The Dublin Mountain Destination & Experience Development Plan

SEA Environmental Report

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Strategic Assessment **Built Environment**

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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 4
2.3 Strategic Objectives 4
2.4 Destination Catalyst Overview 5

3 Strategic Environmental Assessment 8

3.1 Introduction 8
3.2 SEA Stages and Process 9
3.3 SEA Screening and Requirement for SEA 12
3.4 SEA Scoping 13
3.5 SEA Environmental Report 17
3.6 Consultation 18
3.7 SEA Statement 18
3.8 SEA Guidance 18
3.9 Appropriate Assessment 20

4 Relationship with Plans and Programmes 21

4.1 Overview 21
4.2 Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework 21
4.2.1 Updated Draft Revised National Planning Framework 22
4.3 Eastern & Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 23
4.4 South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 24
4.5 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028 25
4.6 Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027 25
4.7 Other Plans and Programmes 26

5 Current State of the Receiving Environment (Environmental Baseline) 29

5.1 Introduction 29
5.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan 29
5.3 Description of the Environmental Baseline 30
5.3.1 Biodiversity 30
5.3.2 Population and Human Health 38
5.3.3 Land, Soils & Geology 40
5.3.4 Water Quality (including Flooding) 45
5.3.5 Air Quality, Noise & Climate 51
5.3.6 Material Assets 55

5.3.7 Cultural Heritage 59
5.3.8 Landscape & Visual 62

6 Strategic Environmental Objectives 69

7 Assessment of Alternatives 71

7.1 Introduction 71
7.2 Alternative 1: Do-nothing / Do-Minimum 71
7.3 Do-something (Alternatives 2A and 2B: Prepare a Plan) 71
7.4 Assessment of Alternatives 73
7.5 Reasoning for Selection of the Preferred Alternative 73

8 Assessment of Effects of the Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan 75

8.1 Introduction 75
8.2 Environmental Assessment of the Strategic Objectives of the Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan 75
8.3 Environmental Assessment of the 'Destination Catalyst', 'Supporting Projects' and 'Destination Projects' Initiatives listed within the Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan 79
8.4 The Interrelationship between Environmental Factors 79
8.5 Potential Cumulative Effects 80
8.6 Overview 82

9 Mitigation Measures 83

9.1 Overview 83
9.2 Mitigation Measures 83

10 Monitoring 98

10.1 Introduction 98

11 References 106

12 Appendices 107

Appendix 1: 108
Detailed Assessment of Environmental Effects of the Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan Action Plan 108
Appendix 2: Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination 117

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 Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan (hereafter referred to the 'Plan' or the 'Dublin Mountains DEDP').

This Environmental Report, which should be read in conjunction with the Dublin Mountains 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. Fáilte Ireland's corporate strategy 2026-2029, the Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030, and the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment's *A New Era for Irish Tourism: National Tourism Policy Statement* together provide an overarching strategic framework for the Dublin Mountains 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

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

- S.I. No. 456 of 2025 European Union (Land Use Planning – Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2025.

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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Directive[2], 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 1/08[4], a SEA of the Dublin Mountains 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.

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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 Dublin Mountains Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP) is a five-year sustainable tourism plan for south County Dublin. The plan is centred on the Dublin mountains and builds upon the Dublin Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027.

The Dublin Mountains area is at the southernmost end of County Dublin on the boarder of County Wicklow. The Dublin Mountains are just north of the Wicklow Mountains.

Given the rocky landscape, the area is predominantly rural with key excursions and activities throughout the region. 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 orienteering, mountain biking, running, walking and hiking.

The Dublin Mountains region is current managed under the *Dublin Mountain Partnership's Strategic Plan 2022-2026* launched by the Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP). The DMP is a multidisciplinary management group with members from Coillte, South Dublin County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Dublin City Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Dublin Mountains Initiative and Fáilte Ireland. The principal purpose of the partnership is to *'improving the recreational experience for users of the Dublin Mountains, whilst recognising the objectives and constraints of the various landowners.'*

The area contains a range of recreational sites including the Hell Fire Club, Massy's Estate, Glenasmole, Rathmichael Wood and Ticknock among others, 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 Dublin Mountain Way, mountain biking trails and the Glencullen Adventure Park.

The National Tourism Policy Statement (December 2025) introduced five strategic pillars for tourism development which have shaped the Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin *Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027* sets a 5-year strategy for tourism development that will increase the commercial potential of Dublin and cater to visitors while conserving the natural environment and improving the lives of locals. 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 Dublin Mountain Destination and Experience Development Plan sets a vision for 2036:

> *"The Dublin Mountains invite visitors to experience Dublin from above, where spectacular views, rich heritage, signature trails and unforgettable outdoor adventures combine to offer a city break with a difference, revealing a side of Dublin found nowhere else.*
>
> *As a distinctive part of Dublin's City, Coast and Mountains proposition, the Dublin Mountains broaden the appeal of the destination, encouraging visitors to stay longer, explore further, connect with nature and discover experiences beyond the traditional city break. Easy access and stronger connections between Dublin City, local communities and the mountains benefit residents and visitors alike, making it easier to experience, access and enjoy more of the destination, while a growing range of unique accommodation encourages deeper engagement with its landscapes and communities.*
>
> *Through a shared commitment to stewardship, the natural, cultural and archaeological assets that make the Dublin Mountains unique are protected, celebrated and enhanced for future generations."*

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 Dublin region in the *Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027*:

Strategic Objective 1: Dublin Mountains Destination
Establish the Dublin Mountains as a Leading Outdoor Destination within Dublin's City, Coast and Mountains Proposition. **Goal:** The Dublin Mountains is established as a recognised and accessible part of Dublin's city, coast and mountains proposition, supported by improved visitor access, stronger gateway hubs, enhanced visitor orientation and a growing range of overnight accommodation options.
Strategic Objective 2: Inspiring Dublin Mountains Experiences
Develop the Dublin Mountains experience base through product investment that delivers memorable outdoor experiences and epic views over the city and coast. **Goal:** The Dublin Mountains offers a distinctive portfolio of signature visitor experiences, anchored by the Dublin Mountains Way, the Dublin Mountains Visitor Centre, landmark viewpoints and outdoor adventure experiences, encouraging visitors to explore more of the destination and engage more deeply with its landscapes, heritage and culture.
Strategic Objective 3: Dublin Mountains Tourism Businesses
Support new and existing tourism businesses in the development of experiences that inspire visitors to explore the Dublin Mountains. **Goal:** A strong and collaborative tourism industry supports a growing range of bookable experiences, strengthens local enterprise development and increases the economic and community benefits generated through tourism across the Dublin Mountains destination.
Strategic Objective 4: Dublin Mountains Stewardship & Environment

Implement a sustainable tourism development approach that is compatible with the conservation of the Dublin Mountains diverse natural, heritage, archaeological and cultural resources.

Goal: A shared approach to destination stewardship is in place, supported by visitor capacity assessments, environmental monitoring and sustainable business practices that safeguard the biodiversity, heritage and landscape quality of the Dublin Mountains.

2.4 Destination Catalyst Overview

To achieve the above strategic objectives, the Dublin Mountains DEDP focuses on a number of 'catalyst projects' and 'supporting projects'. The progress of the DEDP will be measured against the specified 'target outcomes', the catalyst projects and their aims are as follows:

Transport and Access

The research and consultation consistently identified access as one of the most significant barriers to tourism growth within the Dublin Mountains. While the destination benefits from its position within Dublin's wider visitor offering, access to many of its key visitor experiences remains heavily dependent on private vehicles and connectivity between gateway hubs, recreation sites and visitor experiences can be challenging. Addressing these issues represents one of the most important opportunities within the DEDP. Improving sustainable transport, visitor mobility and active travel connections will help strengthen the role of the Dublin Mountains within Dublin's City, Coast and Mountains proposition while supporting greater visitor dispersal and more sustainable visitor movement throughout the destination.

Accommodation

The accommodation profile of the Dublin Mountains presents both a challenge and a significant opportunity. While the Core Experience Zone currently contains only a limited number of registered tourism bed places, substantial accommodation capacity already exists within adjoining visitor gateway hubs. The opportunity is not simply to increase accommodation supply, but to create more compelling overnight reasons to stay within and around the Dublin Mountains through alternative outdoor accommodation, farm diversification initiatives and stronger connections between accommodation providers and visitor experiences. Increasing overnight engagement will be critical to strengthening the economic contribution of tourism within the destination.

Dublin Mountains Visitor Centre: Hellfire Club & Massy's Estate Project

The Dublin Mountains Visitor Centre represents one of the most significant opportunities to enhance the overall visitor experience and create a gateway to the destination. It will provide a place of orientation and interpretation, helping visitors understand the geography, archaeology, history and heritage of Montpelier Hill, Massy's Wood, the Hell Fire Club and the wider Dublin Mountains region. By providing a café, shop, toilets, walkers' lounge, interpretive exhibition and education facilities, the Visitor Centre will significantly enhance the experience of walkers, visitors and local communities. It will showcase the natural, cultural and built heritage of the Dublin Mountains in a way that can be appreciated and protected for future generations. The wider project includes preservation works to the Hellfire Club building, improved access, enhanced walking trails and a tree-top walkway into Massy's Wood. Together, these elements have the potential to create a compelling gateway experience that encourages visitors to explore more of the Dublin Mountains and engage more deeply with its landscapes, heritage and stories.

Core Experience Zone Development

The Dublin Mountains already contains a significant concentration of trails, forests, recreation sites, heritage assets and viewpoints. However, visitors often experience these assets as individual locations rather than as part of a connected destination. The Core Experience Zone provides a framework for improving connectivity, visitor orientation, interpretation and experience development, helping create a more coherent visitor journey and a stronger sense of destination.

Dublin Mountains Way

Walking is already one of the most popular ways visitors experience the Dublin Mountains, and the Dublin Mountains Way provides an opportunity to link many of the destination's landscapes, heritage assets, communities and outdoor experiences. The original vision for the trail identified opportunities to strengthen its appeal through enhanced infrastructure, accessibility, interpretation and visitor engagement. As a route that traverses and connects much of the destination, the Dublin Mountains Way can play an important role in creating a more connected visitor experience and strengthening the overall identity of the destination.

Monumental Mountain Viewpoints

Scenic views consistently emerged as one of the most memorable aspects of the Dublin Mountains visitor experience. The dramatic panoramas across Dublin City, Dublin Bay and the surrounding landscape are among the destination's most distinctive assets. Creating opportunities for visitors to engage more deeply with these views and the stories connected to them can transform an existing strength into a defining feature of the Dublin Mountains visitor proposition.

World-Class Mountain Biking Destination

Mountain biking is already one of the Dublin Mountains' strongest outdoor recreation assets and a key differentiator within the wider Dublin region. Building on this established reputation presents an opportunity to increase visitor engagement, strengthen the destination's adventure appeal and create stronger links with the wider Wicklow mountain biking proposition. Continued enhancement of trail quality, visitor facilities, connectivity and trail sustainability will help maintain the destination's reputation as a leading mountain biking location.

Experience Development & Market Readiness Programme

While the Dublin Mountains benefits from a strong outdoor recreation offer and growing visitor interest, there remains a limited number of visitor experiences that can be booked, promoted and sold as part of the Dublin Mountains visitor proposition. Supporting businesses to develop and package visitor experiences presents an opportunity to create more reasons to visit the destination, encourage longer stays and increase visitor spend across the area.

Dublin Mountains Stewardship Programme

The Dublin Mountains is a valued recreation landscape enjoyed by local communities, recreation users and visitors alike. Balancing increasing levels of recreation and tourism activity with the protection of its landscapes, biodiversity, heritage and community wellbeing represents one of the key long-term stewardship challenges for the destination. Through visitor management assessments, visitor monitoring and collaborative stewardship initiatives, this project will provide a coordinated framework for the sustainable management of the destination while helping safeguard the assets that underpin its long-term appeal.

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

The complete list of catalyst projects, supporting projects and target outcomes 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/EC[5] *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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 *likely to have significant effects* on the environment, and therefore, if SEA is required. The preparation of the *Draft Dublin Mountains DEDP* 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 *Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08* the *Draft Dublin Mountains DEDP* was also required to undergo a 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* (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 *likely significant environmental effects* of implementing the P / P. The findings of the assessment, which is carried out at various stages in the P / P making (*e.g.* Draft, Amended Draft *etc*.), 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP, taking account of *likely significant environmental effects*, 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

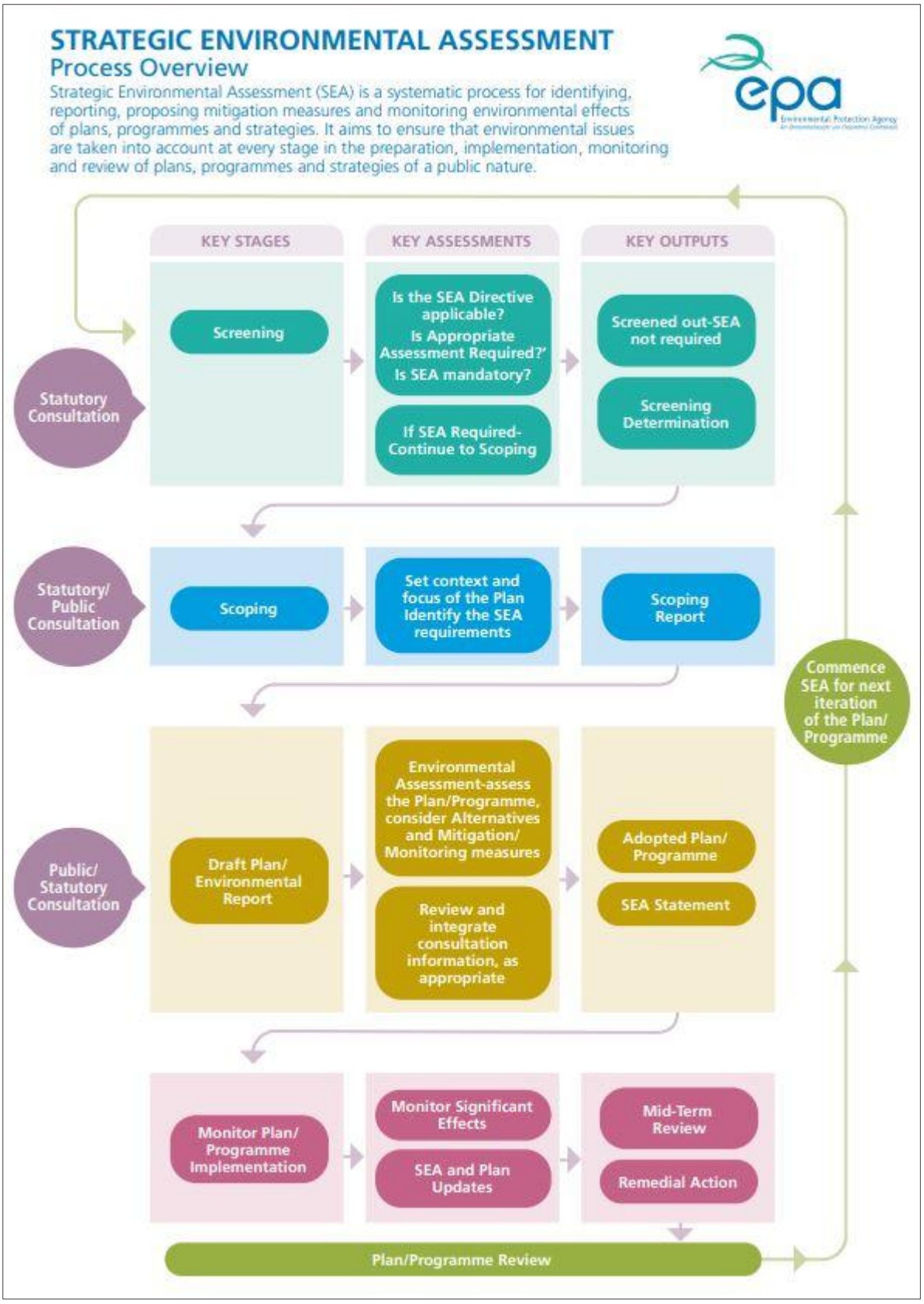

Figure 3.1 Overview of SEA Process (EPA SEA Process Flow, 2021[9])

[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 1/08[11], 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 18th June 2025:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- Department of Enterprise, Tourism & Employment;
- Department of Climate, Energy and Environment;
- The Manager of the Development Applications Unit;
- The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

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 Eastern & Midland 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	

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.	
Development Applications Unit (DAU)	The DAU notes that the DEDP must make reference to local development plans to ensure the protection of archaeological heritage.	The information provided has informed the preparation of the Plan, AA and the Environmental Report.
	DAU highlights the significant overlap of the Dubin Mountains with European sites, including the Wicklow Mountains Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Wicklow Mountains Special Protection Area (SPA). It is required for the SEA and AA to evaluate the potential impact on QI's of these sites, and propose mitigation to reduce adverse effects including erosion caused by hikers, mountain bikers and the illegal use of motor bikes (especially on the mountain ridge to the west of Glenasmole), disturbance of ground nesting birds by humans and especially dogs and the burning of heath and blanket bog habitats by illegally set fires.	

Environmental Authority	Outline of Nature of the Submission	Response to consideration of nature of submission
Department of Climate, Energy and Environment (DCEE)	DCEE encourages the use of CAP25, the National Adaption Framework, Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030, the Clean Air Strategy for Ireland and the Water Action Plan 2024 to assist with the preparation of the SEA materials.	The information provided has informed the preparation of the Plan, AA and the Environmental Report.
	DCEE includes relevant EU legislation to include in the assessment of the plan.	

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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin 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 will also be 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 Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan, an SEA Statement (Stage 4) will be prepared which includes information on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Dublin Mountains DEDP, highlighting the main changes to the Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP in the light of the other alternatives, identifying the other alternatives considered, commenting on their potential effects and explaining why the Dublin Mountains DEDP, as adopted, was selected; and
- The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementing the Dublin Mountains 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 1/08[14] (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 Dublin Mountains DEDP and the SEA Environmental Report.

The AA has concluded that the Dublin Mountains 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 the Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Regional Tourism Development Strategy (RTDS). 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP has been developed to contribute to the overarching regional objectives for the Dublin RTDS.

The Dublin Mountains DEDP is a five-year commercial destination and experience development plan. The role of the Dublin Mountains DEDP is to support the development of unique and compelling destination experiences focused on a number of immediate and strategic destination opportunities. The Dublin Mountains DEDP was developed through a consultative process involving tourism industry representatives, members of the local community and County Councils. The Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP and how they have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan. In its making, the Dublin Mountains 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 Eastern & Midland 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 (RSESs), which effectively set the agenda for implementing the national level development policy – the NPF – at the Regional level. The Dublin Mountains are situated in the Eastern and Midland Region and, therefore, falls under the remit of the Eastern & Midland RSES.

The RSES provides a high-level development framework for the Eastern & Midland Region that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant economic policies and

objectives of Government. The policies in the RSES are structured under Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) Policy Objectives.

The Eastern & Midland 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 6.15: Support the preparation and implementation of Visitor Experience Development Plans within the Region to underpin the overarching regional tourism brands and to deliver greater tourism benefits and to promote the natural and cultural assets of the Region.

RPO 6.16: Support working with relevant landowners and recreational/ tourism agencies to increase access to the countryside and coastal areas to ensure maintenance of the existing network.

RPO 6.17: Support the maintenance of, and enhanced access to state and semi-state lands such as National Parks, Forest Parks, Waterways, etc., together with Monuments and Historic Properties, for recreation and tourism purposes. Access should be planned and managed in a sustainable manner that protects environmental sensitivities, ecological corridors, and the ability of local infrastructure to support increased tourism.

RPO 6.18: Support the preparation and implementation of local authority tourism strategies and diaspora strategies. All tourism strategies and plans should include clear monitoring protocols to monitor the ongoing effect of tourism on sensitive features with particular focus on natural and built heritage assets.

RPO 6.21: EMRA will work with local authorities and Fáilte Ireland to identify destination towns within the Region for the prioritisation of investment and supports to drive tourism growth in the Region, to spread the benefit of tourism throughout the Region and to encourage the increase of tourism product development.

The Dublin Mountain's region blends the boundary between 'Dublin' and 'Ireland's Ancient East', serving outdoor recreational facilities just outside the M50.

4.4 South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028

The South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 sets the planning strategy for South Dublin County through proposed policies and objectives.

The South Dublin administrative area spans from the River Liffey to the Dublin Mountains, bordered by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown to the east, Wicklow to the south and Dublin City and Fingal counties to the north. The administrative area supports a number of key urban centres including Tallaght, Clondalkin and Lucan.

South Dublin has a diverse range of natural and built heritage including the Dublin Mountains, Liffey River Valley, Dodder River Valley, Grand Canal and a range of archaeological and geological records.

The landscape provides for natural and cultural tourism opportunities such as orienteering, climbing, walking, hiking and mountain biking.

South Dublin County continues to engage with the Dublin Tourism Working Group with Fáilte Ireland to make the best use of the 'Grow Dublin' tourism project and the 'Dublin - Surprising By Nature' brand,

It is policy of the South Dublin County Council to:

> ***Policy EDE19:*** *Support the development of a sustainable tourism industry that recognises the recreational and tourism potential of the County, building on the actions in the South Dublin County Tourism Strategy, 2015 or any superseding strategy.*

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

4.5 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028

The Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028 was developed to guide the planning of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County. The county council area covers several key urban areas in the greater Dublin County including Booterstown, Blackrock, Stillorgan, Shankill, Nutgrove and Dún Laoghaire among others.

The county council region has a mix of urban town-centre areas with established retails parks and more natural areas along the coast of the Dublin Bay and the Dublin Mountains. The area has a number of designated European Sites whose protection is integrated into the Development Plan.0

It is policy of the County Council to:

> ***Policy Objective E17****: It is a Policy Objective to co-operate with the appropriate agencies in promoting sustainable tourism and securing the development of tourist and recreation orientated facilities in the County. Furthermore, the Council will promote the implementation of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Tourism Strategy & marketing Plan 2017-2022 and any subsequent update thereof.*

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

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 Dublin Mountains DEDP.

The Dublin Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 - 2027 identifies four strategic objectives to develop the tourism economy in the region. The projects outlined in the Dublin Mountains DEDP align to these overall regional objectives. The strategic objectives are as follows:

- Strategic Objective 1: Increase destination resilience by optimising visitor mix and maximizing revenue by increasing dwell time and range of activities engaged in.
- Strategic Objective 2: Re-ignite business tourism, positioning Dublin as a leader internationally, with a focus on sustainability.

- **Strategic Objective 3**: Develop differentiating experiences, providing domestic and international tourists with reasons to visit and to stay longer.
- **Strategic Objective 4**: Build a committed stakeholder and industry partnership to develop Destination Dublin, encompassing the whole region and leveraging citizen-centric and visitor-centric initiatives for mutual benefit, while reducing the industry's carbon footprint and ensuring net contribution to the protection of our cultural and natural heritage.

This Regional Tourism Development Strategy represents a 10–year vision for the sustainable development of tourism in Dublin, 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 Dublin 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 21st 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

Legislative Framework	
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 Southern 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 4th 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 & Regional Plans and Programmes	
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)
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	
South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP. Being consistent with the strategic provisions of the Dublin Mountains DEDP, this section provides a strategic description of aspects of environmental components which have the greatest potential to be affected by implementation of the Dublin Mountains DEDP, if unmitigated.

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

The development plans for South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown promote the development and strengthening of the overall value of tourism in this region as stated below.

The South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 states that;

> ***Policy EDE19:*** *Support the development of a sustainable tourism industry that recognises the recreational and tourism potential of the County, building on the actions in the South Dublin County Tourism Strategy, 2015 or any superseding strategy.*

The Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028 states that:

> ***Policy Objective E17****: It is a Policy Objective to co-operate with the appropriate agencies in promoting sustainable tourism and securing the development of tourist and recreation orientated facilities in the County. Furthermore, the Council will promote the implementation of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Tourism Strategy & marketing Plan 2017-2022 and any subsequent update thereof.*

In the absence of the Dublin Mountains DEDP it is envisaged that the baseline environment would primarily evolve in line with the policies and objectives of the South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP provides significant opportunities for specific set of tourism-related mitigation measures and the associated likely positive environmental effects.

The Dublin Mountains DEDP will play an important role in promoting and developing tourism in the Dublin Mountains region 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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.

A total of 31no. designated sites have been identified within the potential zone of influence of the plan area. 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

website[15]. Any potential for impact on European Sites has been fully addressed in the NIS that accompanies the Dublin Mountains 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 designation[16].

There is one NHA and 54no. pNHAs identified with 20km of the Plan area. Refer to **Figure 5.2** below for the NHAs and pHNAs 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 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:

[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

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.
- Drinking Water – River. There are two designated drinking water rivers in the Plan area; the Dodder_020 and the Shanganagh_010.

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 one is off the coast of Malahide, c. 16.8km north 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 on the border of the Plan area near Bray, the Dargle River (IE_EA_10D10010).

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 State . Shooting of game birds is not allowed in these sanctuaries. County Dublin has three wildfowl sanctuaries; (1) WFS-18 Brittas Ponds, (2) WFS-19 The North Bull Island and (3) WFS-20 Rogerstown Estuary.

Nature Reserves

Other nature conservation designations are *Statutory Nature Reserves*, which are protected under Ministerial order. The Knocksink Wood Nature Reserve is located on the border of the Dublin Mountains 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 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.

There are no Margaritifera Sensitive Areas within the Plan area. There are some sensitive areas, however these sites are south of the Plan area and separated by Mountains with no hydrological connection.

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.

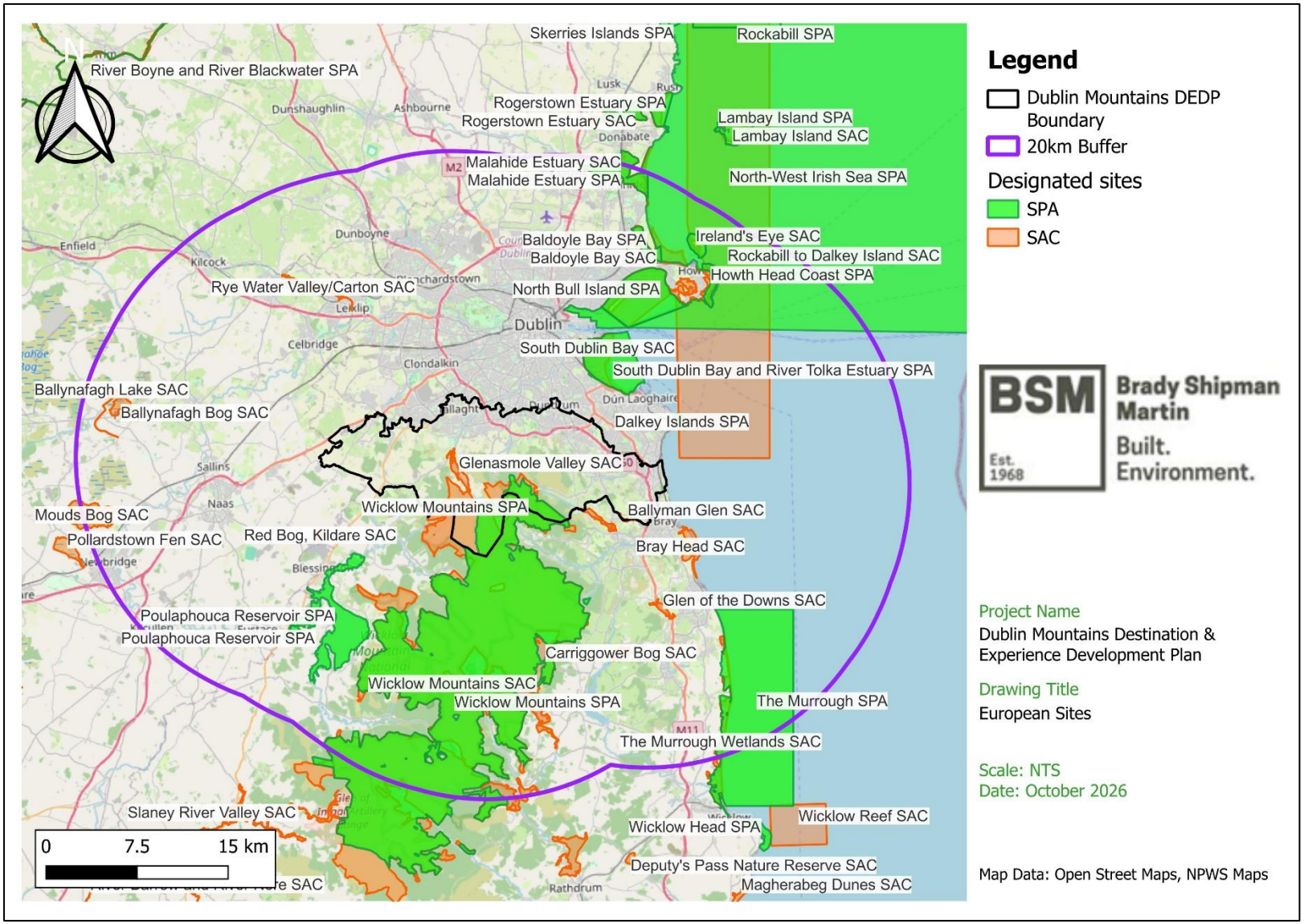

Figure 5.1 European Sites within the study area and in the surrounding the potential zone of influence

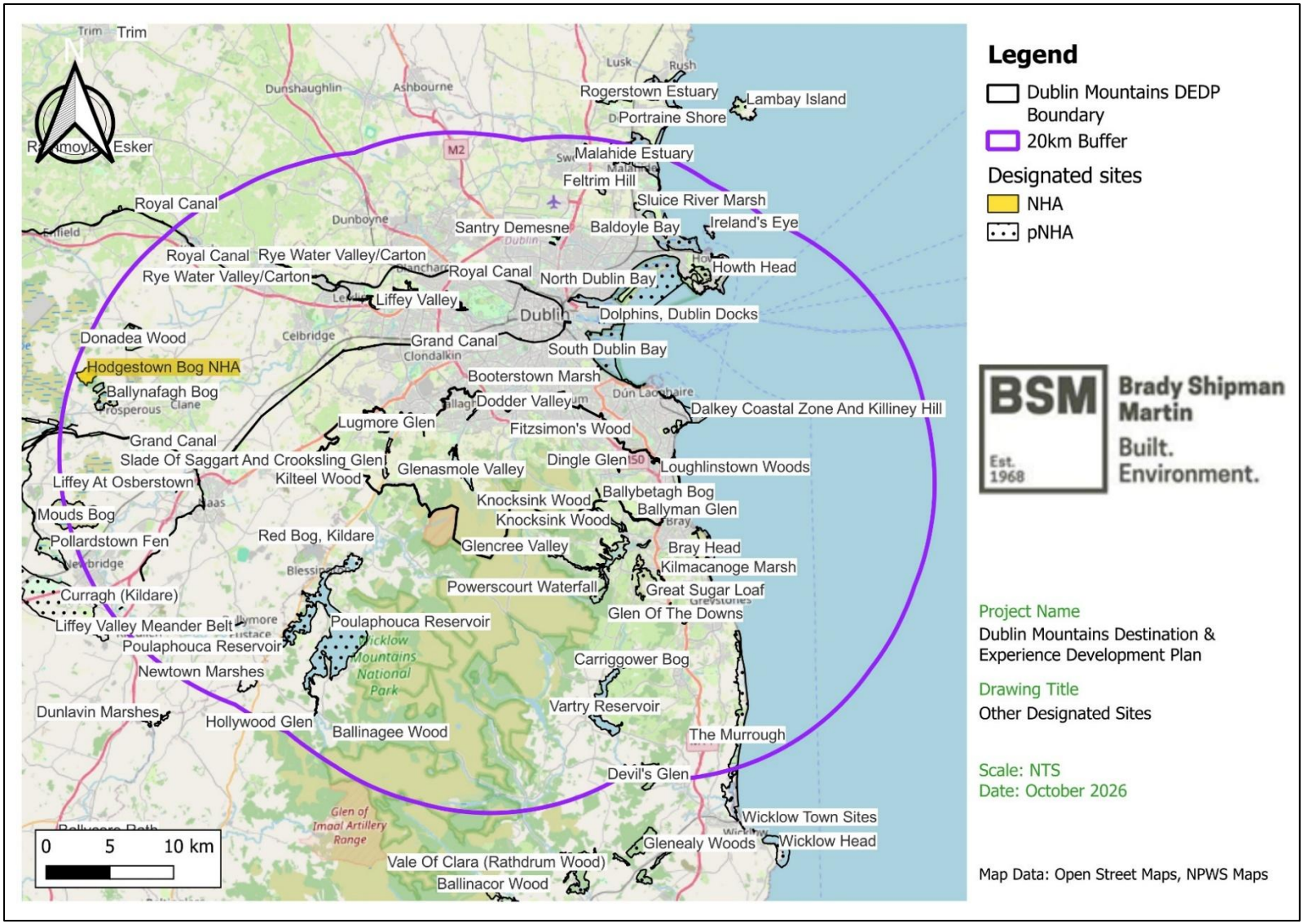

Figure 5.2 Natural Heritage Areas and potential Natural Heritage Areas within study area and in the surrounding area

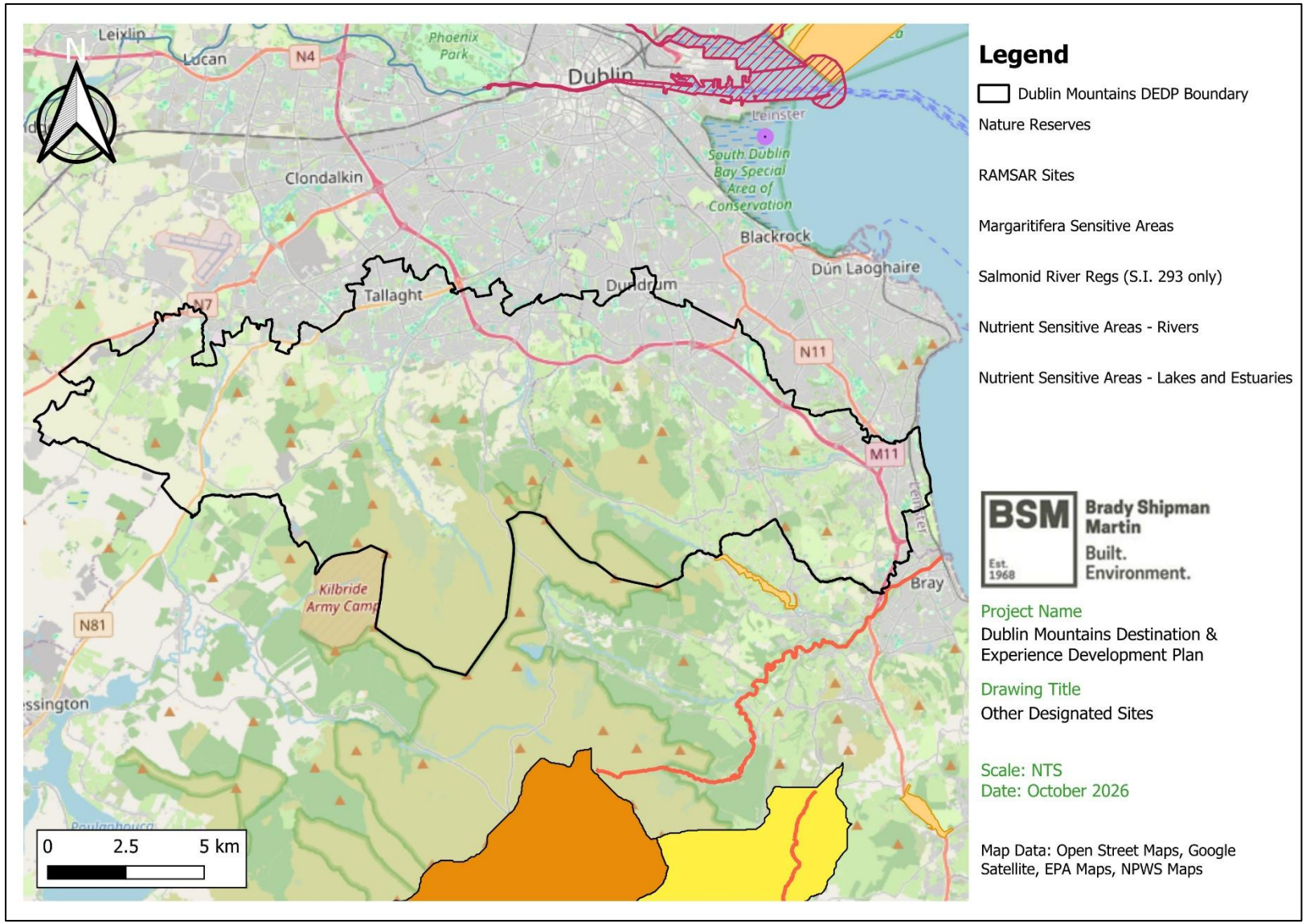

Figure 5.3 Other Designated Sites within study area and in the surrounding area

5.3.2 Population and Human Health

5.3.2.1 Population

The study area includes parts of South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Local Authorities. The study area is surrounded by Dublin City and Fingal to the north, Kildare to the west, and Wicklow, Carlow and Wexford to the south. 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 South Dublin was 8.0% and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown was 7.3%. 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.

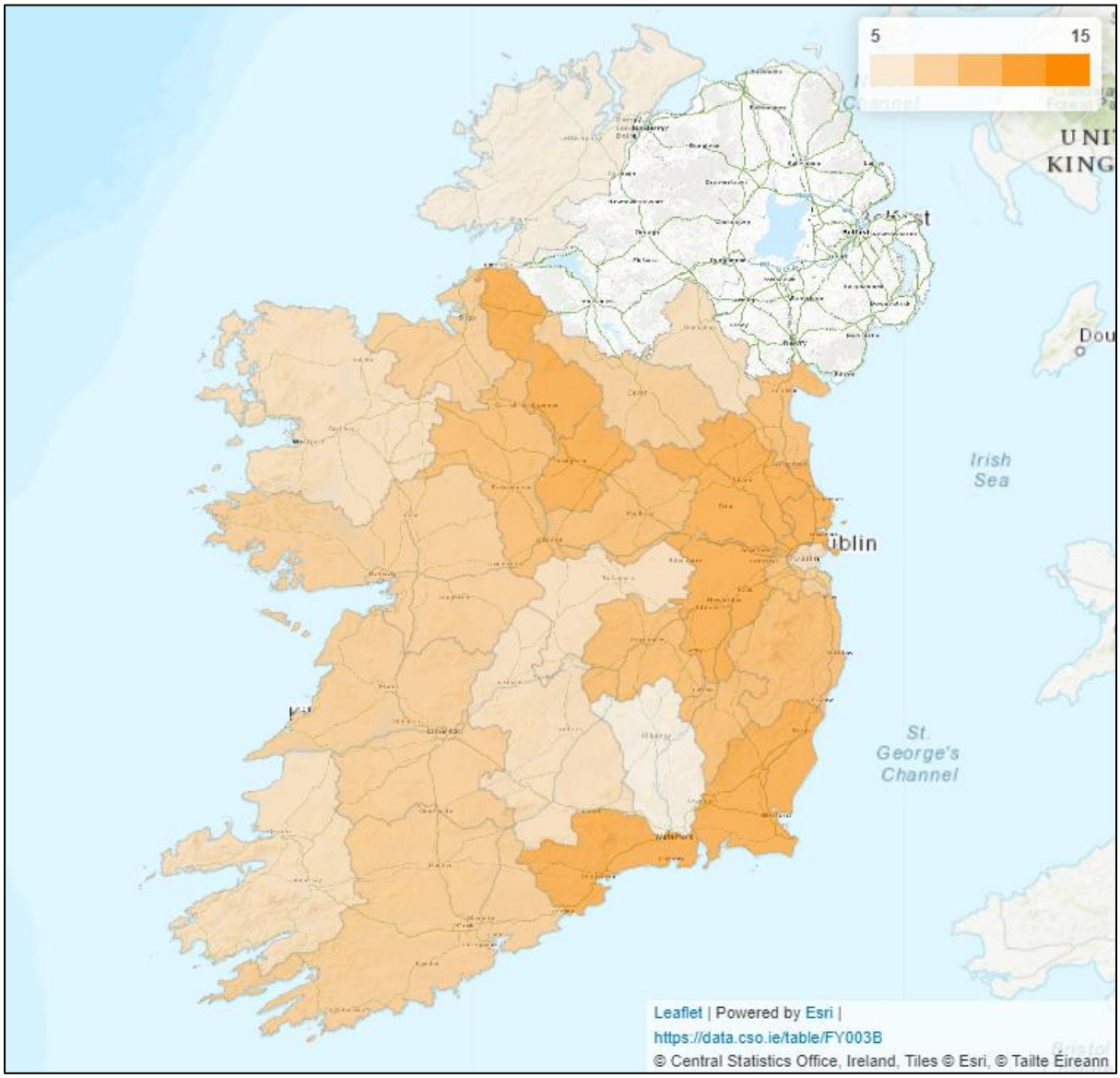

Figure 5.4 Percentage change of population since the previous census by county and city, 2022[17]

[17] 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 plan promotes the development and strengthening of the overall value of tourism in the Dublin Mountains region as previously stated. The local authorities have an objective to enhance the potential for economic development in the tourism sector.

Visitor experience in the Dublin Mountains has been managed by the Dublin Mountain Partnership (DMP) since 2008. The DMP has representation from Coillte, South Dublin County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Dublin City Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Dublin Mountains Initiative, and Failte Ireland.

The current Dublin Mountains 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 the Dublin Mountains region, provided through a mix of private, public and community facilities. Activities provided include extensive walking and hiking trails, orienteering, mountain biking, high ropes courses 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.

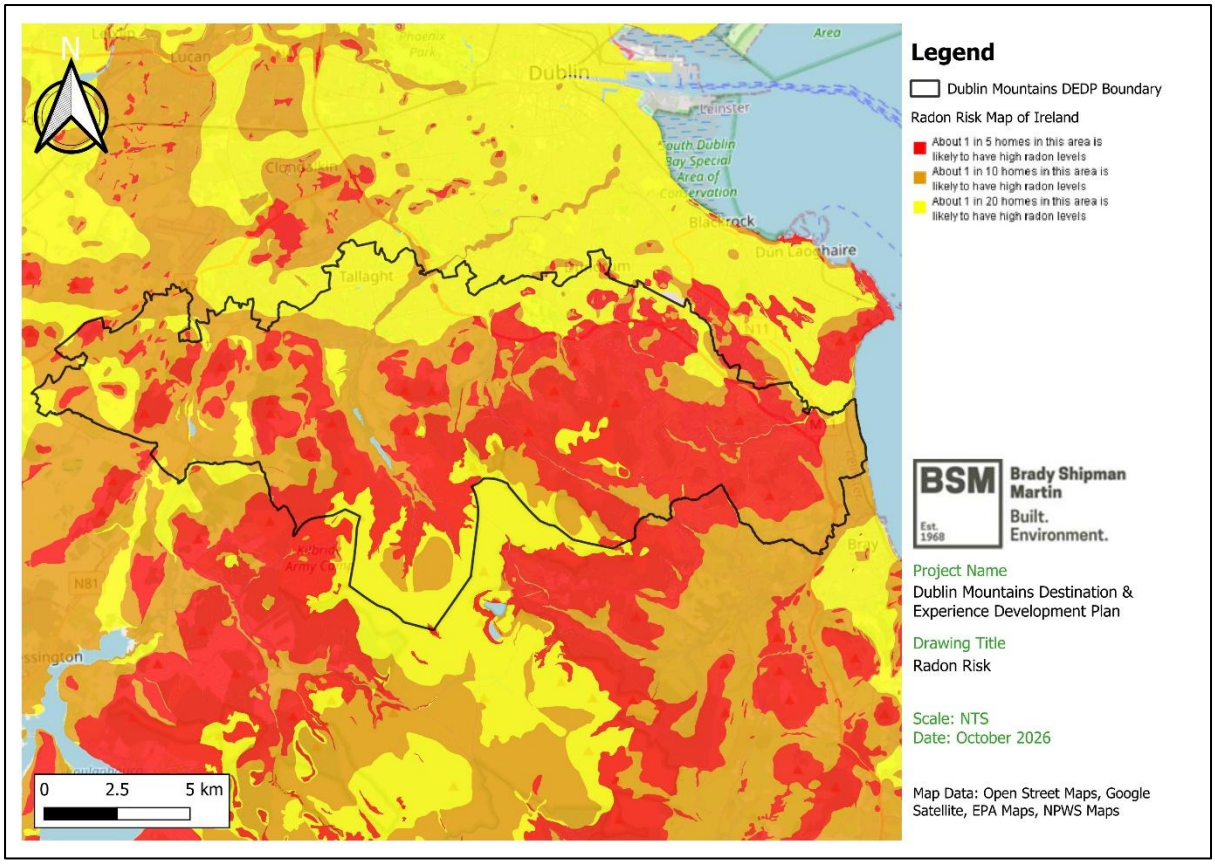

Figure 5.5 Radon Risk Map for the Plan Area

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. Coillte[18] 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 – Barnaslingan Wood, Carrickgollogan, Kilmashogue, Ticknock, Tribadden Wood (Pine Forest), Cruagh Wood, Hell Fire Club, Massy's Estate and Cloon/Curtlestown.

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. Notably, the large areas of the DEDP are underlain by types of peat which are highly environmentally sensitive.

[18] https://www.coillte.ie/our-forests/recreation-map/

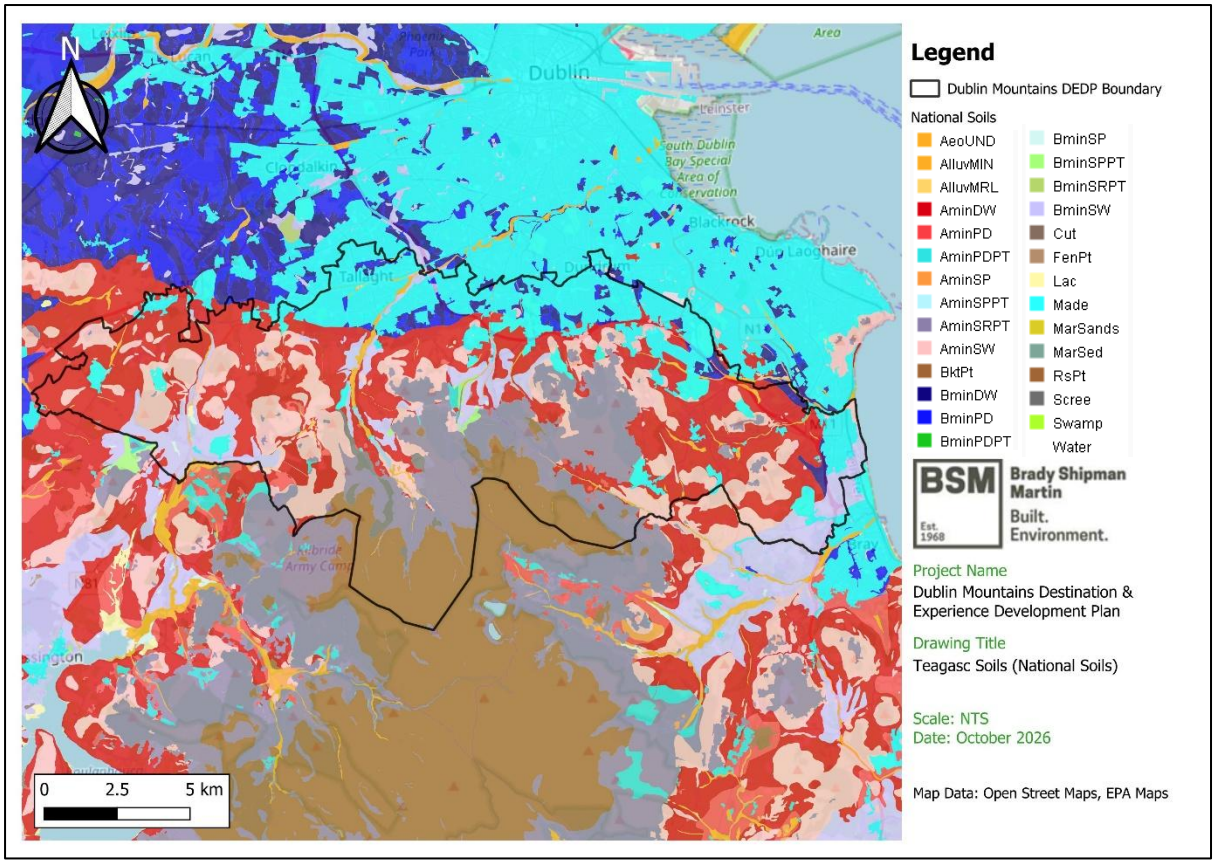

Figure 5.6 Teagasc Subsoils Map for the study area[19]

Seveso Sites

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 'High' to 'Moderate' landslide susceptibility, with the risk ranging from to 'Low' and to 'High' across the area. The landslide susceptibility is greater than the national average due to the location of the DEDP area within the Dublin Mountains. There are 53no. previous landslide events in the DEDP area. Refer to **Figure 5.7**.

[19] EPA Maps - https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/

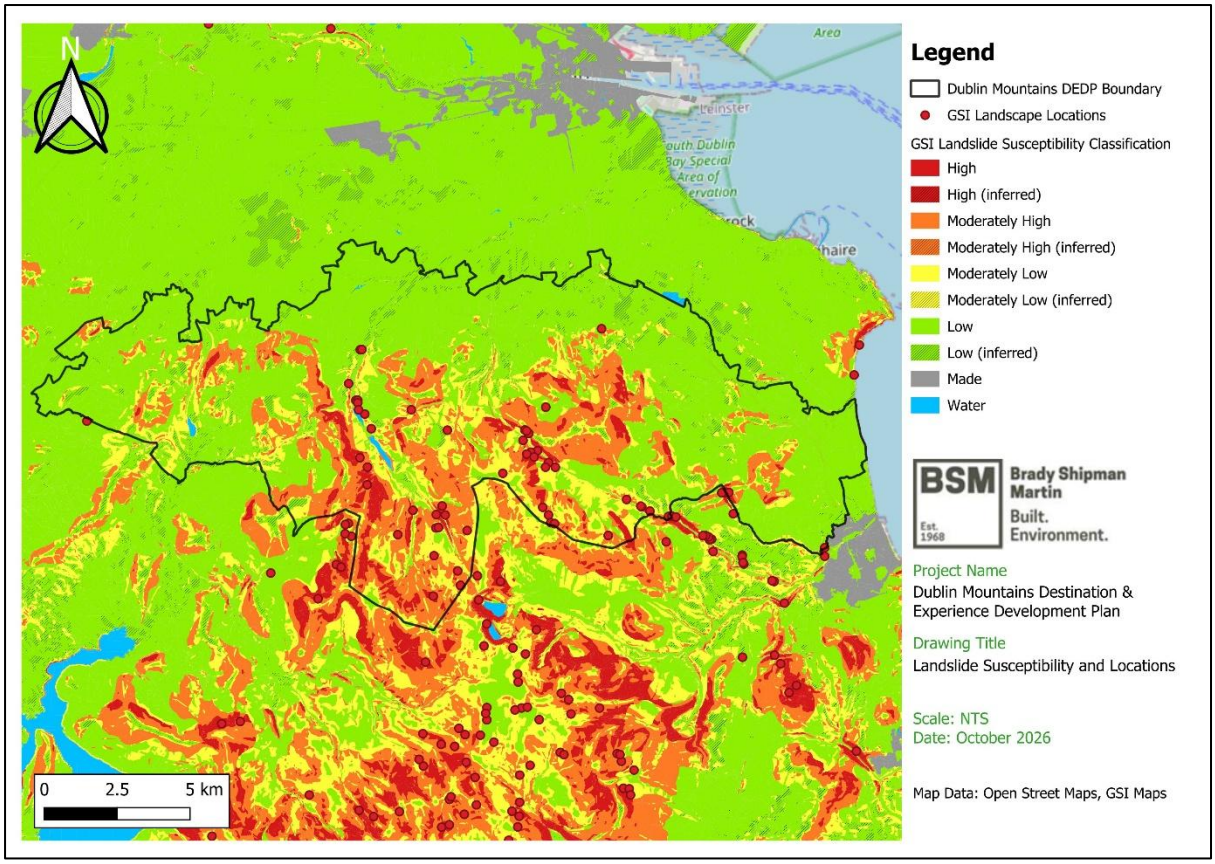

Figure 5.7 GSI Landslide Susceptibility for the study area[20]

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 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 Destination Experience Development Plan area includes several audited geological heritage sites throughout the Dublin Mountains. The mountains themselves are a well-recognised landmarks in South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Counties.

The study area is underlain by several different rock formations[21] as shown in **Figure 5.8** below.

[20] GSI Spatial Resources - https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228
[21] GSI Bedrock Geology - https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/publications/Pages/Bedrock-Geology-of-Ireland-Map-Scale-1-to-1-Million.aspx

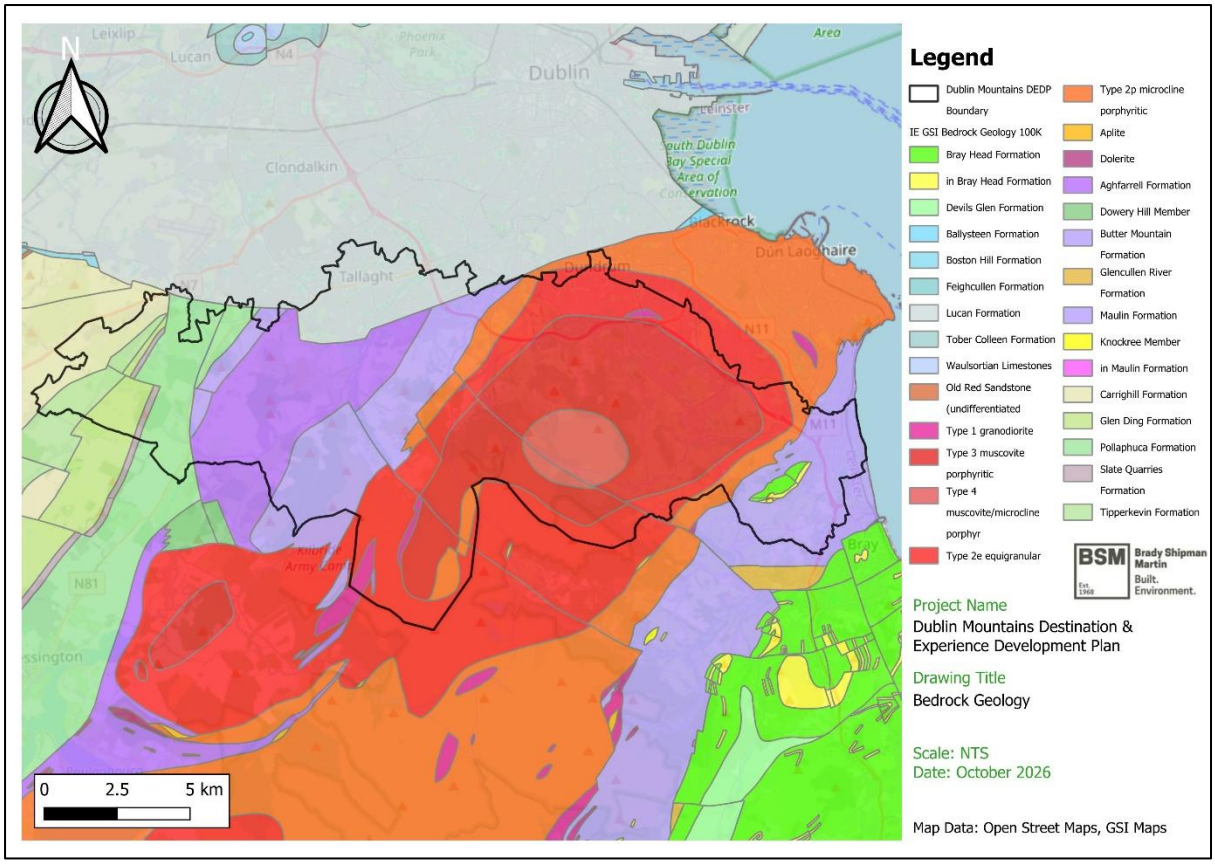

Figure 5.8 GSI Bedrock Geology (100k) for the study area[22]

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

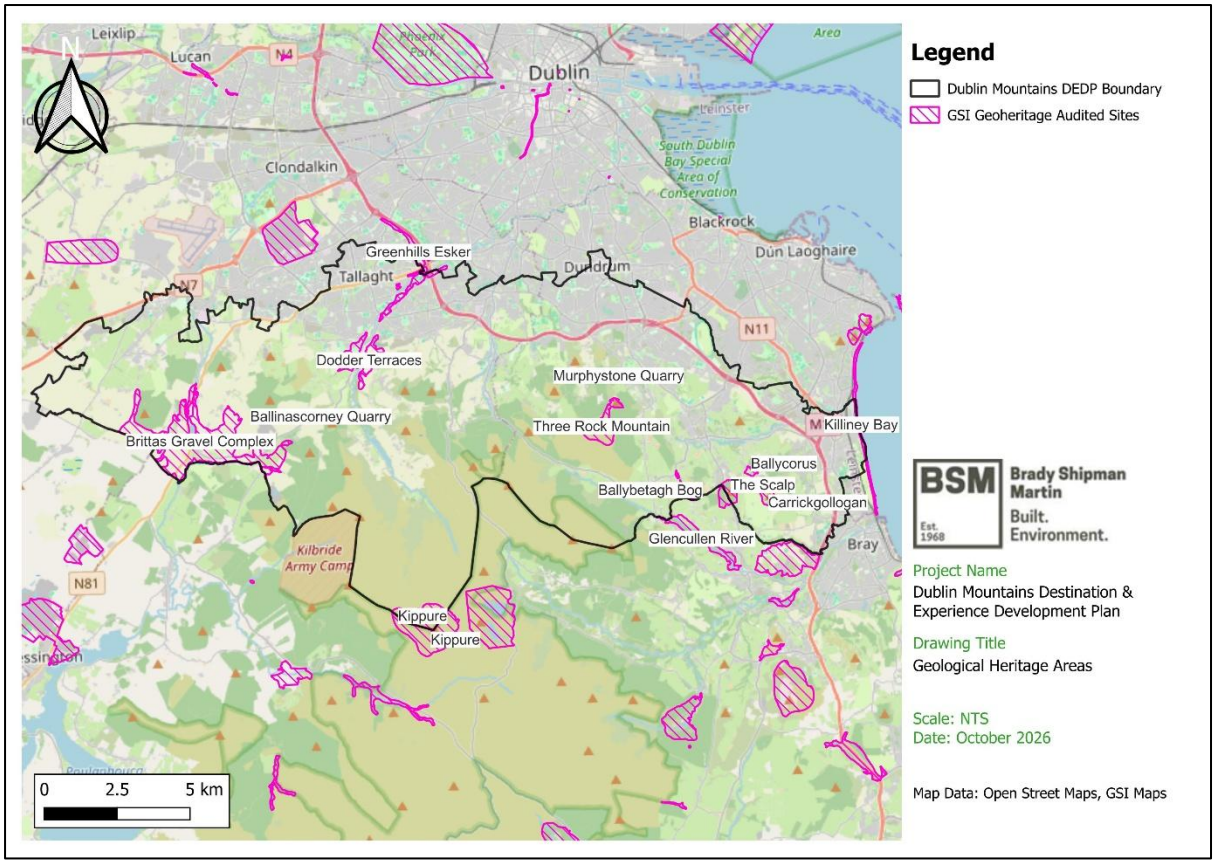

Figure 5.9 Geological Heritage Sites in the study area[23]

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 CO_2 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.

[23] GSI – The Geological Heritage of the study area - https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228

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.

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 – Ovoca-Varty (10) and Liffey and Dublin Bay (09); and the following WFD subcatchments – Dodder_SC_010 (09_16), Liffey_SC_090 (09_15), Liffey_SC_010 (09_13) and Dargle_SC_010 (10_5).

5.3.4.3 Surface Water Quality

The latest *Water Quality in Ireland* report 2019-2024 was published by the EPA in 2025. 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.

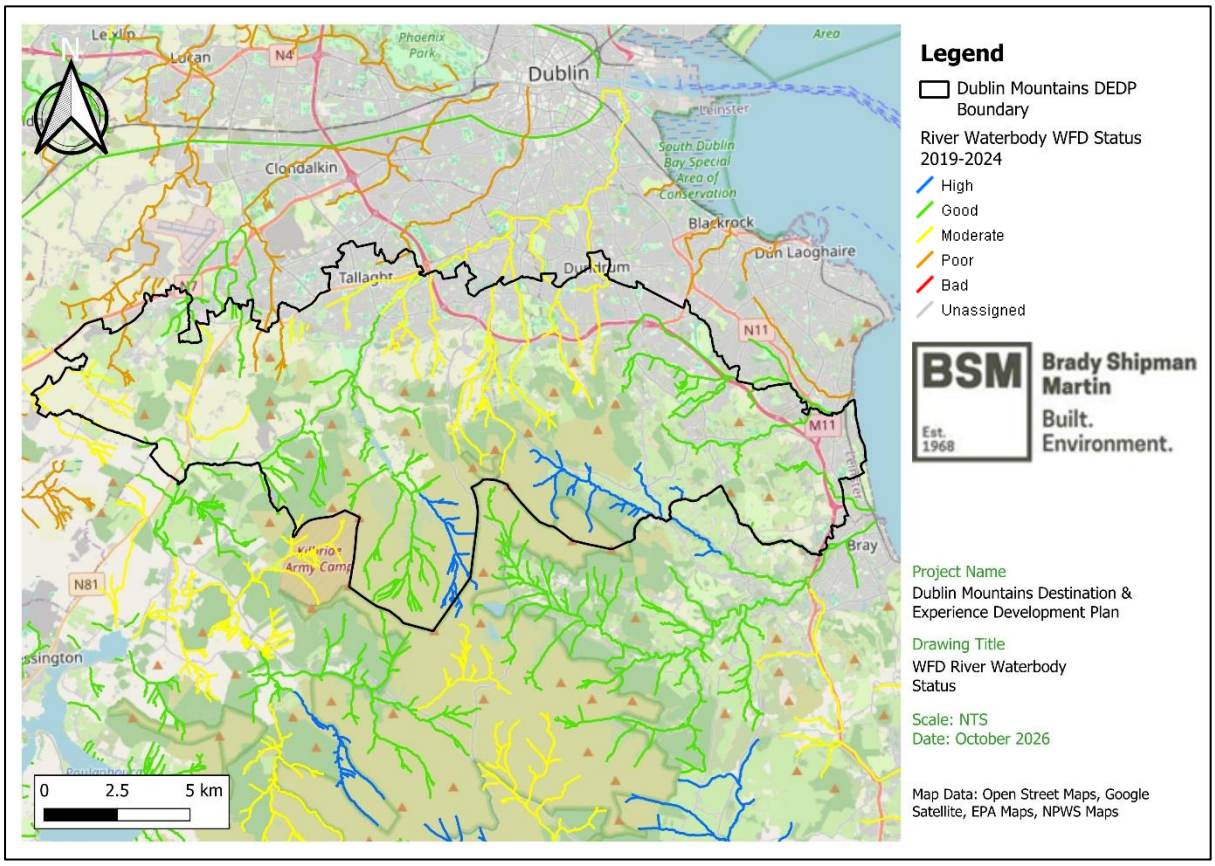

Figure 5.10 WFD River Waterbody Status 2019-2024[24]

There are two **lake waterbodies** within the DEDP area, the Glenasmole Lower (EPA named IE_EA_09_68) and the Glenasmole Upper (EPA named IE_EA_09_70) of *'poor'* and *'good'* quality respectively, as shown in **Figure 5.11** below. There are no canal, coastal or transitional waterbodies within the study area.

[24] https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/

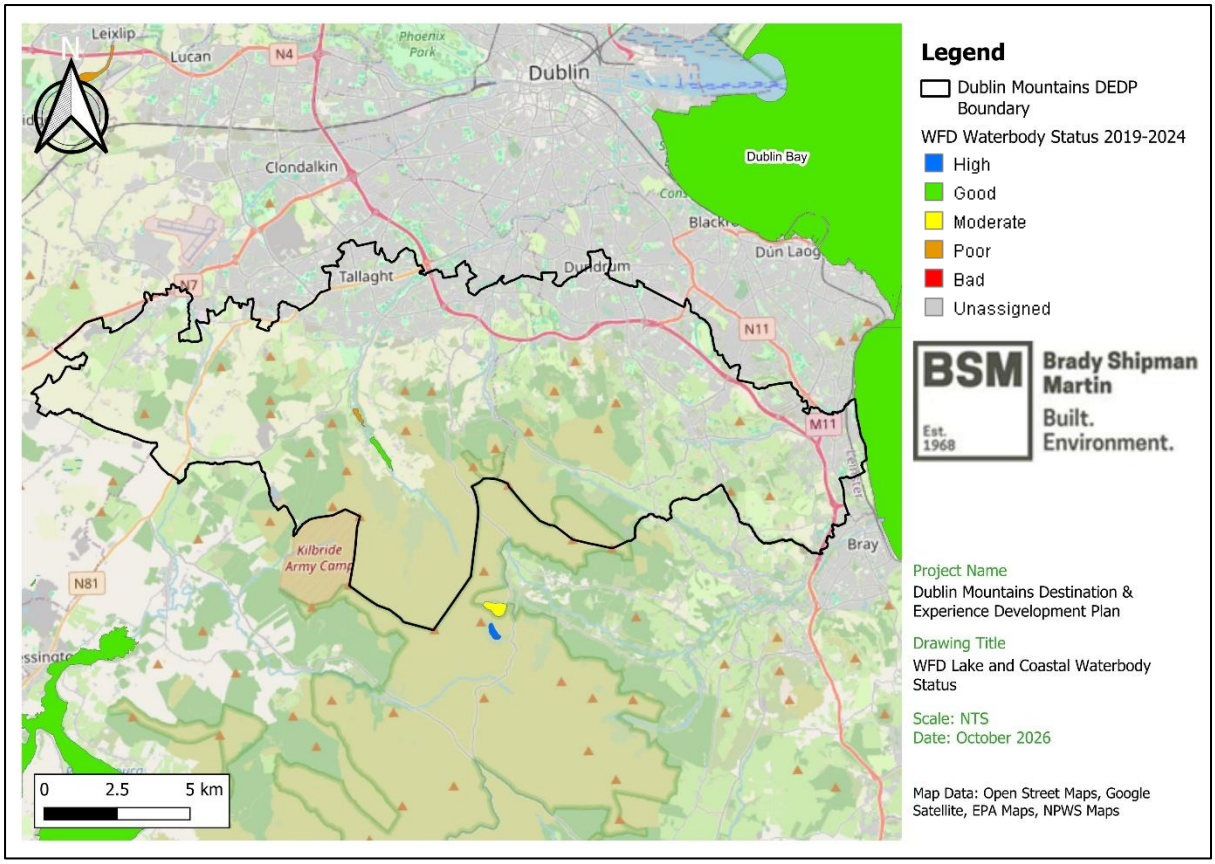

Figure 5.11 WFD Lake Waterbody Status 2019-2024[25]

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 2019 and 2024 was *'good'*[26] across the groundwater bodies within the study area as shown in **Figure 5.12** below. All of the groundwater bodies underlaying the Plan are as protected under EPA Article 7 Abstraction for Drinking Water.

The groundwater vulnerability of study area ranges from *'Moderate'* to *'Extreme,* with most areas falling under *High, Moderate* or *Rock at or near Surface or Karst'*. 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 locally important and poor aquifers. There are no gravel aquifers within the study area. Refer to **Figure 5.14**.

[25] https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/

[26] EPA Groundwater Quality Data - https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/

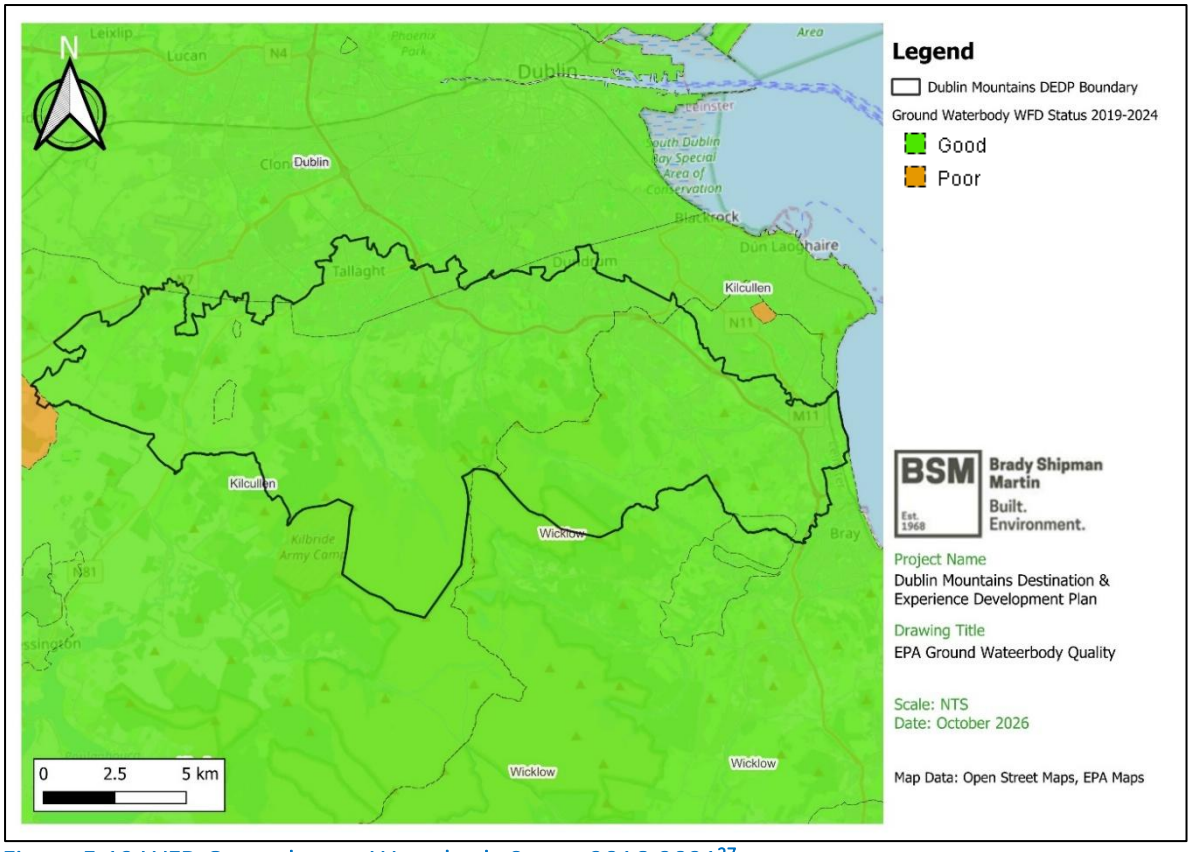

Figure 5.12 WFD Groundwater Waterbody Status 2016-2021[27]

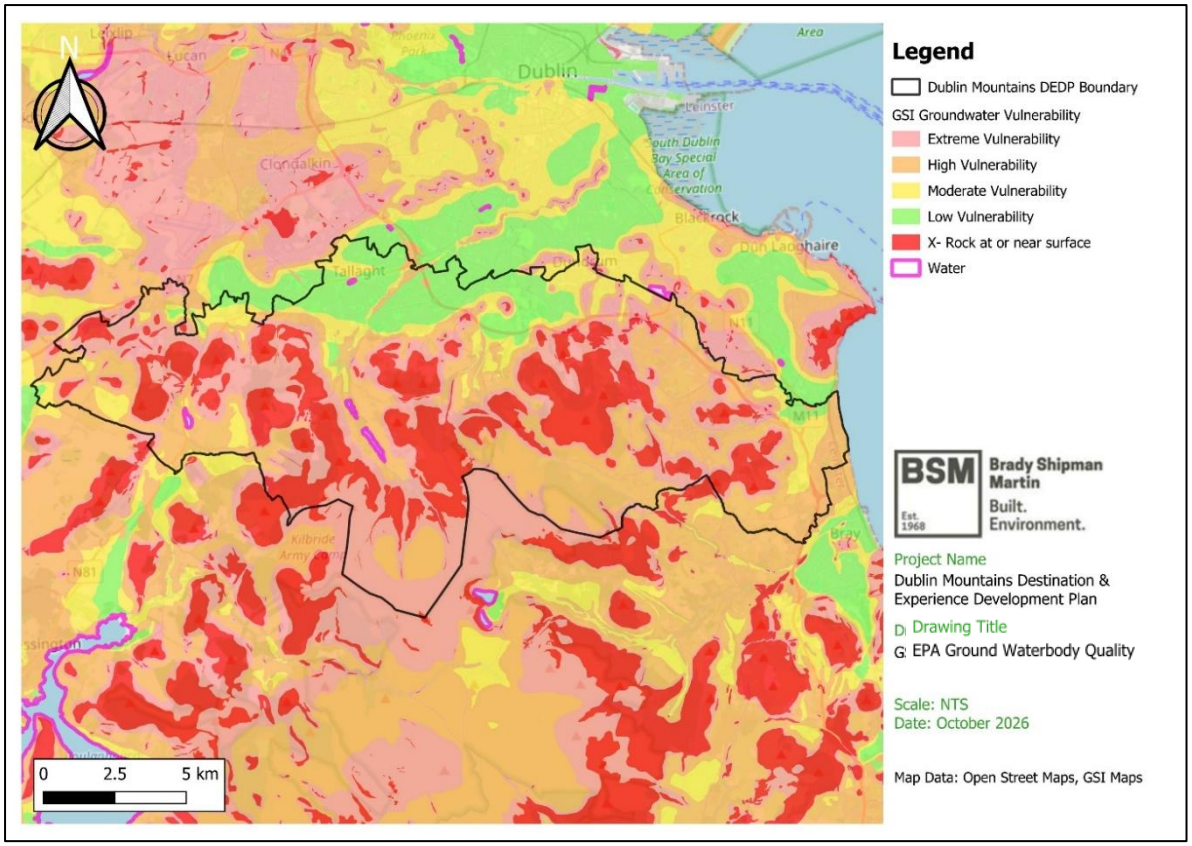

Figure 5.13 Groundwater Vulnerability within the Plan area [28]

[27] https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/
[28] GSI Spatial Resources- https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228

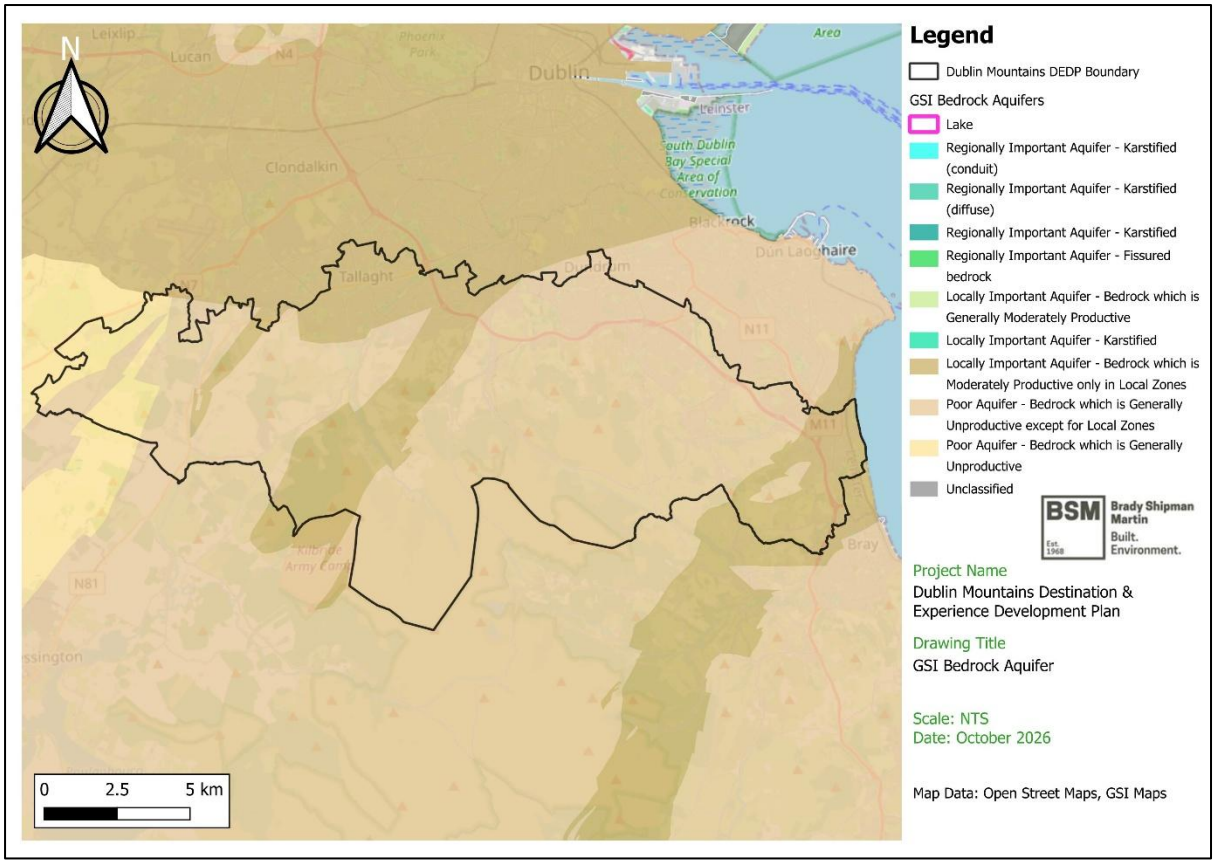

Figure 5.14 Bedrock Aquifer within the Plan area[29]

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 South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028, 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 under a law called the EU Bathing Water Directive, which is implemented in Ireland by the Bathing

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

Water Regulations. There are no designated bathing areas within the Plan area. The closest bathing areas are located in Bray and Killiney.

5.3.4.7 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 legislation[30] 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 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.

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

The study area is located within Zone A, within the 'Dublin Conurbation' zone. The designated zones have been defined to meet the criteria for air quality monitoring, assessment and management as defined in the aforementioned regulations. There are two air quality monitoring station within the study area, see Figure 5.15.

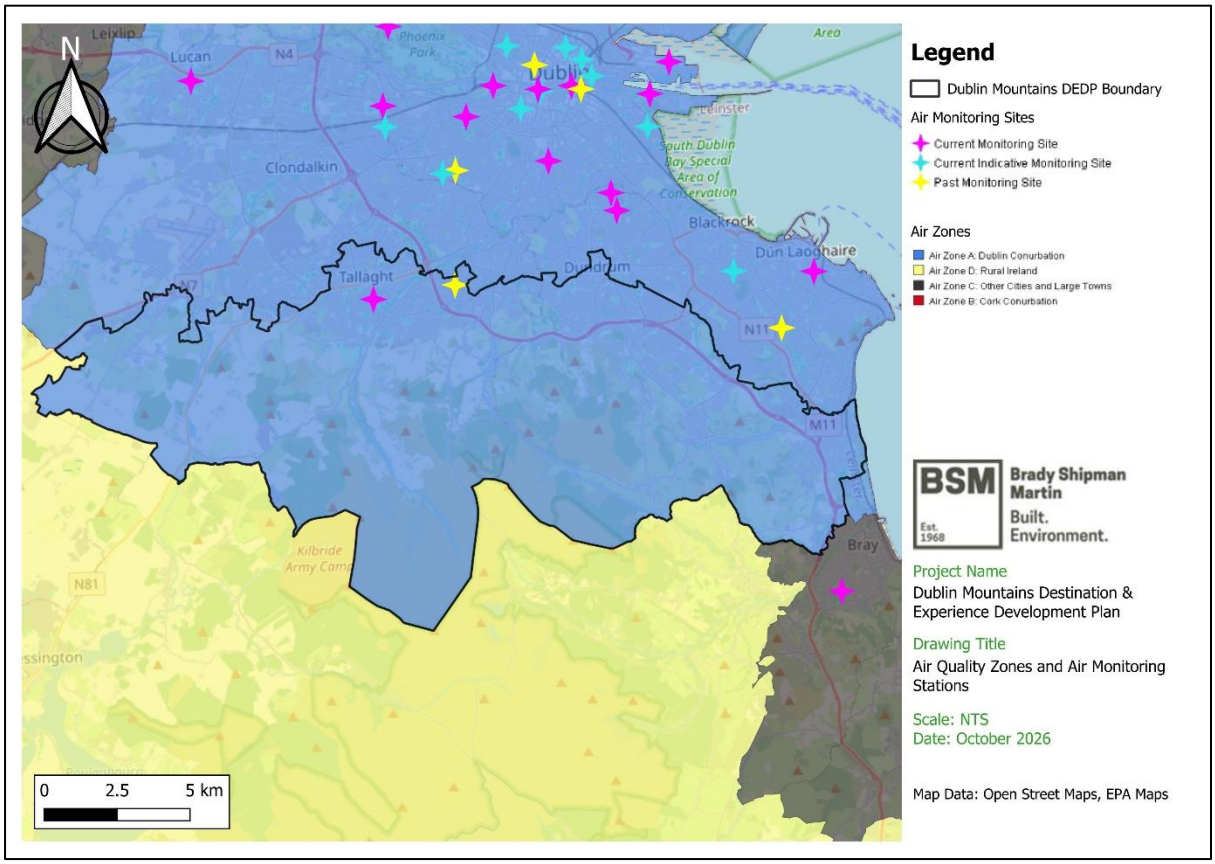

Figure 5.15 Air Quality Zones and Air Monitoring Stations near the Plan Area

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
- PM_{10} 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 (NO_2). The proposed Plan is unlikely to impact the air quality in Zone A, however there is still a need to protect the air quality near the border of County Wicklow.

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 Dublin Mountains 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 regional roads, there is also some noise overflow from the M50 and railway that spreads into the Plan area as shown in Figure 5.16.

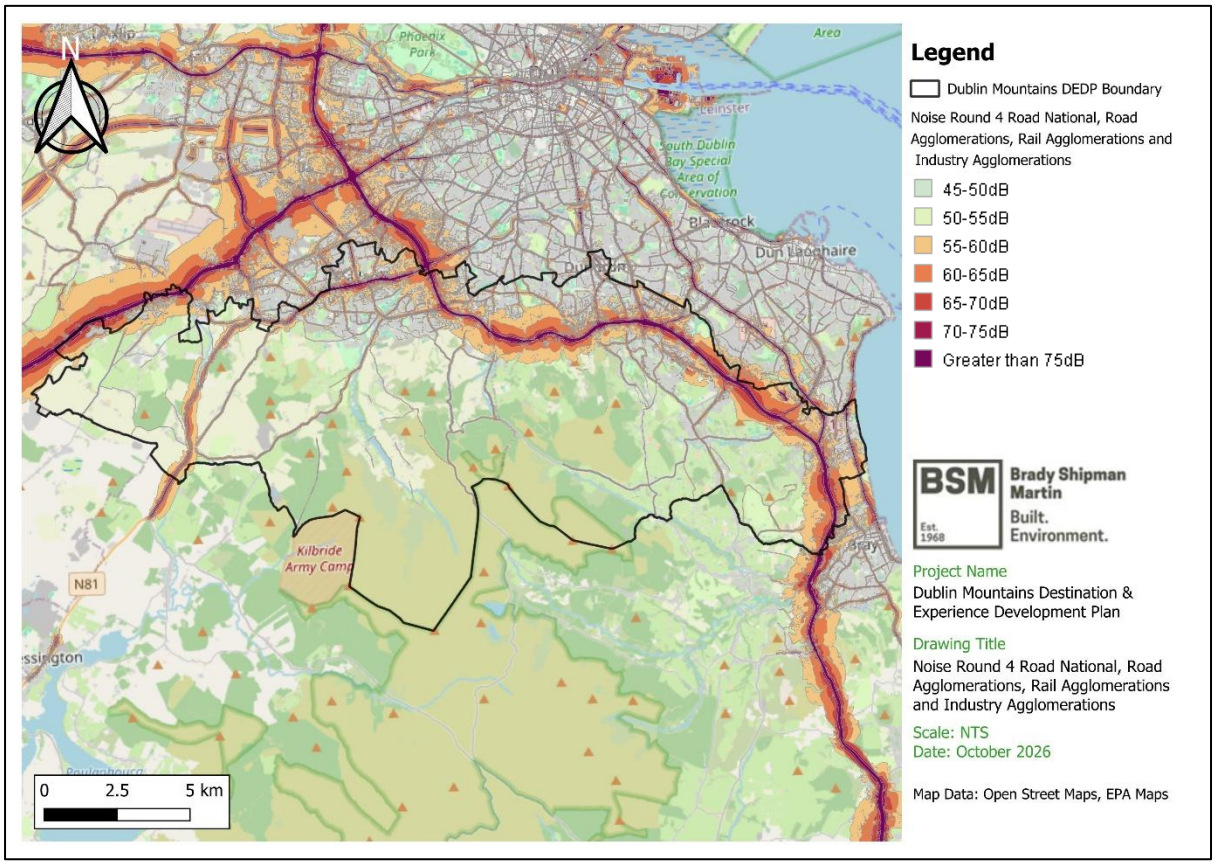

Figure 5.16 Noise Round 4 dB within the Plan Area

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 rivers[31].

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.[32]

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 tourism[38].

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 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.

[31] GOI (2019).
[32] Climate Action Plan 2024- https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/79659-climate-action-plan-2024/

5.3.5.3 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 NO_2, particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM_{10}), 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 Dublin Mountain DEDP is only accessible via car with public transport and active travel routes limited further away from Dublin's urbanised areas.

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 with 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*[33] 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

[33] EPA Drinking Water Quality - https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/annual-drinking-water-reports/

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 is one public wastewater treatment plant in the Plan area, Shanganagh-Bray (RegCD D0038)[34], 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.

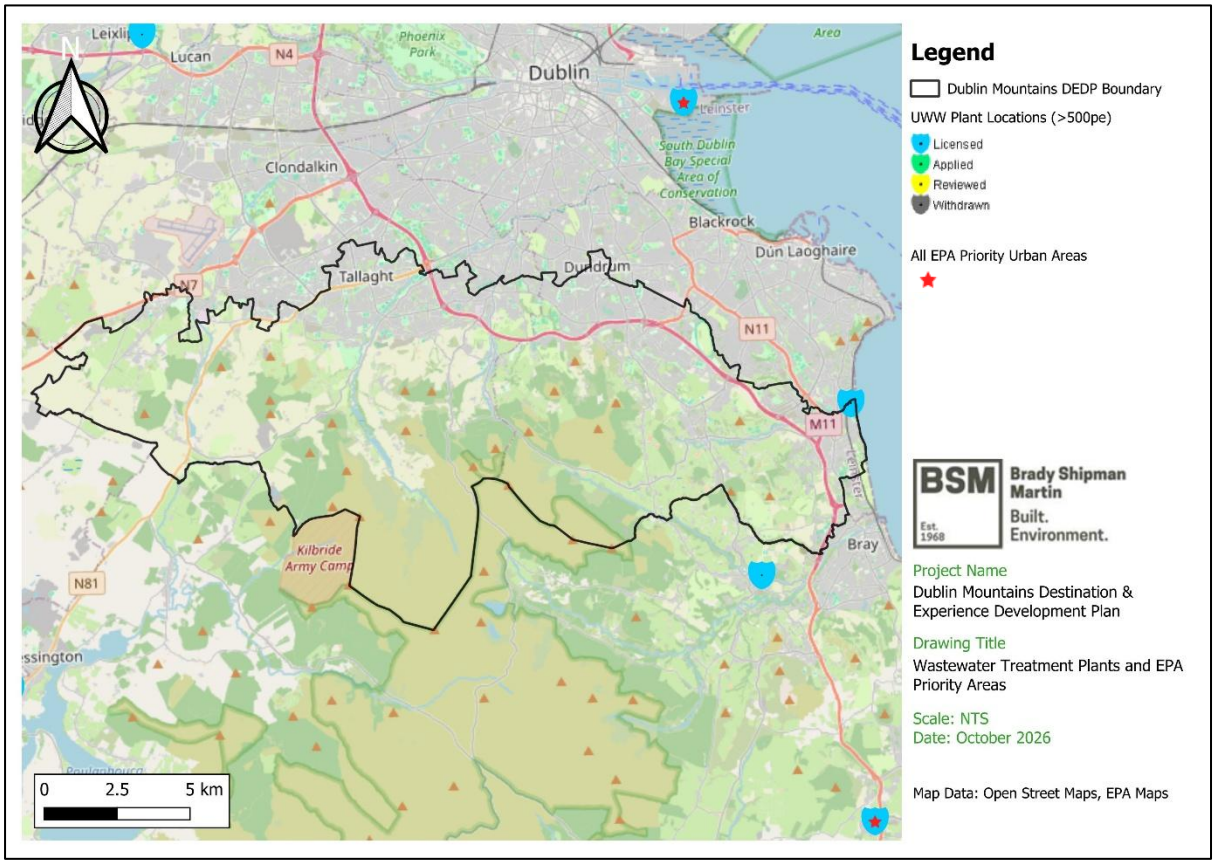

Figure 5.17 Wastewater Treatment Plants and EPA Priority Areas

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*[35].

[34] UWW Plant Locations - https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/
[35] EPA, 2010: https://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/water/wastewater/code%20of%20practice%20for%20single%20houses/

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 Eastern-Midlands 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 Eastern-Midlands Region waste management plan and the two other regional waste management plans. The NWMPCE does not however dissolve the three regional waste areas. The NWCPCE 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 Economy[36] 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.
- 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.

[36] DCCAE (2020).

- 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. There is existing public transport serving surrounding areas such as Tallaght, Sandyford or Kilternan. However, once in the Dublin Mountains region, connectivity is weak with poor linkages between towns and the principal visitor attractions. It is very difficult for a visitor to tour the region by public transport.

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, 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.

The Dublin Mountains DEDP notes the lack of public transport as a key challenge for visitor movement.

5.3.6.5 Telecommunications

High-speed broadband and telecommunications is core to competitiveness. The National Broadband Plan 2019[37] (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.

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 the rural parts of the DEDP area away from town and road networks.

[37] DCCAE, 2019: https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Delivering%20the%20National%20Broadband%20Plan.pdf

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.
- 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 CO_2, 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.
    - 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.

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 Dublin Mountains DEDP area contains 373 RPS features, 394 NIAH buildings and 489 SMR features. Please note that additional records may be added to the RPS for South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County, contact should be made with the Conservation Officer before planning is ought.

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. South Dublin
    - Saint Maelrans Terrace
    - Balrothery Cottages, Tallaght
    - TJ Burns Cottages, Old Bawn Road
    - Boden Village Cottages, Ballyboden
    - Whitechurch Road and Taylor's Lane Cottages, Rathfarnham
    - Tallaght Village
    - Rathcoole Village
- Co. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
    - Pembroke Cottages, Ballinteer Road, Dúndrum
    - Balally Cottages, Sandyford Road, Sandyford
    - Moss Cottages, Enniskerry Road, Kiltiernan
    - Pembroke Cottages, Main Street, Dúndrum
    - Sydenham Villas, Dúndrum
    - Arkle Square, Brewery Road, Stillorgan
    - Sydenham Road, Dúndrum
    - Foxrock

The Dublin Mountains area has a rich cultural heritage background. The location of the DEDP is surrounded by geological heritage from the presence of the mountains nearby. Please refer to Section 5.3.3 for further information on geological heritage in the Plan area.

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.

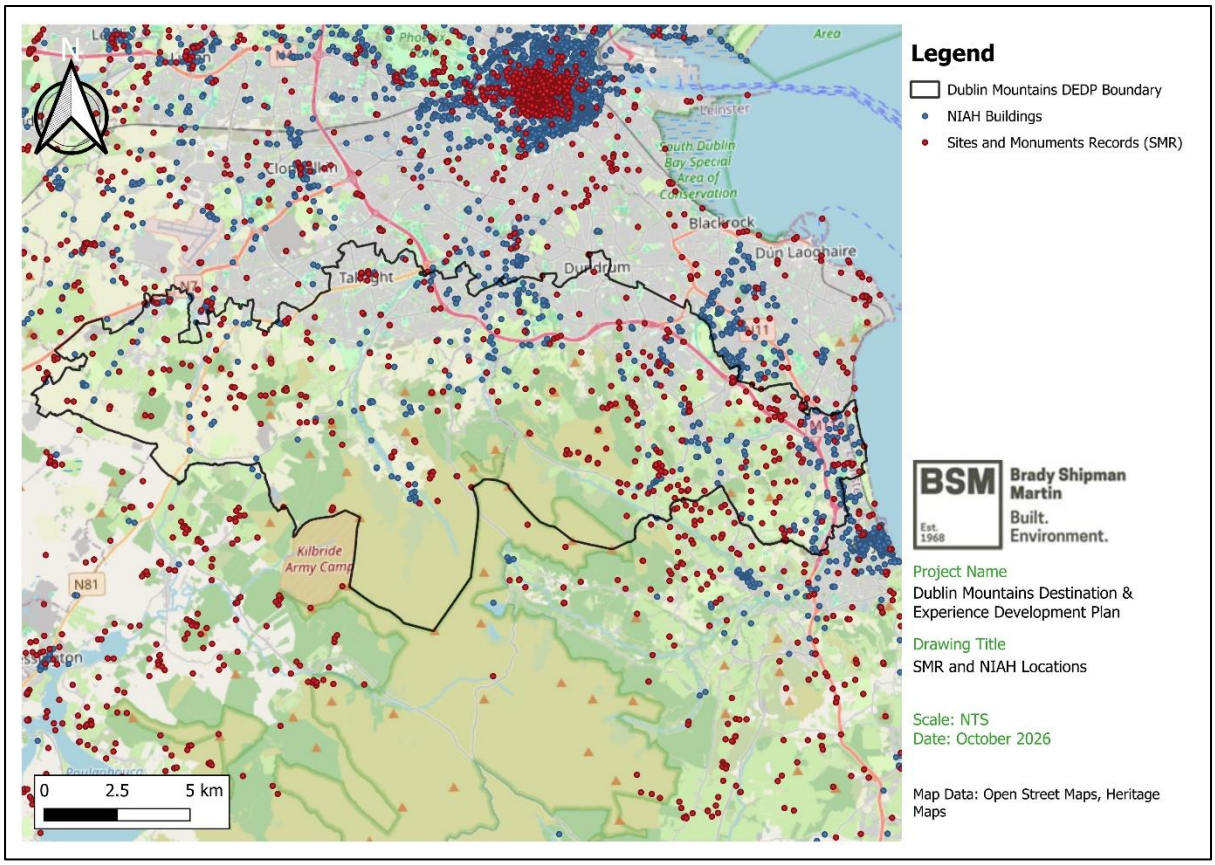

Figure 5.18 Sites and Monuments Record in the Plan area

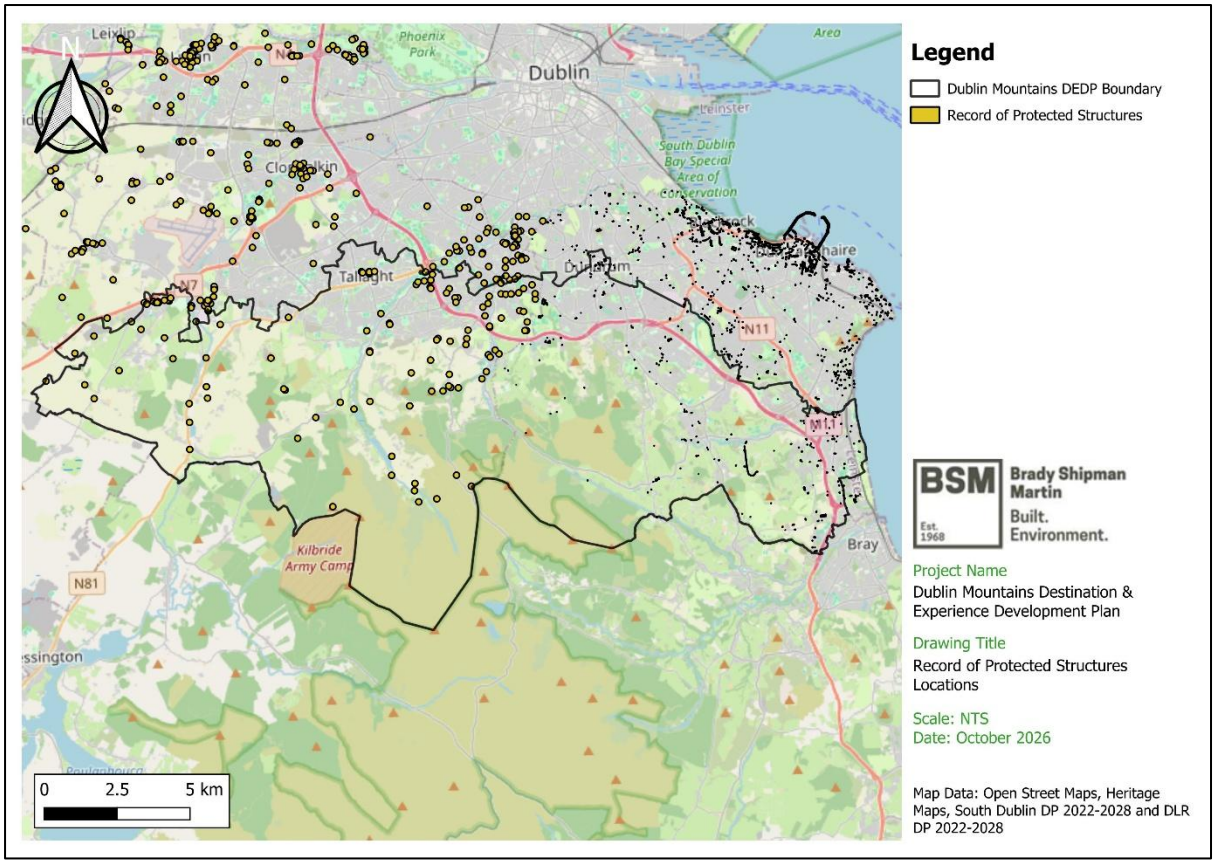

Figure 5.19 NIAH and RPS sites in the Plan area

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 2015-2025[38] 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.

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.

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 5.20.

[38] National Landscape Strategy: https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/N-Landscape-Strategy-english-Web.pdf

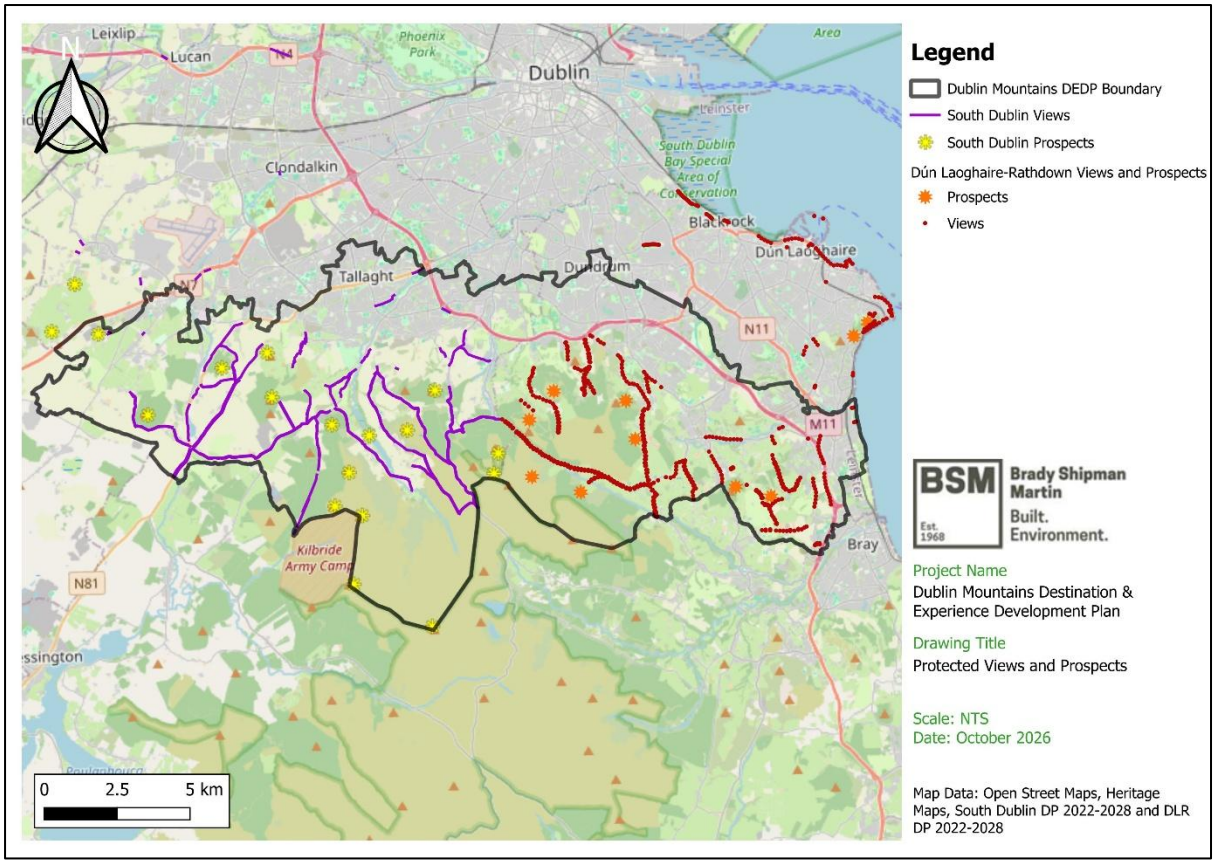

Figure 5.20 Scenic Views in the Plan Area

Landscape Character Area Specific Objectives

South Dublin County Council and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council have outlined specific objectives for the Landscape Character Areas (LCA) present in their jurisdictions. The LCAs that overlap with the Plan area are shown in **Figure 5.21** and **Figure 5.22**.

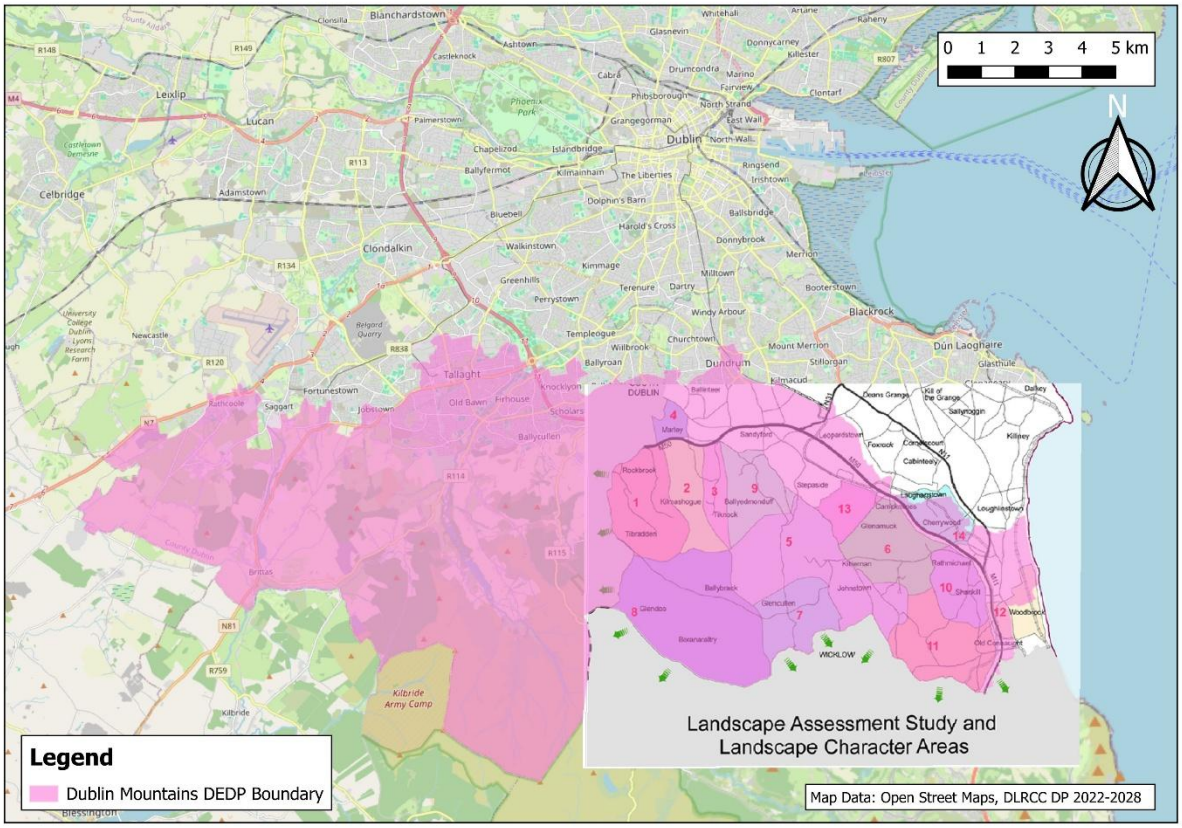

Figure 5.21 LCAs in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown

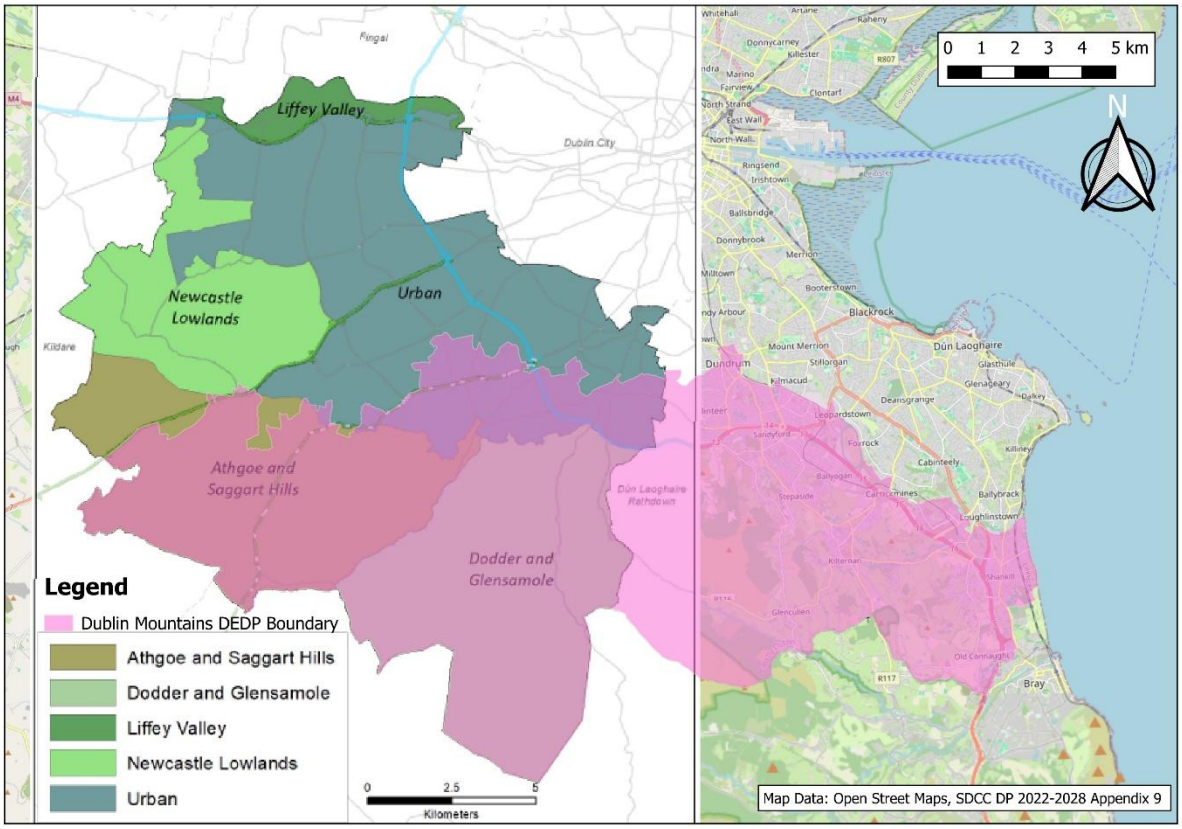

Figure 5.22 LCAs in South Dublin

The objectives for the LCAs are outlined in **Table 5.1**.

Table 5.1 Landscape Character Area Objectives as per the South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028

Landscape Character Area	Specific Objectives
South Dublin	
LCA 4 Dodder and Glensamole	This is a rich and distinctive landscape of national importance. Its values embrace history, archaeology, ecology, culture, landscape form, and scenery. It is highly visible with extensive views and landmarks. It forms a significant backdrop to the greater Dublin area and is a remarkable landscape in its wildness and remoteness so close to heavily urbanised areas. Its character and integrity are of importance to local residents, and it is a very significant resource for recreation users and for tourism. The objectives of managing this LCA is to preserve its overall character and the features and values that contribute to its uniqueness **Landscape character sensitivity: High**
Athgoe and Saggart Hills	The integrity of the landscape character is derived from agriculture combined with other rural land uses including coniferous plantations. It forms a strong and valuable backdrop to the extensive and densely urbanised areas of the county. The integrity of its character, and of its value as a landscape setting have been compromised by housing developments in the area and through the use of non-vernacular styles very much in conflict with the local character **Landscape character sensitivity: Medium to high**
Urban	This landscape character does not have any assigned sensitivity.
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	
LCA 1 Kilmashogue Valley	a) Kilmashogue Valley is currently one of the County's finest unspoilt valley landscapes, which is currently not protected by any particular status. Any development in this valley should be carefully considered and be in sympathy with the existing landscape. The upper portion of the valley has not been affected by large-scale afforestation. b) Existing deciduous trees especially those around Larch Hill shall be afforded continuing protection. c) Buildings – the rural character of the built fabric of the valley shall be maintained along with the avoidance of suburbanisation. Any permitted development shall be vernacular in design, mass and scale and in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan. d) Roads - any plans for road realignment or improvements shall take account of the existing hedgerows. e) Pylons and masts – careful consideration shall be taken of any proposals for pylon schemes to traverse the valley. f) Afforestation (coniferous species) – careful consideration shall be given to the landscape impact of large scale afforestation on the upper reaches of either Kilmashogue or Tibradden Mountain. g) Resist aspirations for large scale residential development. h) Ensure protection of non- designated sites. i) Protect existing hedgerows particularly those identified as priority hedgerows in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown hedgerow survey.
LCA 2 Western Kellystown Road	a) Existing hedgerows and stone walls shall be maintained. b) Deciduous trees in the river valley shall be protected. c) Roads – any plans for road improvements shall take account of the existing hedgerows. d) Pylons and masts – careful consideration shall be taken of any proposals for pylon schemes to traverse the County. e) Afforestation (coniferous species) – careful consideration shall be given to the landscape impact of large scale afforestation. f) Protect existing hedgerows particularly those identified as priority hedgerows in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown hedgerow survey.
LCA 3 Ticknock Road	a) Regard to be had to the restoration and conservation of field patterns.

Landscape Character Area	Specific Objectives
	b) Building – any permitted development shall be vernacular in design, scale and mass and shall nestle into the existing landscape. c) Pylons and Masts – careful consideration shall be given to proposals for pylon schemes traversing the landscape. d) Afforestation – careful consideration shall be given to landscape impact of large scale coniferous afforestation and resultant harvesting on the upper reaches of the Mountains bounding this enclosure. Closing off of the slopes shall be avoided. e) Existing parklands associated with demesne houses shall be treated on an individual basis. It is recommended that historical survey and analysis be carried out prior to any alterations.
LCA 9 Barnacullia	a) The area has already absorbed considerable residential development along its main routeways. At present the Enniskerry Road R117 acts as a boundary between urban and rural developments as the land begins to rise steeply to the west of this roadway. b) The impact of any further pylon schemes on the landscape shall be carefully assessed. c) Any new residential development shall maintain the rural character of the area and should not be obtrusive on the horizon. d) The impact of further extractive industries on the elevated slopes of Three Rock shall be carefully assessed. e) Possible road improvement schemes including the Stepaside Relief Road shall not adversely affect hedgerows and walls. f) To have regard to the recommendations and findings of the Historic Landscape Character Assessment for Barnacullia.
LCA 5 Kiltiernan Plain	a) Regard to be had to the restoration and conservation of field patterns. b) Building – any permitted development shall be vernacular in design, scale and mass and shall nestle into the existing landscape. c) Pylons and Masts – careful consideration shall be given to proposals for pylon schemes traversing the landscape. d) Afforestation – careful consideration shall be given to landscape impact of large scale coniferous afforestation and resultant harvesting on the upper reaches of the Mountains bounding this enclosure. Closing off of the slopes shall be avoided. e) Existing parklands associated with demesne houses shall be treated on an individual basis. It is recommended that historical survey and analysis be carried out prior to any alterations.
LCA 8 Glendoo Valley	a) To continue to support the amenity/recreational value of the Wicklow Way as it passes through the Glendoo Valley. b) Field patterns and stone walls shall be conserved. To have regard to the recommendations and findings of the Historic Landscape Character Assessment for Glencullen c) The nature of this valley landscape renders it a sensitive landscape. Extensive planting of forestry would be detrimental to this landscape. d) Pylons and masts – careful consideration shall be taken of any proposals for pylon schemes to traverse the valley.
LCA 7 Glencullen Valley	a) This is a highly sensitive landscape in which any development must be handled with care. Linear elongation of the existing Glencullen village shall be avoided. Instead consolidation shall be encouraged. b) Building – any new development shall respect the vernacular in design, mass and scale. Development on ridges shall be avoided. c) Encouragement of tree planting of native species in low lying area and on hills. d) The impact of coniferous plantations on the hills shall be noted and further proposals assessed. e) Existing stone walls shall be restored and maintained. Protect existing hedgerows particularly those identified as priority hedgerows in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown hedgerow survey. To have regard to the recommendations and findings of the Historic Landscape Character Assessment for Glencullen.

Landscape Character Area	Specific Objectives
	f) To have regard to the policies and objectives of any Local Area plan for Glencullen. g) To concentrate all new housing development within the village core and specific identified rural clusters. Residential development in the form of new dwelling houses will not be permitted outside the designated village core and rural clusters. h) To implement the Source Protection Plan at Glencullen and to prohibit any development which would conflict with the objectives of the Source Protection Plan which was completed in November 2005.
LCA 13 Carrickmines	a) This enclosure sits between the urban and the rural landscapes and is one that is undergoing rapid change as to accommodates new communities. b) The future vision for this area offers an opportunity to enhance and restore a portion of the landscape as Jamestown park. It is envisaged that this area will serve as an amenity/recreation area for new communities at Stepaside and Carrickmines. To have regard to the policies and objectives of Kiltiernan/Glenamuck Local Area Plan 2013. In June 2018 this plan was extended for a further period up to and including September 2023. c) To have regard to the recommendations and findings of the Historic Landscape Character Assessment for Kiltiernan.
LCA 6 Ballycorus	a) Recognition of the important role of Ballycorus leadmines in the past. b) Dingle Glen is a sensitive landscape and shall be afforded protection due to its rarity. c) Maintenance and restoration of field patterns and boundaries. d) To have regard to the recommendations and findings of the Historic Landscape Character Assessment for Kiltiernan. e) To have regard to the policies and objectives of Kiltiernan/Glenamuck Local Area Plan 2013 (extended to 2023). f) Protect existing hedgerows particularly those identified as priority hedgerows in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown hedgerow survey.
LCA 11 Ballyman	a) This area is distinctively agricultural and low lying in nature with views across to Bray Head and the Sugar Loaf. b) Some of the area falls outside the County and as such the Council shall work with Wicklow County Council on formulating policy for this area. c) Prevention of unauthorised dumping. d) To have regard to the recommendations and findings of the Historic Landscape Character Assessment for Old Connaught. e) Protect existing hedgerows particularly those identified as priority hedgerows in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown hedgerow survey.

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.
- 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP beneath the *South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028* and *Dún Laghoaire-Rathdown County 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP (refer to Table 6.1). The SEOs provide a basis for the assessment of the environmental effects of the Dublin Mountains DEDP and are framed in such a manner as to enable the Dublin Mountains DEDP to be fully assessed in environmental terms.

SEOs are distinct from the strategic objectives within the Dublin Mountains 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 the Dublin Mountains 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[39] 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP does not contradict biodiversity protection, restoration and rehabilitation objectives in the *South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028* and *Dún Laghoaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028*.
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.

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

Theme	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objective
	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 *South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028* and *Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028.*

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 Dublin Mountains 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 the Dublin Mountains 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.

Tourism in the Dublin Mountains will continue to progress under the Dublin Mountains Partnership's Strategic Plan 2022-2026, whose objectives are to provide for recreation, protect the environment and raise awareness of the multiple benefits the Dublin Mountains. The development of the Dublin Mountains will also be guided by the development plans for South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028.

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

The do-something scenario sees the preparation of a Plan that seeks to consolidate the management of tourism in the Dublin Mountains. 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 the Dublin Mountains. The key opportunities to consider for the Plan would be:

- *The Dublin Mountains offer a distinctive combination of outdoor adventure, heritage, nature and dramatic views over the city and coast. Signature assets such as the Dublin Mountains Way, mountain biking experiences and iconic viewpoints provide strong foundations for a differentiated visitor proposition that compliments the wider Dublin experience.*
- *Few capital cities can offer visitors the opportunity to experience a vibrant city, dramatic coastline and mountain landscape within a single destination. The Dublin Mountains provides a distinctive outdoor dimension to this proposition and has the potential to encourage visitors to stay longer, explore more widely and engage with a broader range of experiences across the region.*
- *The proximity of the Dublin Mountains to Dublin City, the Dublin Coast and County Wicklow provides an opportunity to create a connected destination experience. Strengthening the role of visitor*

gateway hubs and improving sustainable transport connections can encourage visitors to explore more widely and stay longer within the region.

- *The area's natural landscapes, the Dublin Mountains Way, mountain biking experiences, heritage and archaeological assets, together with opportunities in food & agritourism, wellness experiences & festivals & events provide a strong platform for the development of memorable visitor experiences.*
- *The Dublin Mountains has strong potential to support a programme of participatory outdoor events centred on walking, trail running, mountain biking, heritage and nature-based activities. Building on existing festivals and outdoor recreation assets can increase destination awareness, extend visitation beyond the peak season, encourage repeat visits and strengthen the local visitor economy.*
- *The Dublin Mountains has an opportunity to increase overnight stays and visitor spend by strengthening the role of visitor gateway hubs and developing distinctive alternative accommodation experiences that reflect the character of the destination. Opportunities also exist to support rural tourism and farm diversification through the development of small-scale outdoor accommodation and agritourism experiences.*
- *A stronger and more connected tourism network can increase the range of visitor experiences available, improve destination competitiveness and maximise the contribution of tourism to local communities. Opportunities exist to support local enterprise development, farm diversification, new tourism experiences and employment opportunities that allow communities to benefit directly from the growth of the visitor economy.*
- *Digital platforms, AI-powered search, online booking systems and social media are increasingly influencing how visitors discover, plan and book travel experiences. The Dublin Mountains has an opportunity to strengthen the competitiveness of tourism businesses, improve the visibility and bookability of visitor experiences, and establish itself as a more connected and discoverable destination. Strengthening destination storytelling, digital capability and online collaboration can help convert existing demand from Dublin visitors into visits, overnight stays and visitor spend.*
- *Creating more accessible trails, viewpoints, interpretation, visitor facilities and digital information can broaden the appeal of the Dublin Mountains and enable a wider range of people to engage with the destination. Improving accessibility supports more inclusive tourism, enhances the visitor experience for all users, and aligns with the ambition to position the Dublin Mountains as a welcoming and sustainable destination. The Digital Audit also identified opportunities to improve website and digital accessibility across a number of tourism businesses, helping visitors more easily discover, plan and book experiences.*
- *The Dublin Mountains Visitor Centre, destination stewardship initiatives and a collective commitment to sustainable tourism provide an opportunity to position the Dublin Mountains as a national exemplar for responsible destination development. The destination has the potential to demonstrate how tourism can support environmental protection while delivering benefits for visitors and communities.*

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 Dublin Mountains 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 to the Dublin Mountains.

Alternative 2A will deliver effective benefit and response for tourism to the Dublin Mountains, whilst at the same providing for sustainable development and environmental protection.

Alternative 2B will deliver effective benefit and response for tourism to the Dublin Mountains, 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP

Reasonable Alternative	Description	SEO	Environmental Assessment	Environmental Evaluation
Alternative 1 Do-nothing / Do-Minimum	Tourism operations in the Dublin Mountains 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 the Dublin Mountains would be facilitated, promoted, supported and coordinated through the preparation of a Plan, with environmental considerations, that seeks to better manage tourism in the Dublin Mountains.	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 the Dublin Mountains would be facilitated, promoted, supported and coordinated through the preparation of a Plan, without environmental considerations, that seeks to better manage tourism in the Dublin Mountains.	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 Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan

8.1 Introduction

The Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP. These Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are detailed in Section 6 of this Report.

South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028 and *Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028* together 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan

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

Table 8.1 Environmental Assessment of Strategic Objectives of the Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP is as follows: *"The Dublin Mountains invite visitors to experience Dublin from above, where spectacular views, rich heritage, signature trails and unforgettable outdoor adventures combine to offer a city break with a difference, revealing a side of Dublin found nowhere else.* *As a distinctive part of Dublin's City, Coast and Mountains proposition, the Dublin Mountains broaden the appeal of the destination, encouraging visitors to stay longer, explore further, connect with nature and discover experiences beyond the traditional city break. Easy access and stronger connections between Dublin City, local communities and the mountains benefit residents and visitors alike, making it easier to experience, access and enjoy more*	This vision statement sets an overall context for destination experience and tourism in the Dublin Mountains area. This will support and underpin the local tourism economy, industry and associated workers. The vision statement encourages the growth of accommodation offerings in the region. 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 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
of the destination, while a growing range of unique accommodation encourages deeper engagement with its landscapes and communities. *Through a shared commitment to stewardship, the natural, cultural and archaeological assets that make the Dublin Mountains unique are protected, celebrated and enhanced for future generations."*						
Strategic Objective 1 – Dublin Mountains Destination Establish the Dublin Mountains as a Leading Outdoor Destination within Dublin's City, Coast and Mountains Proposition	Strategic Objective 1 aims to secure the image of the Dublin Mountains as a key destination for outdoor recreation and tourism. There are no developments proposed in this objective. 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**
Strategic Objective 2 – Inspiring Dublin Mountains Experiences Develop the Dublin Mountains experience base through product investment that delivers memorable	This objective will improve the visitor experiences available in the Dublin Mountain. There are no developments proposed in this objective. No negative or uncertain	**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,	**No**

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
outdoor experiences and epic views over the city and coast.	environmental effects arise and therefore, mitigation is not required.				MA_3), **CH** (CH_1, CH_2), **LV** (LV_1, LV_2)	
Strategic Objective 3 – Dublin Mountains Tourism Businesses Support new and existing tourism businesses in the development of experiences that inspire visitors to explore the Dublin Mountains.	This objective will result in positive effects on population and human health, and material assets. However, in the absence of mitigation, both the construction and operation of new experiences could have the potential to result in uncertain environmental effect for biodiversity and Natura 2000 Sites. Increased tourism in these sensitive locations would also require provision of welfare facilities, wastewater and waste management.	**PHH** (PHH_1, PHH_2), **MA** (MA_1, MA_2, MA_3)		**B** (B_1, B_2, B_3), **LSG** (LSG_1), **WQ** (WQ_1, WQ_2), **ANC** (ANC_1, ANC_2), **CH** (CH_1, CH_2), **LV** (LV_1, LV_2)		Yes
Strategic Objective 4 – Dublin Mountains Stewardship & Environment Implement a sustainable tourism development approach that is compatible with the conservation of the Dublin Mountains diverse natural, heritage, archaeological and cultural resources.	This objective will result in positive effects on the population and human health objectives. There are no developments proposed in this objective. 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 Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan

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

There are 19no. destination catalysts initiatives and 22no. supporting 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP.

The South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 or 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 (*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*)	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
Eastern & Midland 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 4th 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 (Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029, Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028, Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028, Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028, and Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029)	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 – Failte Ireland's Dublin Destination and Experience Development Plans.	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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP.

In this context any proposals for development arising from the Dublin Mountains DEDP must meet the proper planning and sustainable development policies, objectives and development management provisions of the statutory *South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028* and *Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County 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 Dublin Mountains 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 *Dublin Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027*. As stated in the Dublin Mountains 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.

  As mentioned in the DAU submission, the Dublin Mountains are currently experiencing adverse impacts from high visitor numbers on semi-natural habitats and species. 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.

The majority of the mitigation measures are achieved through the detailed environmental protective policies and objectives as set out in the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP area must comply as appropriate with the relevant provisions included within the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028. Given that the Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP.

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

Table 9.1 Mitigation Policies and Objectives in County Development Plans

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
Biodiversity	
Policy NCBH2*: Protect, conserve, and enhance the County's biodiversity and ecological connectivity having regard to national and EU legislation and Strategies.*	***PO GIB18:*** *It is a Policy Objective to protect and conserve the environment including, in particular, the natural heritage of the County and to conserve and manage Nationally and Internationally important and EU designated sites - such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservations (SACs), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) and Ramsar sites (wetlands) - as well as non-designated areas of high nature conservation value known as locally important areas which also serve as 'Stepping Stones' for the purposes of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.*
NCBH2 Objective 2: *To ensure the protection of designated sites in compliance with relevant EU Directives and applicable national legislation.*	***PO GIB19:*** *It is a Policy Objective to ensure the protection of natural heritage and biodiversity, including European Sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network, in accordance with relevant EU Environmental Directives and applicable National Legislation, Policies, Plans and Guidelines.*
NCBH2 Objective 3: *To protect and conserve the natural heritage of the County, and to conserve and manage EU and nationally designated sites and non-designated locally important areas which act as 'stepping stones' for the purposes of green infrastructure and Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.*	***PO GIB20:*** *It is a Policy Objective to support the provisions of the forthcoming DLR County Biodiversity Action Plan, 2021-2025.*
Policy NCBH3: *Conserve and protect Natura 2000 sites and achieve and maintain favourable conservation status for habitats and species that are considered to be at risk through the protection of the Natura 2000 network from any plans or projects that are likely to have a significant effect on their coherence or integrity.*	***PO GIB21:*** *It is a Policy Objective to protect and preserve areas designated as proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, and Special Protection Areas. It is Council policy to promote the maintenance and as appropriate, delivery of 'favourable' conservation status of habitats and species within these areas.*
Policy NCBH4: *Protect the ecological, visual, recreational, environmental and amenity value of the County's proposed Natural Heritage Areas and associated habitats and species.*	***PO GIB22****: It is a Policy Objective to protect and promote the conservation of biodiversity in areas of natural heritage importance outside Designated Areas and to ensure that notable sites, habitats and features of biodiversity*

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
	importance - including species protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000, the Birds Directive 1979, the Habitats Directive 1992, Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011, Flora (Protection) Order, 2015, Annex I habitats, local important areas, wildlife corridors and rare species - are adequately protected. Ecological assessments will be carried out for all developments in areas that support, or have potential to support, features of biodiversity importance or rare and protected species and appropriate mitigation/avoidance measures will be implemented. In implementing this policy, regard shall be had to the Ecological Network, including the forthcoming DLR Wildlife Corridor Plan, and the recommendations and objectives of the Green City Guidelines (2008) and 'Ecological Guidance Notes for Local Authorities and Developers' (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Version 2014).
NCBH4 Objective 1: *To ensure that any proposal for development within or adjacent to a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) is designed and sited to minimise its impact on the biodiversity, ecological, geological and landscape value of the pNHA particularly plant and animal species listed under the Wildlife Acts and the Habitats and Birds Directive including their habitats.*	***PO GIB23:*** *It is a Policy Objective to protect the Ecological Network which will be integrated into the updated Green Infrastructure Strategy and will align with the DLR County Biodiversity Action Plan. Creating this network throughout the County will also improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive. The network will also include non-designated sites.*
Policy NCBH5: *Protect and promote the conservation of biodiversity outside of designated areas and ensure that species and habitats that are protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018, the Birds Directive 1979 and the Habitats Directive 1992, the Flora (Protection) Order 2015, and wildlife corridors are adequately protected.*	
NCBH6 Objective 5: *To ensure that any development above the 350-metre contour in the Dublin Mountains will seek to protect the open natural character of mountain heath, gorselands and mountain bogs.*	

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
NCBH10 Objective 1: *To ensure that development proposals do not lead to the spread or introduction of invasive species. If developments are proposed on sites where invasive species are or were previously present, applicants should submit a control and management programme with measures to prevent, control and / or eradicate the particular invasive species as part of the planning process and to comply with the provisions of the European Communities Birds and Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 / 2011).*	
NCBH11 Objective 3: *To protect and retain existing trees, hedgerows, and woodlands which are of amenity and / or biodiversity and / or carbon sequestration value and / or contribute to landscape character and ensure that proper provision is made for their protection and management taking into account Living with Trees: South Dublin County Council's Tree Management Policy (2015-2020) or any superseding document and to ensure that where retention is not possible that a high value biodiversity provision is secured as part of the phasing of any development to protect the amenity of the area.*	
Population and Human Health	
CS1 Objective 1: *To ensure a sustainable and plan led allocation of housing and employment growth within the strategic development areas of South Dublin County in line with the provisions of the MASP.*	***PO PHP15:*** *It is a Policy Objective to support and facilitate the creation of a healthy County in accordance with the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Healthy County Plan 2019-2022.*
Policy GI6: *Improve the accessibility and recreational amenity of the County's GI in order to enhance human health and wellbeing while protecting the natural environment within which the recreation occurs.*	***PO PHP35****: It is a Policy Objective to:* ▪ *Ensure that all development is of high quality design with a focus on healthy placemaking consistent with NPO 4, 26 and 27 of the NPF, and RPO 6.1, 6.12, 9.10 and 9.11 of the RSES.*

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
	▪ *Promote the guidance principles set out in the 'Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide' (2009), and in the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets' (2013).* ▪ *Ensure that development proposals are cognisant of the need for proper consideration of context, connectivity, inclusivity, variety, efficiency, distinctiveness, layout, public realm, adaptability, privacy and amenity, parking, wayfinding and detailed design.*
Policy H19: *New or replacement dwellings within areas designated Zoning Objective 'HA-DM' (to protect and enhance the outstanding natural character of the Dublin Mountains Area) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.*	***PO GIB12:*** *It is a Policy Objective to promote, protect and enhance sustainable and appropriate access to the natural heritage of the County, where practicable, in a balanced way while protecting the natural heritage of the County.*
Land, Soil and Geology	
Policy NCB12: *Maintain the conservation value and seek the sustainable management of the County's geological heritage resource.*	***PO GIB26:*** *It is a Policy Objective to protect, promote and preserve sites of Geological and Geomorphological importance, in particular the proposed Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), and any County Geological Sites (CGS), that become designated during the lifetime of the Plan.*
NCBH12 Objective 1*: To protect identified County Geological Sites from inappropriate development, avoiding potential conflicts with other ecological and cultural assets by engaging in consultation, and to promote the importance and potential of such sites through the County's Heritage Plan.*	
Water Quality	
NCBH2 Objective 4: *To protect our rivers and in particular to avoid overdevelopment which could have an adverse effect on the biodiversity and ecosystems of the river.*	***PO GIB24:*** *It is a Policy Objective to maintain and protect the natural character and ecological value of the river and stream corridors in the County and where possible to enhance existing channels and to encourage diversity of habitat and nature-based solutions that incorporate biodiversity features. It is also policy (subject to the sensitivity of the riverside habitat), to provide public*

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
	access to riparian corridors, to promote improved passive recreational activities.
IE2 Objective 1: *To work in conjunction with Irish Water to protect existing water and drainage infrastructure and to promote the ongoing upgrade and expansion of water supply and wastewater services to meet the future needs of the County and the Region.*	***PO EI1:*** *It is a Policy Objective to work with Irish Water:* ▪ *To ensure the efficient and sustainable use and development of water resources and water services infrastructure in order to manage and conserve water in a manner that supports climate action, the circular economy, a healthy society and protection of the environment. (Consistent with NSO 9 of the NPF, RSO 7, RPO 10.1 of the RSES).* ▪ *To continue the development and improvement of the water supply and wastewater systems throughout Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown in order to meet the anticipated water and wastewater requirements of the County.* ▪ *To ensure facilities comply with the Water Framework Directive and the River Basin Management Plan or any updated version of the document, 'Water Quality in Ireland 2013-2018'(2019) or any updated version of the document, Pollution Reduction Programmes for Designated Shellfish Areas, the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and the Habitats Directive.*
IE3 Objective 1: *To maintain, improve and enhance the environmental and ecological quality of our surface waters and groundwater by implementing the relevant programme of measures set out in the River Basin Management Plans.*	***PO EI6:*** *It is a Policy Objective to ensure that all development proposals incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).*
IE3 Objective 5: *To generally prohibit development within restricted areas identified on the Bohernabreena / Glenasmole Reservoir Restricted Areas Map contained in Appendix 5.*	
Air, Noise and Climate	

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
Policy CA1: *To support the implementation of International and National objectives on climate action including the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts (and any amending legislation), the 'Climate Action Plan 2021' (and any updated Plans) and ensure that South Dublin's Climate Change Action Plan and County Development Plan are aligned.*	***PO CA1:*** *It is a Policy Objective to support the implementation of International and National objectives on climate change including the 'Climate Action Plan 2021 Securing Our Future', the 'National Adaptation Framework' 2018, the 'National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030', and take account of the 'Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021', and subsequent updates, other relevant policy, guidelines and legislation, that support the climate action policies included in the County Development Plan.*
	PO CA3: *It is a Policy Objective that spatial and infrastructure planning are consistent with climate mitigation and adaptation objectives. When it is available, the Council will be informed by the work led by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly to develop a methodology for quantifying the GHG impacts of spatial planning policies, (QGasSP, an ESPON EU research programme) and the forthcoming Development Plan Guidelines or other national guidance as appropriate. The Council will quantify the GHG impacts for this County Development Plan when EMRA guidelines become available and also ensure the Development Plan is consistent with the approach to climate action recommended in any forthcoming revised Section 28 Development Plan Guidelines or other relevant guidelines and if necessary, vary the development plan (Consistent with NPO 54 of the NPF and RPO 3.6 of the RSES).*
	PO EI14: *It is a Policy Objective:* ▪ *To implement the provisions of national and EU Directives on air and noise pollution and other relevant legislative requirements in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate. (Consistent with RPO 10.10 of the RSES).* ▪ *To maintain and manage a Dublin County ambient air quality monitoring network in conjunction with the EPA and TII and to make available to the*

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
	public the resulting air quality measurements via the EPA website www.epa.ie/air/quality. ▪ *To support the implementation of objectives of the 'Dublin Agglomeration Environmental Noise Action Plan 2018-2023'.*
Material Assets	
Policy NCBH6: *Protect and enhance the visual, environmental, ecological, geological, archaeological, recreational and amenity value of the Dublin Mountains, as a key element of the County's Green Infrastructure network.*	***PO PHP24:*** *It is a Policy Objective to protect the green belt areas and restrict residential development.*
NCBH6 Objective 4: *To ensure that any permitted development supports the principles and protections included in the South Dublin County Green Infrastructure Strategy, recognising the significant value for amenity and ecosystem services provided by the Dublin Mountains for the Greater Dublin Area.*	***PO T1****: It is a Policy Objective to actively support sustainable modes of transport and ensure that land use and zoning are aligned with the provision and development of high quality public transport systems. (Consistent with NSO 1, NPO 26 of the NPF, 64, RPO 4.40, 5.3, 8.1 and Guiding Principles on Integration of Land Use and Transport of the RSES).*
EDE19 Objective 1: *To support the development of tourism infrastructure, attractions, activities, accommodation and facilities at appropriate locations subject to sensitive design and demonstrated environmental safeguards.*	***PO T4:*** *It is a Policy Objective to promote, facilitate and cooperate with other transport agencies in securing the implementation of the transport strategy for the County and the wider Metropolitan Area as set out in Department of Transport's 'Smarter Travel A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 –2020', and subsequent updates and the NTA's 'Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035' and subsequent updates, the RSES and the MASP. (Consistent with NPOs 26, 64 of the NPF and RPOs 5.2, 5.3, 8.4, 8.7, 8.8 and 8.9 of the RSES).*
EDE19 Objective 3: *To support the development of the Dublin Mountains Visitor Centre at Hell Fire and Massy's Wood subject to planning.*	***PO T25****: It is a Policy Objective that where projects for new roads, identified under Section 5.8, are not already provided for by existing plans/programme or are not already permitted, that the feasibility of progressing these projects shall be examined, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report (including greenhouse gas*

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
	emissions and other emissions to air) and the objectives of the Plan relating to sustainable mobility. A Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken where appropriate, for relevant new road infrastructure in two stages: Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection and Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection. In implementing this Objective, the Council will comply with any national policy or guidelines issued relating to the assessment of greenhouse gas emissions and other emissions to air for new transport projects.
EDE20 Objective 2: *To support the development of local tourist and heritage trails at suitable locations including across the Dublin Mountains, and between and within Brittas-Saggart-Rathcoole; Clondalkin; Lucan; Newcastle-Lyons; Ballyboden; Rathfarnham; and Tallaght and seek to make such trails interactive through the use of sensitive signage and the further development of application software ensuring in HA DM that all such trails are sensitively landscaped and designed to ensure positive impact on biodiversity and visual amenity.*	***PO GIB13:*** *It is a Policy Objective to support the vision and objectives of the Dublin Mountains Partnership Strategic Plan (2020- 2025), including the continued sustainable management, development and enhancement of the Dublin Mountains Way and its rerouting off public roads, wherever possible.*
	PO GIB16: *It is a Policy Objective to promote and to co-operate in the extension of the Wicklow Mountains National Park.*
Archaeology, Architecture and Cultural Heritage	
NCBH1 Objective 1: *To protect, conserve and enhance natural, cultural and built heritage features, seeking opportunities to identify, retain, protect, and incorporate heritage assets into plans and development.*	***PO HER1****: It is a Policy Objective to protect archaeological sites, National Monuments (and their settings), which have been identified in the Record of Monuments and Places and, where feasible, appropriate and applicable to promote access to and signposting of such sites and monuments.*
NCBH1 Objective 2: *To support the objectives and actions of the County Heritage Plan and the County Biodiversity Action Plan in the promotion and protection of natural, built and cultural heritage, and to take full cognisance*	***PO HER2:*** *It is a Policy Objective to seek the preservation in situ (or where this is not possible or appropriate, as a minimum, preservation by record) of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places, and of previously unknown sites, features and objects of archaeological*

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
of the County's Landscape Character Assessment and the County Geological Audit in the sustainable management of development.	*interest that become revealed through development activity. In respect of decision making on development proposals affecting sites listed in the Record of Monuments and Places, the Council will have regard to the advice and/or recommendations of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG).*
NCBH1 Objective 3: *To carry out an audit and assessment, based on an initial pilot study of the County's natural and built heritage assets including Council owned protected structures and archaeological features; to identify and safeguard these assets from the potential impacts of climate change; and to explore possible uses as part of climate change mitigation.*	***PO HER7:*** *It is a Policy Objective to include those structures that are considered in the opinion of the Planning Authority to be of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical or social interest in the Record of Protected Structures.*
Policy NCBH13: *Manage development in a manner that protects and conserves the Archaeological Heritage of the County and avoids adverse impacts on sites, monuments, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest.*	***PO HER12:*** *It is a Policy Objective to review and update the RPS on foot of any Ministerial recommendations. The 'Ministerial Recommendations', made under Section 53 of the Planning Acts, 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.*
NCBH13 Objective 1: *To favour the preservation in-situ of all sites, monuments and features of significant historical or archaeological interest in accordance with the recommendations of the Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage, DAHGI (1999), or any superseding national policy document.*	***PO HER13:*** *It is a Policy Objective to:* *i. Protect the character and special interest of an area which has been designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). Please refer to Appendix 4 for a full list of ACAs.* *ii. Ensure that all development proposals within an ACA be appropriate to the character of the area having regard to the Character Appraisals for each area.* *iii. Ensure that any new development or alteration of a building within an ACA or immediately adjoining an ACA is appropriate in terms of the proposed design, including scale, height, mass, density, building lines and materials.*

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
	iv. Seek a high quality, sensitive design for any new development(s) that are complementary and/or sympathetic to their context and scale whilst simultaneously encouraging contemporary design which is in harmony with the area. Direction can also be taken from using traditional forms that are then expressed in a contemporary manner rather than a replica of a historic building style. *v. Ensure street furniture is kept to a minimum, is of good design and any reDúndant street furniture removed.* *vi. Seek the retention of all features that contribute to the character of an ACA including boundary walls, railings, soft landscaping, traditional paving and street furniture.*
NCB13 Objective 2: *To ensure that development is designed to avoid impacting on archaeological heritage including previously unknown sites, features and objects.*	
NCBH13 Objective 3: *To protect and enhance sites listed in the Record of Monuments and Places and ensure that development in the vicinity of a Recorded Monument or Area of Archaeological Potential does not detract from the setting of the site, monument, feature or object and is sited and designed appropriately.*	
NCBH13 Objective 5: *To protect historical burial grounds within South Dublin County and encourage their maintenance in accordance with conservation principles.*	
Policy NCBH19: *Conserve and protect buildings, structures and sites contained in the Record of Protected Structures and carefully consider any proposals for development that would affect the setting, special character or appearance*	

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
of a Protected Structure including its historic curtilage, both directly and indirectly.	
NCBH19 Objective 1: *To ensure the protection of all structures (or parts of structures) and their immediate surroundings including the curtilage and attendant grounds of structures identified in the Record of Protected Structures.*	
Landscape and Visual	
NCBH6 Objective 2: *To restrict development within areas designated with Zoning Objective 'HADM' (To protect and enhance the outstanding natural character of the Dublin Mountains Area) and to ensure that new development:* ▪ *does not significantly impact on sensitive habitats, species, or ecosystem services;* ▪ *is related to the area's amenity potential or to its use for agriculture; mountain or hill farming; and* ▪ *is designed and sited to minimise environmental and visual impacts.*	***PO GIB2:*** *It is a Policy Objective to continue to protect, manage and plan to conserve, maintain or enhance the distinctive characteristics of the County's landscapes, townscapes and seascapes in accordance with the recommended strategies as originally outlined in the Landscape Character Assessment (2002 and since updated), 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 in accordance 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.*
NCBH6 Objective 3: *To ensure that development proposals within the Dublin Mountains protect existing ecological and geological features and archaeological landscapes.*	***PO GIB4:*** *It is Policy Objective to conserve and enhance existing High Amenity Zones and to seek to manage these and other areas to absorb further recreational uses and activity without damaging their unique character.*
Policy NCBH14: *Preserve and enhance the character of the County's landscapes, particularly areas that have been deemed to have a medium to high Landscape Value or medium to high Landscape Sensitivity and to ensure*	***PO GIB5:*** *In assessing development proposals and in the preparation of plans, it is a Policy Objective to have regard to the recommendations and findings of the Historic Landscape Character Assessments (HLCA), already undertaken for*

South Dublin Development Plan 2022	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028
that landscape considerations are an important factor in the management of development.	*a number of the urban-rural fringe areas of the County most likely to come under development pressure.*
NCBH14 Objective 3: *To ensure that development respects and reinforces the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the Landscape Character Types and retains important characteristics such as habitats, landform, vernacular heritage and settlement patterns.*	***PO GIB6:*** *It is a Policy Objective to 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.*

10 Monitoring

10.1 Introduction

Monitoring of the Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP and review is undertaken in parallel with monitoring and review of the *South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028* and *Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028* 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP are well-defined with regard to the environment. Conversely where the objectives of the Dublin Mountains DEDP have a negative impact on the environment, it may be necessary to review the objectives of the Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP.

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[40] 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.

[40] '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.

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
B3	Ensure the Dublin Mountains DEDP does not contradict biodiversity protection, restoration and rehabilitation objectives in the South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028.	To comply with the biodiversity policies and objectives of the South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028.	No contravention of the biodiversity policies and objectives of the South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028.	South Dublin, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and Wicklow County 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 South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028.	No contravention of the tourism and economic development policies and objectives of the South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown 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 Dublin Mountains 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 the Dublin Mountains 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)				

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
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 "*Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4%.*"	CORINE mapping surveys (every 5 years). EPA State of the Environment reporting.
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 Dublin Mountains 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 Dublin Mountains DEDP.	Compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and to ensure that any new developments granted planning	Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
			permissions are on appropriately zoned lands.	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)				
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	Number of incompatible developments (supported by the plan) adversely affecting existing or planned infrastructure, including water	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.

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
	(drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) that does not present a danger to human health.	supply, wastewater management, energy and transport infrastructure.		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 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.	Increase waste recycling in the Counties. Reduce waste generation in the Counties.	EPA State of the Environment reporting. 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	Review delivery of sustainable transport projects via South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils / NTA. Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
			of road reallocated for sustainable alternatives	
Cultural Heritage (CH)				
CH1	Protect 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).	Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places protected from significant adverse effects arising from the Plan.	No adverse effects on archaeological or cultural heritage resulting from implementation of the Plan.	Review of data available from National Monuments Section of Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes. Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities.
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.	
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 South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028	Status of High Amenity Zones and Views and Prospects.	All action and development proposals supported by the plan must comply with policy objectives relating to the	Input from any other relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes.

SEO Ref.	SEO Description	Indicators	Targets	Data Sources and Monitoring Frequency
	and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2022-2028.	Number of developments permitted that result in avoidable adverse impacts on High Amenity Zones and Views and Prospects.	protection of High Amenity Zone and Views and Prospects defined in the CDPs. No development supported by the plan should have an adverse impact on High Amenity Zones and Views and Prospects.	Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities.

11 References

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12 Appendices

Appendix 1:

Detailed Assessment of Environmental Effects of the Dublin Mountains Destination & Experience Development Plan Action Plan

Table 8.1A Environmental Assessment of the Dublin Mountains 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.
Strategic Objective 1 - Dublin Mountains Destination							
1	**Objective 1: Establish the Dublin Mountains as a Leading Outdoor Destination within Dublin's City, Coast and Mountains Proposition**						
Catalyst Projects							
1.1	**Public Transport & Visitor Mobility**	Improve public transport and visitor mobility throughout the Dublin Mountains, strengthening connectivity between visitor gateway hubs, the Core Experience Zone and key visitor experiences					
1.2	**Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan**	Examine the creation and funding of a new route serviced by a schedule of each way journeys between Dúndrum and Tallaght via Glencullen, Tibradden, and the Hell Fire Club under the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan.					
1.3	**Sustainable Access & Cycling Infrastructure**	Support the development of cycling infrastructure, e-bike connectivity and active travel initiatives that strengthen access to the Dublin Mountains and improve visitor movement throughout the destination.	**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
1.4	**Car Parking & Visitor Facilities**	Enhance visitor facilities and assess opportunities to improve or extend visitor parking capacity where appropriate and subject to planning requirements, while supporting visitor management and sustainable access objectives.					
1.5	**Active Travel Connectivity**	Leverage existing and planned active travel investment to strengthen connections between visitor gateway hubs, accommodation locations, trailheads, visitor attractions and key outdoor recreation experiences.					
1.6	**Low-impact Outdoor Accommodation**	Continue to monitor accommodation supply and pipeline activity and identify opportunities for appropriate small-					

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
		scale, low-impact outdoor accommodation within or adjoining the Dublin Mountains Core Experience Zone, where proposals align with the character, environmental sensitivities and visitor experience proposition of the destination.					
1.7	**Farm Diversification and Rural Enterprise Accommodation**	Work with local authorities, rural enterprises, landowners and relevant support bodies to explore farm diversification, agritourism and small-scale accommodation opportunities that can support the Dublin Mountains visitor proposition where feasible.					
	SEA Evaluation: The catalyst projects all contribute to improving the access to the Dublin Mountains through transport, connectivity and accommodation. While some of the projects do not propose any new development, others support further trails, active travel networks, expanded parking or additional accommodation, where feasible. The development of these features and their ancillary infrastructure will positively impact the population and human health objectives of the DEDP. However, in the absence of mitigation, there are likely uncertain effects on the other SEOs.						
Supporting Projects							
1.8	**Visitor Gateway Hub Development**	Develop and deliver projects that strengthen the role of Tallaght, Dundrum, Kilternan and Shankill as visitor gateway hubs through enhanced visitor services, accommodation, wayfinding, visitor orientation, destination connectivity and visitor 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
1.9	**Destination Narrative**	Establish the Dublin Mountains as a recognised outdoor destination within Dublin's City, Coast and Mountains proposition through a shared destination position, stakeholder adoption of a common narrative and coordinated destination storytelling that increases awareness among priority visitor markets.					
1.10	**Coast to Mountains Activity Corridor**	Strengthen connectivity between the Dublin Coast, Dublin Mountains and Wicklow Mountains through linked visitor experiences, outdoor recreation opportunities and collaborative destination development initiatives.					

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
	SEA Evaluation: The supporting projects outline new visitor amenities in the Dublin Mountains area. These developments are likely to have positive effects on population and human health objectives by improving the visitor experience. However, in the absence of mitigation, the development of visitor services and accommodation may have uncertain or negative effects on other environmental SEOs from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure.						
Strategic Objective 2 – ***Inspiring Dublin Mountains Experiences***							
2	**Objective 2: Re-imagine how the Dublin Mountains story is told through product investment that delivers memorable outdoor experiences and epic views over the city and coast**		**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
Catalyst Projects							
2.1	**Core Experience Zone Development**	Enhance connectivity, wayfinding, visitor orientation, interpretation and visitor experiences within the Core Experience Zone through the development of linked trails, looped walks, viewpoints, recreation facilities and heritage experiences.					
2.2	**Dublin Mountains Way Enhancement**	Enhance the Dublin Mountains Way through targeted improvements to trail infrastructure, wayfinding, interpretation, accessibility and connections with visitor experiences, communities and neighbouring outdoor recreation destinations.					
2.3	**Visitor Centre Development**	Undertake the phased delivery of the Dublin Mountains Visitor Centre Project.					
2.4	**Visitor Centre Interpretation & Storytelling**	Develop interpretation, storytelling and educational experiences that enhance visitor understanding of the natural, cultural and heritage significance of the Dublin Mountains					
2.5	**Monumental Mountain Views - Elevated Viewing Points**	Develop a network of landmark viewpoints that enhance visitor engagement with the landscapes, heritage and stories of the Dublin Mountains.					

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
2.6	**Mountain Biking Destination Experience**	Enhance the Dublin Mountains mountain biking experience through investment in trails, visitor facilities, wayfinding, destination connectivity and supporting visitor experiences.					
2.7	**Dublin & Wicklow Mountain Biking Proposition**	Strengthen linkages between the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains to create a compelling mountain biking proposition of scale for domestic and international visitors.					
2.8	**Trail Maintenance Programme**	Enhance the quality, sustainability and accessibility of the mountain biking experience through coordinated trail maintenance, wayfinding and visitor infrastructure improvements.					
	SEA Evaluation: The development of a new visitor centre and improves visitor signage, viewpoints and other facilities will enhance the 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.						
Supporting Projects							
2.9	**Cable Car Feasibility Study**	Undertake a feasibility study for the development of a cable car style visitor attraction in the Dublin Mountains.	**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
2.10	**Accessible Visitor Experiences**	Identify and implement opportunities to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of visitor experiences across the Dublin Mountains, including trails, viewpoints, interpretation, visitor facilities and recreation experiences, enabling a wider range of visitors to engage with the destination.					
2.11	**Dodder Greenway**	Deliver the Dodder Greenway as a strategic recreational and active travel corridor that enhances access to the Dublin Mountains and strengthens connectivity between visitor experiences, communities and gateway hubs across the wider region.					

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
2.12	**Old Bawn to Ballyboden Greenway**	Complete Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Old Bawn to Ballyboden Greenway and strengthen its connections with the Dublin Mountains through interpretation and wayfinding.					
2.13	**Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Active Travel Proposal 2020 (Planned Mobility Hub)**	Support the Mountains to Metal, Sea to Mountains and Park to Park proposed Active Travel cycling routes as part of the DLR Active Travel Proposal.					
2.14	**Bohernabreena Reservoir**	Identify and progress opportunities to enhance recreation, interpretation and visitor facilities at Bohernabreena Reservoir.					
2.15	**Kiltipper Park**	Identify and progress opportunities to enhance visitor engagement, recreation and interpretation opportunities.					
2.16	**Innovative Visitor Experience Development**	Explore opportunities for innovative visitor experiences and infrastructure that enhance the appeal, accessibility and distinctiveness of the Dublin Mountains destination.					
	SEA Evaluation: The development of a new visitor amenities and opportunities will enhance the 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.						
Strategic Objective 3 – *Dublin Mountains Tourism Businesses*							
3	**Objective 3: Support new and existing tourism businesses in the development of experiences that inspire visitors to explore the Dublin Mountains**		**PHH** (PHH1, PHH2)	**B** (B1, B2, B3), **LSG** (LSG1), **WQ** (WQ1, WQ2), **LV** (LV_1, LV2), **ANC**			**No**
Catalyst Projects							
3.1	**Experience Development**	Deliver a programme to develop, package and enhance visitor experiences aligned with the Dublin Mountains destination proposition, with a focus on increasing the number of saleable experiences, improving visitor dispersal and increasing visitor spend within the destination.					

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
3.2	**Digital Capability & Distribution Programme**	Strengthen the digital, social commerce, online booking and AI-driven search capabilities of tourism businesses and visitor experiences across the destination.		(ANC1, ANC2), **MA** (MA1, MA2, MA3), **CH** (CH1, CH2)			
3.3	**Demand Generation & Market Readiness Programme**	Develop the marketing, sales and distribution capabilities of tourism businesses to increase B2C and B2B opportunities, improve market readiness and expand market reach.					
	SEA Evaluation: These catalyst projects are likely to have positive effects on population and human health objectives through increased connection between prospective tourists and local businesses in the Dublin Mountains. The projects and programmes detailed under the catalyst project pertain to brand marketing and visitor dispersion. 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.						
Supporting Projects							
3.4	**Dublin Mountains Tourism Network**	Establish and support the development of the Dublin Mountains Tourism Network as the focal point for industry collaboration, capability building, and destination-led initiatives.	**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**
3.5	**Alignment of Capability Building**	Work with the ETB, LEADER and LEO to align all capability building (training, mentoring and financial supports) with opportunities identified in the Dublin Mountains DEDP.					
3.6	**Food, Agritourism & Producer Experiences**	Support the development of food tourism, agritourism and producer-led visitor experiences that strengthen the distinctiveness of the Dublin Mountains visitor proposition.					
3.7	**Evening Time & Special Interest Experiences**	Develop market-ready evening-time and special interest experiences, including wellness, heritage, nature-based and Dublin Skies experiences.					
3.8	**Events Programme Development**	Establish a working group and implement a coordinated events programme for the Dublin Mountains, including enhancement of existing festivals, development of signature participation events and opportunities to leverage major					

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
		event infrastructure and venues within the wider destination.					
	SEA Evaluation: These supporting projects are likely to have positive effects on population and human health objectives through increased marketing and development of local businesses that are already established in the Dublin Mountains area. The projects and programmes detailed under the catalyst project pertain to brand marketing and visitor dispersion. 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 4 – *Dublin Mountains Stewardship & Environment*							
4	**OBJECTIVE 4: Implement a sustainable tourism development approach for the Dublin Mountains that is compatible with the conservation of the area's diverse natural, heritage, archaeological and cultural resources**		**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**
Catalyst Projects							
4.1	**Stewardship Programme**	Develop and implement a coordinated stewardship programme for the Dublin Mountains, including visitor management assessments at priority locations, visitor monitoring and collaborative initiatives that support the sustainable management of the destination.					
	SEA Evaluation: This catalyst project is likely to have positive effects on population and human health objectives through increased connection between prospective tourists and locals. The projects and programmes detailed under the catalyst project pertain to brand marketing and advertisement of local amenities. 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.						
Supporting Projects			**PHH** (PHH1, PHH2),	**B** (B1, B2, B3), **LSG** (LSG1),			**No**
4.2	**Responsible Recreation**	Promote responsible recreation, Leave No Trace principles and visitor awareness initiatives that encourage positive					

No.	Project	Action	Likely Positive Effects	Likely Neutral Effects	Likely Uncertain Effects	Likely Negative Effects	Mitigation Required Yes / No.
		visitor behaviour and protect the landscapes, trails, forests and heritage assets of the Dublin Mountains.	**ANC** (ANC1, ANC2), **CH** (CH1, CH2)	**WQ** (WQ1, WQ2), **LV** (LV_1, LV2), **MA** (MA1, MA2, MA3)			
4.3	**Biodiversity & Landscape Conservation**	Progress the implementation of the Dublin Mountains Integrated Ecological Management Plan Strategy (IEMPS) and associated initiatives to protect and enhance biodiversity, habitat quality, landscape character and environmental resilience, ensuring recreation and tourism growth is balanced with conservation objectives.					
4.4	**Heritage Conservation & Interpretation**	Protect, conserve and improve engagement with the archaeological, cultural and built heritage assets of the Dublin Mountains through conservation, interpretation and storytelling initiatives, including the Dublin Mountains Visitor Centre, helping visitors better understand the landscapes, places and stories that define the destination.					
4.5	**Sustainable Tourism & Climate Action**	Increase participation in sustainability, climate action and environmental certification programmes, encouraging tourism businesses to adopt more sustainable approaches to energy, water, waste and resource management.					
4.6	**Sustainable Access & Visitor Mobility**	Promote sustainable transport, active travel and environmentally responsible visitor movement throughout the destination, reducing dependence on private vehicles and supporting wider visitor management objectives.					
4.7	**Sustainable Infrastructure & Resource Management**	Work with key stakeholders to evaluate environmental and visitor infrastructure requirements, including water, wastewater, waste management, transport and accommodation capacity, ensuring tourism growth is supported in a sustainable manner.					
	SEA Evaluation: These supporting projects are aimed at integrating sustainable practices throughout the offering in the Dublin Mountains. These projects are expected to have positive impacts on population & human health, climate, air & noise, and cultural heritage SEOs. There are no likely negative or uncertain effects on any other environmental objective. As such, no mitigation is required.						

Appendix 2: Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination

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 Dublin Mountains Destination and Experience Development Plan

Fáilte Ireland as the Competent Authority for the proposed Dublin Mountains 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 1/08[1], 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-*

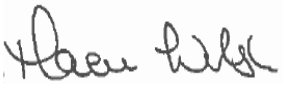
- an appropriate assessment of the plan must be carried out and
- in any case where a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out."

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 Development Applications Unit (DAU).

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 11no. European sites could not be ruled at Appropriate Assessment screening stage.

Signed on behalf of Fáilte Ireland:  **Dated: October 2026**

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