waste received at Council Waste	Increase waste recycling in the Counties.	EPA State of the Environment reporting.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
		Management Facilities annually. Tonnes of W.E.E.E. waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually. Tonnes of Bulky waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually. Tonnes of garden waste received at Council Waste Management Facilities annually.	Reduce waste generation in the Counties.	Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
MA3	Promote sustainable transportation including increased use of public transport and active travel measures.	% change in modal split. Kilometres of permanent segregated cycling network. Kilometres of permanent integrated cycling network. Number of Electric Vehicle charging points in the study area. Total Area of road reallocated for sustainable alternatives.	Percentage increase in the number of public transport users in the study area. Increase kilometres of permanent segregated cycling network. Increase kilometres of permanent segregated cycling network. Increase number of Electric Vehicle charging points in the study area. Increase Total Area of road reallocated for sustainable alternatives	Review delivery of sustainable transport projects via Cork and Limerick County Councils / NTA. Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
Cultural Heritage (CH)				
CH1	Protect and avoid impact on places, features and landscapes of cultural and	Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and	No adverse effects on archaeological or cultural heritage	Review of data available from National Monuments Section of Department of

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
	archaeological importance, including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).	Places protected from significant adverse effects arising from the Plan.	resulting from implementation of the Plan.	Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
CH2	Protect and avoid impact on places, features, buildings and landscapes of architectural heritage, (including entries to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAHs)).	Percentage of entries to the Records of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from the Plan.	No adverse effects on architectural heritage resulting from implementation of the Plan.	Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities.
Landscape & Visual (LV)				
LV1	To protect landscape character, minimise the loss of historic landscape features such as mature trees and hedgerows and scenic views.	Number of unmitigated conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in Development Plans and other statutory land-use plans.	No unmitigated conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in Development Plans and other statutory land-use plans.	Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.
LV2	Avoid impacts on the statutory landscape & visual designations as identified in the Cork Country Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028.	Status of High Amenity Zones and Views and Prospects. Number of developments permitted that result in avoidable adverse impacts on High Amenity Zones and Views and Prospects.	All action and development proposals supported by the plan must comply with policy objectives relating to the protection of High Amenity Zone and Views and Prospects defined in the CDPs. No development supported by the plan should have an adverse	Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes. Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities.

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
			impact on High Amenity Zones and Views and Prospects.	

11 References

- Council Directive Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.*
- Environment Director General of the European Commission (2003). *Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment.*
- EPA (2026a). *SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans - EPA Recommendations and Resources.*
- EPA (2026b). *SEA Spatial Information Sources Inventory.*
- EPA (2024a). *Spatial Information Resources Inventory.*
- EPA (2024b). *SEA Pack.*
- EPA (2023). *Good Practice Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Tourism Sector.*
- EPA (2020). *Ireland's Environment – An Integrated Assessment.*
- EPA (2015). *Strategic Environmental Assessment Resource Manual for Planning Authorities – Integration of SEA Legislation with Procedures for Land Use Plans.*
- EPA (2013). *Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment – Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual.*
- EPA (2023). *SEA Process Checklist [Consultation Draft 2024].*
- EPA (2003). *Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland – Synthesis Report.*
- Fossitt, J.A. (2000). *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland.*
- European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 200/2011).*
- European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435/2004).*
- European Parliament and Council Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.*
- European Union (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025 (S.I. No. 456/2025)*
- Government of Ireland (2018). *Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework.*
- Government of Ireland (2004). *Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment – Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities.*
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (2020) *Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment.*
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (2016) *Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries during construction works in and adjacent to Waters.*
- Cork County Council (2022). *Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028, including environment reports*
- Limerick County Council (2023). *Limerick County Development Plan 2023-2029, including environment reports*
- OPW (2009). *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.*
- Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.*
- Planning and Development Regulations 2024, as amended.*

12 Appendices

Appendix 1:

Detailed Assessment of Environmental Effects of the Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan Action Plan

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

Table 8.1A Environmental Assessment of the Ballyhoura DEDP Action Plan

(SEO Key: B – Biodiversity, PHH – Population & Human Health, LSG – Land, Soils & Geology, WQ – Water Quality, ANC – Air Quality, Noise & Climate Change, MA – Material Assets, CH – Cultural Heritage, LV – Landscape & Visual)

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
1	Catalyst Project: Build Awareness (Marketing & Publicity)						
1.1	IHH Brand Adoption and Education Programme	Deliver an IHH brand adoption and education programme for the Ballyhoura tourism industry partners to ensure a collective understanding of the regional brand opportunity and how to leverage it for sustainable growth in tourism. This will also include a focus on increased use of the Ballyhoura brand.	PHH (PHH1, PHH2)	B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)			No
1.2	Growing Domestic Tourism- Demand Generation	Grow the capabilities of Ballyhoura tourism industry to implement a commercial approach to marketing and sales generation for their business and collectively increase the level of destination recognition in the domestic market.					
1.3	International Profile Development	Work with the Ballyhoura tourism industry to implement a phased approach to marketing and demand generation to grow destination awareness in international markets. This will include B2B sales training, sales task force identification, preparation for sales events and leveraging the opportunities that arise in the Ballyhoura DEDP.					
1.4	Grow the Digital Profile of Ballyhoura	Convene stakeholders to review the findings of the Digital Survey conducted by Fáilte Ireland as part of the DEDP process, with a focus on addressing digital infrastructure gaps and training needs, exploring AI's role in community tourism, and identifying opportunities to enhance Ballyhoura's online presence through digital supports, social commerce, and AI-driven search.					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
1.5	AI and Digital Skills Capability Building	Undertake a co-ordinated programme of training and capability building focusing on digital skills development, enhancing Ballyhoura’s digital infrastructure and the opportunities presented by AI for Tourism & Hospitality.					
1.6	Ballyhoura Content Creation	Undertake tourism industry training on content creation to align destination marketing and communications with the character of the place and the essence of the Ballyhoura destination I.e. local people, communities and local stories.					
1.7	Co-ordinated Marketing Approach	Commit to a co-ordinated marketing planning approach in partnership with Ballyhoura Fáilte, Pure Cork, Cork County Council, Limerick City & County Council and Munster Vales to ensure consistency in delivering the destination message to domestic and international audiences.					
	SEA Evaluation: The ‘Build Awareness’ catalyst project is likely to have positive effects on population and human health objectives through increased connection between prospective tourists and local businesses in Ballyhoura. The projects and programmes detailed under the catalyst project pertain to brand marketing, upskilling local industries in advertisement, digitising experiences and promoting collaboration across the region. The effects of this project will be digital or interpersonal and not likely to have negative or uncertain effects on any other environmental objective. As such, no mitigation is required.						
Strategic Objective 2 – Establish Ballyhoura as a leading outdoor activity destination, supported by a well-connected series of visitor experiences that help tell the story of the people and their place.							
2	Catalyst Project: Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan, including Mountain Bike Centre & Beara Breifne Way		PHH (PHH1, PHH2)				Yes
2.1	Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan Implementation	Work with all relevant agencies, local communities and the tourism industry to implement the Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan. This will include the enhancement and development of the trails network and the sustainable development of: Community rails, Activity hubs and Signature clusters. (Actions below are included in Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan).					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
2.2	Seefin Summit Path	Promote the sustainable and environmentally sensitive development of the Ballyhoura Uplands to grow the trails connectivity and links to the Beara Breifne Way and bike trail. This will include re-building sections of trail sections near the summit of Seefin East, maintaining and re-routing sections of trail giving utmost consideration to environmental sensitivities and engaging with the NPWS, Coillte and Mountaineering Ireland to adopt an integrated approach to management of access in upland areas.			(LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)		
2.3	Beara Breifne Way	Deliver the Ballyhoura components of the Beara Breifne Way, supported by an activation programme that enables the tourism industry to engage with the opportunity and ensures strong integration with the wider Ballyhoura trails experience.					
2.4	Mountain Bike Trail Centre Visitor Experience	Develop Visitor Facilities at the mountain bike Trail Head, inclusive of toilets, showers, shop, pump tracks. The approach will enhance the visitor experience on the mountain biking trails to establish Ballyhoura as an international mountain biking destination. Support this ambition by assessing the feasibility of installing cycling amenities such as pump tracks, enhancing the quality of trails and delivering a quality visitor experience in the trail head centre.					
2.5	Developing Cycling Amenities – Pump Tracks	Undertake a scoping and identification project into potential sites for developing additional cycling pump tracks in local communities across Ballyhoura.					
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive on population and human health objectives.							
However, in the absence of mitigation, upgrades to trails including new amenities and rebuilding of trail sections may have uncertain or negative effects on other environmental SEOs from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.							

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
3	Catalyst Project: Heritage Attractions Cluster		PHH (PHH1, PHH2)	B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)			No
2.6	Doneraile House & Gardens Visitor Experience	Promote the OPW cluster development of Doneraile House and Gardens and Anne's Grove to reflect their promotional and developmental interdependencies. This will include enhancing the visitor experience at Doneraile House & Gardens to become a signature indoor attraction for Ballyhoura and to optimise the promotion of the Changing Places.					
2.7	Anne's Grove Gardens Development Plan	Implement the Anne's Grove Gardens development plan to include the restoration of further historic structures (e.g. the house) and visitor facilities (e.g. pathways, café, toilets). Support the cluster development and interdependencies with Doneraile House and Gardens to also include demand generation.					
2.8	Lough Gur Masterplan	Develop a comprehensive Masterplan for Lough Gur that integrates the Visitor Centre, surrounding heritage assets such as Grange Stone Circle, and planned enhancements including the Lough Gur Walkway and Bird Hide projects, with the objective of creating a coherent and enriched visitor proposition for Lough Gur.					
2.9	Kilmallock Merchant House / Stone Mansion Development Plan	Undertake a development plan for the Merchant House / Stone Mansion project to create a viable multifunctional space that will include: 1. Building restoration requirements 2. Community spaces and uses and 3. Tourism role combining the interpretation of the local heritage story and ability to signpost visitors to experiences across the destination.					
2.10	Mitchelstown Georgian Quarter	Develop a visitor proposition for the Georgian Quarter and experience development plan to maximise the impact of future town regeneration investment and enhancement of					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
		Mitchelstown as a planned Georgian town. This will include a focus on day and evening time visitor experience development linked to the theme of the Georgian Quarter and maximising the role of heritage and cultural assets such as the Saint George's Arts & Heritage Centre.					
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive or neutral effects on the environmental themes and SEOs. The Anne's Grove Garden and Kilmallock Merchant House development plans have been subject to their own planning application processes. No negative or uncertain environmental effects arise and therefore, mitigation is not required.							
3	Catalyst Project: Heritage Attractions Cluster		PHH (PHH1, PHH2)	B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)			No
2.11	Ballyhoura / Golden Vale Food in Tourism Cluster	Develop a cluster of Ballyhoura food experiences that will contribute to Cork's ambition to become a World Region of Gastronomy by 2030. The cluster will be the focus for a food tourism visitor experience development programme and will evolve into a Ballyhoura Food Experience Trail linking to day and evening time activity based around food.					
2.12	Food Tourism Experience Development	Implement a 'food in tourism' saleable experience development programme to grow the number of food and drink experiences in Ballyhoura.					
2.13	Ballyhoura Food Experience Trail	Explore the potential for Ballyhoura Food Experience trail showcasing food and drink experiences.					
2.14	Food & Drink in Destination Events	Examine opportunities to incorporate food and drink experiences into existing and future Ballyhoura festivals and events.					
2.15	Agri Tourism and Food Experiences	Host an 'introduction to tourism programme' linked to agri-tourism opportunities followed by saleable experience development supports. This will include exploring opportunities such as farm visits, meet the maker and food experiences.					
2.16	Kilfinane Market House Feasibility Study	Assess the opportunities to be considered for the Kilfinane Market House to include its use as an enterprise hub that					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
		will include a visitor experience e.g. food or the inclusion of alternative accommodation options. In preparation for a Category 1 RRDF application develop a brief that scopes out the range of opportunities to be considered.					
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive or neutral effects on the environmental themes and SEOs. No negative or uncertain environmental effects arise and therefore, mitigation is not required.							
	Supporting Projects: Ballyhoura Community Hubs – Activity Basecamp Hubs		PHH (PHH1, PHH2)		B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)		Yes
2.17	Ballyhoura Community Hubs – Outdoor Activity Basecamp Pilot Site	Develop a ‘Community Hub / Basecamp’ roadmap and development action plan to develop a visitor services hub / trail head in local communities linked to the uplands areas. The assessment will identify one location in the short term to be developed as the Ballyhoura pilot Basecamp to layer onto existing local community facilities, social enterprises and / or private sector involvement. The roadmap will incorporate the learnings of the Fáilte Ireland basecamp development pilot programme.					
2.18	Water Activity Hubs – Water Activity Basecamps	Build on the destinations community hub and activity basecamp positioning to create a pilot water activity basecamp in Ballyhass Adventure Centre as part of the enhancement of their learning and development experience. The learnings from this pilot will be used to develop the water activity opportunity in other locations across Ballyhoura.					
2.19	Developing Ballyhoura Activity Hubs as ‘Learn to Experience’ Destinations	Leveraging the opportunity for the community hub / activity basecamps to position themselves as ‘learn to’ destinations for all abilities and interests i.e. introduction to outdoor and ecotourism activities e.g. on foot, bike, water or horse. This will build on existing outdoor education experiences in Ballyhoura.					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive or neutral effects on the environmental themes and SEOs. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.							
	Supporting Project: Outdoor Destination Experiences		PHH (PHH1, PHH2)		B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)		Yes
2.20	Galtee Mountains Masterplan Review and Roadmap	Undertake an audit / assessment of previous plans relating to the Galtee Mountains. The outputs of the audit process will be used to create a Galtee Mountains experience development roadmap identifying the actions and emerging opportunities required to enhance the Galtee Mountains as a signature visitor experience for the Munster Vales and Ballyhoura Country, the roadmap will include the implementation of the key actions identified in Ballyhoura Trails Masterplan.					
2.21	Cycling / Walking Route – M20 Corridor	Deliver a safe cycling / walking route linked to the development of the M20 corridor and following agreed mapping in the M20 masterplan.					
2.22	Greenway – Limerick to Montpelier	Assess the feasibility of developing a Greenway from Limerick to Montpelier.					
2.23	Golf Tourism	Develop the leisure tourism potential of golf in Ballyhoura by creating a cluster of golf courses to maximise the opportunities presented by the hosting of the Junior Ryder Cup in Ballyneety Gold Cub.					
2.24	Ballyhoura Water Trail Feasibility	Asses the feasibility of developing an accessible water based trail in the Ballyhoura destination based on the Sport Ireland water trail guidelines.					
2.25	Clare Glens Trails & Slieve Felim	Assess the trails upgrade requirements for the Clare Glens and Slieve Felim. (Pending: confirmation subject to meeting with Tipperary County Council).					
2.26	Rural Tourism Experiences	Deliver a rural tourism saleable experience programme to grow the number of saleable rural tourism experiences in					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
		Ballyhoura and examining agri-tourism opportunities such as Open Farms and the Farm Diversification Training Programme.					
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive or neutral effects on the environmental themes and SEOs. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.							
	Supporting Projects: Ballyhoura Events & Festivals		PHH (PHH1, PHH2)		B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)		Yes
2.27	Ballyhoura Walking Festival	Create an event development plan to grow the economic impact of the Ballyhoura Walking Festival as a signature event for the destination.					
2.28	Ballyhoura Series – Outdoor Events	Identify the requirements on how to attract a festival / event organiser or create local capacity to deliver the Ballyhoura Active Series over a 3-5 year timeframe and subject to securing funding.					
2.29	Ballyhoura Event Development Opportunities	Explore all available funding and festival event opportunities for Ballyhoura to include seasonal, outdoor events or partnerships with bid organisations to attract events to Ballyhoura aligned with the destination commitment to sustainability.					
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive or neutral effects on the environmental themes and SEOs. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure needed to host large scale festivals and outdoor series presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.							
Destination Projects							
2.30	Network Development & Sustainable Tourism	Develop and grow participation in the Ballyhoura Tourism Network with an increased emphasis within the network on developing new sustainable tourism experiences.	PHH (PHH1, PHH2)		B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1,		Yes
2.31	Murroe Sports Complex	Assess the community space opportunity for Murroe Sports Complex to operate as a future community basecamp providing access to visitor facilities linked to local trails.					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
2.32	Kilmallock Medieval Town – Walled Town Walkways	Develop the medieval visitor proposition through the development of animated walkways and necklace of trails with points of interest extending to the West Wall Walkway			LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)		
2.33	Charleville Moatville House	Assess the outputs of the feasibility analysis of redeveloping Moatville House in Charleville into a sustainable community space and visitor experience / facilities.					
2.34	Charleville Schoolyard Theatre	Assess the feasibility of developing the second floor of the Schoolyard Theatre building in Charleville into a cultural space.					
2.35	Knocklong Railway Heritage Project	Assess the feasibility of the Knocklong Railway Heritage Project.					
2.36	Diaspora Tourism	Create a Ballyhoura Diaspora Tourism Development Roadmap to leverage existing diaspora events, international networks and local heritage centre experiences. This will include maximising the profile of bi-annual diaspora events such as the Ballyhoura Robinson Homecoming Event, Canada Ireland 180, and the Rose Kennedy Autumn School as the basis for future development.					
2.37	Diaspora Centre	Examine the feasibility of developing a diaspora centre or enhanced diaspora visitor experience in Ballyhoura					
2.38	Thomas Fitzgerald Centre	Review the visitor experience at the Thomas Fitzgerald Centre in Bruff and develop a visitor experience plan to support its development as a destination attraction.					
2.39	Ballyhoura Outdoor Recreation Destination	Support the development of Ballyhoura as an outdoor recreation destination through the delivery of the Ballyhoura Masterplan, Limerick County Outdoor Recreation Plan and the Cork County Council Recreation and Amenity Policy to enhance the outdoor amenity base and positively impact on the visitor experience.					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
2.40	Trail Maintenance	Assess he requirements and funding gaps for annual trails maintenance and establish strategic partnerships to manage and maintain local trails.					
2.41	Accessible Activity Destination	Undertake a review of existing trails and activities across Ballyhoura to assess future accessibility requirements to ensure Ballyhoura is a best-in-class accessible outdoor destination.					
2.42	Griston Bog Conservation Management Plan	Support the delivery of the Griston Bog Conservation Management Plan.					
2.43	Ballyhoura Visitor services Gap Analysis	Undertake a destination gap analysis on existing tourism and visitor infrastructure to understand the current levels of provision of visitor services and ancillary services that are expected from a well performing tourism destination (e.g. food and beverage, non-product elements such as universal toilets).					
2.44	Kilmallock Cycle Hub	Review Kilmallock Cycle Hub route signposting and clean existing and replace missing signage. (Pending: confirmation subject to meeting with Limerick City & County Council).					
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive or neutral effects on the environmental themes and SEOs. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.							
	Strategic Objective 3 – Grow economic impact through supporting capacity and capability development						
	Supporting Project: Accommodation		PHH (PHH1, PHH2)		B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV		Yes
3.1	Accommodation Development	Build on Fáilte Ireland’s Supply and Pipeline review to ensure that the Ballyhoura destination avails of any potential public or private capital opportunities over the duration of the DEDP.					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
3.2	Growing Alternative Accommodation Supply	Support the sustainable provision of alternative forms of accommodation in Ballyhoura to include options such as camping, Glamping and Agri-tourism based accommodation.			(LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)		
3.3	RV / Campervan Site Assessment	Identify potential sites for sustainable RV / Camper accommodation development in Ballyhoura.					
3.4	Accommodation Workshop	Host a half day workshop for accommodation providers and potential new businesses based on investigating the opportunity to develop accommodation in Ballyhoura.					
3.5	Destination Hubs Cluster Development	Create a number of tourism clusters in key destination towns to strengthen their role as year round visitor hubs for Ballyhoura with a focus on day and evening time opportunities and itinerary development.					
3.6	Ballyhoura at Night – Evening Economy Experience Development	Create a ‘Ballyhoura at Night’ evening time pilot programme in the destination hubs to grow the value of the nighttime economy across Ballyhoura. Host a workshop to support a pilot initiative to focus on creating a calendar of evening events with individual venues hosting evening activity on a weekly or monthly basis to grow the overall Ballyhoura at Night schedule. This will include cultural programming, traditional music, rambling houses and use of event venues for evening time activity as part of the local visitor experience.					
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive or neutral effects on the environmental themes and SEOs. However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.							
Supporting Project: Industry Digitalisation							
Destination Projects							
3.7	Visitor Itineraries	Work with the tourism industry in neighbouring urban destinations such as Limerick City and Cork City to develop		B (B1, B2, B3), LSG			No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
		Ballyhoura itineraries and influence visitor flows into Ballyhoura from the main accommodation hubs. This will include family focused and special interest itineraries i.e. outdoor activities, food, heritage.	PHH (PHH1, PHH2)	(LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)			
3.8	Resourcing Destination Activation – Exploring Funding Options	Explore potential funding models that could support an activator-type role in the delivery of the Ballyhoura DEDP, drawing on models and lessons learned from other DEDPs and initiatives country wide.					
3.9	Creative and Cultural Sector Linkages	Design and pilot an initiative to increase the linkages between visitors to the area and local cultural, craft and creative services and product providers collaborating to optimise visitor economic and social impact.					
3.10	Creative and Cultural Visitor Experiences	Promote creative and cultural opportunities and experiences linked to tourism development in Ballyhoura that include linking to cultural spaces and venues ad integrating with the development of the night time economy across the destination.					
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive or neutral effects on the environmental themes and SEOs. No negative or uncertain environmental effects arise and therefore, mitigation is not required.							
Strategic Objective 4 – A leading sustainable and regenerative tourism destination							
5	Catalyst Project: R512 – Tourism Route		PHH (PHH1, PHH2)	B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1,			No
4.1	R512 – Tourism Route	Undertake feasibility analysis into the development of the R512 as a tourism and orientation route for Ballyhoura. This will include the scoping of a tourism route concept using the R512 as the spine of destination and marketing platform with links to local communities, attractions, experiences and the platform for destination marketing.					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
				ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)			
SEA Evaluation: The listed projects and associated actions will result in positive effects on population and human health. This project will focus on upskilling those working in the tourism industry. No uncertain or negative effects arise, therefore mitigation is not required.							
	Supporting Project: Sustainable Tourism Network Development			B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)			
4.2	Ballyhoura Sustainable Tourism Network	Grow the level of participation in the Ballyhoura tourism network through targeted training and engagement programmes to strengthen the collective approach to sustainable and regenerative tourism for the area.	PHH (PHH1, PHH2)				No
SEA Evaluation: The listed projects and associated actions will result in positive effects on population and human health. This project will focus on upskilling those working in the tourism industry. No uncertain or negative effects arise, therefore mitigation is not required.							
Destination Projects				B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ			
4.3	Ballyhoura Sustainability Action Plan	Implement the Ballyhoura Sustainability Action Plan to guide the development of Ballyhoura as a sustainable tourism destination.	PHH (PHH1, PHH2)				No

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
4.4	Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme	Promote participation in the Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme by hotels and visitor attractions across the destination.		(WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)			
4.5	Carbon Reduction	Work with Ireland's Hidden Heartlands to achieve the reduction in carbon targets identified in the IHH Regional Tourism and Development Strategy.					
4.6	E-Charging Network	Undertake an audit of the existing e-charging network to become a baseline for the destination and supporting targeted growth of the network of e-charging points for bicycles and cars to meet future demand. This will include examining both public and private provision and future needs.					
4.7	Sustainability Training	Deliver annual sustainability training to grow the number and capability of tourism businesses to become more sustainable and act as regenerative tourism ambassadors within and for the Ballyhoura destinations.					
4.8	Kilcolman Nature Reserve	Support Birdwatch in the delivery of a feasibility study for developing the Kilcolman Nature Reserve at the house and outbuildings on the original site.					
4.9	Agri-tourism Development	Support the sustainable development of Agri-tourism, rural tourism and rural wellbeing experiences and exploring opportunities through initiatives such as the Farm Diversification Training Programme and other available opportunities with Teagasc, LEADER and LEO.					
4.10	'Towards a Green and Just Transition in Ballyhoura' Plan	Implement the actions in the 'Towards a Green and Just Transition in Ballyhoura' plan to develop Ballyhoura as a leading sustainable tourism destination.					
4.11	Business Events – Regenerative Impact	Explore niche business events related tourism opportunities with the Shannon Region Conference Bureau and Visit Cork to encourage business tourism groups visiting Limerick and					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
		Cork to engage with regenerative tourism experiences and 'giving back to nature' experiences as part of their ESG programmes.					
4.12	Regenerative Tourism & EU Projects	Engage with Third Level Research Centres with a focus on Regenerative Tourism and build collaborative research and development proposals and projects with EU partner regions.					
4.13	Regenerative Tourism Living Lab	Develop a broad stakeholder Living Lab focused on Regenerative Tourism to engage as a pilot region to test innovative solutions that can improve the quality of the visitor experience across the Ballyhoura area.					
4.14	Local Guide Training	Work with training agencies to deliver guide training programmes to grow the number of local people delivering 'meet the local' guided walking, hiking and biking experiences in Ballyhoura.					
4.15	Community Tourism Awareness Development Programme	Deliver a tourism awareness programme with existing and emerging community groups to enable them to contribute to and leverage the IHH regional brand opportunity for the benefit of their community.					
4.16	Community Tourism Experience Development	Draw on the Community Tourism Toolkit to deliver a community tourism pilot programme with existing and emerging community groups as the basis for developing future community tourism training. This will a) Deliver a regenerative approach among local community groups interested in pursuing tourism opportunities. b) Ensure that new and existing community tourism enterprises are equipped with knowledge and capabilities around commerciality and effective, sustainable governance.					

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
4.17	Discover Science Outdoor Classrooms	Create an outdoor classroom cluster and build capabilities to market the range of Discover Science Outdoor Classrooms across the Ballyhoura area.					
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive or neutral effects on the environmental themes and SEOs. These projects involve scoping, awareness and promoting existing experiences and facilities within the Ballyhoura region. No negative or uncertain environment effects arise and as such no mitigation is required.							
Strategic Objective 5 – Success through new levels of collaboration and a partnership approach							
	Supporting Project: Transport & Access						
5.1	Public Transport Access	Work with Local Link to improve visitor access to and within the Ballyhoura region linked to destination hubs, attractions and activity basecamps.	PHH (PHH1, PHH2)		B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2)		Yes
5.2	Ballyhoura Sustainable Transport Network	Examine the requirements to maximise the potential of TFI’s national sustainable travel development plans for tourism across the destination.					
5.3	Active Travel	Leverage Active Travel investment in the Ballyhoura destination hubs to grow the sustainable travel connectivity across the destination. This will also include consideration of how to increase connectivity between trails / outdoor amenities and local communities, addressing the ‘last mile’ local connectivity challenge.					
5.4	Destination Signage and Visitor Orientation	Develop a consistent destination wide approach to placemaking, signage, public realm and visitor orientation and use of the opportunity to raise the profile of the destination brand.					
5.5	M20 Access	Promote access and erection of signage to the Ballyhoura destination from existing and future transport infrastructure investment such as the M20 to ensure ease of access off future motorway projects.					
SEA Evaluation: These actions will enhance visitor experience and promote tourism resulting in overall positive or neutral effects on the environmental themes and SEOs.							

Ballyhoura Country Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
However, the development of new or existing infrastructure presents potential uncertain environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.							
Destination Projects							
5.6	Community Tourism Impact Measurement System	Scope and design a community tourism impact measurement model to measure the impact of tourism in Ballyhoura	PHH (PHH1, PHH2)	B (B1, B2, B3), LSG (LSG1), WQ (WQ1, WQ2), LV (LV_1, LV2), ANC (ANC1, ANC2), MA (MA1, MA2, MA3), CH (CH1, CH2)			No
5.7	Destination Collaborations	Build on the learnings from the Shared Island collaboration between Ballyhoura and Cuilcagh Geopark to foster destination development and alliances with other areas within the IHH region.					
SEA Evaluation: The listed projects and associated actions will result in positive effects on population and human health.							
No negative or uncertain environmental effects arise, and as such no mitigation is required.							

Appendix 2: Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination

Brady Shipman Martin

DUBLIN

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

CORK

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

mail@bradyshipmanmartin.com
www.bradyshipmanmartin.com



Screening Determination for Strategic Environmental Assessment under SEA Directive 2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law under S.I. 435/2004, as amended concerning the proposed Ballyhoura Country Destination and Experience Development Plan

Fáilte Ireland as the Competent Authority for the proposed Ballyhoura Country Destination and Experience Development Plan has undertaken screening for SEA under Directive 2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law under S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011.

The screening assessment was carried out using the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects as set out in Schedule 1 of S.I. 435/2004, as amended and having regard to Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08¹, which directs that:

"In any case where, following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting a precautionary approach-

- an appropriate assessment of the plan must be carried out and*
- in any case where a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out."*

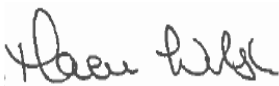
Following assessment of the criteria and having regard to the nature of the Plan and the potential for likely significant environmental effects from implementation of the Plan, including on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site, Fáilte Ireland has determined that the Plan will require SEA.

This determination has been made following consideration of the information contained in the SEA Screening Report, the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to S.I. 435/2004, as amended, the conclusion of the AA Screening Report, and following consultation with the statutory Environmental Authorities for SEA, from whom responses were received from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI).

The principal reason the Plan does require SEA is as follows:

- As directed under Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08: because the potential for likely significant environmental effects on 28no. European sites could not be ruled at Appropriate Assessment screening stage.

Signed on behalf of Fáilte Ireland:



Dated: July 2026