

Skibbereen

Town Development Plan 2009-2015

August 2009

PART 5

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

This is a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Skibbereen Town Development Plan

The Skibbereen Town Plan sets out the overall strategy for the development of Skibbereen town. The previous Town Development Plan was adopted in 2004 and remained in force until 2009. Skibbereen Town Council prepared the new Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015 under The Planning and Development Act (2000), which requires the Planning Authority to prepare a “Development Plan” every six years for its jurisdiction.

As part of this development plan process, RPS Group Plc. undertook this Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which is intended to identify and assess the issues facing the Skibbereen Town Council area going forward. This Environmental Report will be made available to the public along with the draft Skibbereen Development Plan.

The SEA process was undertaken in parallel with each stage of the draft Plan making process and involved close consultation and meetings with the SEA Consultation Authorities, members of HRA Planning Consultancy that drafted the Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015, the SEA team and a number of specialists who focussed on the significant environmental issues of the plan as identified during the screening and scoping phases and assessment of baseline information for the area. The Environmental Report has guided the preparation of objectives, policies and development scenarios for the Development Plan with an ultimate goal of achieving sustainable development within the Skibbereen Town Council area.

1.2 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental quality and consequences of Policy, Plan or Programme initiatives by statutory bodies. The purpose is to ensure that the environmental consequences of plans and programmes are assessed both during their preparation and prior to adoption. The SEA process also gives interested parties an opportunity to comment on the environmental impacts of the proposed plan or programme and to be kept informed during the decision making process.

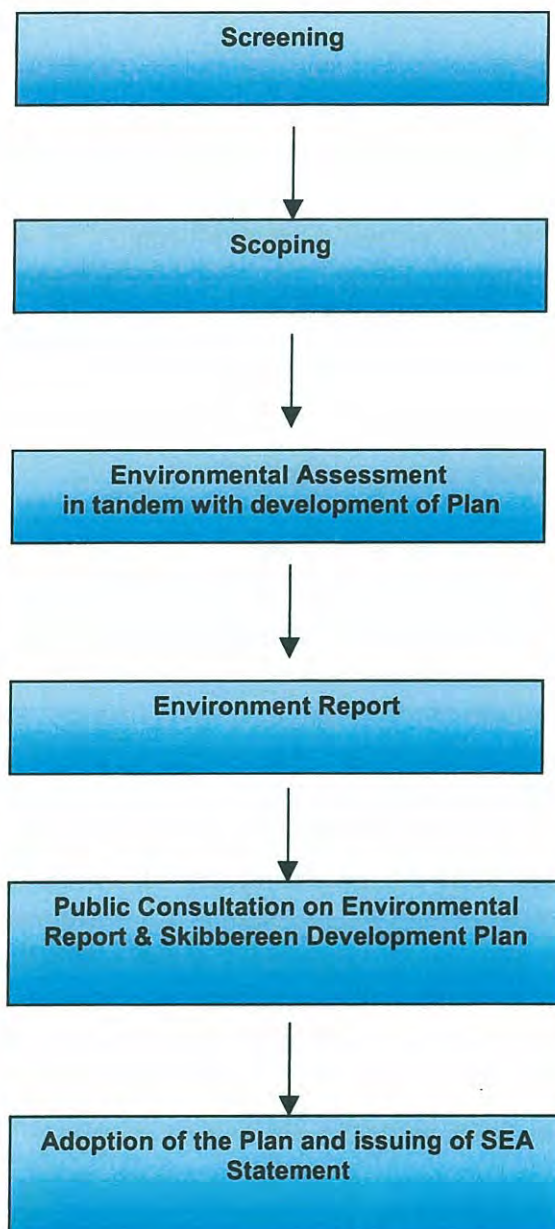
The European Directive (2001/42/EC) on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (the SEA Directive), was transposed into national legislation in Ireland by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435/2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436/2004).

The stages of the SEA can be seen in Figure 1.1 and comprise the following:

- Screening of Plans and Programmes to establish whether the relevant plan or programme must undergo an SEA;

- Scoping Report - A Scoping Report forms part of the statutory scoping process as required by Article 11(1) of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, S.I. 435 of 2004. The purpose of this report is to present the current understanding of the key environmental issues relating to the Skibbereen Development Plan Study Area and to inform the identification and assessment of possible options at a strategic level. It also aims to generate comments from stakeholders on the scope and SEA approach adopted for the Skibbereen Development Plan.
- An Environmental Report - containing the findings of the Assessment on the likely significant effects on the environment of the Plan;
- Consultation on the Draft Plan and associated Environmental Report; and
- An SEA Statement - identifying how environmental considerations and consultations have been integrated into the Final Plan.

Figure 1.1: Stages of the SEA Process



1.3 PREPARATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT AND THE SKIBBEREEN DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In accordance with the provisions of Article 13A of The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, it was determined that the Skibbereen Development Plan would be subject to be Strategic Environmentally Assessed in tandem with the preparation of the Skibbereen Development Plan 2009 - 2015. The proposed plan was screened in terms of the provisions of Article 13A of The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004. Taking account of the relevant criteria set out in schedule 2A of the Regulations, it was considered that Skibbereen Town Council is required to prepare an Environmental Report in respect of the preparation of the Skibbereen Development Plan for the following reasons:

- The plan would set a framework for projects and other activities, with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources to the projects or activities.
- The plan influences non - statutory plans, guidelines and strategies within Skibbereen Town Council area. It also influences the Skibbereen Electoral Local Area Plan 2005 in terms of provision of development within the Skibbereen environs.
- The plan would be relevant in terms of the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
- It is likely that proposals (i.e. new roads) could create environmental problems within the plan area,
- The area, does not include any European, or nationally designated site. However it does include locally Protected features of Landscape and Natural Heritage importance and therefore the plan could pose potential environmental problems relevant to the Skibbereen Town Council area.
- There are no environmental designations within the Skibbereen Town Plan area, however there are a number of designations in the vicinity of Skibbereen, including cSAC 1070 and pNHA 1070 at Myross Woods, east of the town; cSAC 1547 and pNHA 1547 at Castletownsend and pNHA Castletownsend (Gate Lodge), to the southeast; cSAC 0097 and pNHA 0097, Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs, which is situated about 6km southwest of Skibbereen and is 65ha in size; and cSAC 0101 and pNHA 0101 Roaringwater Bay and Islands, southwest of Skibbereen. Therefore, the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1999, which is part of European Union legislation on the environment, would not need to be directly implemented within the plan area due to the location of European Sites outside the plan area. However, if the plan should impact on a European site, then European Legislation would need to be implemented in the area.

The Environmental Report provides a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Skibbereen Town Plan, including its main objectives and policies.

The Planning and Development Act (2000) as amended requires the Planning Authority to prepare a "Development Plan" every six years for its jurisdiction. The Skibbereen Development Plan was adopted in 2003. The Statutory preparation of the Plan began in 13th March 2008 (4 years later), whereby a notice of intention to prepare the Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015 was issued. Submissions and observations were invited from the public. The closing date for submissions was the 13th May 2008. The Town Manager's Report and the s.11 Managers Report was adopted on the 26th June 2008. Table 1.3.1 below summarises the timetable for release of documents.

Table 1.3.1 Timetable of Draft Plan and Strategic Environment Assessment

Date	Development Plan	Strategic Environmental Assessment
March 2008 to May 2008	Strategic Issues Paper for Public Consultation	Scoping Report (Statutory consultation)
June 2008	s. 11 Manager's Report on submissions to the Issues Paper Adopted	
July/August 2008	Preparation of Draft Skibbereen Development Plan	Preparation of Draft Environmental Report
September 2008	Presentation of Draft Town Development Plan to Members	Presentation of Draft Environmental Report to Members
November/December/January	Public Consultation of Draft Skibbereen Development Plan	Public Consultation of Draft Environmental Report
March 2009	Presentation of Draft s. 12 Managers Report to Members	
May 2009	Public consultation of Draft s. 12 Managers Report	

July 2009 Presentation of Draft s.
12(8)a Managers Report on
submissions to Members

August 2009 Final Adopted Skibbereen SEA Statement
Development Plan

2 SEA METHODOLOGY

The SEA methodology used to carry out the SEA of the draft Skibbereen Development Plan reflects the requirements of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) as transposed into Irish law (S.I. No. 436 2004) and also experience drawn from other SEA's carried out in Ireland and the UK. The following documents, in particular, have also been used as guidance:-

- *Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland, Synthesis Report, EPA (2003);*
- *Draft Scoping Checklist as issued by the EPA in Jan 2008;*
- *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 (DoEHLG, 2004);*
- *Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Checklist. Expected publication date(s) Jan - Mar 2008. Environmental Protection Agency;*
- *Guidelines on SEA. Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. Available at: <http://www.dcmnr.gov.ie/Marine/Environmental+Assessment/Environmental+Assessment.htm>;*
- *A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. September 2005. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister;*
- *Strategic Environmental Assessment. Services and Standards for Responsible Authorities. Environment and Heritage Service;*
- *Strategic Environmental Assessment Toolkit (Version 1). September 2006. Scottish Executive; and*
- *Strategic Environmental Assessment and Biodiversity: Guidance for Practitioners. June 2004. Countryside Council for Wales, English Nature, the Environment Agency and the RSPB.*

Under consideration is a draft Skibbereen Development Plan, which if implemented has the potential to impact on the receiving environment. The main steps taken in this SEA process involved screening, scoping, baseline study, consideration of alternatives, environmental assessment of the objectives and policies of the proposed variation and the formulation of mitigation and monitoring measures.

2.1 SCREENING

In accordance with the provisions of Article 13A of The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, it was determined that the Skibbereen Development Plan would be subject to be Strategically Environmentally Assessed in tandem with the preparation of the Plan. The proposed plan was screened in terms of the provisions of Article 13A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004. Taking account of the relevant criteria set out in schedule 2A of the Regulations, it was considered that Skibbereen Town Council is required to prepare an Environmental Report in respect of the preparation of the Skibbereen Development Plan for the following reasons:

- The plan would set a framework for projects and other activities, with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources to the projects or activities.
- The plan influences non - statutory plans, guidelines and strategies within Skibbereen Town Council area. It also influences the Cork County Development Plan in terms of provision of development within the Skibbereen environs. The Draft Cork County Development Plan 2007 also sets out that consideration will be given to the need for a special Local Area Plan for Skibbereen in the future.
- The plan would be relevant in terms of the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
- It is likely that proposals (i.e. Roads Proposals) could create environmental problems,
- The area, does not include any European, or nationally designated sites. However it does include locally Protected features of Landscape and Natural Heritage importance and therefore the plan could pose potential environmental problems.
- There are no environmental designations within the Skibbereen Town Plan area, however there are a number of designations in the vicinity of the Skibbereen Town Council area. Therefore European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997, which is part of European Union legislation on the environment, would not need to be directly implemented within the plan area due to the location of European Sites outside the plan area. However, if the plan should impact on a European site, then European Legislation would need to be implemented in the area.

Therefore, following a screening exercise, Skibbereen Town Council determined that a strategic environmental assessment would be warranted in this case. This decision is available in the public file in Skibbereen Town Council.

2.2 SCOPING

Once determined that an SEA is required for a given plan or programme, in this case the proposed preparation of the Skibbereen Development Plan, an environmental report must be prepared. The content and scope of this environmental report is determined with input from statutory Consultees. In Ireland, three statutory Consultees have been nominated:-

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG); and
- The Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR).

RPS, on behalf of Skibbereen Town Council, undertook formal scoping of the SEA Environmental Report with the three statutory Consultees between July and August 2008. Responses from all parties consulted were received by RPS in August 2008.

The scoping exercise for this SEA determined the potential key environmental impacts and outlined how they should be addressed as part of the Environmental Report (Table 2.1)

During the Scoping Stage Skibbereen Town Council also issued an Issues Paper in order to stimulate public consultation/opinion on the planning issues that the 2009-2015 Development Plan should address. Public interest at the start of the plan process is important so that the Development Plan reflects public aspirations and concerns as well as government policy, strategies and guidelines.

Table 2.1: Key Environmental Impacts Determined from Screening and Scoping Phases

Environmental Topic	Issues	Mitigation/Recommendations
Biodiversity	Maintaining the quality of sensitive buffers	Provision of appropriate buffers between sensitive areas and areas zoned for development (designated ecological sites), consult with NPWS.
	Proximity to designated sites, plan may need an Appropriate Assessment	Consult with NPWS with regard to screening of the plan for Appropriate Assessment, if required should commence in parallel with the SEA.
	Protection of local biodiversity features – including rivers, wetlands, hedgerows, individual trees,	Consideration given to the inclusion of a plan objective for the conservation of non-designated habitats and species. Promotion of linkages between local biodiversity

Environmental Topic	Issues	Mitigation/Recommendations
	rivers, wetlands, hedgerows, individual trees, streams, grasslands, etc.	<p>features and ecological networks e.g. stone walls, hedgerows, watercourses etc. and sufficient buffer zones from areas zoned for development.</p> <p>Enhancement of local features of biodiversity where opportunities arise (possible policy).</p> <p>The plan should have regard to the EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland <i>and Alien species and Noxious Weeds</i>.</p> <p>Objective in the Plan to protect wetlands, and associated surface and groundwater systems within the Town Plan area.</p>
Flooding	Flooding is a significant issue within the Town.	<p>The OPW flood maps and Flood Studies conducted on the area should be referenced as part of the SEA baseline.</p> <p>OPW and Flood Study maps should be referred to in planning applications</p> <p>A specific objective should be included to provide for appropriate flood risk assessments to be undertaken, where proposed development(s) and proposed zoning in areas within the floodplain or on lands liable to flooding.</p> <p>Provision and promotion of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.</p>
Water	According to the WFD the River Ilen and the Glandore Harbour are classified as 'possibly at significant risk of not achieving good status', in accordance with the Water Framework Directive Characterisation- Risk Categorisation.	Policies and Objectives and conditions attached to planning authorisations should ensure that the ongoing development of the Town is undertaken in such a way so as not to compromise the quality of surface water (and associated habitats and species) groundwater within the zone of influence

Environmental Topic	Issues	Mitigation/Recommendations
	<p>Areas within the Development Plan with Extreme groundwater vulnerability ratings and areas with Rock near Surface or Karst.</p> <p>Due to excessive levels of Aluminium in treated water, there is a need for the provision of a safe and secure water supply in Skibbereen.</p> <p>If additional lands for residential development is being proposed in the Plan, consideration should be given, to the adequacy of the existing water supply in terms of both quality and quantity and the potential risk to human health.</p> <p>Waste Water Treatment plant is at capacity.</p>	<p>of the Development Plan area.</p> <p>New objective for a Groundwater Protection Plan for groundwater resources in the Skibbereen area in accordance with the Groundwater Protection Scheme for Cork County.</p> <p>The Plan should implement and include, as appropriate, the relevant recommendations set out in The Provision and Quality of Drinking Water in Ireland –A Report for the Years 2006-2007, (Office of Environment Enforcement- EPA, 2007) as included below in Section 4 of the SEA Pack. You are referred to this Report at: http://www.epa.ie/downloads/pubs/water/drinking/</p> <p>Plan should include specific objectives for the Skibbereen Drinking Water Supply See http://www.epa.ie/downloads/data/water/name,24319,en.html.</p> <p>Include specific objective for the preparation of a Water Conservation Strategy for Skibbereen town and surrounding area as appropriate.</p> <p>Develop an appropriate solution that will involve abandoning or replacing the source, upgrading the treatment facilities or improving management and operational practices.</p> <p>The plan should include the specific provisions of the Urban Waste Water Discharges in Ireland, A report for the Years 2004 and 2005 http://www.epa.ie/downloads/pubs/water/wastewater/name,13978,en.html</p> <p>Policies/objectives to ensure bathing waters in Skibbereen and adjoining areas, as appropriate,</p>

Environmental Topic	Issues	Mitigation/Recommendations
		<p>achieve “sufficient or better status by 2015”</p> <p>Include relevant policies and objectives for the provision and promotion of adequate and appropriate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).</p>
<p>Waste Treatment Plant Water Quality</p>	<p>Potential for a decrease in water quality in the Ilen River as a result of Waste Water discharge.</p>	<p>SEA to address need for a WWTP and set a timeline for delivery.</p> <p>The Plan should include a policy to ensure that all developments currently served by septic tanks should be connected to the proposed WWTP where possible.</p> <p>The Plan should include a policy that all new developments use separate systems for foul and storm water sewage.</p> <p>Ensure that zoning for development is linked to the availability of WWTP infrastructure.</p>
<p>Population and Health</p>	<p>Population Statistics</p> <p>Employment/unemployment</p> <p>Human Health - The following should be assessed in the town plan; Provision of adequate and appropriate amenity to serve both existing community and likely future increases in population; Provision of education and health services; Provision of adequate and appropriate cycleway and footpath networks along with adequate relevant signage; Promotion of the protection of existing natural and cultural heritage resources in the area as a local amenity and an educational resource; Protection of the air quality in the Skibbereen area; Provision of broadband (for</p>	<p>Review population figures giving new percentages from NSS and CDP 2003 and Draft CDP2007.</p> <p>Ensure the mentioned issues are referred to in the draft plan.</p> <p>(Many of the other issues i.e. WWTP are also relevant to population and Human Health, however these will be dealt with under their particular remit in order to avoid overlapping).</p>

Environmental Topic	Issues	Mitigation/Recommendations
	work at home); Provision of childcare facilities near work places; Localised campaigns to encourage exercise and healthy living for all ages.	
Material Assets	New buildings should consider use of renewable material	Sustainable building practice policy Consideration should be given to the implementation of an integrated approach to waste management for any proposed development(s) within the Town.
Landscape	Protection of scenic landscapes, scenic views, scenic routes and landscape in the vicinity of the town Key views, vistas, prospects, sensitive landscapes, river corridors etc all need to be addressed.	Ensure appropriate density and height restrictions to ensure no adverse impacts on adjacent mentioned features within the vicinity of the town Recommend detailed landscape and visual impact assessments where appropriate. Promotion and where possible enhancement of key linkages between established land marks and landscape features and views, including recognition of these features when zoning land and when considering individual planning applications.
Cultural Heritage	Zone of Archaeological Importance and undiscovered sub-surface archaeological sites/monuments	Zone of Archaeological Importance in Skibbereen town. In addition, there may be undiscovered sub-surface archaeological sites/monuments within the town. It is recommended that these issues be investigated within the Environmental Report. Ensure to distinguish between National Monuments, Recorded Monuments and Places (RMPs) in Skibbereen and Record of Protected

Environmental Topic	Issues	Mitigation/Recommendations
		<p>(RMPs) in Skibbereen and Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Refer to www.archaeology.ie</p> <p>The archaeological potential of the coastal and inter-tidal zone, where relevant, should be carefully considered.</p> <p>Any potential impacts on archaeological heritage should be subject to full archaeological assessment.</p> <p>Industrial Heritage should be addressed.</p> <p>Promotion of linkages between significant features of archaeological/architectural significance.</p> <p>Protection of important trees in the town.</p>
Soil	Soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development work, where Brownfield development is proposed in Skibbereen.	A policy/objective should be included in the Plan to ensure adequate and appropriate investigation of the nature and extent of any soil and groundwater contamination and the risks associated with site development work, where Brownfield development is proposed in Skibbereen.
Transport	Traffic congestion, public transport, cycleways and pedestrian facilities all need to be addressed in the draft plan.	<p>Consideration should be given to the inclusion of a Target relating to the improvement of the current transport network in the Skibbereen area.</p> <p>Development of traffic management measures to reduce the potential for traffic congestion and associated vehicular emissions should be considered for Skibbereen Town.</p> <p>Improved pedestrian and cycle facilities</p>

Environmental Topic	Issues	Mitigation/Recommendations
		<p>Good quality public transport</p> <p>Pedestrian facilities, public transport and cycle lanes will need to be addressed in the plan in a balanced and sustainable manner.</p> <p>Traffic, parking and mobility issues will require particular attention, as will consideration of a northern bypass.</p> <p>Considerations should be given in including specific objectives in the Plan in relation to the protection and improvement, as appropriate, of air quality in Skibbereen, particularly in areas zoned for increased urban development and transport related development.</p> <p>Consideration should also be given to the inclusion of specific policies and objectives with respect to climate change.</p>
Other	<p>Objectives, Indicators and Targets</p> <p>The Plan should include relevant policies and objectives for the Promotion of energy conservation measures in buildings and Promotion, where appropriate, of the use of renewable energy systems (e.g. solar, wind, geothermal etc.) within the community.</p> <p>EPA have requested that the plan should be implemented in a strategic sustainable manner in terms of appropriate zoning of land while taking in account the requirements of for drinking water supply, waste water treatment, flood risk and biodiversity protection.</p>	<p>Use similar indicators, and targets as used within the Draft CDP 2007. Provide for consistency in monitoring across the county.</p>

2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

The Environmental Report contains an assessment of the likely significant effects (on biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors) of implementing the proposed plan.

The content of the Environmental Report is broadly defined in Article 12 (1) of the Regulations.

Chapter Title	Reference to Table 4A of the PG (Planning Guidelines)
Non-Tech summary	Ref. J
Introduction	
SEA Background and Methodology	
Key Objectives of the Plan	Ref. A
Planning and Policy Context	Ref. A and Ref. E
Baseline Environment	Ref. B, C and D
Objectives Targets and Indicators	Ref. C and Red. D
Assessment of Alternatives	Ref. J and H
Assessment of Policies/Objectives	Ref. B
Significant Effects and Mitigation Measures	Ref. D, F, I and G
Monitoring	Ref. I

2.4 CONSULTATION

The draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan and Environmental Report went on public display between November 2008 and January 2009 and submissions were invited from the public, from the relevant statutory bodies and the Environmental Authorities.

In order to document the SEA process, since the initial Consultation draft of the Environmental Report, this environmental report has been updated to include the following changes:

- Suggestions and comments received from the environmental authorities.
- Assessment of significant amendments to the draft Development Plan arising from the initial consultation process.

2.4.1 Consultation Response from Environmental Authorities

Consultation responses were received by Skibbereen Town Council from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in January and February 2009.

A submission from the **DoEHLG** Spatial Planning Policy Development Applications Unit was received suggesting a number of changes to the Draft Plan in relation to updates in Planning Policy and also set out comments in relation to architectural heritage and archaeology. No comments were received in relation to the Environmental Report.

A submission from the **EPA** was received relating to the possible impacts of the Draft Development Plan on various aspects of the environment and also included comments relating to the Environmental Report. The EPA submission was broken into two parts and the second part of the submission related to the Environmental Report for the Draft Development Plan. Comments and suggestions in this section put forward for consideration mainly related to the key stages and outputs of the SEA process.

In response to the EPA's submission to the consultation draft Environmental Report additional environmental objectives have been included within table 6.1 and table 10.1 (monitoring programme also includes objectives, targets and indicators) of this environmental report and changes were made to some of the existing environmental objectives, targets and indicators and as a result the Policies and objectives of the Plan were re-assessed (as set out in table 8.2 of this report). The opportunity Sites were also individually assessed as part of this process and are also set out in table 8.2. Furthermore a new section referring to potential cumulative environmental effects has been included in section 8.3 of this report.

Suggestions were also made in terms of the assessment of environmental effects, mitigation measures and monitoring and as a result a new Table (Table 9.1) linking trends and potential environmental impacts, significant effects, mitigation measures and proposed monitoring is included within this environmental report. This table also references how the relevant mitigation measures of significant effects have been incorporated into the plan.

In addition, the Non Technical Summary of this report has been updated to ensure that explicit reference to the Integration of the Plan and Strategic Environment Assessment is documented and to include all the information to be contained in the Environmental Report.

2.4.2 Consultation of Habitats Directive Assessment

A Habitats Directive Assessment screening exercise on the draft Plan was also undertaken by RPS Group and the associated screening report is attached in Appendix 2 of this report. This document went on public display during the Amendment Stage consultation period. As part of the screening process the NPWS were consulted and it was concluded that a full appropriate assessment of the draft plan would not be required.

2.4.3 Assessment of Material Amendments

As a result of the initial consultation submissions made to the draft plan a number of amendments were recommended by the Manager and were set out in the Section 12 (4) Manager's Report which went out on consultation in May 2009. The proposed amendments were also environmentally assessed and this assessment also went out to consultation in May 2009. The environmental assessment of the policies and objectives of the Plan as set out in Table 8.2 of this report have been updated to reflect the amendments to the Plan.

After the initial consultation period of the amendments as per the Section 12(4) Managers in May 2009 the Manager drafted the S. 12 (8) Manager's Report setting out the Manager's Response and Recommendations to the issues raised in the submissions received during the statutory public consultation period. The s.12 (8) Managers Report was presented to the members in July 2009 containing four minor amendments. No material changes were made to the Plan at this stage and therefore no additional amendments were assessed in terms of SEA at this stage.

To conclude it was not considered that any of the proposed amendments of the draft Plan would have a significant impact on the environment of the area.

2.4.4 Adoption of the Plan

The Plan was formally 'made' at a meeting on 13th August 2009. At this meeting the Council accepted all recommendations contained in the s.12 (8) report and agreed to adopt the amended draft development plan.

3 THE DRAFT SKIBBEREEN DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2009-2015 OVERALL STRATEGY

The draft Skibbereen Development Plan 2009 outlines the Council's policies for the development of Skibbereen Town to 2015.

The draft plan has been prepared and developed against a backdrop of consultations by means of public meeting, individual meetings, and written submissions. The plan's main purpose, as the main public statement of the town Council is to take a long-term view of the future development of Skibbereen in order to manage change in the physical environment and provide for new development that contributes to and enhances the existing qualities of the town thereby ensuring that development is planned in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

The strategy underlying the Plan specifically aims to address the following matters:

- Ensure that there is a transport framework to co-ordinate the development process.
- Balance new development and additional traffic movements in the town with the provision and management of infrastructure and housing in a sustainable manner.
- Facilitate and encourage public and private investment in the town, by providing supportive development policies and encouraging rather than restricting development.
- Focus development on the town centre with an adequately flexible approach to attract key operators to the town.
- Capitalise on Skibbereen's comparative advantage by protecting and enhancing the town's unique setting.

4 RELATED PLANS

The SEA Directive requires that the SEA process should include the review of other Plans/Programmes, which are related to the Plan/Programme being assessed i.e. the Skibbereen Development Plan. Any identified actions from this study will need to comply with relevant international and national legislation such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Habitats and Bird's Directives that stringently protect Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within the catchment. The requirements will be expressed in the environmental objectives.

Tables 4.1 to 4.3 below provide an overview of the relevant legislation, plans, policies that apply to the various environmental topics to be addressed in this Environmental Report.

Table 4.1: Overview of International Legislation, Plans, Policies and Programmes

Topic	Title	Summary of Objectives
Biodiversity	UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)	Objectives include the maintenance and enhancement of Biodiversity.
	The Ramsar Convention The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (1971 and amendments)	Objectives include protection and conservation of wetlands, particularly those of importance to waterfowl as Waterfowl Habitat.
Climate	UN Kyoto Protocol The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Kyoto Protocol 1997	Objectives seek to alleviate the impacts of climate change and reduce global emissions of GHGs.
Environment	Agenda 21	Local Agenda 21 is a process which facilitates sustainable development at community level. It is an approach based on participation which respects social, cultural, economic and environmental needs of the present and future citizens of a community in all its diversity and how the community relates to the future of the regional, national and international community of which it is part.
	The 6 th EU Environmental Action Programme 1998.	The Environment Action Programme takes a broad look at the challenges of environmental policy and provides a strategic framework for the Commission's environmental policy up to 2012. It identified four environmental areas for priority actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change • Nature and Biodiversity • Environment and Health and Quality of Life • Natural Resources and Waste
	The MARPOL Convention International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (MARPOL 73/78).	Objectives to protect the marine environment.
	The OSPAR Convention The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (22 September 1992).	Objectives to protect the marine environment.

Topic	Title	Summary of Objectives
	COMAH (Seveso II) Directive- European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving dangerous Substances) Regulations 2000	Requirements for the storage of relatively large quantities of substances classified as dangerous.
Human Health / Air	World Health Organisation (WHO) Air Quality Guidelines (1999) and Guidelines for Europe (1987)	Objectives seek the elimination or minimisation of certain airborne pollutants for the protection of human health.

Table 4.2: Overview of EU Legislation, Plans, Policies and Programmes

Topic	Title	Summary of Objectives
Air	The Air Framework Directive Directive on Air Quality Assessment and Management (Framework Directive) (1996/62/EC)	Objectives include the prevention and/or reduction of airborne pollutants for the protection of human health and environment.
	Directive on National Emission Ceilings for Certain Atmospheric Pollutants (2001/81/EC)	Objectives seek to limit the national emissions of certain airborne pollutants for the protection of human health and the environment.
Biodiversity	The EU Biodiversity Strategy Communication on a European Community Biodiversity Strategy	Objectives seek to prevent and eliminate the causes of biodiversity loss and maintain and enhance current levels of biodiversity.
	The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)	Objectives seek to prevent and eliminate the causes of habitat loss and maintain and enhance current levels of biodiversity.
	The EU Birds Directive (as modified) (EC/79/409)	Objectives seek to prevent and eliminate the causes of bird species loss and maintain and enhance current levels of biodiversity.
	The EU Shellfish Directive (79/923/EEC)	Objectives seek to maintain those coastal and brackish waters, which need protection or improvement, in order to allow shellfish to develop and to contribute to the high quality of shellfish products intended for human consumption.
	The EU Freshwater Fish Directive (78/659/EEC)	Objectives seek to protect those fresh water bodies identified by Member States as waters suitable for sustaining fish populations. For those waters it sets physical and chemical water quality objectives for salmonid waters and cyprinid waters
Climate	Second European Climate Change Programme (ECCP II) 2005.	Objectives seek to develop the necessary elements of a strategy to implement the Kyoto protocol.
Human Health	The EU Environment and Health Strategy 2004-2009 (first period)	Objectives seek to prevent and reduce the impacts of pollution on human health.
	The EU REACH Initiative Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH)	Objectives seek to limit the harmful effects to the environment and human health from certain chemicals through improved analysis and data collection.
	Laying down the Health Conditions for the production and placement on the market of live bi-valve molluscs (91/492/EEC)	Objectives seek to ensure a suitable environment for shellfish growth and protect consumers of shellfish. It classifies shellfish harvesting areas according to the quality of shellfish populations. The classification determines the conditions under which shellfish harvested from those waters can be offered for sale.

Topic	Title	Summary of Objectives
Sustainable Development	The Gothenburg Strategy (2001) Communication from the Commission on "a Sustainable Europe for a Better World"	Objectives seek to make the future development of the EU more sustainable.
	The Sixth Environmental Action Programme (EAP) of the European Community 2002- 2012	Objectives seek to make the future development of the EU more sustainable.
	The SEA Directive (2001/42/EC)	Under the SEA Directive, the RBDMP requires an SEA.
Water	The Water Framework Directive EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	Objectives seek to maintain and enhance the quality of all surface waters in the EU. The RBMPs are a requirement of this directive.
	The Groundwater Directive (1980/68/EC)	Objectives seek to maintain and enhance the quality of all groundwater in the EU.
	EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)	The Floods Directive applies to river basins and coastal areas at risk of flooding. With trends such as climate change and increased domestic and economic development in flood risk zones, this poses a threat of flooding in coastal and river basin areas.
	Bathing Water Directive 2006/7/EC	The overall objective of the revised Directive remains the protection of public health whilst bathing, but it also offers an opportunity to improve management practices at bathing waters and to standardise the information provided to bathers across Europe.
	Nitrates Directive 91/676/EEC	This Directive has the objective of reducing water pollution caused or induced by nitrates from agricultural sources and preventing further such pollution.
	Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive 91/271/EEC. Amended under Directive 98/15/EEC	The primary aim is to protect the environment from the adverse effects of discharges of urban wastewater, by the provision of urban wastewater collecting systems (sewerage) and treatment plants for urban centres. The Directive also provides general rules for the sustainable disposal of sludge arising from wastewater treatment.
	Natura 2000 sites designated under Directive 92/43/EC and 79/409/EEC	The purpose is to enable Habitats Directive Annex I habitats or Annex II species to be maintained, or restored to a favourable conservation status over their natural range. Also, to conserve habitats for bird species under the Birds Directive Annex I.
	Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)	This new directive establishes a regime which sets underground water quality standards and introduces measures to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants into groundwater.
	Drinking Water Directive (DWD) Council Directive 98/83/EC	The primary objective is to protect the health of the consumers in the European Union and to make sure the water is wholesome and clean.
Cultural Heritage	The European Convention on Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (The Valletta Convention of 1992)	Requires that appropriate consideration is given to archaeological issues at all stages of the planning and development process.
Landscape	European Landscape Convention 2000	Requires a commitment from Ireland to introduce policies to effect landscape protection and management.

Table 4.3: Overview of Irish Legislation, Plans, Policies and Programmes

Topic	Title	Summary of Objectives
Air	Air Quality Standards Regulations 2002 (S.I. No. 271 of 2002)	Objectives include the reduction of certain airborne pollutants for the protection of human health and the environment.

Topic	Title	Summary of Objectives
	Ozone in Ambient Air Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 53 of 2004).	Objectives include the reduction of certain airborne pollutants for the protection of human health and the environment.
	The Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992 (Ambient Air Quality Assessment and Management) Regulations 1999	Objectives include the reduction of certain airborne pollutants for the protection of human health and the environment.
Biodiversity	The National Biodiversity Plan (2002)	Objectives include the enhancement and conservation of biodiversity.
	The Wildlife Act 1976. The Wildlife (Amendment) act 2000	The Wildlife Act, 1976 and the Wildlife Amendment Act, 2000 are the principal statutory provisions providing for the protection of Wildlife (both Flora and Fauna) and the control of activities which may impact adversely on the conservation of Wildlife.
	National Heritage Plan 2002-2007	The purpose of the National Heritage Plan is to set out a clear and coherent strategy and framework for the protection and enhancement of Irish heritage over the five year period.
	European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, SI 94/1997, as amended SI 233/1998 and SI 378/2005	These Regulations give effect to Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive) and the Minister to designate special areas of conservation (endangered species and habitats of endangered species) as a contribution to an EU Community network to be known as NATURA 2000.
	Flora Protection Order 1999	Objectives include it being illegal to alter, damage or interfere in any way with their habitats. This protection applies wherever the plants are found and is not confined to sites designated for nature conservation.
	Quality of Shellfish Waters Regulations 1994 (SI 200/1994) and amendments	Give effect to Council Directive 79/923/EEC of 30 October 1979 on the quality required of shellfish waters and prescribe quality standards for shellfish waters and designate the waters to which they apply, together with sampling and analysis procedures to be used to determine compliance with the standards.
	Quality of Salmonid Waters Regulations 1988 (SI 293 of 1988)	Prescribe quality standards for salmonid waters and designate the waters to which they apply, together with the sampling programmes and the methods of analysis and inspection to be used by local authorities to determine compliance with the standards. Also, give effect to Council Directive No. 78/659/EEC on the quality of fresh waters needing protection or improvement in order to support fish life
Climate	National Climate Change Strategy (2000) and National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012	Objectives include the reduction of national GHG emissions (including those from the water sector)
Human Health	Quality of Bathing Waters Regulations 1988 (SI 84 of 1988) and amendments	Prescribe bathing water quality standards and the bathing areas to which they apply, together with the sampling programmes and the methods of analysis and inspection to be used by local authorities to determine compliance with the standards. Give effect to Council Directive No. 76/160/EEC concerning the quality of bathing water.
Energy	Green Paper on Sustainable Energy (1999)	Objectives include the increased utilisation and development of renewable energies to meet EU targets
	Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006	Objectives to promote wind energy where relevant
	Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland The Energy Policy Framework 2007-2020 (White Paper)	This White Paper sets out the Government's Energy Policy Framework 2007-2020 to deliver a sustainable energy future for Ireland. It is set firmly in the global and European context which has put energy security and climate change among the most urgent international challenges. The White Paper sets out the actions to be taken in response to the energy challenges facing Ireland. The objective is to deliver a sustainable energy future, starting now, with a time horizon of 2020 but also looking beyond that.
Planning	National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (2002)	Objectives of the NSS are to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland, supported by more effective planning.

Topic	Title	Summary of Objectives
	National Development Plan from 2007 to 2013	Objectives of the NDP are to promote more balanced spatial and economic development.
	Planning and Development Act 2000	Revised and consolidated the law relating to planning and development by repealing and re-enacting with amendments the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts, 1963 to 1999; to provide, in the interests of the common good, for proper planning and sustainable development including the provision of housing; to provide for the licensing of events and control of funfairs; to amend the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992, the Roads Act 1993, the Waste Management Act 1996, and certain other enactments.
	National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS)	The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) is the government strategic initiative to place the needs of the poor and the socially excluded at the top of the national policy agenda. The NAPS recognises the unacceptable scale of poverty and its impact on those directly affected and on the wider society and it particularly notes the distinct spatial aspects of poverty in urban and rural areas. The strategy emphasises the importance of a cross-departmental policy response in dealing with the problem.
	Retail Planning Guidelines 2005	The Retail Planning Guidelines provide a comprehensive framework to guide local authorities in preparing development plans, assessing applications for planning permission, and guiding retailers and developers in formulating development proposals. Retail functions reflect four broad tiers of urban development. Skibbereen Town is defined in the third tier of towns. Third tier centres are described as providing urban anchors for a rural economy which is undergoing rapid change.
	Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities	These Guidelines are aimed at addressing the high levels of suburban housing development at low densities on Green field sites over the last few decades. This has led to an increase in the demand for travel, greater traffic congestion and high infrastructure costs. The Guidelines recognise that higher densities should not be achieved at an unacceptable amenity cost to the surrounding dwellings and the residents of the proposed development. A high quality of design and layout and a good quality living environment, including the availability of adequate shopping, social, transport and leisure infrastructure, are essential if increased residential densities are to be acceptable.
Sustainable Development	Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland (1997) (DoEHLG)	Objectives are to ensure that future development in Ireland occurs in a sustainable manner.
	European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004)	The EU SEA Directive was transposed into Irish Law under S.I. 435 in 2004.

Topic	Title	Summary of Objectives
	Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines 2005	<p>These guidelines set out in detail how the Government's policies on rural housing are to be implemented by Planning Authorities in making their development plans and in the operation of the development control system to ensure a vibrant future for all rural areas. In supporting housing development patterns in rural areas that are sustainable, policies and practices of planning authorities should seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the needs of rural communities are identified in the development plan process and that policies are put in place to ensure that the type and scale of residential and other development in rural areas, at appropriate locations, necessary to sustain rural communities is accommodated. • Manage pressure for overspill development from urban areas in the rural areas closest to the main cities and towns such as the gateways, hubs, and other large towns. <p>A strong theme in the Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines is the need to strengthen villages and towns. Planning authorities need to ensure that cities, towns and villages offer attractive and affordable housing options to meet the housing needs of urban communities and persons wishing to live in urban areas.</p>
	Making Ireland's Development Sustainable	<p>This document focuses on the link between economic activity and pressures on the environment. Sustainable development emerged as an idea in the late 1980s and led to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At the Summit, world leaders agreed to implement an action programme for sustainable development called, Agenda 21. The Irish Government published <i>Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland</i> in 1997, which applies Agenda 21 in Irish circumstances. <i>Making Ireland's Development Sustainable</i> reviews the progress made in terms of sustainable development in Ireland since Rio, assesses the challenge we now face and sets out policies and actions to meet that challenge.</p>
Transport	Transport 21	<p>Transport 21 is a strategy that will see €34.4 billion invested over the next 10 years in Irish transport. Connecting communities and promoting prosperity is the core aim of this strategy. The programme seeks to meet the transport needs of the country's citizens and also underpin our competitiveness into the future. A comprehensive and efficient transport network is essential if we are to continue to improve our living standards while remaining competitive in the global market place. Transport 21 recognises that quality integrated transport is critical for competitiveness, return on investment and regional development.</p>
Environment	The Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992	Objectives include the better protection of the environment and the control of pollution through improved licensing and monitoring.
	The Protection of the Environment Act 2003	Objectives include for better protection of the environment and the control of pollution through improved licensing and monitoring.
Water	Drinking Water Regulations SI 439 of 2000	Prescribe quality standards to be applied in relation to certain supplies of drinking water, including requirements as to sampling frequency, methods of analysis, the provision of information to consumers and related matters. Give effect to provisions of EU Council Directive 98/83/EC on the quality of water intended for human consumption.
	Local Government (Water Pollution) Act, 1977 (Water Quality Standards for Phosphorus) Regulations 1998 (SI 258 of 1998)	Provide for specified improvements in water quality conditions in rivers and lakes based on phosphorus concentrations or related water quality classifications and give effect to certain requirements arising under Council Directive 76/46/EC on pollution caused by certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment of the Community.
	Water Quality in Ireland 2001-2003	This document assesses the quality of Ireland's aquatic ecosystems concentrating on ambient water quality indicators.

Topic	Title	Summary of Objectives
	Water Quality in Ireland 2005: Key indicators of the Aquatic Environment	The quality of rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters, ground waters and canals is discussed in this report.
	Towards setting guideline values for the protection of groundwater in Ireland (2003)	Proposals for setting environmental quality objectives and standards for groundwater through use of guideline values.
	Groundwater Monitoring Programme	The information on which a national groundwater quality programme is based.
	European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations (SI 722 of 2003)	Provide for the transposition into Irish national law of the provisions of the EU Water Framework Directive.
	European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2005 (S.I. No. 378 of 2006)	Provide statutory support for good agricultural practice to protect waters against pollution from agricultural sources. Give further effect to several EU Directives including Directives in relation to protection of waters against pollution from agricultural sources ("the Nitrates Directive"), dangerous substances in water, waste management, protection of groundwater, public participation in policy development and water policy (the Water Framework Directive).
	Arterial Drainage Act, 1945	Makes provision for the drainage and improvement of land by the execution of works of arterial drainage, to provide for the maintenance of those works and make further and better provision for the maintenance of existing drainage works, and to provide for matters incidental to or connected with the matters aforesaid or relating generally to the drainage of land.
	OPW Guidelines on Flood Risk 2005	The OPW provide guidance on Planning Policy in relation to flooding. The policy which the Planning Authority should adopt is "Development should not itself be subject to an appropriate risk of flooding nor should it cause or exacerbate such a risk at other locations". This provides for run-off areas and the provision of appropriate drains. There should be set-back zones from the edge of watercourses. Minimum design standards should be applied, flood impact assessments to be required in certain developments and certification from a competent person that a development will not contribute to flooding within the relevant catchment.
Material Assets	Quarries and Ancillary Activities Guidelines 2004	Aggregates are a significant natural resource. The extractive industries make an important contribution to economic development in Ireland. However, the operation of quarries can give rise to land use and environmental issues which should be mitigated and controlled through the planning system. These Guidelines seek to identify those issues and to suggest best practice in dealing with them. It is important that Planning Authorities recognise that quarries (including sand-and-gravel pits) vary greatly in size, with varying environmental impacts, and that the planning response to proposed developments should be tailored accordingly.
	EPA Wastewater Treatment Manual 2000	The Waste Water Treatment Manual for single houses details the basic mechanism of the waste water treatment system, various types of systems, suitable site characteristics and treatment options. This document will be referred to by the Planning Authority, though may be replaced by updated versions.
	Irish National Forest Standard 2000	In 1996, the Irish Government published Growing for the Future: A Strategic Plan for the Development of the Forestry Sector in Ireland. The aim of this strategy is to develop forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to national economic and social well-being on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment. In Growing for the Future, a commitment was made to promote quality in all aspects of Irish forestry and to provide the instruments to achieve this. The Irish National Forest Standard is the result of a consultative process initiated in 1999. Working parties were set up to consider environmental, economic, social and legal aspects of forestry and sustainable forest management. The groups were charged with developing indicators for Sustainable Forest Management.

Topic	Title	Summary of Objectives
Waste	The Waste Management Act 1996 and amendments	Objectives include (amongst others) the more effective and environmentally sensitive management of wastes in Ireland.
Cultural Heritage	National Heritage Plan 2002	Core objective is to protect our heritage. In this regard the "polluter pays" principle and the precautionary principles are operable.
	Framework and Principles for the protection of the archaeological heritage	Sets out archaeological policies and principles that should be applied by all bodies when undertaking or authorising development.
	Architectural Heritage Protection, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2004	Outlines policies for protection of Architectural Conservation Areas.
	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)	
Landscape	European Landscape Convention 2000	Requires a commitment from Ireland to introduce policies to effect landscape protection and management.

4.1.1 EU Environmental Plans and Other Guidance

EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC): The provisions of the Directive requires Member States to introduce a range of measures including the protection of species listed in the Annexes; and to undertake surveillance of habitats and species and produce a report every six years on the implementation of the Directive. The habitats listed in Annex 1 of the Directive and the species listed in Annex II, are to be protected by means of a network of sites and are afforded protection as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the EC Birds Directive, form a network of protected areas known as Natura 2000.

The EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) came into force in December 2000 and was written into Irish Law in 2003. The Directive clarifies, collects and updates previous pieces of water legislation and provides for water management on the basis of River Basin Districts. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) sets a framework for comprehensive management of water resources in the European Community, within a common approach and with common objectives, principles and basic measures. The WFD addresses inland surface waters, estuarine and coastal waters and groundwater. The fundamental objective of the WFD aims at maintaining "high status" of waters where it exists, preventing any deterioration in the existing status of waters and achieving at least "good status" in relation to all waters by 2015.

The main objectives of the WFD are to protect and enhance the status of all our waters, encourage sustainable water use, provide for sufficient supply of good quality surface water and groundwater, reduce or phase out discharges of dangerous substances to water, protect territorial and marine waters and to establish and maintain a register of "protected areas".

EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) 1979 seeks to protect, manage and regulate all bird species naturally living in the wild within the European territory of the Member States, including the eggs of these birds, their nests

and their habitats and to regulate the exploitation of these species. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the protection of birds were established following the Birds Directive.

EU Urban Waste-Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC) 1991 seeks to protect the environment from the adverse effects of urban waste water discharges and discharges from certain industrial sectors and concerns the collection, treatment and discharge of domestic waste-water, the mixture of waste-water, the mixture of waste-water and waste-water from certain industrial sectors.

EU Floods Directive was adopted on the 18th January 2006 when the European Commission proposed a directive on the assessment and management of floods. Its aim is to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, infrastructure and property.

The **Groundwater Directive 80/68/EEC** requires Member States to apply a system of investigation and authorisation to waste disposal and other activities in order to ensure that groundwater is not polluted by dangerous substances.

The **Surface Water Directive 75/440/EEC** aims to protect public health by ensuring that surface water abstracted for use as drinking water reaches certain standards before it is supplied to the public. The directive lays down nonbinding "guide" values and binding "imperative" values and requires Member States to monitor the quality of surface waters from which drinking water is abstracted and to take measures to ensure that it complies with the minimum quality standards. The Directive has been integrated into the proposed Water Framework Directive.

The **Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 85/337/EEC** (amended as Directive 97/11/EC), requires Member States to carry out environmental impact assessments (EIA) on certain public or private projects, before they are authorised, where it is believed that the projects are likely to have a significant impact on the environment. The EIA procedure is an integral part of the planning process and the public can provide input and express environmental concerns with regard to the project. The results of this consultation must be taken into account during the authorisation process.

The aim of the **European Convention on Protection of the Archaeological Heritage 1992** is to "protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study". The Convention provides the basic framework for policy on the protection of the archaeological heritage in Ireland. The obligations on the State under the Convention have been summarised by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and included the following:

- Providing for statutory protection measures, including the maintenance of an inventory of the archaeological heritage and the designation of protected monuments and areas;
- The authorisation and supervision of excavations and other archaeological activities;
- Providing measures for the physical protection of the archaeological heritage including acquisition or protection by other means;
- Providing for consultation between archaeologists and planners in relation to the drawing up of development plans and development schemes so as to ensure that full consideration is given to archaeological requirements.
- Facilitating the study of archaeological discoveries by making and bringing up to date surveys, inventories and maps of archaeological sites and taking practical measures to ensure the drafting, following archaeological operations, of a publishable scientific record before the publication of comprehensive studies;
- Educating the public in relation to the value of the archaeological heritage and the threats to it, promoting public access to important elements of this heritage, and encouraging public display of selected archaeological objects.

The Skibbereen Development Plan is informed by the following plans at National and Regional Level.

4.1.2 National Plans

National Development Plan 2007-2013

The 2000 National Development Plan was prepared to underpin the development of a dynamic competitive economy to 2006. The subsequent NDP published this year will guide the development of the country in the period 2007-2013. The Plan sets out a strong framework for the promotion of regional development with a particular focus on investment in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) Gateway centres. Strong urban centres are directly related to regional growth and development, affecting employment, incomes and quality of life throughout the regions.

The Plan has four basic objectives: to continue sustainable national economic and employment growth, to strengthen and improve Ireland's international competitiveness, to foster balanced regional development and to promote social inclusion.

The NDP is the largest and most ambitious investment plan ever drawn up for Ireland, where over €52 billion was invested between 2002-2006 and a predicted € 184 billion of Public, Private and EU funds will be invested

between 2007 and 2013 in economic and social infrastructure, enterprise, science, agriculture sectors, education, training and environmental services.

The 2007 National Development Plan includes a number of strategic investment objectives for the southwest region including major road improvement schemes, waste management, enterprise, social infrastructure programmes etc.

The National Spatial Strategy, 2002-2020

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is a twenty year planning framework which sets out a national context for spatial planning which informs regional planning guidelines, as well as county and city development plans and strategies. It aims to achieve more balanced regional development.

The NSS is essentially a planning framework designed to deliver a more balanced social, economic and physical development between the regions. The successful aspects of the growth of the Greater Dublin Area over recent years need to be emulated in other areas to deliver a more even distribution of successful economic development. The growing strengths of Cork, Limerick/Shannon, Galway, and Waterford suggest that a coordinated development of these cities has the potential to offer a counterweight to the pull of the Dublin Region.

According to the NSS, the best prospects for establishing critical mass of the type and scale capable of competing with that of the Greater Dublin Area are dependent on point to developing Cork, Galway, Limerick/Shannon and Waterford as an increasingly inter-connected and developed network of co-operating and complementary cities. Models for activating such polycentric development approaches are evolving in other European countries.

The strategic roles which cities, towns, villages, communities and rural areas will have in delivering a more spatially balanced Ireland can be summarised as follows:

- Consolidation- the Greater Dublin Area;
- Strengthening the South, South East, West and North West to complement Dublin;
- Revitalisation the West and South West;
- Reinforcing central parts of Ireland and the South East; and
- Co-operating in an all-island context.

The strategy notes that within the South West region, there are medium sized towns, of 1,500 to 5,000 population, that play important economic and service functions along remoter parts of the coastline, such as Dingle, Cahersiveen, Kenmare, Castletownbere, Bantry and Skibbereen. Accessibility and effective local planning frameworks and initiatives to release capacity in terms of land and services for sustainable growth are critical factors in activating the potential of such services in their important county roles.

The strategy also notes that the process of revitalisation in parts of the South and West coastal areas is supported by the successful development of a number of relatively small towns. Associated with these towns is a growing tourism sector, a lively and attractive small town environment and spin-off employment creation in other enterprises and local services. It outlines that, to protect the economic vitality of such towns into the future, to their own benefit and that of the wider areas around them, it will be essential to sensitively balance future development options against the need to maintain those attributes that made these towns attractive in the first place. Achieving this balance will be particularly important in the case of residential development, including second homes, retail development and the treatment of their environs, setting and approaches.

National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012

The National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012 follows on from the first national strategy, published in 2000 and reviewed in 2002, and takes account of the public consultation process which followed the further review in Ireland's Pathway to Kyoto Compliance (2006). The purpose of this Strategy is to show clearly the measures by which Ireland will meet its 2008-2012 commitments; and to show how these measures position us for the post-2012 period, and to identify the areas in which further measures are being researched and developed to enable us meet our eventual 2020 commitment. Through innovation, energy efficiency and more sustainability in our personal choices, we can achieve the necessary lowering of the carbon intensity of our economy without sacrificing competitiveness, economic performance or quality of life.

National Biodiversity Plan 2002

The National Biodiversity Plan 2002 comprises a set of 91 Actions to halt the current and continuing loss of plant species, as well as the vegetation and habitats they compose by the year 2009. The Plan pays special attention to the need for the integration of the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into all relevant sectors. The full and effective integration of biodiversity concerns into the development and implementation of other policies, legislation, and programmes is of crucial importance. The overall objective of the Plan is to secure the conservation, including where possible the enhancement, and sustainable use of biological diversity in Ireland and to contribute to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity globally. The objectives of the National Biodiversity Plan include to;

- Conserve habitat diversity, including all sites of special biodiversity importance;
- Conserve species diversity;
- Conserve genetic diversity, both wild and domesticated;
- Contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and

- Advancing other obligations of the European Community Biodiversity Strategy in the EU, regionally and internationally.

Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland 1997

Sustainable Development – A Strategy for Ireland, published in 1997, stresses the Government's commitment to sustainable forms of transport and the need to strengthen and improve such forms in the interests of the promotion of sustainable development. An emphasis is given to the need to produce an efficient, cost effective and customer focused development of the rail network. The Strategy reflects Ireland's commitment to the principles and agenda for sustainable development agreed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and also responds to the EU Fifth Action Programme for the Environment.

The general aim of the Strategy is to *"ensure that economy and society in Ireland can develop to their full potential within a well protected environment, without compromising the quality of that environment and with responsibility towards present and future generations and the wider international community"*.

To achieve the aims of the Strategy, the Government has adopted the following principles, the implementation of these being specific objectives of this Plan:

- The Precautionary Principle which aims to deal with causes rather than results of environmental pollution; and
- Integration: illustrates the importance of integration at all levels of society – government, sectoral and policy levels, to enable environmental concerns to be addressed in an effective and comprehensive manner.
- The Polluter Pays Principle, which allocates the costs of pollution to producers and consumers rather than to society at large.

The Strategy recognises that the primary responsibility for the proper management of hazardous waste lies with the holder or generator of the waste. Other international policies/legislation that should be adhered to include:

- European Union (EU) Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) 1992;
- EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC);
- European Landscape;
- Birds Directive;
- Air Framework Directive;
- Waste Framework Directive; and
- Phosphorous Regulations.

National Heritage Plan 2002

The National Heritage Plan 2002 sets out a clear and coherent strategy and framework for the protection and enhancement of our heritage over the next five years. The concept of “placing heritage at the heart of public life” is intended to be all-embracing and to encompass the actions of individuals, communities, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, and regional and local bodies – all or which have a critical role to play in the protection and promotion of our heritage. The priorities for the National Heritage Plan include the following key actions:

- Local Heritage Plans, supported by enhanced levels of heritage expertise within Local Authorities;
- Increased levels of assistance for the protection of the archaeological and architectural heritage;
- Implementation of the National Biodiversity Plan and addressing the conservation of habitats, species, genetic diversity and the natural heritage;
- Initiation of a heritage inventory programme and establishment of a central heritage archive and library;
- Establishment of new structures in Dúchas, the Heritage Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, to provide a more efficient, integrated and regionalised service;
- Provision of total additional financial allocations of €123.16 m (£97 m) on a phased basis over the life of the Plan; and
- The deployment of a total of 102 additional staff to enhance existing heritage programmes and to operate the new structures proposed in the Plan.

The Energy White Paper – Delivering a Sustainable Future for Ireland

The White Paper entitled “Delivering a Sustainable Future for Ireland” is an action based strategy for achieving specific energy targets for Ireland in a timeframe between 2007 and 2020. The White Paper sets out strategic goals for the security of energy supply, sustainability and competitiveness. The main provisions of the White Paper are:

- Sustainable transport action plan due late 2007 will consider 100% plant oil in captive fleets in Local Authorities;
- Public sector will lead the way in bio-energy heating, electricity, CHP and biofuels;
- Electricity demand site management will be addressed this year and there are plans to install smart metering for all new and existing housing stock.
- Review part L (Conservation of fuel and energy) of building regulations in 2008 to reduce energy demand by 40% relative to current standards, look for funding mechanisms for smart metering, set target of 33% energy saving across public sector, introduce energy efficiency programmes (targets and standards) for LA's, publish green public procurement action plan, update existing social housing design guidelines; and

- Allocate significant amounts of resources towards remedial works Scheme and LA major refurbishment works.

Transport 21

In 2005 the Government launched Transport 21, a capital investment framework through which the transport system in Ireland will be developed, over the period 2006 to 2015. This framework includes for the development of the N15/N17/N18/N20/N25 Atlantic Corridor from Letterkenny to Waterford via Sligo, Tuam, Ennis, Limerick, Mallow and Cork. The road for the Atlantic Corridor is to be dual carriageway or 2+1. The current NRA policy is that 2+1 should only be used in retrofit situations therefore the cross section for new build sections of the Atlantic Corridor will be dual carriageway.

The scheme objectives are set out in Transport 21 as part of the strategy for National Roads as follows:

“Transport 21 is the capital investment framework through which the transport system in Ireland will be developed, over the period 2006 to 2015. This framework will address the twin challenges of past investment backlogs and continuing growth in transport demand. The projects and programmes that make up Transport 21 will aim to:

- *increase accessibility;*
- *ensure sustainability;*
- *expand capacity;*
- *increase use; and*
- *enhance quality.*

Towards Sustainable Local Communities: Guidelines on Local Agenda 21, 2001

Local Agenda 21 was the result of the first UN Conference on the Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where Ireland was amongst 150 nations, which endorsed Agenda 21, a major blueprint for how the world's nations can work individually and collectively towards sustainable development by the 21st century. Local Agenda 21 and the EU's Fifth Environment Action Programme underlined the fact that traditional policies must be replaced by an integrated approach to environment and development issues, if growth is to be achieved in parallel with, rather than at the expense of, environmental quality.

Local Agenda 21 is intended to translate sustainable development principles and objectives into practical action at the local level. Some of the major aims of Agenda 21 include:

- Reducing the amount of energy and raw materials society consumes, as well as the pollution and waste it produces;
- Protecting fragile ecosystems and environments; and
- Bringing about a fairer distribution of wealth, both between countries and between different social groups within countries.

Local Agenda 21 also encourages consultative processes which involve the whole community, its elected members and other community and representative groups through means of information awareness, public consultation and feedback, partnerships between authorities, businesses and communities, and a continuing monitoring of progress towards sustainability. The principles of Agenda 21 are being met through the process of SEA.

EU Sixth Environment Action Programme, 2002-2012

The EU Sixth Environment Action Programme sets out objectives in the shape of Europe's future environment at the start of the 21st century. It provides a framework for adopting and implementing sustainable development policies in Europe. This vision "Environment 2009: Our Future, Our Choice" seeks the following aims:

- To decouple the generation of waste from economic growth by establishing more sustainable consumption patterns;
- For waste generated, these should represent very low risks to the environment and our health;
- We should maximise recycling and bring "final disposal to an absolute minimum"; and
- Waste should be treated as close as possible to where it is generated ("proximity principle").

Seven 'Thematic Strategies' were introduced as a way to tackle seven key environmental issues, which require a holistic approach because of: their complexity, the diversity of actors concerned and the need to find multiple and innovative solutions. The Seven Thematic Strategies are:

- Clean Air For Europe (CAFE);
- Soil protection;

- Sustainable use of pesticides;
- Protect and conserve the marine environment;
- Waste prevention and recycling;
- Sustainable use of natural resources; and
- Urban environment.

Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines, 2008

Mr. John Gormley, T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and Dr. Martin Mansergh, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Finance with responsibility for the OPW, on 22nd September 2008 jointly published for public consultation the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines which are aimed at ensuring a more consistent, rigorous and systematic approach to fully incorporate flood risk assessment and management into the planning system.

As part of the guidelines Planning Authorities will introduce a new flood risk assessment system, which will be aligned with the existing Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process, introducing processes for screening for flood risk, scoping any flood risk assessment required and carrying out such assessments similar to the overall system for screening and scoping under SEA provision.

Furthermore city and county development plans will establish the overall flood risk assessment context for their functional areas, which may be supplemented by any more detailed site-specific flood risk assessment required to comply with these guidelines at town plan/LAP level.

Planning authorities will assess planning applications for development in accordance with the provisions of these guidelines following the guidance of their own or any OPW strategic flood risk assessment and the application of the sequential approach and, if necessary, the justification test required by these guidelines.

Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2005

Published in January 2005 the *Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities* provide a comprehensive framework to guide local authorities in preparing development plans and assessing applications for planning permission as well as retailers and developers in formulating development proposals.

These guidelines are a revision of the 2001 guidelines with a specific focus on changes regarding retail warehousing. It was recognised that there is evidence of consumer demand in Ireland for large-scale retail warehousing units which are capable of displaying a very wide range of goods within one store. Accordingly,

the Minister has determined that the 6,000sqm floorspace cap on individual retail warehouses will not apply in those areas which are subject to Integrated Area Plans under the Urban Renewal Act, 1998 in National Spatial Strategy, Gateways of Athlone/Tullamore/Mullingar, Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, Letterkenny, Limerick/Shannon, Sligo and Waterford and within the functional areas of the four Dublin local authorities.

Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (Guidelines for Planning Authorities)

This guidance document revises and updates the Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities published in 1999. The guidelines are focused on creating sustainable communities by incorporating the highest design standards and providing a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of essential infrastructure and services. The guidelines recognise that the footprint of urban areas cannot continue to expand unabated and, in line with the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines, they promote the consolidation of urban areas by providing for high-density residential development in the right locations, well-served in terms of public transport and community facilities and built to the highest possible standards. The guidelines set out a range of policy recommendations regarding:

- The key role of Development Plans and Local Area Plans in setting out policies and standards for sustainable development,
- The role of urban design in creating sustainable communities (including 12 best practice design guide criteria) with particular reference to design and layout of housing schemes,
- Key components of sustainable residential development in urban areas,
- The promotion of higher density development in appropriate areas and the appropriate densities and forms of development in smaller settlements
- Issues affecting individual dwellings and quality of life

The guidelines are accompanied by a best practice Urban Design Manual that illustrates how the guidelines can be implemented effectively and consistently across the different scales of urban development around the country.

Guidelines for Planning Authorities: Architectural Heritage Protection, 2004

The Planning and Development Act 2000, required additional development objectives relating to the protection of structures which are deemed to be of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest and to preserve the character of architectural conservation areas.

In this context, these Guidelines aim to assist local authorities/town councils in the adoption of suitable policies for protecting architectural heritage in their development plans and to ensure they have practical effect through development control measures. The guidelines aim to assist planning authorities in their role to protect the architectural heritage of their area. The Skibbereen Development Plan is considered to be consistent with these Guidelines.

4.1.3 Regional Plans

Regional Planning Guidelines for the Southwest Region, 2004

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Southwest provide a broad canvas, which aims to steer the growth and prosperity of the region and its people, up to 2020. The Guidelines contain statements and analysis of key economic objectives, together with a set of planning guidelines to be incorporated in the statutory development plans of the local authorities in the region and are seen as an important link between NSS and the draft of local county and city development plans.

The Region possesses a range of strong towns, such as Skibbereen, with populations in excess of 1,000. Skibbereen is designated as a key local service town within the *Regional Planning Guidelines*. Key local service towns are outlined as towns that play particularly important roles as service/retail/residential centres, generally in more remote parts of the Region, which need development to support rural regeneration. They should maintain rural population; support key service towns and working as a network to drive development (Table 6.2).

All the towns in the settlement hierarchy need to operate in a linked way, in order to deliver on their potential; and operating as a series of linked settlements can deliver the critical mass and service levels to drive development in their respective areas. Skibbereen is linked to Bantry, a key service town, in this way.

South Western River Basin District (SWRBD)

The South Western River Basin District (SWRBD) "A Future for Our Waters" and "Water Matters" outline the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive, and detail the main issues of investigation to date. These include wastewater and industrial discharges, landfills, quarries, mines and contaminated lands, agriculture, wastewater from unsewered properties, forestry, usage and discharge of dangerous substances, physical modifications, abstractions and local issues. The booklet "Water Matters" also outlines the next steps in the process of preparing a River Basin Management Plan, which is due to be adopted for the SWRBD in 2009. The document "A Future for Our Waters" indicates the findings of Risk Assessments that have been carried out on water bodies within the SWRBD.

4.1.4 Local Plans

Cork County Waste Management Plan 2004-2009

The Waste Management Plan was formulated by Cork County Council to address the on-going challenge of waste management in County Cork. The Plan addresses all areas of waste management – from waste

prevention and minimisation, to its collection, treatment, recovery and final disposal. The Plan is guided by international, EU and Irish legislation and policy on waste management.

The Waste Management Plan for County Cork envisages a single, central regional landfill to accept residual waste. National recycling targets for household wastes will be met by provision of a high number of civic amenity and bring sites, combined with a central integrated materials recovery and composting facility to segregate and recover recyclable and biodegradable household wastes. Thermal treatment will be retained as an option, should waste growth necessitate its introduction at a later date.

The previous Waste Management Plan (1999 to 2004) confirmed the decision to proceed on the basis of Scenario 2 of the Waste Management Strategy, which resulted in a number of actions being taken by the Council including:

- Bottlehill identified as the most suitable site for a landfill.
- Application to the Environmental Protection Agency for a waste management licence and to An Bord Pleanála for approval. The EPA had issued a proposed decision to grant a licence and a decision was currently awaited. An Bord Pleanála granted approval in February 2004.
- Progress on the acquisition of sites for the provision of materials recovery and residual landfill facilities.
- Entering into tender negotiations for the provision of a materials recovery facility by public private partnership.
- Progress in the provision of civic amenity sites and transfer stations.

Having regard to the above, the Council proposes to continue to implement scenario 2 for the management of municipal waste in the county until 2009.

Cork Strategic Retail Study 2008

The draft Cork Strategic Retail Study (CSRS) designates Skibbereen as an 'expansion town', which requires headroom for expansion to continue to cater for the needs of the catchment area. After Clonakilty, Skibbereen is the next strongest retail town in West Cork. Clonakilty and Skibbereen are both recognised as towns that need expanded retail capacity to overcome potential isolation from higher order markets and a tendency for leakage to competitive centres outside the County (p.48).

According to Table 6.3, the overall retail strategy for Skibbereen is for incremental growth in line with current and planned population levels. The draft CRSR 2008 recognises that expansion towns should be the principal locations for both convenience and comparison retail development in the rural areas of the County.

According to 2007 figures, the town centre supports 3,630m² of comparison goods floorspace and 2,160m² of convenience goods floorspace. Since 2002 there has been around 1,000sqm net of new comparison floorspace developed, all in small units. A further 1,100sqm net is committed, again all in small units. There is also a central opportunity site in the town and Tesco and Dunnes are looking to locate in the town. An out-of-centre Lidl has been developed since 2002.

Skibbereen is a rural market town rather than a tourism destination, but there is planning permission for a new hotel and the existing hotel has plans to expand. These developments should bring more tourists into the town. There are public realm improvements underway and the bypass is partly completed (p.20).

Cork County Heritage Plan 2005 – 2010

The Cork County Heritage Plan aims to secure benefits for local heritage and to increase awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of this heritage for all of the people in County Cork. It aims to develop and encourage best practice in relation to the management and care of heritage in County Cork and to deliver practical actions to achieve this, as well as to gather and disseminate information about heritage in the County.

Joint Housing Strategy

Cork County Council, in conjunction with Cork Corporation and the nine Urban District Councils in the county produced a Joint Housing Strategy to address the housing needs of the existing and future population of Cork to 2011. The policies and objectives of the strategy are enshrined in the Cork County Development Plan 2003 (as amended).

A draft Joint Housing Strategy has developed looking forward to the year 2020. It is a review of the previous Joint Housing Strategy 2001 and once adopted, will replace the previous Strategy. The primary purpose of the draft Strategy is to ensure that the overall supply of housing is sufficient to meet the planned population of Cork. The draft strategy was on consultation until February 2008 and is due to be adopted in time to inform future development plans.

Cork County Development Plan 2009

The Cork County Development Plan was adopted by the Members of Cork County Council on 9th January 2009 and formally came into operation on the 6th February 2009.

Planning policy in the County Development Plan advocates the concentration of development in locations where it is possible to integrate employment, community services, retailing and public transport in conjunction with population growth.

Skibbereen is identified within the West Strategic Plan Area of the county. The policy and objectives of the Plan for this Area are based on planning and sustainable development goals, which include:

To establish an appropriate balance in the spatial distribution of future population growth so that Bantry, Castletownbere, Dunmanway and Skibbereen, can accelerate their rate of growth, broadly in line with the North and West Cork Strategic Plan, and achieve a critical mass of population to enable them to maximise their potential to attract new investment in employment, services and public transport (p.37).

The Cork County Development Plan 2009 proposes to increase the population in the town from 2,338 persons in 2006 to 3,035 people by 2020 (p.37).

Further to this, Section 5.2.47 of the Plan outlines that in relation to the west strategic plan area, Skibbereen will be designated as a District Employment Centre, which is a centre that serves the employment needs of urban areas as well as large rural hinterlands. This requires that:

an appropriate quantum of land will need to be provided within the urban areas to accommodate a range of employment activities including office based industry and manufacturing. Serviced industrial sites and incubator units should be available within these centres. The main opportunity to strengthen the permanent population in these areas is by strengthening the economic and employment base of the towns and larger villages (p.150).

Overall, the Plan sets out that Skibbereen is an important service centre for a large rural hinterland including a number of the islands. Objective SET 3 - 20 of the Plan is to strengthen the role of Skibbereen as an important centre for population, employment, services and tourism, which would also serve a wider rural area including the islands. The *Skibbereen Electoral Area Plan* will provide for the protection of the setting of the town, in particular the hills and scenic landscape to the southwest of the town and will encourage balanced development supporting its role as a district employment centre and recognise that the town, with its recent improvements to water and sanitary infrastructure, will cater for all future developments including industrial, tourism and educational needs. (p.90).

North and West Cork Strategic Plan 2002 to 2020

The core purpose of the North and West Strategic Plan is to make the Area an attractive place for young adults to live in and encourage inward migration. Skibbereen is identified as one of the coastal towns showing relatively high growth between 1991 and 1996. The plan notes that opportunities for expansion in the fish-processing sector exist and in the Skibbereen/Union Hall area, processing has grown dramatically since 1992.

Skibbereen, with a population of over 1,000 persons is classified by the Plan as 'urban'. Additional growth is identified for Skibbereen, from 4,100 households in 2001 to an estimated 5,507 by 2020 (p. 66).

In terms of achieving sustainable settlement patterns, the towns of Bandon, Bantry, Castletownbere, Clonakilty, Dunmanway and Skibbereen are characterised as an urban development node of the South and South-West. The plan notes that this group of towns could be, capable of (or with the potential in the future of) carrying an important range of services and employment so as to sustain their immediate population and the rural-based population in their hinterlands. A focused and co-ordinated approach to the development and enhancement of these towns will be required. It is recommended that a target to double the household numbers of each of the above towns by 2020, on average, in a planned, incremental fashion, should be considered (p. 74). A transport route between Skibbereen and Bantry is also identified to improve the concentric roads network of the area.

Skibbereen Electoral Area Local Area Plan 2005

The Skibbereen Electoral Area comprises approximately 1220 km². It is located in the centre of the West Cork area. The electoral area has three main towns, Clonakilty, Skibbereen and Dunmanway, which command a hinterland of rural farmland and tourist amenities.

The majority of the built up area of Skibbereen is administered by Skibbereen Town Council, who are a separate planning authority, and prepare their own development plan for their jurisdiction. The Skibbereen Electoral LAP notes that the Town Council adopted a new development plan in 2004 which makes provision for the scale of development necessary to accommodate the level of population growth predicted for the town. Furthermore it notes that the land zoned in the Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2004, largely reflects relatively small areas of land that were designated for development in previous plans but have not yet come forward for development.

The Skibbereen Electoral Area Local Area Plan governs the environs of Skibbereen. In this Local Area Plan, Skibbereen is identified as a Main Settlement in the Skibbereen Electoral Area, while retaining its status as a county town in the overall strategy of the Cork County Development Plan 2003 (as varied), as detailed in Chapter 2, Volume 1 of that Plan.

It outlines that the strategic aims for Skibbereen are to encourage its continued growth and development as the primary urban centre for a large rural hinterland with key employment, educational, service and tourism functions (p. 45).

A need has been identified for an additional hotel in Skibbereen that would offer a full range of facilities including a leisure centre, conference facilities and high quality tourism accommodation. Outside the town, land forms part of the open countryside. Here, the objectives of this plan seek to prevent sprawl and ensure a clear distinction between built up areas and the open countryside by reserving land in the immediate surroundings of towns generally for use as agriculture, open space and recreation uses. Modest provision has

been made for new residential development outside the town council boundary, to the north and west. Skibbereen's established industrial areas are located within the Town Council boundary. A site east of and adjacent to the Town Council boundary has been zoned for small to medium sized light industrial uses and a provision made for a new enterprise zone on the edge of town.

Specific proposed objectives in the plan include provision of a new sewage treatment plant and proposed bypass for the town. There is a proposal to upgrade the regional road (R586) to national status and to improve the condition of the N71 that passes through Clonakilty and Skibbereen.

5 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

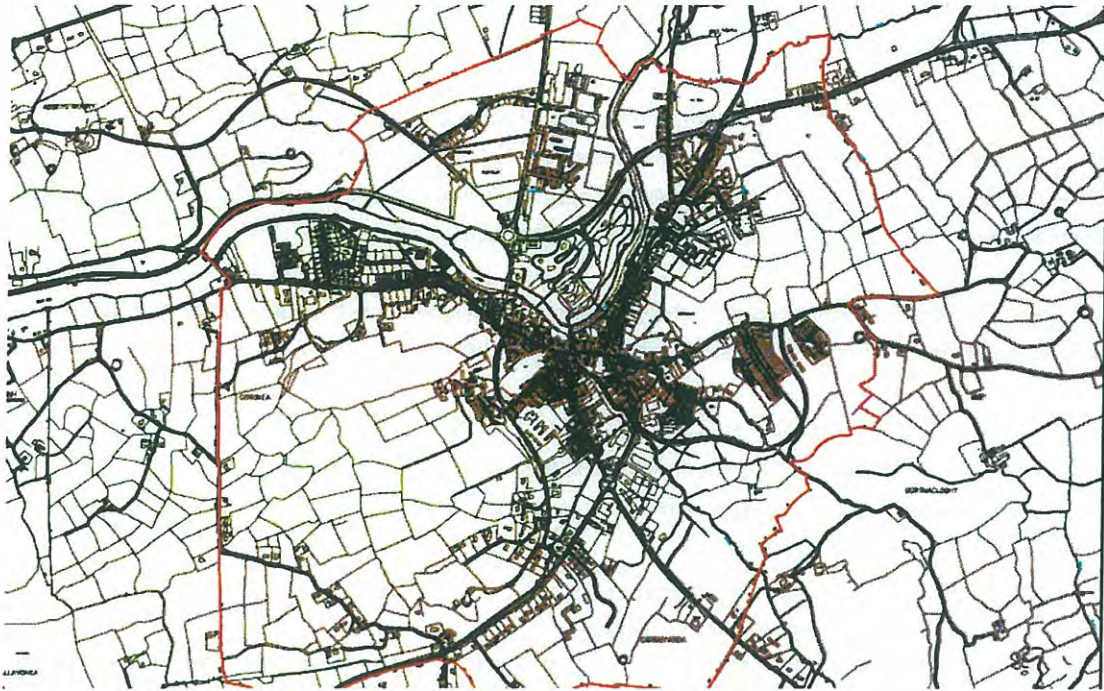
This section of the report describes the current state of the environment in the Skibbereen Development Plan area as an entire site. Sections 5.2 to 5.10 below describe the baseline conditions for each topic. As set out in the SEA guidelines (e.g. Population, Material Assets etc) are fully addressed in accordance with the SEA Guidelines. Figure 5.1.1 presents the boundary of the study area subject to this SEA.

In accordance with the SEA guidelines no primary research was carried out in the collection of data. Existing and available information sources were used. These include the following:-

- Central Statistics Office;
- National Parks and Wildlife Service data base;
- Planning and Policy documents;
- Geological Survey of Ireland;
- South Western Regional Fisheries Board
- The Environmental Protection Agency; and
- Ordnance Survey of Ireland.

Baseline data was collected relating to the indicators described in the SEA directive: biodiversity, fauna, flora, population, human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between these factors.

Figure 5.1.1 Skibbereen Town Council Boundary



5.2 BIODIVERSITY, FLORA AND FAUNA

5.2.1 Existing Policies

It is considered that the current objectives of the Draft Skibbereen Development Plan 2009-2015 with regard to the protection of the natural environment (biodiversity, flora and fauna) need to concentrate on the protection of habitats, flora and fauna. Therefore it is recommended that a number of additional policies should be included in the draft plan in the interest of sustainability of Skibbereen Town.

5.2.2 Baseline

The term 'biological diversity', often abbreviated to 'biodiversity' refers to the variety of living things. In the same way as a rich diversity of cultures enhances the quality of our lives, so does a rich diversity of plants and animals. Biological diversity is known to be important to the proper functioning of the planet's life support system. Conservation of biological diversity has, therefore, become one of the key aims of governments throughout the world.

5.2.2.1 Designated Sites

There are no designated sites within the Skibbereen town boundary. However, there are a number of sites designated for biodiversity conservation within 10km of Skibbereen town, these are described in this section.

The Natura 2000 Network is a network of important ecological sites across the European Union. It is comprised of areas known as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The total land and freshwater area within the Natura 2000 network in Ireland is some 11,644km²: this includes some 2,300km² of designated marine areas. Whilst the designation of an area as a Natura 2000 site greatly restricts development, the designation does not necessarily mean limitation of activities within the site or surrounding area provided these activities are environmentally sensitive and do not impact negatively upon the habitats, or species for the protection of which the site has been designated.

Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs)

Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) are designated and protected under the European Union (EU) 'Habitats Directive' (92/43/EEC), as implemented in Ireland by the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997. There are four candidate Special Areas of Conservation located within 10 km of Skibbereen town boundary: *Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs* (Site Code: 000097), *Castletownshend Wood* (Site Code: 001547), *Roaringwater Bay and Islands* (Site Code: 000101) and *Myross Wood* (Site Code: 001070). See Table 5.2A for the key features of these designated sites.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) were initially designated under Directive 79/409/EEC, the Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds ('The Birds Directive'), and are now protected as Natura 2000 Sites under the EU 'Habitats Directive'. There is one SPA within 10km of Skibbereen: *Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA* (Site Code: 004156). See Table 5.2.1 for the key features of this designated site.

Ramsar sites

Ramsar sites are internationally important wetlands where water is the primary controlling environmental factor. The full title of the Ramsar convention is *The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat*. The convention was developed and adopted by participating nations at a meeting in Ramsar, Iran on February 2, 1971 and came into force on December 21, 1975. There is no Ramsar site within 10km of the study area.

Shellfish Growing Waters

Several marine habitats have been designated as shellfish growing waters in accordance with obligations under EU Council Directive 79/923/EEC on the quality of shellfish waters. The directive seeks to protect or improve shellfish waters identified by member states in order to support shellfish life and growth and thus contribute to the high quality of edible shellfish products. Roaringwater Bay has been designated as 'Shellfish Growing Waters'.

Natural Heritage Areas

Sites of national importance in the Republic of Ireland are termed, proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs). Whilst the Wildlife (Amendment) Act (2000) has been passed into law, pNHAs will not have legal backing until consultative process with landowners has been completed and they are designated as NHAs. This process is currently underway, however none of these pNHAs is yet listed on the NPWS website as having been designated (July 2008).

There are six pNHAs within 10km of Skibbereen: *Lough Hyne Nature Reserve & Environs* (Site Code: 000097), *Castletownshend Wood* (Site Code: 001547), *Roaringwater Bay & Islands* (Site Code: 000101), *Myross Wood* (Site Code: 001070), *Cloonties Lough* (Site Code: 001044) and *Castletownshend (Gate Lodge)* (Site Code: 000084).

Table 5.2A presents details of the key ecological features of the cSACs, SPAs and pNHAs within 10km of Skibbereen; it also gives their distances and directions from Skibbereen, and provides a summary of the key ecological features for which the sites have been designated.

Table 5.2.1: Designated sites within 10km of Skibbereen and the key ecological features of the sites

Name	Site Code	Key Features	Direction & approximate distance from Skibbereen
Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA	004156	The Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA is one of the most important breeding sites in the country for bird E.U. Birds Directive Annex I species Chough. It also supports an important population of the Annex I species Peregrine as well as a range of breeding seabirds, including a population of Black Guillemot of national importance.	3.6km south of Skibbereen
Lough Hyne Nature Reserve & Environs cSAC & pNHA	000097	Lough Hyne is recognised as an internationally important ecological site, with both botanical and zoological interest. This site contains important examples of three habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, including reefs, some of which are very exposed to wave action on the open coast, whilst others are extremely sheltered within the Lough. The cliffs within the lough support a wide variety of sponges including rare species. Two rare gobies (fish) are found; and two sea-slugs more commonly found in the Mediterranean. The southern cup coral <i>Caryophyllia inornatus</i> occurs close to the rapids and is the only known site in Ireland for this species. The cliffs on the eastern edge of Tragumna Bay are used by small numbers of breeding seabirds, as well as breeding Raven, Peregrine and Chough. The last two species are listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.	2.9km southwest of Skibbereen
Castletownshend (Gate Lodge) pNHA	000084	This site is a nursery roost of the Leisler's bat (<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>). Approximately 140 bats roost in the rear attic of a small lodge. This site was once thought to be the largest Leisler's colony in the world and said to contain 800 bats. Only a fraction of that number use the lodge now but it is still a site of international importance, as Ireland is the world stronghold for this species.	5.2km east of Skibbereen
Castletownshend Wood cSAC & pNHA	001547	The site has been planted with conifers, but the steeper slopes retain a covering of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland. Castletownshend is particularly noteworthy for	5.4 km east of Skibbereen

		the presence of the rare and protected plant species.	
Roaringwater Bay & Islands cSAC & pNHA	000101	Roaringwater Bay and Islands is a site of exceptional conservation importance, supporting diverse marine and terrestrial habitats, five of which are listed under the EU Habitats Directive namely dry heath, sea cliffs, large shallow inlets and bays, marine caves and reefs. The site supports a large number of Red Data Book plant species and is also notable for the presence of Otter and Grey seal, two mammal species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. It supports important sea bird colonies and breeding populations of two species of bird listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive the Chough and the Peregrine Falcons.	pNHA 7.5km southwest of Skibbereen. cSAC 6.7km southwest of Skibbereen.
Myross Wood cSAC & pNHA	001070	The main habitat on the site is mixed woodland, which contains fragments of semi-natural woodland on cliffs and rocky ground. The main native tree species present are Oak (<i>Quercus</i> spp.), Downy Birch (<i>Betula pubescens</i>), Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>) and Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>). Of particular note is the presence of a population of legally protected plant species that is listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive and in the Irish Red Data book.	7km east of Skibbereen
Cloonties Lough pNHA	001044	The site is of interest as an example of an upland acid lake, with the added distinction of containing a scarce waterwort (<i>Elatine hexandra</i>).	9.9km east of Skibbereen

Shadow Sites

There is one site within 10km of the study area that is included in the *NGO Special Areas of Conservation Shadow List* (Dwyer, 2000), Kilnaclasha, which lies approximately 2km north of Skibbereen town boundary. The site has been included for the presence of the Habitats Directive Annex II butterfly species Marsh Fritillary (Code: 1065, in the *NGO Special Areas of Conservation Shadow List*). The Shadow List has been compiled by a grouping of Irish conservation Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), and includes sites, which, according to the NGOs, fulfil the ecological requirements for SAC designation.

5.2.2.2 Statutory Nature Reserves

There are two Statutory Nature Reserves *Lough Hyne Nature Reserve* and *Knockomagh Wood Nature Reserve* located within 10km of Skibbereen town boundary. *Lough Hyne Nature Reserve* is situated 2.9km south-west of Skibbereen. Lough Hyne is a sea lough containing a wide range of important habitats both within

the lough and its seaward approaches, a range varying from freshwater to marine that is seldom found in more extensive areas elsewhere. These varied habitats support an exceptionally wide range of animal and plant species (for details see the NPWS Site Synopsis for Lough Hyne or refer to Table 5.2.1 above). *Knockomagh Wood Nature Reserve* is situated 3.3km south-west of Skibbereen on a hillside overlooking and adjoining *Lough Hyne Nature Reserve*. It consists of a small area (12.5 ha.) of sessile oak and mixed broadleaf woodland.

Other Designated sites

There are no Wildlife Sanctuaries or Important Bird Areas within 10km of Skibbereen.

5.2.2.3 Flora of Skibbereen

Skibbereen town lies within Ordnance Survey National Grid 10km square W13. Both the NPWS Rare Plants Database and Preston *et. al.* (2002) have recorded protected flora species from this 10km square.

A plant species list for 10km square W13 was generated from the CD-Rom version of the New Atlas of British and Irish Flora (Preston *et. al.*, 2002). This list was then compared to the lists of species protected under the Flora (Protection) Order of 1999; and those included in the Irish Red Data Book (Curtis and McGough, 1988). Details are provided in Table 5.2.2 below.

Table 5.2.2: Rare or Protected Plant Species recorded by Preston *et. al.* (2002) from 10km squares W13.

Species	Status within 10km square W13 (Preston <i>et al.</i>)	Status within 10km square W13 (NPWS, 2008)	Notes
Annual Knawel (<i>Scleranthus annuus</i>)	Pre 1970	Skibbereen 1896	Flora Protection Order Species 1999
Corncockle (<i>Agrostemma githago</i>)	Pre 1970	Not Recorded	IUCN= Extinct
Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>)	1987-1999	Not Recorded	IUCN = Not threatened IRDB TN = 8 (Rare)
Hen-Bane (<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i>)	Pre 1970	Not Recorded	IUCN Rare IRDB TN = 8 (Rare)

Killarney Fern (<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>)	1987 - 1999	1962 and 1993 location not known	Flora Protection Order Species 1999 IUCN Rare-Vulnerable IRDB TN = 5 (Rare)
Lesser Snapdragon (<i>Misopates orontium</i>)	Not Recorded	Castletownsend 1969	Flora Protection Order Species 1999 IUCN Vulnerable TN=11 (Vulnerable)
Wood Bitter-vetch (<i>Vicia orobus</i>)	1987 - 1999	Not Recorded	Flora Protection Order Species 1999 IUCN = Vulnerable IRDB TN = 11 (Vulnerable)

Four Flora Protection Order species are recorded from 10km National Grid Square W13 as follows.

Annual Knawel (*Scleranthus annuus*) which is recorded by Preston *et. al.* (2000), as being present within the 10km grid square W13 (Pre 1970). Webb *et. al.*, (1996) describe it as occurring in *waste places and roadsides on dry, sandy soils, rare in the north-east and very rare elsewhere.*

Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*) which is recorded by Preston *et. al.* (2000), as being present within the 10km grid square W13 (1987 –1999) and by the NPWS, 2008 (1962 and 1993). Killarney Fern is listed as 'Rare' in the Irish Red Data Book. Curtis and McGough, (1988) describe that the small fern *occurs near waterfalls, on damp rocks, in crevices and beneath overhanging rocks.* Generally it is found in dark, sheltered areas with humid conditions.

Lesser Snapdragon (*Misopates orontium*) which is recorded by NPWS (2008), as being present within the 10km grid square W13 (Castletownsend, 1969). It is listed as 'Vulnerable' in the Irish Red Data Book. Curtis and McGough, (1988) describe that the Lesser Snapdragon has been recorded 20 times with 14 of them being in the Cork region. Webb *et. al.*, (1996) describe it as occurring in *Arable fields, established in Co. Cork, though rare and declining, a rare causal in the south-east.*

Wood Bitter-vetch (*Vicia orobus*) is recorded by Preston *et. al.* (2002), as being present within the 10km square W13 (1987-1999). Webb *et. al.*, (1996) describe its occurrence in *'Thickets and rocky ground in the West, Centre and North-east of Ireland rather rare.'*

Three further species are listed in the Irish Red Data Book as follows.

Corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*) which is recorded by Preston *et. al.* (2000), as being present within the 10km grid square W13 (Pre 1970) is listed as "Extinct" in the Red Data book. Curtis and McGough, (1988) describe it as being, *'widespread throughout corn fields in Ireland at one stage, but is now believed to be extinct.'*

Cowslip (*Primula veris*) which is recorded by Preston *et. al.* (2000), as being present within the 10km grid square W13 (Pre 1970), and is listed as 'Rare' in the Red Data Book. Webb *et. al.*, (1996) describes it as

occurring in 'pastures; frequent in the Centre, rather rare in the North-east and South-west.' Curtis and McGough, (1988) describe it as being rare in Northern Ireland but is increasing in eastern Ireland and is now abundant in many sites where it was once absent or rare.

Hen-bane (*Hyoscyamus niger*) which is recorded by Preston *et. al.* (2000), as being present within the 10km grid square W13 (Pre 1970) and is listed as 'Rare' in the Red Data Book. Webb *et. al.*, (1996) describes it as occurring on *sandy or stony shores throughout; often impermanent*. Curtis and McGough, (1988) describe it as the species as having undergone a dramatic decline and in only being present in Wicklow, Wexford, Dublin, Louth, Kilkenny, Galway and Down.

5.2.2.4 Fauna of Skibbereen

Mammals

In Exploring Irish Mammals, Hayden and Harrington (2000) presents the distribution of mammal species by 20km x 20km squares, each of which is composed of four Ordnance Survey 10km National Grid Squares. Skibbereen lies within the 20km square composed of W02, W03, W12 and W13. Table 5.2.3 presents details of the mammal species found in this 20km square.

Table 5.2.3: Legally Protected Mammal Species recorded by Hayden and Harrington as Being Present in the 20km x 20km Square Comprising 10km National Grid Squares W02, W03, W12 and W13.

Species	Indication of National Distribution	Level of Protection	Likelihood of the species occurring in Skibbereen
Badger	Throughout Ireland	Irish Red Data Book 'Internationally Important' Wildlife (Amendment) Act (2000).	Likely to be present in the vicinity of the town.
Brown long-eared bat	Throughout Ireland	Irish Red Data Book 'Internationally Important'. Habitats Directive Annex IV. Berne Convention Annex II.	Likely to be present in the vicinity of town, roosting in buildings.
Common Pipistrelle/ Soprano pipistrelle	Throughout Ireland	Irish Red Data Book 'Internationally Important'. Habitats Directive Annex IV. Berne Convention Annex II.	Likely to be present in the town, roosting in buildings.

Daubenton's bat	Throughout Ireland	Irish Red Data Book: 'Internationally Important' Bern Convention Appendix II. Habitats Directive Annex IV.	Likely to be present in the vicinity of the town.
Hedgehog	Throughout Ireland	Berne Convention Appendix III.	Likely to be present in larger gardens and 'wild' areas the town.
Irish (mountain) hare	Throughout Ireland	Wildlife (Amendment) Act (2000). Irish Red Data Book 'Internationally important'. Berne Convention Appendix III.	May be present.
Irish stoat	Throughout Ireland	Wildlife (Amendment) Act (2000). Berne Convention Appendix III.	May be present.
Leisler's bat	Widespread distribution although not abundant	Irish Red Data Book 'Internationally Important'. Habitats Directive Annex IV. Berne Convention Annex II.	May be present in the town, roosting in buildings.
Lesser horseshoe bat	South West & West of Ireland	Irish Red Data Book 'Internationally Important'. Habitat Directive Annex I Habitats Directive Annex IV Berne Convention Appendix II.	May be present in the vicinity of the town, roosting in buildings.
Otter	Throughout Ireland	Irish Red Data Book 'Internationally important'. Habitats Directive Annexes II and IV. Berne Convention Appendix	Likely to be present in the Ilen River.

		III. Wildlife (Amendment) Act (2000).	
Pygmy shrew	Throughout Ireland	Berne Convention Appendix III.	Likely to be present in rough areas of scrub and grassland in the town.
Red squirrel	Scattered throughout Ireland, but with evidence of a recent decline.	Wildlife (Amendment) Act (2000).	Likely to be present in woodlands within a few kilometres of the town or possibly within the town itself.

Birds

Table 5.2.4 presents details of bird species of conservation concern recorded by Gibbons *et. al.* (1993) as breeding within OS 10km grid squares W13, within which Skibbereen is located. Species considered here to be of high conservation concern are those listed either on the 'Red List' by Lynas *et. al.* (2007), as being of high conservation concern in Ireland; those listed in the Irish Red Data Book (RDB) (Whilde, 1993) or those listed under Appendix I of the EU 'Birds Directive'.

Table 5.2.4: Bird Species of High Conservation Concern recorded from 10km National Grid Square W13 during the 'New Atlas Survey' 1988-91 (Gibbons *et. al.*, 1993).

Species	Breeding status within 10km square W13	Notes
Chough	Possible Breeding	Annex I Birds Directive Red List
Curlew	Possible Breeding	Red List
Kingfisher	Possible Breeding	Annex I Birds Directive Red List
Peregrine	Breeding Confirmed	Annex I Birds Directive Red List

Redshank	Possible Breeding	Red List
Yellowhammer	Possible Breeding	Red List

Chough are restricted to areas of low intensity livestock farming close to cliffs, caves and old buildings (Gibbons *et al.*, 1993). Potential habitat for Chough lies to the south of the town.

Curlews are frequently found nesting at high altitudes in damp upland and northern moorland areas. It has however occupied lowland regions such as agricultural habitats e.g. pastures & cereals (Gibbons *et al.*, 1993). Its rate of expansion into these regions is thought to have declined by the 1950's. No suitable breeding habitat for Curlew exists close to Skibbereen.

Kingfisher requires relatively shallow and slow moving freshwater, with thriving populations of small fish on which to feed, and vertical banks of fairly soft material where they can excavate their nesting burrows (Gibbons *et al.*, 1993). There is high potential for Kingfisher to occur on the River Ilen.

Peregrine Falcon populations crashed through the effects of organochlorine insecticides, however populations have recovered since 1964 and many populations have reached twice the original recorded size. The highest breeding density is now eight pairs per 10km² (Gibbons *et al.*, 1993). A tenth of the population is known to be nesting in quarries, many still worked. Nesting on buildings has recently occurred in at least 12 localities throughout Ireland and the UK; however it is unlikely that Peregrine breeds within Skibbereen town as tall buildings are absent.

Redshank nest in wet grasslands and on salt marshes near the coast (Gibbons *et al.*, 1993). Redshank are unlikely to occur within the town boundary but could possibly occur as a breeding species in coastal areas of Roaringwater Bay.

Gillmore (1979) found that Yellowhammers had disappeared from agricultural areas in which tillage comprises the lowest proportion (<10%) of agricultural land use. Outside the breeding season, the Yellowhammer is heavily dependant for food on cereals and other large grass seeds (see Gibbons *et al.*, 1993). Yellowhammer was recorded breeding in 10 km Squares W13. The presence of agricultural land within the town boundary offers potential breeding habitat for Yellowhammer.

Reptiles and Amphibians

It is likely that common frog and probable that smooth newt may utilise wet areas such as drains, ponds, etc. within Skibbereen. There are records of Viviparous Lizard within 10km square W13 (Marnell, 2002) and it is possible that the Viviparous Lizard is found within the town boundary of Skibbereen.

Terrestrial Invertebrates

The Habitats Directive Annex II butterfly species Marsh Fritillary has been recorded in the OS 10km National Grid square W13 between 1995 and 1999. A maximum of 2-9 individuals were recorded at the time of surveying (Asher *et. al.* 2001).

None of the three species of Vertigo snails (*V. geyeri*, *V. angustior* and *V. moulinsiana*) that are listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive are known to occur in the Skibbereen area (NPWS, 2008). Kerry Slug a species listed as an Annex II and Annex IV species of the European Habitats Directive is not present within W13. However, it is worth noting that the edge of the Kerry Slugs known range lies directly to the west of W13 with the species has being recorded within W03 and W02.

5.2.2.5 Aquatic biodiversity

The River Ilen's source is found at Mullaghmesha and flows over 20 km south before it reaches Skibbereen. Several tributaries drain into the Ilen River including the River Ruagagh and the Saivnose River. The Ilen River flows to the west of the town boundary draining into Ilen Estuary further south and continues into Roaringwater Bay.

The Ilen River holds populations of salmonids, eel and lamprey species with mullet and flatfish in the tidal section of the river (McPharland pers comm, 2008). The Habitats Directive Annex I Freshwater pearl-mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) has been recorded in the Ilen River (Moorkens, 1999).

The water quality of the Ilen River is continually monitored by the EPA. The most recent water quality survey was carried out in 2005 at a sampling station near Derreeny Bridge where a 'Q value' rating of 4 (meaning that it is of 'Good' status) was recorded. Another station upstream recorded a 'Q-value' rating of 4-5 (meaning "High" status). The Ilen estuary situated south west of Skibbereen has been classified by the EPA as "Possibly at Risk of Not Achieving Good Status".

River Ilen Anglers Club has expressed concerns at the reduction in the population of Atlantic Salmon and Sea Trout in the last 30 years (River Ilen Anglers Club, 2008).

5.2.2.6 Ecological Networks

An ecological network is a network that consists of core areas of high biodiversity value and corridors or 'stepping stones' which are linkages between them. Ecological networks are important in connecting areas of local biodiversity with each other and with nearby designated sites so as to prevent islands of habitat from being isolated. They also provide important linkages for wildlife, flora and fauna and are important for mammals, including bats, and for birds and invertebrates. Treelines and hedgerows are likely to be important components of Skibbereen's ecological networks, allowing for linkages between and within areas of high biodiversity such as woodlands and wetlands in the surrounding countryside. The ecological network approach

supports management of linkages between areas of biodiversity value, between areas used by species for different functions and between local populations of different species.

The importance of ecological networks is the subject of Article 10 of the EU Habitats Directive, which recognises that ecological networks are corridors and 'stepping stones' for wildlife, flora and fauna allowing for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange. The Habitats Directive requires that ecological connectivity and areas of ecological value outside the network of designated ecological sites (cSACs and SPAs) are maintained and it recognises the need for the management of these through land-use planning and development policies.

5.2.2.7 Invasive Species

Invasive species is the term used to describe a non-native species which becomes established in natural, or semi natural ecosystems or habitats, is an agent of change, and threatens native biological diversity (or has the potential to do so).

Wireweed (*Sargassum muticum*) a highly vigorous brown seaweed has been reported in some areas in West Cork and is expected to spread throughout coastal Ireland (see: <http://www.irishseaweed.com/documents/smutposter.pdf>). Both constitute serious threats to native marine flora and fauna. Other potential sources for invasive species include surface water runoff from garden centres, which may bring seeds or fragments of living plants into natural systems; and exotic species planted in parks and residential gardens, which may 'escape' and spread into natural habitats.

Other invasive species threatening natural systems in Ireland include Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), and any of these, or other invasive species, could potentially become a problem for biodiversity in Skibbereen.

5.2.3 Impact Assessment –existing environmental problems and constraints/Threats

The following environmental problems and constraints / threats to biodiversity in Skibbereen have been identified:

- The discharge of raw sewage from Skibbereen town into the Ilen River and the Caol stream has serious implications for these waterways. These waterways flow directly in Roaringwater Bay, which is designated as a cSAC and as a shellfish water. This is potentially a significant problem for implementation of the EU Habitats and Shellfish Waters Directives.
- There is potential for impacts on the aquatic environment in the form of residential, industrial and agricultural run-off, other municipal sources of pollution, fragmentation of river corridors and soil erosion. These risks apply in particular to the Ilen River. Under the Water Framework Directive, water quality must achieve “good status” by 2015.
- Greenfield Development: All developments which take place on greenfield sites are likely to cause some degree of negative impact on biodiversity. Where developments i.e. roads, housing and other infrastructural developments have occurred on greenfield sites they have replaced some semi-natural and natural areas with artificial surfaces causing a gradual loss of biodiversity.
- Invasive species: There is potential for invasive species to enter surface waters and marine systems from a number of sources including runoff from garden centres, from boats, by dumping of waste from fish tanks and garden ponds, and perhaps also from aquaculture facilities. There is therefore a need to include a policy in the new plan to prevent the introduction of those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species. The utilisation of native species in amenity planting and stocking along with change in community actions to reduce the introduction and spread of non-native species should be encouraged.
- Removal of Ecological Corridors: The removal of ecological networks / corridors is a significant issue. It is recognised that there has been a significant increase in hedgerow removal throughout Ireland in recent years.
- Climate Change: Until recently biodiversity losses have been attributed to the spread and increased environmental impact of people, however, it seems likely that future losses will increasingly result from human induced global climate change. Climate change considerations must therefore be seen as central to the protection of the natural environment.

5.2.4 Evolution without implementation of the plan

In Skibbereen, biodiversity, flora and fauna is offered protection through the County Development Plan and the Town Plan. Without implementation of the new Plan it is expected that there would be a continual loss of green field sites and semi-natural habitats.

There is currently no secondary sewage treatment in Skibbereen and as a result large quantities of raw sewage is being discharged into Ilen River from the town. This situation would be expected to worsen in the absence of the Plan.

In general terms, there would be no long-term guidance and each planning application would be dealt with on an individual basis, resulting in potential for long term individual and cumulative impacts on habitats (including fragmentation), water and other natural resources.

5.3 POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH

This section of the report outlines the policies relevant to population in the Skibbereen Town Council area and population, employment and household data primarily retrieved from the Census of Population 2006. The main threats in terms of population and Human Health in the Plan Area include infrastructure constraints and development on greenfield lands.

The 2006 Census of Population identified a population of 2,338 within the Skibbereen Town Council boundary area and the Skibbereen Rural area had a population of 1,200 people according. Skibbereen Town Council has an area of 417 hectares.

This section of the report outlines the policies relevant to population in the Skibbereen Town Council area and population, employment and household data primarily retrieved from the Census of Population 2006 and assesses progress made in these areas compared with the Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2004.

5.3.1 Policy

Relevant National plans outlined in Chapter 4 including the National Spatial Strategy, the National Development Plan, the Retail Planning Guidelines, the Residential Planning Guidelines and the Planning and Development Act are all considered key plans/acts to reference in relation to population and human health. At a regional level the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Southwest Region will inform the policies and objectives for population and human health. While at a local level the Cork Strategic Retail Study (CSRS) 2002, draft Cork Strategic Retail Study (CSRS) 2008, Cork County Development Plan 2003, draft Cork County Development Plan 2007, North and West Cork Strategic Plan 2002 to 2020 and the Skibbereen Electoral Local Area Plan 2005 will inform mitigation, policies and objectives in relation to the human environment (refer to Chapter 4 Related Plans).

5.3.2 Baseline

This section describes the evaluation as set out in the SEA regulations of the environmental topic of population. For the purposes of evaluation, the impacts on population are divided into population impacts in terms of job creation and impacts on population in terms of residential population. The initial section presents a synopsis of the baseline conditions followed by a background to the Plans and policies, which influence the population of Skibbereen.

Census Data Analysis

Table 5.3a indicates trends in population during the intercensal period between 1996-2002, Cork County recorded an increase (10.7%) in population, while Skibbereen Urban District saw an increase of 3.8% and Skibbereen Environs saw a very slight increase by 0.2%. Therefore during this period it was evident that the population of Skibbereen Urban and Rural was growing at a much slower rate than that of County Cork.

During the most recent intercensal period of 2002-2006, Cork County recorded another increase in its population (11.4%). Skibbereen Urban had a population increase of 17%, while Skibbereen Environs had an increase of 4.7%. It is evident that the most significant increase in population between 2002 – 2006 was in the Skibbereen urban area. It is considered that this significant increase in population is a result of the vast rezoning of lands within the town of Skibbereen and potentially as a national immigration flux.

Table 5.3.1: Trends in Population between the Censal Periods of 1996-2002 and 2002-2006 for County Cork, Skibbereen Urban and Skibbereen Environs

Area	1996	2002	% Change 96-02	2006 ¹	% Change 02-06
Skibbereen Urban	1,926	2,000	3.8%	2,338	17%
Skibbereen Environs	1,144	1,146	0.2%	1200	4.7%
Co. Cork	293,323	324,767	10.7%	361,877	11.4%

Source: Census of Population 1996, 2002 and 2006.

The age structure of the population of Skibbereen is important to examine, as this will have implications for future housing demand, schools and health care services. It must be noted that the figures in Table 5.3b below are based on the Skibbereen town Council area, which comprises of Skibbereen Urban; the total population figure for this area is 2,338. Three categories of the population structure are examined:

- the young age dependant population (i.e. those persons within the 0-14 age cohort);
- the old age dependent population (i.e. those persons in the 65+ age cohort); and

- the working/independent age population (i.e. those persons within the 15-64 age cohort).

Table 5.3.2 Skibbereen Urban Age Cohort of the population 2002 - 2006

Area	0-14	15-64	65+	Total
Skibbereen Urban 2006	427 (18%)	1,580 (68%)	331 (14%)	2,338
County Cork	78,863 (22%)	245,103 (68%)	37,911 (10%)	361,877

In 2006, Skibbereen Urban had 18% of its population within the young age dependant population. This is significantly below that for the County, which has a young age dependant population of approximately 22%. This has negative implications for the future working/independent age cohort as there is likely to be a natural decline in the future housing and employment demand in the area, as there is likely to be less young adults moving into the labour market and setting up independent households in the future.

In 2006, 14% of the population in Skibbereen Urban were within the old age dependent population of people approximately 331 people. Skibbereen had a greater number of persons aged 65 and over than the County which only recorded 10% of its population within the 65+ age cohort in 2006, this is indicative of an ageing population in Skibbereen Urban. This increase in the percentage of an elderly population has long-term implications relating to health and social service needs.

Reflecting the national economic growth of recent years and increased participation in employment, a total of 91% of the labour force¹ in Skibbereen Town were engaged in employment in 2006, which is slightly below the County average of 94%. In 2006 7% of the labour force in Skibbereen was unemployed while the county average was slightly lower at 5%. The largest percentage of persons at work in Skibbereen in 2006 was within the services sector (43%), the second largest employer was the manufacturing sector accounting for 14% of all people at work in the town, while 13% of people were employed in the construction industry.

¹ Labour Force= those at work + unemployed + seeking regular work for the first time.

Policy Background

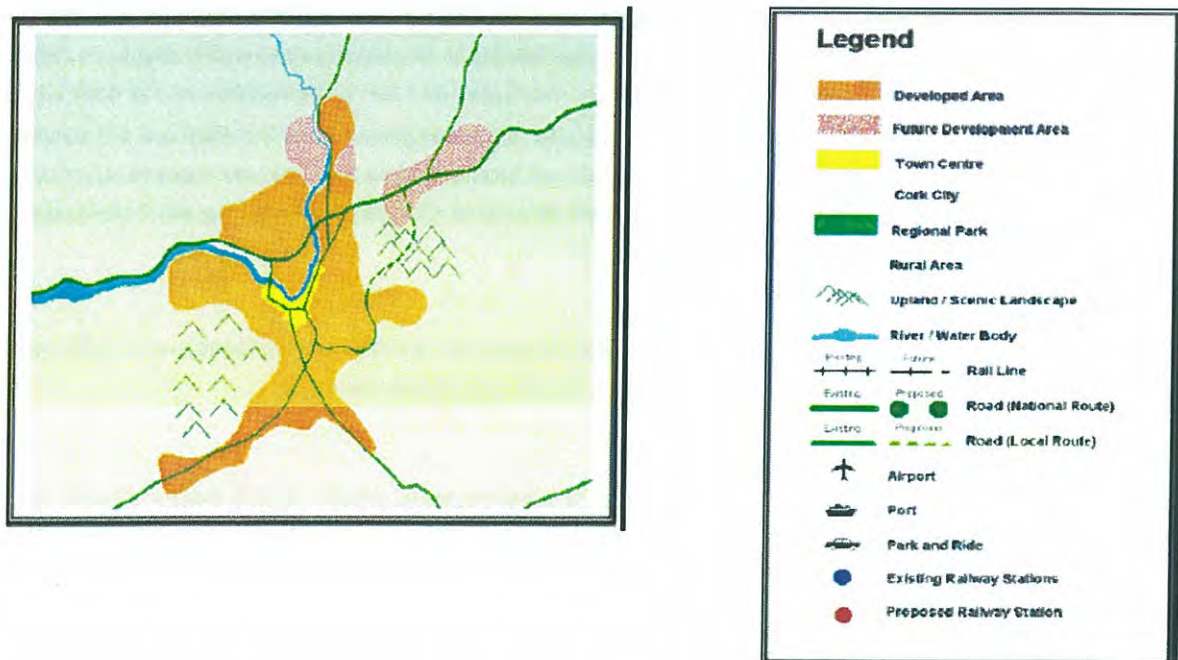
According to the draft Cork County Development Plan 2007 Skibbereen is located in the West Cork Strategic Planning Area. The draft Cork County Development Plan 2007 proposes to increase the population in the town from 2,338 persons in 2006 to 3,035 people by 2020 (p.32).

Section 5.2.39 of the draft CDP 2007 outlines that in relation to the west strategic plan area, Skibbereen will be designated as a District Employment Centre, which is a centre that serves the employment needs of urban areas as well as large rural hinterlands. This requires that;

an appropriate quantum of land will need to be provided within the urban areas to accommodate a range of employment activities including office based industry and manufacturing. Serviced industrial sites and incubator units should be available within these centres. The main opportunity to strengthen the permanent population in these areas is by strengthening the economic and employment base of the towns and larger villages (p.111).

Policy/Objective SET 1 - 34 as set out in the draft plan in relation to Skibbereen Town aims to strengthen the role of Skibbereen as an important centre for population, employment, services and tourism, which would also serve a wider rural area. The draft Cork County Development Plan 2007 also includes an indicative layout for future development to the north and north east of the town on page 61.

Figure 5.3.1: Indicative Layout for future development of Skibbereen



Source: draft Cork County Development Plan 2007 p. 61

Zoning Provision

The vision of the draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015 is to develop a compact and self-contained town, acting as an economic and service provider for the surrounding rural hinterland. At a practical level, the 'vision' entails creating a centre with the level of population and critical mass that will support key services and economic functions and that will drive Skibbereen to a level that will support the surrounding rural hinterland. The overall development strategy for the town is outlined in section 3.3 of Part 2 of the draft Town Plan which aims to restrict growth on the edges of the town to four undeveloped wedges of the town as illustrated in figure 3.1. It is proposed to locate future employment/enterprise generating development along the economic corridor to the north east of the town whilst each of the four undeveloped wedges surrounding the town centre will accommodate future residential, commercial and mixed-use development growth.

The draft plan highlights that there is sufficient lands zoned to accommodate well over the future population projections for the area up until 2020. It seems that a large quantum of land located at the edge of the town has been zoned for residential development in the past. Therefore the draft Town Plan, having regard to the existing supply of residential zoned land, takes on a two-tiered phasing approach to the development of residentially zoned lands. This approach proposes to rezone lands to the north east of the town in order to benefit from future infrastructure proposed in this area as well as proposing to locate development in this area in order to adjoin existing community and educational facilities. Meanwhile, residential lands further removed from the town will take on a phase II zoning which will be brought forward by way of a sequential approach once phase I residential lands are developed.

Having regard to the sequential approach in relation to the zoning of land as promoted in the Development Plan Guidelines published by the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government, the rezoning of lands to the north east of the town is considered appropriate in the interest of sustainability due to its close proximity to the town and its associated services. The draft plan also takes cognisance of the draft Cork County Development Plan 2007 in terms of the location for future development. Furthermore it is considered that the newly zoned lands to the north east of the town will be released as a priority, while phase II land will only be released once all of the phase I land has been developed. This is considered the most sustainable approach due to the central location of phase I lands.

It is considered that there is sufficient lands zoned within the town and a substantial landbank available for new enterprises to support Skibbereen and its environs as District Employment Centre.

It is clear that the development of Skibbereen and its environs would greatly benefit from increased co-operation and co-ordination between the Town Council and the County Council not just in terms of the provision of necessary infrastructure but in the development of lands for residential and Industrial/Enterprise uses. In terms of this Strategic Environmental Assessment it is clear that the further growth of the town should be directed as much as possible to the Town Council area to realise a more compact and sustainable urban area. A new policy for inclusion in the draft plan is proposed in this regard.

5.3.3 Impact assessment – existing environmental problems and constraints

No environmental problems or constraints were identified. Sufficient lands will be rezoned for residential, employment and community uses within the town boundary in line with national, regional and local population projections, which will contribute to the generation of critical mass within the town of Skibbereen. The proposed plan should help to facilitate the growing population of Skibbereen in a sustainable manner and in accordance with various policies and objectives of both national and local plans.

5.3.4 Evolution without implementation of the plan

The provision of planned residential, employment, improved infrastructure and community uses within the Skibbereen Town Council area will result in a better quality of life than would arise from an unstructured/unplanned approach. If the plan was not implemented, the redevelopment and renewal of the area would take place in a haphazard approach, possibly allowing growth in the form of pockets of populations developing in an ad hoc fashion throughout the Skibbereen Town Council area. Moreover the positive regulatory policies and objectives being introduced by the Skibbereen Development Plan and aimed at improving the town's vitality, character and overall environment would not be implemented through the planning and development process.

5.4 SOIL

5.4.1 Policy

Soils are offered protection through the proposed EC Directive 2004/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council for establishing a framework for the protection of soil and amending Directive 2004/35/EC. This Directive provides a common strategy for the protection and sustainable use of soil based on the principles of integration of soil concerns into other policies, preservation of soil functions within the context of sustainable use, prevention of threats to soil and migration of their effects, as well as restoration of degraded soils to a level of functionality consistent with the current and approved future use.

5.4.2 Baseline

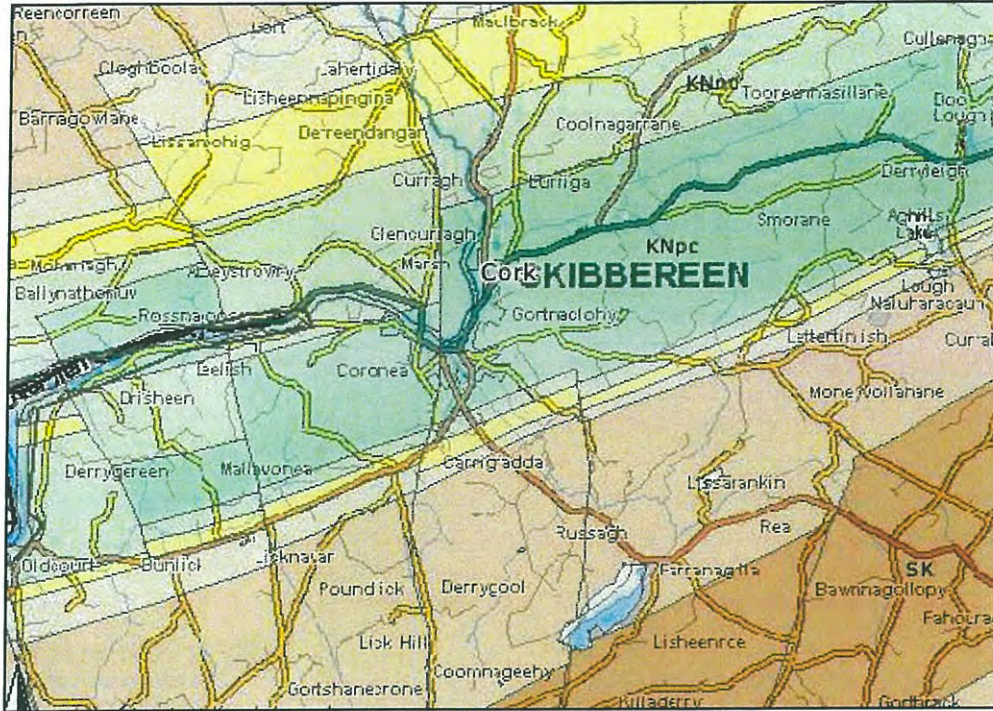
Bedrock Geology

The town of Skibbereen is situated within the Pig's Cove Member Formation which is characterized by linsen bedded mudstones, mudstones and a general lack of sandstones; silicophosphatic nodules are common (depicted in green).

To the north of the town the Narrow Cove Member is dominant, this member is dominated sand lensed and streaked mudstone with subsidiary flasher bedded sandstones (depicted as beige/green). Further north the underlying rock comprises of bedded sandstone from the Kinsale and Old Head of Kinsale Formations (depicted as yellow). The Old Head of Kinsale Formation is made up of mudstone and sandstone and was deposited by fluvial deposition during the Upper Devonian Period ~ 350 million years ago. The overlying Kinsale Formation comprises of a diverse series of mudstones and sandstones (355 million years old).

Both the Narrow Cove Member and Old Head of Kinsale Formation are present to the south of Skibbereen also. In addition further south of the Old Head of Kinsale Formation there is a band of the Toe Head Formation which is comprised of large scale cross bedded sandstones, rippled sandstones, mudstones, interbedded sandstones and mudstones and mudcrack association facies.

Figure 5.4.1 – Formation Bedrock Geology



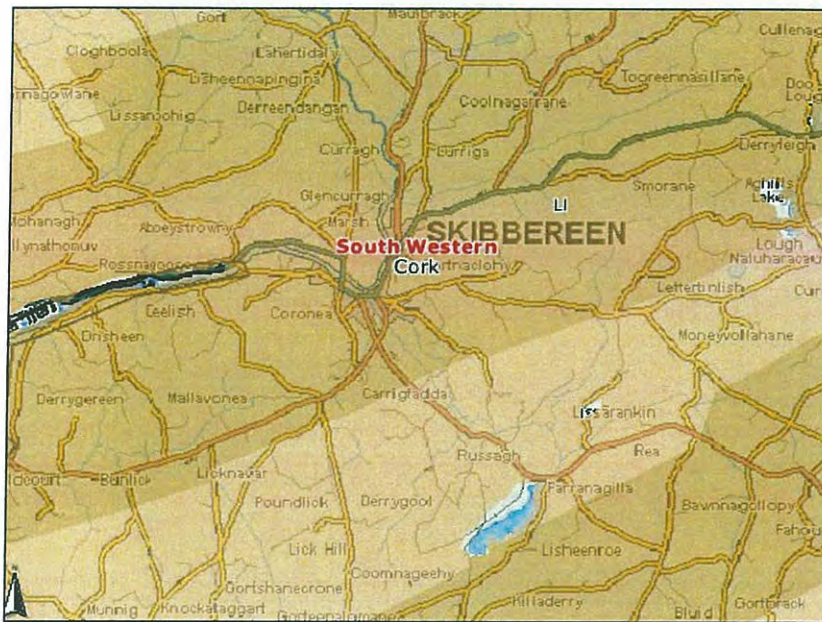
Colour Key	Formation	Bedrock Description
KMpc	Pigs Cove Member	Linsen bedded mudstones, mudstones and a lack of sandstones
KNnc	Narrow Cove Member	Cross bedded sandstones
OH	Old Head of Kinsale Formation	Bedded Sandstones and minor Mudstone
TH	Toe Head Formation	Cross Bedded Sandstones and Minor Mudstones

Hydrogeology

Within the study area there are two underlying aquifers. One locally important aquifer – moderately productive in local zones can be found in the Pig’s Cove Member Formation (See LI – on Figure 5.4.1). The south of

Skibbereen (south of carrigfada) within the Narrow Cove Member Formation is consisted a poor aquifer, generally unproductive within an exception of local zones (See PI – on Figure 5.4.2).

Figure 5.4.2 – Local Aquifers



LI - Locally Important Aquifer - Bedrock which is Moderately Productive in Local Zones
PI - Poor Aquifer - Bedrock which is Generally Unproductive except in Local Zones

Sites of Geological Heritage/Interest

Within the Skibbereen area there are the following sites of geological interest –

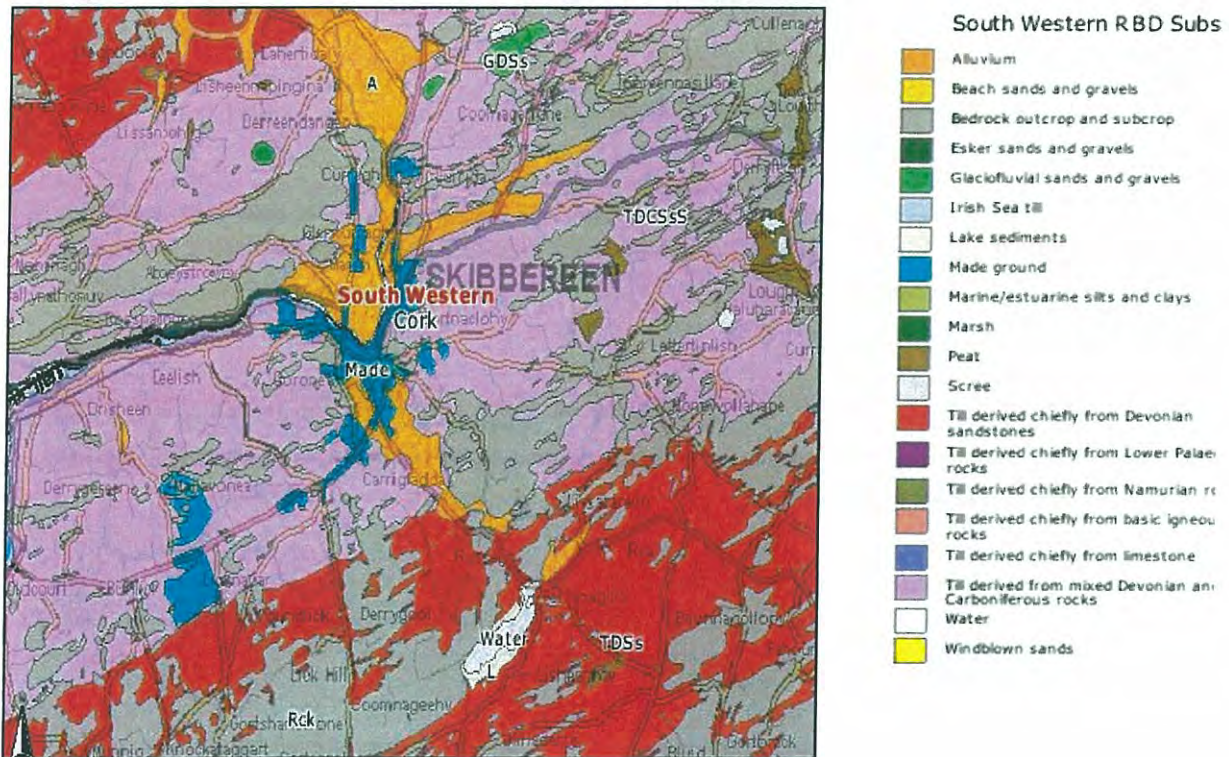
Table 5.4.1 – Areas of Geological interest within the Study Area

Site Name	Principal characteristics	Location
Lough Hyne	Coastal Lagoon with solid rocks	5 km south-west of Skibbereen
Sandycove to East Toe Head	Devonian	Ballycahane, SCoubaun, Farranconnor and Gortacrossig
Toe Head	Late Devonian Plant Fossils	Toe Head

Soils and Subsoils

Figure 5.4.1 above illustrates the soils and subsoils classification for the Skibbereen area. The Skibbereen area generally consists of till derived from devonian and carboniferous rocks. While the town area is generally made up of made ground (depicted in blue) in the form of made hard standing surfaces and landscaping and alluvium deposits (depicted in orange) the surrounding area is overlain by till derived from devonian and carboniferous rocks (depicted in purple). The town is also surrounded by bedrock outcrop and subcrops (depicted in grey).

Figure 5.4.3 – Soils and deposits within the Skibbereen Area



Quarrying and Mining

The following quarrying activities exist within the Skibbereen area:

- McCarthy Plant Hire - Mash Rd, Skibbereen Sandstone - 100,000-250,000 Tonnes PA
- Forenaught Quarry - Castleisland, Skibbereen - Sandstone - 100,000-250,000 Tonnes PA

5.4.3 Impact assessment – existing environmental problems and constraints

Greenfield sites - any proposed developments on greenfield sites involves changing the character of the ground and soil. New developments have the potential to contaminate the soil and underlying groundwater, particularly in the case of septic tanks and poor wastewater treatment facilities. Existing activities such as agriculture and manufacturing may also pose a risk to soil and groundwater.

Soil erosion – construction, agriculture and forestry can lead to soil erosion, which has a negative affects on water quality and aquatic biodiversity. Soil erosion results in a loss of nutrients in the upper layers of the soils also leading to a reduced water-holding capacity. Soil erosion can also lead to sediment movement and agricultural pollution into watercourses. This can lead to increased solids in watercourses, disruption of ecosystems and contamination of drinking water.

5.4.4 Evolution without implementation of the Plan

The proposed Soil Directive suggests the encouragement of development on brownfield sites through sustainable redevelopment of existing sites. The reuse of urban brownfield sites in particular will reduce urban sprawl and the need to develop greenfield sites. The new Plan provides promotes the development of brownfield sites over Greenfield sites.

TC3-1The rehabilitation, restoration and re-use of existing under-utilised sites in the town centre, mixed use and commercial zoning areas shall be encouraged in preference to the development of Greenfield sites in edge of centre or out of centre locations.

In the absence of the Plan there is the potential for further development of Greenfield sites resulting in a loss of soil resource to development and soil erosion due to removal of materials due to construction works. The Plan also provides for the regeneration of existing neighbourhoods.

If quarrying is managed poorly, quarrying (and/or gravel pits) may lead to depletion of subsoils, removal of natural resources and the displacement of the soil layer.

5.5 WATER

5.5.1 Policy

In the interest of maintaining good water quality in the Skibbereen area, the County Council set about fulfilling its obligation under the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations, 2003 (SI No.722 of 2003) transposed by the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) into Irish Law offers protection for water in Ireland. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) sets an objective of achieving at least good status for all water bodies and aims to ensure that no further deterioration in status of any waters will occur by 2015.

Good status for surface water is a combination of the chemical quality, biological quality and microbiological quality that must be achieved. For Groundwater Good Status refers to groundwater chemical water quality and quantity.

In addition to the Water Framework Directive, water in Ireland is also offered protection under European Community (Groundwater Directive, 80/68/EEC) and National Legislation (Local Government (Water Pollution) Act; The Waste Management Acts and the Planning and Development Act).

Drinking Water Regulations (S.I No 439 of 2000) ensure that the presence of a single faecal coliform in a water supply is unacceptable.

Local Policies

The South Western River Basin District (SWRBD) "A Future for Our Waters" and "Water Matters" outline the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive, and detail the main issues of investigation to date. These include wastewater and industrial discharges, landfills, quarries, mines and contaminated lands, agriculture, wastewater from unsewered properties, forestry, usage and discharge of dangerous substances, physical modifications, abstractions and local issues. The booklet "Water Matters" also outlines the next steps in the process of preparing a River Basin Management Plan, which is due to be adopted in 2009. The document "A Future for Our Waters" indicates the findings of Risk Assessments that have been carried out on water bodies within the SWRBD.

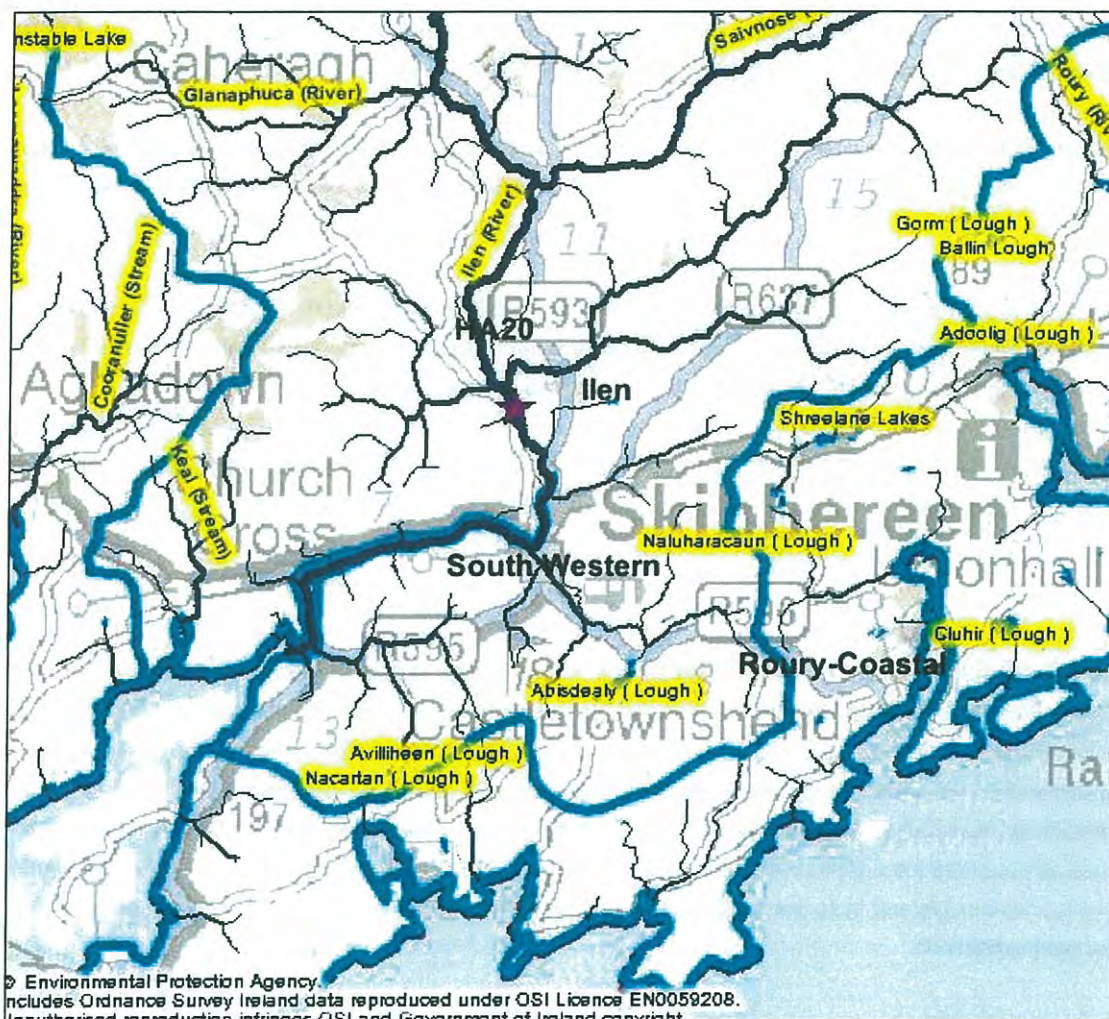
5.5.2 Baseline

Surface Water

The River Ilen flows through Skibbereen town. The River Ilen's source is found at Mullaghmesha and flows over 20 km south before it reaches Skibbereen. Several tributaries drain into the Ilen River including the River Ruagagh and the Saivnose River. The Ilen River flows to the west of the town boundary draining into Ilen Estuary further south and continues into Roaringwater Bay.

In order to manage and assess water quality, a River Basin Management Plan was put in place in the south west of Ireland. Skibbereen lies within the South Western River Basin District (SWRBD) the plan for which is due to be adopted in 2009. Baseline data including the various risk assessments for surface water and groundwater's in the Skibbereen area are outlined below.

Figure 5.5.1: Location of Surface Water Features within the Skibbereen Area



Surface Water Quality

On the 30th of July 2007, Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources, Eamon Ryan T.D. announced that Roaringwater Bay will be one of 54 new sites to be designated as Shellfish Growing Waters under the EU Shellfish Waters Directive (79/923/EEC) as implemented in Ireland by the European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Water) Regulations 2006. Roaringwater Bay is listed as a designated

Shellfish Water in the SEA of Cork County Development Plan published by Cork County Council Planning Policy Unit in December 2007.

The regulations require regular sampling of water and of shellfish flesh in order to monitor a range of water quality parameters, and the establishment of a programme of action to ensure that the waters comply with certain (high) standards. The regulations state that: "In particular, the objective of such a programme must be to take reasonably practicable steps to reduce pollution in those waters.

All rivers/streams within the Skibbereen area (namely the River Ilen) have received an EPA Q Value rating of 4 (depicted in green), indicating "good status" However the Water Framework Directive (WFD) has categorised the water within the area as "Possibly at Risk of Not Achieving Good Status".

The water quality of the Ilen River is continually monitored by the EPA. The most recent water quality survey was carried out in 2005 at a sampling station near Derreeny Bridge where a 'Q value' rating of 4 (meaning that it is of 'Good' status) was recorded. Another station upstream recorded a 'Q-value' rating of 4-5 (meaning high status). The Ilen estuary situated south west of Skibbereen has been classified by the EPA as "Possibly at risk of not achieving good status". See Figure 1.2 for location of EPA monitoring points.

Table 5.5.1 Water Framework Directive and EPA ratings of Rivers, Streams and Bathing Waters within the Study Area

River/Streams	EPA Q Rating (taken further up stream)	Water Framework Directive Rating
Ilen River (Derreeny Bridge)	4	Probably at risk of not achieving good status
Ilen River (Ilen Lower)	4-5	Probably at risk of not achieving good status

[Source – EPA ENvision Mapper

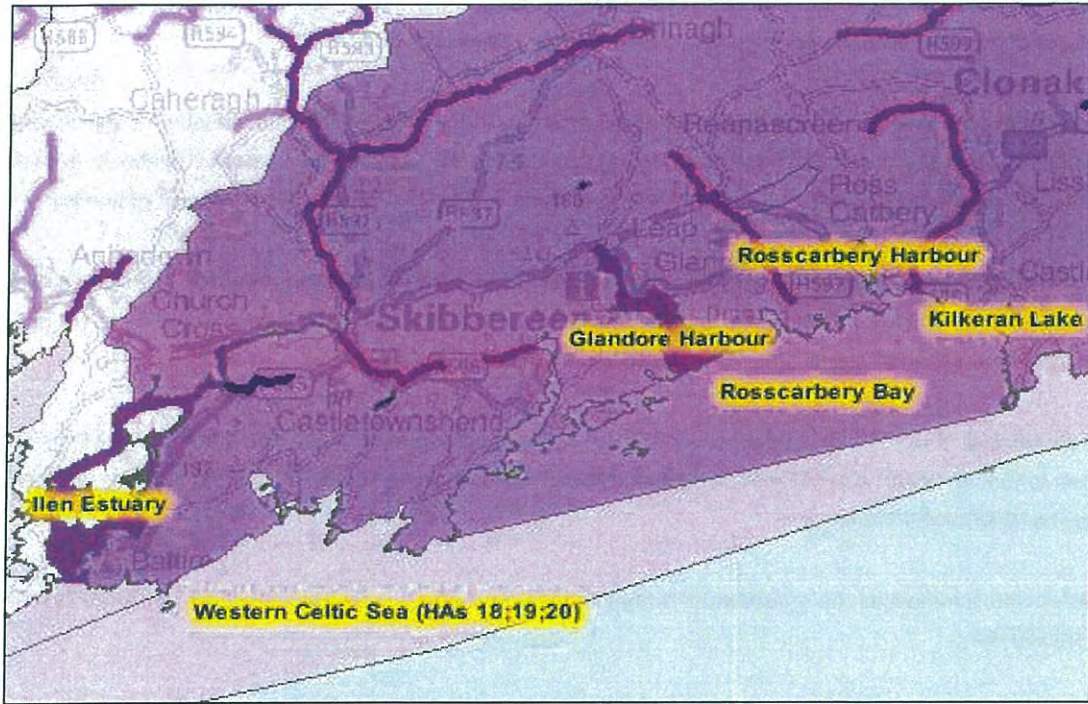
Figure 5.5.2 – Water Quality of Streams and Rivers within the Skibbereen Area



Source – EPA ENvision Mapper

Figure 5.5.3 shows the Water Framework Directives risk classification of rivers within the study area.

Figure 5.5.3 - WFD Risk Assessment Rating for Rivers



Water Framework Directive Colour Key	At Risk of Not Achieving Good Status	Possibly at Risk of Not Achieving Good Status	Expected to Achieve Good Status	Strongly Expected to Achieve Good Status

Source – EPA ENvision Mapper

Groundwater

Groundwater forms an integral part of all ecosystems and within the Skibbereen area is a significant resource. A number of private drinking water supplies are taken from groundwater reserves. .

Groundwater is subject to contamination from agriculture, poorly designed/constructed and maintained domestic wastewater treatment infrastructure, industrial sources etc. Groundwater also contributes to surface water quality providing residual flows from rivers and streams. It is also integral to the support of wetlands.

Earthworks, cuttings or dewatering may have the potential to locally lower the groundwater table, which may impact on shallow domestic wells close to the proposed road. Further, road surface run-off, if not directed into properly constructed drainage outlets, may also impact on these shallow wells.

Road runoff and accidental spillage can affect groundwater quality and wells. Consideration will have to be given to road drainage and pollution control measures. Where there are no surface water features, soakaways may be used for road drainage.

Table 5.5.3 summarises the groundwater throughout the Study Area. This information is presented in Figures 5.5.3 and 5.5.4.

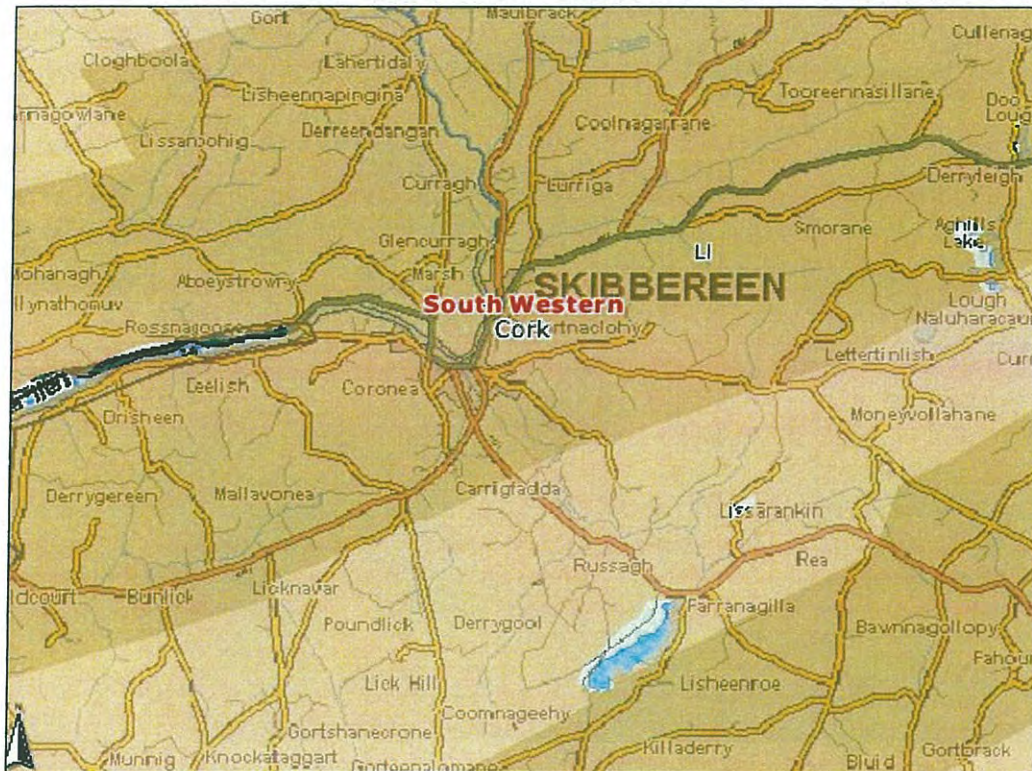
Table 5.5.3 - Summary of GW Ratings Throughout Skibbereen

Location	Water Framework Directive Rating	Aquifer Classification	Aquifer Vulnerability
Town Area	Possibly at Risk of Not Achieving Good Status	Locally Important Aquifer – Moderately Productive in Local Zones (LI)	High – Extreme (some rock near surface)
Surrounding Hinterland			

[Source – WFD - EPA ENvision Mapper, Aquifer Vulnerability - GSI]

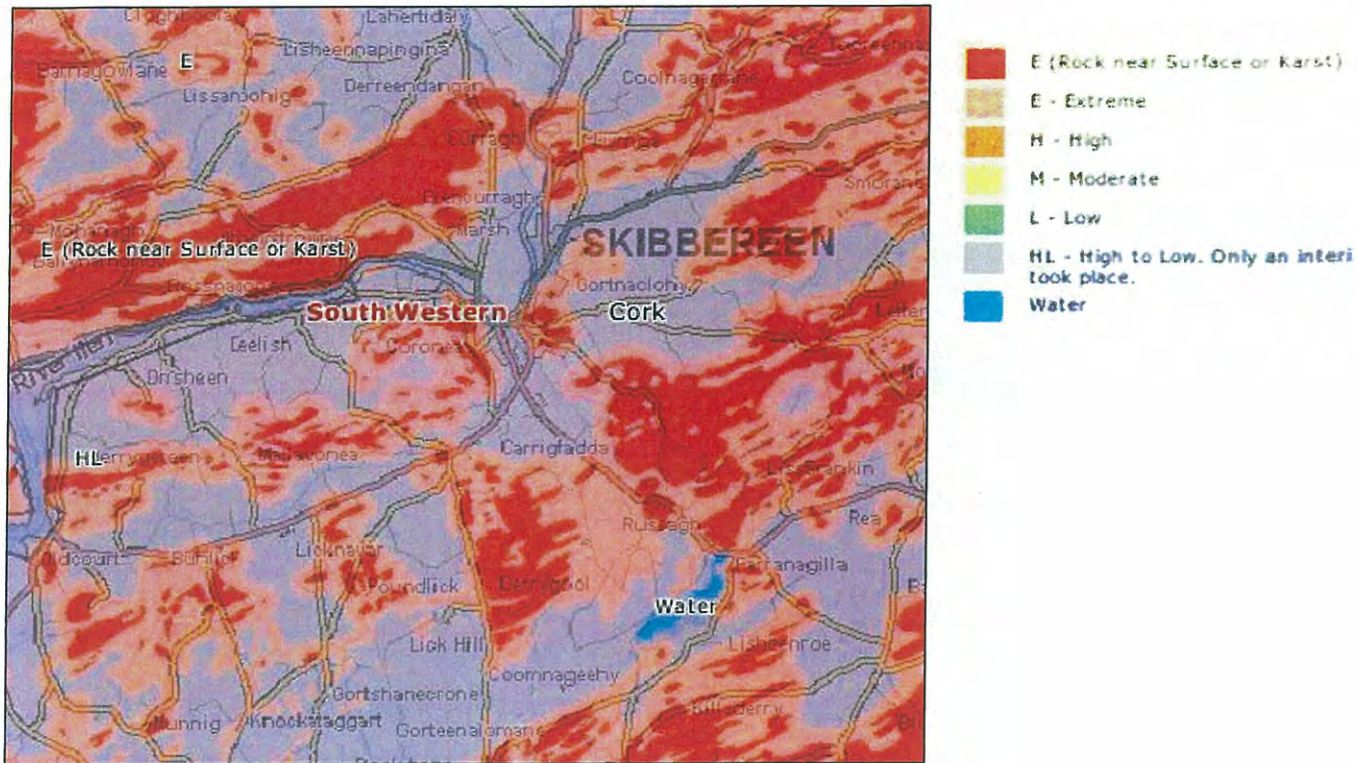
The Water Framework Directive classifies a large proportion of the Skibbereen urban area groundwater as “Possibly at Risk of Not Achieving Good Status”. Also aquifer vulnerability can be considered high with some rock found near surface, therefore verifying a possible risk. See figure 5.5.4 and 5.5.5.

Figure 5.5.4 – Bedrock Aquifer Potential in the Skibbereen Area



LI - Locally Important Aquifer - Bedrock which is Moderately Productive only Local Zones

Source - GSI GW Mapper

Figure 5.5.5- Groundwater Vulnerability Within the Study Area (Source – GSI GW Mapper)

Flooding

Flooding of the River Ilen is considered a key problem within the Skibbereen area. A number of studies have been carried out in order to evaluate the flooding caused by the River Ilen and to recommend flood relief measures. The initial, 1984 report, Road Traffic and Flood Study in Skibbereen (MCOS) examined the history and mechanism of flooding in Skibbereen. In a further report in September 1986, the flood study was reviewed following two major flood events, the first date of 5/6th August 1986 and the second (known as Hurricane Charlie) on the 25/26th September 1986. An additional report prepared by MCOS in 1997- The 1997 Skibbereen Flood Report had regard to a number of issues including the recommendations of the 1984 Road Traffic and Flooding Study and the implementation of flood relief measures in the early 1990's. The Skibberren Urban Study prepared in 2002 also investigated the flood risk posed by the River Ilen and provided recommendations for flood relief.

5.5.3 Impact Assessment –existing environmental problems and constraints

There are a variety of activities both within and outside the study area, which have the potential to impact on water quality. These include sewage treatment works, domestic water treatment systems, housing, construction work, industry, tourism, spillages, marine industry, increased road runoff and agriculture.

Existing problems within the Skibbereen area include:

- Surface Water Pollution -Under the WFD, the River Ilen situated within the town boundary and the Ilen Estuary situated south west of Skibbereen has been classified by the EPA as “Possibly at risk of not achieving good status”, both are directly related and may possibly be at risk if controls are not enforced.
- Groundwater Pollution - The town centre of study area and the surrounding hinterland is considered “probably at risk of not achieving good status” for groundwater. A number of private drinking water supplies are taken from groundwater reserves.
- Impacts to Fisheries - Direct impacts to water will have indirect effects on fisheries.
- There is also potential for impacts on the aquatic environment in the form of industrial and agricultural run-off, other municipal sources of pollution, fragmentation of river corridors and soil erosion. These risks apply in particular to the Ilen River. Under the Water Framework Directive, water quality must achieve “good status” by 2015.
- Flooding- Flooding has been identified as important and a regular occurrence particularly in relation to areas adjacent to fluctuating tide volumes and low lying topography. However the threat of climate change and global warming may have an influence over meteorological conditions such that to increase flooding in the study area. Strict control of planning will be required in flood risk areas and the OPW’s Guidelines on Flood Risk should be adhered to. Flooding of the River Ilen is considered a key constraint to development.
- Flood impact assessment should be undertaken in areas likely to be subject to flooding in a particular in the Marsh area or areas proposed for riverside development (i.e. Section 12.2.3 of the Plan).
- Municipal Wastewater Treatment and Domestic Wastewater Treatment – There is a possibility of unchecked increase in demand for wastewater treatment with potential for increased pollution to surface waters. Therefore correct treatment of wastewater is an important factor to consider in the quality of surface water. It is essential that the new proposed WWTP is constructed by 2009 and that it operates to highest standards. It is also deemed necessary that monitoring of the performance of wastewater treatment plant and sewerage network is undertaken to capture leakages to GW and SW.

5.5.4 Evolution without implementation of the plan

A review of the existing baseline information shows that a number of water bodies in the study area are under pressure from various sources of pollution, which has resulted in reduced biodiversity and poor water quality. In the event that the Plan is not updated there is potential for increased pressure on these water bodies and most water bodies would be unlikely to reach the objectives of the WFD. If water quality were to deteriorate

further or experience a reduction in its quality status, there would also be increased adverse impacts on biodiversity, flora and fauna, fisheries, drinking water, human health and soils. The new Skibbereen Town Development Plan will steer development away from watercourses rather than along or within their floodplains.

Also, in the absence of the Plan there is a possibility of unchecked increase in demand for wastewater treatment with potential for increased pollution of surface water and the potential delay in the construction of the proposed WWTP.

5.6 AIR AND CLIMATE (ENERGY)

5.6.1 Policy

At international level the Air Quality Framework Directive 96/62/EC sets out standards for air quality. The Directive was transposed into Irish law by the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992 (Ambient Air Quality Assessment and Management) Regulations 1999 (S.I No. 33 of 1999).

In March 2007 the Government launched its Energy White Paper entitled '*Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland*'. The paper was devised to be a practical action-based strategy for achieving a new energy future for Ireland and spans the timeframe 2007-2020. Key to the strategy are the three pillars of energy supply - security, sustainability, and economic competitiveness.

At a national level the National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2011 provides for the protection of air quality. The strategy for reducing emissions will be shared across all sectors but the main focus will be on transport, residential, industry, electricity production, the public sector and waste. The new Programme for Government outlines a 3% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions per annum. The programme will also require Ireland to join the top 5 countries in the world, as measured by the Environmental Performance Index (EPI). The National Climate Change Strategy will also be supported by other relevant government policy such as the National Development Plan, Transport 21, National Energy policy 2007 and the at a local level there are currently two objectives in relation to energy and climate change in the County Development Plan.

Climate Change

INF 4-2 It is an objective to support the national Climate Change Strategy and in general to facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Renewable Energy Production

INF 4-3 It is an objective generally to encourage the production of energy from renewable sources, including in particular that from biomass, waste material, solar wave and wind energy, subject to normal proper planning considerations, including in particular impact on areas of environmental or landscape amenity.

While there are no objectives directly relating to air quality the plan states '*that the long term economic, social and environmental well-being of Cork requires water and air quality to be of the highest possible standard.*'

5.6.2 Baseline

Air Quality

In general the air quality in Ireland is considered to be good and this is primarily as a result of the prevailing Atlantic southwesterly winds crossing the country. The EPA monitors the air quality across the country, dividing the country into regions or zones. For Ireland, four zones, A, B, C and D are defined in the Air Quality

Regulations (2002). The main areas defined in each zone are: Zone A (Dublin Conurbation), Zone B (Cork Conurbation), Zone C (other named cities and large towns) and Zone D (Rural Ireland, i.e. the remainder of the State excluding Zones A, B and C).

Air quality monitoring and assessments are undertaken at 5 locations in Cork, of which 3 are located within Cork City Council area and 2 locations are within the administrative area of Cork County Council. Air quality is monitored and assessed in Cork County at Glashaboy and Cork Harbour at Passage West.

There appears to be a small decreasing trend in concentrations in recent years.

- Suspended particulates reached about 90% of the EU limits in the past and have now reduced to about 10% of the limit due to the ban on the sale of coal. These particles arise from the inefficient combustion of solid fuels and diesel.
- New monitoring parameters called PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} are now being used to monitor for particulates. These measure particulates less than 10 and 2.5 microns in diameter. Results from the gravimetric method indicate compliance at about 30 % of the EU annual mean limit.
- Sulphur dioxide levels were always quite low in Cork. The first smokeless fuels increased levels but levels have now fallen again to previous values. The old method for monitoring is compliant at about 7% of the standard. The new method is at about the same level of compliance with the new standard. Sulphur is a contaminant in most types of fuel.
- Nitrogen dioxide average values are about 40% of the mean limit. It arises from air being used as an oxidant in the high temperature combustion of fuel in space heating and traffic.
- Ozone levels were in compliance. There were 9 exceedances of the 8 hour running average while 25 are allowed. Ozone levels can be strongly influenced by imported pollution and/or natural sunshine events. Rural stations in Ireland have far higher levels than our urban station because nitric oxide reduces levels in cities. It is only in urban areas with extreme traffic densities and very high sunshine levels that a different series of reactions dominate to produce very high ozone levels. Ozone has always been present in ambient air but levels have increased due to pollution. It also arises due to diffusion downwards from the stratosphere
- Carbon monoxide levels are about 36% of the standard operative in 2005. It arises from poor oxidation of fuel.
- Lead levels are about 4 % of the standard. This is a major decrease from the 1980's. Unleaded petrol is now the only type available. It is a petrol additive to prevent "knock" and improve acceleration.

- The new continuous monitor, in operation since March 2000, indicates benzene levels to be about 10% of the standard. Benzene derives mainly from traffic fuels.

Source - Air Pollution in Cork City 2007 Report

Climate

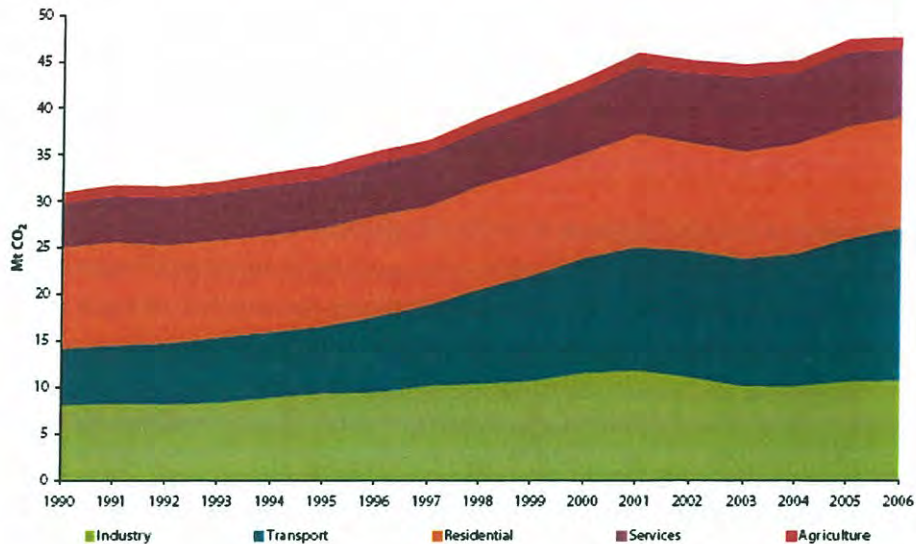
The dominant influence on Ireland's climate is the Atlantic Ocean. Consequently, Ireland does not suffer from the extremes of temperature experienced by many other countries at similar latitudes. Met Eireann provides information on the various climatic conditions experienced across the country. The climate of the area is best described by meteorological measurements collected by the National Meteorological Service from the synoptic stations at Cork Airport. To characterise the prevailing conditions at the site, historical meteorological data compiled by Met Eireann (www.meteireann.ie) is presented for Cork Airport and is available at www.met.ie.

The climate is becoming ever more variable and we can no longer safely refer to past climate when planning for the future.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG)

Ireland currently emits 1.7% of total GHG emissions in the EU-15. This equates to 69.9 Mt of CO₂ equivalents. According to the most recent data (2005), Ireland currently emits 25.4% more GHG's than were emitted in 1990. This is 12% above the target set for Ireland under the EU burden-sharing agreement.

The contribution of various sectors to total energy related CO₂ emissions over the period 1990-2006 is shown in Figure 5a. While not the greatest contributor, the sector of most concern is transport as it has shown the greatest growth in the corresponding period. Coupled with a lack of public transport infrastructure, transport is likely to continue to increase its contribution to global warming and poor air quality in the immediate future.

Figure 6.5.1: Energy related CO₂ emissions by Sector

Source: Energy in Ireland 1990 – 2005-Trends, Issues, Forecasts and Indicators (SEI, 2006)

Green House Gas Permitted Installations within the study area

The National Allocation Plan 2008 to 2011 (extracted from Articles 9 and 10 and Annex III of the EU Emissions Trading Directive (as transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 437 of 2004) and amendments) contains a list of all installations with GHG permits in Ireland. A GHG permit is issued in attempt to control the emissions of gases, which have the potential to change global climatic conditions. There have been no GHG permits issued to installations in the study area.

Energy Overview

Energy is used in Ireland primarily for transportation, electricity generation and heat generation purposes. The contribution of each source to national energy demand has changed somewhat in the last number of decades, for example

- In 1990, thermal uses accounted for 44% of all primary energy used, electricity accounted for 34% and transport 22%; and
- In 2005 thermal uses accounted for 34% of all primary energy used, electricity accounted for 33% and transport 33%.

It is predicted that by 2020 the transport sector will increase its share in national energy demand to a value of 43%. Thermal and electricity uses, it is predicted, will together account for the remaining 57% of national energy demand.

Current Situation

Total Primary Energy Requirements (TPER) have increased substantially in Ireland since the early 1990s. Under a 'business as usual approach' this trend would continue, however, significant national efforts are currently being made to curb energy requirements. These efforts are outlined in national energy policy documents.

Currently, national TPER is met largely by the combustion of fossil fuels and in particular oil, with natural gas, coal and peat supplying lesser amounts of energy. There has been a change in fuel mix used for energy generation in Ireland from 1990 to 2005. In general

- the use of gas and oil has increased substantially;
- the use of coal and peat has declined; and
- the use of renewables has also increased substantially, albeit from a very low base.

TPER are projected to increase up to 2010. After this time the effect of the implementation of current energy policy is expected to result in a stabilization of TPER.

The demand for electricity is predicted to grow in the future. Predictions are that electricity demand will increase by 4.5% per annum between 2005 and 2010. In the following decade, the rate of growth is expected to slow down considerably to 1.2% per annum.

Fossil Fuels

In 2005, fossil fuels supplied 98% of TPER requirements. By 2010 this value is expected to decrease to 94% and to 86% by 2020. The shortfall in supplying TPER is expected to be met through the use of renewables.

Oil and Coal

Ireland imports all coal and oil requirements.

Natural Gas

There is existing indigenous production at the Kinsale fields and satellite fields off the south coast of Ireland but this is expected to decline over the next few years. New indigenous production from the Seven Heads facility also came on shore in the last quarter of 2003, through the nearby Kinsale Head facility. Further indigenous gas supplies were discovered at the Corrib field, located off the West Coast of Ireland. Reserves are believed to be of the order of 20-30bcm. The development of the field was substantially delayed by planning permission difficulties. Despite the more recent finds of indigenous gas fields at Seven Heads and Corrib, the Irish gas market is expected to continue to be heavily reliant on Interconnection with the UK market.

Renewables

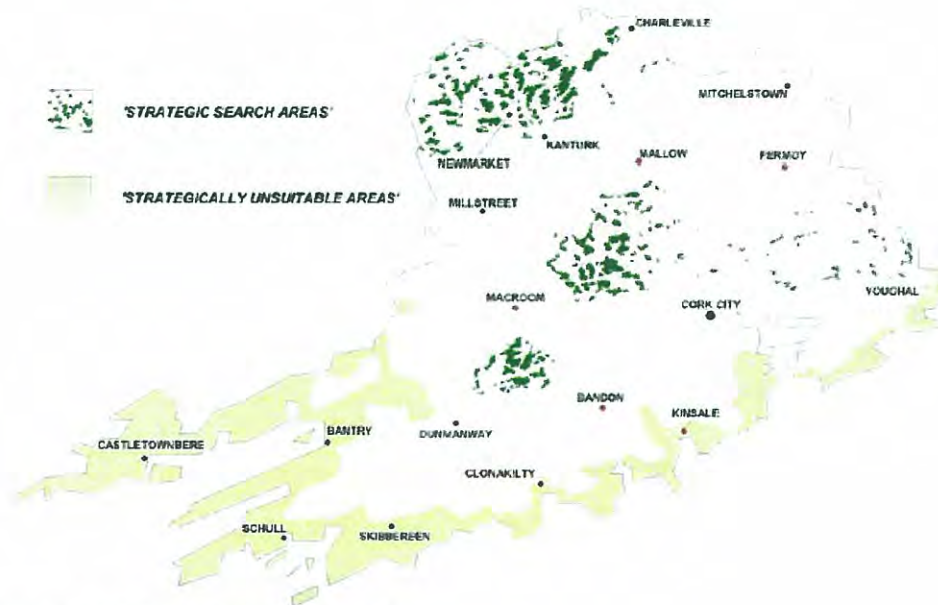
Following the publication in January 2008 of the All Ireland Grid Study, the ESB have announced a massive new investment plan, which will see €22 billion invested in the country's electricity infrastructure in the next 12 years. The scale of the new capital spending programme is unprecedented and half of all the money is to be invested in renewable energy projects including wind, tidal, wave, and biomass energy generation.

The increased use of renewables in supplying TPER will result in a decrease in energy related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. The government policy document '*Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland*' predicts that national CO₂ emissions will decrease by 6% as a result of the increased use of renewables in supplying future TPER.

Windfarms

Cork County Council has received in excess of 70 applications for wind farms in the County. However, while there have been a number of wind farms permitted in County Cork to date only approximately 6 wind farms have been or are in the process of being constructed. A number of existing permissions will have to be renewed over the lifetime of the CDP 2009-2015.

Cork County Council has identified Strategically Unsuitable Areas, which because of high landscape sensitivity, are generally considered to be unsuitable for wind energy projects. Except on a small scale and at particularly suitable locations, wind projects would normally be discouraged in these areas. However, the identification of strategically suitable areas and strategically unsuitable areas does not give any certainty about the outcome of any particular wind energy proposal and even in strategic search areas there will be particular constraints at particular sites. Areas to the south, east, west and along the northern boundary of Skibbereen has been identified as Strategically Unsuitable Areas for Windfarm development. No Strategic Wind Areas have been identified in the vicinity of Skibbereen.

Figure 6.5.2: Windfarms in Cork

Strategic Wind Energy Areas in County Cork.

(Source: Cork County Development Plan 2009)

Solar

Solar energy can be used cost-effectively to meet Irish buildings' heating requirement. Contrary to the old belief that our climate is not suitable for solar, we enjoy as much solar radiation here as most northern European countries. Ireland's annual solar irradiation varies between 950 kWh/m² per year and 1,100 kWh/m² per year. Valentia experiences the greatest solar irradiation in the country. Each square meter horizontal area therefore receives the equivalent of 100 litres of oil in free energy from the sun.

Hydro

At present there is single hydropower plant in operation at Inniscarra on the River Lee (12km from the city centre). The hydroelectric plant has a capacity of 27 MW of electricity. One other pilot scheme is in place, at Carrigrohane a micro-renewable turbine house has been supplying green electricity to 132 of Cork City Council's electricity accounts since 2004 and delivers a maximum of 1,130 MWh/yr electricity. There is no hydro electricity generating plants in the Skibberreen area. It is generally accepted that all the significant hydro power potential in the country has been exploited.

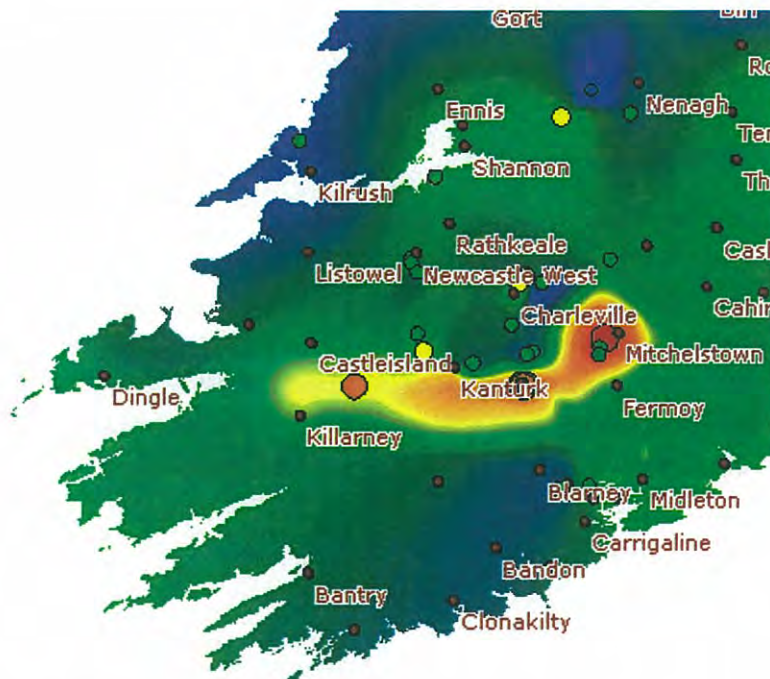
Tidal/Wave Energy

Ireland has become one of the world leaders in wave energy technology with the development of the Wavebob. The Wavebob was developed by an Irish company and can successfully convert wave energy to electrical energy. In general the waters off South Cork have poor potential for wave energy generation. The potential wave resources for the country and county can be seen on www.marinemaps.ie.

Geothermal

In 2004, CSA Group, a natural resource consultancy, completed a study commissioned by SEI, which aimed at identifying the potential resources of geothermal energy in Ireland. The results of this review indicate that Ireland is particularly well suited for the utilization of ground source heat pumps, due to its temperate climate and rainfall levels that ensure good conductivity and year round rain-fall recharge. The current installation rate is increasing rapidly and requires immediate attention to set and maintain high standards of equipment installation and operation. One of the outcomes of the project was to create a series of geothermal maps for Ireland, an example of which is illustrated below.

Figure 6.5.3: Geothermal Resources in the South West



This Map is for illustrative purposes only. All data copyright OSI + SEI

Source www.sei.ie

The map above illustrates clearly the Killarney-Mallow thrust fault and elevated ground temperatures. The warm springs in the Mallow area and in the more recently identified eastward extension to Glanworth, lie along an east northeast trending Killarney-Mallow thrust fault. Temperatures in this area vary between 13°C at Marybrook spring, Newmarket, Co. Cork (typical of groundwater temperatures in the area) to 23.5 °C at the County Council borehole north of Glanworth, Co. Cork. It is also worth noting that in broad terms silica rich rocks, of which the Devonian in the Cork and Kerry area are mostly comprised, have higher heat conductivity than limestone.

However close inspection of the maps indicate that the geothermal resource of the Skibbereen area is poor in comparison to area long the Cork/Kerry county boundary and Cork /Limerick county boundary.

Power Generation in Cork

There are 3 power stations operating in County Cork and permission has also been granted for a further power station at Aghada, which is yet to commence construction. The €400m plant at Aghada will generate 400 megawatts of electricity for the national grid every year. The plant will sit alongside an existing power station and is due to be completed in 2009. (Natural gas powered).

Table 6.5.1: Existing Power Plants in Cork

Location	Capacity (megawatts)	Energy Source
Innishcara	27	Hydro
Aghada	525	Gas
Marina	115	Gas

Energy Efficiency in Buildings, Sustainable Building Design

The EU Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD) contains a range of provisions aimed at improving energy performance of residential and non-residential buildings, both new-build and existing. This Directive was adopted into Irish law as Regulation in 2006.

The EPBD obliges specific forms of information and advice on energy performance to be provided to building purchasers, tenants and users. This information and advice provides consumers with information regarding the

energy performance of a building and enables them to take this into consideration in any decisions on property transactions.

As part of the Directive, a Building Energy Rating (BER) certificate, which is effectively an energy label, will be required at the point of sale or rental of a building, or on completion of a new building.

The Action Plan for Implementation of the EPBD in Ireland published in July 2006 proposes phased implementation of BER in Ireland as follows:

- 1 January 2007: BER of new dwellings;
- 1 July 2008: BER of new buildings, other than dwellings; and
- 1 January 2009: BER of existing dwellings and other existing buildings, when offered for sale or rental.

5.6.3 Impact assessment – existing environmental problems and constraints

Sustainability is a key constraint for future development. Emissions to the atmosphere, energy consumption and climate change are all interlinked. Future developments should give consideration to passive design and clean and energy efficient technologies such as renewables, district heating and co-generation.

In Ireland the transport sector is the fast growing contributor of GHG emissions. A reliable efficient public transport system within the Skibbereen area would reduce car dependence and combat rising CO₂ emissions from vehicle exhausts.

The town of Skibbereen is promoted as a centre of tourist activities for a wide region and an area of high visual amenity. It will be important to ensure that for future energy developments and the associated infrastructure does not impact adversely on the landscape. Skibbereen area has been identified as a strategically unsuitable zone for wind development in the Cork County Development Plan.

Space may also be a constraint in particular when locating vertical ground source heat pumps and district heating plant.

5.6.4 Evolution without implementation of the plan

Evolution without the plan would see a continued upward trend in the inefficient use of energy in the region and deterioration in air quality as a result of ever increasing combustion emissions and inefficient use of resources. Evolution without the plan would also see a slower uptake of renewable energy technologies sustainable building design.

There are policies within the Plan to protect strategic energy corridors and to promote public transport initiatives and without implementation of the Plan these policies may not be achieved.

T2-1 Measures to encourage the development and expansion of public transportation infrastructure within Skibbereen and networks to adjoining settlements and Cork City, shall be supported and facilitated where possible; and

Policy WU5-2 – Strategic energy corridors identified or required for the provision of energy supplies shall be safeguarded from development.

5.7 MATERIAL ASSETS

Within the Skibbereen area there are a variety of material assets. In general material assets are associated with the;

- Built Environment – (protected structures and archaeological monuments); (discussed under cultural heritage)
- Natural Assets – (quarries and mines, agriculture and forestry, conservation areas;
- Infrastructure – (roads, telecommunications, wastewater, roads, energy).

It is how these assets are utilised that has the potential to impact on the Environment.

5.7.1 Policy

The Skibbereen Plan has a number of policies that have regard to material assets. The Plan takes into account policies at a national level, regional and local level. Particular reference is made to the National Spatial Strategy (for transport), the Urban Wastewater Treatment Regulations 2001, the Cork Waste Management Plan, the Cork County Development Plan and the Skibbereen Electoral Local Area Plan.

5.7.2 Baseline

Water Supply

The water supply for Skibbereen Town is sourced upstream of the Ilen River at Ballyhilty. The water for the town is treated downstream on the banks of the River Ilen. The source and treatment have adequate capacity for any proposed development subject to upgrading of pumping stations, treatment tanks and storage capacity. The scheme has capacity for 1.21 million gallons with the current peak demand during summer months at 500,000 gallons. The water from the Ilen River is effectively treated by means of a gravity filtration plant and includes filtration, fluoridation, chlorination and PH correction.

Drinking Water Quality

Drinking water is regulated by the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2000. Drinking water is supplied in County Cork via a range of public and private schemes; however, the vast majority of the population are served by public water supplies. Most drinking water originates from surface water, particularly for public water supplies whereas group water schemes and small private supplies tend to be slightly more reliant on groundwater or spring water.

Cork County Council as a sanitary authority is responsible for the production, distribution and monitoring of public water supplies. Other drinking water supply schemes which are present in the County include:

- Public Group Water Schemes, where the water is provided by the sanitary authority but responsibility for distribution of the water rests with the group scheme. These schemes tend to be supplied off larger public water supplies.
- Private Group Water Schemes' are schemes where the owners of the scheme (usually representatives of the local community) source and distribute their own water.

In accordance with these regulations, the local authority must notify the EPA where there has been a failure to meet a quality standard. According to the EPA report: 'The Provision and Quality of Drinking Water in Ireland, A Report on the Years 2006-2007', no notification of drinking water contamination has been sent to the EPA regarding the supply to the Skibbereen Town Council area. From a summary of the number of incidents of E. coli contamination reported during 2006 6 incidents of E. coli contamination of public water supplies in Cork (West) during 2006 in the Coppeen, Castletownbere New, Dromore Public (Bantry) (2 incidents), Kealkil and Snave supplies. Of particular concern was the Dromore Public (Bantry) supply as both samples analysed in the supply failed to meet the standard. Four of the 10 private group water schemes monitored were contaminated with E. coli during 2006, a rise from 2 in 2005.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the River Ilen and the Ilen Estuary is described as being 'possibly at risk of not achieving good status' in terms of water quality under the Water Framework Directive. According to the *River Ilen and Caol Stream Redevelopment Project, 2007* the water quality of the Caol Stream at the Market Street end is estimated to be moderate to fair, as evidenced by the presence of juvenile trout. However, the quality of water downstream is very poor caused by the direct discharge of untreated sewage into the stream from a number of point sources.

It is considered that the proposed Skibbereen Sewerage Collection System will help to decrease the 'risk of not achieving good status' in terms of water quality.

Waste Water Treatment

Under the EPA Act 1992 (Urban Waste Water Treatment) Regulations, 1994, S.I. 419 of 1994, all wastewater entering collection systems shall be subject to secondary treatment, or equivalent treatment, prior to discharge. To meet modern day legislation the sewerage must be treated.

Currently there is no sewage treatment plant serving the town. At present effluent does not receive any treatment and is collected in a network of old, stone bow culverts and pipes and is discharged directly to the River Ilen at approximately 14 discharge points.

A new wastewater treatment plant is proposed at Cornea in the Skibbereen Environs. Work that is ongoing as part of the Skibbereen Sewerage Scheme, Collection System will eliminate the foul and combined outfalls to the River Ilen and Caol Stream. The new plant will provide secondary treatment to the effluent prior to it being discharged to the River Ilen. Following completion of the scheme, wastewater flows from the town will be collected and discharged to a Main Pumping Station at the Marsh. From here, the flows will ultimately be

pumped to a header manhole on Bridge Street from where they will discharge by gravity to a treatment plant sited at Coronea adjacent to the graveyard.

It is proposed to pump discharges arriving at the Main Pumping Station into the completed storm tank which will then act as a temporary septic tank. Discharges from the storm/septic tank will overflow to a screening chamber, where motorised screens will be in operation. From the screening chamber the discharges flow to a temporary percolation area in the marsh, pending commissioning of the wastewater treatment plant.

The Collection System contract is due for completion in early 2009. It is anticipated that the Main Pumping Station interim arrangement will be operational by August 2008, and may continue to operate as such for up to two years, pending completion of the treatment plant.

The wastewater from the town will be collected through a new piped system in a main pumping station located in the Marsh, upstream of Kennedy Bridge. A second pumping station will be located on the southern bank of the river east of Riverdale, which will pump flows to a header manhole on Bridge Street from where they will gravitate to the Main Pumping Station. Furthermore, 3 Nr. smaller pumping stations will be constructed on the Mill Road, Marsh Road and Glencurragh Road to assist the collection of wastewater at the Main Pumping Station. From the Main Pumping Station raw wastewater will be pumped to a high point on Bridge Street, from where it will gravitate to the proposed treatment works.

The proposed wastewater treatment plant at Coronea will be constructed as a staged development. It is proposed that the main elements will be designed to cater for a population equivalent of 4,700 in Stage 1. The inlet works and outfall at the treatment plant will be designed for a future population equivalent of 9,400 persons. There is adequate space on the site to extend the capacity of the remaining elements of the treatment plant to 9,400 population equivalent in stage 2.

Overall it is considered that the water quality within the Ilen River would be significantly improved by the introduction of a new wastewater treatment plant

In addition a new drainage scheme for Skibbereen called the Skibbereen Main Drainage has commenced work within the town. Both the Skibbereen Main Drainage Scheme and the Skibbereen wastewater treatment plant are due to be completed by 2010.

Waste Disposal/Landfill

In relation to waste disposal, it is noted that the Cork MRF, which is the cornerstone of Waste Management Strategy, is yet to be built; the Bottlehill landfill is non-operational and the Hazardous Waste Incinerator is still not constructed. Landfill capacity in the Cork region, prior to the opening of Bottlehill, is limited to that at Youghal (300,000), which is running below licensed capacity. Rossmore is currently at capacity. Kinsale Road landfill only accepts waste from Cork City Council. Once Bottlehill opens it will have a capacity of 5 Million tonnes with an approximate life of 20 years.

There are a number of bring centres throughout the town including the Main Street car park and the Cork Road and a Civic Amenity Centre is currently under construction on lands adjoining the Fire Station on Marsh Road which will take the following materials;

- Glass bottles/Jars
- Beverage Cans
- Newspapers & Magazines
- Textiles
- Food Tins
- Cardboard Only

There were 93 bring banks in operation across the County as of 2006 (EPA 2006).

Waste and IPC Licensed Sites

Currently there are no IPPC licensed facilities within Skibbereen Town Council, however there is one IPPC license for intensive agricultural use to the north east of the town at Knockskeagh, Leap, County Cork, (reg. ref. P0660-01). There is a licensed waste facility at Benduff Landfill Site (IPPC Reg: W0070-01) to the north east of the town in Rosscarbery, County Cork, Cork and Derryconnell Landfill in Schull to the west (reg. ref. W0089-01).

Waste-to-Energy

In January 2004 Indaver received planning permission for the construction of Phase 1 of a 100,000tpa €75M incinerator for hazardous waste, including a Waste Transfer Station for hazardous waste, to be located at Ringaskiddy. The development was appealed to An Bord Pleanála who subsequently granted permission subject to 27 conditions in January 2004. In addition, a Waste Licence was granted by the EPA for the facility in November 2005. Judicial reviews were sought by objectors to both EPA and APB decisions.

Gas Infrastructure

Gas infrastructure is divided between transmission and distribution infrastructure. Transmission infrastructure forms the backbone of the Irish natural gas system and delivers large volumes of gas at high pressures to the main consumption centres, and in special cases, high consumption customers (generally power stations). The distribution network operate at lower pressure and delivers gas to low consumption customers, typically including small businesses and residential customers, in mostly urban areas.

Transmission Infrastructure

Currently Bord Gais Éireann (BGE) is the only entity that owns and operates transmission infrastructure in Ireland. However the possibility exists for other entities to build and operate a transmission network, subject to licence by the CER under the Gas (Interim) (Regulation) Act 2002.

Electricity

The Electricity Regulation Act 1999 liberalised the electricity sector in Ireland. As a result, the electricity market in Ireland is now fully open to competition, in accordance with the requirements of the EU Directives 96/92/EC and 98/30/EC, as of February 19th 2005. Nationally, the electricity network is currently undergoing a major refurbishment program, to continue to 2010. One of the major projects within this programme is the completion of the Medium Voltage Network Renewal Project. This project will see all of Ireland's Medium Voltage overhead electricity network converted to 20kV or refurbished, to ensure a secure, high quality supply with adequate capacity for existing and future loads.

The existing electricity supply is provided through a 38kv sub-station located approximately 2km north east of the town. Supply voltage at 10kv and 400/230v are available in and around Skibbereen town. As part of its national programme, the ESB are beginning to convert the existing 10 kV network to 20 kV, by refurbishment and the installation of new transformers. Overhead cabling is present in large areas of the town including within the defined Architectural Conservation Area (historic core). Such cabling clutters the landscape and detracts from the quality of the built form. In recent developments, these supply cables have been placed underground and it will be a requirement that all future cables within the town centre are placed underground.

Transport

Skibbereen Town Council had a population of 2,338 in the 2006 Census; it also has a considerable tourist population in the summer months of the year. Significant economic growth and a consequent increase in car ownership throughout Ireland in recent years have added to the pressures on existing infrastructure. In recent years Skibbereen has experienced congestion on its road network, therefore a new relief road to the north east of the town has been proposed as part of the subject draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan.

Currently a Traffic and Transportation study is being undertaken by MHL and Associates Ltd, this study is due for completion in before the plan is adopted. The overall objective of the Transportation Study objective of the study is to enable Skibbereen Town Council and Cork County Council to introduce transport policies. This involves producing a programme of traffic, transportation and road safety proposals, which in the short, medium and long term will take into account traffic growth and land use in the study area.

The Skibbereen Traffic and Transportation Study is currently being progressed and the findings and recommendations included within the study, when published, will be incorporated within the Amended Draft Town Development Plan and will be assessed in terms of this Environmental Report.

It is the aim of Skibbereen Town Council to reduce traffic congestion in the town centre and to create a vibrant urban area within an attractive urban centre. Therefore it is the main objective of the Council to create an integrated and environmentally sound transport system that provides:

- Ease of access to the town;
- A choice of transport access for all;
- Strong integration between transportation planning and land use planning;
- General reduction of the need to travel (especially by car) by land use planning which
- Promotes a sustainable mix of uses;
- Optimum use of existing transportation infrastructure by traffic management and reduced travel times and congestion; and
- A shift from car use to more environmentally friendly modes of transport including walking and cycling

The draft Plan includes a number of strategic objectives which will help to relieve congestion within the town centre, these include developing the N71 as a major strategic economic corridor linking Skibbereen with Cork City, to work with Bus Eireann in providing a dedicated drop-off and pickup bus service within the town centre, implement the recommendations of the Skibbereen Traffic and Management Study, seek the development of a north eastern distributor road linking the Gortnaclohy Link Road with the N71, to provide a public car park on the Marsh lands with direct access to the town centre via the footbridge at Levis Quay once the new sewerage works is complete; Improve pedestrian facilities in the town centre and identify cycling links and routes in accordance with the recommendations of the Skibbereen Traffic and Management Study.

Access to Skibbereen Town

Significant economic growth and a consequent increase in car ownership throughout Ireland in recent years have added to the pressures on existing infrastructure. Skibbereen Town is accessed via the N71 National Primary Route which connects the town to Cork City and other important West Cork County Towns such as Clonakilty, Bantry and Bandon. The town is accessed from the rural hinterland via a series of regional routes including the R596, R595 and R593. A number of bus services depart from the bus station daily serving Skibbereen. Skibbereen also functions as a major bus distributor centre for the West Cork region with nine daily bus services linking Skibbereen and Cork city. The town does not benefit from rail connection with the nearest railway station at Kent Station in Cork City 88kilometers away. Skibbereen Town is approx. 85km south west of Cork International Airport. The town is accessible via road and air; all routes are listed below in Table 5.7.1. Skibbereen is also a pilot cycleway hub in terms of Regional Tourism development.

Table 5.7.1 Accessibility to Skibbereen Town

Road Network	Transport Network
National Road	N71 – Cork City – Bandon – Clonakilty – Skibbereen – Bantry – Kenmare – Killarney
Regional Road	R593 – Drimoleague and Dunmanway R595 - Baltimore R596 - Castletownsend
Rail Network	Kent Station, Cork City (88km 1.30hrs) – Kerry, Dublin.
Air	Cork International Airport (85km 1.25hrs)

5.7.3 Impact assessment – existing environmental problems and constraints

Traffic - A Traffic and Transportation study on Skibbereen Town is currently being undertaken and recommendations have not yet been made. Therefore it is recommended that all new transport objectives that will be included within the plan should be assessed in terms of strategic environmental assessment. In addition it is also considered that any large-scale proposals should undergo Environmental Impact Assessment. Consideration should also be given to the environmental policies and objectives of the current and proposed plan should any of the proposed options be implemented.

Wastewater Treatment – Currently there is no sewage treatment plant serving the town. At present effluent does not receive any treatment and is collected in a network of old, stone bow culverts and pipes and is discharged directly to the River Ilen. It is proposed to develop a new wastewater treatment plant with a capacity of 4,700, which is considered adequate based on population projections for the area to 2020. The wastewater treatment plant will provide secondary treatment to the effluent prior to it being discharged to the River Ilen. In addition a new drainage scheme for Skibbereen called the Skibbereen Main Drainage has commenced work within the town. Both the Skibbereen Main Drainage Scheme and the Skibbereen wastewater treatment plant are due to be completed by 2010. Overall it is considered that the water quality within the Ilen River would be significantly improved by the introduction of a new wastewater treatment plant.

Water Supply – The water supply for Skibbereen Town is sourced upstream of the Ilen River at Ballyhilty. The water for the town is treated downstream on the banks of the River Ilen. The source and treatment have adequate capacity for any proposed development subject to upgrading of pumping stations, treatment tanks and storage capacity.

5.7.4 Evolution without implementation of the plan.

In the absence of the Draft Town Development Plan specific transport objectives would still be provided through the County Development Plan. However the town plan provides a guidance that specifically relates to transport infrastructure within the Skibbereen area.

It is an objective of the plan to implement the outcome of the Skibbereen Traffic and Transportation Study, which proposes to advise on traffic mitigation measures for the town. In the absence of the Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015 recommendations of the transportation study would not be implemented and therefore it is likely that the town would become even more congested, causing increased air and noise pollution within the town centre. Without the plan it is likely that additional public transportation facilities, cycling facilities, pedestrian amenities and parking facilities would not be provided. Without these integral features of the plan the transport situation within the town itself would deteriorate as increased volumes of traffic over time were using the same routes that may presently be at or near capacity.

5.8 CULTURAL HERITAGE

This section of the SEA establishes Skibbereen Town Council's objectives and policies for the protection, conservation and enhancement of Skibbereen's architectural and archaeological heritage. There are many fine buildings of note in the town and these buildings have been listed in the Record of Protected Structures for Skibbereen and are also protected by virtue of their location within the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) designation. In addition to architectural and social heritage, the town is also of archaeological note having regard to its partial inclusion within a Zone of Archaeological Potential and its archaeological sites, which dominate the eastern side of the town.

It will be the town's future challenge to retain and enhance the visual appeal of its townscape, while permitting the modern uses necessary to ensure its vibrancy. Urban development has increased significantly in recent years placing the archaeological heritage of the town under increasing threat.

There is a need for comprehensive townscape management, the key aims of which are to:

- Maintain existing uses and attracting new ones to the town centre.
- Respect the historical and traditional context that contributes to Skibbereen's character.
- Promote the right balance between conservation and redevelopment.
- Enhance the townscape through provision of pedestrian priority areas and other environmental improvements (such as the placement of electricity cables underground, improvements in street lighting, paving and public art).
- Protecting key buildings of the town's architectural heritage (through the Record of Protected Structures).
- Protecting and enhancing key streetscapes and elements of townscape (primarily through Architectural Conservation Areas).

5.8.1 Policy

There are a number of specific planning policies and objectives in the Skibbereen Development Plan 2009 to 2015 to retain and improve those structures, buildings and streetscapes within the town which significantly add to the uniqueness of Skibbereen's urban landscape and to the amenity value of the town. The Plan also refers to national, regional and local plans including the Cork County Development Plan 2003 and draft Cork County Development Plan 2007.

5.8.2 Baseline

Cultural heritage includes inherited artifacts and intangible attributes that are inherited from past generations, maintained and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. The protection of heritage not only has environmental benefits and benefits for the quality of the people of Skibbereen, but it also brings economic benefits to the County by providing attractive towns, villages and countryside for visitors to enjoy.

Skibbereen town possesses a wealth of historical buildings and archaeological remains. Such features are a finite, non-renewable resource particularly vulnerable to partial or total destruction and in certain instances contain irreplaceable information about the past. The Council recognises the value and significance of its built and archaeological heritage and therefore seeks to ensure the effective protection, conservation and enhancement of historical and archaeological sites, monuments and their settings, through preparing a Record of Protected Structures (RPS), defining an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), identifying recorded monuments and archaeological sites and defining an Area of Archaeological Potential.

Archaeological Heritage

Archaeological heritage is a resource, which can be used to gain knowledge and understanding of the past and is therefore of great cultural and scientific interest. Archaeological heritage ranges from sites, features and objects of archaeological interest.

The Minister for the Environment and Local Government is responsible for the protection of archaeological heritage, including the licensing of archaeological excavations, through the exercise of powers under the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2004.

There are a number of categories of monuments under the National Monuments Acts

- National monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister or a Local Authority or national monuments which are subject to a preservation order;
- Historic monuments or archaeological areas recorded in the Register of Historic Monuments; or
- Monuments or places recorded in the Record of Monuments and Places.

The Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) compiles the record of all archaeological monuments in the State and is responsible for the publication of Archaeological Inventories. The Record of Monuments and Places is compiled by The ASI and comprises lists and maps of all monuments with known locations.

It should be noted that any direct impacts on national monuments in State or Local Authority care or subject to a preservation order will require the consent of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local

Government under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 as amended by Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004.

Record of Monuments and Places

The National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 made provision for the compilation of a record of all known monuments in the County - The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). The Record of Monuments and Places consists of a set of maps on which all the archaeological sites in the county known to the Minister in 1997 were marked. It is accompanied by a manual, which contains a descriptive listing of each site. All the sites marked on the RMP maps are protected under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. As new features and monuments are discovered due to research and development driven archaeological assessment, monitoring, testing and excavation a second layer of monuments not yet included in the RMP is created.

Copies of the Record of Monuments & Places maps and accompanying manual can be viewed at the Copies of the Record of Monuments & Places maps and accompanying manual can be viewed at the Cork County Library, Model Business Park, Model Farm Road, Cork and at the Skibbereen Town Council, North Street, Skibbereen.

Preservation (i.e. preservation in-situ or, as a minimum, preservation by record) of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994, and of sites, features and objects of archaeological interest generally, is legal requirement. This includes all remains and sites which might yet be undiscovered, as the Record of Monuments and Places is subject to ongoing continuous updating. The precise location of Zones of Archaeological Potential (ZAP) and Monuments and Places included in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) are identified in Figure 2.6 and Map 2 Heritage and Environmental Features of the Plan.

Given the historic significance of the River Ilen and associated river traffic in the 17th and 18th centuries, underwater archaeology may be another important aspect of Skibbereen's archaeological heritage as there is generally a high archaeological potential within maritime environments. Under the National Monuments Acts 1930-1994 all shipwrecks over one hundred years old, including underwater archaeological structures, features and objects are protected. The Record of Monuments and Places does not include all underwater archaeological sites and as a result development could potentially impact negatively on underwater cultural resources. Therefore the possible impacts on riverine environments by developments adjoining the River Ilen will be considered.

Skibbereen Town has a diverse range of monuments ranging from a number of historic eras. Monuments within the area include ring forts, standing stones, and a country house. There are a number of archaeological sites within and on the periphery of the town boundary, listed in Appendix 2 of the Plan. It is deemed that the Plan area is of high archaeological potential due to the potential of maritime archaeological discoveries.

National Monuments - Archaeological Sites and Monuments in State Ownership

While no state owned National Monuments occur within the boundary of Skibbereen Town Council it should be noted that under the National Monuments Acts any monument in the ownership or guardianship of the local authority may be declared a national monument. This applies to any Recorded Monument in local authority ownership or guardianship where the preservation of any such monument is a matter of national importance because of the archaeological, architectural, historical, traditional or artistic importance attaching to that monument. National Monuments Service will advise on any determinations regarding the status of such monuments. Under the national monuments acts (1930-2004) any works at or in proximity to such monuments will require ministerial consent.

Policy TM3 provides for the protection of Archaeological Sites and Places. It provides that where significant archaeological remains are found through excavation, the Council will require a plan for their recording and conservation (either in-situ or ex-situ) as a component of an application for planning permission. Specifically, policy TM3-1 states that *proposals for development adjoining/neighboring or on land that includes a recorded monument shall undertake an archaeological assessment and submit proposals for the conservation and management of archaeological resources*. Policy TM3-2 states that *a minimum 20m buffer area, maintained free from development, shall be required on all development proposals where sites have archaeological features*.

Architectural Heritage

The term "architectural heritage" is defined in the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) & Historic Monuments Act, 1999 as meaning all:

- a) Structures and buildings together with their settings and attendant grounds fixtures and fittings;
- b) Groups of such structures and buildings, and Sites; and
- c) Which are of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest.

Record of Protected Structures

The Planning and Development Act, 2000 (Part II, Section 10) places an obligation on all local authorities to include in its development plan objectives for the protection of structures, or parts of structures, which are of special architectural, historic, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. These buildings and structures are compiled on a register known as the Record of Protected Structures (RPS), and is outlined in Appendix 2 and mapped on Map 4a of the Plan. There are currently 166 structures listed for protection in the Record of Protected Structures (Draft Skibbereen Development Plan 2009).

The buildings and structures identified on the RPS are irreplaceable records of the past, of the local and national heritage, and therefore require protection. Their presence enhances the character of Skibbereen and adds to its local distinctiveness. It is a policy of the draft plan (Policy TM1) to draw attention to the heritage

value of protected structures and offer general advice on conservation as is available. The Council will resist demolition of protected structures in whole or in part; removal or modification of features of architectural importance; and development that would adversely affect the setting of a protected structure.

In addition to the Record of Protected Structures, structures of architectural heritage merit, although not put forward for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) may continue to contribute to the identity of a locality and should be taken into account in the preparation of the Development Plan. The Skibbereen area is unique in form and character. It is an objective to seek the identification and protection of all structures within the town that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. Such structures include but are not exclusive to the Record of Protected Structures.

National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) - Recorded Structures

The NIAH is a section within the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The work of the NIAH involves identifying and recording the architectural heritage of Ireland, from 1700 to the present day. Identified buildings may be put forward for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures. Surveys of County Cork have not yet been published. Therefore, there are no NIAH listed buildings in Skibbereen Plan town at present.

Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's)

The built heritage of County Cork and Skibbereen town is also offered protection through the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs).

An ACA is defined as a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a Protected Structure, and whose character is an objective of a development plan to preserve. Piecemeal alterations on individual non-protected structures can have a significant cumulative effect on the streetscape.

The entire town centre of Skibbereen has been identified as an ACA. It represents the main commercial centre and the consequent character of the town. There are many fine shopfronts from a variety of periods and styles that create a sense of vibrancy and interest. Whilst many have retained or sympathetically restored shopfronts, future developments must recognise the value that such items have on the overall character of the area. It is not only the lower floors of these buildings that define this character, but the upper levels also contribute to the sense of place created. The sense of enclosure and space that is most attractive and interesting has been determined by the historic layout of the street and the form and scale of the buildings.

Policy TM2 of the draft Plan is designed to recognise the character and architectural value of the ACA. It is considered that the overall quality of the ACA is of sufficient importance to require special treatment in terms of development proposals that may affect protected and unprotected structures alike.

In addition to the policy of the plan, Architectural Conservation Areas are protected by legislation and may be used to protect the following:

- Groups of structures of distinctiveness or visual richness or historical importance;
- The setting and exterior appearance that are of special interest, but the interiors of which do not merit protection;
- The setting of a Protected Structure where this is more extensive than its curtilage;
- Designed landscapes where these contain groups of structures as in, for example urban parks, the former demesnes of country houses and groupings of archaeological or industrial remains; and
- Groups of structures, which form, dispersed but unified entities but which are not within the attendant grounds of a single dominant Protected Structure.

Tree Preservation Orders

In accordance with Section 205 of the Planning & Development Act (2000) it is the policy of the Council to ensure that the existing trees in the town are retained and protected within the Skibbereen Development Plan 2009 - 2015. Policy ENV4 concerns the Protection of Trees. Policy ENV4-1 states that *proposals for development shall not be permitted where it is considered that it will result in the destruction of or significant damage to any tree or stand of trees which makes a significant contribution to the ecology, character or appearance of the area and in particular those trees that define the character of Skibbereen Heights*. Policy ENV4-2 states that *the plantation of trees located on land between the Marsh Road and Mill Road shall be preserved from development and shall only be felled for commercial purposes provided there is a programme of replanting implemented on the site*.

Industrial Heritage

Ireland's industrial heritage is being changed and destroyed at an unknown rate. Over the past decade there has been a growing public awareness of Ireland's industrial heritage, as seen in a number of sites which have been restored by enthusiasts and are now open to the public as tourist and educational attractions. Although there is now official recognition of the importance of the industrial heritage of Ireland, statutory protection is still low, due in the main to a backlog of listing of heritage structures.

Apart from functioning as an important employment and service centre, the town of Skibbereen seeks to enhance its tourism base. The tourist office, Heritage Centre and attractive setting and townscape all combine to make Skibbereen an attractive tourist destination. Displays in the Heritage Centre include the Great Famine Commemoration Exhibition and the Lough Hyne Visitor Centre.

It is recognised that one of the main opportunities to strengthen the permanent population structure of the area is by not only strengthening the economic and employment base of the towns but also by promoting a stronger tourism and leisure economy through the protection of the assets of the town's natural and built heritage.

Gaeltacht Areas

There are no Gaeltacht areas within the subject area.

5.8.3 Impact assessment –existing environmental problems and constraints

Developments or works which occur in close proximity to archaeological monuments would have potential to impact existing archaeological monuments through disturbance or destruction of the monuments. New developments that are adjacent to and/or alterations/extensions to existing protected structures also need to be carefully managed to ensure that the cultural heritage of such areas are not disturbed or negatively impacted upon.

It is deemed that the Plan area is of high archaeological potential. This determination is based on the presence of substantial archaeological remains from many periods of the past within the development area.

5.8.4 Evolution without implementation of the plan

In the absence of the Plan, specific objectives would still be provided through the Cork County Development Plan and National Legislation. However the Skibbereen Development Plan provides a guidance that encompasses principles from the Cork County Development Plan and the national legislation and is therefore more applicable to the area of Skibbereen.

If the plan were not implemented there would not be any local guidance, policies or objectives to protect and conserve archaeological sites, protected structures, trees of merit, Architectural Conservation Areas and buildings and sites of Architectural merit. Therefore these features of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, social or technical interest could be damaged or even lost in some cases.

5.9 LANDSCAPE

Skibbereen contains significant areas of landscape importance, which are important not only for their intrinsic value as places of natural beauty but also because they provide a real asset for residents and visitors alike in terms of recreation, tourism and other uses. The importance of landscape is recognised in the Planning and Development Act 2000, which requires that Development Plans include objectives for the preservation of the landscape, views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty.

5.9.1 Policy

There are a number of specific planning policies and objectives in the 2009 to 2015 Skibbereen Development Plan to protect features of Landscape and Natural Heritage importance which significantly add to the uniqueness of Skibbereen's landscape and to the amenity value of the town. The Plan also refers to national, regional and local plans including the Cork County Development Plan 2003 and draft Cork County Development Plan 2007.

5.9.2 Baseline

Landscape character is a distinct area of landscape that is relatively homogeneous in character. Each character represents its own landscape values and sensitivities. The character specified for a study area is generally a descriptive term made up of the prominent landform and land cover. The town of Skibbereen is particularly attractive enjoying a fine townscape and an attractive landscape setting. To the north is the River Ilen and its floodplain. Elsewhere is attractive, gently rolling countryside.

Skibbereen Town centre is situated between two elevated areas, locally known as Skibbereen Heights to the west of the town and the Rock to the east, as a result the town has largely expanded to the north and south. The Ilen River is the main natural amenity feature and has had a strong influence on the historic development of the town. The river, which is up to 40m in width, carves a large meander through the town forming a floodplain known as the Marsh along the western bank. The Caol Stream running in a southern direction is a tributary of the Ilen. Both the river Ilen and the Caol Stream are subject to flooding.

According to the draft Cork County Council Landscape Strategy the landscape type of Skibbereen town is of low value and is of medium value in terms of sensitivity. The landscape in this area is locally important.

Landscape Types

Skibbereen Town comprises primarily of the Broad Marginal Middleground and Lowland Basin of the River Ilen. Broad Marginal Middleground and Lowland Basin of the River Ilen landscape type is comprised of a broad shallow basin of the River Ilen and its tributaries, and is enclosed by rugged ridges and rocky outcrops. The area is bordered by Mullaghmesha, Nowen Hill and Millane Hill to the north, Mount Kid to the west and Carrigfadda to the east, and falls gently southwards and gradually expands in width towards Skibbereen and ultimately beyond to the coastal fringe and the sea.

Landcover at lower elevations mostly comprises of relatively fertile pasture but with rush on hillsides and on low lying flatter and wetter ground. Low-lying areas are characterised by relatively small fields with low to medium sized hedgerows, while higher ground is characterised by patches of rough scrub and small patches of coniferous plantations. Buildings are sparsely located, comprising occasional houses, farmsteads and sheds, which are generally screened by hedgerows, scrub and woodland and by the complexity of terrain. Towns and villages in this landscape type include Drimoleague to the north and Drinagh to the east.

In the more rural parts of this area buildings are sparse, comprising of occasional houses, farmsteads and sheds. The relative complexity of terrain resulting from topographic undulation and frequencies of hedgerows, scrub and woodland provides a reasonable amount of screening to these buildings lending a distinct sense of rural character.

Values

The Values associated with the Broad Marginal Middleground and Lower Basin is valued locally for its unspoilt natural beauty and strong natural character shaped by non-intensive farming, the vernacular quality of its built environment, which is particularly prevalent in such villages as Drimoleague and in scenic areas such as at Sheparton. The landscape is limited in terms of agricultural productivity with some upland areas being used for forestry, however the area is highly valued by local residents as a place to live and has a strong sense of identity based largely on continuity of settlement.

Sensitivity

Elevated lands to the east and west of the town are sensitive to development. Much of the west of the town is elevated scenic landscape and parts of the east of the town contain elevated scenic areas, there are also vast areas of public and private open space surrounding the town, which are sensitive to development.

Much of the lands adjacent and north of the River Ilen is subject to flooding, areas to the east and south of the town are also subject to flooding and are contained in the flood plain.

There are a number of scenic routes in the vicinity of the town. These include; A 99 from Leap to Skibbereen which runs east-west through the town. After the town, the route forks west into the A 105, between Baltimore via Old Court and Skibbereen and south into the A 106, between Skibbereen and Ballydehob. The above-mentioned scenic routes are renamed as S82, S88 and S90 respectively in the *Draft Cork County Development Plan 2007*.

Pressures for Change

Forestry

Coniferous forestry is evident on high ground but it does not affect the impressive heath ridges, which are a key feature of this landscape type. Overall this landscape is diverse and contains various different features and characteristics thus it is capable of accommodating further forestry development in more remote, higher level rural areas. However if further forestation is to occur it should strive for diversity of species throughout, especially on lower grounds where soil is better quality. The species selection should also respond to the tapestry of different colours of mooreland and farmland by incorporation broadleaf species and larch. Hedgerows where possible, should also be retained in order to reflect field patterns and it is important to set back forestry from peaks and ridges.

Agriculture

The decline of agriculture is likely to impact on the character of the area as further lands may give over to forestry and scrub. Associated with the changes in the agriculture sector within the County as a whole, are an increase in part time farmers and accompanying decline in farm employment. This loss of labour is often particularly acute with regard to traditional maintenance and management of key agricultural landscape features such as hedgerows and ditches. More recently, with the introduction of schemes such as the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS), an attempt has been made to explicitly link farming activities to the environment.

5.9.3 Assessment –existing environmental problems and constraints

It is considered that elevated scenic lands to the west and east of the town known as Skibbereen Heights and the Rock are sensitive to development and should therefore be reserved from development. Instead it is proposed to make use of these areas for the general amenity of the town. Three scenic routes are located in close proximity to the northern edges of the town. The River Ilen and Caol Stream are both subject to flooding, the historical floodplain of the town extends north and south of the town as illustrated in map 2 of the draft plan.

Objectives of the plan aim to conserve and protect the landscape setting of Skibbereen while also providing active and passive open space and recreational areas thereby enhancing the overall living environment and ensuring quality of life for all residents.

5.9.4 Evolution without implementation of the plan.

In the absence of the Plan specific objectives would still be provided through the Cork County Development Plan and National Legislation. However the Skibbereen Development Plan provides a guidance that encompasses principles from the Cork County Development Plan and the national legislation and is therefore more applicable to the area of Skibbereen.

If the plan were not implemented, lands within the town would not be zoned and it is likely that development would take place in an ad hoc, haphazard manner. It is likely that that development would take place on scenic landscapes and important vistas of the town. Therefore features of landscape value could be damaged or even lost in some cases.

6 OBJECTIVES, TARGETS AND INDICATORS

The sustainability criteria are broadly categorised in terms of the indicators outlined in the SEA Directive and in the Draft SEA of the Cork County Development Plan 2009-2015. In the course of carrying out the appraisal, the sustainability criteria were refined, combined and classified in order to avoid duplication and ensure a clear, focused and measurable set of criteria against which the strategy can be assessed. Set out in Table 6.1 are the draft SEA Objectives that are being considered to test the policies and objectives of the Skibbereen Development Plan. These objectives are based on the current understanding of the key environmental issues identified at a local level in Skibbereen and at a county level.

Table 6.1: Skibbereen Town Plan Environmental Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Issue	Objective	Target	Indicator	Responsibility
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna				
B1	To avoid significant adverse impacts (direct, cumulative and indirect), to protected habitats, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites by development within or adjacent to these sites.	No significant adverse impacts, (direct, cumulative and indirect impacts), to relevant habitats, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites.	Number of significant adverse impacts (direct, cumulative and indirect impacts), to relevant habitats and species in designated ecological sites.	STC DoEHLG
B2	To protect the marine environment, aquatic biodiversity, flora and fauna	Meet the requirements of the River Basin Management Plan.	Changes in water quality as identified during water quality monitoring programmes.	STC/CCCT
B3	To protect and where possible enhance fisheries, wetland, shellfisheries, freshwater pearl mussel	No significant adverse impacts, (direct, cumulative and indirect impacts) on fisheries shellfisheries, freshwater pearl mussel.	Biological indicators and areas of suitable habitat supporting such fisheries	EPA River monitoring prog (classification), Dept of Marine,
Population and Human Health				
PH1	To improve the quality of life for the people of Skibbereen through high quality residential, working and recreational environments, sustainable travel patterns.	To improve quality of life, provision of improved physical and social infrastructure, to reduce journey to work times and allow for a better match between place of residence	Journey to work times.	CCC

Issue	Objective	Target and place of work.	Indicator	Responsibility
PH2	To protect human health from hazards or nuisances arising from lack of wastewater treatment facilities, water quality, traffic, noise and incompatible landuses.	Improve quality of drinking water. Implementation of new wastewater treatment plant. Ensure no planning granted for incompatible uses. Improve congestion	Change in drinking water quality. Implementation of WWTP. Occurrence of spatially concentrated health problems. Occurrence/change in traffic congestion.	STC/CCC
Soils				
S1	To maximise the sustainable re-use of brownfield lands and the existing built environment, rather than developing greenfield lands.	All brownfield lands to be redeveloped at the end of the plan lifespan (subject to availability on the open market and demand for such land).	Area of brownfield land available.	STC
S2	To maintain the quality of soils.	To reduce contamination and safeguard soil quality and quantity.	Area of contaminated land encountered during development works and nature and extent of soil contamination.	CCC
S3	To minimise waste production and reduce the volume of waste to landfill and to operate sustainable waste management practices.	To meet national and EU targets on the recycling of municipal waste and its diversion from landfill.	Volume of waste recycled and volume of waste sent to landfill.	STC/CCC
Water				
W1i	Maintain or improve the quality of surface water to meet the requirements of the South Western River Basin Management Plan (SW RBMP) and Programme of Measures (POMs)	0 Faecal Coliform Counts per 100ml of groundwater.	Faecal Coliform Counts per 100ml of groundwater.	EPA STC/CCC

Issue	Objective	Target	Indicator	Responsibility
W1ii		To improve biotic quality ratings, where possible to Q5.	Changes in water quality as identified during water quality monitoring programmes.	EPA STC/CCC
W2i	To maintain and improve, where possible, the quality of rivers, surface water the quality of estuarine and coastal waters.	To maintain a biotic quality rating of Q4, in line with the requirement to achieve good water status under the Water Framework Directive, by 2015.	Biotic Quality Rating (Q Value) and Risk Assessment.	EPA STC/CCC
W2ii		To improve biotic quality ratings, where possible, to Q5.	Biotic Quality Rating (Q Value) and Risk Assessment.	EPA STC/CCC
W3	Promote sustainable water usage	Increase number of water conservation measures implemented during the lifetime of the Plan	Number of water conservation measures implemented during the lifetime of the Plan	EPA STC/CCC
Air and Climate				
A 1	To maintain and improve air quality in Skibbereen and reduce CO2 Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) to alleviate Climate Change.	Increased use of public transport. Increase numbers of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes in the study area. Increase number of permissions granted for renewable energy projects	Use of public transport. Provision of cycle lanes and walking routes. Number of permissions granted for renewable energy projects. Air quality indicators.	STC/CCC
Energy				
E1	Use of renewable energy technology for projected power requirements and implementation of the Building Regulations over the lifetime of the Plan.	Encourage use of renewable energy for domestic and small businesses. Use of renewable energy to supply National Grid where applicable.	Number and type of renewable energy technologies employed in new developments	STC/CCC

Issue	Objective	Target	Indicator	Responsibility
Material Assets				
M1	To serve new development under the plan with appropriate wastewater treatment.	No new developments granted permission, which cannot be adequately served by a public wastewater treatment plant over the lifetime of the plan.	Number of new developments granted permission, which cannot be adequately served by a public wastewater treatment plant over the lifetime of the plan.	CCC NRA
M2	To maintain and improve the quality of drinking water supplies.	To maintain and improve drinking water quality in Skibbereen to comply with the requirements of the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations 2000.	Drinking water quality standards (Microbiological, Chemical and Indicator parameters).	EPA STC/CCC
Cultural Heritage				
CH1	To protect the archaeological heritage of Skibbereen and; the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	No unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in full or partial loss of: a) entries to the Record of Monuments and Places; b) entries to the Register for Historic Monuments; National Monument subject to Preservation Orders, and; c) the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	Number of unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in full or partial loss of: a) entries to the Record of Monuments and Places; b) entries to the Register for Historic Monuments; National Monument subject to Preservation Orders, and; c) the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	CCC Heritage Section Cork Heritage Forum DoEHLG

Issue	Objective	Target	Indicator	Responsibility
CH2	To preserve and protect the special interest and character of Skibbereen's architectural heritage and the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	No unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in physical loss or loss to the context in the surrounding landscape or streetscape of: entries to the Record of Protected Structures; Architectural Conservation Areas, or; entries to the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.	Number of unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in physical loss or loss to the context in the surrounding landscape or streetscape of: entries to the Record of Protected Structures; Architectural Conservation Areas, or; entries to the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.	CCC Heritage Section Cork Heritage Forum DoEHLG
Landscape				
Li	To protect Skibbereen's sensitive landscapes, landscape features and designated views and prospects.	No unauthorised developments to be conspicuously located within sensitive landscapes or designated scenic landscape.	Number of unauthorised conspicuous developments located within sensitive landscapes or designated scenic landscape.	STC/CCC
Lii		No unauthorised developments to adversely impact upon designated scenic views or scenic landscape.	Number of conspicuous developments adversely impacting upon designated scenic views or scenic landscape granted permission during the lifetime of the Plan. Number of Landscape Impact Assessments and photomontages submitted with planning applications	STC/CCC

7 ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Article 5 of the SEA Directive requires the environmental report to consider 'reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme' and the significant effects of the alternatives selected. Alternatives must be realistic and capable of implementation and should present a range of different approaches within the statutory and operational requirements of the Town Plan.

Section 3.14 of the DoEHLG Guidelines notes that the higher the level of the plan, the more strategic the options which are likely to be available. Conversely, lower tier plans, such as Local Area Plans, will be framed in a policy context set by the level(s) above them, and strategic options may be limited. As a result, the strategic options available to the preparation of the Draft Skibbereen Development Plan are limited.

It is a mandatory objective of a Development Plan that sufficient lands are zoned for particular purposes. This is especially relevant in relation to the quantum and location of new residentially zoned lands. In this regard it is important to highlight that sufficient lands are proposed to be rezoned for residential, employment and community uses within the town boundary in line with national, regional and local population projections, which will contribute to the generation of critical mass within the town of Skibbereen.

- **Option 1** 'Do nothing'
- **Option 2** Densification of the town and restriction on expansion outwards
- **Option 3** Promote development in a market led approach to the north and south of the town

Under Option 1 the 'do nothing' scenario, Skibbereen would maintain its current physical and socio-economic characteristics. Development would be market dependent and would occur at a slower pace and in a less co-ordinated manner. Adopting the 'do-nothing' approach would have serious implications for the proper planning and sustainability of Skibbereen Town, as it would mean development would take place in a haphazard manner.

As a result of the do-nothing approach, policies and objectives of the plan would not be updated and therefore derelict and under-utilised buildings would dilapidate further. Physical, social and economic development would not be planned and promoted within the town. Therefore Option 1 would not achieve the strategic vision of the Skibbereen Town Development Plan, which Skibbereen's vision is to develop as a compact and self contained town, acting as an economic and service provider for the surrounding rural hinterland, with a strong combination of industry, services, arts, culture and tourism. Therefore this option is considered negative in terms of the environment and sustainability of Skibbereen and is therefore not the chosen option for the plan.

Alternative Option 2 is to develop the town in a compact and sustainable manner and to restrict expansion outwards through the intensification of the existing Town Centre, redeveloping brownfield sites and Greenfield

sites only where there is a natural extension to existing zoning to the north east of the town. This scenario allows for the intensification of the town centre and the consolidation and expansion of existing services to easily accessible lands that would be accessible by a proposed new distributor road. This scenario would also need to allow for the rezoning of existing undeveloped residential zoned land located further away from the town centre to phase II residentially zoned lands, which would mean that phase II lands would be developed sequentially once Phase I residential land has been developed. This approach would meet a number of the objectives of the Town Development Plan, as it would allow the rejuvenation of existing derelict sites, which would improve the town's architectural character and townscape and consequently improve its tourist function. It would also be likely to have a positive impact on existing residents and traders in the town. Therefore Option 2 is the preferred option for the Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015.

Alternative Option 3 is to promote development in a market led approach to the north and south of the town. Firstly much of the lands to the north and south of the town are subject to flooding therefore this approach could have implications in terms of flooding impacts as a result of development. This approach is not considered to be the most sustainable development approach for the town as it would not maximise the use of brownfield lands within the town centre. It is also considered that extending development towards the edge of the town would not be sustainable as it would not help to consolidate the town centre, nor would it promote walking or cycling or make use of the existing services in the town centre. This option would result in the development of lands based on a market led approach and not on sustainable planning principles. Therefore Option 3 is considered unsustainable due to the dispersed nature of growth and primarily due to its potential to have impacts on the environment.

7.2 ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS

Table 7.2.1 below provides a description of the criteria used to assess the various environmental SEA topics against the proposed alternative.

Table 7.2.1 Scoring Symbol for the Purpose of Assessment of Alternatives

Impact	Negative	Negative indirect	Neutral	Positive (direct)	Positive (indirect)	Uncertain/ Questionable
Symbol	x	⊗	0	✓	⊗	?

Option 1- The "do-nothing" Option

Under Option 1 the 'do nothing' scenario, Skibbereen would maintain its current physical and socio-economic characteristics. Development would be market dependent and would occur at a slower pace and in a less co-

ordinated manner. Adopting the 'do-nothing' approach would have serious implications for the proper planning and sustainability of Skibbereen Town, as it would mean development would take place in a haphazard manner.

As a result of the do-nothing approach, policies and objectives of the plan would not be updated and therefore derelict and under-utilised buildings would dilapidate further. Physical, social and economic development would not be planned and promoted within the town. Therefore Option 1 would not achieve the strategic vision of the Skibbereen Town Development Plan, which Skibbereen's vision is to develop as a compact and self contained town, acting as an economic and service provider for the surrounding rural hinterland, with a strong combination of industry, services, arts, culture and tourism. Therefore this option is considered negative in terms of the environment and sustainability of Skibbereen and is therefore not the chosen option for the plan. An overview of impacts by considering the "do nothing" scenario is provided below in Table 7.2.2.

Table 7.2.2: Option 1 the 'Do-nothing' Option

Environmental Issue	Score	Commentary
Biodiversity	0	May result in pressures to the River Ilen and Caol Stream due to unplanned growth. Possible loss of hedgerows, tree lines and potentially sensitive habitats but not on a significant scale.
Population and Human Health	☒	Under this scenario there would be a continuing reliance on private transport as development would be of an unplanned nature which would result in greater exposure to noise and air pollution.
Water	*	Uncontrolled development could place pressure on surface water and on groundwater quality. Uncontrolled development within the town is likely to have negative impacts to the Ilen River and could have indirect impacts on the Roaringwater Bay further downstream. In addition development near the river and bay could cause pollution and could affect recreational fishing opportunities with a slight negative impact on water quality.
Soil	0	Unplanned development within the area could potentially result in the loss of fertile soils/resources but not on any significant scale.
Air & Climate	☒	Under this scenario there is no planned provisions for the facilitation of a green fabric and therefore there would be a greater reliance on the private car rather than cycleways and pedestrian links resulting in increased CO ₂ emissions and negative impacts to air quality and climate
Material Assets	☒	This option could result in a number of one off septic tanks, connections to ESB rather than a planned and phased approach. Access to services and public facilities would not be planned under this scenario. It would result in the continued unsustainable development of one-off and ribbon housing along minor roads
Cultural Heritage	☒	There could be impacts on the recorded monuments and places sites and protected structures within the area as a consequence of this option. Given the overall high archaeological potential of the plan area sub-surface remains may be encountered and thereby impacted upon. Also under the do-nothing option, the plan would not designate new Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) or Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) and therefore it is possible that the special features of the ACAs and Trees of high landscape, amenity and/or ecological value could be lost or degraded.
Landscape	☒	Unformulated development in the town may result in impacts on elevated scenic areas to the east and west of the town.
Traffic	☒	Unplanned development is likely to result in dispersed development, which would increase the need and dependency upon private means of transport leading to traffic congestion and delays and pressure on the existing road network.

- **Option 2- Densification of the town and restriction on expansion outwards**

Alternative Option 2 is to develop the town in a compact and sustainable manner and to restrict expansion outwards through the intensification of the existing Town Centre, redeveloping brownfield sites and Greenfield sites only where there is a natural extension to existing zoning to the north east of the town. This scenario allows for the intensification of the town centre and the consolidation and expansion of existing services to easily accessible lands that would be accessible by a proposed new distributor road.

This scenario would also need to allow for the rezoning of existing undeveloped residential zoned land located further away from the town centre to phase II residentially zoned lands, which would mean that phase II lands would be developed sequentially once Phase I residential land has been developed. This approach would meet a number of the objectives of the Town Development Plan, as it would allow the rejuvenation of existing derelict sites, which would improve the town's architectural character and townscape and consequently improve its tourist function.

It would also be likely to have a positive impact on existing residents and traders in the town. Therefore Option 2 is the preferred option for the Skibbreen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015.

Table 7.2.3: Densification of the town and restriction on expansion outwards

Environmental Issue	Score	Commentary
Biodiversity	0	The densification of the Town centre and redeveloping brownfield sites and Greenfield sites only where there is a natural extension to existing zonings would have a neutral effect on biodiversity as it would reduce impacts to greenfield areas and wildlife corridors outside the town.
Population and Human Health	✓	It promotes greater use of public transport due to the intensification of the town centre and promotion of development on lands, which have been zoned in a planned manner. This option promotes walking and cycling and allows good access to local amenities and services.
Water	0	Policies in the plan ensure that development will only take place in areas where wastewater and water supply capacity have been assessed with the aim of reducing pressure on surface water and groundwater. In addition lands to be rezoned to the north east of the town are not located in the flood plain.
Soil	0	This scenario would involve uptake of land the majority of which is made ground and therefore there is likely to be less impacts due to the brownfield nature of development .
Air & Climate	✓	Development will be concentrated in areas well served by existing and planned infrastructure making it convenient for the population to utilise public transport and thereby reduce CO ₂ emissions and negative impacts to air quality and climate
Material Assets	✓	This option focuses development in existing development areas and also promotes development on brownfied sites and on Greenfield sites only where there is a natural extension to existing zonings. This option would help to rejuvenate existing derelict sites, which would improve the town's architectural character and townscape and consequently its tourist function. This option promotes development where there is already provision of services, water supply and transport systems can be planned to accommodate development.

Environmental Issue	Score	Commentary
Cultural Heritage	0	This option will concentrate development in areas already developed or zoned for development. However there are policies and objectives within the plan to ensure that Cultural Heritage is protected and enhanced and therefore will prevent development impacting on cultural heritage.
Landscape	0	This option would lead to the development of a more compact urban structure and reduce the need for the development of greenfield areas on the edge of town.
Traffic	0	With the provision of sustainable public transport, it is likely that there will be an increase of use in public transport and reductions in the distances of commuting for the increasing population, as development is concentrated in the town and on lands planned and zoned for development.

Option 3 - Promote development in a market led approach to the north and south of the town

Alternative Option 3 is to promote development in a market led approach to the north and south of the town. This option would promote dispersed development to the north and south of the town, which would result in the loss of the greenfield land and agricultural lands. In addition there would be a reliance on private transport into Skibbereen Town. It would also result in urban sprawl and there would be a lack of distinction between the built up area and the open countryside. Furthermore much of the lands to the north and south of the town are subject to flooding therefore this approach could have implications in terms of flooding impacts as a result of development.

This approach is not considered to be the most sustainable development approach for the town as it would not maximise the use of brownfield lands within the town centre. It is also considered that extending development towards the edge of the town would not be sustainable as it would not help to consolidate the town centre, nor would it promote walking or cycling or make use of the existing services in the town centre. This option would result in the development of lands based on a market led approach and not on sustainable planning principles. Therefore Option 3 is considered unsustainable due to the dispersed nature of growth and primarily due to its potential to have impacts on the environment. . An overview of impacts by considering Option 3 is provided below in Table 7.2.4.

Table 7.2.4: Promote development in a market led approach to the north and south of the town

Environmental Issue	Score	Commentary
Biodiversity	☒	May result in pressures to the River Ilen and Caol Stream due to unplanned market led growth. Possible loss of hedgerows, tree lines and potentially sensitive habitats but not on a significant scale.
Population and Human Health	☒	This scenario would create a higher dependency on the private motorcar, which may adversely affect human health due to deterioration of air quality, as development would not be proposed in a planned phased manner.
Water	☒	A market led approach to development to the north and south of the town could potentially have negative impacts on the water quality due to the increased demand for groundwater in an unplanned manner.

Environmental Issue	Score	Commentary
Soil	☒	Development on greenfield lands to the north and south of the town would eventually result in loss of fertile soils/resources in favour of development of brownfield sites.
Air & Climate	0	Under this scenario there is no provision for the facilitation of a green fabric and therefore there would be a greater reliance on the private car rather than use of cycleways and pedestrian links resulting in increased CO ₂ emissions and negative impacts to air quality and climate
Material Assets	☒	This option would result in the development of greenfield sites instead of the re-use of brownfield sites and the redevelopment of derelict structures within the town. This option would therefore result in the further dilapidation of the town centre and would not be sustainable in the long term. This could have indirect impacts on the tourism industry in Skibbereen.
Cultural Heritage	☒	There could be impacts on the recorded monuments and places sites and protected structures within the area as a consequence of this option as lands are not zoned in a planned manner
Landscape	*	This scenario would result in the development of greenfield lands within the town boundary and is likely to put pressure on the open landscapes to the north and south of the town. In addition, without development of brownfield or derelict sites in favour of greenfield sites, these areas will continue to be unused and negatively impact upon the landscape character of the town
Traffic	☒	If lands were to be developed in a market led approach to the north and south of the town this would cause a strain on and there would not be provision to extend public transport links in a dispersed manner throughout the town, therefore this would increase the number of people travelling by private means of transport leading to traffic congestion and delays and pressure on existing road network.

7.3 CONCLUSION

Table 7.3.5 below summarises the scoring for each development option. Development Option 2 has clearly emerged as the preferred option for the preparation of the Skibbereen Development Plan and will be examined in more detail in Chapter 8.

Table 7.3.5 Summary of Development Option Score

SEA Objective	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Biodiversity	0	0	☒
Population and Human Health	☒	✓	☒
Water	*	0	☒
Soil	0	0	☒

Air & Climate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	0
Material Assets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Heritage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Landscape	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	0	*
Traffic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

8 EVALUATION OF THE DRAFT PLAN POLICIES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section of the Environmental Report is to evaluate as far as is possible the environmental effects of this draft Town Plan and to set out measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as far as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment. This section therefore evaluates the Draft Plan's Policies and objectives against the SEA objectives. As part of the methodology a matrix was used to assess the strategic objectives of the Skibbereen Development Plan against the objectives devised to ensure that the strategy is sustainable as indicated in Table 8.2 below. This process enables an overview of where potential significant environmental effects may arise from implementation of the Plan and allows for additional objectives to be generated, if necessary.

It is considered that overall the proposed strategy will not have a negative impact on the environment. All potential significant effects that have emerged as a result of baseline study and the assessment of the Policies and Objectives is documented in chapter 9 entitled 'Significant effects and Proposed Mitigation Measures'. Under this section mitigation measures will be put in place in order to prevent deterioration in environmental quality of the area. A Monitoring programme which will be linked to significant effects is set out in section 10 of this report.

The environmental objectives of Biodiversity Flora and Fauna, Population and Human Health, Soil water, Air and Climatic Factors, Energy, Material Assets, Cultural Heritage and Landscape area assessed against the policies and objectives outlined in the draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015.

8.2 ASSESMENT CRITERIA

The assessment criteria used is based on the likely significant effects of the Plan's Objectives on the environmental objectives as detailed in Table 8.1. The criteria used for the assessment is described in Table 8.1:

Table 8.1 Assessment Criteria

Type of Impact	Description	Symbol
Positive	Improves the quality of the environment (i.e. improves air quality, biodiversity etc. Positive impacts may be	+
	Short Term / Temporary	+S

	Long Term/ Permanent	+L +T +P
	Indirect	+ I
Negative	<p>Reduces the quality of the environment (i.e. reducing air quality or reducing species diversity). A negative impact can however be sufficiently minimised/eliminated by installation of appropriate mitigation measures.</p> <p>Negative impacts may be</p> <p>Short Term/Temporary</p> <p>Long Term/Permanent</p> <p>Indirect</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-S</p> <p>-L</p> <p>-I</p>
Short term/ Temporary	Usually lasts the duration of the project i.e. during the construction stage of a development i.e. during provision of infrastructure recommended in the Plan.	S +S or -S
Long term/ Permanent	Will last greater than 60 years	L +L or -L
Indirect	Effects that are not a direct result of the Plan, same as secondary effects.	I +I or -I
Neutral	No Impact	0
Questionable	Unknown	?
Cumulative	Effects on the environment that result from incremental changes caused by strategic action together with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. These results can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time or space.	C

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets	Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Comments			
	B1	B2	B3	PH 1	PH 2	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2		CH 1	CH2	L1
Main Objectives																			
To ensure that there is a transport framework to coordinate the development process.	+1	0		+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	
To balance new development and additional traffic movements in the town with the provision and management of infrastructure and housing in a suitable manner.	+1	0		+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	
To facilitate and encourage public and private investment in the town, by providing supportive development policies and encouraging rather than restricting development.	0	0		+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	+1	0	0	0	
To focus development on the town centre with an adequate flexible approach to attract key operators to the town.	+1	0		+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	Overall impacts to biodiversity and soil/water with development focussed in the town.
To capitalise on Skibbereen's comparative advantage by protecting and enhancing the town's unique setting.	+1	0		+1	+1	+1	+1	0	+1	+1	+1	+1	0	0	0	+L	+L	+L	
A Strategic Vision																			
Objective 1 - A Strong Local Economy	0	0		+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	+1	0	
Objective 2 - An Accessible + Legible Town	+1	0		+L	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	+L	

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets		Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Comments		
	B1	B2	B3	PH	PH	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH		CH2	L1
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2		1	2
Objective 3 - A Positive Physical + Natural Environment	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	+L	0	+L	+L	+L	
Objective 4 - A Vibrant + Balanced Community	0	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	+L	0	+L	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	
Objective 5 - Strong Local Services + Amenities	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	+L	
Effective Transport and Movement Objectives																			
Objective T1	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	Improvement of road infrastructure.
Objective T2	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	Helps to facilitate public transport
Objective T3	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	All policies as implemented into the Plan as a result of same will be assessed.
Objective T4	0	0	0	+L	-J	-S	0	0	0	0	0	-L	0	0	0	0	0	-I	May be some negative impacts in terms of quality of soils during construction, however any impact is only likely to be short term. Negative in terms of Greenfield development, however sequential policy in Plan will ensure that development is in line with this approach.

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets		Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Comments		
	B1	B2	B3	PH	PH	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH		CH2	L1
	0	0	0	1	2	+	-	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	1		0	0
Objective T5	-1	0	0	+L	+1	+1	-S	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	+1	+1	+1	May be some indirect impact to habitats and species due to development of car park, however Policy ENV3 will mitigate impacts. Due to flooding issues it is not proposed to facilitate development on these lands until the WWTP is implemented. See Objective ENV2 also which refers to Marsh lands.
Objective T6	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	+1	
Effective Transport and Movement Policies																			
Policy T1 - Transport Corridor	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	Improvement of road infrastructure.
Policy T2 – Sustainable Public Transport	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	+1	
Policy T3 – North Eastern Distributor Road	0	0	0	+L	+1	-1	-S	0	0	0	0	-L	0	0	0	0	0	-1	See Objective T4 above.
Policy T4 – Parking and Access	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	0	
Effective Transport and Movement Policies																			
Town Centre, Urban Renewal & Regeneration Objectives																			
Objective TC1	0	0	0	+L	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	+1	+1	+1	0	
Objective TC2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	See assessment of

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Comments																		
	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water		Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets		Cultural Heritage	Landscape				
	B1	B2	B3	PH 1	PH 2	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH 1	CH2	L1	
Opportunity Site 1 – Fair Field	0	0	0	+L	-S	+I	-S	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	+I	+I	+L	sites below Generally positive due to infill nature of development. May be some negative short term impacts to soil and noise during construction.
Opportunity Site 2 – East Backlands	0	0	0	+L	-S	+I	-S	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	+I	+I	+I	Same as above. Protective policies in plan to ensure buffer between site and river. Plan also refers to sensitive town centre development.
Opportunity Site 3 – West Backlands	0	0	0	+I	-S	+I	-S	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	+I	+I	+I	Generally positive due to infill nature of development. May be some negative short term impacts to soil and noise during construction. Protective policies in plan to ensure buffer between site and river.
Opportunity Site 4 – Secondary Schools	0	0	0	+L	-S	+I	-S	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	+I	+I	+I	Generally positive for the population of Skibbereen. May be some short term negative impacts if sites are further developed.
Opportunity Site 5 – Marsh Lands	-1	0	0	+L	-S	+I	-S	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	+I	+I	+I	May be some indirect impact to habitats and

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets		Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Comments		
	B1	B2	B3	PH	PH	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH		CH2	L1
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2		1	2
Objective TC3	0	0	0	+1	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	species due to development of car park, however Policy ENV3 will mitigate impacts. Due to flooding issues it is not proposed to facilitate development on these lands until the WWTP is implemented. See Objective ENV2 also which refers to Marsh lands.
Objective TC4	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Objective TC5	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Objective TC6	0	0	0	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	
Objective TC7	+1	+1	+1	+L	+L	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	
Objective TC8	0	0	0	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Objective TC9	0	0	0	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Objective TC10	0	0	0	+1	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	
Town Centre, Urban Renewal & Regeneration Policies																			
Policy TC1 - Opportunity Sites	0	0	0	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	Generally positive as sites are centrally located. See individual assessments as set out under Objective TC2.
Policy TC2 - Protecting Retail Use	0	0	0	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	Ensures a compact sustainable Town

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets		Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Comments		
	B1	B2	B3	PH 1	PH 2	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH 1		CH2	L1
Policy TC3 - Derelict & Vacant Buildings	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+I		+I	centre
TC4 - Town Centre Design	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+I		0	
TC5 - Evening Economy	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	0		0	
Shopping and Retail Planning Objectives																			
Objective SR1	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	
Objective SR2	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	
Objective SR3	+I	+I	0	+I	+I	+I	0	0	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	0		+I	
Objective SR4	0	0	0	+L	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		+I	Refer to site assessment under TC2
Objective SR5	+I	+I	0	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	0		+I	Refer to site assessment under TC2
Objective SR6	0	0	0	+I	-S	-S	-S	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	May be some negative short term impacts to soil and noise during construction.
Objective SR7	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	+I	0	0	0		+L	
Shopping and Retail Planning Objectives																			
Policy SR1 – Protecting the vitality and viability of the Town	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	+I		0	
Policy SR2 Sequential Approach	0	0	0	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	+I		0	
Policy SR3 – Retail Warehousing	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	
Policy SR4 – Commercial Use	0	0	0	+I	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets		Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Comments				
	B1	B2	B3	PH 1	PH 2	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH 1		CH2	L1		
	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0		0	0	0	
Policy SR5 – Neighbourhood Centre	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Policy SR6 – Advertising	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	0		
Townscape Management Building and Archaeological Heritage Objectives																					
Objective TM1	+1	0	0	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+	+	Potential slight short term impacts on biodiversity.
Objective TM2	0	-S	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	-S	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	
Objective TM3	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	
Objective TM4	+1	+	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	
Objective TM5	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	
Objective TM6	+1	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Townscape Management Building and Archaeological Heritage Policies																					
Policy TM1 – Protected Structures	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	
Policy TM2	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	+	+	
Policy TM3 – Protection of Archaeological Sites and Places	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	
Residential Strategy and Neighbourhood Objectives																					
Objective H1	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	+	
Objective H2	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Objective H3	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Objective H4	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Objective H5	0	0	0	+	+	-I	-S	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	May be potential

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets		Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Comments		
	B1	B2	B3	PH 1	PH 2	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH 1		CH2	L1
Natural Environment Open Space and Public Amenity Objectives																			
Objective ENV1	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Objective ENV2	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Objective ENV3	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Objective ENV4	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Objective ENV5	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Objective ENV6	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Objective ENV7	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Objective ENV8	0	0	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	Sufficient Biodiversity policies to ensure protection of environment against this objective.
ENV 9	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	
Natural Environment Open Space and Public Amenity Objectives																			
Policy ENV1 - Improving Amenity Spaces	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Policy ENV2 – Open Spaces within Residential Developments	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Policy ENV3 – Natural Environment	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Policy ENV 4 – Protection of Trees	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	
Policy ENV5 - Provision of Walkways	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	Reduced trampling Of natural environment
Policy ENV6 – Maintaining Open Space Provision	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	+L	

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna			Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets			Cultural Heritage		Landscape	Comments		
	B1	B2	B3	PH 1	PH 2	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH 1	CH2	L1				
Recreation and Community Facilities Objectives																						
Objective CR1	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Objective CR2	0	0	0	+L	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Objective CR3	0	0	0	+L	+I	?	?	?	?	?	?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Location of new school and effect on soil and water will be assessed by way of individual apps
Objective CR4	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Objective CR5	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Recreation and Community Facilities Policies																						
Policy CR1 Development and Expansion of Educational Facilities	0	0	0	+L	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	May reduce need to commute outside the town
Policy CR2 Reuse of Existing Educational Establishments and Sites	0	0	0	+L	+I	+I	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+I	+I	0	0	0	0	0	Reduce need to develop greenfield lands
Policy CR3 Provision of Health Services	0	0	0	+L	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	May reduce need to commute outside the town
Policy CR4 – Provision of residential care Homes and Childcare Facilities	0	0	0	+L	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	As above
Policy CR5 – Protection of existing Leisure and Community Facilities	0	0	0	+L	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Tourism Arts and Culture Objectives																						

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets		Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Comments		
	B1	B2	B3	PH 1	PH 2	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH 1		CH2	L1
Urban Design Objectives																			
Objective UD1	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	+1	+L	
Objective UD2	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	+1	
Objective UD3	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	
Objective UD4	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	
Objective UD5	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	
Urban Design Policies																			
Policy UD1 – Design Statement	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	+1	+L	
Policy UD2 – Masterplanning	+1	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	+1	+1	+1	+L	
Policy UD3 – Urban Design Principles	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	+1	+L	
Employment Enterprise and Economic Development Objectives																			
Objective EC1	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	
Objective EC2	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	
Objective EC3	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Employment Enterprise and Economic Development Policies																			
Policy EC1 – New Employment Uses	0	0	0	+L	+1	-S	-S	0	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	-S	May be short term negative impacts During construction if developed on Greenfield sites
Policy EC2 – Small-scale Businesses	0	0	0	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Policy EC3 – Promotion of Quality work environment	0	0	0	+L	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets		Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Comments		
	B1	B2	B3	PH 1	PH 2	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH 1		CH2	L1
Engineering Infrastructure and Utilities Objectives																			
Objective WU1	0	+I	+I	+L	+I	0	0	0	+I	+I	+I	0	0	+I	+I	0	0	0	
Objective WU2	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	+L	+L	+L	0	0	+I	+L	0	0	0	
Objective WU3	0	+I	+I	+I	+I	0	0	0	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	
Objective WU4	+I	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	+L	+I	0	0	0	
Objective WU5	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	0	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	
Objective WU6	0	0	0	+I	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	
Objective WU7	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	0	+L	
Objective WU8	0	+I	+I	+L	+I	0	0	0	+I	+I	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Objective WU9	0	+I	+I	+L	+I	0	0	0	+I	+I	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Objective WU10	0	+I	+I	+L	+I	0	0	0	+I	+I	+I	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	
Engineering Infrastructure and Utilities Policies																			
Policy WU1 Protection of water resources	0	+I	+I	+L	+I	0	0	0	+I	+I	+I	0	0	+I	+I	0	0	0	
Policy WU2 – Waste Water Management	+I	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	+L	+I	0	0	0	
Policy WU3 – Surface Water Management	+I	+L	+L	+I	+I	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	
Policy WU4 – Surface Water and Floodrisk management	+I	+L	+L	+L	+L	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	+I	0	0	0	
Policy WU5 Public Utility Management Provision	0	0	0	+I	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	
Policy WU6 – Waste Management	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+L	0	0	0	0	+L	
Implementation Objectives																			
Objective IMP1	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I
Objective IMP2	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I
Objective IMP3	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I
																			Provide funding to

Table 8.1: Assessment Matrix of Skibbereen Development Plan Policies and Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Biodiversity Flora & Fauna		Population & Human Health		Soil			Water			Air & Climate	Energy	Material Assets		Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Comments		
	B1	B2	B3	PH 1	PH 2	S1	S2	S3	W1	W2	W3	A1	E1	M1	M2	CH 1		CH2	L1
Objective IMP4	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	implement initiatives.
Objective IMP5	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	Prevents negative impacts resulting from unauthorised development. Provides information to developers and public
Implementation Policies																			
Policy IMP1 – Enforcement	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	+I	
Policy IMP2 – Related Plans and Strategies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Policy IMP3 – Development Contributions	0	0	0	+L	+L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Provides local funding

8.3 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Cumulative effects are changes to the environment that are caused by an action in combination with other past, present and future human actions. Cumulative impacts can be created when insignificant impacts are joined together to create a cumulative impact. Cumulative effects can occur in various ways including 'Nibbling loss', 'Spatial and temporal crowding' and 'growth inducing potential' and are described as follows;

- **'Nibbling loss'**: the gradual disturbance and loss of land and habitat
- **Spatial and temporal crowding**: Cumulative effects can occur when a lot of things are happening within too a small area and in too brief a period of time. This may result in the exceedance of a threshold and the environment may not be able to recover to pre-disturbance conditions and can occur quickly or gradually over a long period of time before the effects become apparent. Spatial crowding results in an overlap of effects among actions
- **Growth-inducing potential**: Each new action can induce further actions to occur. The effects of these "spin-off" actions (e.g., increased vehicle access into a previously unroaded hinterland area) may add to the cumulative effects already occurring in the vicinity of the proposed action, creating a "feedback" effect. Such actions may be considered as "reasonably-foreseeable actions".

Potential cumulative impacts of the Draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan have been identified from a review of negative impacts directly resulting from implementation of objectives and policies of the Plan as indicated in Table 8.2 of this Report. Potential cumulative impacts have also been identified from review of trends and potential impacts as identified study of the existing baseline topics outlined in Chapter 5 of this report and from review of relevant plans and projects within and adjoining the Town. Table 8.3 below documents all potential cumulative effects, their significance along with the relevant mitigation measures. It is not considered that the subject draft Development Plan would have a significant cumulative impact on the environment of the area.

Table 8.3 Assessment of Cumulative Impacts

Environmental Topic	Description of Cumulative effects	Significance	Mitigation (refer to Plan)	Residual Significance
Biodiversity /Soil	The cumulative nibbling loss of greenfield lands and associated vegetation, species, habitats - and their flora and fauna of development such as roads, housing and other infrastructural developments occurring often replace semi-natural and natural areas with artificial surfaces causing a gradual loss of greenfield sites and biodiversity, flora and fauna.	Possibly significant if not mitigated	Plan takes a sequential approach to the zoning of land and therefore any loss of greenfield land will be a natural progression in terms of the growth of the town. A number of Policies/Objectives included in chapter 9 of the Plan to mitigate against impacts to biodiversity.	Not significant
Biodiversity and Water Quality	Potential for cumulative impacts on the aquatic environment, in the form of spatial and temporal crowding as a result of discharge of raw sewage from Skibbereen town into the Ilen River and the Caol stream has serious implications for these waterways. These waterways flow directly in Roaringwater Bay, which is designated as a cSAC and as a shellfish water. This is potentially a significant problem for implementation of the EU Habitats and Shellfish Waters Directives.	Significant if not managed and mitigated	Objectives WU1 and WU4 as set out in section 14 of the Plan aim to address this issue.	Not significant

9 SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS AND MITIGATION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Annex 1 (g) of the Directive requires that the Environmental Report describe the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and/or offset as fully as possible any significant adverse effects on the environment from implementing the plan.

It should be noted that proposals to implement this plan may also require Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) at planning application stage. Other impacts and necessary mitigation measures or actions may be identified during this process.

The likely significant effects of the Draft Plan have been informed by trends and potential impacts as identified in section 5 of this report, impacts arising in the assessment of policies and objectives of the Plan as set out in table 8.2 of this report and from cumulative impacts as outlined in Table 8.3 of this report.

The following table 9.1 links significant effects with potential trends and impacts as set out above with proposed mitigation measures and monitoring as set out in table 10.1 below.

The mitigation measures identified in this Environmental Report will feed into the Draft Plan and may include the need to provide for additional development objectives in the Draft and/or the changing of wording of proposed development objectives. It is proposed to include all mitigation measures as outlined below into the Draft Plan where possible.

Table 9.1 Trends, Significant Effects, Proposed Mitigation Measures and Proposed Monitoring of draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan Environmental Report

Trend & Potential Impacts	Significant Effects	Mitigation Measures (and reference to where addressed in the draft Plan highlighted in brackets)	Monitoring (Refer to relevant Indicators, targets and responsibilities as indicated in Table 10.1)
<p>Biodiversity</p> <p>The discharge of raw sewage from Skibbereen town into the Ilen River and the Caol stream has serious implications for these waterways. These waterways flow directly in Roaringwater Bay, which is designated as a cSAC and as a shellfish water. This is potentially a significant problem for implementation of the EU Habitats and Shellfish Waters Directives.</p> <p>There is potential for impacts on the aquatic environment in the form of residential, industrial and agricultural run-off, other municipal sources of pollution, fragmentation of river corridors and soil erosion. These risks apply in particular to the Ilen River. Under the Water Framework Directive, water quality must achieve "good status" by 2015.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>SEA recommends the inclusion of a new policy to ensure that developments along the Ilen River or the Caol Stream do not negatively impact the ecology of these waterway due to a vegetation removal and the loss of habitat through consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Services."</p> <p>(Policy ENV 3 – 1 and Objectives WU1 and WU4 adequately address matters)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: B1, B2, W1, W2, M1, M2</p>
<p>Invasive species: There is potential for invasive species to enter surface waters and marine systems from a number of sources including runoff from garden centres, from boats, and dumping of waste from fish tanks and garden ponds, and perhaps also from aquaculture facilities. There is therefore a need to include a policy in the new plan to prevent the introduction of those alien species, which threaten ecosystems, habitats, or species. The utilisation of native species in amenity planting and stocking along with change in community actions to reduce the introduction and spread of non-native species should be encouraged.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>SEA recommends the inclusion of a new objective to ensure that invasive species are not introduced into the environment of Skibbereen, or into adjacent semi-natural habitats, particularly the River Ilen.</p> <p>Also suggest inclusion of policy setting out that native species will be used for amenity and landscape planting wherever possible, and if non-native species are to be used an appropriately qualified ecologist will be consulted as to their suitability.</p> <p>(Policy ENV 3 – 1 adequately addresses this matter)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: B1, S1, S2,</p>

Table 9.1 Trends, Significant Effects, Proposed Mitigation Measures and Proposed Monitoring of draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan Environmental Report

Trend & Potential Impacts	Significant Effects	Mitigation Measures (and reference to where addressed in the draft Plan highlighted in brackets)	Monitoring (Refer to relevant Indicators, targets and responsibilities as indicated in Table 10.1)
<p>Removal of Ecological Corridors: The removal of ecological networks / corridors is a significant issue. It is recognised that there has been a significant increase in hedgerow removal throughout Ireland in recent years.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>SEA suggests inclusion of a policy/objective for Skibbereen Town Council to undertake habitat surveys with the aim of identifying hedgerows, semi-natural habitats, important sites for fauna, etc. These studies will provide a mechanism for management of hedgerows and other ecological corridors in the study area.</p> <p>(Adequately addressed in Objective ENV9)</p> <p>SEA suggests inclusion of a policy/objective to maintain features of the landscape that serve as refuges for wild plants, such as hedgerows, trees, rivers, lakes, parklands, stonewalls, ponds and roadside verges where possible.</p> <p>(Adequately addressed in Policy ENV3 – 4)</p> <p>SEA suggests inclusion of a policy/objective for the Promotion of linkages between local biodiversity features and ecological networks e.g. stone walls, hedgerows, watercourses etc. and sufficient buffer zones from areas zoned for development.</p> <p>(Addressed in Policy ENV3 – 1, however it is considered that other than the a set back of 3m from the waters edge of the Ilfen River on Objective UD4, all other specified buffers shall be assessed on its own merit during the development management process.)</p> <p>SEA suggests inclusion of a policy/objective to support the implementation and actions of the County Biodiversity Action Plan, which is due to be published shortly.</p> <p>(Addressed in Objective ENV9)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated in Table 10.1: B1, S1, S2, S3</p>

Table 9.1 Trends, Significant Effects, Proposed Mitigation Measures and Proposed Monitoring of draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan Environmental Report

Trend & Potential Impacts	Significant Effects	Mitigation Measures (and reference to where addressed in the draft Plan highlighted in brackets)	Monitoring (Refer to relevant Indicators, targets and responsibilities as indicated in Table 10.1)
Population and Human Health			
<p>Impacts on human health resulting from lack of waste water treatment facilities and associated risk to water quality in the area.</p> <p>A number of private drinking water supplies are taken from groundwater reserves. The Water Framework Directive classifies a large proportion of the Skibbereen urban area groundwater as "Possibly at Risk of Not Achieving Good Status" which therefore poses a threat to human health.</p>	<p>Significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>Mitigation as proposed below under water and material assets.</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: S1, S2</p>
Soil			
<p>Greenfield sites - any proposed developments on ground and soil. New developments have the potential to contaminate the soil and underlying groundwater, particularly in the case of septic tanks and poor wastewater treatment facilities. Existing activities such as agriculture and manufacturing may also pose a risk to soil and groundwater.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>The SEA recommends inclusion of a specific policy for the development of brownfield sites over Greenfield sites both within the town centre and hinterland where available.</p> <p>(Adequately addressed in Objective TC6 and Policy TC 3 – 1 and TC 3 – 2)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: S1, S2</p>
Water			
<p>Surface Water Pollution -Under the WFD, the River Ilen situated within the town boundary and the Ilen Estuary situated south west of Skibbereen has been classified by the EPA as "Possibly at risk of not achieving good status", both are directly related and may possibly be at risk if controls are not enforced.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>The SEA recommends inclusion of a policy committing to meeting the requirements of the Water Framework Directive through maintaining high status or good status of waters where they exist and to achieve good quality status in all other waters by 2015. Good water is measured in quantity, quality and ecology for surface water and quantity and quality for</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: W1, W2, W3, W4, M1, M2</p>

Table 9.1 Trends, Significant Effects, Proposed Mitigation Measures and Proposed Monitoring of draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan Environmental Report

Trend & Potential Impacts	Significant Effects	Mitigation Measures (and reference to where addressed in the draft Plan highlighted in brackets)	Monitoring (Refer to relevant Indicators, targets and responsibilities as indicated in Table 10.1)
<p>Municipal Wastewater Treatment and Domestic Wastewater Treatment – There is a possibility of unchecked increase in demand for wastewater treatment with potential for increased pollution to surface waters. Therefore correct treatment of wastewater is an important factor to consider in the quality of surface water. It is essential that the new proposed WWTP is constructed by 2009 and that it operates to highest standards. It is also deemed necessary that monitoring of the performance of wastewater treatment plant and sewerage network is undertaken to capture leakages to GW and SW.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>groundwater. (This is adequately addressed in Policy WU – 1)</p> <p>The SEA suggests that the following Objective 'WU4 Ensure completion of the new sewerage scheme in Skibbereen in a timely fashion' should be amended to state: 'Ensure completion of the new sewerage scheme in Skibbereen by 2009.' (Objective WU4 has been amended)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: PH2, W1</p>
Air and Climate			
<p>Climate Change: Until recently biodiversity losses have been attributed to the spread and increased environmental impact of people, however, it seems likely that future losses will increasingly result from human induced global climate change. Climate change considerations including flooding risk must therefore be seen as central to the protection of the natural environment.</p>	<p>No significant effect proposed as a result of the implementation of the Plan.</p>	<p>The SEA suggests the inclusion of a policy to implement the objectives and measures of the National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012. (The Plan contains many policy commitments that endeavor to achieve wider sustainable development objectives across a variety of sections of the Plan. Furthermore it is considered that Chapter 15 which refers to sustainability adequately addresses and promotes principles to combat climate change)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: A1, PH1</p>
Material Assets			
<p>The EPA made a specific recommendation in their Scoping Response of 13th August 2008 to set a timeline for</p>	<p>Not significant but pro-active</p>	<p>The SEA suggests the inclusion of a timeframe for the Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrade.</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In</p>

Table 9.1 Trends, Significant Effects, Proposed Mitigation Measures and Proposed Monitoring of draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan Environmental Report

Trend & Potential Impacts	Significant Effects	Mitigation Measures (and reference to where addressed in the draft Plan highlighted in brackets)	Monitoring (Refer to relevant Indicators, targets and responsibilities as indicated in Table 10.1)
<p>completion of the WWTP.</p> <p>The Water Framework Directive classifies a large proportion of the Skibbereen urban area groundwater as "Possibly at Risk of Not Achieving Good Status". A number of private drinking water supplies are taken from groundwater reserves, which could potentially be polluted from domestic septic tanks.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>(Adequately addressed in section 14.2.2 of the Plan)</p> <p>The SEA suggests the inclusion of a policy to ensure that all developments currently served by septic tanks should be connected to the WWTP where possible.</p> <p>(This policy inclusion has been noted but not amended as such a policy could lead to the uneconomic extension of services in the area. There is already pressure for services to be extended to agricultural lands in the town to serve one off housing and such a policy could exacerbate the situation.)</p>	<p>Table 10.1: W1, W2, M1, M2</p> <p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: M1, W1, W2, W3, W4</p>
Cultural Heritage			
<p>Text for inclusion in terms of protection of national monuments.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>Any direct impacts on national monuments in State or Local Authority care or subject to a preservation order will require the consent of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 as amended by Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004.</p> <p>(Adequately addressed in section 17.1.2 of the Plan)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: CH1, CH2</p>
<p>Potential Impacts on the coastal/Riverine and inter-tidal zone</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>The archaeological potential of the coastal/Riverine and inter-tidal zone, where relevant, should be carefully considered. Any potential impacts on archaeological heritage should be subject to full archaeological assessment. (i.e. not just medium to major scale developments as noted in the plan).</p> <p>(Adequately addressed in section 17.1.2 and Table 17.4.1 of the Plan)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: CH1, CH2</p>

10 MONITORING

Article 10 of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EEC) requires Member States to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans “*in order, inter alia, to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action*”. The primary purpose of monitoring is to cross-check significant environmental effects which arise during the implementation stage against those predicted during the plan preparation stage.

The Directive leaves considerable flexibility to Member States in deciding how monitoring shall be arranged, however it is generally agreed that a mixture of “quantitative and qualitative indicators are required. The Directive recognises that the monitoring does not necessarily require new research activity and that existing sources of information can be used. Monitoring programmes for different Plans can also be combined e.g. monitoring of within the Skibbereen Development Plan can be combined with monitoring required for the Cork County Development Plans. This allows for consistency in monitoring across the county and assists in comparing results.

In addition monitoring can be used to identify any information gaps and/deficiencies that were identified as part of the SEA process. Furthermore, Government Guidelines state that monitoring should concentrate on the likely significant effects identified in the Environmental Report (DoHGL, 2004).

Monitoring will be based around the SEA “Environmental Objectives, indicators and targets. The Objectives, indicators and targets for the various environmental topics are set out below in Table 10.1. The indicators that area used will show changes that would be attributable to the implementation of the Plan. The indicators chosen are at a level, which is relevant to the Plan and are collated on and reported on by a variety of government agencies including EPA, CCC, NPWS, OPW and WFD.

Monitoring proposals must concentrate on likely significant environmental effects, which have been identified in the Environmental Report and the measures identified as necessary to prevent, reduce, or offset any significant adverse effects. The indicators/monitoring will act as an early warning sign so that appropriate remedial action is undertaken.

Responsibilities and Frequency of Reporting

The Statutory Manager’s Report on progress in achieving objectives of the Town Plan, takes place two years after the adoption of the Town Plan and “shall include information in relation to the progress on, and the results of monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan”. If an objective or policy is having a significant adverse effect a variation may be considered during the lifetime of the plan.

It is largely the responsibility of Cork County Council to undertake the monitoring, however it is the responsibility of Skibbereen Town Council to interpret the monitoring data relevant to Skibbereen and to ensure new studies recommended in the Environmental Report (i.e. habitat survey) are undertaken.

Identification of Significant Gaps in Environmental Information

During the preparation of this Environmental Report a number of gaps in environmental information have been identified, these comprise:

- The lack of local habitat surveys for non-designated sites and insufficient baseline data on habitats and species to allow for on-going monitoring. It is recommended that Skibbereen Town Council undertake habitat surveys of the study area
- No detailed wetland inventory in County Cork
- No specific Landscape assessment for Skibbereen Town
- Lack of information on fisheries
- Lack of monitoring on "Major Pressures reported in the assessment of Habitats and Species" in Skibbereen

Table 10.1 Monitoring

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna						
B1	To avoid significant adverse impacts (direct, cumulative and indirect), to protected habitats, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites by development within or adjacent to these sites.	Loss of biodiversity and ecological networks and spread of invasive species	No significant adverse impacts, (direct, cumulative and indirect impacts), to relevant habitats, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites.	Number of significant adverse impacts (direct, cumulative and indirect impacts), to relevant habitats and species in designated ecological sites.	STC DoEHLG	Review each planning application as submitted
B2	To protect the marine environment, aquatic biodiversity, flora and fauna	Loss of aquatic biodiversity, flora and fauna.	Meet the requirements of the River Basin Management Plan.	Changes in water quality as identified during water quality monitoring programmes.	STC/CCC	Review in parallel with water quality monitoring programmes
B3	To protect and where possible enhance fisheries, wetland, shellfisheries, freshwater pearl mussel	Loss of fisheries and aquatic biodiversity	No significant adverse impacts, (direct, cumulative and indirect impacts) on fisheries shellfisheries,	Biological indicators and areas of suitable habitat supporting such fisheries	EPA River monitoring prog (classification), Dept of Marine,	Review in parallel with water quality monitoring programmes

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
	mussel		freshwater pearl mussel			
Population and Human Health						
PH1	To improve the quality of life for the people of Skibbereen through high quality residential, working and recreational environments, sustainable travel patterns.	Deterioration in: streetscape quality due to increased litter; in human health and quality of life; Lack of a diversity in employment and accommodation	To improve quality of life, provision of improved physical and social infrastructure, to reduce journey to work times and allow for a better match between place of residence and place of work.	Journey to work times.	CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
PH2	To protect human health from hazards or nuisances arising from lack of waste water treatment facilities, water quality, traffic, noise and incompatible landuses.	Health problems resulting from poor drinking water, noise and air quality. Poor Air quality. Deterioration in quality of life as a result of congestion or poor quality surrounding environment..	Improve quality of drinking water. Implementation of new waste water treatment plant. Ensure no planning granted for incompatible uses. Improve congestion	Change in drinking water quality. Implementation of WWTP. Occurrence of spatially concentrated health problems. Occurrence/change in traffic congestion.	STC/CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
Soils						
S1	To maximise the sustainable re-use of brownfield lands and the existing built environment, rather than developing greenfield lands.	Loss of biodiversity and quality soils through over use of greenfield sites instead of brownfield sites	All brownfield lands to be redeveloped at the end of the plan lifespan (subject to availability on the open market and demand for such land).	Area of brownfield land available.	STC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
S2	To maintain the quality of soils.	Loss of biodiversity and quality soils	To reduce contamination and safeguard soil quality and quantity.	Area of contaminated land encountered during development works and nature and extent of soil contamination.	CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
S3	To minimise waste production and reduce the volume of waste to landfill and to operate sustainable waste management practices.	Negative impacts to groundwater quality and increased litter;	To meet national and EU targets on the recycling of municipal waste and its diversion from landfill.	Volume of waste recycled and volume of waste sent to landfill.	STC/CCC	Annually

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
Water						
W1i	Maintain or improve the quality of surface water to meet the requirements of the South Western River Basin Management Plan (SW RBMP) and Programme of Measures (POMs)	Negative impacts to surface water quality, fisheries and aquatic biodiversity	0 Faecal Coliform Counts per 100ml of groundwater.	Faecal Coliform Counts per 100ml of groundwater.	EPA STC/CCC	As per monitoring cycle in accordance with the WFD monitoring programme
W1ii			To improve biotic quality ratings, where possible to Q5.	Changes in water quality as identified during water quality monitoring programmes.	EPA STC/CCC	
W2i	To maintain and improve, where possible, the quality of rivers, surface water the quality of estuarine and coastal waters.	Negative impacts to surface water quality, fisheries and aquatic biodiversity; Poor quality water	To maintain a biotic quality rating of Q4, in line with the requirement to achieve good water status under the Water Framework Directive, by 2015.	Biotic Quality Rating (Q Value) and Risk Assessment.	EPA STC/CCC	Annually
W2ii			To improve biotic quality ratings, where possible, to Q5.	Biotic Quality Rating (Q Value) and Risk Assessment.	EPA STC/CCC	Annually
W3	Promote sustainable water usage	To introduce water measures to reduce water wastage, leakage and over consumption usage and to promote conservation measures at household and Industrial level.	Increase number of water conservation measures implemented during the lifetime of the Plan	Number of water conservation measures implemented during the lifetime of the Plan	EPA STC/CCC	Annually
Air and Climate						
A 1	To maintain and improve air quality in Skibbereen and reduce CO2 Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) to alleviate Climate Change.	Poor Air quality and increasing contributions to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions	Increased use of public transport. Increase numbers of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes in the study area. Increase number of permissions granted for renewable energy projects	Use of public transport. Provision of cycle lanes and walking routes. Number of permissions granted for renewable energy projects. Air quality indicators.	STC/CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
Energy						
E1	Use of renewable energy technology for projected power requirements and implementation of the Building Regulations over the lifetime of the Plan.	Poor Air quality and increasing contributions to climate change	Encourage use of renewable energy for domestic and small businesses. Use of renewable energy to supply National Grid where applicable	Number and type of renewable energy technologies employed in new developments	STC/CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
Material Assets						
M1	To serve new development under the plan with appropriate wastewater treatment.	Inadequate WWT for increased population; poor quality water and contamination	No new developments granted permission which cannot be adequately served by a public waste water treatment plant over the lifetime of the plan.	Number of new developments granted permission which cannot be adequately served by a public waste water treatment plant over the lifetime of the plan.	CCC NRA	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
M2	To maintain and improve the quality of drinking water supplies.	Overuse of resources potentially resulting in inadequate water supply during the lifetime or post 2015.	To maintain and improve drinking water quality in Skibbereen to comply with the requirements of the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations 2000.	Drinking water quality standards (Microbiological, Chemical and Indicator parameters).	EPA STC/CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan.
Cultural Heritage						
CH1	To protect the archaeological heritage of Skibbereen and; the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	Impacts to RPS, RMPs, ACAs and the townscape of Skibbereen	No unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in full or partial loss of: a) entries to the Record of Monuments and Places; b) entries to the Register for Historic Monuments; National Monument subject to Preservation Orders, and; c) the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	Number of unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in full or partial loss of: a) entries to the Record of Monuments and Places; b) entries to the Register for Historic Monuments; National Monument subject to Preservation Orders, and; c) the context of the above within the surrounding	CCC Heritage Section Cork Heritage Forum DoEHLG	Review each planning application as submitted

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
			relevant.	landscape where relevant.		
CH2	To preserve and protect the special interest and character of Skibbereen's architectural heritage and the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	Impacts to RPS, RMPs, ACAs and the townscape of Skibbereen; Visual impact to the streetscape of Skibbereen	No unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in physical loss or loss to the context in the surrounding landscape or streetscape of: entries to the Record of Protected Structures; Architectural Conservation Areas, or; entries to the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.	Number of unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in physical loss or loss to the context in the surrounding landscape or streetscape of: entries to the Record of Protected Structures; Architectural Conservation Areas, or; entries to the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.	CCC Heritage Section Cork Heritage Forum DoEHLG	Review each planning application as submitted
Landscape						
Li	To protect Skibbereen's sensitive landscapes, landscape features and designated views and prospects.	Visual impacts to the landscape	No unauthorised developments to be conspicuously located within sensitive landscapes or designated scenic landscape.	Number of unauthorised conspicuous developments located within sensitive landscapes or designated scenic landscape.	STC/CCC	Review each planning application as submitted.

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
Lii			No unauthorised developments to adversely impact upon designated scenic views or scenic landscape.	<p>Number of conspicuous developments adversely impacting upon designated scenic views or scenic landscape granted permission during the lifetime of the Plan.</p> <p>Number of Landscape Impact Assessments and photomontages submitted with planning applications</p>	STC/CCC	Review each planning application as submitted

11 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

11.1 Introduction

This is a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Skibbereen Town Development Plan

The Skibbereen Town Plan sets out the overall strategy for the development of Skibbereen town. The previous Town Development Plan was adopted in 2004 and remained in force until 2009. Skibbereen Town Council prepared the new Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015 under The Planning and Development Act (2000) which requires the Planning Authority to prepare a “Development Plan” every six years for its jurisdiction.

As part of this development plan process, RPS Group Plc. undertook this Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which is intended to identify and assess the issues facing the Skibbereen Town Council area going forward. This Environmental Report will be made available to the public along with the draft Skibbereen Development Plan.

The SEA process was undertaken in parallel with each stage of the draft Plan making process and involved close consultation and meetings with the SEA Consultation Authorities, members of HRA Planning Consultancy that drafted the Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015, the SEA team and a number of specialists who focussed on the significant environmental issues of the plan as identified during the screening and scoping phases and assessment of baseline information for the area. The Environmental Report has guided the preparation of objectives, policies and development scenarios for the Development Plan with an ultimate goal of achieving sustainable development within the Skibbereen Town Council area.

11.2 Description of the Plan

The Skibbereen Development Plan 2009 outlines the policies and objectives for the future development of Skibbereen Town up to 2015. The draft plan has been prepared and developed against a backdrop of consultations by means of public meetings, individual meetings, and written submissions. The plan's main purpose, as the main public statement of the town Council is to take a long-term view of the future development of Skibbereen in order to manage change in the physical environment and provide for new development that contributes to and enhances the existing qualities of the town thereby ensuring that development is planned in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. The strategy underlying the Plan specifically aims to address the following matters:

- Ensure that there is a transport framework to co-ordinate the development process.

- Balance new development and additional traffic movements in the town with the provision and management of infrastructure and housing in a sustainable manner.
- Facilitate and encourage public and private investment in the town, by providing supportive development policies and encouraging rather than restricting development.
- Focus development on the town centre with an adequately flexible approach to attract key operators to the town.
- Capitalise on Skibbereen's comparative advantage by protecting and enhancing the town's unique setting.

The SEA Directive requires that the SEA process should include the review of other Plans/Programmes, which are related to the Plan/Programme being assessed i.e. the Skibbereen Development Plan. Any identified actions from this study will need to comply with relevant international and national legislation such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Habitats and Bird's Directives that stringently protect Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within the catchment. The requirements will be expressed in the environmental objectives.

11.3 Methodology

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental quality and consequences of Policy, Plan or Programme initiatives by statutory bodies. The purpose is to ensure that the environmental consequences of plans and programmes are assessed both during their preparation and prior to adoption. The SEA process also gives interested parties an opportunity to comment on the environmental impacts of the proposed plan or programme and to be kept informed during 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 in Ireland 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).

- **Screening** of Plans and Programmes establishes whether the relevant plan or programmes must undergo an SEA, in this case Skibbereen Town Council determined during their screening process in March 2008 that an SEA was warranted.
- **Scoping of the Environmental Report** - Scoping is the procedure whereby the range of environmental issues and the level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report are decided upon, in conjunction with the prescribed environmental authorities. RPS, on behalf of Skibbereen

Town Council, undertook formal scoping of the SEA Environmental Report with the three statutory Consultees between July and August 2008. Responses from all parties consulted were received by RPS in August 2008.

- **Environmental Report** – Skibbereen Town Council commissioned RPS Group in April 2008 to continue the SEA process and prepare an Environmental Report. The Environmental Report investigates, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Town Plan. Specifically, the aim of this Environmental Report is to identify:
 - Existing environmental issues in Skibbereen Town;
 - The likely significant effects on the environment when the new Town Plan is implemented;
 - How the impact on the environment can be reduced or prevented; and
 - How to monitor environmental impacts over the lifetime of the Town Development Plan.
- **Consultation** - on the Draft Plan and associated Environmental Report was carried out between November 2008 and January 2009 whereby the Plan and environmental report were available for public viewing at the office of Skibbereen Town Council. During this stage the public had the opportunity to submit written observations/comments on the documents to the Town Council for their consideration.
- **SEA Statement** – when the updated Town Plan is adopted, an Environmental Statement identifying how environmental considerations and consultations were integrated into the Final Plan will be made available to the public and to view and purchase at Skibbereen Town Council.
- **Monitoring** - Skibbereen Town Council is required to monitor the significant environmental effects arising from the implementation of the Skibbereen Town Development Plan. This Environmental Report puts forward proposals for monitoring the Plan, which are adopted alongside the Skibbereen Town Development Plan.

11.4 Environmental Baseline

The following sections describe the baseline, or existing environmental conditions collected and assessed for each of the topics required under the SEA Directive i.e. biodiversity, population and human health, flora and fauna, water, soil, air and climate, material assets, cultural heritage, transportation and landscape. It was considered necessary to combine some topics in order to avoid unnecessary duplication.

As required by the SEA Directive, the environmental report also comments on the likely evolution of the various indicators in the absence of the implementation of the preparation of the Skibbereen Development Plan 2009 - 2015.

The key findings of the baseline survey are described below and full details can be found in Chapter 5 of the Environmental report.

Biodiversity Flora Fauna

There are no designated sites within the Skibbereen town boundary. However, there are a number of sites designated for biodiversity conservation within 10km of Skibbereen town, these are described in this section.

There are six pNHAs within 10km of Skibbereen: *Lough Hyne Nature Reserve & Environs* (Site Code: 000097), *Castletownshend Wood* (Site Code: 001547), *Roaringwater Bay & Islands* (Site Code: 000101), *Myross Wood* (Site Code: 001070), *Cloonties Lough* (Site Code: 001044) and *Castletownshend (Gate Lodge)* (Site Code: 000084).

There is one site within 10km of the study area that is included in the *NGO Special Areas of Conservation Shadow List* (Dwyer, 2000), Kilnaclasha, which lies approximately 2km north of Skibbereen town boundary. There are two Statutory Nature Reserves *Lough Hyne Nature Reserve* and *Knockomagh Wood Nature Reserve* located within 10km of Skibbereen town boundary.

The River Ilen's source is found at Mullaghmesha and flows over 20 km south before it reaches Skibbereen. Several tributaries drain into the Ilen River including the River Ruagagh and the Saivnose River. The Ilen River flows to the west of the town boundary draining into Ilen Estuary further south and continues into Roaringwater Bay.

The Ilen River holds populations of salmonids, eel and lamprey species with mullet and flatfish in the tidal section of the river (McPharland pers comm, 2008). The Habitats Directive Annex I Freshwater pearl-mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) has been recorded in the Ilen River (Moorkens, 1999).

Population and Human Health

The 2006 Census of population identified a population of 2,338 within the Skibbereen Town Council boundary area and the Skibbereen Rural area had a population of 1,200 people according. Skibbereen Town Council has an area of 417 hectares of Land in total.

According to the draft Cork County Development Plan 2007 Skibbereen is located in the West Cork Strategic Planning Area. The draft Cork County Development Plan 2007 proposes to increase the population in the town from 2,338 persons in 2006 to 3,035 people by 2020 (p.32).

The overall development strategy for the town is outlined in section 3.3 of Part 2 of the draft Town Plan which aims to restrict growth on the edges of the town to four undeveloped wedges of the town as illustrated in figure 3.1. It is proposed to locate future employment/enterprise generating development along the economic corridor to the north east of the town whilst each of the four undeveloped wedges surrounding the town centre will accommodate future residential, commercial and mixed-use development growth.

The draft plan highlights that there is sufficient lands zoned to accommodate well over the future population projections for the area up until 2020. It seems that a large quantum of land located at the edge of the town has been zoned for residential development in past. Therefore the draft Town Plan having regard to the existing supply of residential zoned land takes on a two tiered phasing approach to the development of residentially zoned lands. This approach proposes to rezone lands to the north east of the town in order to avail of future infrastructure proposed in this area as well as proposing to locate development in this area in order to adjoin existing community and educational facilities. Meanwhile residential lands further removed from the town will take on a phase II zoning which will be brought forward by way of a sequential approach once phase I residential lands are developed.

Having regard to the sequential approach in relation to the zoning of land as promoted in the Development Plan Guidelines published by the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government, the rezoning of lands to the north east of the town is considered appropriate in the interest of sustainability due to its close proximity to the town and its associated services. The draft plan also takes cognisance of the draft Cork County Development Plan 2007 in terms of the location for future development. Furthermore it is considered that the 11.49 hectares of newly zoned lands to the north east of the town will be released in place of the 16.6 hectares of phase II land will only be released once all of the phase I land has been developed. Therefore it is considered that the newly zoned lands will be positive in terms of the sustainability of the town due to its central location.

It is considered that there is sufficient lands zoned within the town and a substantial landbank available for new enterprises to support Skibbereen and its environs as District Employment Centre.

Soil

The town of Skibbereen is situated within the Pig's Cove Member Formation which is characterized by linsen bedded mudstones, mudstones and a general lack of sandstones; silicophosphatic nodules are common (depicted in green).

Within the study area there are two underlying aquifers. One locally important aquifer – moderately productive in local zones can be found in the Pig's Cove Member Formation (See LI – on Figure 5.4.1). The south of Skibbereen (south of carrigfada) within the Narrow Cove Member Formation is consisted a poor aquifer, generally unproductive within an exception of local zones.

The Skibbereen area generally consists of till derived from devonian and carboniferous rocks. While the town area is generally made up of made ground (depicted in blue) in the form of made hard standing surfaces and

landscaping and alluvium deposits (depicted in orange) the surrounding area is overlain by till derived from devonian and carboniferous rocks (depicted in purple). The town is also surrounded by bedrock outcrop and subcrops (depicted in grey).

Water

The River Ilen flows through Skibbereen town. The River Ilen's source is found at Mullaghmesha and flows over 20 km south before it reaches Skibbereen. Several tributaries drain into the Ilen River including the River Ruagagh and the Saivnose River. The Ilen River flows to the west of the town boundary draining into Ilen Estuary further south and continues into Roaringwater Bay. Groundwater forms an integral part of all ecosystems and within the Skibbereen area is a significant resource. A number of private drinking water supplies are taken from groundwater reserves.

On the 30th of July 2007, Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources, Eamon Ryan T.D. announced that Roaringwater Bay will be one of 54 new sites to be designated as Shellfish Growing Waters under the EU Shellfish Waters Directive (79/923/EEC) as implemented in Ireland by the European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Water) Regulations 2006. Roaringwater Bay is listed as a designated Shellfish Water in the SEA of Cork County Development Plan published by Cork County Council Planning Policy Unit in December 2007.

The regulations require regular sampling of water and of shellfish flesh in order to monitor a range of water quality parameters, and the establishment of a programme of action to ensure that the waters comply with certain (high) standards. The regulations state that: "In particular, the objective of such a programme must be to take reasonably practicable steps to reduce pollution in those waters.

All rivers/streams within the Skibbereen area (namely the River Ilen) have received an EPA Q Value rating of 4 (depicted in green), indicating "good status" However the Water Framework Directive (WFD) has categorised the water within the area as "Possibly at Risk of Not Achieving Good Status".

The water quality of the Ilen River is continually monitored by the EPA. The most recent water quality survey was carried out in 2005 at a sampling station near Derreeny Bridge where a 'Q value' rating of 4 (meaning that it is of 'Good' status) was recorded. Another station upstream recorded a 'Q-value' rating of 4-5 (meaning high status). The Ilen estuary situated south west of Skibbereen has been classified by the EPA as "Possibly at risk of not achieving good status".

Flooding of the River Ilen is considered a key problem within the Skibbereen area. A number of studies have been carried out in order to evaluate the flooding caused by the River Ilen and to recommend flood relief measures.

Air and Climate

In general the air quality in Ireland is considered to be good and this is primarily as a result of the prevailing Atlantic south-westerly winds crossing the country. The EPA monitors the air quality across the country, dividing the country into regions or zones. There appears to be a small decreasing trend in concentrations in recent years.

Sustainability is a key constraint for future development. Emissions to the atmosphere, energy consumption and climate change are all interlinked. Future developments should give consideration to passive design and clean and energy efficient technologies such as renewables, district heating and co-generation.

In Ireland the transport sector is the fast growing contributor of GHG emissions. A reliable efficient public transport system within the Skibbereen area would reduce car dependence and combat rising CO₂ emissions from vehicle exhausts.

The town of Skibbereen is promoted as the capital of West Cork and centre of tourist activities for a wide region and an area of high visual amenity. It will be important to ensure that for future energy developments and the associated infrastructure does not impact adversely on the landscape. Skibbereen area has been identified as a strategically unsuitable zone for wind development in the Cork County Development Plan.

Space may also be a constraint in particular when locating vertical ground source heat pumps and district heating plant.

Material Assets

Traffic - A Traffic and Transportation study on Skibbereen Town is currently being undertaken and recommendations have not yet been made. Therefore it is recommended that all new transport objectives that will be included within the plan should be assessed in terms of strategic environmental assessment. In addition it is also considered that any large-scale proposals should undergo Environmental Impact Assessment. Consideration should also be given to the environmental policies and objectives of the current and proposed plan should any of the proposed options be implemented.

Wastewater Treatment – Currently there is no sewage treatment plant serving the town. At present effluent does not receive any treatment and is collected in a network of old, stone bow culverts and pipes and is discharged directly to the River Ilen. It is proposed to develop a new wastewater treatment plant with a capacity of 4,700, which is considered adequate based on population projections for the area to 2020. The wastewater treatment plant will provide secondary treatment to the effluent prior to it being discharged to the River Ilen. In addition a new drainage scheme for Skibbereen called the Skibbereen Main Drainage has commenced work within the town. Both the Skibbereen Main Drainage Scheme and the Skibbereen wastewater treatment plant are due to be completed by 2010. Overall it is considered that the water quality within the Ilen River would be significantly improved by the introduction of a new wastewater treatment plant.

Water Supply – The water supply for Skibbereen Town is sourced upstream of the Ilen River at Ballyhilty. The water for the town is treated downstream on the banks of the River Ilen. The source and treatment have adequate capacity for any proposed development subject to upgrading of pumping stations, treatment tanks and storage capacity.

Cultural Heritage

Skibbereen town possesses a wealth of historical buildings and archaeological remains. Such features are a finite, non-renewable resource particularly vulnerable to partial or total destruction and in certain instances contain irreplaceable information about the past. The Council recognises the value and significance of its built and archaeological heritage and therefore seeks to ensure the effective protection, conservation and enhancement of historical and archaeological sites, monuments and their settings, through preparing a Record of Protected Structures (RPS), defining an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), identifying recorded monuments and archaeological sites and defining an Area of Archaeological Potential.

There are currently 166 structures listed for protection in the Record of Protected Structures (Draft Skibbereen Development Plan, 2009). These structures range from cottages, houses, shop fronts, arches and schools.

The built heritage of County Cork and Skibbereen town is also offered protection through the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The entire town centre of Skibbereen has been identified as an ACA. It represents the main commercial centre and the consequent character of the town. There are many fine shopfronts from a variety of periods and styles that create a sense of vibrancy and interest.

Skibbereen Town has a diverse range of monuments ranging from a number of historic eras. Monuments within the area include ring forts, standing stones, and a country house. There are 6 archaeological sites within the town boundary and 8 archaeological sites outside the town boundary

Currently there are no tree preservation orders in the Plan, however there are policies in the plan to allow the protection of trees.

Landscape

Skibbereen Town centre is situated between two elevated areas, locally known as Skibbereen Heights to the west of the town and the Rock to the east, as a result the town has largely expanded to the north and south. The Ilen River is the main natural amenity feature and has had a strong influence on the historic development of the town. The river, which is up to 40m in width, carves a large meander through the town forming a floodplain known as the Marsh along the western bank. The Caol Stream running in a southern direction is a tributary of the Ilen. Both the river Ilen and the Caol Stream are subject to flooding.

According to the draft Cork County Council Landscape Strategy the landscape type of Skibbereen town is of low value and is of medium value in terms of sensitivity. The landscape in this area is locally important.

11.5 Consideration of Alternatives and Influence of SEA on the Development Strategy of the Plan

As part of the SEA process three development strategies for the Plan area were assessed in order to determine the preferred development strategy for the Plan area with the least environmental effects. The three alternatives considered included a 'Do-nothing approach', an alternative to 'Rezone sufficient lands as a natural extension of the town centre'; and an alternative to 'Extend new development zonings on remaining undeveloped Greenfield lands within the town boundary'.

In review of the three alternative development options available to the town it was considered that the alternative to extend new development on remaining undeveloped Greenfield lands within the town boundary would not help to consolidate the town centre, nor would it promote walking or cycling or make use of the existing services in the town centre and therefore this option was considered unsustainable due to the dispersed nature of growth and potential to have impacts on the environment. Given the extent of residentially zoned lands within the town it was considered that a sequential approach to phasing of residential development should be introduced in the plan area. The 'do-nothing' strategy was not the chosen strategy for the development of the town as it was considered that new protective policies and objectives of the plan could not be introduced and the Plan would not be sufficiently updated in accordance with national policy and guidance.

Based on the policy context, issues and needs facing the town it was considered that the preferred alternative as set out in the SEA should be to develop the town in a compact and sustainable manner and to restrict expansion outwards through the intensification of the existing Town Centre, redeveloping brownfield sites and Greenfield sites only where there is a natural extension to existing zoning to the north east of the town. It was considered that this development strategy would allow for the intensification of the town centre and the consolidation and expansion of existing services to accessible lands close to the town centre. Accordingly this strategy aims to address a number of the matters facing the town including the need to focus development on the town centre with an adequately flexible approach to attract key operators to the town. This alternative is reflected in the vision of the plan, which is to develop as a compact and self contained town, acting as an economic and service provider for the surrounding rural hinterland, with a strong combination of industry, services, arts, culture and tourism.

11.6 Significant Effects and Mitigation

The likely significant effects of the Draft Plan have been informed by trends and potential impacts as identified in the review of European, National, Regional and Local planning and environmental legislation and guidance documents, existing environment as indicated from the environmental baseline study and from impacts arising from the assessment of policies and objectives of the Plan. This process enabled an overview of where potential environmental trends and impacts may arise from implementation of the draft Plan and allowed for a cross check and where necessary provision of additional mitigatory measures including provision of new policies/objectives to be incorporated where possible in the draft Plan.

Table 11.1 (also 9.1) below links potential trends and impacts with significant effects to the relevant proposed mitigation measures and proposed monitoring measure as set out in table 11.2 (also 10.1) below.

Table 11.1: Trends, Significant Effects, Proposed Mitigation Measures and Proposed Monitoring of draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan Environmental Report

Trend & Potential Impacts	Significant Effects	Mitigation Measures (and reference to where addressed in the draft Plan highlighted in brackets)	Monitoring (Refer to relevant Indicators, targets and responsibilities as indicated in Table 10.1)
<p>Biodiversity</p> <p>The discharge of raw sewage from Skibbereen town into the Ilen River and the Caol stream has serious implications for these waterways. These waterways flow directly in Roaringwater Bay, which is designated as a CSAC and as a shellfish water. This is potentially a significant problem for implementation of the EU Habitats and Shellfish Waters Directives.</p> <p>There is potential for impacts on the aquatic environment in the form of residential, industrial and agricultural run-off, other municipal sources of pollution, fragmentation of river corridors and soil erosion. These risks apply in particular to the Ilen River. Under the Water Framework Directive, water quality must achieve "good status" by 2015.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>SEA recommends the inclusion of a new policy to ensure that developments along the Ilen River or the Caol Stream do not negatively impact the ecology of these waterway due to a vegetation removal and the loss of habitat through consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Services."</p> <p>(Policy ENV 3 – 1 and Objectives WU1 and WU4 adequately address matters)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated in Table 10.1: B1, B2, W1, W2, M1, M2</p>
<p>Invasive species: There is potential for invasive species to enter surface waters and marine systems from a number of sources including runoff from garden centres, from boats, by dumping of waste from fish tanks and garden ponds, and perhaps also from aquaculture facilities. There is therefore a need to include a policy in the new plan to prevent the introduction of those alien species, which threaten ecosystems, habitats, or species. The utilisation of native species in amenity planting and stocking along with change in community actions to reduce the introduction and spread of non-native species should be encouraged.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>SEA recommends the inclusion of a new objective to ensure that invasive species are not introduced into the environment of Skibbereen, or into adjacent semi-natural habitats, particularly the River Ilen.</p> <p>Also suggest inclusion of policy setting out that native species will be used for amenity and landscape planting wherever possible, and if non-native species are to be used an appropriately qualified ecologist will be consulted as to their suitability.</p> <p>(Policy ENV 3 – 1 adequately addresses this matter)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: B1, S1, S2,</p>

Table 11.1: Trends, Significant Effects, Proposed Mitigation Measures and Proposed Monitoring of draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan Environmental Report

Trend & Potential Impacts	Significant Effects	Mitigation Measures (and reference to where addressed in the draft Plan highlighted in brackets)	Monitoring (Refer to relevant Indicators, targets and responsibilities as indicated in Table 10.1)
<p>Removal of Ecological Corridors: The removal of ecological networks / corridors is a significant issue. It is recognised that there has been a significant increase in hedgerow removal throughout Ireland in recent years.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>SEA suggests inclusion of a policy/objective for Skibbereen Town Council to undertake habitat surveys with the aim of identifying hedgerows, semi-natural habitats, important sites for fauna, etc. These studies will provide a mechanism for management of hedgerows and other ecological corridors in the study area.</p> <p>(Adequately addressed in Objective ENV9)</p> <p>SEA suggests inclusion of a policy/objective to maintain features of the landscape that serve as refuges for wild plants, such as hedgerows, trees, rivers, lakes, parklands, stonewalls, ponds and roadside verges where possible.</p> <p>(Adequately addressed in Policy ENV3 – 4)</p> <p>SEA suggests inclusion of a policy/objective for the Promotion of linkages between local biodiversity features and ecological networks e.g. stone walls, hedgerows, watercourses etc. and sufficient buffer zones from areas zoned for development.</p> <p>(Addressed in Policy ENV3 – 1, however it is considered that other than the a set back of 3m from the waters edge of the Ilfen River on Objective UD4, all other specified buffers shall be assessed on its own merit during the development management process.)</p> <p>SEA suggests inclusion of a policy/objective to support the implementation and actions of the County Biodiversity Action Plan, which is due to be published shortly.</p> <p>(Addressed in Objective ENV9)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: B1, S1, S2, S3</p>

Table 11.1: Trends, Significant Effects, Proposed Mitigation Measures and Proposed Monitoring of draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan Environmental Report

Trend & Potential Impacts	Significant Effects	Mitigation Measures (and reference to where addressed in the draft Plan highlighted in brackets)	Monitoring (Refer to relevant Indicators, targets and responsibilities as indicated in Table 10.1)
Population and Human Health			
<p>Impacts on human health resulting from lack of waste water treatment facilities and associated risk to water quality in the area.</p> <p>A number of private drinking water supplies are taken from groundwater reserves. The Water Framework Directive classifies a large proportion of the Skibbereen urban area groundwater as "Possibly at Risk of Not Achieving Good Status" which therefore poses a threat to human health.</p>	<p>Significant if mitigated</p> <p>if not</p>	<p>Mitigation as proposed below under water and material assets.</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: S1, S2</p>
Soil			
<p>Greenfield sites - any proposed developments on greenfield sites involves changing the character of the ground and soil. New developments have the potential to contaminate the soil and underlying groundwater, particularly in the case of septic tanks and poor wastewater treatment facilities. Existing activities such as agriculture and manufacturing may also pose a risk to soil and groundwater.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>The SEA recommends inclusion of a specific policy for the development of brownfield sites over Greenfield sites both within the town centre and hinterland where available.</p> <p>(Adequately addressed in Objective TC6 and Policy TC 3 – 1 and TC 3 – 2)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: S1, S2</p>
Water			
<p>Surface Water Pollution -Under the WFD, the River Ilen situated within the town boundary and the Ilen Estuary situated south west of Skibbereen has been classified by the EPA as "Possibly at risk of not achieving good status", both are directly related and may possibly be at risk if controls are not enforced.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>The SEA recommends inclusion of a policy committing to meeting the requirements of the Water Framework Directive through maintaining high status or good status of waters where they exist and to achieve good quality status in all other waters by 2015. Good water is measured in quantity, quality and ecology for surface water and quality for</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: W1, W2, W3, W4, M1, M2</p>

Table 11.1: Trends, Significant Effects, Proposed Mitigation Measures and Proposed Monitoring of draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan Environmental Report

Trend & Potential Impacts	Significant Effects	Mitigation Measures (and reference to where addressed in the draft Plan highlighted in brackets)	Monitoring (Refer to relevant Indicators, targets and responsibilities as indicated in Table 10.1)
<p>Municipal Wastewater Treatment and Domestic Wastewater Treatment – There is a possibility of unchecked increase in demand for wastewater treatment with potential for increased pollution to surface waters. Therefore correct treatment of wastewater is an important factor to consider in the quality of surface water. It is essential that the new proposed WWTP is constructed by 2009 and that it operates to highest standards. It is also deemed necessary that monitoring of the performance of wastewater treatment plant and sewerage network is undertaken to capture leakages to GW and SW.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>groundwater. (This is adequately addressed in Policy WU – 1)</p> <p>The SEA suggests that the following Objective 'WU4 Skibbereen in a timely fashion' should be amended to state: 'Ensure completion of the new sewerage scheme in Skibbereen by 2009.' (Objective WU4 has been amended)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: PH2, W1</p>
<p>Air and Climate</p>	<p>No significant effect proposed as a result of the implementation of the Plan.</p>	<p>The SEA suggests the inclusion of a policy to implement the objectives and measures of the National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012. (The Plan contains many policy commitments that endeavor to achieve wider sustainable development objectives across a variety of sections of the Plan. Furthermore it is considered that Chapter 15 which refers to sustainability adequately addresses and promotes principles to combat climate change)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: A1, PH1</p>
<p>Material Assets</p>	<p>Not significant but pro-active</p>	<p>The SEA suggests the inclusion of a timeframe for the Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrade.</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In</p>

Table 11.1: Trends, Significant Effects, Proposed Mitigation Measures and Proposed Monitoring of draft Skibbereen Town Development Plan Environmental Report

Trend & Potential Impacts	Significant Effects	Mitigation Measures (and reference to where addressed in the draft Plan highlighted in brackets)	Monitoring (Refer to relevant Indicators, targets and responsibilities as indicated in Table 10.1)
<p>completion of the WWTP.</p> <p>The Water Framework Directive classifies a large proportion of the Skibbereen urban area groundwater as "Possibly at Risk of Not Achieving Good Status". A number of private drinking water supplies are taken from groundwater reserves, which could potentially be polluted from domestic septic tanks.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>(Adequately addressed in section 14.2.2 of the Plan)</p> <p>The SEA suggests the inclusion of a policy to ensure that all developments currently served by septic tanks should be connected to the WWTP where possible.</p> <p>(This policy inclusion has been noted but not amended as such a policy could lead to the uneconomic extension of services in the area. There is already pressure for services to be extended to agricultural lands in the town to serve one off housing and such a policy could exacerbate the situation.)</p>	<p>Table 10.1: W1, W2, M1, M2</p> <p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: M1, W1, W2, W3, W4</p>
Cultural Heritage			
<p>Text for inclusion in terms of protection of national monuments.</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>Any direct impacts on national monuments in State or Local Authority care or subject to a preservation order will require the consent of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 as amended by Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004.</p> <p>(Adequately addressed in section 17.1.2 of the Plan)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: CH1, CH2</p>
<p>Potential Impacts on the coastal/Riverine and inter-tidal zone</p>	<p>Possibly significant if not mitigated</p>	<p>The archaeological potential of the coastal/Riverine and inter-tidal zone, where relevant, should be carefully considered. Any potential impacts on archaeological heritage should be subject to full archaeological assessment. (i.e. not just medium to major scale developments as noted in the plan).</p> <p>(Adequately addressed in section 17.1.2 and Table 17.4.1 of the Plan)</p>	<p>Refer to Monitoring Programme As Indicated In Table 10.1: CH1, CH2</p>

11.7 Monitoring

A Monitoring programme of the identified significant effects is set out in table 11.2 below, which aims to prevent against deterioration of the environmental quality of the area during the lifetime of the plan. Monitoring proposals must concentrate on likely significant environmental effects, which have been identified in the Environmental Report and the measures identified as necessary to prevent, reduce, or offset any significant adverse effects. The indicators/monitoring will act as an early warning sign so that appropriate remedial action is undertaken.

Table 11.2 Monitoring Programme

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna						
B1	To avoid significant adverse impacts (direct, cumulative and indirect), to protected habitats, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites by development within or adjacent to these sites.	Loss of biodiversity and ecological networks and spread of invasive species	No significant adverse impacts, (direct, cumulative and indirect impacts), to relevant habitats, species or their sustaining resources in designated ecological sites.	Number of significant adverse impacts (direct, cumulative and indirect impacts), to relevant habitats and species in designated ecological sites.	STC DoEHLG	Review each planning application as submitted
B2	To protect the marine environment, aquatic biodiversity, flora and fauna	Loss of aquatic biodiversity, flora and fauna.	Meet the requirements of the River Basin Management Plan.	Changes in water quality as identified during water quality monitoring programmes.	STC/CCC	Review in parallel with water quality monitoring programmes
B3	To protect and where possible enhance fisheries, wetland, shellfisheries, freshwater pearl mussel	Loss of fisheries and aquatic biodiversity	No significant adverse impacts, (direct, cumulative and indirect impacts) on fisheries shellfisheries, freshwater pearl mussel	Biological indicators and areas of suitable habitat supporting such fisheries	EPA River monitoring prog (classification), Dept of Marine,	Review in parallel with water quality monitoring programmes

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
Population and Human Health						
PH1	To improve the quality of life for the people of Skibbereen through high quality residential, working and recreational environments, sustainable travel patterns.	Deterioration in: streetscape quality due to increased litter; in human health and quality of life; Lack of a diversity in employment and accommodation	To improve quality of life, provision of improved physical and social infrastructure, to reduce journey to work times and allow for a better match between place of residence and place of work.	Journey to work times.	CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
PH2	To protect human health from hazards or nuisances arising from lack of waste water treatment facilities, water quality, traffic, noise and incompatible landuses.	Health problems resulting from poor drinking water, noise and air quality. Poor Air quality. Deterioration in quality of life as a result of congestion or poor quality surrounding environment.	Improve quality of drinking water. Implementation of new waste water treatment plant. Ensure no planning granted for incompatible uses. Improve congestion	Change in drinking water quality. Implementation of WWTP. Occurrence of spatially concentrated health problems. Occurrence/change in traffic congestion.	STC/CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
Soils						
S1	To maximise the sustainable re-use of brownfield lands and the existing built environment, rather than developing greenfield lands.	Loss of biodiversity and quality soils through over use of greenfield sites instead of brownfield sites	All brownfield lands to be redeveloped at the end of the plan lifespan (subject to availability on the open market and demand for such land).	Area of brownfield land available.	STC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
S2	To maintain the quality of soils.	Loss of biodiversity and quality soils	To reduce contamination and safeguard soil quality and quantity.	Area of contaminated land encountered during development works and nature and extent of soil contamination.	CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
S3	To minimise waste production and reduce the volume of waste to landfill and to operate sustainable waste management	Negative impacts to groundwater quality and increased litter;	To meet national and EU targets on the recycling of municipal waste and its diversion from landfill.	Volume of waste recycled and volume of waste sent to landfill.	STC/CCC	Annually

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
	practices.		from landfill.			
Water						
W1i	Maintain or improve the quality of surface water to meet the requirements of the South Western River Basin Management Plan (SW RBMP) and Programme of Measures (POMs)	Negative impacts to surface water quality, fisheries and aquatic biodiversity	0 Faecal Coliform Counts per 100ml of groundwater.	Faecal Coliform Counts per 100ml of groundwater.	EPA STC/CCC	As per monitoring cycle in accordance with the WFD monitoring programme
W1ii			To improve biotic quality ratings, where possible to Q5.	Changes in water quality as identified during water quality monitoring programmes.	EPA STC/CCC	
W2i	To maintain and improve, where possible, the quality of rivers, surface water the quality of estuarine and coastal waters.	Negative impacts to surface water quality, fisheries and aquatic biodiversity; Poor water quality	To maintain a biotic quality rating of Q4, in line with the requirement to achieve good water status under the Water Framework Directive, by 2015.	Biotic Quality Rating (Q Value) and Risk Assessment.	EPA STC/CCC	Annually
W2ii			To improve biotic quality ratings, where possible, to Q5.	Biotic Quality Rating (Q Value) and Risk Assessment.	EPA STC/CCC	Annually
W3	Promote sustainable water usage	To introduce water measures to reduce water wastage, leakage and over consumption usage and to promote conservation measures at household and Industrial level.	Increase number of water conservation measures implemented during the lifetime of the Plan	Number of water conservation measures implemented during the lifetime of the Plan	EPA STC/CCC	Annually
Air and Climate						
A 1	To maintain and improve air quality in Skibbereen and reduce CO2 Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) to alleviate Climate Change.	Poor Air quality and increasing contributions to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions	Increased use of public transport. Increase numbers of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes in the study area. Increase number of permissions granted for	Use of public transport. Provision of cycle lanes and walking routes. Number of permissions granted for	STC/CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
			renewable energy projects	renewable energy projects. Air quality indicators.		
Energy						
E1	Use of renewable energy technology for projected power requirements and implementation of the Building Regulations over the lifetime of the Plan.	Poor Air quality and increasing contributions to climate change	Encourage use of renewable energy for domestic and small businesses. Use of renewable energy to supply National Grid where applicable	Number and type of renewable energy technologies employed in new developments	STC/CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
Material Assets						
M1	To serve new development under the plan with appropriate wastewater treatment.	Inadequate WWT for increased population; poor quality water and contamination	No new developments granted permission which cannot be adequately served by a public waste water treatment plant over the lifetime of the plan.	Number of new developments granted permission which cannot be adequately served by a public waste water treatment plant over the lifetime of the plan.	CCC NRA	Review during the lifetime of the Plan
M2	To maintain and improve the quality of drinking water supplies.	Overuse of resources potentially resulting in inadequate water supply during the lifetime or post 2015.	To maintain and improve drinking water quality in Skibbereen to comply with the requirements of the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations 2000.	Drinking water quality standards (Microbiological, Chemical and Indicator parameters).	EPA STC/CCC	Review during the lifetime of the Plan.

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
Cultural Heritage						
CH1	To protect the archaeological heritage of Skibbereen and; the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	Impacts to RPS, RMPs, ACAs and the townscape of Skibbereen	No unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in full or partial loss of: a) entries to the Record of Monuments and Places; b) entries to the Register for Historic Monuments; National Monument subject to Preservation Orders, and; c) the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	Number of unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in full or partial loss of: a) entries to the Record of Monuments and Places; b) entries to the Register for Historic Monuments; National Monument subject to Preservation Orders, and; c) the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	CCC Heritage Section Cork Heritage Forum DoEHLG	Review each planning application as submitted
CH2	To preserve and protect the special interest and character of Skibbereen's architectural heritage and the context of the above within the surrounding landscape where relevant.	Impacts to RPS, RMPs, ACAs and the townscape of Skibbereen; Visual impact to the streetscape of Skibbereen	No unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in physical loss or loss to the context in the surrounding landscape or streetscape of: entries to the Record of Protected Structures; Architectural Conservation Areas, or; entries to the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.	Number of unauthorised developments permitted over the lifespan of the plan which result in physical loss or loss to the context in the surrounding landscape or streetscape of: entries to the Record of Protected Structures; Architectural Conservation Areas, or; entries to the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.	CCC Heritage Section Cork Heritage Forum DoEHLG	Review each planning application as submitted

Issue	Objective	Impact	Target	Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency
Landscape						
Li	To protect Skibbereen's sensitive landscapes, landscape features and designated views and prospects.	Visual impacts to the landscape	No unauthorised developments to be conspicuously located within sensitive landscapes or designated scenic landscape.	Number of unauthorised conspicuous developments located within sensitive landscapes or designated scenic landscape.	STC/CCC	Review each planning application as submitted.
Lii			No unauthorised developments to adversely impact upon designated scenic views or scenic landscape.	Number of conspicuous developments adversely impacting upon designated scenic views or scenic landscape granted permission during the lifetime of the Plan. Number of Landscape Impact Assessments and photomontages submitted with planning applications	STC/CCC	Review each planning application as submitted

Appendix 1 Designated Sites

Site Synopsis

Site Name: Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA

Site Code: 004156

The Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA is large site situated on the south-west coast of Co. Cork. It encompasses the high coast and sea cliffs from Sheep's Head to Mizen Head, Brow Head and Crookhaven in the west and from Baltimore to Tragumna Bay, Gokane Point and the Toe Head peninsula in the east. The site includes the sea cliffs, the land adjacent to the cliff edge (inland for 300 m), an area further inland to the east of Dunlough Bay, and also areas of sand dunes at Barley Cove and Crookhaven. The high water mark forms the seaward boundary. Most of the site is underlain by Devonian sandstones and mudstones, though Carboniferous rocks are also found on the Sheep's Head and Toe Head peninsulas.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Chough and Peregrine.

The Sheep's Head peninsula is the narrowest of the large peninsulas in the south-west of the county. Tall cliffs, c. 100 m high, occur at its end and hills rise up from much of the coast; pastures are concentrated along the southern side. Much of the land is of marginal agricultural value, with coarse grassland and heath predominating. The Mizen Head Peninsula, on the other hand, has a quantity of semi-improved agricultural grasslands and heath, as well as a sand dune system at Barley Cove. At Mizen Head, large areas of closely bedded sandstones and shales occur, and erosion of their joints has produced a spectacular array of red-brown and pink cliffs up to 130 m high. The cliffs at Three Castle Head to the north are almost 100 m high. Further south and east, a convoluted stretch of coast with sheltered bays, estuaries and exposed headlands extends from Baltimore to Toe Head. The habitats present range from sea cliff, Gorse-dominated heath and rough grassland to good agricultural grassland.

The site supports an important population of breeding Chough, a Red Data Book species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive; 80 breeding pairs were recorded from the site in the 1992 survey and 73 in the 2002/03 survey. The birds are found in pairs and flocks along the coast from Sheep's Head in the north to beyond Toe Head in the south. The Mizen Head cliffs hold some of the highest concentrations of breeding pairs in Ireland. Chough also occur inland.

At Sheep's Head, Chough are concentrated at the tip of the peninsula. An estimated 20 pairs bred in 1992, with 17 recorded in 2002, from Dooneen in the south to Glanroon in the north. Flocking and roosting activity is limited. During the winter of 2003/04, flocks of up to 27 birds were feeding on improved pastures around Caher. Roosting is confined to the southern side of the very extremity of the peninsula, with small numbers, of up to 8 birds, gathering occasionally. At Mizen Head, an estimated 46 pairs bred in 1992 and 30 in 2002, from Crookhaven in the south to Dunkelly in the north. The highest densities of breeding Chough are on and around

Mizen Head itself. Studies have shown that Chough forage mainly within 300 m inland of the cliff tops used for breeding and these areas have been included in the site. Flocking activity centres on the dunes at Barley Cove and around Dunlough Bay. Twenty-six birds were recorded in the dunes in October 2002, 52 in September 2003 and 26 in June 2004. A flock of 30-40 birds were recorded feeding during the winter of 2003/04, inland from Dunlough Bay on improved pastures and Gorse-dominated areas. Two roosts were identified in 2002 on the Mizen Head Peninsula, one at Brow Head (up to 25 birds), and one north of Mizen Head (up to 55 birds). The remainder of the breeding pairs in the site are scattered along the cliffs between Baltimore Head in the west and Toe Head in the east. A roost at Baltimore Head holds up to 15 birds (winter 2003/04).

Landuse is predominantly extensive grazing of sheep, but cattle-grazing also occurs, especially on the better quality land, notably to the south. Grazing and the resultant tight vegetation sward is beneficial to Chough. The habitats present are quite robust and there are few noticeable activities negatively impacting on the Chough population. However, there is a level of agricultural abandonment in places, notably on Sheep's Head and, to a lesser degree, on the Mizen Head Peninsula. The resultant rank vegetation renders some of these areas unavailable to feeding Chough. Also, the reduction in cattle numbers and increase in sheep numbers in the recent past, is less beneficial to Chough, as sheep-grazing results in a more uniform vegetation sward. One other potential threat is the residue left in livestock dung due to the application of broad-spectrum anti-parasitic drugs.

The site supports an important Peregrine population (8 pairs in 2002); this species is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The site also holds a nationally important population of Black Guillemot (137 individuals), as well as smaller populations of other breeding seabirds: Fulmar (57 pairs), Herring Gull (30 pairs), Shag (17 pairs), Kittiwake (20 pairs) and Great Black-backed Gull (1 pair) – all seabird data from 1999, 2001 and 2002.

The Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA is one of the most important sites in the country for Chough. It also supports an important Peregrine population as well as a range of breeding seabirds, including a population of Black Guillemot of national importance. The presence of Chough and Peregrine, both species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, is of particular significance.

13.11.2006

Site Name: Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs cSAC and pNHA

Site Code: 000097

This is a large coastal site (>400 ha.) situated just east of Roaringwater Bay some 5 km south-west of Skibbereen, county Cork. It includes Lough Hyne Nature Reserve on its western end, Ballyally Lough, the adjacent marshland area along the Bealariree stream and the coastline eastwards to Gokane Point, including Tragumna Bay. The site therefore encompasses a range of both marine and terrestrial habitats, including three habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive.

Lough Hyne is a deep landlocked bay joined by a narrow channel (Barloge Creek) to the sea. It is situated on alternating bands of lower Old Red Sandstone and Carboniferous slates. Approximately 4,000 years ago in

post-glacial times this was a freshwater lake, but due to the post-glacial rise in sea-level it is now saline. The narrowness of the connecting sea channel means that the tidal fluctuations are reduced to approximately 1m and consequently the zonation of the intertidal communities is confined to a narrow band along the shore. Another unusual feature of the site is the rapids created in the narrow channel when the tidal levels inside and outside the lough differ.

The site contains reefs which are very exposed to wave action on the open coast, as well as extremely sheltered reefs within the Lough, the latter is a very rare habitat in Ireland. Reefs are listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Many of the communities found on the reefs are more characteristic of the exposed open coast and in Lough Hyne the sponge dominated communities occur at much shallower depths than on the open coast. Lough Hyne has been extensively studied and is known to have a very high species diversity and very high species richness for such a small area. On the open coast and within the Lough the rocky shores are renowned for the presence of the Mediterranean sea urchin *Paracentrotus lividus*. This is the most easterly limit for this species in Ireland. Dense stands of the kelp *Laminaria sacchorhiza* are found in the rapids with a species rich faunal community under the boulders. Within the lough the shallow subtidal reefs may be characterised by a mixed kelp forest of *Laminaria saccharina* and *Sacchariza polyschides* with some *Laminaria digitata* and foliose red algae while in other areas *Laminaria saccharina* and *Cystoseira* species are the characterising algae. At the entrance to the lough where there is strong water movement the brown algae *Halydris siliquosa* and mixed kelp species are characteristic, a community that is typical of moderately exposed tide swept areas. With increasing depth at this area communities more characteristic of areas exposed to wave action on the open coast are found; sponges hydroids, cupcorals, solitary sea squirts and red algae dominate the boulders. The vertical surfaces are colonised by the jewel anemone, the sponge *Esperiopsis fucorum* and solitary sea squirts; a bryozoan turf of *Crisia* species may also be present. Cobbles, pebbles and gravel support a community of keel worm *Pomatoceros triquetter*, the barnacle *Balanus crenatus* and bryozoan crusts.

In sheltered areas away from the turbulent water entering the lough much of the rock is covered by solitary sea squirts and sponges. The cliffs within the lough support a wide variety of sponges the cup coral and a community characterised by the rare soft coral *Paraerythropodium coralloides* which is more characteristic of open water. Rare sponges that are known to occur within the lough includes *Plakortis simplex* and *Halicnemia patera*. Two rare gobies are found in Lough Hyne: Couche's goby *Gobius couchi* and the Red-mouthed goby *Gobius cruenatatus*. Two sea-slugs more commonly found in the Mediterranean occur in Lough Hyne: *Dicata odhneri* and *Facelina dubia*. The southern cup coral *Caryophyllia inornatus* occurs close to the rapids and is the only known site in Ireland for this species. 75% of the marine algae on the national species list have been recorded in the area. These include the rare species *Osmundea truncata*, *Gymnogrongs devoniensis* and *Notastoma canariensis*. Large mats of the red algae *Trailiella* also occur

Much of the floor of Lough Hyne is soft mud, but areas of pebbles, gravel and muddy sand also occur in shallow water around the edges of the lough. In sheltered areas the pebbles and gravel are colonised by solitary sea squirts while the sand and mud are colonised by burrowing anemones. The scallop *Pecten maximus* may also be present and in some areas the Dublin Bay prawn *Nephrops norvegicus* is common.

Outside the Lough in Southern Bay and Barloge Bay dense stands of Eelgrass (*Zostrea marina*) occur growing on coarse sand.

There is a large cave on the south-western side of Bullock Island. The brown alga *Laminaria hyperborea* occurs at the entrance and a short distance into the cave due to good light penetration. The red alga *Cryptopleura ramosa* occurs on the sides of the cave and into the intertidal areas within the cave. Rockpools within the cave are characterised by sheets of the jewel anemone *Corynactis viridis*, a species found in areas subject to wave action.

To the north of Lough Hyne is the mixed woodland of Knockomagh, whose species include Oak (*Quercus petraea*), Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) with some Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Yew (*Taxus baccata*). However, there has been much planting of coniferous species such as Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) and Larch (*Larix* spp.) in the wood over the last 30 years.

Surrounding the lough are areas of heathland with western gorse (*Ulex gallii*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), scrub woodland and some improved agricultural grassland. The land to the east includes Ballyally Lough and Bealariree Marsh. The northern end of the marsh supports some wet woodland with Willow (*Salix* spp.) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*); the marsh itself is dominated by the Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), with much wild celery (*Apium graveolens*) in the upper reaches of Bealariree stream.

The remainder of the site follows the rocky coastline, whose physical features include marine caves, a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, cliffs and a blow-hole. The cliffs on the eastern edge of Tragumna Bay are used by small numbers of breeding seabirds, as well as breeding Raven, Peregrine and Chough. The last two species are listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. Fields to the northeast of Gokane Point also contain the rare Red Data Book species, Sharp-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia elatine*).

Because it is nearly land-locked with relatively little tidal exchange of water, Lough Hyne is vulnerable to the effects of eutrophication. Polluting operations around the lake (including heavy fertilization of agricultural land), and pollution of the streams and drains which feed into the lough, should be prevented where possible. The lough is also used by scuba-divers and field studies groups and disturbance of the habitats and the removal of biological material, especially of Shellfish (e.g. Scallop, Sea Urchins and Lobster) is a potential threat.

Lough Hyne has been recognised as an internationally important ecological site, with both botanical and zoological interest. The surrounding coastland area also supports a range of habitats which are both scientifically interesting and very scenic. This site contains important examples of three habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The high species diversity and the presence of a number of rare and unusual species adds further interest to the area.

17.9.2001

Site Name: Roaringwater Bay and Islands cSAC and pNHA**Site Code: 000101**

Roaringwater Bay, Co. Cork, is a wide shallow bay located on the southwest coast. The site includes the immediate coastline on the mainland from Long Island to Baltimore together with the whole bay and most of the islands. Bedrock is composed of a series of Devonian Old Red Sandstone reefs that run parallel to troughs of Devonian Carboniferous marine clastics in a north east/south west direction. These reefs emerge to form the islands on the south side of the bay and within the bay. Generally the coast is low-lying but the southern edge rises, in line with the hills behind Baltimore, to culminate in a summit of 160m on Cape Clear.

The bay itself has a wide variety of reef and sediment habitats, subject to a range of wave exposures and tidal currents, and has been selected for three marine habitats listed under the EU Habitats Directive, i.e. large shallow inlets and bays, marine caves and reefs. The shores of the bay range from the exposed, rocky shores of South Sherkin Island, to the sheltered rock, sand and mud communities of the Inner Bay and estuarine communities where the rivers enter the bay. The shallow subtidal reefs have good examples of kelp forest community grazed by the sea urchin *Echinus esculentus*. The animal dominated reefs includes the feather star *Antedon bifida* community, the hydroid *Sertularia argentia* and *Hydralmania falcata* community, and sponge and ascidian communities some of which are species rich and in which two rare species occur; the sponge *Tethyspira spinosa* and the rare red alga *Phyllophora sicula*. The scarce hydroid *Tamarisca tamarisca* occurs at a number of sites within the bay. These communities are typical of very sheltered areas with some current present. The cave community on Sherkin Island is home to the rare filamentous red alga, *Pterosiphonia pennata*. The sedimentary communities in Roaringwater Bay are exceptional. Of particular interest is the extensive bed of the calcareous free living red alga *Lithophyllum dentatum*, (generally termed maerl but may be locally know as 'coral') which is the largest in the country for this species. This bed typically contains specimens that are very large and uniquely flattened in form with the rare filamentous red alga *Spyridia filamentosa*. *Lithophyllum dentatum* is only known from 2 other sites. There are also other maerl communities and several seagrass beds (*Zostera marina*) which may co-occur with a particularly good example in Horseshoe Bay, Sherkin Island.

The terrestrial habitats are also of conservation interest and include good examples of two habitats listed under the EU Habitats Directive, i.e. dry heath and sea cliffs. The coastal heath vegetation is typified by an abundance of Autumn Gorse (*Ulex gallii*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*). This is regularly burnt in most places so that there are clearings where grasses and herbs such as Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Common Violet (*Viola riviniana*) and Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) have a temporary rise to prominence before the shrubs grow again. Outcrops of rock bring variety into the heath and are the sites of the more interesting species. These include many southern plants, for example the rare Red Data Book species Hairy Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus subbiflorus*), the Common Birdsfoot itself (*Ornithopus perpusillus*), Spotted Rockrose (*Tuberaria guttata*), Pale Heath Violet (*Viola lactea*) and Lanceolate Spleenwort (*Asplenium billotii*). In addition there is a small amount of Deptford Pink (*Dianthus armeria*), the only place it grows in Ireland though it was likely to have been introduced. Flushes and damp places through this vegetation support some interesting liverworts as well as Birdsfoot Clover (*Trifolium ornithopodioides*) and the special annual plants of the south-west, Chaffweed (*Anagallis minima*), Yellow Centaury (*Cicendia filiformis*) and Allseed

(*Radiola linoides*). Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*) is also common with Yellow Bartsia (*Parentucellia viscosa*) somewhat less so.

High rocky seacliffs are confined to the southern and south-eastern sides of Clear Island and Sherkin Island. The steep areas of rocky cliffs are generally between 30 and 60 m in height, but more sloping ground with a heath covering extends to 120 m on Clear Island and to 100 m on Sherkin Island. Low, gently sloping cliffs occur elsewhere on some of the islands and on coastal sections of the mainland (mostly less than 30 m). The cliffs have typical maritime vegetation, with Sea Pink (*Armeria maritima*), Scurvy Grass (*Cochlearia* spp.), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Sea Campion (*Silene maritima*), Plantains (*Plantago maritima*, *P. coronopus*), Sea Samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*), Tree Mallow (*Lavatera arborea*) and, locally, Dotted Sedge (*Carex punctata*) and the Slender Spikerush (*Eleocharis uniglumis*).

Two other Red Data Book plants, Little Robin (*Geranium purpureum*) and Sea Pea (*Lathyrus japonicus*) occur rarely on shingle beaches while Ray's Knotgrass (*Polygonum raii*) is more widespread. Several streams have been ponded by such beaches to create marshes of Reed (*Phragmites australis*) where Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*) and Marsh Orchids (*Dactylorhiza majalis*, *D. incarnata*) are frequent together with some Creeping Willow (*Salix repens*) and Gypsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*). On Clear Island a similar marsh has developed into a bog with abundant bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.), Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and St John's Wort (*Hypericum elodes*). Sand is a notable feature of Sherkin Island and occurs to a small extent elsewhere. Wild Radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*), Crested Hairgrass (*Koeleria macrantha*) and Sea Storksbill (*Erodium maritimum*) grow in this habitat with a little Haresfoot Clover (*Trifolium arvense*), Knotted Clover (*T. striatum*) and the Red Data Book Lesser Centaury (*Centaureum pulchellum*).

Otter and Grey seal, two mammal species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive, occur within the site. Seabirds breed on some of the islands in the bay. A survey on Clear Island in 1995 reported the following species: Fulmar 716 pairs, Shag 59 pairs, Lesser Black-backed Gull 160 pairs, Herring Gull 51 pairs, Great Blackbacked Gull 50 pairs, Guillemot 42 individuals and Razorbill 31 individuals. Cormorants breed on Calf Island, Carrigmore and The Catalogues (c. 100 pairs in mid 1980s), and there is a scattering of gulls on several other islands. Roaringwater Bay has a nationally important population of Black Guillemot, with 198 individuals counted in 1999. Terns (Arctic/Common) bred within the site in the 1980s, with a large colony of 122 pairs on Carrigvigliash Rock in 1984. Such large numbers, however, have not been seen since and there have been no records of breeding in the last 10 years. The site holds a very important concentration of Choughs (33 pairs in 1992), as well as several pairs of Peregrine Falcons. Both of these species are listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. Clear Island has Ireland's only manned bird observatory (established in 1959) and there is a marine research station on Sherkin Island.

In conclusion, Roaringwater Bay and Islands is a site of exceptional conservation importance, supporting diverse marine and terrestrial habitats, five of which are listed under the EU Habitats Directive. The site is also notable for the presence of Otter and Grey Seal plus a number of rare species and also supports important sea bird colonies.

16.10.2001

Site Name: Myross Wood cSAC and pNHA**Site Code: 001070**

Myross Wood is located just to the south of Leap Village, approximately 8 km east of Skibbereen, Co. Cork, and situated on a hillside sloping down to the upper reaches of Glandore Harbour.

The main habitat on the site is mixed woodland, which contains fragments of seminatural woodland on cliffs and rocky ground. The main native tree species present are Oak (*Quercus* spp.), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*). The wood has been much modified over the years and has been planted with exotic species such as Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Silver Fir (*Abies alba*).

Despite modification of the woodland, the ground flora remains reasonably diverse with species such as Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthodes non-scripta*), Woodsorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Red Campion (*Silene dioica*) and Smooth-stalked Sedge (*Carex laevigata*) occurring. The wood, and the shady banks of the stream that flows through it, support a rich diversity of ferns (e.g. *Dryopteris aemula*, *D. pseudomas*, *D. diatata*, *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Polystichum setiferum*), mosses (e.g. *Eurynchium praelongum*, *Isopterygium elegans*, *Thamnobryum alopecurum*, *Mnium hornum*, *Thuidium tamariscum*) and liverworts (e.g. *Conocephalum conicum*, *Plagiochila porelloides*, *Pellia epiphylla*).

Of particular note is the presence of a population of Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*), a rare and legally protected fern that is listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive and in the Irish Red Data book.

4.2.1999

Site Name: Castletownshend cSAC and pNHA**Site Code: 001547**

Castletownshend wood, which is situated 7 km east of Skibbereen, lies on the west side of a narrow sea inlet cut into an undulating ridge of Old Red Sandstone. The soil is thin and the slopes of the site are generally covered by Oak woodland, particularly on the steeper slopes around The Narrows. The woodland consists of Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) with some Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), and with Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) as the understorey. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) also occur and there are a few specimens of Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and occasional conifers. Such a woodland structure shows a long history of human influence, which is further emphasised by the presence of Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) shrubs which are extensively naturalised and actively spreading within the site.

Where Rhododendron occurs, the ground flora of the woodland is sparse, but elsewhere ferns (*Dryopteris affinis*, *D. aemula*, *Athyrium filix-femina* and *Blechnum spicant*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) are present, and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*

periclymenum) and Ivy (*Hedera helix*) scramble in the trees overhead. At one place the Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*) occurs as a small colony. This is a legally protected plant (Flora (Protection) Order, 1999), which is rare though not unknown elsewhere in Cork. It is also rare throughout Europe and is listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. It is a south-western 'Atlantic' plant whose Irish populations were much reduced through collecting in the 1900s.

Some of the site has been planted with conifers, but the steeper slopes retain a covering of semi-natural broadleaf woodland. Castletownshend is particularly noteworthy for the presence of the rare and protected Killarney Fern.

14.1.2000

Site Name: Castletownshend (Gate Lodge) pNHA

Site Code: 000084

This site is a nursery roost of the Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*). Approximately 140 bats roost in the rear attic of a small lodge, most of the bats along the main ridge beam and wall plate. They exit from the gable apex. The Office of Public Works had repairs carried out on the tiling at the gable end used by the bats but the exit point was not disturbed. This site was once thought to be the largest Leisler's colony in the world and said to contain 800 bats. Only a fraction of that number use the lodge now but it is still a site of international importance, as Ireland is the world stronghold for this species.

Although the present caretaker does not welcome the bats, this can be considered a safe site. Owner tolerance, to whatever degree, is an important consideration when trying to protect roosts of this species, the largest and possibly the noisiest of the seven bat species. Although the Leisler's bat is considered common in Ireland, the number of safe nursery roosts are small.

11th July, 1995.

Site Name: Cloonties Lough pNHA

Site Code: 001044

This small site is located approximately 1km. north-east of Glandore. It consists of an upland acid lake, which has a mostly stony bottom and margins.

The following description of the site is based on the one provided by An Foras Forbartha, 1986. At one end of the lake a muddy shelf occurs in shallow water, and the aquatic vegetation is probably best developed here. Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) occur as fringing vegetation, with White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*) frequent in open water. Rushes (*Juncus bilbosus*) and *J. Acutiflorus*) are frequent, with Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Marsh Cinqufoil (*Potentilla palustris*), Tufted Forget-me-not (*Myosotis laxa* sbsp *caespitosa*) and Bog Stichwort (*Stellaria alsine*) also present. The shallow water also

contains water plantains (*Alisma plantago-aquatica* and *Baldellia ranunculoides*) and, when it dries out in summer, provides suitable conditions for the scarce six-stamered waterwort (*Elatine hexandra*).

The adjacent acid grassland, with blanket peat at the western end, adds interest to the site.

The lake supports a few Teal and Mallard in winter, with Moorhen and coot more permanently resident. In addition, the N.H.A. survey noted a pair of Mute Swans on the lake, Golden Plover and Lapwing feeding on adjacent fields and snipe on the marsh.

The main threat to the site is eutrophication as a result of run-off from the adjacent intensively farmed agricultural land.

The site is of interest as an example of an upland acid lake, with the added distinction of containing a scarce waterwort (*Elatine hexandra*).

Appendix 2: Habitats Directive Assessment

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Appropriate Assessment of local authority plans is to ensure that protection of the integrity of European 'Natura 2000' sites is included as an integral part of the planning process at a local level. By carrying out an Appropriate Assessment, Skibbereen Town Council also ensure that in accepting and implementing Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015 they are not likely to be in breach of the provisions of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

The requirement for Appropriate Assessment of plans or projects originates from Article 6 (3) and (4) of *European Union (EU) Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora*, commonly known as the 'Habitats Directive', which is implemented in Ireland through the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations of 1997. The wording of Article 6 (3) of the directive is as follows:

'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the 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 the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.'

The wording of Article 6 (4) of the directive is as follows:

'If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.'

In February 2008, the statutory requirement for an Appropriate Assessment of all land use plans was further emphasised by a Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Circular Letter (SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08), which was issued to all County and City Managers, Directors of Services for Planning and Town Clerks. The Circular Letter entitled 'Appropriate Assessment of Land Use Plans' emphasises the fact that an appropriate assessment of the ecological implications of any plan or project is required, whether it is within or outside a designated site, if it may impact upon the conservation objectives of that site. In May 2008, the Environmental Protection Agency circulated this letter as part of their guidance on the process to be employed in Strategic Environmental Assessment as part of "SEA Pack Vol. II 16 05 08".

The process is in its infancy in Ireland and to date very few Appropriate Assessments of local authority plans have been completed and there are currently no formal guidelines on the procedure to be employed. Staff from National Parks and Wildlife Service, the competent statutory authority, are however becoming increasingly familiar with the requirements of Appropriate Assessment, and this document has been produced in consultation with NPWS staff. It is our understanding that guidelines are currently being prepared by the EPA, however until these become available, this on-going liaison and consultation process ensures that our Appropriate Assessment has been carried out in a manner that is acceptable to the relevant competent authorities.

In addition to the advice available from NPWS, the EU has published a number of documents which provide guidance on the requirements of Appropriate Assessment, including, *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites - Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, which sets out the principles of how to approach decision making during the process and this have been followed as closely as possible. There are however a number of restrictions when attempting to apply this document in an Irish context, including first and foremost, the lack of formal statutory guidelines; and also, importantly, the relative lack of published data on many of the faunal and floral elements of the environment which comprise the conservation objectives of European sites.

2 METHODOLOGY

The Appropriate Assessment process progresses through four stages as follows:

- Stage 1 – Screening of Skibbereen Town Development Plan;
- Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment of Skibbereen Town Development Plan;
- Stage 3 – Assessment of alternative solutions; and
- Stage 4 – Assessment of compensatory measures.

Stages 1 and 2 relate to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive; and Stages 3 and 4 to Article 6(4).

A key consideration of Appropriate Assessment is that other plans and projects must be considered and that the assessment must take account of the impacts on Natura 2000 sites of these developments 'in combination' with the plan or project that is under consideration. This is discussed in further detail in the Screening and Appropriate Assessment sections of this report (Sections 2 and 3 respectively).

Stage 1 – Screening

The aim of Stage 1, 'Screening' is to determine whether or not Stage 2, the Appropriate Assessment is required, i.e. to determine whether or not the objectives and policies of the Skibbereen Town Development Plan are likely to negatively affect the conservation objectives on any Natura 2000 site. This is done by examining the objectives and the policies of the plan; and the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 sites that might potentially be affected.

Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment

The aim of Stage 2, the 'Appropriate Assessment' proper, is to propose changes to Skibbereen Town Development Plan that will Avoid and Mitigate any negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites and thereby avoid the need to progress to Stage 3, which would effectively constitute a rejection of the plan in its current form and require the Town Council to implement Compensatory measures for impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

Stages 3 and 4 - Assessment of Alternative Solutions and Compensatory Measures

Provided the recommendations of Stage 2 are incorporated into future drafts of Skibbereen Town Development Plan, Stages, 3 and 4, which relate to alternative solutions and Compensatory measures under Article 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive, will not be required.

Revisions

Any future revised drafts of Skibbereen Town Development Plan, including revisions to zoning proposals, will be reviewed in order to ascertain whether or not revisions to this Appropriate Assessment are required. If a revised Appropriate Assessment is required, it will be prepared by RPS and issued to the Town Council. This process will continue at each revision stage of the Town Plan until published of the final version.

3 STAGE 1 – SCREENING

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SCREENING PROCESS

This stage involves establishing whether or not the plan is likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site. The screening process requires an initial review of the draft plan to identify any policies or objectives that might potentially have impacts upon Natura 2000 sites. These might include for example policies and objectives that include a requirement for new development land; policies or objectives that may result in increases in disturbance to sensitive fauna and flora; policies and objectives that could result in deterioration in water quality, etc.

For definition purposes the Natura 2000 site(s) include Special Areas of Conservation (habitats) and/ or Special Protection Areas (birds). With regard to SACs, Annex I refers to habitats and Annex II refers to species listed in the Habitats Directive. With regard to SPAs, Annex I refers to the EU Birds Directive. Also land that could have a potential to contain important bird areas that have not already been designated, as an SPA should be taken into consideration.

Table 1: Natura 2000 Sites Within 15km of Skibbereen Town, Co. Cork

Site Name	Site Designation	Site Code	Location Relative to Skibbereen
Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs	cSAC	000097	3.5km to the south
Castletownsend	cSAC	001547	6km to the east
Myross Wood	cSAC	001070	8km to the east
Sheep's Head to Toe Head	SPA	004156	4km to the south
Roaringwater Bay and Islands	cSAC	000101	8km to the west and southwest

Screening also requires a review of all Natura 2000 sites that could potentially be subject to the impacts that have been identified. Clearly a key variable that will determine whether or not a particular Natura 2000 site is likely to be negatively effected by the draft plan's policies and objectives is its physical distance from Skibbereen, and it will generally, but not necessarily, be the case that the greater the distance the lower the possibility of impacts. It is not considered that any of the policies or objectives of Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015 have the potential to impact upon any Natura 2000 sites more than 15km from the town. A total of five Natura 2000 sites are located within 15km of the town. These are shown in Table 1, which also gives the distance and direction of each site from Skibbereen. Each site is then discussed with respect to its requirement or not for an Appropriate Assessment.

Data and information for this screening assessment was collected from the following sources, consultation with NPWS, Natura 2000 Forms, 'Notice of Intention to Designate' Forms, NPWS Site Synopses, other published data on rare and protected species, and personal knowledge of the sites.

3.2 CASTLETOWNSEND cSAC

Castletownsend cSAC is designated on the basis of its important population of an Annex II plant species. No impacts on this population will result from any Policies, Objectives or zonings of Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015. **Appropriate Assessment of Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015 in relation to the potential for negative impacts on Castletownsend cSAC is not required.**

3.3 MYROSS WOOD cSAC

Myross Wood cSAC is designated on the basis of its important population of an Annex II plant species. No impacts on this population will result from any Policies, Objectives or zonings of Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015. **Appropriate Assessment of Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015 in relation to the potential for negative impacts on Myross Wood cSAC is not required.**

3.4 SHEEP'S HEAD TO TOE HEAD SPA

This is a very large site, split into three separate sections. The eastern section lies to the south of Skibbereen and covers the coast between Toe Head and Baltimore Beacon. The closest part of the SPA to Skibbereen is at Tragumna Bay approximately 4km to the south of the town. The western sections of the SPA cover the coastlines of the Sheep's Head and Mizen Peninsulas more than 20km further west.

The site is designated on the basis of its important breeding population of the Birds Directive Annex I species Chough, which is a largely sedentary species. It is unlikely that Choughs from the Toe Head portion of the SPA occur in the vicinity of Skibbereen town on anything other than a casual basis, and it is considered very unlikely, due to the significant distance, that there could be any indirect negative impacts or 'in combination' impacts on the site as a result of activities within the town. **Appropriate Assessment of Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015 in relation to the potential for negative impacts on Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA is not required.**

3.5 ROARINGWATER BAY AND ISLANDS cSAC

The closest sections of the cSAC to the town are approximately 8km distant; at Roaringwater Bay to the west and at Baltimore to the southwest. The bay supports a range of unusual sublittoral habitats and species and high quality semi-natural terrestrial habitats are present on the islands.

The cSAC is designated on the basis of five Annex I habitat types, 'large shallow inlets and bays', 'reefs', 'dry heath', 'sea caves' and 'vegetated sea cliffs'; and three Annex II mammal species, grey seal, otter and harbour porpoise, all of which are resident in Roaringwater Bay.

The River Ilen which flows through Skibbereen drains into the bay approximately 10km downstream of the town, however it is not considered likely that such discharges are sufficient to threaten the integrity of any of the qualifying criteria of the cSAC. **Appropriate Assessment of Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015 in relation to the potential for negative impacts on Roaringwater Bay and Islands cSAC is not required.**

3.6 LOUGH HYNE NATURE RESERVE AND ENVIRONS cSAC

Lough Hyne is of International Importance and is in many ways a unique site. It is a very sheltered sea lough with a narrow entrance and a restricted tidal range of approximately 1m. Both the lough itself and Knockamagh Wood to the north are designated as Nature Reserves. The cSAC is designated on the basis of three marine Annex I habitats, 'large shallow inlets and bays', 'reefs' and 'sea caves'. The cSAC also includes adjacent areas of woodland to the north and west; extensive coastal and marine areas eastwards to Tragumna Bay and Gokane Point; and inland areas to the east including a freshwater lake at Ballyally Lough. The criteria for inclusion of these areas is somewhat obscure as no terrestrial or freshwater habitats, nor Annex II species that use these habitat types, are listed in the Natura 2000 Form; it is assumed that these areas form a vital 'buffer' to the Annexed habitats.

A number of the threats listed in the Natura 2000 Form for the site relate to human pressures on the site, including anchoring of boats, shrimp fishing and the collection by tourists of sea urchins. Whilst it is potentially possible that Skibbereen Town Development Plan might have included policies objectives or zoning proposals that might result in an increase in these, or other similar, human pressures, a review of the plan indicates that no such Policies or Objectives exist within the plan. **Appropriate Assessment of Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015 in relation to the potential for negative impacts on Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs cSAC is not required.**

4 STAGE 2 – APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

The Screening Stage (Stage 1) has concluded that no policies, objectives and proposals (i.e. critical infrastructure) of Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 - 2015 might potentially impact negatively, including potential 'in combination' impacts, on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site, and it is not necessary to progress to Stage 2 of the Appropriate Assessment process. Consultation with the Appropriate staff in NPWS indicate that they are in agreement with this conclusion.

Hence, implementation of 'Avoidance' or 'Mitigation' measures, which would require amendments to Skibbereen Town Development Plan 2009 – 2015, is not required.