

Cork County Development Plan Review

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Scoping Report for the Cork County Development Plan 2022- 2028

Background Document No. 11

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1.0 Introduction and Context

Cork County Council intends to review the Cork County Development Plan 2014-2020 and prepare the new Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 under Sections 11 and 12 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

This Scoping Document forms part of the official Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process under S.I. 436 of 2004¹ as amended by S.I. 201 of 2011². The purpose of this document is to provide preliminary information on the proposed County Development Plan, with a view to establishing the scope, level of detail and approach required for the SEA which will follow. It is intended that the information contained within the report will enable meaningful consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees in relation to the proposed County Development Plan.

The process is currently at a stage where this Draft SEA Scoping Report (which will be updated to take account of submissions made by environmental authorities) has been prepared.

In parallel to the SEA Scoping, Cork County Council are also presenting for consultation a Public Consultation Document which will outline the scope of issues to be addressed during the review process. Further information on the Public Consultation Document can be found at <https://www.corkcoco.ie/en/Cork-County-Development-Plan-2022-2028>

2.0 Background to the Cork County Development Plan (CDP)

The Cork County Development Plan is part of a systematic hierarchy of land use plans and spatial plans which fall under the National Planning Framework (NPF) – Project 2040 and the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). These plans contain higher level policy and objectives which will in turn steer the development of Cork County at a lower level and it will be necessary to show evidence of adherence to these plans as part of the CDP.

In accordance with Section 11 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) a planning authority is legally obliged to prepare a Development Plan (CDP) for its functional area every six years. However Section 11(AB) of same Act states that *'the council of the county of Cork shall, not later than 4 years (or such longer period, not exceeding 5 years, as the Minister may specify by order) after the making of a development plan, give notice of its intention to review its existing development plan and to prepare a new development plan for its area'*. Therefore the review process for the Draft County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 shall commence on 12th March 2020 with the publication of the Public Consultation Document along with 11 background documents including the SEA Scoping Report. The other background documents cover the following topics:

1. Approach to County Development Plan Review
2. Population & Housing
3. Rural Housing
4. Settlements and Placemaking

¹ S.I. No. 436/2004 - Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004

² S.I. No. 201/2011 - Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011

5. Urban Capacity Study
6. Economy and Employment
7. Water Services
8. Transport and Mobility
9. Energy
10. Built Heritage

3.0 Legislative Background and stages of SEA and the Plan process

Strategic Environmental Assessment is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental consequences of implementing plan/ programme initiatives prepared by authorities at a national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative means. 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.

Legally, the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) was transposed into Irish regulations and associated amendments to provide the legislative framework for SEA in Ireland.

The requirements for SEA in Ireland are set out in the national Regulations, S.I. No. 435 of 2004 European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 and **S.I. No. 436 of 2004** Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 and **S.I. No. 201 of 2011** Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 respectively.

In the case of the review of the County Development Plan **S.I. No. 436 of 2004 and S.I. No. 201 of 2011 apply.**

S.I. No. 201/2011 - Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 state that a full SEA is a mandatory requirement in respect of the following:

- *Development Plans where the population or target population of the area is 10,000 persons or more;*
- or
- *Development Plans where the planning authority determines that the plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.*

The SEA process for the Review of the County Development Plan is comprised of the following principle steps:

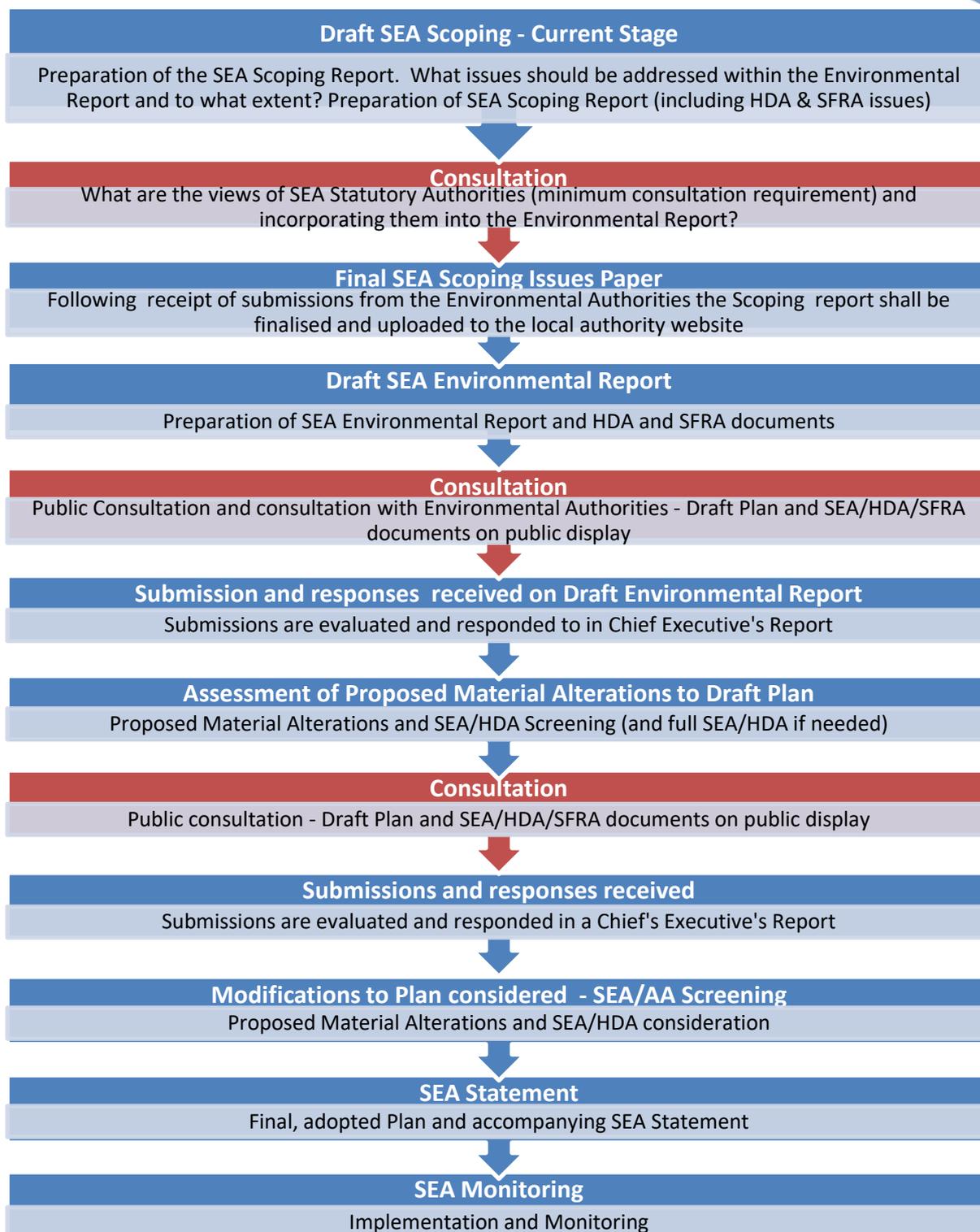
- **Scoping (Current stage):** Consultation with the defined statutory bodies on the scope and level of detail to be considered in the assessment (the SEA process will begin at this stage and not Screening as an SEA of the CDP is statutorily required);
- **Environmental Report:** An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the CDP;

- **Consultation** on the draft CDP and associated Environmental Report;
- **Evaluation** of the submissions and observations made on the draft CDP and Environmental Report prior to finalising the CDP;
- Issuance of an **SEA Statement** identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the final CDP.

Figure 1.1 overleaf gives an overview of the integrated Plan preparation, SEA, Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes. The preparation of the Draft Plan, SEA, HDA and SFRA are taking place concurrently and the findings of each will inform the Draft Plan.

The process is currently at the stage where a Scoping Report has been prepared. This will be subsequently updated to take account of any submissions received from the environmental authorities.

Following the current Scoping Report stage, the Environmental Report will contain the findings of the assessment of the likely significant effects on the environment resulting from implementation of the CDP. It will reflect the requirements of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and also the transposed regulations in Ireland (S.I. 436/2004) as amended in 2011.



Taking into account the scope detailed in this report, environmental impacts will be predicted, evaluated and mitigated. The findings of the assessment will be presented in an SEA Environmental Report which will accompany the Draft Plan on public display as part of the required statutory public consultation. Submissions will be responded to in the Chief Executive's report on public consultation, with updates made to the SEA and HDA documentation where relevant.

In the case of any proposed Material Alterations these will be screened for the need to undergo SEA and HDA and full, detailed assessments will be undertaken where required. The SEA and HDA documents will accompany the Proposed Material Alterations on public display. Submissions will be responded to in the Chief Executive's report on public consultation, with updates made to the SEA and HDA documentation where relevant. Modifications will be examined to ensure that they would not be likely to affect the Natura 2000 network of designated ecological sites and to ensure that they would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects.

When the Plan is adopted, the SEA, HDA and SFRA documents will be finalised and an SEA Statement, which will include information on how environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan, will be prepared. The Plan will be implemented and environmental monitoring will be undertaken.

4.0 SEA Guidance, Methodology and the integration of other assessments

The methodology followed in this report is derived from a number of sources including the appropriate legislation and guidance documents prepared on a national and EU level.

The following principal sources of guidance will be used during the overall SEA process and during preparation of the Environmental Report:

- SEA Spatial Information Sources Inventory, June 2019, Environmental Protection Agency.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Pack, 2018, Environmental Protection Agency.
- SEA Effectiveness Review in Ireland - Action Plan 2018-2020
- GISEA Manual, 2017, Environmental Protection Agency.
- SEA Scoping Guidance Document, 2017, Environmental Protection Agency.
- Integrating Climate Change into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note, June 2019, Environmental Protection Agency.
- Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment – Good Practice Guidance, 2015, Environmental Protection Agency.
- Environmental Protection Agency's 2012 Review of SEA Effectiveness in Ireland.
- Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment – Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual. EPA Strive Programme 2007-2013. Strive Report Series No. 106.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Checklist - Consultation Draft. January 2008. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland. Synthesis Report. 2003. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC). Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment. Guidelines for Regional Planning Authorities. November 2004. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

In addition a number of relevant circulars in relation to SEA have been issued which will have relevance for the environmental assessment of the proposed County Development Plan and will be taken into account during the course of the SEA. These circulars are as follows:

- PSSP 6/2011: ‘Further Transposition of the EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)’; and
- Circular PL 9 of 2013: ‘Article 8 (Decision Making) of EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as amended’.

4.1 Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA)

The Birds (2009/147/EC) and Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) set out various procedures and obligations in relation to nature conservation management in Member States in general, and of the Natura 2000 sites and their habitats and species in particular. Natura 2000 sites are comprised of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

The Habitats Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora obliges member states to designate, protect and conserve habitats and species of importance in a European Union context. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that *“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the conservation of a site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives.”*

This Directive was initially transposed into Irish Law through several pieces of legislation; however these have now been consolidated into the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended). Any proposed plan or project in Ireland that has potential to result in a significant effect on a designated European Site will require a HDA. Case law has determined that the likelihood need not be great, merely possible, and that the precautionary principle must apply as set out in European Commission Guidance and as required by CJEU case law (i.e. C 127/02 ‘Waddenzee’).

The CDP is not directly connected to the conservation of any European Sites, however as a countywide strategy, it has the potential to impact on habitats and species for which Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) have been designated.

The HDA for the CDP is being carried out in parallel with the SEA process. The findings of the HDA will be used to guide the development of the alternatives to be considered as part of the CDP and SEA. The first stage of the HDA process is Screening, which is to determine whether implementation of the CDP has the potential to have a significant effect on designated European Sites. Where likely significant effects are identified then a Natura Impact Report will be required.

It is noted that there are requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives that are not encompassed by HDA e.g. annex IV species as per Articles 12 and 13 of the Habitats Directive, landscape features outside designated sites which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna as per Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and disturbance and deterioration of bird habitats as per article 4(4) of the Birds Directive, these will be addressed in the SEA.

The SEA and HDA processes will facilitate the integration of environmental considerations into the Plan. It is intended that these considerations will include the following:

- Policies and objectives contributing towards environmental protection and management and

- the sustainable development; and
- Integration of environmental considerations into the land use zoning included as part of the Plan.

4.2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

Flood Risk Management aims to minimise the risks arising from flooding to people, property and the environment. Natural floodplains merit protection to maintain their flood risk management function as well as for reasons of amenity and biodiversity. These represent important elements of green infrastructure.

In order to meet the needs of the Strategic Environmental Assessment process and the requirements of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government / Office of Public Works Guidelines, *'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management'* (2009), Cork County Council intend to carry out a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) of the County Development Plan. This will provide an assessment of flood risk within the county and will inform land-use planning decisions for this and other plans.

Updated Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) mapping is expected to be made available by the Office of Public Works (OPW) later this year or early in 2020 and this will inform the SFRA of the County Development Plan.

4.3 Climate Change

The SEA Directive provides plan-makers with a statutory framework to integrate climate-related policies/objectives into plans and programmes. As part of the SEA process the EPA's Guidance Note *'Integrating Climate Change into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland (2015)'* will be taken into account. This guidance document states that the main climate change considerations to be taken into account as part of the Scoping Stage should include the following:

- Establish environmental (climatic) baseline;
- Develop climate change Environmental Protection Objective(s);
- Identify environmental vulnerabilities which may be affected significantly by climate change;
- Consider adaptation and mitigation options to achieve the aims/goals of the policies, plans and programmes and strategies (PPPS); and
- Early scoping consultation.

Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) has been used to examine the baseline information available for both Climate Change and Biodiversity indicators and overlay both parameters to identify which areas of the County are more sensitive to change. The ESM web-tool has been developed by the EPA/ UCD/ AIRO/ OSI as a decision support tool for environmental assessment processes in Ireland including SEA. The tool is described in more detail below in Section 6.1.

5.0 Relationship with other plans and programmes

The County Development Plan is part of a hierarchy of local, regional and national plans. While it should be consistent with higher-level plans such as those of a regional or national nature, it must also guide or direct plans and programmes at a lower level hierarchically.

The County Development Plan will play a significant role in ensuring that the objectives and vision of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region and the National Planning Framework (NPF) are implemented and integrated in a consistent manner at sub-regional and county level. In considering the significant plans and programmes relevant to the review of the County Development Plan the EPA's Scoping Guidance document was consulted.

The following international, national, regional and local plans/programmes and legislation where relevant will influence the policies contained in the CDP:

Table 5.1 – EU Legislation, Plans/ Policies/ Programmes

EU Legislation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) • EIA Directive (85/337/EC as amended) • Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) • Birds Directive (2009/147/EC- codified version of 79/409/EEC) • Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and associated directives which have been subsumed as follows: Drinking Water Abstraction Directive; Sampling Drinking Water Directive; Exchange of Information on Quality of Surface Freshwater Directive; Shellfish Directive; Freshwater Fish Directive; Groundwater (Dangerous Substances) Directive; and Dangerous Substances Directive • Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC) • Bathing Water Directive (revised) 2006 (2006/7/EC) • Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC) • Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) (2008/56/EC) • Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (2014/89/EU) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewage Sludge Directive (86/278/EEC) • Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC) • Nitrates Directive (91/676/EC) • Integrated Pollution Prevention Control Directive (2008/1/EC) • Floods Directive (2007/60/EC) • Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC) and proposal for a revised directive (COM/2016/0767 final/2) • Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU) • Seveso III Directive (2012/18/EU) • Clean Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (2008/50/EC)

Table 5.2 – National Legislation

National Legislation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) • Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016 • Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436/2004) as

National Legislation
<p>amended by S.I. 201 of 2011;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Development regulations 2001 (as amended) • The Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 • European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011 as amended) • Waste Management Act 1996 as amended • Quality of Bathing Waters Regulations 1988 (S.I. 84 of 1988) as amended • European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003, (S.I. 722 of 2003) • European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Water) Regulations (S.I. 272 of 2009) • European Communities Environmental Objectives (FPM) Regulations 2009 (S.I. 296 of 2009) • European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 (S.I. 9 of 2010) • European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 31 of 2014) • Quality of Bathing Waters Regulations 1988 (S.I. 84 of 1988) as amended • Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015

Table 5.3– National/Regional Plans/Policies/Programmes

National/ Regional & Local Plans/ Policies/ Programmes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Planning Framework (NPF) • National Development Plan 2018-2027 • Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) • Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment (2016-2021) (DPER, 2015) • Rebuilding Ireland, Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness • Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021 • National Policy Position on Climate Action • National Climate Change Mitigation Plan • Adapting to Climate Change - National Adaptation Framework 2018 and sectoral Adaptation Plans • Climate Action Plan 2019 • National Clean Air Strategy (Draft) • Draft Bioenergy Plan 2014 • Second Cycle River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 • Irish Water - Water Services Strategic Plan 2015 • National Water Resources Plan [in prep] • Lead in Drinking Water Mitigation Plan • National Wastewater Sludge Management Plan 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Broadband Plan Intervention Strategy (Draft) • National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015 – 2025 • Healthy Ireland – a Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025 • Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines • Wind Energy Guidelines • Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014- 2020 • Realising our Rural Potential, Action Plan for Rural Development • Ireland’s Fourth Nitrates Action Programme • Forestry Programme 2014-2020 • Forest Policy Review: Forests, Products and People – A Renewed Vision (2014) • Food Wise 2025 – Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine South West Region Action Plan for Jobs 2015 • Organic Farming Scheme Catchment Flood Risk and Management Studies • Flood Risk Management Plans • European Structural & Investment Funds 2014-2020 • National Heritage Plan (2002)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquaculture Plan 2014 • National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 • All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 • National Peatlands Strategy 2015 • Southern Region Waste Management Plan 2015- 2021 • Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland (Energy White Paper) 2007 and 2015 update • National Renewable Energy Action Plan • Strategy for Renewable Energy 2012-2020 • Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan 2030 • Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth • National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020 • National ITS Strategy (Draft) • National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2010-2020 • Construction 2020 • Blue Dot Catchment Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020 • Culture (2025) • Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland (1997) (DEHLG) • Cork County Council Local Economic and Community Plan (2016) • Cork County Biodiversity Action Plan 2009-2014 • Cork County Council’s Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019 • Cork County Landscape Character Assessment 2007 • Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009 • Regional Development Strategy 2035 • NPWS Conservation Plans and/or Conservation Objectives for SAC and SPAs
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6.0 Baseline gathering

In order to assess the likely significant impacts of the Plan, baseline data on the current state of the environment is collected and evaluated and the potential effects of the plan predicted and considered. Therefore the purpose of the baseline description is to identify the current state of the environment, against which the likely effects of implementing the plan can be assessed. In accordance with legislation and guidance, the existing environment is described with respect to biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water (surface freshwater, coastal, transitional, groundwater, bathing and water services (drinking water and waste water treatment), air, climatic factors, material assets (roads, transportation, energy etc), cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage), landscape and the interrelationships between these factors as appropriate. Any existing problems relevant to the new Plan are also identified at this baseline stage.

Identification of baseline environmental status provides for the identification of key resources and sensitivities within the Plan area and the identification of potential threats to the environment, thus allowing for the inclusion of mitigation measures later in the process that may need to be incorporated into the new Plan to ensure that it does not exacerbate existing problems. Assessment of the baseline environment also enables plan-makers to consider how the environment might evolve in the absence of the proposed plan.

In line with the SEA Directive, an environmental baseline will be compiled for the Draft Cork County Development Plan. The SEA Environmental Report will present a full description of the relevant aspects of the environmental baseline data. The baseline will reflect the strategic nature of the CDP.

The environmental baseline will be presented in the Environmental Report under a number of Strategic Environmental Assessment topic headings as follows:

- Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna;
- Population;
- Human Health;
- Soil ;
- Water;
- Air Quality and Climatic Factors;
- Material Assets;
- Cultural Heritage including Architectural and Archaeological Heritage; and
- Landscape.

Outlined in the following sections are brief descriptions of the current state of the environment within Cork County. A non-exhaustive summary of the data sources to be used as part of the process is given in Table 6.1 overleaf:

Table 6.1 – Baseline Data Sources

SEA Topic	Potential Data Sources
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) database; National Biodiversity Data Centre; Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan; Invasive Species Ireland website; WFD Ireland website; MSFD Ireland website; EPA Geoportal.
Population	Central Statistics Office (CSO) database, including census 2016 data
Human Health	EPA Geoportal; Central Statistics Office (CSO) database, including census 2016 data; See also Soils, Water and Air Quality entries.
Soils	Corine Land Cover and Land Use Database; Coillte Forestry Database; Teagasc Soil Information; Geological Survey of Ireland Online Mapping.
Water	EPA ENVision (Environmental Mapping); EPA Geoportal; EPA database reports including but not limited to: Water Quality in Ireland (latest available); Integrated Water Quality Reports (latest available); and Quality of Estuarine and Coastal Waters (latest available); National Catchment Flood Risk Management Programme (CFRAM), Office of Public Works (OPW) (Flooding);

Air Quality	EPA database (air quality); Local Authority air quality monitoring network.
Climatic Factors	Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections, EPA (latest available); Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEAI)
Material Assets	EPA GeoPortal; OPW flood data; DAFM datasets; DCCAIE datasets.
Cultural Heritage including Architectural and Archaeological Heritage	National Monuments Service (Archaeological Survey Database); National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Record of Protected Structures (RPS).
Landscape	Landscape Character Areas (County level) Landscape Character types (County level)

6.1 Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM)

In addition to the above data sources Cork County Council is piloting the use of Environmental Sensitivity Mapping at County Development Plan Level. The ESM web-tool developed by the EPA, UCD, OSI and AIRO of Maynooth University has been developed as a decision support tool for environmental assessment processes in Ireland including SEA. It is worth noting that SEA is not a decision making tool but a decision informing tool and the ESM will support the SEA process in informing these decisions through up to date data visualisations.

The ESM webtool uses spatial data sets with specific layers attributed a pre-defined scientific score. When these layers are examined together and overlaid, an environmental sensitivity map is generated for the relevant area. Where more sensitivities are present in an area the colour overlay turns from green to orange to red.

The areas of red displayed on the maps (as illustrated in Figure 6.1.1 below and the following sections) do not necessarily mean that development will be restricted in the area but rather that more consideration of the environmental sensitivities will be required and mitigation measures may be needed where development is permitted. It is worth noting that many of the red areas displayed are areas of natural capital such as valuable habitats, landscapes and scenic areas, ensuring protection and enhancement of these areas will be a key policy aim of the development plan.

Cork County Council is using the ESM mapping tool to examine the sensitivities in relation to the different environmental topics but also to assess the cumulative/in-combination sensitivities within certain geographical areas i.e. countywide, river catchments, coastal areas etc. Where relevant datasets were made available maps have been generated to illustrate the associated sensitivities, a selection of these maps have been included under the SEA environmental topics below. Figure 6.1.1 below illustrates a 'countywide environmental sensitivity scenario' where all relevant environmental datasets from each of the SEA environmental topics have been overlaid and areas of varying environmental sensitivity are shown.

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - County Environmental Sensitivity Scenario

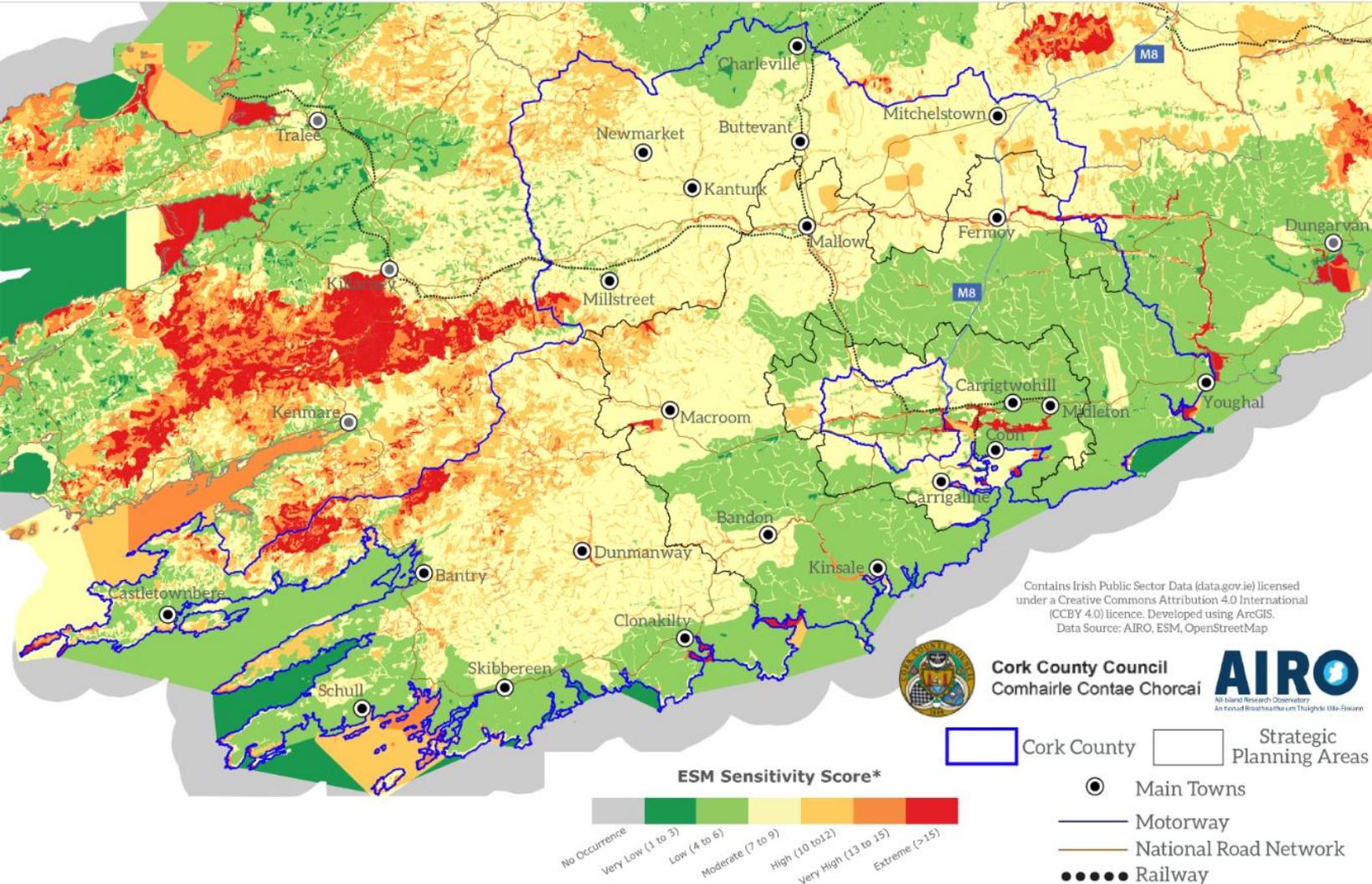


Figure 6.1.1 –Environmental Sensitivity Map for Cork County and surrounding areas Data source – ESM

6.2 Biodiversity – Flora and Fauna

The Plan area is rich in biodiversity, containing many important, and protected, habitats and species such as rivers, lakes, wetlands, coastal areas, woodlands, bats, wildfowl, waders, salmon, lamprey, freshwater pearl mussel, otters etc. However, it also contains many other habitats which are not protected such as scrub, parks, streams, hedgerows, tree lines, roadside verges, housing estate open spaces and gardens. It is these locally important habitats and species within the landscape, including extensive areas of wetland, broadleaf woodlands and grasslands, which provide links between the more rare and protected habitats, and are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild plants and animals.

In addition to the above the natural environment provides ecosystem services in the form of food, fuel, water purification, flood alleviation and more.

Under Article 11 of the Directive, each member state is obliged to undertake surveillance of the conservation status of the natural habitats and species in the Annexes and under Article 17, to report to the European Commission every six years on their status and on the implementation of the measures taken under the Directive. The latest version of the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland was published in August 2019. This publication provides a synopsis for each of the listed habitats and species occurring in Ireland. The report found that 46% of habitats are demonstrating ongoing declining trends.

European and National Legislation protect the most valuable of our remaining wild places, habitats and species through designation of sites as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).

The SEA Environmental Report of the Draft CDP will consider available information on these designated ecological sites and protected species, ecological connectivity and non designated habitats within the plan area. The assessment will include data available from those sources listed in Table 6.1 on the previous page and any additional sources that may emerge as part of the process.

Figure 6.2.1 below contains the locations of all designated sites within the County and through the use of ESM, a map has also been formulated to show the areas which have increased sensitivity to change, these include areas occupied by sensitive habitats and species and also areas with sensitive water environments or other know environmental constraints.

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - Designated Sites (SAC, SPA, NHA and pNHA)

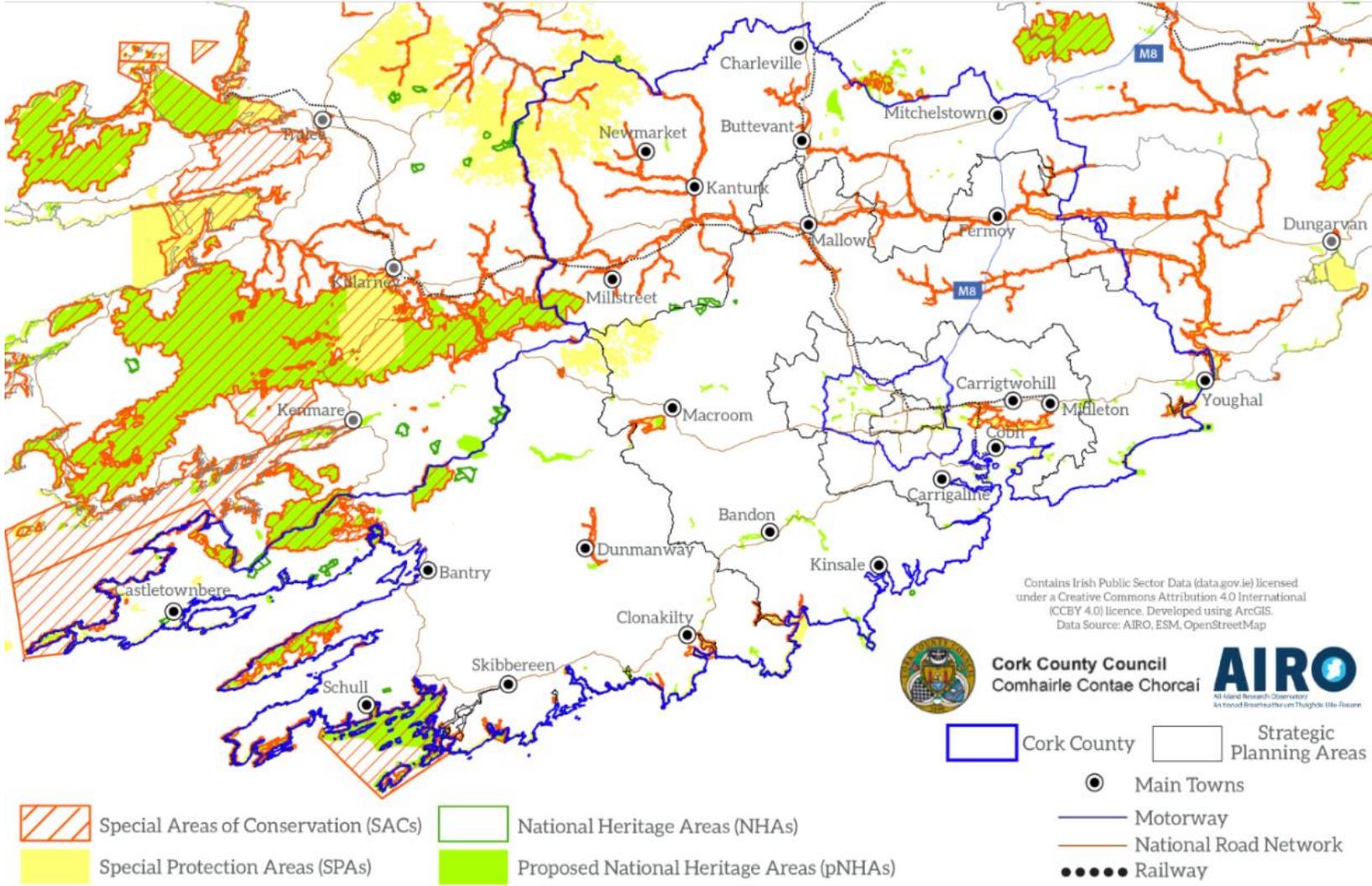


Figure 6.2.1 – Designated sites in Cork County and surrounding areas Data source – ESM and NPWS

There are 30 SACs, 18 SPAs and 9 NHAs within the county. Details of each site are contained in tables 6.1 to 6.3 overleaf. A detailed list of all designated sites and their respective qualifying interests will be included in the environmental report.

Other considerations under this topic which will be assessed in the Environmental Report include the list below, which is not exhaustive:

- Ecological connectivity and networks – to demonstrate the requirements of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive are being met.
- Ramsar Sites - designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.
- Wildfowl Sanctuaries (provided for by Statutory Instrument No. 192 of 1979);
- Freshwater Pearl Mussel Catchments - Freshwater pearl mussel is a globally threatened, long-lived and extremely sensitive species that can be impacted by many forms of pollution, particularly sediment and nutrient pollution and by hydrological and morphological changes, which may arise from developments, activities or changes in any part of the catchment.
- Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas - These areas are those identified as those requiring special protection under existing national or European legislation, either to protect their surface water or groundwater, or to conserve habitats or species that directly depend on those waters.
- Blue Dot Programme - The EPA in combination with the DHPCLG have identified a network of High Status Objective sites and water bodies. These are monitoring locations which are currently at high or close to high status and which have been identified as high status objective sites under the Water Framework Directive.
- Watercourses, wetlands and peat lands – sites of biodiversity interest both inside and outside of designated sites.
- Shellfish Areas - Shellfish production areas listed in the Irish Shellfish Regulations (S.I. 200/1994) and European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) (Amendment) Regulations 2009.

Maps illustrating each of the above will be included in the environmental report and ESM will be used to examine the cumulative impacts of certain policies and objectives on the plan area. Figure 6.2.2 below shows the locations existing and previously recorded populations of Freshwater Pearly Mussel in Cork County.

In accordance with requirements under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and Section 177 of Part XAB of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, the impacts of the policies and objectives of all statutory land use plans on designated sites must be assessed as an integral part of the process of making a land use plan.

The SEA will be informed by the findings of the Habitat Directive Assessment/Natura Impact Report and will follow elements of Integrated Biodiversity Assessment with reference made to the EPA's 2013 Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment - Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual.

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - Freshwater Pearl Mussel Catchment

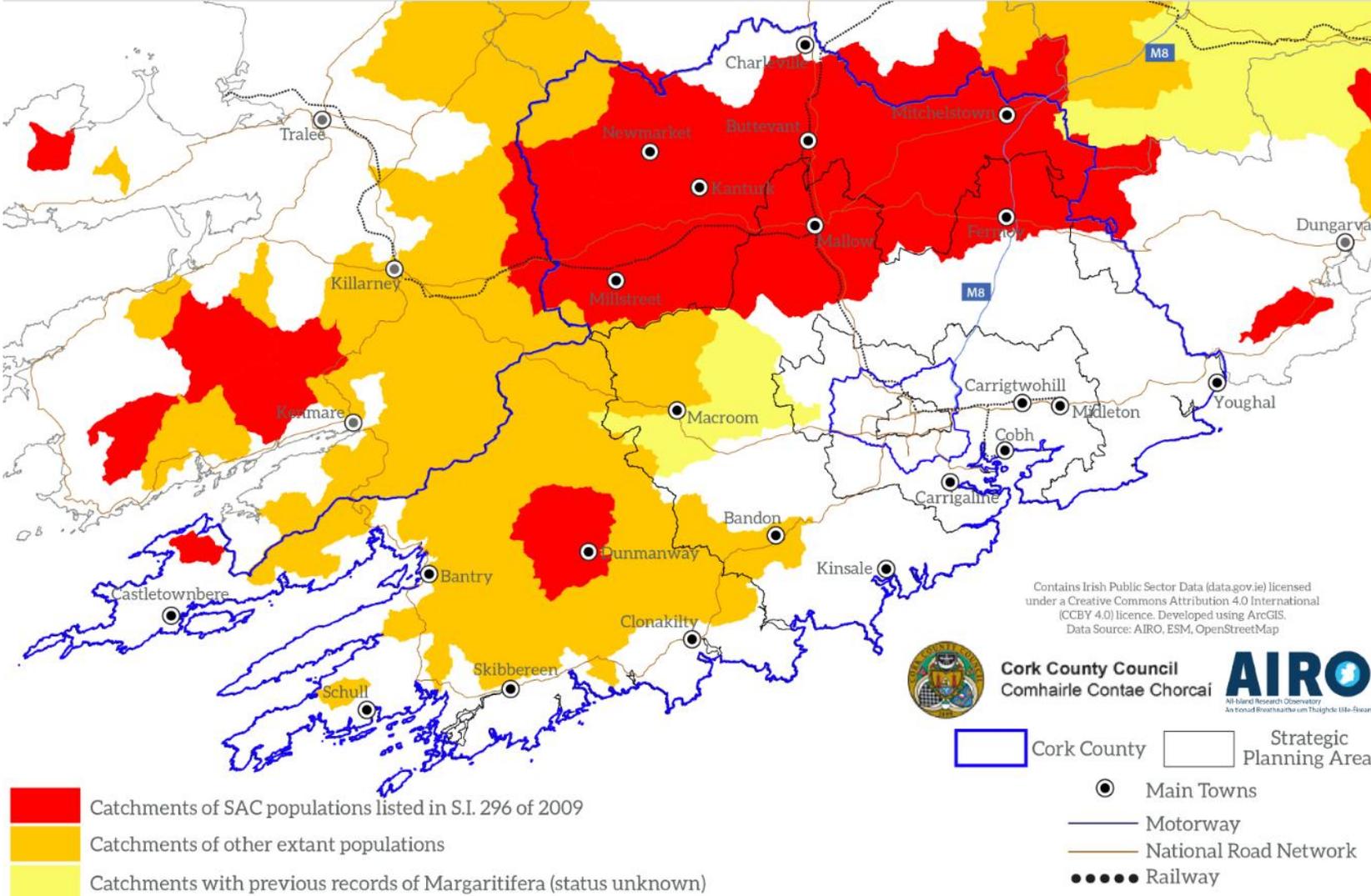


Figure 6.2.2 – Freshwater Pearl Mussel Catchments in Cork County Data source – ESM and NPWS

Table 6-1: Special Areas Of Conservation in County Cork

Site Code	Site Name	Site Code	Site Name
002036	Ballyhoura Mountains SAC	000090	Glengarriff Harbour and Woodland SAC
000077	Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC	001058	Great Island Channel SAC
002171	Bandon River SAC	002158	Kenmare River SAC
001040	Barley Cove to Ballyrisode Point SAC	001061	Kilkeran Lake and Castlefrefre Dunes SAC
002170	Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC	000365	Killarney National Park, Macgillycuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment SAC
000093	Caha Mountains SAC	000097	Lough Hyne Nature Reserve and Environs SAC
002037	Carrigeenamronety Hill SAC	002165	Lower River Shannon SAC
001547	Castletownshend SAC	001890	Mullaghanish Bog SAC
001043	Cleanderry Wood SAC	001070	Myross Wood SAC
000091	Clonakilty Bay SAC	002281	Reen Point Shingle SAC
001230	Courtmacsherry Estuary SAC	000101	Roaringwater Bay and Islands SAC
001873	Derryclogher (Knockboy) Bog SAC	000102	Sheep's Head SAC
002280	Dunbeacon Shingle SAC	000106	St. Gobnet's Wood SAC
002189	Farranamanagh Lough SAC	000108	The Gearagh SAC
001879	Glanmore Bog SAC	000109	Three Castle Head to Mizen Head SAC

Table 6-2: Special Protection Areas in County Cork

Site Code	Site Name	Site Code	Site Name
004022	Ballycotton Bay SPA	004162	Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA
004023	Ballymacoda Bay SPA	004021	Old Head of Kinsale SPA
004155	Beara Peninsula SPA	004191	Seven Heads SPA
004094	Blackwater Callows SPA	004156	Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA
004028	Blackwater Estuary SPA	004124	Sovereign Islands SPA
004081	Clonakilty Bay SPA	004161	Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA
004030	Cork Harbour SPA	004066	The Bull and The Cow Rocks SPA
004219	Courtmacsherry Bay SPA	004109	The Gearagh SPA
004190	Galley Head to Duneen Point SPA	004162	Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA

Table 6-3: Natural Heritage Areas in County Cork

Site Code	Site Name	Site Code	Site Name
002447	Boggeragh Mountains NHA	002449	Mount Eagle Bogs NHA
002386	Conigar Bog NHA	002416	Pulleen Harbour Bog NHA
002105	Derreenatra Bog NHA	000105	Sovereign Islands NHA
001059	Hungry Hill Bog NHA	002371	Trafrask Bog NHA
002417	Leahill Bog NHA		

High Status Water Bodies and Blue Dot Catchment Programme

High status objective sites are waterbodies that are at pristine and near pristine condition, or have been at this status in recent years, and support important species such as Atlantic salmon, or support economic and recreational activities associated with unspoilt areas. These waterbodies across Europe are under significant threat and Co. Cork is fortunate to still have good examples. They require additional care, and developments in these areas need to reflect their sensitive nature. A network known as the 'Blue Dot Catchments Programme' has been set up to support the protection of these sensitive water bodies. This project is managed by the Local Authorities Water Programme with data from the EPA. A targeted programme including supports for septic tank owners to address inadequately function treatment systems in these areas is to be put in place. Figure 6.2.3 below shows the location of these catchments in Cork County.

6.2.1 Links between Biodiversity, Climate Change and Flooding

Climate change is regarded as the biggest environmental issue facing the world today. The release of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, is regarded as one of the main drivers of climate change. Biodiversity, and particularly plants, play a significant role in removing this carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it through photosynthesis. However, activities which lead to a loss of vegetation prevent this critical service from occurring, while activities such as the drainage of peatlands can actually release more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The rate of biodiversity loss across the world has been inextricably linked to the rate of global climate change. However, there has been an increasing move towards trying to adapt to climate change, rather than trying to stop it, and in this regard, biodiversity has another significant role to play, particularly in relation to flood attenuation.

Wetlands, such as bogs, fens and marshes, slow down the flow of water, and so help to regulate flooding, however, their loss not only exacerbates the level of flooding, but also its speed, which leads to flash flooding. Wetlands can contain huge volumes of water (bogs, for example, are made up of over ninety percent water) and when a wetland is drained, the water must go somewhere, and water will always flow to the lowest lying areas. The protection and retention of river floodplains from infilling, reclamation or development is also vitally important to ameliorate the impacts of flooding.

Figure 6.2.4 overleaf illustrates an environmental sensitivity map which combines information from both climate change and biodiversity datasets. The map has been formulated by overlaying areas of sensitive ecological designation e.g. protected habitats, river catchments etc. with known data sets used to measure the impact of climate change e.g. flood extent scenarios, vegetation carbon and water retention capacity. The resultant map illustrates those areas that are most sensitive to climate change.

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - Blue Dot Catchment Programme

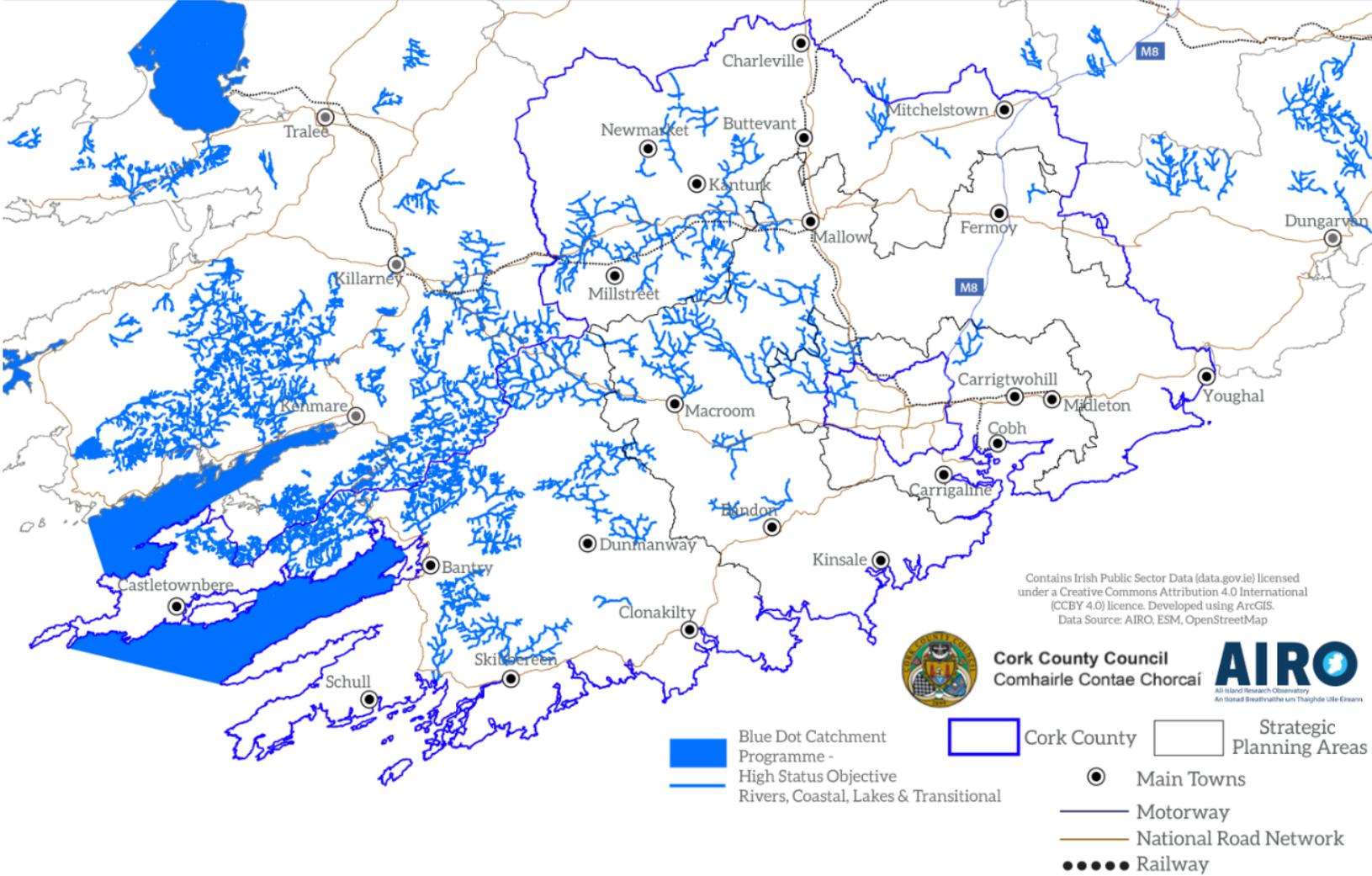


Figure 6.2.3 –Environmental Sensitivity Map illustrating High Status Water Bodies under the Blue Dot Catchment Programme. Data source – ESM & EPA

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - Climate Change/Biodiversity Scenario

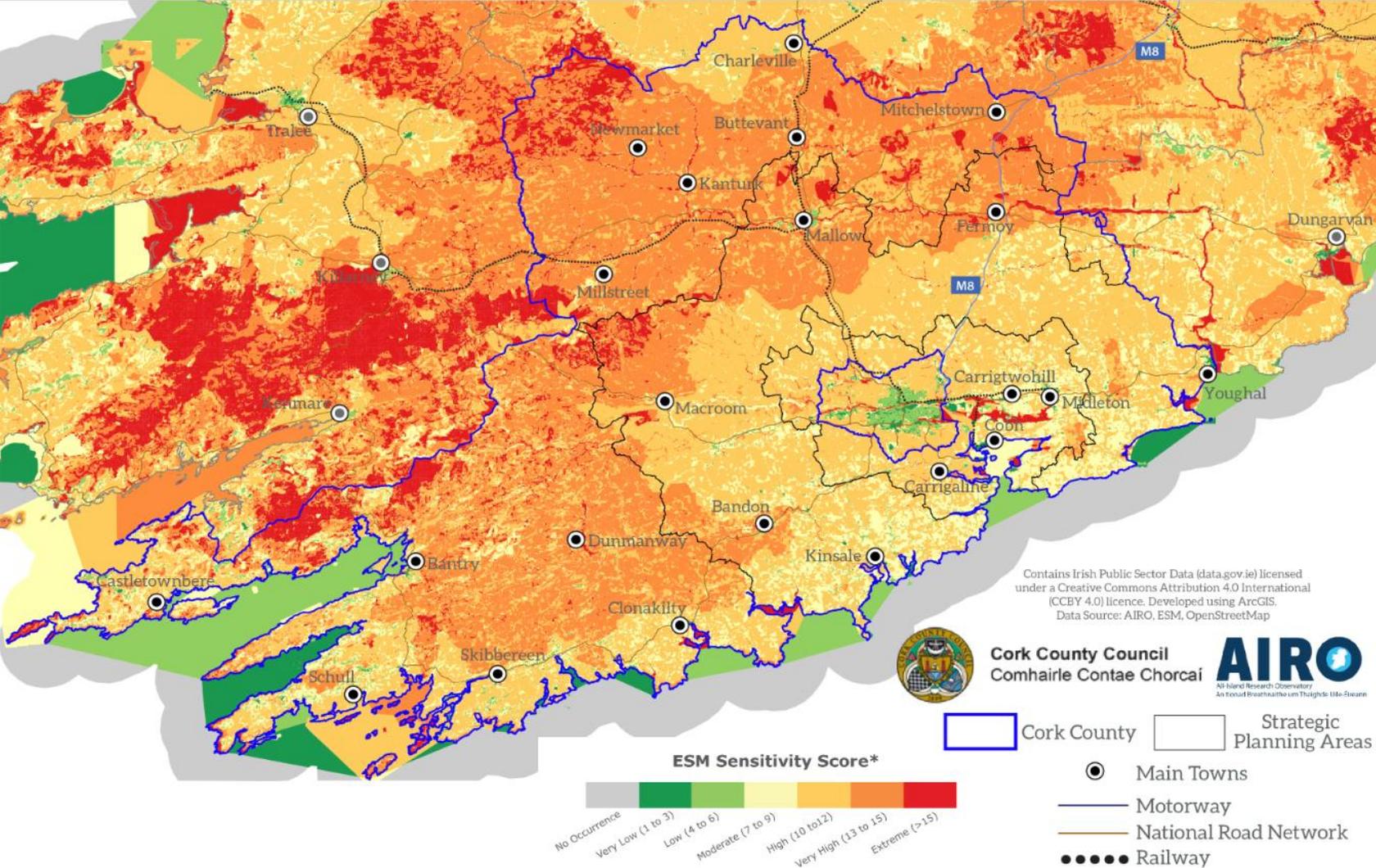


Figure 6.2.4 –Environmental Sensitivity Map illustrating Climate Change and Biodiversity Scenario. Data source – ESM

6.3 Population and Human Health

The National Planning Framework makes provision for the population of Cork City and County to grow to about 770,000 by 2040. The draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region including the Cork Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) includes interim population targets to 2026 and 2031. The population of Cork County is targeted to grow by nearly 105,000 people to about 437,000 people by 2040.

It is important to acknowledge that on the 31st of May 2019 the boundary of County Cork changed bringing with it all of the associated rearrangements of Municipal Districts and Local Electoral Areas following enactment of the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act, 2019 and the Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee No. 1 Report 2018. Where Census Data is used for tables and graphs in this document – these will generally refer to the old boundaries – i.e. the boundaries that were in effect during the last census (2016). Where information relates to new future population targets the new boundaries are used.

The 2016 Census population data for Cork suggests that there is evidence of a continuation of strong growth with an increase of population from 399,802 to 417,211 (17,409) or a 4.3% increase from the 2011 Census. In addition, the data indicates a trend of people returning to live in Cork City with a 5.4% increase (6,392 people) in population from the previous Census in 2011. The following bar chart highlights the changes in population in both the County and City from 1951 to 2016.

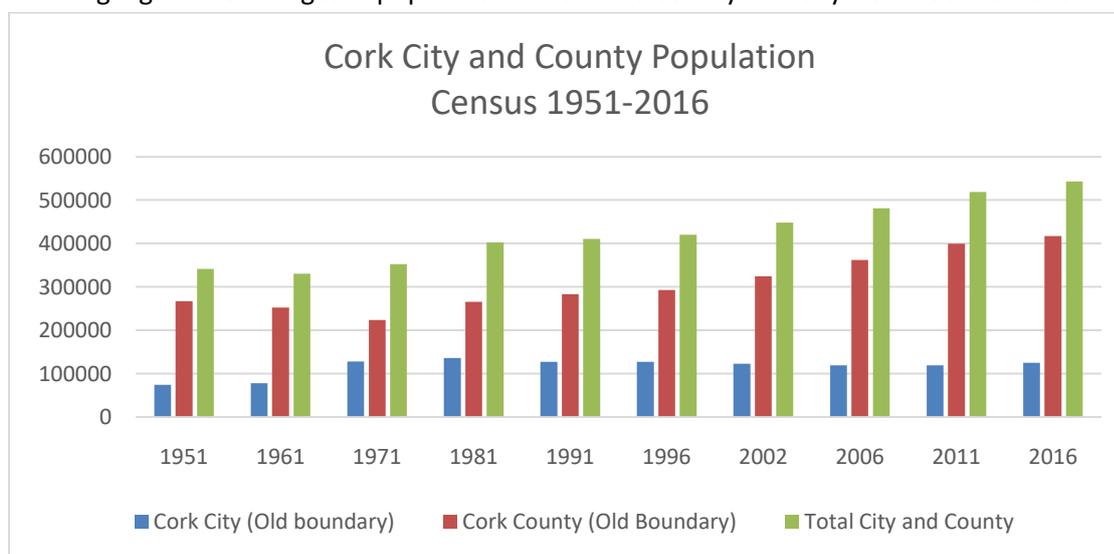


Figure 6.3.1 – Bar chart highlighting the changes in population in both the County and City from 1951 to 2016 Data source – www.cso.ie

The Core Strategy of the Cork CDP allocates population and housing growth across the towns, villages and rural parts of the county. The current allocation for population growth for each Strategic Planning Area, as provided for by the County Development Plan 2014, and adjusted to take account of the boundary changes³ and is set out in Table 6.3.2 below. The current population of Cork County is 332,015, this excludes Cork City and any areas that were transferred to the City Council.

³ See Appendix 1 for the Core Strategy tables from the CDP 2014 for the old administrative boundary

Table 6.3.2: Core Strategy 2014 by Strategic Planning Area			
Strategic Planning Area	2011 Census Pop	2022 Target Pop	2016 Census Pop ⁴
Metropolitan Cork (adjusted for new boundaries)			
Main Towns	49,464	76,191	53,904
Villages and Rural	(Not available)	(Not available)	40,649
Total SPA	(Not available)	(Not available)	94,553
Greater Cork Ring			
Main Towns	41,300	54,727	43,010
Villages and Rural	77,118	77,155	81,960
Total SPA	118,418	131,882	124,970
North Cork			
Main Towns	13,039	17,117	13,510
Villages and Rural	37,405	38,895	38,091
Total SPA	50,498	56,012	51,601
West Cork			
Main Towns	13,894	19,900	13,307
Villages and Rural	46,483	48,937	47,584
Total SPA	60,377	68,837	60,891
Total County			332,015

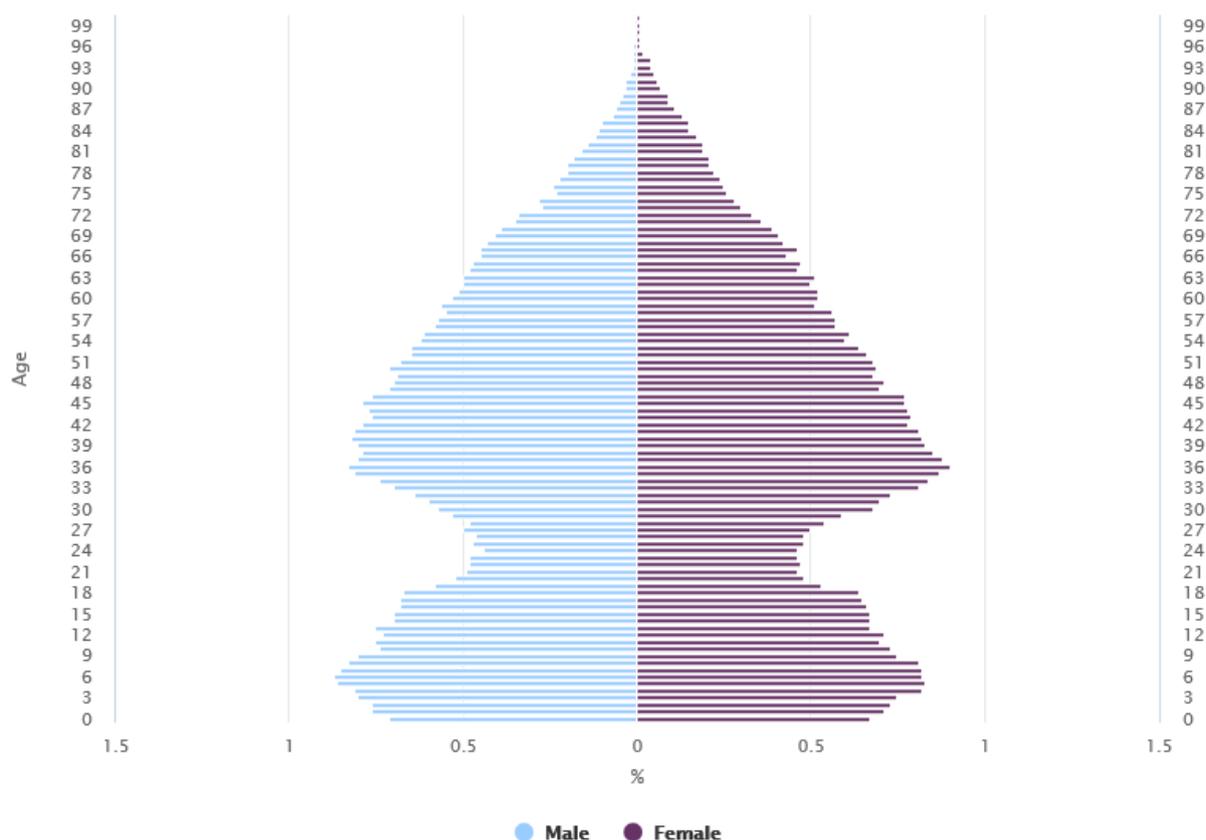
Data Source: www.corkcocodevplan.com and www.cso.ie

63% of the population of the county live in rural areas (including village settlements) and 37% live in urban areas. Table 6.3.2 shows that growth in the villages and rural area of the Greater Cork Ring recorded substantial growth while the towns did not perform as well as expected. Indeed, population levels in the main towns were well below target across all Strategic Planning Areas.

The allocation of future growth for County Metropolitan Cork as set out in the NPF and the RSES is 49,000 additional people to 2040 – which is about 47% of the total growth allocated to Cork County. The remainder of this growth – 55,000 people will be divided up between the Greater Cork Ring Strategic Planning Area, the West Strategic Planning Area and the North Strategic Planning Area.

Figure 6.3.2 below shows a population pyramid illustrating the CSO data available for the number of males and females in 2016, by single year of age. It is evident from the pyramid that in Cork County there is a definite increase in the years 3-9 which taper back to the birth rate by age 18, indicating a previous baby boom. The more typical pyramid shape is evident from mid-30's which tapers out as expected especially over 80 years of age – with slightly more females showing at the tip of the pyramid in both areas.

⁴ Some of the Census towns which previously combined legal towns and their environs have been newly defined using the standard census town criteria (with the 100 metres proximity rule). For some towns the impact of this has been to lose area and population, compared with previous computations – one such example is Bantry town.



Source: CSO Ireland

Figure 6.3.2 – Population pyramid illustrating census 2016 data for Cork County

With regard to household numbers and available private and public infrastructure in the County, there are 52,096 permanent private households serviced by individual septic tanks in County Cork, 5,690 are served by individual treatment systems that are not septic tanks. There are 81,832 permanent private household served by public sewerage schemes (Census 2016). There are 103,347 permanent private households getting their water supply from public mains, 4,295 from the local authority group schemes, 2,159 from private group schemes and 31,759 from other private sources (Census 2016).

The ESM tool has been used to inform the baseline information on other elements of the population also, including deprivation levels and unemployment rates in the County. An examination was conducted using CSO data from the 2016 Census and the maps illustrated below were generated.

Figure 6.3.3 shows the deprivation index for the County, those areas that are suffering with economic difficulties and in contrast those areas recording affluence can be seen. Large areas of west and north Cork are recording marginally below average levels of deprivation.

Figure 6.3.4 again uses data from the Census 2016 to determine the levels of unemployment throughout the county. This information will inform the CDP economic strategy in the future. There is also a known strong link between levels of unemployment and health issues amongst the general population. More information on this topic can be found in the Economy and Employment background document.

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2016

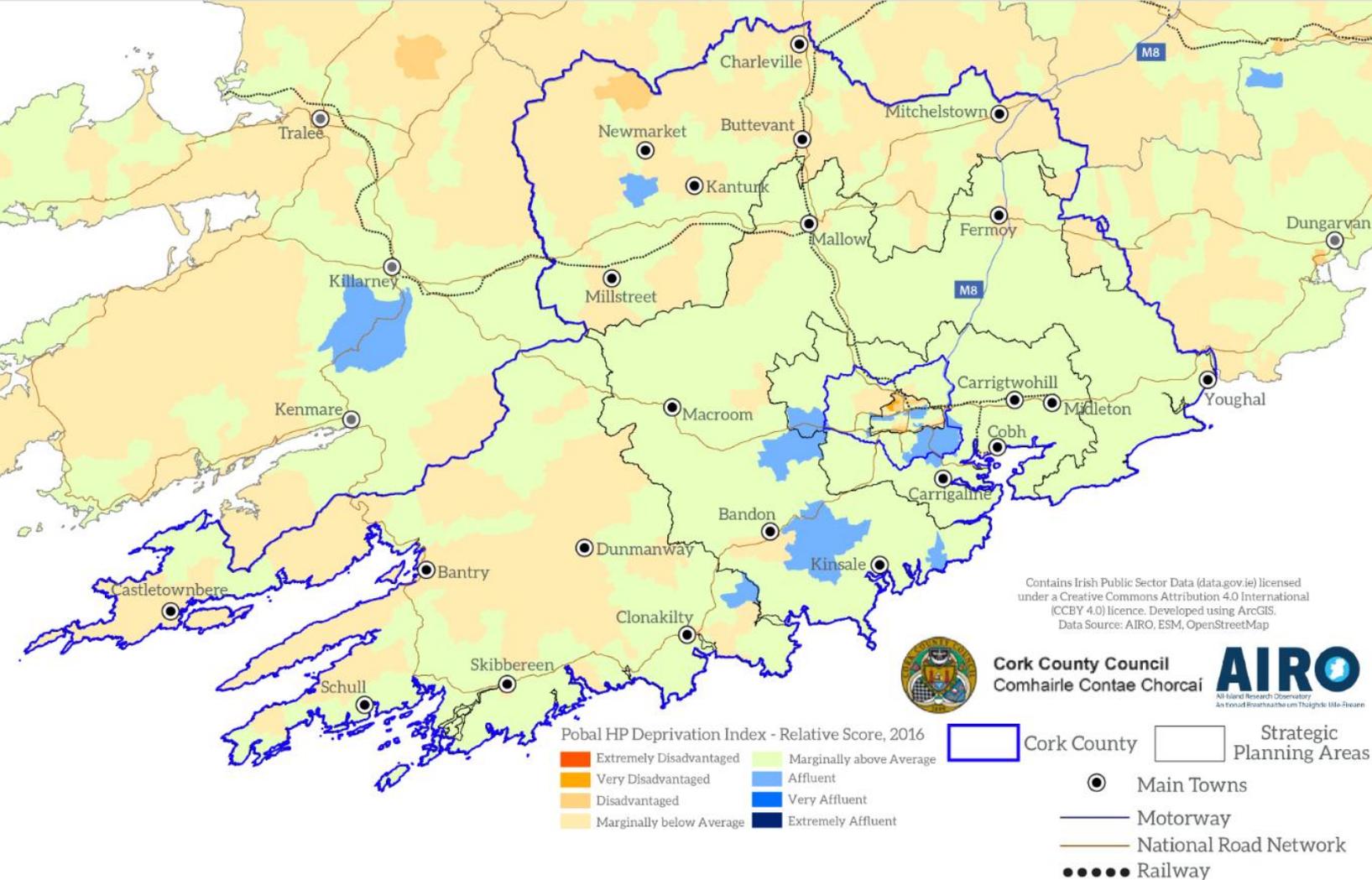


Figure 6.3.3 – Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2016. Data source – www.cso.ie and ESM

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - Labour Force Unemployment Rate, 2016

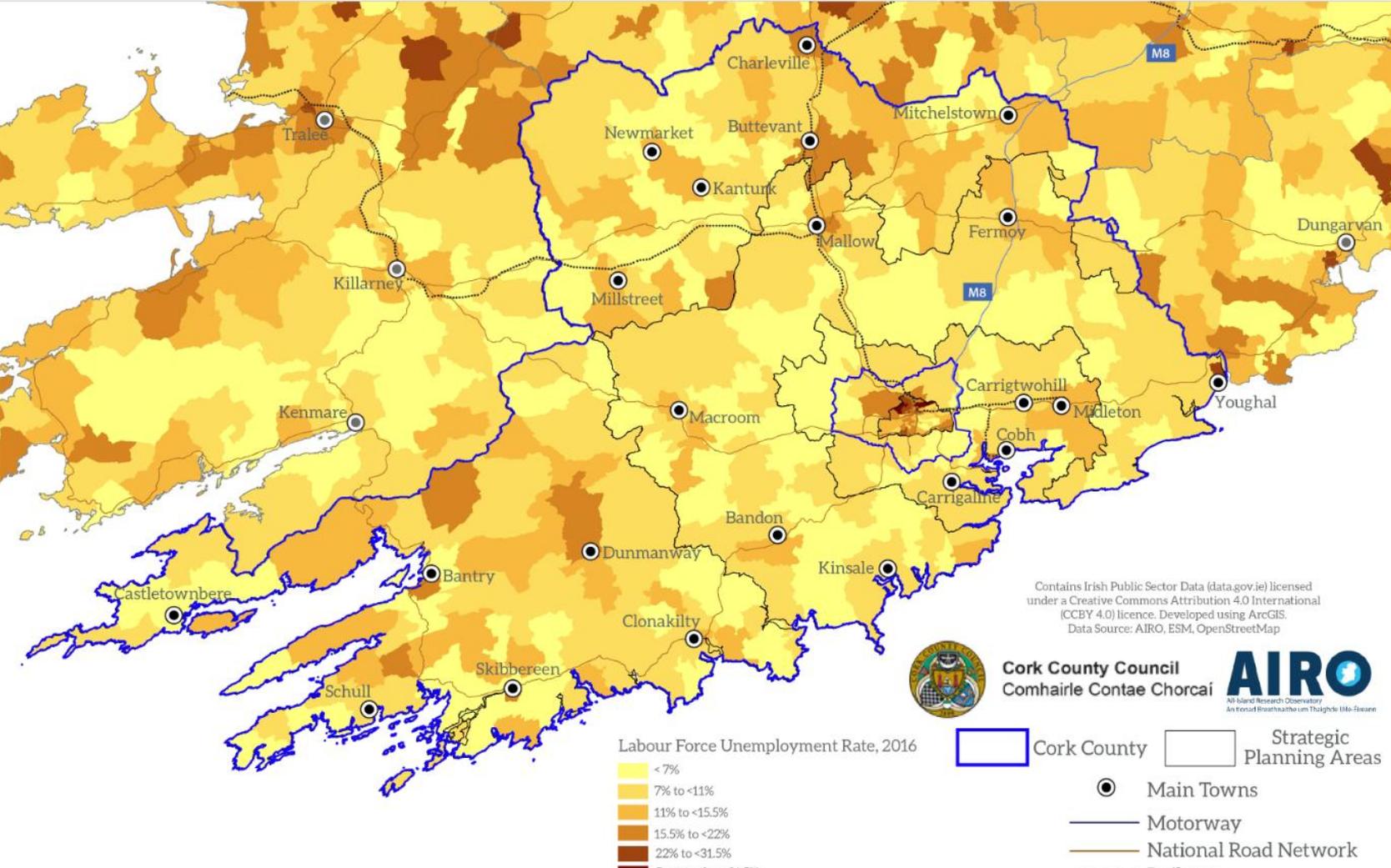


Figure 6.3.4 – Labour Force Unemployment Rate, 2016. Data source – www.cso.ie and ESM

6.4 Soils & Geology

Soil is a valuable resource that performs many ecosystem services: production of food; production of biomass; storage, filtration and transformation of nutrients and water; carbon storage and cycling; and contributes to the landscape and cultural environment. Figure 6.4.1 below details the various different soil types that are present in Cork County.

In the northern, eastern and southern parts of the County the soils are predominantly acid/ basic deep well-drained mineral soils such as Brown Podzolics. These are good productive agricultural soils with a wide range of uses, particularly suitable for arable farming, which should be protected where possible. To the northwest of the County, there are heavy textured gley soils which are poorly drained due to a combination of heavy texture, gently undulating topography and/or high ground-water level. Poorly drained mineral soils, shallow lithosolic-podzolic types and peats are more common along the western Atlantic margins of West Cork.

High Level Blanket Peat soils and Low Level Peat soils are found in western and north-western parts of the County. High Level Blanket Peat soils occur above 150 metres and also at the higher levels in mountain areas in the western parts of the County. Low Level Peat soils occur in flat or undulating topography below the 150 m contour line. These soils have limited agricultural value but often have important nature conservation value and also are important carbon sinks which need to be preserved to combat further climate change.

There are 103 sites of geological interest in County Cork which are afforded protection in the current County Development Plan. Some of the sites listed are also protected under Natural Heritage Area Designations.

Figure 6.4.2 presents an overview of the land cover types present in the County. It gives an interesting perspective on the various areas of natural and anthropogenic land uses and may be used to inform future decisions on areas suitable for development.

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - Soils (National Soil Survey)

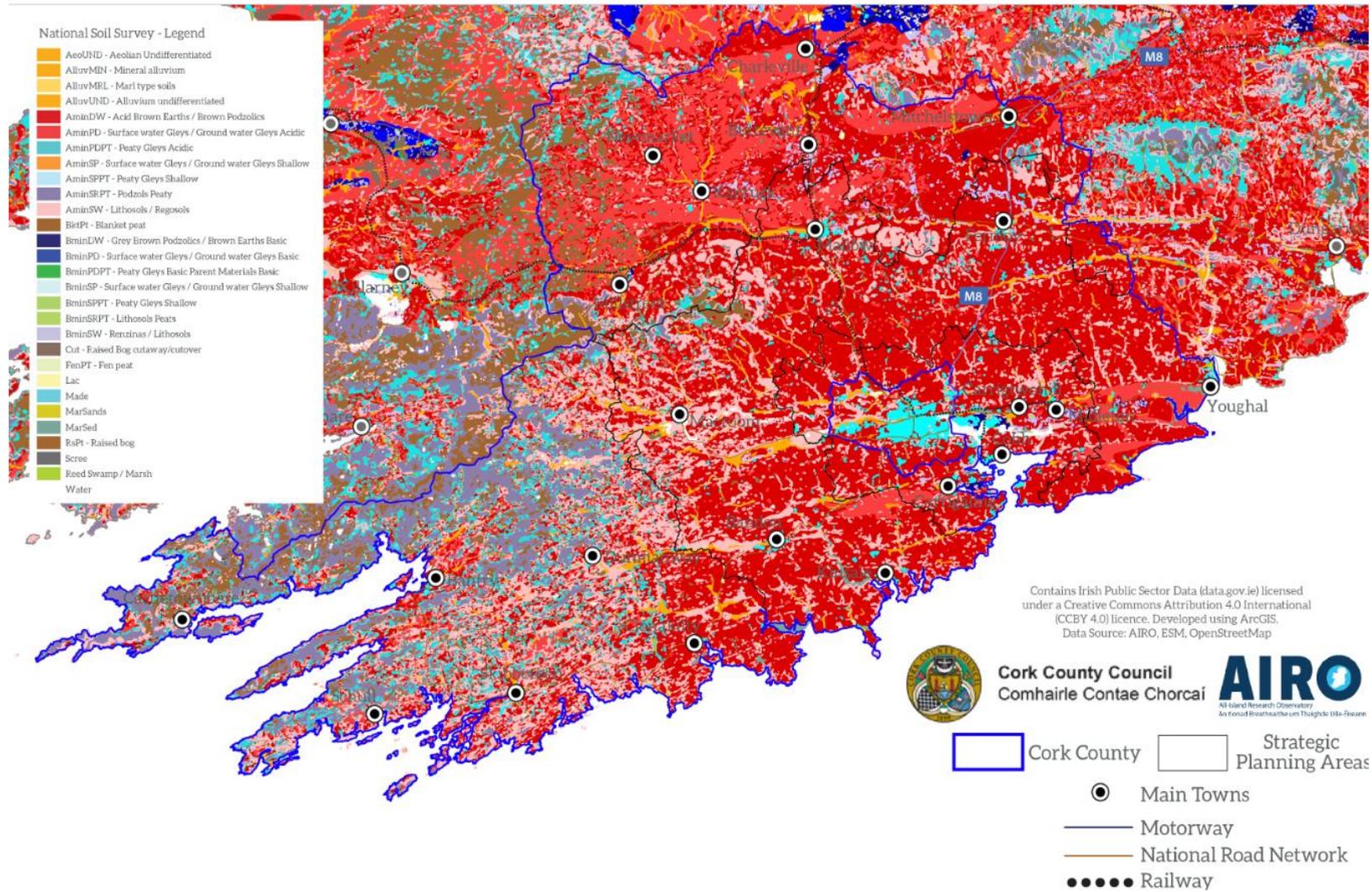


Figure 6.4.1 – Soil Types in County Cork. Data source –National Soil Survey and ESM

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - CORINE Land Cover Type, 2018

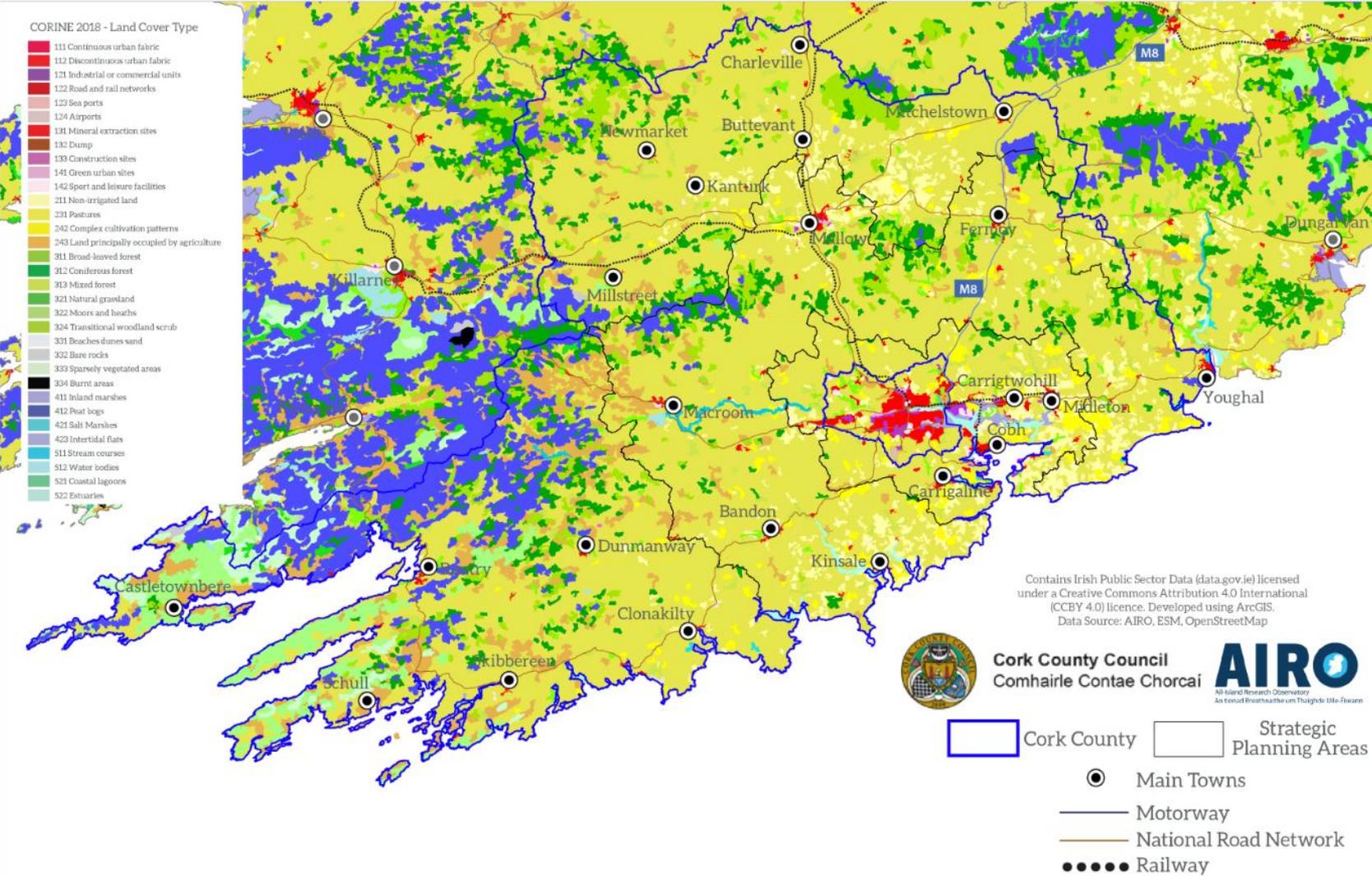


Figure 6.4.2 – Corine Land Cover map of County. Data source – EPA and ESM

6.5 Water

County Cork has the greatest number of rivers of any county in Ireland including the Argideen, Bandon, Blackwater, Bride, Glashaboy, Ilen and the Lee. Notably, most major rivers in the County run from west to east.

The most recent data (released in 2019) on the existing water quality in County Cork for the period 2013-2018 is illustrated in figure 6.5.1 and shows that the majority of our river and coastal water bodies have achieved good or high status, while our lakes and transitional waters have significantly higher percentages of poor status water bodies. To date, water protection efforts have succeeded in reducing the extent of serious pollution in rivers but there remains a need to improve the status of others which are currently at less than good ecological status.

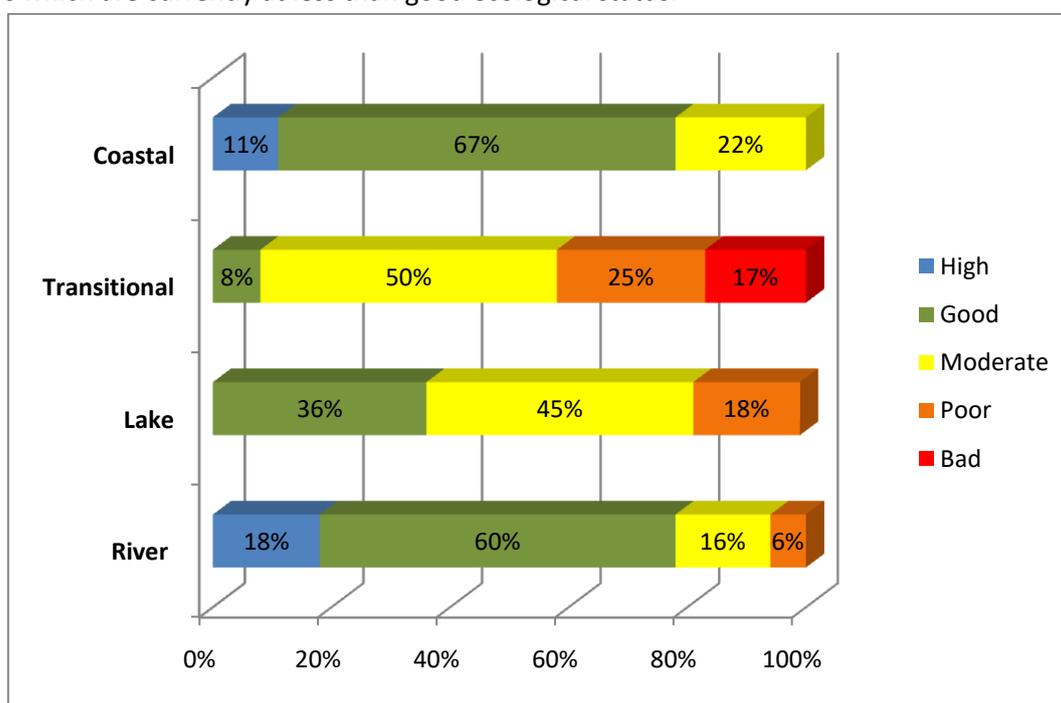


Fig. 6.5.1 Water Quality Status in county Cork for the period 2013-2018
Data Source: EPA – Catchments.ie website, 2019

Under the EU Water Framework Directive Ireland is obliged to produce a River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and the current plan covers the period 2018-2021. The plan details a series of actions to protect and improve water quality and achieve good ecological status in all our waterbodies by 2027. Water quality data for Cork County back to 2007 shows a worrying trend, with deterioration in the number of waterbodies achieving good status (down from 59% to 51% between 2007 and 2015) and corresponding increases in the number of moderate and poor ranked waterbodies.

Time Period	High	Good	Moderate	Poor	Bad
2007-2009	22%	59%	14%	5%	1%
2010-2012	23%	54%	16%	6%	0%
2010-2015	22%	51%	17%	10%	0%
2013-2018	16%	57%	19%	7%	1%

Fig. 6.5.2 Water Quality Status for all Surface Waters - Trend 2007-2018

Source: EPA – Catchments.ie website, 2019

Figure 6.5.3 below shows current data in relation to the WFD Lake and River status for the various different water bodies throughout the county. No water body currently has a ‘bad’ status, the challenge for the next County development Plan will be to improve on the current situation and ensure there is no deterioration of current ‘poor’ status water bodies.

An examination was conducted of the data available on the ‘at risk’ waterbodies throughout the county, these are waterbodies which are at risk of deteriorating or not achieving ‘Good’ ecological status by 2021 (2nd Water Framework Directive (WFD) cycle). Risk status is assigned based on the latest ecological status, water quality trends and distance to thresholds assessments (source: EPA – <https://www.catchments.ie/maps/>). The catchments of the Blackwater, Lee and Bandon rivers in particular show high proportion of “at risk” water bodies. Similarly, water bodies in east and northeast Cork, particularly, in the vicinity of Charleville, Buttevant and Mitchelstown are also “at risk” of not meeting the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.

In the case of estuarine water bodies, those “at risk” in Cork County include the Lower Blackwater Estuary and Youghal Harbour, Cork Harbour, Owenaboy Estuary, Kinsale harbour, Ardigeen Estuary, Coutmacsherry Bay, Clonakilty Bay and harbour, Rosscarbery Bay and Harbour, Ilen Estuary, lough Mahon and the Owenacurra Estuary. The assimilative capacity of receiving waters is particularly important in sensitive ecological catchments such as those that host Freshwater Pearl Mussel (FWPM) e.g. Ownagapul River, Eyeries. Water abstraction and impacts on water quality are two of the main threats to future FWPM populations.

All rural houses in unserviced areas rely on individual onsite waste water treatment facilities and water supplies. It is essential, in terms of public health and protecting groundwater and overall environmental quality, that the original site selection process verifies that the site is suitable for such development in the first instance and that the waste water treatment systems are correctly designed, installed and maintained over its lifetime.

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - WFD Lake and River Status

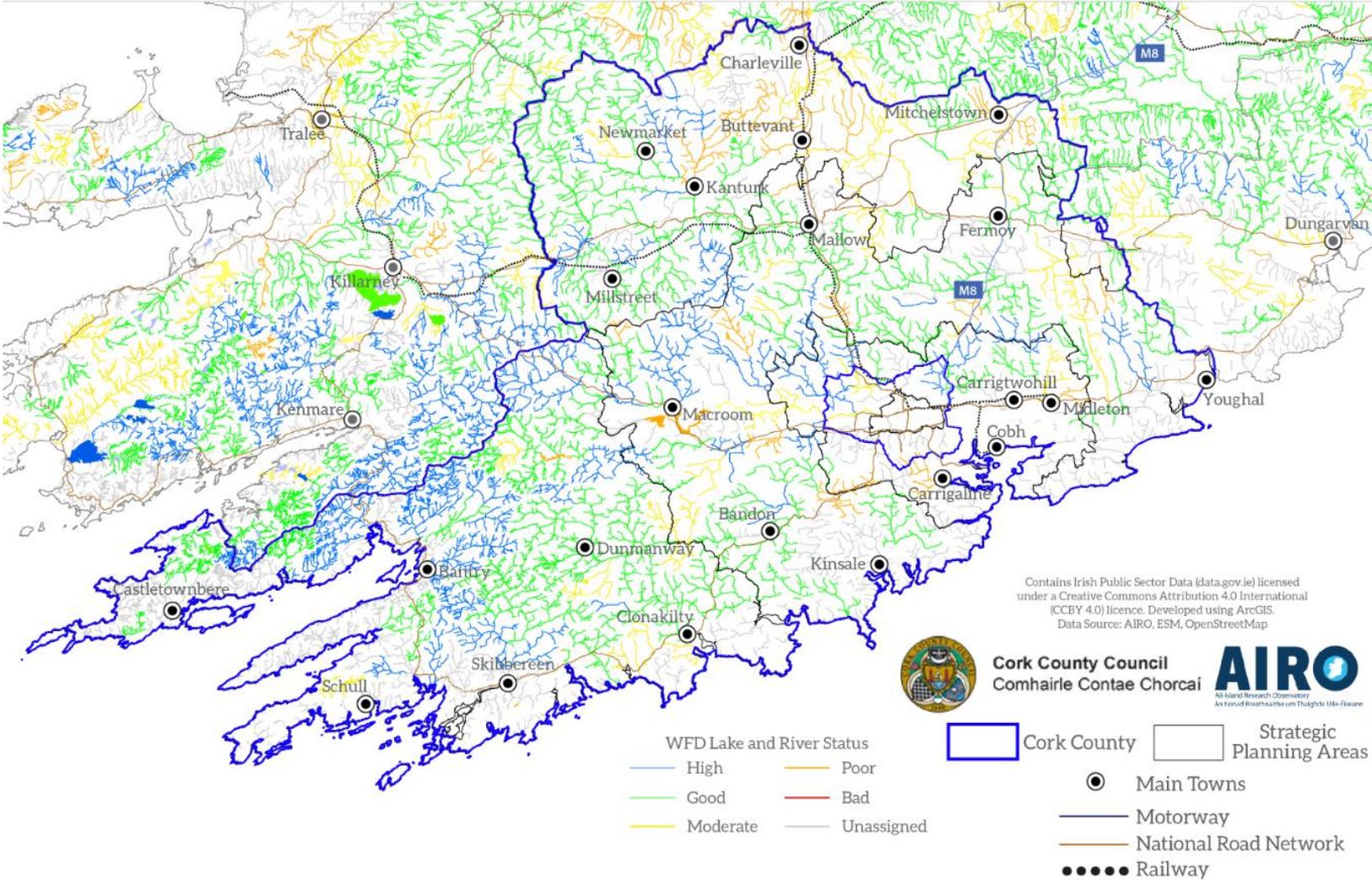


Figure 6.5.3 – Current WFD Lake and River Status. Data source – EPA (catchments.ie) and ESM

Groundwater is a natural resource with both an ecological and economic value. It is of vital importance for sustaining life, health, agriculture and the integrity of ecosystems. This is particularly true in North Cork where 90% of the water supply comes from groundwater sources.

The catchment area around a groundwater source, which contributes water (Zone of Contribution) to a borehole or spring, is known as a Source Protection Zone. The GSI have prepared Groundwater Source Protection reports for a small number of public supplies in North Cork and South Cork. The EPA has also prepared Groundwater Source Protection Reports for the monitoring points in Cork in the EPA’s National Groundwater Monitoring Network.

Through an assessment of the existing baseline information it has emerged that the three main challenges for water quality management are to eliminate serious pollution associated with point sources (waste water treatment plants); to tackle diffuse pollution (pollution from agricultural and forestry activities and septic tanks etc); and to use the full range of legislative measures in an integrated way to achieve better water quality. These challenges will be examined in greater detail in the environmental report. Figure 6.5.4 below details the frequency of significant pressures and sources of pressures on ‘At Risk’ water bodies.

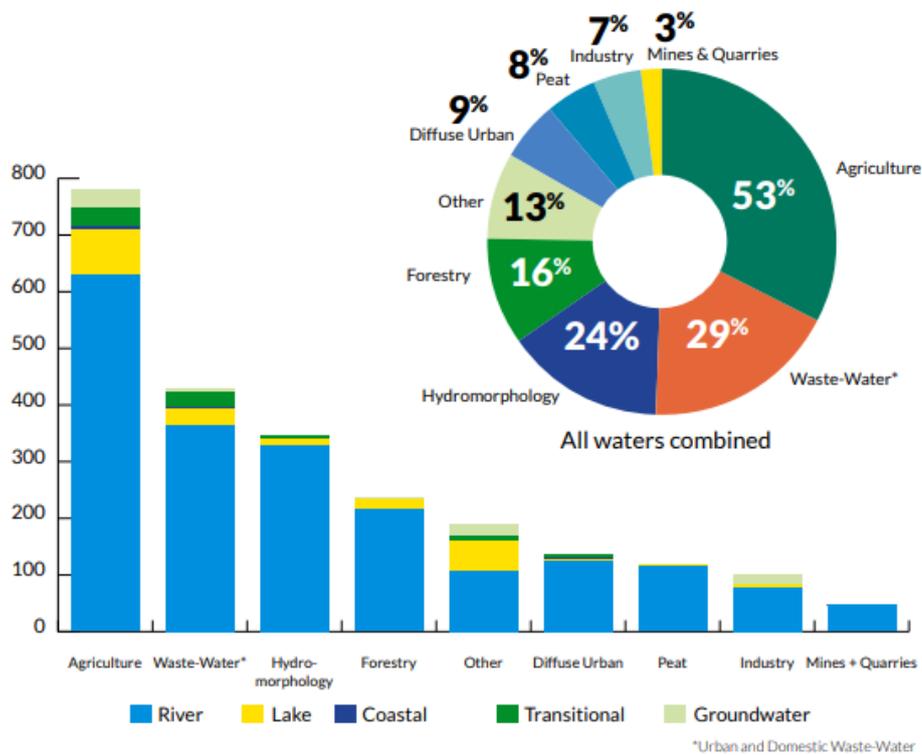


Figure 6.5.4 frequency of significant pressures and sources of pressures on ‘At Risk’ water bodies. Data source – EPA (catchments.ie)

6.6 Air and Climatic Factors

The Earth’s climate is changing and the impact of these changes is becoming increasingly more evident. These changes are creating significant global economic, environmental and social impacts. The Irish Government’s Climate Action Plan highlights that these changes will cause ‘*extensive direct and indirect harm to Ireland and its people, as well as to other countries more exposed and less able than we are to withstand the associated impacts*’.

The county has experienced the impacts of climate change and has witnessed significant flood events in the past such as when the River Bandon (in 2015) and the River Lee (in 2009) exceeded capacity. In addition extensive periods of drought have led to shortages in water supply in settlements across the county, most notably in the summer of 2018. Table 6.6.1 below details some other events that have occurred as the result of climate change and more extreme weather events in the recent past.

Table 6.6.1 – Recent examples of Climate Change Impacts				
Subsidence of a bridge structure at Barleycove causeway after a flood/rainfall event - September 2015.	Clonakilty required tankering of water due to drought conditions – Summer 2018	62% of critically damaged bridges in Cork showed failure due to bridge scour, which leads to exposure of bridge foundations, as a consequence of increased rainfall intensity and larger flows – Survey 2012-2014	Drought will have a significant impact on water supply but also for certain water reliant species such as the Otter and Freshwater Pearl Mussel.	Spread of alien invasive species in riparian areas through extensive flooding.

Mitigation and adaptation are important strategies in responding to climate change. Mitigation deals with the causes of climate change and works to reduce man-made effects on the climate system. Climate adaptation refers to actions taken to reduce the negative effects of climate change or to take advantage of emerging opportunities. Cork County Council’s Climate Change Adaptation Strategy was adopted in September 2019 and sets out the Local Authority’s strategic priorities, measures and responses for climate adaptation in the county over the next 5 years with the aim of building resilience and preventing the worst of risks. A key action set out in the strategy is the requirement to mainstream climate change adaptation into all of the Council’s plans and policies including the County Development Plan.

Air quality is generally good in the County, with Cork’s geographical location in an area with a relatively mild climate which has an almost continuous movement of clean air. The biggest threat now facing air quality is emissions from road traffic.

Climate Change is recognised as a significant global environmental problem and this is why this is one of the cross cutting themes of this Development Plan. Scientific evidence is showing that the

climate is changing and it is imperative to consider how human activity is influencing such change and how resultant impacts such as increased flooding can be better planned for or averted.

The impacts of climate change are felt more prominently at a local level. County Cork has experienced severe weather events over recent years including increases in storm events, higher incidences of flooding and periods of prolonged drought. Under the National Adaptation Framework, each Local Authority is required to develop a Climate Adaptation Strategy for the period 2019-2024. Cork County Councils Climate Adaptation Strategy was adopted in September 2019.

Expected increases in temperature, changes in precipitation patterns, weather extremes (storms and flooding, sea surges, flash floods) and sea-level rise will affect the abundance and distribution of Irish species and possibly encourage the spread of alien invasive species, noxious weeds and pests. All these protected biodiversity areas will need to be given careful consideration during climate adaptation planning.

Resilience to climate change impacts can be improved by well-designed places and buildings. Carbon emissions can be reduced through, for instance, good physical connections with surrounding areas which encourages walking and cycling and by having easier access to public transport.

6.7 Material Assets & Infrastructure

Material assets primarily relate to the infrastructural assets that enable a settlement to function as a place to live and work and can be taken to mean infrastructure including also settlements (towns and villages etc.), transport, energy supply and utilities including water services.

Cork County has a high level of road transport infrastructure; this has led to the over-reliance on the car as the predominant mode of transport for both passengers and freight. As a consequence, emissions of greenhouse gases and acidifying gases from the road transport sector contribute significantly to national emissions. There is a strong need for measures to encourage modal shift away from private cars and encourage more informed decision making and consumer choices in relation to distance travelled and the vehicles/ fuels employed by citizens.

In parts of County Cork there is a lack of appropriate waste water treatment infrastructure, where existing facilities are overstretched or where they do not treat waste water to a sufficient degree. In some areas residential development has preceded the provision of waste water or has resulted in cases where the capacity of existing treatment facilities has been exceeded and put under increasing pressure. This is becoming a significant consideration around the county but particularly for the towns within the River Blackwater Catchment and the also the Lower Cork Harbour Towns. Some improvements have been made of late through investment by Irish Water but more is required in order to ensure water quality meets the required national and European standards.

A Water Services Capacity register has been prepared which contains all the relevant data with regard to available capacity, investment requirements and areas where environmental sensitivities are present and may require further investigation and works. A summary of this capacity Register is given in Table 6.7.1 below. Cork County Council is working in conjunction with Irish Water, informing them of these areas of constraint and coming up with solutions where necessary (See Water Services Background Document for more info).

Table 6.7.1. Water Services Capacity within the Settlement Network – September 2019

Settlement Network	Water Supply				Waste Water				
	Total	Capacity	Future capacity	Limited capacity	No capacity	Capacity	Future capacity	Limited capacity	No capacity
Main Settlements	26	9	3	10	4	10	14	2	0
Key Villages	45	15	6	17	7	11	20	6	8
Villages	96	37	2	24	33	20	13	6	57
Village Nuclei	88	21	1	23	43	3	2	0	83
Other Locations	46	12	0	8	26	1	0	2	43
Islands	7	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	7
Total	308	95	13	85	115	45	49	16	198

6.8 Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural, Heritage

Cultural Heritage gives us a sense of identity and place. It encompasses the monuments, buildings, folklore and traditions that link communities together. Preservation of these resources not only enriches the identity of Cork County for generations to come but also provides for a unique selling point in terms of tourism and thus the local economy.

In Cork there are approximately 18,977 monuments listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004, the largest number for any county in Ireland as figure 6.8.1 illustrates. All known archaeological sites are identified in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) (see www.archeology.ie). The list of monuments includes megalithic (wedge) tombs, standing stones, fulachta fiadh, ringforts, souterrains, medieval churches, tower houses and water-powered mills.

The Architectural Heritage of the County is afforded protection through the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) by way of the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). Cork County Council has a legal responsibility to include a RPS in the Development Plan to protect buildings of special interest or significance. The County Development Plan 2022 will include all the settlements of the County, replacing the current Municipal District Local Area Plans adopted in 2017 and the Development Plans of the former Town Council Towns of Clonakilty, Cobh, Fermoy, Kinsale, Macroom, Mallow, Midleton, Skibbereen and Youghal. There are currently 1325 RPS (82 transferred to city) and there are an additional 1493 RPS in the former town council areas, therefore giving a total of 2,818 currently in the County. There are currently 41 ACAs (3 transferred to City) in the County and an additional 33 ACAs in the former town council areas giving a total of 77.

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)

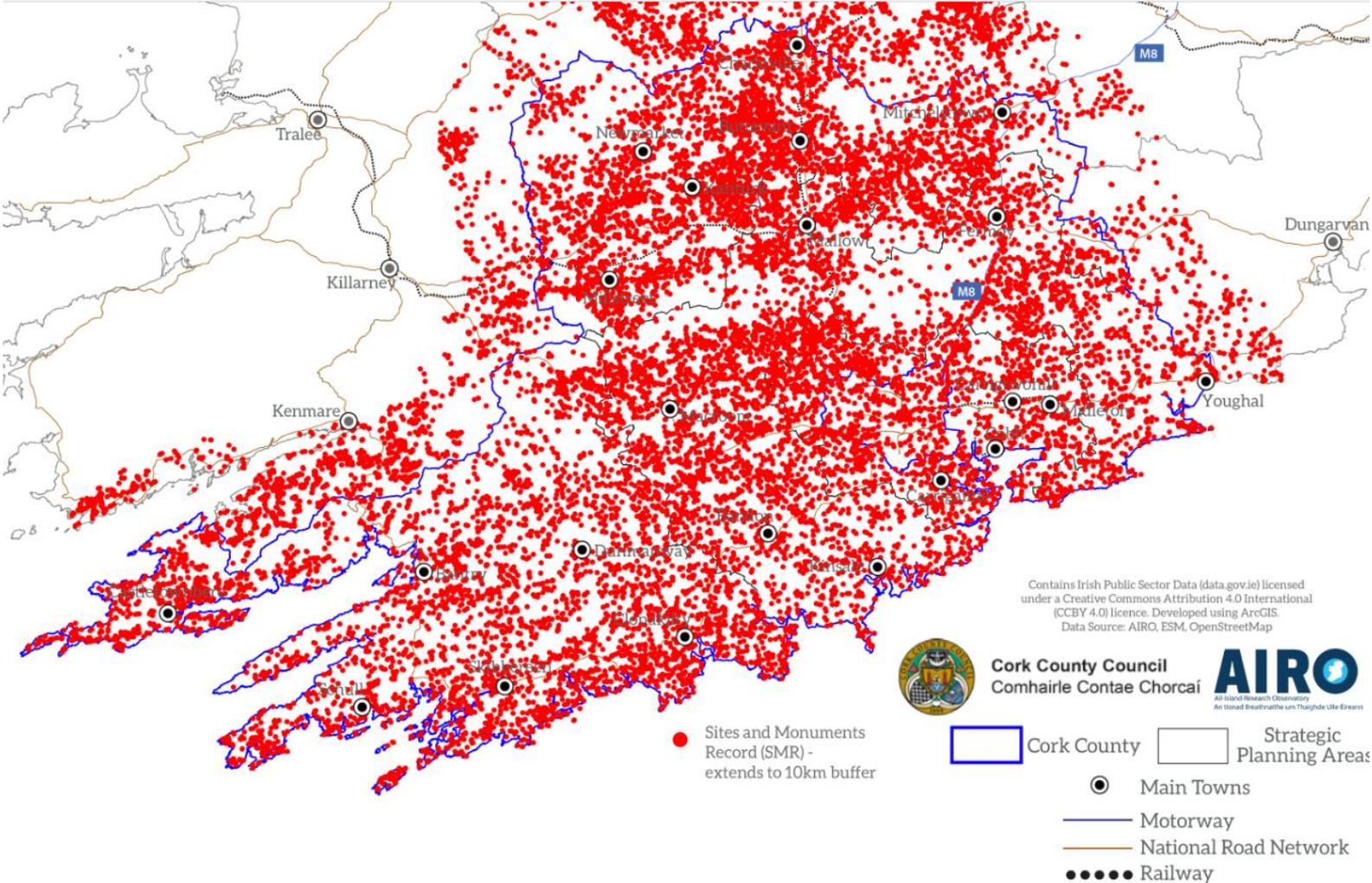


Figure 6.8.1 – Sites and Monuments within County Cork. Data source –DCHG (www.archaeology.ie) and ESM.

6.9 Landscape

As defined by Article 1.a. of the European Landscape Convention - Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

The National Landscape Strategy for Ireland (2015-2025) was produced in line with Ireland's obligations under the Landscape Convention and is to be used to ensure compliance with the European Landscape Convention and to establish principles for protecting and enhancing the landscape while positively managing its change. It is intended that a National Landscape Character Map will be prepared to describe and assess distinct landscape character areas at the national scale, ensuring consistency within and between public authority areas and functions.

Cork County contains significant areas of landscape importance which are significant not only for their intrinsic value as places of natural beauty but also because they provide a real asset for residents and tourists in terms of recreation and other uses. A Landscape Character Assessment forms part of the current Development Plan which may be updated on completion of the National Landscape Character Assessment and Department Guidelines.

The Cork County Development Plan 2003 identified 76 landscape character areas in the County, reflecting its complexity and diversity. The landscape character areas were then amalgamated into 16 generic landscape types, based on similarities evident within the areas (see figure 6.9.1 overleaf). Each landscape type represents a generic area of distinctive character based on large-scale characteristics. The Landscape Character Assessment evaluated each of the 16 landscape character types and attributed a value, sensitivity and importance to each landscape type (see figure 6.9.2 overleaf). It is intended that the County Development Plan will provide a framework to manage change appropriately within the landscape by limiting development within the most sensitive and scenic locations and directing growth to appropriate robust landscape areas within the fringes of the existing settlement network.

While recognising that landscape and seascape are a constantly evolving entity, the most significant impact of development on the landscape relates to its visual impact. In areas of the County with high landscape sensitivity, the capacity to accommodate development without adverse impacts on the environment would be more limited. New developments in the landscape, may not in itself have an adverse visual impact, however, the cumulative impact of many similar developments could have the potential to adversely affect the landscape, a further examination of the impacts of policies and objectives within the proposed draft plan on landscape sensitivity will be carried out in the SEA environmental report.

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - Landscape Character Areas (Types)

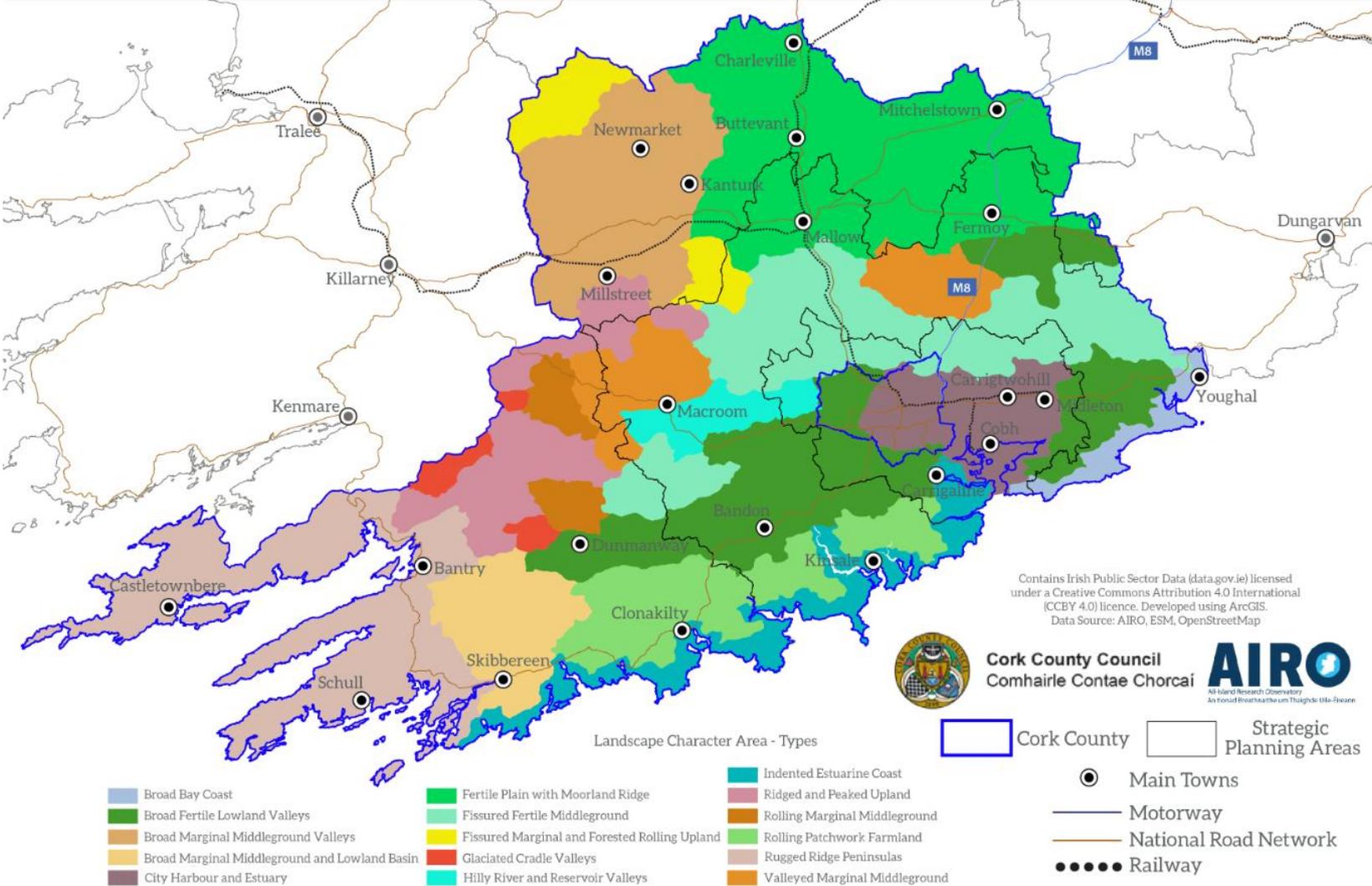


Figure 6.9.1 – Landscape Character Areas (Types). Data source – CDP and ESM.

Cork County Council SEA Baseline - Landscape Character Areas

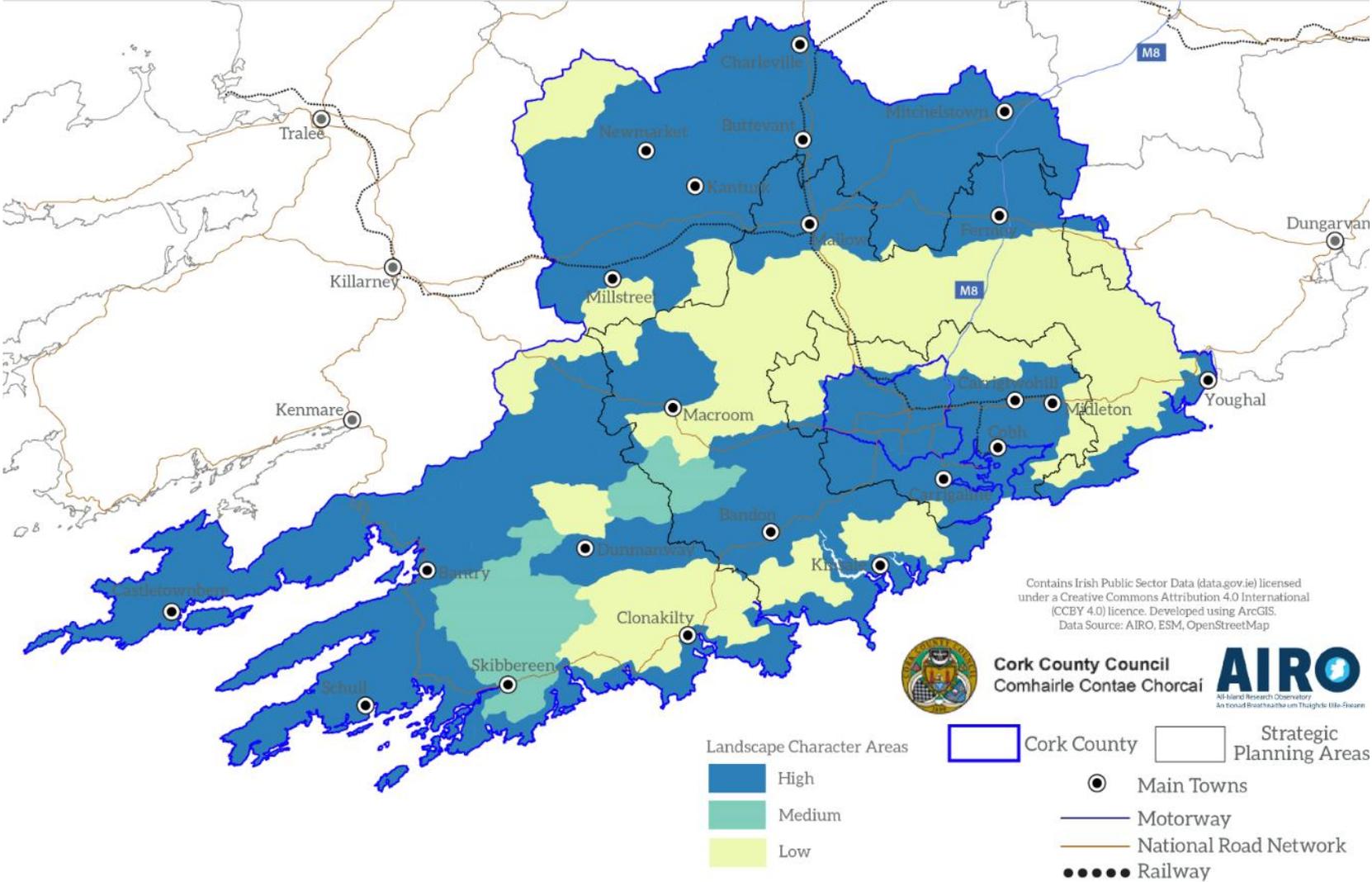


Figure 6.9.2 – Landscape Character Areas. Data source – CDP and ESM.

7.0 Scoping of SEA Topics

In accordance with S.I. 436 of 2004 as amended, consideration has been given to the type of environmental effects, both positive and negative, that could be expected to arise from implementation of the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028. It is anticipated that Table 7.1 will evolve as the Development Plan process progresses and as a clearer picture of the types of measures being considered and the impacts on the receiving environment becomes fully apparent.

Table 7.1 Scoping of SEA Issues

SEA Topics	Scoped In / Out	Environmental Constraints and Opportunities
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for improved integration of key conservation legislation in overarching land use planning decisions; • Consideration of the economic potential of biodiversity, flora and fauna to contribute to settlements, communities and regions; • Balancing the need for growth with protecting wild places and protected areas; • Effects on protected areas: European (SACs, SPAs). • Effects on flora and fauna. • Effects on salmonids, other protected fish and shellfish species. • Effects on Ramsar sites, UWWTD sensitive waters, NHAs. • Effects on sensitive habitats and marine habitats. • Potential for habitat loss and fragmentation; • Effects and opportunities on refuge for fauna. • Effects on habitat quality. • Potential introduction and spread of alien species and invasive species. • Control and management of alien species and invasive species. • Potential for habitat loss and fragmentation. • Potential for interaction with Habitats Directive, i.e. Article 6.
Population & Human Health	In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased requirements for public transport services and cycle corridors to service population growth and commuter belts; • Increasing car dependency and associated emissions to air; • Disparities between where people work and where they live; • Effects on connectivity of communities, both physical links and communications. • Impacts on community amenities and facilities to local residents. • Effects on disadvantaged communities. • Improving transport connections to and from Cork Harbour and surrounding area. • Disturbance and nuisance impacts from traffic. • Health impacts from emissions and disturbance. • Impacts on employment and training opportunities. • Recreational use of land (walking, cycling, bird watching etc.). • Recreational use of water (e.g. bathing, fishing, sailing, rowing, and kayaking).

SEA Topics	Scoped In / Out	Environmental Constraints and Opportunities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible effects on tourism (e.g. increased numbers visiting key tourism sites).
Soils and Geology	In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilisation of existing brownfield sites; Land vulnerable to erosion (e.g. coastal and riparian areas). Erosion and soil function. Encourage sustainable soil management; Value soils including prime agricultural land; Effects on geomorphology (i.e. river channels, landforms). Change in land use. Effects on access to lands. Management of contaminated soils/materials.
Water	In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on WFD status/ Blue Dot Catchment Programme. Facilitating growth and development without compromising achievement of WFD and MSFD objectives. Improve water services infrastructure networks and ensure development is matched with current and future infrastructure capacity i.e. wastewater volumes and treatment and water supply. Pressures and impacts on ecological status of water bodies. Effects on groundwater table and contamination of groundwater. Water pollution from point or diffuse sources; Morphological impacts on water bodies. Impacts on water supply (including potable) and water conservation. Flood risk.
Air & Climatic Factors	In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effects on ambient air quality. Car dependant culture; Modal shift away from road transport; Switch to alternative fuels; Reduce transport related emissions and increase energy efficiency across all transport modes; Integrate planning, economy and transport to reduce transport demand. Construction and operational emissions of developments. Effects of noise and vibration on humans and wildlife (including marine) in surrounding areas. Climate change mitigation and adaptation. Impacts of climate change on biodiversity. Climate change exacerbated flooding. Coastal zone management. Radon. Increased risk of extreme weather events. Provision of infrastructure which is adaptable to the impacts of climate change.
Material Assets & Infrastructure	In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for settlement to be aligned with required transport, water, energy infrastructure. Balance competing requirements for land use and natural resources. Infrastructure-led development. Effects of development on traffic and transportation, roads, railways lines, light houses, airports.

SEA Topics	Scoped In / Out	Environmental Constraints and Opportunities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on waste generation on the environment, landfills etc. • Effects on rates of reuse and recycling. • Many rural and peripheral areas poorly served by broadband • Effects of traffic levels on infrastructure in larger settlements. • In-combination impacts on biodiversity, water, soils, landscape, cultural heritage, soils etc. from competing sectors. • Effects on existing and proposed utilities and infrastructure, e.g. for transport, energy and communications.
<p>Cultural, Architectural & Archaeological Heritage</p>	<p>In</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on designated sites and monuments. • Integration of cultural heritage into the design of future developments. • Promotion of the cultural heritage resource as a source of economic benefit for communities e.g. tourism • Effects on water-based archaeological features. • Effects on historic landscapes. • Effects on cultural-scapes. • Effects on industrial and engineering archaeology. • Potential for disturbance of previously undiscovered archaeological remains. • Effects on areas of architectural significance. • Effects on protected structures and locally important buildings. • Effects on designated ACAs.
<p>Landscape & Visual Amenity</p>	<p>In</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects on areas of designated landscape quality and scenic views. • To integrate landscape considerations into the design of future developments; • Effects on the general landscapes and seascapes. • Potential for positive impacts (such as an enhancement to local amenities and historic buildings) should be considered and targets of improvement set. • Effects on historic landscapes. • Impacts on landscape character. • Effects on amenity value of natural environment. • Challenge when no national landscape character assessment.

Table 7.1 below highlights the potential inter-relationships between the SEA topics at a County Development Plan level. These potential interactions will be taken into account in the assessment of options / alternatives.

Table 7.1 Potential Inter-Relationships between SEA Topics

Environmental Topic	Air	Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	Climatic Factors	Cultural Heritage	Geology, Soils & Land use	Landscape & Visual Amenity	Material Assets & Infrastructure	Population & Human Health	Water
Air									
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	Y								
Climatic Factors	Y	Y							
Cultural Heritage	N	Y	Y						
Geology, Soils & Land Use	Y	Y	Y	Y					
Landscape & Visual Amenity	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				
Material Assets & Infrastructure	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			
Population & Human Health	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Water	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

8.0 Proposed Framework for Assessing Environmental Effects

A key purpose of scoping is to set out sufficient details about the proposed methodological framework for the assessment of environmental effects to allow the consultees to form a view on this matter. It is proposed to use an objectives-led assessment which will involve comparing the proposed alternatives against defined SEA Environmental Objectives (SEOs) for each of the identified issue areas.

The preceding sections have identified the environmental characteristics and key environmental issues relating to the Cork County Development Plan and the key influences from external plans, policies and strategies. This section uses that information to set out a series of draft SEA strategic environmental objectives. These will be used in the environmental report to predict the likely environmental effects of the Plan and, subsequently, monitor the implementation of the strategy. The use of these objectives ensures that following this scoping stage, the SEA focuses only on those issues that are most relevant and significant to the County Development Plan.

Set out in Table 8.1 are the draft Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) (also known as Environmental Protection Objectives (EPOs)) that are being considered to test the potential environmental impacts of the County Development Plan. These objectives are based on the current understanding of the key environmental issues identified. The detailed assessment criteria are examples of the issues that will be considered during the assessment of whether the plan, including the proposed alternatives, meets the proposed SEA objectives. The list is based on the environmental topics set out in Annex 1(f) of the SEA Directive, which might be significantly impacted upon by the Plan. The effects on these topics will address the secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative impacts.

It should be noted that these are draft objectives only and are provided for the purpose of discussion at this scoping stage. The SEA team welcomes feedback on the draft objectives with a view to updating them prior to any assessment.

The plan's impacts can be estimated as the difference in environmental conditions with and without implementation of the plan. It is clearly desirable, therefore, to use relevant quantitative data as far as possible to measure such changes, i.e. environmental indicators which can be used during the implementation monitoring phase. SEA indicators will be developed at Environmental report stage in order for the effectiveness of the Plan in meeting the SEA environmental objectives and targets.

Table 8.1 – Draft Strategic Environmental Objectives and Targets

Draft Strategic Environmental Objective	Draft Targets
<p>BIODIVERSITY FLORA AND FAUNA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To preserve, protect, maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, particularly EU designated sites and protected species. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>That biodiversity is integrated into all decision making across the Plan</i> ▪ <i>Seek to protect Margaritifera Sensitive Areas located outside of designated SACs.</i> ▪ <i>No loss of protected habitats and species during the lifetime of the Plan.</i> ▪ <i>Submission of Screening Report or Natura Impact Statement for proposed developments with planning applications in/and/or near European Sites.</i> ▪ <i>Prevent the introduction of new invasive or alien species.</i>
<p>POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a more healthy Ireland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Increase in the number of green spaces and amenities available to the public.</i> ▪ <i>Improved trends in perceived quality of life related to these matters</i> ▪ <i>No significant deterioration in human health as a result of environmental factors.</i> ▪ <i>Increase the number of active travel routes available to the population.</i>
<p>WATER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the WFD and MSFD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Not to permit development where it would result in a WWTP exceeding the terms of its discharge license.</i> ▪ <i>Encourage future population growth in areas served by urban waste water treatment plants and public water supplies</i> ▪ <i>All waters within the plan area to achieve the requirements of the WFD and the relevant River Basin Management Plan by 2027.</i>
<p>LAND AND SOILS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Reduce the use of greenfield land by encouraging the reuse of brownfield sites.</i> ▪ <i>Ensure sustainable extraction of non-renewable sand, gravel and rock deposits and the reuse and recycling of construction and demolition waste.</i>

<p>AIR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole resulting from emissions to air from all sectors with particular reference to emissions from transport, residential heating, industry and agriculture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Provide for increased use of public transport.</i> <i>Increase number of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes in the plan area. Maintain ambient air quality through reduction of private vehicle usage.</i> <i>An increase in the percentage of the population travelling to work or school by public transport or non mechanical means.</i>
<p>CLIMATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets and promote development resilient to the effects of climate change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Achieve transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.</i> <i>Increased density and penetration of the public transport network including frequency of service – eg. for urban and rural bus services.</i>
<p>MATERIAL ASSETS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimise existing infrastructure and provide new infrastructure to match population distribution proposals in the county. Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Reduction in the quantities of waste sent to landfill. Increase in the quantities of waste sent for recycling.</i> <i>Improvements to existing water and wastewater infrastructure.</i> <i>An increase in provision of cycle lanes and pedestrian routes.</i> <i>Reduction in the quantities of waste sent to landfill. Increase in the quantities of waste sent for recycling.</i>
<p>CULTURAL HERITAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological or architectural heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>No permitted development which involves loss of cultural heritage, including protected structures, archaeological sites, Architectural Conservations Areas and landscape features.</i> <i>To increase the number of uninhabited and derelict structures that are restored.</i>
<p>LANDSCAPE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ensure no significant disruption of significant natural or historic/cultural landscapes and features through objectives of the County Development Plan.</i>

9.0 Alternatives

The development and assessment of alternatives is a legal requirement under the SEA Directive and Regulations. Article 5(1) of the SEA Directive and 13E(1) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended 2011) requires that the Planning Authority considers alternatives within the Environmental Report. Plan-making involves consideration of alternative strategies for achieving the plan's objectives. Therefore, a number of reasonable alternatives should be identified that are capable of fulfilling the plan's objectives. The development of the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 will include the consideration of alternative approaches/options to the planning of the county's future.

Alternatives must be reasonable, realistic and capable of implementation and should represent a range of different approaches within the statutory and operational requirements of the plan.

It should be noted however that the position of the CDP within the plan hierarchy under the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region will pre-determine the scope of the strategic alternatives available. The content of the plan and any alternatives derived are also predetermined by relevant sections of the Planning and Development Act (as amended).

In developing alternatives the 'do nothing' approach is not considered a realistic option due to the statutory requirement to review the County Development Plan, taking account of key national and regional guidelines and strategies. The "do nothing" scenario will therefore act as our baseline for the County Development Plan review.

Developing combinations incorporating the key elements of the Development Plan, i.e. the plan framework, plan structure and settlement strategy to include zoning shall provide the foundation for the formulation of alternatives at the next stage of the SEA process in the environmental report. As previously stated any alternatives considered will take account of national and regional policy objectives e.g. compact growth.

In 2015 the EPA published guidance on the development of alternatives within the SEA process 'Developing and Assessing Alternatives in SEA'. This guidance expands on the requirements to be adhered to in formulating such alternatives.

Each alternative will be assessed for possible significant effects on the environment. The alternatives will then be graded to determine which has the least amount of impact. It should be noted that the SEA is not a decision making tool but a decision informing tool and where alternatives with negative environmental effects are selected for other reasons (e.g. cost, policy drivers or public need), the SEA has an important role in identifying mitigation measures to avoid or reduce these effects.

10.0 Statutory Consultation Process

10.1 Notice to Environmental Authorities

Article 13D of S.I. No. 436/2004 - Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 sets out the details of the requirements for consultation with the environmental authorities on the Scoping of the Environmental Report.

In accordance with those requirements as listed in sub-articles (1) and (2), the following relevant environmental authorities will be notified as part of the SEA Scoping stage:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Minister for the Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and
- Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

In addition to the above the following adjoining Local Authorities will also be notified:

- Cork City Council
- Limerick City and County Council
- Waterford City and County Council
- Kerry County Council and
- Tipperary County Council

In accordance with Article 13D (2)(c) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) submissions or observations in relation to the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report may be made to the Cork County Council within a specified period which shall not be less than 4 weeks from the date of the notice below (please note: additional time has been allowed to take account of the Christmas period)

All submissions or observations on this report should be made to Cork County Council at the address below by **9th April 2020**.

Padraig Moore, Senior Planner
 Planning Policy Unit
 Floor 13
 Cork County Council
 Carrigrohane Road
 Cork

11.0 Outcome of the Scoping Exercise and next steps

The findings and comments received as part of the scoping process will be included and addressed in the SEA Environmental report, this will be published alongside the Draft Development Plan for public consultation under Section 20 (3) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended).