

Variation  
No.1



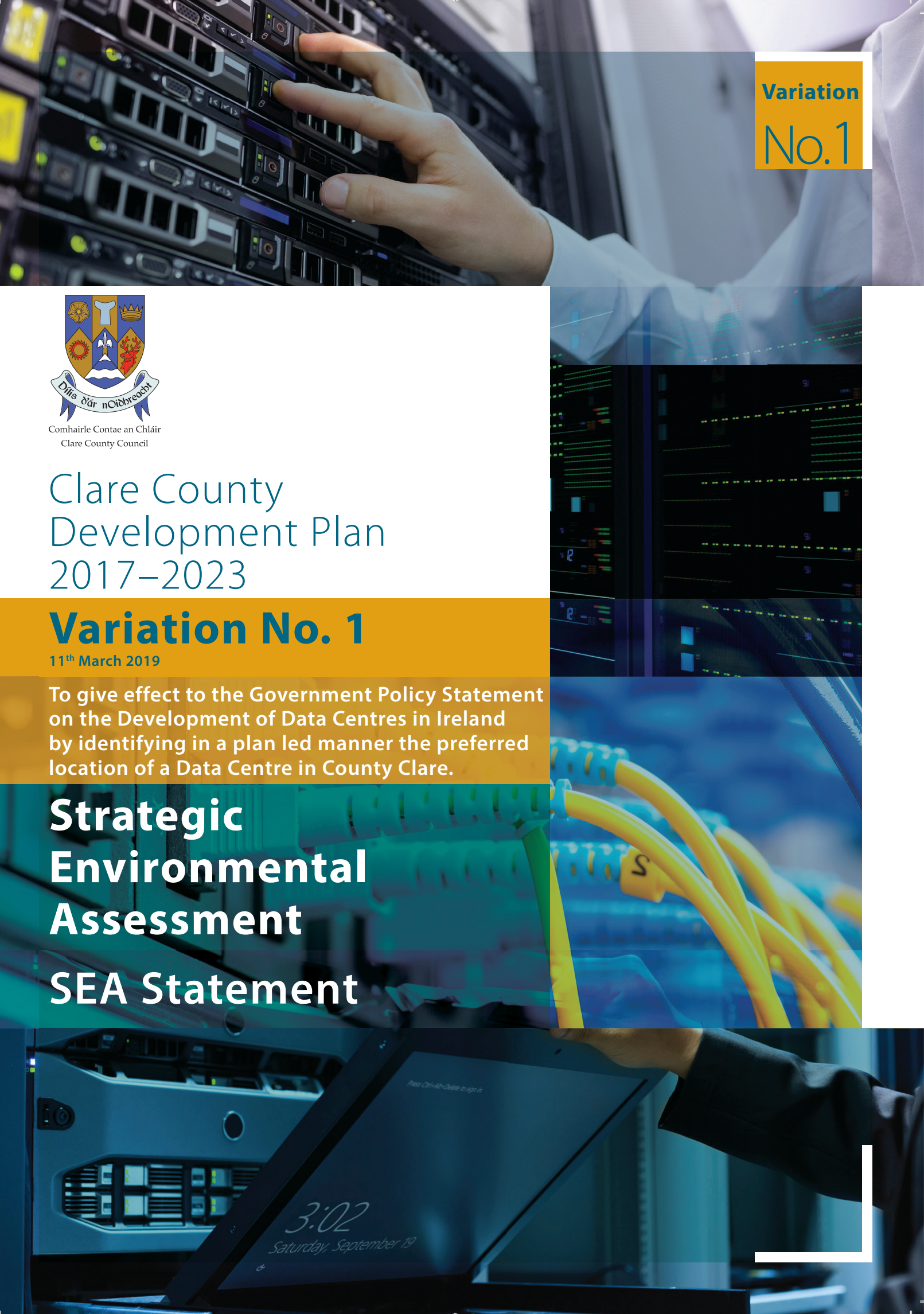
# Clare County Development Plan 2017–2023

## Variation No. 1

11<sup>th</sup> March 2019

To give effect to the Government Policy Statement on the Development of Data Centres in Ireland by identifying in a plan led manner the preferred location of a Data Centre in County Clare.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment SEA Statement



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## **1 Introduction**

Clare County Council has prepared Variation No 1 to the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (CDP). Clare County Council made the Variation on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

The main purpose of the SEA Statement is to provide information on the decision-making process. To document how environmental considerations, the views of statutory consultees and other submissions and the recommendations of the SEA Environmental Report have been taken into account in the Variation, as well as monitoring arrangements.

The Variation No.1 to the Clare CDP was also screened for likely significant effects on European Sites listed in the EU Habitats Directive and a Natura Impact Report accompanied the preparation of the Variation.

This SEA Statement includes the following information:

- Summary of how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Variation No 1 (Section Two)
- Summary of how submissions received during consultation have been taken into account in the Variation (Section Three);
- Reasons for choosing the recommended development scenario, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered (Section Four);
- Measures that are to be undertaken to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementing the Variation (Section Five).

## **2 Summary of how Environmental Considerations and the SEA Environmental Report have been integrated into the Variation No 1.**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this section is to present a summary of how environmental considerations and consultation have informed the Variation plan preparation process. Legislation and guidance relating to SEA recommends that the process of plan preparation, SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) should be integrated and prepared in an iterative process to facilitate the ongoing assessment and evaluation of environmental considerations during plan preparation. A multi-disciplinary team worked on the SEA and AA elements of the Variation. Key tasks associated with the SEA were as follows:

**TABLE 1 STAGES IN SEA**

Stage of SEA	Plan
<b>Stage 1 Screening</b>	Screening is the first stage of SEA to determine if the plan requires full SEA. The SEA Regulations state that SEA is mandatory for certain plans while screening for SEA is required for other plans that fall below the specified thresholds. Given the scale, nature and extent of the Variation, as well as the finding of likely significant effects identified by the Screening Statement in support of Appropriate Assessment, the Variation progressed to the next stage of SEA – Scoping.
<b>Stage 2 Scoping</b>	The purpose of the SEA Scoping report is to identify the scope of the SEA and ensure that relevant data and environmental topics are included in the SEA. The Scoping report was issued to the statutory environmental authorities consultees for a four week period in October 2018.
<b>Stage3 Environmental Report</b>	The Environmental Report tells the story of the proposed Variation and how environmental considerations have been addressed and included during the preparation process. The appropriate assessment is also discussed in the Environmental Report. This report was the main consultation document of the SEA process and was on display alongside the plan along with supporting reports.
<b>Stage 4 SEA Statement-current stage</b>	This stage is the final output of the SEA process and tells the story of the SEA process. It has been prepared now the Variation No 1 is finalised and made.

### **2.2 Baseline Data, Geographical Information System and environmental sensitivity mapping.**

The baseline data assists in describing the current state of the environment, facilitating the identification, evaluation and subsequent monitoring of the effects of the plan. It helps identify existing environmental problems in and around the plan area and in turn these can be quantified (for certain environmental parameters) or qualified. This highlights the environmental issues relevant to each SEA parameter and ensures that the plan implementation does not exacerbate such problems. Conversely this information can also be used to promote good environmental practices and opportunities for environmental enhancement, thereby improving environmental quality where possible.



Baseline data was gathered for all parameters. Site visits were undertaken by the SEA team in October 2019. Other data was gathered from the SEA ER of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023, Irish Water, the EPA, Met Eireann and other sources as appropriate.

The SEA has also used a Geographical Information System (GIS) in the following ways:

- To provide baseline information on a range of environmental parameters;
- To assist in assessment of alternatives;
- To help assess in-combination or cumulative impacts, and
- To provide maps to illustrate environmental parameters in the SEA Environmental Report.

## **2.3 Mitigation**

Mitigation involves ameliorating significant negative effects. Where the environmental assessment identifies significant adverse effects, consideration is given in the first instance to preventing such impacts or where this is not possible, to lessening or offsetting those effects. Mitigation measures can be generally divided into those that:

- Avoid effects;
- Reduce the magnitude or extent, probability and/or severity of effect;
- Repair effects after they have occurred, and
- Compensate for effects, by balancing out negative impacts with positive ones.

The iterative process of the Variation preparation has facilitated the integration of environmental considerations into the layout and text of the plan. In addition, potential positive effects of implementing the plan have been and will be maximised and potential adverse effects have been and will be avoided, reduced or offset.

Many impacts will be more adequately identified and mitigated at project and EIA level. In general terms, all proposals for development will be required to have due regard to environmental considerations outlined in this Environmental Report and associated assessments including the Stage II Appropriate Assessment.

Variation No 1 has been prepared having regard to the policies and objectives outlined within the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023. The environmental protection measures for the CDP 2017-2023 are included in the SEA ER. Specific measures developed for Variation No 1 include the SEA ER (Chapter Nine) which has the full list of mitigation measures.

### **2.3.1 Mitigation Measures-**

The following table presents the mitigation measures recommended for Variation No 1. The column demonstrates whether this was included in the Variation as made.

**Table 2 Mitigation Measures –Amendment of Text**

Mitigation Measure	Included in Variation? Yes/No
A Traffic Management Plan for the construction and operation phase of development.	Yes
Any proposed development shall adopt sustainable practice in terms of building design, materials, construction and operation	Yes
A Hydrological Assessment to determine the effects of the development on groundwaters and groundwater quality shall be submitted with development proposals for the site	Yes
At the southern boundary of the site is a mesotrophic lake, which will require protection through the provision of a buffer incorporating the dense clump of trees to the west of the lake and shall be included in an overall Landscape Management Plan for the site.	Yes
A Construction and Environmental Management Plan shall be submitted as part of development proposals on site. This shall include a Flood Risk Assessment, a Surface Water Management Plan for the construction and operation phase of the development, a Pollution Prevention Plan and shall incorporate principles of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. During the construction phase of developments on site where applicable all relevant best practice guidelines shall be adhered to.	Yes
An Air Quality Impact Assessment with reference to potential impacts on European Sites within the zone of influence of the proposed development shall be submitted, this shall inform an Appropriate Assessment Screening report and/or Natura Impact Report. This Air Quality impact assessment should also assess potential effects on residents or local population	Yes
The hedgerows and scrub area on this site provide a potential foraging and commuting area for wildlife including Lesser Horseshoe bats. Future development proposals must be informed by a series of bat surveys to record the known usage of the site by in particular Lesser Horseshoe bats and ensure that there is no net loss of supporting habitat. The surveys must include a full light spill modelling study. Any habitat loss must be offset by additional landscape planting to ensure connectivity across the landscape	Yes
Impacts of development of the site on conservation interest bird species of surrounding SPAs and breeding birds should be avoided, through protection and retention of breeding bird habitat in accordance with the Wildlife Acts. Development proposals for the site shall be accompanied by bird surveys (to include a winter bird survey) to assess the use of the site by bird species and where disturbance and/or displacement are predicted appropriate mitigation measures shall be identified. Hedgerow and treeline pruning or removal shall be conducted outside the breeding bird season (March 01 <sup>st</sup> through August 31 <sup>st</sup> ).	Yes
An Ecological Impact Assessment (designed by an appropriately qualified landscape architect and ecologist) and a Habitat Survey shall form part of development proposals for the site.	Yes
A Landscape and Biodiversity Management plan shall be submitted to	Yes

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provide landscape, visual and environmental screening and enhancement measures through planting and design	
An Invasive Species Survey and Management plan (if required) shall accompany development proposals for the site	Yes
Development proposals shall also include an Otter Use Survey of the site, and where disturbance and/or displacement are predicted appropriate mitigation measures shall be identified	Yes
A buffer will be required to be provided with regard to the location of a National Monument (CKL-034-007) on site.	Yes
Adequate wastewater treatment and disposal measures shall accompany development proposals for this site to ensure that there is no impact to water quality in the area	Yes

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### **3 Summary of how consultations were taken into account.**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Throughout the preparation of Variation No1 and the SEA ER, consultation was undertaken at key points in the process.

Further information is available in the following SEA Reports:

- SEA Scoping report issued October 2018
- SEA Environmental Report - placed on public display December 2018
- SEA considerations of submissions made and Chief Executive's recommendation

The following section summarises key points and how they were addressed in the SEA and Variation No 1.

#### **3.2 Consultation on SEA- Scoping and Environmental Report**

The purpose of the SEA Scoping report is to identify the scope of the SEA and ensure that relevant data and environmental topics are included in the SEA. The SEA ER accompanied the Variation display period that took place December 2018 – January 2019.

The table below summarises key points raised during the SEA Scoping Stage, and the SEA ER stage.



**Table 3 Environmental Consultation**

Consultee	Key Issue Raised	SEA Response
<b>SEA Scoping Stage</b>  <b>Scientific Officer, SEA Section</b> <b>Office of Evidence and Assessment. Environmental Protection Agency, Regional Inspectorate, Inniscarra, County Cork</b>		
	As a priority, we focus our efforts on reviewing and commenting on key sector plans. For land use plans at county and local level, we provide a 'self-service approach' via our guidance document 'SEA of Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources'. This document is updated regularly.	The Guidance document has been used and informed this SEA process to date.
	Where we provide specific comments on plans and programmes, our comments will focus on the EPA's remit and areas of expertise (in particular water, air, climate change, waste, resource efficiency, noise, radon and the inter-relationships between these and other relevant topics e.g. biodiversity), as appropriate and relevant to the particular plan or programme.	Noted
	The Agency responds to Plans on a priority basis. The attached SEA integration guidance document sets out the key environmental issues, as relevant and appropriate, to be taken into account in the preparation of the SEA and Variation	Noted, and has been used to guide and inform this SEA process.
	Further comment on the Variation may be provided upon receipt of the Draft Environmental Report and Plan and associated documents during the next statutory consultation phase of the SEA Process.	Noted.
	Guidance on Developing and Assessing Alternatives in SEA (EPA, 2015) is also available at: <a href="http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/developingandassessingalternativesinsea.html">http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/developingandassessingalternativesinsea.html</a>	Noted and utilised in this SEA ER
	EPA State of the Environment Report 2016  The EPA published our most recent State of the Environment Report in 2016 'Ireland's Environment – An Assessment (EPA, 2016). The recommendations, key issues and challenges described within this report should be considered, as relevant and appropriate to the Plan area in preparing the Draft Variation and associated SEA. This	Noted and utilised in this SEA ER

Consultee	Key Issue Raised	SEA Response
	report can be consulted at: <a href="http://www.epa.ie/irelandsenvironment/stateoftheenvironmentreport/">http://www.epa.ie/irelandsenvironment/stateoftheenvironmentreport/</a>	
	<p>SEA WebGIS Search and Reporting Tool</p> <p>The EPA SEA WebGIS Search and Reporting Tool is a GIS based web application that allows users to explore, interrogate and produce an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in specific geographic areas. These reports are indicative and will provide an overview of key aspects of the environment within a specific plan area. This may be used to inform the SEA screening and scoping stages for Plans and Programmes with reference in the first instance to the land use sector, though it is also applicable to other sector plans. It may be accessed via <a href="http://www.edenireland.ie">www.edenireland.ie</a></p>	Considered at SEA Screening stage of this proposed Variation.
	<p>River Basin Catchment Management Tool</p> <p>The EPA WFD Application provides a single point of access to catchment data which will be useful for a range of catchment science and management purposes, not just those that are specific to the Water Framework Directive. The Application is accessible through EDEN External link <a href="https://wfd.edenireland.ie/">https://wfd.edenireland.ie/</a> and is available to public agencies.</p>	Noted, used in Chapter Four Environmental Baseline
	<p>Environmental Authorities</p> <p>Under the SEA Regulations (S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011), notice should also be given to the following:</p> <p>The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government</p> <p>Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, where it appears to the planning authority that the plan or programme, or modification of the plan or programme, might have significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment</p> <p>where it appears to the competent authority that the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, might have significant effects in relation to the architectural or archaeological heritage or to nature</p>	Noted and notified

Consultee	Key Issue Raised	SEA Response
	<p>conservation, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht), and</p> <p>any adjoining planning authority whose area is contiguous to the area of a planning authority which prepared a draft plan, proposed Variation or local area plan.</p>	

**Table 4 Consultation on SEA ER and Natura Impact Report**

Consultee	Comment	SEA response
David Galvin Office of Environmental Assessment EPA	<p>Welcomes commitment to CEMP and traffic management.</p> <p>Should clarify when other plans/ surveys referred to such as Otter survey, Biodiversity and Landscape Plan will be carried out during the lifetime of the variation.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>These surveys will be undertaken specifically for the lands that are the focus of this Variation.</p> <p>The following objective is present in the Clare CDP 2017-2023 already:</p> <p><i>CDP 2.1: It is an objective of the development plan:</i></p> <p><i>a) To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications in the plan area to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report contained in Volume 10 of this development plan;</i></p> <p><i>b) To require projects to be fully informed by ecological and environmental constraints at the earliest stage of project planning and any necessary assessment to be undertaken, including assessments of disturbance to species, where required;</i></p> <p><i>c) To require compliance with the objectives and requirements of the Habitats Directive, the Bird Directive, Water Framework Directive, all other relevant EU Directives and all relevant transposing legislation.</i></p>

Consultee	Comment	SEA response
	<p>Section 5.1.5 Water Services</p> <p>We note this and a commitment should be included to ensure that adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure is in place in advance of the development of the Variation lands.</p> <p>Resilient water supplies capable of dealing with extreme weather events should be considered.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The Clare CDP 2017-2023 already includes a specific objective in this regard as follows:</p> <p><i>CDP 8.24 Water Services</i></p> <p><i>It is an objective of the development plan:</i></p> <p><i>a) To work closely with Irish Water to identify and facilitate the timely delivery of the water services required to realise the development objectives of this plan;</i></p> <p><i>b) To facilitate the provision of integrated and sustainable water services through effective consultation with Irish Water on the layout and design of water services in relation to the selection and planning of development areas and the preparation of master plans;</i></p> <p><i>c) To ensure that adequate water services will be available to service development prior to the granting of planning permission and to require developers to consult Irish Water regarding available capacity prior to applying for planning permission;</i></p> <p><i>d) To ensure that development proposals comply with the standards and requirements of Irish Water in relation to water and waste water infrastructure to facilitate the proposed development.</i></p>
	Submission lists the requirements of information to be included in an Environmental Report.	Noted, the requirements of information to be included in an Environmental Report as provided for in S.I.436 of 2004 is included in Table 1 of the SEA ER and identifies where each element is included and addressed in the SEA ER.
	Submission provides information on requirements for SEA Statement and procedures upon adoption of Plan	Noted, and will be followed.
Diarmuid Buttimer Developme	<p>Proposed Variation and Site Selection</p> <p>The reasons for identifying the lands as the preferred location are listed</p>	Noted, Consideration of Alternatives provides a detailed commentary and assessment on how the preferred alternative was selected.



Consultee	Comment	SEA response
nt application s unit, Dept of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	but it is noted that there is a lack of clarity as to how ecological and other environmental constraints were taken into account in selecting the site.	The seven sites identified by Clare County Council and the further 16 identified through Expressions of Interest were assessed at Strategic level against each of the Strategic Environmental Objectives (including Biodiversity SEOs) and a commentary was provided for each one in terms of proximity to European Sites, existing landcover and both natural and cultural heritage resources.  It is considered that at Strategic level this approach is in line with requirements and does provide a commentary on environmental constraints considered through the assessment process whilst balancing the needs and requirements for the objectives of the Variation.
	<p>Likely effects on the Environment Biodiversity</p> <p>Bat houses/roosts at Knockanean and Knocknaskibbole are 850m and 1900m respectively from the zoned lands. Both bat roosts are within the 2.5k radius within which there should be no net loss of potential Lesser Horseshoe Bat feeding habitat (derived from SAC conservation objectives) and within the 3km radius specified in the Clare CDP. There would be a more robust basis for identifying Toureen as the preferred site as the preferred site for data centre developments if these bat roost were identified in associated maps and if inconsistencies relating to losses of habitat were further addressed and mitigation at plan level.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Figure 5.5 of the SEA presents known bat roosts within 20km of the Variation Lands. Therefore information on such roosts are already presented in the SEA ER in this figure.</p> <p>Regarding the inconsistency of SAC Conservation Objectives and the CDP, as this is a Variation to the CDP, it is recommended that the 3km radius, as per the Clare CDP be applied.</p>
	<p>Likely Effects on European Sites</p> <p>The NIR identifies 25 European Sites as being at risk from the proposed variation. This is overly precautionary and appears to apply from the blanket application of a 15km buffer.</p> <p>This will limit the precision of the Appropriate Assessment that will be carried out.</p> <p>It is of concern that only plans and one project are considered in combination effects.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>This comment was addressed through a review of the Screening Statement in Support of Appropriate Assessment which provided greater detail on the sites that are identified as being subject to Appropriate Assessment.</p>

## **4 Consideration of Alternatives**

### **4.1 Introduction**

One of the critical roles of the SEA is to facilitate an evaluation of the likely environmental consequences of a range of alternative development scenarios, in this case the Variation No 1 to the Clare CDP 2017-2023.

These alternative development scenarios should meet the following considerations:

- Take into account the geographical scope, hierarchy and objectives of the plan –be realistic
- Be based on socio-economic and environmental evidence – be reasonable
- Be capable of being delivered within the plan timeframe and resources –be implementable
- Be technically and institutionally feasible – be viable

In developing, refining and assessing the alternatives for the Variation, the toolkit included in Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment Good Practice Guidance (EPA 2015) was utilised.

In addition to the above, Variation No 1 will function within the policy hierarchy established by national, regional and county strategic plans, as well as relevant legislation.

### **4.2 Alternative Scenarios for Variation No1 to the Clare CDP 2017-2023.**

In considering the alternative scenarios for the Variation, a number of different approaches were assessed. These are presented below:

#### A. STRATEGIC NON SITE SPECIFIC WRITTEN OBJECTIVE IN THE CLARE CDP 2017-2023 TO FACILITATE DATA CENTRES. POLICY ONLY AMENDMENT

This objective would provide for a clear policy statement in the CDP that would support the provision of data centres, subject to compliance with the relevant standards, policies and objectives in the current CDP. Whilst such an objective may provide clarity in terms of an overall statement of support for Data centres, such an approach would have a number of disadvantages from the environmental and spatial planning perspective. This objective would not provide clarity to potential applicants or the public in terms of strategic site locations, that could fulfil the recommended criteria identified by the IDA in considering potential data centre locations. It would not allow for a careful consideration of strategic environmental considerations, as potential lands and applications could be submitted on an adhoc basis. Furthermore in the absence of being able to assess strategic environmental considerations across a range of SEOs, such as biodiversity, and population and human health this approach would neither provide clarity or guidance to potential applicants or allow for a careful consideration of potentially more suitable sites for such landuse activities at County level.

## B. INDICATIVE STRATEGIC LOCATIONS IDENTIFIED FOR LOCATION OF DATA CENTRES. POLICY AND LANDUSE ZONING AMENDMENTS

This approach would use the recommended criteria provided by the IDA and allow for the identification of areas of potential for data centre locations at county level. This approach would have the positive effect of being able to identify potential opportunity areas, and avoid most environmentally sensitive areas (using the environmental sensitivity mapping used in the Clare CDP 2017-2023). However, the disadvantage to this approach is that it does not allow for greater scrutiny of these strategic lands and may result in areas being identified at strategic level, that are not suitable for this landuse activity upon closer consideration.

## C. SPECIFIC SITES IDENTIFIED FOR LOCATION OF DATA CENTRES, POLICY AND LANDUSE ZONING AMENDMENTS

This approach would be similar to that outlined in the preceding alternative; however, it would expand the level of investigation and allow for more detailed assessment of potential lands at county level. Essentially this approach would also use the IDA recommended criteria to identify potential sites, rather than strategic areas. This approach allows for a greater level of scrutiny of environmental resources as it narrows the focus of the search onto specific sites, rather than strategic areas. This should also allow for a greater level of confidence in the identification of sites as data centre locations. By amending the landuse zoning and policy objectives, this approach allows for greater clarity by showing support at policy level including the Government Statement on *The Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy* and also allowing environmental measures to be developed for specific sites reflecting local environmental sensitivities.

From the above evaluation, the lands at Toureen emerged as the preferred lands for a potential data centre. This site is the preferred area at strategic level, in terms of balancing the objectives of the Variation with environmental considerations including proper planning and sustainable development. The SEA then assessed the best policy response for the Variation. These are summarised below:

### **4.3 Preferred site, consideration of appropriate Landuse Zoning in the Clare CDP 2017-2023**

#### 1. EXTENSION OF CURRENT LANDUSE ZONING INDUSTRIAL.

The Industry landuse zoning in the Clare CDP 2017-2023 is defined as follows:

*The use of land for industry uses shall be taken to include the use for industrial processing or manufacturing of a scale and nature where there is significant goods, manufacturing and related issues. Uses of this nature may result in the generation of emissions.*

*This type of industrial activity may also be subject to the SEVESO Directives, the main EU legislation dealing with the control of on-shore major accident hazards involving dangerous substances.*

*A mix of uses such as office-based or retail development is not considered appropriate in areas zoned for industrial development.*

This scenario would entail leaving the existing Industrial landuse zoning in place but extending it to a larger area. Depending on the type of development activity proposed under this Industrial zoning, could give rise to a variety of potential environmental effects; though these are difficult to quantify in the absence of potential development activities and existing environmental protection provisions in the Clare CDP 2017-2023 should mitigate adverse environmental effects at project level.

The industrial landuse zoning generally applies to more intensive landuse activities for example, industrial processing or manufacturing. Potential development activities under this landuse zoning could include IPCC licensed activities and or Seveso Sites. Therefore an expansion of the Industrial Landuse zoning at a specific site in the County could result in more intensive landuse activities, that are considered unnecessary in light of data centre requirements. Moreover the data centre does not represent industrial processing or manufacturing landuse and therefore this option is excluded on the basis that it does not fit the industrial landuse definition.

## 2 ASSESSMENT OF LANDUSE ZONING OF ENTERPRISE AS AN APPROPRIATE ZONING OBJECTIVE FOR DATA CENTRES

The Enterprise zoning objective is defined in the CDP2017-2023 as follows:

*Lands zoned for 'enterprise' shall be taken to include the use and development of land for high-end research and development, business, science and technology based industry, financial services, call centres/telemarketing, software development, enterprise and incubator units, small/medium manufacturing or corporate offices in high quality campus/park type development*

This Enterprise zoning definition is more consistent with potential data centre landuse than (technology based industry and campus type development) than industrial landuse zoning. Approximately 58 areas are zoned for Enterprise in the County; however, most of these would not meet the IDA recommended criteria for data centre landuse. By amending this Enterprise zoning, additional text may also be required in relation to key elements of large data centres.

For all zonings – potential applications would be required to demonstrate compliance with the relevant environmental protection measures of the Clare CDP 2017-2023.

## 3 CONSIDER A NEW LANDUSE ZONING SPECIFICALLY FOR DATA CENTRES.

This option would require a new landuse zoning in the CDP that would specifically address data centres. This would have the advantage of a clear policy statement that specifically supports data centres in the County and could be tailored to ensure that environmental considerations were embedded in any definition. However, the disadvantages to this is that it would introduce a specific zoning objective for a single landuse measure and this may set



a precedent for further uses. Moreover as a single site has been selected through the process outlined in the preceding sections, the proposed Variation would be identifying a single new landuse zoning definition for an individual site in the county. This may affect other potential data centre sites as discussed in the preceding section. Ultimately the environmental effects of data centres may be sufficiently considered through the Enterprise zoning.

#### **7.6 Preferred alternative**

The lands at Toureen were identified as particularly suitable for potential data centre landuse in light of its potential suitability based on research by Clare County Council and thereafter through the Expression of Interest process.

In terms of landuse policies and zoning, the preferred alternative is to amend the Enterprise Zoning to allow for data centres and associated energy generating infrastructure.

By complying with appropriate mitigation measures - including those which have been integrated into the Variation - potential adverse environmental effects which could arise as a result of implementing this scenario would be likely to be avoided, reduced or offset.

## 5 Monitoring

### 5.1 Introduction

Article 10 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EEC) requires that monitoring must be undertaken of the significant environmental effects directly related to the implementation of the Variation. This is to provide for any unforeseen adverse effects to be identified at an early stage in its implementation, allowing for appropriate remedial action to be undertaken.

The primary purpose of monitoring is to allow the actual impacts of Variation No 1 to the Clare CDP 2017-2023 to be assessed against the Strategic Environmental Objectives and their associated targets and indicators. The indicators used will show changes that would be attributable to the implementation of the County Development Plan.

Monitoring can use existing sources of information and does not necessarily require new research to be undertaken, but can be effective in identifying where additional research should be targeted to supplement where information is deficient.

**Table 5** below presents the SEA Monitoring Table. The SEA Objectives formed the basis of the assessment of the Variation to the Clare CDP and it includes targets (overall aim), indicators (measurement of monitoring change), data sources and agency/body responsible for the monitoring.

As a number of the indicators within the monitoring table relate to the number of planning applications received it is also recommended that data arising from planning applications, particularly in terms of environmental monitoring through the preparation of Screening Reports for Appropriate Assessment, Ecological Reports, Environmental Impact Statements, Environmental Reports etc be integrated into the GIS and a dedicated environmental database. This will assist in assessing cumulative impacts also, in particular ecology and water quality. This is something which Clare County Council Planning Department has progressed and is being further developed and should be prioritised and driven through the CDP Monitoring Programme.

**Table 5 Strategic environmental objectives, targets and indicators**

Strategic Environmental Objective	Target	Indicator/Data Sources	Source/Responsibility/Frequency
<b>Population, Human Health and Quality of Life</b>			
P1 – Protect, enhance and improve people’s quality of life based on high quality residential, community, educational, working and recreational environments and on sustainable travel patterns.	<p>Increase in the number of green spaces and amenities available to the public.</p> <p>Improved trends in perceived quality of life related to these matters.</p> <p>Bonds to ensure the completion of developments until taken charge.</p> <p>No significant deterioration in human health as a result of environmental factors.</p>	<p>No/area of green spaces and amenities available to the public.</p> <p>Improved trends in perceived quality of life related to these matters as gathered through surveys.</p> <p>Employment rates over the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>Completion handover of development to CCC.</p> <p>Availability of public transport/ smarter travel initiatives.</p> <p>Occurrence of any decline in human health around the plan area.</p>	<p>CSO – every six years in line with census CCC - Annual</p> <p>Iarnrod Eireann - Annual Bus Eireann – Annual</p>
P2 - To protect human health from hazards or nuisances arising from incompatible land uses/developments.	No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors.	Any occurrence of spatially concentrated deterioration in human health.	CSO – every six years and as results arise on a yearly basis from the 2016 census CCC – Annual
P3 - Provision of green spaces for amenity and recreational uses.	Increase in the number of green spaces and amenities available to the public.	No. /area of green spaces and amenities available to the public.	CCC – Annual
<b>Biodiversity</b>			

<p>B1 – Protect, conserve, enhance where possible and avoid loss of diversity and integrity of the broad range of habitats, species and wildlife corridors.</p>	<p>No reduction in length or loss of hedgerows. Operators who conduct mechanical hedge cutting should have achieved the Teagasc proficiency standard MT 1302-Mechanical Hedge Trimming. 30% broadleaf/native afforestation. Protection and promotion of non-designated salmonid rivers. No. ecological networks or parts thereof which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity to be lost without remediation as a result of implementation of the Clare CDP 2017 – 2023 Afford the same level of protection to Margaritifera Sensitive Areas as is afforded to Freshwater Pearl Mussel SAC rivers</p>	<p>Percentage of unique habitats and species lost in non-designated sites over the lifetime of the Plan through trending of annual/bi-annual surveys. Percentage of broadleaf/native afforestation. Percentage loss of connectivity between areas of local biodiversity importance as a result of implementation of the Clare CDP as evidenced from a resurvey of CORINE mapping.</p> <p>Decrease in population of freshwater pearl mussels in <i>Margaritifera</i> sensitive areas and/or habitat and water quality deterioration.</p>	<p>CCC – Annual/bi-annual surveys OPW - Annual</p> <p>Coillte- Annual NPWS – Annual or as and when surveys completed by NPWS for National Monitoring programmes on a rolling basis and/or surveillance monitoring undertaken for compliance with Article 17 of the Habitats Directive and reported on every 6 years. CCC - Annual OPW - Annual National Biodiversity Data Centre – Annual</p> <p>Shannon RBD/National RBD – First and second RBMP Cycle</p>
<p>B2 – To achieve the conservation objectives of European Sites (SACs)</p>	<p>No loss of protected habitats and species during the lifetime of the Plan. No compromise in the favourable</p>	<p>Designation of additional areas due to biodiversity and/or geological value. Percentage of unique habitats and species lost in designated sites through trending of annual surveys.</p>	



and SPAs) and other sites of nature conservation.	conservation condition of European sites. No compromise or impact on the achievement of the favourable conservation condition objectives (whether maintain or restore) of European sites.	No./percentage of developments in/near Natura 2000 network. Percentage of European sites in the plan area that are at 'Favourable' conservation status. Percentage of Qualifying Interest Features which have achieved their specific objectives of maintain or restore.	
B3 - Conserve and protect other sites of nature conservation including NHAs, pNHAs, National Parks, Nature Reserves, Wildfowl Sanctuaries as well as protected species outside these areas as covered by the Wildlife Act.	No loss of protected habitats & species during the lifetime of the Plan. Submission of Screening Report or Natura Impact Statement for proposed developments with planning applications in/and/or near European Sites.	Percentage of unique habitats and species lost in designated sites through trending of annual surveys. Provision/No. of Screening Reports/Natura Impact Statements with developments proposed for sites in/and/or near European sites.	
B4 - Meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the Shannon River Basin Management Plan/National	All waters within the plan area to achieve the requirements of the WFD and the relevant River Basin Management Plan by 2027.	No. of surface and groundwater bodies achieving "Good Status". No. of waterbodies indicating deterioration in status.  No. of planning applications with sufficient inclusion of buffer zones where	

River Basin Management Plan	Ensure provision of riparian zones at project/site level.	necessary and applicable.	
B5 – To minimise and, where possible, eliminate threats to biodiversity including invasive species.	<p>Prevent the introduction of new invasive or alien species.</p> <p>Control/manage new invasive species.</p> <p>Control/manage/e radicate invasive species throughout the county.</p>	<p>No., type and location of invasive species identified.</p> <p>No. of actions achieved under the Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>Increase/decrease in coverage of invasive species identified.</p> <p>No. of submissions/observations submitted through invasive species Ireland “Alien Watch”.  <a href="http://www.invasivespeciesireland.com/alien-watch">www.invasivespeciesireland.com/alien-watch</a></p> <p>The National Biodiversity Data Centre will track success in the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan by measuring increases in the abundance and diversity of pollinators within the Irish landscape as the 81 actions are implemented.</p>	
B6 - Promote green infrastructure networks, including riparian zones and wildlife corridors.	<p>Ensure new development is set back from rivers.</p> <p>The recommended width for larger river channels (&gt;10m) is 35m to 60m and for smaller channels (&lt;10m) is 20m or greater. The determined width should be tailored</p>	No. planning permissions close to water.	

	to site specific, river reach or lakeshore characteristics and their associated habitats. It is important that the buffer zone is large enough to protect the ecological integrity of the river (including emergent vegetation), the riparian zone (bank side vegetation including trees) and takes into account the human history of the area.		
<b>Soil and Geology</b>			
S1 – To maximise the sustainable re-use of the existing built environment, derelict, disused and infill sites (brownfield sites), rather than greenfield sites.	Preference for development on brownfield site over green field. Specified % of new applications granted to be on brownfield sites. Limited and controlled development of greenfield sites. Re-use of soil from redeveloped sites where possible. No incidences of soil contamination.	No/% of new developments on brownfield sites. Area of brownfield land developed over the plan period. % of total greenfield land developed. Level of urbanisation. Excessive land-filling of quality soil. Incidences of soil contamination.	CCC – Annual through a review of planning applications
S2 – Minimise the excavation	Limited and controlled development of	Volume of construction and demolition waste recycled.	CCC – Annual

and movement of soils within site works.	greenfield sites.  Limit the amount of excavation in sensitive locations for example peat excavation in wind farm sites.	No. of brownfield sites that have been redeveloped.	
S3 – Minimise the consumption of non-renewable deposits on site.	Re-use of soils from redeveloped sites where possible.  Increased provision of construction and demolition waste facilities.	Excessive land-filling of quality soils.  No. of facilities for Construction and Demolition Waste.	CCC – Annual
S4 - Minimise the amount of waste to landfill from site.	Reduction in the quantities of waste sent to landfill.  Increase in the quantities of waste sent for recycling.  Increase in the number of bring banks in the plan area.  Compliance with the Southern Region Waste Management Plan.	Quantity of household waste sent to landfill.  Quantity of household waste sent to recycling.  The number of bring banks provided for in the plan area.  Compliance with the Southern Region Waste Management Plan.  Statistical Indicators (Primary and Secondary) reported on through the Southern Waste Region Statistical Indicators Annual Report.	CCC  EPA   Southern Waste Region – Annually through Statistical Indicators Report and Waste Management Plan Annual Report.
S5 - Conserve, protect and avoid loss of diversity and integrity of	No loss of diversity and integrity of designated habitats, geological features, species	Percentage of habitats, geological features, species etc. Lost over the lifetime of the Plan through trending of annual/bi-annual	GSI

designated habitats, geological features, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites.	or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites.  Designation of sites as County Geological Sites.	surveys.  No. of areas designated as County Geological Sites.	CCC - Annual
<b>Water</b>			
W1 – Protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and, with regard to their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the aquatic ecosystem (quality, level, flow).	To achieve a Q rating of 4 ‘good’ quality status by 2015.	Biotic quality rating of river waters at EPA monitoring locations.	EPA – Annual as recorded through the WFD Monitoring Programme
W2 – Monitor the on-going trends in water quality status.	Demonstrate an on-going status improvement and an upward trend in water quality.	Progression from bad to poor, poor to moderate, moderate to good and good to high in terms of WFD Status.	EPA EDEN Portal – As up-dated through the 2 <sup>nd</sup> River Basin Management cycle by the EPA.
W3 – Maintain or improve the quality of surface water and	Improvement or at least no deterioration in surface water quality by 2015.	Changes in receiving water quality as identified during water quality monitoring for WFD, ShIRBMP/National RBMP conducted by CCC and EPA.	CCC – As reported through the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> River Basin Management Plan.  EPA – As reported through the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup>

groundwater (including estuarine) to status objectives as set out in the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Shannon River Basin Management Plan and POMS.			River Basin Management Plan.
W4 – Implement appropriate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in the County.	New drainage systems to be compliant with SUDs.	No. of developments granted planning permission that incorporate SUDs.	CCC – Quarterly planning permissions granted.
W5 – Reduce the impact of polluting substances to all waters and prevent pollution and contamination of groundwater by adhering to aquifer protection plans and to maintain and improve the quality of drinking	Improvement or at least no deterioration in surface and groundwaters by 2015.	Changes in receiving waters and groundwater quality as identified by water quality monitoring programmes conducted by CCC and EPA.	CCC - Annual EPA – Annual

water supplies.			
W6 - Promote sustainable water use and water conservation in the plan area and to maintain and improve the quality of drinking water supplies.	Pressure on water and waste water treatment plants.	<p>Decrease in no. of water shortage notices issued during drought periods.</p> <p>Decrease in the amount of water consumed per household in the plan area.</p>	CCC/Irish Water
W7 –Protect flood plains and areas of flood risk from development through avoidance, mitigation and adaptation measures.	In accordance with OPW/DOEHLG, all planning applications within designated Flood Risk Zones A and B as identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the plan are required to undertake Flood Risk Assessment.	Level and location of flooding.	<p>CCC – Records obtained as and when flood events occur</p> <p>OPW – As updated on <a href="http://www.floods.ie/">http://www.floods.ie/</a> and once CFRAMS final maps become available in 2017 and are updated as part of the overall implementation of the Floods Directive in Ireland.</p>
W8 – To promote a responsible attitude to recreation and amenity use of water in relation to water quality and disturbance to species and to prevent pollution and	Maintain water quality, no pollution or contamination issues in our rivers and lakes in particular but also our estuaries and all waters designated as bathing waters.	Adherence to bathing water guidance and standards in accordance with the bathing water Directive and associated regulation Regulation (S.I. No. 79 of 2008).	<p>Retention or approval for Blue Flag status - The Blue Flag is operated in Ireland by An Taisce-The National Trust for Ireland on behalf of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) – Annually</p> <p>Progression of bathing waters from ‘sufficient’ to ‘good’ to ‘excellent’ with no waters</p>

contamination of designated bathing waters.			categorised as 'poor' in accordance with the water quality standards specified in the 2008 Regulations with a classification of at least 'sufficient' to be achieved for all bathing waters.
<b>Air and Climate Change</b>			
C1 – Minimise all forms of air pollution and maintain/improve ambient air quality.	Maintain ambient air quality through reduction of private vehicle usage.	Air quality indicators.	CCC - Annual  EPA - Annual
C2 – Minimise emissions of greenhouse gases and contribute to a reduction and avoidance of human-induced global climate change.	Provide for increased use of public transport.  Increase number of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes in the plan area.  Establish incentives/increase no. of permissions for renewable energy projects.	Use of public transport.  Provision of cycle lanes and walking routes.  No. of grants given for insulation works; energy efficiency of new buildings – energy rating figures.  No. of planning applications for residential houses with low carbon footprint.  No. Of wind turbines permitted which may contribute to mitigation of, and adaptation to Climate Change.  Location of permitted wind farms within areas of the greatest wind energy resource in County Clare as depicted through the SEAI Wind Atlas. <a href="http://maps.seai.ie/wind/">http://maps.seai.ie/wind/</a>	CCC – Annual as new cycle strategy and/or Green Infrastructure is published.  CSO – Annual as figures/reports based on 2016 census become available.  CCC – No and type of planning applications in relation to low carbon residential housing and wind turbines and/or commencement of construction of such on an annual basis.  SEAI
C3 - Reduce car	An increase in the percentage of the	Percentage population within the plan area	CSO – every 6 years through census



dependency within the plan area by way of an integrated approach to sustainable urban transport.	<p>population travelling to work or school by public transport or non-mechanical means.</p> <p>A decrease in the average distance travelled to work or school by the population of the plan area.</p>	<p>travelling to work or school by public transport or non-mechanical means.</p> <p>Average distance travelled to work or school by the population of the plan area.</p>	information.
<b>Material Assets – Transport</b>			
T1 – Maximise sustainable modes of transport and encourage use of walkways/cycle paths as alternative routes to school, work, and shops.	<p>An increase in provision of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes.</p> <p>An increase in population travelling to work and school by public transport or non-motorised transport.</p> <p>A reduction in the distance travelled to work or school by the population of the plan area.</p>	<p>No. of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes provided in the plan area.</p> <p>Percentage of the population within the plan area travelling to work or school by public transport or non-mechanical means.</p> <p>Average distance travelled to work or school by the population of the plan area.</p> <p>Number of private cars on road as a percentage of Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT).</p>	<p>CCC – Achievement of Clare County Council Active Travel under the Departments Smarter Travel Scheme annually.</p> <p>CSO – every 6 years through census information.</p> <p>NRA</p>
T2 - Provide for ease of movement for all road users and to promote development patterns that protect and enhance road safety.	<p>Reduce the number of private vehicles on the road.</p> <p>Increase in public transport.</p> <p>Increase cycle and walking modes of transport.</p> <p>Integrated traffic management plan for the plan area.</p>	<p>No. of private cars on the road as a percentage of AADT.</p> <p>No. of applications for the Bike to Work Scheme.</p> <p>Traffic survey and pedestrian surveys undertaken in the preparation of a traffic management plan.</p>	CCC - ongoing

<b>Material Assets – Waste</b>			
WA1 – Implement the waste pyramid and encourage reuse/recycling of material wherever possible.	<p>Reduction in the quantities of waste sent to landfill.</p> <p>Increase in the quantities of waste sent for recycling.</p> <p>Increase in the number of bring banks in the plan area.</p> <p>Compliance with the Southern Region Waste Management Plan</p>	<p>Quantity of household waste sent to landfill.</p> <p>Quantity of household waste sent to recycling.</p> <p>The number of bring banks provided for in the plan area.</p> <p>Compliance with the Southern Region Waste Management Plan.</p>	<p>CCC – Environment Department statistics and reports.</p> <p>Southern Waste Region – Annually through Statistical Indicators Report and Waste Management Plan Annual Report</p>
<b>Material Assets – Water Supply</b>			
WS1 - To ensure adequate and clean drinking water supplies.	Upgrade existing water treatment plants within the plan area.	Number of upgrades undertaken within the plan area.	<p>Irish Water – Achievement of Water Services Strategic Plan objectives</p> <p>Irish Water – The implementation of the Lead Mitigation Plan over the lifetime of the County Development Plan to achieve safe, clean drinking water for all.</p>
WS2 - Improve efficiency in distribution of potable water to the population through pipe rehabilitation and to promote	<p>Reduce the amount of water usage.</p> <p>Reduce the amount of water lost through pipe leakage (currently 65%) through the pipe rehabilitation.</p> <p>Increase usage of</p>	<p>Water meter readings (Reintroduction of water charges based on conservation).</p> <p>Sale of water harvesting butts.</p> <p>Retrofitting of rainwater harvesting units.</p>	Irish Water – reduction in household costs for water charges based on conservation (This is dependent on water charges being reintroduced; meter readings are still ongoing in the absence of charges.

water conservation and sustainable water usage for long-term protection of available water resources.	water collected through water harvesting.		
<b>Material Assets – Waste Water</b>			
WW1 - To ensure that all zoned lands (existing and proposed) are connected to the public sewer network ensuring treatment of wastewater which meets EU requirements prior to discharge.	Upgrade existing wastewater treatment plant infrastructure identified within the plan as being insufficient, based on existing and forecasted population demands to meet EU requirements.	Upgraded Waste Water Treatment Plants within the plan area.	Irish Water - Achievement of Water Services Strategic Plan objectives.  CCC – granting of permission conditioned based on a future WWTP upgrade.  CCC – refusal of permission as no upgrade to WWTP due to take place.
WW2 - Reduce the dependency on individual proprietary wastewater treatment facilities and ensure the highest standards possible in existing and	Testing of individual proprietary wastewater treatment facilities in line with EU/National guidance.  Sustainable alternative individual proprietary WWT facilities.	No. planning applications for single houses within the plan area, served by individual WWT facility.  Testing of individual WWT facilities.  Types/usage/percentage using sustainable methods of WWT.	CCC – ongoing.

future wastewater treatment facilities.	Measures to promote encourage and incentivise a change from traditional WWTS to alternative sustainable systems.		
<b>Material Assets – Renewable Energy</b>			
RE1 - Reduce waste of energy, promote use of renewable energy sources and support energy conservation initiatives across all sectors including the development of low carbon business practices and buildings.	Increase in renewable energy developments.	<p>No. of renewable energy developments granted planning permission.</p> <p>Establishment of R&amp;D projects (one or more).</p> <p>Meet or exceed County contributions to national renewable energy targets.</p> <p>Meet or exceed County contributions to national energy efficiency/conservation targets.</p> <p>In line with the Wind Energy Strategy (Volume 5 of the Development Plan) achieve the minimum target of 550MW from wind energy by 2017.</p> <p>The number of hectares of land that has been converted to use for Bio energy production utilising Miscanthus; Oilseed Rape; Reed Canary Grass or SRC Willow. (Suitable lands have been identified through the SEAI Bioenergy Map <a href="http://maps.seai.ie/bioenergy/">http://maps.seai.ie/bioenergy/</a>).</p>	<p>CCC – new solar farms, windfarms or other renewable energy developments granted.</p> <p>LCEA, Clare CoCo, SIFP – number of new R&amp;D projects within the Plan area e.g. testing of tidal energy devices.</p> <p>Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly.</p>
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>			
CH1 – Protect	No permitted	No. of developments	CCC - ongoing

and conserve the cultural heritage including the built environment and settings; archaeological (recorded and unrecorded monuments), architectural (Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, vernacular buildings, materials and urban fabric) and manmade landscape features (e.g. field walls, footpaths, gate piers etc.).	development which involves loss of cultural heritage, including protected structures, archaeological sites, Architectural Conservations Areas and landscape features.	permitted during the lifetime of the plan which will result in the loss or partial loss of protected structures or sites of archaeological status.  No. of additions to the list of Protected Structures.  No. of additions to the list of Architectural Conservation Areas.  Development of cultural heritage areas for amenity resources.	
CH2 – To protect, conserve and enhance local folklore, traditions and placenames within the Plan area.	To increase the use of local placenames within the plan area.	No. Of applications which are referred to the Conservation and Heritage Officers.	CCC - ongoing
CH3 – To ensure the restoration and re-use of	To increase the number of uninhabited and derelict structures	No. planning applications for restoration/re-use of vacant and derelict structures.	CCC - ongoing

existing uninhabited and derelict structures where possible opposed to demolition and new build (to promote sustainability and reduce landfill).	that are restored opposed to demolition.	No. planning applications for demolition and redevelopment of vacant and derelict sites.	
<b>Landscape</b>			
L1 – Conserve, protect and enhance valued natural, cultural and built landscapes, views of local value and features including those of geological and aesthetic value.	Ensure no significant disruption of historic/cultural landscapes and features through objectives of the County Development Plan.	<p>No. of developments permitted and their impacts on cultural/historic landscapes.</p> <p>No. of developments located within Scenic Route or no degradation of areas designated as Heritage Landscapes (Locations in text and on maps).</p> <p>No. of developments located within a designated scenic view or route or high landscape area in County Clare that disrupt views (based on the LCA).</p> <p>Development and application of framework in relation to the application of LCA and their contribution to SEA.</p>	<p>CCC – ongoing</p> <p>Heritage Council - ongoing</p> <p>Fáilte Ireland - ongoing</p> <p>GSI - ongoing</p> <p>NPWS - ongoing</p> <p>EPA SEA Unit in conjunction with CCC</p>
L2 - Maintain and enhance landscape quality within the plan area by minimising	<p>No significant visual impact from development.</p> <p>Ensure no significant disruption of high</p>	<p>No. of developments located within a high landscape area that disrupt views (based on LCA):</p> <p>Loss of vistas/views.</p>	CCC - ongoing

visual impacts through appropriate design, assessment and siting.	landscape values.	<p>Loss of trees.</p> <p>Loss of amenity woodland.</p> <p>No of large scale developments permitted.</p>	
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CLARE COUNTY  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2017  
2023



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Clare County Council

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Variation  
No.1

Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023  
**Strategic Environmental Assessment**  
SEA Statement  
11<sup>th</sup> March 2019