



# Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy

*Environmental Report June 2013 including Non-  
Technical Summary and Habitat Directive  
Screening Report*

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## Abbreviations

ACA	Architectural Conservation Area
cSAC	Candidate Special Area of Conservation
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DoCMNR	Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources
DoECLG	Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ER	Environmental Report
EU	European Union
GHG	Green House Gas Emissions
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GSI	Geological Survey of Ireland
HDA	Habitats Directive Assessment
EHDA	Extended Habitats Directive Assessment
IGHP	Irish Geological Heritage Programme
LAP	Local Area Plan
LCEA	Limerick Clare Energy Agency
LCSPRS	Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy
MWRA	Mid West Regional Authority
MWRPG	Mid West Regional Planning Guidelines
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NHA	Natural Heritage Area
NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
NO <sub>2</sub>	Nitrogen dioxide
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
NRA	National Roads Authority
NSS	National Spatial Strategy
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
O <sub>3</sub>	Ozone
OPW	Office of Public Works
P/P	Plan/Programme
pNHA	Proposed Natural Heritage Area
POMS	Programme of Measures

PPP	Public Private Partnership
RBD	River Basin District
RBMP	River Basin Management Plans
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
RPG	Regional Planning Guidelines
RPS	Record of Protected Structures
RWP	The Rural Water Programme
S.I. No.	Statutory Instrument Number
SAA	Shannon Airport Authority
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SDZ	Strategic Development Zone
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEO	Strategic Environmental Objective
SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
SIRBD	Shannon International River Basin District
SO <sub>2</sub>	Sulphur dioxide
SPA	Special Protection Area
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WMU	Water Management Units
WRBD	Western River Basin District
WSIP	The Water Services Investment Programme
WWTP	Waste Water Treatment Plant

## Glossary

### **Alternatives (Reasonable)**

Alternatives should take into account the objectives and geographical scope of the P/P. There can be different ways of fulfilling the P/P objectives, or of dealing with environmental problems. The alternatives should be realistic, capable of implementation and should fall within the legal and geographical competence of the authority concerned.

### **Appropriate Assessment**

An assessment of the effects of a plan or project on the Natura 2000 network. The Natura 2000 network comprises Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive, Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive and Ramsar sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (collectively referred to as European sites).

### **Baseline Environment**

A description of the present state of the environment of the P/P area.

### **Baseline Survey**

Description of the existing environment against which future changes can be measured.

### **Biodiversity, 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.

### **Biotic Index Values (Q Values)**

The Biotic Index Values, or Q values, are assigned to rivers in accordance with biological monitoring of surface waters - low Q ratings, as low as Q1, are indicative of low biodiversity and polluted waters, and high Q ratings, as high as Q5, are indicative of high biodiversity and unpolluted waters. Good status as defined by the Water Framework Directive equates to approximately Q4 in the national scheme of biological classification of rivers as set out by the Environmental Protection Agency.

### **Birds Directive**

EU Council Directive of 2nd April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC).

### **Built Environment**

Refers to both architectural heritage and archaeological heritage.

### **Cumulative Effects**

Effects on the environment that result from incremental changes caused by the strategic action together with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. These effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time or space.

### **Data**

Includes environmental data, proxy data, and any other relevant statistical data.

### **Designated Environmental Authority**

An organisation that must be consulted in accordance with the SEA Regulations. For Ireland these are the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural

Resources (DCENR) and in certain circumstances the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG).

### **Ecology**

The study of relationships between living organisms and between organisms and their environment (especially animal and plant communities), their energy flows and their interactions with their surroundings.

### **Environmental Assessment**

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 (in accordance with Articles 4 to 9 of the SEA Directive).

### **Environmental Characteristics**

Environmental resources, issues and trends in the area affected by the P/P.

### **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**

An ordered exercise designed to enable the environmental impacts of a proposed development/project to be anticipated before the project is carried out.

### **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**

A statement of results from the ordered exercise which focuses on anticipating all environmental impacts of significance of a proposed development, prior to implementation or construction, and which specifies those measures which should be taken to eliminate or mitigate such impacts to an acceptable level.

### **Environmental Indicator**

An environmental indicator is a measure of an environmental variable over time, used to measure achievement of environmental objectives and targets.

### **Environmental Objective**

Environmental objectives are broad, overarching principles which should specify a desired direction of environmental change.

### **Environmental Problems**

Annex I of Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27 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 Receptors**

Include biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological) and landscape as listed in the SEA Directive. This list is not exhaustive, and can include other receptors which may arise for a particular P/P.

**Environmental Report (ER)**

A document required by the SEA Directive as part of an environmental assessment which identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan or programme.

**Environmental Targets**

A target usually underpins an objective often having a time deadline that should be met and should be accompanied by limits or thresholds.

**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.

**Evolution of the Baseline**

A description of the future state of the baseline in the absence of a plan or programme assuming 'business as usual' or 'do nothing' scenarios, depending on which is more reasonable for the P/P being proposed.

**Extended Habitats Directive Assessment**

This refers to a more detailed assessment of the potential impact of a plan or policy on a Natura 2000 site if an initial screening suggests that a negative impact is likely.

**Geographical Information System (GIS)**

Refers to a computer system that collects, stores, views and analyses geographical information and commonly creates maps as an output.

**Geology**

Science of the earth, including the composition, structure and origin of its rocks.

**Habitat**

Area in which an organism or group of organisms live.

**Habitats Directive**

EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

**Habitats Directive Assessment**

An assessment of the effects of a plan or project on the Natura 2000 network. The Natura 2000 network comprises Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive, Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive and Ramsar sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (collectively referred to as European sites).

**Hierarchy of Plans**

Both higher and lower level P/P relevant to the P/P being assessed.

**Indirect effect**

Any aspect of a P/P that may have an impact (positive or negative) on the environment, but that is not a direct result of the proposed P/P. May also be referred to as a secondary effect.

**Interrelationships**

Associations or linkages, related to environmental impact of the proposed P/P usually on environmental receptors.

**Issues Paper**

Paper produced as part of the consultation process, usually for Land Use Plans, to facilitate consultation with stakeholders on key issues.



**Invasive Alien Species**

Plants or animals which did not originally occur in Ireland before human colonisation of the country and which are expanding their numbers and distribution so as to cause a competitive threat to such native fauna and flora.

**Key Environmental Issues**

Those significant environmental issues, which are of particular relevance and significance within a P/P area and/or the zone of influence of that P/P. These issues should be identified during SEA Scoping process.

**Key Environmental Receptors**

Aspects of the environment likely to be significantly impacted by the proposed P/P.

**Material Assets**

Critical infrastructure essential for the functioning of society such as: electricity generation and distribution, water supply, wastewater treatment transportation etc.

**Member States**

Those countries that belong to the European Union.

**Mitigate**

To make or become less severe or harsh.

**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. Mitigation measures can be roughly divided into those that: avoid effects; reduce the magnitude or extent, probability and/or severity of effects; repair effects after they have occurred; and compensate for effects, balancing out negative impacts with other positive ones.

**Monitoring** A continuing assessment of environmental conditions at, and surrounding, the plan or programme. This determines if effects occur as predicted or if operations remain within acceptable limits, and if mitigation measures are as effective as predicted. The primary purpose of monitoring is to identify significant environmental effects which arise during the implementation stage against those predicted during the plan preparation stage.

**Monitoring Programme**

A detailed description of the monitoring arrangements to be put in place to carry out the monitoring of the impact of the proposed P/P on the environment including; frequency of monitoring, who has responsibility for monitoring, and responses if monitoring identifies significant negative impacts.

**Natura 2000 Site**

Designated European Site. In combination Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas will constitute Natura 2000 network of protected sites for habitats and species across the EU.

**Natural Heritage**

Refers to habitats and species of flora and fauna.

**Non-technical Summary**

A summary of the findings of the ER, summarized under the headings listed in Annex 1 of the SEA Directive that can be readily understood by decision-makers and by the general public. It should accurately reflect the findings of the ER.

**Plan or Programme**

Including those co-financed by the European Community, as well as any modifications to them which are subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government, and which are required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions.

In accordance with the SEA Directive, P/P that require SEA are those that fulfill the conditions listed in Article 2(a) and Article 3 of the SEA Directive.

**Post-mitigation Residual Impacts**

Environmental effects that remain after mitigation measures have been employed.

**Protected Structure**

Protected Structure is the term used in the Planning Act of 2000 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.

**Proxy Data**

Is a measure of activity resulting from a P/P which provides information on environmental impact without the need for a direct measure of an environmental receptor. For example, an increase in the number of vehicles (activity resulting from a P/P) can provide information on the impact on air quality and greenhouse gases without having to measure the concentration of these parameters in the receiving environmental receptor.

**Public**

One or more natural or legal persons and, in accordance with national legislation or practice, their associations, organisations or groups.

**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 Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994.

**Scoping**

The process of deciding the content and level of detail of an SEA, including the key environmental issues, likely significant environmental effects and alternatives which need to be considered, the assessment methods to be employed, and the structure and contents of the Environmental Report.

**Screening**

The determination of whether implementation of a P/P would be likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment. The process of deciding whether a P/P requires SEA.

**SEA Directive**

Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment'.

**SEA Statement**

A statement summarising:

- how environmental considerations have been integrated into the P/P

- how the ER, the opinions of the public and designated authorities, and the results of transboundary consultations have been taken into account
- the reasons for choosing the P/P as adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives.

### **Secondary Effect**

Effects that are not a direct result of the P/P. This is another name for 'indirect effect'.

### **Sensitivity**

Potential for significant change to any element in the environment that is subject to impacts.

### **Short-term Effects**

These are typical of those effects that may occur during construction stage of a development, for example, the increased traffic going to and from a site during construction, or, the noise associated with construction activities.

### **Significant Effects**

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.

### **SPA**

Special Protection Area under Birds Directive (79/409/EEC), designated for bird species listed in Annex I of the Directive, in particular internationally important concentrations of migratory and wetland birds. Designation is focused on habitats of these species.

### **Statutory Authority**

The authority by which or on whose behalf the plan or programme is prepared.

### **Statutory Instrument**

Any order, regulation, rule, scheme or bye-law made in exercise of a power conferred by statute.

### **Strategic Actions**

Strategic actions include: Policies, 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 Assessment (SEA)**

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. 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.

### **Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO)**

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures which are developed from international, national and regional policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives and against which environmental effects can be tested.

### **Synergistic Effect**

Effects that, when totalled, result in a greater or lesser effect than the sum of the individual effects.

**Threshold**

Magnitude of a project, which if exceeded, will trigger the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Transboundary Consultation**

If a plan or programme is being prepared that is likely to have significant effects on the environment in another Member State, or where a Member State likely to be significantly affected so requests, the Member State in whose territory the plan or programme is being prepared shall, before the plan or programmes adoption or submission to the legislative procedure, forward a copy of the draft plan or programme and the relevant environmental report to the other Member State.

**Zone of Influence**

The area over which a plan can impact on the environment.

# 1 Non-Technical Summary

## Introduction

Recreational facilities and amenities exist at regional, county and local levels and perform a number of inter-related functions. They are an integral part of the quality-of-life infrastructure and contribute significantly to the physical, mental and social health of the population; they contribute significantly to the attractiveness of an area as a location for inward investment and as a desirable destination for a mobile labour market; and they add to the tourism and visitor infrastructure particularly in the context of activity and adventure holidays.

Over recent years the significant improvements in the traffic and transport infrastructure of the Mid-West region has resulted in substantial increases in both intra and inter-regional accessibility. This means that facilities and other recreation resources that may not have been accessible in a meaningful way have now become more accessible to the population of the region and visitors alike.

Sports and recreational infrastructure has, historically, been largely provided by local communities in towns, rural areas and counties. With some notable exceptions (major sporting facilities for example), facilities and infrastructure has often been put in place with the intention of providing for a local population and its visitors alone. Often, little thought has been given to the potential of the facility to serve a wider population outside the community or the applicable administrative area as a whole. This has sometimes resulted in the wasteful duplication of facilities, difficulties being experienced by the owners and management of the facilities in ensuring their on-going viability and under-utilisation of expensive infrastructure.

It is to address these issues that it has been agreed between the relevant Local Authorities that a Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy (LCSPRS) be developed.

It has also been agreed and is included in the brief for this piece of work that an SEA and a Habitats Directive screening are carried out as part of the process.

### ***Outline of the contents and main objectives of the strategy and of its relationship with other relevant plans, programmes and policies***

There are many plans, programmes and legislative requirements that have a relevance to the strategy. However, many of these are of more relevance at city and county level as the executive agencies responsible for their implementation are the Local Authorities and other public and private decision-makers. The LCSPRS is more relevant to those high-level strategic plans and programmes that reflect the same overarching and co-ordinating role as the LCSPRS. These include –

## EU/International

- Agenda 21
- The Sixth Environment Action Programme (EAP) of the European Community 2002-2012
- The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS)

- Kyoto Protocol
- Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) as amended
- Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)
- The Drinking Water Directive (DWD), (98/83/EC) 1998
- EC Freshwater Fish Directive, (78/659/EEC) 1978
- The new Groundwater Directive, (2006/118/EC) 2006
- EC Bathing Water Quality Directive, (2006/7/EC) 2006
- European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1992 (The Valletta Convention)
- World Heritage Convention
- EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020
- EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, (2009/147/EC) 1979
- EU Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna, (92/43/EEC), 1992
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011
- The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North- East Atlantic (the OSPAR Convention)
- UN Convention of Biological Diversity, 1992
- SEA Directive - Assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the Environment, (2001/42/EC) 2001
- Climate Change Programme (ECCP II)
- European Landscape Convention 2000

## **National**

- Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland, 1997
- Making Ireland's Development Sustainable 2002
- National Development Plan (NDP) Transforming Ireland A Better Quality of Life for All 2007-2013
- National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020
- Draft National Sports Facilities Strategies, 2012, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

- Irish Trails Strategy, Irish Sports Council, 2007
- Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020
- National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2012
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, OPW), 2009
- National Renewable Energy Action Plan, (NREAP) 2010
- Actions for Biodiversity 2011 – 2016, Ireland’s 2nd National Biodiversity Plan
- National Heritage Plan, (2002)
- National Climate Change Strategy (2007-2012)
- A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland – Strategy Issues Paper for Public Consultation, (Sept 2011)
- Draft Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines, (2000)

## **Regional**

- Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 – 2022
- Mid-West Area Strategic Plan
- Mid-West Climate Change Strategy 2008
- Lough Derg Sustainable Marina, Recreational and Tourism Study
- Shannon IRBD River Basin Management Plan, 2009-2015
- Western RBD Basin Management Plan, 2009-2015

## **Local**

- Action Plans of Local Sports Partnerships
- City and County Development Plans
- City and County Development Strategies
- Local Biodiversity Action Plans
- Groundwater Protection Schemes
- County and City Tourism Plans
- Strategies of Major Sporting Bodies

- Limerick Regeneration Strategies and Master-plans
- Development plans of major facility providers
- Strategies and Action Plans of Local Development Companies

The principal objectives of the Strategy are as follows –

- The development of a set of goals and objectives for the provision of sporting and physical recreation facilities in the area
- The preparation of an analysis of the existing provision within the focus area and adjacent areas
- The implementation of an evaluation of the population necessary to support different types of facility
- An assessment of current and future population within the relevant areas
- The identification of any gaps or excess in the provision of larger-scale facilities
- The identification of the resources available and gaps in provision for those with disabilities who wish to participate in sports and active recreation
- The identification of any opportunities for the provision of facilities that address a new sporting or active recreation area
- The development of a set of policies that will guide Local Authorities in their land-use management and development functions and provide information to others who may wish to undertake the development of sports or physical recreation projects

### **Strategic Policies**

In the light of the strategic objectives that are outlined above, the following are the strategic policies that will guide decision-makers with respect to the provision of sports and physical recreation facilities throughout Limerick and Clare –

### **Strategic Approach to Facility Distribution**

1 That a hierarchy of facility provision will be adopted as follows –

- Large scale stadia and facilities
- Multi-sport facilities at key locations
- Smaller scale multi-sport facilities
- Community-level facilities for sports and physical recreation at a level smaller than the multi-sport facilities referred to above



- Specific facilities provided by individual sports and recreation clubs and organisations to meet their own needs
- 2 That larger-scale sports and physical recreation stadia and facilities be located within the areas of Limerick Metropolitan Area, Shannon and Ennis in order to maximise accessibility of larger populations, to maximise the viability of the facilities and to maximise the potential use of public transport facilities for providing access to these facilities. In particular, where significant areas have been developed or are planned for development provision should be made for the establishment of multi-sports facilities in accordance with the recommendations of the Draft National Sports Facilities Strategy.
  - 3 That new stadia for team games will generally not be permitted within the area other than
    - the provision within Limerick Metropolitan Area of one medium-sized stadium not exceeding a capacity of 7,500 with a primary focus on the accommodation of League of Ireland soccer matches and
    - the provision of a new stadium at an appropriate location and which replaces an existing stadium.
  - 4 That the provision of facilities which have specific needs which require them to be located outside the Limerick Metropolitan Area/Shannon/Ennis area will be accommodated subject to addressing the environmental considerations outlined below.
  - 5 That key sub-regional locations be identified for the provision of all-weather sports facilities to accommodate a wide range of sports and physical recreation activities and such that, no person is significantly more than 20 kilometres from such a facility. These locations will relate to the regional structure outlined in the Regional Planning Guidelines and should include -
    - Provision of facilities in the Limerick Metropolitan Area in accordance with the considerations outlined at section 4.3.2 of this strategy including the provision of at least one area to serve the North side of Limerick Metropolitan Area and one area to serve the South side of Limerick Metropolitan Area. These facilities should incorporate the facilities set out in the following two paragraphs and which should not be in addition to the facilities referred to in this paragraph
    - One area to provide an integrated training facility for soccer within the Limerick Metropolitan Area
    - One area to provide a multi-sports facility for Limerick Institute of Technology
    - One multi-sports all-weather facility in Shannon
    - The enhancement of the Lee's Road Regional Sports Facility in Ennis and the provision of a substantial indoor sports facility in the town of Ennis that will be managed as part of the overall Lee's Road facility

- The provision and/or upgrading of one integrated all-weather multi-sports facility in key settlements within Limerick and Clare but outside the Limerick Metropolitan Area/Ennis/Shannon area. The precise distribution of these locations should be decided by the Planning Authorities acting in consultation but should reflect the sub-regional centres identified in the Regional Planning Guidelines and should also have regard to the locations where substantial sports facility development has taken place or is under way. In that context the following locations should be included for consideration -
  - Kilrush
  - Killaloe/Ballina
  - Lisdoonvarna
  - Lahinch/Ennistymon
  - Tulla
  - Scarrif
  - Newcastlewest
  - Kilmallock
  - Rathkeale

Over time the facilities at these locations should include the following as a minimum –

- One full-size, floodlit all-weather playing pitch capable of accommodating those games that require the largest playing area
- Grass pitches for a variety of sports
- A floodlit walking/running track incorporating outdoor gym facilities
- An indoor facility capable of accommodating full basketball games
- Facilities for other sports such as tennis and bowls
- A play area
- Training areas

All these facilities may not be on the one site but, where they are on a number of sites, they should be managed and maintained by a single entity.

- 6 That smaller-scale facilities be provided at other intermediate locations such that no person is generally more than 10 kilometres from such a facility. These facilities should include a floodlit all-weather playing area that is not of full size, a walking track, a playground, an outdoor gym and an indoor games hall. In these locations attempts should be made to maximise the use of existing facilities and to upgrade them where necessary, developing new facilities only where

unavoidable. Particular attention should be paid to the provision of training facilities at these locations as the absence of such facilities can prove a significant barrier to participation in sports.

- 7 That the provision of facilities that allow the better use and enjoyment of sporting and physical recreation facilities which make use of natural resources will generally be permitted provided that they are of an appropriate scale and address the environmental conditions as set out below. Where possible this should be achieved by the enhancement of existing facilities rather than the provision of new facilities. In addition, areas may be identified as hubs for particular forms of sporting and physical recreation activities related to their natural amenities and/or geographic location and development plans prepared to facilitate the development of such hubs.
- 8 That the provision of smaller-scale community-based facilities will continue to be supported subject to the requirements as set out above and the meeting of environmental considerations as set out below. Such facilities might, in particular, include a children's playground, a safe walking/cycling route and a community hall used for non-competitive physical recreation.

### **Social and Physical Access to Facilities**

- 9 That the needs of all age-groups are considered when facilities are being developed and that, in particular, the needs of the young and of older people are given particular attention. With regard to the former this should relate to the incorporation of age-appropriate green spaces into all developments in accordance with the provisions of the document 'Play Space Guidelines 2007 (DDDA 2006). With regard to the latter it should include the provision of separate cycle paths, the provision of level, well-maintained, non-slip walkways and convenient access to parks and green spaces as recommended by the WHO Age-Friendly Cities Programme. This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.
- 10 That new facilities will be provided in a manner that will seek to encourage physical activity amongst different age groups in a single location by, for example, providing a children's playground and an adult outdoor gym or walking area in close proximity. In addition, that where significant facilities are planned, these should be located, where possible, close to schools and public open space.
- 11 That particular consideration be given to the provision within publicly-funded facilities, of the spaces and equipment necessary to accommodate those activities that have been identified as being most likely to encourage additional participation in sports or physical activities amongst the resident population
- 12 That the needs of those with a disability are provided for in the design and development of facilities for sports and physical recreation. Such an approach should include the following –
  - The incorporation of provision for those with a disability in the design of new facilities

- The making of special provision for those with a disability in certain circumstances e.g. the provision of boardwalk areas on walking routes
- The development and implementation of a programme of upgrading of those facilities that cannot currently adequately accommodate those with disabilities

This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.

- 13 That the needs of those who cannot afford to pay for the use of facilities be taken into account when new facilities or the integration of existing facilities are being proposed and that mechanisms are incorporated into the project proposal which will help to address this issue. In addition and in order to facilitate access by those with limited resources, that the pricing policies of facilities be such as to require a reasonable level of payment by those that can afford to do so.

In addition that the needs of the working population be taken into account when new facilities or the integration of existing facilities are being proposed and that mechanisms are incorporated into the project proposal which will help to address this issue with particular regard to the provision of opening hours that are convenient for this population.

Also, that the provision of public transport to proposed facilities and to existing facilities not currently served by such transport will be examined as part of the objective of maximising access to sports and physical recreation opportunities for all, with the intention of arranging for the establishment of such services where possible.

This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.

### **The Need for New Facilities**

- 14 That new developments of the following types of facility will generally not be supported within the area unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is a need for the facility and that its provision will not impact on the viability of other existing facilities either within the strategy area or in areas that border it –

- Golf Course
- Private swimming pool other than in an education context
- Racecourse
- Greyhound Stadium

15 That facilities and resources associated with the following sports and activities will generally be permitted subject to meeting environmental protection requirements and the identification of a market need that will not give rise to deadweight or displacement; and that proactive actions will be taken to enhance access to such facilities particularly through the provision of year-round parking, pathway and storage facilities where required.

- Walking trails both urban (Sli na Slainte) and rural and associated amenities such as sculpture trails or nature walks. The provision of walking trails in urban environments is of specific benefit as it provides for the most common form of physical activity undertaken by the urban population, it requires little investment or maintenance as most of the facilities are in place and it offers an opportunity to link sports and recreation provision with the objectives of the Smarter Travel agenda.
- Dedicated cycle routes. In this regard particular attention should be paid to the potential to use abandoned routes such as the Abbeyfeale railway line and the West Clare railway line for the provision of new facilities.
- Mountain-bike trails. In this regard, in particular, the Ballyhoura bike trail system should be developed and enhanced with the provision of additional facilities to accommodate a wide range of users including families.
- Other trails including long-distance walking and cycling routes which should be developed in accordance with the principles set out in the publication 'Creating Green Infrastructure in Ireland' (Comhar 2010).
- Water-based activities on the Shannon, the Shannon Estuary, the Fergus and the Fergus Estuary including sailing, marine sailing, canoeing and kayaking, rowing, surfing, wind-surfing, and fishing. In this regard, specific provision should be made for rowing within the Limerick Metropolitan Area in order to benefit from one of the best stretches of rowing water in the country by, amongst other things, the holding of regattas in the area.
- Equestrian Activities. In this regard specific provision should be made for indoor facilities for equestrian activities within the Limerick Metropolitan Area and the Ennis Area.
- Children's playgrounds and adult outdoor gyms particularly in areas where the level of provision is less than the national average. Such provision should be made in accordance with the standards set out in the document 'Play Space Guidelines 2007 (DDDA 2006).
- Other outdoor activities such as mountain climbing, orienteering and rock-climbing.

### **Integration of the Use of Facilities**

16 That where public access to a particular type of facility is not available but a private facility is available in the area, to seek to make arrangements with the private facility owner for the provision of public access.

17 That the adoption of integrated multi-sport models of facility provision be promoted and supported where possible and appropriate. Such multi-sport models will promote the inclusion of public, voluntary, school-based and privately-owned facilities in a particular area under a joint

management body in order to maximise the use of existing facilities, to ensure that facilities do not lie idle more than is necessary and to ensure that where new facilities are proposed they will be provided only where there is a clear lack of capacity in the area. The promotion of such a model will be carried out through the nature of the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine when proposals to other funders should receive the endorsement of public bodies in the area; through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate; and through the promotion of the adoption of this policy by funders at national and regional level.

- 18 That it will be a policy of all those engaged in the development and management of sports and physical recreation in the area to promote the adoption of the concept of Healthy Stadia.

A Healthy Stadium is, one that promotes the health of visitors, fans and the local community – and one that provides a place where people can go and have a positive, healthy experience playing or watching sport.

The Healthy Stadia concept is firmly based on a commitment to partnership and requires a multi-stakeholder approach comprising three elements; creating supportive and healthy working and living environments, integrating health promotion into the daily activities of the setting and developing links with other settings and with the wider community.

- 19 That where a new sports or community hall is being provided it is designed to be of a size that will accommodate those sports that require the greatest floor area and that the granting of permission for the provision of such a development be dependent on its being designed to such a standard.
- 20 That where new all-weather pitches are being provided they should be designed to accommodate those sports that require the largest playing area and that provision be made for the installation of flood-lighting when possible.
- 21 That the provision of sports hall and pitch facilities be based on an integrated multi-sport model and that the promoters of any such facility be required to indicate how such integration will be implemented and that undertakings be given with regard to the ongoing provision of coaching and other supports.
- 22 That different models for the integration of sports facility provision at community level be supported. These models include a single-site model in which all facilities both indoor and outdoor are accommodated on the one site and a multi-site model in which both new and existing facilities located on one or more sites are managed in an integrated way through the use of mechanisms that have a legal status and that can ensure the on-going participation of facility owners and the overall community.
- 23 That where integrated facilities are being provided a floodlit walking route is incorporated as part of the overall development.
- 24 That the local community served by a particular facility be involved in the design, development and management of such facility.

## **Development and Management of Sports Clubs**

- 25 That collaborative mechanisms for the establishment of new sports clubs at key locations be examined to facilitate the taking up of a range of individual non-invasive sports by all age groups. Such collaborative mechanisms should include community and voluntary organisations, national governing bodies, local development organisations, public bodies and educational bodies and would be appropriately promoted and supported by the Local Sports Partnerships. The types of sports that might be considered under this heading include gymnastics, martial arts, racquet sports, aerobics, dance, athletics, sulky-racing and cycling as well as team sports. Sports that have a specific historic and cultural value should be particularly considered for support under this heading.
- 26 That the enhancement of the Governance of individual organisations that own and manage facilities that are or that might be used for sports and physical recreation activities be supported in order to provide the management bodies of such organisations with the confidence and the capacity to engage in the collaborative and integrated models and processes outlined in this document. Mechanisms for the implementation of this objective will include the application of a Club Mentoring Programme and the provision of coordinated support to voluntary organisations.
- 27 That the tenure of sporting organisations with regard to land they hold from public authorities will be examined and amended where necessary and possible with the purpose of facilitating the achievement of the community-based, multi-sport integrated approaches referred to in this strategy.
- 28 That with regard to a small number of community and voluntary organisations which provide substantial sports and physical recreation facilities that are open to the general public and which face on-going uncertainties and funding challenges arising from their public service role, a long-term and sustainable funding system be identified and developed for such organisations and that the barriers to such organisations accessing funding are addressed. Such funding mechanisms should provide for on-going maintenance and development as well as providing support for normal operational costs.

## **Economic Potential of Sport and Physical Recreation**

- 29 That the needs of the tourism sector are taken into account when proposals for new development or activities are being considered and that the proposers of facilities which will be reliant on visitors for their viability be requested to provide evidence of the likely use of the facility by visitors to the area and that the proposed facility will not undermine the viability of existing facilities in the area.
- 30 That pro-active steps be taken to promote international, national and regional sporting events within the area, particularly those such as the Great Limerick Run that involve mass participation and that the benefits of the designation of Limerick as Ireland's European City of Sport be built on in this context. In addition, the development of Limerick as a centre for Sports Medicine should be pursued through the collaboration of sporting organisations, Higher Education Institutes and other relevant organisations.

## Environmental Considerations

- 31 That where existing facilities are being upgraded the opportunity will be taken to upgrade those aspects of the facility that have an impact on the environment including the reduction in the use of energy, the improvement in the systems used for the treatment and disposal of waste-water and the management of associated activities to address any negative environmental impacts arising from them.
- 32 That where infrastructure developments are being undertaken, consideration will be given to whether and to what extent facilities for sport and physical recreation can be incorporated in the design and that where such provision is possible it will be made.
- 33 That when open space is being provided in association with other developments or as stand-alone amenities the quality of the open space as well as its quantity will be assessed with particular regard to its role in promoting sports and physical recreation either in itself or through the added value it provides for existing facilities. A matrix for the provision of open space such as that contained in the Limerick City Development Plan should be adopted.
- 34 That nothing in this strategy should be interpreted so as to prevent the implementation of the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary when it is adopted insofar as it applies to Sport and Physical Recreation.
- 35 That actions be taken to implement a 'Leave no Trace' approach to the use of the natural environment for sports and physical recreation so that the any natural amenity used by the public should not be impacted upon by that use and anything taken into the natural environment will be taken out again by the user.

## Methodology

This Environmental Report is a central element of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process, and it has been prepared in the context of the following:

- S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011)
- DEHCLG Guidelines on Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) for Regional Planning Guidelines
- EPA Guidance Documents available at <http://www.epa.ie/whatwedo/advice/sea/resources/>

A number of principles have been adopted in this SEA:

1. The purpose of the SEA is to enable better-informed decisions to be made by enabling the structured assessment of environmental impacts of actions that might arise as a result of decisions taken.



2. The environmental parameters considered in this SEA are those that are relevant to the impacts of the provision of sports and physical recreation facilities and activities within the area concerned.
3. This SEA has been prepared in the context of the high-level strategic nature of the overall process.
4. The LCSPRS and therefore the SEA do not seek to determine the ways in which other decision-makers address their own responsibilities; they focus on environmental the outcomes that are being sought within the context of the LCSPRS.

### *Screening*

The carrying out of an SEA and of a HDA Screening was a requirement of the brief for the preparation of the Sports and Recreation Strategy. In the light of that requirement it was not considered necessary to carry out the normal SEA screening so the process proceeded straight to the scoping stage.

### *Consultation*

A variety of key stakeholders were consulted in the development of this strategy. These consultations were based on a stakeholder engagement proposal that was developed in consultation with the Steering Group. The main purposes of the consultations were as follows –

- To identify the current level of provision of key facilities by the stakeholders
- To identify extent of the current capacity of those facilities that is utilised
- To identify any plans for future development
- To identify the catchment area of the users of the facility (this was generally possible on an anecdotal basis only)
- To identify any additional developments in the area that were considered necessary by the stakeholders
- To identify the accessibility of facilities for those with a disability and others with particular needs
- To identify accessibility to facilities for the general community including those who may often not be in a position to gain access to certain facilities

The following are the stakeholders who were consulted during this process. Some of this consultation took place through the Steering Group and some through specific meetings with the relevant organisations.

- All Local Authorities in the area
- Mid-West Regional Authority
- Limerick City Regeneration Agency (now incorporated into Limerick City Council)

- Sporting bodies responsible for the provision of major facilities or the organisation of major events including GAA, FAI and IRFU
- Commercial providers of large-scale facilities such as horse and greyhound racing
- Local Sports Partnerships
- Coillte
- Local Development Companies
- Shannon Development
- Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
- Third-level Institutions in the area
- Bodies with an input into the provision of recreational facilities for those with a disability
- Certain community groups with particular approaches to the provision of facilities

Some of this consultation took place through the Steering Group, others took place in face-to-face meetings and some through telephone discussions.

### *Scoping*

A Scoping Document was prepared and this was used as the basis of the consultation with the five environmental authorities prescribed in the legislation; the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the Department of Arts, Tourism and Sports, The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. The Scoping Document is attached at Appendix One. The responses to the Scoping Document were taken into account in preparing this report.

### ***Description of relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the evolution of that environment without implementation of the plan***

The environmental baseline is described in line with legislative requirements, and includes data relating to the environmental receptors of biodiversity, population, human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape.

### **Biodiversity**

Counties Limerick and Clare and Limerick City have a richness of natural habitats, plants, birds and animals. There are 49 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) in the area, 37 in Clare and 12 in Limerick. These are sites that are deemed important under the EU's Habitats Directive. Some of the SACs cross county or indeed regional boundaries. The area also has 12 Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which are designated under the EU Birds Directive with 10 in County Clare and 2 in Limerick City and County. Some of these sites are particularly important from the point of view of sports and physical recreation since they provide the basic resource within which such activities take place and can be impacted on by such activities.

## **Population**

The population of the area has increased from 278,581 in 2002, to 295,005 in 2006, and to 308,191 in 2011. The average population increase per year from 2002 to 2011 is therefore approximately 2,500 people. While the rate of growth was somewhat less than the national rate, it exceeds the expected level of growth in the 2004 Regional Planning Guidelines. A number of population issues can be noted, based on comparison of 2011 census statistics with those of 2002:

- low rate of population growth in Limerick City and suburbs;
- high rate of population growth in the Co. Limerick areas close to Limerick City;
- population decline in some settlements;
- some decline in some rural areas.

## **Human health**

Human health is dealt with where appropriate through consideration of other environmental issues such as air and water. Human health also has relevance for sports and physical recreation however, because sport and exercise can have a positive impact on morbidity and mortality within the general population.

## **Soil**

Soil is a non-renewable resource. The main soil types in the Region are grey brown podzolics (good all-purpose soils), gleys (mostly unsuitable for cultivation or for intensive grassland production) and peat. No data were available regarding soil quality for the area, reflecting the paucity of national soil data. However, soil in Ireland is generally considered to be of good quality.

The latest inventory of active quarries, mines and pits in the Region dates from 2001, and recorded 37 facilities. The number of quarries in actual operation is likely to have changed considerably in the intervening period due to the down-turn in the construction industry and the consequent reduction in the demand for aggregate.

There are two landfills in the area, both of which are licensed to operate by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

## **Water**

The introduction of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in 2000 established a new integrated approach to the protection and improvement of Irish aquatic ecosystems and water resources. The main environmental protection objective of the WFD is to ensure all waters achieve “good status” by 2015, and to prevent deterioration in the existing status of waters.

The unit of management for the WFD is the river basin district (RBD). The Shannon International RBD extends from the river’s source in Cavan and Fermanagh, to the Dingle peninsula. The Shannon International RBD covers most of the Mid-West Region with a small area of North Clare in the Western RBD.

The area faces a very significant challenge in meeting the main objective of the Water Framework Directive. There are issues with the quality of river, lake, estuary and ground waters. The most recent EPA Report on Water Quality suggests that 7% of the rivers were considered to be of High status, 37% to be Good and 32% to be Moderate.

In addition, that report states 45% of lakes in the RBD are of High or Good status with the remaining 55% being of Moderate status. In the same report, 43% of lakes were assigned High or Good physico-chemical status while the other 57% were assigned Moderate status.

A significant proportion of the region has groundwater in the “extreme” and “high” vulnerability rating classes as recorded in the ground water vulnerability data and classifications of the GSI (<http://spatial.dcenr.gov.ie/imf/imf.jsp?site=Groundwater>). The vulnerability rating determines the acceptability and characteristics of on-site wastewater treatment systems.

The freshwater bathing sites of Mountshannon and Ballycuggeran on Lough Derg have Blue Flag status. The areas beaches are all of Good quality with the exception of the White Strand at Milltown Malbay which is considered to be of Poor quality due to its failing an e-coli test.

### **Drinking Water Quality**

Drinking water quality is generally good and improving throughout the area with few exceedances of either micro-biological or chemical parameters within the area in question according to the latest EPA report in 2011. However, there are still some areas where improvements are required and care needs to be taken that this positive and improving situation is maintained.

### **Air**

The EPA provides consolidated data for eight air quality parameters. There were no issues with the area’s compliance on five of these parameters (sulphur dioxide, particulate matter, lead, benzene and carbon monoxide). Monitoring for nitrogen dioxide at Park Road in Limerick showed three exceedances of an hourly limit, which is not to be exceeded more than 18 times in any calendar year. There was also one exceedance of the 8-hour mean limit for ground-level ozone at the same location. No more than 25 such days are permitted. A ban on bituminous coal came into force in Limerick in 1998. This has led to a substantial reduction in black smoke concentrations in Limerick, but they are still higher than in Dublin or Cork.

### **Climatic factors**

Based on the Mid-West Energy Balance & Climate Change Strategy, 2008, it is estimated that the Region produced 4.2 million tonnes of energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2005 (total national emissions of greenhouse gases in 2007 were 69.2 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent). The transport sector is the greatest single contributor to energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the Region (at almost 35%), and emissions from that sector grew significantly between 1990 and 2005.

### **Material assets**

#### *Transport*

The area is well serviced with a network of National and Regional routes that either pass through or are adjacent to it. Some National Secondary Routes and Regional Routes are also of particular importance from a regional point of view. The area is also well served with rail systems, relatively speaking. Some of the area's rail links are in the process of being upgraded while others have already been improved. Shannon Airport is the most important asset for air transport, though there are other, smaller, private airports of local significance. Limerick City Docks and Foynes are the most important port developments though there are a number of other smaller ports and harbours along the Shannon Estuary.

### *Energy*

Moneypoint and Ardnacrusha are the most important electricity generation stations, though there is an increasing number of renewable energy developments within the Region. The natural gas network has been extended to a considerable part of the Region including the Gateway and Hub towns.

### *Communications*

Generally the Region is well served with cable-based communication and wireless communication has wide coverage. Broadband coverage in the region is variable. Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) are available in the major centres but rural areas still have significant limitations in broadband coverage. In addition, broadband penetration in the settlements is limited due to a variety of factors.

### *Water and Wastewater*

Major water supply and waste water treatment systems are present in the Gateway City and Town and in the Hub Town. However, these facilities are not adequate to meet current needs in some cases and do not have the spare capacity to meet future needs in others.

Data gathered by the Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines (MWRPG) Technical Group during the production of the Regional Planning Guidelines indicated that drinking water losses from the distribution networks in the region of typically 40 to 50% (with a lowest loss of 15-25%, and a high of 75%).

The region faces a significant challenge in the effort to meet the requirements of the EU's Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. According to the latest EPA report on compliance of local authorities in 2009 with the overall requirements of the Directive, seven agglomerations had no secondary treatment, and 20 which had secondary treatment failed standards/guidance values. No data was readily available on the performance of treatment systems for population centres with less than 500 population equivalents, or of on-site wastewater treatment systems (e.g. septic tanks serving a single dwelling). However, it is probable that there are negative environmental impacts arising from a significant proportion of these systems.

### *Recreation and Tourism*

A number of nationally and regionally significant recreation and tourism assets exist in the region. Those that depend particularly on a high quality environment include the Cliffs of Moher Centre, the

Ailwee Caves Centre, the Lough Derg Water Activities Centre, Adare village, Kilrush Creek Marina and Ballina/Killaloe Marina.

In addition major sporting facilities exist in Limerick City and Ennis, while the coastal and estuarine areas of the two counties and some of its upland areas provide significant resources for outdoor sports and physical activities.

### *Cultural heritage*

There are over 2,400 protected structures of architectural interest in the area, and 32 architectural conservation areas (19 in Clare and 13 in Limerick). Regarding archaeology, it is estimated that there are about 6,000 protected monuments and sites in the Mid-West. There are also about 100 National Monuments in State Care - 37 in Co. Clare and 62 in Co. Limerick. The Burren has been nominated for inclusion to the UNESCO World Heritage List and the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher have achieved UNESCO World Heritage Site Status.

### *Landscape*

The LCSPRS area is rich in the nature and variety of landscape types it contains. Landscapes that are of regional significance include:

- The Atlantic Coast of West Clare characterised by a variety of coastline types, some rocky and some sandy;
- The Karstic area of the Burren between Clare and Galway characterised by its fissured limestone and the small lakes and turloughs of the East Burren complex;
- The Shannon Estuary with long views over water to the far shore;
- The Shannon River characterized by smaller, more intimate views;
- Lough Derg with a number of small islands and surrounded by the upland areas that contain it;
- The upland areas of the Galtee Mountains, Ireland's highest inland mountain range;
- The upland area of the Ballyhoura Hills which run between Limerick and Cork and have many areas of natural beauty;
- The Slieve Felim area of Limerick;
- Slieve Aughty between Clare and Galway.

Many of these areas also contain SACs and SPAs with high-quality habitats and significant levels of biodiversity.

Each of these different landscape types brings unique qualities of experience to the local population and visitors alike. The various landscapes are also subject to a variety of potential negative impacts. These include:

- Inappropriately designed and located developments;
- Changing farming practices leading to landscape degradation;
- The impact of afforestation on the appearance and habitat diversity of the landscape;
- Major infrastructure developments;
- Excessive use for activities associated with tourism, sport and physical recreation;
- The impact of pollution and eutrophication on water bodies.

Many of those areas that are of regional significance cross county and regional boundaries. At present there are a variety of approaches and designations that are applied by the different Planning Authorities and this militates against the coordinated development of the landscape in these areas.

It is important that a common approach is taken to the management of the rural landscape throughout the region in order that its protection and enhancement can be ensured.

#### **Evolution of the Region's environment without the implementation of the LCSPRS**

The evolution of the region is subject to many policies, plans and programmes. Many of these operate at a higher level than the LCSPRS and many at a lower level. In addition, many of the plans and programmes can be implemented independently of the LCSPRS. Indeed the way in which many of them should be implemented place mandatory obligations on the implementing bodies from the point of view of environmental protection.

The LCSPRS does, however, bring a number of specific factors into consideration particularly those associated with water quality, habitat protection and transportation.

#### ***Description of the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected***

*and*

#### ***Identification of any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan, particularly those relating to European protected sites***

Section 4 of the main Environmental Report includes an analysis of those topics (parameters) and locations that are likely to be significantly affected by the LCSPRS. Table 1 below presents details on those parameters and locations that are considered to be of high relevance to the LCSPRS. The table also presents information on existing environmental problems which are relevant to the LCSPRS, particularly those relating to European protected sites (i.e. SACs and SPAs).

**Table 1.1: Environmental parameters and locations of high relevance to the LCSPRS**

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities
<b>Surface water</b>				
	Lough Derg	Important large body of water susceptible to eutrophication from point and diffuse discharges, and upstream impacts. Multiple demands for recreation, transportation, waste-water discharge, fishing. The Lake has been identified as requiring improvement in the RBD Draft Plan	High	Boating, sailing, water-sports, lakeside recreation, walking, trekking.  Impacts from habitat disturbance, waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light
	Shannon River	The Shannon River between Lough Derg and the Shannon Estuary bears some of the characteristics of Lough Derg. It is important in environmental terms not only in its own right but because it feeds the non-saline fraction of the Shannon Estuary	High	Boating, sailing, water-sports, lakeside recreation, walking, trekking  Impacts from habitat disturbance, waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light
	Shannon Estuary	Important large body of water susceptible to environmental degradation from point discharges, diffuse pollution and upstream impacts. Multiple demands for industry, aquaculture, recreation, transportation, waste-water discharge, fishing. Parts of the estuary have been identified as requiring improvement in the RBD Draft Plan and the whole of the area has been	High	Boating, sailing, water-sports, lakeside recreation, walking, trekking  Impacts from habitat disturbance, waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light



Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities
		designated as an SPA		
	Artificial water bodies	There are a number of these throughout the region	Medium	Some significant regional level water-based sports are possible on these water-bodies. In particular, canals might be developed for a variety of significant water-based activities such as boating  Impacts from waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light
<b>Ground Water</b>				
	Aquifer Clare	This is a major aquifer system that has significant implications for the Ennis Water Supply. It extends North of Ennis and into the Western RBD as well as being primarily in the Shannon RBD. It has been identified in both RBD Plans as requiring improvement.	Medium	There is no direct activity that would have relevance for the aquifer bodies. However, the development of facilities in areas without piped services would have implications for the aquifers and it is possible that some significant developments could be in this category
	Aquifer Limerick	This is a major aquifer in the vicinity of Limerick City. It lies within the Limerick County jurisdiction and is not a major source of water for the area. It has been identified in the RBD Plan as requiring improvement in status	Medium	There is no direct activity that would have relevance for the aquifer bodies. However, the development of facilities in areas without piped services would have implications for the aquifers and it is possible that some significant developments could be in this category
<b>Coastal Water</b>				
	Atlantic Coast	This is a major resource within the region and is, at least in the areas close to the coastline, subject to threat from	High	A variety of water-based activities might be accommodated in this area and would have some relevance. The

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities
		both point and diffuse discharges. These areas are also subject to a variety of demands including recreational, agricultural and commercial, though, within the region there is little industrial demand.		extent of the impact of the activities likely to take place would not be likely to be significant but the on-shore service bases associated with such activities might be of importance.
<b>Drinking Water</b>				
	Water quality and availability	Drinking water quality and availability is a critical resource in the region. While there is a variety of potential resources some of these are under pressure	Medium	Generally developments would not be likely to have significant implications for drinking water quality. However, the development of facilities in areas without piped services would have implications for the aquifers and it is possible that some significant developments could be in this category
<b>Bathing Water</b>				
	Quality of bathing water	Bathing water is distributed around the region at specific locations. This water is relatively fragile and can reach unacceptable standards without ceaseless vigilance	Medium	The development of facilities that make use of bathing water may emerge in the strategy
<b>Air</b>				
	Greenhouse gas emissions	The region should play its part in achieving national greenhouse gas emission targets. Air is distributed across the region and is a fragile resource in this context.	Medium	The principal impacts on greenhouse gases would arise from traffic and the use of heating, electricity and other energy-using facilities in sports and recreation developments
<b>Biodiversity (Habitats, Flora and</b>				

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities
<b>Fauna)</b>				
	The Burren	The Burren is a major internationally recognised habitat containing many internationally protected species. It is an area that has emerged in its current form from a variety of human interactions with nature. The area is subject to a variety of conflicting demands – conservation, agriculture, habitation, tourism and recreation and can be subject to the impacts of environmentally significant impacts arising at a distance from it	Medium	The principal sports and recreation activities likely to impact on the Burren are those arising from walking and other trails although other activities such as rock-climbing, potholing and caving might also be of relevance. In addition, the Burren extends into the maritime areas at certain points and may be impacted on by water-based activities at these locations.
	The Shannon system	As well as its importance from a water point of view, the Shannon system contains many important habitats vulnerable to changes in water quality	Medium	Water-based sports and recreation activities
	Other Natura 2000 sites	Other Natura 2000 sites, are important though they will also be addressed by processes at the City and County level	High	A wide variety of activities are possible in the vicinity of Natura 2000 sites
<b>Landscape</b>				
	Areas of high quality and vulnerable landscape	Landscape is region-wide and is fragile particularly in certain areas.	Medium in certain areas	A wide range of activities might take place in areas of high landscape quality. While many of these will be low impact the cumulative effect could be significant.
<b>Soil</b>				
	Brownfield	Significant brownfield	Medium	Significant sports and

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities
	development land	redevelopment land exists in Limerick City and Shannon Industrial Zone		recreation development is possible within the brownfield land particularly in Limerick City
	Other land zoned for development	Land with theoretical development potential is a widespread resource within the region	Medium	There is a significant number of sports and recreation related developments that might take place within the zoned land of the region
	Land at risk from flooding	This land is widespread throughout the region and has implications for strategic decisions	High	Water related developments; riverside and lakeside activities such as trails
<b>Human Health</b>				
	Drinking Water Quality	See above		
	Bathing Water Quality	See above		
	Road and transport safety	This is an issue that is spread throughout and across the region. It is a factor that emerges from a combination of traffic volumes and road quality as well as other less infrastructural questions	High	Roads and transport issues are not specifically part of sports and recreation with the exception of road racing and cycling. However, the traffic implications of larger scale sports and recreation developments can be significant.
<b>Population</b>				
	Pleasant living working and recreational environment	A pleasant living and working environment is a matter that is relevant across the region	High	All sporting and recreational developments of a significant nature

***List of environmental protection objectives, established at international, EU or national level, which are relevant to the plan and describe how those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account when preparing the plan***

The environmental protection objectives for this strategy are based on the key environmental issues listed in Table 1.1 which in turn relate to environmental protection policies and strategies established at EU or national level. These include the Water Framework Directive, the Habitats Directive, Planning and Development Legislation and the European Landscape Convention. Again it is emphasised that these issues must be considered in a high-level strategic context. The environmental protection objectives are 10 in total, and are as follows –

- W1. The maintenance and improvement of surface water quality;
- W2. The maintenance and improvement of ground water quality;
- W3. The maintenance and improvement of drinking water quality;
- W4. The maintenance and improvement of bathing water quality;
- F1. The appropriate management of flood risk, the reduction of the risk to development arising from flooding and the making of provision for flood plains;
- G1. The reduction in the generation of greenhouse gases through the process of management of development location, maximising the use of public transport and minimising traffic;
- E1. The protection of SACs and SPAs in the context of the potential impact of sporting and recreational developments;
- E2. The protection and improvement of other habitats;
- P1. The protection of sites of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel that do not lie within the region but that may be impacted on by activities within the region;
- L1. The maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality both within and outside the region;
- Q1. The enhancement of quality of life for the population in the context of better sporting and recreational facilities.

***Describe the likely significant effects on the environment (biodiversity, human health, fauna, etc.)***

The Environmental Report examines the likely significant effects on the 11 environmental protection objectives of 28 strategic policies contained in the strategy. Table 1.2 summarises the likely significant environmental effects of these objectives, by presenting totals for the number of objectives that:

- Have impacts which would likely be positive or consistent with the environmental protection objectives contingent upon certain mitigations being adopted or certain conditions being imposed in the Strategy. This is the “Positive or Negative if conditioned” column in the table. An objective was counted under this column if it had at least one contingent score under any of the environmental protection objectives;
- Have impacts which are likely to be positive or consistent with the environmental protection objectives. An objective was counted under this column if it has primarily positive impacts with the remaining scores neutral;
- Have impacts which are likely to be neutral or insignificant. An objective was counted under this column if it had neutral or mainly neutral with some positive impacts;
- Have impacts which are likely to be negative. A predominance of negatives was the criterion for counting under this column.

**Table 1.2: Summary of likely significant environmental effects of LCSPRS policies**

Strategic Policy	Positive or Neutral if conditioned	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Not evaluated	Total
1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,15,17,19,20,23,29,30, 32,34,35	X					19
9,11,12,13,14,16,18,21,22,24,25,26,27,2 8,31,33		X				16
None			X			0
None				X		0
None					X	0

It can be noted that none of the LCSPRS objectives assessed are considered likely to have a significant negative effect on the environment. It must be remembered that the process of undertaking the SEA ran in parallel to the development of the strategy. Therefore potential negative impacts of interim policies could be identified during the drafting process, and the objective conditioned to remove the potential negative impact.

A number of matters are of importance given the contingent nature of the policies that are contained in the strategy. The nature of the impacts that might arise from the implementation of these strategy policies could be significant. However, many of these impacts would be local in nature and would be addressed by other processes dealing with specific project proposals.

Some of the key impacts that would be likely to arise and that are strategic in nature relate to water quality, particularly in the context of the quality of the receiving waters for the treated wastewater of substantially increased populations using sports and recreation facilities; the impact on landscape from uncoordinated management of sport and recreation developments in sensitive areas; the impact on SACs and SPAs of sport and recreation developments and activities within them or in their vicinity; and the impact on flood risk management in the event of uncoordinated approaches to this issue. Within rural areas there is concern regarding the impact on groundwater of low quality individual treatment systems provided in association with sports and recreation facilities.

There are a number of potential cumulative impacts that are of concern. These, in particular, relate to the impact on water quality of receiving waters of effluent arising from population increase, enterprise/industrial development, commercial development and sports and recreation and development activities taken together. The same issue of cumulative impacts applies to groundwater in rural areas in particular. A third area of concern regarding cumulative impacts relates to the impacts of a number of similar developments within or in proximity to SACs and SPAs.

These developments could give rise to habitat damage and compromise the sites. These issues have been addressed in the conditions for policy acceptance and incorporated into the Strategy.

While specific projects or activities may give rise to short-term effects, such matters are best addressed through other processes at Development Plan or project level. The effects identified and addressed through this SEA process are longer-term effects that fall to be addressed by high-level, strategic processes such as the LCSPRS.

***Give an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives considered, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken (including any difficulties)***

Because of the high-level and strategic nature of the LCSPRS and the resultant basis on which the SEA was prepared, the consideration of alternatives relates to high level issues only.

In light of the nature and structure of the region, these are the options that might theoretically be pursued:

- 1. To concentrate all facilities in areas of highest population density but to allow for the provision of those facilities that require natural resources in the areas where the most appropriate of such resources exist*
- 2. To allow for a wide dispersal of all facilities including those that require a high population to sustain them and all others.*
- 3. To concentrate large-scale built facilities in areas of greatest population densities and to provide those facilities that require natural resources in the areas where the most appropriate of such resources exist but to also provide sub-regional multi-sport centres in smaller settlements which will serve smaller and more isolated hinterlands*

Each of these approaches has its costs and benefits. The more concentrated approach makes best use of infrastructure such as public transport and enables environmental impacts to be more easily managed; it also makes it more likely that those facilities that require substantial populations to be viable can be accessed to an appropriate size of population. However such an approach limits access to the more isolated populations and makes access to certain sports and recreation facilities more difficult. It must also be borne in mind, however, that while more rural populations may have more limited access to built and specialised facilities, they may well have better access to the natural amenities which are necessary for many sports and recreation activities.

The approach that allows a wide dispersal of facilities is positive in terms of accessibility but it is negative under the various headings of viability, cost, environmental impact, management of resources and so on.

The third option which seeks to balance the provision of major built facilities close to the major centres of population while providing a smaller but still significant sub-regional level of facilities at some key points throughout the region has many of the benefits and less of the dis-benefits of either of the other two approaches. This also has the advantage of reflecting the approach that has been taken in the Regional Planning Guidelines and would benefit from the provision of services and infrastructure that might arise from that document.

In adopting this option, it was considered that, provided the various policies included in the strategy are adopted and provided the conditions associated with various policies and projects are complied with, the environmental objectives can be achieved while providing a reasonable level of sports and recreation development in all parts of the region.

### **Proposed Monitoring Measures**

The monitoring measures proposed will address some key parameters under each of the Environmental Objectives identified. As far as possible the measures will use data that is gathered for other purposes. The monitoring measures relate to the quality of water in various contexts – surface water; underground water; drinking water and bathing water. They also include measures that assess progress in the management of flood risk; the protection of Natura 2000 sites which are sites key to environmental protection; and the Freshwater Pearl Mussel which is a species that is a very good indicator of water quality as well as being a rare and vulnerable species in its own right.

The maintenance of landscape quality will also be monitored as will the environmental impacts on human health and quality of life.

Generally the targets to be sought for are those that reflect the minimum standards for the indicator with an expected improvement beyond the minimum standard.



## **2 Introduction**

### **2.1 Background and SEA Methodology**

#### **2.2 Background**

Recreational facilities and amenities exist at regional, county and local levels and perform a number of inter-related functions. They are an integral part of the quality-of-life infrastructure and contribute significantly to the physical, mental and social health of the population; they contribute significantly to the attractiveness of an area as a location for inward investment and as a desirable destination for a mobile labour market; and they add to the tourism and visitor infrastructure particularly in the context of activity and adventure holidays.

Over recent years the significant improvements in the traffic and transport infrastructure of the Mid-West region has resulted in substantial increases in both intra and inter-regional accessibility. This means that facilities and other recreation resources that may not have been accessible in a meaningful way have now become more accessible to the population of the region and visitors alike.

Sports and recreational infrastructure has, historically, been largely provided by local communities in towns, rural areas and counties. With some notable exceptions (major sporting facilities for example), facilities and infrastructure has often been put in place with the intention of providing for a local population and its visitors alone. Often, little thought has been given to the potential of the facility to serve a wider population outside the community or the applicable administrative area as a whole. This has sometimes resulted in the wasteful duplication of facilities, difficulties being experienced by the owners and management of the facilities in ensuring their on-going viability and under-utilisation of expensive infrastructure.

It is to address these issues that it has been agreed between the relevant Local Authorities that a Sports and Recreation Strategy be developed.

It has also been agreed and is included in the brief for this piece of work that an SEA and a Habitats Directive screening are carried out as part of the process.

### **2.3 SEA Methodology**

#### **2.3.1 Introduction**

An SEA was required to be carried out as part of the process for the preparation of the Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy; therefore a screening exercise was not required and was not carried out. A Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) screening was also required and it was a requirement an extended HDA would also be carried out for those proposals or policies that would be liable to have significant implications for Natura 2000 sites. A copy of the HDA screening report is included.

This Environmental Report is a central element of the SEA process, and it has been prepared in the context of the following:

- S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European

Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011)

- DECLG Strategy on SEA and HDA for Regional Planning Guidelines
- EPA Guidance Documents available at <http://www.epa.ie/whatwedo/advice/sea/resources/>

While an SEA is required to be carried out and HDAs required to be carried out where necessary, the nature of the focus of the SEA is important. The LCSPRS has the following characteristics amongst others -

- The LCSPRS is a strategic report which is intended to guide further decision-making and policy adoption. This means that another phase of decision-making will take place which will address matters in more detail before any specific action occurs;
- The Strategy does not comprise a development management policy but it is intended that its key recommendations will be used to inform Regional and Local Authority Plans and/or strategies as well as the work of other key decision-makers and funders;
- The LCSPRS has no mandatory status with regard to a range of bodies that are key to its implementation such as transport providers, Governing Bodies of Sports, commercial recreation, developers, providers of tourism and other visitor facilities and so on. This means that the adoption of a realistic set of assumptions on which to base evaluations is difficult;

A number of principles have been adopted in this SEA as follows –

- The purpose of the SEA is to enable better-informed decisions to be made by enabling the structured assessment of environmental impacts of actions that might arise as a result of decisions taken.
- The environmental parameters considered in this SEA are those that are relevant to the impacts of the provision of sports and physical recreation facilities, amenities and activities within the area concerned.
- This SEA has been prepared in the context of the high-level strategic nature of the overall process.
- The LCSPRS and therefore the SEA do not seek to determine the ways in which other decision-makers address their own responsibilities; they focus on environmental the outcomes that are being sought.

### **2.3.2**

A variety of key stakeholders were consulted in the development of this strategy. These consultations were based on a stakeholder engagement proposal that was developed in consultation with the Steering Group. The main purposes of the consultations were as follows –

- To identify the current level of provision of key facilities by the stakeholders
- To identify extent of the current capacity of those facilities that is utilised
- To identify any plans for future development

- To identify the catchment area of the users of the facility (this was generally possible on an anecdotal basis only)
- To identify any additional developments in the area that were considered necessary by the stakeholders
- To identify the accessibility of facilities for those with a disability and others with particular needs
- To identify accessibility to facilities for the general community including those who may often not be in a position to gain access to certain facilities

The following are the stakeholders who were consulted during this process. Some of this consultation took place through the Steering Group and some through specific meetings with the relevant organisations.

- All Local Authorities in the area
- Mid-West Regional Authority
- Limerick City Regeneration Agency (now incorporated into Limerick City Council)
- Sporting bodies responsible for the provision of major facilities or the organisation of major events including GAA, FAI and IRFU
- Commercial providers of large-scale facilities such as horse and greyhound racing
- Local Sports Partnerships
- Coillte
- Local Development Companies
- Shannon Development
- Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
- Third-level Institutions in the area
- Bodies with an input into the provision of recreational facilities for those with a disability
- Certain community groups with particular approaches to the provision of facilities

Some of this consultation took place through the Steering Group, others took place in face-to-face meetings and some through telephone discussions.

Scoping was carried out with the five environmental authorities prescribed in the legislation; the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the Department of Arts, Tourism and Sports, The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. The Scoping

Document is attached at Appendix One. The responses to the Scoping Document were taken into account in preparing this report.

### 2.3.3 Technical difficulties encountered

One of the principal difficulties encountered during the preparation of the LCSPRS and of the SEA and HDA screening associated with it was that of identifying the appropriate status of the LCSPRS and therefore the nature and extent of the environmental evaluation that was required.

Because the LCSPRS is not a directly executable plan it was difficult to be precise about the impacts that might arise from particular policies since these policies are indicative rather than precise. In addition, while particular projects might be envisaged, the detail of the projects was too imprecise to enable specific impact assessments to be made.

Despite these difficulties, it was clear that certain environmental impacts could arise from the strategy unless this was prepared with certain principles in mind. The approach that was taken, therefore, was to identify these contingent impacts and to impose requirements in the LCSPRS requiring these impacts to be addressed as a condition of the adoption and implementation of the specific policies being proposed.

In addition to the above there was a lack of data for some issues and these are referred to throughout the report.

### 2.3.4 Checklist of Information to be included in this Environmental Report

Information to be included in the Environmental Report	Corresponding Section of this Report
A - Outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	Section 2
B - Description of relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the evolution of that environment without implementation of the plan	Section 3, 5
C - Description of the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	Section 4
D - Identification of any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan, particularly those relating to European protected sites	Sections 3 & 4
E - List environmental protection objectives, established at international, EU or national level, which are relevant to the plan and describe how those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account when preparing the plan	Section 6
F - Describe the likely significant effects on the environment	Section 7
G - Describe any measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse environmental effects of implementing the plan	Section 8
H - Give an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives considered, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken (including any difficulties)	Section 9
I - A description of proposed monitoring measures	Section 10
J - A non-technical summary of the above information	Section 1

**Table 2.1: Checklist of Information to be included in the Environmental Report**

## **2.4 Contents and main objectives of the LCSPRS**

The following are the main contents and objectives of the LCSPRS.

- The development of a set of goals and objectives for the provision of sporting and physical recreation facilities in the area
- The preparation of an analysis of the existing provision within the focus area and adjacent areas
- The implementation of an evaluation of the population necessary to support different types of facility
- An assessment of current and future population within the relevant areas
- The identification of any gaps or excess in the provision of larger-scale facilities
- The identification of the resources available and gaps in provision for those with disabilities who wish to participate in sports and active recreation
- The identification of any opportunities for the provision of facilities that address a new sporting or active recreation area
- The development of a set of policies that will guide Local Authorities in their land-use management and development functions and provide information to others who may wish to undertake the development of sports or physical recreation projects

## **2.5 Relationships with other plans**

There are many plans, programmes and legislative requirements that have a relevance to the Strategy. However, many of these are of more relevance at city and county level as the executive agencies responsible for their implementation are the Local Authorities. The LCSPRS is more relevant to those high-level strategic plans and programmes that reflect the same overarching and co-ordinating role as the LCSPRS. These included the following –

### **The National Spatial Strategy**

This strategy is a statement of Government policy regarding the achievement of balanced regional development through the development of larger population centres which can act as the drivers of growth in each region. This strategy has implications for the concentration of major facilities in areas that can provide a critical mass of population and provide a good basis for sustainable development. It must also be noted, however, that the NSS also envisages an important role for the rural areas of the country and that some of these functions are relevant to this strategy.

### **The National Development Plan**

While changing economic circumstances have impacted on its implementation it is still of significance in that identifies key infrastructural developments, some important mechanisms for development of all areas including the rural areas of the country.

### **The Water Framework Directive**

This is a key EU directive which has given rise to the work on the Draft River Basin District Plans. These plans when finally adopted will be critical to the management of the region's water resources. The LCSPRS has been developed in a way that seeks to ensure that nothing in it will be inconsistent with these plans. Indeed, the implications for water quality is a key focus of this Report.

### **The Habitats Directive**

This EU directive has given rise to the network of Natura 2000 list of sites. The LCSPRS specifically seeks to ensure that protection is offered to these sites through the LCSPRS policies and actions.

### **The Birds Directive**

This EU directive also gave rise to part of the network of Natura 2000 sites.

### **Transport 21**

Transport 21 sets out the transport investment strategy for the country. This strategy has been taken into account when the most appropriate locations for developments of different types of facility have been identified.

### **Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future**

This is the Government policy document regarding sustainable transport. This has been considered and referenced in the LCSPRS in the context of identifying the appropriate location of major facilities.

### **Strategy on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management**

This is a Government policy document that addresses the issue of flood risk. Because the management of flood risk is a matter that may have implications for facility development this was considered to be an appropriate document for consideration during the preparation of the LCSPRS.

### **City and County Development Plans**

The LCSPRS has taken into account the City and County Development Plans of the relevant authorities

### **Local Area Plans**

While this Strategy may be relevant to Local Area Plans, these have not been considered in detail as such plans are required to be consistent with the City and County Development Plans and it is a matter for the Planning Authorities to ensure this consistency.

### **Regional Planning Guidelines**

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Mid-West Region have also been taken into account in the preparation of the strategy.

## **Mid-West Area Strategic Plan**

The Mid-West Area Strategic Plan provides a land-use and transportation plan for the Mid-West Region and makes recommendations regarding the distribution of population and development throughout the region.

### **Strategies of providers of sport and recreation facilities**

These have implications for the development of sport and physical recreation, particularly amongst those parts of the community who are marginalised and poorly represented in sports and physical recreation.

### **Strategies and Action Plans of Local Sports Partnerships**

These are also relevant documents to the LCSPRS particularly with regard to the provision of access to sports and physical recreation facilities for the more marginalised and excluded sectors of society.

## **2.6 Other relevant policies and protocols**

The LCSPRS is relevant and related to a range of other policies and strategies. The most relevant are the following –

### **EU/International**

- The Sixth Environment Action Programme (EAP) of the European Community 2002-2012
- The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS)
- Kyoto Protocol
- Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)
- The Drinking Water Directive (DWD), (98/83/EC) 1998
- EC Freshwater Fish Directive, (78/659/EEC) 1978
- The new Groundwater Directive, (2006/118/EC) 2006
- EC Bathing Water Quality Directive, (2006/7/EC) 2006
- European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1992 (The Valletta Convention)
- World Heritage Convention
- EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020
- EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, (2009/147/EC) 1979
- EU Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna, (92/43/EEC), 1992

- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011
- The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North- East Atlantic (the OSPAR Convention)
- UN Convention of Biological Diversity, 1992
- SEA Directive - Assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the Environment, (2001/42/EC) 2001
- Climate Change Programme (ECCP II)
- European Landscape Convention 2000

### **National**

- Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland, 1997
- Making Ireland's Development Sustainable 2002
- Draft National Sports Facilities Strategies, 2012, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Irish Trails Strategy, Irish Sports Council, 2007
- National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2012
- National Renewable Energy Action Plan, (NREAP) 2010
- Actions for Biodiversity 2011 – 2016, Ireland's 2nd National Biodiversity Plan
- National Heritage Plan, (2002)
- National Climate Change Strategy (2007-2012)
- A National Landscape Strategy for Ireland – Strategy Issues Paper for Public Consultation, (Sept 2011)
- Draft Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines, (2000)

### **Regional**

- Lough Derg Sustainable Marina, Recreational and Tourism Study
- Shannon IRBD River Basin Management Plan, 2009-2015
- Western RBD Basin Management Plan, 2009-2015

### **Local**

- City and County Development Strategies
- Local Biodiversity Action Plans



- Groundwater Protection Schemes
- County and City Tourism Plans
- Limerick Regeneration Strategies and Master-plans

### 3 Baseline description of the current physical environment in the study area

The environmental baseline is described in line with legislative requirements, and includes data relating to the environmental receptors of biodiversity, population, human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape.

#### 3.1 Biodiversity

Biodiversity can be defined as the variability among living organisms including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems. Biodiversity can include diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. In Ireland there are a number of categories of protected areas for the conservation and protection of flora and fauna, as listed below (Westmeath County Council, 2007). The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is charged with responsibility for site designation and protection (NPWS, 2009).

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) protected under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), established for the conservation of habitats and species of flora and fauna;
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the protection of birds were established under the EU Birds Directive in 1979;
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are sites of national importance and are designated under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000;
- Other sites of importance for nature conservation.

Together SACs and SPAs form part of the EU Natura 2000 Network. More information on the Natura 2000 Network is available in the HDA report.

##### 3.1.1 SACs in the area

There are 49 SACs in the area as shown in Table 3.1.

No	SAC	County	No	SAC	County
1	Ballyallia Lake	Clare	26	Newhall and Edenvale Complex	Clare
2	Ballycullinan Lake	Clare	27	Old Domestic Building (Keevagh)	Clare
3	Ballycullinan, Old Domestic Building	Clare	28	Old Domestic Buildings, Rylane	Clare
4	Ballyogan Lough	Clare	29	Old Farm Buildings, Ballymacrogan	Clare
5	Ballyteige (Clare)	Clare	30	Pollagoona Bog	Clare
6	Ballyvaughan Turlough	Clare	31	Pouladatig Cave	Clare
7	Black Head - Poulsallagh Complex	Clare	32	Poulnagordon Cave (Quin)	Clare
8	Carrowmore Dunes	Clare	33	Ratty River Cave	Clare
9	Carrowmore Point To Spanish Point and Islands	Clare	34	Slieve Bernagh Bog	Clare
10	Danes Hole, Poulnalecka	Clare	35	Termon Lough	Clare
11	Dromore Woods and Loughs	Clare	36	Toonagh Estate	Clare
12	East Burren Complex	Clare	37	Tullaheer Lough and Bog	Clare
13	Galway Bay Complex	Clare	38	Curraghchase Woods	Limerick

No	SAC	County	No	SAC	County
14	Glendree Bog	Clare	39	Barrigone	Limerick
15	Glenomra Wood	Clare	40	Tory Hill	Limerick
16	Inagh River Estuary	Clare	41	Galtee Mountains	Limerick
17	Kilkee Reefs	Clare	42	Clare Glen	Limerick
18	Kilkishen House	Clare	43	Glen Bog	Limerick
19	Knockanira House	Clare	44	Glenstal Wood	Limerick
20	Lough Gash Turlough	Clare	45	Ballyhoura Mountains	Limerick
21	Loughatorick South Bog	Clare	46	Carrigeenamronety Hill	Limerick
22	Lower River Shannon	Clare	47	Lower River Shannon	Limerick
23	Moneen Mountain	Clare	48	Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford)	Limerick
24	Moyree River System	Clare	49	Askeaton Fen Complex	Limerick
25	Newgrove House	Clare			

**Table 3.1: List of SACs in the area**

The SAC at Clare Glens is in both North Tipperary and Co. Limerick, while the lower River Shannon is present in counties Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary. There are also sites of trans-regional importance, such as the Galtee Mountains (shared with the SWRA), and the East Burren Complex and Galway Bay complex (shared with the WRA).

### 3.1.2 SPAs in the area

Ireland's location at the end of major flyways of waterfowl migrating south for the winter from North America, Greenland, Iceland and the Arctic is significant in regard to the provision for, and the protection of, bird habitats. In spring and summer, Ireland provides important breeding grounds for bird species from Europe and Africa, and Ireland is also home to resident species which are scarce or rare in other parts of Europe (NPWS, 2009). The SPAs in the area are listed in Table 3.2. It should be noted, however, that many SPAs overlap with SACs.

SPA	County	SPA	County
1 Cliffs of Moher	Clare	7 Loop Head	Clare
2 Inner Galway Bay	Clare	8 Slieve Aughty Mountains	Clare
3 Ballyallia Lake Wildfowl Sanctuary	Clare	9 Mid-Clare Coast	Clare
4 Lough Derg	Clare	10 River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries	Limerick
5 River Shannon & River Fergus Estuaries	Clare	11 Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle	Limerick
6 Illaunonearaun	Clare	12 Slieve Felim to Silvermines	Limerick

**Table 3.2: List of SPAs in the area**

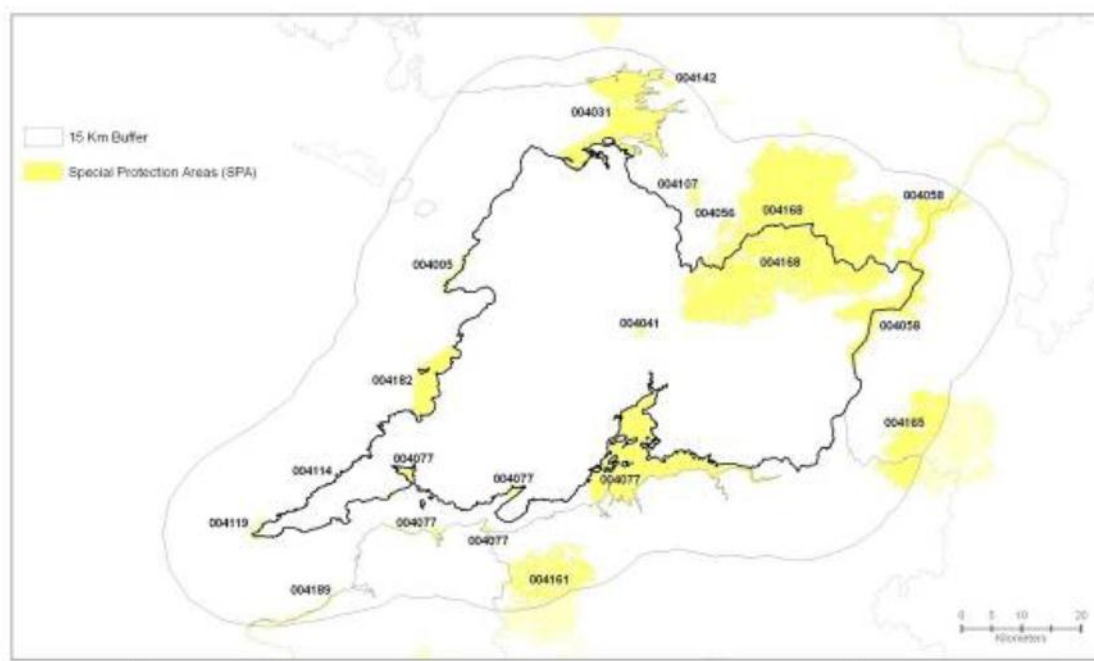
### 3.1.3 NHAs in the area

These sites of national importance are designated under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000), and this designation is habitat-based insofar as it protects the habitats present, or the species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection (NPWS, 2009). NHAs in the region are listed in Table 3.3.

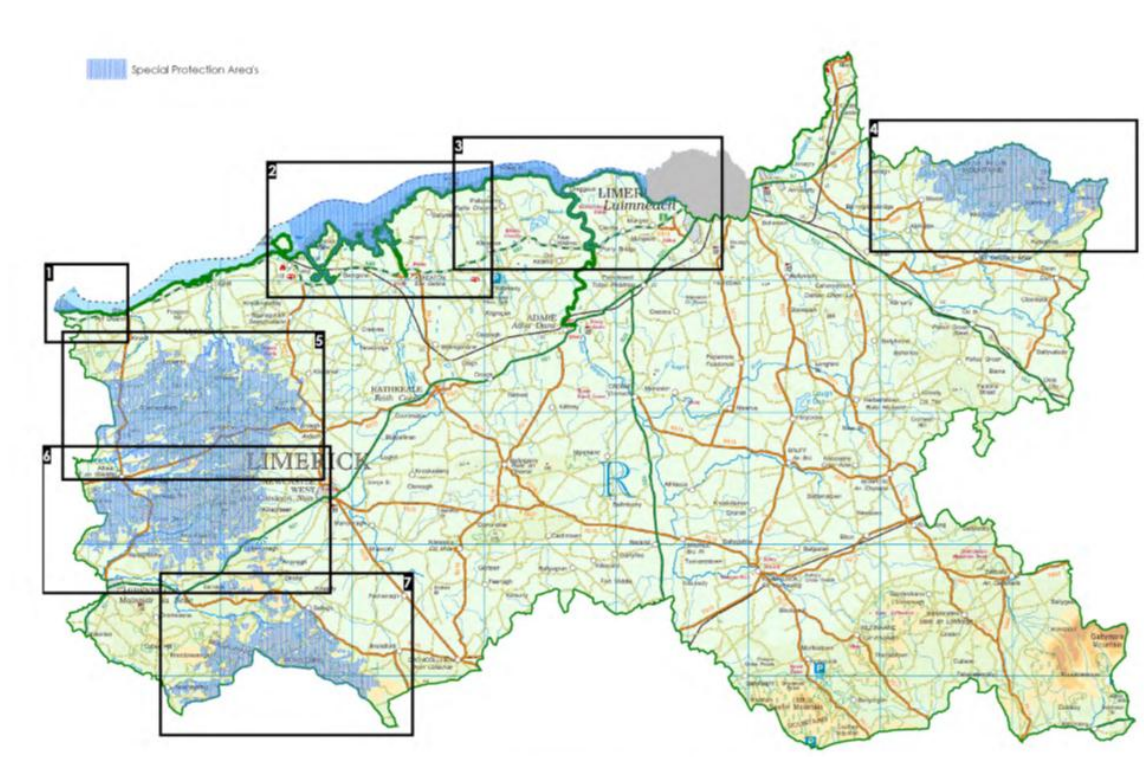
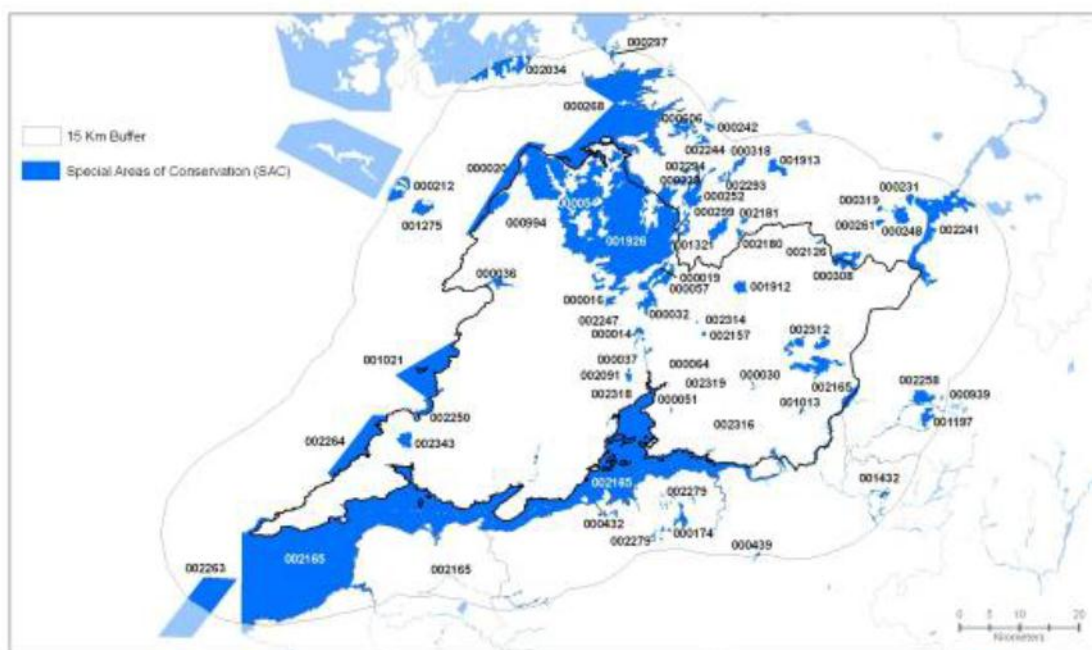
No	NHA	County	No	NHA	County
1	Doon Lough	Clare	11	Gortacullin Bog	Clare
2	Ayle Lower Bog	Clare	12	Woodcock Hill Bog	Clare
3	Loughanilloon Bog	Clare	13	Lough Acrow Bogs	Clare
4	Slieve Aughty Bog	Clare	14	Oysterman's Marsh	Clare
5	Cloonloun More Bog	Clare	15	Maghera Mountain Bogs	Clare
6	Lough Naminna Bog	Clare	16	Grageen Fen And Bog	Limerick
7	Lough Atorick District Bogs	Clare	17	Moyreen Bog	Limerick
8	Derryoover Bog	Clare	18	Carrigkerry Bogs	Limerick
9	Slievecallan Mountain Bog	Clare	19	Lough Gay Bog	Limerick
10	Cragnashingaun Bogs	Clare	20		

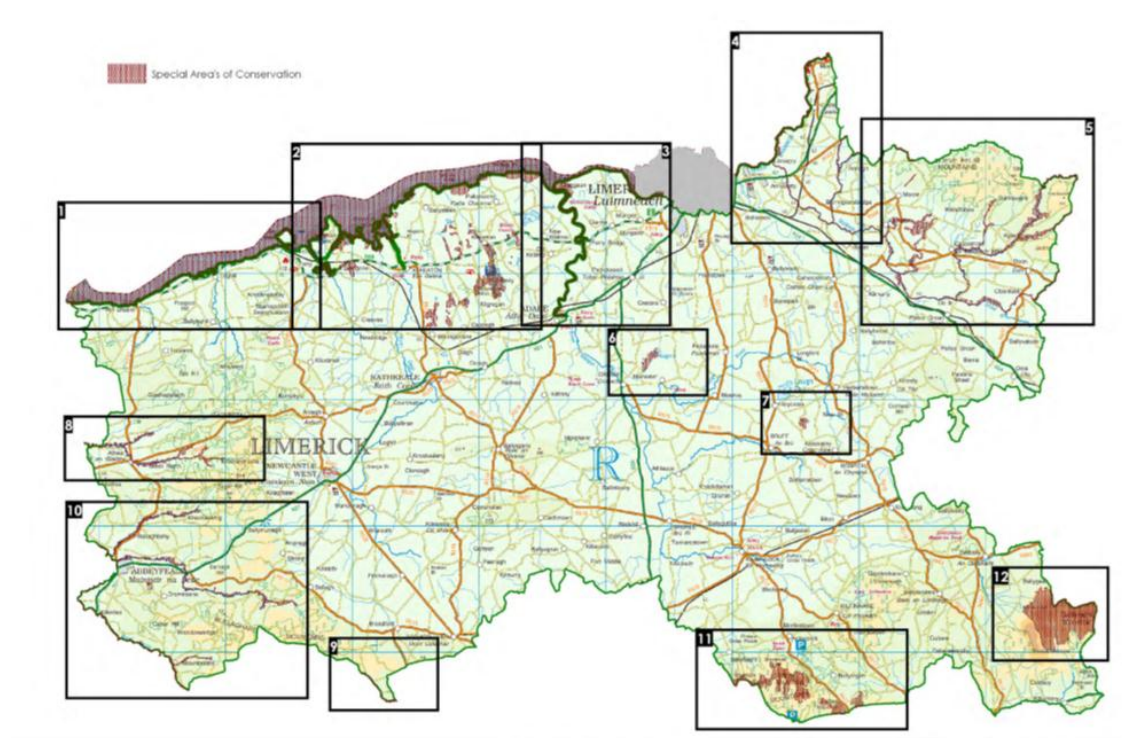
**Table 3.3: List of NHAs in the area**

It will be noted from the following maps, taken from the Clare and Limerick Development Plans, that protected areas are widely distributed throughout the region. Some of these are at more remote locations but some are in close proximity to the areas of greatest development pressure. In particular, water bodies that act as the receiving waters for final effluents from major population centres and that also act as sources of water supply are particularly noticeable. Many of these resources are also potential locations for the development of activities and facilities associated with sports and physical recreation.



**Figure 3.1: SPAs Clare**





**Figure 3.4: SACs Limerick**

### 3.1.4 Other Important Sites in the Area

In addition to SACs, SPAs and NHAs the area contains other important sites and features of importance for nature conservation and form part of Ireland's contribution to the Natura 2000 network within the EU. These include the following –

- Burren National Park, Nature Reserves and Wildfowl Sanctuaries
- Freshwater Pearl Mussel or Margaritifera sensitive areas – boundaries available from [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie), together with an overview of the implications
- Annex IV (Habitats Directive) species of flora and fauna, and their breeding sites and resting places which are strictly protected wherever they occur, whether inside or outside nature conservation sites
- Other species of flora and fauna and their key habitats which are protected under the Wildlife Acts, 1976-2000, wherever they occur
- 'Protected species and natural habitats' as defined in the Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC) and European Communities (Environmental Liability) Regulations, 2008, including:
  - Birds Directive – Annex I species and other regularly occurring migratory species, and their habitats (wherever they occur)
  - Habitats Directive – Annex I habitats, Annex II species and their habitats, and Annex IV species and their breeding sites and resting places (wherever they occur)
  - Stepping stones and ecological corridors covered by Article 10 of the Habitats Directive

- Other habitats of ecological value in a national or local context, e.g. water bodies, wetlands and natural/semi-natural woodlands

For the purposes of this strategy and the conditions outlined at Part 8 below, these areas shall be designated as the areas that constitute the Natural Environment and shall be treated as such.

The following is the list of pNHAs in the area

No	Site Name	Location	No	Site Name	Location
1	Ballycar Lough	Clare	26	Derryvinnaun Wood	Clare
2	Cahermurphy Wood	Clare	27	Caherkinallia Wood	Clare
3	Cloonlara House	Clare	28	St. Senan's Lough	Clare
4	Durra Castle	Clare	29	Lough Cleggan	Clare
5	Fort Fergus (Ballynacally)	Clare	30	Cloonamirran Wood	Clare
6	Inchicronan Lough	Clare	31	Lough Graney Woods	Clare
7	Lough Goller	Clare	32	Scattery Island	Clare
8	Derrygeeha Lough	Clare	33	Knockalisheen Marsh	Clare
9	Newpark House (Ennis)	Clare	34	Rosroe Lough	Clare
10	Paradise House (Ballynacally)	Clare	35	Adare Woodlands	Limerick
11	Poulnasherry Bay	Clare	36	Ardagh Church,	Limerick
12	Turloughnagullaun	Clare	37	Herbertstown Fen	Limerick
13	Farrihy Lough	Clare	38	Lough Gur	Limerick
14	Castle Lake	Clare	39	Lough More Common Turlough	Limerick
15	Cahiracon Wood	Clare	40	Dromore and Bleach	Limerick
16	Cahiracalla Wood	Clare	41	Glenastar Wood	Limerick
17	Cloonsnaghta Lough	Clare	42	Heathfield Wood	Limerick
18	Derryhumma Wood	Clare	43	Dromsallagh Bog	Limerick
19	Derrymore Wood	Clare	44	Skoolhill	Limerick
20	Dromoland Lough	Clare	45	Glencurrane River Valley	Limerick
21	Fin Lough (Clare)	Clare	46	Ballynacourty Wood	Limerick
22	Garrannon Wood	Clare	47	Mountrussell Wood	Limerick
23	Gortglass Lough	Clare	48	Ballyroe Hill and	Limerick
24	Lough Cullaunyeeda	Clare	49	Ballintlea Wood	Limerick
25	Lough O'Grady	Clare			

**Table 3.4: List of pNHAs in the area**



## 3.2 Population

Province County or City	2011											
	Population 2006 (Number)			Population 2011 (Number)			Actual change in population 2006-2011 (Number)			Percentage change in population 2006-2011 (%)		
	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female
Clare	110,950	56,048	54,902	116,885	58,134	58,751	5,935	2,086	3,849	5.3	3.7	7.0
Limerick City	59,790	29,309	30,481	56,779	27,771	29,008	-3,011	-1,538	-1,473	-5.0	-5.2	-4.8
Limerick County	124,265	63,371	60,894	134,527	67,743	66,784	10,262	4,372	5,890	8.3	6.9	9.7
Total	295,005	148,728	146,277	308,191	153,648	154,543	13,186	4,920	8,266	4.5	3.3	5.7

**Table 3.5: Population Change**

According to the CSO Census, from which Table 3.4 is derived, population grew in the Limerick and Clare by about 13,000 persons between 2006 and 2011 to reach a total of 308,191 in 2011. This represented a growth rate of 4.5% which was somewhat lower than the national average.

Two important aspects of the structure of this growth relate to the distribution and gender breakdown of the growth. The growth has not been evenly distributed with Limerick County experiencing significantly the highest growth rate. This is, at least in part, explained by the level of growth in the areas that form the environs of Limerick City. County Clare also experienced a healthy growth rate of over 5%. However, Limerick City experienced a decline in population of 5%.

A second feature of the pattern of growth is that there was a significantly greater growth in the number of females than the number of males. The data on this pattern is not yet clear but it is likely to represent a higher net outmigration of males than females.

## 3.3 Human Health

Human health is a relevant issue for the sports and physical recreation area. The standardised death rate per thousand population (that is the death rate which takes account of age and sex characteristics), was above the national average in Limerick City (7.78) and County (6.94), while that in County Clare (6.28) was somewhat less than the national average (6.36) as reported in the CSO publication on Vital Statistics in 2009.

Area	Neoplasms	Diseases of the circulatory system	Diseases of the respiratory system	External causes of injury and poisoning
State	1.91	2.13	0.81	0.39
Clare	1.73	2.28	0.86	0.35
Limerick City	2.12	2.63	1.03	0.67
Limerick County	1.99	2.33	0.99	0.40

**Table 3.6: Causes of Mortality**

It will also be noted that while all causes of death in Limerick City are higher than the national average, those for diseases of the circulatory system and of the respiratory system, both associated



with lack of physical exercise, are particularly high. These mortality indicators may also be associated, however, with the higher than average black smoke levels in the Limerick City area. (See below)

Human health also dealt with in this report through consideration of other environmental issues such as air and water.

### **3.4 Soil**

Soil, defined as the top layer of the earth's crust, is a non-renewable resource, and may be described as a biologically active, complex mixture of weathered minerals (sand, silt and clay), organic matter, organisms, air and water (EPA, 2002).

There is no specific EU legislation on soil protection; rather it has been addressed indirectly or within sectoral policies such as water, waste, industrial pollution prevention and agriculture. However, developments in soil protection policies in recent years aim to maintain the biological diversity of soil. The most notable developments in soil protection at a European level are the Thematic Strategy on Soil Protection (COM (2006)231), and the proposed Soil Framework Directive (COM (2006)232) (European Commission, 2009). One objective of the Strategy document was to increase knowledge in the area of soil protection throughout Member States with the aim of improving the foundation in which soil-related policies would be based (COEC, 2006, Strategy). In Ireland soil data were available from sources such as the National Soil Database (2007) and Teagasc, however the EPA conclude that there is much research required to address a paucity of national soil data (EPA, 2008).

#### **3.4.1 Soil Quality**

No data were specifically available regarding soil quality for the Mid-West region as a geographic unit. However, soil in Ireland is generally considered to be of good quality owing to Ireland's maritime climate, sustainable land management practices and a lack of historic industrialisation (EPA, 2008).

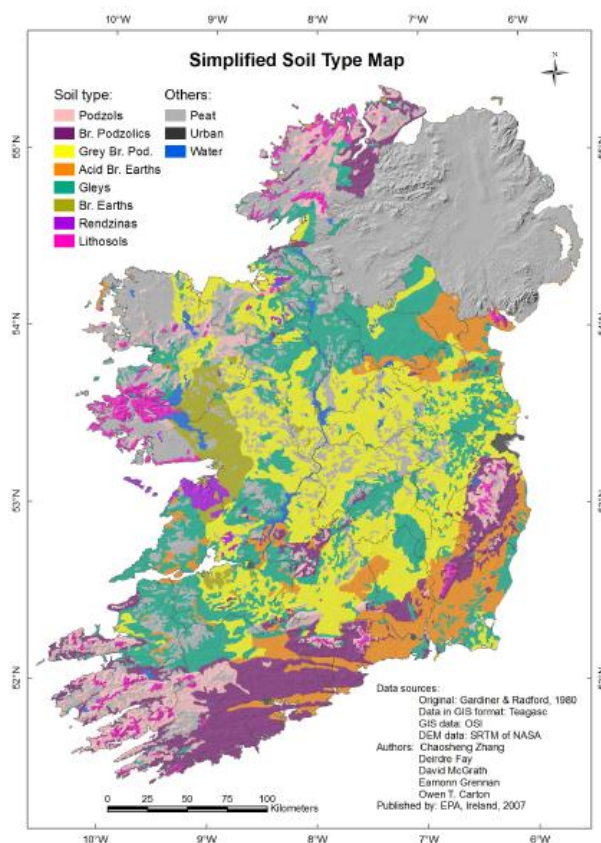
#### **3.4.2 Soil Type**

Figure 3. presents a soil map of Ireland indicating that the main soil types in the MW region are a mixture of grey brown podzolics, gleys and peat. Underlying and associated geology is shown in Figure 3..

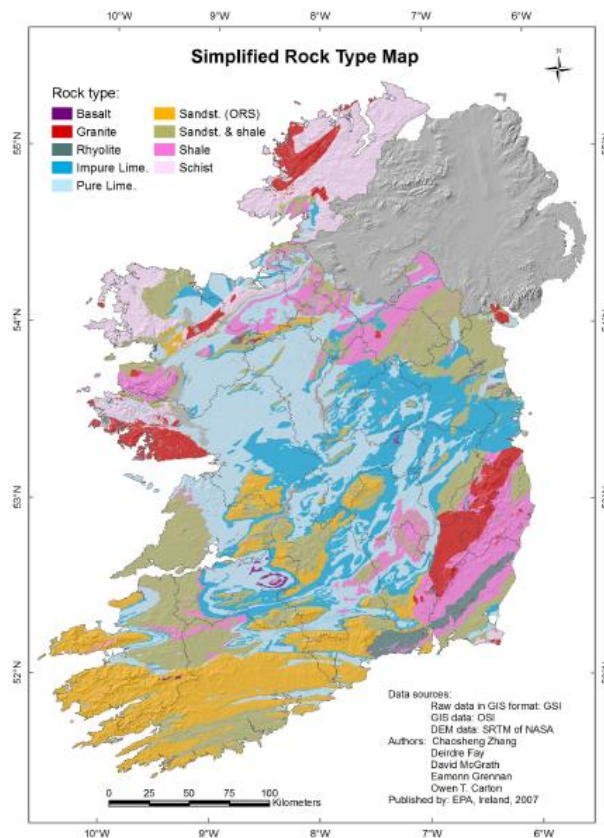
Grey Brown Podzolics are typically formed from a calcareous parent material and are associated with the distribution of Carboniferous limestone in Ireland. They are considered to be good, all purpose soils.

Gleys are soils in which have developed under the influence of permanent or intermittent water-logging. Gleys are extensive throughout Ireland and are commonly associated with drumlins, and with parent materials such as Carboniferous sandstones and shales. Most gleys have poor physical conditions making them unsuitable for cultivation or for intensive grassland production.

Peats are characterised by a high content of organic matter (> 30%), and both blanket and basin peat occur in Ireland. In the west of Ireland and in the upper parts of mountain ranges climatic conditions such as high rainfall and humidity led to the development of blanket peat (EPA, 2007).



**Figure 3.5: Simplified Soil Type Map (EPA, 2007)**



**Figure 3.6: Simplified rock type map (EPA, 2007)**

### **3.4.3 Brownfield sites and contaminated land**

The DEHLG SEA Guidelines suggest the reuse of brownfield lands, where possible, as a soil environmental protection objective (Government of Ireland, 2004). A brownfield site is industrial or commercial land that is abandoned and is often situated in town or city centre locations. However, some brownfield sites may be contaminated as a result of activities undertaken at the site resulting in the presence of certain substances that can pose a risk to wildlife, environmental quality or human health (EPA, 2006). It is estimated that there are between 1,980 and 2,300 contaminated commercial sites in Ireland (EPA, 2008).

There were no data available as to the area of brownfield land in the MW region, and nor was there an inventory of contaminated sites in the region.

### **3.4.4 Quarrying and mining**

Quarrying and mining activities result in the direct loss of soil and soil degradation during their development and operation. Mining activities also have the potential to cause soil contamination through the deposition of heavy-metal wastes. Very little information is currently available in Ireland on the quantity of soil lost to these operations (EPA, 2002). However data were available regarding the number of such facilities in the MW region. The latest inventory of active quarries / mines and pits in the Mid West regions dates from 2001, and recorded 37 facilities in the region (available from the online GSI Datasets Public Viewer) .

### **3.4.5 Landfill**

Municipal waste disposal to landfill may also result in soil contamination by heavy metals or organic micropollutants (EPA, 2002). There are 2 landfills in the area, both of which are licensed to operate by the EPA:

- Co. Clare: Central Waste Management Facility, Ballyduff Beg;
- Co. Limerick: Gortadroma Landfill Site;
- Historical Landfill sites.

## **3.5 Water**

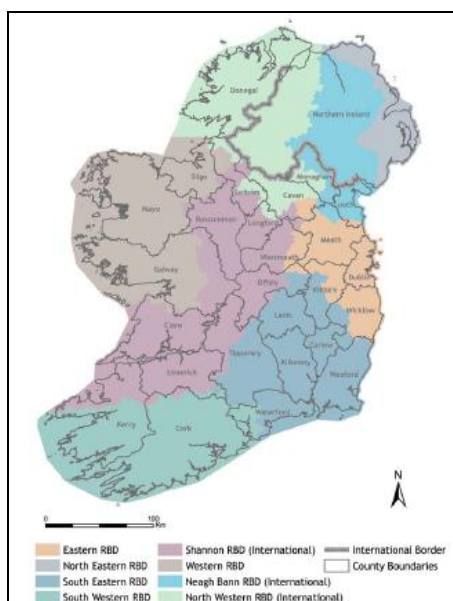
Details are provided on the status of surface and ground water in the region.

### **3.6 Surface Water**

The introduction of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in 2000 established a new integrated approach to the protection and improvement of Irish aquatic ecosystems and water resources (EPA, 2008). The unit of management for the WFD is the river basin district (RBD), and of primary relevance to the area is the Shannon RBD with a very small area of the Western RBD being relevant to North Clare.

The main environmental protection objective of the WFD is to ensure all waters achieve “good status” by 2015, and to prevent deterioration in the existing status of waters (EPA, 2008). A milestone in the implementation of the Directive was the completion of draft river basin management plans by 2008. These plans represent the most up to date and extensive source of

data on water quality in Ireland, and will be used to inform the baseline description of surface water for this environmental report (see SRBD, 2008).



**Figure 3.7: River Basin Districts in Ireland (EPA, 2008, p67)**

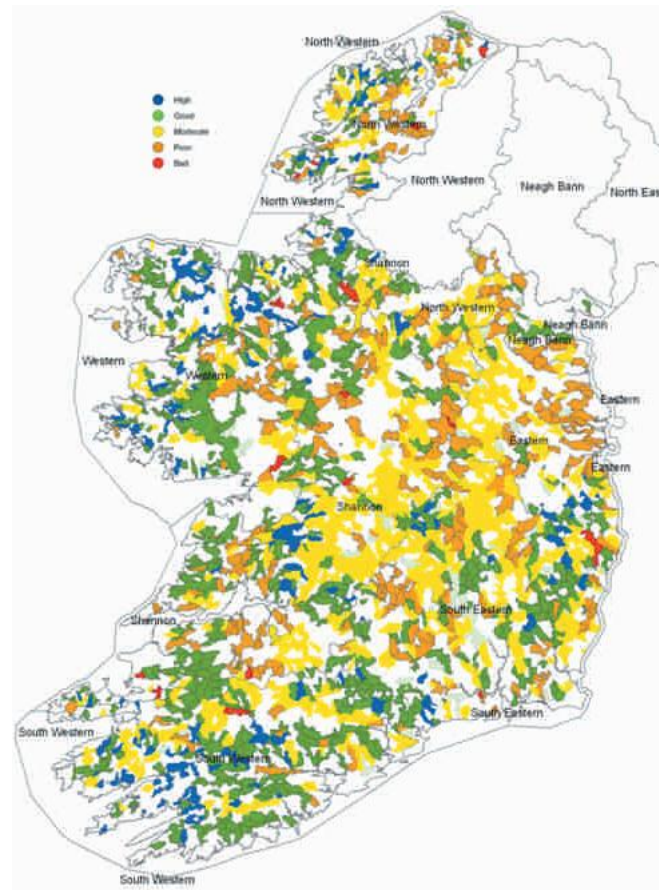
### 3.6.1 Shannon River Basin District

The Shannon District is the largest in Ireland, greater than 18,000 km<sup>2</sup> in area, stretching from the river source in the Cuilcagh Mountains in counties Cavan and Fermanagh to the Dingle peninsula in north Kerry. Large areas of counties Limerick and Clare are included in the Shannon region, including all of Limerick City and some coastal parts of Clare which drain to the sea, as shown in Figure 3. (SRBD, 2008).

### 3.6.2 River quality in the region

The River Shannon is the largest in Ireland, flowing for 260 km before entering the Shannon Estuary at Limerick City. Seasonal flooding in winter along the flood plains on either side of the river, the “callows”, results in protected sites of international biodiversity importance, notable for the plants and animals found there (see Section 0). The main tributaries of the Lower Shannon are the Rivers Fergus, Maigue, Deel and Mulkear (SRBD, 2008). In general, the quality of the rivers in the SRBD may be considered to be of satisfactory status, with 63% of rivers with high or good ecological status, while 37% of rivers are less than good (moderate, poor or bad) (SRBD, 2008).

In the EPA 2010 report, however, only 7% of the rivers were considered to be of High status, 37% to be Good and 32% to be Moderate. These conditions are not distributed equally throughout the RBD, however, and as the map above shows, more of the rivers in the Clare and Limerick areas can be considered to have the higher quality designations.



The EPA Report of 2010 states the following at page 113 –

Ecological status is assessed on a 'one-out-all-out' basis. Overall ecological status of a water body is based on the biological quality element or physico-chemical standard with the lowest status. For example, if all the elements in a particular water body are at or near reference conditions then the status of the water body is considered to be high. However, if any single biological quality element or chemical parameter is of lesser status then classification is based on that element.

### 3.6.3 Lake quality in the region

The Shannon District is host to more than 1,600 lakes but less than 50 of them are greater than 1 km<sup>2</sup> in area. The largest lakes are Lough Derg (120 km<sup>2</sup>), Lough Ree (100 km<sup>2</sup>) and Lough Allen (30 km<sup>2</sup>) and these are all on the River Shannon (SRBD, 2008). The quality of lakes in the region is less than satisfactory with only 15% of lakes exhibiting High or Good ecological status, while 85% are less than Good (SRBD, 2008). However, the EPA report of 2010 indicated that in Clare and Limerick only Ballybeg and Dromore Lake were of poor biological status in 2009. In addition, that report states 45% of lakes in the RBD are of High or Good status with the remaining 55% being of Moderate status. In the same report, 43% of lakes were assigned High or Good physico-chemical status while the other 57% were assigned Moderate status.

Mountshannon and Ballycuggeran are freshwater bathing sites on Lough Derg and both are of Blue Flag status (see Section 3.6.5). The bathing water quality of Ballyallia Lake was found to consistently fail bathing water requirements between 2007 and 2009. (EPA, 2010).

### 3.6.4 Estuarine water quality in the region

The Shannon estuary, with an area of approximately 150 km<sup>2</sup>, is the largest estuary in Ireland. Rivers Fergus, Deel and Maigue rivers flow into the Shannon Estuary, while the main ports and harbours are located at Limerick and Foynes (SRBD, 2008, p4). 45% of estuaries are satisfactory, with high or good ecological status and 55% of estuaries are less than good (SRBD, 2008).

From 2002 to 2006 the EPA carried out a trophic status assessment of 69 Irish estuaries and nearshore coastal waters, the results of which indicated the Deel Estuary and the Fergus Estuary to be of intermediate quality (EPA, 2008).

### 3.6.5 Marine water quality in the region

The EU Directive concerning the quality of bathing waters (CEC, 1976) instructs local authorities to undertake annual monitoring of designated bathing areas, ensuring maintenance, and where possible improvement, of bathing water quality. This will be replaced in 2014 by the Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008 (SI No. 79 of 2008). In the region all marine-based and freshwater bathing areas were of good quality with regard to Intestinal enterococci (I.E) and Escherichia coli (E. Coli), in 2011 with the exception of Milltown Malbay, as shown in Table 3.5. It is noted that the Milltown Malbay failure related to e-coli only and that it was not possible to identify a cause.

County	Beach	Quality	E.C. min	E.C. Guide	I.E.
Clare	Cappagh Pier, Kilrush	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Kilkee	✓	✓	✓	✓
	White Strand, Doonbeg	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Spanish Point	✓	✓	✓	✓
	White Strand, Milltown Malbay	Poor	X	X	✓
	Lahinch	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Fanore	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Ballyallia	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Table 3.7: Bathing water quality in the MW Region (EPA, 2010)**

The separate, but complementary Blue Flag scheme, administered by An Taisce, also seeks high standards of water quality, environmental management of the beach area, provision of safety services and facilities and environmental education (EPA, 2008). In the study area Co. Clare has 6 Blue Flag beaches, at Doonbeg, Cappagh, Kilkee, White Strand-Milltown Malbay, Lahinch, and Fanore and two freshwater ones at Mountshannon and Ballycuggeran. (An Taisce, 2010). Another freshwater bathing location at Ballyallia Lake near Ennis was stated by the EPA to have consistently failed standards between 2007 and 2009. (EPA, 2010)

### **3.7 Groundwater**

The majority of the area falls within the Shannon International River Basin District (RBD). Part of north Clare is within the Western River Basin District. Draft River Basin Management Plans have been produced for the two RBDs that together cover the area. The Environmental Reports for these Plans include data on the groundwater status of the region.

A significant proportion of the region has groundwater in the “extreme” and “high” vulnerability rating classes as recorded in the ground water vulnerability data and classifications of the GSI (<http://spatial.dcenr.gov.ie/imf/imf.jsp?site=Groundwater>). The vulnerability rating determines the acceptability and characteristics of on-site wastewater treatment systems. For areas unclassified as yet, it is appropriate to assume “high” vulnerability in assessing the suitability of on-site wastewater treatment systems.

The quantitative status of groundwater is good throughout the region, and the chemical status is generally good, with the exception of areas of poor status in the west of Co. Limerick and in mid-Clare.

The EPA Report of 2010 on water quality, classified 75% of the Shannon RBD as being of Good status and 25% of Poor status.

### **3.8 Drinking Water Quality and Network Losses**

Generally the quality of drinking water in the area was very high though there are some issues that remain to be resolved. These issues indicate the vigilance needed to ensure that drinking water quality remains at a high level. The following is a summary of the situation in the three areas in 2010 as reported by the EPA.

#### *Clare*

Clare County Council is responsible for the operation of 23 Public Water Supplies (PWS) serving a population of 80,313. Microbiological compliance in Clare PWSs was 100% in both 2009 and 2010. Chemical compliance levels have increased from 99.0% in 2009 to 99.1% in 2010.

No non-compliances of the microbiological parametric values occurred during 2010 and while there were 8 non-compliances with chemical parametric values, most of these should have been resolved through the provision of a new PWS source for Flagmount.

A number of boil notices were issued in 2010 but these general affected small numbers only.

No PWS was added to the Remedial Action list in 2010 and there should now be no supply on that list.

#### *Limerick City*

Limerick City Council is responsible for the operation of 1 Public Water Supply (PWS) serving a population of 55,000. Microbiological compliance levels in the Limerick City PWS were 100% in both 2009 and 2010 whilst chemical compliance levels have increased from 99.7% in 2009 to 99.8% in 2010.



No non-compliances of the microbiological parametric values occurred during 2010 and while there were a small number of non-compliances with chemical parametric values these did not cause a threat to public health.

No boil notices were issued in 2010.

No PWS was added to the Remedial Action list in 2010 and there should now be no supply on that list.

### *Limerick County*

Limerick County Council is responsible for the operation of 51 Public Water Supplies (PWS) serving a population of 67,946. Microbiological compliance has increased in PWSs in Limerick from 99.3% in 2009 to 100% in 2010. Chemical compliance levels have increased from 99.7% in 2009 to 100% in 2010.

No non-compliance of the microbiological parametric values occurred during 2010 while there was one exceedence of chemical parametric values.

Five new boil water notices were issued during 2010 and at the end of 2010, four boil water notices remained in place.

6 PWS were on the Remedial Action List at the end of 2010, there were no additions to the list and 9 schemes were removed.

Data gathered during the production of the Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines indicates drinking water losses from the distribution networks in the region of typically 40 to 50% (with a lowest loss of 15-25%, and a high of 75%). Addressing the issue of loss from the water network is a priority issue in the context of the accommodation of the population growth that has been identified for the region and the pressure on water supplies that such growth will bring.

## **3.9 Air Quality**

In September 2009, the EPA published the report *“Air Quality in Ireland 2008: Key Indicators of Ambient Air Quality”* (O’Leary, 2009). The data in this section were taken from that report.

### *3.9.1 Sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>)*

Concentrations nationally were “very low” in 2008, with no exceedances of the limit values. The EPA also report data for specific locations, including the Shannon Estuary. The annual mean for sulphur dioxide in the Shannon Estuary was 5 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, in the context of a limit value for the protection of ecosystems of 20 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. The hourly limit value for the protection of human health is no more than 24 hours greater than 350 µg/m<sup>3</sup> – no hourly values greater than 350 µg/m<sup>3</sup> were recorded in the Shannon Estuary. There were also no daily values greater than 125 µg/m<sup>3</sup> recorded there.

### *3.9.2 Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>)*

Concentrations nationally in 2008 were within limit values. Monitoring results for Limerick (Park Road) gave an annual mean of 17 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, compared to an annual mean limit value of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for the protection of human health. Three [hourly limit] values at Park Road in 2008 were greater than 100 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Under the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2002, 100 µg/m<sup>3</sup> is the Lower Assessment



Threshold for the protection of human health and is not to be exceeded more than 18 times in any calendar year.

### 3.9.3 Particulate matter ( $PM_{10}$ )

Results nationally complied with the relevant standard.

### 3.9.4 Black smoke

“Black smoke” is a subset of particulate matter ( $PM_{10}$ ). A ban on bituminous coal came into force in Limerick in 1998. This has led to a substantial reduction in black smoke concentrations in Limerick, but they are still higher than in Dublin or Cork (at about  $50 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  compared to a 98-percentile limit value of  $250 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ).

### 3.9.5 Lead (Pb)

Concentrations measured at all stations nationally were below the limit value.

### 3.9.6 Benzene ( $C_6H_6$ )

Concentrations measured at the two locations nationally were within the limit value. No data is reported for 2008 for the Mid-West region.

### 3.9.7 Carbon monoxide (CO)

Concentrations measured at all locations nationally were well within the limit value. No data is reported for 2008 for the Mid-West region.

### 3.9.8 Ground-level ozone ( $O_3$ )

The hourly information threshold was not exceeded anywhere nationally. There were five exceedances of the 8-hour mean limit of  $120 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , one of these at the Park Road in Limerick ( $130 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ). No more than 25 such days are permitted.

## 3.10 Climate

The Mid-West Energy Balance & Climate Change Strategy (2008) presents data for energy-related  $\text{CO}_2$  emissions in the region. Key data from the Strategy are presented in the following table -

Millions of tonnes of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions				
Year	Clare	Limerick County	Limerick City	Total
1990	0.8	1.0	0.4	2.2
1995	0.9	1.1	0.5	2.5
2000	1.2	1.4	0.5	3.2
2005	1.3	1.5	0.6	3.4

**Table 3.8: Energy-related carbon dioxide emissions in the region**

The transport sector is the greatest single contributor to energy related  $\text{CO}_2$  emissions (at almost 35%), and emissions from that sector grew significantly between 1990 and 2005. There is some variation across the region in per capita energy-related  $\text{CO}_2$  emissions, with Limerick City at 12.4 tonnes per capita, compared to 12.7 and 13.0 tonnes per capita in Co. Limerick and Co. Clare respectively.

To place these figures in context, total national emissions of greenhouse gases in 2007 were 69.2 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (EPA, 2008a), of which 69% arose from fossil fuel combustion. Based on these figures, and taking a national population of 4,239,848 (for 2006, from CSO, 2009), per capita emissions of greenhouse gases in 2007 were 16.3 tonnes, and per capita emissions arising from fossil fuel combustion 11.2 tonnes.

This information has impacted on many elements of the proposed Strategy including those associated with population distribution and land-use zoning, transport, enterprise development, renewable energy development and flood-risk management.

### **3.11 Material Assets**

The consideration of material assets in the Mid-West Region relates only to those assets that are of regional significance. In general, these assets relate to physical infrastructure under the following headings –

#### **Transport**

##### *3.11.1 Roads*

The region is well serviced with a network of National and Regional routes that either pass through or are adjacent to the region. These include –

- **Motorways**
  - Ennis – Shannon (M18);
  - Dublin-Cork (M8);
  - Nenagh – Limerick (M7).
- **National Primary Routes**
  - Ennis/Galway (N18);
  - Limerick /Roscrea (N7);
  - Limerick/Tipperary/Waterford (N24);
  - Limerick/Cork (N20);
  - Limerick/Tralee (N21).

Some National Secondary Routes and Regional Routes are also of particular importance from a regional point of view.

##### *3.11.2 Rail*

The region is also well served with rail systems, relatively speaking. These include the following links:

- Limerick-Ennis-Galway;
- Limerick – Nenagh – Dublin;
- Limerick – Limerick Junction – Dublin;
- Limerick – Foynes;
- Limerick – Limerick Junction – Waterford;
- Limerick – Limerick Junction - Cork.

Some of these links are in the process of being upgraded while others have already been improved.

### *3.11.3 Air*

Shannon Airport is the most important airport from this point of view though there are other, smaller, private airports of local significance.

### *3.11.4 Water*

Limerick City Docks and Foynes are the most important port developments though there are a number of other smaller ports and harbours along the Shannon Estuary.

## **Energy**

### *3.11.5 Electricity*

Moneypoint and Ardnacrusha are the most important energy generation systems, though there is an increasing number of renewable energy developments within the region.

### *3.11.6 Gas*

The natural gas network has been extended to a considerable part of the region including the Gateway and Hub towns.

## **Communications**

### *3.11.7 Telecommunication*

Generally the region is well served with cable-based communication and wireless communication has wide coverage in the region.

### *3.11.8 Broadband*

Broadband coverage in the region is variable. Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) are available in the major centres but rural areas still have significant limitations in broadband coverage. In addition, broadband penetration in the settlements is limited due to a variety of factors.

## **Water and Wastewater**

From a regional point of view water and waste-water systems tend not to cross county boundaries though there are a number of exceptions, particularly in Limerick City, and Killaloe/Ballina.

Major water supply and waste water treatment systems are present in the Gateway City and Town and in the Hub Town. However, these facilities are not adequate to meet current needs in some cases and do not have the spare capacity to meet future needs in others.

### *3.11.9 Urban wastewater discharges*

The region faces a significant challenge in the effort to meet the requirements of the EU's Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. In 2012, the EPA issued a report entitled "*A focus on Urban Wastewater*" (EPA 2012 A). The report includes data on the compliance of local authorities with the overall requirements of the Directive. The table below summarises the situation for the study area.

Local Authority area	Number of agglomerations without secondary treatment	No. of agglomerations with secondary treatment that failed standards/guidance values
Clare	7	6
Limerick City	0	0
Limerick County	4	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>

**Table 3.9: Compliance of local authorities with the overall requirements of the UWWT Directive**

The likely evolution of this situation is dependent on the future quantity and nature of the effluents received by these treatment plants, and on whether improvement works are undertaken.

It should be noted, however, that this is a significant improvement on 2007 when 30 agglomerations with secondary treatment failed the standards/guidance values.

#### **3.11.10 On-site wastewater treatment systems**

The EPA estimates that there are approximately 400,000 dwellings in Ireland whose wastewater is treated by on-site systems (EPA, 2009). However, as far as the authors are aware, there are no data on the number and effectiveness of on-site wastewater treatment systems in the region. This is a data gap encountered in the undertaking of this SEA. On-site systems typically serve single dwellings in areas not served by a mains sewer and central waste water treatment plant. It is known nationally that poorly designed, constructed and maintained treatment systems have a negative environmental impact, and this would apply within the study area also.

The EPA “*Code of Practice for Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (p.e ≤ 10)*”, (EPA 2010) is a recent publication that will assist in addressing this issue.

### **Sport, Recreation and Tourism**

A number of nationally and regionally significant assets exist in the region under this heading. These include -

- Bunratty Castle and Folk Park which is a major international attraction;
- The Cliffs of Moher Centre, which is acknowledged as a location of international interest;
- The Ailwee Caves Centre, Clare;
- The Hunt Museum in Limerick;
- Glor, the National Folk Music Centre in Ennis;
- The Lough Derg Water Activities Centre;
- The UL Sports Centre, Limerick;
- Cusack Park, Ennis, Limerick GAA Grounds; Thomond Park, Limerick;
- Adare Village and associated resources;
- Kilrush Creek Marina;
- Ballina/Killaloe Marina.

In addition there are many facilities of more local importance within each zone.

### 3.12 Cultural Heritage

By definition, heritage refers to inherited properties, inherited characteristics or indeed anything passed on from past eras and ancestors. Cultural heritage includes physical buildings, structures and objects complete or in part, remaining on the landscape (CAAS, 2007). Therefore the baseline description of cultural heritage in the area will focus on aspects of archaeological and architectural heritage present in the region, as recommended by the Government of Ireland SEA Strategy (2004).

#### 3.12.1 Architectural heritage in the region

The provision for the protection of architectural heritage exists under the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts. Amendments in 2000 obliged local authorities as part of the County Development Plan (CDP) process to compile a "Record of Protected Structures" in their area. A protected structure is a structure that a local authority considers to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view (DEHLG, 2000). Each CDP must include policy objectives to protect structures or parts of structures of special interest and to preserve the character of architectural conservation areas within its functional area (DEHLG, 2004). There are over nearly 2000 protected structures in the area, as shown in Table 3.8, and further details of the structures are available from the relevant CDPs.

County	Source	Number
Limerick	2005-2011 CDP	>1,400
Clare	2005-2011 CDP	519

**Table 3.10: Number of Protected Structures per county**

There are also a number of architectural conservation areas in region (see Table 3.11: L). These areas are established when groups of buildings, including villages, small towns, elements of larger towns and streetscapes are of special architectural interest, and warrant protection from uncomplimentary patterns of development or degradation (DEHLG, 2004).

Clare	Limerick
Ballyvaughan	Abbeyfeale
Corofin	Adare
Ennistimon	Askeaton
Kilfenora	Castleconnell
Kilkee	Castletroy
Kilkishen	Croom
Killadysert	Glin
Killaloe	Kilfinane
Kilmihil	Kilmallock
Lisdoonvarna	Newcastle West
Miltown Malbay	Adare Manor,
Mountshannon	Ballysteen House
Newmarket on Fergus	Glin Castle
O'Briensbridge	
Quin	
Scarrif	
Scattery Island	
Sixmilebridge	
Tuamgraney	

**Table 3.11: List of architectural conservation areas in the area**

### *3.12.2 Archaeological heritage in the region*

Ireland has a rich legacy of archaeological monuments requiring protection and conservation. Monuments range in scale and complexity, and can include fulacht fias, ringforts, raths, castles, abbeys and churches etc (Internet Reference 1). Protection of archaeological heritage in Ireland is coordinated by the National Monuments Service. They are charged with identifying and designating monuments, implementing legislative provisions in relation to the protection of monuments and implementing protective and regulatory controls under the National Monuments Acts. An amendment to this act in 1994 established a provision for the statutory compilation of a “Record of Monuments and Places” (RMP). These records are available on a county by county basis in planning authority offices and public libraries. Data pertaining to the Archaeological Survey of Ireland were issued on a county by county basis as the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) between 1984-1992, which in turn formed the foundation for the publication of the RMP between 1995 and 1998.

There are also a number of National Monuments in State Care in the area and these are protected by the National Monuments Service and the Office of Public Works working together in partnership. There are 62 in Co. Limerick and 37 in Co. Clare (NMS, 2009).

The Burren, partially located in the region, has been nominated for inclusion to the UNESCO World Heritage List. A number of archaeological sites from the Mesolithic period on are present in the Burren, and of particular note are the number of monuments from the prehistoric and Early Christian periods (DEHLG, 2008).

### **3.13 Landscape**

The area is rich in the nature and variety of landscape types it contains. Landscapes that are of regional significance include –

- The Atlantic Coast of West Clare characterized by a variety of coastline types, some rocky and some sandy;
- The Karstic area of the Burren between Clare and Galway characterized by its fissured limestone and the small lakes and turloughs of the East Burren complex;
- The Shannon Estuary with long views over water to the far shore;
- The Shannon River characterized by smaller, more intimate views;
- Lough Derg with a number of small islands and surrounded by the upland areas that contain it;
- The upland areas of the Galtee Mountains Ireland’s highest inland mountain range;
- The upland area of the Ballyhoura Hills which run between Limerick and Cork and have many areas of natural beauty;
- The Slieve Felim area of Limerick;
- Slieve Aughty between Clare and Galway.

Many of these areas also contain Natura 2000 sites with high-quality habitats and significant levels of biodiversity.

Each of these different landscape types brings unique qualities of experience to the local population and visitors alike. The various landscapes are also subject to a variety of potential negative impacts. These include

- Inappropriately designed and located developments;
- Changing farming practices leading to landscape degradation;
- The impact of afforestation on the appearance and habitat diversity of the landscape;
- Major infrastructure developments;
- Excessive use for activities associated with tourism, sports and recreation activities;
- The impact of pollution and eutrophication on water bodies.

Many of those areas that are of regional significance cross county and regional boundaries. It is important that a common approach is taken to the management of the rural landscape throughout the area with respect to sports and physical recreation in order that its protection and enhancement can be ensured.

## 4 Environmental pressures in the region

Annex 1(f) of the SEA Directive lists the following as SEA topics

- Biodiversity
- Population
- Human health
- Fauna
- Flora
- Soil
- Water
- Air
- Climatic factors
- Material assets
- Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage
- Landscape
- Interrelationship between these elements

The SEA is required to provide a description of the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected and the identification of any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan, particularly those relating to European protected sites.

In the light of the above baseline description and the achievement of clarity on the nature of environmental issues that it is appropriate to consider within the Region, the following key environmental issues are presented below in tabular form together with a commentary on their relevance to the LCSPRS. Some issues that are not relevant to the LCSPRS are also identified for completeness and an explanation as to why they are not relevant is included.

All of the Annex 1(f) items are considered though some are grouped together e.g. biodiversity, flora and fauna are considered in the context of habitats.



Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
<b>Surface water</b>					
	Lough Derg	Important large body of water susceptible to eutrophication from point and diffuse discharges, and upstream impacts. Multiple demands for recreation, transportation, waste-water discharge, fishing. The Lake has been identified as requiring improvement in the RBD Draft Plan	High	Boating, sailing, watersports, lakeside recreation, walking, trekking.  Impacts from habitat disturbance, waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light	Lough Derg should be included for consideration as it meets the suggested criteria.
	Shannon River	The Shannon River between Lough Derg and the Shannon Estuary bears some of the characteristics of Lough Derg. It is important in environmental terms not only in its own right but because it feeds the non-saline fraction of the Shannon Estuary	High	Boating, sailing, watersports, lakeside recreation, walking, trekking  Impacts from habitat disturbance, waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light	The Shannon River should be included as it meets all the relevant criteria
	Shannon Estuary	Important large body of water susceptible to environmental degradation from point discharges, diffuse pollution and upstream impacts. Multiple	High	Boating, sailing, watersports, lakeside recreation, walking, trekking  Impacts from habitat	The Shannon Estuary should be included in the SEA as it meets the criteria set out

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		demands for industry, aquaculture, recreation, transportation, waste-water discharge, fishing. Parts of the estuary have been identified as requiring improvement in the RBD Draft Plan and the whole of the area has been designated as an SPA		disturbance, waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light	
	River Fergus	The River Fergus is significant because of its relevance to the Hub Town of Ennis. It has been assessed as being of Poor status along much of its length in the RBD Plan and discharges to the Shannon Estuary.	Low	Some low-level water-based activity	The River Fergus should not be included as it does not meet the criterion of a resource with a regional scale potential for sports and recreation
	Other rivers	There are many other rivers that contribute to the Shannon system	Low	Some small local scale water-based activities	These rivers should not be included as they do not meet the criteria set out above
	Other lakes	There are many other lakes in the region	Low	Some small local scale water-based activities	These lakes should not be included as they do not meet the criteria set out above
	Artificial water bodies	There are a number of these throughout the region	Medium	Some significant regional level water-based sports are possible on these	Some of these water bodies meet the criteria set out above and should be included. Others with

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
				water-bodies. In particular, canals might be developed for a variety of significant water-based activities such as boating  Impacts from waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light	lower potential should not
<b>Ground Water</b>					
	Aquifer Clare	This is a major aquifer system that has significant implications for the Ennis Water Supply. It extends North of Ennis and into the Western RBD as well as being primarily in the Shannon RBD. It has been identified in both RBD Plans as requiring improvement.	Medium	There is no direct activity that would have relevance for the aquifer bodies. However, the development of facilities in areas without piped services would have implications for the aquifers and it is possible that some significant developments could be in this category	This resource should be included as it may be impacted on, even indirectly, by certain developments and would, therefore, meet the criteria set out above.
	Aquifer Limerick	This is a major aquifer in the vicinity of Limerick City. It lies within the Limerick County jurisdiction and is not a major source of water for the area. It has been identified in the RBD Plan as	Medium	There is no direct activity that would have relevance for the aquifer bodies. However, the development of facilities in areas without piped services would have implications for the	This resource should be included as it may be impacted on, even indirectly, by certain developments and would, therefore, meet the criteria set out above.

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		requiring improvement in status		aquifers and it is possible that some significant developments could be in this category	
<b>Coastal Water</b>					
	Atlantic Coast	This is a major resource within the region and is, at least in the areas close to the coastline, subject to threat from both point and diffuse discharges. These areas are also subject to a variety of demands including recreational, agricultural and commercial, though, within the region there is little industrial demand.	High	A variety of water-based activities might be accommodated in this area and would have some relevance. The extent of the impact of the activities likely to take place would not be likely to be significant but the on-shore service bases associated with such activities might be of importance.	These areas should be considered as part of the SEA. Data is limited but may be of relevance at a strategic level with regard to the capacity to accommodate LCSPRS development
<b>Drinking Water</b>					
	Water quality and availability	Drinking water quality and availability is a critical resource in the region. While there is a variety of potential resources some of these are under pressure	Medium	Generally developments would not be likely to have significant implications for drinking water quality. However, the development of facilities in areas without piped services would have implications for the aquifers and it is possible	Drinking water quality impacts should be included in the SEA.

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
				that some significant developments could be in this category	
<b>Bathing Water</b>					
	Quality of bathing water	Bathing water is distributed around the region at specific locations. This water is relatively fragile and can reach unacceptable standards without ceaseless vigilance	Medium	The development of facilities that make use of bathing water may emerge in the Strategy	The development of facilities could have implications for bathing water standards and this issue should be included
<b>Air</b>					
	Air quality	The air resource of the region is a key determinant of quality of life, bio-diversity and human health	Low	Air quality is not likely to be significantly impacted on by sports and recreation developments. The principal air quality impact would arise from the traffic associated with large-scale development but the level of impact would be small	Air quality should not be included in the SEA
	Greenhouse gas emissions	The region should play its part in achieving national greenhouse gas emission targets. Air is distributed across the region and is a fragile resource in this context.	Medium	The principal impacts on greenhouse gases would arise from traffic and the use of heating and other energy-using facilities in sports and recreation developments	Consideration of the greenhouse gas situation should be included as the implications meet the criteria set out above even if the impacts will be relatively small in an overall sense

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
<b>Biodiversity (Habitats, Flora and Fauna)</b>					
	The Burren	The Burren is a major internationally recognised habitat containing many internationally protected species. It is an area that has emerged in its current form from a variety of human interactions with nature. The area is subject to a variety of conflicting demands – conservation, agriculture, habitation, tourism and recreation and can be subject to the impacts of environmentally significant impacts arising at a distance from it	Medium	The principal sports and recreation activities likely to impact on the Burren are those arising from walking and other trails although other activities such as rock-climbing, potholing and caving might also be of relevance. In addition, the Burren extends into the maritime areas at certain points and may be impacted on by water-based activities at these locations.	The Burren should be included as it meets some of the criteria set out above
	The Shannon system	As well as its importance from a water point of view, the Shannon system contains many important habitats vulnerable to changes in water quality	Medium	Water-based sports and recreation activities	Should be included in the SEA as it meets many of the criteria outlined above
	Other Natura	Other Natura 2000 sites,	Medium	A wide variety of activities	These resources should be

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
	2000 sites	though important, are contained within the boundaries of an individual city or county and should be addressed by the processes at that level		are possible in the vicinity of Natura 2000 sites	considered but at a general rather than an individual level
<b>Landscape</b>					
	Areas of high quality and vulnerable landscape	Landscape is region-wide and is fragile particularly in certain areas.	Medium in certain areas	A wide range of activities might take place in areas of high landscape quality. While many of these will be low impact the cumulative effect could be significant.	These areas should be included in the SEA in a general sense
<b>Cultural assets</b>					
	Built Heritage	The built heritage is widespread throughout the region and is fragile and sometimes vulnerable. However, it also tends to be gathered in small units within the boundaries of specific administrative units and does not require inter-authority co-ordination	Low	The impact of sports and recreation development on the built heritage is likely to be small	This should not be included as it does not meet the criteria set out above
	Archaeological heritage	The archaeological heritage is widespread throughout the region and is fragile and	Low	The impact of sports and recreation development on the archaeological heritage	This should not be included as it does not meet the criteria set out above

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		sometimes vulnerable. However, it also tends to be gathered in small units within the boundaries of specific administrative units and does not require inter-authority co-ordination		is likely to be small	
<b>Material assets</b>					
	Mineral resources	These are spread throughout the region	Low	The impact of sports and recreation development on the mineral resources is likely to be small	This should not be included as it does not meet the criteria set out above
<b>Soil</b>					
	Brownfield development land	Significant brownfield redevelopment land exists in Limerick City and Shannon Industrial Zone	Medium	Significant sports and recreation development is possible within the brownfield land particularly in Limerick City	This should be included as it meets some of the criteria set out above
	Other land zoned for development	Land with theoretical development potential is a widespread resource within the region	Medium	There is a significant number of sports and recreation related developments that might take place within the zoned land of the region	This should be included as it meets a significant number of the criteria set out above
	Land at risk from flooding	This land is widespread throughout the region and	High	Water related developments; riverside	This land should be included as significant types of sports and



Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		has implications for strategic decisions		and lakeside activities such as trails	recreation development could take place within areas liable to flooding
<b>Human Health</b>					
	Noise	Noise is an issue that is spread throughout the region. It is an important element for quality of life and can be impacted on from a distance	Low	While noise might be an issue in some very specific circumstances, the extent of uses likely to give rise to significant noise impacts are very few	This is a matter that should not be included as the levels of impact are likely to be small
	Air quality	See above			
	Drinking Water Quality	See above			
	Bathing Water Quality	See above			
	Road and transport safety	This is an issue that is spread throughout and across the region. It is a factor that emerges from a combination of traffic volumes and road quality as well as other less infrastructural questions	High	Sports and recreation development are not specifically part of sports and recreation with the exception of road racing. However, the traffic implications of larger scale sports and recreation developments can be significant.	This should be included as travel to sports and recreation activities is a significant factor
	Light pollution	This is an issue that is associated primarily with built environments including some major infrastructure	Low	Significant stadium developments can give rise to substantial amounts of light over-spill.	This is a matter that should not be included as it does not meet a sufficient number of the criteria outlined above

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
<b>Population</b>					
	Pleasant and healthy living working and recreational environment	A pleasant living and working environment is a matter that is relevant across the region	High	All sporting and recreational developments of a significant nature	This should be included as the outcome of an appropriate Sports and Recreation Strategy will have significant implications for quality of life

**Table 4.1: Analysis of Environmental Parameters**

From this it can be seen that at a strategic level appropriate to the LCSPRS, the key environmental issues in the region relate to the following -

1. Surface water quality
2. Ground water quality
3. Drinking water quality
4. Bathing water quality
5. Flood-risk management
6. The generation of green-house gases through the process of management of development location, maximising the use of public transport, minimising traffic congestion
7. The protection of Natura 2000 sites in the context of the potential impact of a range of development types and activities associated with sports and recreation activity
8. The protection and improvement of other habitats
9. The protection of sites of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel that lie within the region or that do not lie within the region but that may be impacted on by activities within the region
10. Landscape quality both within and outside the region as they may be impacted on by sports and physical recreation activities and development
11. Quality of life for the population in the context of the provision of opportunities and facilities for sports and physical recreation and its impact on health

There are also a number of matters that are not considered to require action at the regional level beyond pointing decision-makers to their obligations with regard to them. These include –

1. The protection of the built environment;
2. Light pollution;
3. Noise protection;
4. Air pollution.

#### 4.1 Interaction between the different environmental pressures

The interaction between the various environmental pressures can be considered in a number of ways. Firstly it is appropriate to examine the extent to which there is an interaction between the various parameters. The following table indicates the extent to which an interaction is likely to exist at a strategic level.

**Table 4.2 Interaction between pressures**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1											
2	H										
3	H	H									
4	H	L	L								
5	H	H	M	L							
6	L	L	M	M	H						
7	H	N	N	M	M	N					
8	H	N	N	M	M	N	H				
9	H	H	M	M	M	M	H	H			
10	H	H	L	H	H	M	L	L	H		
11	H	L	H	M	H	H	N	N	H	H	

N = None

L = Low

M = Medium

H = High

## **5 Evolution of Sports and Physical Recreation in Limerick and Clare in the absence of the LCSPRS**

The evolution of Sports and Physical Recreation in the area is subject to many policies, plans and programmes. Many of these operate at a higher level than the LCSPRS and many at a lower level. In addition, many of the plans and programmes can be implemented independently of the LCSPRS. Indeed the way in which many of them should be implemented place mandatory obligations on the implementing bodies from the point of view of environmental protection.

The LCSPRS does, however, bring a number of specific benefits that would not arise from other processes.

Firstly they permit the Region to be considered as a unit with regard to sports and physical recreation and to examine how provision in that sector can also be integrated with that of adjacent counties.

Secondly, in the light of the need for collaborative action to be taken and the need to consider the provision of facilities on the basis of need that arise from areas that cross administrative boundaries it allows for a better balance to be achieved between the threshold and range of facilities or, in other words between access to facilities and the populations they need to serve to ensure their viability.

The evolution of the region in the absence of the LCSPRS, therefore, would be governed by many processes, plans and programmes independent of the LCSPRS. It is quite possible, however, that if facilities are proposed on a piece-meal and non-integrated basis, funding for facility provision may be withheld and the viability of those facilities that are provided may be in doubt. In addition, access to facilities for much of the population may be compromised.

## 6 Environmental Protection Objectives

The environmental objectives for the LCSPRS are based on the key environmental issues outlined above. Again it is emphasised that these issues must be considered in a high-level strategic context and it is the principal issues in this context that have been considered.

The environmental objectives, therefore, are as follows –

- W1. The maintenance and improvement of surface water quality
- W2. The maintenance and improvement of ground water quality
- W3. The maintenance and improvement of drinking water quality
- W4. The maintenance and improvement of bathing water quality
- F1. The appropriate management of flood risk, the reduction of the risk to development arising from flooding and the making of provision for flood plains
- G1. The reduction in the generation of green-house gases through the process of management of development location and maximising the use of public transport and reducing travel needs in terms of frequency and distance
- E1. The protection of Natura 2000 sites in the context of the potential impact activities and facilities associated with sports and physical recreation
- E2. The protection and improvement of other habitats in the context of the potential impact of activities and facilities associated with sports and physical recreation
- P1. The protection of sites of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel that lie within the Region and those that do not lie within the region but that may be impacted on by activities within the region in accordance with Freshwater Pearl Mussel Sub-Basin Management Plans
- L1. The maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality both within and outside the region
- Q1. The enhancement of quality of life including health for the population in the context of access to activities and facilities associated with sport and physical recreation.

In addition to emerging from the issues identified for the region, these objectives are derived from a variety of EU and National legislation and policy.

## **7 Strategic Environmental Assessment of review of LCSPRS**

In the context of the set of environmental objectives that have been set out in this document, an environmental impact matrix has been prepared. This matrix relates the strategic policies set out in the strategy to each of the environmental objectives.

The impacts were considered to be in one of four categories—

1. Impacts which were likely to be positive or consistent with the environmental objective (+)
2. Impacts which were likely to be negative (-)
3. Impacts which would be positive or consistent contingent upon certain mitigations being adopted or certain conditions being imposed in the Strategy (C)
4. Where the impact is neutral or insignificant (0)

Due to the nature of the LCSPRS and the approach that has been taken in the SEA as a result, it is considered that, if the conditions outlined in the SEA and incorporated in the LCSPRS are implemented there will be no negative impacts in the short, medium or longer term. Any negative environmental effects of the LCSPRS will be mitigated by the conditions which have been identified in this report and which have been incorporated into the strategy document. In addition, any cumulative impacts will be addressed through this process, since the reduction in impact achieved through the applications of these conditions will also address cumulative impacts. These conditions, numbered 1 to 11, are set out on pages 112 to 114 below.

**Table 7.1: Evaluation of LCSPRS in the Context of Proposed Environmental Objectives and Conditions**

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
<p>1. That a hierarchy of facility provision will be adopted as follows –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large scale stadia and facilities</li> <li>• Multi-sport facilities at key locations</li> <li>• Smaller scale multi-sport facilities</li> <li>• Community-level facilities for sports and physical recreation at a level smaller than the multi-sport facilities referred to above</li> <li>• Specific facilities provided by individual sports and recreation clubs and organisations to meet their own needs</li> </ul>	C	C	C	C	C	+	C	C	C	+	+	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11
<p>2. That larger-scale sports and physical recreation stadia and facilities be located within the areas of Limerick Metropolitan Area, Shannon and Ennis in order to maximise accessibility of larger populations, to maximise the viability of</p>	C	C	C	C	C	+	C	C	C	+	+	1,2,4,7,8,9,10,11

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
the facilities and to maximise the potential use of public transport facilities for providing access to these facilities. In particular, where significant areas have been developed or are planned for development provision should be made for the establishment of multi-sports facilities in accordance with the recommendations of the Draft National Sports Facilities Strategy												
<p>3. That new stadia for team games will generally not be permitted within the area other than</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the provision within Limerick Metropolitan Area of one medium-sized stadium not exceeding a capacity of 7,500 with a primary focus on the accommodation of League of Ireland soccer matches and</li> <li>the provision of a new stadium at an appropriate location and which</li> </ul>	C	C	C	C	C	+	C	C	C	+	+	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11



Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
replaces an existing stadium.												
4. That the provision of facilities which have specific needs which require them to be located outside the Limerick Metropolitan Area/Shannon/Ennis area will be accommodated subject to addressing the environmental considerations outlined below	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	+	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11
5. That key sub-regional locations be identified for the provision of all-weather sports facilities to accommodate a wide range of sports and physical recreation activities and such that no person is more than 20 kilometres from such a facility and that a specific approach to the provision of such facilities be adopted within the Limerick Metropolitan Area	C	C	C	C	C	+	C	C	C	+	+	1,2,4,7,8,9,10,11
6. That smaller-scale facilities be provided at other intermediate locations such that no person is generally more than 10 kilometres from such a facility. These facilities should include a floodlit all-weather playing area that is not at of full	C	C	C	C	+	C	C	C	C	C	O	1,2,4,7,8,9,10,11

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
size, a walking track, a playground, an outdoor gym and an indoor games hall. In these locations attempts should be made to maximise the use of existing facilities and to upgrade them where necessary, developing new facilities only where unavoidable. Particular attention should be paid to the provision of training facilities at these locations as the absence of such facilities can prove a significant barrier to participation in sports.												
7. That the provision of facilities that allow the better use and enjoyment of sporting and physical recreation facilities which make use of natural resources will generally be permitted provided that they are of an appropriate scale and address the environmental conditions as set out below. Where possible this should be achieved by the enhancement of existing facilities rather than the provision of new facilities. In addition, areas may be identified as hubs for particular forms of sporting and physical	C	C	C	C	C	O	C	C	C	+	+	3,5,6,7,8,9,10,11

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
recreation activities related to their natural amenities and/or geographic location and development plans prepared to facilitate the development of such hubs.												
8. That the provision of smaller-scale community-based facilities will continue to be supported subject to the requirements as set out above and the meeting of environmental considerations as set out below.	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	+	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11
9 That the needs of all age-groups are considered when facilities are being developed and that, in particular, the needs of the young and of older people are given particular attention. With regard to the former this should relate to the incorporation of age-appropriate green spaces into all developments in accordance with the provisions of the document 'Play Space Guidelines 2007 (DDDA 2006). With regard to the latter it should include the provision of separate cycle paths, the provision of level, well-	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
maintained, non-slip walkways and convenient access to parks and green spaces as recommended by the WHO Age-Friendly Cities Programme. This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.												
10. That new facilities will be provided in a manner that will seek to encourage physical activity amongst different age groups in a single location by, for example, providing a children's playground and an adult outdoor gym or walking area in close proximity, for example. In addition, that where significant facilities are planned, these should be located, where possible, close	C	C	C	C	C	+	C	C	C	C	+	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
to schools and public open space.												
11. That particular consideration be given to the provision within publicly-funded facilities, of the spaces and equipment necessary to accommodate those activities that have been identified as being most likely to encourage additional participation in sports or physical activities amongst the resident population	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	
12. That the needs of those with a disability are provided for in the design and development of facilities for sports and physical recreation. Such an approach should include the following – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The incorporation of provision for those with a disability in the design of new facilities</li> <li>The making of special provision for those with a disability in certain circumstances egg the provision of boardwalk areas on walking routes</li> </ul>	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The development and implementation of a programme of upgrading of those facilities that cannot currently adequately accommodate those with disabilities</li> </ul> <p>This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.</p>												
13. That the needs of those who cannot afford to pay for the use of facilities be taken into account when new facilities or the integration of existing facilities are being proposed and that mechanisms are incorporated into the project proposal which will help to address this issue. In addition and in order to facilitate access by those with limited resources, that the	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
<p>pricing policies of facilities be such as to require a reasonable level of payment by those that can afford to do so.</p> <p>In addition that the needs of the working population be taken into account when new facilities or the integration of existing facilities are being proposed and that mechanisms are incorporated into the project proposal which will help to address this issue with particular regard to the provision of opening hours that are convenient for this population.</p> <p>Also, that the provision of public transport to proposed facilities and to existing facilities not currently served by such transport will be examined as part of the objective of maximising access to sports and physical recreation opportunities for all, with the intention of arranging for the establishment of such services where possible.</p> <p>This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the</p>												

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders that receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.												
<p>14. That new developments of the following types of facility will generally not be permitted within the area unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is a need for the facility and that its provision will not impact on the viability of other existing facilities either within the strategy area or in areas that border it –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Golf Course</li> <li>• Private swimming pool other than in an education context</li> <li>• Racecourse</li> </ul>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	O	



Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greyhound Stadium</li> </ul>												
<p>15 That facilities and resources associated with the following sports and activities generally be permitted subject to meeting environmental protection requirements and the identification of a market need that will not give rise to deadweight or displacement; and that proactive actions will be taken to enhance access to such facilities particularly through the provision of year-round parking, pathway and storage facilities where required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking trails both urban (Sli na Slainte) and rural and associated amenities such as sculpture trails or nature walks. The provision of walking trails in urban environments is of specific benefit as it provides for the most common form of physical activity undertaken by the urban population, it requires little investment or maintenance as</li> </ul>	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
<p>most of the facilities are in place and it offers an opportunity to link sports and recreation provision with the objectives of the Smarter Travel agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated cycle routes. In this regard particular attention should be paid to the potential to use abandoned routes such as the Abbeyfeale railway line and the West Clare railway line for the provision of new facilities</li> <li>• Mountain-bike trails. In this regard, in particular, the Ballyhoura bike trail system should be developed and enhanced with the provision of additional facilities to accommodate a wide range of users including families.</li> <li>• Other trails including long-distance walking and cycling routes which should be</li> </ul>												

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
<p>developed in accordance with the principles set out in the publication 'Creating Green Infrastructure in Ireland' (Comhar 2010).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water-based activities on the Shannon, the Shannon Estuary, the Fergus and the Fergus Estuary including sailing, marine sailing, canoeing and kayaking, rowing, surfing, wind-surfing, and fishing. In this regard, specific provision should be made for rowing within the Limerick Metropolitan Area in order to benefit from one of the best stretches of rowing water in the country by, amongst other things, the holding of regattas in the area.</li> <li>Equestrian Activities. In this regard specific provision should be made for indoor facilities for equestrian activities in the Limerick and within the Ennis</li> </ul>												

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
<p>Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's playgrounds and adult outdoor gyms particularly in areas where the level of provision is less than the national average. Such provision should be made in accordance with the standards set out in the document 'Play Space Guidelines 2007 (DDDA 2006).</li> <li>Other outdoor activities such as mountain climbing, orienteering and rock-climbing</li> </ul>												
16. That where public access to a particular type of facility is not available but a private facility is available in the area, to seek to make arrangements with the private facility owner for the provision of public access	+	+	+	+	O	+	O	O	O	+	+	
17. That the adoption of integrated multi-sport models of facility provision be promoted and supported where possible	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	+	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
and appropriate. Such multi-sport models will promote the inclusion of public, voluntary, school-based and privately-owned facilities in a particular area under a joint management body in order to maximise the use of existing facilities, to ensure that facilities do not lie idle more than is necessary and to ensure that where new facilities are proposed they will be provided only where there is a clear lack of capacity in the area. The promotion of such a model will be carried out through the nature of the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine when proposals to other funders should receive the endorsement of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.												
18. That it will be a policy of all those	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
<p>engaged in the development and management of sports and physical recreation in the area to promote the adoption of the concept of Healthy Stadia.</p> <p>A Healthy Stadium is, one that promotes the health of visitors, fans and the local community – and one that provides a place where people can go and have a positive, healthy experience playing or watching sport.</p> <p>The Healthy Stadia concept is firmly based on a commitment to partnership and requires a multi-stakeholder approach comprising three elements; creating supportive and healthy working and living environments, integrating health promotion into the daily activities of the setting and developing links with other settings and with the wider community</p>												
19. That where a new sports or community hall is being provided it is	C	C	C	C	C	+	C	C	C	C	+	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
designed to be of a size that will accommodate those sports that require the greatest floor area and that the granting of permission for the provision of such a development be dependent on its being designed to such a standard.												
20. That where new all-weather pitches are being provided they should be designed to accommodate those sports that require the largest playing area and that provision be made for the installation of flood-lighting when possible	O	O	O	O	O	+	C	C	O	C	+	1,2,4,7,8,9,10,11
21. That the provision of sports hall and pitch facilities be based on an integrated multi-sport model and that the promoters of any such facility be required to indicate how such integration will be implemented.	O	O	O	O	O	+	O	O	O	O	+	
22. That different models for the integration of sports facility provision at community level be supported. These models include a single-site model in	O	O	O	O	O	+	O	O	O	O	+	

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
which all facilities both indoor and outdoor are accommodated on the one site and a multi-site model in which both new and existing facilities located on one or more sites are managed in an integrated way through the use of mechanisms that have a legal status and that can ensure the on-going participation of facility owners and the overall community												
23. That where integrated facilities are being provided a floodlit walking route is incorporated as part of the overall development	O	O	O	O	O	+	C	C	O	C	+	1,2,4,7,8,9,10,11
24. That the local community served by a particular facility be involved in the design, development and management of such facility	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	
25. That collaborative mechanisms for the establishment of new sports clubs at key locations be examined to facilitate the taking up of a range of individual non-invasive sports by all age groups. Such	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	



Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
collaborative mechanisms should include community and voluntary organisations, national governing bodies, local development organisations, public bodies and educational bodies and would be appropriately promoted and supported by the Local Sports Partnerships. The types of sports that might be considered under this heading include gymnastics, martial arts, racquet sports, aerobics, dance, athletics, sulky-racing and cycling as well as team sports.												
26. That the enhancement of the Governance of individual organisations that own and manage facilities that are or that might be used for sports and physical recreation activities be supported in order to provide the management bodies of such organisations with the confidence and the capacity to engage in the collaborative and integrated models and processes outlined in this document. One of the mechanisms for the	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
implementation of this objective will include the application of a Club Mentoring Programme												
27. That the tenure of sporting organisations with regard to land they hold from public authorities will be examined and amended where necessary and possible with the purpose of facilitating the achievement of the community-based, multi-sport integrated approaches referred to in this strategy.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	
28. That with regard to a small number of community and voluntary organisations which provide substantial sports and physical recreation facilities that are open to the general public and which face on-going uncertainties and funding challenges arising from their public service role, a long-term and sustainable funding system be identified and developed for such organisations and that the barriers to such organisations accessing funding are addressed. Such funding mechanisms should provide for	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
on-going maintenance and development as well as providing support for normal operational costs.												
29. That the needs of the tourism sector are taken into account when proposals for new development or activities are being considered and that the proposers of facilities which will be reliant on visitors for their viability be requested to provide evidence of the likely use of the facility by visitors to the area and that the proposed facility will not undermine the viability of existing facilities in the area.	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	+	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11
30. That pro-active steps be taken to promote international, national and regional sporting events within the area, particularly those such as the Great Limerick Run that involve mass participation and that the benefits of the designation of Limerick as Ireland's European City of Sport be built on in this context. In addition, the development of Limerick as a centre for Sports Medicine should be pursued through the	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	+	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
collaboration of sporting organisations, Higher Education Institutes and other relevant organisations.												
31. That where existing facilities are being upgraded the opportunity will be taken to upgrade those aspects of the facility that have an impact on the environment including the reduction in the use of energy, the improvement in the systems used for the treatment and disposal of waste-water and the management of associated activities to address any negative environmental impacts arising from them.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	O	
32. That where infrastructure developments are being undertaken, consideration will be given to whether and to what extent facilities for sport and physical recreation can be incorporated in the design and that where such provision is possible it will be made.	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	+	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11
33. That when open space is being provided in association with other	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	+	

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
developments or as stand-alone amenities the quality of the open space as well as its quantity will be assessed with particular regard to its role in promoting sports and physical recreation either in itself or through the added value it provides for existing facilities. A matrix for the provision of open space such as that contained in the Limerick City Development Plan should be adopted.												
34. That nothing in this strategy should be interpreted so as to prevent the implementation of the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary when it is adopted insofar as it applies to Sport and Physical Recreation.	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11
35. That actions be taken to implement a 'Leave no Trace' approach to the use of the natural environment for sports and physical recreation so that the any natural amenity used by the public should	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	

Policy	W1	W2	W3	W4	F1	G1	E1	E2	P1	L1	Q1	Condition references as outlined at PP 114- 116 below
not be impacted upon by that use and anything taken into the natural environment will be taken out again by the user.												

## 7.1 *Nature of possible impacts*

The nature of the impacts that might arise from the implementation of this Strategy could be significant. However, many of these impacts would be local in nature and would be addressed by other processes dealing with a specific project proposals.

Some of the **key impacts** that would be likely to arise and that are strategic in nature relate to water quality, particularly in the context of the quality of the receiving waters for the treated waste water of substantially increased sport and recreation activity; the impact on landscape from uncoordinated provision of facilities or encouragement of activities; the impact on landscape of increased activity and facility development; the impact on Natura 2000 sites of developments or activities within them or in their vicinity; and the impact on flood risk management in the event of uncoordinated approaches to development or activity in these areas. Within rural areas there is concern regarding the impact on ground water of inappropriate individual treatment systems being used to service new facilities.

There are a number of potential **cumulative impacts** that are of concern. These, in particular, relate to the impact on water quality of receiving waters of effluent arising from a variety of sources taken together of which activities associated with sport and physical recreation would be just one. The same issue of cumulative impacts applies to groundwater in rural areas in particular. A third area of concern regarding cumulative impacts relates to the impacts of a number of similar developments with or in proximity to Natura 2000 sites. These developments, such as walking or other trails, for example, could give rise to habitat damage and compromise the Natura 2000 sites.

This issue has been addressed in the conditions set out below and has been incorporated into the strategy as a requirement for decision-makers.

While specific projects or activities may give rise to **short-term effects**, such matters are best addressed through other processes at Development Plan or project management level. The effects identified and addressed through this process are **longer-term effects** that fall to be addressed by high-level, strategic processes such as the LCSPRS.

## **8 Measures proposed to prevent, reduce or offset any significant adverse environmental effects**

It will be noted from the above matrix that policies and projects were identified as being positive or consistent with the environment objectives, contingently consistent subject to conditions, or neutral or of negligible impact.

It is also clear that some of the environmental objectives are already well catered for within the LCSPRS (see table below). With regard to those objectives it was not considered that specific conditions were required as the LCSPRS already addressed them. It should also be noted that the environmental impacts were being considered as the strategy was being developed and certain conditions were incorporated in the strategy in an iterative way as their preparation continued.

It will be noted that no mitigations were identified in the matrix. This is primarily related to the high-level and strategic nature of the LCSPRS and the relatively non-specific nature of the policies it contains. However, a number of potential negative impacts were identified which required the imposition of conditions on the policies identified in the strategy. These conditions are listed below and those relevant to each policy are identified in the matrix. The conditions also have been incorporated into the strategy and are noted therein as having resulted from the SEA/HDA processes.

It should also be noted that the SEA carried out in the context of this strategy is an element of a wider process involving both higher level authorities and lower level authorities and other decision-makers. Both SEAs and HDAs will have to be prepared in other contexts notwithstanding anything stated or adopted in this strategy.

### **Conditions**

1. The major centres identified for sport and recreation growth have or will require waste-water treatment systems that discharge to river systems. Many of these systems contain Natura 2000 Sites that would be vulnerable to inadequately treated waste-water discharges. Therefore, policies for the development of sport and recreation in such areas must be contingent on the provision of waste-water treatment systems with a capacity to produce waste water discharges of a standard that will not impact negatively on downstream Natura 2000 Sites. Where a development cannot be shown not to have a negative impact even with mitigation measures being adopted, then the development cannot be permitted except in the very unusual circumstances of an Imperative Reason of Overriding Public Interest being involved.
2. In addition to the impact from waste-water sport and recreation developments may have other negative implications for Natura 2000 Sites. These implications may be related to the physical destruction of a habitat, the impact of air emissions, the impact of traffic, noise and other general activities and light pollution. No sport and recreation policy shall be adopted or development permitted unless it can be demonstrated through the carrying out of an EHDA that the development will not impact negatively on a Natura 2000 Site or that where such an impact is likely it can be mitigated satisfactorily. Where a development cannot be



shown not to have a negative impact even with mitigation measures being adopted, then the development cannot be permitted except in the very unusual circumstances of an Imperative Reason of Overriding Public Interest being involved.

3. Developments associated with rural sport and recreation may have implications for Natura 2000 Sites either because of the activity, footfall and general habitat disturbance associated with their development or due to ancillary services such as water abstraction, waste-water discharge or traffic associated with them. In the case of Natura 2000 Sites no permission should be granted for any specific development unless and until an adequate assessment, including, where necessary an Extended HDA has been carried out and such assessment has concluded that the policy or project will have no detrimental impact on the site in question or that adequate mitigating measures are possible. Where a development cannot be shown not to have a negative impact even with mitigation measures being adopted, then the development cannot be permitted except in the very unusual circumstances of an Imperative Reason of Overriding Public Interest being involved.
4. Even where Natura 2000 Sites are not impacted on, any development of sport and recreation should be contingent on the effluent arising from it being such that it will not impact on any waste-water treatment system whether private or public, that will prevent that system discharging a final effluent that meets the requirements of the appropriate River Basin District Management Plans.
5. Even where Natura 2000 Sites are not impacted on, any development or activity associated with sport and recreation, should be contingent upon its not impacting negatively on the natural environment and no such development or activity should be permitted until it has been demonstrated that such is the case or that mitigation measures adequate to address the impacts can be implemented.
6. Rural sport and recreation developments may be proposed in areas without a piped waste-water collection and treatment system and this has implications for the quality of groundwater in the region. The RBD analyses have identified areas within the region where the quality of the ground-water is not adequate. Any development that requires the provision of a private treatment system should be considered in the context of the following:
  - The quality of the groundwater into which the effluent will discharge and the need to preserve or improve that quality;
  - The quality of the effluent proposed to be discharged from the waste-water treatment process;
  - The quantity of the effluent proposed to be discharged;
  - The capacity of the ground to enhance the quality of the final effluent;
  - Proposals for the management and maintenance of the treatment system;
  - The capacity of the Local Authority to monitor the quality of the discharge.

No development should take place until it has been demonstrated that the quality of the groundwater will not be impaired as a result of the development.

7. Areas that contain or are designated as Natura 2000 sites are also liable to exhibit some of the technical characteristics that would facilitate the development of high-quality facilities particularly associated with activities such as cycling, walking, hiking or mountain-biking. No policies should be adopted or permission granted for developments liable to impact on a Natura 2000 Site unless and until an Extended HDA has concluded that the proposed development would not have a negative impact on such a site or that mitigation measures which would eliminate such impacts can be identified and applied.
8. As noted above, in implementing this strategy, full regard must be had to the requirements of the Habitats Directive including the carrying out of an assessment of the implications for any Natura 2000 Site that might be at risk from any proposed development. While all Natura 2000 Sites are of key importance, a number have particular importance as they contain species that are of particular relevance as indicators of environmental quality.

A key species in this regard is the Fresh Water Pearl Mussel and particular care must be taken that activities do not pose a threat to species such as this, whether they lie within or without the area of the strategy. Where such an impact is identified the development must be mitigated or, where that is not possible must not be implemented unless the procedure relating to developments of Overriding National Importance has been completed.

This consideration applies to developments in the following areas –

- Those that involve discharges to the Cloon River;
  - Those that involve discharge to the Blackwater River or its tributaries.
9. In considering the management of flood risk regard should be to current flooding risks and the impact of climate change on existing defences and on the flood risk of any proposed development.
  10. In addition, in considering the impact of any proposed policy or project that is liable to give rise to a waste-water treatment demand, the likely cumulative impact of such demands that are liable to arise from any source and no policy shall be adopted or development permitted that would result in the capacity of the area's waste water treatment system to be exceeded by the cumulative demands of successive developments.
  11. Finally, in considering the impact of any proposed policy or project that is liable to give rise to impacts on a Natura 2000 Site, the likely cumulative effect of such impacts that are liable to arise from any source shall be considered and no policy shall be adopted or development permitted that would result in the deterioration of the site's habitat status either by itself or cumulatively with other developments or activities.

## Relationship between key pressures and conditions

The following table sets out the relationship between the key pressures and the conditions outlined above, indicating the conditions used to address the specific pressures. It should also be noted, however, that there are already LCSPRS policies that address some of the issues while others require specific conditions to be associated with them.

Pressure	Condition
W1. The maintenance and improvement of surface water quality	1,3,4,6,8,10,11
W2. The maintenance and improvement of ground water quality	1,3,4,6,8,10,11
W3. The maintenance and improvement of drinking water quality	1,3,4,6,8,10,11
W4. The maintenance and improvement of bathing water quality	1,3,4,6,8,10,11
F1. The appropriate management of flood risk, the reduction of the risk to development arising from flooding and the making of provision for flood plains.	1,4,10,11
G1. The reduction in the generation of green-house gases through the process of management of development location and maximising the use of public transport and reducing travel needs in terms of frequency and distance	Addressed adequately by overall policy elements of the LCSPRS
E1. The protection of Natura 2000 sites in the context of the potential impact activities and facilities associated with sports and physical recreation	1,2,3,7,8,11
E2. The protection and improvement of other habitats in the context of the potential impact of activities and facilities associated with sports and physical recreation	Addressed adequately within the LCSPRS through specific policy requirement within the Natural Heritage section.
P1. The protection of sites of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel that lie within the Region and those that do not lie within the region but that may be impacted on by activities within the region in accordance with Freshwater Pearl Mussel Sub-Basin Management Plans	8
L1. The maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality both within and outside the region	5
Q1. The enhancement of quality of life including health for the population in the context of access to activities and facilities associated with sport and physical recreation.	Addressed throughout the LCSPRS by a large number of policies

**Table 8.1: Relationship between Environmental Pressures, Conditions and Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategies**

## 9 Alternatives considered

Because of the high-level and strategic nature of the LCSPRS and the resultant basis on which the SEA was prepared, the consideration of alternatives relates to high level development location issues only.

In light of the nature and structure of the region, these are the options that might theoretically be pursued:

- 1. To concentrate all facilities in areas of highest population density but to allow for the provision of those facilities that require natural resources in the areas where the most appropriate of such resources exist*
- 2. To allow for a wide dispersal of all facilities including those that require a high population to sustain them and all others*
- 3. To concentrate large-scale built facilities in areas of greatest population densities and to provide those facilities that require natural resources in the areas where the most appropriate of such resources exist but to also provide sub-regional multi-sport centres in smaller settlements which will serve smaller and more isolated hinterlands.*

Each of these approaches has its costs and benefits. The more concentrated approach makes best use of infrastructure such as public transport and enables environmental impacts to be more easily managed; it also makes it more likely that those facilities that require substantial populations to be viable can be accessed to an appropriate size of population. However such an approach limits access to the more isolated populations and makes access to certain sports and recreation facilities more difficult. It must also be borne in mind, however, that while more rural populations may have more limited access to built and specialised facilities, they may well have better access to the natural amenities which are necessary for many sports and recreation activities.

The approach that allows a wide dispersal of facilities is positive in terms of accessibility but it is negative under the various headings of viability, cost, environmental impact, management of resources and so on.

The third option which seeks to balance the provision of major built facilities close to the major centres of population while providing a smaller but still significant sub-regional level of facilities at some key points throughout the region has many of the benefits and less of the dis-benefits of either of the other two approaches. This also has the advantage of reflecting the approach that has been taken in the Regional Planning Guidelines and would benefit from the provision of services and infrastructure that might arise from that document.

In adopting this option, it was considered that, provided the various policies included in the Strategy were adopted and provided the conditions associated with various policies and projects were complied with, the environmental objectives could be achieved while providing a reasonable level of sports and recreation development in all parts of the region.

The following are some of the factors that were taken into account when the three options were being considered.

Factor	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Anthropogenic greenhouse gases	Would help to address this issue if adequate public transport were put in place but the strategy has no control over this issue	Would have negative implications for greenhouse gas emissions from transport	Would have positive implications if public transport system were put in place but the strategy has no control over this issue
Ground-water quality	Would be likely to have no negative implications for groundwater	Could have negative implications but this would be significantly mitigated if adequate treatment systems were put in place	Would have implications that would lie between the other two options but dependent on the nature of the treatment systems provided
Surface water quality	Could have negative implications for surface water unless adequate effluent treatment systems were put in place due to the concentration of users that would result	Would be likely to be relatively neutral in its implications for surface water if treatment systems were put in place	Could have negative implications for surface water unless adequate effluent treatment systems were put in place due to the concentration of users that would result
Impacts on bio-diversity	Would be likely to have less negative implications for bio-diversity	Could have negative implications. However, the scale of impact likely to arise would be more likely to be limited and could be mitigated by appropriate measures	The implications would lie in the middle range and would not be negative if appropriate mitigation measures were to be implemented
Access to facilities	Would be negative for many existing urban, rural and village communities	Would be negative in that the concentrations needed to create focal points for communities would be lost.	Would provide a balance that would facilitate a reasonable level of access for all communities

Factor	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Viability of facilities	Would be likely to facilitate viability of facilities as fewer would be provided	Would be least likely to lead to viable levels of facilities	Would allow for the provision of viable facilities while maximising access
Public health	Would be positive for some parts of the community but likely to have a negative overall effect	Would be likely to generally have a negative effect as the viability of facilities would be compromised	Would allow the best balance between viability and access with consequent benefits for public health
Use of scarce public resources	This would be positive but at the expense of access – the cost/benefit would not be likely to be high	This would be negative as it would be liable to lead to the proliferation of facilities and compromise their viability	This would achieve the best balance between access and viability and give the best cost/benefit return

**Table 9.1: Evaluation of Alternatives**

Given all these considerations, it has been decided to adopt Option 3 and to devise the strategic policies on this basis.

In adopting this option, it was considered that, provided the various policies included in the strategy were adopted and provided the conditions associated with various policies and project were complied with, the environmental objectives could be achieved while maintaining sustainable facilities in all parts of the area concerned.

If the conditions set out in the LCSPRS cannot be complied with, however, the matter will have to be fundamentally reviewed.

## 10 Proposed Monitoring Measures

As part of the monitoring of the LCSPRS it is necessary that key environmental indicators be monitored in order to assess the level of achievement of key environmental objectives.

Indicators have been chosen that are relatively readily available and that relate to the various environmental objectives. If better or more comprehensive information becomes available this will be used in the future.

Objective	Indicator	Measure	Action Trigger Levels
W1. The maintenance and improvement of surface water quality	Biological status of surface water bodies	Not less than minimum requirements and improving	Biological status not improving
	Chemical status of surface water bodies	Not less than minimum requirements and improving	Chemical status not improving
	Level of pollutants in surface water bodies	Not less than minimum requirements and improving	Level of pollutants not improving
	Percentage of water bodies both surface and groundwater in the region that are at 'Good' status	Increasing relative to 2009 baseline	Percentage not increasing
W2. The maintenance and improvement of ground water quality	Biological status of groundwater	Not less than minimum requirements and improving	Biological status not improving
	Chemical status of groundwater	Not less than minimum requirements and improving	Chemical status not improving
	E-coli measurements in groundwater	Not more than maximum concentrations and improving	E-coli concentrations not improving
	Percentage of water bodies both surface and groundwater in the region that are at 'Good' status	Increasing relative to 2009 baseline	Percentage not increasing
W3. The maintenance and improvement of drinking water quality	Extent to which drinking-water quality standards in public water supplies is met	90% compliance and improving	Compliance not improving
	Extent to which drinking water standards in private water supplies are met	75% compliance and improving	Compliance not improving
	Number of annual exceedences of standards	Decreasing	Number of exceedences not decreasing
W4. The maintenance and improvement of bathing water quality	Extent to which bathing water standards are met	90% compliance and improving  Blue Flag status for all bathing areas in the region	Compliance not improving or Blue Flag status lost
F1. The appropriate management of flood	Development permitted in areas liable to flood	No development other than low	Permission of any development

Objective	Indicator	Measure	Action Trigger Levels
risk, the reduction of the risk to development arising from flooding and the making of provision for flood plains.		impact land uses	
G1. The reduction in the generation of green-house gases through the process of management of development location, maximising the use of public transport, minimising traffic congestion and reducing commuting needs in scale and distance	Percentage of people using public transport on a regular basis to access sport and recreation facilities and activities	Increasing @ 2% per annum	Public transport use not increasing
E1. The protection of Natura 2000 sites in the context of the potential impact of a range of development types	Number of sport and recreation developments permitted in Natura 2000 sites	None that would negatively impact on their status	Any threat to status
	Trend in parameters of Natura 2000 sites that are critical to its status	Improving	Trends not improving
	Percentage of Natura 2000 sites in the Region that are at 'Favourable' conservation status	Increasing	Percentage not increasing
E2. The protection and improvement of other habitats	Trends in habitat biodiversity	Improving	Trends not improving
	Percentage of species in the Region at 'Favourable' conservation status	Increasing	Percentage not increasing
P1. The protection of sites of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel that do not lie within the region but that may be impacted on by activities within the region	Quality of water in relevant areas	Not less than minimum requirements and improving	Quality not improving
	Quantity and quality of freshwater pearl mussels	Increasing	Quality and quantity not increasing
L1. The maintenance and enhancement of	Evaluation of landscape quality	Improving	Evaluation not indicating



Objective	Indicator	Measure	Action Trigger Levels
landscape quality both within and outside the region			improvement
	Number of developments permitted that have a negative impact on landscape quality	Nil	Any development associated with sports and recreation that would have a negative impact
Q1. The enhancement of quality of life including health for the population and visitors in the context of access to and use of sports and physical recreation facilities	Trends in perceived quality of life related to these matters and as gathered through surveys	Improving	Trends not improving
	Levels of obesity	Decreasing	Trend not decreasing
	Levels of physical activity	Increasing	Trend not increasing
	Levels and causes of mortality	Approaching national average	Not trending towards national average

**Table 10.1: Monitoring Parameters**

### **Monitoring programme and response to unexpected impacts**

Because this is a multi-organisational strategy the carrying out of the monitoring programme will require participation by a range of different bodies. It is proposed that the Regional Authority will be responsible for the organisation of the monitoring activity associated with this strategy. Many of the parameters are similar to those used for the Regional Planning Guidelines and the monitoring processes can be combined to maximise the benefit and the response.

Given the approach that is being taken to the management of impact in this strategy it is not likely that unanticipated impacts will arise. However, in the event that unexpected impacts do arise, the Regional Authority will act as convener of the various bodies involved in order to generate a response.

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## **Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy**

### **Habitats Directive Assessment Screening Report**

## **12 Habitats Directive Assessment - Screening**

### **12.1 Background**

In circumstances in which it is possible that a plan or programme might impact negatively on a Natura 2000 site it is necessary to carry out an assessment as to the nature of that impact and to ascertain whether mitigation measures are possible. If such measures are not possible strategies which would result in damage to a Natura 2000 site are presumed not to be acceptable other than in exceptional circumstances.

A number of potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites have been identified that could arise from actions that would be taken in the context of the LCSPRS if adequate mitigation measures were not taken. In order to ensure that appropriate protection is given to the Natura 2000 sites, certain policies and projects in the LCSPRS has been made conditional on adequate evaluations and mitigations being carried out at project level to ensure that these priority habitats are not damaged.

These conditions have been incorporated into the LCSPRS and are denoted in the LCSPRS as having arisen from the SEA or HDA screening process.

The SAC and SPA descriptions in the following table are direct quotes or edited extracts from the site synopses from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS, 2009).

### **12.2 Conclusion**

The Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy, does not identify areas or sites for development that are sufficiently specific to permit or require a detailed assessment of their impact on any Natura 2000 site. Such assessments, where necessary, should be carried out when a specific project is being considered. However, the general environmental conditions incorporated in the strategy provide adequate protection to Natural 2000 sites.

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
Ballyallia Lake	Clare	A naturally eutrophic lake situated on the River Fergus approximately 4 km north of Ennis. Also an SPA. Includes Lough Girroga.		<p>No development shall be permitted or specific policy adopted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>
Ballycullinan Lake	Clare	A calcareous lake situated approximately 2 km south of Corrofin. A <i>Cladium</i> fen site. Includes a series of smaller lakes to the north-east.		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be</p>

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
Ballyogan Lough	Clare	A complex of limestone pavement, scrub woodland, lake and fen situated about 10 km east of Corrofin. <i>Cladium</i> fen.		satisfactorily mitigated  No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated  No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated
Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex	Clare	Encompasses a complete range of rocky Burren habitats from coastal, glacially planed limestone pavements to high level heaths. Includes the Caher River and Fanore dunes. Of international scientific interest.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated  No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
				that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated
<u>Danes Hole, Poulnalecka</u>	Clare	A small fossil cave in the banks of the Ahaclare River situated within a wood approximately 4 km west of Broadford. Site of international importance for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat. A nearby summer roost for the bat and the commuting routes between the two are also included.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
<u>Dromore Woods and Loughs</u>	Clare	Situated in central Clare 9 km north-north-west of Ennis. Contains a mosaic of different habitats. Includes several lakes which are mostly linked by the River Fergus. Habitat for Pine Marten, Otter and a Lesser Horseshoe Bat population of international importance.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated
<u>Inagh River Estuary</u>	Clare	An estuarine channel that flows westwards to the sea from Ennistimon. Holds examples of five habitat types listed in the EU Habitats Directive.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated  No effluent discharge that would



SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
				be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated
Pouladatig Cave	Clare	A natural limestone cave, west of Ennis. A hibernating site for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat. Of international importance.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Lough Gash Turlough	Clare	West of Newmarket-on-Fergus. One of the latest turloughs to dry out in any year. Habitat to two rare plant species.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Moneen Mountain	Clare	A large, composite site situated in north County Clare. Extends inland from Muckinish Point and includes all of the higher ground between Ballyvaughan and Bell Harbour in a southerly direction for approximately 20km. The bulk of the site is made up of limestone pavement. Contains a breeding colony of Lesser Horseshoe Bats. Of international scientific importance.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Moyree River System	Clare	Situated in a sheltered valley on the south-eastern fringe of the Burren. Contains		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
		good examples of four habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Internationally important summer roosting and hibernation site for Lesser Horseshoe Bats.		<p>been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>
Poulnagordon Cave (Quin)	Clare	A natural limestone cave used as a hibernation site by the Lesser Horseshoe Bat.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Galway Bay Complex	Clare	Comprises the inner, shallow part of the large Galway Bay. Includes a diverse range of marine, coastal and terrestrial habitats. Of immense conservation importance, with many habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive.		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this</p>

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
				has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated
Loughatorick South Bog	Clare	Blanket bog about 8 km north-west of Mountshannon, straddling the Clare/Galway border.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Ballyteige	Clare	Wet meadow and heath, located 2 km west of Lisdoonvarna.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Ballyvaughan Turlough	Clare	A turlough situated about 1.5 km south-west of Ballyvaughan.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Glenomra Wood	Clare	Deciduous wood located in south-east Clare, about 10 km north of Limerick City.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Carrowmore Point To Spanish Point and Islands	Clare	Extends along the Clare coastline from Spanish Point (3 km west of Milltown Malbay), in a south-south-westerly direction to Carrowmore Point. The		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
		presence of a lagoon and petrifying springs are of particular significance.		<p>habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>
Termon Lough	Clare	A turlough situated approximately 6 km south-west of Gort.		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>
Glendree Bog	Clare	Highland blanket bog located in the Slieve Aughty range 13 km west-north-west of Scarriff.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
				habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
East Burren Complex	Clare	This large site incorporates all of the high ground in the east Burren, and extends south-eastwards to include a complex of calcareous wetlands. Of international scientific interest.		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>
Old Domestic Building (Keevagh)	Clare	Breeding site of the Lesser Horseshoe Bat near the village of Quin.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Newhall and Edenvale Complex	Clare	Natural fossil limestone caves south of Ennis, used by the Lesser Horseshoe Bat. One of the most important sites in Europe for the species.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Pollagoona Bog	Clare	Small blanket bog beside Lough Atorick, close to the Clare-Galway county		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
		boundary.		been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
<u>Newgrove House</u>	Clare	A hibernating site for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat, near Tulla.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Lower River Shannon	Clare and Limerick	This very large site stretches along the Shannon valley from Killaloe to Loop Head/ Kerry Head, a distance of some 120 km. The site thus encompasses the Shannon, Feale, Mulkear and Fergus Estuaries, the freshwater lower reaches of the River Shannon (between Killaloe and Limerick), the freshwater stretches of much of the Feale and Mulkear catchments and the marine area between Loop Head and Kerry Head. This site is of great ecological interest as it contains a high number of habitats and species listed on Annexes I and II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Most of the estuarine part of the site has been designated a SPA.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated  No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated
Old Farm Buildings, Ballymacrogan	Clare	Breeding site for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat, near Ruan.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
Ballycullinan, Old Domestic Building	Clare	Breeding site for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat, east of Ballycullinan Lough.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Toonagh Estate	Clare	Nursery roost for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat, north-west of Ennis.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Carrowmore Dunes	Clare	Situated on the south-western coast of County Clare, roughly midway between Milltown Malbay and Kilkee, and extends from Carrowmore Point in the north to Doonbeg Bay in the south. Of considerable conservation significance. Supports a population of rare snail.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Kilkee Reefs	Clare	Situated north of the River Shannon estuary on the Co. Clare coast. The site stretches for approximately 12 km from Ballard Bay to Castle Point.		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no</p>

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
				negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated
Slieve Bernagh Bog	Clare	Situated to the west of Lough Derg, in the south-east of Co. Clare.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
<u>Old Domestic Buildings, Rylane</u>	Clare	Breeding site for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat, near Ruan.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Ratty River Cave	Clare	North of Sixmilebridge. An important winter roost and a breeding site of the Lesser Horseshoe Bat.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Knockanira House	Clare	South-west of Ennis. An important site for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Kilkishen House	Clare	North of Sixmilebridge. An important site for the Lesser Horseshoe Bat.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the



SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
				habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Tullaheer Lough and Bog	Clare	Located 4 km south-east of Doonbeg. A diverse site comprising of raised bog, wet grassland, improved grassland, scrub woodland, alkaline fen and lake.		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>
Curraghchase Woods	Limerick	Approximately 7 km east of Askeaton. Consists largely of mixed woodland and a series of wetlands. Hibernation site of the Lesser Horseshoe Bat.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Barrigone	Limerick	Approximately 5km west of Askeaton. An area of dry, species-rich, calcareous grassland and patches of scrub. Rare species of plants and invertebrates present.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Tory Hill	Limerick	An isolated wooded limestone hill situated about 2 km north east of Croom. Includes		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
		Lough Nagirra and its associated wetland vegetation. Has good examples of three habitats listed in the E.U. Habitats Directive.		been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Galtee Mountains	Limerick	Ireland's highest range of inland mountains. Supports breeding Peregrine falcons.		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>
Clare Glen	Limerick	On the Limerick-Tipperary border, in the western foothills of the Slievefelim Mountains, about 10 km northwest of Cappamore. The Killarney Fern is present.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Glen Bog	Limerick	Situated 3 km north-east of Bruff. Comprises a wet (alluvial) woodland occupying the site of a former lake and the summit and southern side of Knockderc.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
				habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Glenstal Wood	Limerick	In the western foothills of the Slievefelim Mountains, about 8 km north-west of Cappamore. Associated with Glenstal Abbey. Killarney Fern is present.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Ballyhoura Mountains	Limerick	The mountains straddle the Co. Limerick/Co. Cork border and are situated about 10 km south of Kilmallock. Contain wet heath, dry heath and blanket bog habitats. The heathland and surrounding afforested slopes are important for Hen Harrier and Peregrine.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Carrigeenamronety Hill	Limerick	3 km south-east of the village of Ballyorgan. A good population of Killarney Fern is present.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford)	Limerick	One of the largest rivers in Ireland, draining a major part of Co. Cork and five ranges of mountains. Contains 10 habitats and 9 species listed in the Habitats Directive.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated  No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an

SAC	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
				EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated
Askeaton Fen Complex	Limerick	Consists of a number of small fen areas to the east and south east of Askeaton. Important for its <i>Cladium</i> fen and alkaline fen.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated

**Table 12.1. – Analysis of Natura 2000 Sites - SACs**

SPA	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
Cliffs of Moher	Clare	One of the most important seabird colonies in the country. Extends a distance of some 9.5 km along the north Clare coast from Faunmore in the north to just south of Cancregga Point in the south. Of special conservation interest for the following species: Chough, Fulmar, Kittiwake, Guillemot, Razorbill and Puffin; and for holding an assemblage of over 20,000 breeding seabirds		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Inner Galway Bay	Clare	One of the most important ornithological sites in the western region. Has		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has

SPA	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
		internationally important wintering populations of Great Northern Diver and Brent Goose, and nationally important populations of an additional sixteen species. Has breeding colonies of Sandwich Tern, Common Tern and Cormorant that are of national importance		<p>been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>
Ballyallia Lake Wildfowl Sanctuary	Clare	Located on the River Fergus, a little north of Ennis. An important site for wintering waterfowl, having seven species with populations of national importance. Also of importance is the occurrence of Whooper Swan.		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or</p>

SPA	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
				that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated
Lough Derg	Clare	Supports nationally important breeding populations of Common Tern, Cormorant, Great Crested Grebe, and probably Tufted Duck and Black-headed Gull. In winter, it has nationally important populations of Tufted Duck and Goldeneye. The presence of Common Tern, Whooper Swan and Greenland White-fronted Goose is of particular note as these are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>
River Shannon & River Fergus Estuaries	Clare and Limerick	The most important coastal wetland site in the country. The site comprises all of the estuarine habitat west from Limerick City and south from Ennis, extending west as far as Killadysert and Foynes on the north and south shores respectively. Also included are several areas in the outer Shannon estuary, notably Clonderalaw Bay and Poulmarsherry Bay, as well as the		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative</p>

SPA	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
		intertidal areas on the south shore of the Shannon between Tarbert and Beal Point. Of international importance for the numbers of wintering birds it supports. Also supports internationally important numbers of Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit and Redshank. In addition, there are 16 species that have populations of national importance. For several of the bird species, it is the top site in the country. Also of note is that three of the species which occur regularly are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Whooper Swan, Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit.		impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated
Illeannonearaun	Clare	<p>The island is a regular haunt for wintering Barnacle Geese. Flock size varies as birds move between here and Mutton Island to the north. Up to 200 have been recorded (as in spring 1988) but numbers are usually less, with 22 in spring 1994 and 107 in 1997.</p> <p>The island is also important as a seabird colony. A Cormorant colony was established in the 1970s and in 1995 60 individuals were counted. Other species include Fulmar (10 pairs in 1993), Great</p>		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated

SPA	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
		Black-backed Gull (c. 25 pairs) and Lesser Black-backed Gull (35 pairs in 1999).		
Loop Head	Clare	<p>The cliffs support large numbers of breeding seabirds. A survey in 1987 recorded the following: Fulmar 66 pairs; Kittiwake 690 pairs; Guillemot 4,010 individuals and Razorbill 105 individuals.</p> <p>A further survey in 2000, which was not complete due to blind spots, gave the following: Fulmar (45 pairs), Guillemot (5000 individuals), Razorbill (20 individuals) and Kittiwake (260 pairs).</p> <p>The Kittiwake and Guillemot populations are of National Importance. The seabirds utilise the marine areas within the site for feeding, bathing and socialising. The site supports breeding Chough, a species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. A survey in 1992 recorded 3 breeding pairs, plus seven flock birds. The Choughs nest on the cliffs and feed on the overlying maritime grassland and heath. Loop Head is a traditional site for Peregrine, also an Annex I species.</p>		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>



SPA	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
Slieve Aughty Mountains	Clare	<p>The SPA is a stronghold for Hen Harriers and supports the second largest concentration in the country. A survey in 2005 resulted in 24 confirmed and 3 possible breeding pairs, which represents over 17% of the national total. A somewhat lower count of between 15 and 23 pairs in the 1998-2000 period is considered to reflect poorer coverage then. The mix of forestry and open areas provides optimum habitat conditions for this rare bird, which is listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive. The early stages of new and second rotation conifer plantations are the most frequently used nesting sites, though some pairs may still nest in tall heather of unplanted bogs and heath. Hen Harriers will forage up to c. 5 km from the nest site, utilising open bog and moorland, young conifer plantations and hill farmland that is not too rank. Birds will often forage in openings and gaps within forests. In Ireland, small birds and small mammals appear to be the most frequently taken prey.</p> <p>The site also supports a breeding population of Merlin, a species that is also</p>		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated

SPA	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
		listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The population size is not well known but is likely to exceed five pairs. Red Grouse is found on many of the unplanted areas of bog and heath – this is a species that has declined in Ireland and is now Red-listed.		
Mid-Clare Coast	Clare	<p>The stretch of coastline between Quilty and Lurga Point has extensive areas of mud and sand flats and supports nationally important bird populations. Further intertidal flats occur at Doughmore Bay and Doonbeg Bay</p> <p>The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Cormorant, Barnacle Goose, Ringed Plover, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin and Turnstone. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands, and as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland &amp; Waterbirds...</p>		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated</p>
Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount	Limerick	The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for Hen Harrier. This		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been

SPA	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
Eagle		SPA is a stronghold for Hen Harrier and supports the largest concentration of the species in the country.		concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains	Limerick	The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for Hen Harrier. This SPA is one of the strongholds for Hen Harrier in the country.		No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated
Lough Derg	Clare	<p>Lough Derg SPA is of high ornithological importance as it supports nationally important breeding populations of Common Tern, Cormorant, Great Crested Grebe, and probably Tufted Duck and Black-headed Gull. In winter, it has nationally important populations of Tufted Duck and Goldeneye, as well as a range of other species including Whooper Swan. The site is still used on occasions by Greenland</p> <p>White-fronted Goose. The presence of Common Tern, Whooper Swan and Greenland White-fronted Goose is of particular note as these are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.</p>		<p>No development or activity shall be permitted unless an EHDA has been carried out and it has been concluded that no threat to the habitat exists or that any threat that might exist can be mitigated</p> <p>No effluent discharge that would be liable to have a negative impact on the habitat shall be permitted unless and until an EHDA has been carried and this has concluded either that no negative impact would arise or that any such impacts can be</p>

SPA	County	Description	Mitigation	Condition
				satisfactorily mitigated

**Table 12.2. – Analysis of Natura 2000 Sites - SPAs**

## **Appendix One – Scoping Document**

## **1. Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy**

## **2. SEA Scoping Report and Alternatives to be Considered**

### **3. Background**

The Mid-West Region of Ireland is a NUTS III Region that comprises the city of Limerick and the counties of Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary. The region is 8,248 sq. kilometres in extent and contains the Limerick-Shannon Gateway and the Hub Town of Ennis. It had a population of 350,000 in 2006 and is targeted to grow to a population of 440,000 in 2022. The region has a wide range of infrastructure both physical and social and is well-connected nationally and internationally through road, sea, rail and air.

The region contains some major physical features some of which are environmentally sensitive including the lower part of the Shannon River system; a large part of the karstic region of the Burren; a substantial Atlantic coastline and a variety of smaller-scale environmentally sensitive areas.

### **4. Area of focus**

This Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy (LCSPRS) covers only part of the Mid-West Region – Counties Clare and Limerick and the City of Limerick. (This will be referred to as ‘the region’ within this document. Despite the limited range of the focus, however, it is considered appropriate that some consideration also be given to the resources available in adjacent counties that will have relevance for the strategy. This will include the Counties of Tipperary, Cork and Galway since they are all of relevance in the context of the provision of facilities to the populations of the areas which are the focus of the Strategy. It is not intended, however, that the Environmental Report will address these areas in any significant way.

### **5. The approach to the scoping**

In approaching this scoping exercise regard was had to the following –

- Planning And Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004
- Planning And Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Amendment Regulations 2011
- European Communities Amendment Regulations 2011
- EPA SEA Scoping Template 2012
- DEHLG Guidelines on SEA

as well as to a range of environmental and other data.

These documents were taken into account in order to seek to clarify and address a number of issues that in some ways seemed conflicting and in order to identify the appropriate level and manner in which the SEA should contribute to the decision-making regarding the LCSPRS.

In order to seek to bring clarity to some of these matters a number of principles are suggested as being appropriate to guide the scoping of the SEA.

6. The purpose of the SEA is to enable better-informed decisions to be made by enabling the structured assessment of environmental impacts of actions that might arise as a result of the LCSPRS. These decisions are only those that apply at regional level, however, and not those that will be taken at national, local or community level
7. The relevance of environmental parameters to an SEA at regional level and the extent to which they are considered should reflect –
  - a. The nature, extent, importance and fragility of the resource in question
  - b. The extent to which the resource is relevant to the LCSPRS with regard to the likelihood of its being a strategic resource for sporting or recreational activity at a regional scale or the impact of Sporting and Recreational development or activity would be likely to have on the resource
8. The SEA should focus on addressing environmental issues that are relevant at a regional level and in the context of the LCSPRS.

#### **9. Implications of these principles for the region's environmental resources**

If these principles are adopted, then the following analysis suggests the scope of the matters that might be considered by the SEA.

This approach addresses the key environmental and other resources of the region that are relevant to the LCSPRS and indicates the nature of the impact that might arise as a result of strategic decisions contained within the LCSPRS.

#### **10. Likely areas of impact**

Sports and Recreation activity has a wide variety of characteristics ranging from large-scale stadium-based team sports to individual, informal activities such as walking and hiking. Some activities are concentrated into relatively small areas of land such as a lawn-tennis facility, others such as golf courses impact significantly on large areas of land while others, such as walking and hiking have a widely-dispersed impact which is small-scale with respect to any individual but which can be significant when a large number of small-scale impacts are combined. There are, of course, other activities such as mountain-biking and quad-biking which can have severe local impacts if not adequately controlled.

In addition to the direct impact of participants in sports and recreation activities, regard must also be had to the indirect impact of many such activities. The crowds that attend major sporting and recreational events have significant impacts in terms of transportation, noise, light-pollution, water use, waste-water generation, litter and habitat damage.

Sports and physical recreation within the area which is the subject of this strategy serves both an indigenous population and a significant visitor population and both of these demands must be taken into account when considering the best strategic approach to developments in the region. In addition to considering the existing indigenous population regard must also be had to the targeted growth in the regional population and the regional distribution of that growth.

A review of the principal sports and recreation activities of a regional scale that may be developed include the following –

- A regional-scale centre for association football
- Water-related sports and recreation activities of many kinds
- Walking, hiking and other forms of trails
- Equestrian activity
- Cycle trails
- Multi-sports facilities of a sub-regional scale

The current level of provision and demand for other forms of intensive use such as golf-courses and swimming pools suggest that further developments of this nature in the region are unlikely.

### **11. Sensitive environmental resources**

The table below reviews the sensitive environmental resources that may be impacted on by new sports and recreational developments. The environmental resources that are most likely to come under threat from the activities that are likely to be developed are as follows –

- Inland and coastal waters
- Ground water resources
- Those parts of the natural landscape that are developed for trails
- Air quality to the extent that it is impacted on by transport emissions
- Natura 2000 sites to the extent that they may be impacted on by walking and other trail activity
- Health and quality of life of the human population



Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
Surface water					
	Lough Derg	Important large body of water susceptible to eutrophication from point and diffuse discharges, and upstream impacts. Multiple demands for recreation, transportation, waste-water discharge, fishing. The Lake has been identified as requiring improvement in the RBD Draft Plan	High	Boating, sailing, watersports, lakeside recreation, walking, trekking.  Impacts from habitat disturbance, waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light	Lough Derg should be included for consideration as it meets the suggested criteria.
	Shannon River	The Shannon River between Lough Derg and the Shannon Estuary bears some of the characteristics of Lough Derg. It is	High	Boating, sailing, watersports, lakeside recreation, walking, trekking  Impacts from habitat disturbance, waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light	The Shannon River should be included as it meets all the relevant criteria

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		important in environmental terms not only in its own right but because it is feeds the non-saline fraction of the Shannon Estuary			
	Shannon Estuary	Important large body of water susceptible to environmental degradation from point discharges, diffuse pollution and upstream impacts. Multiple demands for industry, aquaculture, recreation, transportation, waste-water discharge, fishing. Parts of the estuary have been identified as requiring improvement in	High	Boating, sailing, watersports, lakeside recreation, walking, trekking  Impacts from habitat disturbance, waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light	The Shannon Estuary should be included in the SEA as it meets the criteria set out

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		the RBD Draft Plan and the whole of the area has been designated as an SPA			
	River Fergus	The River Fergus is significant because of its relevance to the Hub Town of Ennis. It has been assessed as being of Poor status along much of its length in the RBD Plan and discharges to the Shannon Estuary.	Low	Some low-level water-based activity	The River Fergus should not be included as it does not meet the criterion of a resource with a regional scale potential for sports and recreation
	Other rivers	There are many other rivers that contribute to the Shannon system	Low	Some small local scale water-based activities	These rivers should not be included as they do not meet the criteria set out above
	Other lakes	There are many other lakes in the region	Low	Some small local scale water-based activities	These lakes should not be included as they do not meet the criteria set out above
	Artificial water bodies	There are a number of these throughout the region	Medium	Some significant regional level water-based sports are possible on these water-bodies. In particular, canals might be developed for a	Some of these water bodies meet the criteria set out above and should be included. Others with lower potential should not

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
				variety of significant water-based activities such as boating  Impacts from waste-water discharges, visual intrusion, noise and light	
<b>Ground Water</b>					
	Aquifer Clare	This is a major aquifer system that has significant implications for the Ennis Water Supply. It extends North of Ennis and into the Western RBD as well as being primarily in the Shannon RBD. It has been identified in both RBD Plans as requiring improvement.	Medium	There is no direct activity that would have relevance for the aquifer bodies. However, the development of facilities in areas without piped services would have implications for the aquifers and it is possible that some significant developments could be in this category	This resource should be included as it may be impacted on, even indirectly, by certain developments and would, therefore, meet the criteria set out above.
	Aquifer Limerick	This is a major aquifer in the vicinity of Limerick City. It lies within the	Medium	There is no direct activity that would have relevance for the aquifer bodies. However, the development of facilities in areas without piped services would have	This resource should be included as it may be impacted on, even indirectly, by certain developments and would, therefore, meet the criteria set out above.

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		Limerick County jurisdiction and is not a major source of water for the area. It has been identified in the RBD Plan as requiring improvement in status.		implications for the aquifers and it is possible that some significant developments could be in this category.	
<b>Coastal Water</b>					
	Atlantic Coast	This is a major resource within the region and is, at least in the areas close to the coastline, subject to threat from both point and diffuse discharges. These areas are also subject to a variety of demands including recreational, agricultural and commercial,	High	A variety of water-based activities might be accommodated in this area and would have some relevance. The extent of the impact of the activities likely to take place would not be likely to be significant but the on-shore service bases associated with such activities might be of importance.	These areas should be considered as part of the SEA. Data is limited but may be of relevance at a strategic level with regard to the capacity to accommodate LCSPRS development.

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		though, within the region there is little industrial demand.			
<b>Drinking Water</b>					
	Water quality and availability	Drinking water quality and availability is a critical resource in the region. While there is a variety of potential resources some of these are under pressure	Medium	Generally developments would not be likely to have significant implications for drinking water quality. However, the development of facilities in areas without piped services would have implications for the aquifers and it is possible that some significant developments could be in this category	Drinking water quality impacts should be included in the SEA.
<b>Bathing Water</b>					
	Quality of bathing water	Bathing water is distributed around the region at specific locations. This water is relatively fragile and can reach unacceptable standards without ceaseless	Medium	The development of facilities that make use of bathing water may emerge in the Strategy	The development of facilities could have implications for bathing water standards and this issue should be included

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		vigilance			
<b>Air</b>					
	Air quality	The air resource of the region is a key determinant of quality of life, bio-diversity and human health	Low	Air quality is not likely to be significantly impacted on by sports and recreation developments. The principal air quality impact would arise from the traffic associated with large-scale development but the level of impact would be small	Air quality should not be included in the SEA
	Greenhouse gas emissions	The region should play its part in achieving national greenhouse gas emission targets. Air is distributed across the region and is a fragile resource in this context.	Medium	The principal impacts on greenhouse gases would arise from traffic and the use of heating and other energy-using facilities in sports and recreation developments	Consideration of the greenhouse gas situation should be included as the implications meet the criteria set out above even if the impacts will be relatively small in an overall sense
<b>Biodiversity (Habitats, Flora and Fauna)</b>					
	The Burren	The Burren is a major internationally recognised habitat containing many internationally	Medium	The principal sports and recreation activities likely to impact on the Burren are those arising from walking and other trails although other activities such as rock-climbing, potholing and caving might also be of relevance. In	The Burren should be included as it meets some of the criteria set out above

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		protected species. It is an area that has emerged in its current form from a variety of human interactions with nature. The area is subject to a variety of conflicting demands – conservation, agriculture, habitation, tourism and recreation and can be subject to the impacts of environmentally significant impacts arising at a distance from it		addition, the Burren extends into the maritime areas at certain points and may be impacted on by water-based activities at these locations.	
	The Shannon system	As well as its importance from a water point of view, the Shannon system contains many	Medium	Water-based sports and recreation activities	Should be included in the SEA as it meets many of the criteria outlined above



Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		important habitats vulnerable to changes in water quality			
	Other Natura 2000 sites	Other Natura 2000 sites, though important, are contained within the boundaries of an individual city or county and should be addressed by the processes at that level	Medium	A wide variety of activities are possible in the vicinity of Natura 2000 sites	These resources should be considered but at a general rather than an individual level
<b>Landscape</b>					
	Areas of high quality and vulnerable landscape	Landscape is region-wide and is fragile particularly in certain areas.	Medium in certain areas	A wide range of activities might take place in areas of high landscape quality. While many of these will be low impact the cumulative effect could be significant.	These areas should be included in the SEA in a general sense
<b>Cultural assets</b>					
	Built Heritage	The built heritage is widespread throughout the region and is	Low	The impact of sports and recreation development on the built heritage is likely to be small	This should not be included as it does not meet the criteria set out above

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		fragile and sometimes vulnerable. However, it also tends to be gathered in small units within the boundaries of specific administrative units and does not require inter-authority co-ordination			
	Archaeological heritage	The archaeological heritage is widespread throughout the region and is fragile and sometimes vulnerable. However, it also tends to be gathered in small units within the boundaries of specific administrative units and does	Low	The impact of sports and recreation development on the archaeological heritage is likely to be small	This should not be included as it does not meet the criteria set out above

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		not require inter-authority co-ordination			
<b>Material assets</b>					
	Mineral resources	These are spread throughout the region	Low	The impact of sports and recreation development on the mineral resources is likely to be small	This should not be included as it does not meet the criteria set out above
<b>Soil</b>					
	Brownfield development land	Significant brownfield redevelopment land exists in Limerick City and Shannon Industrial Zone	Medium	Significant sports and recreation development is possible within the brownfield land particularly in Limerick City	This should be included as it meets some of the criteria set out above
	Other land zoned for development	Land with theoretical development potential is a widespread resource within the region	Medium	There is a significant number of sports and recreation related developments that might take place within the zoned land of the region	This should be included as it meets a significant number of the criteria set out above
	Land at risk from flooding	This land is widespread throughout the region and has implications for strategic	High	Water related developments; riverside and lakeside activities such as trails	This land should be included as significant types of sports and recreation development could take place within areas liable to flooding

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		decisions			
<b>Human Health</b>					
	Noise	Noise is an issue that is spread throughout the region. It is an important element for quality of life and can be impacted on from a distance	Low	While noise might be an issue in some very specific circumstances, the extent of uses likely to give rise to significant noise impacts are very few	This is a matter that should not be included as the levels of impact are likely to be small
	Air quality	See above			
	Drinking Water Quality	See above			
	Bathing Water Quality	See above			
	Road and transport safety	This is an issue that is spread throughout and across the region. It is a factor that emerges from a combination of traffic volumes and road quality as well as other less infrastructural	High	Sports and recreation development are not specifically part of sports and recreation with the exception of road racing. However, the traffic implications of larger scale sports and recreation developments can be significant.	This should be included as travel to sports and recreation activities is a significant factor

Resource / Factor / Receptor	Unit	Nature, scale, fragility	Relevance to LCSPRS	Comments on type of Sporting or Recreational Activity <i>and/or</i> Impacts of these activities	Rationale for inclusion/exclusion
		questions			
	Light pollution	This is an issue that is associated primarily with built environments including some major infrastructure	Low	Significant stadium developments can give rise to substantial amounts of light over-spill.	This is a matter that should not be included as it does not meet a sufficient number of the criteria outlined above
<b>Population</b>					
	Pleasant living working and recreational environment	A pleasant living and working environment is a matter that is relevant across the region	High	All sporting and recreational developments of a significant nature	This should be included as the outcome of an appropriate Sports and Recreation Strategy will have significant implications for quality of life

## **12. How these considerations will be used**

The SEA will identify the status of relevant environmental indicators within the region that are relevant to the LCSPRS.

When this status has been identified, the SEA process will be used to evaluate strategic options; to identify mitigation measures that are required to maintain the environmental status of specific environmentally important areas; and to identify particularly vulnerable areas where specific mitigation measures will need to be developed.

In addition, the cumulative effects will be considered using these parameters when the actual assessment is being carried out.

## **13. Alternative approaches**

The range of alternative approaches that are possible for a strategy of the nature are limited, given the overall purposes of the strategy and the fact that the focus is on regional-scale developments.

The fundamental parameters of the LCSPRS are as follows –

- To identify an appropriate level of service of regional scale facilities for the region's population
- To identify the current distribution of such facilities
- To identify the catchment of such facilities
- To determine the scale of population within the catchment area and whether this will ensure a viable support for the facility although initial investigation suggests that this will be difficult
- To identify the areas that do not have an adequate service and mechanisms through which those inadequacies can be addressed
- To identify any gaps in the provision of sporting and recreational facilities necessary for tourism
- To identify any opportunities for the provision of national facilities for specific sports and recreation activities

In the light of these parameters the following are some alternatives that might be considered –

- To concentrate all facilities in areas of highest population density but to allow for the provision of those facilities that require natural resources in the areas where the most appropriate of such resources exist
- To concentrate large-scale built facilities in areas of greatest population densities and to provide those facilities that require natural resources in the areas where the most appropriate of such resources exist but to also provide sub-regional multi-sport centres in smaller settlements which will serve smaller and more isolated hinterlands

- To allow for a wide dispersal of all facilities including those that require a high population to sustain them and all others.

Each of these options will be considered further as information develops.

#### **14. Habitat Directive Screening**

This strategy is not intended to identify specific sites for individual developments. The strategy is intended to be more high-level and strategic. However, a HDA screening of the strategy proposals will be carried out and if such a screening suggests that an extended HDA is required for any aspect of the strategy this will be carried out.

#### **15. Consultation in the preparation of this Scoping Report**

This preparation of the LCSPRS is being overseen by a Steering Group representative of some of the key stakeholders including local authorities, the Regional Authority and the DECLG. This Scoping Report has been developed in that context.