

2019

STRATEGIC
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT
SCREENING REPORT OF
THE HEALTHY CLARE
STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 -
2021

Prepared under S.I. 435 of 2004 for Clare County Council

CONTENTS

1	Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021	2
1.1	Introduction	2
1.2	Aim and Purpose of Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021.....	2
	Figure A: Planning Hierarchy	4
1.5	Environmental Considerations	4
2	Schedule 2a Screening Assessment	10
2.1	Introduction	10
	Table 2a SEA Screening.....	10
2.2	Conclusion to SEA Screening Assessment.....	13

This report has been prepared by Minogue & Associates with all reasonable skill, care and diligence. Information report herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is prepared for Clare County Council and we accept no responsibility to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.

1 HEALTHY CLARE STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2021

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) requires an environmental assessment be carried out for all plans that are prepared for certain specified sectors, including land use planning of which the proposed *Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021* relates.

The following Regulations transpose this Directive into Irish law:

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

In deciding whether a particular plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, regard must be had to the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive. The approach to this screening assessment is to identify the relevant sections of the *Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021* and thereafter to assess same for potential environmental effects. Section Three of this report assesses these against the criteria contained in Schedule 2a of the Regulations. This Screening Assessment is being prepared under the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004).

1.2 AIM AND PURPOSE OF HEALTHY CLARE STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2021

Vision for a Healthy Clare: Where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility.

Over the past number of years significant work has been undertaken, in consultation with the public, in developing national policies and plans. These include, but are not limited to, Tobacco Free Ireland (2013), National Sexual Health Strategy (2015), National Physical Activity Plan (2016), A Healthy Weight for Ireland Obesity Policy (2016), Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery - a health lead response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland (2017), National Get Ireland Walking Strategy (2017), Connecting for Life: Strategy for Suicide Prevention (2015-2020) and the National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013).

The Healthy Cities and Counties initiative is being pursued by all local authorities around the country. The process in Clare is being led by the Clare Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) through the establishment of a Healthy Clare Working Group. The action plan contained within this strategy is a local plan that realises and assists in the implementation of the national priorities of the following:

- Physical Activity,
- Mental Health,

- Healthy Weight,
- Tobacco Free,
- Sexual Health, and
- Prevention & Reduction of Alcohol related harm.

A healthy population is also a major asset for our society; therefore the Healthy Clare Strategy aims to improve the overall health and wellbeing of the County's population. This means that all sectors of society need to be proactively involved in improving the health and wellbeing of our population. A person's health and wellbeing can be influenced by; economic status, education, housing, the physical environment in which people live and work. It can also be affected by policy decisions taken by Government, the individual choices people make about how they live, and the participation of people in their communities.

Through the process of extensive consultation with key stakeholders the six national priority themes were examined. The outcome of the consultation identified there were 2 key priority areas of Mental Health & Physical Activity for Clare. The Healthy Clare Strategy will focus on these areas as a priority as well as the delivery of actions in the other areas of Healthy Weight, Sexual Health, Tobacco Free and Drug & Alcohol related harm.

The Healthy Clare Working Group will identify the actions to be pursued over the next three years and identify the organisations in the county that are best placed to lead out on these priority areas. Work plans of local agencies have been examined to identify relatable actions to the priority areas of the Healthy Clare Strategy. In some cases the lead agencies will need to connect with other agencies in order to achieve these actions. It is equally important that actions within the strategy are looked at on a whole county basis.

This strategy is the first step towards a collaborative approach to a healthier Clare and one that can be built on through learning and experiences into the future.

Chapter Six presents a Three Year Strategic Focus.

In consideration of the geography of the county and the need to address any imbalance in terms of access, the recommendation is that the west of the county be looked at so that a greater degree of activity might take place in this area. Targeting areas of deprivation with priority health actions is a way forward. Feedback suggests that specific strategic actions should refer to the six health priorities of Healthy Ireland and relate to an all of County approach in terms of general development and promotions.

The work programme will be broken into a broad range of opportunity, which will embrace over time;

1. Promotions and evidence-based actions, guided by the Healthy Ireland Policy Priorities and other relevant Government Policies
2. Infrastructural development where necessary and in association with the mandate of the Local Authority

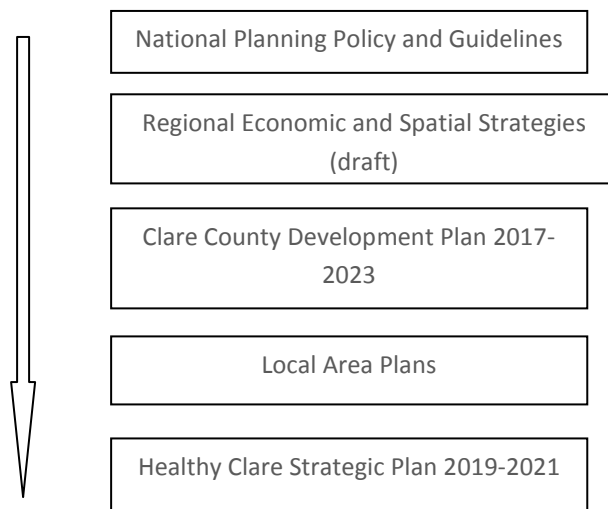
3. Equipment and facilities required to support the development of wellbeing in society

4. Advocacy with regard to collaboration and partnership. Consolidating this approach will be a key strategic intent for Healthy Clare.

There is a requirement to continue the conversation among agencies. However, the approach is one of responsibility, reporting, integration, collaboration and communication across the health themes.

Figure A below illustrates where the *Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021* is situated within the land use planning hierarchy. Each of these land use strategies have been subject to the SEA process.

FIGURE A: PLANNING HIERARCHY



1.5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The SEA Environmental Report of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023¹, provides the following descriptions of the environmental resources around the County:

The Plan area is rich in biodiversity, containing many important, and protected, habitats and species such as the Shannon Estuary, lakes, turloughs, fens, wetlands, woodlands, bats, wildfowl (duck and geese), waders, salmon, lamprey and otters. 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, fens, broadleaf woodlands, grasslands and turloughs, 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 such as garden birds (robins, wrens, finches, etc.) and migrant summer visitors (swallows, cuckoos, warblers, etc), otters, hedgehogs, bats, pigmy shrew and other Irish mammals, lamprey, salmon and other fish species, and a variety of invertebrates, including beetles, bees, butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. They also

¹ The description of environmental considerations is taken from the Non Technical Summary of the SEA ER of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023.

allow for the spread of seeds, which benefit the wildflower populations of County Clare. It is recognised that many rare and protected species are reliant on locally important species, and as such the protection of common habitats and species should not be underestimated. Within County Clare there are habitats of high biodiversity and conservation value, including the wildlife sanctuary of Mutton Island and the Keelhilla nature reserve. There are a number of designated sites associated within the county which are designated as Ramsar Sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). In total, Clare has 37 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), 10 Special Protection Areas (SPAs), 14 Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and 61 proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) (Note; some of these pNHA are also SACs and SPAs).

Section 2.1 of the Strategy provides analysis of demographics in the County with a focus on rural populations and a summary of this analysis is provided in the following paragraph:

In 2016 the population of Clare was 118,627. This reflected an increase of 1.5% since 2011 and 35% since 1981. However, the high average population growth masked the significant inter-generational (1981-2016) decline experienced across much of the County. While the large corridor from Ennis, through Shannon, to Limerick and Killaloe, experienced population growth of 61% between 1981 and 2016, the more rural parts of Clare experienced population decline of 3%. It is clear that, with the exception of a small number of Electoral Districts (eg. Doolin and Mountshannon), the vast majority of EDs in the rural area performed well below the county average (35%). Those experiencing most severe population decline were in open countryside and, while containing no large settlement, they formed a number of neighbouring parishes with small settlements at their core.

Human health can be determined by social, environmental and economic factor, amongst other. Human health may be impacted upon in a variety of ways and by a number of environmental receptors such as water, biodiversity, climate, flooding, air and major accidents, etc. Potential impacts on population and human health include inadequate water and wastewater and waste infrastructure, contamination of soils, excessive noise, flooding and poor air quality in areas where there are large volumes of traffic and the associated health impacts

Soil comprises for the most part of organic matter, minerals and fine to course grained weathered rock. The variability of the constituent parts and the percentage content of each in the soil matrix results in differing characteristics. Soil is a complex mixture of weathered minerals, living organisms, organic matter in various stages of decomposition, gases and water. Numerous natural factors influence the composition of soils, notably bedrock, climate and topography. Soils have a number of functions including supporting plant life and life within the soil, biogeochemical cycling of elements, energy cycles, water storage and exchange and ecosystem productivity. As soil is formed over a long period of time it can be considered a non- renewable resource.

In terms of geology the western area of County Clare consists of Namurian sandstone and shale which are sedimentary rocks. Marine shelf facies stretches from the north of Clare, through the centre of the county, down to the southern centre of the county and also into the east – the last glaciation event carved into these deposits which now form the limestone pavements making up the

Burren landscape. The south of Clare also contains three small areas of Waulsortian mudbank deposits. The east of the county consists of three corridors and four small areas of Waulsortian mudbank. There are 89 sites of geological importance within County Clare, which include cave systems, limestone pavements and mushroom stones. The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) has identified some of these areas as Geological Heritage Sites as part of their Irish Geological Heritage Programme

Air quality is dependent on a number of factors including the source of potential pollutants and weather conditions. The Air Framework Directive (96/62/EC) requires member states to divide countries into zones for the assessment and management of air quality. Ireland is divided into four zones which include: Zone A – Dublin Corporation Zone B – Cork Conurbation Zone C – Other Cities and large towns; and Zone D – Rural Ireland. The majority of County Clare falls within Zone D with the exception of Ennis Town and surrounding urban area which falls under Zone C. Transport and industries are the main influences on air quality in County Clare.. The air quality in the Rural West Region and County Clare is “good” with daily up to date information.

The Water Framework Directive water body status of the surface and groundwater bodies within County Clare and published by the EPA in 2015. Key findings are:

- 50% of River bodies are of high or good status. 30% are moderate to bad status.
- 25.7% of lake bodies are high or good status. 30.9% moderate to bad status
- 70.5% of transitional/coastal waters are high or good status. 20.4% moderate to poor status.
- 3.4% of groundwater high or good status. 96.5% moderate to poor status.

Flooding is a major issue in relation to County Clare, particularly over recent years and the issues of flood risk management; through mitigation and adaptation measures and developing overall resilience to climate change are of critical importance. A strategic approach to the management of flood risk is important in County Clare as the risks are varied and disparate, with scales of risk and scales of existing and proposed development varying greatly across the county.

Road Network: The road network in the county is made up of motorway, national primary roads, and national secondary roads, regional and local roads. County Clare has a large rural area with a dispersed population with the result that the car is the predominant mode of transport. The maintenance and upgrade of the existing road network and, where necessary, the provision of new road networks or realignments are essential to achieve modern high standards.

Bus Network: Bus Eireann operates regular services from their centrally located newly refurbished bus station to Shannon Airport, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Dublin. Private operator, Dublin Coach also operate several (up to 25 during peak times) daily express services between Ennis, Limerick, Kildare and Dublin. Bus Eireann also provides an infrequent service from Ennis to north and west Clare and a regular service to Shannon Airport. Local Services are provided for by Clare Bus, a not-for-profit bus service, which has a large number of routes that connect Ennis with its extensive rural hinterland. The services provided are designed to support communities and increase transport options at a local level while opening up access to the national transport network. The route schedules connect with national transport links provided by Bus Eireann, Dublin Coach and Irish Rail in Ennis

The rail services within County Clare consist of a branch off the Limerick line which serves Ennis. The Western Rail Corridor has been opened recently and it involved upgrading 36 miles of track and associated infrastructure, as well as the provision of five stations at Gort, Ardrahan, Craughwell, Sixmilebridge and Oranmore. Ennis is situated on the western rail corridor which has undergone substantial investment over recent years. Ennis rail and bus station is located within walking distance of the town centre of Ennis. There are park and ride facilities at the station. The regular routes serviced from Ennis include a Limerick/Dublin service, Limerick/Cork/Tralee and Galway/Limerick services. Air Shannon Airport is located within the southern part of the county. It is a critical element of the transport network in the region with both a national and international role. It is strategically located between Limerick and Galway with capacity to serve an increased market to the west should future development take place in the Shannon Estuary which requires air transport.

Waste Management: Clare falls under the Southern Region Waste Management Plan area for which the management plan was published in May 2015. Within the County Development Plan Area there are a range of waste recycling facilities which include 5 recycling centres and transfer stations. Domestic and commercial waste collection is undertaken solely by private permitted collectors, which include waste separation to aid waste recycling. There is an extensive education and awareness programme of waste prevention initiatives in order to minimise waste going to landfill.

Water Services Infrastructure: The responsibility for the provision and management of water services (water supply and wastewater but excluding storm/surface water other than where sewage has been combined with surface water) was transferred to Irish Water on the first of January 2014. Irish Water is currently analysing water services infrastructure needs at a national level and identifying priority projects for inclusion in the next Capital Investment Plan (CIP 2017-2022). Priorities must include investment to ensure acceptable service levels to existing customers, achieving regulatory compliance.

The onset of climate change and predicted change in weather patterns, culminating in an increase in dry spells of weather and of rain surges, have potential implications on water supply. Already the water supply sources within the county comes under strain during more prolonged spells of dry weather, which are set to increase in years to come. Measures need to be put in place to adapt to predicted weather changes in terms of ensuring an adequate supply of clean water to the existing and future population of the plan area.

Wastewater Treatment: The Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC, amended by Directive 98/15/EEC) aims to protect the environment from the adverse effects of wastewater discharges by ensuring that wastewater is appropriately treated before it is discharged to the environment. Such treatment is essential in order to meet the requirements of the WFD. Wastewater within the county is treated either through wastewater treatment plants (48%) or individual septic tank units (44%). Many of the buildings which are located outside of the larger towns and villages are not connected to the public wastewater disposal system, and the effluent must be treated by individual proprietary wastewater treatment plants and septic tanks. There are 31 urban wastewater treatment plants in County Clare. Wastewater services tend to be associated with individual settlements/agglomerations and there are significant service and compliance issues in many existing wastewater systems in Clare. The safe treatment and disposal of sewerage is

fundamental to the sustainable development of our society. The treatment of wastewater is either through wastewater treatment plants or individual septic tank units.

The term 'renewable energy' refers to those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment including the sun, wind, oceans and the fall of water. Geothermal energy, plant material and combustible or digestible agricultural, domestic or industrial waste may also be regarded as renewable sources of energy. The Council recognises the importance of developing renewable energy sources in the interest of achieving a low carbon economy and security of energy supply. A Wind Energy Strategy and a Renewable Energy Strategy have been prepared for County Clare and comprise Volumes 5 and 6 of this plan respectively. The Wind Energy Strategy identifies the optimum locations for wind energy developments in the county having regard to environmental and geographical constraints and the protection of the amenities of local residents. A new Wind Energy Strategy will be prepared for County Clare during the lifetime of this plan.

Archaeological heritage is defined as including structures, places, caves, sites, features or other objects, whether on land underwater or in inter-tidal zones. All archaeological structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, all recorded monuments as well as their contexts, and moveable objects, situated both on land and underwater are part of the Archaeological Heritage. Therefore the archaeological heritage of the area is not confined to the archaeological sites within the Record of Monuments and Places. There are currently c.7500 monuments in Clare, which is more than most counties in Ireland. Notably, there is little evidence from the earliest period, the Mesolithic, but the Neolithic or New Stone Age and subsequent eras are well represented with many sites and artefacts demonstrating life in Clare for the past 6,000 years. These early farmers left little evidence of their settlements but their territorial/burial monuments survive. Large numbers of megalithic structures are found in the Burren including the Poulawack Cairn, a burial mound constructed more than 5500 years ago, which is of National importance. Nearby are Parknabinnia Chambered Tomb and a pre-historic quarry possibly used to extract stone to build these structures. North of this cluster stands what is possibly the most iconic monument in County Clare, the Poul nabrone Portal Tomb. Various megalithic tombs also survive in other areas of County

There are 857 protected structures in the plan area ranging from churches, bridges, grain stores, houses, shops and public buildings. Ennis town centre which has survived almost intact since the late 16th century and other groups of buildings in the plan area are designated Architectural Conservation Areas, affording protection to the exterior of all structures within the ACAs in order to protect the unique architectural character of an organically evolved, mediaeval, Gaelic market town. An ACA refers to a place, area, group of structures or townscape, that is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or that contributes to the appreciation of a protected structure, and whose character it is an objective of a Local Area Plan to preserve. Its inclusion within the Plan, in terms of Section 81, Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) affords greater control over the form of development that may be permitted and reduces instances of inappropriate development, demolition and unnecessary change within the designated area. There is also, in the plan area, a rich heritage of stone buildings

and examples of a rich vernacular building tradition which evolved, over many millennia, to suit life in this part of County Clare.

The National Landscape Strategy (NLS) for Ireland 2015-2025 seeks to provide a framework for the protection of the many cultural, social, economic and environmental values embedded in the landscape. The objective of the Strategy is to provide the data that will assist in the future decision making process regarding our landscapes, and which will ensure that decisions are made on the basis of factual evidence collected. The NLS will assist in the achievement of greater consistency in decision making across the country when dealing with issues of landscape, in particular via landscape character assessment. It will 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 will provide a high level policy framework to achieve balance between the protection, management and planning the landscape by way of supporting actions. The components of Landscape Character Assessment are Landscape Character Types, Landscape Character Areas and Seascape Character Areas. Landscape Character Types There are 26 landscape types identified within the County, sub-divided into three groups, namely Upland Types, Lowland Types and Coastal Types. In addition the Landscape Character Assessment identified: 41 Habitat Types – an area in which an organism or group of organisms lives and is defined by the living and non-living components of the environment. The latter includes physical, chemical and geographical factors, in addition to human impact or management; Historical Landscape Types – an archaeological or historic landscape is a discrete landscape based on the “scale and integrity of the archaeological features (that) reflect significantly on the human history and land use of that area.

Sensitivity mapping is a means of assessing the overall vulnerability of the County using the key baseline datasets collated as part of the SEA ER. The Environmental Sensitivity Map provided spatial evidence to support the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) across a number of sectors. The map effectively reflects where the key concentrations of sensitivity are situated within the plan area. These include: The Northern area of the Plan (North Clare) – in and around the Burren which contains a number of NHAs, wetlands, rock at or near the surface and a heritage landscape. The Southern area of the Plan (along and including the Shannon Estuary)– This includes the Cloon River (FPM SAC), the Gaurus River and flood plain, River Fergus and flood plain (to the east), Ballybeg Lough, Newhall and Edenvale Estate (south-west) and the Shannon Estuary containing heritage landscapes and surface waters that are nutrient sensitive. The central area of the plan (including Ennis and on to North East Clare) – this includes key SPAs and NHAs which are protected for the Hen Harrier, moderate to poor river status, a high number of protected bat roosts, high to extreme groundwater vulnerability and areas of heritage landscape to the east.

2 SCHEDULE 2A SCREENING ASSESSMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The following section and table below presents the SEA screening assessment of the **Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021** against the criteria provided in Schedule 2a of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2001-2011 which details the criteria for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Screening assessment should be read in conjunction with the Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021 as well as the Habitats Directive Screening report.

TABLE 2A SEA SCREENING

Criteria for determining whether the proposed Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021 is likely to have significant effects on the environment
1. The characteristics of the Strategic Plan having regard, in particular, to:
<i>the degree to which the Strategic Plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,</i>
<p>This strategic plan is developed in support of a range of health related policies as well as the rollout of national Healthy Cities and Counties.</p> <p>The Vision of the Strategic Plan: <i>Where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility.</i></p> <p>This vision is reflected through goals and objectives of the Clare CDP 2017-2023. Examples include:</p> <p><i>Goal IV. A County Clare where healthy and sustainable communities are developed and integrated with the timely delivery of a wide range of community, educational and cultural facilities and where, through a commitment to equality, participation, accessibility and social inclusion, the county develops as a unique location with an enhanced quality of life for its citizens and visitors.</i></p> <p>And CDP 5.11 Physical Recreation and Active Living promotes Active Living as a means of enhancing health, wellbeing and social inclusion.</p> <p>The strategic plan does not set a framework for projects as it focuses on a number of areas listed below. The Healthy Clare Working Group will identify the actions to be pursued over the next three years and identify the organisations in the county that are best placed to lead out on these priority areas. Mental health and Physical Activity have been identified as priority areas.</p> <p>Healthy Clare is about giving effect to the vision, goals and objectives set out in the international and national frameworks and guidelines. The Healthy Clare Strategy will take the lessons from international best practice and will have regard to, comply with, and give effect to national policies through bespoke interventions and actions. This implies tailoring actions to suit the Clare context and taking cognisance of where agencies / partners have the capacity to co-deliver.</p> <p>No specific landuse proposals are included in the Healthy Clare Strategic Plan and no detail or identification of areas relating to these themes. Clearly if physical activity were to result in proposals</p>

relating to new areas of physical activities such as new sports grounds, or walking trails, landuse effects could arise. Chapter Six identifies infrastructural development as necessary within the local authority mandate but does not provide further detail at this juncture as to what type of landuse or infrastructural development this may entail.

In this instance, landuse zonings and environmental protection measures in the existing Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 would apply. The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 functions as the primary landuse plan for any physical proposals that may arise from the strategy. This plan was subject to both SEA and Appropriate Assessment and includes a series of environmental protection objectives that will apply and require compliance with should physical proposals arise from the strategy itself. *CDP 5.11 Physical Recreation and Active Living* of the Clare CDP 2017-2023 promotes Active Living as a means of enhancing health, wellbeing and social inclusion.

The Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021 will not set a framework for projects and other activities with regard to location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources. The Clare CDP 2017-2023 sets out clearly the spatial framework for development locations and landuse in the County and will be referenced as required and appropriate.

the degree to which the Strategic Plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy,

The Strategic Plan has examined Work plans of local agencies to identify relatable actions to the priority areas of the Healthy Clare Strategy. In some cases the lead agencies will need to connect with other agencies in order to achieve these actions. It is a non-statutory strategy and is complementary to existing work programmes and national policies and plans pertaining to health and wellbeing as outlined in Section 1.2 and the preceding text above.

the relevance of the Healthy Clare Strategic Plan in the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,

The plan highlights and references the relationships and interactions between environmental factors and human health.

Environmental problems relevant to the Healthy Clare Strategic Plan

The SEA ER of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023, provides considerable detail on environmental problems relevant to the County. The Strategic Plan recognises the role environmental quality can have on human health and well being.

There are numerous areas of environmental sensitivity within the County, many of which are designated under the legislative framework. These include: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Natural Heritage Areas, Proposed National Heritage Areas (pNHA), views and prospects, Architectural and Archeological Conservation Areas, protected structures, recorded monuments and structures, and recreational and amenity areas. Details of these areas together with aims and policies for their protection are set out in the Clare CDP 2017-2023 and the accompanying SEA and AA.

The environmental report conducted as part of the SEA process on the entire content of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 discussed various issues of concern in the plan area (County

Clare) and provided various mitigating measure to decrease impacts considered to be severe or significant.

The Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021 does not conflict with the objectives of the Development Plan, and should actions be developed over time they will be in line with the local authority mandate and therefore compliant with provisions of the Clare CDP 2017-2023.

the relevance of the Strategic Plan to the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).

The strategic plan does not have particular relevance to implementation of EU legislation given its current structure as a high level plan that identifies key themes for health, rather than landuse activities.

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,

The Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021 has identified six key themes and with of these identified as priority areas; at this juncture there are no landuse effects or areas identified for physical development; therefore no effects are identified.

the cumulative nature of the effects,

Given that the Strategic Plan does not direct activities to areas or identify landuse activities *per se*, cumulative effects are not identified to arise. Once the environmental protection measures within the existing County Development Plan are followed, adhered to and implemented, in the event of physical infrastructure proposals arising in the future, it is predicted that the Strategic Plan would not give rise to cumulative effects.

the transboundary nature of the effects

In terms of negative transboundary environmental effects/impacts it is considered that with proper regard and consistency with the environmental protection policies and objectives contained in the Clare CDP 2017-2023 should physical infrastructure proposals arise from the strategic plan, and the completion of appropriate environmental assessments and planning process for any proposed development arising from the strategy, no negative transboundary environmental effects are predicted.

the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),

As above, the Healthy Clare Strategic plan is not identified as giving rise to effects that would present as risks to human health or the environment; moreover, given the focus of the strategic plan positive effects on human health are a core objective of the strategic plan.

the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).

No landuse effects or areas identified for physical development; therefore no effects are identified

the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

The County has numerous areas designated under natural and cultural heritage including

In total, Clare has 37 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), 10 Special Protection Areas (SPAs), 14 Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and 61 proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) (Note; some of these pNHA are also SACs and SPAs). There are also a number of other sites across the County that have been designated for environmental and/or ecological protection. These sites include the Burren National Park, two Ramsar sites (Galway Bay and Ballyallia lake), 5 Wildlife Sanctuaries and 4 Nature Reserves.

Over 7,500 archaeological sites are recorded within the county with certain clusters present in areas such as the Burren; 870 protected structures are listed in the County and a number of landscapes and scenic routes are also designated.

The Healthy Clare Strategic Plan will not set the context for landuse or development activities outside of that already facilitated within existing landuse plans and therefore no areas likely to be affected are identified.

(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,

It is anticipated that environmental quality standards will not be exceeded by the Strategic Plan. Should physical infrastructure proposals arise from the strategic plan they will be required to be consistent and compliant with the Clare CDP 2017-2023.

(c) intensive land-use,

The Strategic plan does not provide for additional landuse or intensification of same; landuse zonings will remain as provided in the relevant CDP 2017-2023. Therefore such effects are not identified.

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

The Clare CDP 2017-2023 recognises the importance of sites with National and European designations and sets out policies and objectives for their protection. These include sites designated under the EU Birds, and Habitats Directive, the Geopark designation and the National Park amongst others.

It is not considered that the implementation of the Healthy Clare Strategic Plan will have significant negative effects on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, European Union or international protection status.

A Habitats Directive Screening Statement has been prepared in tandem with this SEA Screening to assess if likely significant effects arise in relation to conservation management objectives of European Sites and Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021. This has found that no such effects are identified.

2.2 CONCLUSION TO SEA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

Section 9 (1) of the (2004) Regulations (S.I. No. 435) states “*subject to sub-article (2), an environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes*”

(a) which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications and tourism, and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, or

(b) which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but, either individually or in combination with other plans, are likely to have a significant effect on any such site.”

The Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019 -2021 aims to support health and wellbeing in the county through the identification of thematic health areas, the oversight of a working group and development of actions over time. These do not set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive in Annex I and II. In this regard, they will not be placing limits on activities or development, influence location, nature, size or operating conditions nor will they dictate or specifically direct the allocation of resources at this juncture.

The Screening Statement in support of Appropriate Assessment undertaken on this Strategic Plan has likewise determined no stage 2 appropriate assessment is required in relation to the strategy.

Therefore, on the basis of the above assessment and consideration of the criteria as set out in Schedule 2a of the Regulations 2011 (as amended) it is considered the Healthy Clare Strategic Plan 2019-2021 is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects and does not require full SEA. A final determination however will not be made until the specified environmental authorities have been consulted.

