

The Border Regional Authority *Údarás Réigiúnach na Teorann*



Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (Environmental Report) of Draft RPGs 2010 - 2022 **Non-Technical Summary**

January 2010



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1.0 Introduction

This is a Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Report on the Draft Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's) for the Border Region .

The Strategic Environmental (SEA) Directive requires that certain Plans and Programmes, prepared by statutory bodies, which are likely to have a significant impact on the environment, be subject to the SEA process. The SEA process is mandatory in the case of the Regional Planning Guidelines.

The preparation of the RPG's is a parallel process with the SEA and Habitats Directive Assessment and both assessments have significantly influenced the making of the Guidelines. In essence, the SEA process ensures that environmental considerations are built into the Guidelines so that new development delivers a good quality of life and that the quality of the environment of the Border Region is protected and enhanced - for existing and future generations.

A healthy environment is critical to our development and prosperity. Because of our ever increasing ability to interfere with the environment, reliance on a pristine environment can no longer be taken for granted. Accordingly, there is a responsibility on us all to ensure that the environment is not compromised by our actions or inactions.

The SEA process should therefore be viewed as a very positive planning instrument - an opportunity to secure economic, social and environmental prosperity.

The Environmental Report is the primary element in the SEA process.

The chapter headings in this Summary Report follow those of the parent Environmental Report.

1.1 Steps in the Process

The SEA process is comprised of the following steps:

- Scoping: Consultation with statutory bodies and other interested parties on the scope and level of detail to be considered in the assessment
(Completed)
- Preparation of Environmental Report: An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the Plan or Programme
(Ongoing)
- Consultation on the draft Regional Planning Guidelines and associated Environmental Report and Habitats Assessment Report
(Current Stage)
- Evaluation of the submissions and observations made on the draft Border Regional Planning Guidelines, Environmental Report and Habitats Assessment Report
(To be completed)
- Preparation of an SEA Statement identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the Final Plan/Programme
(To be completed).

1.2 Content of Environmental Report

An SEA must consider all, or a combination, of the following topics as listed in the SEA Directive:-

- Biodiversity
- Population
- Human Health
- Fauna
- Flora
- Soil
- Water
- Air
- Climatic factors
- Material Assets
- Cultural heritage, including Architectural and Archaeological
- Landscape
- The interrelationship between the above

1.3 Vision and Key Strategic Goals for the Region

The vision for the region as set out in the Draft Guidelines is as follows:

“By 2022 the Border Region will be a competitive area recognised as, and prospering from, its unique interface between two economies, where economic success will benefit all, through the balanced development model of the Atlantic Arc, the Eastern Corridor and Central Border Area, which will provide an outstanding natural environment, innovative people, which in themselves, will be our most valuable asset”.

The 2004 Guidelines set out a vision for the region and nine key strategic goals that are required to achieve that vision. It is considered that the vision generally remains valid and the key strategic goals have been updated to reflect the new circumstances that this Region faces over the period of the Guidelines of 2010 - 2022

The key strategic goals required to achieve this vision for the region are set out in the guidelines:

SG 1 To foster the development of the region’s most important asset, its people by providing an improved quality of life for all people and communities living, working and visiting the region.

SG 2 The need to ensure the development of the key urban settlements and the links between them and to facilitate integrated sustainable development between urban and rural areas.

SG 3 To improve intra and inter regional connectivity and mobility throughout the region.

SG 4 To promote economic growth, competitiveness and development potential of the region and to facilitate emerging sectors in the region that will provide sustainable jobs for the future.

SG 5 To protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment and built heritage of the region.

SG 6 To co-ordinate a regional approach to the key environmental challenges facing the region.

SG 7 To co-ordinate and integrate key issues in national and regional spatial planning strategies and in particular, the National Spatial Strategy and the National Development Plan, and associated inter-regional development initiatives that support and promote strategic links.

SG 8 To co-ordinate and integrate key issues in cross border spatial planning strategies, and in particular, the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland and associated inter-regional development initiatives that support and promote strategic links between the two economies.

SG 9 To exploit the regions unique location at the interface between two economies by putting in place the drivers for economic growth through the development of the Eastern Corridor, Atlantic Arc and the Central Border Area

2.0 Consultation

A wide level of consultation has, and will continue, to take place as part of the SEA. To date, consultation has taken place with each of the six local authorities, the public and Environmental Agencies, both north and south of the border. The outcomes of this process have informed the making of the Guidelines.

Details of those consulted and a summary of and submissions received, and certain workshops/meeting held, is contained in Chapter 2 of the Environmental Report.

3.0 Policy Context

The review of the RPG's must be considered within the context of a hierarchy of policies, plans and strategies which include international, EU, national, regional and local levels. This relationship is set out in figure 2 of the Environmental Report. The Regional Planning Guidelines are the key vehicle for the delivery of the National Spatial Strategy. The Guidelines will have an increasingly influential role with respect to all Development Plans within the Region as the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill, 2009 reinforces their role within the spatial planning hierarchy.

The target of the RPG's is primarily County Development Plans and Local Area Plans. It is mainly through these plans that the RPG's will be implemented. Under the Planning Act 2009 the status of the RPG's has been given increased significance.

3.1 National Plans and Policies highlighted in the Environmental Report.

The following is a list of some of the more relevant plans, policies or programmes that have been taken into consideration as part of the Environmental Assessment Process.

- The National Development Plan 2007-2013
- National Spatial Strategy
- Shaping our Future (RDS Northern Ireland)
- Ireland's Environment 2008
- Northern Ireland State of the Environment Report (2008)
- National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012
- Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland; The Energy Policy Framework 2007 - 2020
- Smarter Travel and Transport 21
- Innovation for a Green Economy - Environment and Technology
- Water Framework Directive 2000
- River Basin Management Plans
- Grid 25. A Strategy for the development of Electricity Supply Grid
- Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007
- Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012 Needs Assessment 2009
- Coastal Zone Management Plans

- Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS)
- Waste Management Plans

In addition, International, European National Plans/Programmes, including a wide range of Planning Guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government have been taken into consideration, where relevant. A list of some of these Plans/Programmes may be found in the main environmental report.

4.0 Habitats Directive Assessment

A report referred to as a Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA), has also been carried out on the RPG review in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. It is a parallel, but a separate process to SEA and will be documented as such. This assessment is an evaluation and assessment of the potential impacts of policies and objectives of the new Guidelines on European sites such as Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) both within, and outside the Region. These sites are generally known as Natura 2000 network. The HDA assesses how the Guidelines will impact on all Natura 2000 sites - the ultimate aim of which must be to avoid significant impacts on these sites. While an outline of the HDA may be found in the Environmental Report, the full report is available as a separate document, entitled Habitats Directive Assessment.

5.0 Alternative Approaches to the Making of the Guidelines

The SEA process is required to consider 'reasonable alternatives' taking into consideration the objectives of the Guidelines and the significant environmental effects of the alternatives selected.

In selecting SEA Alternatives, cognisance must always be taken of parent strategies and documents which have a key influence on how alternatives will be framed. Certain strategic issues will therefore have already been determined at a higher level. In the case of the RPGs, the European Spatial Development Perspective at the European level, and the National Development Plan (NDP) and National Spatial Strategy (NSS) at the national level, are considered to provide the framework and guiding principles within which alternatives must be considered.

The following three alternatives were formulated and considered;

- Continuation of Current Trends;
- Predominantly Gateway Led Development Model;
- Balanced Development Model.

Table I provides a summary of the three alternative growth models and outline the main features with respect to each.

Table I. SEA Alternative Growth Models for Border Region

Alternative	Main Features	Assessment
1. Continuation of current trends.	Minimal intervention in terms of spatial planning thereby allowing current trends to continue whereby market forces largely dictate the location of future growth and development.	<p>It is likely the future population growth would be concentrated in the eastern part of the region and there would be a greater dispersal of population into the rural areas. It would lead to ad-hoc dispersed settlement pattern that would inhibit the development of strategically importance centres.</p> <p>New development would fail to be directed towards properly serviced and robust receiving environments.</p> <p>This model would result in a lack of long term strategic planning in terms of the delivery of key infrastructural services and facilities.</p> <p>It would not comply with the development framework outlined for the Border Region in the NSS</p>
2. Gateway Led Development Model	Focus primarily on development of a three centre as an engine for the overall development of the Region.	<p>The existing Gateways of Letterkenny/Derry, Sligo and Dundalk, are located towards the periphery of the Region and have a strong east/west divide. The centre of the region is structurally weak. In terms of their geographical location these centres are therefore poorly positioned to achieve the more balanced development of the Region.</p> <p>Weaker areas would become marginalised and would decline further.</p> <p>This alternative would give rise to political and public disquiet and would be difficult to implement.</p> <p>It would not comply with the development framework outlined for the Border Region in the NSS</p>
3. Balanced Development Model	Focus primarily on development of a number of strategically important centres which would act as engines for the overall development of the Region.	<p>This alternative offers a good geographical spread of key settlements that would facilitate more balanced regional development.</p> <p>It would enable key strategically important centres to coordinate their efforts, join forces and thereby act like a large urban entity that would punch above their individual weight.</p> <p>It would help sustain and stimulate the development of neighbouring areas and help secure the vitality and viability of rural areas.</p> <p>It would comply with the development framework for the Border Region as outlined in the NSS.</p>

Having regard to the principles of sustainable development, the overall aim of the NSS, and the vision and goals of the RPGs, it is considered that the Balanced Development Model is the most appropriate development model for the future development of the Border Region.

The development of the key urban centres of the Gateways, Hubs in addition to, Carrick-on-Shannon and Drogheda, are considered to be the most effective way of focusing future growth and development in the region. These settlements will be the engines for growth and will act as a stimulus to the growth of other urban centres and rural hinterlands.

The sustainability of rural areas depends to a large extent on strong urban centres. These centres are positioned to achieve a critical mass that will sustain strong economic activity and the development of strategically important services and facilities. This alternative is best placed to achieve more balanced Regional Development and secure the economic, environmental and cultural/social prosperity of the Region. This framework will in turn provide for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Region.

6.0 Current State of the Environment

The Border Region is endowed with a wide range of environmental resources, which must be acknowledged and dealt with appropriately within the Guidelines. The current state of the Region's environment is considered in the Environmental Report under the following environmental headings:

- Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora
- Population
- Human Health
- Soil
- Water
- Air
- Climatic factors
- Material Assets
- Cultural heritage, including Architectural and Archaeological
- Landscape
- Interrelationship between the above topics

7.0 Significant Environmental Pressures

The key aim of the SEA process is to identify the significant environmental issues facing the region, and to ensure that the long term development of the region is guided in a manner that protects, and where possible, enhances the natural and built environment.

The more significant environmental issues that are addressed in the Environmental Report include;

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| • settlement patterns | • climate change and greenhouse gas emissions |
| • water quality | • flood risk |
| • biodiversity | • waste management, |
| • landscape and cultural heritage, | • coastal management. |
| • built heritage | |
| • transportation | |
| • agriculture and afforestation, | |
| • energy resources | |

Table II provides a general summary of the main Environmental Pressures within the Region.

Table II. Summary of Environmental Issues within the Border Region

Topic	Environmental Pressures
Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora	<p>Certain developments and activities associated with; agricultural activities, afforestation, urban developments, windfarms, quarries, tourism, peat extraction, commercial fishing, and a wide range of infrastructural works (including road works, water abstraction, wastewater disposal) that are located within or close to ecologically sensitive sites can give rise to significant environmental pressures. The protection of shellfish growing areas, freshwater pearl mussel and salmon have been highlighted as of particular importance.</p> <p>There are a relatively high number of Natura 2000 sites (SAC's and SPA's) and Natural Heritage Sites located within the Region. These sites are particularly sensitive to certain development works and activities.</p> <p>Invasive non-native plant and animal species are one of the greatest threats to the biodiversity of the Region.</p>
Population and human health	<p>Increase in population, their activities and settlement patterns has the potential to place increased pressure on biodiversity, water quality, landscape, cultural heritage and air. In particular, increased pressure on water quality arising from pollution can have a significant impact on human health. Individual and cumulative changes in the quality of the natural and built environment at local, regional and national level has the potential to impact to varying degrees on human health and wellbeing. High levels of radon in buildings and road safety have also been highlighted as significant issues.</p>
Soil	<p>Certain forms of development and activities including, urban and rural development, windfarms, waste disposal, afforestation, recreation and agricultural activities can place a significant pressure in soils. Changes in precipitation arising from global warming could have significant impacts on slope stability and could impact on soil and water quality.</p>
Water	<p>Development and activities can often impact on water quality including; groundwater, drinking water and bathing water. Urban and rural development including, wastewater and surface water disposal, landfills, quarries, contaminated lands, illegal dumping, agricultural activity, water recreational activities and afforestation can have significant impacts on water quality. Excessive inputs of nutrients, namely phosphorous and nitrogen present one of the most significant risks to water quality.</p>
Air and Noise	<p>Currently no significant impacts have been identified in respect to air quality or noise levels. Impacts arising from air pollution are primarily associated with transport and industrial emissions.</p>
Climatic factors	<p>Increased greenhouse gas emissions have been linked with climate change resulting in increases in the intensity and frequency of flooding. Of particular concern is the high dependency on the use of the car arising from a dispersed settlement pattern.</p>
Material Assets	<p>Material assets include a wide range of natural and man made assets. These can include infrastructural services and facilities and other items such as; cultural heritage, agricultural lands quarries, coastal and water resources. Developments and activities can often impact on these assets, some of which have been referred to herein. It has been highlighted that there is a high level of residential and commercial vacancy within the Region. These properties represent an underutilized resource and if left idle,</p>

	they can over time deteriorate and detract from the character of urban areas.
Cultural heritage, including Architectural and Archaeological	Pressures can arise from certain developments and activities on or near sites of heritage value. The visual amenities and character of urban and rural areas items of architectural, archaeological and historical importance, including shipwrecks may be placed under pressure by such works. It is acknowledged that development works can often have a positive impact on our cultural heritage.
Landscape	Developments and activities can impact on visually sensitive areas including designated landscape and seascapes. A lack of uniformity between counties within and adjoining the Region towards their approach to the management of the landscape, has been highlighted as a key challenge facing the Region.
Interrelationship between the above topics	Cumulative impacts and interaction of above mentioned items can give rise to increased pressure on the environment. The impacts and interactions will obviously vary in extent and nature. In particular issues in respect to; water quality, climate change and the issue of one-off housing in the countryside crosses a number of environmental topic areas. Population increase and changes in peoples activities and settlement patterns can impact on a wide range of the topics mentioned above.

Table III outlines some of the specific environmental issues within each constituent County that was highlighted during the SEA process.

Table III. Summary of specific Environmental Issues within Counties

Donegal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many offshore islands covered by Natura 2000 sites • Shellfish growing areas posing threats to protected habitats • Off shore resource exploration posing threats to natural habitats • Infrastructural schemes such as the committed road line of the proposed A5/N2 dual carriageway and the potential routes for proposed new rail links • North West Gateway and associated supporting infrastructure such as broadband ducting • One-off housing in the Countryside.
Sligo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-off housing in the countryside • Infrastructural schemes such as expansion of Sligo Regional Airport (Strandhill), the Sligo outer bypass and potential realignments or deviations of the N16 road route • The Sligo Bay cluster of cSACs and SPAs provides added complexity to the protected habitat equation • Radon in buildings in certain areas of the County.
Leitrim
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of residential vacancy • Rural Communities in decline within certain areas of the county • Certain areas under pressure from one-off housing • Water pollution from afforestation, individual wastewater treatment systems and slurry spreading.
Cavan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water pollution arising from urban run-off and wastewater disposal • Dispersed settlement pattern and associated environmental pressures • Habitat loss and fragmentation including loss of hedgerows arising from rural settlement patterns

- Intensive farming
- Disruption of hydrological regime – associated pressure on water quality

Monaghan

- One of housing in the countryside and urban sprawl
- Limited capacity of municipal wastewater treatment systems
- Pollution arising from intensive agricultural activities – slurry storage and spreading.
- Diesel laundering washing
- Illegal dumping
- Draining and illegal filling of small scale wetlands
- Depletion of water resources arising from increase in demand
- Cumulative impacts from manmade development on habitats notably loss of hedgerows and wetlands.
- Infrastructural works including new road works and mineral extraction.

Louth

- Settlement coalescence, ribbon development and one-off housing
- Coastal flooding risk
- Water supply constraints due to high demand in south Louth
- Radon in buildings in certain parts of the County.

Achieving a good quality of life for the people who live, work or visit the Region, while protecting and enhancing the environment is a key objective of the SEA process.

Securing economic development and social equity, together with preserving and enhancing the urban and rural character of the Region, are closely associated with environmental issues. The RPGs provide a spatial planning framework for the development of the Region over the next 12 years, particularly in respect to the development of key strategic centres and the provision of key infrastructural requirements as outlined in Table IV below.

Table IV. Future Investment Priorities for Key Settlements

Settlement	Future Investment Priorities	Time Scale	Progress
Letterkenny	Relief Road		
	Sewerage Scheme	Completion by 2011	Under Construction
	Water supply Scheme	By 2014	At planning stage
Dundalk	Western Infrastructure (Major Internal Distributor Road Network including Bus Corridor)	-	At Planning Stage
	Coastal Protection Measures	2015	In Capital Works Programme
Sligo	Western Distributer Road	2011	Phase one under construction
	Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads	2012	Planning Complete – Awaiting Funding
	N4/N15 upgrade to Borough Boundary including widening of Hughes Bridge	2012	At planning stage
Cavan	Cavan and Cootehill Water Supply Scheme	2011	At planning stage
	Inner Relief Road into Town		

	Centre		
Monaghan	Extension of By pass onto N54, Cavan Road	-	At planning stage
	Sewerage Scheme Advanced Works	-	At planning stage
	Extend and Improve Sewerage Treatment Works in Castleblayney	-	At planning stage
Drogheda	Improve Port Access		
	Drogheda Sewerage Network Improvements		
	Water Supply Scheme		
Carrick-on-Shannon	Carrick-on-Shannon upgrading of Sewerage Scheme	Completion Mid 2011	Contractor appointed; work commended on DBO
	By pass	scheduled for 2015	Project upgrade at route selection stage

Table V outlines the key investment priorities for the Region as a whole.

Table V. Future Investment Priorities for the Border Region

Priorities for the Region (Intra & Inter-regional)	Time Scale	Progress
Development of the N2/A5 Dual Carriageway	Completion by 2015	At planning stage
Delivery and Completion of Project Kelvin	Completion by end of 2010	Under construction
Roll out of National Broadband Scheme	Completion by end of 2010	Under construction
Development of all Strategic Radial Corridors and Strategic Link roads (see transport section)	Period of the Guidelines 2010 - 2022	At planning and under construction
Development of Transmission Grid Network	Grid 25 Strategy extends up to 2025	At planning stage

Whereas, the development of key strategic centres and the provision of key infrastructural services and community facilities will have an overall positive impact in terms of social, economic and environmental considerations, it is likely that such development will, in certain instances, be accompanied by some adverse impact on the environment. The policies and objectives in the RPG's have been informed and honed by the SEA and Habitats Assessment process so as to avoid or mitigate any such adverse impacts. This ensures that the integrity of the environment is not compromised. The RPG's have indicated that the strategic centres have the capacity to accommodate the target populations set in the RPG's, subject to the sequencing of development with the provision of the necessary 'accommodation works', See box with **accommodation works** below.

Accommodation Works

In order to secure the sustainable development of the Region it is of critical importance that the Planning Authorities ensure that all development works, proceed in tandem with the provision of key 'accommodation works' such as infrastructural works, social and community services and facilities. The development of the Region envisaged in the RPG's is predicated on the provision of such 'accommodation works'. In this regard where there are shortfalls, e.g., Wastewater collection treatment and disposal, Water Supply, Health Care, Sport, Recreation and Amenities, Pedestrian and Transportation facilities, Educational and Community facilities and so on, it is of critical importance that works do not proceed until such shortfalls have been properly addressed prior to receiving the consent of a planning authority. This requirement is particularly relevant in relation to the strategically important centres that have been identified in the Guidelines and to developments that raise significant planning concerns.

The delivery of all infrastructural accommodation works, services and facilities envisaged in the Guidelines is subject to review and is very much dependant on the response of a number of agencies including that of the local authorities.

The delivery of all development works, both private and public is also dependant on compliance with relevant legislative requirements, including in particular the requirements of EU Directives, and on resources becoming available.

It is worth highlighting the fact that issues in relation to water quality, climate change, flood risk and biodiversity have featured strongly in the SEA process to date.

The River Basin District Plans and accompanying programme of measures have been highlighted in the Environmental Report as having a key role to play in the management of water quality within the Region and the wider area. In this regard, the RPG's have fashioned to align with the aims and objectives of RBMPs.

Likewise, the National Climate Change Strategy 2007 – 2012 has been identified as having a major role to play in addressing and adapting to the challenge of climate change. The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions has been raised as a significant issue. A flood risk assessment has been carried out and as a result policies and guidance in respect to managing flood risk have been incorporated into the RPGs.

Environmental pressure on landscape is of particular relevance considering the high scenic quality and rural character of the Region and the fact that these pressures relate to a wide range of environmental issues such as;

- One-off housing in the Countryside;
- Windfarms;
- Afforestation;
- Quarrying;
- Major infrastructural projects including roadworks;
- Agricultural activities, including changes in agricultural practices, and in some cases, the abandonment of farming.

Generally the environmental impacts often act across a number of environmental areas; e.g. the provision of infrastructure may impact on; cultural heritage, biodiversity, water quality and landscapes. The impacts can vary in scale and extent, some are short term and reversible, others are more long-term and irreversibly. Also, whereas individual impacts may be minor, the cumulative impacts, particularly when viewed over the longer term can be very significant.

8.0 Flood Risk Assessment

In recent years, we have become increasingly aware of the importance of factoring the risk to people, property, the overall economy and the environment from flooding into the planning system, and the role that good planning has in avoiding and reducing such risk that could otherwise arise in the future.

There are many areas within the Region, including urban centers, that are already at risk from periodic flooding. The effects of climate change, such as more severe rainfall events and rising sea levels, will increase these risks and may put other areas at risk that may not have flooded in the past.

The Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government Nov 09 (DEHLG Guidelines) Flood Risk Management Guidelines require the planning system at national, regional and local levels to:

- Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding, particularly floodplains, unless there are proven wider sustainability grounds that justify appropriate development and where the flood risk can be reduced or managed to an acceptable level without increasing flood risk elsewhere;
- Adopt a sequential approach to flood risk management when assessing the location for new development based on avoidance, reduction and mitigation of flood risk; and
- Incorporate flood risk assessment into the process of making decisions on planning applications and planning appeals.

Having regard to the DEHLG Guidelines, it is important to set out the key policy recommendations to avoid and manage flood risk within the Border Region. Regional Flood Risk Appraisal therefore includes:

- the identification of appropriate policy responses for priority areas, including areas that transcend administrative boundaries and where there appears to be significant flood risk
- Requirements on foot of the guidelines for co-operation, implementation and co-ordination of more detailed area level strategic flood risk assessment in development plans.

9.0 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Implementation of the RPG's.

The Regional Planning Guidelines act as a vehicle for the consideration of a wide range of economic, social and environmental issues at a strategic level. The process provides an opportunity for participation of a wide range of parties with an interest and expertise in the strategic development of the region. The consideration of the

environmental issues is generally inextricably linked to the economic, social and cultural considerations. Accordingly, environmental considerations play a central role in shaping the guidelines and this is manifested through the relationship between the Guidelines and Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Directive Assessment.

In the absence of the RPGs, the following outcomes are the most likely to arise in this region:-

1. No long term strategic planning framework for the region;
2. Further development of the Region in an unbalanced way;
3. No strategic identification of the key infrastructural requirements to help economic recovery;
4. No core settlement strategy which leads to a weakening of the urban structure and makes the region less attractive to invest in;
5. The socio-economic development of the region will occur on an ad-hoc basis;
6. Less protection for the natural receiving environment within the region;
7. The ecological, cultural, architectural and archaeological heritage will not be sufficiently protected at a strategic level;
8. Key environmental issues such as; the protection of water quality, flood risk or addressing the issue of climate change may not be sufficiently considered at county and local levels due to the absence of a parent document dealing strategically with the issue;
9. An increase in the travel to work patterns experienced in the region because in a 'laisaire faire' situation development will be provided where the market dictates.

The policies and objectives that emerge in the review of the Guidelines will provide the framework for future County Development Plans and Local Areas Plans within the Region.

Having regard to the foregoing, it is reasonable to conclude that the RPGs will lead to the proper planning and sustainable development of the Region which would not occur to the same extent in their absence.

10 Monitoring, Environmental Objectives, Indicators and Targets

Under Section 26 (1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 – 2009 a Regional shall, not later than 6 years after the making of such guidelines and not less than once in every period of 6 years thereafter, review such guidelines and when so reviewing, it may revoke the guidelines or make new regional planning guidelines. In this regard the environmental indicators and targets presented below may be used to monitor the predicted environmental impacts of implementing the Plan.

Monitoring will be based around the objectives, indicators and targets for each of the topic areas such as; Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna, population and human health and Landscape. Monitoring at an early stage will help identify unforeseen adverse effects and in undertaking the appropriate remedial action. Monitoring measures over the period of the Guidelines can be geared towards addressing any gaps (where practicable) which are identified in the Environmental Report. It will also enable an assessment of whether the Guidelines is achieving its environmental objectives and targets and will help identify issues that be need to be revisited.

11 Assessment of Aims, Policies and Objectives

All of the draft aims, policies and objectives contained within the Guidelines were assessed in terms of their likely impact on the environment. This assessment was in

addition to the Habitats Assessment which focused on the impact of the policies and objectives on Natura 2000 sites (SAC's & SPA's). Policies and objectives were amended or new ones added as part of both assessment processes.

In general terms, the policies and objectives in the Draft Plan were considered to be of positive nature in terms of the development of the Region and the protection of the environment. Where conflicts between the policies/objectives and environmental considerations were identified, it was considered that these impacts were likely to be rendered benign or acceptable through appropriate mitigation measures.

12 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation involves ameliorating significant negative effects and enhancing positive ones. The EPA Guidelines on SEA (2003) state that mitigation; "may involve preventing impacts altogether, reducing their magnitude as much as possible and/or probability of occurrence, or putting in place measures to remedy effects after they have occurred, or to compensate for them by providing environmental benefits elsewhere.

The Guidelines have been formulated with the explicit intention of protecting the environment and avoiding potentially adverse environmental impacts. A number of meetings/workshops have taken place during the formulation of the Guidelines involving the groups such as; the RPG Technical Working Group, the SEA Team, the Habitats Directive Assessment Team, Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government, Environmental Protection Agency, National Parks and Wildlife Service, North South Share River Basin District Office, Northern Ireland Environmental Agency and Infrastructural Providers. At these meetings/workshops environmental considerations were central to the making of the Guidelines.

It is important to note in terms of environmental assessment, that certain individual plans and projects that provide the framework for development, including County Development Plans, Local Area Plans will be subject to SEA and Habitats Assessment Reports as the need arises. In addition, proposals for developments will be subject to detailed assessment in terms of normal planning requirements including where deemed necessary; Environmental and other Technical Reports, Environmental Impact Assessments and Habitats Assessments.

The measures referred to above will act to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant effects of implementing the Guidelines.

13 Incorporating Environmental Issues into Draft RPG's

Table VI provides an indication of how the environmental issues raised as part of the SEA process were incorporated into the Draft RPG's as policies, objectives or otherwise. The list may not be exhaustive and does not include reference to the statements within the Draft RPG's. The third column of the table includes some proposals for additional policies, objectives or references to be included in the RPG's. The latter represents the final phase of ensuring that the environmental issues raised during the SEA process are incorporated into the Draft RPG's.

Table VI. Incorporating Environmental Issues into the RPG's

Environmental Issue	Policy, Objective, or reference in RPG's	Additional Policy Objective or Reference Required (final check)
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna		
Impact of development works e.g. forestry, agricultural activities and wide range of infrastructural works	SG5, SG6 ESP 5 INFP 1, INFP 14, INFP 18 – INFP 22, INFO 6, INFP 23, INFP 28, ENVP 1 – ENVP 3, ENVP 4 – ENVP 6, ENVO 2 – ENVO 5, ENVP 9 – ENVP 11, ENVO 8 – ENVO 12, ENVP 14, ENVO 29 – 31, ENVP 15, ESP 8 INFP 18 – INFP 22, INFO 6, INFP 23, ENVP 4 – ENVP 6, ENVO 2 – ENVO 5, ENVO 5, ENVP 9 – ENVP 11, ENVO 8 – ENVO 12, ENVP 15,	
Protection of watercourses especially sensitive water bodies	Most water related policies and objectives apply to varying degrees	
Conservation of Fish Stock	ENVP 6, ENVO 2 – ENVO 5, CSP 9, INFP 1, INFP 14, INFP 18, INFP 20 - INFP 22, INFO 6, INFP 23, INFP 28, ENVP 4 – ENVP 6, ENVO 2 – ENVO 5, ENVO 5, ENVP 9 – ENVP 11, ENVO 8 – ENVO 12, ENVP 15,	
Control of Invasive Species Protection of Natura 2000 sites including certain sites within Northern Ireland	ENVP 6, ENVO 2 – ENVO 5, CSP 9, INFP 1, INFP 14, INFP 18, INFP 20 - INFP 22, INFO 6, INFP 23, INFP 28, ENVP 4 – ENVP 6, ENVO 2 – ENVO 5, ENVO 5, ENVP 9 – ENVP 11, ENVO 8 – ENVO 12, ENVP 15,	
Alignment with “Green City Guidelines 2008”	ENVP 6, ENVO 2 – ENVO 5	
Protection of Annex 11 species such as Freshwater Pearl Mussel and Salmon Ramsar Sites and Statutory Nature Reserves	Biodiversity related policies and objectives apply to varying degrees ENVO 2 – ENVO 5,	Make specific reference to protection of protection of Pearl Mussel.
Ecological Networks	ENVO 2 – ENVO 5, ENVP 15,	
Shellfish Waters	Biodiversity related policies and objectives apply to varying degrees	Make specific reference to protection of Shellfish Waters
Population and Human Health		
Quality of Life	Vision Statement and most policies and objectives apply to varying degrees.	
Population Trends and Regional Population Targets and Settlement Patterns	SG2, SG 7, Ch 3 (Table 3.1), Ch 3 Balanced Development Model, Settlement Strategy (Aims, Model, Framework,) and Policies CSP 1 – CSP 9	
Health and its relationship with environmental issues	Many policies and objectives apply to varying degrees - with particular reference to, drinking water quality, provision of; community related infrastructure, services and facilities.	
Radon in buildings		* add statement to RPGs

Road Safety		Refer to SEA. Add reference to RPG's e.g. L A working in collaboration with other stakeholders have a key role to play in bringing Ireland's road safety record in line with 'best practice' countries throughout the World. Refer to SEA
Provision of infrastructure and community facilities	INFP 2 - INFP 22, INFP 23, INFP 24, INFP 25, INFP 27, INFO 12 – INFO 18, INFP 28, INFP 29, ENVP 13, ENVO 23 – 28, ENVP 15, SIP 1, SIP 2, SIO 1 – SIO 10, FRP1 – FRP10.	
Flooding		
Water		
Impact of development works on water quality eg forestry, agricultural activities and wide range of infrastructural works	SG6, INFP 18 – INFP 22, INFO 6, INFP 23, INFP 28, ENVP 4 – ENVP 6, ENVO 2 – ENVO 5, ENVO 5, ENVP 9 – ENVP 11, ENVO 8 – ENVO 12, ENVP 15,	
Alignment with aims policies and objectives of River Basin District Plans	SG6, INFP 18, INFO 6 ENVO 5, ENVP 9 – ENVP 11, ENVO 8 – ENVO 12, ENVP 15,	
Wastewater and Drinking Water and Bathing Water requirements – with particular refer to recent EPA Reports on Wastewater Treatment and Quality of Drinking Water	SG6 ESP 8 INFP 3, INFP 1 – INFP 6, INFP 18 – INFP 22, INFO 1 – INFO 6, INFP 23, ENVP 4 – ENVP 6, ENVO 2 – ENVO 5, ENVO 5, ENVP 9 – ENVP 11, ENVO 8 – ENVO 12, ENVP 15,	
Air and Climate Change		
Climate Change & Air Quality	SG 6, ENVP 1 – ENVP 3, ENVO 1, ENVP 15,	
Impact of Climate Change on Cultural and Natural Heritage, Coastal Flooding	ENVP 1 – ENVP 3, ENVO 1	
Limiting greenhouse gas emissions and reducing dependency on fossil fuels	ESP 7 INFP 6 INFP 7 - INFP 13, INFP 24 – NNFP 26, INFO 7 – INFO 11, ENVP 1 – ENVP 3, ENVO 1, ENVP 15,	
Cultural Heritage		
Impact of development works eg forestry, agricultural activities and wide range of infrastructural works	SG5, SG 6, INFP 23, ENVP 12, ENVO 13 – 22, ENVP 14, ENVO 29 – 31, ENVP 15,	
Identification and protection of Geological Sites.	SG5, ENVP 5, ENVO 1, ENVO 2.	Add statement outlining the need for L A to collaborate with each other and with the GSI in identifying and protecting geological sites of importance – refer to submission from GSI in SEA
Protection of items of Architectural and Archaeological Interest	SG5, INFP 23, ENVO 8 – ENVO 12, ENVP 14, ENVO 29 – 31, ENVP 15,	

Consideration of Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark ESP 6

Landscape

Impact of development works e.g. forestry, agricultural activities and wide range of infrastructural works SG5 SG 6 ESP 5, INFP 23, INFO 7, ENVP 7, ENVP 8, ENVO 6 – ENVO 7, ENVO 22, ENVP 14, ENVO 29 – 31, ENVP 15,

Identification. classification and protection of landscape SG6 ENVP 7, ENVP 8 ENVO 6 – ENVO 7, ENVO 22, ENVP 14, ENVO 29 – 31, ENVP 15,

Lack of uniformity between Local Authorities towards management of landscape SG6, ENVP 7, ENVP 8 ENVO 6 – ENVO 7, ENVP 14, ENVO 29 – 31, ENVP 15,

Other Issues

Urban Character, layout and Design ENVP 12, ENVO 13 - ENVO 22

One-off housing in the countryside Many policies and objectives apply to varying degrees, CSP 8 in particular

Cross border co-operation and collaboration in respect to spatial planning SG6, SG8, INFP 29, ENVP 15, ENVO 23, SIO 2,

Cumulative impact of off-shore wind farms

Development of Recreation and Tourism Facilities ESP 5, ESP 6

Inter-county and Transboundary Environmental Pressures SG6 SG8 ESP 6 INFP 1, ENVP 4 – ENVP 6, ENVO 2 – ENVO 5, ENVO 5, ENVP 9 – ENVP 11, ENVO 8 – ENVO 12, ENVO 8 – ENVO 12, ENVO 23, ENVP 15,

Coastal Management SG6, ENVP 14, ENVO 29 – 31,

Waste Management SG6, INFP 28, INFP 29.

Alternatives under Art 5 of the SEA Directive CH 3 Settlement Strategy with particular reference to, Settlement Hierarchy and the Balanced Development Model)

Level of Commercial and Residential Vacancy CSP 3, Other measures including Economic Strategy, provision of key Infrastructural and Community related services and facilities.

Sustaining Rural Communities CSP 8, INFP 5 INFP 8, INFP 18, INFP 19, INFP 23, INFP SIP 1, SIP 2, SIO 1 – SIO 10, 27, INFO 12 – INFO 18,

