

# NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

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ON THE

## STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

OF THE

### KILKENNY CITY AND ENVIRONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008-2014



for: **Kilkenny Borough Council & Kilkenny County Council**

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# 1 Introduction and Terms of Reference

This is the Non Technical Summary of the Environmental Report on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan (CEDP) 2008-2014. The purpose of the report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the future accommodation of growth in Kilkenny City and Environs.

The SEA is being carried out in order to comply with the provisions of the SEA Regulations and in order to improve planning and environmental management in Kilkenny City and Environs. This report should be read in conjunction with CEDP.

SEA is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a proposed plan, or other strategic action, in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic and social considerations.

The SEA process is led by the environmental baseline, the current state of the environment, to facilitate the identification, evaluation and subsequent monitoring of the effects of the plan and the alternatives.

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives, taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment.

## 2 The Plan for the City and Environs

The CEDP vision is to develop Kilkenny City as a centre of excellence for creativity in all sectors whilst ensuring the continued protection and enhancement of the city's magnificent built and natural heritage, its thriving cultural and artistic base and its strong and dynamic services economy. This will ensure that the city will be a vibrant and attractive place for people to visit, work and live in as it fulfils its role as a Hub for the South East Region.

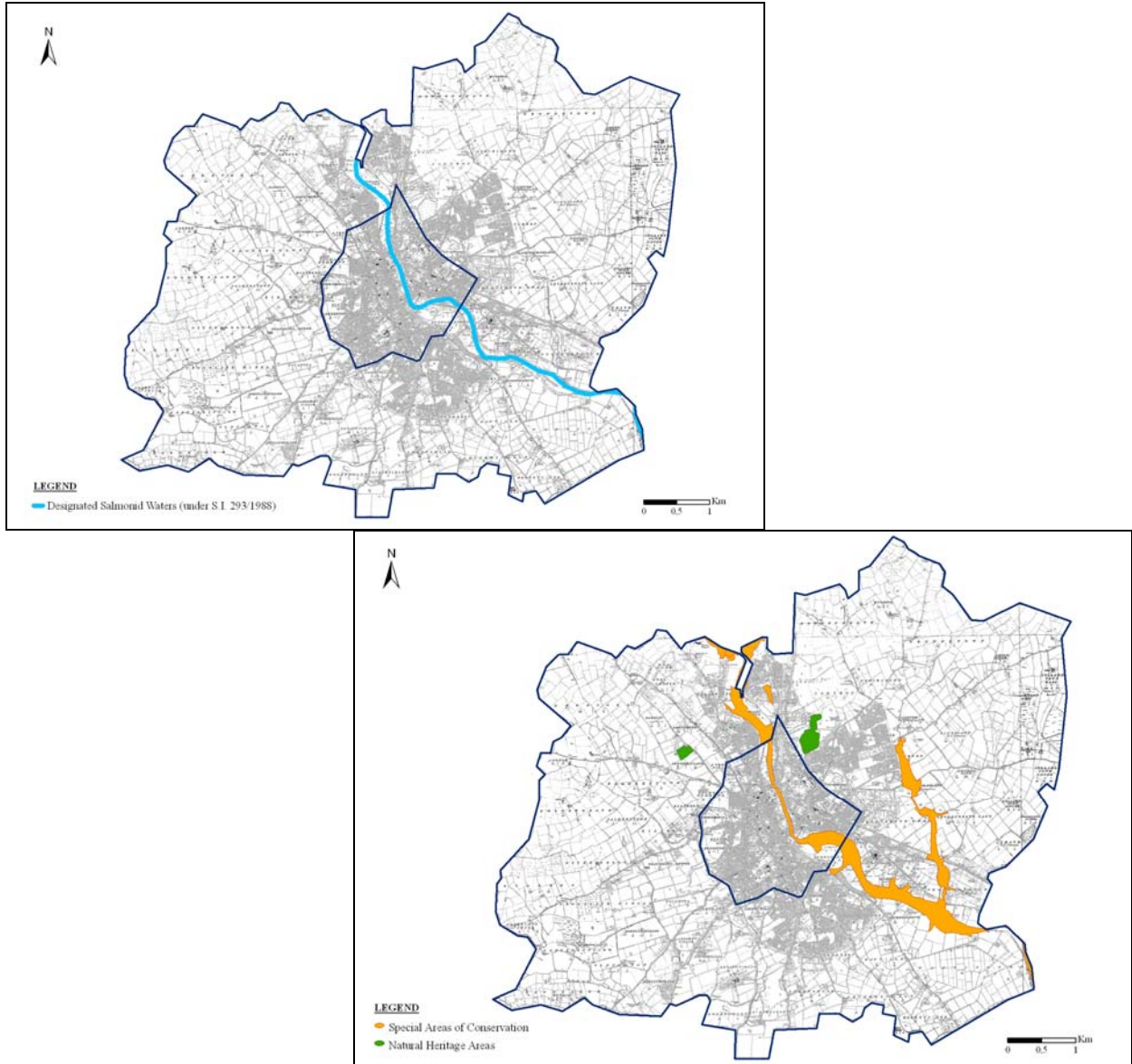
The strategic goals identified within the CEDP are as follows:

- To promote the sustainable development of the City so as to enable it to fulfill its role as a Hub within the South East Region.
- To provide the highest quality living environment possible, to all members of our community.
- To guide the location and pattern of development whilst ensuring that a relatively compact urban form is maintained.
- To promote balanced and sustainable economic development and employment by ensuring that a diverse range of economic sectors are developed.
- To develop an integrated transport strategy for the City and Environs linked to land use objectives, which facilitates access to a range of transport modes.
- To protect, conserve and enhance the built and natural heritage of Kilkenny City and Environs for future generations.
- To promote the regeneration of the city centre, in particular the sites identified in the City Centre Local Area Plan, and to protect and promote the city centre as the commercial and cultural focus for Kilkenny City and Environs.
- To advance the redevelopment of the Bateman Quay site in accordance with the principles of the City Centre Local Area Plan.
- To provide for the development of sustainable communities through the preparation of Local Area Plans for the expansion of the City and Environs.
- To promote Western Environs Local Area Plan and the Loughmacask Local Area Plan areas as major new neighbourhoods for the expansion of Kilkenny City and Environs.
- To make provision for a hierarchy of parks, open spaces and outdoor recreation areas and to use the river corridors of the River Nore, Breagagh and Pockocke to provide open space for the City and Environs.

The Plan has been prepared as an implementation mechanism for the Regional Planning Guidelines as it applies to Kilkenny City and Environs and the Overall Vision and Strategic Goals, Settlement Strategy, policies and objectives have been formulated in response to the Guidelines.

### 3 The Environment of the City and Environs & Potential Environmental Effects

#### Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna



**Figure 3.1 River Nore**  
**Figure 3.2 Ecological Designations**

These maps show the spread of designated habitats in the City.

All habitats within the City and its environs have been impacted upon heavily by human beings over time. The banks and channels of the River Nore and the Bregagh River are the most extensive sites and are part of a larger Special Area of Conservation (SAC). A number of trees and woodlands are worthy of preservation and there are five proposed Natural Heritage Areas within the City and Environs area, as shown in Figure 3.2.

### **Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna - Potential Effects**

All developments in the vicinity of designated features and sites have potential to create adverse effects. These need to be carefully prepared and scrutinised in order to anticipate and avoid impacts on these resources and their part in the wider ecological networks of the City.

### **Water**

The principal legislation governing water quality in Ireland is the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (SI No. 722 of 2003) which transposes the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires that all member states implement the necessary measures to prevent deterioration of the status of all waters - surface, ground, estuarine and coastal - and protect, enhance and restore all waters with the aim of achieving good status by 2015. All public bodies, including Kilkenny Borough and County Councils, are also required to: coordinate their policies and operations so as to maintain the good status of water bodies which are currently unpolluted, and; improve polluted water bodies to good status by 2015.

The most recent water quality data from the EPA (EPA, online water quality maps) shows that the quality of the Nore deteriorates as it flows through the City. The River deteriorates from a Q4 biotic rating<sup>1</sup> to a Q3 biotic rating<sup>2</sup>.

The Bregagh River is identified as having a Q3 Biotic Rating as it flows into the Nore in Kilkenny City while the Brownstown River is identified as having a Q4 Biotic Rating before it flows into the Nore to the south of the City.

Kilkenny City and its Environs are located over a regionally important diffuse karst aquifer. The Geological Survey of Ireland rates aquifers according to their vulnerability to pollution. Aquifer vulnerability refers to the ease with which pollutants of various kinds can enter underground water. Aquifers of high vulnerability (which can be predominate the majority of the City and Environs) and aquifers of extreme vulnerability (which can be found in a number of areas in the Environs) are the two classifications of aquifers which are most sensitive to an imposed contaminant load - the majority of the City and Environs ground waters are classified as being either of extreme or high vulnerability.

The SERBD Risk Assessment for Groundwater in and around Kilkenny City shows that most of the aquifers are assessed as being *probably at significant risk* of failing to achieve the WFD's objectives by 2015 with smaller aquifer areas assessed as being *probably not at significant risk*.

### **Water - Potential Effects**

Based on the risk assessment included in the SERBD Characterisation Report (2005)<sup>3</sup>, a sizable proportion of water bodies in and around Kilkenny City and Environs would be unlikely to meet their commitments under the Water Framework Directive.

If development was to occur without appropriate waste water infrastructure then it is likely these water bodies would fail to meet WFD commitments. Also, the extent and severity of adverse impacts with regard to biodiversity and flora and fauna, drinking water supplies and human health as a result of poor water quality would be likely to increase.

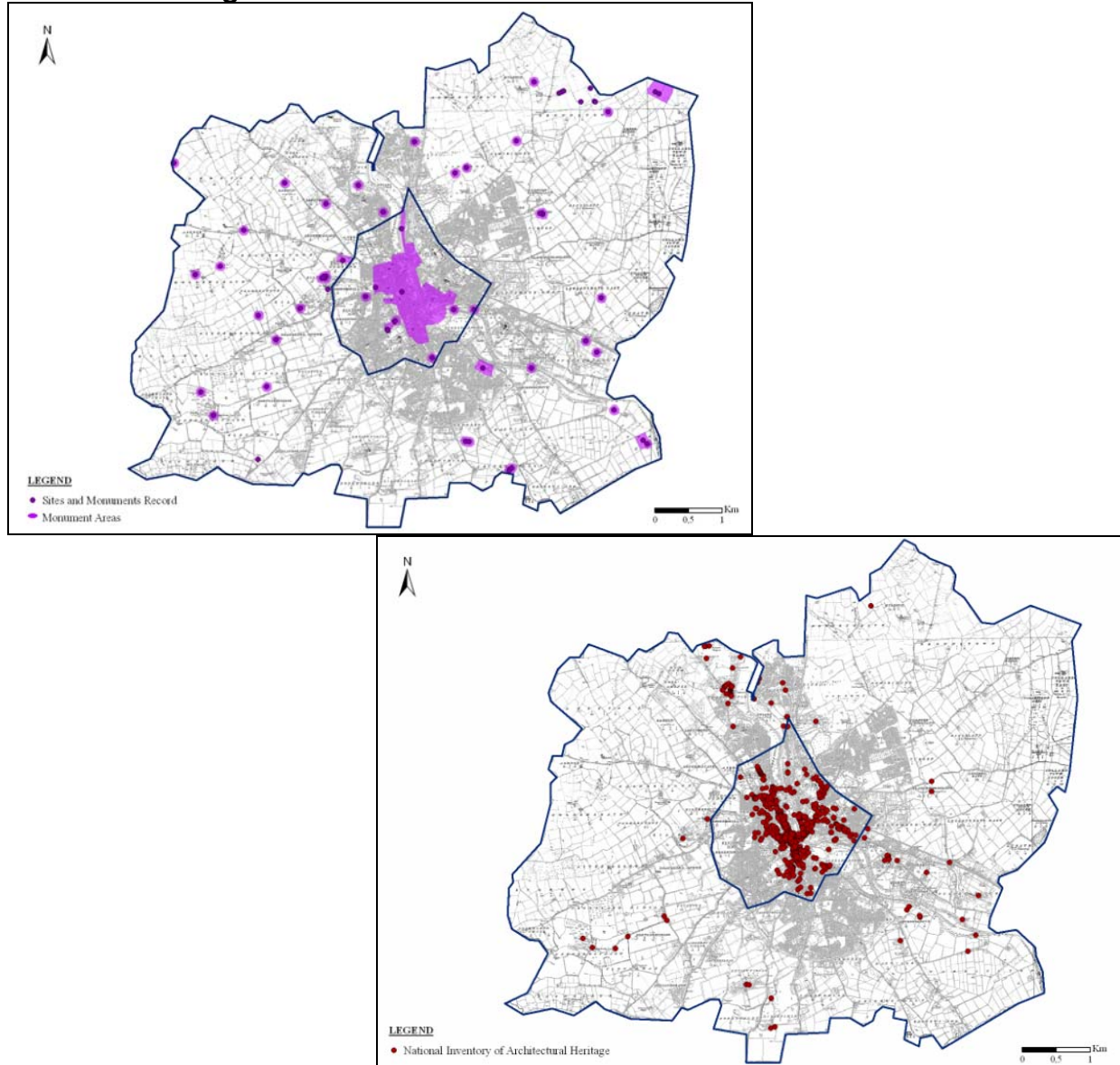
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<sup>1</sup> The Biotic Index Values, or Q values, are assigned to rivers in accordance with biological monitoring of surface waters - low Q ratings, as low as Q1, are indicative of low biodiversity and polluted waters, and high Q ratings, as high as Q5, are indicative of high biodiversity and unpolluted waters. Good status as defined by the Water Framework Directive equates to approximately Q4 in the national scheme of biological classification of rivers as set out by the EPA.

<sup>2</sup> Slightly polluted waters (Q3-4) support reduced or much reduced biological community diversity, have water quality which is fair or doubtful, and, may be of a satisfactory or unsatisfactory condition, referring to the likelihood of interference with beneficial or potential beneficial uses. Moderately polluted waters (Q2-3 or Q3) support much reduced or low biological community diversity, have water quality which is doubtful or poor, and, are of unsatisfactory condition.

<sup>3</sup> SERBD Project Office (2005) *Article 5 Characterisation Summary Report* Carlow: WRBD Project Office

## Cultural Heritage



**Figure 3.3 National Monuments and Areas**  
**Figure 3.4 Architectural Heritage (NIAH)**

The heritage of the medieval Kilkenny City is a unique resource which is fundamental to the cultural identity of the City and the quality of life of its citizens. Historic buildings can define the City's localities and communities and can become a focus of community identity and pride. Kilkenny City has a rich archaeological heritage which is a valuable cultural and tourism asset. It is identified as a single Recorded Monument (kk019-026) in Record of Monuments and Places. There are a number of Zones of Archaeological Potential within the city, which indicate areas of known or potential archaeological interest, – the most extensive of which is centered on the core of the City.

The City also has a rich architectural heritage which includes the City walls, abbeys, gate lodges, barracks, a round tower, churches, the railway station, Smithwick's brewery, a variety of public and private houses, shops, walks bridges, locks and Kilkenny Castle and its gardens, parks and walls.

### **Cultural Heritage - Potential Effects**

Development which involves material alteration or additions to protected structures can detract from the special character of the structure and its setting, and have the potential to result in the loss of features of architectural or historic interest and the historic form and structural integrity of the structure are retained.

Archaeology can be previously unknown but can be damaged through development causing ground disturbance.

Development on sites adjoining protected monuments, places or structures can also impact upon the setting of these cultural heritage items.

### **Landscape**

The character of Kilkenny is the result of a combination of the natural features of river and topography, the street spaces as well as the City's cultural heritage including its various buildings.

The River Nore is an important natural feature of the City's landscape facilitating valuable views and prospects along its tree-lined banks and its bridges. The most significant part of the built environment of Kilkenny is the quality of the City Centre. Buildings such as St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny Castle, and St. Mary's Cathedral dominate the centre and are linked by streets of different character and type.

The environs of the City are largely residential in character with industrial, commercial, institutional and other uses. The structure is more open rather than the close grain form of the Historic City.

### **Landscape - Potential Impacts**

Specific components in the City are sensitive to development - they have a reduced ability to accommodate change or intervention without suffering unacceptable effects to their character. These sensitivities include the cultural heritage components and their contexts (National Monuments, National Monument Areas, Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas and the medieval walls of the City) and the River Nore and its banks.



## 4 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the CEDP.

Mitigation involves ameliorating significant negative effects. Where there are significant negative effects, consideration is given in the first instance to preventing such effects or, where this is not possible for stated reasons, to lessening or offsetting those effects. Mitigation measures can be roughly divided into those that: *avoid* effects; *reduce* the magnitude or extent, probability and/or severity of effect; *repair* effects after they have occurred, and; *compensate* for effects, balancing out negative impacts with other positive ones.

A mitigation measure set out in the Kilkenny County Development Plan SEA Environmental Report identifies the Kilkenny Hub Corridor Impact Zone which has a significant potential to conflict with elevated densities of environmental sensitivities. In order to sustainably facilitate necessary development in this area the preparation of a Spatial Strategy to assist in the preparation of future development plans or local area plans in this area is recommended.

This strategy will help to mitigate against impacts as a result of implementing the Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan.

Each Local Area Plan (LAP) or framework plan within the City and Environs should contain adequate policy and guidance in order to highlight the importance of retaining the unique character and diversity the appropriate areas, and provide for their protection.

Policies should be amended where necessary to take of account of the carrying capacity of the environment - as outlined in this report.

Consideration should be given in the drafting of residential policies to targeting the use of brownfield sites as a priority. Residential objectives which promote the identification of opportunities for infill development and consolidation of existing areas to reduce the need to zone additional greenfield lands should be included within LAP subject to stringent design guidance and environmental protection.

### Mitigation Measures for Specific Environmental Topics

1. Designated Ecological Sites
2. Designated Wetland / Peatland Ecological Sites
3. Salmonid Waters Protection
4. Ecological Networks
5. Water Quality Protection
6. Archaeological Heritage
7. Architectural Heritage
8. Landscape Heritage