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Director of Services,
Planning Department,
Kilkenny County Council,
County Hall,
Johns Street,
Kilkenny

25th March 2020

Our Ref: SCP200301.1

Re. SEA Scoping for Local Area Plan (LAP) for the area of Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch for the period 2020-2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

We acknowledge your notice, dated 6th March 2020, in relation to the preparation of a new Local Area Plan (LAP) for the area of Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch for the period 2020-2026 (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, Kilkenny and Carlow County Councils 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 Southern Region.

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/AppropAssess/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, appearing to read 'Suzanne Wylde'.

Suzanne Wylde
Scientific Officer
SEA Section
Office of Evidence and Assessment
Environmental Protection Agency