

**SI 435 Strategic
Environmental
Assessment Screening
Report (Plans and
Programmes)**

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1 Introduction

Cork County Council has prepared a new Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy (RAP). This policy has been prepared following a review of the 2006 Cork County Council Recreation and Amenity Policy and is intended to replace the interim policy currently in place since 2019. It has been drafted to take into account the latest Cork County Development Plan 2022 as well as other relevant national policy, guidelines and best practice which have been published since the 2006 policy.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the likely environmental effects of implementing a Plan or programme in order to ensure that environmental considerations are appropriately addressed in the decision-making process.

The European Directive (2001/42/EC) on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (the SEA Directive) was transposed into national legislation by:

- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435/2004); and
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436/2004).

These regulations were subsequently amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No. 200 of 2011) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No. 201 of 2011).

The legislation requires that as a first step SEA Screening be carried out which is “the process for deciding whether a particular plan, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA.”

The purpose of this document is to carry out a screening exercise to determine, in respect of the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy, if SEA is required to be carried out in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Regulations, as amended. If SEA is considered to be required following Screening, then further steps are required including SEA scoping, environmental assessment, consultation etc.

This SEA Screening Report provides the findings of the SEA Screening process for the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy.

2 Legislative Context

The screening stage of SEA is primarily addressed through Article 2 and Article 3 of the SEA Directive and Annex II which sets out the considerations in relation to determining significant environmental effects. Article 2(a) of the SEA Directive establishes two cumulative conditions which P/P must satisfy in order for the further elements of the SEA Directive to be applicable to them:

- They must have been prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure, by a parliament or government; and
- They must be required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions.

If these conditions are not satisfied, the measure is not regarded as a Plan or Project which comes within the scope of the SEA Directive. Once a Plan or Project has been determined to be within the scope of the SEA Directive, Article 3 sets out the criteria for determining which Plan or Project requires environmental assessment. Again, several conditions must be met. A Plan or Project must

- a) belong to the list of sectors and
- b) set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive, or
- c) require an Appropriate Assessment under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

Annex II of the SEA Directive presents the criteria for determining the likely significant effects referred to in Article 3(5) of the Directive. The significance of effects is determined with reference to the type and nature of the Plan or Project, its position in the planning hierarchy and its influence on other Plans or Projects. It also has regard to the nature of the effects and the sensitivity of the receiving environment as well as the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects. Cumulative and transboundary issues must also be considered.

The SEA Directive is transposed into Irish legislation by the following:

- European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations (S.I. 435/2004)
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations (S.I. 436/2004). Both pieces of legislation were amended in 2011 through the following amendment regulations:
- European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Amendment Regulations (S.I. 200/2011)
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Amendment Regulations (S.I. 01/2011).

The criteria defined in Annex II of the SEA Directive has been transposed into national legislation via Schedule 1 of S.I. 435/2004.

This SEA Screening has been carried out in accordance with above legislation.

3 Guidance Documents

A number of national guidance documents on SEA were reviewed in the preparation of this SEA Screening Report, including:

- Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening (EPA, 2021)
- Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland (EPA, 2013)
- Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment- Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004)
- Implementation of Directive 2001/43 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (European Commission, ND)
- SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities (EPA, 2015)
- Integrating Climatic Factors into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note (EPA, 2019)
- Synthesis Report on Developing A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies For Plans And Programmes In Ireland (EPA, 2003)

4 Other Assessments

In addition to the SEA, there is a requirement under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) (as transcribed into Irish law) to assess whether Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have significant effect on a European site, which includes Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), in view of the site's conservation objectives. The requirement for an assessment derives from Article 6 of the directive, and in particular Article 6(3) which requires that:

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the conservation of a site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.”

In recognition of this, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening has also been carried out.

5 Cork County Council Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy

5.1 *Background and Policy Context*

This policy has been prepared following a review of the 2006 Cork County Council Recreation and Amenity Policy and is intended to replace the interim policy currently in place since 2019. It has been drafted to take into account the latest Cork County Development Plan 2022 as well as other relevant national policy, guidelines and best practice which have been published since the 2006 policy.

5.2 *Plan Area*

The Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy is applicable to the entire functional area of Cork County Council.

5.3 *Aim of the Plan/Project*

The purpose of this document is to set out appropriate policy and strategy recommendations for the planning and provision of public open space/amenity space and outdoor type recreation facilities in County Cork.

5.4 *Content of the Plan/Project*

The policy considers the advancement of and makes recommendations in relation to the strategic approach within the County (and at settlement level) and sets out a development level approach and standards for recreation and amenity provision. Policy and actions are set out as considered appropriate. The main focus of the policy is publicly owned and/or maintained land, or land which is capable of being taken in charge, the primary use of which is for outdoor recreation and amenity (both active and passive).

6 SEA Screening Methodology

6.1 Overview

Although an SEA Screening Report is not a mandatory requirement in the legislation, it has become embedded good practice to produce a screening report and it is the recommended approach in much of the SEA guidance listed in Section 3 above. As such, this SEA screening report has been produced following the guidance in Section 3 above.

In particular, the EPA Synthesis Report *“Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland”* sets out a series of procedural tasks to consider when carrying out SEA Screening of plans and programmes.

Step 1 of SEA is that the overall characteristics of the plan or programme should first be considered, by means of a ‘pre-screening check’ to see if it falls within the requirements of the SEA Directive (referred to as ‘Task 1.1’ in the EPA guidance document). This allows rapid screening-out of a plan or programme that is clearly not going to have any environmental impact and screening-in of those that do require SEA.

Should the ‘pre-screening check’ determine that the plan or programme is of a type that falls within the requirements of the SEA Directive, the potential environmental significance of implementing the proposed plan or programme should then be considered, against the significance criteria outlined in Annex II (2) of the SEA Directive (referred to as ‘Task 1.2’ in the EPA Synthesis Report). The application of environmental significance criteria is important in determining whether an SEA is required.

The overall steps to SEA screening is provided in **Figure 1** below.

6.2 Step1: SEA ‘Pre-Screening Check’

The EPA Synthesis Report *“Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland”* provides a “decision-tree” or flowchart, which simplifies the complex wording of the SEA Directive into a systematic and logical series of questions.

Task 1.1 ultimately helps to determine whether the plan or programme in question constitutes a plan or programme as defined and characterised in the SEA Directive. Task 1.1 therefore enables the rapid screening out of those plans that are not subject to the SEA Directive and which would therefore not require SEA.

The EPA flowchart is illustrated in **Figure 1** below and sets out the steps of the SEA Screening methodology.

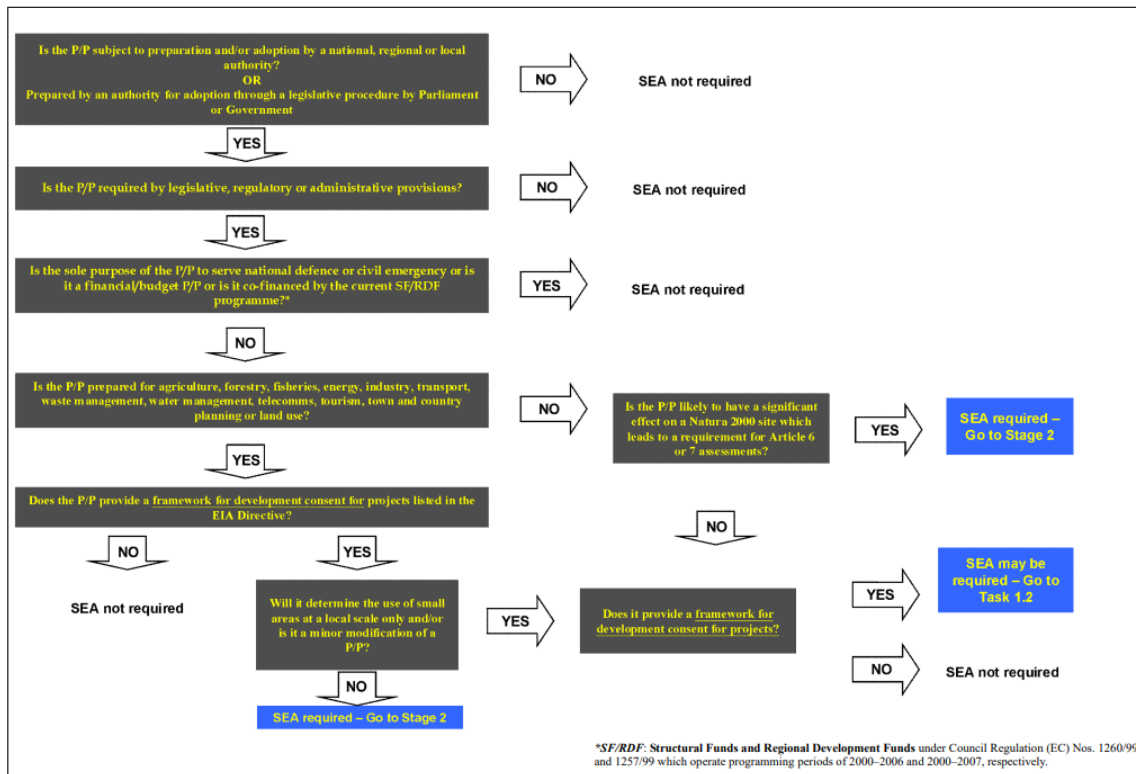


Figure 1: SEA Screening Decision Tree. Source: EPA 2013 “Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland” Synthesis Report

The Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy was assessed using the criteria in the EPA ‘decision-tree’ or flowchart in order to ascertain the requirement for SEA in the table below.

Table 1: SEA Step 1 Assessment using EPA Criteria

	EPA CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
1	Is the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy subject to the preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR Prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?	The Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy is prepared on behalf of Cork County Council to fulfil a commitment in the Cork County Development Plan 2022.
2	Is the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions?	<p>This policy has been prepared following a review of the 2006 Cork County Council Recreation and Amenity Policy and is intended to replace the interim policy currently in place since 2019.</p> <p>The Cork County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 includes a commitment to to prepare a Recreation and Amenity Policy to replace the current Interim Policy within two years of the plan being adopted. (paragraph 14.5.5)</p> <p>Therefore, it can be determined that the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy is required by administrative provisions.</p>

3	Is the sole purpose of the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget Plan or is it co-financed by the current Structural Funds/Regional Development Funds Programme?	The sole purpose of the project is not to serve national defence or civil emergency, and the Plan is not a financial budget, or co-financed by the current Structural Funds and Regional Development Funds programme.
4	Is the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecoms, tourism, town and country planning or land-use?	The Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy is considered to be a planning and land use focused document and should therefore be subject to 'Task 1.2' of the SEA screening process.
5	Does the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy provide a framework for development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	<p>According to the European Commission 'Guidance on the implementation of Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment,' this would "<i>normally mean that the plan or programme contains criteria or conditions which guide the way the consenting authority decides an application for development consent. Such criteria could place limits on the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in a given area; or they could contain conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission is to be granted; or they could be designed to preserve certain characteristics of the area concerned (such as the mixture of land uses which promotes the economic vitality of the area).</i>"</p> <p>The determinant of providing a 'framework for development consent' is described in Annex II of the SEA Directive as the degree to which a Plan '<i>sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources</i>'</p> <p>Some of the measures put forward in the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy could be considered to set a framework for development consent, in that they identify circumstances under which development will be encouraged. For example, it sets out a development level approach and standards for recreation and amenity provision at the development level.</p> <p>The Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy is not considered to fall under any of the projects which would require mandatory environmental assessment under Annex I of the EIA Directive¹ but may be considered to fall under Annex II which could be determined to require an EIA.</p> <p>It is considered that the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy has the potential, to some degree, to set a framework for the future development consent of projects, in accordance with the EPA interpretation of the same.²</p> <p>It is therefore determined that the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy could be considered to fall within the requirements of the SEA Directive and should therefore be subject to 'Task 1.2' of the SEA screening process;</p>

¹ EIA Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU

² As set out in the EPA report "Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland."

consideration of the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy against statutory significant criteria.

The results of the above ‘pre-screening check’ are circled in red in Figure 2 below and shown within the context of the EPA’s ‘decision-tree’ or flowchart. As such, it found that SEA may be required and that further assessment under Task 1.2 is required before a conclusion can be reached.

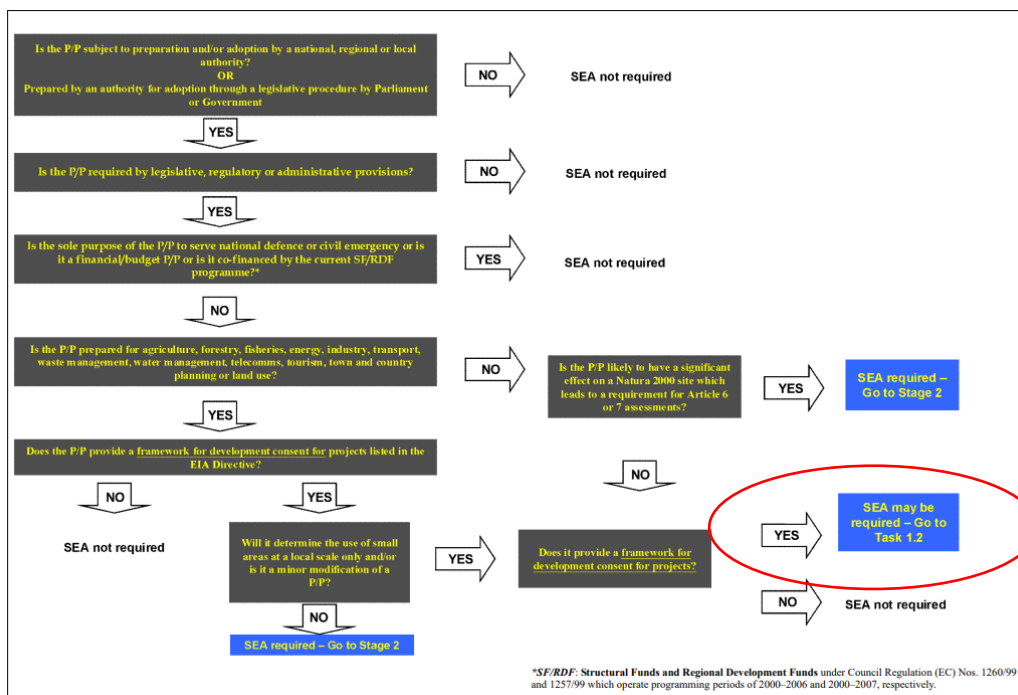


Figure 2- Outcome of SEA Screening Task 1.1

6.3 Step 2: SEA Significance Criteria Assessment

As outlined above, Task 1.1 helps to determine whether the plan or programme in question constitutes a plan or programme as defined and characterised in the SEA Directive. If it is determined that a plan or programme is a type which is defined in the SEA Directive, it then needs to be determined if that plan or programme has the potential to give rise to negative environmental effects, and if it should therefore be subject to SEA.

‘Task 1.2’ of the SEA Screening methodology constitutes environmental significance screening, which may be undertaken to assess whether a plan or programme, which has not been screened out by Task 1.1, is likely to result in significant environmental effects and should therefore, be taken forward for SEA. Annex II of the SEA Directive sets out the “statutory” criteria that should be addressed when undertaking Task 1.2.

Annex II of the SEA Directive is transposed into national legislation as Schedule 1 ‘Criteria for determining whether a Plan or Programme (or Modification thereto) is likely to have significant effects on the Environment’ of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended.

Thus, Task 1.2 of the SEA Screening methodology involves an assessment of the plan or programme against the significance criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the European Communities

(Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended in order to determine if the plan or programme should be subject to SEA. The significance criteria is as follows:

1. *The characteristics of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, having regard, in particular, to*
 - *the degree to which the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;*
 - *the degree to which the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, influences other plans including those in a hierarchy;*
 - *the relevance of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;*
 - *environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme;*
 - *the relevance of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).*

2. *Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to*
 - *the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;*
 - *the cumulative nature of the effects;*
 - *the transboundary nature of the effects;*
 - *the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);*
 - *the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);*
 - *the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:*
 - a) *special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;*
 - b) *exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;*
 - c) *intensive land-use.*

the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.”

The Annex II criteria listed above forms the framework under which the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy is assessed in Step 2. In order to adequately assess and describe the ‘*characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected*’ relevant to the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy, each of the proposed measures were reviewed against the sub headings of this Significance Criteria. This detailed assessment of each measure set out by the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy is included in **Appendix A. Table 2 and Table 3** below provide an overview of the assessment of the project against the ‘Significance Criteria’ and sub-criteria listed above.

Table 2: Assessment of the characteristics of the Plan/Programme

	SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
	The characteristics of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, having regard, in particular, to	
1	The degree to which the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy sets a framework for projects	Some of the measures, put forward in the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy could be considered to set a framework for projects and other activities in that they support the need for

and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.

more strategic planning in relation to recreation and amenity infrastructure whilst also in parallel identifying guideline conditions/standards under which development will be assessed.

While it is therefore recognised that the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy has the potential to set a framework/guide projects and other activities, it should also be considered in the context of the Irish strategic planning hierarchy.

The National Planning Framework 2040 is described as *“the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of the country.”*

The NPF promotes National Strategic Outcomes relevant to the future development of County Cork. One of the ten strategic outcomes on which the NPF is based is ‘enhanced amenity and heritage’.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a settlement and economic growth strategy that seeks to realise the National Planning Framework at a regional level. One of the key elements of the RSES strategy is the strengthening of recreational assets and natural and built heritage as a key component of Quality of Life.

This draft policy is not only affected by planning policy but is affected by many streams of government policy in relation to health and wellbeing, sports, disability inclusion, biodiversity and play, for example.

The Cork County Development Plan which was finalised in 2022 represents the most recent planning policy document covering the County. It aligns with National and Regional Policy and was prepared taking into account various Section 28 Guidelines many of relevance to Recreation and Amenity.

The Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines published in 2024 include key high-level recommendations in relation to open space/green infrastructure as well as quantity standards for public open space (policy and objective 5.1).

The Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy has been drafted to closely align with these national policies and guidelines.

Thus, while it is recognised that the Draft RAP has the potential to set a framework for projects and other activities, the degree to which it does so, in isolation, is not considered to be significant, when reviewed in the context of the hierarchy of national, regional plans and guidelines which underpin the Irish planning process.

<p>2</p>	<p>The degree to which the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy influences other plans including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>The policy and actions of the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy have been developed taking into wider national policy and guidance, Cork County Development plan policy, etc.</p> <p>It is considered that the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy could have the potential to influence other plans and programmes, specifically those in the strategic planning hierarchy however its alignment with national policy and guidance ensures that this influence will be of a complementary nature.</p> <p>In the identification of the influencing potential of the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy, it is important to note the purpose of the policy, which is ultimately to promote Healthy Placemaking and enhance overall quality of life through the provision of strategically planned amenities including green infrastructure and the delivery of high quality multifunctional residential amenity spaces.</p> <p>Thus, while the Draft RAP will, to some degree, influence other plans and programmes in a hierarchy, the influencing potential of the Draft RAP is likely to result in an overall positive effect on the environment.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>The relevance of the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>The National Planning Framework 2040 is described as <i>“the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of the country.”</i></p> <p>The NPF promotes National Strategic Outcomes relevant to the future development of County Cork. One of the ten strategic outcomes on which the NPF is based is ‘enhanced amenity and heritage’.</p> <p>The purpose of the Draft RAP is to set out appropriate policy and strategy recommendations for the planning and provision of public open space/amenity space and outdoor type recreation facilities in County Cork.</p> <p>The focus of the policy is the provision of green space and amenities (facilitating both active and passive recreation) at the local level and more broadly the provision of more strategic green and blue infrastructure.</p> <p>The document has been drafted based on key sustainable development principles and themes which are set out in chapter 3 and aligns with other key documents such as the Cork County Development Plan 2022 and the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines (2024) which endorse sustainable development.</p> <p>The Draft RAP is therefore considered to significantly promote sustainable development in County Cork.</p>

4	Environmental problems relevant to the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy	It is not considered that the Draft RAP will give rise to any environmental problems. The document has been drafted based on key sustainable development principles and themes, aligning with and complementing existing national, local policy and guidance.
5	The relevance of the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	Strengthening and enhancement of biodiversity and ecosystems is a fundamental of green infrastructure. As part of the European Green Deal to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 the 2030 EU Biodiversity Strategy sets out a long-term plan to protect nature and reverse degradation of ecosystems. The Draft RAP which promotes more strategic planning in relation to green infrastructure can be considered to be complementary to this aim.

Table 3: Assessment of the characteristics of the effects

	SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
	The characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to	
1	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	<p>The purpose of the Draft RAP is to set out appropriate policy and strategy recommendations for the planning and provision of public open space/amenity space and outdoor type recreation facilities in County Cork.</p> <p>The focus of the policy is the provision of green space and amenities (facilitating both active and passive recreation) at the local level and more broadly the provision of more strategic green and blue infrastructure.</p> <p>It is envisaged that implementation of the Draft RAP will deliver well planned and enhanced green and blue infrastructure including high quality multifunctional amenity spaces at the residential level providing social and environmental benefits to the communities in which they are located.</p> <p>There are no site-specific proposals set out in the Draft RAP.</p> <p>Individual projects arising from implementation of the Draft RAP will be subject to EIA and AA at project level, as required.</p>
2	The cumulative nature of the effects	<p>It is envisaged that implementation of the Draft RAP will deliver well planned and enhanced green and blue infrastructure including high quality multifunctional amenity spaces at the residential level providing social and environmental benefits to the communities in which they are located.</p> <p>The cumulative effect of provision of such infrastructure will ultimately mean more sustainable communities across Cork</p>

		County as well as associated environmental benefits. The nature of this potential cumulative effect is predicted to be long-term and positive.
3	The transboundary nature of the effects	It is not considered that there will be any transboundary effects with the implementation of the Draft RAP.
4	The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	Successful implementation of the Draft RAP is likely to result in an overall reduced risk to human health and the environment. The overall aim of the policy is to promote Healthy Placemaking and enhance overall quality of life through the provision of strategically planned amenities including green infrastructure and the delivery of high quality multifunctional residential amenity spaces.
5	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	There are no site-specific proposals set out in the Draft RAP. It is envisaged that implementation of the Draft RAP will deliver well planned and enhanced green and blue infrastructure including high quality multifunctional amenity spaces at the residential level and provide positive social and environmental benefits to the communities in which they are located. The overall effect of provision of such infrastructure will ultimately mean more sustainable communities across Cork County as well as associated environmental benefits. The nature of this potential cumulative effect is predicted to be long-term and positive.
6	The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,	No potential for significant negative effects on the natural or cultural heritage of County Cork are predicted to result from the implementation of the Draft RAP. There are no site-specific proposals set out in the Draft RAP. Individual projects arising from implementation of the Draft RAP will be subject to EIA and AA at project level, as required.
7	The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,	No potential for exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values are predicted to result from the implementation of the Draft RAP. It is envisaged that implementation of the Draft RAP will deliver well planned and enhanced green and blue infrastructure including high quality multifunctional amenity spaces at the residential level and provide positive social and environmental benefits to the communities in which they are located. There are no site-specific proposals set out in the Draft RAP. Individual projects arising from implementation of the Draft RAP will be subject to EIA and AA at project level, as required.

8	The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (c) intensive land-use,	The Draft RAP does not determine strategic land-use in County Cork but advocates for well planned and enhanced green and blue infrastructure. There are no site-specific proposals set out in the Draft RAP. Individual projects arising from implementation of the Draft RAP will be subject to EIA and AA at project level, as required.
9	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.	There is no potential for significant effects on any site of recognised national, community or international protection status identified from the implementation of the Draft RAP. There are no site-specific proposals set out in the Draft RAP. Individual projects arising from implementation of the Draft RAP will be subject to EIA and AA at project level, as required.

7 Consultation

Prior to finalising any determination on the need for SEA, it is a statutory requirement to consult with the SEA Environmental Authorities. The transposition of the SEA Directive through S.I. 435/2004, as amended, specifically requires that account be taken of any submission or observation from the environmental authorities for SEA in Ireland. In this regard, the Environmental Protection Agency were consulted.

Notice of the screening was sent to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for their consideration for a period of not less than 4 weeks from the date of the notice (26th April 2024). A copy of the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy which has informed the SEA screening and the draft SEA Screening Report was included with the notice. These documents were considered draft until the consultation was completed and a final determination was made.

The notice stated that Cork County Council was making a Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy and that it is being determined if the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy would have significant effects on the environment having regard to the significance criteria at Schedule 1 of the Regulations. A submission or observation in relation to whether or not the implementation of a Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy would be likely to have significant effects on the environment was invited from the Environmental Protection Agency.

A response was received and was considered prior to making a determination. This response outlines the role of the EPA in the process noting the proposed SEA determination that SEA is not required. It outlines available guidance and resources for SEA screening and the SEA process generally. It notes that in proposing the plan it should be consistent with the need for proper planning and sustainable development and that the recommendations, key issues and challenges described in the EPAs State of Environment Report (2020) should be considered where relevant and where appropriate. It also outlines that the Plan should comply with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

In reaching the SEA screening determination Cork County Council are satisfied that they have adequately considered the response of the EPA and no further changes have been proposed.

8 Conclusion and Determination

The Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy was assessed using the 'pre-screening' flowchart, as provided in the EPA Synthesis Report "*Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland.*" Following this assessment, it was concluded that the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy falls within the requirements of the SEA Directive in that it may set a framework for projects and other activities.

The measures proposed under the Draft RAP were subsequently screened against the significance criteria outlined in Annex II of the SEA Directive, to determine if the Plan would give rise to likely significant environmental effects.

While the SEA Screening assessment recognises that the Draft RAP may set a framework for projects and other activities, the degree to which it does so is not considered to be significant, when considered in the context of the hierarchy of national, regional and local plans in which it sits, and the relevant policy which underpins the Irish planning process.

The Draft RAP was identified as having the potential, to some degree, to influence other plans and programmes, specifically those in the strategic planning hierarchy. However, in considering the purpose of the Draft RAP which is ultimately to set out appropriate policy and strategy recommendations for the planning and provision of public open space/amenity space and outdoor type recreation facilities in County Cork the influencing potential of the Draft RAP is likely to result in an overall positive effect on the environment.

It is envisaged that implementation of the Draft RAP will deliver well planned and enhanced green and blue infrastructure including high quality multifunctional amenity spaces at the residential level providing social and environmental benefits to the communities in which they are located.

The successful implementation of the Draft RAP will likely significantly contribute to well-planned and enhanced green and blue infrastructure including high quality multifunctional amenity spaces and the overall promotion of sustainable development in County Cork. It will also result in a likely reduction in risks and benefits for human health and the environment.

No likely significant negative effects on the value and vulnerability of County Cork are predicted to result from the successful implementation of the Draft RAP. Further, no likely significant negative effects on any areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status have been identified.

Cork County Council have also considered the response and comments of the EPA (see section 7) and are therefore satisfied that no requirement for SEA is identified as a result of this SEA Screening assessment.

9 References

1. Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening (EPA, 2021)
2. Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland (EPA, 2013).
3. Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment- Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004) .

4. Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (European Commission, ND).
5. (Draft) SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities (EPA, 2013).
6. Integrating Climatic Factors into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note (EPA, 2019).
7. Synthesis Report on Developing A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans And Programmes In Ireland (EPA, 2003).

Appendix A

Detailed Assessment of Potential Effects and Subject Area

As Table 3 has already assessed the characteristics and effects of the overall Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy in detail (see responses in Table 3) the following table represents a short summary of the predicted potential effects on relevant individual elements of the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy outlining them as either positive, negative, none or not applicable. It should be noted that no negative effects from any of the relevant aspects as set out in the Draft RAP were observed.

In the first instance each particular (relevant) aspect of the policy has been listed below in order to assess each potential effect and impact on the subject area. The relevant areas are listed as follows:

1. Strategic Planning for Recreational Needs - plan and support the delivery of and refurbishment of recreation and amenity facilities to serve, so far as is possible, the recreational needs of the population it serves.
2. Planning for Green Infrastructure and Open Space - consider the most effective way to deliver on the various commitments/strategies expected from the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Growth Guidelines taking into account Green and Blue Infrastructure, parks and open space and recreational requirements for the County.
3. Active Recreation Provision - To assess provision of sporting facilities as part of studies/audits carried out in advance of preparing area/settlement level plans and to identify possible locations and mechanisms to address any deficits.
4. Promote the development of high-quality and multi-functional recreational facilities in appropriate locations throughout County Cork (co-location is encouraged), including Active Recreational Hubs, Multi-Use Games Areas and other community facilities to meet existing and future community needs.
5. Playgrounds/Play Spaces - Support upgrade and strengthening of the existing network of playgrounds where there is appropriate justification.
6. Playgrounds/Play Spaces - Look to strengthen playground infrastructure in line with settlement network and in important tourist locations where justified.
7. Childrens Play - support the provision of natural open spaces and opportunities for children and young people within the county to play and socialise and to promote a built environment that is child friendly and accessible to children.
8. Teen Space - To ensure that the needs of children and teenagers are adequately considered when planning for the recreational needs of communities across the County.
9. Accessibility for All - To ensure that accessibility-for-all is a key consideration in site selection and project design processes for all open space and recreational facilities.
10. Enhancement of facilities – To support the enhancement of existing facilities to encourage their better use through improved accessibility and capacity.
11. Resourcing and Funding - To consider identification and allocation of appropriate additional resources to the provision of Parks and other Recreational Amenities.
12. Public Open Space Quantity Standards – Residential Developments -Public Open Space quantity standards shall be applied which are in accordance with Policy and Objective 5.1 of the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines (2024).
13. Part 5 – guidance standards and checklist relating to the provision of amenity space/green infrastructure at development level.
 - Emphasis on quality and long-term sustainability of public open space
 - Important role as multifunctional asset and placemaking toolChecklist includes a series of questions under the headings of accessibility, network creation, quantity, health and wellbeing, sustainability and placemaking.

Relevant Aspects of the Draft Recreation and Amenity Policy	Predicted Characteristics of Potential Effects and Subject Area								
	Potential for significant effects: probability, duration, frequency and reversibility	Potential cumulative effects	Potential transboundary effects	Potential risks to human health or the environment	Magnitude and spatial extent of the effects	Potential effects on natural or cultural heritage of subject area	Potential for exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values of subject area	Potential for intensive landuse of subject area	Potential effects on protected areas / landscapes
1. Strategic Planning for Recreational Needs	None	Positive	n/a	None	Positive	None	None	n/a	None
2. Planning for Green Infrastructure and Open Space – effective delivery	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
3. Active Recreation Provision – Studies/audits	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
4. Promote recreational facilities in appropriate locations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
5. Playgrounds/playspaces – existing network	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6. Playgrounds/playspaces – strengthen infrastructure	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
7. Children’s Play	None	Positive	n/a	None	Positive	None	None	n/a	None
8. Teen Space	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
9. Accessibility for All	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
10. Enhancement of Facilities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
11. Resourcing and Funding	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
12. Public Open Space Quantity Standards	None	Positive	n/a	None	Positive	None	None	n/a	None

13. Guidance standards and checklist – part 5	None	Positive	n/a	None	Positive	None	None	n/a	None
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