

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

CONCLUSION STATEMENT

Ref: (S.I.) 435/2004 European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (as amended)

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING:	
Author:	Strategic Environmental Assessment report prepared by Logika Group and dated 20 th December 2024.
Planning file reference	Carlow County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028
Project Details:	<p>The purpose of the CCC Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 (NAP) is to provide a strategic overview of the management of noise issues and effects within Carlow County. The NAP aims to develop clear priorities based on detailed noise mapping results, with a view to preventing environmental noise where necessary; particularly where exposure to noise levels can induce harmful effects on human health. The NAP also identifies areas to preserve environmental acoustic quality where the baseline is good.</p> <p>The requirement to prepare a NAP is set for members of the European Union under the Environmental Noise Directive (END) (2002/49/EC), a legal instrument for addressing adverse effects of environmental noise which have been transposed into Irish law³ and require preparation of strategic noise mapping and implementation of NAPs. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the national competent authority responsible for implementing the END and will ultimately report noise mapping and action planning to the European Commission. Under the Regulations, the Action Planning Authority (APA) is responsible for preparing a NAP for the County of Carlow. The entire administrative area within CCC is covered by the CCC NAP and is the focus of this Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report.</p>
Carlow County Environmental Context:	
Context:	<p>See Section 4.1.</p> <p>Carlow County covers an area of 896km². The total population of the Carlow County is approximately 61,968. In terms of noise sources, there are approx. 62.6 km of major roads. There are no major railways or aircraft sources. The NAP identifies a total of 30 noise sensitive buildings (schools and hospitals) located within Carlow County.</p>
Baseline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 4.2.1 for Biodiversity, Flora, and Fauna. • See Section 4.2.2 for Population and Noise • See Section 4.2.3 for Water and Soils • See Section 4.2.4 for Air Quality • See Section 4.2.5 for Climatic Factors • See Section 4.2.6 for Material Assets • See Section 4.2.7 for Cultural Heritage. • See Section 4.2.8 for Landscape.
SEA Screening:	
Stage 1: SEA 'Applicability'	<p>See Section 5.1 Stage 1 – SEA 'Applicability';</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the NAP is prepared and then will be adopted at a regional level by the Action Planning Authority, Carlow County Council.

	<p>the NAP is required by The Environmental Noise Directive (“END”) (2002/49/EC). A European Union legal instrument vital for protecting public health and the environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the NAP is being prepared for the transportation sector. Noise issues and interventions may have relevance for other sectors but is being prepared in the context of planning and land use. - The NAP does not therefore provide a framework for development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive. - The NAP has no predicted likely significant effects upon the identified Natura 2000 sites and no requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments. - The NAP’s sole purpose is not to serve national defence or civil emergency nor is it a financial/budget P/P nor is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme.
Stage 1: Outcome of SEA ‘Applicability’	The pre-screening checks indicate that the NAP is not a plan or programme to which the SEA applies, as the NAP does not provide a framework for development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive.
Stage 2: SEA ‘Screening’	<p>The NAP does not provide a framework for development consent nor will it have a significant effect upon a Natura 2000 site, thus it is concluded that an SEA is not required. However, the NAP has been assessed further in relation to criteria 9(3) which states ‘A competent authority shall determine whether plans and programmes (..) are likely to have significant effects on the environment’. This is established by criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA regulations.</p> <p>See Table A1-1: Screening Table – The characteristics of plans and programmes.</p> <p>See Table A1-2: Stage 2 Screening Table - Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected</p>
Stage 2: Outcome of SEA ‘Screening’	Stage 2 Screening of the Carlow County Council NAP determines that no further SEA is required. It has been determined that the NAP will operate at a high level and therefore a full SEA would not be proportionate relative to the NAP itself. The NAP does not satisfy the conditions for mandatory SEA under S.I. 435/2004.
Consultation and Next Steps:	
Overview:	<p>Step 3 of Stage 2 of SEA Screening indicates there is a specific requirement to consult with relevant environmental authorities for a minimum of 4 weeks, regarding the outcomes of the SEA screening report. These authorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Protection Agency • Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Development Application Unit • Department of Environment, Climate and Communications • Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine
Outcome of Consultation:	Consultation was undertaken between the 16 th of October 2024 to the 26 th of November 2024. No specific consultation responses have been received from the environmental authorities with particular reference to the SEA. Although consultation responses to the NAP have resulted in minor revisions and these have been updated within this SEA Screening Report, they have not changed the overall conclusions of the SEA Screening Report.

<p>Screening conclusion:</p>	<p>In terms of setting a framework, the CCC NAP does in one sense set out a locational framework for noise, but it is however limited in terms of scale and does not necessarily drive specific changes or actions.</p> <p>The NAP will have a minimal influence on other plans and programmes within Carlow County. The NAP is inherently a plan which promotes environmental best practice, but it does not influence the implementation of sustainable development principles.</p> <p>There are several designated sites across Carlow County and various social, economic, and environmental factors which indicate a diverse geographic area. The NAP is also relevant in the context of EU Directive implementation and must be consistent with these relevant directions.</p> <p>In terms of the characteristics of effects, the NAP is a strategy which should not have any transboundary effects of its own accord, nor bring any expected human health or environmental risks because of its implementation. The NAP is also unlikely to be cumulative in nature because it should be implemented in compliance with other plans and programmes that have been considered by the SEA process. While the Carlow County is geographically large, the NAP's interventions are relatively localised. Therefore, the vulnerability and value of the area likely to be affected by the NAP is also relatively localised because areas where environmental thresholds are (or are not) exceeded are small, pocketed areas within Carlow County. The effects of the NAP upon national, EU or internationally protected sites is not significant because the areas to which the NAP identifies for interventions are mostly not corresponding to protected sites within Carlow County.</p> <p>To conclude, this stage of the SEA screening process determines that the CCC NAP does not require further SEA consideration.</p>
<p>Attachments</p>	<p>Carlow County Council – Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 report prepared by Logika Group and dated 20th December 2024.</p> <p>Stage I Appropriate Assessment Screening report prepared by Logika Group and dated 20th December 2024.</p>

Screening Determination Statement

Screening Determination for Strategic Environmental Assessment under SEA Directive 2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law under Statutory Instrument (S.I.) 435/2004 European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (as amended)

For the Carlow County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028

Carlow County Council (CCC), the Action Planning Authority (APA) has undertaken screening of the Carlow County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 (Ref: 16068A-20-R01-02-F02) for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under Directive 2001/42/EC. The assessment for screening was carried out using the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects as set out in Schedule 1 of S.I. 435/2004 (as amended) (the 'SEA Regulations') and is set out in the SEA Screening Report (Ref: 13354A-20-R034-01-F02) dated 20th December 2024 prepared by Logika Consultants Ltd. on behalf of Noise Consultants Ltd for CCC of the Carlow County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028.

Following assessment of the criteria and having regard to the nature of the plan and the potential for likely significant environmental effects from implementation of the plan, the APA has determined that the plan will not give rise to likely significant effects on the environment. This determination has been made following

consideration of the information contained in the SEA Screening Report and the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to S.I. 435/2004 (as amended). Furthermore, this determination is informed by consultation with the following statutory Environmental Authorities for SEA which was carried out alongside the statutory and public consultation of the Carlow Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 from the 16th of October 2024 to the 26th of November 2024: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); the Minister for Housing, the Local Government and Heritage, Development Application Unit; Department of Environment, Climate and Communications; and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. No specific correspondence or feedback was received from the statutory Environmental Authorities for SEA.

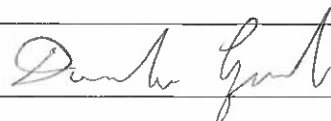
The principal reasons the Carlow County Council Noise Action Plan (NAP) 2024-2028 does not require SEA are as follows:

- Although the CCC NAP does set out a locational framework for noise, it is limited in terms of scale (i.e. it is strategic) and does not necessarily drive specific changes or actions, such as operating conditions or allocate resources that are at a site-specific level. The CCC NAP does not directly specify detailed projects or activities that would necessitate Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Therefore, the degree to which the NAP drives other activities, is not significant in the context of the SEA Regulations.
- The CCC NAP has minimal influence on other plans and programs within Carlow County and primarily promotes environmental best practices and signposts existing mechanisms or environmental instruments that can be used to implement its aims, which in themselves may have been subject to environmental assessment.
- The CCC NAP seeks to manage the risk of additional members of the community being exposed to undesirable noise levels where they would have an adverse effect to health. In SEA terms it is not deemed that, when considered against other environmental conditions and problems, the CCC NAP would give rise to significant environmental effects on account of the high level and strategic nature of the mitigation set out in the NAP. This is also on account of the reliance upon existing or emerging plans and policies that are already or will be considered in respect of SEA.
- The CCC NAP covers an area which includes 8 Natura 2000 sites regarding flora, fauna, species, and habitats. Measures included in the NAP are not likely to have specific geographic relevance because there are no Most Important Areas (MIA) or Priority Important Areas (PIA) which overlap with the geographic extent of the protected sites. Therefore, the NAP and its subsequent interventions will not lead to significant positive or negative noise effects on protected sites. It should also be noted that the factors to which ecologically designated sites are protected does not necessarily correlate with changing noise levels. Therefore, in summary, the CCC NAP is not considered to have a significant effect upon recognised protected sites within the Carlow County.
- The CCC NAP is not considered to have significant environmental transboundary effects, nor human health or environmental risks, and is unlikely to have cumulative effects, in the context of the SEA Regulations as it complies with other plans which have been assessed.

Determination: In making the determination, the information contained within the SEA Screening Report (Ref:13354A-20-R034-01-F02) has been taken into account and carefully considered. The APA hereby confirms agreement that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is **not** required for the Carlow County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028, in accordance with the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive) and Statutory Instrument No. 435 of 2004, European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (as amended).

Signed on behalf of the
Carlow County Council:

Signature:



Date:

23/02/2025