

Review of the Monaghan County Development Plan (incorporating the Development Plans for the Towns of Monaghan, Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones and Ballybay) 2007-2013



Strategic Environmental Issues Paper March 2011



Strategic Environmental Assessment - What is it?

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a requirement under European Law, transposed into Irish Law, which measures the effects of proposals in the development plan on the environment and, if they are significant, indicates what mitigation measures should be applied to the plan and how environmental issues and challenges can be monitored. It also facilitates the identification and appraisal of alternative plan strategies to ensure the impacts of the policies and objectives upon the environment are fully appraised.

This Strategic Environmental Issues Paper is meant to initiate public debate on what broad environmental issues are associated with implementation of the development plan. The paper sets out what are considered to be the main environmental issues facing County Monaghan between now and 2019, but the list is not exhaustive.

An environmental report relating to the SEA will be made available and comments invited on it at the same time as the draft development plan. Public displays and wide ranging consultation will take place throughout the county and regular updates on what is happening will be available at www.monaghan.ie and on facebook.



Appropriate Assessment - What is it?

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) is an assessment based on best scientific knowledge of the potential impacts of the development plan on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site which are wildlife sites of European importance i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPA's), and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to prevent negative effects on these Natura 2000 sites.

Screening exercises during the preparation of the new plan will be carried out to determine the potential for impact upon the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites. The conclusions of these screening exercises will assist in the preparation of the SEA. AA Screening Reports, and any other subsequent documents relating to the AA will be made publicly available.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity means the total variety of life forms on earth. This includes people, plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms such as viruses and bacteria. Biodiversity is a measure of the health of ecosystems. An ecosystem is a group of living (e.g. fauna and flora) and non-living components (e.g. climate, soil, geology or rock type) which have inter-dependent relationships.

Greater biodiversity implies greater health. Rapid environmental changes can have significant effects on bio diversity. Since the emergence of humans there has been ongoing biodiversity reduction. The reduction is caused primarily by human impacts, particularly habitat destruction. Biodiversity's impact on human health is a major international issue.

County Monaghan is rich in biodiversity including the bogs of Slieve Beagh, and the scenic lakes, wetlands and grasslands within the rolling lowland drumlin landscape for which Monaghan is famed. It also occurs in urban centres in parks, woods, ponds and gardens.

The Biodiversity Plan for County Monaghan 2008-2013 covers the three levels at which biodiversity may be considered, namely ecosystem diversity, species diversity and genetic diversity. This plan sets out a series of realistic, measurable and targeted actions under various themes to be implemented by key stakeholders over its six year period.

Flora and Fauna

Flora is the plant life naturally occurring in an area, while fauna is the animal life naturally occurring in an area. County Monaghan has a wide and varied range of flora and fauna, some of which are protected species under the European Habitats Directive and Irish law. Development can pose a significant threat to the wealth of flora and fauna in the county.

Population and Human Health

Increase in population, human activities and settlement patterns have the potential to place increased pressure on biodiversity, water quality, landscape, cultural heritage and air. In particular, increased pressure on water quality arising from pollution can have a significant impact on human health. Individual and cumulative changes in the quality of the natural and built environment at local, regional and national level have the potential to impact to varying degrees on human health and wellbeing. High levels of radon in buildings and road safety can also be significant issues.

Soil and Water

Certain forms of development and activities including, urban and rural development, windfarms, waste disposal, afforestation, recreation and agricultural activities can place a significant pressure on soils. Changes in precipitation arising from global warming could have significant impacts on slope stability and could impact on soil and water quality, through incidences such as soil erosion and sedimentation.

Development and activities can often impact on water quality including; groundwater, drinking water and bathing water. Urban and rural development including, wastewater and surface water disposal, landfills, quarries, contaminated lands, illegal dumping, agricultural activity, water recreational activities and afforestation can have significant impacts on water quality. Excessive inputs of nutrients, namely phosphorous and nitrogen present one of the most significant risks to water quality.

Air and Noise

Impacts arising from air pollution are primarily associated with transport and industrial emissions. Increases in noise levels associated with development and increasing traffic can also have significant impacts on wildlife and humans.

Climate

Increased greenhouse gas emissions have been linked with climate change, resulting in such things as increases in the intensity of rainfall events leading to flooding and soil erosion. Of particular concern is the high dependency on the use of the car arising from a dispersed settlement pattern.

Material Assets

Material assets include infrastructural services and facilities and other items as well as cultural heritage, agricultural lands, quarries, coastal and water resources. Developments and other human activities can often impact on these assets. For example high levels of vacant residential and commercial vacancy represent an underutilised resource and if left idle, can over time deteriorate and detract from the character of urban areas.

Cultural, Architectural and Archaeological Heritage

Pressures can arise from certain developments and activities on or near sites of heritage value. The visual amenities and character of urban and rural areas items of architectural, archaeological and historical importance may be placed under pressure by such works. It is also acknowledged that development works can often have a positive impact on our cultural heritage.

Landscape

Developments and activities can impact on visually sensitive areas including designated landscape. County Monaghan has a unique drumlin landscape, inter-dispersed with many lakes. The sustainable management of the landscape is a key challenge facing the county. The Landscape Character Assessment for County Monaghan 2008 identifies the different landscape character types and landscape character areas within the county, and examines the forces for change. How development is accommodated in the landscape will have a significant bearing on the unique quality of the landscape in County Monaghan.

Inter-relationships of the above

Cumulative impacts and interaction of above mentioned items can give rise to increased pressure on the environment. The impacts and interactions will obviously vary in extent and nature. For example, issues in respect to accommodating population growth crosses a number of environmental topic areas such as water quality, landscape and material assets. Population increase and changes in peoples activities and settlement patterns can impact on a wide range of the topics mentioned above.

- **What do you think are the main environmental issues facing County Monaghan?**
- **What do you consider are the main threats to biodiversity in County Monaghan?**
- **How can the value of our natural heritage, built heritage, cultural heritage, and archaeological heritage be best protected and improved?**
- **How can we facilitate development in the County whilst preserving and protecting our natural heritage?**
- **How can the policies and objectives in the County Development Plan ensure that the environment is protected?**

Stages of Strategic Environmental Assessment

Stage 1 — Publication of Strategic Environmental Issues Paper (8 weeks consultation period)	Mar-Apr 2011
Stage 2 — Preparation of Manager's Report on Strategic Environmental Issues Paper Submissions received	May-Jun 2011
Stage 3 — Consideration by Elected Members of Manager's Report and Submissions	Jul-Sep 2011
Stage 4 — Preparation of Environmental Report	Oct 2011-Feb 2012
Stage 5 — Publication of Environmental Report (10 weeks consultation period)	Mar-May 2012
Stage 6 — Preparation of Manager's Report on Submissions received in respect of Environmental Report	May-Jul 2012
Stage 7 — Consideration by Elected Members of Environmental Report, Draft Plan, Manager's Report and Submissions	Aug-Sep 2012
Stage 8 — Notification of Determination of Need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (if necessary) of Material Alterations to Draft Plan (4 weeks consultation period)	Oct-Nov 2012
Stage 9 — Preparation of Manager's Report on Submissions received in respect of Strategic Environmental Assessment of Material Alterations to Draft Plan	Dec 2012
Stage 10 — Consideration by Elected Members of Manager's Report and Submissions	Jan 2013
Stage 11 — Making of Development Plan by Elected Members with or without Material Alterations — Publication of Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement and Monitoring	Feb 2013

Public Consultation Meetings

Members of the Planning Section will be available to discuss the matters outlined in this Strategic Environmental Issues Paper at the following times, dates and places:-

*Monaghan Town — Market House, Market Street
Tuesday 15th March 2011 @ 7.30pm*

*Carrickmacross— Workhouse, Shercock Road
Tuesday 22nd March 2011 @ 7.30pm*

*Castleblayney — Iontas Centre, Connabury
Thursday 24th March 2011 @ 7.30pm*

*Clones — Ulster Canal Stores, Cara Street
Tuesday 29th March 2011 @ 7.30pm*

*Ballybay — Birch Court, Main Street
Thursday 31st March 2011 @ 7.30pm*

How can I make my comments?

*By written submission to the relevant council below:
Monaghan County Council, The Glen, Monaghan
Monaghan Town Council, Town Hall, 1 Dublin St, Monaghan
Carrickmacross Town Council, Shercock Rd, Carrickmacross
Castleblayney Town Council, Main St, Castleblayney
Clones Town Council, Pringle Building, Monaghan St, Clones*

By E mail to the relevant council below:

devplan@monaghancoco.ie

clerk@monaghantc.ie

clerk@carrickmacrosstc.ie

clerk@castleblayneytc.ie

clerk@clonestc.ie

The closing date for submissions in respect of this Strategic Environmental Issues Paper is 5pm on Friday 6th May 2011

You can also arrange to discuss any issues by telephone or by appointment by contacting the Planning Section directly on 047 30595 prior to submitting your comments.

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