

Mr Bernard Greene
Senior Planner
Leitrim County Council
Aras an Chontae
Carrick on Shannon
Co Leitrim
N41 PF67

24th July 2020

Our Ref: SCP200707.1

Re. Strategic Issues Paper for the Leitrim County Development Plan 2022-2028

Dear Mr Greene,

We acknowledge your notice, dated 17th June 2020, in relation to the Strategic Issues Paper for the Leitrim County Development Plan 2022-2028 (the 'Plan').

The EPA is one of five statutory environmental authorities under the SEA Regulations. In our role as an SEA environmental authority, we focus on promoting the full and transparent integration of the findings of the Environmental Assessment into the Plan and advocating that the key environmental challenges for Ireland are addressed as relevant and appropriate to the plan. Our functions as an SEA environmental authority do not include approving or enforcing SEAs or plans.

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 the attached guidance document '*SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources*'. This document is updated regularly and sets out our key recommendations for integrating environmental considerations into Local Authority land use Plans. We recommend that you take this guidance document into account in preparing the Plan and SEA.

In preparing the Plan, Leitrim County Council should also ensure that the Plan aligns with key relevant higher-level plans and programmes and is consistent with the relevant



objectives and policy commitments of the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern & Western Region.

Specific Comments

Climate Action

In preparing the Plan, you should take into account the need to align with national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, including those set out in the *Climate Action Plan 2019*, as well as incorporating any relevant recommendations and measures in sectoral, regional and local climate adaptation and mitigation plans.

The Agency recently published [Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections for 2018-2040](#) (EPA, 2019) which should be taken into account in preparing the Plan, as appropriate and relevant.

The Agency has also published an update of the existing good practice guidance note on how to incorporate climatic factors into plans and programmes falling under the remit of the SEA Directive – [Integrating Climatic Factors into the Strategic Environmental Assessment Process in Ireland](#) (EPA, 2019). Key climate-related aspects to consider in the Plan and SEA, where relevant, include:

- Direct and indirect impacts of the Plan on greenhouse gas emissions and removals (Mitigation)
- Direct and indirect impacts of climate change on the implementation of the Plan, e.g. the resilience of critical water service infrastructure to flooding and drought (Adaptation)
- The linkages between mitigation and adaptation (inter-relationships).

Biodiversity

Leitrim County Council should promote the need to protect non-designated aspects of biodiversity including ecological corridors / linkages / green infrastructure and areas of important local biodiversity. To help protect and/or to enhance biodiversity in the Plan area, there is merit in assessing and incorporating any relevant habitat mapping available.

Invasive Alien Species Control and Management

A clear commitment should be included to ensure that implementation of the Plan, in particular, any proposed development associated with the Plan, addresses the control and management of invasive species.

Transboundary/Adjacent Authorities

Adjoining local authorities and equivalent authorities in Northern Ireland, should be consulted, as relevant" in preparing the plan and associated SEA.

Key Plans and Programmes

Some suggested national / regional / sectoral plans to consider in preparing the Plan and SEA are listed below.

Sustainable Development

- National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals

Tourism

- National Greenways Strategy
- Local authority tourism strategies

Climate

- Relevant sectoral, regional and local authority climate adaptation and mitigation plans/strategies – including Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Built and Archaeological Heritage (DCHG, in preparation).
- Relevant OPW Flood Risk Managements Plans and associated flood risk mapping
- National Climate Action Plan 2019
- National Energy and Climate Plan (DCCAE, in preparation)
- National Mitigation Plan
- National Adaptation Framework

Biodiversity

- National Biodiversity Action Plan
- All Island Pollinator Plan
- Any available biodiversity/heritage plans and habitat mapping

Water & Water Services

- River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021
- Water Services Strategic Plan / Capital Investment Programme and Draft National Water Resources Plan (Irish Water)

Transport

- Planning Land Use and Transport – Outlook 2040 (DTTAS, in prep)

Air & Noise

- Local Authority Noise Action Plans
- National Clean Air Strategy (DCCAE, in prep)
- National Air Pollution Control Programme (DCCAE, 2019)

Available Guidance & Resources

Our website contains various SEA resources and guidance, including:

- SEA process guidance and checklists
- Inventory of spatial datasets relevant to SEA
- topic specific SEA guidance (including *Good practice note on Cumulative Effects Assessment* (EPA, 2020), *Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring* (EPA, 2020), *Integrating climatic factors into SEA* (EPA, 2019), *Developing and Assessing Alternatives in SEA* (EPA, 2015), and *Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment* (EPA, 2012))

You can access these resources at: www.epa.ie/monitoringassessment/assessment/sea/

Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Webtool

The ESM Webtool is a new decision support tool to assist SEA and planning processes in Ireland. The tool brings together over 100 datasets and allows users to explore environmental considerations within a particular area and create plan-specific environmental sensitivity maps. These maps can help planners anticipate potential land-



use conflicts and help identify suitable development locations, while also protecting the environment. The ESM Webtool is available at www.enviromap.ie.

EPA SEA WebGIS Tool

Our SEA WebGIS Tool, available through the EDEN portal (https://gis.epa.ie/EIS_SEA/), allows public authorities to produce an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in a specific geographic area. It is intended to assist in SEA screening and scoping exercises.

EPA WFD Application

Our WFD Application provides a single point of access to water quality and catchment data from the national WFD monitoring programme. The Application is accessed through EDEN <https://wfd.edenireland.ie/> and is available to public agencies. Publicly available data can be accessed via the Catchments.ie website.

EPA AA GeoTool

Our AA GeoTool application has been developed in partnership with the NPWS. It allows users to select a location, specify a search area and gather available information for each European Site within the area. It is available at: <http://www.epa.ie/terminalfour/ApproAssess/index.jsp>

State of the Environment Report – Ireland’s Environment 2016

In preparing the Plan and SEA, the recommendations, key issues and challenges described within our most recent State of the Environment Report [Ireland’s Environment – An Assessment 2016](#) (EPA, 2016) should be considered, as relevant and appropriate to the Plan.

Transition to a low carbon climate resilient economy and society

You should ensure that the Plan aligns with national commitments on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as relevant sectoral, regional and local adaptation plans.

Environmental Authorities

Under the SEA Regulations, you should also consult with:

- The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government,
- The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, where it appears to you as the competent authority that the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, might have significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment,
- The Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht where it appears to you as 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 conservation, and



- 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.

If you have any queries or need further information in relation to this submission, please contact me directly. I would be grateful if you could send an email confirming receipt of this submission to: sea@epa.ie.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Galvin'.

David Galvin
SEA Section
Office of Evidence and Assessment
Environmental Protection Agency