SEA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

FOR

PROPOSED VARIATION NO. 1
TO THE
DONEGAL COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2024-2030

for: Donegal County Council

Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council

by: CAAS Ltd.

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations ..... **v**

Glossary ..... **vi**

Section 1 SEA: Introduction and Benefits **1**

1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Implications for the Planning Authority 1
1.3 Why SEA? The Benefits 1

Section 2 The Proposed Variation **3**

2.1 Introduction and Content 3
2.2 Proposed Variation Aim and Format 3
2.3 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure evidence-based planning 4
2.4 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes 4

Section 3 SEA Methodology **5**

3.1 Introduction to the Iterative Approach 5
3.2 Appropriate Assessment and Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment 5
3.3 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 6
3.4 Scoping 6
3.5 Alternatives 6
3.6 Environmental Report 6
3.7 SEA Statement 7

Section 4 Environmental Baseline **9**

4.1 Introduction 9
4.2 National Reporting on the Environment 9
4.3 Sustainable Development Goals 9
4.4 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of a new Proposed Variation 10
4.5 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services 11
4.6 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna 12
4.7 Population and Human Health 26
4.8 Soil 27
4.9 Water 33
4.10 Air and Climatic Factors 42
4.11 Material Assets 46
4.12 Cultural Heritage 52
4.13 Landscape 57

Section 5 Strategic Environmental Objectives **59**

Section 6 Description of Alternatives **64**

6.1 Introduction 64
6.2 Limitations in Available Alternatives 64
6.3 Description of Alternatives Considered 64

Section 7 Evaluation of Alternatives **66**

7.1 Introduction 66
7.2 Methodology 66
7.3 Detailed Assessment of Alternatives 68

7.4 Reasons for Choosing the Selected Alternatives in light of Other Reasonable Alternatives Considered....75

Section 8 Evaluation of Proposed Variation Provisions.... 76

8.1 Introduction....76
8.2 Cumulative Effects....78
8.3 Overall Evaluation (including transboundary)....80
8.4 Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment....84
8.5 Interrelationship between Environmental Components....84
8.6 Detailed Evaluation....86

Section 9 Mitigation Measures.... 94

9.1 Introduction....94
9.2 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure evidence-based planning....94
9.3 Consideration of Alternatives....94
9.4 Integration of individual provisions into the text of the Proposed Variation....95
9.5 Integration of individual provisions into the text of the County Development Plan....95

Section 10 Monitoring Measures 99

10.1 Introduction....99
10.2 Indicators and Targets....99
10.3 Sources....99
10.4 Reporting....100

Appendix I Relationship with Legislation and Other Policies, Plans and Programmes.... 105

Appendix II Further Environmental Baseline Detail.... 129

Appendix III Further Environmental Baseline Mapping

Appendix IV Non-Technical Summary

List of Figures

Figure 4.1 European sites within a 15 km buffer of the area to which the Proposed Variation relates 18
Figure 4.2 NHAs and pNHAs within and within a 15 km of the area to which the Proposed Variation relates 19
Figure 4.3 CORINE Land Cover Mapping 2018 20
Figure 4.4 Areas likely to contain Annex I Habitats 21
Figure 4.5 WFD Register of Protected Areas Shellfish Waters 22
Figure 4.6 WFD Register of Protected Areas Salmonid Waters 23
Figure 4.7 Margaritifera Sensitive Areas 24
Figure 4.8 Other Ecological Designations 25
Figure 4.9 Soil Types 30
Figure 4.10 County Geological Sites 31
Figure 4.11 Landslide Susceptibility and Landslide Events 32
Figure 4.12 WFD Status of Surface Waterbodies (2016-2021) 37
Figure 4.13 WFD Status of Ground Waterbodies (2016-2021) 38
Figure 4.14 Groundwater Vulnerability 39
Figure 4.15 Groundwater Productivity 40
Figure 4.16 Entries to the WFD RPA for Drinking Water and Nutrient Sensitive Areas 41
Figure 4.17 Mineral Localities 51
Figure 4.18 Archaeological Heritage 55
Figure 4.19 Architectural Heritage 56
Figure 4.20 Landscape Designations 58

Please refer to Appendix III Further Environmental Baseline Mapping for Additional Localised Maps.

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Checklist of Information included in this Environmental Report 8
Table 5.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs), Indicators and Targets 60
Table 7.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives 66
Table 7.2 Criteria for appraising the effect of the Alternatives on SEOs 68
Table 7.3 Effects common to Variations adopting each of the different alternatives 68
Table 7.4 Assessment of Local Transport Plan Alternatives against SEOs 70
Table 7.5 Assessment of Transport Infrastructure Alternatives against SEOs 71
Table 7.6 Assessment of Opportunity Sites Alternatives against SEOs 72
Table 7.7 Assessment of Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives against SEOs 75
Table 8.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives 77
Table 8.2 Criteria for appraising the effect of the Proposed Variation provisions on SEOs 78
Table 8.3 Overall Evaluation (including transboundary) – Effects arising from the Variation 81
Table 8.4 Presence of Interrelationships between Environmental Components 85
Table 9.1 Integration of Environmental Considerations into the Proposed Variation and existing County Development Plan 96
Table 10.1 Indicators, Targets, Sources and Remedial Action 101

List of Abbreviations

AA	Appropriate Assessment
ACA	Architectural Conservation Area
CAFE	Cleaner Air for Europe
CFRAM	Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management
CGS	County Geological Site
CORINE	Co-ORdinated INformation on the Environment
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
DCCAE	Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment
DCEE	Department of Climate, Energy and Environment
DCHG	Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DZ	Dercarbonising Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EQS	Environmental Quality Standard
ELVs	Emission Discharge Values
EU	European Union
GFC	Gross Final Consumption
GSI	Geological Survey of Ireland
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LULUCF	Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry
NECP	National Energy and Climate Plan
NHA	Natural Heritage Area
NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
NO_2	Nitrogen dioxide
NTA	National Transport Authority
OPW	Office of Public Works
O_3	Ozone
$PM_{2.5}$	Fine particulate matter
pNHA	proposed Natural Heritage Area
PAS	Priority Action Substance
RAL	Remedial Action List
RED	Renewable Energy Directive
RBD	River Basin District
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
RPA	Register of Protected Areas
RPS	Record of Protected Structures
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEO	Strategic Environmental Objective
SI No.	Statutory Instrument Number
SPA	Special Protection Area
SuDS	Sustainable urban Drainage systems
WHO	World Health Organisation
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WRZ	Water Resource Zone
WSS	Water Supply Scheme
WTP	Water Treatment Plant
WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant

Glossary

Appropriate Assessment

The obligation to undertake Appropriate Assessment (AA) derives from Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. AA is a focused and detailed impact assessment of the implications of a strategic action (such as a plan or programme) or project, alone and in combination with other strategic actions and projects, on the integrity of a European Site in view of its conservation objectives.

Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

Biodiversity is the variability among living organisms from all sources including inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems' (United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity 1992).

Flora is all the plants found in a given area.

Fauna is all the animals found in a given area.

Environmental Problems

Annex I of Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27th June 2001, on the assessment of the effects of certain Plans and programmes on the environment (the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive) requires that information is provided on 'any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme', thus, helping to ensure that the proposed strategic action does not make existing environmental problems worse.

Environmental problems arise where there is a conflict between current environmental conditions and ideal targets. If environmental problems are identified at the outset, they can help focus attention on important issues and geographical areas where environmental effects of the plan or programme may be likely.

Environmental Vectors

Environmental vectors are environmental components, such as air, water or soil, through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported, coming into contact with human beings.

Mitigate

To make or become less severe or harsh.

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 a human action, be it a plan, programme or project. Mitigation involves ameliorating significant negative effects. Where there are significant negative effects, consideration should be given in the first instance to preventing such effects or, where this is not possible, 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 effects; repair effects after they have occurred; and compensate for effects, balancing out negative impacts with other positive ones.

In the context of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, mitigation measures are clearly distinguished from compensatory measures. Compensatory measures are intended to offset the negative effects of the plan or project so that the overall ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 Network is maintained.

Natural Heritage

The Heritage Act (1995) defines natural heritage as including flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, inland waterways, heritage gardens and parks.

Protected Structure

Protected Structure is the term used in the Planning and Development Acts (as amended) and associated Regulations (as amended) to define a structure included by a planning authority in its Record of Protected Structures. Such a structure shall not be altered or demolished in whole or part without obtaining planning permission or confirmation from the planning authority that the part of the structure to be altered is not protected.

Recorded Monument

A monument included in the list and marked on the map which comprises the Record of Monuments and Places that is set out county by county under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. The definition includes Zones of Archaeological Potential in towns and all other monuments of archaeological interest which have so far been identified. Any works at or in relation to a recorded monument requires two months' notice to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994.

Scoping

Scoping is the process of determining what issues are to be addressed, and setting out a methodology in which to address them in a structured manner appropriate to the plan or programme. Scoping is carried out in consultation with appropriate environmental authorities.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt it.

Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO)

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives established at International, Community or Member State level and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Proposed Variation and the alternatives can be evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if - in the case of adverse effects - unmitigated.

Section 1 SEA: Introduction and Benefits

1.1 Introduction

This is the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report for Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030. It has been prepared by CAAS Ltd. on behalf of Donegal County Council. The purpose of this report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the making and implementation of the Proposed Variation.

Environmental assessment is a procedure that ensures that the environmental implications of decisions are taken into account before such decisions are made. *Environmental Impact Assessment*, or EIA, is generally used for describing the process of environmental assessment for individual projects, while *Strategic Environmental Assessment* or SEA is the term which has been given to the environmental assessment of plans and programmes, which help determine the nature and location of individual projects taking place. SEA is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a proposed plan or programme, or a variation to these, in order to ensure that these effects are adequately addressed at the earliest appropriate stages of decision-making in tandem with economic, social and other considerations.

The SEA has been undertaken in order to comply with the European SEA Directive[1], which introduced the requirement that SEA be carried out on plans and programmes, and variations to these, that are prepared for a number of sectors, including land use planning.

1.2 Implications for the Planning Authority

SEA identifies the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation. The findings of the SEA are expressed in this Environmental Report, which accompanies the Proposed Variation on public display and identifies how environmental considerations were integrated into the Proposed Variation and how alternatives for the Proposed Variation were considered. This report may be updated in order to take account of recommendations contained in submissions and/or in order to take account of any changes which are made to the Proposed Variation on foot of submissions.

The planning authority must take into account the findings of this report and other related SEA output during their consideration of the Proposed Variation and before it is adopted.

When the Proposed Variation is finalised, an SEA Statement must be prepared which will summarise, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Variation.

1.3 Why SEA? The Benefits

SEA is the planning authority's and the public's guide to what are generally the best areas for development.

SEA enables the planning authority to direct development towards the most robust, well-serviced and connected areas – thereby facilitating the general avoidance of incompatible development in the most sensitive, least well-serviced and least well-connected areas.

SEA provides greater certainty to the public and to developers. Plans, and variations to plans, are more likely to be adopted without delays or challenges and planning applications are more likely to be granted permission. Environmental mitigation is more likely to cost less.

The Proposed Variation directs incompatible development away from the most sensitive

[1] Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27th June 2001, on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, transposed into Irish Law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 435 of 2004), as amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 200 of 2011), and the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004), as amended by the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 201 of 2011).

areas and focuses on directing compact, sustainable development within compatible areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation.

Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable County Donegal to become a more desirable place to live, work and visit.

Compatible sustainable development in sensitive areas is also provided for, subject to various requirements relating to environmental protection and management being met.

Section 2 The Proposed Variation

2.1 Introduction and Content

Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030 has been prepared pursuant to Section 58 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended).

2.2 Proposed Variation Aim and Format

The aim of the Proposed Variation is to:

1. Insert new Area Plans for An Clochán Liath (Dungloe), Ballyshannon, Bridgend, Carndonagh, Donegal Town and Killybegs into the Development Plan to replace the current 'Seven Strategic Towns Local Area Plan 2018-2024 which is due to expire in August 2026 and make amendments to Chapter 17 – General Introduction to Area Plans and Table 3.7 Core Strategy Table.
2. Amend the zoning of site NR2.16 at Cockhill, Buncrana – from 'New Residential Phase 2' to 'New Residential Phase 1' within the Buncrana Area Plan Land Use Zoning Map to address an error in said land use zoning map. Note: At the Special Plenary Council Meeting of the 16th May 2024 the Elected Members had in fact resolved to zone the subject lands as 'New Residential Phase 1' rather than 'New Residential Phase 2'.
3. Amend land use zonings on foot of Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) related landowner submissions, where appropriate, within affected settlements throughout Donegal to accord with the Residential Zoned Land Tax Change in zoning of land subject to existing economic activity Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines (DoHLGH December 2024) and Section 653I (4) of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 and otherwise to take into account the proper planning and development of an area.
4. Replace the proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) Zonings with Local Environment Zonings within the Letterkenny Plan Land Use Zoning Map as pNHAs are not in fact a statutory designation/do not constitute a land use zoning and should be replaced by an appropriate zoning to effectively guide development.
5. Rezone an area of land at Mullindrait, Stranorlar – from part 'Opportunity Site' and Part 'Open Space and Recreation' to 'New Residential Phase 1'.

To give effect to these aims, the Proposed Variation contains five Sections namely:

- Section 1: Contains the Area Plans for An Clochán Liath (Dungloe), Ballyshannon, Bridgend, Carndonagh, Donegal Town and Killybegs including land use zoning maps and amendments to Chapter 17 General Introduction to Area Plans (Note: These land use zoning maps include any amended land use zonings for said settlements on foot of RZLT related landowner submissions). The amendments to Chapter 17 also introduce more flexibility and responsiveness in terms of the potential release of 'New Residential Phase 2' lands, whereby such lands could be considered for development purposes when, inter alia, a minimum of 50% of the 'Phase 1' lands in a given settlement have been developed or committed to development by way of a grant of planning permission – see Policy GEN-H-3.
- Section 2: Provides details pertaining to the proposed Amendment of Zoning of Site NR2.16 at Cockhill Buncrana within the Buncrana Area Plan land use zoning map, from New Residential Phase 2' to 'New Residential Phase 1'.
- Section 3: Amendment of Letterkenny Plan on foot of Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) rezoning requests and the rezoning of lands currently designated as 'proposed Natural Heritage Areas' to 'Local Environment'.
- Section 4: Amendment of the Ballybofey-Stranorlar Area Plan on foot of Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) rezoning requests and the rezoning of

lands at Mullindrait, Stranorlar as 'New Residential Phase 1'.

2.3 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure evidence-based planning

In preparing the Proposed Variation, information relating to various sectors, from different Departments within the Councils and from different bodies and organisations, was gathered and analysed, contributing towards the development of evidence-led provisions. This work included preparing the following documents that are appended to the Proposed Variation: this SEA Environmental Report; an Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report; a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report; and Donegal Six Strategic Towns Local Transport Plans.

The undertaking of the SEA process was part of this strategic work and contributed towards the integration of environmental considerations into individual Proposed Variation provisions as detailed in Section 9 of this report.

2.4 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

It is important to note that when reading the Proposed Variation, the provisions of the County Development Plan are relevant and, in this regard, both documents should be read in tandem with each other.

The existing County Development Plan to be varied sits within a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for, among other things, land use planning, infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism, environmental protection and environmental management. The Proposed Variation must comply with relevant higher-level strategic actions and will, in turn, guide lower-level strategic actions. These documents include plans and programmes such as those detailed in Appendix I[2] (see also, Section 4 "Environmental Baseline", Section 5 "Strategic Environmental Objectives", Section 6 "Description of Alternatives" and Section 9 "Mitigation Measures"). These documents have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant.

The First Revision of the National Planning Framework sets out Ireland's planning policy direction up to 2040. The National Planning Framework is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region sets out objectives for land use planning, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been subject to environmental assessment and must, as relevant and appropriate, be implemented through the County Development Plan to be varied.

In order to be realised, projects included in the Proposed Variation (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

[2] Appendix I is not intended to be a full and comprehensive review of EU Directives, the transposing regulations or the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management. The information is not exhaustive and it is recommended to consult the Directive, Regulation, Plan or Programme to become familiar with the full details of each.

Section 3 SEA Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the Iterative Approach

The preparation of the Proposed Variation, SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA; see Section 3.2 below), and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA; see Section 3.3 below) are taking place concurrently and the findings of the SEA, AA and SFRA have informed the Proposed Variation. The process is currently at a stage where the findings of this report will be placed on public display as part of the required statutory public consultations. AA and SFRA documents will also accompany the Proposed Variation on public display. Submissions made on the Proposed Variation and the associated documents will be responded to and updates made to the documents where relevant.

When the Proposed Variation is finalised, the SEA, AA and SFRA documents will be finalised. Final documents will include an SEA Statement, which will include information on how environmental considerations were integrated into the Proposed Variation, and an AA Conclusion Statement. The Proposed Variation will be implemented and environmental monitoring – as well as planning and project development and associated environmental assessments and administrative consent of projects – will be undertaken.

3.2 Appropriate Assessment and Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment

Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening and Stage 2 AA are being undertaken alongside the Proposed Variation. The requirement for AA is provided under the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 1992/43/EEC). The emerging conclusion of the AA is that the Proposed Variation will not affect the integrity of any European Site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.[3] The preparation of the Proposed Variation, SEA and AA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA have informed the SEA.

Many elements of Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment as detailed in the EPA's (2013) Practitioner's Manual have been aligned with in the undertaking of the SEA for the Proposed Variation. These include:

Scoping

- Biodiversity-relevant issues were identified for consideration at scoping stage and these are now detailed in Section 4.
- Reference to a zone of influence is provided at Section 4.

Baseline

- Biodiversity data sources relevant for this local level assessment have been identified and datasets collated/gathered.
- The biodiversity baseline addresses designated sites and other habitats and species of ecological value.
- AA information has been incorporated into the SEA baseline.

Alternatives

- Impacts upon biodiversity are considered under each of the alternatives and potential conflicts can be mitigated.

Impact assessment

- Effects on biodiversity are identified and assessed and the AA considers the interrelationship between biodiversity and potential effects on European Sites.

Mitigation and monitoring

- Proposed mitigation measures deriving from the various processes were generally consistent and compatible.
- Indicators and associated targets have been included in SEA for monitoring European Sites.

Reporting

- This SEA ER: addresses all biodiversity-related considerations relevant for this level of assessment; contains all biodiversity-relevant information, data, figures and maps relevant for this level of assessment; and has been informed by the AA findings.

Communication and consultation

- Submissions received are taken on board.
- The preparation of the Proposed Variation, SEA and AA have taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA have informed the SEA.

[3] Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: (a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan, or variation to the Plan, to proceed; and (c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

3.3 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been undertaken as part of the preparation of the Proposed Variation. Requirements in relation to SFRA are provided under 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014. The SFRA has informed the provisions of the Proposed Variation.

3.4 Scoping

The scope of environmental issues to be dealt with by the SEA together with the level of detail to which they are addressed was broadly decided upon taking into account the collection of environmental baseline data and input from environmental authorities. Scoping allowed the SEA to become focused upon key issues relevant to the environmental components that are specified under the SEA Directive[4].

All relevant environmental authorities identified under the SEA Regulations as amended, were sent SEA scoping notices by the Council indicating that submissions or observations in relation to the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report could be made to the Council.

As the Proposed Variation is not likely to have significant effects on the environment in another Member State, formal transboundary consultations as provided for by Article 7 of the SEA Directive were not undertaken. However, Northern Ireland environmental authorities were consulted with as a neighbouring jurisdiction. Submissions from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council were received and these have been taken into account by the SEA.

3.5 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. In accordance with this requirement, alternatives for the Proposed Variation are identified and assessed in Sections 6 and 7.

3.6 Environmental Report

This SEA Environmental Report predicts and evaluates the likely environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation and relevant alternatives. The Environmental Report provides the Council, stakeholders and the public with a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of the Proposed Variation.

Mitigation measures to prevent or reduce significant adverse effects posed by the Proposed Variation are identified in Section 9 - these have been integrated into the Proposed Variation.

This Environmental Report may be updated in order to take account of recommendations contained in submissions and in order to take account of changes that are made to the original, Proposed Variation that is being placed on public display. Any proposed changes to the Proposed Variation will be examined for the need to undertake SEA and AA.

The Environmental Report is required to contain the information specified in Schedule 2B of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004), as amended (see Table 3.1).

No significant difficulties have been encountered during the undertaking of the assessment to date.

[4] These components comprise biodiversity, fauna, flora, population, human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.

3.7 SEA Statement

On finalisation of the Proposed Variation, an SEA Statement will be prepared that will include information on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Proposed Variation, highlighting the main changes to the Proposed Variation that resulted from the SEA process;
- How the SEA Environmental Report and consultations have been taken into account, summarising the key issues raised in consultations and in the Environmental Report indicating what action was taken in response;
- The reasons for choosing the Proposed Variation in the light of the other alternatives, identifying the other alternatives considered, commenting on their potential effects and explaining why the Proposed Variation as adopted was selected; and
- The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation.

Table 3.1 Checklist of Information included in this Environmental Report

Information Required to be included in the Environmental Report	Corresponding Section of this Report
(A) Outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	Sections 2, 5 and 8
(B) Description of relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the evolution of that environment without implementation of the plan or programme	Section 4, and Appendices II and III
(C) Description of the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	Sections 4, 7 and 8, and Appendices II and III
(D) Identification of any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme, particularly those relating to European protected sites	Section 4
(E) List of environmental protection objectives, established at international, EU or National level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and describe how those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account when preparing the Proposed Variation	Sections 5, 7, 8, 9 and Appendix I
(F) Describe the likely significant effects on the environment	Sections 7 and 8
(G) Describe any measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse environmental effects of implementing the plan or programme	Section 9
(H) Give an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives considered, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken (including any difficulties)	Sections 3, 6, 7 and 8
(I) A description of proposed monitoring measures	Section 10
(J) A non-technical summary of the above information	Appendix IV Non-Technical Summary
(K) Interrelationships between each environmental topic	Addressed as it arises within each Section

Section 4 Environmental Baseline

4.1 Introduction

Reflecting the specifications in the SEA Directive, the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment for the following environmental components are described in this section: biodiversity and flora and fauna; population and human health; soil; water; air and climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage; landscape; and the interrelationship between the above factors.

This description includes information that is relevant to lower tier planning, environmental assessments and decision-making[5].

County Donegal shares a border with Northern Ireland and the potential for likely significant transboundary environmental effects is considered by the SEA. For this purpose, environmental baseline information at and across the border in Northern Ireland relating to each of the environmental components detailed below have been considered.

4.2 National Reporting on the Environment

The EPA's *"Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024"* report provides an integrated assessment of the overall quality of Ireland's environment, the pressures being placed on it and the societal responses to current and emerging environmental issues. This report has informed various parts of the environmental baseline provided below. The five key environmental priorities identified by the report are:

- "Delivering a national policy position on the environment - we urgently need to have a national policy position on the environment to address the complex interactions, synergies and trade-offs across environmental policy areas and to deal with its interactions with other policy domains.
- Driving policy implementation - we must rigorously implement existing environmental plans and programmes to achieve the benefits that they were developed to deliver.
- Transforming our systems - transformation of our energy, transport, food and industrial sectors is critical to achieving a sustainable future.
- Scaling up investment in infrastructure - investment in water, energy, transport and waste management infrastructure is essential to protect the environment now and into the future.
- Protecting the environment to protect our health - protecting the environment is key to protecting our health and we must act to reduce the modifiable risks to our health from environmental exposures."

4.3 Sustainable Development Goals

Implementation of the Proposed Variation will contribute towards efforts to achieve a number of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which were adopted by world leaders in 2015 at a United Nations Summit and came into force in 2016. These Goals include:

- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

[5] Article 5 of the SEA Directive, in accordance with the established European principle of subsidiarity, requires that the Environmental Report includes the information that may reasonably be required taking into account, inter alia, the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process in order to avoid duplication of the assessment.

4.4 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of a new Proposed Variation

In the absence of a Proposed Variation, the framework for development for the relevant settlements would be primarily provided by the existing County Development Plan, as well as other related documents. There would be no Proposed Variation to provide additional detail beyond that provided already through the existing planning framework as how to achieve sustainable development and environmental protection and management.

As a result, there would be a decreased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of the positive environmental effects identified by this assessment occurring, including:

- Contribution towards protection of ecology (including designated sites, ecological connectivity, habitats) by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- Contribution towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and associated ecosystem services, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats.
- Contribution towards protection and/or maintenance of biodiversity and flora and fauna by contributing towards the protection of natural capital including the environmental vectors of air, water and soil. Biodiversity and flora and fauna includes biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species (including birds and bats), listed/protected species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats (including terrestrial and aquatic habitats), and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna – including terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity and flora and fauna.
- Promotion of economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management.
- Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- Contribution towards the protection of human health by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- Contributes towards protection of human health as a result of contributing towards the protection of natural capital including environmental vectors, such as air and water.
- Contribution towards the protection of soils and designated sites of geological heritage by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- Contribution towards the protection of the environment from contamination.
- Contribution towards the protection of water by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- Contributions towards the protection of water resources including the status of surface and groundwaters and water-based designations.
- Contribution towards flood risk management and appropriate drainage.
- Contribution towards compliance with national and regional water services and waste management policies.
- Contribution towards increase in renewable energy use by facilitating renewable energy and electricity transmission infrastructure developments.
- Contribution towards limits in increases in energy demand from the transport sector by facilitating sustainable compact growth.
- Contribution towards reductions in average energy consumption per capita including promoting sustainable compact growth, sustainable mobility, sustainable design and energy efficiency.
- Contribution towards climate mitigation and adaptation by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.
- In combination with other plans, programmes etc., contribution towards the objectives of the wide policy framework relating to climate mitigation and adaptation, and associated contribution towards maintaining and improving air quality and managing noise levels, including through measures relating to:
    - Sustainable compact growth;

    - Sustainable mobility, including walking, cycling and public transport;
    - Drainage, flood risk management and resilience; and
    - Sustainable design, energy efficiency and green infrastructure.
- Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage elsewhere by facilitating development within settlements.
- Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage within settlements, by facilitating brownfield development and regeneration.
- Contributes towards protection of wider landscape and landscape designations by facilitating development within settlements.

Furthermore, and as a result, there would be an increased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of the adverse environmental effects identified by this assessment occurring, including:

- Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure:
    - Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna;
    - Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and
    - Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.
- Potential interactions with human health if effects arise from environmental vectors.
- Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands.
- Potential for riverbank erosion.
- Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology.
- Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.
- Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts).
- Increases in waste levels.
- Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.
- Potential conflict between development under the Plan as varied and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives.
- Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality.
- Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors.
- Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.
- Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities.
- Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.

4.5 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

Natural capital comprises renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a flow of ecosystem services that provide benefits to people. These benefits can include clean air and water, a stable climate, protection from floods, food, resources for fuel, building materials, clothes and medicines, recreation. Managing natural capital so that it can continue to deliver the ecosystem services that provide these benefits is important in order to ensure sustainable development. Unmanaged natural capital risks the continued degradation and depletion of these assets, and in turn, of their capacity to provide the economy and society with the ecosystem benefits that they depend on. These services also regulate climate, regulate water flows (e.g. through wetlands and forests), sequester and store carbon in peatlands and improve soil quality for crops.

Ecosystems are multifunctional communities of living organisms interacting with each other and their environment. Ecosystems provide a series of services for human well-being (ecosystem services) either directly or indirectly contributing towards human wellbeing. There are four main types; provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services. Provisioning services are the products obtained from ecosystems such as food, fresh water, wood, fibre, genetic resources and medicines. Regulating services are defined as the benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes such as climate regulation, natural hazard regulation, water purification and waste management, pollination or pest control. Support services highlight the importance of ecosystems to provide habitat for migratory species and to maintain the viability of gene-pools. Cultural services include non-material benefits that people obtain from ecosystems

such as spiritual enrichment, intellectual development, recreation and aesthetic values[6].

Various provisions relating to ecosystem services have been included in the Proposed Variation.

The following natural capital and ecosystem services issues are relevant to this SEA and have been taken into account in the provisions of the Proposed Variation and/or the existing Donegal County Development Plan:

- Air quality;
- Noise pollution;
- Light pollution;
- Water quality and river basin management including interactions with soil;
- Soil and vegetation carbon, which helps to regulate greenhouse gas emissions;
- Soil/geological storage of water, contributing towards flood control;
- Land supporting food production; and
- Natural resources supporting energy production and recreation.

4.6 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

4.6.1 Overview

Information on biodiversity and flora and fauna which is relevant to project planning and development and associated environmental assessment and administrative consent of projects includes available information on designated ecological sites and protected species, ecological connectivity (including stepping stones and corridors) and non-designated habitats.

The following information is relevant to ecological networks and connectivity and non-designated habitats:

- CORINE land cover mapping (including areas likely to contain a habitat listed in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive)[7];
- Trees, groups of trees and woodlands;
- Watercourses and wetlands;
- Other relevant County Development Plans designations;
- The EPA's Framework National Ecological Network for Ireland[8]; and
- Other sites of high biodiversity value or ecological importance as identified by, for example, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (badger sets), relevant datasets from the National Biodiversity Data Centre and BirdWatch Ireland's 'Important Bird Areas' (Crowe et al., 2009)[9].

Relevant sites in Northern Ireland include:

- UK National Site Network (NSN) Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and UK Special Protection Area (SPAs), not provided for under EU legislation[10].

Ecological networks are important in connecting areas of local biodiversity with each other and with nearby designated sites so as to prevent islands of habitat from being isolated entities. They are composed of linear features, such as treelines, hedgerows and rivers/streams, which provide corridors or stepping stones for wildlife species moving within their normal range. They are important for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species of flora and fauna particularly for mammals, especially for bats and small birds and facilitate linkages both between and within designated ecological sites, the non-designated surrounding countryside and urban areas.

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive recognises the importance of ecological networks as corridors and stepping stones for wildlife, including for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species of flora and fauna. The Directive requires that ecological connectivity and areas of ecological value outside the Natura 2000 network of designated ecological sites are maintained.

Man-made habitats within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates can also include important biodiversity features. Gardens provide habitats for a range of wildlife including various bird species, invertebrates such as bees

[6] https://biodiversity.europa.eu/topics/ecosystem-services

[7] The CORINE land cover mapping classifies land cover under various headings. This dataset allows for the identification of lands that are likely to be most valuable to biodiversity including those which are likely to contain a habitat listed in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive e.g., natural grasslands, peat bogs, salt marshes. CORINE Land Cover is a map of the European environmental landscape based on interpretation of satellite images. Land cover is the observed physical cover, as seen from the ground or through remote sensing, including for example natural or planted vegetation, water and human constructions which cover the earth's surface.

[8] The EPA's Framework National Ecological Network provides a classification of the relative importance of areas by virtue of the biodiversity and flora that they contain and the connectivity they provide. Many of the areas identified are corridors.

[9] Including: available habitats mapping at a suitable scale; trees; groups of trees and woodlands; and hedgerows.

[10] The UK NSN SACs and UK SPAs are afforded protection in Northern Ireland under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. SACs and SPAs in the UK no longer form part of the EU Natura 2000 ecological network. The 2019 Regulations have created a national site network on land and at sea, including both the inshore and offshore marine areas in the UK. The national site network includes: existing UK SACs and SPAs; and new UK SACs and SPAs designated under these Regulations.

and butterflies and mammals such as hedgehogs, mice, rats and foxes. These species move around between gardens using hedgerows and vegetated areas. These urban green spaces are of importance as they form part of a network of green spaces across the area to which the Proposed Variation relates including gardens, parks, graveyards, amenity walks, railway lines and patches of woodland and scrub within which animals and plants continue to thrive.

Ecological islands or areas of habitat that are not connected to surrounding ecologically valuable habitats can also be important.

The zone of influence of the area to which the Proposed Variation relates and beyond with respect to impacts upon ecology via surface waters – including designated ecology – can be estimated to be areas within 15 km of the area to which the Proposed Variation relates and all downstream areas of catchments which drain the area.

4.6.2 European Sites

European sites comprise Special Areas of Conservation[11] (SACs) and Special Protection Areas[12] (SPAs). Such sites within a 15 km buffer around the area to which the Proposed Variation relates are mapped on Figure 4.1). There are 72 European sites designated within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates (46 SACs and 26 SPAs).[13]

There are no European sites designated within An Clochán Liath, however, Rutland Island and Sound SAC (Site Code: 002283)[14] is designated adjacent to the east of the settlement boundary, whilst Cloghernagore Bog And Glenveagh National Park SAC (Site Code: 002047)[15] is located c. 1 km to the north-east of the settlement boundary and Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA (Site Code: 004039)[16] is located c. 0.5 km to the east of the settlement boundary.

There is one SPA designated within Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon), namely Donegal Bay SPA (Site Code: 004151)[17] and one site designated c. 0.8 km to the south of the settlement boundary, namely Dunmuckrum Turloughs SAC (Site Code: 002303)[18].

There are no European sites designated within Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town), however Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC (Site Code: 000133)[19] and Donegal Bay SPA (Site Code: 004151)[20] are located adjacent to the settlement boundary.

There are no European sites designated within or adjacent to Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend), Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) and Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs).

All relevant European sites[21] and their sensitive features are listed in the Appendix II of this report. For more detail on European sites please refer to the AA document that accompanies the Proposed Variation and this SEA Environmental Report.

[11] SACs have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. The Habitats Directive seeks to establish Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the EU. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SACs to protect habitats and species, which, together with the SPAs designated under the 1979 Birds Directive, form Natura 2000. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010. The Regulations have been prepared to address several judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) against Ireland, notably cases C-418/04 and C-183/05, in respect of failure to transpose elements of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive into Irish law.

[12] SPAs have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the EU.

[13] Please refer to Appendix III for more information.

[14] Sensitive features comprise: coastal lagoons; large shallow inlets and bays; reefs; annual vegetation or drift lines; embryonic shifting dunes; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; humid dune slacks; and harbour seal.

[15] Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains; water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; European dry heaths; Alpine and Boreal heaths; *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils; blanket bogs; depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*; old sessile oak woodlands with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles; freshwater pearl mussel; salmon; otter; and Killarney fern.

[16] Sensitive features comprise: red-throated diver; merlin; peregrine; golden plover; and dunlin.

[17] Sensitive features comprise: great northern diver; light-bellied brent goose; common scoter; sanderling; and wetland and waterbirds.

[18] Sensitive features comprise: turloughs.

[19] Sensitive features comprise: mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; dunes with *Salix repens ssp. Argentea*; humid dune slacks; and harbour seal.

[20] Sensitive features comprise: great northern diver; light-bellied brent goose; common scoter; sanderling; and wetland and waterbirds.

[21] Including sites in Ireland and Northern Ireland within 15km buffer around the County.

4.6.3 Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated due to their national conservation value for ecological and/or geological/geomorphological heritage. They cover nationally important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms or geomorphological features, wildlife plant and animal species or a diversity of these natural attributes. NHAs are designated under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. Proposed NHAs (pNHAs) were published on a non-statutory basis in 1995, but have not since been statutorily proposed or designated.

There are 16 NHAs and 85 pNHAs designated within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, as mapped on Figure 4.2.[22]

There are no NHAs or pNHAs designated within An Clochán Liath, however, Cloghernagore Bog And Glenveagh National Park pNHA (Site Code: 002047) is located c. 0.5 km to the east of the settlement boundary.

There is one pNHA, namely Erne Estuary/Finner Dunes pNHA (Site Code: 000139), designated within Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon).

There are no NHAs or pNHAs designated within Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town), however, Donegal Bay (Murvagh) pNHA (Site Code: 000133) is designated adjacent to the settlement boundary.

There are no NHAs or pNHAs designated within or adjacent to Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend), Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) and Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs).

4.6.4 Land Cover

Land cover is the observed physical cover, as seen from the ground or through remote sensing, including for example natural or planted vegetation, water and human constructions which cover the earth's surface.

The CORINE 2018[23] mapping (shown on Figure 4.3) identifies the most dominant land cover types are peat bogs (concentrated in the central, north-west and south-west) and pastures (mainly in the east, south, north and north-east).

The CORINE 2018 mapping identifies the most dominant land cover types surrounding An Clochán Liath are discontinuous urban fabric (concentrated in the centre and extending to the north and north-west); complex cultivation patterns (mainly in the south and east); land principally occupied by agriculture with significant areas or natural vegetation (located to the west); and peat bogs (surrounding the settlement).

The CORINE 2018 mapping identifies the most dominant land cover types surrounding Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) are discontinuous urban fabric (located in the central parts of the settlement); and pastures (surrounding the settlement).

The CORINE 2018 mapping identifies the most dominant land cover types surrounding Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) are pastures and non-irrigated arable land.

The CORINE 2018 mapping identifies the most dominant land cover types surrounding Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) are discontinuous urban fabric (located within the central parts of the settlement); and pastures (surrounding the settlement).

The CORINE 2018 mapping identifies the most dominant land cover types surrounding Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) are discontinuous urban fabric (located in the central parts of the settlement); pastures (surrounding the settlement); and intertidal flats (located to the south-west of the settlement).

The CORINE 2018 mapping identifies the most dominant land cover types surrounding Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) are discontinuous urban fabric (located within the central parts of the settlement); (land principally occupied by agriculture with significant areas of natural

[22] Please refer to Appendix III for more information.

[23] The CORINE (Co-ordinated Information on the Environment) land cover data series was devised as a means of compiling geo-spatial environmental information in a standardised and comparable manner. CORINE has become a key data source for informing environmental and planning policy on a national and European level. The main land cover type in Ireland is agricultural land including forestry, which accounts for two-thirds of the national landmass. Most of this is permanent grassland pastures. Peatlands and wetlands are the second most widespread land cover type, covering almost one-fifth of the country. While forested areas cover about one-tenth of the country. Despite rapid development in the past two decades, Ireland's landscape is predominantly rural and agricultural.

vegetation (surrounding the settlement); and peat bogs (located to the north-west of the settlement).

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I habitats (see Figure 4.4), include:

- Peat bogs
- Moors and heathlands;
- Intertidal flats;
- Beaches-dunes-sands;
- Mixed forest;
- Broad-leaved forest;
- Waterbodies; and
- Salt marshes.

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I habitats surrounding An Clochán Liath include peat bogs; and intertidal flats.

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I Habitats surrounding Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) include: salt marshes; and water bodies.

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I Habitats surrounding Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) include: intertidal flats; broad-leaved forests; and peat bogs.

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I Habitats surrounding Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) include: peat bogs; broad-leaved forests; beaches, dunes and sand; and moors and heathland.

Within Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) and Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh), there are no areas with the potential for Annex I Habitats.

4.6.5 Register of Protected Areas

In response to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) a number of water bodies or parts of water bodies that must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by people and by wildlife have been listed on Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs). Entries to the RPAs within and adjacent to the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, designated by virtue of their value to biodiversity include Shellfish waters[24] (including coastal and transitional waters and intersecting surface and groundwaters). In County Donegal, these areas are found within the following areas: Trawbreaga Bay; Lough Swilly; Mulroy Bay; Sheephaven; Gweedore Bay; Dunglow; Trawenagh Bay; Gweebara Bay; Loughras Beg; McSwynes Bay; Inver Bay; and Donegal Bay, as mapped on Figure 4.5.

There are also a number of water-dependent habitats within the area that have been listed on RPAs relating to biodiversity – these relate to designated SACs and SPAs (see Section 4.6.2) and associated surface and groundwaters.

RPAs designated by virtue of their value to humans are addressed under Section 4.9.7.

4.6.6 Salmonid Waters

The Salmonid Regulations (S.I. 293/1988) designate the waters capable of supporting salmon (Salmo salar), trout (Salmo trutta), char (Salvelinus) and whitefish (Coregonus) as protected. 34 (no.) rivers, tributaries and lakes are listed and protected under these Regulations that prescribe quality standards for salmonid waters, the sampling programmes and the methods of analysis and inspection to be used by local authorities to determine compliance with the standards. Sections of the Rivers Finn, Swilly, Glasagh (Upper), Leannan, Lurgy, Glashagh (Lower) and Maggy's Burn are listed under the Regulations, as shown on Figure 4.6.

4.6.7 Margaritifera Sensitive Areas

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. There are two species of freshwater

[24] In order to protect existing shellfish waters and to ensure the Shellfish Waters Directive (2006/113/EC). The purpose of this Directive is to put in place concrete measures to protect waters, including shellfish waters, against pollution and to safeguard certain shellfish populations from various harmful consequences, resulting from the discharge of pollutant substances into the sea. The future protection of these areas, the European Union introduced the Directive applies to the aquatic habitat of bivalve and gastropod molluscs only (includes oysters, mussels, cockles, scallops and clams). It does not include crustaceans such as lobsters, crabs and crayfish.

pearl mussel in Ireland (Margaritifera and Margaritifera durrovensis) and both are protected under Annex II and Annex V of the EU Habitats Directive. In the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, the Margaritifera Sensitive Areas are found within the following river catchments (mapped on Figure 4.7):

- Clady (catchments of SAC populations listed in S.I. 296 of 2009);
- Tullaghobegly (catchments of other extant populations);
- Lackagh – Owencarrow (catchments of SAC populations listed in S.I. 296 of 2009);
- Leannan – Glaskeenan (catchments of SAC populations listed in S.I. 296 of 2009);
- Leannan (catchments of SAC populations listed in S.I. 296 of 2009);
- Finn (catchments of other extant populations);
- Owenrea (catchments of SAC populations listed in S.I. 296 of 2009);
- Bungosteen (catchments of other extant populations);
- Oily (catchments of other extant populations);
- Eany Water (catchments of other extant populations);
- Eske (catchments of SAC populations listed in S.I. 296 of 2009);
- Ballintra (catchments of other extant populations);
- Erne – Waterfoot (catchments of other extant populations); and
- Erne – Ominey (catchments of other extant populations).

Twenty-seven Management Plans for the Freshwater Pearl Mussel have been published, the objective of which is to restore the freshwater pearl mussel populations in 27 rivers, or stretches of rivers that are within the boundaries of Special Areas of Conservation.

4.6.8 Other Designations

Other Designations within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates (mapped on Figure 4.8) include National Parks, Ramsar Sites and Nature Reserves.

4.6.8.1 National Parks

National Parks have the following characteristics:

- Where one or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation; where plant and animal species, geomorphological sites and habitats are of special scientific, educational and recreational interest or which contain a natural landscape of great beauty;
- Where steps have been taken by the Government to prevent or eliminate as soon as possible exploitation or occupation in the whole area and to enforce effectively the respect of ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic features which have led to its establishment; and
- Where visitors are allowed to enter, under special conditions, for inspirational, educational, cultural and recreational purposes.

There are seven National Parks in Ireland, including Glenveagh National Park, located within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates. Glenveagh National Park lies in the heart of County Donegal, among the landscape of the Derryveagh Mountains. The park includes the former Glenveagh Estate, as well as the quartzite hills around Crocknafarragh to the west and the peatlands of Lough Barra bog, Meenachullion and Crockastoller to the south.[25]

4.6.8.2 Ramsar Sites

Ramsar sites are wetlands designated to be of international importance under the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance (especially as Water Fowl Habitat), established at Ramsar in 1971 and ratified by Ireland in 1984. The main aim of the Convention is to secure the designation by each contracting state of wetlands in its territory for inclusion in a list of wetlands of international importance for waterfowl. This entails the commitment of each contracting state to a policy of protection and management of the designated wetlands, and of formulating and implementing planning so as to promote the conservation of designated wetlands and, as far as possible, the wise use of wetlands in its territory. Ireland presently has 45 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance, with surface areas of 66,994 hectares.

There are four Ramsar sites designated within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates (mapped on Figure 4.8), including:

- Lough Barra Bog;
- Meenachullion Bog;
- Pettigo Plateau; and
- Trawbreaga Bay.

Ramsar Sites closest to County Donegal in Northern Ireland (also mapped on Figure 4.8) include: Lough Foyle Ramsar Site, located in County Derry; Fairy Water Bogs Ramsar Site, located in County Tyrone; and Pettigoe Plateau Ramsar Site, Located in County Fermanagh.

[25] Source: www.npws.ie

4.6.8.3 Nature Reserves

Nature Reserves are areas of importance to wildlife, protected under Ministerial order. There are currently 78 Statutory Nature Reserves in Ireland. Most are owned by the State but some are owned by organisations or private landowners. There are ten Nature Reserves located within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates (mapped on Figure 4.8):

- Ardnamona
- Ballyarr Wood
- Derkmore Wood
- Duntally Wood;
- Inch Levels;
- Lough Barra;
- Meenachillion;
- Pettigo Plateau;
- Rathmullan Wood; and
- Sheskinmore

Nature Reserves closest to County Donegal in Northern Ireland (also mapped on Figure 4.8) include: Magilligan Point; Ballymaclary; Binevenagh; Altikeeragh; Roe Estuary; Ness & Envy Wood; Banagher Glen; Boorin; Killeter Forest; Meenadoan; Castle Archdale Forest; and Castlecadwell Forest.

4.6.9 Existing Problems

Ireland's Article 17 report on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (DCHG, 2019) identifies various Irish, EU-protected habitats and species to be of unfavourable status and many to be still declining, although it also identifies that a range of positive actions are underway. Categories for pressures and threats on Ireland's habitats and species identified by the report comprise:

- Agriculture;
- Forestry;
- Extraction of resources (minerals, peat, non-renewable energy resources);
- Energy production processes and related infrastructure development;
- Development and operation of transport systems;
- Development, construction and use of residential, commercial, industrial and recreational infrastructure and areas;
- Extraction and cultivation of biological living resources (other than agriculture and forestry);
- Military action, public safety measures, and other human intrusions;
- Alien and problematic species;
- Mixed source pollution;
- Human-induced changes in water regimes;
- Natural processes (excluding catastrophes and processes induced by human activity or climate change);
- Geological events, natural catastrophes;
- Climate change; and
- Unknown pressures, no pressures and pressures from outside the Member State.

Ireland's Article 12 Birds Directive Reports and the 6th National Report under the Convention of Biological Diversity identify similar issues.

The Proposed Variation includes measures to contribute towards the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna and associated ecosystem services.

Previous changes in land uses arising from human development have resulted in a loss of biodiversity and flora and fauna; however, legislative objectives governing biodiversity and fauna were not identified as being conflicted with.

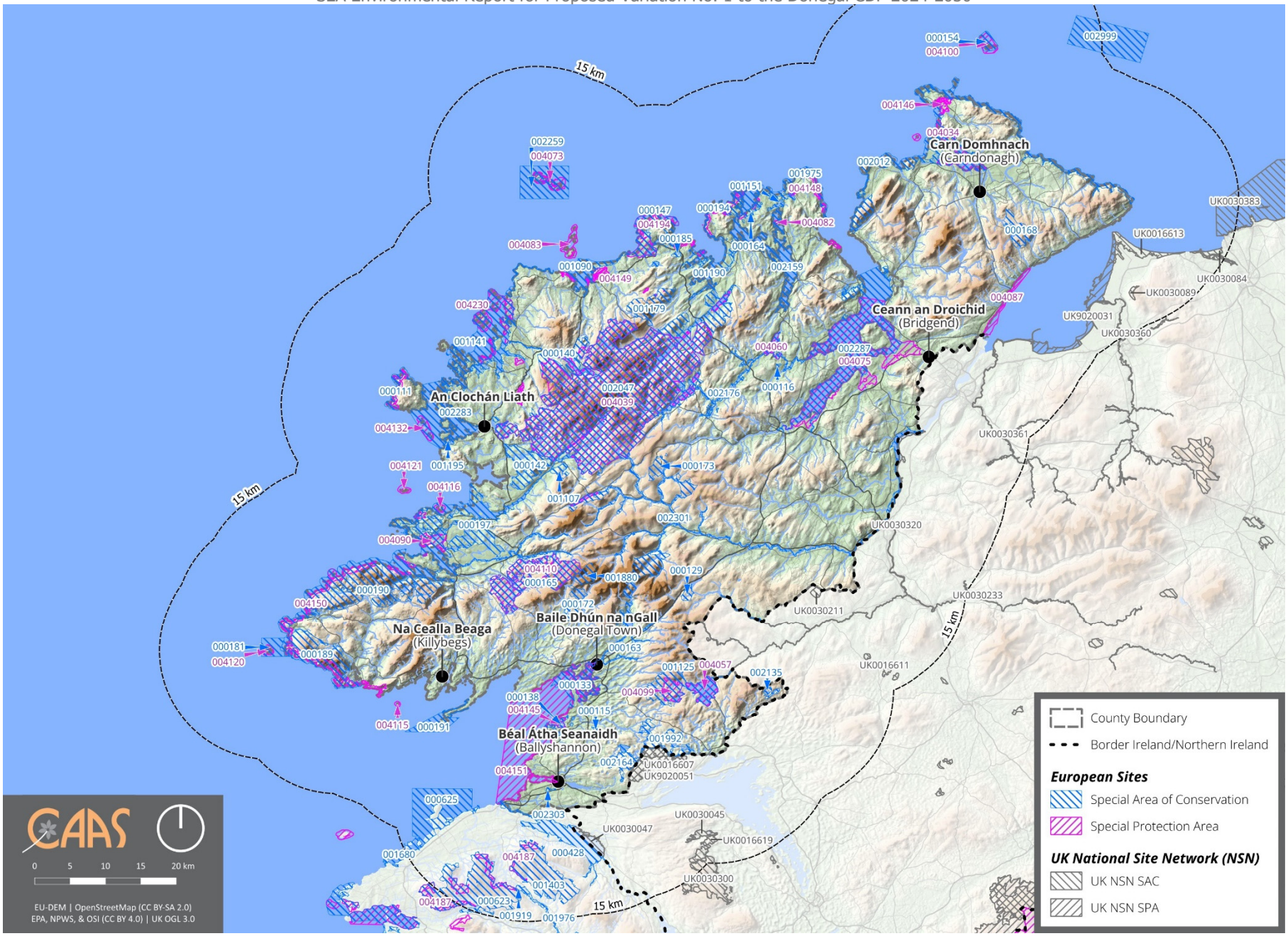

Figure 4.1 European sites within a 15 km buffer of the area to which the Proposed Variation relates

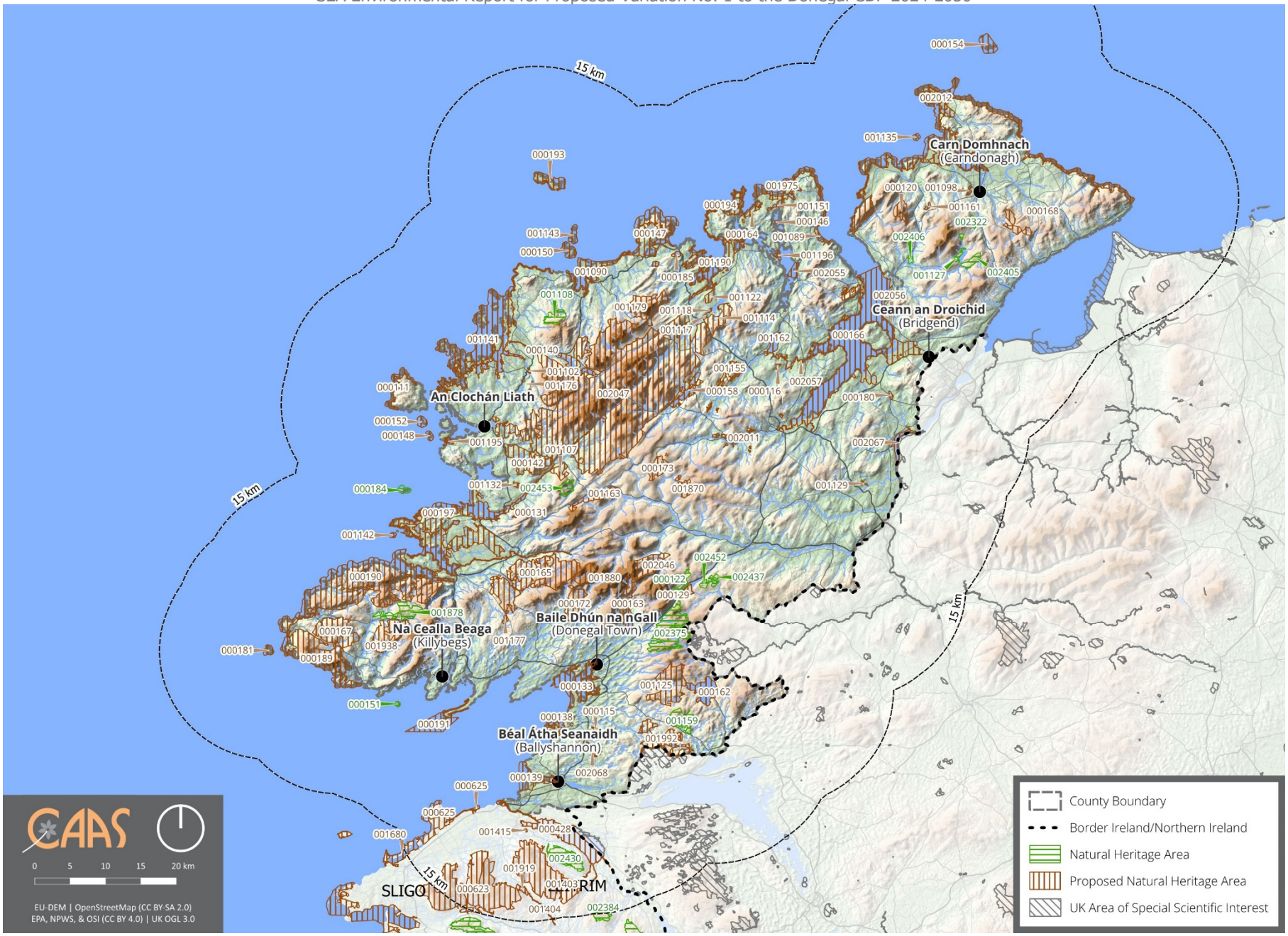

Figure 4.2 NHAs and pNHAs within and within a 15 km of the area to which the Proposed Variation relates

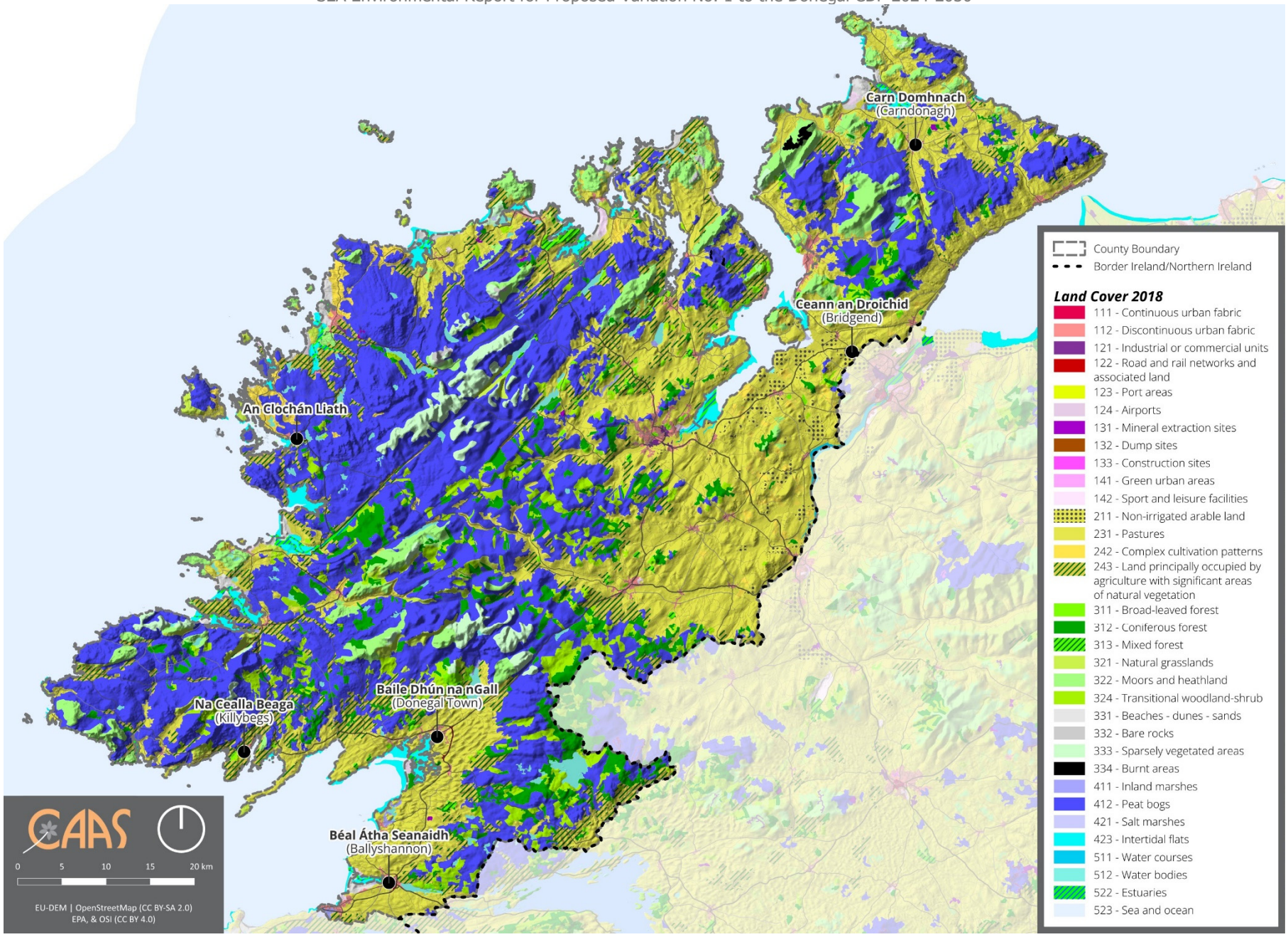

Figure 4.3 CORINE Land Cover Mapping 2018

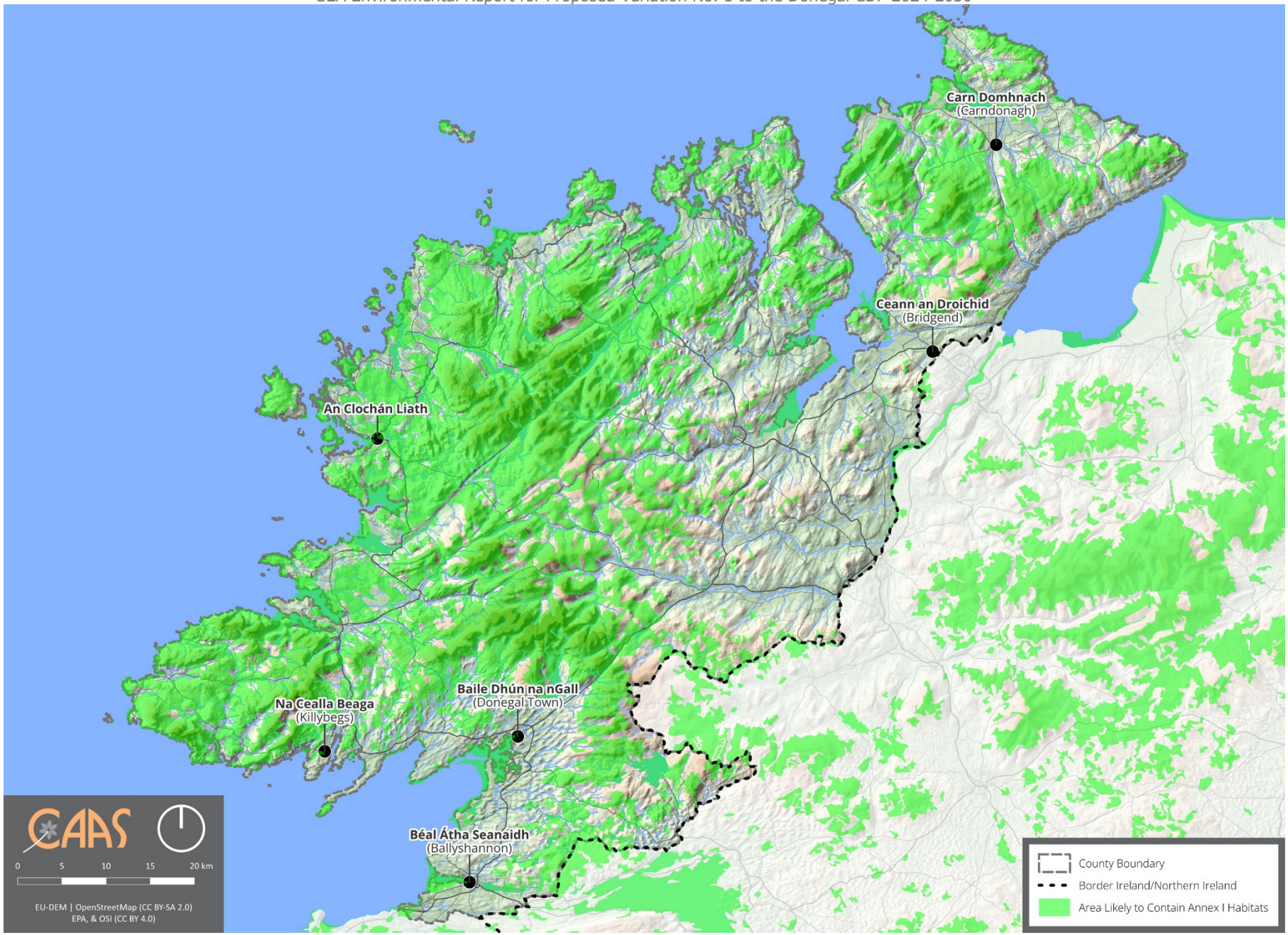

Figure 4.4 Areas likely to contain Annex I Habitats

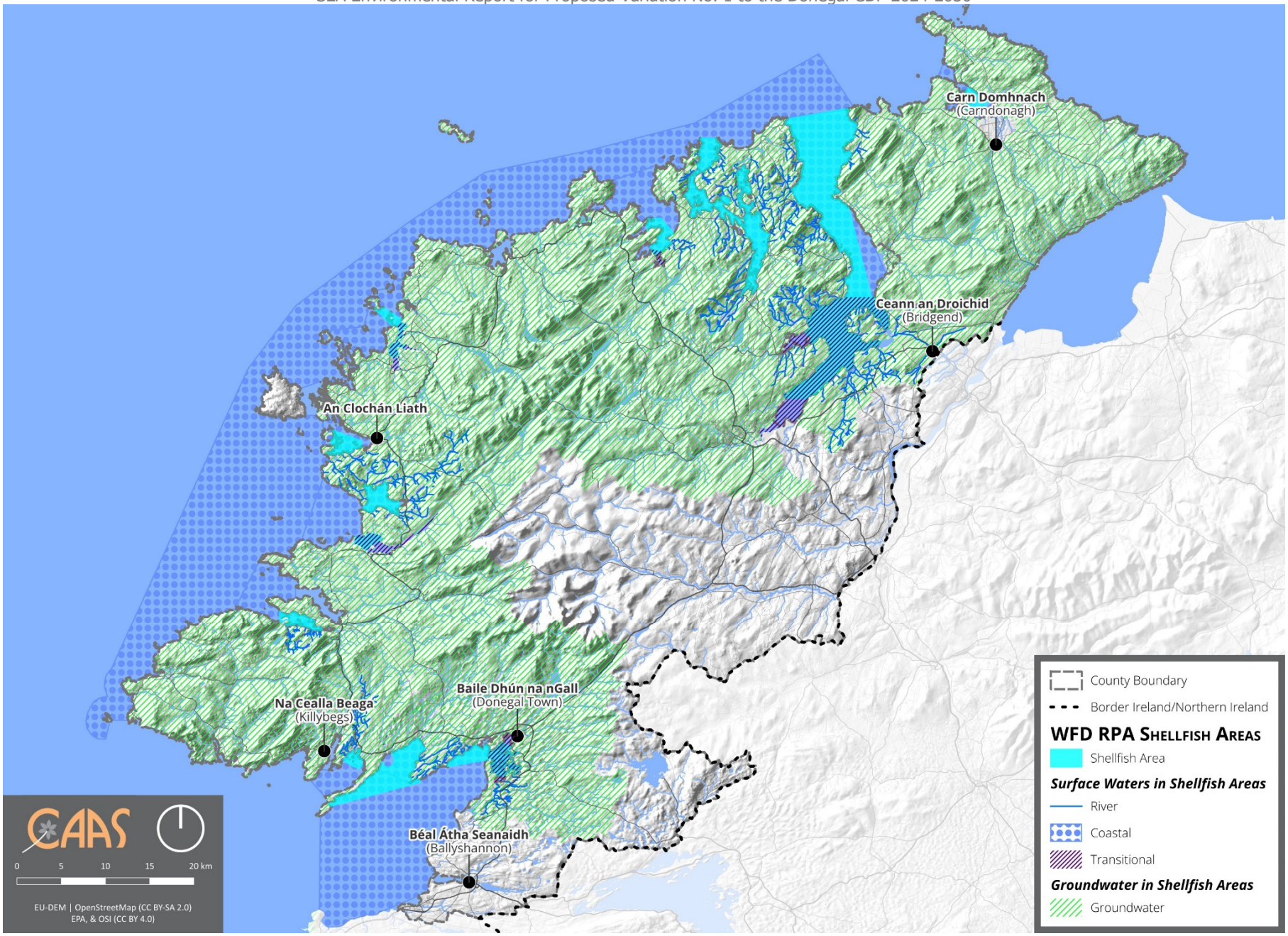

Figure 4.5 WFD Register of Protected Areas Shellfish Waters

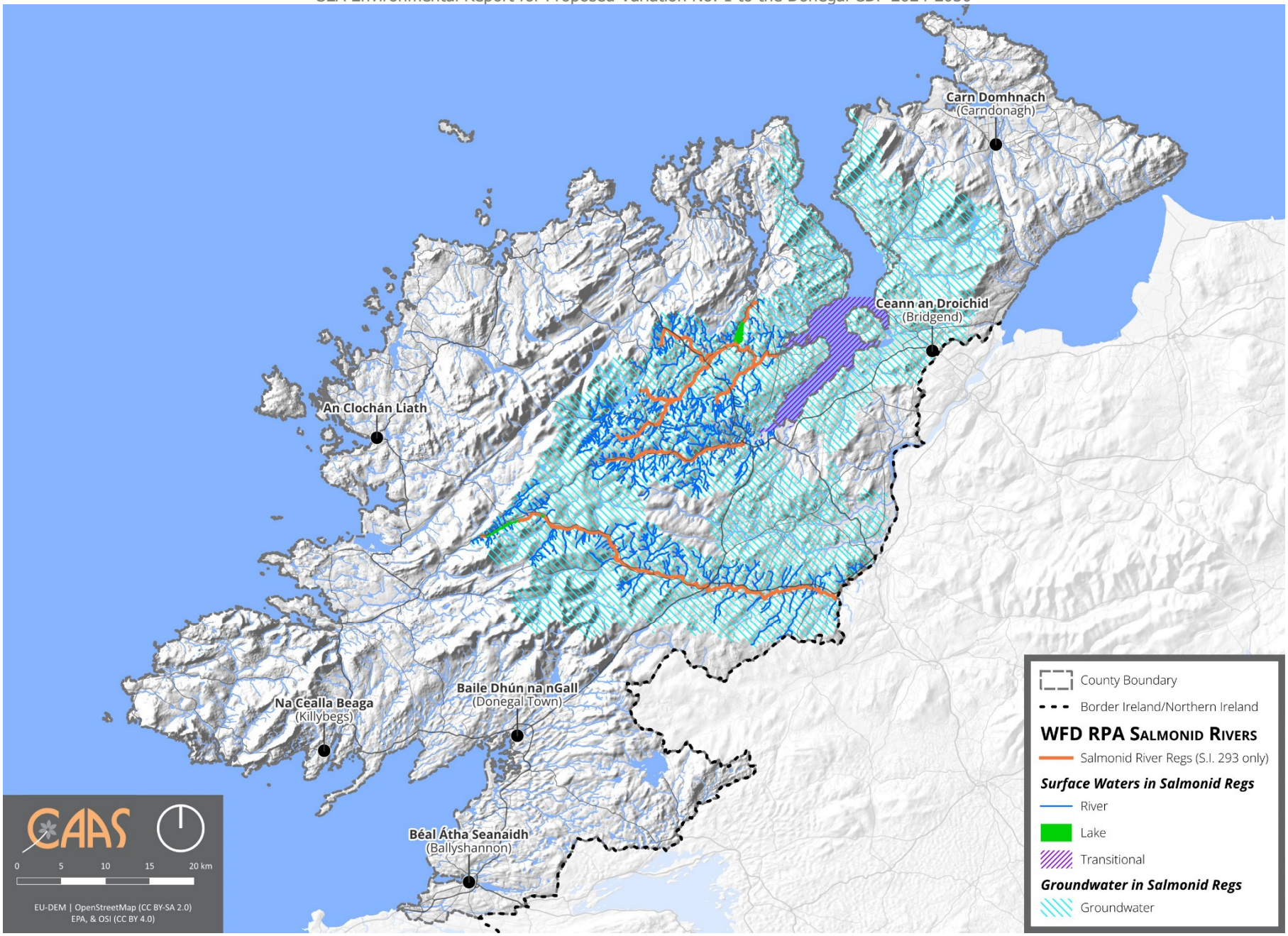

Figure 4.6 WFD Register of Protected Areas Salmonid Waters

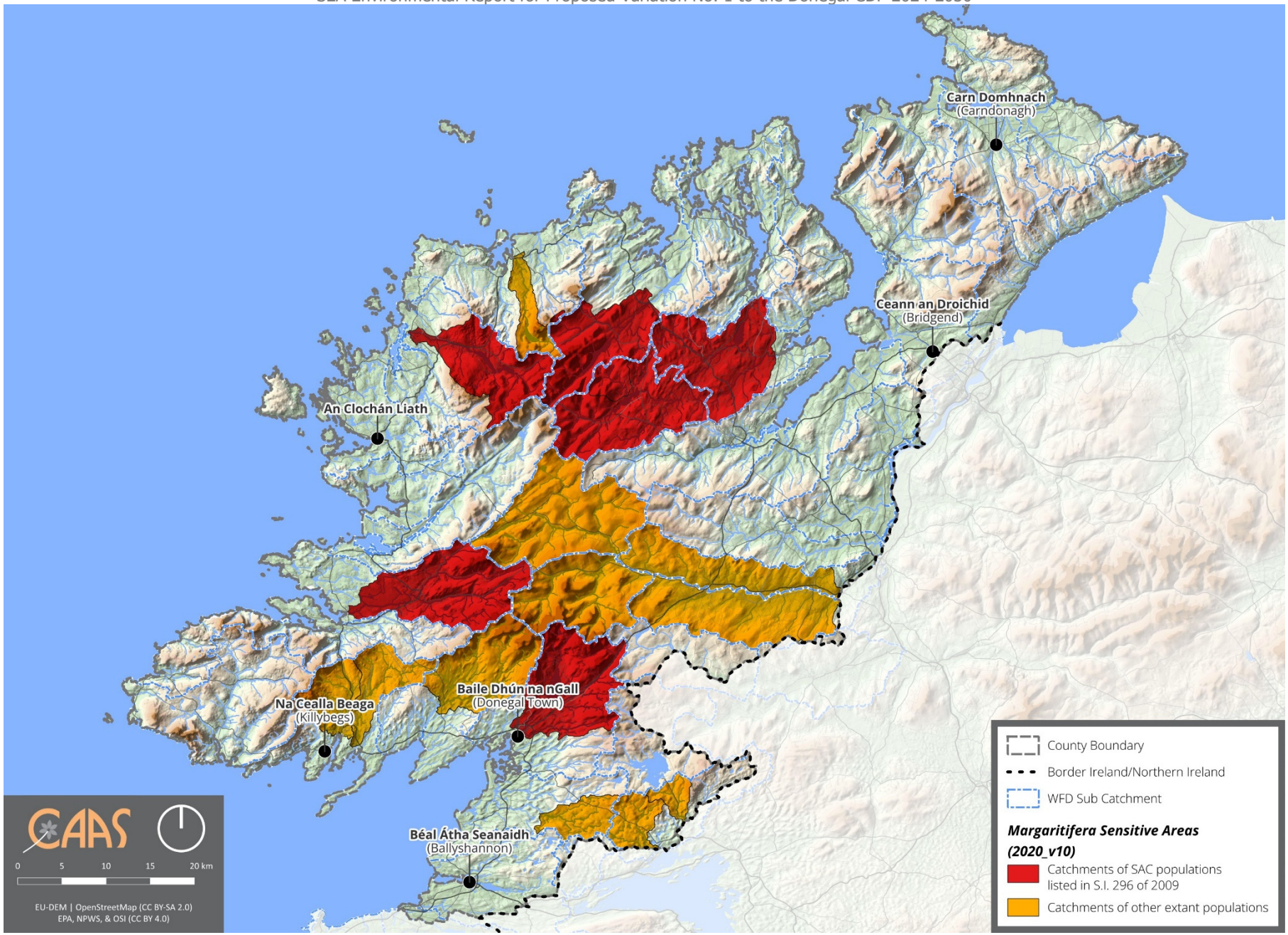

Figure 4.7 Margaritifera Sensitive Areas

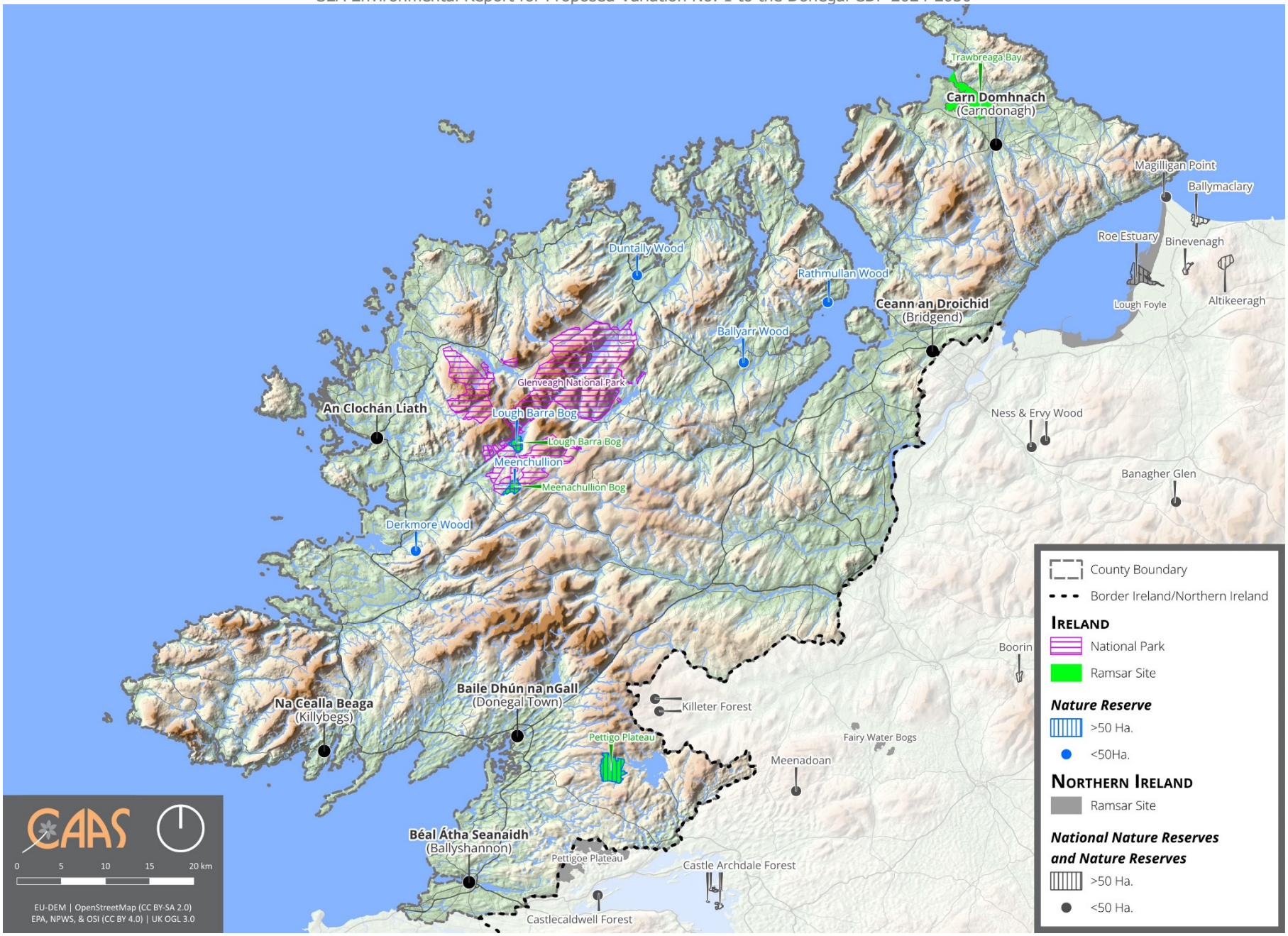

Figure 4.8 Other Ecological Designations

4.7 Population and Human Health

4.7.1 Population

The results of Census 2022 recorded a population of 167,084 persons within the CSO boundary of Donegal County Council, of which the Proposed Variation relates. The population growth projections for the County, as set out in the NPF are 173,500-176,500 for 2026 and 179,500-183,500 for 2031.

The populations recorded in the 2022 Census in each of the six towns are as follows:

- An Clochán Liath – 1,247 persons;
- Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) – 2,246 persons;
- Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) – 373 persons;
- Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) – 2,768 persons;
- Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) – 2,749 persons; and
- Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) – 1,258 persons.

Donegal is a geographically extensive and rural county. Donegal is located in a strategic position in the north-west of the country, with the 'North-West Strategic Growth Partnership' between Donegal and Derry City and Strabane District Council, which advocates for a 'North-West Metropolitan City Region', of Letterkenny and surrounding towns, Derry City and Strabane. Letterkenny is also highlighted as a Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan in the Northern and Western RSES. Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town), Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) and An Clochán Liath are identified as County Growth Drivers and Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) and Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) are identified as Service Towns.[26]

The population provided for in the Planning Framework will interact with various environmental components. Potential interactions include:

- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and landscapes;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for waste water treatment at the municipal level;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction;
- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality.

4.7.2 Human Health

With regard to human health, impacts relevant to the SEA are those which arise as a result of interactions with environmental vectors (i.e. environmental components such as air, water or soil through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported so that they come into contact with human beings). Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise as a result of exposure to these vectors e.g. interactions with human health that could occur in urban locations that experience high-levels of traffic congestion and associated particulate matter and noise emissions to air.

Emission limits for discharges to air, soil and water are set with regards to internationally recognised exposure limit values. These are generally set to be many times the safe exposure limit - in order to provide protection. In the event that a plan or programme began to have adverse health effects on surrounding populations it is likely that it would have been identified as being in breach of such emission standards at a very early stage - and long before the manifestation of any adverse health effects in the population.

These factors have been considered with regard to the description of: the baseline of each environmental component; and the identification and evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation.

4.7.3 Soil

In the absence of mitigation, contaminated materials have the potential to adversely impact upon human health, water quality and habitats and species.

As is the case with other historically developed areas across the country, there is potential for contamination at local sites within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, especially where land uses occurred in the past in the absence of the high standards of today's environmental protection legislation.

[26] Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030

4.7.4 Existing Problems

The number of homes within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates with radon levels above the reference level is within the normal range experienced in other locations across the country[27].

Sources of flood risk within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates include: coastal (including in Killybegs and Dungloe); fluvial (River Skeoge in Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend), Donagh River, Glennagannon River and Ballywilly Brook in Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh), and River Eske in Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town); pluvial (rainwater); and surface drainage systems sources. There is historic and predictive evidence of flooding within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates (see subsection 4.9.8).

Also refer to the other sections of this report referred to above with respect interactions with other environmental components.

4.8 Soil

Soil is the top layer of the earth's crust. It is formed by mineral particles, organic matter, water, air and living organisms. Soil can be considered as a non-renewable natural resource because it develops over very long timescales. It is an extremely complex, variable and living medium and performs many vital functions including: food and other biomass production, storage, filtration and transformation of many substances including water, carbon, and nitrogen. Soil has a role as a habitat and gene pool, serves as a platform for human activities, landscape and heritage and acts as a provider of raw materials. Such functions of soil are worthy of protection because of their socio-economic as well as environmental importance. Soils in any area are the result of the interaction of various factors, such as parent material, climate, vegetation and human action.

To date, there is no legislation which is specific to the protection of soil resources. However, the EU Soil Strategy for 2030 sets out a framework and concrete measures to protect and restore soils, and ensure that they are used sustainably. It sets a vision and objectives to achieve healthy soils by 2050, with concrete actions by 2030. In 2023, the EU proposed a new Soil Monitoring Law to protect and restore soils and ensure that they are used sustainably.

4.8.1 Soil Types

The most dominant soil types[28] (Figure 4.9) surrounding the built-up areas[29] of the area to which the Proposed Variation relates are: peat soils (ombrotrophic); groundwater gleys (wetland soils with slowly permeable horizons resulting in seasonal waterlogging); brown podzols (characterised by dark brown humus mineral soil covered with a thin mat of partly decayed leaves); and alluvial soils (associated with alluvial clay, silt or sand river deposits).

The most dominant soil type surrounding the built-up areas of An Clochán Liath are: peat soils, surrounding the settlement; and lithosol soils (shallow soils, consisting of partially weathered rock fragments), occurring to the west and south of the settlement.

The most dominant soil type surrounding the built-up areas of Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) are: groundwater gleys, surrounding the settlement.

The most dominant soil type surrounding the built-up areas of Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) are: groundwater gleys, occurring to the south and west of the settlement; brown podzols, occurring to the north of the settlement; and alluvial soils occurring throughout the centre of the settlement.

The most dominant soil type surrounding the built-up areas of Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) are: peat soils, surrounding the settlement; groundwater gleys, occurring to the north of

[27] The greatest health risk from radiation in Ireland is caused by radon. The presence of radon gas, a naturally occurring radioactive gas that originates from the decay of uranium in rocks and soils, occurs across the country. It accounts for more than half of the total radiation dose received by the Irish population. As a known carcinogen, in the same category as tobacco smoke and asbestos it is a cause of lung cancer. Exposure to radon for long periods or at high concentrations can lead to lung cancer. Mapping available at http://www.epa.ie/radiation/radonmap

[28] All soil types belong to a Sub-Group and so in turn to one of the 11 soil Great Groups. Great Groups and Sub-Groups are a hierarchical arrangement of soils used for taxonomical classification (http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/soilguide.php).

[29] The built-up areas are mainly made up of urban soils. Urban soils are soils, which have been disturbed, transported or manipulated by human activity in the urban environment and are often overlain by a non-agricultural, man-made surface layer that has been produced by mixing, filling or by contamination of land surfaces in urban and suburban areas.

the settlement; and alluvial, occurring in the north and central parts of the settlement.

The most dominant soil type surrounding the built-up areas of Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) are: groundwater gleys, surrounding the settlement.

The most dominant soil type surrounding the built-up areas of Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) are: groundwater gleys, surrounding the settlement.

Active blanket bogs and active raised bogs are considered to be priority habitats, listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Ombrotrophic (rain-fed) and minerotrophic (groundwater fed) peat soils are often indicative of areas that are the most sensitive to development due to ecological sensitivities and impeded drainage issues. Many of these peat areas are also subject to ecological designations.

Outcropping rock is identified within a number of upland and coastal locations.

The GSI (Geological Survey Ireland) have a suite of data sources available that would be useful in planning and assessing individual projects with regard to the environmental topic(s) of soil and/or material assets. These include:

- Aggregate Potential Mapping;
- Bedrock mapping;
- Quaternary and Physiographic mapping; and
- National Aquifer and Recharge mapping.

4.8.2 County Geological Sites

Geological Survey Ireland coordinate the Irish Geological Heritage Programme, whereby an objective has been set to identify and select sites of geological interest within each county across the country. County Geological Sites (CGSs) do not receive statutory protection like Natural Heritage Areas but receive an effective protection from their inclusion in the planning system. The audit of CGSs in Donegal was completed in two parts, with South Donegal completed in 2014 and North Donegal completed in 2018. There are 101 CGS identified in County Donegal, as shown on Figure 4.10.

There are three CGSs designated within or surrounding Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon): Ballyshannon CGS (Site Code: DL001); Lough Lareen (Site Code: DL025); and Donegal and Inver Bays (Site Code: DL011).

There is one CGS designated within Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh): Carndonagh Fan (Site Code: ND044).

There is one CGS designated within Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town): Donegal and Inver Bays (Site Code: DL011).

There is one CGS designated within Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs): Donegal and Inver Bays (Site Code: DL011).

There are no CGS designated within or surrounding An Clochán Liath or Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend).

4.8.3 Landslides

The term "landslide" describes a wide variety of processes that result in the downward and outward movement of materials such as rock, debris, earth, mud and peat under the force of gravity. Issues such as existing ground conditions, slope stability and storage of excavated material have the potential to influence susceptibility to landslides/bog bursts. The potential impacts of landslides include loss of human life/injury, flooding, pollution of watercourses and impacts upon aquatic biodiversity.

There are a number of landslide events recorded within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates (mapped on Figure 4.11). The GSI have identified[30] the area to which the Proposed Variation relates as having mainly low levels of landslide susceptibility, with high levels of landslide susceptibility occurring in mountainous areas (mapped on Figure 4.11).

[30] https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/programmes-and-projects/geohazards/projects/Pages/Landslide-Susceptibility-Mapping.aspx

4.8.4 Potentially Contaminated Lands and Landfill Sites

In the absence of mitigation, contaminated materials have the potential to adversely impact upon human health, water quality and habitats and species. As is the case with other urban, semi-urban and port areas across the country, there is potential for contamination at sites within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, especially where land uses occurred in the past, in the absence of environmental protection legislation.

4.8.5 Existing Problems

Legislative objectives governing soil were not identified as being conflicted with.

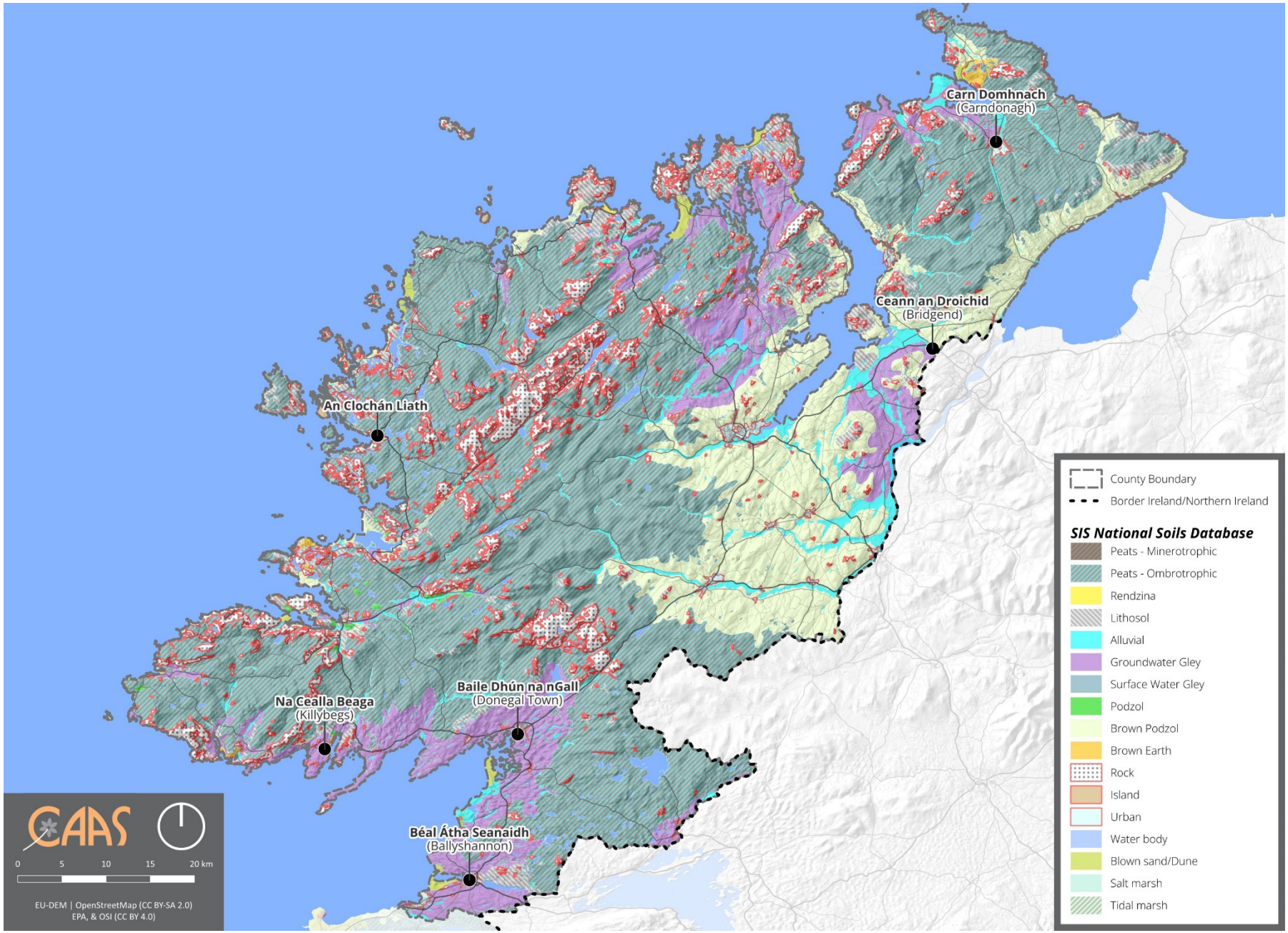

Figure 4.9 Soil Types

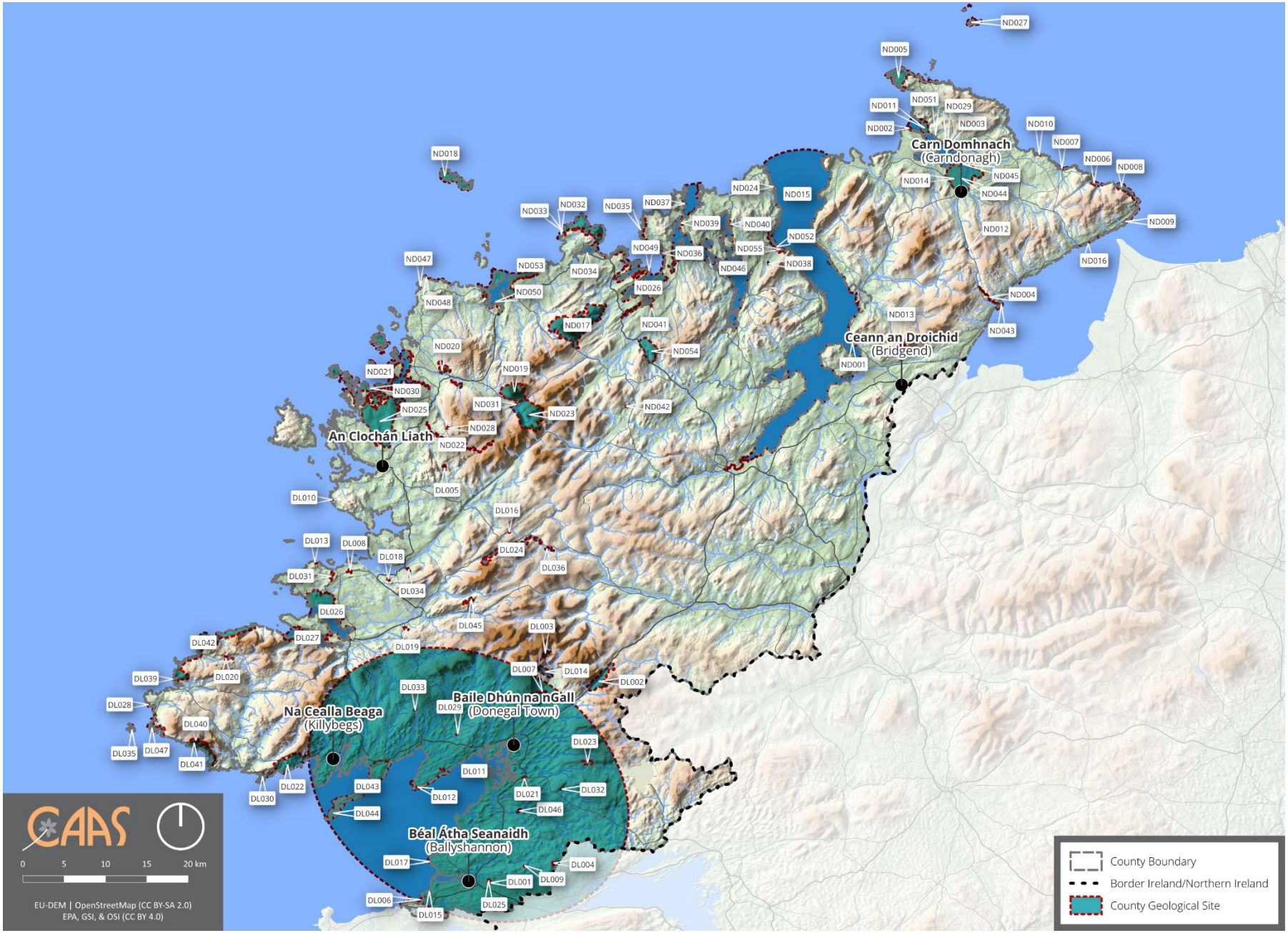

Figure 4.10 County Geological Sites

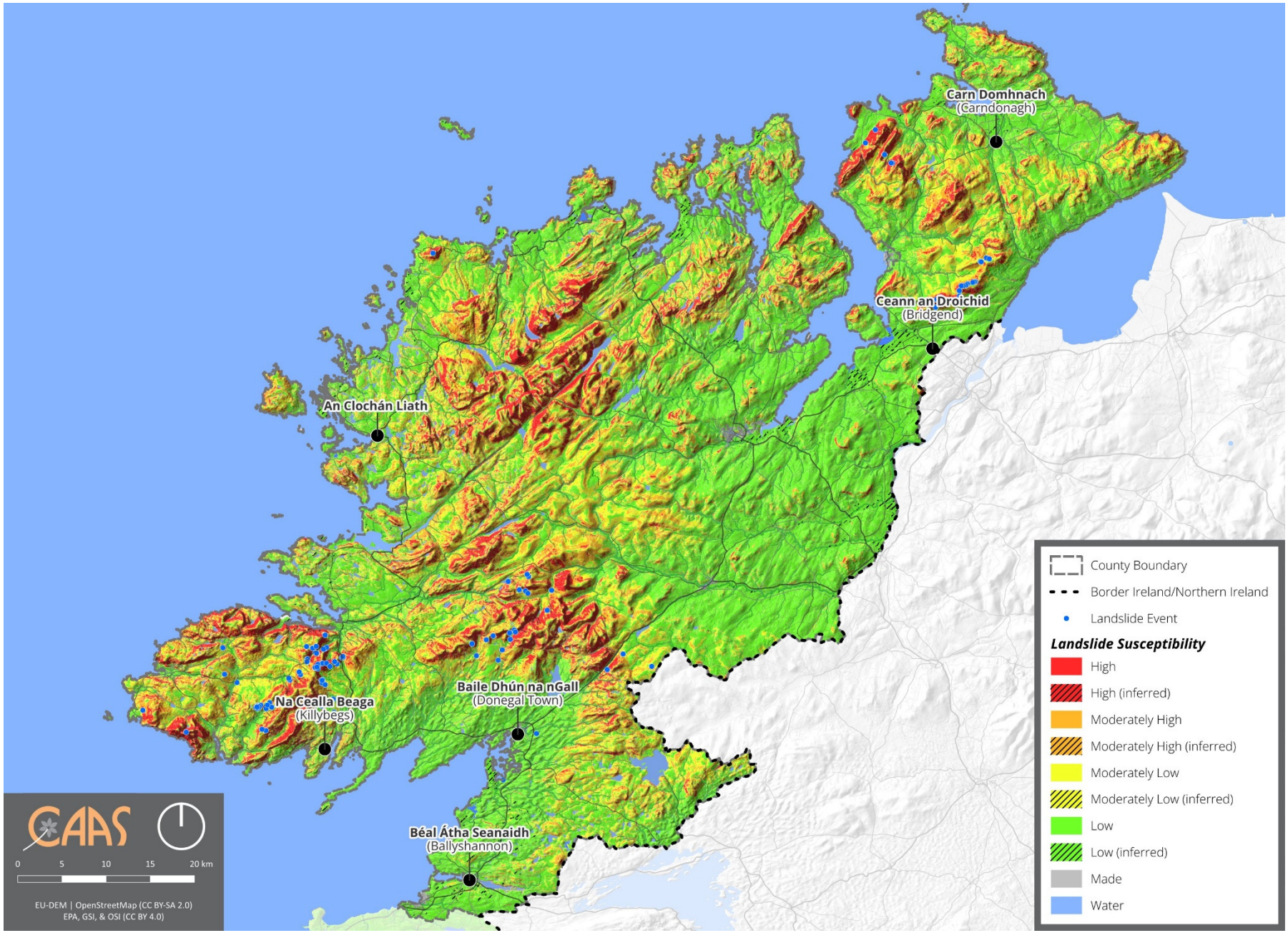

Figure 4.11 Landslide Susceptibility and Landslide Events

4.9 Water

4.9.1 The Water Framework Directive

Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD). The 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*. All public bodies are required to coordinate their policies and operations so as to maintain the *good status* of water bodies that are currently unpolluted and improve polluted water bodies to *good status.*

Article 4 of the WFD sets out various exemptions for deterioration in status caused as a result of certain physical modifications to water bodies. This is provided: all practicable mitigation measures are taken; there are reasons of overriding public interest or the benefits to human health, safety or sustainable development outweigh the benefits in achieving the WFD objective; there are no better alternatives; and the reasons for the physical modification are explained in the River Basin Management Plan.

The EU's Common Implementation Strategy Guidance Documents No. 20 and 36 provide guidance on exemptions to the environmental objectives of the WFD.

For the purpose of assessment, reporting and management, water is divided into groundwater, rivers, lakes, estuarine waters and coastal waters which are in turn divided into specific, clearly defined water bodies.

4.9.2 Zone of Influence

The Zone of Influence of the area to which the Proposed Variation relates and beyond with respect to impacts upon waters can be estimated to be all groundwater and surface water bodies that are downstream of catchments which drain the area to which the Proposed Variation relates.

4.9.3 Surface Water Drainage

A catchment is an area of land contributing to a waterbody, with all the water ultimately running off to a single outlet. The WFD requires water quality management to be based on natural river catchments i.e. by reference to the natural, environmental unit rather than by reference to administrative or legal boundaries, which often fragment river catchments.

County Donegal lies within the North-Western River Basin District. Catchments draining the area to which the Proposed Variation relates include: Donagh-Moville; Lough Swilly; Gweebarra-Sheephaven; Foyle; Donegal Bay North; and Erne. The main rivers in County Donegal are the Rivers Finn, Foyle, Erne, Eske and Swilly. The main lakes in County Donegal are Lough Swilly, Lough Eske and Lough Beag.

4.9.4 Surface Water Status

The WFD defines 'overall surface water status' as the general expression of the status of a body of surface water, determined by the poorer of its ecological status and its chemical status. Thus, in order to achieve 'good surface water status' both the ecological status and the chemical status of a surface water body need to be at least 'good'.

The ecological status is an expression of the structure and functioning of aquatic ecosystems associated with surface waters. Such waters are classified as of 'good ecological status' when they meet Directive requirements.

Chemical Status is a pass/fail assignment with a failure defined by a face-value exceedance of an Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) for one or more Priority Action Substances (PAS) listed in Annex X of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The EQS values for individual PAS substances are set at European level. Good surface water chemical status means that concentrations of pollutants in the water body do not exceed the environmental limit values specified in the Directive.

The current WFD (2016-2021) status[31] of surface waters draining the area to which the Proposed Variation relates ranges from *high* to *bad*. Subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD, some of these water

[31] As per EPA's WFD Status 2016-2021 classification (https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/).

bodies will need improvement in order to comply with the objectives of the WFD. Figure 4.12 illustrates the WFD surface water status within and surrounding the area to which the Proposed Variation relates.

The current WFD (2016-2021) status of surface waters draining An Clochán Liath ranges from *high* (Dungloe Bay Coastal Waterbody) to *good* (Dunglow Lake) to *moderate* (Glais Bheagáin_010) to *poor* (Dungloe_020).

The current WFD (2016-2021) status of surface waters draining Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) ranges from *good* (Abbey_010; Assaroe Lake; and Erne Estuary Transitional Waterbody); to *moderate* (River Erne).

The current WFD (2016-2021) status of surface waters draining Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) is *poor* (Skeoge_010).

The current WFD (2016-2021) status of surface waters draining Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) ranges from *good* (Glennagannon_020) to *poor* (Donagh_020; and Donagh_030).

The current WFD (2016-2021) status of surface waters draining Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) ranges from *high* (Donegal Bay (Erne) Coastal Waterbody); to *good* (Ballykillowen Stream_010; Clarcarricknagun_010; Drummeny_010; Eske_020; Leitrim Hill Stream_010; and Inner Donegal Bay Transitional Waterbody).

The current WFD (2016-2021) status of surface waters draining Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) ranges from *high* (Donegal Bay Northern Coastal Waterbody); to *good* (McSwines Bay Coastal Waterbody; and Cunlin Lough Stream_010); to *moderate* (Fintragh_010; Oily_020; and Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) Harbour Coastal Waterbody); to *poor* (Stragar_010).

A number of rivers and lakes within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates are currently identified in the combined 2016-2021 data as being at risk of not meeting the WFD's objectives due to damage caused by significant pressures related to[32]:

- **Urban wastewater pressures (Skeoge_010)**, which may include direct discharge of nutrients from urban wastewater treatment plants and discharge from combined storm overflows or storm water overflows. Discharges of elevated concentrations of phosphorus, ammonium and nitrogen impact on the ecology of surface waters;
- **Urban run-off pressures, (Dungloe_020; Dunagh_030)** which may include leaking sewers and run-off from paved and unpaved areas and misconnections where private foul connections are connected to storm sewers instead of the foul sewer network;
- **Hydromorphological and anthropogenic pressures are identified together in many instances. Hydromorphological pressures, (Dunglow; Erne; Stragar_010)** may include, modifications to the physical habitat conditions or the natural functioning of a waterbody which can impact on ecology, caused by dredging and straightening of rivers (chanellisation), land drainage or hard infrastructure such as dams, weirs, culverts or other obstructions. Anthropogenic pressures can include: water abstractions; invasive species; agriculture; use of fertilizers, manures and pesticides; animal husbandry activities; inefficient irrigation practices; deforestation of woods; aquaculture; pollution due to industrial effluents and domestic sewage; mining; and recreational activities;
- **Industrial pressures (Stragar_010),** may include discharges and emissions from industrial and commercial facilities;
- **Agricultural pressures (Erne; Donagh_020; Donagh_030; Skeoge_010; Stragar_010; Oily_020; and Fintragh_010),** may include issues related to farming including loss of excess nutrients and sediment loss to surface waters from diffuse sources such as spreading of fertilisers and manures. Excess phosphorous and sediment are typically issues for rivers and lakes, and too much nitrogen is the main issue for estuaries and coastal waters;
- **Invasive species pressures (Erne)** may include those relating to non-native species introduced outside their natural range that threaten ecosystems, habitats and native species with environmental or socio-economic harm. Currently 37 species have been identified across the EU as a high priority for management, and nine of these occur in Ireland. The potential impacts of IAS include the alteration of eco-systems (by causing bank erosion, for example), inhibition of access to water bodies, hindrance of land development and, in some cases, potential human health impacts; and
- **Extractive industry related pressures (Stragar_010)** may include different activities that lead to the extraction of raw materials from the earth, such as oil, metals, mineral and aggregates. Impacts from extractive sites include sediment/siltation pollution and alteration to the physical environment.

4.9.5 Groundwater Status

Groundwater is stored in the void spaces in underground layers of rock, or aquifers. These aquifers are permeable, allowing both the infiltration of water from the soils above them and the yielding of water to surface and coastal

[32] https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water

waters. Groundwater is the part of the subsurface water that is in the saturated zone - the zone below the water table, the uppermost level of saturation in an aquifer at which the pressure is atmospheric, in which all pores and fissures are full of water.

For groundwater bodies, the approach to classification is different from that for surface water. For each body of groundwater, both the chemical status and the quantitative must be determined. Both have to be classed as either *good* or *poor*. The WFD sets out a series of criteria that must be met for a body to be classed as good chemical and quantitative status.

The WFD status (2016-2021) of groundwater underlying County Donegal (mapped on Figure 4.13) is currently generally identified as being of *good* status and meeting the objectives of the WFD. There is a limited area identified as being of *poor* status in the south of the County, at Waste Facility (W0024-03); the groundwater underlying this area is currently not meeting the objectives of the WFD.

4.9.6 Aquifer Vulnerability and Productivity

The GSI rates groundwaters according to both their productivity and vulnerability to pollution.

Aquifer vulnerability refers to the ease with which pollutants of various kinds can enter into groundwater. The aquifers underlying most of the area to which the Proposed Variation relates (mapped on Figure 4.14) are classified mainly as being of "extreme", "extreme (rock at or near surface or karst)", "high" or "moderate" vulnerability.

The GSI also rates aquifers based on the hydrogeological characteristics and on the value of the groundwater resource. This is referred to as aquifer productivity and is mapped on Figure 4.15. Aquifers in the area to which the Proposed Variation relates are classified as being 'Locally important gravel aquifer', 'Locally Important Aquifer karstified', 'Locally Important Aquifer Bedrock which is Moderately Productive only in Local Zones', 'Locally Important Aquifer Bedrock which is Generally Moderately Productive', 'Poor Aquifer Bedrock which is Generally Unproductive except for Local Zones', 'Poor Aquifer Bedrock which is Generally Unproductive', 'Regionally Important Aquifer karstified' and 'Lake'.

4.9.7 WFD Registers of Protected Areas

The WFD requires that Registers of Protected Areas (RPAs) are compiled for a number of water bodies or part of water bodies which must have extra controls on their quality by virtue of how their waters are used by people and by wildlife.

The WFD requires that these RPAs contain: areas from which waters are taken for public or private water supply schemes; designated shellfish production areas; bathing waters; areas which are affected by high levels of substances most commonly found in fertilizers, animal and human wastes - these areas are considered nutrient sensitive; areas designated for the protection of habitats or species e.g. Salmonid areas; Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and, Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Also refer to Section 4.6.5.

The surface water bodies within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates and surrounding areas is used for drinking water abstraction in accordance with European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 278/2007). These surface water bodies are identified on the Rivers and Lakes for Drinking Water, as mapped on Figure 4.16 and WFD RPA Nutrient Sensitive Areas for Groundwater and Surface Waters in Nutrient Sensitive Areas[33], as mapped on Figure 4.16.

4.9.8 Flooding

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) document accompanies this SEA Environmental Report and the Draft Plan. Requirements in relation to SFRA are provided under 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014.

[33] Groundwater bodies that intersect with areas designated as sensitive under the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC) and transposing Regulations.

Flood risk management and drainage provisions are already in force through the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-20230 and related provisions have been integrated into the Proposed Variation.

Predictive flood risk mapping is available from the Office of Public Works and included in the accompanying Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Sources of flood risk within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates include: coastal (including in Killybegs and Dungloe); fluvial (River Skeoge in Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend), Donagh River, Glennagannon River and Ballywilly Brook in Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh), and River Eske in Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town); pluvial (rainwater); and surface drainage systems sources.

4.9.9 Existing Problems

Subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD, based on available water data, the recorded status of certain surface and groundwater bodies will need improvement in order to comply with the objectives of the WFD. The Proposed Variation and the County Development Plan to which it relates include provisions that will contribute towards improvements in the status of waters.

There is elevated levels of flood risk from coastal and fluvial sources at various locations across the area to which the Proposed Variation relates. Flood risk management and drainage provisions are already in force through the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030 and related provisions have been integrated into the Proposed Variation.

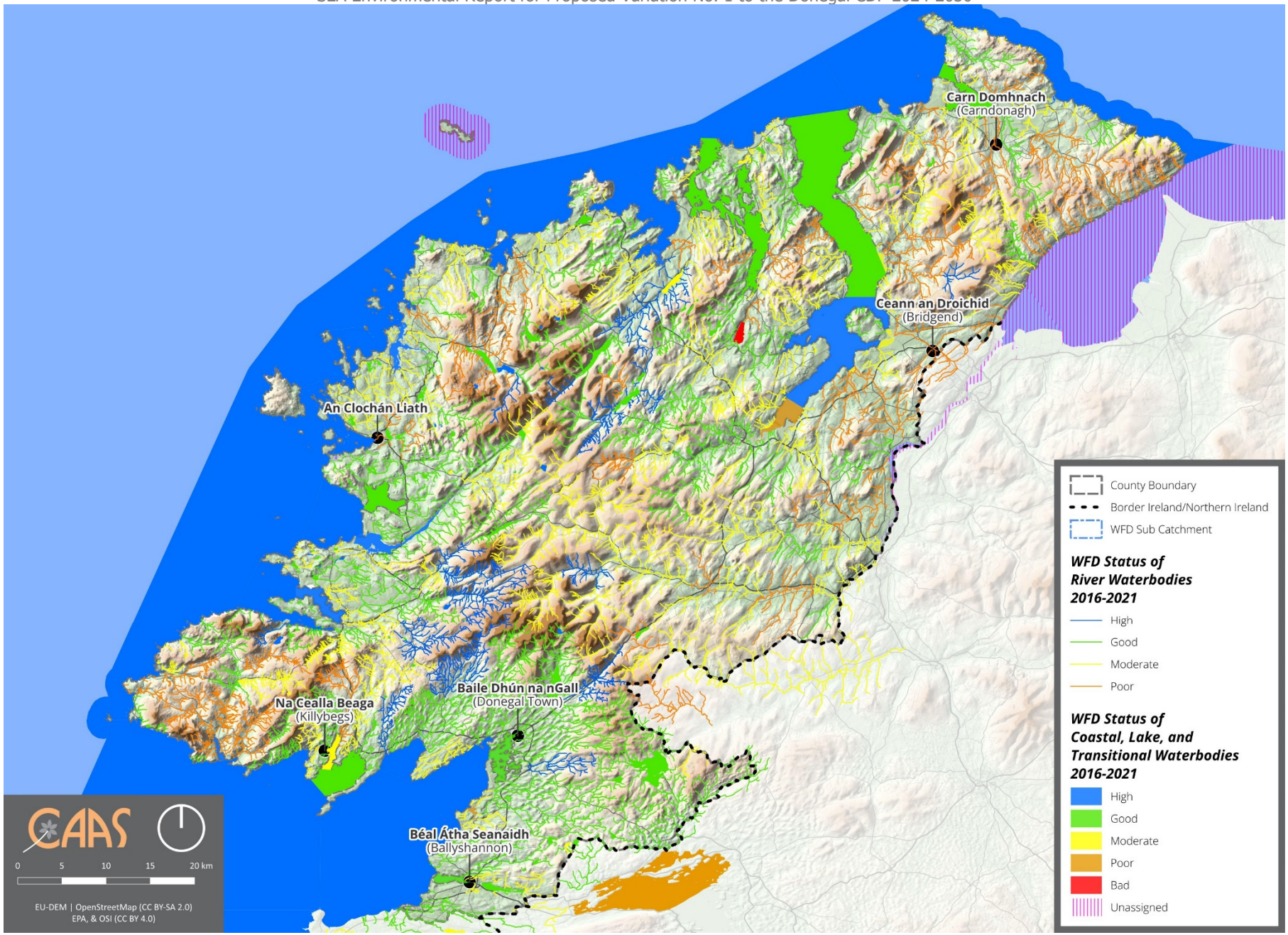

Figure 4.12 WFD Status of Surface Waterbodies (2016-2021)

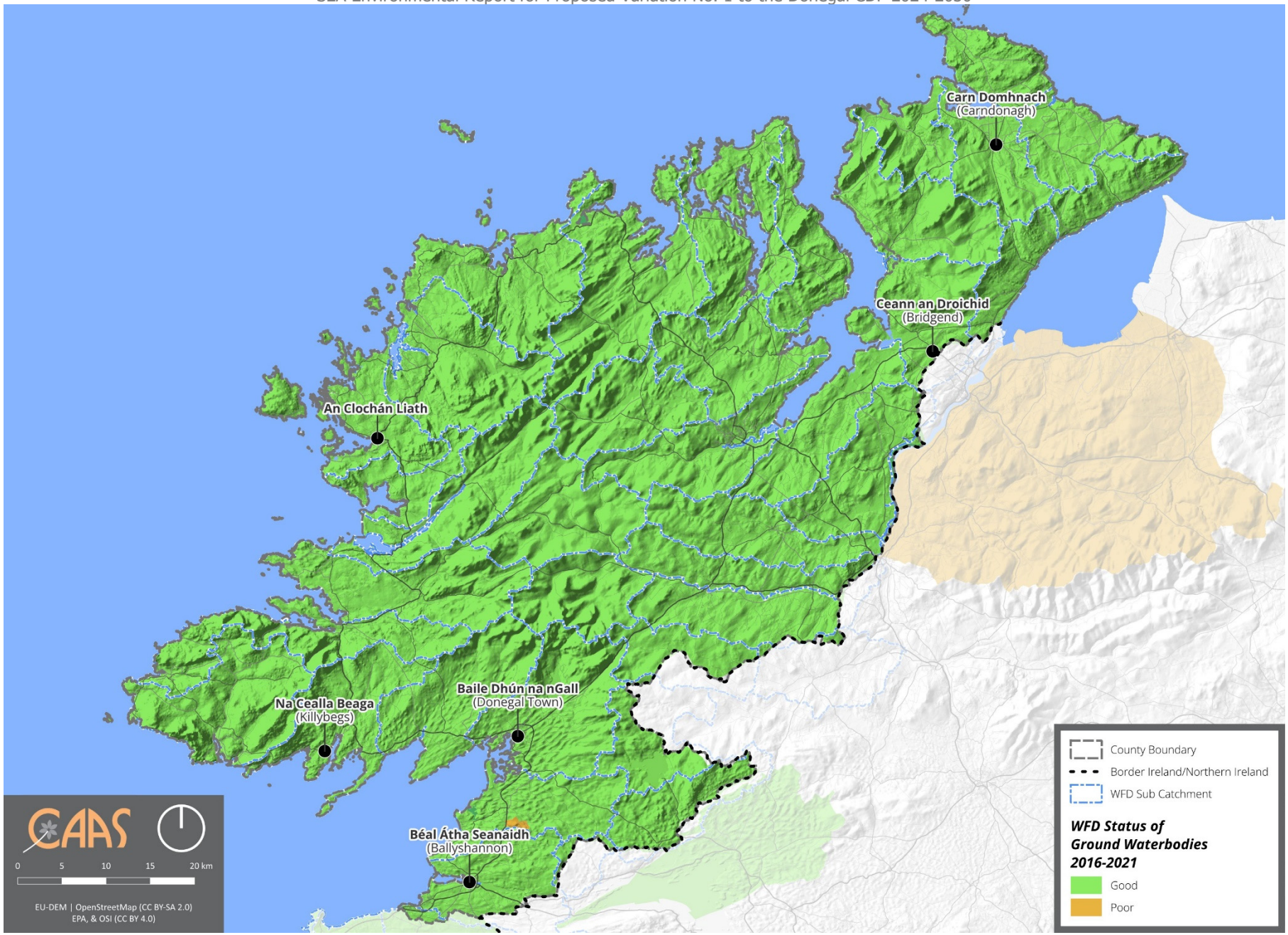

Figure 4.13 WFD Status of Ground Waterbodies (2016-2021)

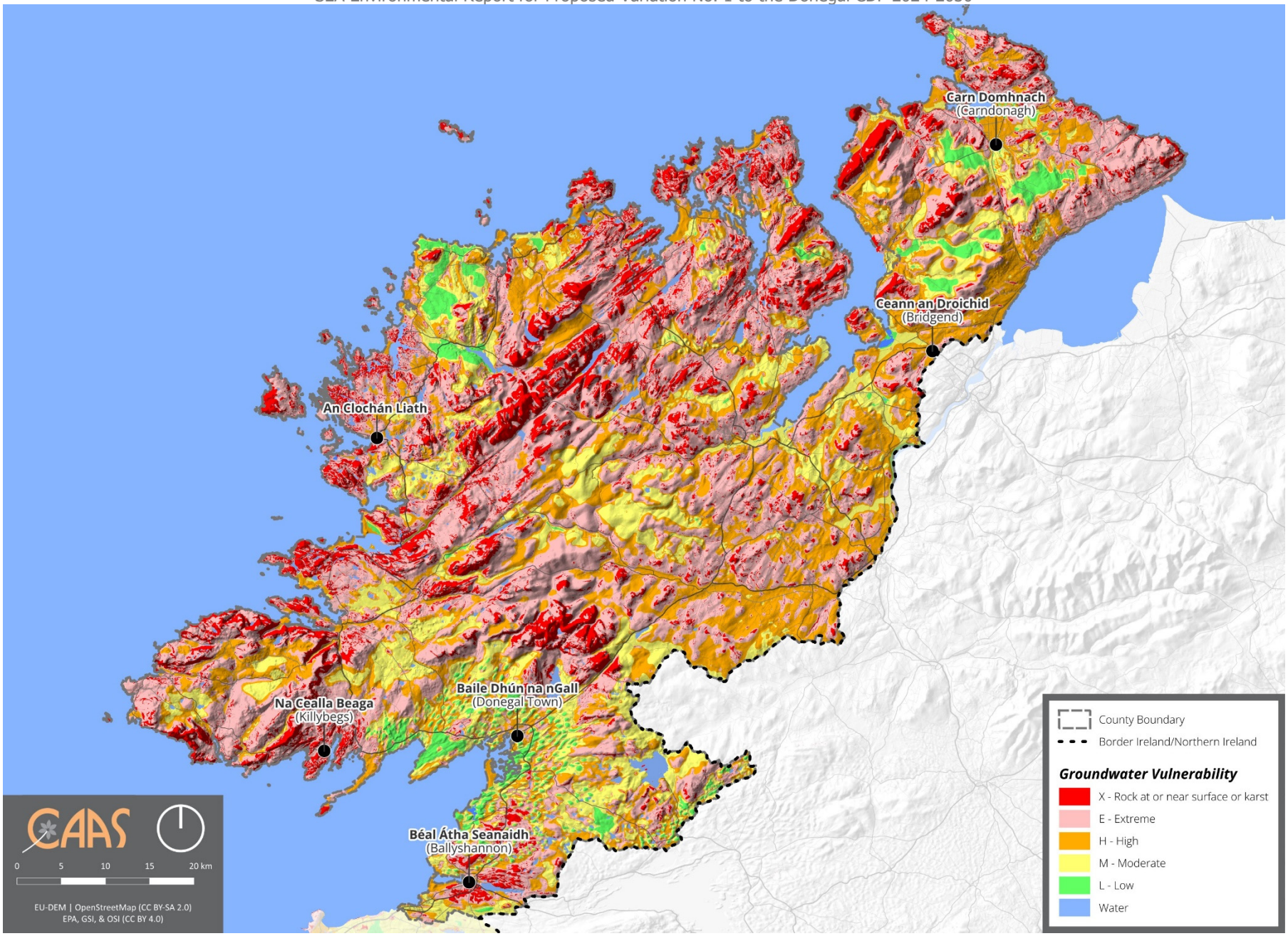

Figure 4.14 Groundwater Vulnerability

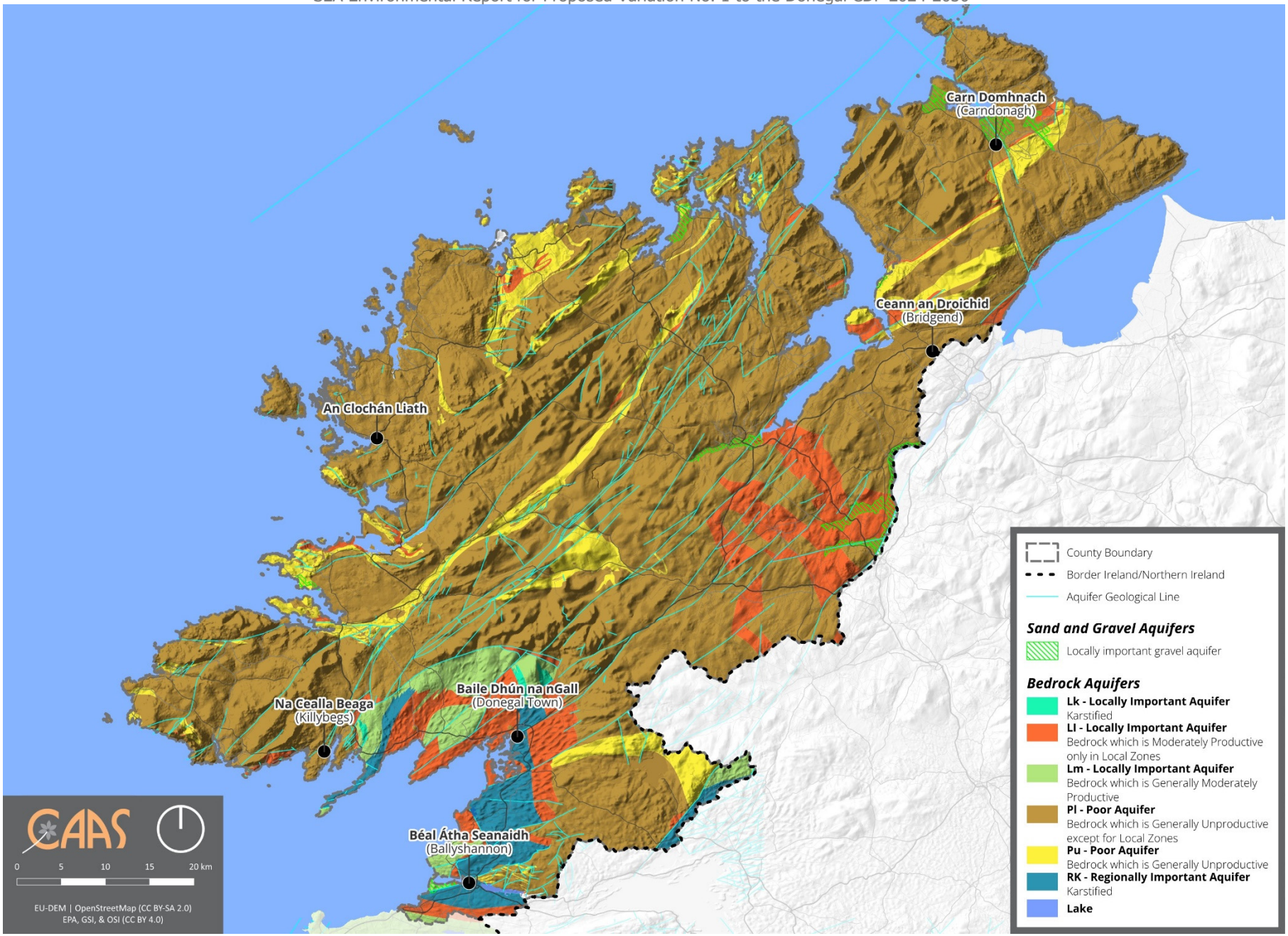

Figure 4.15 Groundwater Productivity

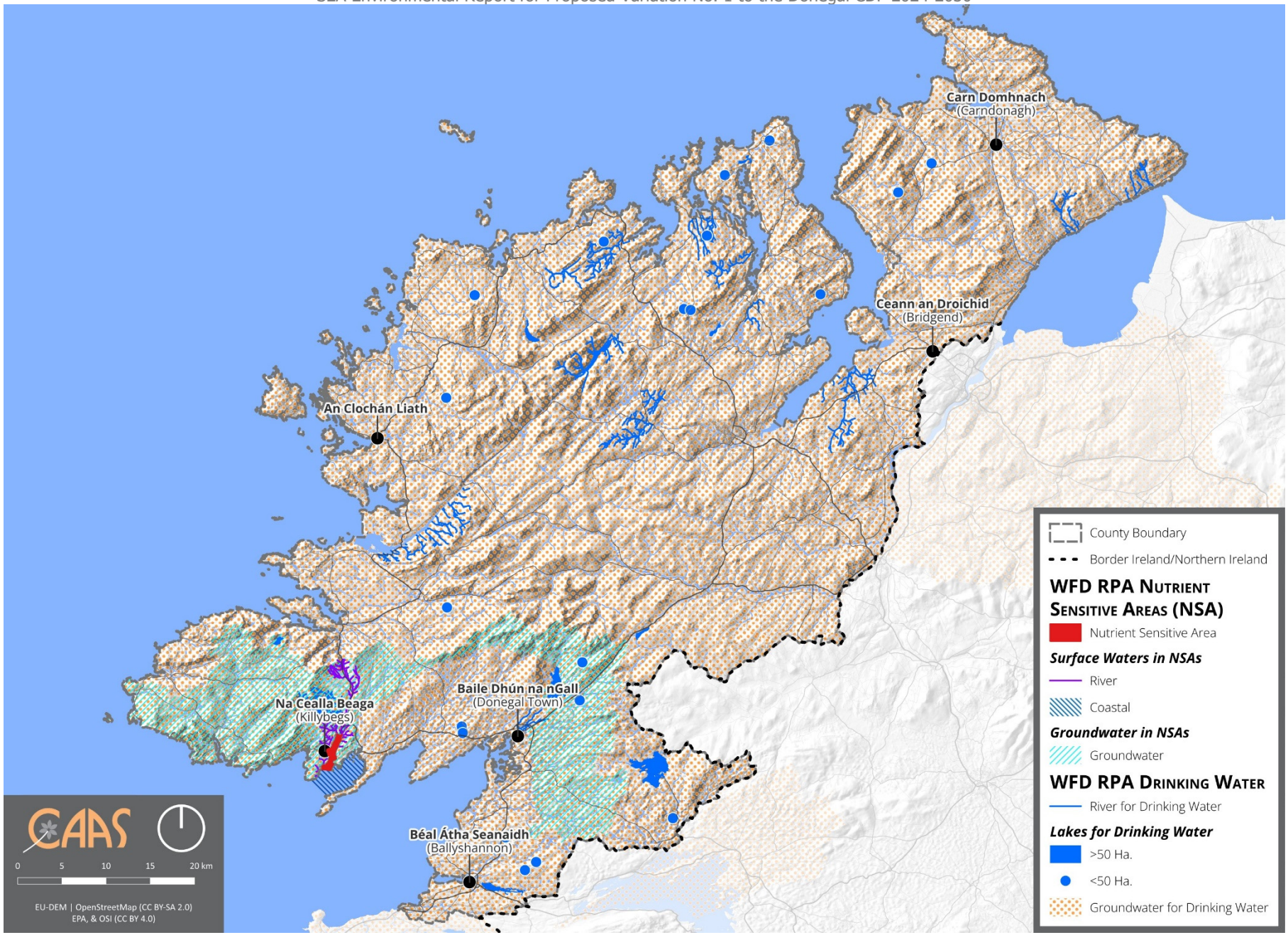

Figure 4.16 Entries to the WFD RPA for Drinking Water and Nutrient Sensitive Areas

4.10 Air and Climatic Factors

4.10.1 Climatic Factors

Interactions with climatic factors are also present with other environmental components including water/flooding (see Section 4.9.8).

Total emissions of greenhouse gases by humans come from various sectors including transport, agriculture, energy industries, manufacturing combustion, industrial processes, residential developments, commercial services developments, waste management processes and fluorinated gases equipment (such as refrigeration and fire protection systems).

In 2023, Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to be 55.01 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO_2 eq), which is 6.8% lower (or 4.00 Mt CO_2 eq) than emissions in 2022 (59.00 Mt CO_2 eq) and follows a 2.0% decrease in emissions reported for 2022. Emissions are 1.2% below the historical 1990 baseline for the first time in 33 years.

In 2023, emissions in the stationary EU Emissions Trading System emissions (covering emissions from sectors including Agriculture, Transport, Energy, Industries, Residential, Manufacturing Combustion and Industrial Processes) decreased by 17%. When land use, land-use change and forestry is included, total national emissions decreased by 3.8%.

Emissions under the Effort Sharing Regulation (covering emissions from the electricity and heat generation, industrial manufacturing and aviation sectors) decreased by 3.4%.

Decreased emissions in 2023 compared to 2022 were observed in the largest sectors except for transport which showed an increase of 0.3%.

The EPA's 2025 publication *Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections 2024-2055* provides an updated assessment of Ireland's total projected greenhouse gas emissions to 2055, using the latest Inventory data for 2023[34] as the starting point. The report provides an assessment of Ireland's progress towards achieving its national ambitions under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and EU emission reduction targets for 2030 as set out under the Effort Sharing Regulation[35]. Key findings identified as part of the report are that:

- Ireland is not on track to meet the 51 per cent emissions reduction target (by 2030 compared to 2018) which include many 2024 Climate Action Plan measures. Greenhouse gas emissions are projected to be 9 to 23 per cent lower by 2030 (compared to 2018) which places Ireland further from the 2030 national climate target compared to previous assessments.
- Budget period 1 (2021-2025) of 295 Mt CO_2eq is projected to be exceeded by between 8 to 12 Mt CO_2eq. Budget period 2 (2026-2030) of 200 Mt CO_2eq is also expected to be exceeded by a significant margin of 77 to 114 Mt CO_2eq (with carryover from Budget period 1).
- Sectoral emissions ceilings for 2030 are projected to be exceeded by the Buildings, Electricity, Industry and Transport sectors; and met by the sector 'Other'. A direct comparison of emissions in the Agriculture sector against its Sectoral Emission Ceilings is no longer viable due to significant refinement of the Agriculture inventory.
- Ireland is not projected to meet its EU target, set under the Effort Sharing Regulation, of a 42 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 (compared to 2005) even with flexibilities applied. This assessment shows that greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by 10 to 22 per cent by 2030 (compared to 2005) without the use of flexibilities and by 13 to 26 per cent with the use of flexibilities.
- Additional measures and accelerated implementation of existing measures is necessary to meet both National and EU targets. Projected gaps to National and EU 2030 targets reported this year are larger than last year due to more conservative delivery of measures and associated estimates of emission reductions by 2030.
- From 21.4 Mt CO_2eq in 2018, total emissions from the Agriculture sector are projected to be between 18.0 and 21.6 Mt CO_2eq in 2030 (a 16 per cent reduction in the *With Additional Measures* "WAM" and 1 per cent increase in *With Existing Measures* "WEM"). Without full implementation of all planned policies and measures, there will be a net increase in emissions in this sector by 2030.
- Transport emissions are projected to decrease from 12.3 Mt CO_2eq in 2018 to between 9.7 Mt CO_2eq and 11.2 Mt CO_2eq in 2030 (a 9 to 21 per cent reduction). Measures that are projected to contribute to greater emissions reductions

[34] https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/air-emissions/irelands-final-greenhouse-gas-emissions-1990-2023.php

[35] Regulation (EU) 2018/842 of on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions by Member States from 2021 to 2030 contributing to climate action to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement.

include 640,000 electric vehicles by 2030 and avoid/shift measures such as a 50 per cent increase in daily active travel journeys.
- From 10.6 Mt CO_2eq in 2018, emissions from the Energy Industries sector are projected to decrease to between 3.4 and 4.4 Mt CO_2eq in 2030 (a 59 to 68 per cent reduction). Renewable energy generation at the end of the decade is projected to range from 60 to 68 per cent of electricity generation.
- Emissions from the Residential Sector arise from fuel combustion for domestic space and hot water heating. These are projected to decrease from 7.0 Mt CO_2eq in 2018 to between 5.7 and 5.4 Mt CO_2eq in 2030 (a 19 to 22 per cent reduction). 571,000 domestic heat pumps are projected to be installed by 2030.
- Total emissions from the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector are projected to increase over the period 2018 to 2030 by between 1.5 and 3.8 Mt CO_2eq (an increase of 39 to 95 per cent). It is unlikely with current planned measures that the target set under the EU LULUCF Regulation, and included in Climate Action Plan 2024, will be met. It is unlikely with current planned measures that the target set under the EU LULUCF Regulation, and included in Climate Action Plan 2024, will be met
- The ten Policies and Measures (WEM and WAM) estimated to achieve the largest potential GHG emission reductions in 2030 account for over three quarters of the total potential GHG emission reduction in 2030.

4.10.2 Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

Climate mitigation describes the action to reduce the likelihood of climate change occurring or reduce the impact if it does occur. This can include reducing the causes of climate change (e.g. emissions of greenhouse gases) as well as reducing future risks associated with climate change.

The National Climate Action Plan 2025 is the third statutory update to the plan since the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 was signed into law, committing Ireland to 2030 and 2050 targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It builds on Climate Action Plan 2024, outlining how Ireland will accelerate the actions required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development.

Climate adaptation is a change in natural or human systems in response to the impacts of climate change. These changes moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities and can be in response to actual or expected impacts.

The National Adaptation Framework (2024) aims to create a unified approach involving both government and society to adapt to climate change. It outlines how various sectors and local authorities can implement adaptation measures to minimise Ireland's vulnerability to climate change's adverse effects while taking advantage of any beneficial impacts. The Framework emphasises the importance of integrating adaptation strategies into all levels of policy making, infrastructure development, and local planning.

In 2018, four Climate Action Regional Offices were established for the purpose of coordinating climate action at regional and local levels. As specified in its Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly supports the work of the Climate Action Regional Offices.

The Donegal County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 sets out mitigation, adaptation and other climate measures to create a low carbon and climate resilient County. The Climate Action Plan sets out a range of actions across six theme areas of Sustainability and Resource Management; Governance and Leadership; Transport; Built Environment; Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure; and Communities and Resilience.

Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) is one of 2 Decarbonising Zones (DZ) identified in Donegal which identifies a range of mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity measures to address low carbon energy, greenhouse gas (GHG) emission and climate needs.[36]

4.10.3 Alternative Fuels and Renewable Electricity Generation Targets

The use of alternative fuels, including electricity, forms a significant part of government policy to reduce transport emissions. The Proposed Variation facilitates a mode shift away from the private car to public transport, walking and cycling and provisions relating to electric vehicles. This will contribute

[36] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030

towards reductions in the consumption of non-renewable energy sources and achievement of legally binding renewable energy targets.

The first Renewable Energy Directive (RED)[37] was the most important legislation influencing the growth of renewable energy in the EU and Ireland for the decade ending in 2020. From 2021, RED was replaced by the second Renewable Energy Directive (REDII)[38], which continues to promote the growth of renewable energy out to 2030. RED set out two mandatory targets for renewable energy in Ireland to be met by 2020, while REDII sets new targets and criteria to be met by Ireland in 2030 and the interim.

The overall renewable energy share is referred to as the overall Renewable Energy Sources (RES) target. REDII introduced a binding EU-wide target for overall RES of 32% in 2030 and required Member States to set their national contributions to the EU-wide target. REDII also set a target for the renewable energy share in transport sector. This is commonly referred to as the RES-T target. REDII set a RES-T target of 14% by 2030.

Given the need to speed up the EU's clean energy transition, the REDII was revised in 2023. The amending Directive EU/2023/2413 (REDIII) entered into force on 20 November 2023. REDIII sets an overall renewable energy target of at least 42.5% binding at EU level by 2030 - but aiming for 45%. RED III has increased the RES-T target to 29%. RED III also changed the scope of the RES-T to include additional forms of transport.

As per the updated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030, Ireland's overall RES target is 43% in 2030. The NECP includes RES trajectories transport – 16.3% with existing measures and 18.2% with additional measures.

Greater use of alternative fuels, including renewable energy, has the potential to contribute towards energy security.

[37] Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources.
[38] Directive (EU) 2018/2001 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable resources (recast).

4.10.4 Ambient Air Quality

In order to protect human health, vegetation and ecosystems, EU Directives set down air quality standards in Ireland and the other Member States for a wide variety of pollutants. These pollutants are generated through fuel combustion, in space heating, traffic, electricity generation and industry and, in sufficient amounts, could affect the well-being of the areas inhabitants.

The new Directive on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (2024/EC) simplifies EU rules on ambient air quality by merging the two existing EU directives into one[39]. Its goal is to bring quality standards in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations. The Directive introduces stricter limits on key air pollutants, aligning EU standards more closely with World Health Organization guidelines. The revised Directive prioritises the health of EU citizens: it sets new air quality standards for pollutants to be reached by 2030 which are more closely aligned with the WHO air quality guidelines. Those pollutants include, among others, particulate matter PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide, all known to cause respiratory problems.

The EU Directive include details regarding how ambient air quality should be monitored, assessed and managed. In order to comply with the directive mentioned above, the EPA measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants. For the purposes of monitoring in Ireland, four zones are defined in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2002 (S.I. No. 271 of 2002).

The EPA's (2024) *Air Quality in Ireland 2023 Report* identifies that:

- Ireland's latest monitoring shows we are in compliance with current EU standards.
- Ireland is not on track to achieve its ambition, set out in the National Clean Air Strategy, to meet the health-based WHO air quality guideline limits in 2026.
- Main pollutants of concern are fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) from solid fuel combustion and nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) from vehicle emissions/traffic.
- Air pollution can be a major environmental risk to people's health, with approximately 1,600

[39] Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe Directive 2008/50/EC and Fourth Daughter Directive 2004/107/EC

premature deaths annually in Ireland due to poor air quality.

The report further identifies the critical role of local authorities in the enforcement and implementation of existing plans and investment in infrastructure to encourage cleaner and healthier air quality choices, including:

- Local authorities must provide more resources to increase air enforcement activities and implement the new solid fuel regulations.
- Investment in clean public transport infrastructure across the country must be maintained and increased.
- More safe footpaths and cycle lanes must be created to continue to increase active travel as a viable and safe alternative to car use and associated NO_2 emissions.

In order to apply with European Directives relating to air quality, the EPA manages the National Ambient Air Quality Network and measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants at monitoring stations across the country.[40] There are two stations within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates: Letterkenny and Malin Head.

4.10.5 Noise

Noise is unwanted sound. The Noise Directive - Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise - is part of an EU strategy setting out to reduce the number of people affected by noise in the longer term and to provide a framework for developing existing EU policy on noise reduction from source. The Directive requires competent authorities in Member States to:

- Draw up *strategic noise maps* for major roads, railways, airports and agglomerations, using harmonised noise indicators and use these maps to assess the number of people who may be impacted upon as a result of excessive noise levels;
- Draw up action plans to reduce noise where necessary and maintain environmental noise quality where it is good; and,
- Inform and consult the public about noise exposure, its effects, and the measures considered to address noise.

Under the EU Environmental Noise Directive, which was transposed into Irish law through the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 (as amended), Strategic Noise Maps and Noise Action Plans are required to be made or revised every five years. The County Donegal Noise Action Plan 2024 - 2028 has been prepared by Donegal County Council. The purpose of the Noise Action Plan is to avoid, prevent and reduce, on a prioritised basis the harmful effects, including annoyance due to the long-term exposure to environmental noise.

4.10.6 Existing Problems

Significant progress is being made in the reductions of greenhouse gas emissions; however, Ireland is not on track to meet the 51% emissions reduction target (by 2030 compared to 2018) based on the projections contained in the latest (2025) assessment.

In the Climate Change Advisory Council's *Annual Review 2024,* the findings of an assessment of the degree to which progress is being made solely in the implementation of adaptation policy and increasing resilience for the period April 2023 to March 2024 is provided. The Review details that four sectors (Transport, Flood Risk Management, Built and Archaeological Heritage and Local Government) demonstrated good overall progress, six showed moderate progress (Agriculture, Forestry and Seafood, National Adaptation Framework, Communications Networks, Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure, Health and Electricity and Gas Networks) and one (Biodiversity) showed no progress and supplied insufficient evidence. This was a slight improvement compared with the results in 2023.

Air quality and noise can present challenges, especially in urban areas, as detailed under the relevant sub-sections above. With regard to air quality, air pollution from transport is dominated by NO_x emissions. Of these, NO_2 is particularly impactful from a health perspective. The Proposed Variation will help to facilitate reductions in emissions and a transition from dependence on fossil fuel combustion powered transport.

[40] For more detail on current daily air quality data refer to: https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/.

4.11 Material Assets

Other material assets, in addition to those detailed below, covered by the SEA include archaeological and architectural heritage (see Section 4.12) and natural resources of economic value, such as water and air (see Sections 4.9 and 4.10).

4.11.1 Public Assets and Infrastructure

Public assets and infrastructure that have the potential to be impacted upon by the Proposed Variation, if unmitigated, include: resources such as public open spaces, parks and recreational areas; public buildings and services; transport and utility infrastructure (electricity, gas, telecommunications, water supply, waste water infrastructure etc.); and natural resources that are covered under other topics such as water and soil.

4.11.2 Land

The Proposed Variation has the potential to assist with the reuse and regeneration of brownfield sites thereby contributing towards sustainable mobility and reducing the need to develop greenfield lands and associated potential adverse environmental effects. Brownfield lands are generally located within urban/suburban areas.

4.11.3 Green Infrastructure

Parks and open space promote health and well-being, provide recreational facilities and range of habitats for various species. Green Infrastructure (GI) is also a crucial component in building resilient communities capable of adapting to the consequences of climate change with trees, woodlands and wetlands providing carbon capture and slowing water flows while improving air quality.

4.11.4 Woodland

Woodlands provide recreational opportunities in addition to their heritage and economic benefits. They are a valuable resource in terms of biodiversity, recreation and tourism, and also important as links in the green infrastructure network.

4.11.5 Transport

Donegal is located in a strategic position in the north-west of the country. Major roads, N13, N14 and N15 provides key connectivity to Northern Ireland through Derry City and Strabane. The N15 (Atlantic Economic Corridor) also connects County Donegal with Leitrim and Sligo. The N56 makes up for a large part of the 'Wild Atlantic Way' throughout Donegal.

Donegal Airport is located in the north-west of the County and provides links to Dublin and the UK.

The closest train stations to Donegal are located in Sligo Town and Derry City. Bus Éireann runs a number of routes throughout Donegal, including to Dublin, Galway, Sligo, Derry, Strabane and throughout County Donegal. TFI Local Link provides local routes throughout County Donegal. Private bus companies also provide routes to Dublin and Derry.

An Clochán Liath benefits from strong road links with the N56 National Secondary Road and the R252 and R254 Regional Roads, which provide routes to the west and east of the County.[41]

Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) benefits from the N15 National Route/ Atlantic Economic Corridor which provides links to the north and south of the County, as well as Northern Ireland. Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) benefits from nine bus services, with routes to Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town), Letterkenny, Sligo/Galway, Manorhamilton and Dublin.[42]

Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) is located on the fork of the N13 and the R238 roads. The N13 provides links to Derry City and Letterkenny and the R238 provides links to the Inishowen peninsula. Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) is served by a number of bus services, including TFI Local Link and private bus companies, with routes to Dublin, Derry, Buncrana and Moville.

Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) is served by a number of secondary roads, including the

[41] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030

[42] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030

R238, R244 and R240, which provides links to Moville, Buncrana and other neighbouring towns. Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) is served by a number of bus services, with routes to Malin Head, Derry, Buncrana/Letterkenny and Dublin.[43]

Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) is strategically located at a key point where National Roads N15 and N56 join. The N15 and N13, north-south from Derry to Sligo and a key junction of the N56, link at the by-pass outside of the town. These routes provide links to the west of the County and the route of the Wild Atlantic Way. The town is by-passed along its eastern boundary by the N15. Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) is well serviced by a number of bus routes, including six Local Link bus routes to Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Letterkenny, Glencolmcille, Narin, Pettigo and Coragh. There are also Bus Eireann express services to Dublin and Galway and Bus Eireann services to Glencolmcille and Dungloe. [44]

Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) is served by Regional Road R263 to the north of the town, which in turn connects into National Secondary Route N56, the primary road corridor in the western half of the county. Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) is served by Bus Éireann, with routes to Donegal and Glencolmcille.[45]

As part of the preparation of the Proposed Variation, an Area Based Transport Assessment was carried out culminating in Donegal Six Strategic Towns Local Transport Plans accompanying the Proposed Variation.

4.11.6 Minerals and Aggregates

The GSI have a suite of data sources available that would be useful in planning and assessing individual projects with regard to the environmental topic(s) of soil and/or material assets. These include:

- Aggregate Potential Mapping;
- Bedrock mapping;
- Quaternary and Physiographic mapping; and
- National Aquifer and Recharge mapping.

Mineral localities are mapped on Figure 4.17.

4.11.7 Water Services

4.11.7.1 Wastewater

The EPA's 2024 report *'Urban Waste Water Treatment in 2023'* identified that:

- 10 large urban areas that did not meet European Union treatment standards in 2023 require improvements to comply with these standards and protect the environment;
- 16 towns and villages discharging raw sewage into the environment every day must be connected to wastewater treatment plants;
- 6 collecting systems (sewers) were subject to a judgement from the Court of Justice of the European Union and must be prioritised;
- 34 priority areas require improvements to protect rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters that are adversely impacted by wastewater;
- 3 collecting systems must be upgraded to prevent sewage pollution at bathing waters that were classified as having poor water quality; and
- 12 areas need improvements in wastewater treatment to protect endangered freshwater pearl mussels.

Based on the EPA's assessment of monitoring information provided by Uisce Éireann and the enforcement activities carried out by the EPA, this report identifies urban areas with the most important environmental issues that must be addressed.

From January 2014, Irish Water, now Uisce Éireann, became responsible for all public water services, involving the supply of drinking water and the collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater. Uisce Éireann is also responsible for the treatment and disposal of the sludge that is generated from both its water and waste water treatment plants. The Council is an agent of Uisce Éireann for operations and remains the designated Water Authority for the assessment and approval of on-site wastewater treatment systems and is responsible for surface water drainage in County Donegal.

The provision of well-maintained quality wastewater treatment infrastructure is essential to facilitate sustainable development of County Donegal while also protecting the environment and public health. Uisce Éireann is now responsible for the collection, treatment and disposal of waste water where public wastewater facilities exist in towns and villages.

[43] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030
[44] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030
[45] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030.

Uisce Éireann, working in partnership with Donegal County Council, is making investments to undertake essential upgrade works to waste water treatment plants in towns and villages across the County. The upgrading of infrastructure will contribute towards compliance with the Water Framework Directive, EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and Drinking Water Regulations and will help to protect human health and maintain the quality of surface and ground waters.

4.11.7.2 Wastewater Infrastructure

Within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, there are two Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs) that are identified by the EPA as a priority areas[46] (such areas are those where improvements are required to resolve urgent environmental issues), including Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) (due to significant pressures on waters at risk of pollution) and Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) (due to improvement required to protect shellfish).

The Ballyshannon WWTP has a current design capacity of 6100 Population Equivalent (PE)[47], with a current load of 3159 PE. The WWTP is currently fully compliant with the wastewater discharge licence.[48]

The Bridgend WWTP has a current design capacity of 260 PE, with a current load of 546 PE. The WWTP is currently non-compliant with the wastewater discharge licence, due to exceedances of Ammonia-Total (as N) mg/l; BOD, 5 days with Inhibition (Carbonaceous mg/l; COD-Cr mg/l; ortho-Phosphate (as P) - unspecified mg/l; and Suspended Solids mg/l.[49]

The Carndonagh-Malin WWTP has a current design of capacity of 5833 PE, with a current load of 5,337 PE. The WWTP is currently non-compliant with the wastewater discharge licence, due to exceedances of Ammonia-Total (as N) mg/l; and Total Oxidised Nitrogen (as N) mg/l.[50]

The Donegal Town WWTP has a design capacity of 12,000 PE, with a current load of 5,464 PE. The WWTP is currently fully compliant with the wastewater discharge licence.[51]

The Dungloe WWTP has a design of capacity of 2,400 PE, with a current load of 1,756 PE. The WWTP is currently fully compliant with the wastewater discharge licence.[52]

The Killybegs WWTP has a design capacity of 4,200 PE, with a current load of 2,140 PE. The WWTP is currently fully compliant with the wastewater discharge licence.[53]

4.11.7.3 Water Supply

Uisce Éireann is responsible for providing and maintaining adequate public water supply infrastructure throughout County Donegal.

Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) is located within the Ballyshannon and Bundoran Water Resource Zone (WRZ)[54] and as identified by Uisce Éireann, has spare capacity available to meet targeted population growth by 2034.[55] The Ballyshannon Water Treatment Plant (WTP) serves a population of 5,000 people (EDEN figure 2,971), with an average of 1,500 m^3/day of treated water produced at the Ballyshannon WTP. The raw water abstraction is a combination of groundwater from two boreholes and spring source and surface water from Lough. The treated water is pumped to two reservoirs, Ballyshannon reservoir and Corkery reservoir.[56]

Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) is located within the Letterkenny & Inishowen East & Eddie Fullerton Dam WRZ, and as identified by Uisce Éireann, has potential capacity available to

[46] https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/waste-water/Priority-areas-for-website-August-2025.pdf

[47] Population Equivalent (PE) is a measurement of the organic biodegradable load. A population equivalent of 1 (1 PE) means the organic biodegradable load having a five-day biochemical oxygen demand (BOD_5) of 60 g of oxygen per day; the load is calculated on the basis of the maximum average weekly load entering the treatment plant during the year, excluding unusual situations such as those due to heavy rain.

[48]https://www.water.ie/sites/default/files/2025-06/D0128-01_2024_AER.pdf

[49]https://www.water.ie/sites/default/files/2025-09/D0532-01_2024_AER.pdf

[50]https://www.water.ie/sites/default/files/2025-06/D0113-01_2024_AER.pdf

[51]https://www.water.ie/sites/default/files/2025-06/D0135-01_2024_AER.pdf

[52]https://www.water.ie/sites/default/files/2025-07/D0208-01_2024_AER.pdf

[53]https://www.water.ie/sites/default/files/2025-02/D0011-01_2023_AER.pdf

[54] A Water Resource Zone (WRZ) is an independent water supply system serving a region, city, town or village and is governed by topography or the extent of the water distribution network in an area. A WRZ may include multiple Water Treatment Plants and/or sources.

[55] https://www.water.ie/connections/developer-services/capacity-registers/water-supply-capacity-register/donegal

[56]https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/audit-reports/donegal/Ballyshannon-Audit-Report-2024.pdf

meet targeted population growth by 2034, however, a Level of Service improvement is required.[57] The Inishowen East Public Water Supply (PWS) produces approximately 1,264.0 m^3/d of water serving a population of 3,327 (EDEN 2024).[58]

Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) is located within the Inishowen West & Carndonagh & Culdaff WRZ, and as identified by Uisce Éireann, has potential capacity available to meet targeted population growth by 2034, however, a Level of Service improvement is required. The Inishowen West WTP produces approximately 2862.0 m^3/d of water serving a population of 3,355 (EDEN 2024).[59]

Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) is located within the Donegal (River Eske) WRZ, and as identified by Uisce Éireann, has potential capacity available to meet targeted population growth by 2034, however, a Level of Service improvement is required. The Donegal (River Eske) Public Water Scheme (PWS) produces approximately 2,894 m3/d of water serving a population of 5,993 (EDEN figures).[60]

An Clochán Liath is located within the Rosses WRZ, and as identified by Uisce Éireann, has potential capacity available to meet targeted population growth by 2034, however, a Level of Service improvement is required. The Rosses Regional Public Water Supply (PWS) is supplied by Crolly water treatment plant (WTP) which produces approximately 4,877 m3/day of treated water (EDEN figure), and serves a population of approximately 9,418 people (EDEN figure). The raw water source is Lough Keel.[61]

Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) is located within the Killybegs WRZ, and as identified by Uisce Éireann, has capacity available to meet the targeted population growth by 2034. The Killybegs public water supply scheme serves a population of 4,420 with the source of raw water for the supply abstracted from Lough Adeery.[62]

Under Section 58 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992, the EPA is required to collect and verify monitoring results for all water supplies in Ireland covered by the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2000. The EPA publishes their results in annual reports that are supported by Remedial Action Lists (RALs). The RAL identifies water supplies that are not in compliance with the Regulations mentioned above. The most recent EPA Remedial Action List (Q2 of 2025, published in 2025)[63] includes two sites within County Donegal, however, does not include any water scheme that supplies the area to which the Proposed Variation relates.

4.11.7.4 Surface Water Drainage

Donegal County Council is responsible for surface water drainage in the area to which the Proposed Variation relates. Sustainable urban Drainage systems (SuDS) is a method to minimise the quantity and increase the quality of surface water runoff and to mitigate adverse impacts of climate change. SuDS can also provide amenity and biodiversity benefits. The Council seeks to ensure the sustainable management of surface water discharges in urban areas through the use of SuDS.

4.11.8 Waste Management

The National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy (Regional Waste Management Planning Offices, 2024) sets out a framework for the prevention and management of waste in Ireland for the period 2024 to 2030. The County Development Plan to which the Proposed Variation relates seeks to influence sustainable consumption and prevent the generation of waste, improve the capture of

[57] Level of service (LoS) improvement required. Capacity constraints exist and additional analysis of Pre-connection Enquiries and Connection Applications will be undertaken as required by UÉ on an individual basis considering their specific load requirements. Improvement proposals will include but are not limited to leakage reduction and/or capital investment. These proposals will be required to maintain/improve levels of service as demand increases. These proposals will be developed & prioritised through the National Water Resources Plan and investment planning process.

[58] https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/audit-reports/donegal/Inishowen-East-(Disinfection)-Audit-2024-SV30674.pdf

[59] https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/audit-reports/donegal/Inishowen-West-(Disinfection)-SV30675.pdf

[60] https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/audit-reports/donegal/Donegal-R-Eske-Audit-07122022.pdf

[61] https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/audit-reports/donegal/Rosses-Regional-(Crolly-WTP)-Audit-09.06.2025-AIO.pdf

[62] https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/audit-reports/donegal/Killybegs-Audit-18102023.pdf

[63] Available at: https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/annual-drinking-water-reports/Q2-2025-RAL-for-web.pdf

materials to optimise circularity and enable compliance with policy and legislation.

4.11.9 Existing Problems

The provisions of the Proposed Variation will contribute towards protection of the environment with regard to impacts arising from material assets.

The provision of infrastructure and supporting services for development, particularly water and wastewater services, is critical.

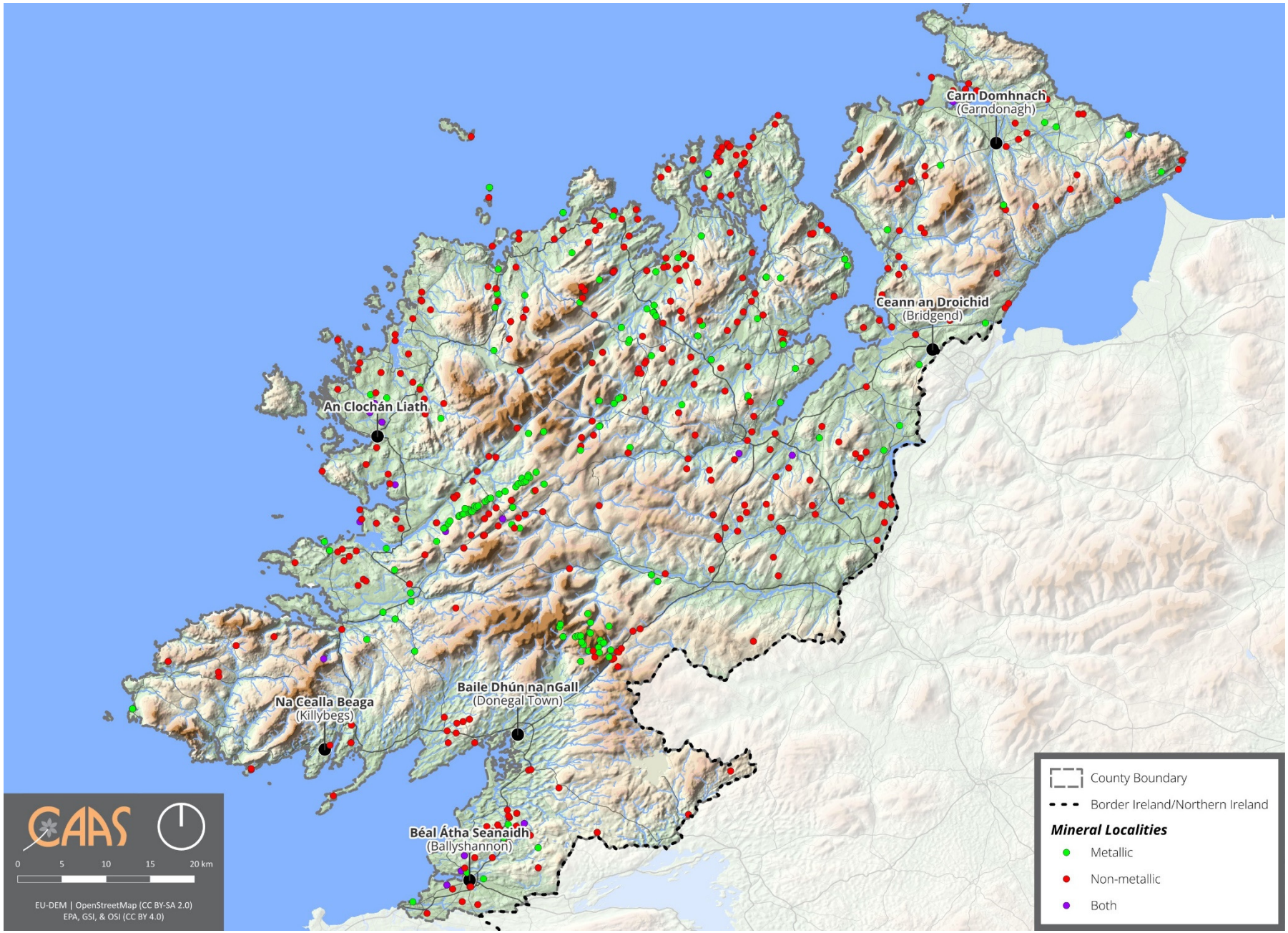

Figure 4.17 Mineral Localities

4.12 Cultural Heritage

4.12.1 Archaeological Heritage

Archaeology is the study of past societies through the material remains left by those societies and the evidence of their environment. Archaeological sites and monuments vary greatly in form and date; examples include earthworks of different types and periods, (e.g. early historic ringforts and prehistoric burial mounds), megalithic tombs from the Prehistoric period, medieval buildings, urban archaeological deposits and underwater features.

Archaeological heritage is protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), Natural Cultural Institutions Act 1997 and the Planning Acts.

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is an inventory, put on a statutory basis by amendment to the National Monuments Act 1994, of sites and areas of archaeological significance, numbered and mapped. It is available from the National Monuments Service and at archaeology.ie.

The term 'monument' includes all man-made structures of whatever form or date except buildings habitually used for ecclesiastical purposes. All monuments in existence before 1700 A.D. are automatically considered to be historic monuments within the meaning of the Acts. Monuments of architectural and historical interest also come within the scope of the Acts. Monuments include: any artificial or partly artificial building, structure or erection or group of such buildings, structures or erections; any cave, stone or other natural product, whether or not forming part of the ground, that has been artificially carved, sculptured or worked upon or which (where it does not form part of the place where it is) appears to have been purposely put or arranged in position; any, or any part of any, prehistoric or ancient tomb, grave or burial deposit, or, ritual, industrial or habitation site; and any place comprising the remains or traces of any such building, structure or erection, any such cave, stone or natural product or any such tomb, grave, burial deposit or ritual, industrial or habitation site, situated on land or in the territorial waters of the State', but excludes 'any building or part of any building, that is habitually used for ecclesiastical purposes' (National Monuments Acts 1930-2004). A recorded monument is a monument included in the list and marked on the map which comprises the RMP set out county by county under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. The definition includes Zones of Notification within which requirements for notifications of proposed works apply.

There are various entries to the RMP within and surrounding the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, including four National Monuments in State Care located within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates: Donegal Franciscan Abbey (Ownership) and Donegal Castle (Guardianship), located in Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town); and Carndonagh Cross (Ownership) and Donagh Parish Church and graveyard (Ownership) located in Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh). Figure 4.18 shows the spatial distribution of Recorded Monuments within and beyond the area to which the Proposed Variation relates and their associated Zones of Notification.

The archaeological heritage of Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) includes: the historic town; graveyards; Assaroe Abbey; standing stones; forts; a promontory fort; and a holy well.[64]

Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) has a number of archaeological sites, including: St Patricks High/Donagh Cross and Associated Stone Structures, Donagh Parish Church and graveyard (which are classified as National Monuments, as mentioned above); megalithic tomb, ecclesiastical enclosure; and souterrain.[65]

There is archaeological evidence of settlements in and around Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) dating from prehistoric times. The Franciscan Abbey, which is associated with the Annals of the Four Masters, is located within Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town). The town is recognised as an area of archaeological importance.[66]

[64] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030.
[65] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030.
[66] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030.

The archaeological heritage of Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) includes the medieval area which is located in the southern part of the town. It contains a Holy Well, St. Catherine's Church and 'Cat's' Castle. Along with the town centre, these areas are recognised as areas of archaeological importance.[67]

There are two Zones of Archaeological Potential in Killybegs: the Rough Point Archaeological Complex (40.24 ha in area); and the Na Cealla Beaga Archaeological Complex (38.64 ha in area, situated within the Urban Core).

The Underwater Archaeology Unit was established within the National Monuments Service to manage and protect Ireland's underwater cultural heritage, including the quantification of the underwater resource and assessing development impacts in order to manage and protect this aspect of Ireland's heritage. The Shipwreck Inventory is principally a desktop survey with information gathered from a broad range of cartographic, archaeological and historical sources, both documentary and pictorial. Wrecks over 100 years old and archaeological objects found underwater are protected under the National Monuments (Amendment) Acts 1987 and 1994. Significant wrecks less than 100 years old can be designated by Underwater Heritage Order on account of their historical, archaeological or artistic importance. Such Orders can also be used to designate areas of seabed or land covered by water to more clearly define and protect wreck sites and archaeological objects. Under the legislation all diving on known protected wreck sites or with the intention of searching for underwater cultural heritage is subject to licensing requirements.

Waterbodies within and surrounding the area to which the Proposed Variation relates may contain many features and finds associated with riverine heritage such as shipwrecks, piers, quay walls, fords, stepping stones and associated archaeological objects and features.

4.12.2 Architectural Heritage

The term architectural heritage is defined in the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments Act 1999 as meaning all: structures and buildings together with their settings and attendant grounds, fixtures and fittings; groups of structures and buildings; and, sites which are of technical, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest.

Records of Protected Structures are legislated for undr the Planning and Development Acts. Protected structures are structures, or parts of structures that are of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view.

In relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, the following are encompassed:

- The interior of the structure;
- The land lying within the curtilage[68] of the structure;
- Any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors; and,
- All fixtures and features that form part of the interior or exterior of any structure or structures referred to in subparagraph (i) or (iii).

There are numerous Protected Structures within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, as shown on Figure 4.19. Notable Protected Structures include: the Union Workhouse (Béal Átha Seanaidh/ Ballyshannon); The Church of the Sacred Heart (Carn Domhnach/ Carndonagh); Donegal District Hospital (Baile Dhún na nGall/ Donegal Town); the Courthouse (Béal Átha Seanaidh/ Ballyshannon); and The Old Rectory (Na Cealla Beaga/ Killybegs).

There are 60 Protected Structures listed in Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon); 13 in Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh); 11 in Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town); and 10 in Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs). There are no Protected

[67] Proposed Variation No. 1 for the Donegal CDP 2024-2030.

[68] Curtilage is normally taken to be the parcel of ground immediately associated with the Protected Structure, or in use for the purposes of the structure. Protection extends to the buildings and land lying within the curtilage. While the curtilage sometimes coincides with the present property boundary, it can originally have included lands, features or even buildings now in separate ownership, e.g. the lodge of a former country house, or the garden features located in land subsequently sold off. Such lands are described as being attendant grounds, and the protection extends to them just as if they were still within the curtilage of the Protected Structure.

Structures listed in An Clochán Liath and Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend).

The architectural heritage of Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) includes important buildings/sites such as: the Clock Tower/Gallogley's Jewellers; St Anne's Church; Condon House; St Patrick's Catholic Church; P. Mulligan & Sons Ltd Warehouse; St Catherine's Convent; Erne Mills; the Union Workhouse; and the Mall.[69]

The extensive architectural heritage of Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) dates from pre-Christian times and is noted for the St Patricks High Cross, dating from the 7th Century, and a market and service town in the 19th century. The RPS includes: The Church of the Sacred Heart; Donagh Parish Church (Church Street); and John Colgan Memorial Hall (Chapel Street).[70]

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of a Protected Structure. An ACA may or may not include Protected Structures. In an ACA, protection is placed on the external appearance of such areas or structures. There is one ACA designated within Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon), as mapped on Figure 4.19.

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) is a State initiative under the administration of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and was established on a statutory basis under the provisions of the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999. The purpose of the NIAH is to identify, record, and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland, uniformly and consistently as an aid in the protection and conservation of the built heritage. NIAH surveys provide the basis for the recommendations of the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to the local authorities for the inclusion of particular structures in their Record of Protected Structures. The NIAH includes historic gardens and designed landscapes. Figure 4.19 shows entries to NIAH in the area to which the Proposed Variation relates.

There are seven structures listed on the NIAH within An Clochán Liath, including: An Clochán Liath Pier; St. Crone's Church of Ireland Church; Bank of Ireland Main Street; No. 27 Main Street; Patrick John Sally's Public House; Street Water Pump; and Ionad Teampeall Chróine.[71]
Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) has a number of structures listed on the NIAH, including: Carn Domhnach/Carndonagh Wesleyan Chapel (Bridge Street); McDonough and Co. Ltd Department Store (the Diamond); Carn Domhnach/Carndonagh Court House; and the thatched cottage on Pound Street.[72]

4.12.3 Existing Problems

The context of archaeological and architectural heritage has changed over time however no existing conflicts with legislative objectives governing archaeological and architectural heritage have been identified.

[69] Proposed Variation No. 1 for the Donegal CDP 2024-2030.
[70] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030.
[71] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030.
[72] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal CDP 2024-2030.

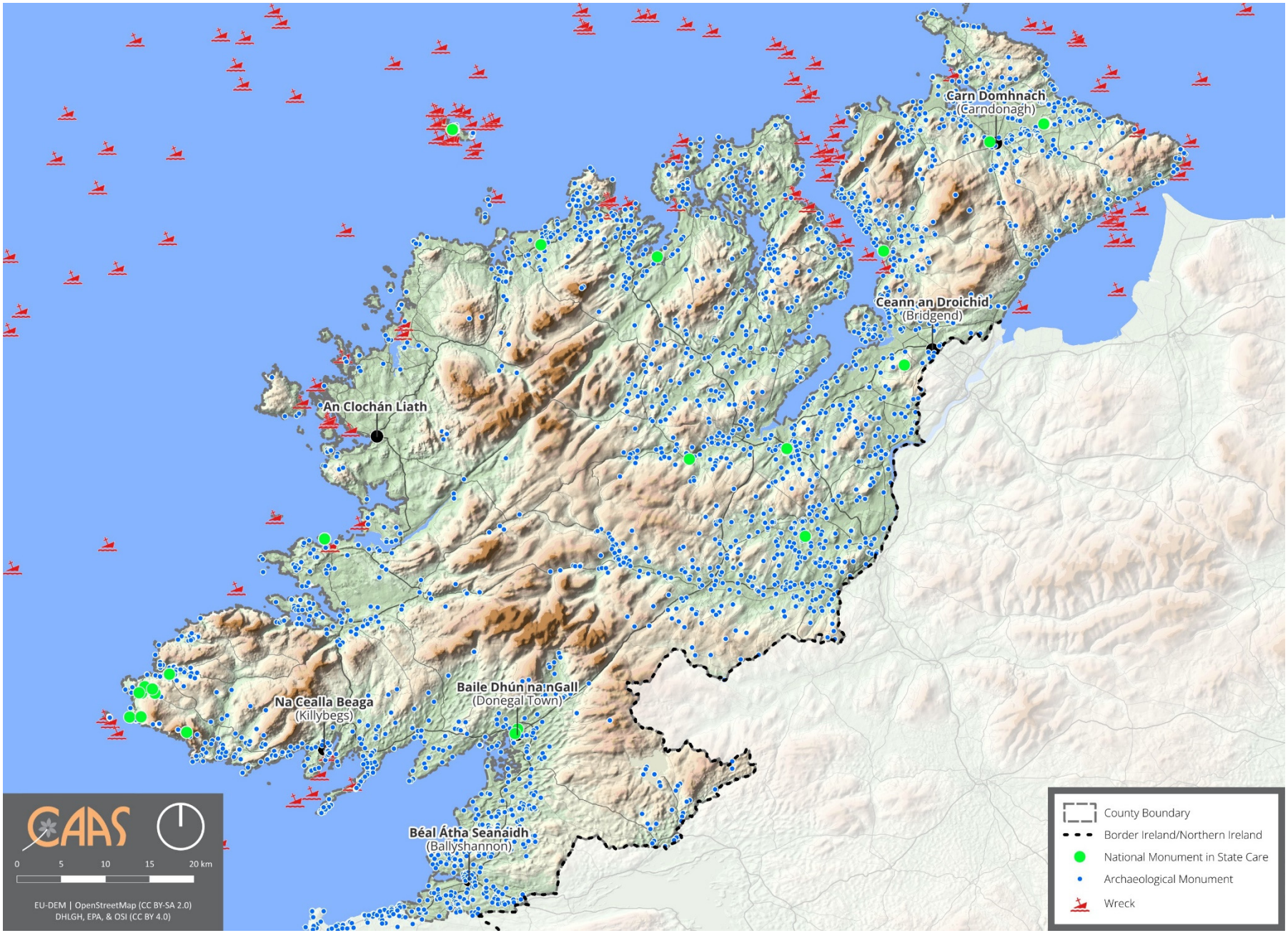

Figure 4.18 Archaeological Heritage

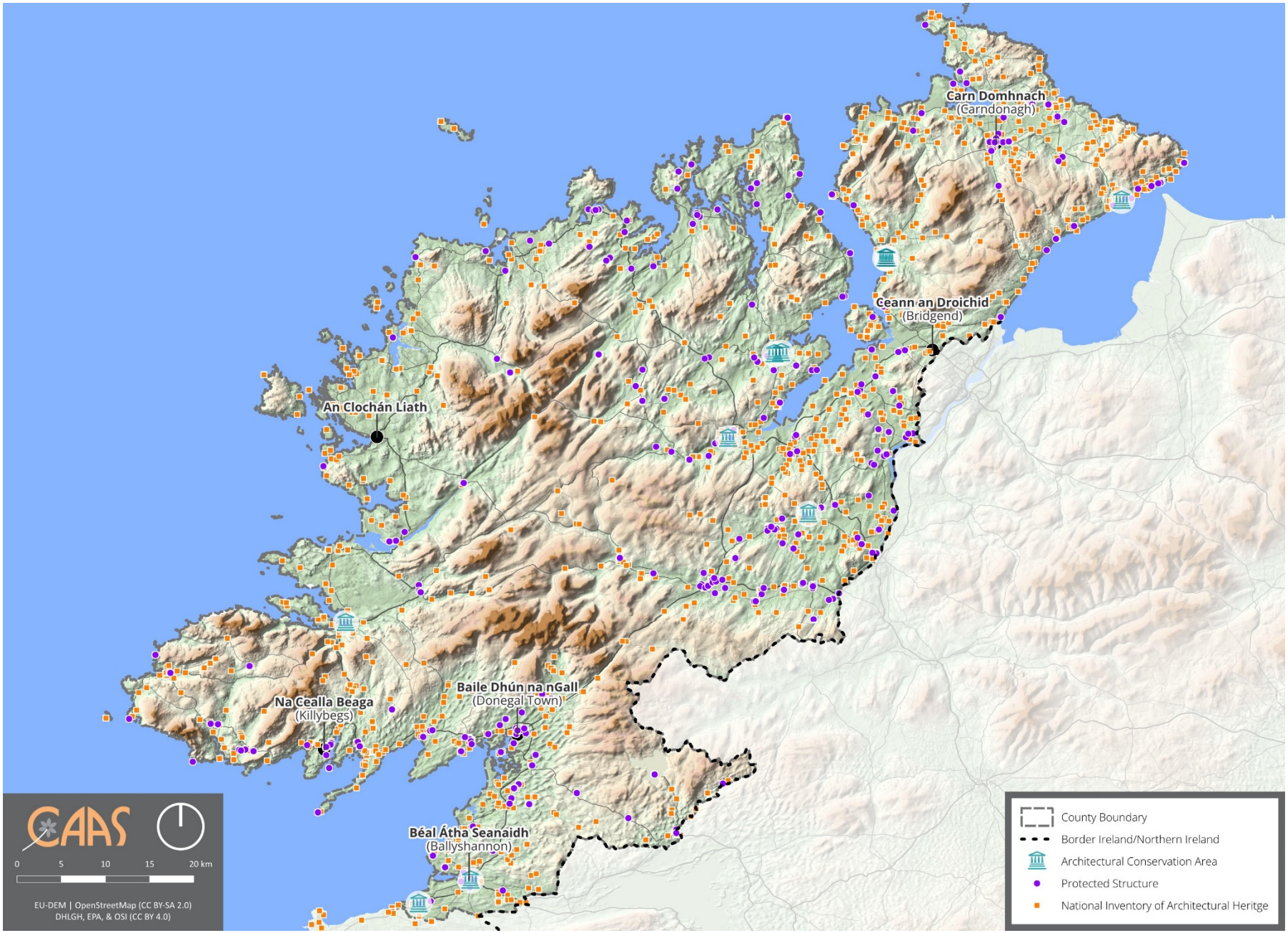

Figure 4.19 Architectural Heritage

4.13 Landscape

4.13.1 Introduction

Article 1 (a) of the European Landscape Convention provides a definition of landscape as follows; "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural/or human factors". The Convention was ratified in Ireland in 2002, requiring the adoption of national measures to promote landscape, planning, protection and management. The importance of landscape and visual amenity and the role of its protection are recognised in the Planning and Development Act, which requires that Development Plans include objectives for the preservation of the landscape, views and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty.

County Donegal has a unique and diverse landscape ranging from low lying areas of Donegal Bay and Lough Swilly to mountainous areas of Mount Errigal and the Seven Sisters. Donegal has a significant amount of arable lands, boglands, and an extensive and varied coastline of rocky outcrops, cliffs and sandy beaches. There are a range of landscape amenities including the Sliabh Liag cliffs, Wild Atlantic Way and Glenveagh National Park.

4.13.2 Landscape Character Assessment

The purpose of landscape character assessment is to provide the foundation for policy formulation and decision making for landscape management.

There are a range of different landscapes found in the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, each with varying amenity values, topography, exposure levels and each containing a variety of habitats.

The existing Donegal County Development Plan 2022-2028 identifies 23 Landscape Character Types, 44 Landscape Character Areas, three scenic amenity designations and designated views and prospects within the Council's administrative area.

The Scenic Amenity Designations of County Donegal are classified as:

1. **Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA):** These are sublime natural landscapes of the highest quality that are synonymous with the identity of County Donegal. These areas have extremely limited capacity to assimilate additional development.

2. **Areas of High Scenic Amenity (HSA):** These are landscapes of significant aesthetic, cultural, heritage and environmental quality that are unique to their locality and form a fundamental element of the landscape and identity of County Donegal. These areas have the capacity to absorb sensitively located development of scale, design and use that will enable assimilation into the receiving landscape and which does not detract from the quality of the landscape, subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the plan.

3. **Areas of Moderate Scenic Amenity (MSA):** These are primarily landscapes outside Local Area Plan Boundaries and Settlement framework boundaries, that have a unique, rural and generally agricultural quality. These areas have the capacity to absorb additional development that is suitably located, sited and designed subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the Plan.

The areas to which the Proposed Variation relates is located within the 'High Scenic Amenity' and 'Moderate Scenic Amenity'. There are no Views or Prospects designated within the areas to which the Proposed Variation relates, as mapped on Figure 4.20.

4.13.3 Existing Environmental Problems

New developments have resulted in changes to the visual appearance of lands within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates however legislative objectives governing landscape and visual appearance were not identified as being conflicted with.

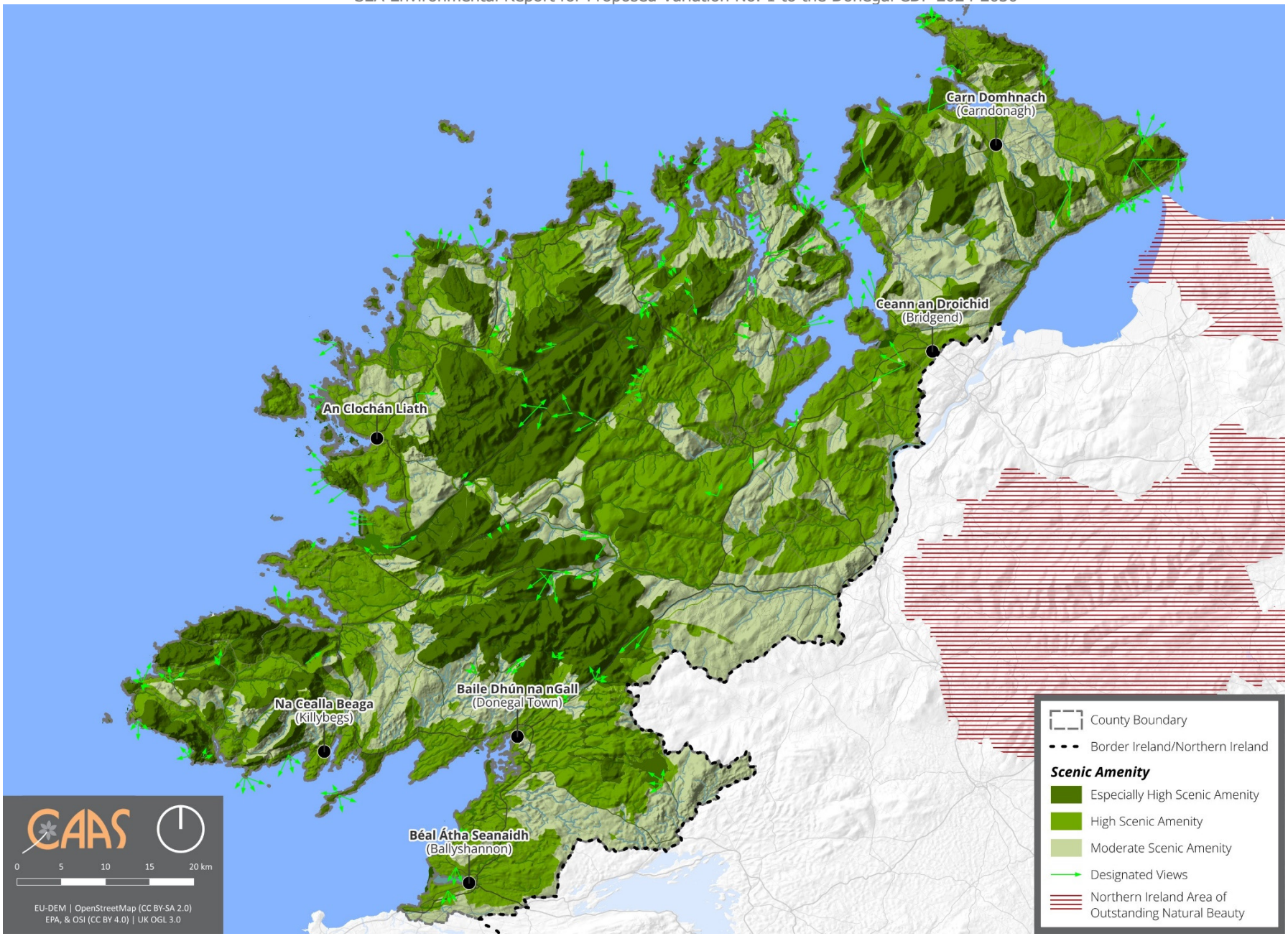

Figure 4.20 Landscape Designations

Section 5 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies that generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level e.g. the environmental protection objectives of various European Directives that have been transposed into Irish law and which are required to be implemented.

The SEOs are set out under a range of topics and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Proposed Variation and the alternatives are evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if – in the case of adverse effects – unmitigated.

The SEOs are linked to indicators which can facilitate monitoring the environmental effects of the Proposed Variation as well as identifying targets which the Proposed Variation can help work towards.

All SEOs, indicators and targets are provided on Table 5.1 overleaf.

Further detail on legislation, plans and programmes are provided under Section 2 (and associated Appendix I "Relationship with Legislation and Other Policies, Plans, and Programmes") and Section 4.

The monitoring measures identified below as part of the Proposed Variation SEA are consistent with the measures that were identified by the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030 SEA. This consistency across the hierarchy of land use plans will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future monitoring.

Table 5.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs), Indicators and Targets

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicators	Targets
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	**BFF**	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration	• Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate, restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, of international, EU and nationally designated sites, protected species and habitats. • Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, regarding its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function. • Maintain and where appropriate, enhance the biodiversity value of local designated and non-designated ecological and heritage areas, which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. • Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets.	• Condition of European sites	• Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions and to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species • Confirmation of compliance with Plan provisions relating to the protection of European Sites and sustaining resources
				• Number of spatial plans that have included ecosystem services content, mapping and policy to protect ecosystem services when their relevant plans are either revised or drafted	• Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions and to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species
				• SEAs and AAs as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc.	• Screen for and undertake SEA and AA as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc.
				• Status of water bodies	• Included under Water below
				• Compliance of planning permissions with Plan measures providing for the protection of Biodiversity and flora and fauna – see County Development Plan Chapter 11 "Natural, Built and Archaeological Heritage"	• For planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that they comply with all Plan measures providing for the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna – see County Development Plan Chapter 11 "Natural, Built and Archaeological Heritage"
Population and Human Health	**PHH**	Improve quality of life for all ages and abilities based on high-quality, serviced, well connected and sustainable residential, working, educational and recreational environments	• Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options. • Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection. • Ensure that existing population and planned growth is linked with the required infrastructure and the services. • Protect human health and well-being from environment-related pressures.	• Implementation of Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by County Development Plan Chapter 7 "Economic Development"	• Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by County Development Plan Chapter 7 "Economic Development"
				• Number of spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors resulting from development permitted under the County Development Plan	• No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the County Development Plan
				• Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures	• Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to active travel
				• Number of spatial plans that include specific green infrastructure mapping	• Require all local level land use plans to include specific green infrastructure mapping
Soil (and Land)	**S**	Ensure the long-term sustainable management of land	• Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource • Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield • Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites	• Proportion of population growth occurring on infill and brownfield lands compared to greenfield (also relevant to Material Assets)	• As per the revised NPF, to limit the rate of increase land that is sealed or artificialised per year and promote the reversal of this in suitable areas e.g., flood zones, high density areas • In accordance with the NPF, deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints and ensure compact and sequential patterns of growth • To map brownfield and infill land parcels

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicators	Targets
				• Instances where contaminated material generated from brownfield and infill must be disposed of	• Dispose of contaminated material in compliance with EPA guidance and waste management requirements
				• Environmental assessments and AAs as relevant for applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission	• Screen for and undertake environmental assessments and AA as relevant for applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission
Water	**W**	Protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water resource	• Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive • Ensure water resources are sustainably managed to deliver proposed regional and County growth targets in the context of existing and projected water supply and wastewater capacity constraints ensuring the protection of receiving environments • Avoid inappropriate zoning and development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion • Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals	• Status of water bodies as reported by the EPA Water Monitoring Programme for the WFD	• Subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive, not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status' • Implementation of the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan
				• Number of incompatible developments permitted within flood risk areas	• Minimise developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk
Material Assets	**MA**	Sustainable and efficient use of natural resources	• Make best use of existing infrastructure, promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure and protect existing assets, to meet the needs of the county and Donegal's population. • Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies. • Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development • Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of transport modes.	• Programmed delivery of Uisce Éireann infrastructure for all key growth towns in line with Uisce Éireann Investment Plan and prioritisation programme to ensure sustainable growth can be accommodated • Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the County Development Plan	• All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately and appropriately served by waste water treatment over the lifetime of the County Development Plan • Where septic tanks are proposed, for planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that the outfall from the septic tank will not – in-combination with other septic tanks – contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive • Facilitate, as appropriate, Uisce Éireann in developing water and wastewater infrastructure • See also targets relating to greenfield and brownfield development of land under Soil and broadband under Population and Human Health
				• Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures	• Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to active travel

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicators	Targets
Air	**A**	Support clean air policies that reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and public health	• 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 • Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency • Promote continuing improvement in air quality • Reduction of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter which are responsible for acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution • Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health — Air Quality Directive • Significantly decrease noise pollution and move closer to WHO recommended levels	• Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels • NO_2 (Nitrogen Dioxide), PM_{10} (particulate matter with diameter of 10 microns or less) and O_3 (Ozone) as part of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring	• Decrease in proportion of journeys made by car compared to previous levels • Improvement in Air Quality trends, particularly in relation to transport related emissions • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to sustainable mobility and travel
Climatic Factors[73]	**C**	Achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy that is cognisant of environmental impacts	• Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting mitigation and adaptation measures. • Integrate sustainable design solutions into the county's infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure). • Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets. • Encourage and promote development resilient to the effects of climate change. • Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport.	• Implementation of Plan measures relating to climate reduction targets	• For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to climate reduction targets
				• A competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy	• Contribute towards transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050
				• Share of renewable energy in transport	• Contribute towards the National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 sectoral target for transport (RES-T) of 14%, by 2030 (this may be increased following a provisional European agreement on 30 March 2023 for a binding overall RES target of at least 42.5% by 2030)
				• Greenhouse gas emissions	• Contribute towards the target of aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions of at least 51% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2030 (helping to set Ireland on a path to reach net-zero emissions by 2050)
				• Energy consumption, the uptake of renewable options and solid fuels for residential heating	• To promote reduced energy consumption and support the uptake of renewable options and a move away from solid fuels for residential heating
				• Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels	• Decrease in the proportion of journeys made by residents of the settlements using private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to sustainable mobility and travel

[73] Please also refer to relevant legislation and requirements under Section 4.10, Section 8 and Appendix I. Targets under the national Climate Action Plan are reviewed and updated periodically.

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Guiding Principle	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicators	Targets
				• Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures	• Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to active travel
Cultural Heritage	**CH**	Safeguard cultural heritage features and their settings through responsible design and positioning of development	Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and / or architectural heritage.	• Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, protected from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the County Development Plan	• Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context of these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the County Development Plan
				• Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the County Development Plan	• Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the County Development Plan
Landscape	**L**	Protect and enhance the landscape character	To implement the Development Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention.	• Number of developments permitted that result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the County Development Plan	• No developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the County Development Plan

Section 6 Description of Alternatives

6.1 Introduction

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. Alternatives for the Variation are identified under a number of types below and assessed in Section 7.

6.2 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The alternatives available for the Proposed Variation are significantly limited by the provisions of higher-level planning objectives, including those of Ministerial Guidelines, the Revised National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region and the existing County Development Plan. These documents set out various requirements for the content of the Variation including on topics such as population, land use zoning and densities.

The alternatives focus on alternatives relating to the new Area Plans for An Clochán Liath, Ballyshannon, Bridgend, Carndonagh, Donegal Town, and Killybegs. There are no significant reasonable alternatives available relating to the other elements of the Proposed Variation.

6.3 Description of Alternatives Considered

6.3.1 Local Transport Plan Alternatives

- **Local Transport Plan Alternative 1**: Inform the Variation's Area Plans with a Local Transport Plan, which focuses on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes.

- **Local Transport Plan Alternative 2**: Do not inform the Variation's Area Plans with a Local Transport Plan, which focuses on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes, relying solely on existing provisions, including those included as part of the County Development Plan.

6.3.2 Transport Infrastructure Alternatives

In integrating provisions relating to the provision of transport infrastructure into the Variation, the following alternatives were considered:

- **Transport Infrastructure Alternative 1:** Provide new transport infrastructure with all additional environmental mitigation left to be defined until project level.

- **Transport Infrastructure Alternative 2:** Provide new transport infrastructure, subject to environmental constraints, including those related to habitats and potential impacts such as disturbance from lighting – includes minimising river crossings, avoiding sensitive habitats, not increasing barriers to flood waters and sustainable design and construction techniques.

6.3.3 Opportunity Sites Alternatives

Opportunity Sites within the various settlements a wide range of development opportunities by reason of their strategic location, scale, nature and/or current use. The following alternatives consider the approach to these sites in new Area Plans.

- **Approach to Opportunity Sites Alternative 1**: Do not include specific guidance for future planning applications at Opportunity Sites; development would be market-led and would seek to comply with relevant planning provisions in the absence of additional criteria.

- **Approach to Opportunity Sites Alternative 2**: Include guidance for future planning applications at Opportunity Sites, with such guidance allowing for flexibility in areas such as final design, layout and uses.

- **Approach to Opportunity Sites Alternative 3**: Include detailed criteria for future planning applications at Opportunity Sites, with such criteria not allowing for flexibility in areas such as final design, layout and uses.

6.3.4 Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives

Two alternatives (with associated components) for compact development/land use zoning are identified as follow:

Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 1: "More Consolidated, More Compact Development"

- Area Plan settlements facilitated in meeting 2030 population targets, resulting in balanced, orderly development and implementation of the Development Plan's Core Strategy.
- This alternative involves preparing Area Plan's that are strongly guided by existing and planning infrastructure, including green and blue infrastructure, transport infrastructure and social and community infrastructure.
- The physical infrastructure required to be in place to achieve the growth targets is already in place or planned.
- At least 30% of all new homes to be provided on existing brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites at appropriate densities.
- Development proposals would be developed in a planned and coordinated manner focused within urban core/town centre and adjacent areas.

Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 2 "Less Consolidated, Less Compact Development"

- Area Plan settlements facilitated in meeting 2030 population targets, resulting in implementation of the Development Plan's Core Strategy.
- This alternative involves preparing Area Plans that are not strongly guided by existing and planning infrastructure, including green and blue infrastructure, transport infrastructure and social and community infrastructure.
- Additional infrastructure would be required to accommodate sporadic development, more than would be required for Alternative 1 "More Consolidated, More Compact Development".
- A greater proportion of new residential development to take place on peripheral, outer fringe lands (beyond the existing development envelope) over the lifetime of the Plan, with 30% less likely to be achieved on existing brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites at appropriate densities (in comparison with Alternative 1 "More Consolidated, More Compact Development").
- Urban core/town centre development would be sporadic and uncoordinated around central areas.

Section 7 Evaluation of Alternatives

7.1 Introduction

This section provides a comparative evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing available alternatives that are described in Section 6. This determination sought to understand whether each alternative was likely to improve conflict with or have a neutral interaction with the receiving environment.

7.2 Methodology

The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (see Section 4) and the Strategic Environmental Objectives (see Section 5 and Table 7.1) are used in the assessment of alternatives.

The alternatives are evaluated using compatibility criteria (see Table 7.2 below) in order to determine how they would be likely to affect the status of the existing environment and the SEOs. The SEOs and the alternatives are arrayed against each other in order to demonstrate which interactions would cause effects on specific components of the environment. Where the appraisal identifies an interaction with the status of an SEO the relevant SEO code is entered into the relevant column. The interactions identified are reflective of likely significant environmental effects:

- Interactions that would be *likely to improve the status* of a particular SEO would be likely to contribute towards a significant positive effect on the environmental component to which the SEO relates, including in-combination with the existing statutory planning/decision-making and consent-granting framework.
- Interactions that would *potentially conflict with the status* of *an SEO and would be likely to be mitigated* would be likely to result in potential significant negative effects; however, these effects could be mitigated by integrating measures into the Proposed Variation and by measures that have been integrated into the existing County Development Plan.
- Interactions that would probably *conflict with the status of an SEO and would be unlikely to be mitigated* would be likely to result in a significant residual negative effect on the environmental component to which the SEO relates.

Effects considered include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects. The degree of significance of effects occurring cannot be fully determined at this level of decision making due to the lack of exact detail available with regard to the type or scale of development that will be permitted under the Proposed Variation. However, a strategic assessment can be undertaken.

Table 7.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives[74]

Environmental Component	Guiding Principle	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration	**BFF**	• Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate, restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, of international, EU and nationally designated sites, protected species and habitats. • Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, regarding its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function. • Maintain and where appropriate, enhance the biodiversity value of local designated and non-designated ecological and heritage areas, which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. • Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets.

[74] See also Section 5.

Environmental Component	Guiding Principle	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Population and Human Health	Improve quality of life for all ages and abilities based on high-quality, serviced, well connected and sustainable residential, working, educational and recreational environments	**PHH1**	• Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options. • Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection. • Ensure that existing population and planned growth is linked with the required infrastructure and the services. • Protect human health and well-being from environment-related pressures.
Soil (and Land)	Ensure the long-term sustainable management of land	**S**	• Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource • Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield • Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites
Water	Protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water resource	**W**	• Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive • Ensure water resources are sustainably managed to deliver proposed regional and County growth targets in the context of existing and projected water supply and wastewater capacity constraints ensuring the protection of receiving environments • Avoid inappropriate zoning and development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion • Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals
Material Assets	Sustainable and efficient use of natural resources	**MA**	• Make best use of existing infrastructure, promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure and protect existing assets, to meet the needs of the county and Donegal's population. • Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies. • Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development • Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of transport modes.
Air	Support clean air policies that reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and public health	**A**	• 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 • Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency • Promote continuing improvement in air quality • Reduction of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter which are responsible for acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution • Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health — Air Quality Directive • Significantly decrease noise pollution and move closer to WHO recommended levels
Climatic Factors	Achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy that is cognisant of environmental impacts	**C**	• Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting mitigation and adaptation measures. • Integrate sustainable design solutions into the county's infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure). • Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets. • Encourage and promote development resilient to the effects of climate change. • Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport.
Cultural Heritage	Safeguard cultural heritage features and their settings through responsible design and positioning of development	**CH**	• Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and / or architectural heritage.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the landscape character	**L**	• To implement the Development Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention.

Table 7.2 Criteria for appraising the effect of the Alternatives on SEOs

Likely to **Improve** status of SEOs	Potential **Conflict** with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated	Probable **Conflict** with status of SEOs - unlikely to be mitigated	**No Likely** interaction with status of SEOs
+	-	-	0

7.3 Detailed Assessment of Alternatives

7.3.1 Effects Common to all Alternatives

Each of the alternatives would be part of a wider Proposed Variation envisaging – in compliance with the robust policy framework in place at national, regional and local level – sustainable development and compact growth in Donegal generally. As such, common environmental effects (as detailed on Table 7.3) would be present under Variations adopting each of the different alternatives, albeit often to varying degrees.

Table 7.3 Effects common to Variations adopting each of the different alternatives

Environmental Component	Significant Positive Environmental Effects, likely to occur	Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated
Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna	• Contribution towards protection of ecology (including designated sites, ecological connectivity and habitats) by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Sustains existing sustainable rural management practices – and the communities who support them – to ensure the continuation of long-established managed landscapes and the flora and fauna that they contain.	Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure: • Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna; • Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and • Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds (e.g. wetland birds, swifts) and bats.
Population and Human Health	• Promotion of economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management. • Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contribution towards the protection of human health by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.	• Potential adverse effects arising from flood events. • Potential interactions with human health if effects arise from environmental vectors.

Environmental Component	Significant Positive Environmental Effects, likely to occur	Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated
Soil	• Contribution towards the protection of soils (including those used for agriculture) and designated sites of geological heritage by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.	• Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands. • Potential for riverbank erosion.
Water	• Contribution towards the protection of water by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.	• Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology. • Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.
Material Assets	• Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contribution towards limits in increases in energy demand from the transport sector by facilitating sustainable compact growth.	• Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Increases in waste levels. • Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure. • Interactions between agricultural waste and soil, water, biodiversity and human health – including as a result of emissions of ammonia from agricultural activities (e.g. manure handling, storage and spreading) and the production of secondary inorganic particulate matter.
Air and Climatic Factors	• Contribution towards climate mitigation and adaptation and reduction of overall emissions to air by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond.	• Potential conflict between development under the Plan as varied and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives. • Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality. • Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors. • Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.
Cultural Heritage	• Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage elsewhere by facilitating development within settlements.	• Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities.
Landscape	• Contributes towards protection of wider landscape and landscape designations by facilitating development within settlements.	• Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.

7.3.2 Overall Comparative Assessment of Alternatives

7.3.3 Assessment of Local Transport Plan Alternatives

Informing the Variation's Area Plans with a Local Transport Plan, which focuses on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes, (**Area Based Transport Assessment Alternative 1**) would provide a more coordinated and more orderly provision of transport infrastructure and services, with delivery of projects, and associated benefit with respect to sustainable mobility and compact development, more likely. This approach would be more likely to improve the potential for meeting important objectives relating to emissions and energy use. Potentially adverse impacts on environmental components including ecology and water would need to be adequately mitigated at project level.

Not informing the Variation's Area Plans with a Local Transport Plan, which focuses on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes, (**Area Based Transport Assessment Alternative 2**) would provide a less coordinated and less orderly provision of transport infrastructure and services, with delivery of projects, and associated benefit with respect to sustainable mobility and compact development, less likely. This approach would be less likely to improve the potential for meeting important objectives relating to emissions and energy use. Potentially adverse impacts arising from more coherently planned transport developments on environmental components, including ecology and water, could be mitigated at both Development Plan and project level.

Local Transport Plan Alternatives are assessed against Strategic Environmental Objectives on Table 7.4.

Selected Local Transport Plan Alternative for the Variation: Alternative 1

Table 7.4 Assessment of Local Transport Plan Alternatives against SEOs

Alternative (selected alternative indicated in **bold**)	Likely to **Improve** status of SEOs +			Potential **Conflict** with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated -			Probable **Conflict** with status of SEOs - unlikely to be mitigated -	**No Likely** interaction with status of SEOs 0
	to a **Greater** degree	to a **Moderate** degree	to a **Lesser** degree	to a **Lesser** degree	to a **Moderate** degree	to a **Greater** degree		
Local Transport Plan Alternative 1	**PHH A C MA BFF S W CH L**			**PHH A C MA BFF S W CH L**				
Local Transport Plan Alternative 2			**PHH A MA C BFF S W CH L**			**PHH A C MA BFF S W CH L**		

7.3.4 Assessment of Transport Infrastructure Alternatives

Under **Transport Infrastructure Alternative 1**, new transport infrastructure would be considered subject to environmental constraints, including those related to habitats and potential impacts (e.g. disturbance from lighting). This would include minimising river crossings, avoiding sensitive habitats, not increasing barriers to flood waters and sustainable design and construction techniques. By focusing on mitigation at both plan and project levels, Alternative 1 would offer the most certainty for environmental protection and management and would be more likely to result in important individual projects (relating to sustainable mobility and emissions/energy objectives) receiving permission.

Under **Transport Infrastructure Alternative 2**, all additional environmental mitigation would be left to be defined in the future, at project level. This would offer the least certainty for environmental protection and management and would be more likely to result in important individual projects (relating to sustainable mobility and emissions objectives) not been given permission.

Transport Infrastructure Alternatives are assessed against Strategic Environmental Objectives on Table 7.5.

Selected Transport Infrastructure Alternative for the Variation: Alternative 1

Table 7.5 Assessment of Transport Infrastructure Alternatives against SEOs

Alternative (selected alternative indicated in **bold**)	Likely to **Improve** status of SEOs **+**			Potential **Conflict** with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated **-**			Probable **Conflict** with status of SEOs - unlikely to be mitigated **-**	**No Likely** interaction with status of SEOs **0**
	to a **Greater** degree	to a **Moderate** degree	to a **Lesser** degree	to a **Lesser** degree	to a **Moderate** degree	to a **Greater** degree		
Transport Infrastructure Alternative 1	**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**			**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**				
Transport Infrastructure Alternative 2			**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**			**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**		

7.3.5 Assessment of Opportunity Sites Alternatives

Opportunity Sites within the various settlements a wide range of development opportunities by reason of their strategic location, scale, nature and/or current use. Whether and how these sites are developed is an important component to the success of the Area Plans in achieving sustainable development.

Not including specific guidance for future planning applications at Opportunity Sites (**Opportunity Sites Alternative 1**) would reduce the likelihood of sustainable development. Development would be market-led and would seek to comply with relevant planning provisions in the absence of specific guidance. The sustainable development of the Area Plan settlements would be less likely than under Alternative 2.

By including guidance for future planning applications at Opportunity Sites while, at the same time, allowing for flexibility in areas such as final design, layout and uses, **Alternative 2** would increase the likelihood of sustainable development.

Including detailed criteria for future planning applications at Opportunity Sites with such criteria not allowing for flexibility in areas such as design, layout and uses (**Opportunity Sites Alternative 3**) would potentially hinder compliance with rigid criteria in the longer term, in a context of evolving market needs and planning requirements.

Opportunity Sites Alternatives are assessed against Strategic Environmental Objectives on Table 7.6.

Selected Opportunity Sites Alternative for the Variation: Alternative 2

Table 7.6 Assessment of Opportunity Sites Alternatives against SEOs

Alternative (selected alternative indicated in **bold**)	Likely to **Improve** status of SEOs +			Potential **Conflict** with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated -			Probable **Conflict** with status of SEOs - unlikely to be mitigated -	**No Likely** interaction with status of SEOs 0
	to a **Greater** degree	to a **Moderate** degree	to a **Lesser** degree	to a **Lesser** degree	to a **Moderate** degree	to a **Greater** degree		
Opportunity Sites Alternative 1			**PHH A MA C BFF S W CH L**			**PHH A C MA BFF S W CH L**		
Opportunity Sites Alternative 2	**PHH A C MA BFF S W CH L**			**PHH A C MA BFF S W CH L**				
Opportunity Sites Alternative 3			**PHH A MA C BFF S W CH L**			**PHH A C MA BFF S W CH L**		

7.3.6 Assessment of Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives

Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 1: "More Consolidated, More Compact Development"

Under this Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative, Area Plan settlements would be facilitated in meeting 2030 population targets, resulting in balanced, orderly development and implementation of the Development Plan's Core Strategy.

The approach under this alternative would allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Area Plans to the highest degree.

The infrastructure required to be in place to achieve the growth targets is already in place or planned under this alternative.

The development of urban core/town centre and adjacent areas would be more compact and sustainable under this scenario and would better support the longer-term viability of the Area Plan settlements. A higher number of residential units, in comparison with Alternative 2, would be expected to take place within the existing built-up footprints on brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites at appropriate densities, with a greater focus on use of consolidation and regeneration sites, with potential for wider regeneration benefits to central areas, including housing provision. Regeneration, reuse and redevelopment of more central and brownfield and infill lands and optimising the use of vacant, derelict, and underutilised sites and buildings would be more likely to be achieved.

Giving a strong preference to lands that have both greater capacity to satisfy the principles of active travel and a more realistic opportunity of being developed over the lifetime of the Area Plans would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of the settleemnts as envisaged by the wider planning framework to the greatest degree.

There would be greater potential and viability for integrated land use and transportation under this alternative, including proximate development patterns linked by active travel infrastructure and public transport. Associated benefits and improvements to the public realm and appearance of the built environment, including liveability and quality of life improvements, would be more likely.

This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would make the greatest contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of lands (including those within urban core/town centre and adjacent areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the Area Plan settlements and beyond. There would be a reduced need for greenfield land consumption under this alternative. This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would be considered the most effective out of both Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives considered in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for the Area Plan settlements.

The approach under Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 1 'More Consolidated, More Compact Development' would benefit the protection of various environmental components. Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to a significant degree. Less residual environmental effects would result.

Under this alternative there would be:

- More optimum use of land and resources, with positive role for addressing climate change, such as potential for reduced carbon heavy travel patterns.
- Greater potential for modal shift to sustainable travel such as walking, cycling and public transport, with knock on benefits for climate resilience in the Area Plan settlements.
- Use of already serviced lands in more central and built-up urban core/town centre areas could lead to potential reduced costs for delivery of new supporting infrastructure.
- Creation of more liveable built environments, with greater accessibility to services and amenities for local communities.

Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 2: "Less Consolidated, Less Compact Development"

Under this Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative, Area Plan settlements would be facilitated in meeting 2030 population targets, resulting in implementation of the Development Plan's Core Strategy.

The approach under this alternative would not allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Area Plan settlements to the highest degree.

Additional infrastructure would be required to accommodate sporadic development, more than would be required for Alternative 1 'More Consolidated, More Compact Development'.

The development of the Area Plan settlements would be less compact and less sustainable under this scenario and would not optimally support the longer-term viability of the settlements. A lower number of residential units, in comparison with Alternative 1, would be expected to take place within the existing built-up footprints on brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites at appropriate densities. Under this alternative there would be potential for greater proportion of housing to be delivered outside of the built-up areas, including on urban fringe and outer areas and on greenfield sites, creating unsustainable travel patterns with a reliance on the private car. Giving less of a preference to lands that have both greater capacity to satisfy the principles of active travel and a more realistic opportunity of being developed over the lifetime of the Area Plans and would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Area Plan settlements as envisaged by the wider planning framework to a lesser degree.

There would be greater potential for negative impacts on the vitality and viability of the built-up areas, due to increased and sustained levels of vacancy and dereliction for existing buildings and brownfield lands. This alternative would be likely to result in a more dispersed pattern of low-density urban core/town centre development, that would be more difficult to serve with active travel infrastructure and public transport.

This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would make less of a contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of lands (including those urban core/town centre and adjacent areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services. Demand to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the Area Plan settlements would be provided for. This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would be considered the least effective out of both Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives considered in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for the Area Plan settlements.

The approach under Alternative 2 'Less Consolidated, Less Compact Development' would benefit the protection of various environmental components to a lesser degree. Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to in many cases; however, more residual environmental effects would result.

Under this alternative there would be:

- An increase in car dependency and associated carbon heavy travel patterns, which would undermine efforts aimed at securing climate resilience.
- Increased peripheral pattern of residential development with potential for self-contained and disconnected built environments.
- Reduced potential for modal shift to sustainable travel options such as walking, cycling and public transport.
- Potential for increased costs associated with the delivery on new supporting infrastructure (roads, footpaths etc.) in more peripheral areas.
- Increased costs for the delivery of necessary supporting infrastructure for urban fringe, outer areas and greenfield sites.

Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives are assessed against Strategic Environmental Objectives on Table 7.7. Selected Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative for the Variation: Alternative 1 "More Consolidated, More Compact Development"

Table 7.7 Assessment of Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives against SEOs

Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative (selected alternative indicated in **bold**)	Likely to **Improve** status of SEOs +		Potential **Conflict** with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated -		Probable **Conflict** with status of SEOs - unlikely to be mitigated -	**No Likely** interaction with status of SEOs 0
	to a **Greater** degree	to a **Lesser** degree	to a **Lesser** degree	to a **Greater** degree		
A. "More Consolidated, More Compact Development"	**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**		**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**			
B. "Less Consolidated, Less Compact Development"		**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**		**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**		

7.4 Reasons for Choosing the Selected Alternatives in light of Other Reasonable Alternatives Considered

Selected alternatives for the Variation from each of the types of alternatives that emerged from the planning/SEA process are indicated above.

These alternatives have been integrated into the Proposed Variation that is being placed on public display having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects which were identified by the SEA and are detailed above; and
2. Planning – including social and economic – effects that also were considered.

Section 8 Evaluation of Proposed Variation Provisions

8.1 Introduction

This section provides an assessment of environmental effects using the information on the current state of the environment (provided in Section 4) and the Strategic Environmental Objectives (see Table 8.1) from implementation of the Proposed Variation.

The Proposed Variation provisions (and, in Section 7, the alternatives) are evaluated using compatibility criteria (see Table 8.2 below) in order to determine how they would be likely to affect the status of the existing environment and the SEOs. The SEOs and the Variation provisions (and, in Section 7, the alternatives) are arrayed against each other in order to demonstrate which interactions would cause effects on specific components of the environment. Where the appraisal identifies an interaction with the status of an SEO the relevant SEO code is entered into the relevant column.

The interactions identified are reflective of likely significant environmental effects:

- Interactions that would be *likely to improve the status* of a particular SEO would be likely to contribute towards a significant positive effect on the environmental component to which the SEO relates, including in-combination with the existing statutory planning/decision-making and consent-granting framework.

- Interactions that would *potentially conflict with the status* of *an SEO and would be likely to be mitigated* would be likely to result in potential significant negative effects; however, these effects will be mitigated by measures which have been integrated into the Proposed Variation, or associated County Development Plan, and residual effects would not be significant (see Table 8.3 of this report).

- Interactions that would probably *conflict with the status of an SEO and would be unlikely to be mitigated* would be likely to result in a significant residual negative effect on the environmental component to which the SEO relates.

Effects considered include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

The degree of significance of effects occurring cannot be fully determined at this level of decision making due to the lack of exact detail available with regard to the type or scale of development that will be permitted under the Proposed Variation. However, a strategic assessment can be undertaken.

Table 8.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives[75]

Environmental Component	Guiding Principle	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration	**BFF**	• Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate, restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, of international, EU and nationally designated sites, protected species and habitats. • Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, regarding its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function. • Maintain and where appropriate, enhance the biodiversity value of local designated and non-designated ecological and heritage areas, which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. • Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets.
Population and Human Health	Improve quality of life for all ages and abilities based on high-quality, serviced, well connected and sustainable residential, working, educational and recreational environments	**PHH1**	• Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options. • Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection. • Ensure that existing population and planned growth is linked with the required infrastructure and the services. • Protect human health and well-being from environment-related pressures.
Soil (and Land)	Ensure the long-term sustainable management of land	**S**	• Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource • Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield • Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites
Water	Protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water resource	**W**	• Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive • Ensure water resources are sustainably managed to deliver proposed regional and County growth targets in the context of existing and projected water supply and wastewater capacity constraints ensuring the protection of receiving environments • Avoid inappropriate zoning and development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion • Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals
Material Assets	Sustainable and efficient use of natural resources	**MA**	• Make best use of existing infrastructure, promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure and protect existing assets, to meet the needs of the county and Donegal's population. • Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies. • Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development • Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of transport modes.
Air	Support clean air policies that reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and public health	**A**	• 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 • Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency • Promote continuing improvement in air quality • Reduction of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter which are responsible for acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution • Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health — Air Quality Directive • Significantly decrease noise pollution and move closer to WHO recommended levels

[75] See also Section 5

Environmental Component	Guiding Principle	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Climatic Factors	Achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy that is cognisant of environmental impacts	**C**	• Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting mitigation and adaptation measures. • Integrate sustainable design solutions into the county's infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure). • Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets. • Encourage and promote development resilient to the effects of climate change. • Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport.
Cultural Heritage	Safeguard cultural heritage features and their settings through responsible design and positioning of development	**CH**	• Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and / or architectural heritage.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the landscape character	**L**	• To implement the Development Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention.

Table 8.2 Criteria for appraising the effect of the Proposed Variation provisions on SEOs

Likely to **Improve** status of SEOs	Potential **Conflict** with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated	Probable **Conflict** with status of SEOs - unlikely to be mitigated	**No Likely** interaction with status of SEOs
+	-	-	0

8.2 Cumulative Effects[76]

Cumulative effects are one of the types of effects which have been considered by the assessment of the alternatives. Cumulative effects can be described as the addition of many small impacts to create one larger, more significant, impact.

There are two types of potential cumulative effects that have been considered, namely:

- Potential *intra-Plan* cumulative effects - these arise from the interactions between different types of potential environmental effects resulting from a plan, programme, variation to a plan, etc. Where there are elevated levels of environmental sensitivities (such as those identified under Section 4), future development could result in environmental conflicts and lead to a deterioration in environmental integrity. The interrelationships between environmental components that help determine these potential effects are identified on Table 8.4 e.g. interrelationships between: human health and water quality; human health and air quality; human health and flood risk; and ecology and water quality.
- Potential *inter-Plan* cumulative effects - these arise when the effects of the implementation of one plan occur in combination with those of other plans, programmes, developments, etc.

Effects that may arise as a result of implementing the Proposed Variation have been mitigated to the extent that the only residual adverse effects likely to occur as a result of implementation of the Proposed Variation are those which are identified under Table 8.3.

Other policies, plans and programmes that have been considered by the assessment of effects include those which are detailed under Section 2.4 (and associated Appendix I "Relationship with Legislation, Plans and Programmes"), Section 4 and Section 5. Plans and programmes from various sectors will interact with the Proposed Variation, including those relating to land use planning. These plans and

[76] The EPA's guidance note 'Good Practice Guidance note on cumulative effects assessment in SEA' has been considered in the assessment.

programmes are subject to their own environmental assessment requirements as relevant. Examples include:

- Land use policy, plans and programmes (e.g. the Donegal County Development Plan to which the Proposed Variation relates, the National Planning Framework, the Northern and Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, and adjoining County Development Plans and Local Area Plans);
- Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plans of adjoining counties;
- Energy policy, plans and programmes (e.g. Shaping Our Electricity Future 1.1 and associated Implementation Programme and the National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030);
- Climate related policy, plans and programmes (e.g. Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended, Climate Action Plan 2025, the National Adaptation Framework 2024 and the Donegal Climate Action Plan 2024-2029);
- Water services, waste management and transport infrastructure plans (e.g. Uisce Éireann's Water Services Strategic Plan and associated Capital Investment Plan, and the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024); and
- Environmental protection and management plans (e.g. River Basin Management Plan and Flood Risk Management Plans).

Potential cumulative/in combination effects include:

- Contributions towards reductions in travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air, reductions in consumption from non-renewables and associated achievement of legally binding targets (in combination with plans and programmes from all sectors, including energy, transport and land use planning) as a result of facilitating:
    - Sustainable compact growth;
    - Sustainable mobility, including walking, cycling and public transport;
    - Drainage, flood risk management and resilience; and
    - Sustainable design, energy efficiency and green infrastructure.
- Contributions towards travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air (in combination with plans and programmes from all sectors, including transport and land use planning) as a result of facilitating development which must be accompanied by road capacity;
- Facilitation of new development that is accompanied by appropriate levels of water services thereby contributing towards environmental protection;
- Need for and use of water and waste water treatment capacity arising from new developments and associated potential adverse effects;
- Potential cumulative effects upon surface and ground water status as a result of uses, within the Proposed Variation area and wider catchment, including housing, employment, agricultural and forestry – loadings and abstractions;
- Potential cumulative effects (habitat damage, enhancing ecological connectivity, contributing towards sustainable mobility) arising from linear developments, such as those relating to green infrastructure, including beyond the Proposed Variation boundary;
- Potential cumulative effects on flood risk by, for example, development of greenfield lands or obstruction of flood paths; and
- In combination with plans and programmes from all sectors potential adverse effects on all environmental components arising from all development in greenfield and brownfield areas (e.g. infrastructural, residential, economic, agricultural etc.). The type of these effects are consistent with those described on Table 8.3. These plans and programmes are required to comply with environmental legislation and undergo SEA and AA as relevant comply with environmental legislation while projects are subject to EIA and AA, as relevant.

These effects would have the potential, if unmitigated, if they occurred, to result in changes in the environment within and beyond the Variation area.

A variety of the issues covered by the Proposed Variation provisions are regional and county issues which are considered: at Regional Assembly level, in the Northern and Western RSES and by planning authorities across the Region; and at County level, including through the Donegal County Development Plan, to which the Proposed Variation relates. The solutions to these issues are often regional solutions

which are subject to their own consenting procedures. Works arising outside of Area Plan settlements as a result of providing for new development within the settlements, including works arising as a result of the cumulative provision of development in the wider County and region, would potentially conflict with a number of environmental components, across the wider County and region and beyond, including: ecology, soil function, the status of water bodies and the landscape. Some of these conflicts would be mitigated by measures which will be integrated into the Proposed Variation or have already been integrated into the County Development Plan, while some will be mitigated by measures arising out of separate consent procedures.

8.3 Overall Evaluation (including transboundary)

Donegal County Council has integrated various recommendations arising from the SEA process into the Proposed Variation (see Section 9). Table 8.3 provides a detailed overall evaluation of the environmental effects arising from the Proposed Variation. The effects encompass all in-combination/cumulative effects arising from implementation of the Proposed Variation. The Proposed Variation would contribute towards the proper planning and sustainable development of the relevant settlements and the wider County and the effects are consistent with those identified by the SEA for the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030.

The potentially significant adverse environmental effects (if unmitigated) arising from implementation of the Proposed Variation are detailed as are residual effects, taking into account mitigation integrated into both the Proposed Variation and the Donegal County Development Plan – see Section 9.

Environmental impacts which occur will be determined by the nature and extent of multiple or individual projects and site-specific environmental factors. Strategic Environmental Objective (SEO) codes are taken from Table 8.1.

The scope of the assessment (including description of baseline, the relationship to other plans and programmes and the evaluation of effects) has considered the environment of both Ireland and Northern Ireland. Taking into account, *inter alia*, the detailed mitigation which has been integrated into the existing Development Plan and associated Proposed Variation (including that which is identified at Section 9), it has been determined that: significant residual adverse environmental effects will not occur in Ireland; and significant environmental effects will not occur in Northern Ireland.

Table 8.3 Overall Evaluation (including transboundary) – Effects arising from the Variation

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP, the Northern and Western RSES, the Donegal County Development Plan and adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans.			SEO Codes
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	**Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated**	**Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects**	
Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna	• Contribution towards protection of ecology (including designated sites, ecological connectivity, habitats) by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contribution towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and associated ecosystem services, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats. • Contribution towards protection and/or maintenance of biodiversity and flora and fauna by contributing towards the protection of natural capital including the environmental vectors of air, water and soil. Biodiversity and flora and fauna includes biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species (including birds and bats), listed/protected species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats (including terrestrial and aquatic habitats), and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna – including terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity and flora and fauna.	Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure: • Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna; • Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and • Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.	• Loss of an extent of non-protected habitats and species arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces. • Losses or damage to ecology (these would be in compliance with relevant legislation).	**BFF**
Population and Human Health	• Promotion of economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management. • Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond • Contribution towards the protection of human health by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contributes towards protection of human health as a result of contributing towards the protection of natural capital including environmental vectors, such as air and water.	• Potential adverse effects arising from flood events. • Potential interactions with human health if effects arise from environmental vectors.	• Potential interactions with residual effects on environmental vectors – please refer to residual adverse effects under "Soil", "Water" and "Air and Climatic Factors" below.	**PHH**

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP, the Northern and Western RSES, the Donegal County Development Plan and adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans.			SEO Codes
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	**Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated**	**Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects**	
Soil	• Contribution towards the protection of soils and designated sites of geological heritage by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contribution towards the protection of the environment from contamination.	• Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands. • Potential for riverbank erosion.	• Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces. • Coastal and riverbank erosion will continue to occur naturally over time and is likely to be enhanced by climate change.	**S**
Water	• Contribution towards the protection of water by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contributions towards the protection of water resources including the status of surface and groundwaters and water-based designations. • Contribution towards flood risk management and appropriate drainage.	• Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology. • Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.	• Any increased loadings as a result of development to comply with the River Basin Management Plan. • Flood related risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to extreme weather events – however such risks will be mitigated by measures that have been integrated into the Proposed Variation.	**W**
Material Assets	• Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contribution towards compliance with national and regional water services and waste management policies. • Contribution towards increase in renewable energy use by facilitating renewable energy and electricity transmission infrastructure developments. • Contribution towards limits in increases in energy demand from the transport sector by facilitating sustainable compact growth. • Contribution towards reductions in average energy consumption per capita including promoting sustainable compact growth, sustainable mobility, sustainable design and energy efficiency.	• Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Increases in waste levels. • Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.	• Exceedance of capacity in critical infrastructure risks remain, including due to uncertainty with regard to climate – however, such risks will be mitigated by: measures, including those requiring the timely provision of critical infrastructure, and compliance with the Water Framework Directive and associated River Basin Management Plan. • Residual wastes to be disposed of in line with higher-level waste management policies. • Any impacts upon public assets and infrastructure to comply with statutory planning/consent-granting framework.	**MA**

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP, the Northern and Western RSES, the Donegal County Development Plan and adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans.			SEO Codes
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	**Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated**	**Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects**	
Air and Climatic Factors	• Contribution towards climate mitigation and adaptation by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • In combination with other plans, programmes etc., contribution towards the objectives of the wide policy framework relating to climate mitigation and adaptation, and associated contribution towards maintaining and improving air quality and managing noise levels, including through measures relating to: o Sustainable compact growth; o Sustainable mobility, including walking, cycling and public transport; o Drainage, flood risk management and resilience; and o Sustainable design, energy efficiency and green infrastructure.	• Potential conflict between development under the Plan as varied and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives. • Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality[77]. • Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors[78]. • Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.	• An extent of travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air. This has been mitigated by provisions that have been integrated into the Proposed Variation, including those relating to sustainable compact growth and sustainable mobility. • Interactions between noise emissions and sensitive receptors. Various provisions have been integrated into the Proposed Variation to ensure that noise levels at sensitive receptors will be minimised.	**AC**
Cultural Heritage	• Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage elsewhere by facilitating development within settlements. • Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage within settlements, by facilitating brownfield development and regeneration.	• Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities.	• Potential effects on known architectural and archaeological heritage and unknown archaeology however, these will occur in compliance with legislation.	**CH**
Landscape	• Contributes towards protection of wider landscape and landscape designations by facilitating development within settlements.	• Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.	• Landscapes will change overtime as a result of natural changes in vegetation cover combined with new developments that will occur in compliance with the Development Plan's landscape protection measures.	**L**

[77] Although road transport interventions would be likely to result in an overall reduction in traffic flows and associated interactions with air, noise and human heath, there would be potential for displacement of traffic to lead to localised increases traffic flows and associated localised potential impacts in terms of increased population exposure to air pollutants and/or elevated noise levels, both within the Area Plan settlements and beyond.

[78] Although road transport interventions would be likely to result in an overall reduction in traffic flows and associated interactions with air, noise and human heath, there would be potential for displacement of traffic to lead to localised increases traffic flows and associated localised potential impacts in terms of increased population exposure to air pollutants and/or elevated noise levels, both within the Area Plan settlements and beyond.

8.4 Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening and Stage 2 AA are being undertaken alongside the Proposed Variation. The requirement for AA is provided under the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 1992/43/EEC). The emerging conclusion of the AA is that the Proposed Variation will not affect the integrity of any European Site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.[79] The preparation of the Proposed Variation, SEA and AA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA have informed the SEA.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been undertaken as part of the preparation of the Proposed Variation. Requirements in relation to SFRA are provided under 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014. The SFRA has informed both the land use zoning and the written provisions of the Proposed Variation.

8.5 Interrelationship between Environmental Components

The SEA Directive requires the Environmental Report to include information on the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, fauna, flora, population, human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.

Likely significant effects on environmental components which are identified include those which are interrelated; implementation of the Proposed Variation will not affect the interrelationships between these components. The presence of significant interrelationships between environmental components is identified on Table 8.4.

[79] Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: (a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan, or variation to the Plan, to proceed; and (c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

Table 8.4 Presence of Interrelationships between Environmental Components

Component	Biodiversity, flora and fauna	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Air and Climatic factors	Material assets	Cultural heritage	Landscape
Biodiversity, flora and fauna		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Population and Human Health			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Soil				Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Water					No	Yes	No	No
Air and Climatic Factors						Yes	No	No
Material Assets							Yes	Yes
Cultural Heritage								Yes
Landscape								

8.6 Detailed Evaluation

For an explanation of SEO codes e.g. **BFF**, **PHH**, **S**, **W**, etc. refer to Table 8.1 on page 77.

The following applies to each of the sub-sections below:

The Proposed Variation is situated in a hierarchy of documents setting out public policy setting out public policy for, among other things, land use planning, infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism, environmental protection and environmental management, such as the Donegal County Development Plan to which the Proposed Variation relates, the National Planning Framework, the National Development Plan, the National Climate Action Plan 2025, the National Adaptation Framework 2024, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region, the Donegal Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 and the Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan 2024 (for additional detail please refer to Section 2.4 *"Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes"* in this report).

These other existing policies, plans etc. have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant, and already provide for various measures that have been compiled into the County Development Plan to which the Proposed Variation relates. The County Development Plan to be varied aligns with these documents and will be incorporated into the review and preparation of these documents.

Lower tier plans and projects must be consistent and comply with the provisions of the County Development Plan, including the Variation, when made, and of these other policies, plans etc. and will be subject to their own project level EIA and AA requirements as relevant. An assessment of cumulative effects is provided at Section 8.2 of this report.

8.6.1 Area Plan Provisions: Urban Core/Town Centre/Regeneration, Housing, Economic Development, and Opportunity Sites

	Likely to **Improve** status of SEOs **+**	Potential **Conflict** with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated **-**	Probable **Conflict** with status of SEOs - unlikely to be mitigated **-**	**No Likely** interaction with status of SEOs **0**
The Area Plans include a variety of land use and activity provisions, including those relating to Urban Core/Town Centre/Regeneration, Housing, Economic Development, and Opportunity Sites. The assessment of these provisions against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the: • Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.5 of this report; and • Assessments of the selected alternatives (including those relating to Compact Development/Land Use Zoning and Opportunity Sites) for the Proposed Variation provided at Section 7 of this report. Land Use Zoning and Objectives have taken into account environmental considerations, including those relating to ecology, cultural heritage, landscape/topography, infrastructural requirements and water. Zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF, Northern and Western RSES and existing Donegal County Development Plan. Flood risk management and drainage provisions are already in force through the County Development Plan and related provisions have been integrated into the Variation. In addition, land use zoning contained within the Variation has been informed by the SFRA process and associated delineation of flood risk zones. The detailed Variation preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department combined with specialist input from the SFRA process facilitated zoning that helps to avoid inappropriate development being permitted in areas of high flood risk.	**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**	**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**		

The Area Plans support economic development in the various settlements, for example the Na Cealla Beaga/Killybegs Town Plan aims to support appropriate proposals that can enhance the marine services and employment base within the town, thereby consolidating Killybegs' role as one of the premier ports in the country. The Council recognises the strategic potential offered by hydrogen fuel to contribute to transition to low carbon operations. It continues to liaise with external stakeholders in relation to the potential for development of an installation for production of Green Hydrogen fuel and the identification of suitable locations for this sector. The existing County Development Plan outlines the opportunity and options as regards Green Hydrogen for Killybegs – see chapters 9 and 14. Land use activities and developments relating to tourism are provided for that would be likely to contribute towards an increase in the number and dwell time of visitors and associated potential adverse effects. Such effects would include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, including tourism. Examples may include developments/operation of developments relating to water services, transport, energy, access or accommodation. Mobility has the potential to impact upon emissions, energy usage and infrastructural capacity. Accommodation and hospitality has the potential to impact upon land-take, water service capacity and water resources, energy usage. Tourism activities and products, especially in areas outside of settlements, have the potential to impact upon ecology, heritage, water and the landscape. Mitigation referencing various environmental components is provided for in relation to all of these activities. Funding was allocated under the European INTERREG VA cross border programme 2014-2020 for the construction of a Greenway between Derry and Buncrana via Bridgend. This project is currently in Phase 2 whereby preferred route options will be presented to the public for consideration. This greenway will offer a safe, scenic, and eco-friendly corridor for walking, cycling and recreation connecting the neighborhoods, school and businesses in the town. This will also have an economic benefit for the town by attracting new visitors into the town and enhancing linkages between communities and promoting sustainable transport. The development of new greenways, blueways and walking and cycling routes, including those within County Donegal and those between County Donegal, adjoining counties and beyond, including Northern Ireland, has the potential to contribute towards sustainable mobility and a better management of movements in sensitive areas, thereby benefitting various environmental components including habitats at certain locations. The development of these projects, however, presents a variety of potentially adverse environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure. These types of infrastructure are often constructed in ecologically and visually sensitive areas adjacent to the banks of rivers and streams and along the coast. Potential adverse effects would be mitigated both by measures which have been integrated into the Plan which provide for and contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development (including those identified at Section 9 of this report) and by measures arising from lower tier assessments (including those for the preparation of lower tier plans and projects). Projects would need to be subject to normal planning and environmental assessment processes, as well as complying with the Corridor and Route Selection Process for relevant new infrastructure (see Policy GEN-T-P-1 from the Proposed Variation). The development of green infrastructure can achieve synergies with regard to the provision of open space amenities, sustainable mobility, the sustainable management of water, the protection and management of biodiversity, the protection of cultural heritage and the protection of protected landscape sensitivities. The Clochán Liath Town Centre Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan 2022, including the An Clochán Liath Town Centre Masterplan, which builds on an ambition and vision for the town to realize its full potential as a magnet that draws and keeps people there has been taken into account in the preparation of the Proposed Variation. The Killybegs Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan the purpose of which was to identify the key priorities and actions in supporting the sustainable regeneration of the town up to 2040 and beyond has been taken into account in the preparation of the Proposed Variation. The Action Plan is regeneration focused and considers key thematic areas: maritime heritage and infrastructure, natural and built heritage, community provision, tourism, conservation, regeneration sites, commercial/economic development opportunities, parking, access, and recreation. Implementing the Variation will help to direct incompatible development away from the most sensitive areas in the Area Plan settlements and focus on directing compact, sustainable development within and adjacent to the existing settlement footprint. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the Area Plan settlements to become more desirable places to live, work and visit. Compatible sustainable development in sensitive areas is also provided for, subject to various requirements relating to environmental protection and management being met. These provisions would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities and sustainable development, in combination with other Development Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse				

environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy. The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the existing County Development Plan has informed the Plan through an iterative process. Similarly, mitigation measures have been integrated into the Proposed Variation. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating provisions for environmental protection and management into the Proposed Variation, Donegal County Council is helping to ensure that: • The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Proposed Variation, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Development Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and • The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Development Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised.				

8.6.2 Area Plan Provisions: Infrastructure and Services including Water Supply & Wastewater Infrastructure, Flooding, Energy, and Transport and Sustainable Mobility

	Likely to **Improve** status of SEOs +	Potential **Conflict** with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated -	Probable **Conflict** with status of SEOs - unlikely to be mitigated -	**No Likely** interaction with status of SEOs 0
The Area Plans include a variety of land use and activity provisions, including those relating to Urban Core/Town Centre/Regeneration, Housing, Economic Development, and Opportunity Sites. The assessment of these provisions against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the: • Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.5 of this report; and • Assessments of the selected alternatives (including those relating to Local Transport Plan and Transport Infrastructure Alternatives) for the Proposed Variation provided at Section 7 of this report. Provisions relating to water supply and wastewater would, by protecting water resources, providing safe drinking water and appropriately treating waste water, contribute towards the protection of various environmental components including: human health, biodiversity and flora and fauna, the status of waters, flood risk management and soil. There would be potential for significant adverse environmental effects upon various environmental components to arise during construction of water services infrastructure. Such potential significant adverse effects could also arise during operation: the protection of human health, biodiversity and flora and fauna and the status of waters, could all be conflicted with by outflows and abstractions. With respect to water services, and as identified by the Proposed Variation: • An Clochán Liath is currently supplied with water by both the Crolly Water Treatment Works (WTW) and the Lettermacaward WTW, both of which come under the Rosses Water Resource Zone. It should be noted that different areas are supplied by each WTW. Uisce Éireann's Capacity Register indicates there is potential spare capacity available to cater for population projections. • Uisce Éireann has advised that An Clochán Liath effluent treatment infrastructure has more than adequate capacity to deal with the additional loading that would be generated as a result of the development envisaged in this Town Area Plan. While Uisce Éireann confirmed no known major network constraints, it also asserts that localised upgrades and/or extensions may be required to facilitate development. • A lack of existing capacity in Ceann an Droichid/Bridgend is a significant constraint on new development within the village and, pending the upgrade of the plant, could give rise to threats to the water quality in the Skeoge River and Natura 2000 sites in the wider area. In these circumstances, the Area Plan must comply with the relevant provisions of the existing Development Plan and wider national guidance with respect to the assessment of development proposals and the zoning of land for development purposes.	**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**	**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**		

- All proposals for development in Ceann an Droichid/Bridgend that will generate effluent will be assessed against the provisions of Development Plan policy and all other material considerations pending the commissioning of the upgraded Bridgend Treatment Works.
- Na Cealla Beaga is served by Killybegs Water Resource Zone and there is sufficient capacity available to cater for population projections. There are no known major network constraints though localised upgrades and/ or extensions may be required to facilitate new development at several locations within the town boundary.
- Similarly, in relation to wastewater treatment infrastructure servicing Na Cealla Beaga, sufficient capacity exists to cater for population projections. There are no known major network constraints though localised upgrades and/or extensions may be required to facilitate new development at several locations within the town boundary. Localised upgrades may be required especially in areas served by 80mm diameter watermains or 150mm diameter sewers or less. Where new developments are being proposed additional surface water will not be accepted into combined (foul and surface water) networks.
- Direct consultations with Uisce Éireann indicate that there are currently significant water supply constraints and a dynamic water supply situation in the Carndonagh area. They however estimate that a volume of water may be available in the water supply zone over the lifetime of the plan sufficient to cater for the proposed housing supply target (i.e. 172 units). They also have indicated that ongoing works to supplement the water supply in Carn Domhnach/Carndonagh from groundwater sources (e.g. Tirnaleague Aquifer) may provide a potential for a small increase to the water supply.
- The Uisce Éireann Wastewater Treatment capacity register 2024 (published August 2025) indicates that Carn Domhnach/Carndonagh/Malin Wastewater treatment plant currently has organic capacity of 5,833 PE, a load of 5,130 PE and a potential spare capacity of 703 PE. In this regard Uisce Éireann indicates that the plant is performing well and is meeting all licence standards apart the Total Oxidised Nitrogen limit. Uisce Éireann are developing options to consistently achieve this limit but this will not be implemented in the 2025-2029 investment period and wastewater connections enquires and applications will be assessed on an individual basis. Otherwise, the town has an extensive public sewer network with sewers extending along most key arterial roads however extensions would be required to service backland locations.
- The Uisce Éireann Water Supply Capacity Register 2024 (published August 2025) states that Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) lies within the Donegal (River Eske) Water Resource Zone with potential capacity available to cater for the targeted population increase in the core strategy. Uisce Éireann have advised that Level of Service improvements will be required as demand increases, e.g. capital upgrades, leakage reduction, and that connection applications will be assessed on an individual basis. Consequently, the quantum of residential related zonings identified in the land use zoning map have had regard to the current water supply capacity as advised by Uisce Éireann.
- Uisce Éireann Wastewater Treatment Capacity Register 2024 (published August 2025) indicates that Baile Dhún na nGall's (Donegal Town) wastewater treatment plant has spare capacity available to cater for the targeted population increase in the core strategy.
- The Uisce Éireann Water Supply Capacity Register 2024 (published August 2025) states that Carn Donagh lies within the Ballyshannon and Bundoran Water Resource Zone and has capacity available to support 2034 targets. The Uisce Éireann Wastewater Capacity register indicates that the Ballyshannon Wastewater Treatments Plan has an overall capacity of 6,100 PE, a current load of 3,159 PE and consequently an estimate spare capacity of 2,941 PE. Consequently, Ballyshannon has sufficient additional water supply and wastewater treatment capacity to meet the Ballyshannon core strategy housing target and the overall level of growth envisaged by the Area Plan. However, whilst the town has extensive watermain and sewer networks local authority engagement with Uisce Éireann indicates that part of these networks (e.g. in the Port Road/Rock Road areas) require upgrading.

Sustainable drainage and flood risk management provisions would contribute towards the protection and management of human health, biodiversity, flora and fauna, cultural heritage, water status and existing infrastructure and services. Flood risk management infrastructure (for example under the Carn Domhnach/Carndonagh and Dhún na nGall/Donegal Town Flood Relief Schemes) has the potential to result in significant adverse environmental effects during construction and operation on most environmental components. These types of infrastructure are often constructed in ecologically and visually sensitive areas, adjacent to the banks of rivers and streams and along the coast. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems can contribute towards the maintenance and improvement in the status of water bodies and flood risk management and positively interact with other environmental components including biodiversity and flora and fauna.

Supporting the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity infrastructure contributes towards the framework for the development of energy. These provisions would contribute towards achieving various government objectives and targets including those relating to climate mitigation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the amount of energy to be consumed from renewable sources. The development of renewable energy would have the potential to adversely impact upon the environment, if unmitigated.

Renewable energy provisions would contribute towards achieving various government objectives and targets, including those relating to climate mitigation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the amount of energy to be consumed from renewable sources. The development of renewable energy

would also have the potential to adversely impact upon the environment, if unmitigated. Policy ETN-P-1 of the Development Plan already protects the HEP station in Ballyshannon by restricting incompatible lands uses. Furthermore, in designing and implementing the 3 Bridges Looped Walkway/Cycleway the Council acknowledges the need to not compromise public safety or the operational activities of the HEP station and will proactively work with the ESB to achieve this objective. As part of the preparation of the Proposed Variation, an Area Based Transport Assessment was carried out culminating in Donegal Six Strategic Towns Local Transport Plans that have informed and accompany the Proposed Variation. The Proposed Variation supports the delivery of the National Transport Authority's National Cycle Network 'Cycle Connect' Network. The Area Plan for An Clochán Liath has been informed by and supports the progress and implementation of the 'An Clochán Liath Town Centre Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan', including with respect to the provision of linkages and civic space. The construction of the N13 Bridgend to County Boundary TEN-T Improvement Project will provide a step change opportunity to improve the walking and cycling environment within Bridgend. The existence of the port at Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) means that the town must cater for high volumes of commercial traffic in addition to domestic traffic accessing the town for retail or other service purposes. The nature of the commercial traffic is primarily heavy goods vehicles carrying a wide variety of cargo, inclusive of fish destined for export markets or project cargo such as large wind turbine components. In light of this fact and having regard to the need to maintain the viability of Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) going forward, the Proposed Variation identifies that it is vital that the quality and capacity of access routes into and out of the town are protected and improved into the future, particularly Regional Road R263 to the north of the town, which in turn connects into National Secondary Route N56. The Proposed Variation reserves the corridor for the Na Cealla Beaga Outer Relief Road and supports its delivery. The Area Plan for Killybegs also supports the progress and implementation of the 'Killybegs Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan', including with respect to the provision of linkages and civic space. KB-I-O-1 supports designation of Na Cealla Beaga as a TEN-T Network Port and developments that contribute to the provision of additional harbour infrastructure and sustain the Port of Killybegs as one of the premier Fishery Harbour Centres in Ireland. New greenway proposals such as the Barnesmore Greenway (between the towns of Donegal Town and Ballybofey/Stranorlar) and greenways from Bridgend to both Buncrana and Derry offer significant opportunities to increase the popularity of active travel. The All-Island Strategic Rail Review recommended that a rail line be provided between Derry/Londonderry and Letterkenny, which would provide an opportunity to connect these urban centres to each other and greatly improve access to Belfast and Dublin. In the context of the Rail Review, it is considered by the Council that the potential for Bridgend to function as a stop along the envisaged Letterkenny-Derry/Londonderry route should be explored further, and this is reflected in the transportation objectives in the Proposed Variation. The Variation provides for improving traffic flow and parking arrangements in the Bridgend town centre and facilitates the delivery of TEN-T N13 Bridgend to County Boundary Improvement Project[80]. The development of new, and enhancement of existing, walking and cycling routes has the potential to contribute towards sustainable mobility and a better management of movements in sensitive areas, thereby benefitting various environmental components, including habitats, at certain locations. The development of sustainable transportation and movement related infrastructure, however, presents a variety of potentially adverse environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure. These types of infrastructure are often constructed in ecologically and visually sensitive areas, such as adjacent to the banks of rivers and streams. The development of new greenways, blueways and walking and cycling routes, including those within County Donegal and those between County Donegal, adjoining counties and beyond, including Northern Ireland, has the potential to contribute towards sustainable mobility and a better management of movements in sensitive areas, thereby benefitting various environmental components including habitats at certain locations. The development of these projects, however, presents a variety of potentially adverse environmental effects that would, if unmitigated, have the potential to arise from both the construction and operation of such developments and/or their ancillary infrastructure. These types of infrastructure are often constructed in ecologically				

[80] December 2013 the European parliament adopted Regulation (EU) No.315/2013 on Guidelines for the development of the Trans European Transport Network (Ten-T), (amended in 2014 to include supplementary maps (EU) No.473/2014). The Guidelines set out that member states shall "take appropriate measures" to complete their core network by 2030; the maps associated with the Regulations show the core network corridors of the TEN-T extending from Dublin to Belfast, and Dublin to Cork only. Nationally, as a result of the directive, parts of the N13 (including the Letterkenny to Bridgend section), N14 and N15 have also been identified as part of the TEN-T network.

and visually sensitive areas adjacent to the banks of rivers and streams and along the coast. Potential adverse effects would be mitigated both by measures which have been integrated into the Plan which provide for and contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development (including those identified at Section 9 of this report) and by measures arising from lower tier assessments (including those for the preparation of lower tier plans and projects). Projects would need to be subject to normal planning and environmental assessment processes, as well as complying with the Corridor and Route Selection Process for relevant new infrastructure (see Policy GEN-T-P-1 from the Proposed Variation). The development of green infrastructure can achieve synergies with regard to the provision of open space amenities, sustainable mobility, the sustainable management of water, the protection and management of biodiversity, the protection of cultural heritage and the protection of protected landscape sensitivities. The facilitation of journeys by car, in particular, would give rise to emissions to air. Although interventions would be likely to result in an overall reduction in traffic flows and associated interactions with air, noise and human heath, there would be potential for displacement of traffic to lead to localised increases traffic flows and associated localised potential impacts in terms of increased population exposure to air pollutants and/or elevated noise levels. As identified by Policy GEN-T-P-1 from the Proposed Variation the Council will: "Ensure that all new transport and green infrastructure projects, inclusive of those referenced in the Plan be subject to individual environmental assessments inclusive of local environmental factors. Such assessments must, inter alia: a. Prepare a feasibility assessment b. Consider environmental constraints including those relating to habitats along with potential impacts (e.g. disturbance from lighting) c. Address sustainable mobility in accordance with the relevant objectives contained elsewhere in the Plan d. Include implementation measures to minimise river crossings, avoid sensitive habitats, not increase barriers to flood waters and employ sustainable design and construction techniques e. Undertake a corridor and route selection process where appropriate f. Demonstrate that any proposed interventions are consistent with all relevant legislative requirements." Implementing the Variation will help to direct incompatible development away from the most sensitive areas in the Area Plan settlements and focus on directing compact, sustainable development within and adjacent to the existing settlement footprint. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the Area Plan settlements to become more desirable places to live, work and visit. Compatible sustainable development in sensitive areas is also provided for, subject to various requirements relating to environmental protection and management being met. These provisions would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities and sustainable development, in combination with other Development Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy. The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the existing County Development Plan has informed the Plan through an iterative process. Similarly, mitigation measures have been integrated into the Proposed Variation. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating provisions for environmental protection and management into the Proposed Variation, Donegal County Council is helping to ensure that: • The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Proposed Variation, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Development Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and • The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Development Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised.				

8.6.3 Area Plan Provisions: Community, Recreation, Environment and Heritage

	Likely to **Improve** status of SEOs +	Potential **Conflict** with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated -	Probable **Conflict** with status of SEOs - unlikely to be mitigated -	**No Likely** interaction with status of SEOs 0
The Area Plans include a variety of land use and activity provisions, including those relating to Community, Recreation, Environment and Heritage. The assessment of these provisions against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the: • Environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.5 of this report; and • Assessments of the selected alternatives (including those relating to Compact Development/Land Use Zoning and Opportunity Sites) for the Proposed Variation provided at Section 7 of this report. Land Use Zoning and Objectives have taken into account environmental considerations, including those relating to ecology, cultural heritage, landscape/topography, infrastructural requirements and water. Zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF, Northern and Western RSES and existing Donegal County Development Plan. Flood risk management and drainage provisions are already in force through the County Development Plan and related provisions have been integrated into the Variation. In addition, land use zoning contained within the Variation has been informed by the SFRA process and associated delineation of flood risk zones. The detailed Variation preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department combined with specialist input from the SFRA process facilitated zoning that helps to avoid inappropriate development being permitted in areas of high flood risk. The focus of most Community, Recreation, Environment and Heritage provisions is sustainable development and the protection and management of natural and built heritage (including biodiversity, water, soil, archaeological heritage, architectural heritage and landscape). Implementing the Variation will help to direct incompatible development away from the most sensitive areas in the Area Plan settlements and focus on directing compact, sustainable development within and adjacent to the existing settlement footprint. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the Area Plan settlements to become more desirable places to live, work and visit. Compatible sustainable development in sensitive areas is also provided for, subject to various requirements relating to environmental protection and management being met. These provisions would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities and sustainable development, in combination with other Development Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy. The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the existing County Development Plan has informed the Plan through an iterative process. Similarly, mitigation measures have been integrated into the Proposed Variation. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating provisions for environmental protection and management into the Proposed Variation, Donegal County Council is helping to ensure that: • The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Proposed Variation, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Development Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and • The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Development Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised.	**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**	**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**		

8.6.4 Other Proposed Variation Provisions

	Likely to **Improve** status of SEOs +	Potential **Conflict** with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated -	Probable **Conflict** with status of SEOs - unlikely to be mitigated -	**No Likely** interaction with status of SEOs 0
In addition to Area Plan related provisions, the Proposed Variation contains a number of other provisions, the assessment of which against Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs BFF, PHH, S, W, MA, A, C, CH and L) is consistent with the environmental effects detailed under subsections 8.2 to 8.5 of this report. The amendment of zoning of site NR2.16 at Cockhill, Buncrana within the Buncrana Area Plan Land Use Zoning Map is to address an error in said land use zoning map. Other land use zonings are on foot of Residential Zoned Land Tax related landowner submissions, where appropriate, within affected settlements throughout Donegal to accord with the related Statutory Instruments and Ministerial Guidelines. An Appendix to the Proposed Variation details the rational for RZLT rezonings across all Area Plans. The replacement of "proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA)" Zonings with "Local Environment" Zonings within Letterkenny are provided for as pNHAs are not a statutory designation/do not constitute a land use zoning and need be replaced by an appropriate zoning to effectively guide development. Finally, the rezoning of an area of land at Mullindrait, Stranorlar – from part 'Opportunity Site' and Part 'Open Space and Recreation' to 'New Residential Phase 1' is provided for. Land Use Zoning and Objectives have taken into account environmental considerations, including those relating to ecology, cultural heritage, landscape/topography, infrastructural requirements and water. Zoning has been applied in a way that primarily seeks to achieve sustainable and compact growth, taking into account the various requirements set out in the higher-level NPF, Northern and Western RSES and existing Donegal County Development Plan. Flood risk management and drainage provisions are already in force through the County Development Plan and related provisions have been integrated into the Variation. In addition, land use zoning contained within the Variation has been informed by the SFRA process and associated delineation of flood risk zones. The detailed Variation preparation process undertaken by the Planning Department combined with specialist input from the SFRA process facilitated zoning that helps to avoid inappropriate development being permitted in areas of high flood risk. Implementing the Variation will help to direct incompatible development away from the most sensitive areas in the Area Plan settlements and focus on directing compact, sustainable development within and adjacent to the existing settlement footprint. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable the Area Plan settlements to become more desirable places to live, work and visit. Compatible sustainable development in sensitive areas is also provided for, subject to various requirements relating to environmental protection and management being met. These provisions would contribute towards the Statutory consent granting and decision-making framework for land use developments and activities and sustainable development, in combination with other Development Plan provisions and other plans, programmes, strategies, etc. Potential adverse environmental effects arising from land use development and activities include in-combination effects arising from services and infrastructure to service development, for example those relating to water services, transport and energy. The SEA process that has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the existing County Development Plan has informed the Plan through an iterative process. Similarly, mitigation measures have been integrated into the Proposed Variation. Some of these measures are reproduced under Section 9 "Mitigation Measures" of this report. By integrating provisions for environmental protection and management into the Proposed Variation, Donegal County Council is helping to ensure that: • The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Proposed Variation, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Development Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and • The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Development Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised.	**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**	**BFF PHH S W MA A C CH L**		

Section 9 Mitigation Measures

9.1 Introduction

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the Proposed Variation. Various environmental sensitivities and issues have been communicated to the Council through the SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes. By integrating related recommendations into the Proposed Variation, the Council has ensured that both the beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Variation have been and will be maximised and that potential adverse effects have been and will be avoided, reduced or offset.

Mitigation was achieved through:

- Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure evidence-based planning;
- Considering alternatives for the Proposed Variation;
- The integration of environmental considerations into zoning provisions of the Proposed Variation;
- The integration of individual SEA, AA and SFRA provisions into the text of the Proposed Variation; and
- The integration of individual provisions into the text of the existing, already in force, County Development Plan.

9.2 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure evidence-based planning

In preparing the Proposed Variation, information relating to various sectors, from different Departments within the Councils and from different bodies and organisations, was gathered and analysed, contributing towards the development of evidence-led provisions. This work included preparing the following documents that are appended to the Proposed Variation: this SEA Environmental Report; an Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report; a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report; and Donegal Six Strategic Towns Local Transport Plans.

The undertaking of the SEA process was part of this strategic work and contributed towards the integration of environmental considerations into individual provisions as detailed under Table 9.1.

9.3 Consideration of Alternatives

Although strategic alternatives in relation to the content of the Proposed Variation were significantly limited (see Section 6), alternatives for the Proposed Variation were considered, as part of the Proposed Variation preparation/SEA process.

These alternatives were assessed by the SEA process (see Section 7) and the findings of this assessment informed the selection of alternatives for the Proposed Variation, facilitating an informed choice with respect to the type of Proposed Variation that was prepared and placed on public display.

9.4 Integration of individual provisions into the text of the Proposed Variation

Various provisions have been integrated into the text of the Proposed Variation through the Proposed Variation-preparation and SEA, SFRA and AA processes. Both the Planning and the assessment teams contributed towards the mitigation which was developed over multiple iterations and was informed by, inter alia, various communications through the SEA, AA and SFRA processes.

Table 9.1 links key mitigation measure(s) to the likely significant effects of implementing the Proposed Variation, if unmitigated. The effects are consistent with those identified by the SEA for the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030. The measures generally benefit multiple environmental components i.e. a measure providing for the protection of biodiversity, flora and fauna could beneficially impact upon the minimisation of flood risk and the protection of human health, for example.

9.5 Integration of individual provisions into the text of the County Development Plan

In addition to the individual provisions integrated into the text of the Proposed Variation, individual provisions relating to environmental protection and management have been integrated into the existing, already in force, Donegal County Development Plan. These measures are identified alongside the Proposed Variation measures on Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 Integration of Environmental Considerations into the Proposed Variation and existing County Development Plan

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Proposed Variation measures, including:	Supporting Existing Donegal County Development Plan measures, including:
Biodiversity and flora and fauna	Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure: • Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna; • Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and • Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.	RCNH-G-O-1 ACL-CREH-O-1 ACL-CREH-P-2 CN-H-P-2 CN-F-O-1 CN-CERH-O-1 CN-CERH-P-1 CH-BH-P-1 DT-TSM-O-6 DT-TSM-P-3 DT-ED-P-1 KB-I-O-1 KB-ED-O-1 KB-ED-O-7 CN-CERH-O-2 CN-CERH-O-3 DT-TOU-P-4 KB-ED-P-3	BIO-O-1 BIO-O-2 BIO-P-1 BIO-P-2 BIO-P-3 BIO-P-4 BIO-P-5 EX-O-1 EX-P-1 EX-P-2 MRCM-O-2 GEN-H-2
Population and human health	• Potential adverse effects arising from flood events. • Potential interactions if effects arising from environmental vectors.	Also refer to measures under other environmental components including Soil, Water and Air and Climatic Factors. CN-WW-P-1 CN-WW-P-2 CN-WW-P-3	Also refer to measures under other environmental components including Soil, Water and Air and Climatic Factors. EX-O-1 RH-P-9 ED-P-10 WW-O-2 WW-P-6 TC-G-P-1 TC-G-P-4 RCNH-G-O-1
Soil	• Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands. • Potential for riverbank erosion.	Also refer to measures under other environmental components including Water.	Also refer to measures under other environmental components including Water. BIO-O-2 G-P-1
Water	• Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology. • Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.	Also refer to measures under other environmental components including Soil and Material Assets. ACL-ED-O-1 ACL -ED-O-2 ACL-ED-P-1 ACL -ED-P-2 ACL-CREH-P-1 BN-ED-O-1 BN-OPP-P-1 BN-OPP-P-2 BN-ED-P-1 BE-WWSI-O-1 CN-F-O-1 CN-F-P-1 DT-F-O-1 DT-F-O-2 DT-F-P-1 DT-F-P-2 KB-F-O-1 KB-F-O-2	Also refer to measures under other environmental components including Soil and Material Assets. EX-O-1 EX-P-1 EX-P-2 WW-O-1 WW-P-2 WW-P-6 WW-P-10 WW-P-11 TOU-P-8 ED-P-9 WE-P-8 TOU-P-8 GEN-F-P-1 GEN-F-P-2
Air and Climatic Factors	• Potential conflict between development under the Proposed Variation and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives. • Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality. • Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors. • Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.	ACL-UCR-O-2 ACL-TSM-O-1 ACL-TSM-O-2 ACL-TSM-P-1 ACL-TSM-P-2 ACL-TSM-P-3 ACL-TSM-P-4 ACL-IS-O-1 ACL-IS-O-2 ACL-IS-P-1 ACL-IS-P-2 ACL-IS-P-3 BN-TSM-O-1 BN-TSM-O-2 BN-TSM-O-3 BN-TSM-O-4 BN-TSM-O- 5BN-TSM-O-6 BN-TSM-O-7 BN-TSM-O-8 BN-TSM-P-1	CA-O-1 CA-O-2 CA-P-1 CA-P-2 F-P-1 F-P-2 F-P-3 F-P-4 T-P-1 T-P-2 T-P-2A T-P-2B T-O-2 T-O-3 T-O-4 T-O-5 T-P-3 T-O-6 T-O-7 T-O-8 T-P-4

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Proposed Variation measures, including:	Supporting Existing Donegal County Development Plan measures, including:
		BN-TSM-P-2 BN-TSM-P-3 BN-TSM-P-4 BN-CRH-P-1 BN-CRH-P-2 BE-TSM-O-1 BE-TSM-O-2 BE-TSM-O-3 BE-TSM-O-4 BE-TSM-O-5 BE-TSM-O-6 BE-TSM-O-7 BE-TSM-O-8 BE-TSM-P-1 BE-TSM-P-2 BE-TSM-P-3 BE-TSM-P-4 CN-TSM-O-1 CN-TSM-O-2 CN-TSM-O-3 CN-TSM-O-4 CN-TSM-O-5 CN-TSM-O-6 CN-TSM-P-1 CN-TSM-P-2 CN-TSM-P-3 CN-TSM-P-4 CN-CERH-O-1 CN-CERH-P-1 CN-CERH-P-3 DT-TSM-O-1 DT-TSM-O-2 DT-TSM-O-3 DT-TSM-O-4 DT-TSM-O-5 DT-TSM-O-6 DT-TSM-P-1 DT-TSM-P-2 DT-TSM-P-3 DT-TSM-P-4 DT-TSM-P-5 DT-TSM-P-6 DT-TOU-O-2 DT-TOU-P-2 DT-CREH-P-2 KB-TSM-O-1 KB-TSM-O-2 KB-TSM-P-1 KB-TSM-P-2 KB-TSM-P-3 KB-TSM-P-4 KB-I-O-4 KB-I-P-4 KB-ED-O-3 KB-CREH-O-1 KB-CREH-O-3 KB-CREH-P-1	T-P-5 T-O-9 T-P-6 T-P-7 T-P-8 T-P-9 T-O-10 T-O-11 T-O-12 T-O-13 T-O-14 T-O-15 T-O-15A T-P-10 T-P-11 T-P-2 T-P-13 T-P-14 T-P-15 T-P-15A T-P-15B T-P-15C T-P-15D GEN-T-O-1 GEN-T-0-2 GEN-T-P-1 GEN-T-P-2 GEN-T-P-3 GEN-T-P-4 GEN-T-P-5 GEN-T-P-6 GEN-T-P-7 TC-G-P-1
Material Assets	• Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Increases in waste levels. • Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.	Also refer to measures under other environmental components including Population and Human Health, Cultural Heritage, Soil, Water, Air and Climatic Factors provisions. BE-F-O-1 CN-WW-P-1 CN-WW-P-2 CN-WW-P-3 KB-I-O-1	Also refer to measures under other environmental components including Population and Human Health, Cultural Heritage, Soil, Water, Air and Climatic Factors provisions. WW-O-1 WW-O-2 WW-O-3 WW-P-1 WW-P-2 WW-P-3 WW-P-4 WW-P-5 WW-P-6 WW-P-7 WW-P-8 WW-P-9 WW-P-10 WW-P-11 WW-P-12 WW-P-13 MRCM-O-1

Topic	Potentially Significant Adverse Effect, if Unmitigated	Proposed Variation measures, including:	Supporting Existing Donegal County Development Plan measures, including:
			MRCM-O-2 MRCM-P-1 MRCM-P-2 MRCM-P-3 MRCM-P-4 MRCM-P-5 MRCM-P-6 MRCM-P-7 MRCM-P-8 MRCM-P-9 MRCM-P-10 ETN-O-1 G-O-1 ETN-P-1
Cultural Heritage	• Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities.	ACL-UCR-O-5 ACL-CREH-O-3 BN-AAH-O-1 BN-AAH-P-1 BN-AAH-P-2 CN-CERH-O-5 CN-CERH-P-5 DT-TOU-O-1 DT-TOU-O-4 DT-TOU-P-4 DT-CREH-O-2 DT-CREH-O-7 DT-CREH-P-5 DT-CREH-P-3 KB-CREH-O-4 KB-CREH-P-4	AH-O-1 AH-O-2 AH-P-1 AH-P-2 AH-P-2A AH-P-2B AH-O-3 AH-P-3 AH-P-4 AH-P-5 AH-O-4 AH-P-6 AH-P-7 AH-P-8 AH-P-9 AH-P-10 AYH-O-1 AYH-P-1 AYH-P-2 AYH-P-3 AYH-P-4 EX-P-1 EX-P-2 TC-G-P-2 TC-G-P-3 TC-G-P-4
Landscape	• Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.	Also refer to measures under Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna and Cultural Heritage BN-TOU-O-1 BN-CRH-O-2 BN-CRH-P-4 BN-CRH-P-6 DT-TOU-P-4 DT-CREH-O-3 DT-CREH-O-4 DT-CREH-P-4 KB-ED-P-1 KB-ED-P-2 KB-CREH-P-4	Also refer to measures under Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna and Cultural Heritage L-O-1 L-P-1 L-P-2 L-P-3 L-P-4 L-P-5 L-P-6 L-P-7 L-P-8 EX-P-1 EX-P-2 GEN-H-2 TC-G-P-1 TC-G-P-3 TC-G-P-4 RCNH-G-O-1

Section 10 Monitoring Measures

10.1 Introduction

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. This section details the measures which will be used in order to monitor the likely significant effects of implementing the Proposed Variation. Monitoring will be undertaken as part of reporting on the County Development Plan (to which the Variation is being made) monitoring programme.

Monitoring can both demonstrate the positive effects facilitated by the Proposed Variation and can enable, at an early stage, the identification of unforeseen adverse effects and the undertaking of appropriate remedial action.

The occurrence of significant adverse environmental effects not predicted and mitigated by this assessment, which are directly attributable to the implementation of the Proposed Variation, would necessitate consideration of these effects in the context of the Proposed Variation and potential remediation action(s) and/or review of part(s) of the Proposed Variation.

10.2 Indicators and Targets

Monitoring is based around indicators which allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives identified in Section 5 and used in the evaluation. Each indicator to be monitored is accompanied by the target(s) which were identified with regard to the relevant strategic actions. The monitoring measures identified below as part of the Proposed Variation SEA are consistent with the measures that were identified by the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030 SEA. This consistency across the hierarchy of land use plans will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future monitoring.

Table 10.1 overleaf shows the indicators and targets which have been selected for monitoring the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation, if unmitigated.

Monitoring is an ongoing process and the programme allows for flexibility and the further refinement of indicators and targets. The Monitoring Programme may be updated to deal with specific environmental issues – including unforeseen effects – as they arise.

10.3 Sources

The Proposed Variation forms part of the wider land use planning framework comprising a hierarchy of policies, plans, programmes, etc. This wider framework, including the National Planning Framework, Northern and Western RSES, and Donegal County Development Plan is subject to its own SEA (and associated monitoring) requirements. Individual projects will be subject to their own monitoring requirements as relevant.

In implementing the Monitoring Programme, the Council will take into account this hierarchy of planning and environmental monitoring.

Sources for indicators may include existing monitoring databases (including those maintained by planning authorities and national/regional government departments and agencies) and the output of lower-tier environmental assessment and decision making (including a review of project approvals granted and associated documents and the output of any EIA monitoring programmes).

Internal monitoring of the environmental effects of grants of permission in the Council would provide monitoring of certain indicators on a *grant of permission*[81] basis. Where significant adverse effects as a result of the development to be permitted are identified, such effects could be identified, recorded and used to inform monitoring evaluation.

[81] The likely significant effects of development proposals on environmental sensitivities are further determined during the development management process. Documenting any identified effects as a result of a development to be permitted can help to fulfill monitoring requirements.

10.4 Reporting

Reporting will be undertaken as part of reporting on the County Development Plan monitoring programme. A stand-alone Monitoring Report on the significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan as varied will be prepared in advance of the beginning of the review of the Development Plan. This report will address indicators consistent with those set out on Table 10.1.

The Council is responsible for the ongoing review of indicators and targets, collating existing relevant monitored data, the preparation of monitoring evaluation report(s), the publication of these reports and, if necessary, the carrying out of remedial action.

Table 10.1 Indicators, Targets, Sources and Remedial Action

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action[82]
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	**BFF**	• Condition of European sites	• Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions and to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species • Confirmation of compliance with Plan provisions relating to the protection of European Sites and sustaining resources	• DHLGH report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years) [83] • DHLGH National Birds Directive Monitoring Report for the under Article 12 (every 6 years) [84] • Internal review of local land use plans • Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where condition of European sites is found to be deteriorating this will be investigated with the Regional Assembly and the DHLGH to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance.
		• Number of spatial plans that have included ecosystem services content, mapping and policy to protect ecosystem services when their relevant plans are either revised or drafted	• Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions and to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species	• Internal review of local land use plans	• Review internal systems
		• SEAs and AAs as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc.	• Screen for and undertake SEA and AA as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc.	• Internal review of new Council policies, plans, programmes etc. under the County Development Plan	• Review internal systems
		• Status of water bodies	• Included under Water below	• Included under Water below	• Included under Water below
		• Compliance of planning permissions with Plan measures providing for the protection of Biodiversity and flora and fauna – see County Development Plan Chapter 11 "Natural, Built and Archaeological Heritage"	• For planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that they comply with all Plan measures providing for the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna – see County Development Plan Chapter 11 "Natural, Built and Archaeological Heritage"	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Review internal systems
Population and Human Health	**PHH**	• Implementation of Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by County Development Plan Chapter 7 "Economic Development"	• Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by County Development Plan Chapter 7 "Economic Development"	• Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Review internal systems • Consultations with DCEE
		• Number of spatial concentrations of health problems arising from	• No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan	• Review of published information from the Health Service Executive and EPA	• Consultations with the Health Service Executive and EPA

[82] Where remedial action is required, consultations with government agencies (e.g. DCEE, DT, EPA, HSE, NPWS, Regional Assembly, Uisce Éireann) may be undertaken in order to confirm causes of any identified changes in the environment and in order to develop appropriate responses.

[83] Including confirmation with development management that the following impacts have been considered and including use of monitoring data, where available: biodiversity/habitat loss; nitrogen deposition impacts on European sites; recreational disturbance resulting from implementation of tourism and recreation policies and objectives particularly in riparian areas; biodiversity enhancement; and disturbance /visitor pressure impacts of recreation, amenity and tourism development.

[84] Including confirmation with development management that the following impacts have been considered and including use of monitoring data, where available: biodiversity/habitat loss; nitrogen deposition impacts on European sites; recreational disturbance resulting from implementation of tourism and recreation policies and objectives particularly in riparian areas; biodiversity enhancement; and disturbance /visitor pressure impacts of recreation, amenity and tourism development.

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action[82]
		environmental factors resulting from development permitted under the Plan		• Internal consultations with the Council's Environment Department	
		• Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures	• Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to active travel	• CSO data • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DCEE and NTA to develop a tailored response.
		• Number of spatial plans that include specific green infrastructure mapping	• Require all local level land use plans to include specific green infrastructure mapping	• Internal review of local land use plans	• Review internal systems
Soil (and Land)	S	• Proportion of population growth occurring on infill and brownfield lands compared to greenfield (also relevant to Material Assets)	• As per the revised NPF, to limit the rate of increase land that is sealed or artificialised per year and promote the reversal of this in suitable areas e.g., flood zones, high density areas • In accordance with the NPF, deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints and ensure compact and sequential patterns of growth • To map brownfield and infill land parcels	• EPA Geoportal • Compilation of greenfield and brownfield development for the DHLGH • Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where the proportion of growth on infill and brownfield sites is not keeping pace with the targets set in the NPF and the RSES, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly to establish reasons and coordinate actions to address constraints to doing so.
		• Instances where contaminated material generated from brownfield and infill must be disposed of	• Dispose of contaminated material in compliance with EPA guidance and waste management requirements	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission where contaminated material must be disposed of	• Consultations with the EPA and Development Management
		• Environmental assessments and AAs as relevant for applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission	• Screen for and undertake environmental assessments and AA as relevant for applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Review internal systems
Water	W	• Status of water bodies as reported by the EPA Water Monitoring Programme for the WFD	• Subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive, not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status' • Implementation of the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan	• EPA Monitoring Programme for WFD compliance [85]	• Where water bodies are failing to meet at least good status this will be investigated with the DHLGH Water Section, the EPA Catchment Unit, the Regional Assembly and, as relevant, Uisce Éireann to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance. • Where planning applications are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the WWTP or failure of the WWTP to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will consider whether it is necessary to coordinate a response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Uisce Éireann to achieve the necessary capacity.

[85] Including monitoring of water quality and nitrogen deposition due to bioenergy and agricultural projects where available

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action[82]
		• Number of incompatible developments permitted within flood risk areas	• Minimise developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where planning applications are being permitted on flood zones, the Council will ensure that such grants are in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and include appropriate flood risk mitigation and management measures.
Material Assets	MA	• Programmed delivery of Uisce Éireann infrastructure for all key growth towns in line with Uisce Éireann Investment Plan and prioritisation programme to ensure sustainable growth can be accommodated • Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan	• All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately and appropriately served by waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan • Where septic tanks are proposed, for planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that the outfall from the septic tank will not – in-combination with other septic tanks – contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive • Facilitate, as appropriate, Uisce Éireann in developing water and wastewater infrastructure • See also targets relating to greenfield and brownfield development of land under Soil and broadband under Population and Human Health	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where planning applications are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the WWTP or failure of the WWTP to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will consider whether it is necessary to coordinate a response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Uisce Éireann to achieve the necessary capacity.
		• Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures	• Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to active travel	• CSO data • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DCEE and NTA to develop a tailored response.
Air	A	• Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels • NO_2 (Nitrogen Dioxide), PM_{10} (particulate matter with diameter of 10 microns or less) and O_3 (Ozone) as part of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring	• Decrease in proportion of journeys made by car compared to previous levels • Improvement in Air Quality trends, particularly in relation to transport related emissions • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to sustainable mobility and travel	• CSO data • EPA Air Quality Monitoring • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHLGH, DCEE and NTA to develop a tailored response. See also entry under Population and human health above
Climatic Factors	C	• Implementation of Plan measures relating to climate reduction targets	• For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to climate reduction targets	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Review internal systems
		• A competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy	• Contribute towards transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050	• Confirmation of progress in implementing of Donegal County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 • EPA Greenhouse Gas Emissions reporting	• Where targets are not achieved, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly and the Climate Action Regional Office to establish reasons and develop solutions.
		• Share of renewable energy in transport	• Contribute towards the National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 sectoral target for transport (RES-T) of 14%, by 2030 (this may be increased following a provisional		

Environmental Component	SEO Code	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action[82]
			European agreement on 30 March 2023 for a binding overall RES target of at least 42.5% by 2030)	• Internal review of implementation of Plan provisions relating to renewable energy in transport, including facilitating the development of electricity charging and transmission infrastructure	
		• Greenhouse gas emissions	• Contribute towards the target of aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions of at least 51% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2030 (helping to set Ireland on a path to reach net-zero emissions by 2050)		
		• Energy consumption, the uptake of renewable options and solid fuels for residential heating	• To promote reduced energy consumption and support the uptake of renewable options and a move away from solid fuels for residential heating		
		• Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels	• Decrease in the proportion of journeys made by residents of the settlements using private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to sustainable mobility and travel	• CSO data • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Where trends toward carbon reduction are not recorded, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly and the Climate Action Regional Office to establish reasons and develop solutions.
		• Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures	• Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to active travel	• CSO data • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DCEE and NTA to develop a tailored response.
Cultural Heritage	CH	• Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, protected from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan	• Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context of these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where monitoring reveals visitor or development pressure is causing negative effects on designated archaeological or architectural heritage, the Council will work with Regional Assembly, Fáilte Ireland and the National Monuments Service and other stakeholders, as relevant, to address pressures through additional mitigation.
		• Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan	• Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	
Landscape	L	• Number of developments permitted that result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan	• No developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where monitoring reveals developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, the Council will re-examine Plan provisions and the effectiveness of their implementation

Appendix I Relationship with Legislation and Other Policies, Plans and Programmes

This appendix is not intended to be a full and comprehensive review of EU Directives, the transposing regulations or the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management. The information is not exhaustive and it is recommended to consult the Directive, Regulation, Plan or Programme to become familiar with the full details of each.

Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan, to be varied
European Level			
SEA Directive (2001/42/EC)	• Contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development. • Provide for a high level of protection of the environment by carrying out an environmental assessment of plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.	• Carry out and environmental assessment for plans or programmes referred to in Articles 2 to 4 of the Directive. • Prepare an environmental report which identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme and reasonable alternatives that consider the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme. • Consult with relevant authorities, stakeholders and public allowing sufficient time to make a submission. • Consult other Member States where the implementation of a plan or programme is likely to have transboundary environmental effects. • Inform relevant authorities and stakeholders on the decision to implement the plan or programme. • Issue a statement to include requirements detailed in Article 9 of the Directive. • Monitor and mitigate significant environmental effects identified by the assessment.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EIA Directive (2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)	• Requires the assessment of the environmental effects of public and private projects which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. • Aims to assess and implement avoidance or mitigation measures to eliminate environmental effects, before consent is given of projects likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue, inter alia, of their nature, size or location are made subject to a requirement for development consent and an assessment with regard to their effects. Those projects are defined in Article 4.	• All projects listed in Annex I are considered as having significant effects on the environment and require an EIA. • For projects listed in Annex II, a "screening procedure" is required to determine the effects of projects on the basis of thresholds/criteria or a case by case examination. This should take into account Annex III. • The environmental impact assessment shall identify, describe and assess in an appropriate manner, in the light of each individual case and in accordance with Articles 4 to 12, the direct and indirect effects of a project on the following factors: human beings, fauna and flora, soil, water, air, climate and the landscape, material assets and the cultural heritage, the interaction between each factor. • Consult with relevant authorities, stakeholders and public allowing sufficient time to make a submission before a decision is made.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)	• Promote the preservation, protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, including the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. • Contribute towards ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. • Maintain or restore to favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of community interest. • Promote the maintenance of biodiversity, taking account of economic, social, cultural and regional requirements.	• Propose and protect sites of importance to habitats, plant and animal species. • Establish a network of European sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I and habitats of the species listed in Annex II, to enable the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. • Carry out comprehensive assessment of habitat types and species present. • Establish a system of strict protection for the animal species and plant species listed in Annex IV.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)	• Conserve all species of naturally occurring birds in the wild state including their eggs, nests and habitats. • Protect, manage and control these species and comply with regulations relating to their exploitation. • The species included in Annex I shall be the subject of special conservation measures concerning their habitat in order to ensure their survival and reproduction in their area of distribution.	• Preserve, maintain or re-establish a sufficient diversity and area of habitats for all the species of birds referred to in Annex 1. • Preserve, maintain and establish biotopes and habitats to include the creation of protected areas (Special Protection Areas). • Ensure the upkeep and management in accordance with the ecological needs of habitats inside and outside the protected zones, re-establish destroyed biotopes and creation of biotopes. • Measures for regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I is required as regards their breeding, moulting and wintering areas and staging posts along their migration routes. The protection of wetlands and particularly wetlands of international importance.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan, to be varied
EU Nitrates Directive (91/676/EC)	• Reducing water pollution caused or induced by nitrates from agricultural sources and - preventing further such pollution.	Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme is designed to prevent pollution of surface waters and ground water from agricultural sources and to protect and improve water quality. Ireland's third NAP came into operation in 2014. Each Member State's NAP must include: • a limit on the amount of livestock manure applied to the land each year • set periods when land spreading is prohibited due to risk • set capacity levels for the storage of livestock manure	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Integrated Pollution Prevention Control Directive (2008/1/EC)	• The purpose of this Directive is to achieve integrated prevention and control of pollution arising from the activities listed in Annex I. It lays down measures designed to prevent or, where that is not practicable, to reduce emissions in the air, water and land from the abovementioned activities, including measures concerning waste, in order to achieve a high level of protection of the environment taken as a whole, without prejudice to Directive 85/337/EEC and other relevant Community provisions.	The IPPC Directive is based on several principles: • an integrated approach • best available techniques, • flexibility; and • public participation	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Plant Protection (products) Directive 2009/127/EC	• The Directive aims at reducing the risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and • the environment by introducing different targets, tools and measures such as Integrated Pest • Management (IPM) or National Action Plans (NAPs).	• The Framework Directive applies to pesticides which are plant protection products. • Regarding pesticide application equipment already in professional use, the Framework Directive introduces requirements for the inspection and maintenance to be carried out on such equipment.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED) 2023/2413 **- amending Directive (EU) 2018/2001, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and Directive 98/70/EC as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, and repealing Council Directive (EU) 2015/652**	The Renewable Energy Directive is the legal framework for the development of clean energy across all sectors of the EU economy, supporting cooperation between EU countries towards this goal. The revised Directive introduces stronger measures to ensure that all possibilities for the further development and uptake of renewables are fully utilised. This will be key to achieving the EU's objective of climate neutrality by 2050 and to strengthen Europe's security of energy supply. In addition to double the existing share of renewable energy sources, a strong policy framework will facilitate electrification in different sectors, with new increased sector-specific targets for renewables in heating and cooling, transport, industry, buildings and district heating/cooling, but also with a framework promoting electric vehicles and smart recharging.	The revised Directive sets an overall renewable energy target of at least 42.5% binding at EU level by 2030 - but aiming for 45%. The amended RED contains revised targets for renewable energy consumption in transport, of 29% energy share (known as the 'RES-T') or a 14.5% GHG reduction by 2030.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Indirect Land Use Change Directive (2012/0288(COD))	• Article 3(4) of Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (3) requires Member States to ensure that the share of energy from renewable energy sources in all forms of transport in 2020 is at least 10 % of their final energy consumption. • The blending of biofuels is one of the methods available for Member States to meet this target, and is expected to be the main contributor. • Other methods available to meet the target are the reduction of energy consumption, which is imperative because a mandatory percentage target for energy from renewable sources is likely to become increasingly difficult to achieve sustainably if overall demand for energy for transport continues to rise, and the use of electricity from renewable energy sources.	• Limit the contribution that conventional biofuels (with a risk of ILUC emissions) make towards attainment of the targets in the Renewable Energy Directive; • Improve the greenhouse gas performance of biofuel production processes (reducing associated emissions) by raising the greenhouse gas saving threshold for new installations subject to protecting installations already in operation on 1st July 2014; • Encourage a greater market penetration of advanced (low-ILUC) biofuels by allowing such fuels to contribute more to the targets in the Renewable Energy Directive than conventional biofuels; • Improve the reporting of greenhouse gas emissions by obliging Member States and fuel suppliers to report the estimated indirect land-use change emissions of biofuels.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive (2014/94/EU)	• This Directive establishes a common framework of measures for the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure in the Union in order to minimise dependence on oil and to mitigate the environmental impact of transport.	• This Directive sets out minimum requirements for the building-up of alternative fuels infrastructure, including recharging points for electric vehicles and refuelling points for natural gas (LNG and CNG) and hydrogen, to be implemented by means of Member States' national policy frameworks, as well as common technical specifications for such recharging and refuelling points, and user information requirements.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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EU Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU)	• Establishes a set of binding measures to help the EU reach its 20% energy efficiency target by 2020. • Under the Directive, all EU countries are required to use energy more efficiently at all stages of the energy chain, from production to final consumption.	• Energy distributors or retail energy sales companies have to achieve 1.5% energy savings per year through the implementation of energy efficiency measures • EU countries can opt to achieve the same level of savings through other means, such as improving the efficiency of heating systems, installing double glazed windows or insulating roofs • The public sector in EU countries should purchase energy efficient buildings, products and services • Every year, governments in EU countries must carry out energy efficient renovations on at least 3% (by floor area) of the buildings they own and occupy • Energy consumers should be empowered to better manage consumption. This includes easy and free access to data on consumption through individual metering • National incentives for SMEs to undergo energy audits • Large companies will make audits of their energy consumption to help them identify ways to reduce it • Monitoring efficiency levels in new energy generation capacities.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Seveso Directive (2012/18/EU)	• This Directive lays down rules for the prevention of major accidents which involve dangerous substances, and the limitation of their consequences for human health and the environment, with a view to ensuring a high level of protection throughout the Union in a consistent and effective manner.	The Seveso Directive is well integrated with other EU policies, thus avoiding double regulation or other administrative burden. This includes the following related policy areas: • Classification, labelling and packaging of chemicals; • The Union's Civil Protection Mechanism; • The Security Union Agenda including CBRN-E and Protection of critical infrastructure; • Policy on environmental liability and on the protection of the environment through criminal law; • Safety of offshore oil and gas operations.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives (European Commission, 2020)	• The EU's biodiversity strategy for 2030 is a comprehensive, ambitious and long-term plan to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems. The strategy aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030, and contains specific actions and commitments.	The Strategy contains specific commitments and actions to be delivered by 2030, including: • Establishing a larger EU-wide network of protected areas on land and at sea, building upon existing Natura 2000 areas, with strict protection for areas of very high biodiversity and climate value. • An EU Nature Restoration Plan - a series of concrete commitments and actions to restore degraded ecosystems across the EU by 2030, and manage them sustainably, addressing the key drivers of biodiversity loss. • A set of measures to enable the necessary transformative change: setting in motion a new, strengthened governance framework to ensure better implementation and track progress, improving knowledge, financing and investments and better respecting nature in public and business decision-making. • Measures to tackle the global biodiversity challenge, demonstrating that the EU is ready to lead by example towards the successful adoption of an ambitious global biodiversity framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Green Infrastructure Strategy	Aims to create a robust enabling framework in order to promote and facilitate Green Infrastructure (GI) projects.	• Promoting GI in the main EU policy areas. • Supporting EU-level GI projects. • Improving access to finance for GI projects. • Improving information and promoting innovation.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
UN Kyoto Protocol (2nd Kyoto Period), the Second European Climate Change Programme (ECCP II), Paris climate conference (COP21) 2015 (Paris Agreement)	The UN Kyoto Protocol set of policy measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Second European Climate Change Programme (ECCP II) aims to identify and develop all the necessary elements of an EU strategy to implement the Kyoto Protocol. At the Paris climate conference (COP21) in December 2015, 195 countries adopted the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal. The agreement sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C.	• The Kyoto Protocol is implemented through the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP II). • EU member states implement measures to improve on or compliment the specified measures and policies arising from the ECCP. • Under COP21, governments agreed to come together every 5 years to set more ambitious targets as required by science; report to each other and the public on how well they are doing to implement their targets; track progress towards the long-term goal through a robust transparency and accountability system.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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EU 2020 Climate and Energy Package	• Binding legislation which aims to ensure the European Union meets its climate and energy targets for 2020. • Aims to achieve a 20% reduction in EU greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels. • Aims to raise the share of EU energy consumption produced from renewable resources to 20%. • Achieve a 20% improvement in the EU's energy efficiency.	Four pieces of complimentary legislation: • Reform of the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) to include a cap on emission allowances in addition to existing system of national caps. • Member States have agreed national targets for non-EU ETS emissions from countries outside the EU. • Meet the national renewable energy targets of 16% for Ireland by 2020. • Preparing a legal framework for technologies in carbon capture and storage.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy	• A 2030 Framework for climate and energy, including EU-wide targets and policy objectives for the period between 2020 and 2030 that has been agreed by European countries. • Targets include a 40% cut in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels, at least a 27% share of renewable energy consumption and at least 27% energy savings compared with the business-as-usual scenario.	To meet the targets, the European Commission has proposed the following policies for 2030: • A reformed EU emissions trading scheme (ETS). • New indicators for the competitiveness and security of the energy system, such as price differences with major trading partners, diversification of supply, and interconnection capacity between EU countries. • First ideas for a new governance system based on national plans for competitive, secure, and sustainable energy. These plans will follow a common EU approach. They will ensure stronger investor certainty, greater transparency, enhanced policy coherence and improved coordination across the EU.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
The Clean Air for Europe Directive (2008/50/EC) **(EU Air Framework Directive)** **Fourth Daughter Directive (2004/107/EC)**	• The CAFE Directive merges existing legislation into a single directive (except for the fourth daughter directive). • Sets new air quality objectives for $PM_{2.5}$ (fine particles) including the limit value and exposure related objectives. • Accounts for the possibility to discount natural sources of pollution when assessing compliance against limit values. • Allows the possibility for time extensions of three years (PM_{10}) or up to five years (NO_2, benzene) for complying with limit values, based on conditions and the assessment by the European Commission. • The Fourth Daughter Directive lists pollutants, target values and monitoring requirements for the following: arsenic, cadmium, mercury, nickel and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in ambient air.	• Sets objectives for ambient air quality designed to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole. • Aims to assess the ambient air quality in Member States on the basis of common methods and criteria. • Obtains information on ambient air quality in order to help combat air pollution and nuisance and to monitor long-term trends and improvements resulting from national and community measures. • Ensures that such information on ambient air quality is made available to the public. • Aims to maintain air quality where it is good and improving it in other cases. • Aims to promote increased cooperation between the Member States in reducing air pollution.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Noise Directive (2002/49/EC)	The Noise Directive - Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise - is part of an EU strategy setting out to reduce the number of people affected by noise in the longer term and to provide a framework for developing existing Community policy on noise reduction from source.	The Directive requires competent authorities in Member States to: • Draw up strategic noise maps for major roads, railways, airports and agglomerations, using harmonised noise indicators and use these maps to assess the number of people which may be impacted upon as a result of excessive noise levels; • Draw up action plans to reduce noise where necessary and maintain environmental noise quality where it is good; and • Inform and consult the public about noise exposure, its effects, and the measures considered to address noise. The Directive does not set any limit value, nor does it prescribe the measures to be used in the action plans, which remain at the discretion of the competent authorities.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)	• Establishes a framework for the assessment and management of flood risks • Reduce adverse consequences for human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity associated with floods in the Community	• Assess all water courses and coast lines at risk from flooding through Flood Risk Assessment • Prepare flood hazard maps and flood risk maps outlining the extent or potential of flooding and assets and humans at risk in these areas at River Basin District level (Article 3(2) (b)) and areas covered by Article 5(1) and Article 13(1) (b) in accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3. • Implement flood risk management plans and take adequate and coordinated measures to reduce flood risk for the areas covered by the Articles listed above. • Inform the public and allow the public to participate in planning process.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	• Establish a framework for the protection of water bodies to include inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater and their dependent wildlife and habitats. • Preserve and prevent the deterioration of water status and where necessary improve and maintain "good status" of water bodies. • Promote sustainable water usage. • The Water Framework Directive repealed the following Directives: o The Drinking Water Abstraction Directive o Sampling Drinking Water Directive o Exchange of Information on Quality of Surface Freshwater Directive o Shellfish Directive o Freshwater Fish Directive o Groundwater (Dangerous Substances) Directive o Dangerous Substances Directive	• Protect, enhance and restore all water bodies and meet the environmental objectives outlined in Article 4 of the Directive. • Achieve "good status" for all waters. • Manage water bodies based on identifying and establishing river basins districts. • Involve the public and streamline legislation. • Prepare and implement a River Basin Management Plan for each river basin districts identified and a Register of Protected Areas. • Establish a programme of monitoring for surface water status, groundwater status and protected areas. • Recover costs for water services.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)	Aims to protect the marine environment beyond the areas considered under the WFD.	The Directive requires the application of an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities, enabling sustainable use of marine resources, goods and services. The aim of the Directive is to achieve Good Environmental Status for marine waters. This means that marine waters should be clean, healthy, biologically diverse and productive.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)	• Protect, control and conserve groundwater. • Prevent the deterioration of the status of all bodies of groundwater. • Implements measures to prevent and control groundwater pollution, including criteria for assessing good groundwater chemical status and criteria for the identification of significant and sustained upward trends and for the definition of starting points for trend reversals.	• Meet minimum groundwater standards listed in Annex 1 of Directive. • Meet threshold values adopted by national legislation for the pollutants, groups of pollutants and indicators of pollution which have been identified as contributing to the characterisation of bodies or groups of bodies of groundwater as being at risk, also taking into account Part B of Annex II.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Drinking Water Directive **- Directive (EU) 2020/2184 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on the quality of water intended for human consumption (recast)**	• Protect human health from the adverse effects of any contamination of water intended for human consumption by ensuring that it is wholesome and clean, and to improve access to water intended for human consumption.	For purposes of the Directive, 'water intended for human consumption' means: a) all water, either in its original state or after treatment, intended for drinking, cooking, food preparation or other domestic purposes in both public and private premises, regardless of its origin and whether it is supplied from a distribution network, supplied from a tanker or put into bottles or containers, including spring waters; b) all water used in any food business for the manufacture, processing, preservation or marketing of products or substances intended for human consumption.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive **- Directive (EU) 2024/3019 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2024 concerning urban wastewater treatment (recast)**	• Protect the environment and human health from adverse effects of urban wastewater discharges while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving energy efficiency in the sector.	The Directive establishes a detailed framework covering: • Requirements for collection and treatment of urban wastewater in agglomerations above 1,000 population equivalent (p.e.) • Standards for secondary, tertiary and new quaternary treatment of wastewater • Extended producer responsibility for pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies to cover costs of removing micropollutants • Energy neutrality targets for treatment plants • Requirements for monitoring, reporting and public access to information	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Environmental Liability Directive (2004/35/EC) as amended by Directive 2006/21/EC, Directive 2009/31/EC and Directive 2013/30/EU	• Establish a framework of environmental liability based on the 'polluter-pays' principle, to prevent and remedy environmental damage.	• Relates to environmental damage caused by any of the occupational activities listed in Annex III, and to any imminent threat of such damage occurring by reason of any of those activities; damage to protected species and natural habitats caused by any occupational activities other than those listed in Annex III, and to any imminent threat of such damage occurring by reason of any of those activities, whenever the operator has been at fault or negligent. • Where environmental damage has not yet occurred but there is an imminent threat of such damage occurring, the operator shall, without delay, take the necessary preventive measures. • Where environmental damage has occurred the operator shall, without delay, inform the competent authority of all relevant aspects of the situation and take all practicable steps to immediately control, contain, remove or otherwise manage the relevant contaminants and/or any other damage factors in order to limit or to prevent further environmental damage and adverse effects on human health or further impairment of services and the necessary remedial measures, in accordance with Article 7. • The operator shall bear the costs for the preventive and remedial actions taken pursuant to this Directive. • The competent authority shall be entitled to initiate cost recovery proceedings against the operator. • The operator may be required to provide financial security guarantees to ensure their responsibilities under the directive are met. • The Environmental Liability Directive has been amended through a number of Directives. Implementation of the Environmental Liability Directive is contributed towards by a Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAWP) 'Making the Environmental Liability Directive more fit for purpose' that is updated annually to changing developments, growing knowledge and new needs.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta 1992)	• The aim of this (revised) Convention is to protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study.	The Valletta Convention makes the conservation and enhancement of the archaeological heritage one of the goals of urban and regional planning policies. The Convention sets guidelines for the funding of excavation and research work and publication of research findings. It also deals with public access, in particular to archaeological sites, and educational actions to be undertaken to develop public awareness of the value of the archaeological heritage. It also constitutes an institutional framework for pan-European co-operation on the archaeological heritage, entailing a systematic exchange of experience and experts among the various States.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Convention of the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada 1995)	• The main purpose of the Convention is to reinforce and promote policies for the conservation and enhancement of Europe's heritage. It also affirms the need for European solidarity with regard to heritage conservation and is designed to foster practical co-operation among the Parties. It establishes the principles of "European co-ordination of conservation policies" including consultations regarding the thrust of the policies to be implemented.	• The reinforcement and promotion of policies for protecting and enhancing the heritage within the territories of the parties. • The affirmation of European solidarity with regard to the protection of the heritage and the fostering of practical co-operation between states and regions.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro 2005)	• Cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time. • A heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations.	• Recognise that rights relating to cultural heritage are inherent in the right to participate in cultural life, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. • Recognise individual and collective responsibility towards cultural heritage. • Emphasise that the conservation of cultural heritage and its sustainable use have human development and quality of life as their goal. • Take the necessary steps to apply the provisions of this Convention concerning the role of cultural heritage in the construction of a peaceful and democratic society. • Greater synergy of competencies among all the public, institutional and private actors concerned.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Landscape Convention 2000	• The developments in agriculture, forestry, industrial and mineral production techniques, together with the practices followed in town and country planning, transport, networks, tourism and recreation, and at a more general level, changes in the world economy, have in many cases accelerated the transformation of landscapes. The Convention expresses a concern to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment. It aims to respond to the public's wish to enjoy high quality landscapes.	• Promote protection, management and planning of landscapes. • Organise European co-operation on landscape issues.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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The Seventh Environmental Action Programme (EAP) of the European Community (2013-2020)	It identifies three key objectives: • to protect, conserve and enhance the Union's natural capital • to turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green, and competitive low-carbon economy • to safeguard the Union's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and wellbeing	Four so called "enablers" will help Europe deliver on these objectives (goals): • Better implementation of legislation. • Better information by improving the knowledge base. • More and wiser investment for environment and climate policy. • Full integration of environmental requirements and considerations into other policies. Two additional horizontal priority objectives complete the programme: • To make the Union's cities more sustainable. • To help the Union address international environmental and climate challenges more effectively.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Bern Convention (Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats)	The convention has three main aims: • to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats • to promote cooperation between states • to give particular attention to endangered and vulnerable species including endangered and vulnerable migratory species	The Parties under the convention recognise the intrinsic value of nature, which needs to be preserved and passed to future generations, they also: • Seek to ensure the conservation of nature in their countries, paying particular attention to planning and development policies and pollution control. • Look at implementing the Bern Convention in central Eastern Europe and the Caucus. • Take account of the potential impact on natural heritage by other policies. • Promote education and information of the public, ensuring the need to conserve species is understood and acted upon. • Develop an extensive number of species action plans, codes of conducts, and guidelines, at their own initiative or in co-operation with other organisations. • Created the Emerald Network, an ecological network made up of Areas of Special Conservation Interest.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Bali Road Map (2007)	The overall goals of the project are twofold: • To increase national capacity to co-ordinate ministerial views, participate in the UNFCCC process, and negotiate positions within the timeframe of the Bali Action Plan; and • To assess investment and financial flows to address climate change for up to three key sectors and/or economic activities.	The Bali Action Plan is centred on four main building Blocks: • mitigation • adaptation • technology • financing	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Cancun Agreements (2010)	Set of decisions taken at the COP 16 Conference in Cancun in 2010 which addresses a series of key issues in the fight against climate change. Cancun Agreements' main objectives cover: • Mitigation • Transparency of actions • Technology • Finance • Adaptation • Forests • Capacity building	Among the most prominent agreements is the establishment of a Green Climate Fund to transfer money from the developed to developing world to tackle the impacts of climate change.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Doha Climate Gateway (2012)	Set of decisions taken at the COP 18 meeting in Doha in 2012 which pave the way for a new agreement in Paris in 2015.	• Set out a timetable to adopt a universal climate agreement by 2015 (to come into effect in 2020); • Complete the work under Bali Action Plan and to focus on new completing new targets; • Strengthen the aim to cut greenhouse gases and help vulnerable countries to adapt; • Amend Kyoto Protocol to include a new commitment period for cutting down the greenhouse gases emissions; and • Provide the financial and technology support and new institutions to allow clean energy investment and sustainable growth in developing countries.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
EU Common Agricultural Policy	• To improve agricultural productivity, so that consumers have a stable supply of affordable food; and • To ensure that EU farmers can make a reasonable living.	• ensuring viable food production that will contribute to feeding the world's population, which is expected to rise considerably in the future; • Climate change and sustainable management of natural resources; • Looking after the countryside across the EU and keeping the rural economy alive.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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EU REACH Regulation (EC 1907/2006)	• Aims to improve the protection of human health and the environment through the better and earlier identification of the intrinsic properties of chemical substances.	The aims are achieved by applying REACH, namely: • Registration, • Evaluation, • Authorisation; and • Restriction of chemicals. REACH also aims to enhance innovation and competitiveness of the EU chemicals industry.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Stockholm Convention	• The objective of the Stockholm Convention is to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants.	• Prohibit and/or eliminate the production and use, as well as the import and export, of the intentionally produced POPs that are listed in Annex A to the Convention • Restrict the production and use, as well as the import and export, of the intentionally produced POPs that are listed in Annex B to the Convention • Reduce or eliminate releases from unintentionally produced POPs that are listed in Annex C to the Convention • Ensure that stockpiles and wastes consisting of, containing or contaminated with POPs are managed safely and in an environmentally sound manner • Other provisions of the Convention relate to the development of implementation plans, information exchange, public information, awareness and education, research, development and monitoring, technical assistance, financial resources and mechanisms, reporting, effectiveness evaluation and non-compliance	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Ramsar Convention	The Convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".	Under the "three pillars" of the Convention, the Contracting Parties commit to: • Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands; • Designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the "Ramsar List") and ensure their effective management; • Cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European 2020 Strategy for Growth	Europe 2020 sets out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century and puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities: • Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; • Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy; • Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.	In order to reach these priorities, the Commission proposes five quantitative targets to fulfil by 2020: 1. 75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed; 2. 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D; 3. the "20/20/20" climate/energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right); 4. the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree; 5. 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Level			
The National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan (first revisions 2025)	The National Planning Framework is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of to the year 2040. The new 2025 Framework is revised and updated to take account of changes that have occurred since it was published in 2018 and to build on the framework that is in place. It is a framework to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities for the people, and to protect and enhance the environment. The National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan form a single vision for Ireland under Project Ireland 2040. The implementation of the National Planning Framework will continue to be fully supported by the Government's investment strategy for public capital investment and investment by the State sector in general, with the National Development Plan detailing key projects that will make plans a reality.	The ambition is to create a single vision, a shared set of goals for every community across the country. These goals are expressed in the Framework as National Strategic Outcomes: 1. Compact Growth 2. Enhanced Regional Accessibility 3. Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities 4. High-Quality International Connectivity 5. Sustainable Mobility 6. A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills 7. Enhanced Amenities and Heritage 8. Transition to a Carbon Neutral and Climate-Resilient Society 9. Sustainable Management of Environmental Resources 10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Planning, Land Use and Transport Outlook 2040 [in preparation]	The PLUTO will take account of forecasted future economic and demographic scenarios, affordability considerations and relevant Government policies and will: 1. Quantify in broad terms the appropriate scale of financial investment in land transport over the long term; 2. Consider how fiscal, environmental and technological developments might impact on this investment; and, 3. Identify strategic priorities for future investment to ensure land transport infrastructure provision facilitates the objectives of Project Ireland 2040.	In preparation	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended)	• An Act to consolidate and revise the law relating to planning and development; to provide for proper planning and sustainable development in the interests of the common good; to provide for the licensing of events and control of funfairs; for those purposes to repeal and replace the Planning and Development Act 2000; to amend certain other enactments; and to provide for matters connected therewith.	• Development, with certain exceptions, is subject to development control under the Planning Acts and the local authorities grant or refuse planning permission for development, including ones within protected areas. • There are, however, a range of exemptions from the planning system. Use of land for agriculture, peat extraction and afforestation, subject to certain thresholds, is generally exempt from the requirement to obtain planning permission. • Additionally, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for a range of classes and large-scale projects. • Under planning legislation, Development Plans must include mandatory objectives for the conservation of the natural heritage and for the conservation of European sites and any other sites which may be prescribed. There are also discretionary powers to set objectives for the conservation of a variety of other elements of the natural heritage.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011	• The purpose of these Regulations is to transpose into Irish law Directive 2001/42/EC of 27 June 2001 (O.J. No. L 197, 21 July 2001) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment — commonly known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.	• The Regulations cover plans and programmes in all of the sectors listed in article 3(2) of the Directive except land-use planning. • These Regulations also amend certain provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to provide the statutory basis for the transposition of the Directive in respect of land-use planning. • Transposition in respect of the land-use planning sector is contained in the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004).	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477of 2011, as amended)	• These Regulations provide a new for the implementation in Ireland of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on habitats and protection of wild fauna and flora (as amended) and for the implementation of Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of wild birds.	• They provide, among other things, for: the appointment and functions of authorized officers; identification, classification and other procedures relative to the designation of Community sites. • The Regulations have been prepared to address several judgments of the CJEU against Ireland, notably cases C-418/04 and C-183/05, in respect of failure to transpose elements of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive into Irish law.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Waste Management Act 1996, as amended	• To make provision in relation to the prevention, management and control of waste; to give effect to provisions of certain acts adopted by institutions of the European communities in respect of those matters; to amend the Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992, and to repeal certain enactments and to provide for related matters.	• The Waste Management Act contains a number of key legal obligations, including requirements for waste management planning, waste collection and movement, the authorisation of waste facilities, measures to reduce the production of waste and/or promote its recovery.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Communities Environmental Objectives (FPM) Regulations 2009 (S.I 296 of 2009)	• The purpose of these Regulations is to support the achievement of favourable conservation status for freshwater pearl mussels	• Set environmental quality objectives for the habitats of the freshwater pearl mussel populations named in the First Schedule to these Regulations that are within the boundaries of a site notified in a candidate list of European sites, or designated as a Special Area of Conservation, under the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 (S.I. No. 94/1997). • Require the production of sub-basin management plans with programmes of measures to achieve these objectives. • Set out the duties of public authorities in respect of the sub-basin management plans and programmes of measure.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 (S.I 9 of 2010), as amended (S.I. No. 366 of 2016)	• To amend the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No. 9 of 2010) to make further provision to implement Commission Directive 2014/80/EU of 20 June 2014 amending Annex II to Directive 2006/118/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration.	The substances and threshold values set out in Schedule 5 to S.I. No. 9 of 2010 have been reviewed and amended where necessary, based on existing monitoring information and international guidelines on appropriate threshold values. • Part A of Schedule 6 has been amended to include changes to the rules governing the determination of background levels for the purposes of establishing threshold values for groundwater pollutants and indicators of pollution. • Part B of Schedule 6 has been amended to include nitrites and phosphorus (total) / phosphates among the minimum list of pollutants and their indicators which the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must consider when establishing threshold values. • Part C of Schedule 6 amends the information to be provided to the Minister by the EPA with regard to the pollutants and their indicators for which threshold values have been established.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2022 (S.I. No. 113 of 2022)	• The purpose of these Regulations is to give effect to Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme pursuant to Council Directive 91/676/EEC concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural source.	The Regulations include measures such as: • Farmyard Management • Nutrient Management • Prevention of Water Pollution from Fertilizers and Certain Activities	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021	• An Act to provide for the approval of plans by the Government in relation to climate change for the purpose of pursuing the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.	When considering a plan or framework, for approval, the Government shall endeavour to achieve the national transition objective within the period to which the objective relates and shall, in endeavouring to achieve that objective, ensure that such objective is achieved by the implementation of measures that are cost effective and shall, for that purpose, have regard to: • The ultimate objective specified in Article 2 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change done at New York on 9 May 1992 and any mitigation commitment entered into by the European Union in response or otherwise in relation to that objective, • The policy of the Government on climate change, • Climate justice, • Any existing obligation of the State under the law of the European Union or any international agreement referred to in section 2; and • The most recent national greenhouse gas emissions inventory and projection of future greenhouse gas emissions, prepared by the Agency.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Climate Action Plans	The National Climate Action Plan 2023 provided a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting Ireland on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government and set out in the Climate Act 2021. The Climate Action Plan 2024 builds upon the 2023 Plan by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The Climate Action Plan 2025 is the third statutory annual update to the Climate Action Plan.	The Climate Action Plans list the actions needed to deliver on Ireland's climate targets and sets indicative ranges of emissions reductions for each sector of the economy. It will be updated periodically to ensure alignment with Ireland's legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings. Climate Action Plan 2025 lays out a roadmap of actions that are intended to lead to meeting the national climate objective of pursuing and achieving, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. It aligns with legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. Climate Action Plan 2025 builds upon the Climate Action Plan 2024 by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and it should be read in conjunction with Climate Action Plan 2024. The Plan provides a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and achieve climate neutrality by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024	• It is the second National Implementation Plan for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals reviews the progress made towards each of the 17 Goals.	The Plan sets out five strategic objectives and 51 actions, with 119 individual measures to increase Ireland's ambition and strengthen implementation structures to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also incorporates 23 external actions from four other National Plans or Strategies which contribute to and are complementary to the objectives of this Plan and which have been included for coherence and reporting purposes. Strategic Objective 1: To embed the SDG framework into the work of Government Departments to achieve greater Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Strategic Objective 2: To integrate the SDGs into Local Authority work to better support the localisation of the SDGs Strategic Objective 3: Greater partnerships for the Goals Strategic Objective 4: To further incorporate the principle of Leave No One Behind into Ireland's Agenda 2030 implementation and reporting mechanisms Strategic Objective 5: Strong reporting mechanisms	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan (2016-2021)	• €27 billion multi-annual Exchequer Capital Investment Plan, which is supported by a programme of capital investment in the wider State sector, and which over the period 2016 to 2021 will help to lay the foundations for continued growth in Ireland.	• This Capital Plan reflects the Government's commitment to supporting strong and sustainable economic growth and raising welfare and living standards for all. • It includes allocations for new projects across a number of key areas and funding to ensure that the present stock of national infrastructure is refreshed and maintained.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Sea-Fisheries) Regulations 2013 (S.I. 290 of 2013)	These regulations have been drafted to implement the responsibilities of the Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine in relation to sea fisheries in Natura 2000 sites, in accordance with the Habitats and Birds Directives as transposed by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011).	• Regulation 3 provides for the submission of a Fisheries Natura Plan in relation to planned fisheries; • Regulation 4 provides for a screening of a Fisheries Natura Plan to determine whether or not an appropriate assessment is required; • Regulation 5 provides for an appropriate assessment of a Fisheries Natura Plan and also provides for public and statutory consultation; • Regulation 6 provides for the Minister to make a determination to adopt a Fisheries Natura Plan. The Minister may amend, withdraw or revoke a plan; • Regulation 7 provides for publication of the adopted Fisheries Natura Plan; • Regulation 8 provides for a Risk Assessment of unplanned fisheries and also provides for public and statutory consultation on the assessment; • Regulation 9 provides for the issue of a Natura Declaration to prohibit, restrict including restricting by permit, control, etc. of sea fishing activities; • Regulation 10 provides for Natura Permits to be issued where required by Natura Declarations; and • Regulations 11 to 31 deal with functions of authorised officers and related matters, offences, etc.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Ireland's National Renewable Energy Action Plan 2010 (Irish Government submission to the European Commission)	• The National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP) sets out the Government's strategic approach and concrete measures to deliver on Ireland's 16% target under Directive 2009/28/EC.	• The NREAP sets out the Member State's national targets for the share of energy from renewable sources to be consumed in transport, electricity and heating and cooling in 2020, and demonstrates how the Member State will meet its overall national target established under the Directive.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Strategy for Renewable Energy (2012-2020)	• The Government's overarching strategic objective is to make renewable energy an increasingly significant component of Ireland's energy supply by 2020, so that at a minimum it will achieve its legally binding 2020 target in the most cost-efficient manner for consumers. • Of critical importance is the role which the renewable energy sector plays in job creation and economic activity as part of the Government's action plan for jobs.	This document sets out five strategic goals, reflecting the key dimensions of the renewable energy challenge to 2020: • Increasing on and offshore wind, • Building a sustainable bioenergy sector, • Fostering R&D in renewables such as wave & tidal, • Growing sustainable transport; and • Building out robust and efficient networks.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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National Climate Mitigation Plan 2017	• The Plan represents an initial step to set Ireland on a pathway to achieve the deep decarbonisation required in Ireland by mid-century in line with the Government's policy objectives.	The National Mitigation Plan focuses on the following issues: • Climate Action Policy Framework • Decarbonising Electricity Generation • Decarbonising the Built Environment • Decarbonising Transport • An Approach to Carbon Neutrality for Agriculture, Forest and Land Use Sectors	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Clean Air Strategy for Ireland	• The Clean Air Strategy will provide the strategic policy framework necessary to identify and promote integrated measures across government policy that are required to reduce air pollution and promote cleaner air while delivering on wider national objectives.	• Having a National Strategy will provide a policy framework by which Ireland can develop the necessary policies and measures to comply with new and emerging EU legislation. • The Strategy should also help tackle climate change. • The Strategy will consider a wider range of national policies that are relevant to clean air policy such as transport, energy, home heating and agriculture. • In any discussion relating to clean air policy, the issue of people's health is paramount and this will be a strong theme of the Strategy.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Shaping Our Electricity Future 1.1	The main objective of the Shaping Our Electricity Future Roadmap Version 1.1 is to outline how we can make the grid ready so that 80% of Ireland's and Northern Ireland's electricity can come from renewable sources, like the wind and sun, by 2030. These targets, and new limits to carbon emissions, are the product of updates to climate change policy across the island in 2022.	Key goals include: • Support the delivery of renewable electricity. • Find problems, gaps, opportunities, potential collaborations, or areas of duplication in the deployment of renewable electricity projects. • Help to find and resolve potential regulatory, administrative and/or legal barriers to the faster deployment of renewable electricity projects. • Increase alignment across the energy sector to support the delivery of renewable electricity generation projects. • Recommend appropriate investment conditions for electricity projects.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways (2018)	• The objective of this Strategy is to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenways users. • It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country over the next 10 years with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity.	• A Strategic Greenway network of national and regional routes, with a number of high capacity flagship routes that can be extended and/or link with local Greenways and other cycling and walking infrastructure; • Greenways of scale and appropriate standard that have significant potential to deliver an increase in activity tourism to Ireland and are regularly used by overseas visitors, domestic visitors and locals thereby contributing to a healthier society through increased physical activity; • Greenways that provide a substantially segregated off road experience linking places of interest, recreation and leisure in areas with beautiful scenery of different types with plenty to see and do; and • Greenways that provide opportunities for the development of local businesses and economies, and • Greenways that are developed with all relevant stakeholders in line with an agreed code of practice.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Water Resources Plan – Framework Plan	• The NWRP is a plan on how to provide a safe, secure and reliable water supply to customers for the next 25 years, without causing adverse impact on the environment. • The objective of the NWRP is to set out how we intend to maintain the supply and demand for drinking water over the short, medium and long term whilst minimising the impact on the environment. • The preparation of the NWRP has been divided into two phases, the combination of which will become the final NWRP. The NWRP Framework Plan (Phase 1) has now been adopted. Phase 2 of the NWRP (four Regional Water Resources Plans), currently in preparation, will address the needs across the 535 individual water supplies and identify the solutions to address these needs.	The key objectives of the plan are to: • Identify areas where there are current and future potential water supply shortfalls, taking into account normal and extreme weather conditions • Assess the current and future water demand from homes, businesses, farms, and industry • Consider the impacts of climate change on Ireland's water resources • Develop a drought plan advising measures to be taken before and during drought events • Develop a plan detailing how we deal with the material that is produced as a result of treating drinking water • Assess the water resources available at a national level including lakes, rivers and groundwater	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development 2030	The national plans are intended to inform investment priorities for aquaculture under Member States' operational programmes under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund. They are also intended to identify measures to reduce the administrative burden on operators, to secure sustainable development and growth of aquaculture through coordinated spatial planning, to enhance the competitiveness of the aquaculture sector and to promote a level playing field for EU operators by exploiting their competitive advantages. Ireland's National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development was finalised following public consultation earlier in 2022. The Plan was adopted by the European Commission in 2022.	• The National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development proposes 58 actions to be implemented over the period up to 2030.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan, to be varied
Construction 2020, A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector	• Construction 2020 sets out a package of measures agreed by the Government and is aimed at stimulating activity in the building industry. • The Strategy aims both to increase the capacity of the sector to create and maintain jobs, and to deliver a sustainable sector, operating at an appropriate level. It seeks to learn the lessons of the past and to ensure that the right structures and mechanisms are in place so that they are not repeated.	This Strategy therefore addresses issues including: • A strategic approach to the provision of housing, based on real and measured needs, with mechanisms in place to detect and act when things are going wrong; • Continuing improvement of the planning process, striking the right balance between current and future requirements; • The availability of financing for viable and worthwhile projects; • Access to mortgage finance on reasonable and sustainable terms; • Ensuring we have the tools we need to monitor and regulate the sector in a way that underpins public confidence and worker safety; • Ensuring a fit for purpose sector supported by a highly skilled workforce achieving high quality and standards; and • Ensuring opportunities are provided to unemployed former construction workers to contribute to the recovery of the sector.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland (1997)	• The overall aim of this Strategy is to ensure that economy and society in Ireland can develop to their full potential within a well-protected environment, without compromising the quality of that environment, and with responsibility towards present and future generations and the wider international community.	• The Strategy addresses all areas of Government policy, and of economic and societal activity, which impact on the environment. It seeks to re-orientate policies as necessary to ensure that the strong growth Ireland enjoys and seeks to maintain will be environmentally sustainable.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025 and National Landscape Character Assessment (pending preparation)	• The National Landscape Strategy 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 of the landscape by way of supporting actions. • Landscape Strategy Vision: *"Our landscape reflects and embodies our cultural values and our shared natural heritage and contributes to the well-being of our society, environment and economy. We have an obligation to ourselves and to future generations to promote its sustainable protection, management and planning."*	The objectives of the National Landscape Strategy are to: • Implement the European Landscape Convention by integrating landscape into the approach to sustainable development; • Establish and embed a public process of gathering, sharing and interpreting scientific, technical and cultural information in order to carry out evidence-based identification and description of the character, resources and processes of the landscape; • Provide a policy framework, which will put in place measures at national, sectoral - including agriculture, tourism, energy, transport and marine - and local level, together with civil society, to protect, manage and properly plan through high quality design for the sustainable stewardship of the landscape; • Ensure that we take advantage of opportunities to implement policies relating to landscape use that are complementary and mutually reinforcing and that conflicting policy objectives are avoided in as far as possible.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Hazardous Waste Management Plan (EPA) 2014-2020 and new National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2021-2027	This Plan sets out the priorities to be pursued over the next six years and beyond to improve the management of hazardous waste, taking into account the progress made since the previous plan and the waste policy and legislative changes that have occurred since the previous plan was published. Section 26 of the Waste Management Act 1996 as amended, sets out the overarching objectives for the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan. In this context, the following objectives are included as priorities for the revised Plan period: • To prevent and reduce the generation of hazardous waste by industry and society generally; • To maximise the collection of hazardous waste with a view to reducing the environmental and health impacts of any unregulated waste; • To strive for increased self-sufficiency in the management of hazardous waste and to minimise hazardous waste export; • To minimise the environmental, health, social and economic impacts of hazardous waste generation and management.	The revised Plan makes 27 recommendations under the following topics: • Prevention • Collection • Self-sufficiency • Regulation • Legacy issues • North-south cooperation • Guidance and awareness • Implementation	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Ministerial Guidelines such as Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines, Ministerial Guidelines for Architectural Heritage and Flood Risk Management Guidelines	• The Department produces a range of guidelines designed to help planning authorities, An Bord Pleanála, developers and the general public and cover a wide range of issues amongst others, architectural heritage, child care facilities, landscape, quarries and residential density.	• The Minister issues statutory guidelines under Section 28 of the Act which planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála are obliged to have regard to in the performance of their planning functions.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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HSE Healthy Ireland Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025	• The vision is: *"A Healthy Ireland, 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."*	These four goals are interlinked, interdependent and mutually supportive: • Goal 1: Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life • Goal 2: Reduce health inequalities • Goal 3: Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing • Goal 4: Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Our Sustainable Future: A framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland 2012	A medium to long term framework for advancing sustainable development and the green economy in Ireland. It identifies spatial planning as a key challenge for sustainable development and sets a series of measures to address these challenges.	• Sets out the challenges facing us and how we might address them in making sure that quality of life and general wellbeing can be improved and sustained in the decades to come.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020 (2009)	• Outlines a policy for how a sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved. • Sets out five key goals: o To reduce overall travel demand. o To maximise the efficiency of the transport network. o To reduce reliance on fossil fuels. o To reduce transport emissions. o To improve accessibility to transport.	• Others lower level aims include: o reduce distance travelled by private car and encourage smarter travel, including focusing population growth in areas of employment and to encourage people to live in close proximity to places of employment o ensuring that alternatives to the car are more widely available, mainly through a radically improved public transport service and through investment in cycling and walking o improving the fuel efficiency of motorised transport through improved fleet structure, energy efficient driving and alternative technologies o strengthening institutional arrangements to deliver the targets	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Investing in our Future: A Strategic Framework for Investment in Land Transport (SFILT) – Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	• SFILT sets out a set of priorities to guide the allocation of the State's investment to best develop and manage Ireland's land transport network over the coming decades.	The three priorities stated in SFILT are: • Priority 1: Achieve steady state maintenance (meaning that the maintenance and renewal of the existing transport system is at a sufficient level to maintain the system in an adequate condition); • Priority 2: Address urban congestion; and • Priority 3: Maximise the value of the road network. In delivering on the steady state maintenance objective set out in SFILT, the Plan includes for: • Planned replacement programme for the bus fleet operated under Public Service Obligation ("PSO") contracts; • Tram refurbishment and asset renewal in the case of light rail; and • To the extent within the Authority' remit, support for the operation of the existing rail network within the GDA.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland – The Energy Policy Framework 2007 – 2020 (2007)	• White paper setting out a framework for delivering a sustainable energy future in Ireland. • Outlines strategic Goals for: o Security of Supply o Sustainability of Energy o Competitiveness of Energy Supply	The underpinning Strategic Goals are: • Ensuring that electricity supply consistently meets demand • Ensuring the physical security and reliability of gas supplies to Ireland • Enhancing the diversity of fuels used for power generation • Delivering electricity and gas to homes and businesses over efficient, reliable and secure networks • Creating a stable attractive environment for hydrocarbon exploration and production • Being prepared for energy supply disruptions	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Adaptation Framework (NAF) 2024 and associated regional, local and sectoral adaptation plans	• NAF specifies the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different sectors and by local authorities in their administrative areas in order to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of any positive effects that may occur	• Adaptation under this Framework should seek to minimise costs and maximise the opportunities arising from climate change. • Adaptation actions range from building adaptive capacity (e.g. increasing awareness, sharing information and targeted training) through to policy and finance-based actions. • Adaptation actions must be risk based, informed by existing vulnerabilities of our society and systems and an understanding of projected climate change. • Adaptation actions taken to increase climate resilience must also consider impacts on other sectors and levels of governance	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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National Renewable Energy Action Plan (2010)	• Sets out the Member State's national targets for the share of energy from renewable sources to be consumed in transport, electricity and heating and cooling in 2020, and demonstrates how the Member State will meet its overall national target established under the Directive.	Including Ireland's 16% target of gross final consumption to come from renewables by 2020.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Ireland (2009 – 2020)	• This is the second National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Ireland.	• The Plan reviews the original 90 actions outlined in the first Plan and updates/renews/removes them as appropriate.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Wildlife Act of 1976 **Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000** **Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2023**	The act provides protection and conservation of wild flora and fauna. The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 introduced a new public sector duty on biodiversity. The legislation provides that every public body, as listed in the Act, is obliged to have regard to the objectives and targets in the National Biodiversity Action Plan.	• Provides protection for certain species, their habitats and important ecosystems • Give statutory protection to NHAs • Enhances wildlife species and their habitats • Includes more species for protection	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Actions for Biodiversity (2017-2021) Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan	• Sets out strategic objectives, targets and actions to conserve and restore Ireland's biodiversity and to prevent and reduce the loss of biodiversity in Ireland and globally.	• To mainstream biodiversity in the decision-making process across all sectors. • To substantially strengthen the knowledge base for conservation, management and sustainable use of biodiversity. • To increase awareness and appreciation of biodiversity and ecosystems services. • To conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider countryside. • To conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the marine environment. • To expand and improve on the management of protected areas and legally protected species. • To substantially strengthen the effectiveness of international governance for biodiversity and ecosystem services.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Broadband Plan (2012)	• Sets out the strategy to deliver high speed broadband throughout Ireland.	The Plan sets out: • A clear statement of Government policy on the delivery of High-Speed Broadband. • Specific targets for the delivery and rollout of high-speed broadband and the speeds to be delivered. • The strategy and interventions that will underpin the successful implementation of these targets. • A series of specific complementary measures to promote implementation of Government policy in this area.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations of 2003 (SI 722 of 2003) **European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations of 2003 (SI 350 of 2014)** **European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface waters) Regulations of 2009 (SI 272 of 2009)**	• Transpose the Water Framework Directive into legislation. • Outlines the general duty of public authorities in relation to water. • Identifies the competent authorities in charge of water policy (amended to Irish Water in 2013) and gives EPA and the CER the authority to regulate and supervise their actions.	• Implements River basin districts and characterisation of RBDs and River Basin Management Plans. • Requires the public to be informed and consulted on the Plan and for progress reports to be published on RBDs. • Implements a Register of protected areas, Classification systems and Monitoring programmes for water bodies. • Allows the competent authority to recover the cost of damage/destruction of status of water body. • Outlines environmental objectives and programme of measures and environmental quality standards for priority substances. • Outlines criteria for assessment of groundwater. • Outlines environmental objectives to be achieved for surface water bodies. • Outlines surface water quality standards. • Establishes threshold values for the classification and protection of surface waters against pollution and deterioration in quality.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations of 2010 (SI 9 of 2010)	• Transpose the requirements of the Groundwater Directive 2006/118/EC into Irish Legislation.	• Outlines environmental objectives to be achieved for groundwater bodies of groundwater against pollution and deterioration in quality. • Sets groundwater quality standards. • Outlines threshold values for the classification and protection of groundwater.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Water Pollution Acts 1977 to 1990	• The Water Pollution Acts allow Local Authorities the authority regulate and supervise actions relating to water in their division.	The Water Pollution Acts enable local authorities to: • Prosecute for water pollution offences. • Attach appropriate pollution control conditions in the licensing of effluent discharges from industry, etc., made to waters. • Issue notices ("section 12 notices") to farmers, etc., specifying measures to be taken within a prescribed period to prevent water pollution. • issue notices requiring a person to cease the pollution of waters and requiring the mitigation or remedying of any effects of the pollution in the manner and within the period specified in such notices; • Seek court orders, including High Court injunctions, to prevent, terminate, mitigate or remedy pollution/its effects. • Prepare water quality management plans for any waters in or adjoining their functional areas.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Water Services Act 2007 (No. 30 of 2007) **Water Services Act 2013 (No. 6 of 2013)** **Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013 (No. 50 of 2013)** **Water Services Act 2017 (No. 29 of 2017)** **Water Services (Amendment) Act 2022 (No. 39 of 2022)**	• Provides the water services infrastructure. • Outlines the responsibilities involved in delivering and managing water services. • Identifies the authority in charge of provision of water and waste water supply. • Irish Water was given the responsibility of the provision of water and waste water services in the amendment act during 2013, therefore these services are no longer the responsibility of the 34 Local Authorities in Ireland.	Key strategic objectives include: • Ensuring Uisce Éireann delivers infrastructural projects that meet key public health, environmental and economic objectives in the water services sector. • Ensuring the provision of adequate water and sewerage services in the gateways and hubs listed in the National Spatial Strategy, and in other locations where services need to be enhanced. • Ensuring good quality drinking water is available to all consumers of public and group water supplies, in compliance with national and EU drinking water standards • Ensuring the provision of the remaining infrastructure needed to provide secondary waste water treatment, for compliance with the requirements of the EU Urban Waste water Treatment Directive.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Irish Water's Water Services Strategic Plan 2015 and Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024	This Water Services Strategic Plan sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services over the next 25 years up to 2040. It details current and future challenges which affect the provision of water services and identifies the priorities to be tackled in the short and medium term. The Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024 is Uisce Éireann investment plan for water and wastewater assets and infrastructure for the next 5 years. The Capital Investment Plan sets out where to prioritise investment to deliver the most urgently needed improvements in drinking water quality, leakage reduction, water availability, wastewater compliance, efficiencies and customer service.	• The Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024 is made up of investment in individual projects such as building new or upgrading existing water and wastewater treatment plants and upgrading existing networks, and national programmes where activities are being delivered in a consistent and efficient manner across the country. Some examples of these programmes are the Leakage Reduction Programme, the National Disinfection Programme, the Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme, and the National Certification Authorisation Programme.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Raised Bog SAC Management Plan and Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Areas	• Aims to meet nature conservation obligations while having regard to national and local economic, social and cultural needs	• Ensure that the implications of management choices for water levels, quantity and quality are fully explored, understood and factored into policy making and land use planning. • Review the current raised bog NHA network in terms of its contribution to the national conservation objective for raised bog habitats and determine the most suitable sites to replace the losses of active raised bog habitat and high bog areas within the SAC network and to enhance the national network of NHAs.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Agri-Food Strategy 2030	This 10-year Strategy sets out four high-level "Missions" to be achieved in order to develop such a system in Ireland: 1. A Climate Smart, Environmentally Sustainable Agri-Food Sector 2. Viable and Resilient Primary Producers with Enhanced Wellbeing 3. Food that is Safe, Nutritious and Appealing, Trusted and Valued at Home and Abroad 4. An Innovative, Competitive and Resilient Sector, driven by Technology and Talent	Each of the Missions has a set of Goals which are underpinned by a series of Actions.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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Agri-vision 2015 Action Plan	Outlines the vision for agricultural industry to improve competitiveness and response to market demand while respecting and enhancing the environment	not applicable	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) **Agri-Environmental Options Scheme (AEOS)** **Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS)**	• Agri-environmental funding schemes aimed at rural development for the environmental enhancement and protection. • GLAS is the new replacement for REPS and AEOS which are both expiring.	• Establish best practice farming methods and production methods in order to protect landscapes and maximise conservation. • Protect biodiversity, endangered species of flora and fauna and wildlife habitats. • Ensure food is produced with the highest regard to the environment. • Implement nutrient management plans and grassland management plans. • Protect and maintain water bodies, wetlands and cultural heritage.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Rural Development Programme	• The National Rural Development Programme, prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, sets out a national programme based on the EU framework for rural development and prioritises improving the competitiveness of agriculture, improving the environment and improving the quality of life in rural areas	At a more detailed level, the programme also: • Supports structural change at farm level including training young farmers and encouraging early retirement, support for restructuring, development and innovation; • Aims to improve the environment, biodiversity and the amenity value of the countryside by support for land management through funds such as Natura 2000 payments etc.; and • Aims to improve quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity through the implementation of local development strategies such as non-agricultural activities	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Ireland's Forest Strategy 2023-2030 and associated Implementation Plan including the National Forestry Programme 2023-2027	The Implementation Plan will facilitate the initial steps in the implementation of the Strategy on the road to achieving the Shared Vision for 2050. The Implementation Plan includes the new Forestry Programme (2023 – 2027), which will be the primary implementation mechanism for the Forest Strategy. The Plan also includes a list of actions that will be funded and enabled by mechanisms outside of the Forestry Programme.	The Forestry Programme 2023-2027 was created in alignment with Ireland's Forest Strategy and is designed to provide lasting benefits for many key areas including climate change, biodiversity, wood production, and employment alongside enhancing societal benefits. The Forestry Programme will provide incentives for farmers and other landowners and will provide farm families with the opportunity to increase and diversify their income streams.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027 3rd Cycle [in preparation]	This draft River Basin Management Plan sets out the measures that are necessary to protect and restore water quality in Ireland. The overall aim of the plan is to ensure that our natural waters are sustainably managed and that freshwater resources are protected so as to maintain and improve Ireland's water environment.	The River Basin Management Plan sets out the measures necessary to protect and improve the quality of Ireland's waters. These plans are prepared in 6-year cycles, during which a programme of measures must be implemented so as to achieve water quality objectives. Good water quality contributes to protecting human health by improving the quality of drinking water sources and bathing waters.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Peatlands Strategy (2015-2025)	This Strategy aims to provide a long-term framework within which all of the peatlands within the State can be managed responsibly in order to optimise their social, environmental and economic contribution to the well-being of this and future generations.	Objectives of the Strategy: • To give direction to Ireland's approach to peatland management. • To apply to all peatlands, including peat soils. • To ensure that the relevant State authorities and state-owned companies that influence such decisions contribute to meeting cross-cutting objectives and obligations in their policies and actions. • To ensure that Ireland's peatlands are sustainably managed so that their benefits can be enjoyed responsible. • To inform appropriate regulatory systems to facilitate good decision making in support of responsible use. • To inform the provision of appropriate incentives, financial supports and disincentives where required.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan, to be varied
Flood Risk Management Plans arising from National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme	• The national Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme commenced in Ireland in 2011 and is being overseen by the Office of Public Works. The CFRAM Programme is intended to deliver on core components of the National Flood Policy, adopted in 2004, and on the requirements of the EU Floods Directive.	CFRAM Studies have been undertaken for all River Basin Districts. The studies are focusing on areas known to have experienced flooding in the past and areas that may be subject to flooding in the future either due to development pressures or climate change. Flood Risk and Hazard mapping, including Flood Extent Mapping, was finalised in 2017. The final outputs from the studies are the CFRAM Plans, finalised in 2018. The Plans define the current and future flood risk in the River Basin Districts and set out how this risk can be managed.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Draft National Bioenergy Plan 2014 - 2020	The Draft Bioenergy Plan sets out a vision as follows: • Bioenergy resources contributing to economic development and sustainable growth, generating jobs for citizens, supported by coherent policy, planning and regulation, and managed in an integrated manner.	Three high level goals, of equal importance, based on the concept of sustainable development are identified: • To harness the market opportunities presented by bioenergy in order to achieve economic development, growth and jobs. • To increase awareness of the value, opportunities and societal benefits of developing bioenergy. • To ensure that bioenergy developments do not adversely impact the environment and its living and non-living resources.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023-2025	• The plan has a high focus on bringing sustainable scientific practices, technologies and biobased innovation and solutions into use on farms and by biobased industries in Ireland. • The plan recognises that the bioeconomy is crucial for decarbonisation, sustainability and circularity, while also providing an impetus to competitiveness and rural and regional development and employment.	Includes 33 actions to accelerate support for the development of the bioeconomy.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Draft Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework (DCCAE) 2016	Goal: To optimise the opportunities in Ireland for renewable electricity development on land at significant scale, to serve both the All Island Single Electricity Market and any future regional market within the European Union, in accordance with European and Irish law, including Directive 2009/28/EC: On the promotion of the use of energy from renewable resources.	Objective: To develop a Policy and Development Framework for renewable electricity generation on land to serve both the All Island Single Electricity Market and any future regional market within the European Union, with particular focus on large scale projects for indigenous renewable electricity generation. This will, inter alia, provide guidance for planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for the Transport Sector (DTTAS) 2017- 2030	This Framework sets targets to achieve an appropriate level of alternative fuels infrastructure for transport, which is relative to national policy and Irish market needs. Non-infrastructure-based incentives to support the use of the infrastructure and the uptake of alternative fuels are also included within the scope of the Framework.	Targets for alternative fuel infrastructure include the following: • AFV forecasts • Electricity targets • Natural gas (CNG, LNG) targets • Hydrogen targets • Biofuels targets • LPG targets • Synthetic and paraffinic fuels targets	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Food Wise 2025 (DAFM)	Food Wise 2025 sets out a ten-year plan for the agri-food sector. It underlines the sector's unique and special position within the Irish economy, and it illustrates the potential which exists for this sector to grow even further.	Food Wise 2025 identifies ambitious and challenging growth projections for the industry over the next ten years including: • 85% increase in exports to €19 billion. • 70% increase in value added to €13 billion. • 60% increase in primary production to €10 billion. • The creation of 23,000 additional jobs all along the supply chain from producer level to high-end value-added product development.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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National Cycle Network Plan Report 2023	• Outlines objectives and actions aimed at developing a strong cycle network in Ireland • Sets out 19 specific objectives, and details the 109 actions, aimed at ensuring that a cycling culture is developed	• Sets a target where 10% of all journeys will be made by bike by 2020 • Proposes the planning, infrastructure, communication, education and stakeholder participations measures required to implement the initiative	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland 2017 to 2030	• This National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport represents the first step in communicating our longer-term national vision for decarbonising transport by 2050, the cornerstone of which is our ambition that by 2030 all new cars and vans sold in Ireland will be zero-emissions capable. • By 2030 it is envisaged that the movement in Ireland to electrically-fuelled cars and commuter rail will be well underway, with natural gas and biofuels developing as major alternatives in the freight and bus sectors.	This policy set out to achieve five key goals in transport: • Reduce overall travel demand • Maximise the efficiency of the transport network • Reduce reliance on fossil fuels • Reduce transport emissions • Improve accessibility to transport These goals remain the cornerstone of transport policy and are fully aligned to the objectives of this National Policy Framework.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021	The Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 sets out actions that the Tourism Leadership Group has identified as priorities to be progressed until 2021 in order to maintain sustainable growth in overseas tourism revenue and employment. Each action involves specific tourism stakeholders, both in the public and private sectors, all of whom we expect to proactively work towards the completion of actions within the specified timeframe.	The Plan contains 27 actions focusing on the following areas: • Policy Context • Marketing Ireland as a Visitor Destination • Enhancing the Visitor Experience • Research in the Irish Tourism Sector • Supporting Local Communities in Tourism • Wider Government Policy • International Context • Co-ordination Structures	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Tourism Policy Statement: People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025	The main goal of this policy statement is to have a vibrant, attractive tourism sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country; is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; helps promote a positive image of Ireland overseas, and is a sector in which people want to work.	The Tourism Policy Statement sets three headline targets to be achieved by 2025: • Overseas tourism revenue of €5 billion per year • net of inflation excluding carrier receipts; • 250,000 people employed in tourism; and • 10 million overseas visitors to Ireland per year.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Draft Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework (DCCAE)	Goal: To optimise the opportunities in Ireland for renewable electricity development on land at significant scale, to serve both the All Island Single Electricity Market and any future regional market within the European Union, in accordance with European and Irish law, including Directive 2009/28/EC: On the promotion of the use of energy from renewable resources.	Objective: To develop a Policy and Development Framework for renewable electricity generation on land to serve both the All Island Single Electricity Market and any future regional market within the European Union, with particular focus on large scale projects for indigenous renewable electricity generation. This will, inter alia, provide guidance for planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála. Methodology: Development of the Policy and Development Framework is to be informed by the carrying out of an SEA, including widespread consultation with stakeholders and public, and with AA under the Habitats Directive.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
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All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025	The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is an island-wide attempt to reverse declines in pollinating insects to ensure the sustainability of our food, avoid additional economic impacts on agriculture, and protect the health of the environment. The main objectives include: • Making farmland, public land and private land in Ireland pollinator friendly; • Raising awareness of pollinators and how to protect them; • Managed pollinators – supporting beekeepers and growers; • Expanding our knowledge of pollinators and pollination service; and • Collecting evidence to track change and measure success.	This voluntary Plan identified 81 actions, shared out between over 100 governmental and non-governmental organisations. A large focus of the Plan is to identify actions to improve the quality and amount of flower-rich habitat. Actions range from creating pollinator highways along our transport routes, to supporting pollinators on farmland, in gardens, businesses, and on public land.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
National Marine Planning Framework 2021	The National Marine Planning Framework brings together all marine-based human activities for the first time, outlining the government's vision, objectives and marine planning policies for each marine activity. The Framework details how these marine activities will interact with each other in an ocean space that is under increasing spatial pressure, ensuring the sustainable use of our marine resources to 2040.	The NMPF is intended as the marine equivalent to the National Planning Framework. This approach will enable the Government to: • set a clear direction for managing our seas; • clarify objectives and priorities; and • direct decision makers, users and stakeholders towards strategic, plan-led, and efficient use of our marine resources.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
UK Marine Policy Statement and the Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland. UK Marine Policy Statement and the Draft Marine Plan for Northern provide the policy framework for both planning and marine licensing authorities in making their decisions	• Achieving a sustainable marine economy • Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society • Living within environmental limits • Promoting good governance • Using sound science responsibly	The MPS will facilitate and support the formulation of Marine Plans, ensuring that marine resources are used in a sustainable way in line with the high-level marine objectives and thereby: • Promote sustainable economic development; • Enable the UK's move towards a low-carbon economy, in order to mitigate the causes of • climate change and ocean acidification and adapt to their effects; • Ensure a sustainable marine environment which promotes healthy, functioning marine ecosystems and protects marine habitats, species and heritage assets; and • Contribute to the societal benefits of the marine area, including the sustainable use of marine resources to address local social and economic issues	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009	Aims to provide the legal mechanism to help ensure clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas by putting in place a new system for improved management and protection of the marine and coastal environment.	This Act comprises eight key elements: • Marine Management Organisation (MMO) • Strategic Marine Planning System • Streamlined Marine Licensing System • Marine Nature Conservation • Fisheries Management and Marine Enforcement • Migratory and Freshwater Fisheries • Coastal Access • Coastal and Estuarine Management	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013	Aims to provide for marine plans in relation to the Northern Ireland inshore region; to provide for marine conservation zones in that region; to make further provision in relation to marine licensing for certain electricity works in that region; and for connected purposes.	This Act sets out a new framework for Northern Ireland's seas based on: a system of marine planning that will balance conservation, energy and resource needs; improved management for marine nature conservation and the streamlining of marine licensing for some electricity projects. The main provisions of the Act are outlined below: • Marine Planning • Nature Conservation • Marine Licensing	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) NI	The SPPS consolidates some twenty separate policy publications into one document and sets out strategic subject planning policy for a wide range of planning matters. It also provides the core planning principles to underpin delivery of the two-tier planning system with the aim of furthering sustainable development.	The overall objective of the planning system is to further sustainable development and improve well-being for the people of the North.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024-2030	The Regional Waste Management Planning Offices, under the auspices of the County and City Management Association National Oversight Group, have co-ordinated the preparation of this plan which is the first National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy. This Plan sets out a framework for the prevention and management of waste in Ireland for the period 2024 to 2030.	The Plan seeks to influence sustainable consumption and prevent the generation of waste, improve the capture of materials to optimise circularity and enable compliance with policy and legislation.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Regional/ County/Local Level			
Northern and Western Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy 2020-2032	The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy provides a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the Northern and Western Region in order to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework.	The Northern and Western Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy includes provisions for its nine constituent local authorities: Donegal County Council; Leitrim County Council; Cavan County Council; Monaghan County Council; Roscommon County Council; Mayo County Council; Sligo County Council; Galway City Council; Galway County Council.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Integrated Implementation Plan 2019-2024	The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035, which established an overall framework for transport investment over the next two decades and was subject to full SEA and Stage 2 AA, is a key policy shaping the six-year Integrated Infrastructure Plan. The priorities in the Integrated Infrastructure Plan align with the objectives and priorities set out in the Transport Strategy, focused on improving public and sustainable transport.	The Implementation Plan identifies investment proposals for a number of areas including: • Bus; • Light Rail; • Heavy Rai; • Integration Measures and Sustainable Transport Investment; • Integrated Service Plan; and • Integration and Accessibility.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Regional Development Strategy 2035 (Northern Ireland)	• Spatial strategy for the future development of Northern Ireland. Strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide public and private sectors.	• Aims to provide long-term policy direction with a strategic spatial perspective.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
NI Regional Landscape Character Assessment	In recognising the importance of sustaining local identity, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has commissioned Landscape Character Assessments of Northern Ireland from environmental consultants, which resulted in the identification of distinct character areas within Northern Ireland.	• The Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment provides a strategic overview of the landscape in Northern Ireland and subdivides the countryside into 26 Regional Landscape Character Areas based upon information on people and place and the combinations of nature, culture and perception which make each part of Northern Ireland unique.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
NI Regional Seascape Character Assessment	The aim of this study is to provide a strategic understanding of different areas of regional seascape character along the entire Northern Ireland coast, complementing similar assessments undertaken elsewhere in the UK. This will contribute to the aims of the European Landscape Convention through promoting the protection, management and planning of the seascape, and to support the European cooperation in landscape issues.	• Identify and map the different regional seascape character areas. • Describe the key features and characteristics of each seascape character area. • Relate the description of each seascape character area to its neighbouring terrestrial landscape character areas (as described in the NI Landscape Character Assessment, 2000) and take account of boundaries identified in relation to neighbouring seascape areas for the British and Irish coastline.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

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NPWS Conservation Plans and/or Conservation Objectives for SACs and SPAs	Management planning for nature conservation sites has a number of aims. These include: • To identify and evaluate the features of interest for a site • To set clear objectives for the conservation of the features of interest • To describe the site and its management • To identify issues (both positive and negative) that might influence the site To set out appropriate strategies/management actions to achieve the objectives	• Conservation objectives for SACs and SPAs (i.e. sites within the Natura 2000 network) have to be set for the habitats and species for which the sites are selected. • These objectives are used when carrying out appropriate assessments for plans and projects that might impact on these sites.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Groundwater Protection Schemes	A Groundwater Protection Scheme provides guidelines for the planning and licensing authorities in carrying out their functions, and a framework to assist in decision-making on the location, nature and control of developments and activities in order to protect groundwater.	A Groundwater Protection Scheme aims to maintain the quantity and quality of groundwater, and in some cases improve it, by applying a risk assessment-based approach to groundwater protection and sustainable development.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030 and other Land Use Plans in force within Donegal and in other adjoining planning authorities. This includes Development Plans, Local Area Plans and Planning Schemes.	• Outline planning objectives for land use development. • Strategic framework for planning and sustainable development including those set out in National Planning Framework and Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies. • Set out the policies and proposals to guide development in the specific Local Authority area.	• Identify future infrastructure, development and zoning required. • Protect and enhances amenities and environment. • Guide planning authority in assessing proposals. • Aim to guide development in the area and the amount of nature of the planned development. • Aim to promote sustainable development. • Provide for economic development and protect natural environmental, heritage.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Donegal Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2029	The Strategy's Vision is: Donegal – a Diverse, Natural, Authentic outdoors for all.	The Strategy's Mission is: To provide an authentic outdoor recreation experience for all to enjoy while protecting our unique and diverse landscapes and waterscapes, developed and nurtured in respectful partnership and working together to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits for our local communities and visitors.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Donegal Tourism Strategy 2025	Donegal County Council's Tourism Strategy 2025 aims to foster sustainable and regenerative tourism growth that not only bolsters the local economy but also enhances the social, cultural, and environmental fabric of Donegal.	By prioritizing sustainability, community engagement, and collaboration, Donegal is setting a positive benchmark for other regions striving to develop tourism in a responsible and impactful manner.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Emerging Biodiversity Action Plan for County Donegal 2025	Aims to protect, conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services across all spectrums.	• Outlines the status of biodiversity and identifies species of importance. • Outlines objectives and targets to be met to maintain and improve biodiversity. • Aims to increase awareness.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan, to be varied
County Donegal Heritage Plan 2023-2030	The County Donegal Heritage Plan provides the basis for the identification, investigation, interpretation, promotion, preservation, conservation and enhancement of County Donegal's built, cultural and natural heritage, and sets out a strategy for the management of heritage resources and landscapes in a sustainable manner.	The County Donegal Heritage Plan identifies a list of actions which will be taken to achieve its strategic aims and objectives. The County Donegal Heritage Plan has identified heritage issues and needs in the county and aims to address them locally, within a regional and national framework. The County Donegal Heritage Plan addresses priorities set out in Cultúr Le Chéile - Strategic Plan for Culture Division 2022-2026, Donegal County Council and in Our Place in Time - Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023-2028.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
The Clochán Liath Town Centre Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan 2022	Builds on an ambition and vision for the town to realize its full potential as a magnet that draws and keeps people there.	Includes the An Clochán Liath Town Centre Masterplan.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Killybegs Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan the	The purpose of the Plan was to identify the key priorities and actions in supporting the sustainable regeneration of the town up to 2040 and beyond has been taken into account in the preparation of the Proposed Variation.	The Action Plan is regeneration focused and considers key thematic areas: maritime heritage and infrastructure, natural and built heritage, community provision, tourism, conservation, regeneration sites, commercial/economic development opportunities, parking, access, and recreation.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme	The Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme which aims to reduce and manage flood risk effectively.	Outlines strategies for sustainable long-term management of flood risk, including investment in flood relief schemes and other policy measures. Additionally, the Floods Directive requires the preparation of catchment-based Flood Risk Management Plans to set out objectives and actions for flood risk management.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
The All-Island Strategic Rail Review	The All-Island Strategic Rail Review aims to enhance and expand the rail system across Ireland and Northern Ireland with 32 strategic recommendations for development up to 2050.	The All-Island Strategic Rail Review was jointly commissioned by the Department of Transport in Ireland and the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland. Its primary goal is to create a strategic vision for the rail system that supports sustainable transport, enhances connectivity, and aligns with net carbon zero commitments in both jurisdictions. The review emphasizes the importance of rail as a backbone for a high-quality transport system that benefits communities and the economy.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
December 2013 the European parliament adopted Regulation (EU) No.315/2013 on Guidelines for the development of the Trans European Transport Network (Ten-T), (amended in 2014 to include supplementary maps (EU) No.473/2014)	The Guidelines set out that member states shall "take appropriate measures" to complete their core network by 2030; the maps associated with the Regulations show the core network corridors of the TEN-T extending from Dublin to Belfast, and Dublin to Cork only.	Nationally, as a result of the directive, parts of the N13 (including the Letterkenny to Bridgend section), N14 and N15 have also been identified as part of the TEN-T network	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

Legislation, Plan, etc.	Summary of high-level aim/ purpose/ objective	Summary of lower level objectives, actions etc.	Relevance to the Plan, to be varied
County Donegal Landscape Character Assessment (2002)	Characterises the geographical dimension of the landscape.	• Identifies the quality, value, sensitivity and capacity of the landscape area. • Guides strategies and guidelines for the future development of the landscape.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Donegal Noise Action Plan 2024-2028	Noise Action Plans are prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006, Statutory Instrument 140 of 2006. These Regulations give effect to the EU Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise. This Directive sets out a process for managing environmental noise in a consistent manner across the EU and the Noise Regulations set out the approach to meeting the requirements of the Directive in Ireland.	The purpose of Noise Action Plans is to inform and consult the public about noise exposure, its effects and the measures which may be considered to address noise problems Address strategic noise issues by requiring competent authorities to draw up action plans to manage noise issues and their effects Reduce noise, where possible, and maintain the environmental acoustic quality where it is good.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Donegal County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029	Under the National Climate Action Plan 2023, Donegal County Council is required to prepare a locally specific climate action plan for their administrative areas. Once adopted, the plan will be valid for five years, and is subject to update at least every five years. Donegal County Council's Climate Action Plan was adopted in February 2024 and will contribute towards addressing the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, climate change adaptation, and strengthening the alignment between national climate policy and the delivery of local climate action.	Through the development and implementation of specific, action-focused, time-bound and measurable actions, local authority climate action plans will: • Provide a strong emphasis on a place-based approach to climate action, delivering a better understanding of greenhouse gas emissions and climate-related risks at a local level, while addressing context-specific conditions and support for locally tailored policy making. • Deliver and promote evidence-based and integrated climate action by way of adaptation and mitigation measures, centred around a strong understanding of the role and remit of the local authority on climate action. • Translate and provide strategic direction at local and community levels on the delivery of the national climate objective which is seeking to curb further global warming and to transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by no later than the end of 2050.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Fáilte Ireland Tourism plans and strategies, including those relating to the Wild Atlantic Way	Fáilte Ireland's work includes preparing various plans and strategies for Ireland's Ancient East and other brands and initiatives. These plans are subject to their own environmental assessment processes and any project arising is required to be consistent with and conform with the provisions of all adopted/approved Statutory Policies, Strategies, Plans and Programmes, including provisions for the protection and management of the environment.	Some of Fáilte Ireland's plans and strategies include various projects relating to land use and infrastructural development, including those relating to development of land or on land and the carrying out of land use activities. Many of these projects exist already while some are not currently in existence. The Statutory Policies, Strategies, Plans and Programmes that provide for different projects undergo a variety of environmental assessments. These assessments ensure that environmental effects are considered, including: those arising from new and intensified uses and activities; and those arising from various sectors such as tourism.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.
Various existing, planned and emerging projects provided for by the above plans and programmes	These projects have been provided for by higher-level plans and programmes.	These projects will contribute towards the development of the area to which the Plan relates and/or wider area and will contribute towards environmental protection and management.	Where new land use developments or activities occur as a result of this legislation, plan, programme, etc., individually or in combination with others, potential in-combination effects may arise. Implementation of the Plan to be varied to comply with all environmental legislation and align with and cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies and their plans etc. – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management.

Appendix II Further Environmental Baseline Detail

SACs (53) and SPAs (27) sites within 15 km from the area to which the Proposed Variation relates		
Site Code	**Site Name**	**Sensitive Features**
000111	Aran Island (Donegal) Cliffs SAC	Sensitive features comprise: vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; European dry heaths; Alpine and Boreal heaths; calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation; siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation; and submerged or partially submerged sea caves.
000115	Ballintra SAC	Sensitive features comprise: European dry heaths; and limestone pavements.
000116	Ballyarr Wood SAC	Sensitive features comprise: old sessile oak woodlands with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles.
000129	Croaghonagh Bog SAC	Sensitive features comprise blanket bogs.
000133	Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC	Sensitive features comprise: mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; dunes with *Salix repens ssp. argentea*; humid dune slacks; and harbour seal.
000138	Durnesh Lough SAC	Sensitive features comprise: coastal lagoons; and *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils.
000140	Fawnboy Bog/Lough Nacung SAC	Sensitive features comprise: Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; blanket bogs; depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*; and freshwater pearl mussel.
000142	Gannivegil Bog SAC	Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; and blanket bogs.
000147	Horn Head and Rinclevan SAC	Sensitive features comprise: embryonic shifting dunes; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; dunes with *Salix repens ssp. argentea*; humid dune slacks; machairs; oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*; Geyer's Whorl Snail; grey seal; petalwort; and slender naiad.
000154	Inishtrahull SAC	Sensitive features comprise vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts.
000163	Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC	Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains; petrifying springs with *tufa* formation; old sessile oak woodlands with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles; freshwater pearl mussel; salmon; and Killarney Fern.
000164	Lough Nagreany Dunes SAC	Sensitive features comprise: embryonic shifting dunes; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; decalcified fixed dunes with *Empetrum nigrum*; Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes; dunes with *Salix repens ssp. argentea*; humid dune slacks; machairs; oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*; and slender naiad.
000165	Lough Nillan Bog (Carrickatlieve) SAC	Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains; and blanket bogs.
000168	Magheradrumman Bog SAC	Sensitive features comprise: Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; and blanket bogs.
000172	Meenaguse/Ardbane Bog SAC	Sensitive features comprise blanket bogs.
000173	Meentygrannagh Bog SAC	Sensitive features comprise: blanket bogs; transition mires and quaking bogs; alkaline fens; and slender green feather-moss.
000181	Rathlin O'Birne Island SAC	Sensitive features comprise reefs.
000185	Sessiagh Lough SAC	Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*; and slender naiad.
000189	Slieve League SAC	Sensitive features comprise: reefs; vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; European dry heaths; Alpine and Boreal heaths; *Hydrophilous* tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels; blanket bogs; siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels; calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation; and siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation.
000190	Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC	Sensitive features comprise: vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; Atlantic salt meadows; Mediterranean salt meadows; embryonic shifting dunes; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; decalcified fixed dunes with *Empetrum nigrum*; Atlantic decalcified dunes; dunes with *Salix repens ssp. argentea*; humid dune slacks; Alpine and Boreal heaths; blanket bogs; narrow-mouthed whorl snail; otter; and grey seal.
000191	St. John's Point SAC	Sensitive features comprise: large shallow inlets and bays; reefs; vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; semi-natural dry grasslands with scrubland facies on calcareous substrates; *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils; Alkaline fens; limestone pavements; submerged or partially submerged sea caves; marsh fritillary; and common bottlenose dolphin.
000194	Tranarossan and Melmore Lough SAC	Sensitive features comprise: mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; annual vegetation of drift lines; perennial vegetation of stony banks; vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; embryonic shifting dunes; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; decalcified fixed dunes with *Empetrum nigrum*; dunes with *Salix repens ssp. argentea*; humid dune slacks; machairs; hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of *Chara spp.*; European dry heaths; Alpine and boreal heaths; and petalwort.
000197	West of Ardara/Maas Road SAC	Sensitive features comprise: estuaries; mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; large shallow inlets and bays; annual vegetation of drift lines; Atlantic salt meadows; Mediterranean salt meadows; embryonic shifting dunes; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; decalcified fixed dunes with *Empetrum nigrum*; Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes; dunes with *Salix repens ssp. argentea*; humid dune slacks; machairs; oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains; oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; European dry heaths; alpine and boreal dry heaths; *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands; semi-natural dry grasslands with scrubland facies on calcareous substrates; *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils; lowland hay meadows; blanket bogs; depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*; alkaline fens; Geyer's whorl snail; freshwater pearl mussel; marsh fritillary; salmon; otter; harbour seal; petalwort; and slender naiad.
000428	Lough Melvin SAC	Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*; *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils; salon; and otter.
000623	Ben Bulben, Gleniff and Glenade Complex SAC	Sensitive features comprise: water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; European dry heaths; alpine and boreal heaths; *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands; semi-natural dry grasslands with scrubland facies on calcareous substrates; species-rich *Nardus*

		grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas; *Hydrophiloustall* herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels; blanket bogs; transition mires and quaking bogs; petrifying springs with tufa formation; alkaline fens; siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels; calcareous rocky slopes with *chasmophytic* vegetation; Geyer's whorl snail; and otter.
000625	Bunduff Lough and Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore SAC	Sensitive features comprise: mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; large shallow inlets and bays; reefs; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; humid dune slacks; machairs; *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands; semi-natural dry grasslands with scrubland facies on calcareous substrates; alkaline fens; marsh fritillary; harbour porpoise; and petalwort.
001090	Ballyness Bay SAC	Sensitive features comprise: estuaries; mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; embryonic shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; humid dune slacks; and Geyer's whorl snail.
001107	Coolvoy Bog SAC	Sensitive features comprise blanket bogs.
001125	Dunragh Loughs/Pettigo Plateau SAC	Sensitive features comprise: Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; and blanket bogs.
001141	Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC	Sensitive features comprise: coastal lagoons; reefs; perennial vegetation of stony banks; vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; Atlantic salt meadows; Mediterranean salt meadows; embryonic shifting dunes; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; decalcified fixed dunes with *Empetrum nigrum*; Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes; dunes with *Salix repens ssp. argentea*; humid dune slacks; machairs; oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*; European dry heaths; alpine and boreal heaths; *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands; otter; petalwort; and slender naiad.
001151	Kindrum Lough SAC	Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*; and slender naiad.
001179	Muckish Mountain SAC	Sensitive features comprise: alpine and boreal heaths; and siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation.
001190	Sheephaven SAC	Sensitive features comprise: mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; annual vegetation of drift lines; vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand; Atlantic salt meadows; Mediterranean salt meadows; embryonic shifting dunes; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; humid dune slacks; machairs; old sessile oak woodlands with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles; marsh fritillary; and petalwort.
001195	Termon Strand SAC	Sensitive features comprise coastal lagoons.
001403	Arroo Mountain SAC	Sensitive features comprise: Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; European dry heaths; alpine and boreal heaths; blanket bogs; petrifying springs with tufa formation; calcareous and calcschist screes of the montane to alpine levels; and calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation.
001680	Streedagh Point Dunes SAC	Sensitive features comprise: mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; perennial vegetation of stony banks; Atlantic salt meadows; Mediterranean salt meadows; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; and narrow-mouthed whorl snail.
001880	Meenaguse Scragh SAC	Sensitive features comprise Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*.
001919	Glenade Lough SAC	Sensitive features comprise: natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition* - type vegetation; white-clawed crayfish; and slender naiad.
001975	Ballyhoorisky Point to Fanad Head SAC	Sensitive features comprise: perennial vegetation of stony banks; vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*; hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of *Chara spp.*; narrow-mouthed whorl snail; and slender naiad.
001976	Lough Gill SAC	Sensitive features comprise: natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition* - type vegetation; semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates; old sessile oak woodlands with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles; alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*; white-clawed crayfish; sea lamprey; brook lamprey; river lamprey; salmon; and otter.
001992	Tamur Bog SAC	Sensitive features comprise: Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; blanket bogs; and depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*.
002012	North Inishowen Coast SAC	Sensitive features comprise: mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; perennial vegetation of stony banks; vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; machairs; European dry heaths; narrow-mouthed whorl snail; and otter.
002047	Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC	Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains; water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; European dry heaths; alpine and boreal heaths; *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils; blanket bogs; depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*; old sessile oak woodlands with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles; freshwater pearl mussel; salmon; otter; and Killarney fern.
002135	Lough Nageage SAC	Sensitive features comprise white-clawed crayfish.
002159	Mulroy Bay SAC	Sensitive features comprise: mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; large shallow inlets and bays; reefs; and otter.
002164	Lough Golagh and Breesy Hill SAC	Sensitive features comprise blanket bogs.
002176	Leannan River SAC	Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains; oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*; freshwater pearl mussel; salmon; otter; and slender naiad.
002259	Tory Island Coast SAC	Sensitive features comprise: coastal lagoons; reefs; perennial vegetation of stony banks; vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; and submerged or partially submerged sea caves.
002283	Rutland Island and Sound SAC	Sensitive features comprise: coastal lagoons; large shallow inlets and bays; reefs; annual vegetation of drift lines; embryonic shifting dunes; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; humid dune slacks; and harbour seal.
002287	Lough Swilly SAC	Sensitive features comprise: estuaries; coastal lagoons; Atlantic salt meadows; *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils; old sessile oak woodlands with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles; harbour porpoise; and otter.
002301	River Finn SAC	Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; blanket bogs; transition mires and quaking bogs; salmon; and otter.
002303	Dunmuckrum Turloughs SAC	Sensitive features comprise turloughs.
002999	Hempton's Turbot Bank SAC	Sensitive features comprise sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time.
004034	Trawbreaga Bay SPA	Sensitive features comprise: barnacle goose; light-bellied brent goose; chough; and wetland and waterbirds.

004039	Derryveagh And Glendowan Mountains SPA	Sensitive features comprise: red-throated diver; merlin; peregrine; golden plover; and dunlin.
004057	Lough Derg (Donegal) SPA	Sensitive features comprise: lesser black-backed gull; and herring gull.
004060	Lough Fern SPA	Sensitive features comprise: pochard; and wetland and waterbirds.
004073	Tory Island SPA	Sensitive features comprise: fulmar; corncrake; razorbill; and puffin.
004075	Lough Swilly SPA	Sensitive features comprise: great crested grebe; grey heron; whooper swan; greylag goose; shelduck; teal; mallard; scaup; goldeneye; red-breasted merganser; coot; oystercatcher; knot; dunlin; curlew; redshank; greenshank; black-headed gull; common gull; common tern; Greenland white-fronted goose; wigeon; shoveler; sandwich tern; and wetland and waterbirds.
004082	Greers Isle SPA	Sensitive features comprise: black-headed gull; common gull; and sandwich tern.
004083	Inishbofin, Inishdooey and Inishbeg SPA	Sensitive features comprise: barnacle goose; corncrake; common gull; lesser black-backed gull; and arctic tern.
004087	Lough Foyle SPA	Sensitive features comprise: red-throated diver; great crested grebe; bewick's swan; whooper swan; greylag goose; light-bellied brent goose; shelduck; teal; mallard; eider; red-breasted merganser; oystercatcher; golden plover; lapwing; knot; dunlin; bar-tailed godwit; curlew; redshank; black-headed gull; common gull; herring gull; wigeon; and wetland and waterbirds.
004090	Sheskinmore Lough SPA	Sensitive features comprise Greenland white-fronted goose.
004099	Pettigo Plateau Nature Reserve SPA	Sensitive features comprise Greenland white-fronted goose.
004100	Inishtrahull SPA	Sensitive features comprise: shag; barnacle goose; and common gull.
004110	Lough Nillan Bog SPA	Sensitive features comprise: merlin; golden plover; Greenland white-fronted goose; and dunlin.
004115	Inishduff SPA	Sensitive features comprise shag.
004116	Inishkeel SPA	Sensitive features comprise barnacle goose.
004120	Rathlin O'Birne Island SPA	Sensitive features comprise barnacle goose.
004121	Roaninish SPA	Sensitive features comprise: barnacle goose; and herring gull.
004132	Illancrone and Inishkeeragh SPA	Sensitive features comprise; barnacle goose; common tern; arctic tern; and little tern.
004145	Durnesh Lough SPA	Sensitive features comprise: whooper swan; and Greenland white-fronted goose.
004146	Malin Head SPA	Sensitive features comprise corncrake.
004148	Fanad Head SPA	Sensitive features comprise corncrake.
004149	Falcarragh to Meenlaragh SPA	Sensitive features comprise corncrake.
004150	West Donegal Coast SPA	Sensitive features comprise: fulmar; cormorant; shag; peregrine; herring gull; kittiwake; razorbill; and chough.
004151	Donegal Bay SPA	Sensitive features comprise: great Northern diver; light-bellied brent goose; common scoter; sanderling; and wetland and waterbirds.
004187	Sligo/Leitrim Uplands SPA	Sensitive features comprise: peregrine; and chough.
004194	Horn Head to Fanad Head SPA	Sensitive features comprise: fulmar; cormorant; shag; barnacle goose; peregrine; kittiwake; guillemot; razorbill; chough; and Greenland white-fronted goose.
004230	West Donegal Islands SPA	Sensitive features comprise: shag; barnacle goose; corncrake; common gull; and herring gull.

UK National Site Network SACs (15) and SPAs (2) designated within 15km from the area to which the Proposed Variation relates			
Site Code	**Site Name**	**Site Code**	**Site Name**
UK0016607	Pettigoe Plateau NI SAC	UK0030233	Owenkillew River NI SAC
UK0016611	Fairy Water Bogs NI SAC	UK0030300	West Fermanagh Scarplands NI SAC
UK0016613	Magilligan NI SAC	UK0030320	River Foyle and Tributaries NI SAC
UK0016619	Monawilkin NI SAC	UK0030360	River Roe and Tributaries NI SAC
UK0030045	Largalinny NI SAC	UK0030361	River Faughan and Tributaries NI SAC
UK0030047	Lough Melvin NI SAC	UK0030383	Skerries and Causeway NI SAC
UK0030084	Bann Estuary NI SAC	UK9020031	Lough Foyle ni spa
UK0030089	Binevenagh NI SAC	UK9020051	Pettigoe Plateau NI SPA
UK0030211	Moneygal Bog NI SAC		

NHAs (16) and pNHAs (85) within 15km from the area to which the Proposed Variation relates							
Site Code	**Site Name**	**Site Code**	**Site Name**	**Site Code**	**Site Name**	**Site Code**	**Site Name**
000122	Cashelnavean Bog NHA	000142	Gannivegil Bog	000197	West Of Ardara/Maas Road	001176	Cronaguiggy Bog
000151	Inishduff NHA	000146	Greer's Island (Massmount), Mulroy Bay	000428	Lough Melvin	001177	Meenybraddan Bog
000184	Roaninish NHA	000147	Horn Head And Rinclevan	000623	Ben Bulben, Gleniff And Glenade Complex	001179	Muckish Mountain
001108	Corveen Bog NHA	000148	Illancrone	000625	Bunduff Lough And Machair/Trawalua/Mullaghmore	001190	Sheephaven
001127	Illies Hill Bog NHA	000150	Inishbofin (Donegal)	001089	Ballymastocker Dunes	001195	Termon Strand
001159	Lough Fad Bog NHA	000152	Inishkeeragh	001090	Ballyness Bay	001196	The Point, Mulroy
001878	Crocknamurrin Mountain Bog NHA	000154	Inishtrahull	001098	Carndonagh Wood	001403	Arroo Mountain
002322	Slieve Snaght Bogs NHA	000158	Lough Akibbon And Gartan Lough	001102	Crolly Bridge Woods	001404	Bonet River
002375	Barnesmore Bog NHA	000162	Lough Derg (Donegal)	001107	Coolvoy Bog	001415	Kinlough Wood
002384	Dough/Thur Mountains NHA	000163	Lough Eske And Ardnamona Wood	001114	Derriscligh Bog	001680	Streedagh Point Dunes
002405	Camowen River Bog NHA	000164	Lough Nagreany Dunes	001117	Derryfad Bog	001870	Tullytresna Bog
002406	Umrycam Bog NHA	000165	Lough Nillan Bog (Carrickatlieve)	001118	Derrylaggy Woods	001880	Meenaguse Scragh
002430	Aghavoghil Bog NHA	000166	Lough Swilly Including Big Isle, Blanket Nook & Inch Lake	001122	Drumeasan Bog	001919	Glenade Lough
002437	Meenagarranroe Bog NHA	000167	Lough Unna/Lough Unshagh Bogs	001125	Dunragh Loughs/Pettigo Plateau	001938	Coguish Bog
002452	Lough Hill Bog NHA	000168	Magheradrumman Bog	001129	Feddyglass Woods	001975	Ballyhoorisky Point To Fanad Head
002453	Meenmore West Bog NHA	000172	Meenaguse/Ardbane Bog	001132	Galwolie Bog	001992	Tamur Bog
000111	Aran Island (Donegal) Cliffs	000173	Meentygrannagh Bog	001135	Glashedy Island	002011	River Swilly Valley Woods
000115	Ballintra	000180	Port Lough	001141	Gweedore Bay And Islands	002012	North Inishowen Coast
000116	Ballyarr Wood	000181	Rathlin O'Birne Island	001142	Inishbarnog	002046	Owendoo And Cloghervaddy Bogs
000120	Bulbin Mountain	000185	Sessiagh Lough	001143	Inishbeg	002047	Cloghernagore Bog And Glenveagh National Park
000129	Croaghonagh Bog	000189	Slieve League	001151	Kindrum Lough	002055	Carlan Isles (Mulroy Bay)
000131	Derkmore Wood Nature Reserve	000190	Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay	001155	Leannan Valley Woods	002056	Old Rectory, Fahan
000133	Donegal Bay (Murvagh)	000191	St. John's Point	001161	Lough Fad West	002057	Ramelton Mill
000138	Durnesh Lough	000193	Tory Island	001162	Lough Fern	002067	River Foyle, Mongavlin To Carrigans
000139	Erne Estuary/Finner Dunes	000194	Tranarossan And Melmore Lough	001163	Lough Finn	002068	Carricknahorna Lough And Lough Gorman
000140	Fawnboy Bog/Lough Nacung						

APPENDIX III FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE MAPPING

FOR

PROPOSED VARIATION NO. 1
TO THE
DONEGAL COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2024-2030

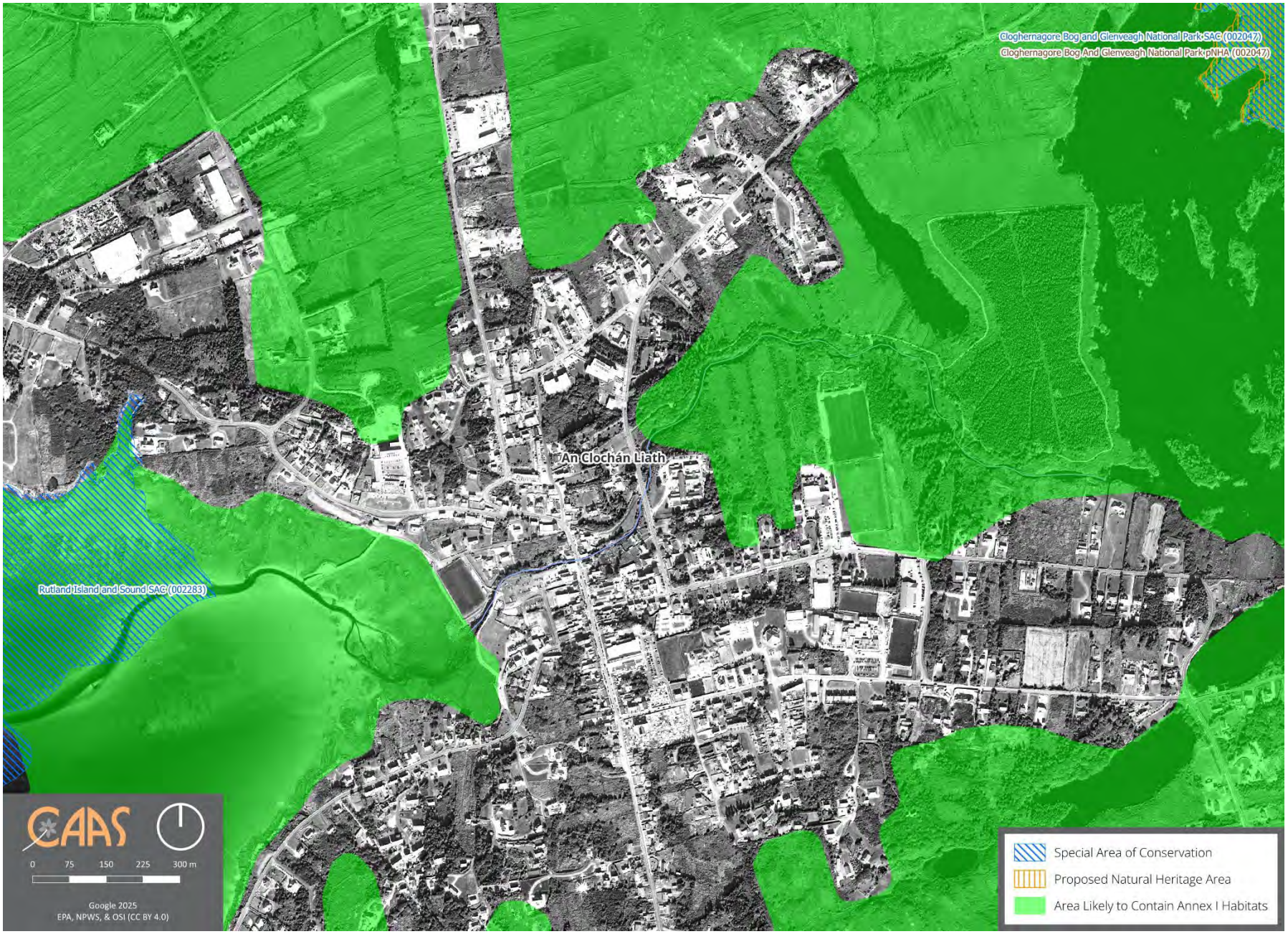
for: Donegal County Council

Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council

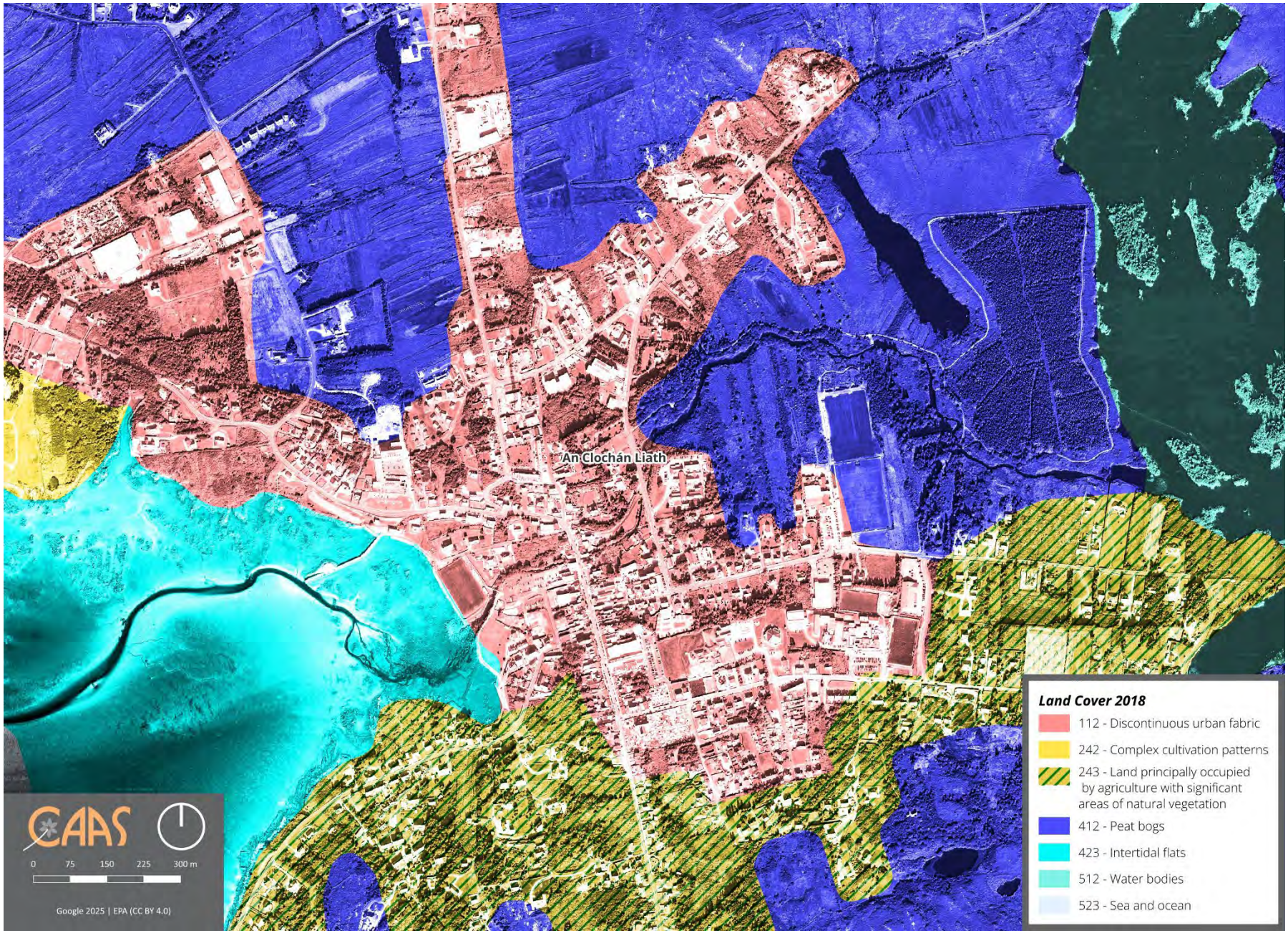
by: CAAS Ltd.

SEPTEMBER 2025

Donegal County Council, County House, The Diamond, Lifford, County Donegal.
CAAS Ltd., 1st Floor, 24-26 Ormond Quay Upper, Dublin.



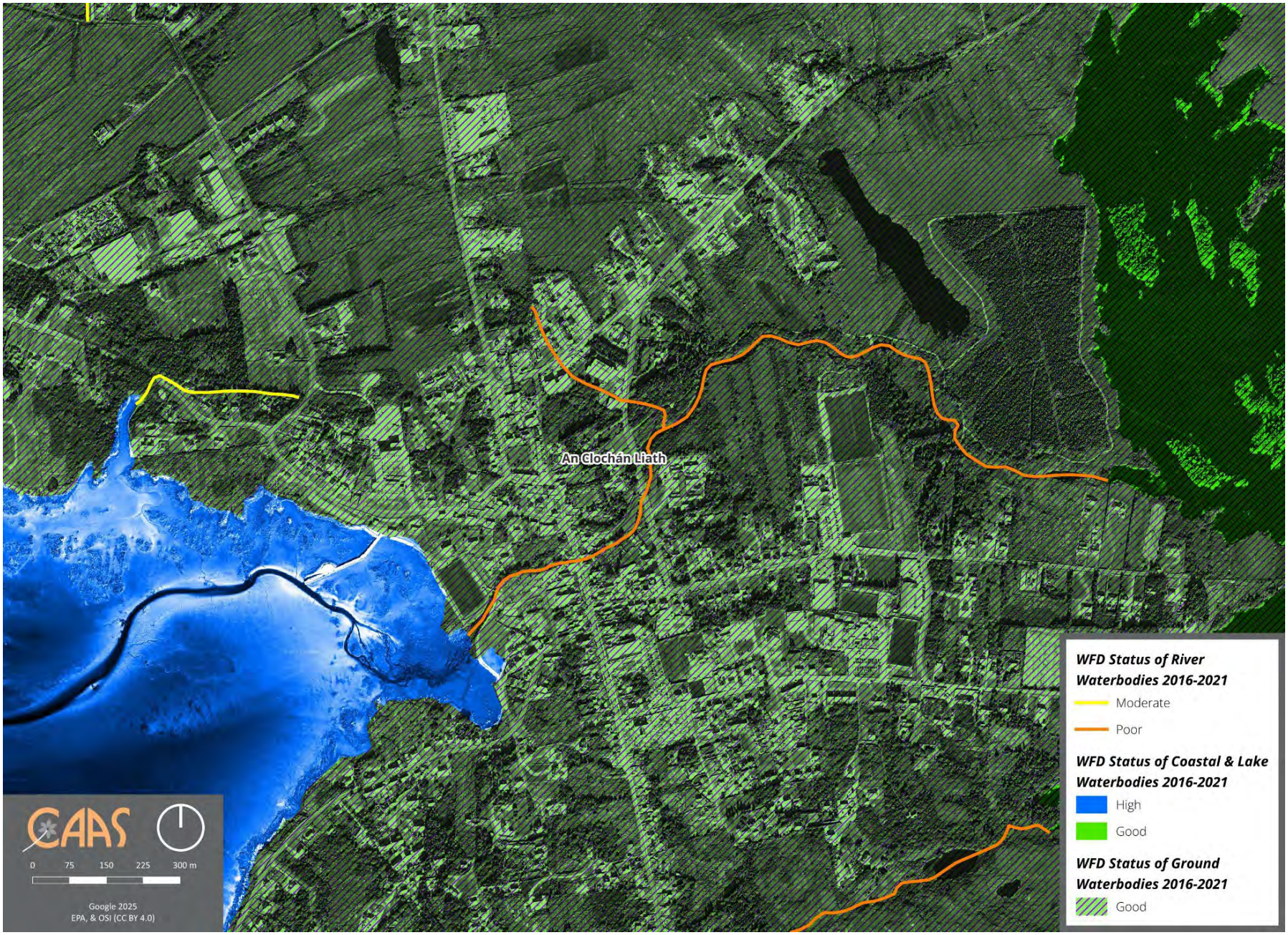
An Clochán Liath Ecological Designations



An Clochán Liath CORINE Land Cover Mapping 2018



An Clochán Liath Soils



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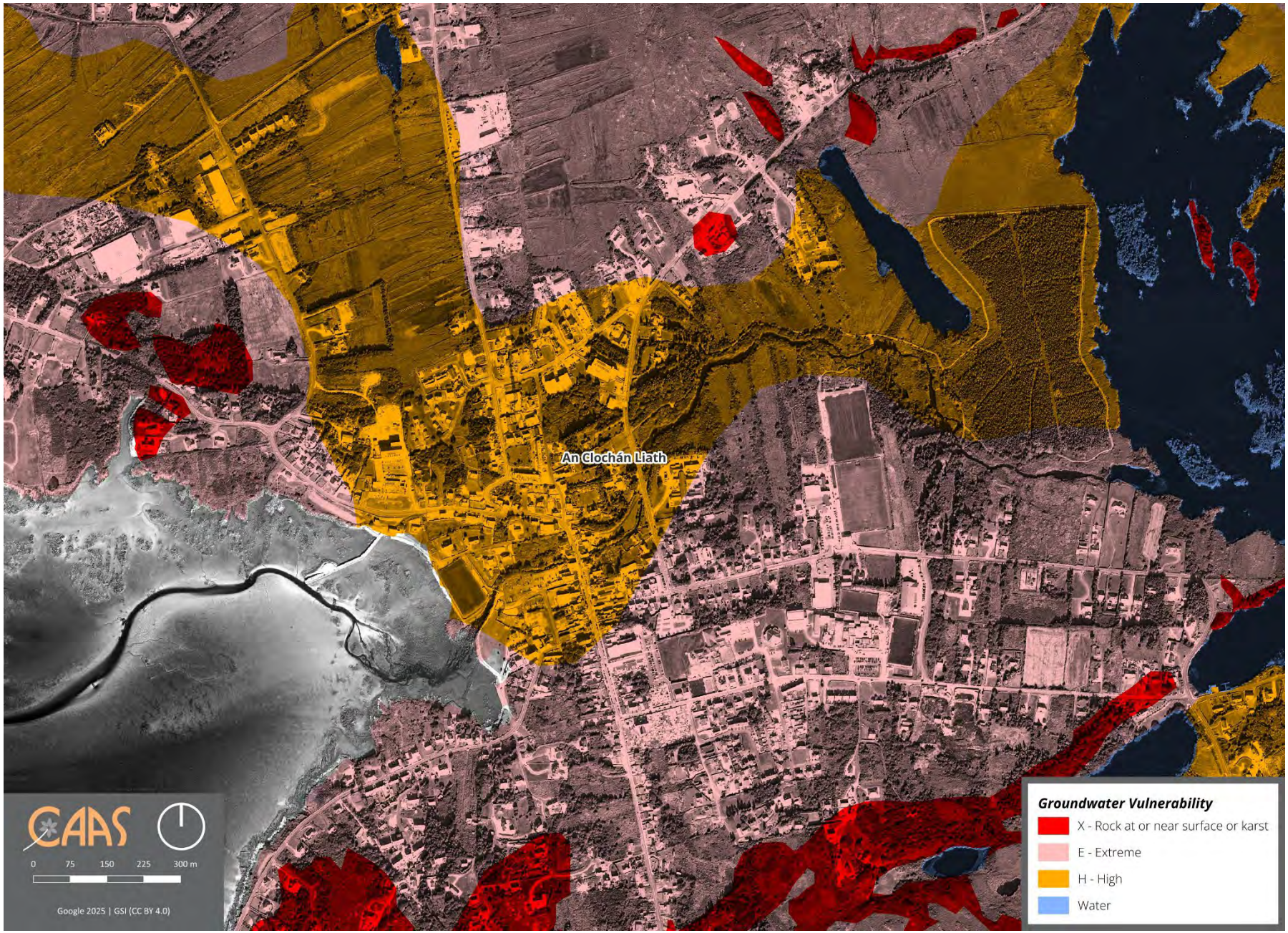
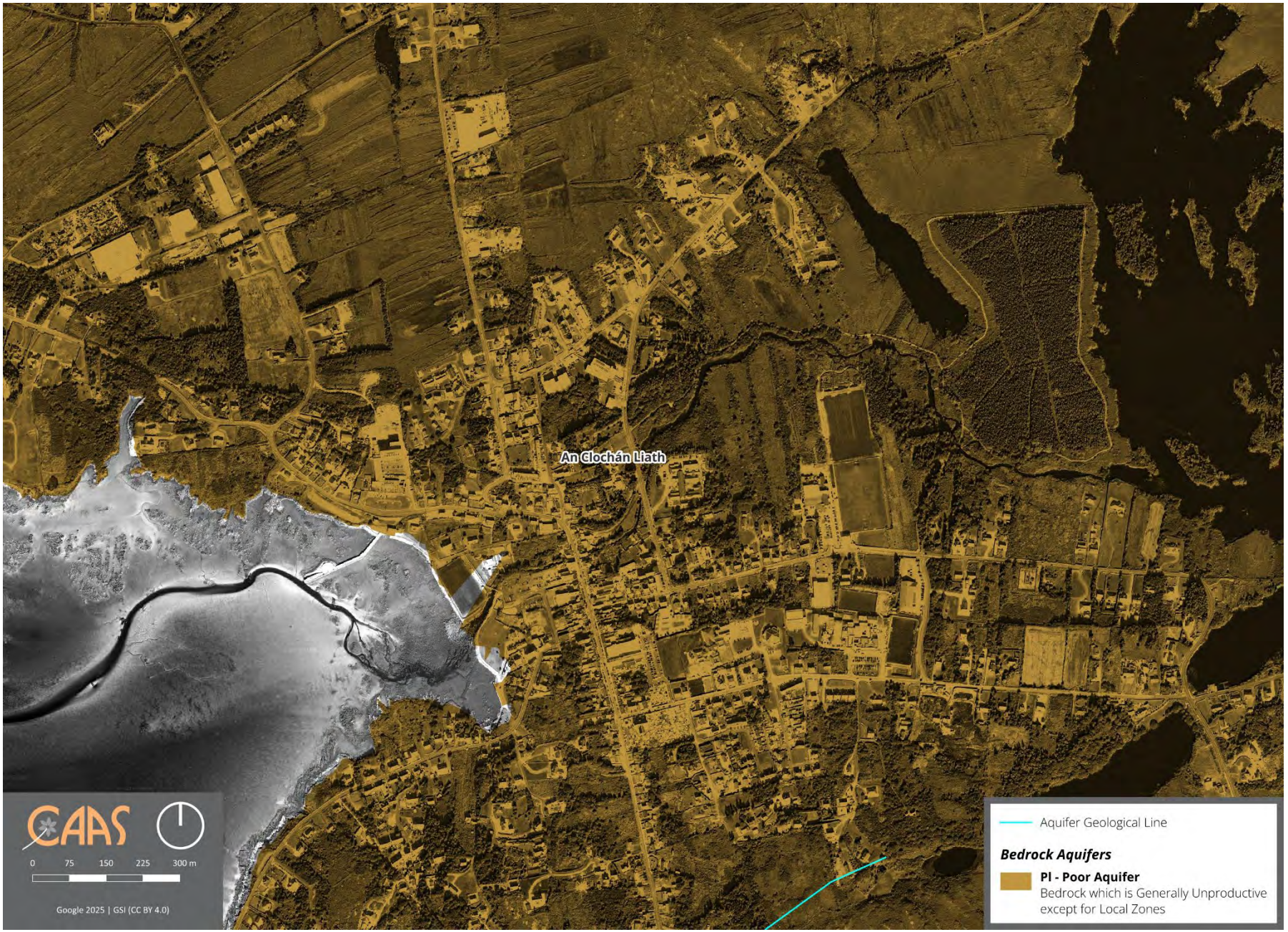


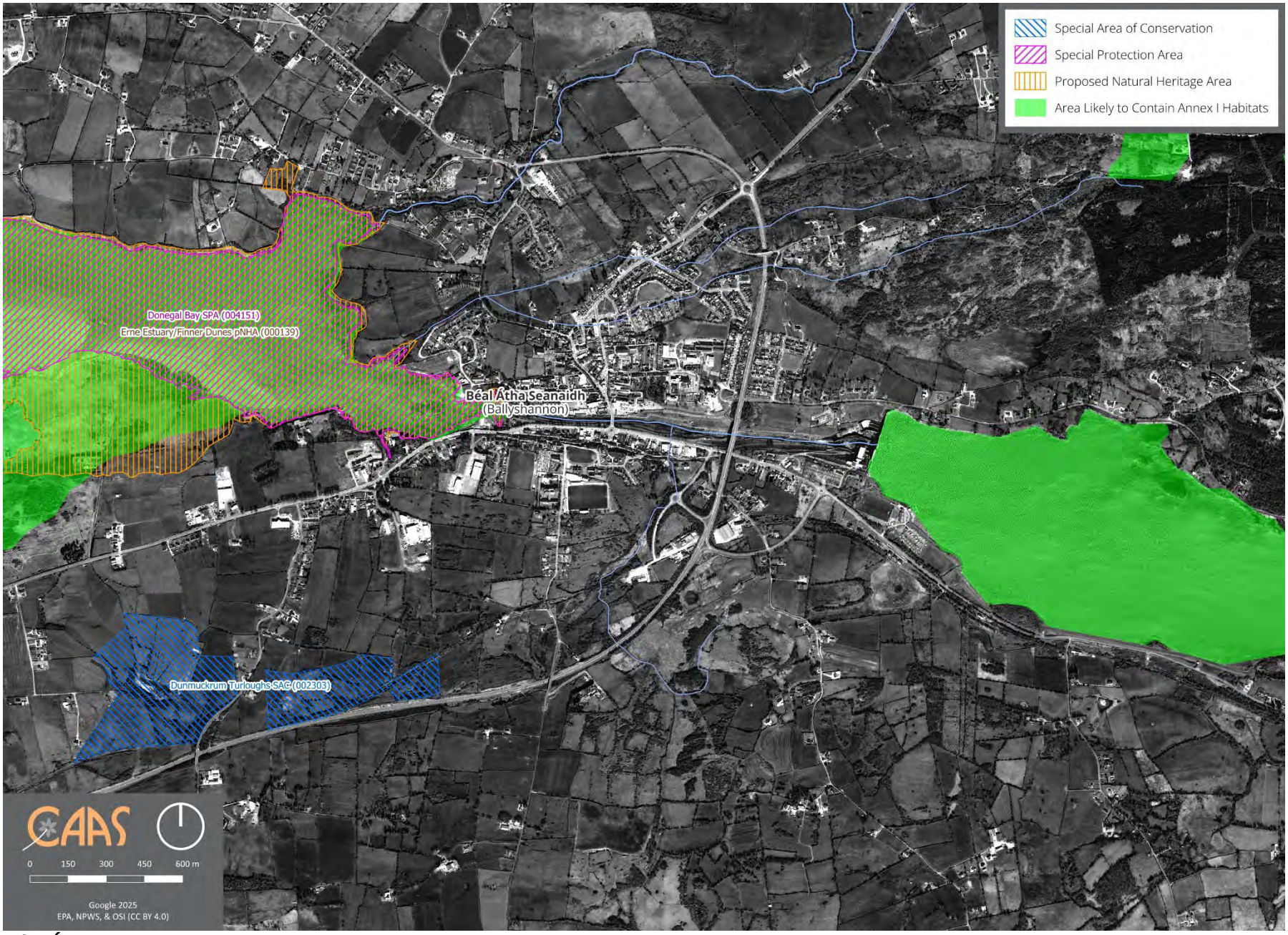
An Clochán Liath Groundwater Vulnerability



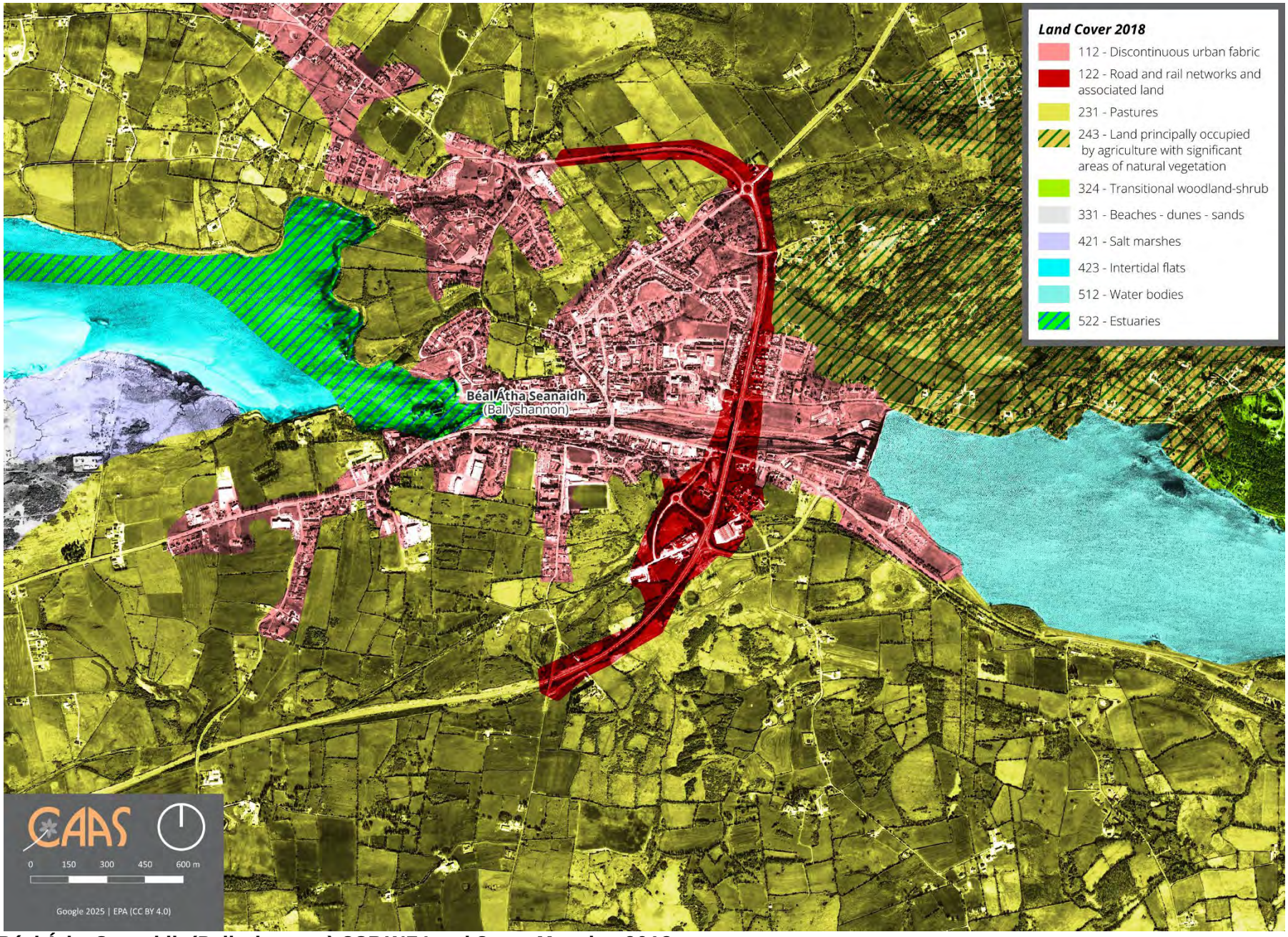
An Clochán Liath Groundwater Productivity



An Clochán Liath Cultural Heritage



Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) Ecological Designations



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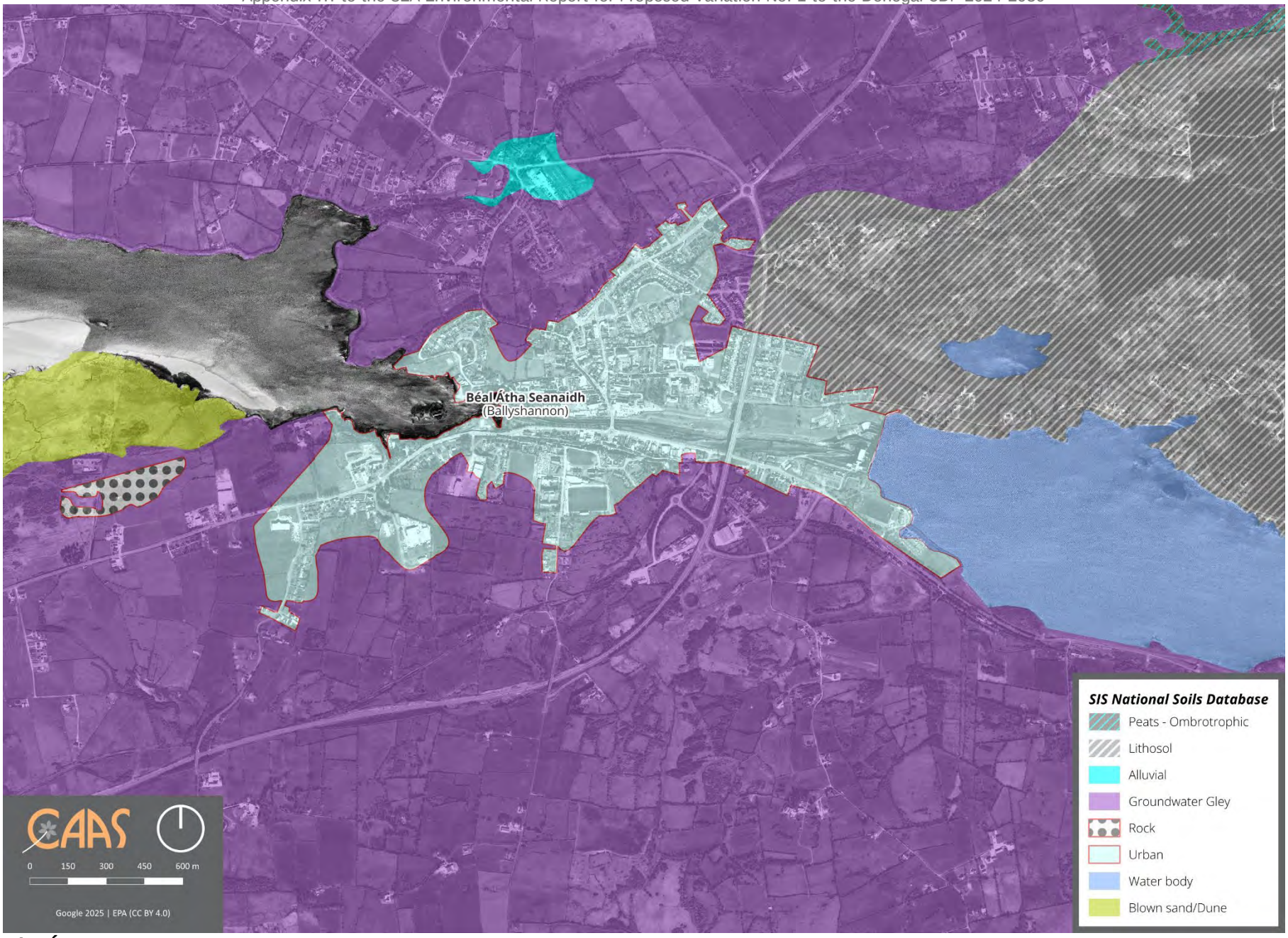

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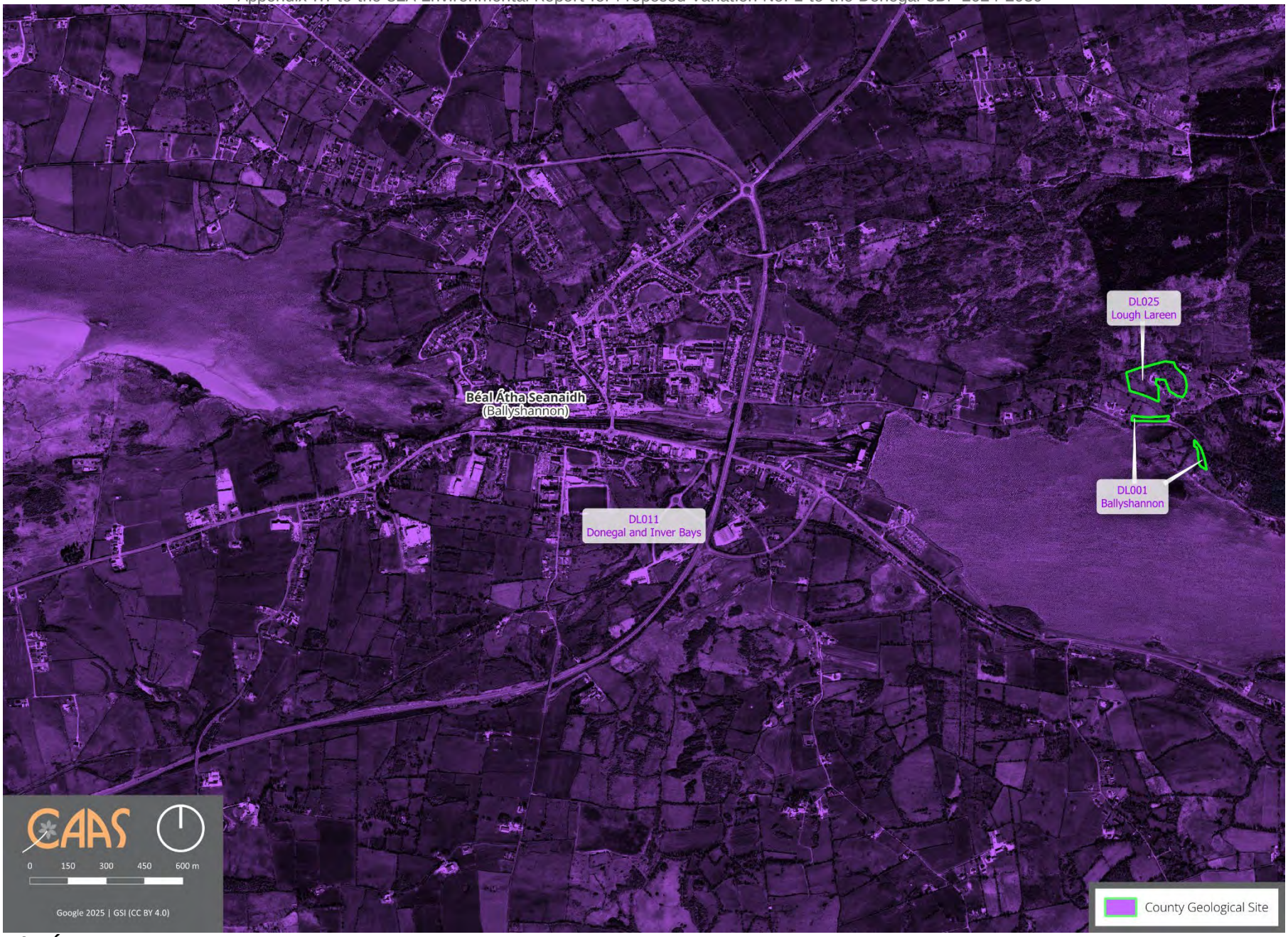
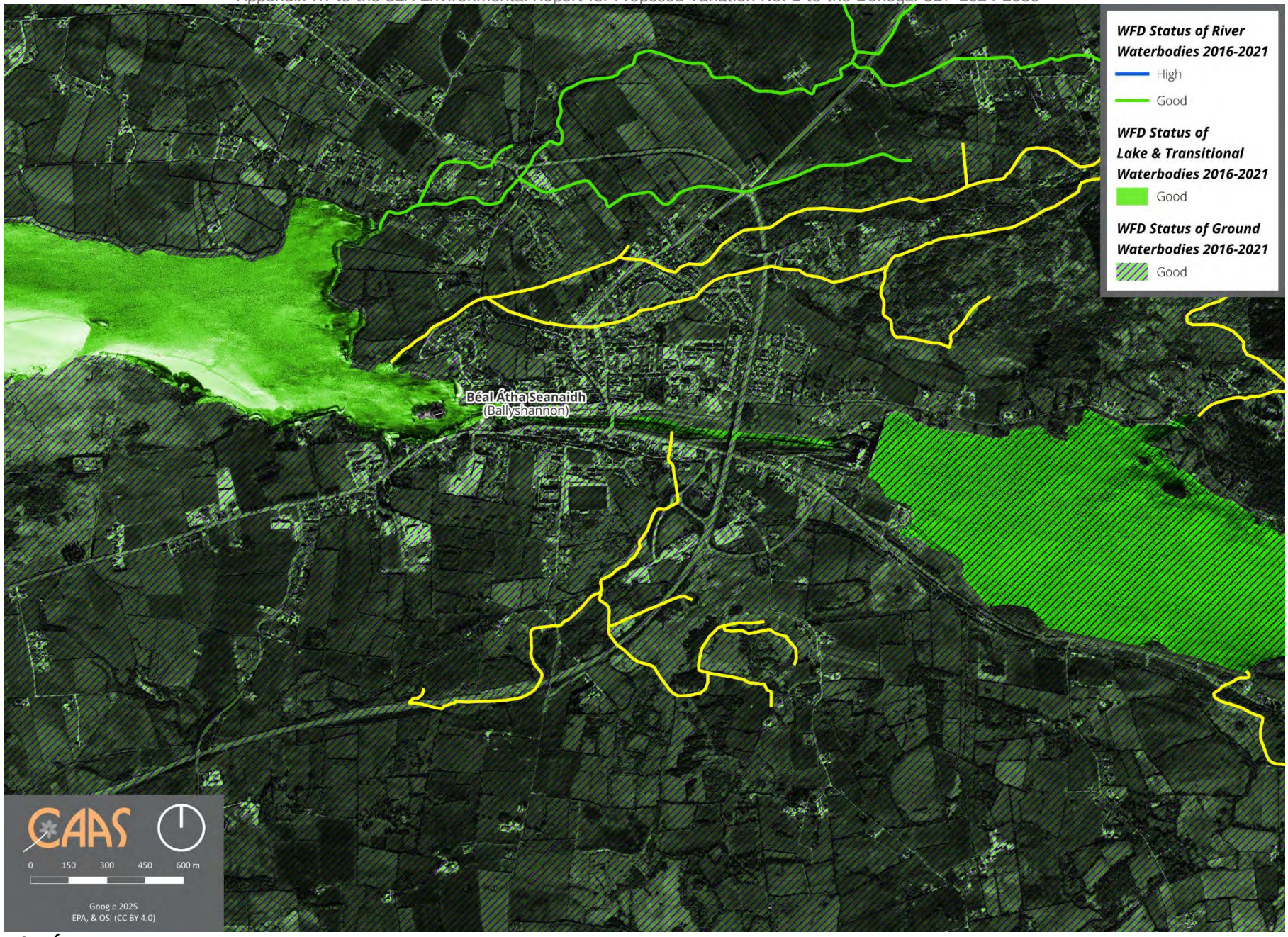


Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) County Geological Sites



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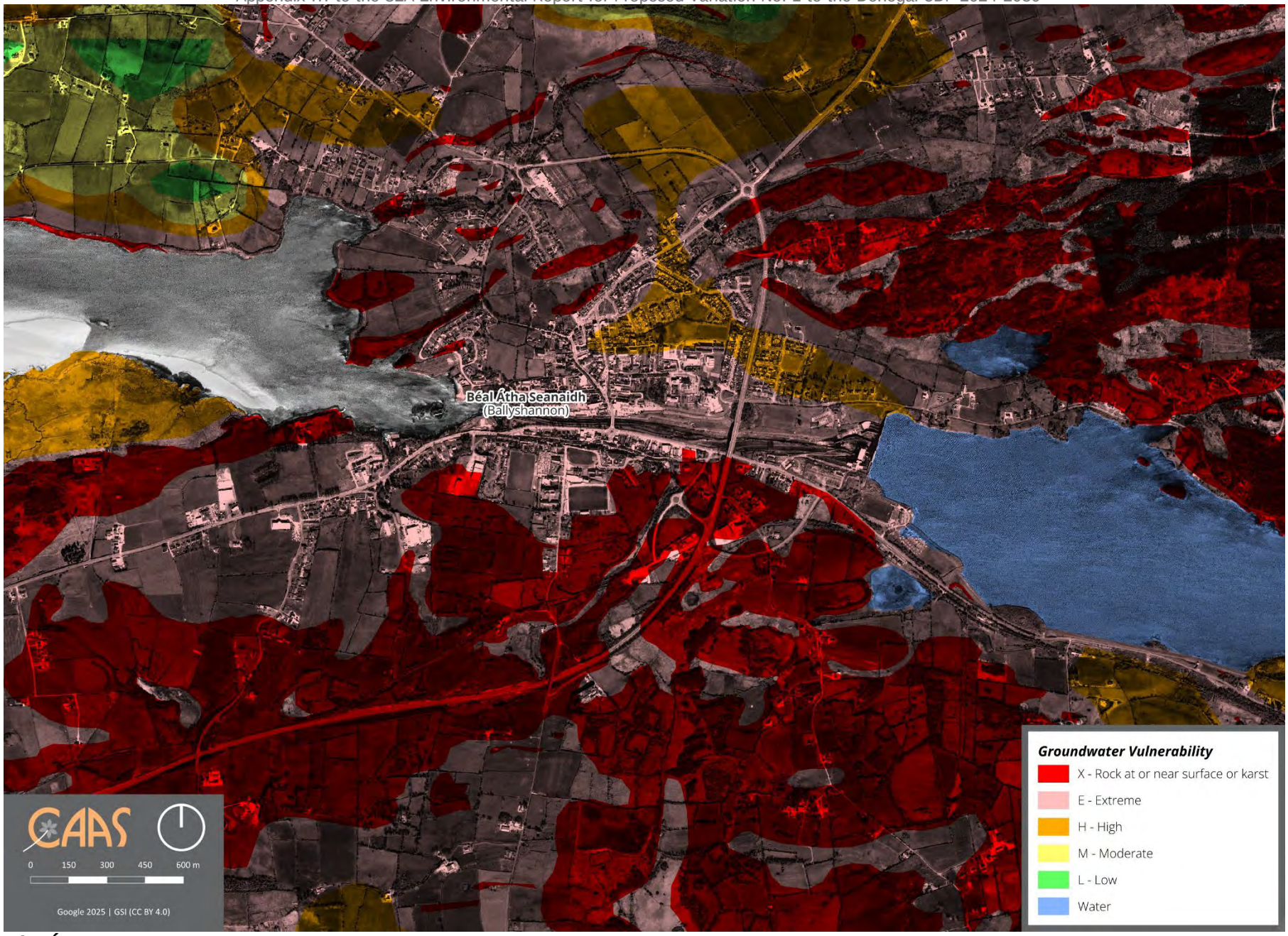
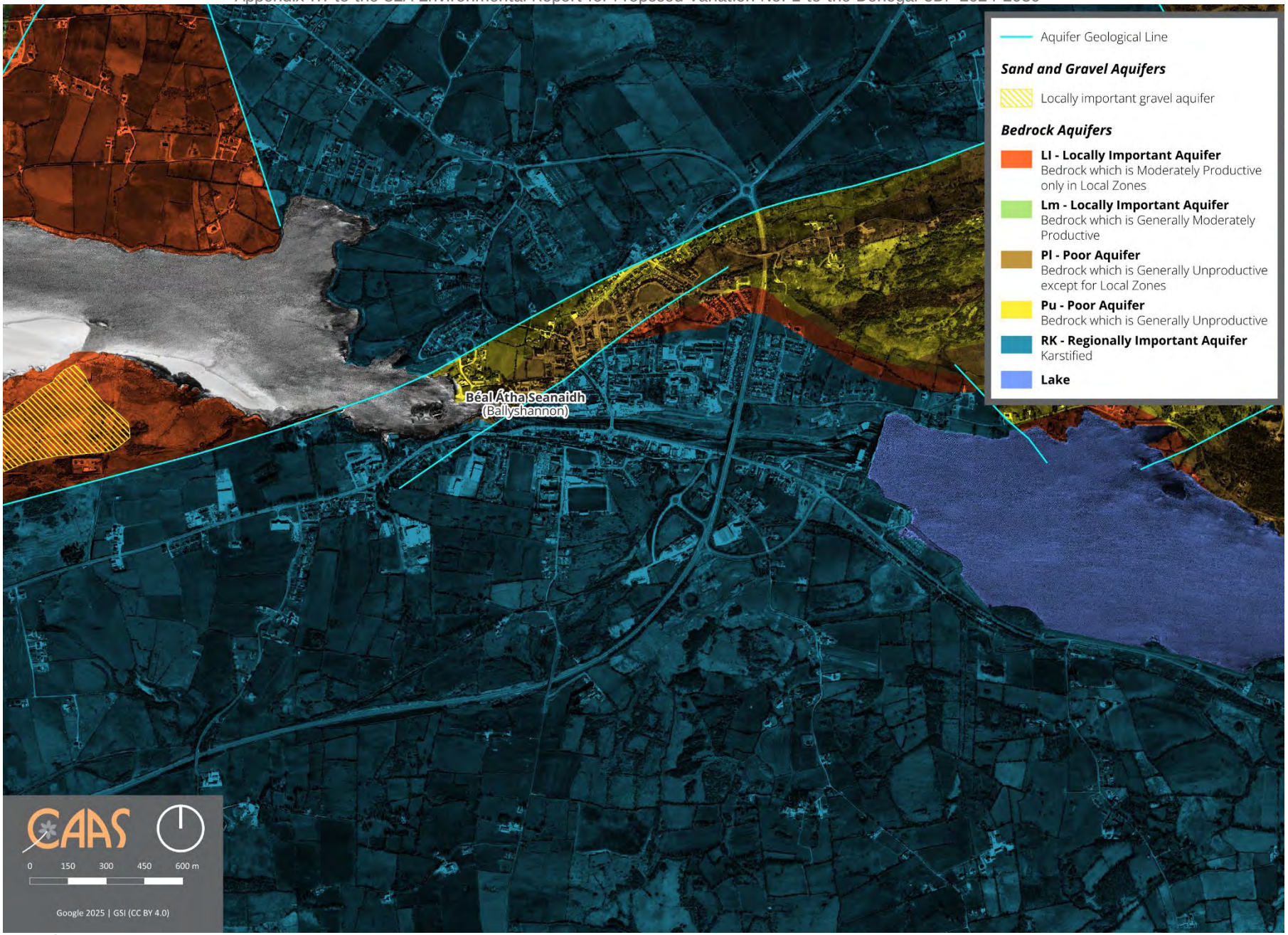
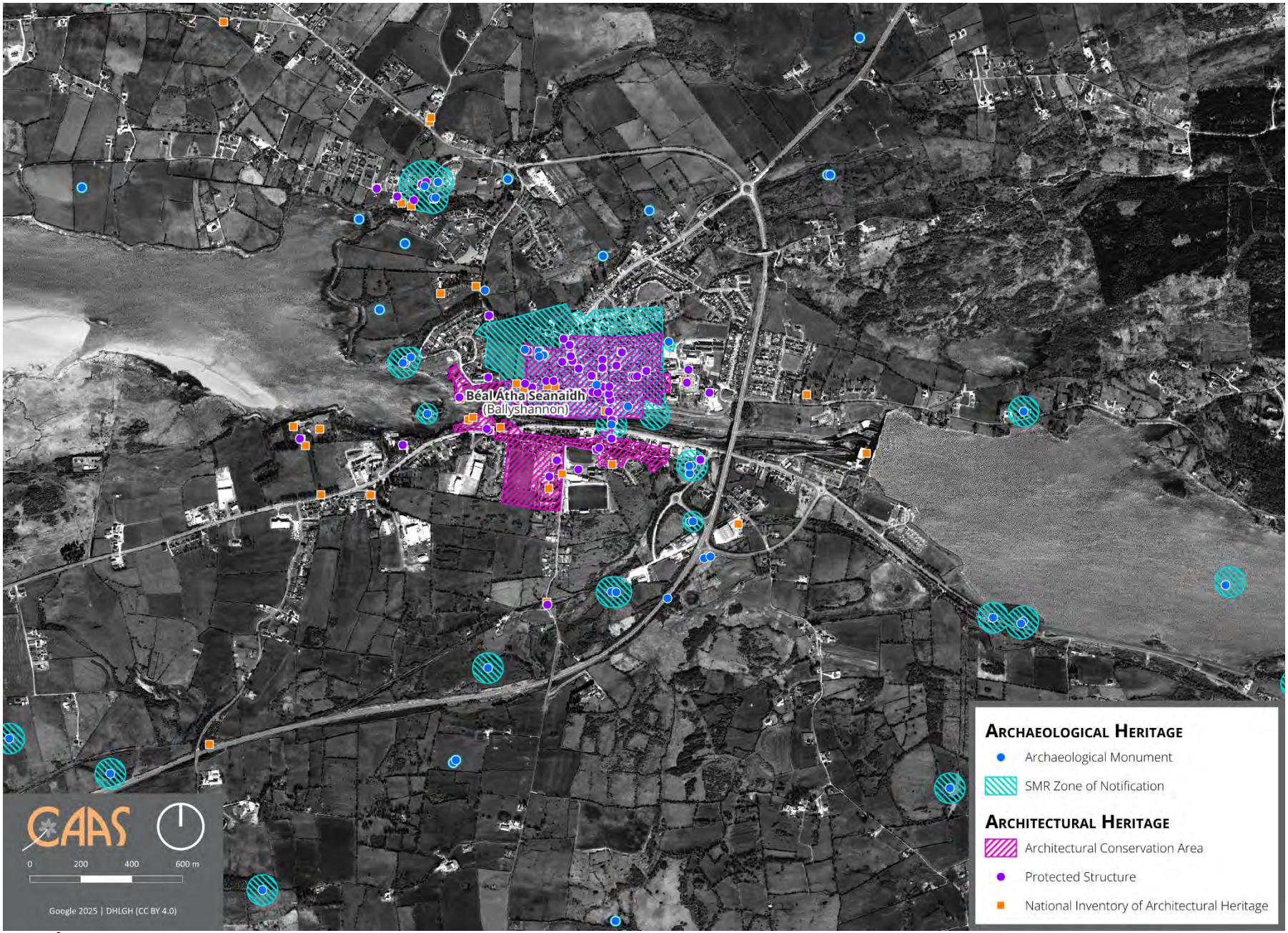


Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) Groundwater Vulnerability



Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) Groundwater Productivity



Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) Cultural Heritage



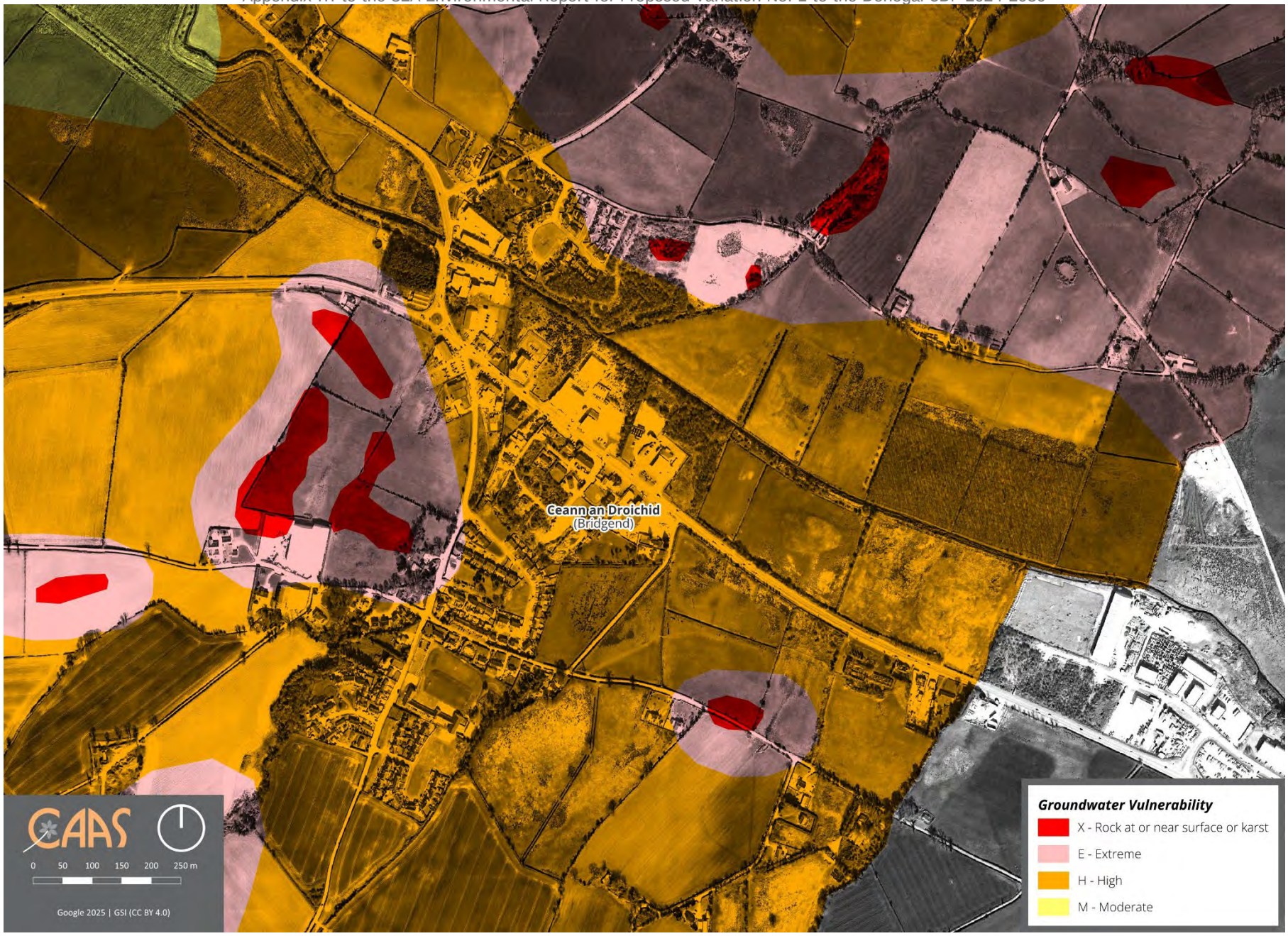
Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) CORINE Land Cover Mapping 2018



Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) Soils



Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) WFD Status of Surface Waterbodies (2016-2021) and WFD Status of Ground Waterbodies (2016-2021)



Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) Groundwater Vulnerability



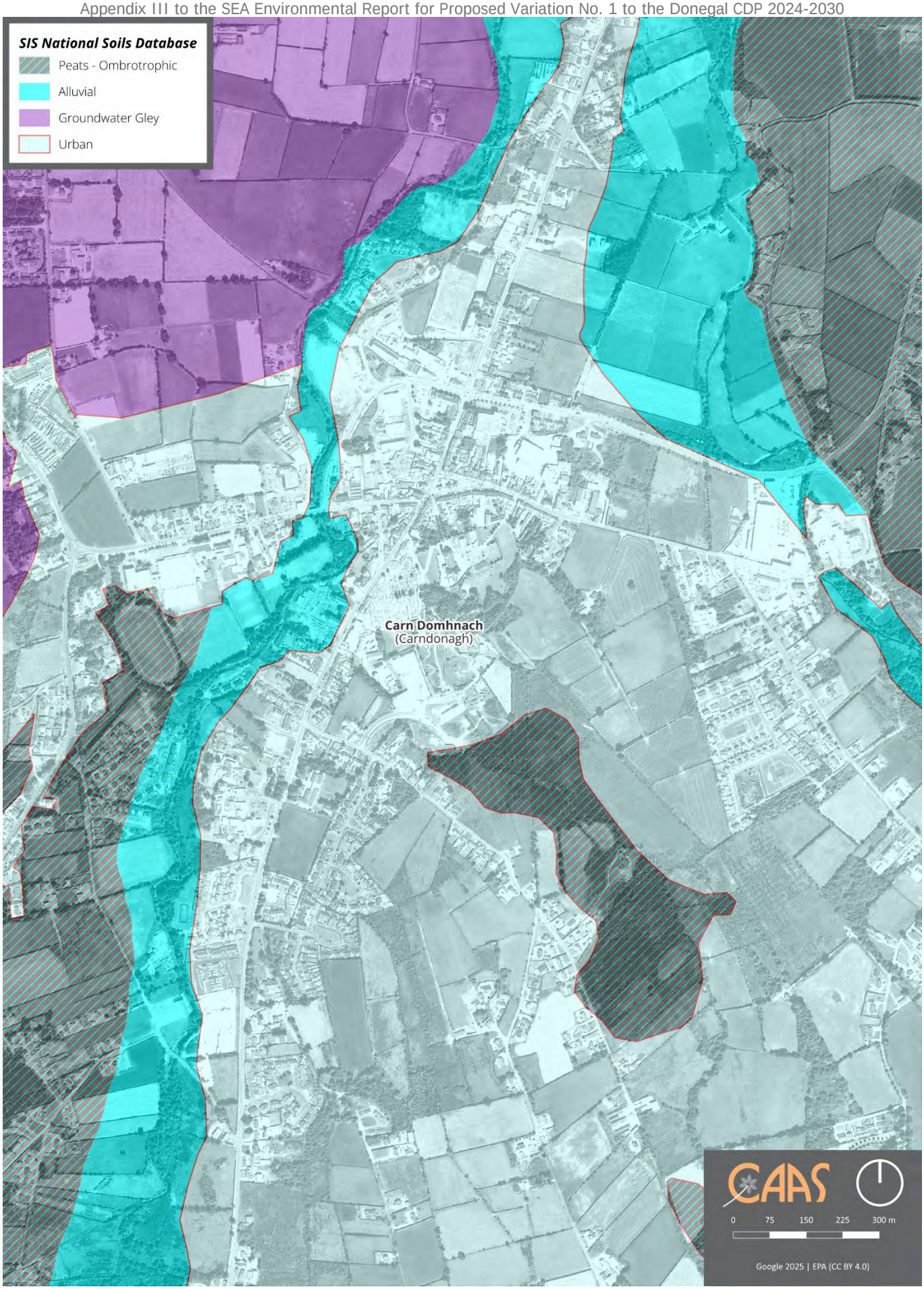
Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) Groundwater Productivity



Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) Cultural Heritage



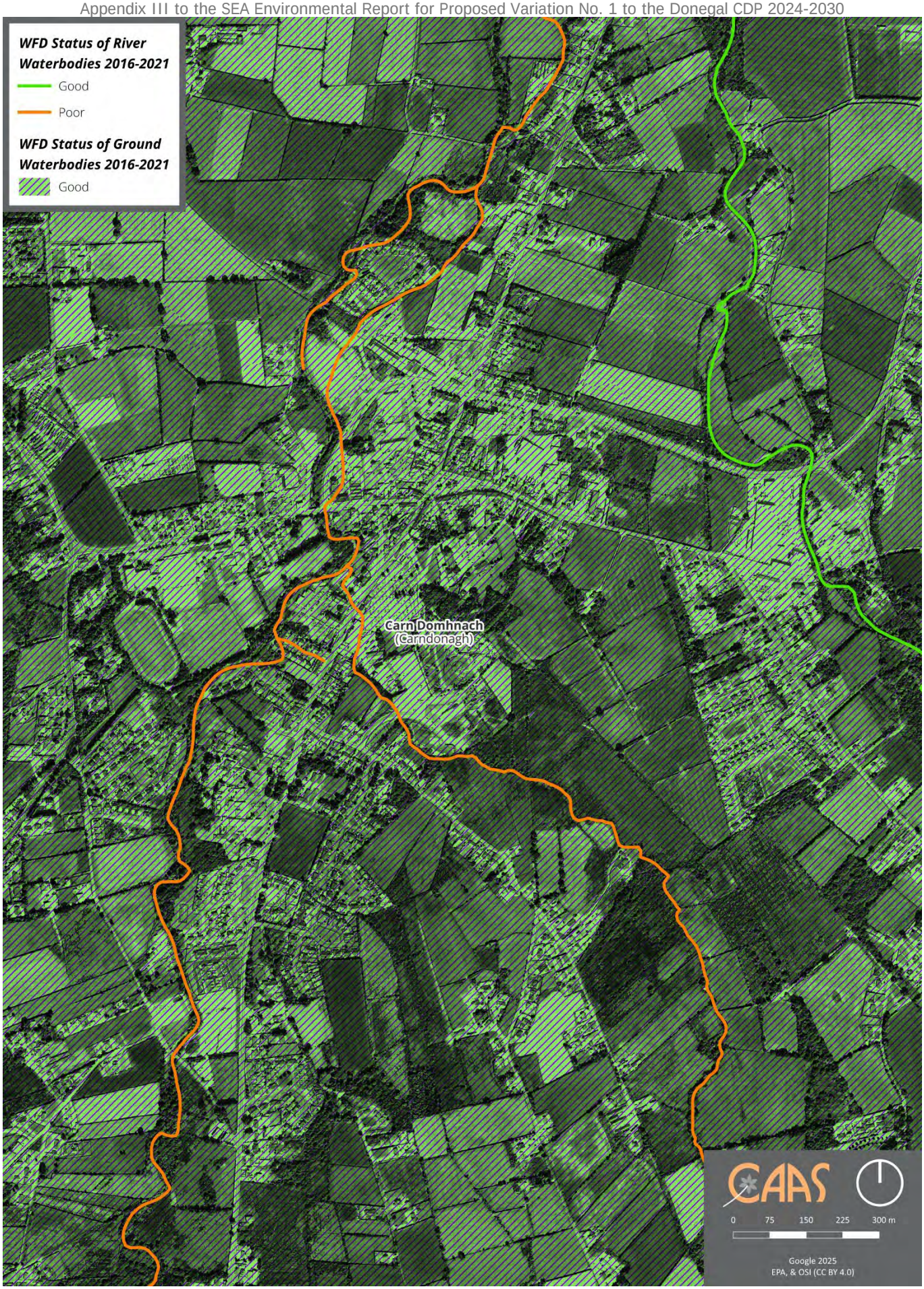
Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) CORINE Land Cover Mapping 2018



Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) Soils



Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) County Geological Sites



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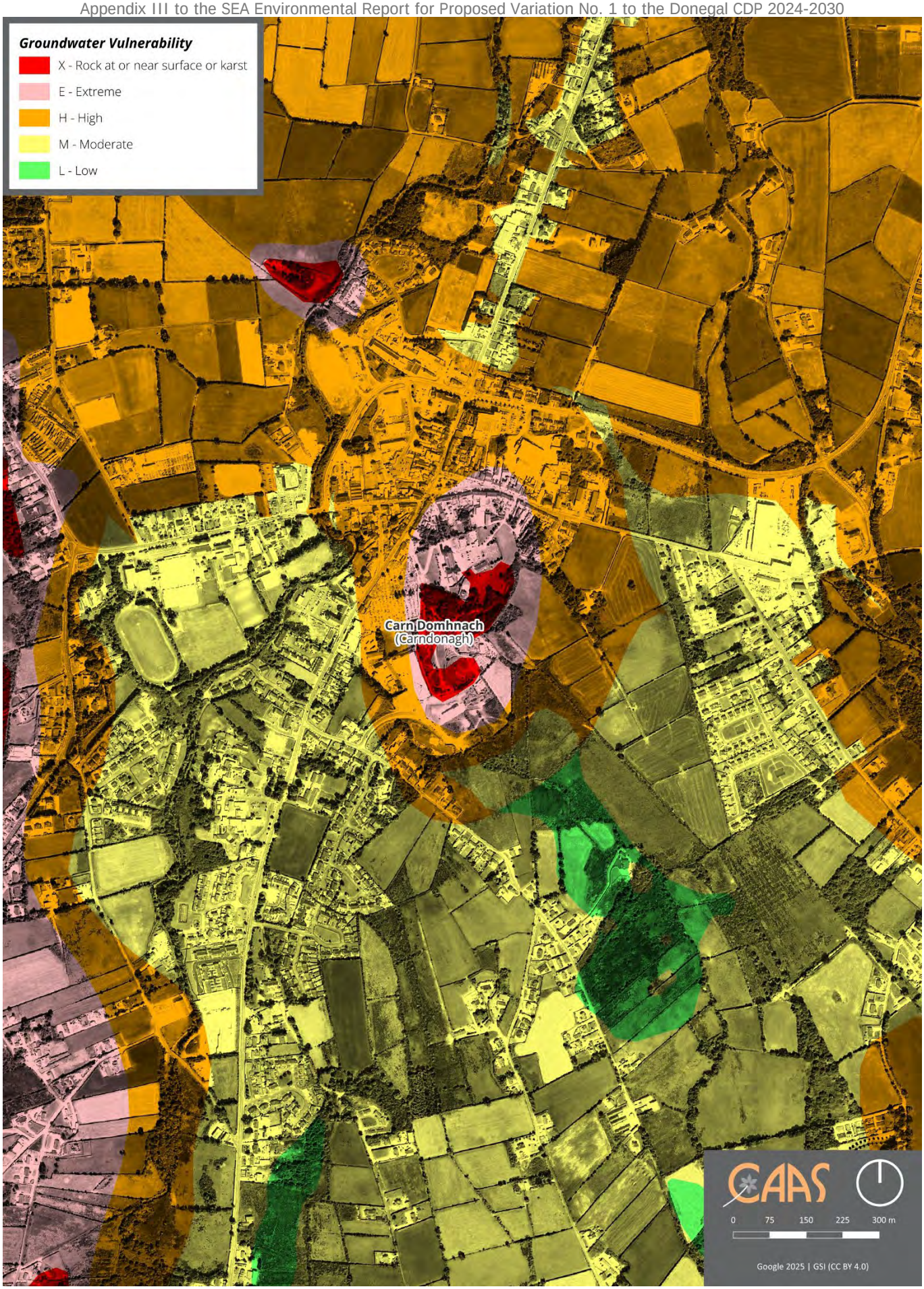


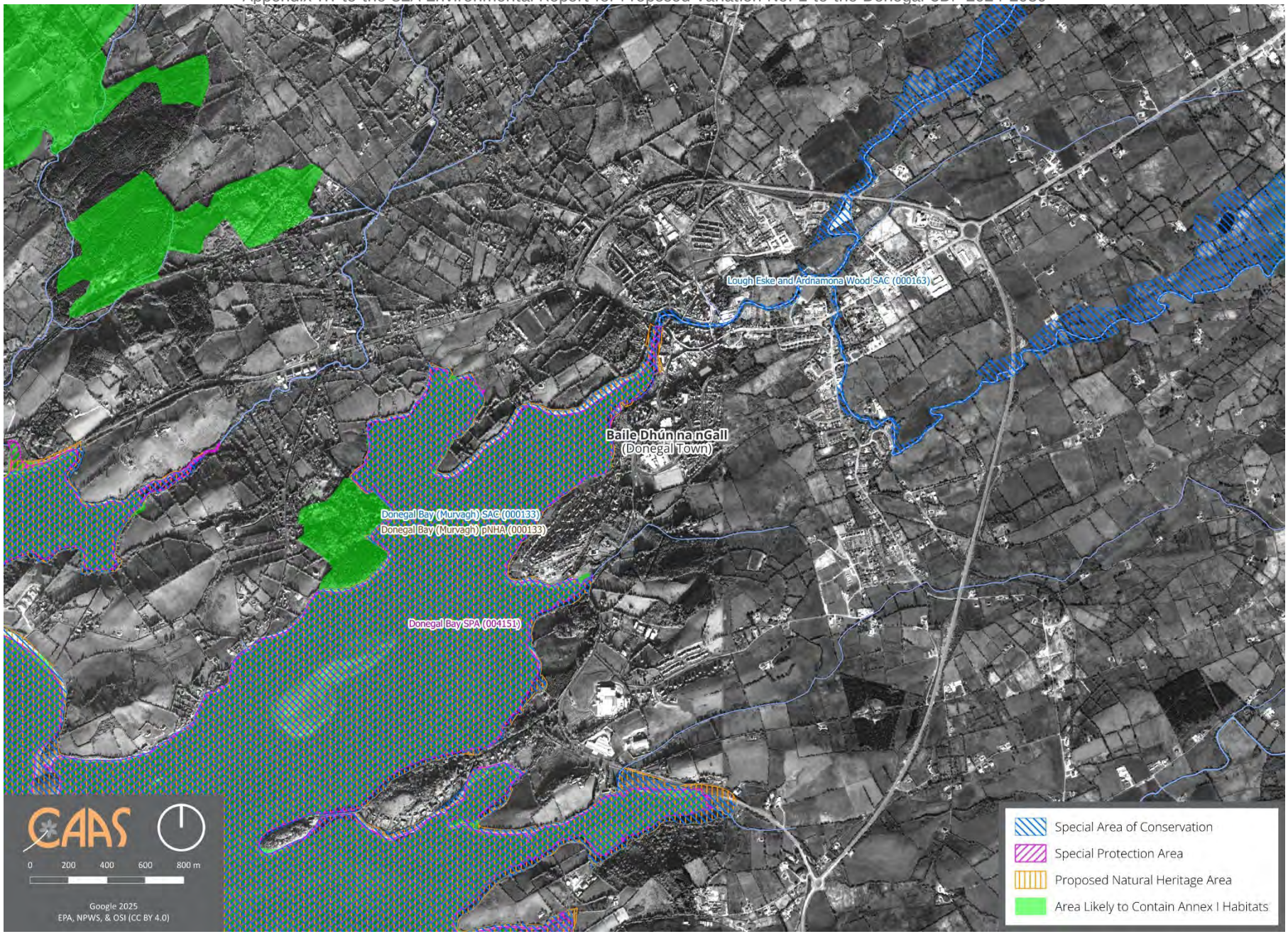
Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) Groundwater Vulnerability



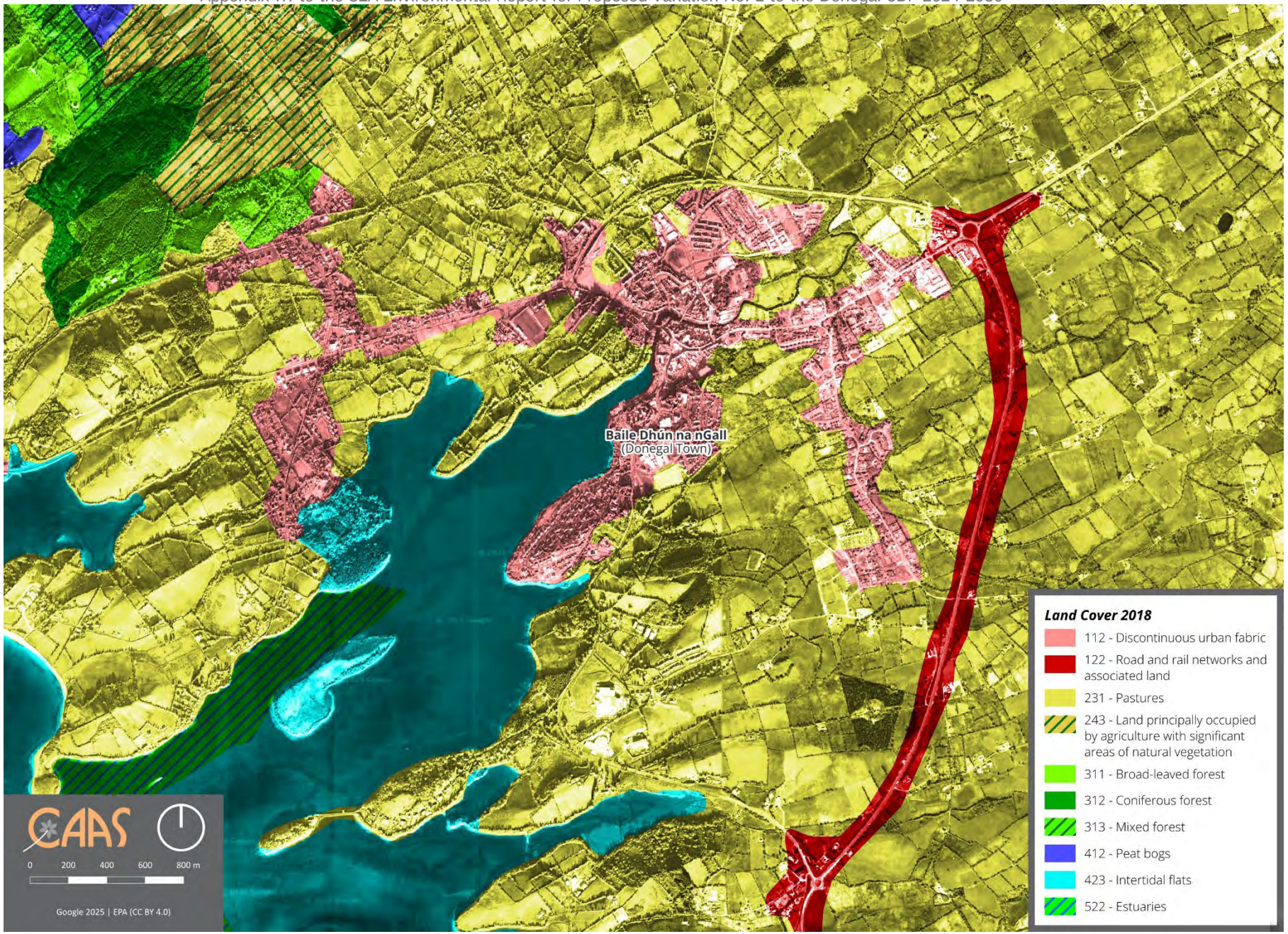
Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) Groundwater Productivity



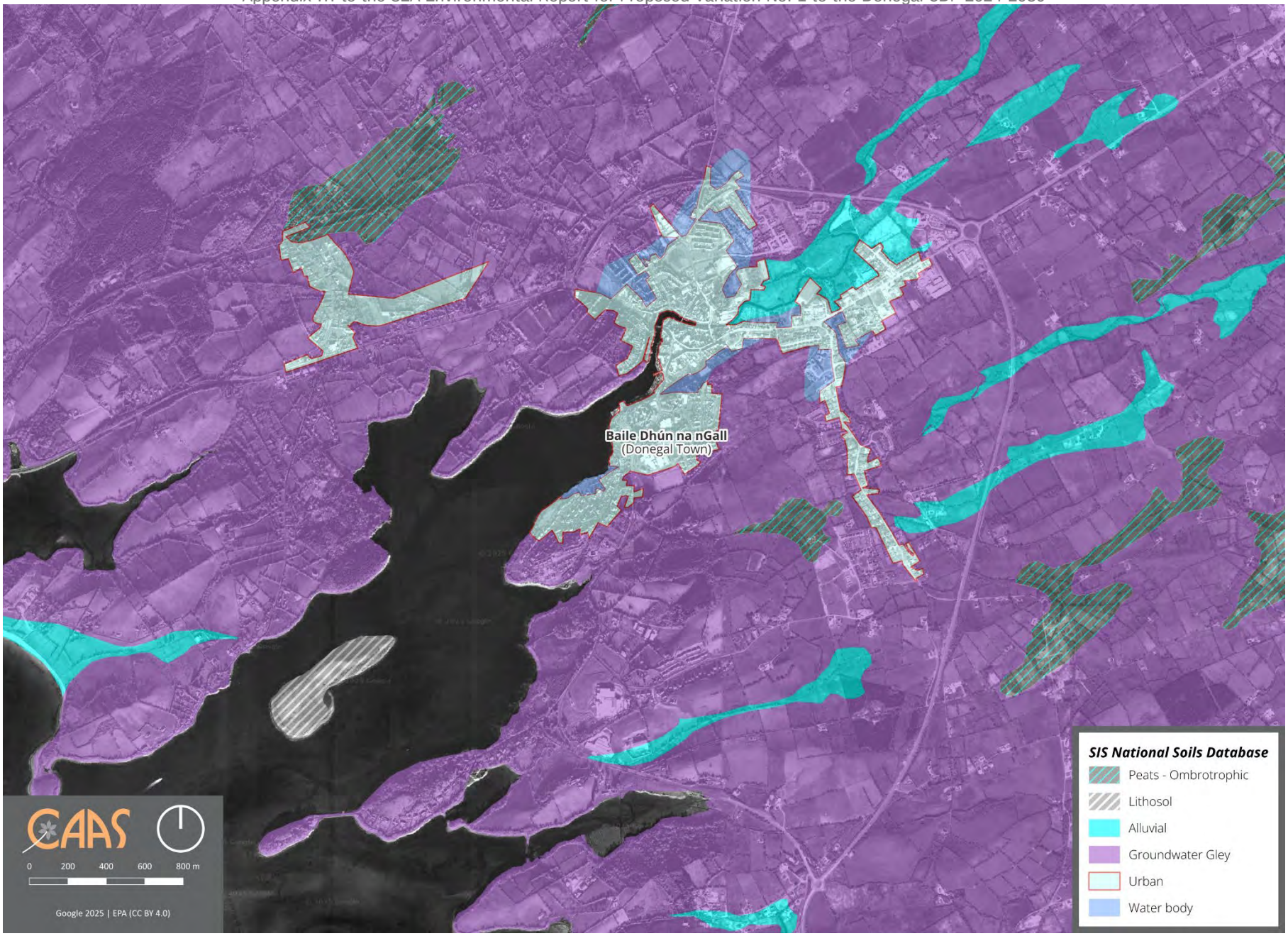
Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) Cultural Heritage



Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) Ecological Designations



Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) CORINE Land Cover 2018



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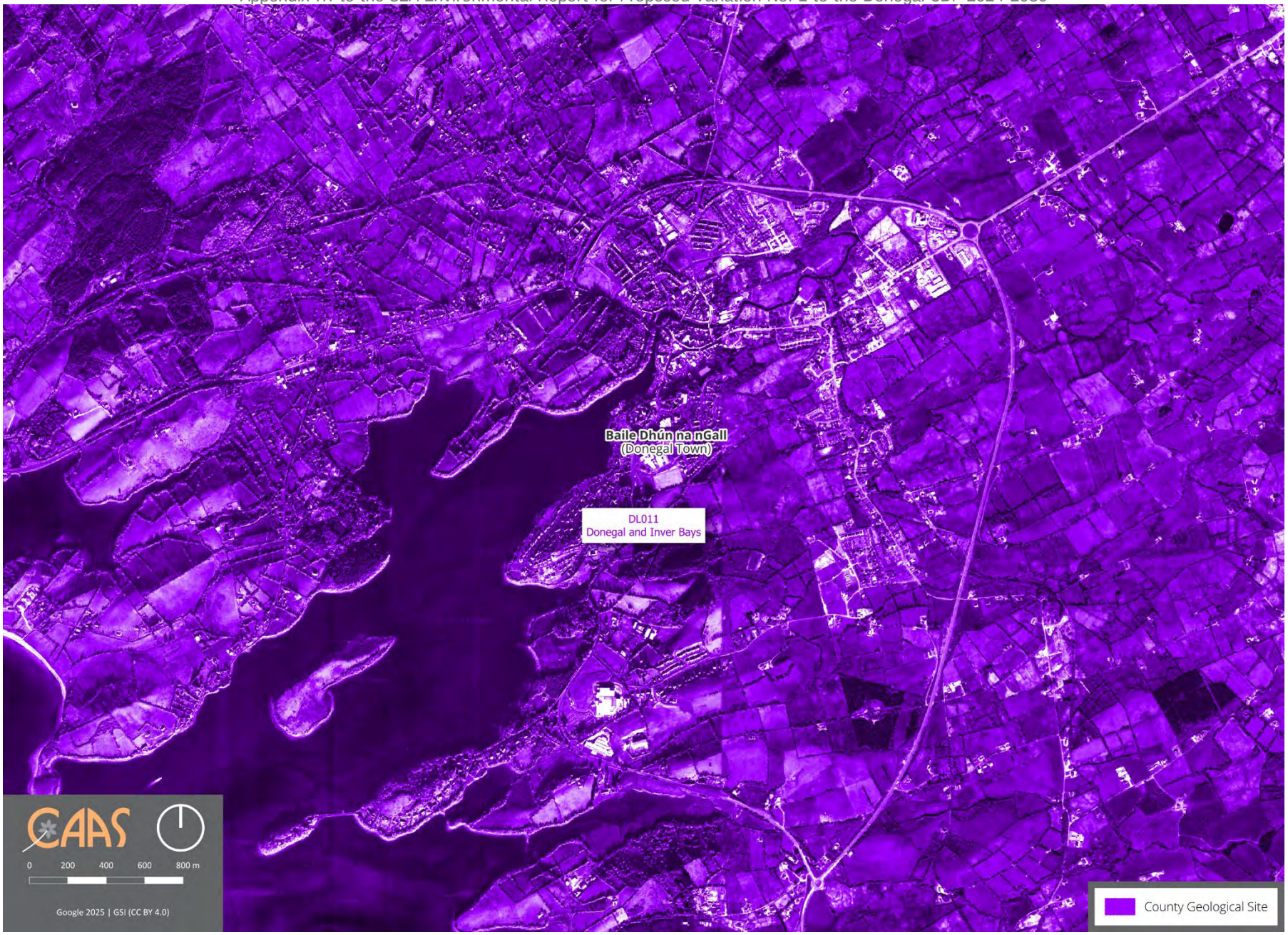
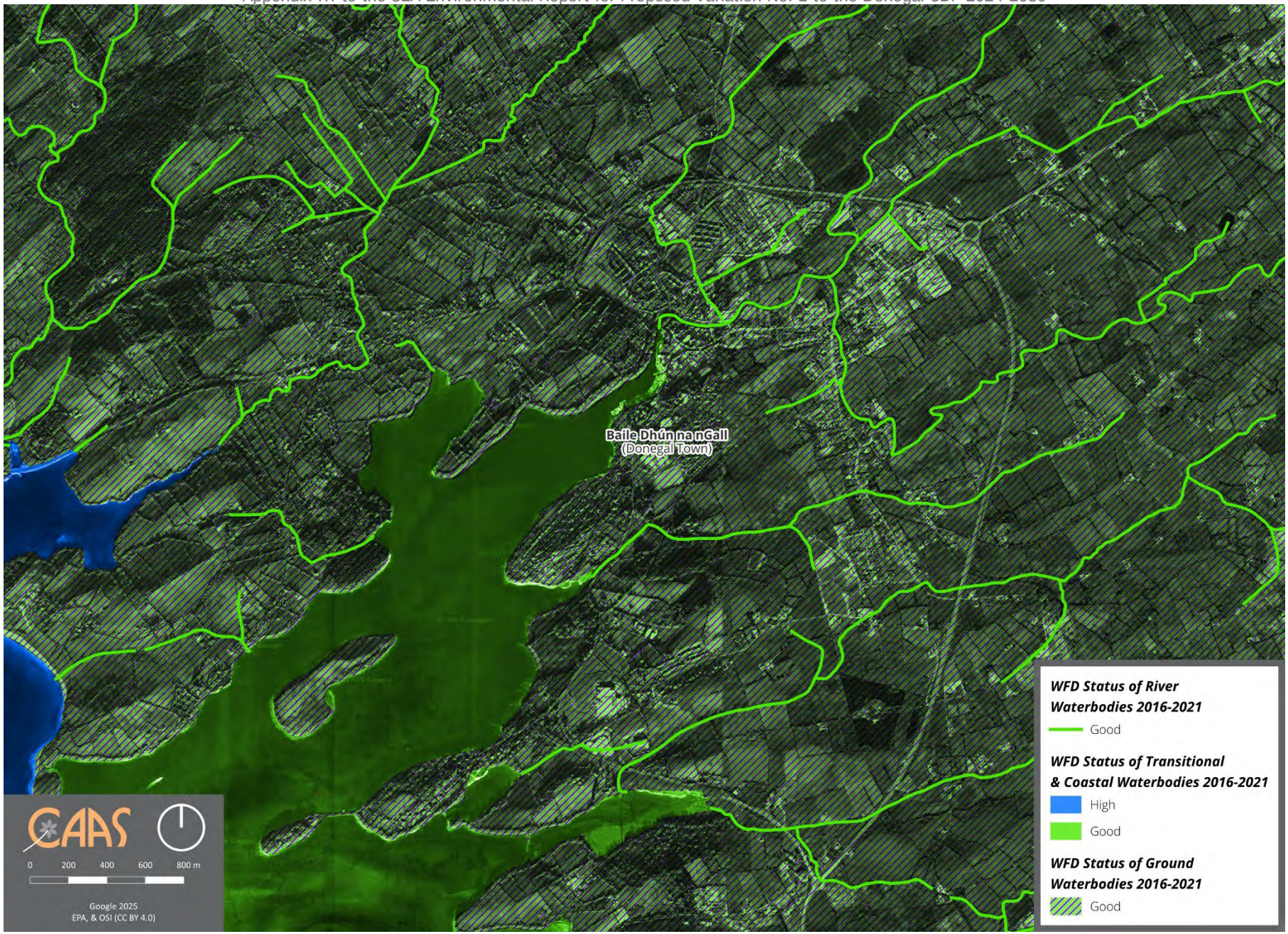


Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) County Geological Sites



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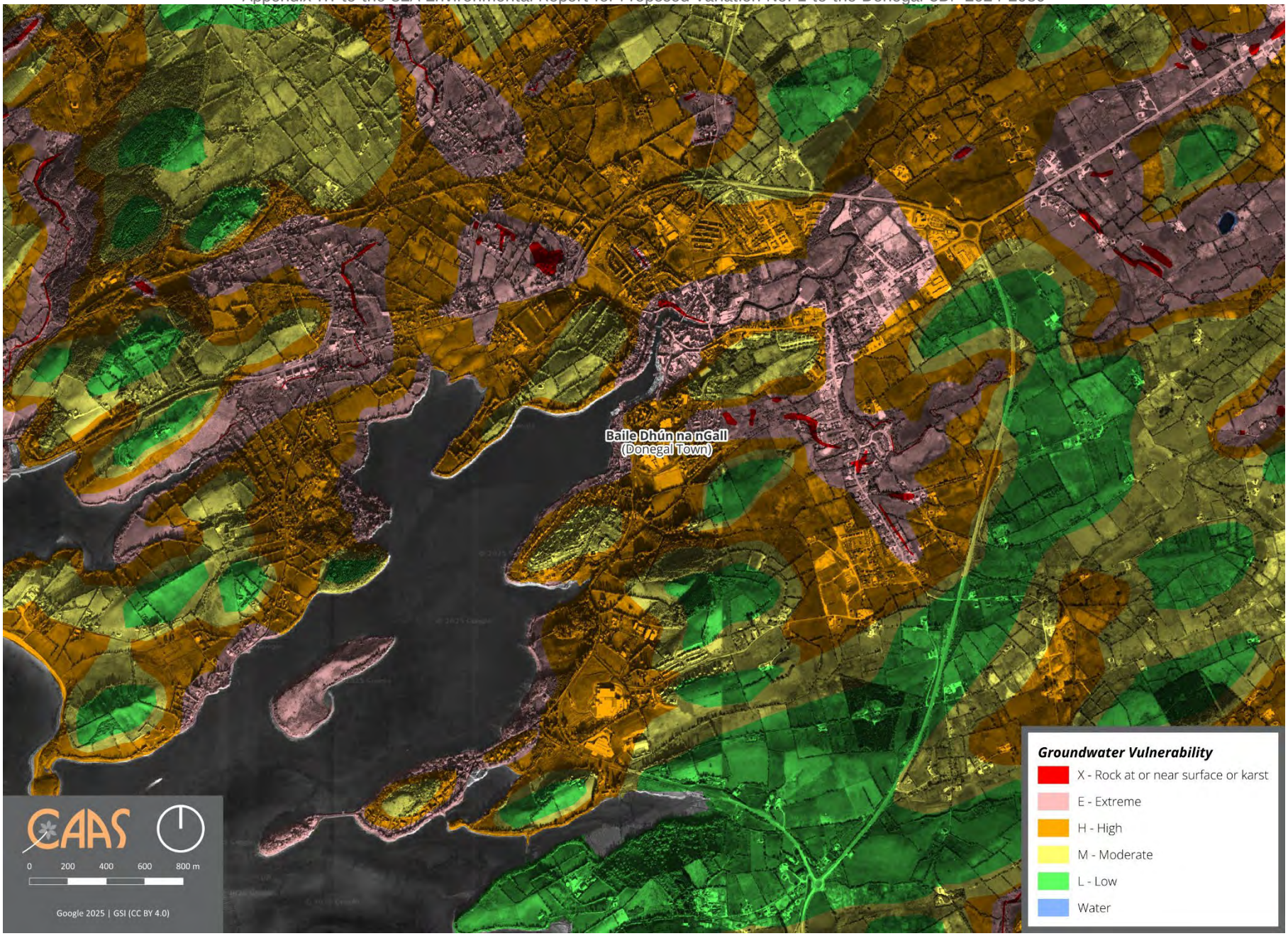
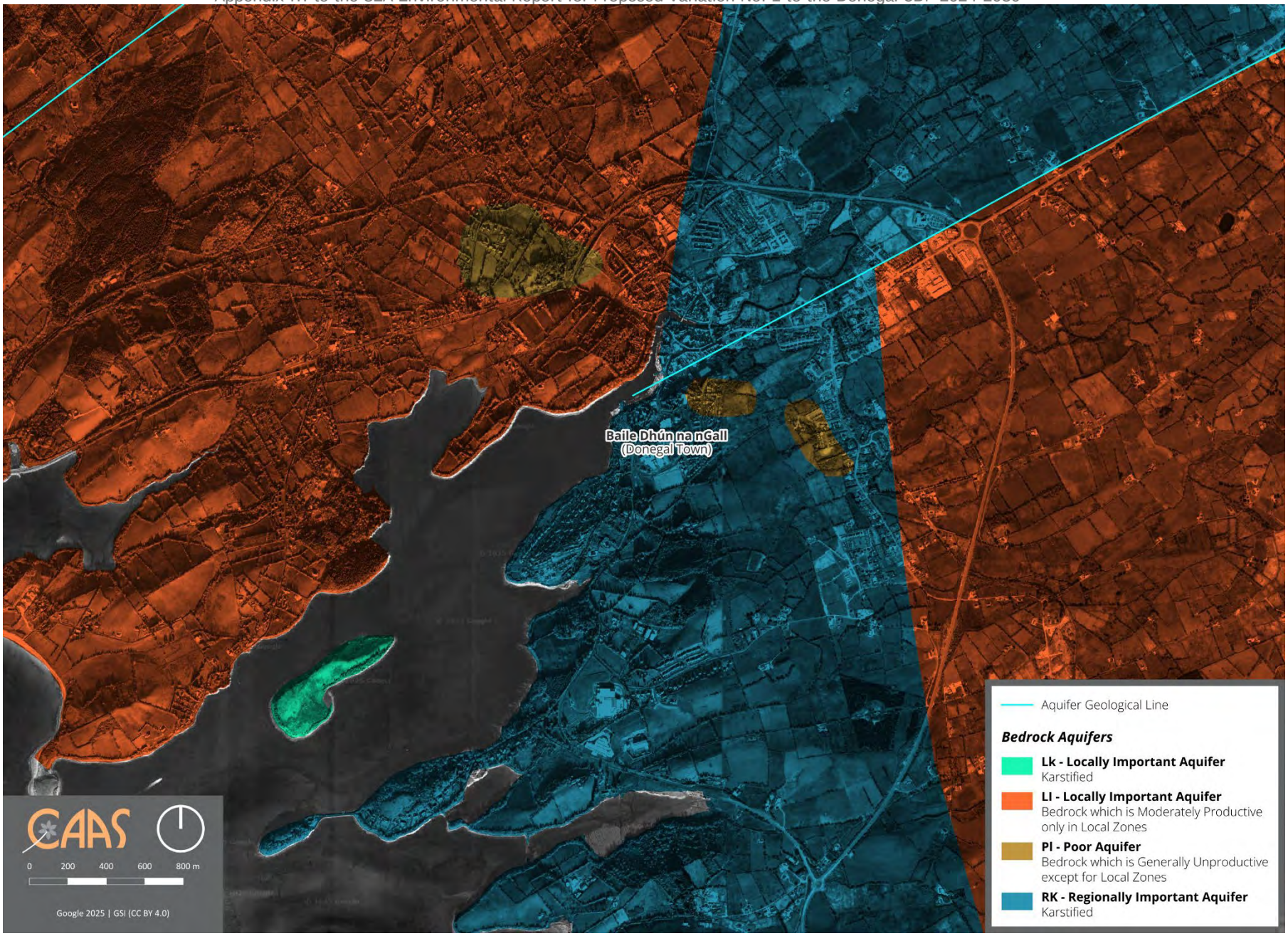
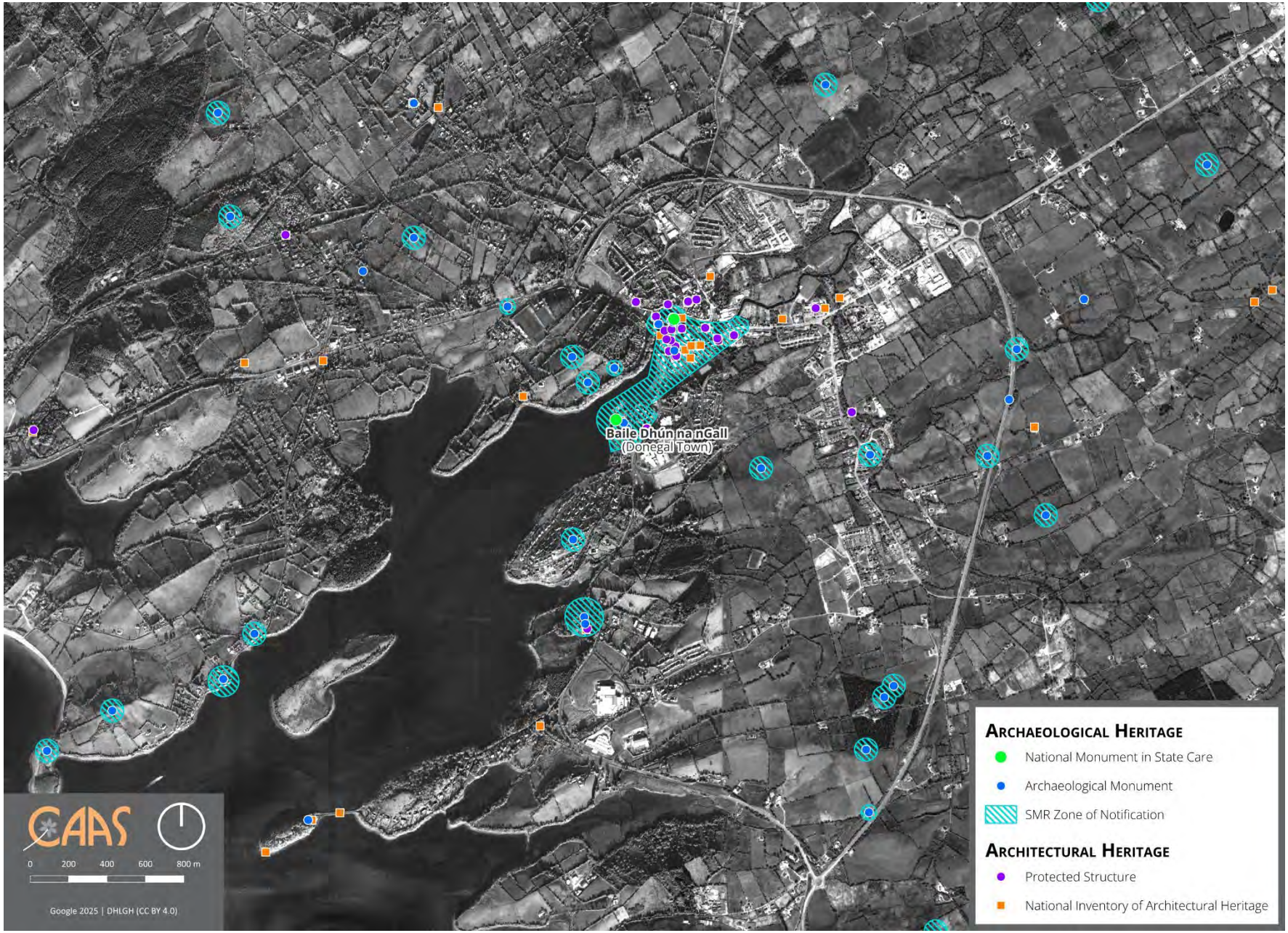


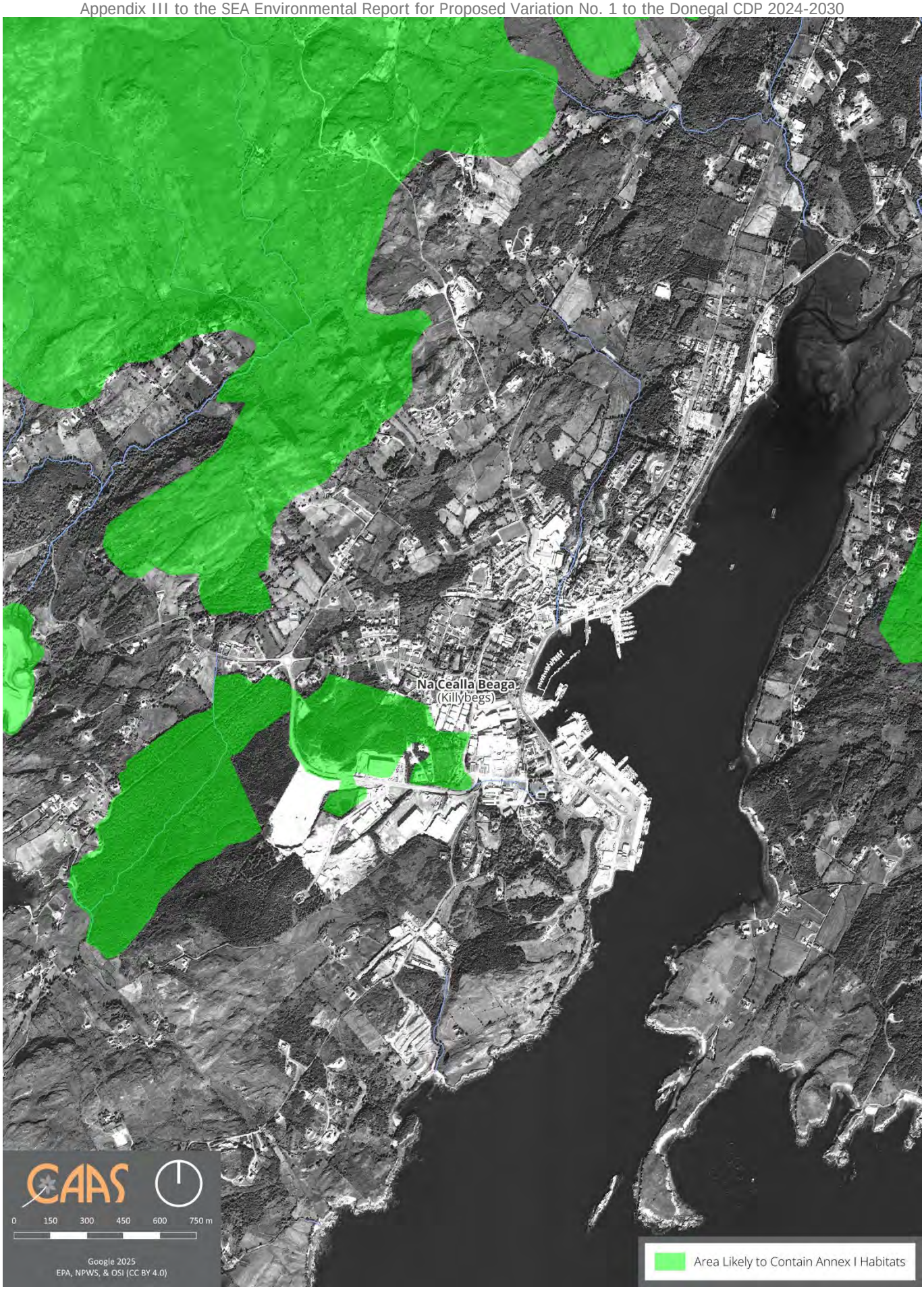
Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) Groundwater Vulnerability



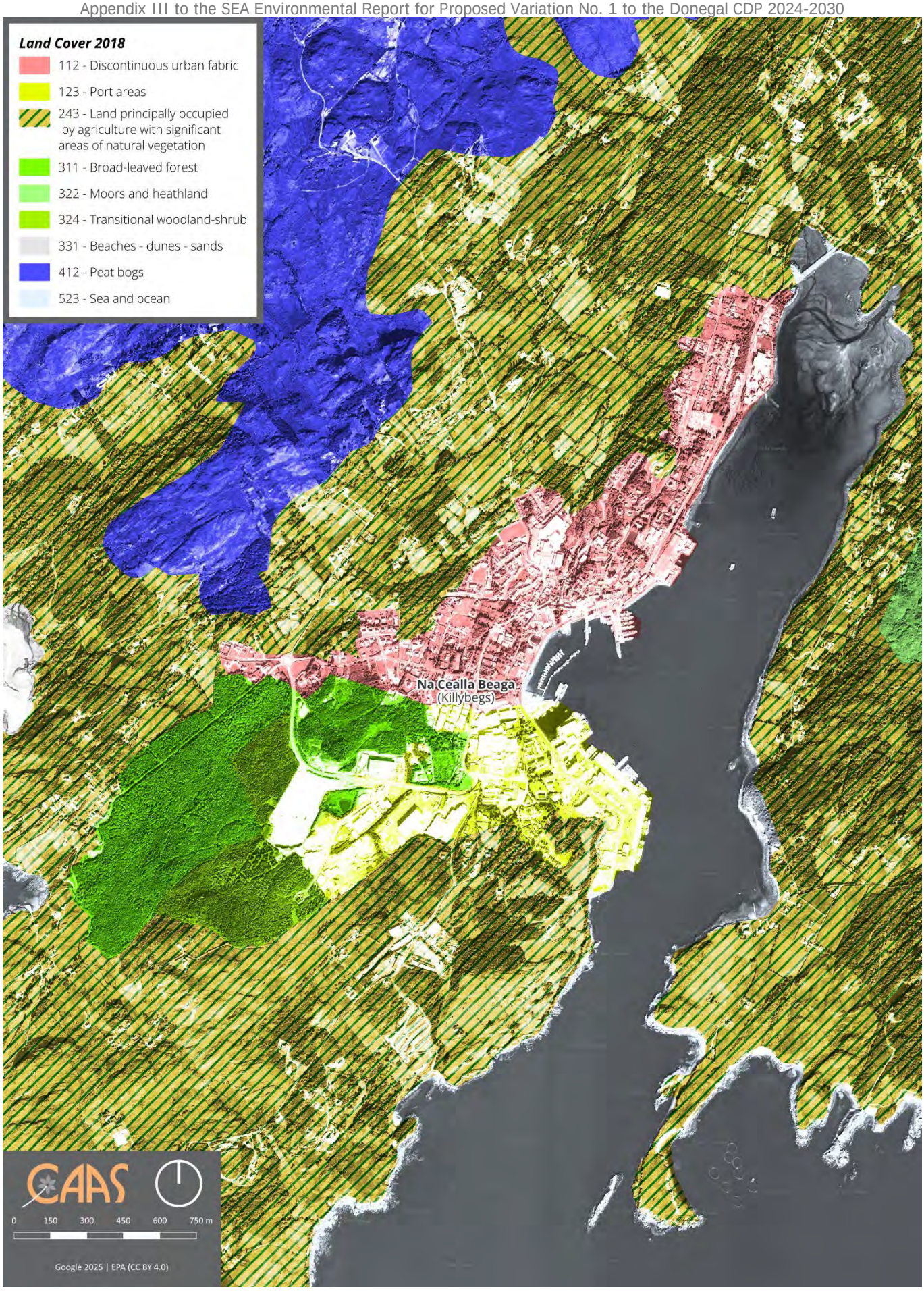
Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) Groundwater Productivity



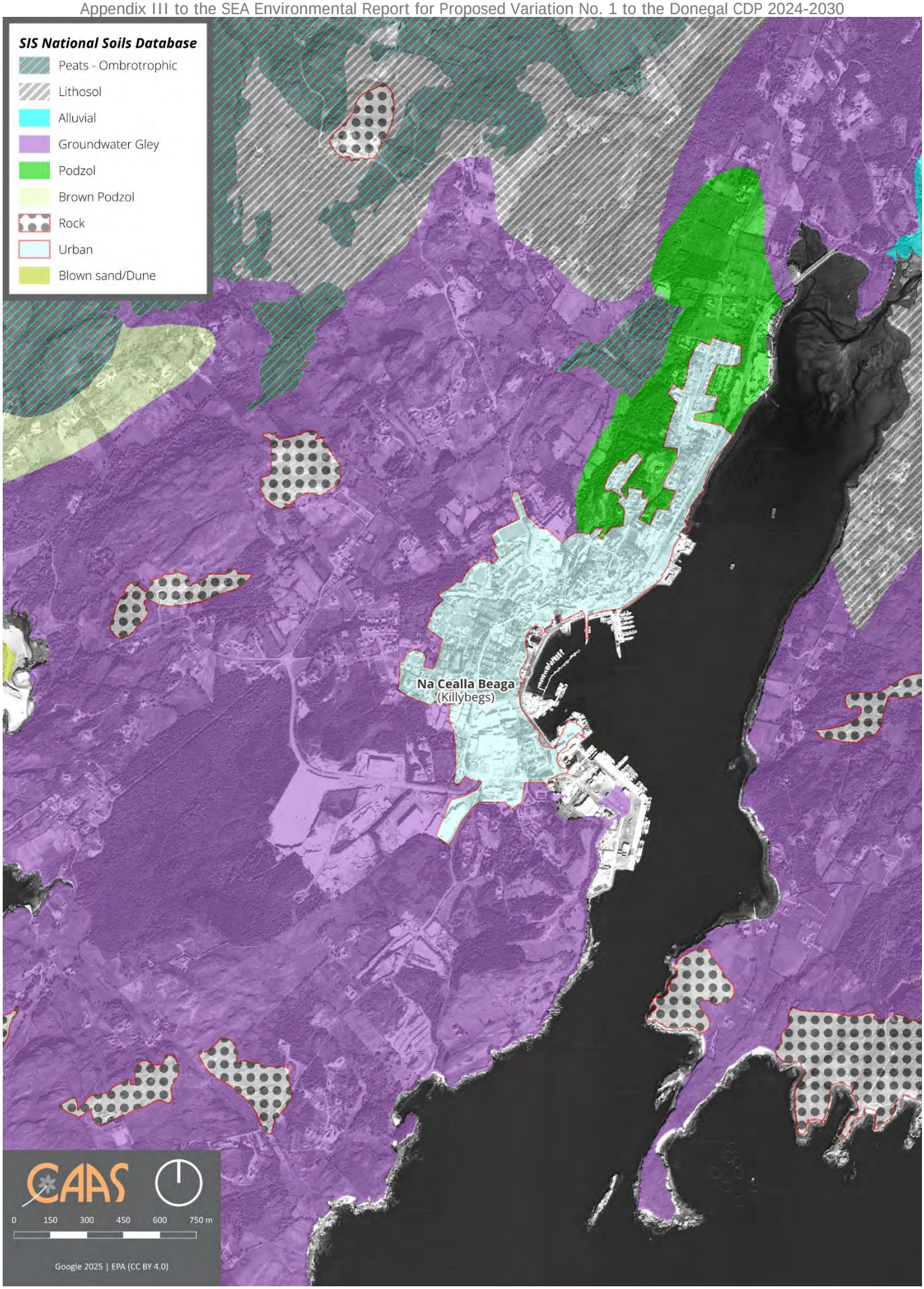
Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) Cultural Heritage



Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) Ecological Designations



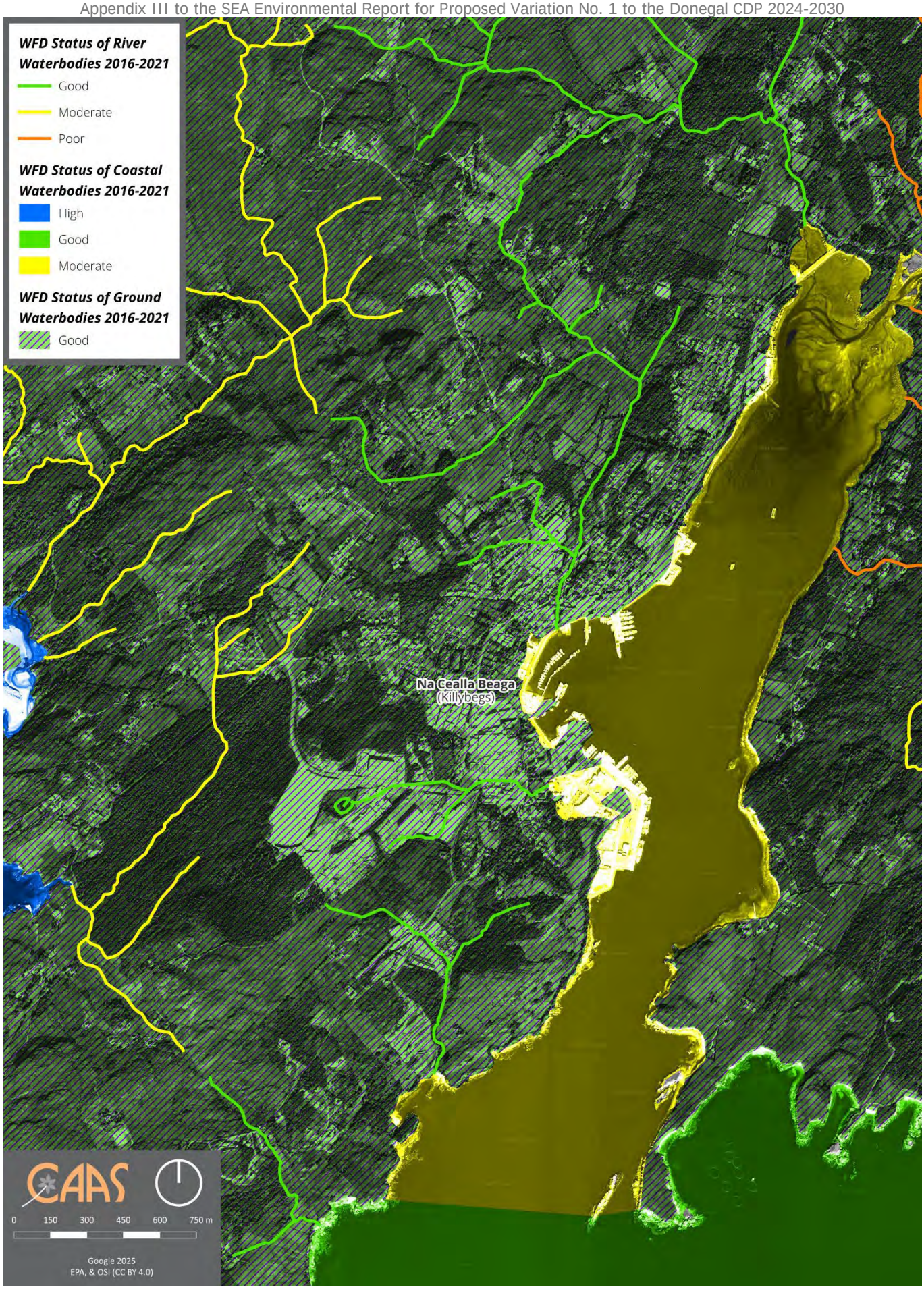
Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) CORINE Land Cover Mapping 2018



Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) Soils



Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) County Geological Sites



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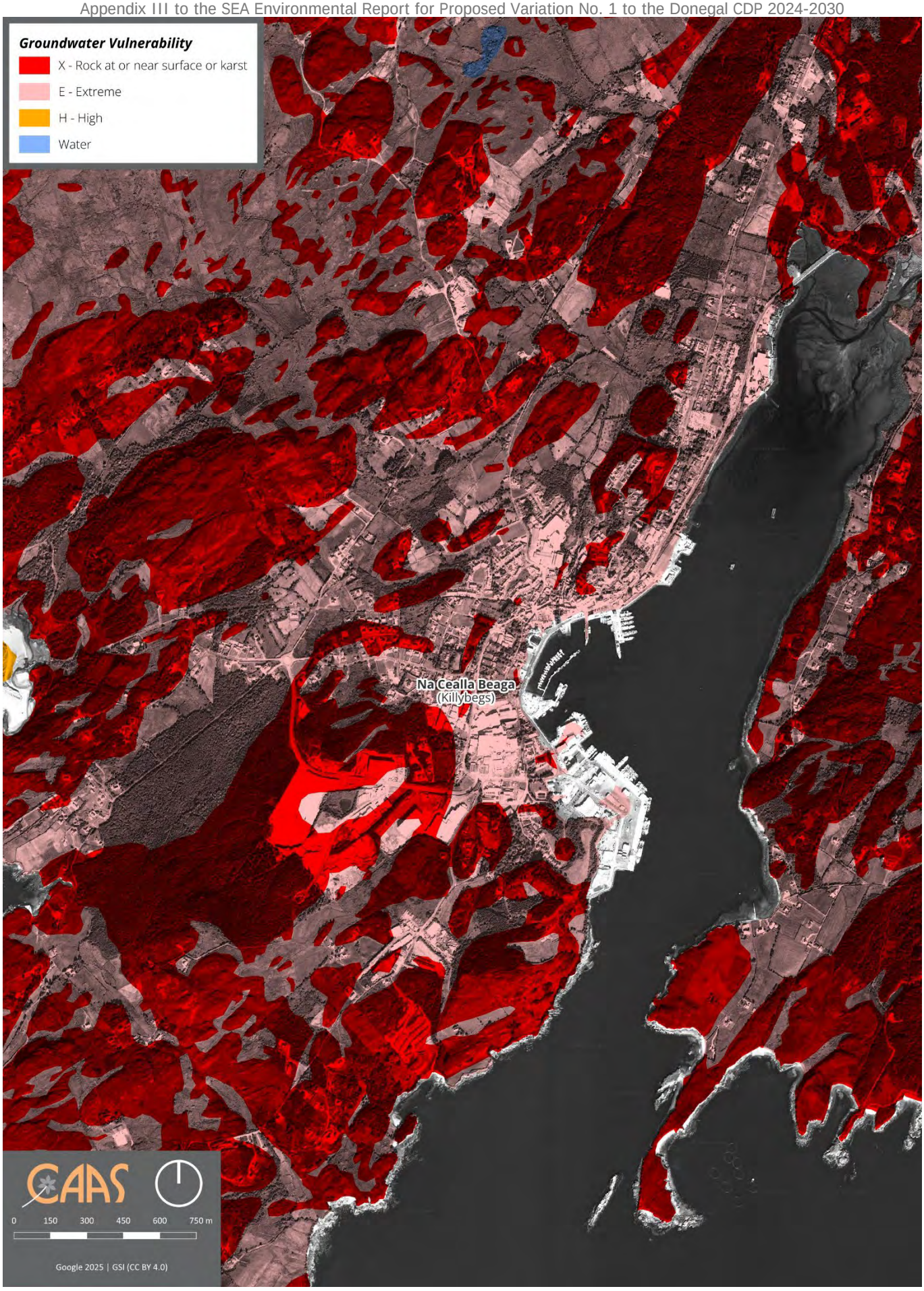
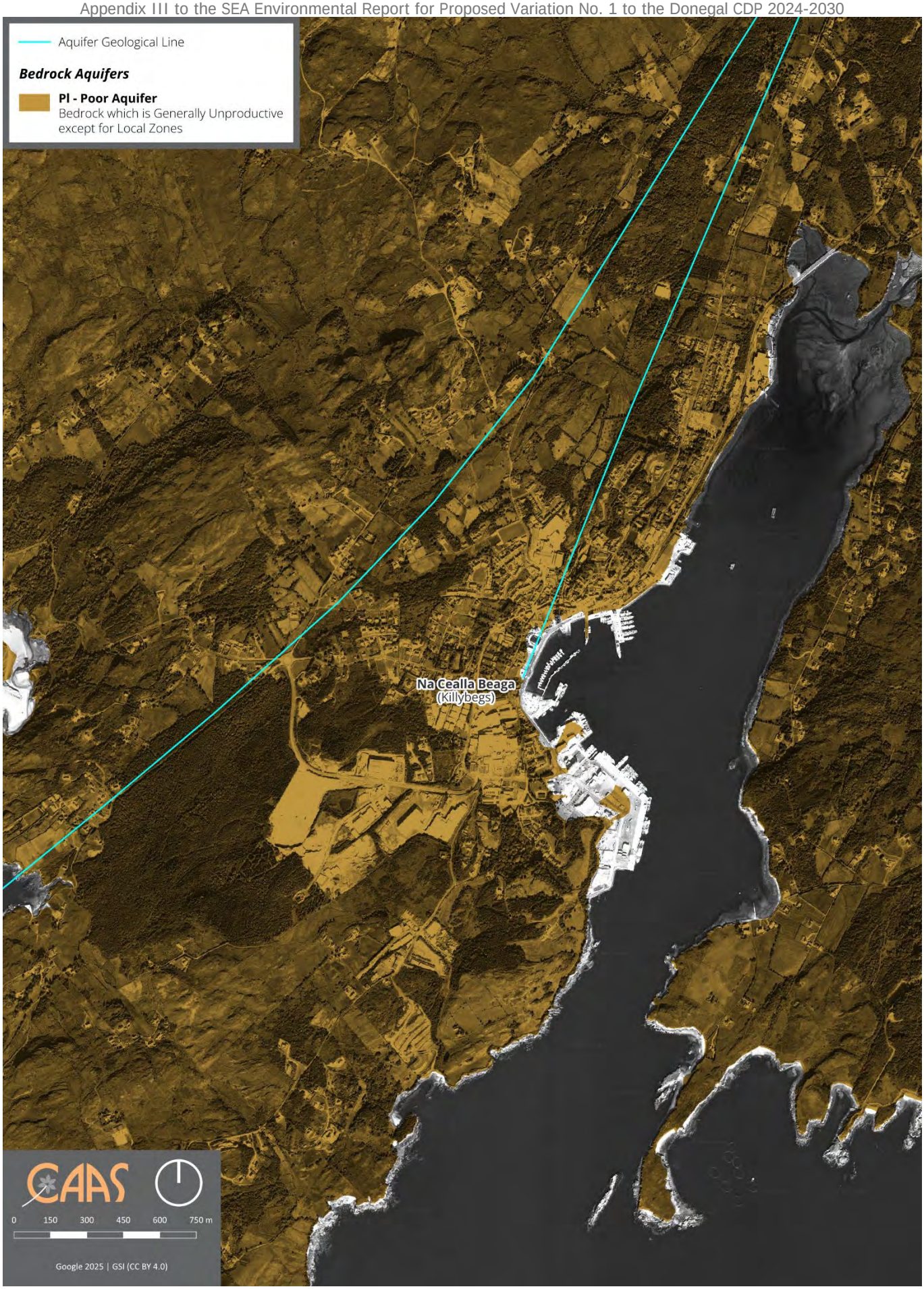
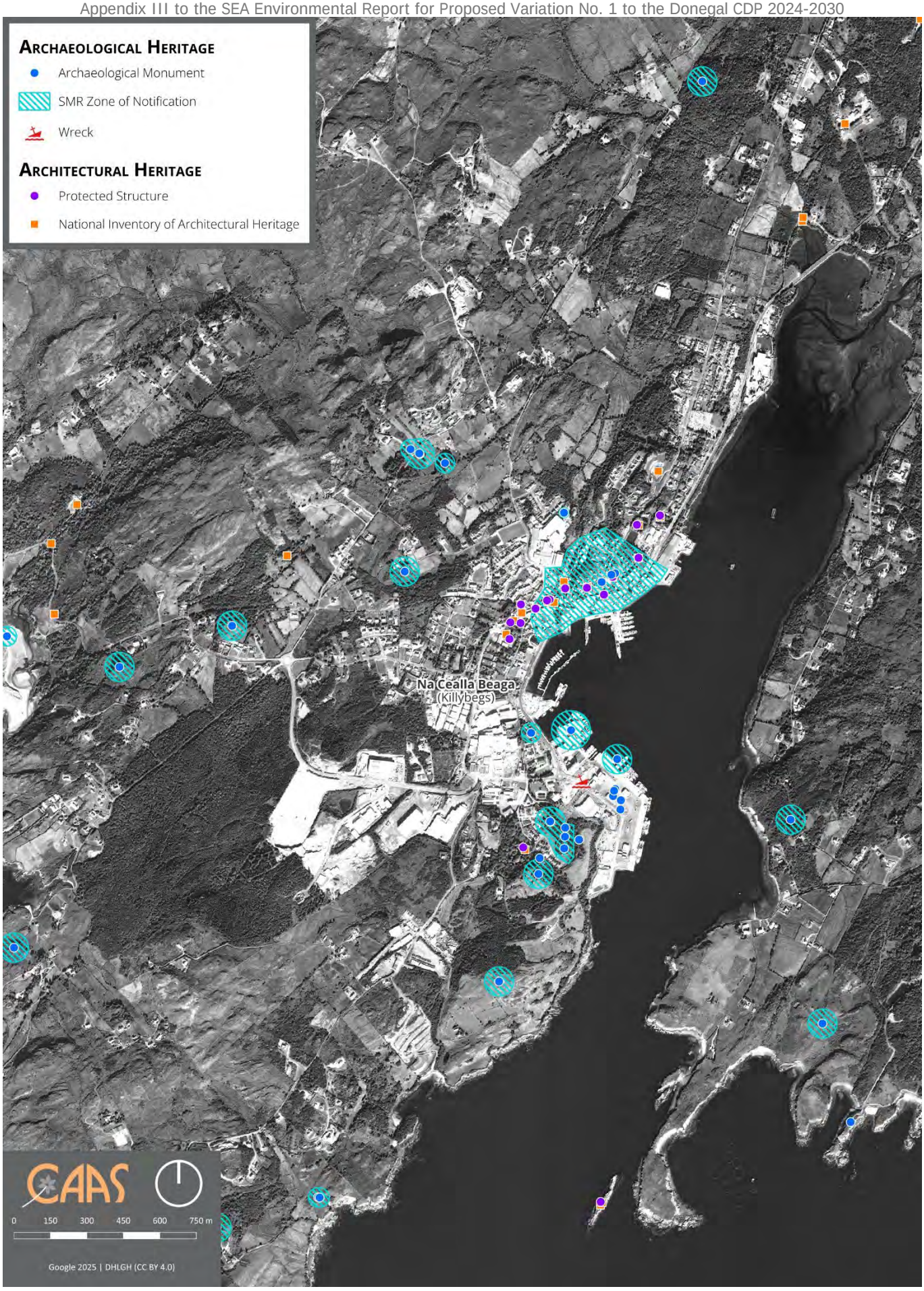


Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) Groundwater Vulnerability



Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) Groundwater Productivity



Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) Cultural Heritage

SEA Environmental Report
Appendix IV – Non-Technical Summary

FOR

Proposed Variation No. 1
TO THE
Donegal County Development Plan
2024-2030

for: Donegal County Council

Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council

by: CAAS Ltd.

September 2025

Donegal County Council, County House, The Diamond, Lifford, County Donegal.
CAAS Ltd., 1st Floor, 24-26 Ormond Quay Upper, Dublin.

Table of Contents

Section 1 Introduction and Terms of Reference 1

Section 2 The Proposed Variation 3

2.1 Introduction and Content 3
2.2 Proposed Variation Aim and Format 3
2.3 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure evidence-based planning 4
2.4 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes 4

Section 3 The Environmental Baseline 5

3.1 Introduction 5
3.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of a Proposed Variation 5
3.3 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna 5
3.4 Population and Human Health 7
3.5 Soil 8
3.6 Water 9
3.7 Air and Climatic Factors 14
3.8 Material Assets 15
3.9 Cultural Heritage 17
3.10 Landscape 18
3.11 Strategic Environmental Objectives 18

Section 4 Alternatives 20

4.1 Introduction 20
4.2 Limitations in Available Alternatives 20
4.3 Alternatives Description and Assessment Summary 20
4.4 Reasons for Choosing the Selected Alternatives in light of Other Reasonable Alternatives Considered 23

Section 5 Summary of Effects arising from the Proposed Variation 24

Section 6 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures 28

6.1 Mitigation 28
6.2 Monitoring 28

Section 1 Introduction and Terms of Reference

This is the Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Report for Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030. The purpose of the Environmental Report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the adoption and implementation of the Proposed Variation. The Environmental Report has been prepared as part of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process for the Proposed Variation.

What is SEA?

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, social and other considerations.

Why is SEA needed? The Benefits

SEA is the planning authority's and the public's guide to what are generally the best areas for development.

SEA enables the planning authority to direct development towards the most robust, well-serviced and connected areas – thereby facilitating the general avoidance of incompatible development in the most sensitive, least well-serviced and least well-connected areas.

SEA provides greater certainty to the public and to developers. Plans, and variations to plans, are more likely to be adopted without delays or challenges and planning applications are more likely to be granted permission. Environmental mitigation is more likely to cost less.

The Proposed Variation directs incompatible development away from the most sensitive areas and focuses on directing compact, sustainable development within compatible areas. Development of these generally more robust, well-serviced and well-connected areas will contribute towards environmental protection and sustainable development, including climate mitigation and adaptation.

Compact development can be accompanied by placemaking initiatives to enable County Donegal to become a more desirable place to live, work and visit.

Compatible sustainable development in sensitive areas is also provided for, subject to various requirements relating to environmental protection and management being met.

How does the SEA work?

All of the main environmental issues were assembled and considered by the team who prepared the Proposed Variation. This helped them to devise a Variation that contributes towards the protection and management of environmental sensitivities. It also helped to identify wherever potential conflicts between the Variation and the environment exist and enabled these conflicts to be mitigated.

The SEA was scoped in consultation with designated environmental authorities.

What is included in the Environmental Report that accompanies the Proposed Variation?

- A description of the environment and the key environmental issues;
- A description and assessment of alternatives for the Proposed Variation;
- An assessment of the provisions of the Proposed Variation; and,
- Mitigation measures, which will avoid/reduce the environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation and will contribute towards compliance with important environmental protection legislation.

Difficulties Encountered during the SEA process

No significant difficulties have been encountered during the undertaking of the assessment to date.

What happens at the end of the process?

An SEA Statement is prepared which summarises, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Proposed Variation.

Section 2 The Proposed Variation

2.1 Introduction and Content

Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030 has been prepared pursuant to Section 58 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (as amended).

2.2 Proposed Variation Aim and Format

The aim of the Proposed Variation is to:

1. Insert new Area Plans for An Clochán Liath (Dungloe), Ballyshannon, Bridgend, Carndonagh, Donegal Town and Killybegs into the Development Plan to replace the current 'Seven Strategic Towns Local Area Plan 2018-2024 which is due to expire in August 2026 and make amendments to Chapter 17 – General Introduction to Area Plans and Table 3.7 Core Strategy Table.
2. Amend the zoning of site NR2.16 at Cockhill, Buncrana – from 'New Residential Phase 2' to 'New Residential Phase 1' within the Buncrana Area Plan Land Use Zoning Map to address an error in said land use zoning map. Note: At the Special Plenary Council Meeting of the 16th May 2024 the Elected Members had in fact resolved to zone the subject lands as 'New Residential Phase 1' rather than 'New Residential Phase 2'.
3. Amend land use zonings on foot of Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) related landowner submissions, where appropriate, within affected settlements throughout Donegal to accord with the Residential Zoned Land Tax Change in zoning of land subject to existing economic activity Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines (DoHLGH December 2024) and Section 653I (4) of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 and otherwise to take into account the proper planning and development of an area.
4. Replace the proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) Zonings with Local Environment Zonings within the Letterkenny Plan Land Use Zoning Map as pNHAs are not in fact a statutory designation/do not constitute a land use zoning and should be replaced by an appropriate zoning to effectively guide development.
5. Rezone an area of land at Mullindrait, Stranorlar – from part 'Opportunity Site' and Part 'Open Space and Recreation' to 'New Residential Phase 1'.

To give effect to these aims, the Proposed Variation contains five Sections namely:

- Section 1: Contains the Area Plans for An Clochán Liath (Dungloe), Ballyshannon, Bridgend, Carndonagh, Donegal Town and Killybegs including land use zoning maps and amendments to Chapter 17 General Introduction to Area Plans (Note: These land use zoning maps include any amended land use zonings for said settlements on foot of RZLT related landowner submissions). The amendments to Chapter 17 also introduce more flexibility and responsiveness in terms of the potential release of 'New Residential Phase 2' lands, whereby such lands could be considered for development purposes when, inter alia, a minimum of 50% of the 'Phase 1' lands in a given settlement have been developed or committed to development by way of a grant of planning permission – see Policy GEN-H-3.
- Section 2: Provides details pertaining to the proposed Amendment of Zoning of Site NR2.16 at Cockhill Buncrana within the Buncrana Area Plan land use zoning map, from New Residential Phase 2' to 'New Residential Phase 1'.
- Section 3: Amendment of Letterkenny Plan on foot of Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) rezoning requests and the rezoning of lands currently designated as 'proposed Natural Heritage Areas' to 'Local Environment'.
- Section 4: Amendment of the Ballybofey-Stranorlar Area Plan on foot of Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) rezoning requests and the rezoning of lands at Mullindrait, Stranorlar as 'New Residential Phase 1'.

2.3 Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure evidence-based planning

In preparing the Proposed Variation, information relating to various sectors, from different Departments within the Councils and from different bodies and organisations, was gathered and analysed, contributing towards the development of evidence-led provisions. This work included preparing the following documents that are appended to the Proposed Variation: this SEA Environmental Report; an Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report; a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report; and Donegal Six Strategic Towns Local Transport Plans.

The undertaking of the SEA process was part of this strategic work and contributed towards the integration of environmental considerations into individual Proposed Variation provisions as summarised in Section 6 of this report.

2.4 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

It is important to note that when reading the Proposed Variation, the provisions of the County Development Plan are relevant and, in this regard, both documents should be read in tandem with each other.

The existing County Development Plan to be varied sits within a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for, among other things, land use planning, infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism, environmental protection and environmental management. The Proposed Variation must comply with relevant higher-level strategic actions and will, in turn, guide lower-level strategic actions. These documents have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant.

The First Revision of the National Planning Framework sets out Ireland's planning policy direction up to 2040. The National Planning Framework is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region sets out objectives for land use planning, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been subject to environmental assessment and must, as relevant and appropriate, be implemented through the County Development Plan to be varied.

In order to be realised, projects included in the Proposed Variation (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

Section 3 The Environmental Baseline

3.1 Introduction

A summary of the environmental baseline is described in this section. This baseline together with the Strategic Environmental Objectives, which are identified in Section 3.11, is used in order to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation and in order to determine appropriate monitoring measures.

3.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of a Proposed Variation

In the absence of a Proposed Variation, the framework for development across the Area Plan settlements would be provided by the County Development Plan and other related documents. There would be no Proposed Variation to provide additional detail beyond that provided already through the existing planning framework as how to achieve sustainable development and environmental protection and management.

As a result, there would be both:

- A decreased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of the positive environmental effects identified by this assessment occurring; and;
- An increased likelihood in the extent, magnitude and frequency of the adverse environmental effects identified by this assessment occurring.

3.3 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

European sites comprise Special Areas of Conservation[1] (SACs) and Special Protection Areas[2] (SPAs). Such sites within a 15 km buffer around the area to which the Proposed Variation relates are mapped on Figure 3.1). There are 72 European sites designated within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates (46 SACs and 26 SPAs).

There are no European sites designated within An Clochán Liath, however, Rutland Island and Sound SAC (Site Code: 002283)[3] is designated adjacent to the east of the settlement boundary, whilst Cloghernagore Bog And Glenveagh National Park SAC (Site Code: 002047)[4] is located c. 1 km to the north-east of the settlement boundary and Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA (Site Code: 004039)[5] is located c. 0.5 km to the east of the settlement boundary.

There is one SPA designated within Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon), namely Donegal Bay SPA (Site Code: 004151)[6] and one site designated c. 0.8 km to the south of the settlement boundary, namely Dunmuckrum Turloughs SAC (Site Code: 002303)[7].

There are no European sites designated within Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town), however Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC (Site Code: 000133)[8] and Donegal Bay SPA (Site Code: 004151)[9] are located adjacent to the settlement boundary.

[1] SACs have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. The Habitats Directive seeks to establish Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the EU. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SACs to protect habitats and species, which, together with the SPAs designated under the 1979 Birds Directive, form Natura 2000. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010. The Regulations have been prepared to address several judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) against Ireland, notably cases C-418/04 and C-183/05, in respect of failure to transpose elements of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive into Irish law.

[2] SPAs have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the EU.

[3] Sensitive features comprise: coastal lagoons; large shallow inlets and bays; reefs; annual vegetation or drift lines; embryonic shifting dunes; shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria*; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; humid dune slacks; and harbour seal.

[4] Sensitive features comprise: oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains; water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*; European dry heaths; Alpine and Boreal heaths; *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils; blanket bogs; depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*; old sessile oak woodlands with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles; freshwater pearl mussel; salmon; otter; and Killarney fern.

[5] Sensitive features comprise: red-throated diver; merlin; peregrine; golden plover; and dunlin.

[6] Sensitive features comprise: great northern diver; light-bellied brent goose; common scoter; sanderling; and wetland and waterbirds.

[7] Sensitive features comprise: turloughs.

There are no European sites designated within or adjacent to Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend), Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) and Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs).

Land cover is the observed physical cover, as seen from the ground or through remote sensing, including for example natural or planted vegetation, water and human constructions which cover the earth's surface. The CORINE 2018[10] mapping (shown on Figure 3.2) identifies the most dominant land cover types are peat bogs (concentrated in the central, north-west and south-west) and pastures (mainly in the east, south, north and north-east).

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I habitats, include:

- Peat bogs
- Moors and heathlands;
- Intertidal flats;
- Beaches-dunes-sands;
- Mixed forest;
- Broad-leaved forest;
- Waterbodies; and
- Salt marshes.

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I habitats surrounding An Clochán Liath include peat bogs; and intertidal flats.

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I Habitats surrounding Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) include: salt marshes; and water bodies.

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I Habitats surrounding Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) include: intertidal flats; broad-leaved forests; and peat bogs.

Categories from CORINE mapping that may indicate areas with the potential for Annex I Habitats surrounding Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) include: peat bogs; broad-leaved forests; beaches, dunes and sand; and moors and heathland.

Within Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) and Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh), there are no areas with the potential for Annex I Habitats.

There are seven National Parks in Ireland, including Glenveagh National Park, located within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates. Glenveagh National Park lies in the heart of County Donegal, among the landscape of the Derryveagh Mountains. The park includes the former Glenveagh Estate, as well as the quartzite hills around Crocknafarragh to the west and the peatlands of Lough Barra bog, Meenachullion and Crockastoller to the south.

Ecological networks are important in connecting areas of local biodiversity with each other and with nearby designated sites so as to prevent islands of habitat from being isolated entities. They are composed of linear features, such as treelines, hedgerows and rivers/streams, which provide corridors or stepping stones for wildlife species moving within their normal range. They are important for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species of flora and fauna particularly for mammals, especially for bats and small birds and facilitate linkages both between and within designated ecological sites, the non-designated surrounding countryside and urban areas.

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive recognises the importance of ecological networks as corridors and stepping stones for wildlife, including for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species of flora and fauna. The Directive requires that ecological connectivity and areas of ecological value outside the Natura 2000 network of designated ecological sites are maintained.

[8] Sensitive features comprise: mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation; dunes with *Salix repens ssp. Argentea*; humid dune slacks; and harbour seal.
[9] Sensitive features comprise: great northern diver; light-bellied brent goose; common scoter; sanderling; and wetland and waterbirds.
[10] The CORINE (Co-ordinated Information on the Environment) land cover data series was devised as a means of compiling geo-spatial environmental information in a standardised and comparable manner. CORINE has become a key data source for informing environmental and planning policy on a national and European level. The main land cover type in Ireland is agricultural land including forestry, which accounts for two-thirds of the national landmass. Most of this is permanent grassland pastures. Peatlands and wetlands are the second most widespread land cover type, covering almost one-fifth of the country. While forested areas cover about one-tenth of the country. Despite rapid development in the past two decades, Ireland's landscape is predominantly rural and agricultural.

Man-made habitats within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates can also include important biodiversity features. Gardens provide habitats for a range of wildlife including various bird species, invertebrates such as bees and butterflies and mammals such as hedgehogs, mice, rats and foxes. These species move around between gardens using hedgerows and vegetated areas. These urban green spaces are of importance as they form part of a network of green spaces across the area to which the Proposed Variation relates including gardens, parks, graveyards, amenity walks, railway lines and patches of woodland and scrub within which animals and plants continue to thrive.

Ecological islands or areas of habitat that are not connected to surrounding ecologically valuable habitats can also be important.

Existing Problems
Ireland's Article 17 report on the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (DCHG, 2019) identifies various Irish, EU-protected habitats and species to be of unfavourable status and many to be still declining, although it also identifies that a range of positive actions are underway. Ireland's Article 12 Birds Directive Reports and the 6th National Report under the Convention of Biological Diversity identify similar issues.

The Proposed Variation includes measures to contribute towards the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna and associated ecosystem services. Previous changes in land uses arising from human development have resulted in a loss of biodiversity and flora and fauna; however, legislative objectives governing biodiversity and fauna were not identified as being conflicted with.

3.4 Population and Human Health

The results of Census 2022 recorded a population of 167,084 persons within the CSO boundary of Donegal County Council, of which the Proposed Variation relates. The population growth projections for the County, as set out in the NPF are 173,500-176,500 for 2026 and 179,500-183,500 for 2031.

The populations recorded in the 2022 Census in each of the six towns are as follows:

- An Clochán Liath – 1,247 persons;
- Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) – 2,246 persons;
- Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend) – 373 persons;
- Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) – 2,768 persons;
- Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) – 2,749 persons; and
- Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) – 1,258 persons.

Donegal is a geographically extensive and rural county. Donegal is located in a strategic position in the north-west of the country, with the 'North-West Strategic Growth Partnership' between Donegal and Derry City and Strabane District Council, which advocates for a 'North-West Metropolitan City Region', of Letterkenny and surrounding towns, Derry City and Strabane. Letterkenny is also highlighted as a Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan in the Northern and Western RSES. Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town), Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs) and An Clochán Liath are identified as County Growth Drivers and Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon) and Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) are identified as Service Towns.[11]

The population provided for by the Variation will interact with various environmental components. Potential interactions include:

- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and landscapes;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for waste water treatment at the municipal level;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction;
- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality.

Human health has the potential to be impacted upon by environmental vectors (i.e. environmental components such as air, water or soil through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported so that they come into contact with human beings). Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise as a result of exposure to these vectors arising from incompatible adjacent land uses for example. These factors have been considered with regard to the description of: the baseline of each environmental component; and the identification and evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Variation.

[11] Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030

Existing Problems
The number of homes within County Donegal with radon levels above the reference level is within the normal range experienced in other locations across the country.

Sources of flood risk within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates include: coastal (including in Killybegs and Dungloe); fluvial (River Skeoge in Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend), Donagh River, Glennagannon River and Ballywilly Brook in Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh), and River Eske in Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town); pluvial (rainwater); and surface drainage systems sources.

3.5 Soil

The most dominant soil types[12] surrounding the built-up areas[13] of the area to which the Proposed Variation relates are: peat soils (ombrotrophic); groundwater gleys (wetland soils with slowly permeable horizons resulting in seasonal waterlogging); brown podzols (characterised by dark brown humus mineral soil covered with a thin mat of partly decayed leaves); and alluvial soils (associated with alluvial clay, silt or sand river deposits).

The GSI (Geological Survey Ireland) have a suite of data sources available that would be useful in planning and assessing individual projects with regard to the environmental topic(s) of soil and/or material assets. These include:

- Aggregate Potential Mapping;
- Bedrock mapping;
- Quaternary and Physiographic mapping; and
- National Aquifer and Recharge mapping.

Geological Survey Ireland coordinate the Irish Geological Heritage Programme, whereby an objective has been set to identify and select sites of geological interest within each county across the country. County Geological Sites (CGSs) do not receive statutory protection like Natural Heritage Areas but receive an effective protection from their inclusion in the planning system. The audit of CGSs in Donegal was completed in two parts, with South Donegal completed in 2014 and North Donegal completed in 2018. There are 101 CGS identified in County Donegal.

There are three CGSs designated within or surrounding Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon): Ballyshannon CGS (Site Code: DL001); Lough Lareen (Site Code: DL025); and Donegal and Inver Bays (Site Code: DL011). There is one CGS designated within Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh): Carndonagh Fan (Site Code: ND044). There is one CGS designated within Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town): Donegal and Inver Bays (Site Code: DL011). There is one CGS designated within Na Cealla Beaga (Killybegs): Donegal and Inver Bays (Site Code: DL011). There are no CGS designated within or surrounding An Clochán Liath or Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend).

The term "landslide" describes a wide variety of processes that result in the downward and outward movement of materials such as rock, debris, earth, mud and peat under the force of gravity. Issues such as existing ground conditions, slope stability and storage of excavated material have the potential to influence susceptibility to landslides/bog bursts. The potential impacts of landslides include loss of human life/injury, flooding, pollution of watercourses and impacts upon aquatic biodiversity. There are a number of landslide events recorded within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates. The GSI have identified[14] the area to which the Proposed Variation relates as having mainly low levels of landslide susceptibility, with high levels of landslide susceptibility occurring in mountainous areas.

In the absence of mitigation, contaminated materials have the potential to adversely impact upon human health, water quality and habitats and species. As is the case with other urban, semi-urban and port areas across the country, there is potential for contamination at sites within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, especially where land uses occurred in the past, in the absence of environmental protection legislation.

[12] All soil types belong to a Sub-Group and so in turn to one of the 11 soil Great Groups. Great Groups and Sub-Groups are a hierarchical arrangement of soils used for taxonomical classification (http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/soilguide.php).
[13] The built-up areas are mainly made up of urban soils. Urban soils are soils, which have been disturbed, transported or manipulated by human activity in the urban environment and are often overlain by a non-agricultural, man-made surface layer that has been produced by mixing, filling or by contamination of land surfaces in urban and suburban areas.
[14] https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/programmes-and-projects/geohazards/projects/Pages/Landslide-Susceptibility-Mapping.aspx

Existing Problems
Legislative objectives governing soil were not identified as being conflicted with.

3.6 Water

Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD). The 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*. All public bodies are required to coordinate their policies and operations so as to maintain the *good status* of water bodies that are currently unpolluted and improve polluted water bodies to *good status.*

County Donegal lies within the North-Western River Basin District. Catchments draining the area to which the Proposed Variation relates include: Donagh-Moville; Lough Swilly; Gweebarra-Sheephaven; Foyle; Donegal Bay North; and Erne. The main rivers in County Donegal are the Rivers Finn, Foyle, Erne, Eske and Swilly. The main lakes in County Donegal are Lough Swilly, Lough Eske and Lough Beag.

The current WFD (2016-2021) status[15] of surface waters draining the area to which the Proposed Variation relates ranges from *high* to *bad*. Subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD, some of these water bodies will need improvement in order to comply with the objectives of the WFD.

Figure 3.3 illustrates the WFD surface water status within and surrounding the area to which the Proposed Variation relates.

The WFD status (2016-2021) of groundwater underlying County Donegal (mapped on Figure 3.4) is currently generally identified as being of *good* status and meeting the objectives of the WFD. There is a limited area identified as being of *poor* status in the south of the County, at Waste Facility (W0024-03); the groundwater underlying this area is currently not meeting the objectives of the WFD.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) document accompanies this SEA Environmental Report and the Draft Plan. Requirements in relation to SFRA are provided under 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014.

Flood risk management and drainage provisions are already in force through the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-20230 and related provisions have been integrated into the Proposed Variation.

Predictive flood risk mapping is available from the Office of Public Works and included in the accompanying Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Sources of flood risk within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates include: coastal (including in Killybegs and Dungloe); fluvial (River Skeoge in Ceann an Droichid (Bridgend), Donagh River, Glennagannon River and Ballywilly Brook in Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh), and River Eske in Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town); pluvial (rainwater); and surface drainage systems sources.

Existing Problems
Subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD, based on available water data, the recorded status of certain water bodies will need improvement in order to comply with the objectives of the WFD. The Proposed Variation includes provisions that will contribute towards improvements in the status of waters.

There is elevated levels of flood risk from fluvial and coastal sources at various locations across Donegal. The preparation of the Proposed Variation, SEA and SFRA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the SFRA have informed both the Proposed Variation and the SEA.

[15] As per EPA's WFD Status 2016-2021 classification (https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/).

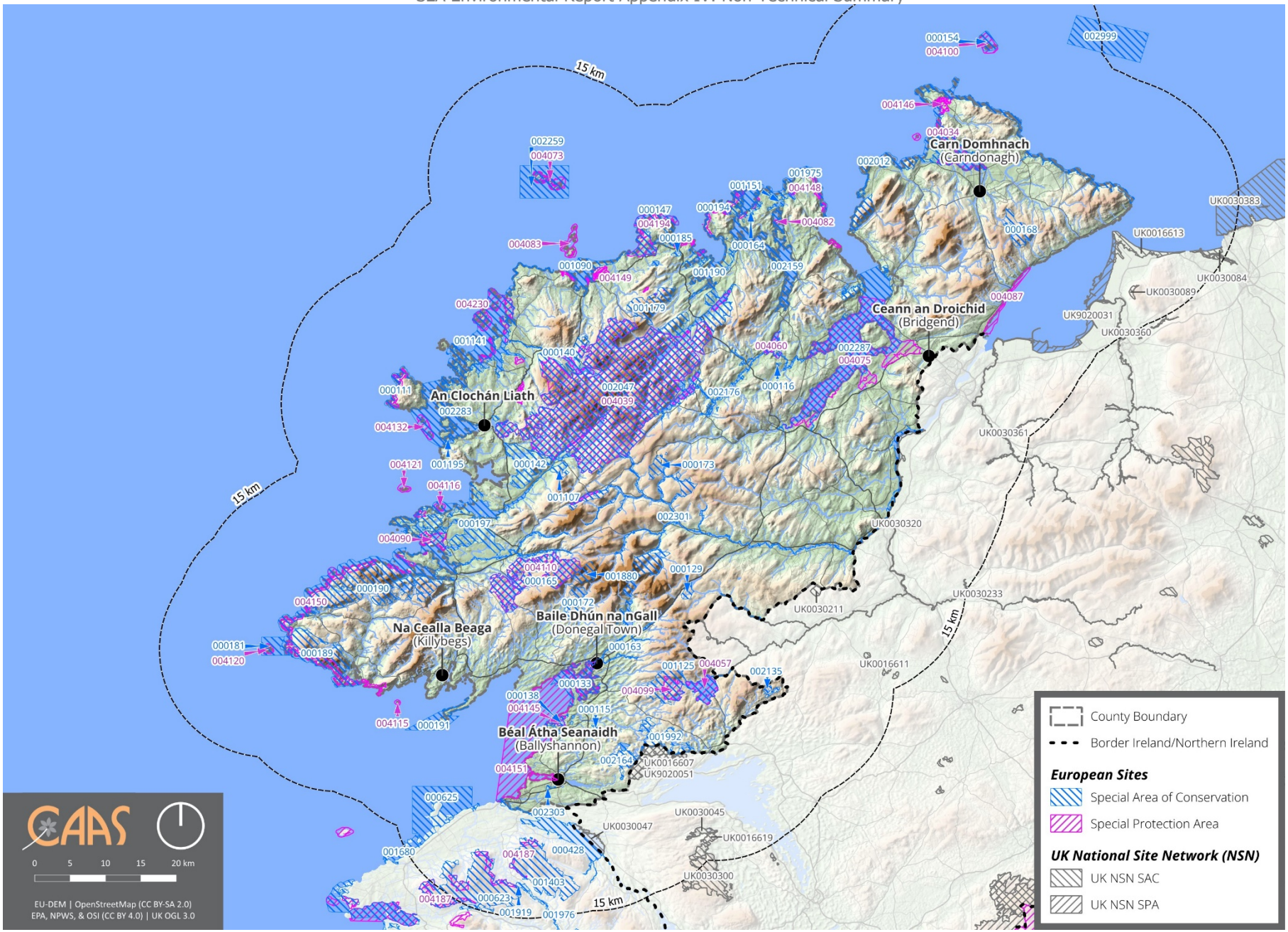


Figure 3.1 European Sites within and within 15 km buffer of County Donegal

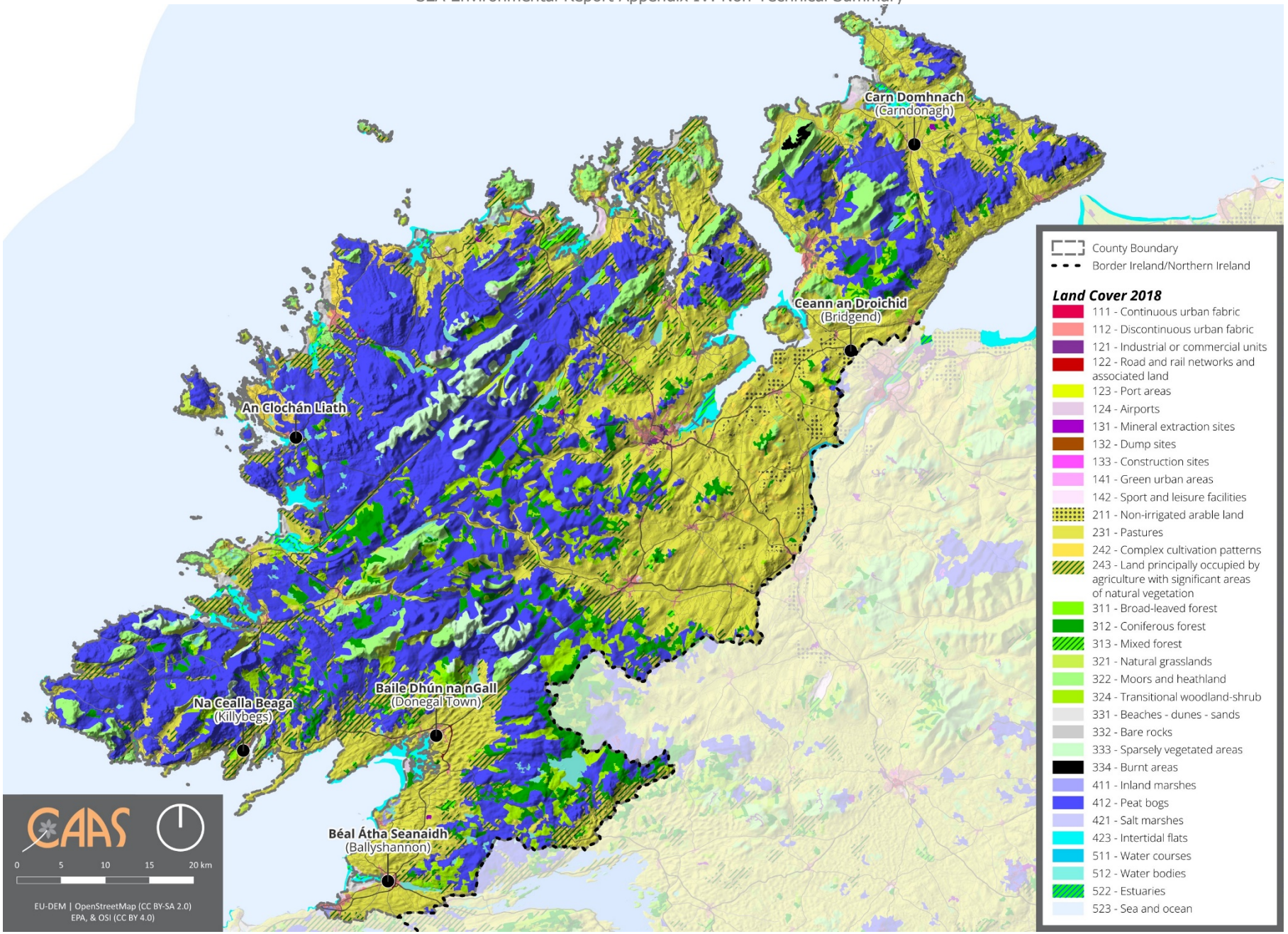


Figure 3.2 CORINE Land Cover Mapping 2018

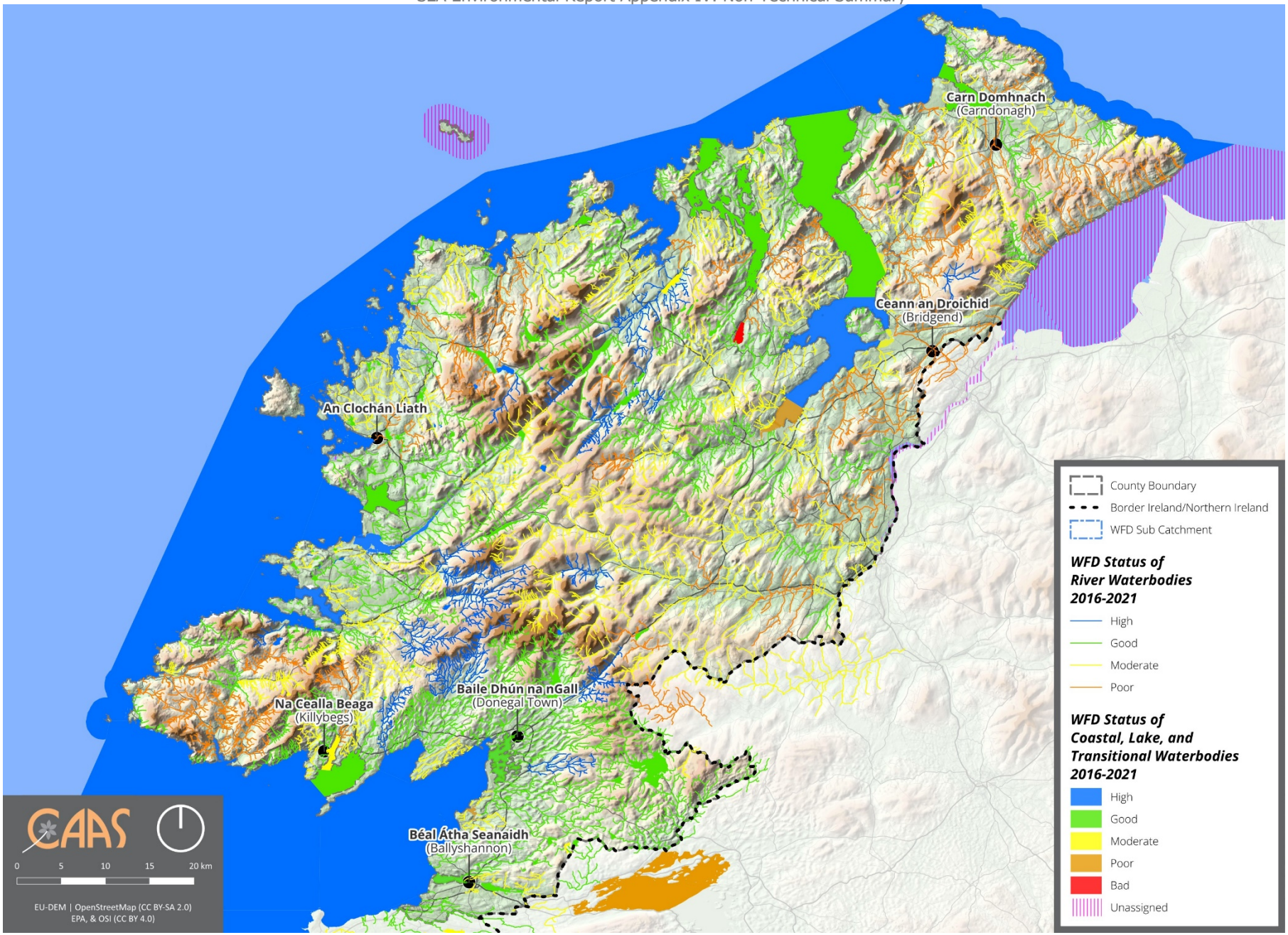


Figure 3.3 Surface Water Status (2016-2021)

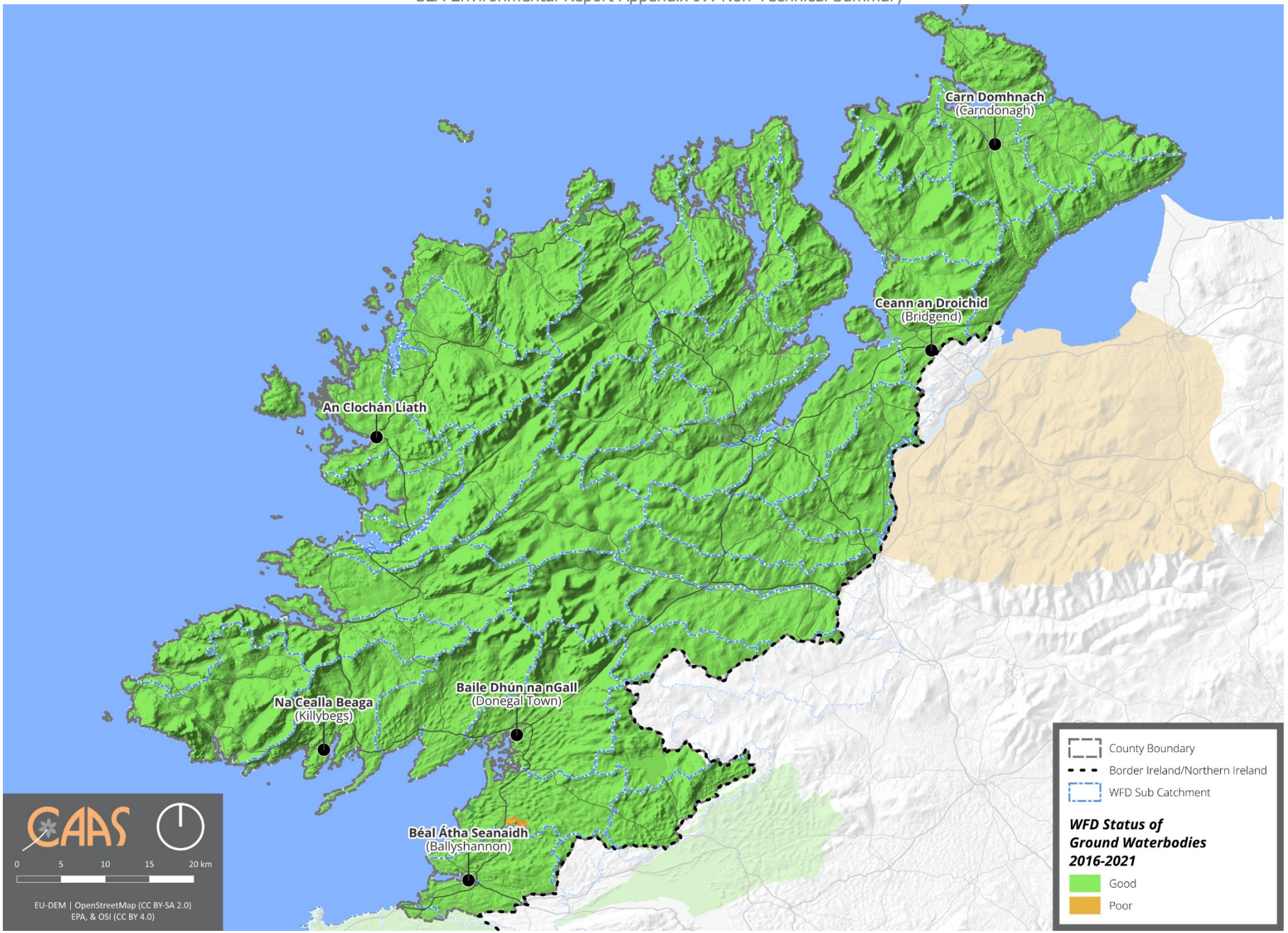


Figure 3.4 Ground Water Status (2016-2021)

3.7 Air and Climatic Factors

Total emissions of greenhouse gases by humans come from various sectors including transport, agriculture, energy industries, manufacturing combustion, industrial processes, residential developments, commercial services developments, waste management processes and fluorinated gases equipment (such as refrigeration and fire protection systems).

In 2023, Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to be 55.01 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO_2 eq), which is 6.8% lower (or 4.00 Mt CO_2 eq) than emissions in 2022 (59.00 Mt CO_2 eq) and follows a 2.0% decrease in emissions reported for 2022. Emissions are 1.2% below the historical 1990 baseline for the first time in 33 years. In 2023, emissions in the stationary EU Emissions Trading System emissions (covering emissions from sectors including Agriculture, Transport, Energy, Industries, Residential, Manufacturing Combustion and Industrial Processes) decreased by 17%. When land use, land-use change and forestry is included, total national emissions decreased by 3.8%. Emissions under the Effort Sharing Regulation (covering emissions from the electricity and heat generation, industrial manufacturing and aviation sectors) decreased by 3.4%. Decreased emissions in 2023 compared to 2022 were observed in the largest sectors except for transport which showed an increase of 0.3%.

Climate mitigation describes the action to reduce the likelihood of climate change occurring or reduce the impact if it does occur. This can include reducing the causes of climate change (e.g. emissions of greenhouse gases) as well as reducing future risks associated with climate change. The National Climate Action Plan 2025 is the third statutory update to the plan since the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 was signed into law, committing Ireland to 2030 and 2050 targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It builds on Climate Action Plan 2024, outlining how Ireland will accelerate the actions required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development.

Climate adaptation is a change in natural or human systems in response to the impacts of climate change. These changes moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities and can be in response to actual or expected impacts. The National Adaptation Framework (2024) aims to create a unified approach involving both government and society to adapt to climate change. It outlines how various sectors and local authorities can implement adaptation measures to minimise Ireland's vulnerability to climate change's adverse effects while taking advantage of any beneficial impacts. The Framework emphasises the importance of integrating adaptation strategies into all levels of policy making, infrastructure development, and local planning.

The Donegal County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 sets out mitigation, adaptation and other climate measures to create a low carbon and climate resilient County. The Climate Action Plan sets out a range of actions across six theme areas of Sustainability and Resource Management; Governance and Leadership; Transport; Built Environment; Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure; and Communities and Resilience.

Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh) is one of 2 Decarbonising Zones (DZ) identified in Donegal which identifies a range of mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity measures to address low carbon energy, greenhouse gas (GHG) emission and climate needs.[16]

The EPA's (2024) *Air Quality in Ireland 2023 Report* identifies that:

- Ireland's latest monitoring shows we are in compliance with current EU standards.
- Ireland is not on track to achieve its ambition, set out in the National Clean Air Strategy, to meet the health-based WHO air quality guideline limits in 2026.
- Main pollutants of concern are fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) from solid fuel combustion and nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) from vehicle emissions/traffic.
- Air pollution can be a major environmental risk to people's health, with approximately 1,600 premature deaths annually in Ireland due to poor air quality.

[16] Proposed Variation No. 1 to the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030

The report further identifies the critical role of local authorities in the enforcement and implementation of existing plans and investment in infrastructure to encourage cleaner and healthier air quality choices, including:

- Local authorities must provide more resources to implement the new solid fuel regulations and full implementation of air quality plans.
- Local authorities must prioritise resource allocation of resources to advance enforcement.
- Investment in clean public transport infrastructure across the country must be maintained and increased.
- More safe footpaths and cycle lanes must be created to continue to increase active travel as a viable and safe alternative to car use and associated NO_2 emissions.

Existing Problems
Significant progress is being made in the reduction of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. The EPA's 2024 publication Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections 2023-2040 identifies that Ireland's emissions, under the Emissions in the 'Planned Additional Measures' scenario, which includes most 2024 Climate Action Plan measures, are projected to be 29% lower in 2030 (compared with 2018). However, this would not meet the 51% emissions reduction target (by 2030 compared to 2018) based on these projections.

In the Climate Change Advisory Council's *Annual Review 2024,* the findings of an assessment of the degree to which progress is being made solely in the implementation of adaptation policy and increasing resilience for the period April 2023 to March 2024 is provided. The Review details that four sectors (Transport, Flood Risk Management, Built and Archaeological Heritage and Local Government) demonstrated good overall progress, six showed moderate progress (Agriculture, Forestry and Seafood, National Adaptation Framework, Communications Networks, Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure, Health and Electricity and Gas Networks) and one (Biodiversity) showed no progress and supplied insufficient evidence. This was a slight improvement compared with the results in 2023.

Air quality and noise can present challenges, especially in urban areas, as detailed under the relevant sub-sections above. With regard to air quality, air pollution from transport is dominated by NO_x emissions. Of these, NO_2 is particularly impactful from a health perspective. The Proposed Variation will help to facilitate reductions in emissions and a transition from dependence on fossil fuel combustion powered transport.

3.8 Material Assets

Other material assets, in addition to those referred to below, covered by the SEA include archaeological and architectural heritage (see Section 3.9) natural resources of economic value, such as water and air (see Sections 3.6 and 3.7).

Public Assets and Infrastructure
Public assets and infrastructure that have the potential to be impacted upon by the Proposed Variation, if unmitigated, include: resources such as public open spaces, parks and recreational areas; public buildings and services; transport and utility infrastructure (electricity, gas, telecommunications, water supply, waste water infrastructure etc.); and natural resources that are covered under other topics such as water and soil.

Land
The Proposed Variation has the potential to assist with the reuse and regeneration of brownfield sites thereby contributing towards sustainable mobility and reducing the need to develop greenfield lands and associated potential adverse environmental effects. Brownfield lands are generally located within urban/suburban areas.

Green Infrastructure
Parks and open space promote health and well-being, provide recreational facilities and range of habitats for various species. Green Infrastructure (GI) is also a crucial component in building resilient communities capable of adapting to the consequences of climate change with trees, woodlands and wetlands providing carbon capture and slowing water flows while improving air quality.

Woodland
Woodlands provide recreational opportunities in addition to their heritage and economic benefits. They are a valuable resource in terms of biodiversity, recreation and tourism, and also important as links in the green infrastructure network.

Transport

Donegal is located in a strategic position in the north-west of the country. Major roads, N13, N14 and N15 provides key connectivity to Northern Ireland through Derry City and Strabane. The N15 (Atlantic Economic Corridor) also connects County Donegal with Leitrim and Sligo. The N56 makes up for a large part of the 'Wild Atlantic Way' throughout Donegal.

Donegal Airport is located in the north-west of the County and provides links to Dublin and the UK.

The closest train stations to Donegal are located in Sligo Town and Derry City. Bus Éireann runs a number of routes throughout Donegal, including to Dublin, Galway, Sligo, Derry, Strabane and throughout County Donegal. TFI Local Link provides local routes throughout County Donegal. Private bus companies also provide routes to Dublin and Derry.

As part of the preparation of the Proposed Variation, an Area Based Transport Assessment was carried out culminating in Donegal Six Strategic Towns Local Transport Plans accompanying the Proposed Variation.

Water Services

Uisce Éireann, working in partnership with Donegal County Council, is making investments to undertake essential upgrade works to waste water treatment plants in towns and villages across the County. Uisce Éireann is responsible for providing and maintaining adequate public water supply infrastructure throughout Donegal.

With respect to water services, and as identified by the Proposed Variation:

- An Clochán Liath is currently supplied with water by both the Crolly Water Treatment Works (WTW) and the Lettermacaward WTW, both of which come under the Rosses Water Resource Zone. It should be noted that different areas are supplied by each WTW. Uisce Éireann's Capacity Register indicates there is potential spare capacity available to cater for population projections.
- Uisce Éireann has advised that An Clochán Liath effluent treatment infrastructure has more than adequate capacity to deal with the additional loading that would be generated as a result of the development envisaged in this Town Area Plan. While Uisce Éireann confirmed no known major network constraints, it also asserts that localised upgrades and/or extensions may be required to facilitate development.
- A lack of existing capacity in Ceann an Droichid/Bridgend is a significant constraint on new development within the village and, pending the upgrade of the plant, could give rise to threats to the water quality in the Skeoge River and Natura 2000 sites in the wider area. In these circumstances, the Area Plan must comply with the relevant provisions of the existing Development Plan and wider national guidance with respect to the assessment of development proposals and the zoning of land for development purposes.
- All proposals for development in Ceann an Droichid/Bridgend that will generate effluent will be assessed against the provisions of Development Plan policy and all other material considerations pending the commissioning of the upgraded Bridgend Treatment Works.
- Na Cealla Beaga is served by Killybegs Water Resource Zone and there is sufficient capacity available to cater for population projections. There are no known major network constraints though localised upgrades and/ or extensions may be required to facilitate new development at several locations within the town boundary.
- Similarly, in relation to wastewater treatment infrastructure servicing Na Cealla Beaga, sufficient capacity exists to cater for population projections. There are no known major network constraints though localised upgrades and/or extensions may be required to facilitate new development at several locations within the town boundary. Localised upgrades may be required especially in areas served by 80mm diameter watermains or 150mm diameter sewers or less. Where new developments are being proposed additional surface water will not be accepted into combined (foul and surface water) networks.
- Direct consultations with Uisce Éireann indicate that there are currently significant water supply constraints and a dynamic water supply situation in the Carndonagh area. They however estimate that a volume of water may be available in the water supply zone over the lifetime of the plan sufficient to cater for the proposed housing supply target (i.e. 172 units). They also have indicated that ongoing works to supplement the water supply in Carn Domhnach/Carndonagh from groundwater sources (e.g. Tirnaleague Aquifer) may provide a potential for a small increase to the water supply.
- The Uisce Éireann Wastewater Treatment capacity register 2023 (published December 2024) indicates that Carn Domhnach/Carndonagh/Malin Wastewater treatment plant currently has organic capacity of 5,833 PE, a load of 5,130 PE and a potential spare capacity of 703 PE. In this

regard Uisce Éireann indicates that the plant is performing well and is meeting all licence standards apart the Total Oxidised Nitrogen limit. Uisce Éireann are developing options to consistently achieve this limit but this will not be implemented in the 2025-2029 investment period and wastewater connections enquires and applications will be assessed on an individual basis. Otherwise, the town has an extensive public sewer network with sewers extending along most key arterial roads however extensions would be required to service backland locations.

- The Uisce Éireann Water Supply Capacity Register 2023 (published Dec 2024) states that Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town) lies within the Donegal (River Eske) Water Resource Zone with potential capacity available to cater for the targeted population increase in the core strategy. Uisce Éireann have advised that Level of Service improvements will be required as demand increases, e.g. capital upgrades, leakage reduction, and that connection applications will be assessed on an individual basis. Consequently, the quantum of residential related zonings identified in the land use zoning map have had regard to the current water supply capacity as advised by Uisce Éireann.
- Uisce Éireann Wastewater Treatment Capacity Register 2023 (published December 2024) indicates that Baile Dhún na nGall's (Donegal Town) wastewater treatment plant has spare capacity available to cater for the targeted population increase in the core strategy.
- The Uisce Éireann Water Supply Capacity Register 2024 (published August 2025) states that Carn Donagh lies within the Ballyshannon and Bundoran Water Resource Zone and has capacity available to support 2034 targets. The Uisce Éireann Wastewater Capacity register indicates that the Ballyshannon Wastewater Treatments Plan has an overall capacity of 6,100 PE, a current load of 3,159 PE and consequently an estimate spare capacity of 2,941 PE. Consequently, Ballyshannon has sufficient additional water supply and wastewater treatment capacity to meet the Ballyshannon core strategy housing target and the overall level of growth envisaged by the Area Plan. However, whilst the town has extensive watermain and sewer networks local authority engagement with Uisce Éireann indicates that part of these networks (e.g. in the Port Road/Rock Road areas) require upgrading.

Waste Management
The National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy (Regional Waste Management Planning Offices, 2024) sets out a framework for the prevention and management of waste in Ireland for the period 2024 to 2030. The Proposed Variation seeks to influence sustainable consumption and prevent the generation of waste, improve the capture of materials to optimise circularity and enable compliance with policy and legislation.

Existing Problems
The provisions of the Proposed Variation will contribute towards protection of the environment with regard to impacts arising from material assets. The provision of infrastructure and supporting services for development, particularly water and wastewater services, is critical.

3.9 Cultural Heritage

Archaeological Heritage
The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is an inventory, put on a statutory basis by amendment to the National Monuments Act 1994, of sites and areas of archaeological significance, numbered and mapped. It is available from the National Monuments Service and at archaeology.ie.

There are various entries to the RMP within and surrounding the area to which the Proposed Variation relates, including four National Monuments in State Care located within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates: Donegal Franciscan Abbey (Ownership) and Donegal Castle (Guardianship), located in Baile Dhún na nGall (Donegal Town); and Carndonagh Cross (Ownership) and Donagh Parish Church and graveyard (Ownership) located in Carn Domhnach (Carndonagh).

Architectural Heritage
Protected structures are structures, or parts of structures that are of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. There are numerous Protected Structures within the area to which the Proposed Variation relates. Notable Protected Structures include: the Union Workhouse (Béal Átha Seanaidh/ Ballyshannon); The Church of the Sacred Heart (Carn Domhnach/ Carndonagh); Donegal District Hospital (Baile Dhún na nGall/ Donegal Town); the Courthouse (Béal Átha Seanaidh/ Ballyshannon); and The Old Rectory (Na Cealla Beaga/ Killybegs).

An Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) is a place, area, group of structures or townscape, which is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or contributes to the appreciation of a Protected Structure. An ACA may or may not include Protected Structures. In an ACA, protection is placed on the external appearance of such areas or structures. There is one ACA designated within Béal Átha Seanaidh (Ballyshannon).

Existing Problems
The context of archaeological and architectural heritage has changed over time however no existing conflicts with legislative objectives governing archaeological and architectural heritage have been identified.

3.10 Landscape

The existing Donegal County Development Plan 2022-2028 identifies 23 Landscape Character Types, 44 Landscape Character Areas, three scenic amenity designations and designated views and prospects within the Council's administrative area. The Scenic Amenity Designations of County Donegal are classified as:

1. **Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA):** These are sublime natural landscapes of the highest quality that are synonymous with the identity of County Donegal. These areas have extremely limited capacity to assimilate additional development.
2. **Areas of High Scenic Amenity (HSA):** These are landscapes of significant aesthetic, cultural, heritage and environmental quality that are unique to their locality and form a fundamental element of the landscape and identity of County Donegal. These areas have the capacity to absorb sensitively located development of scale, design and use that will enable assimilation into the receiving landscape and which does not detract from the quality of the landscape, subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the plan.
3. **Areas of Moderate Scenic Amenity (MSA):** These are primarily landscapes outside Local Area Plan Boundaries and Settlement framework boundaries, that have a unique, rural and generally agricultural quality. These areas have the capacity to absorb additional development that is suitably located, sited and designed subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the Plan.

Existing Problems
New developments have resulted in changes to the visual appearance of lands within County Donegal however legislative objectives governing landscape and visual appearance were not identified as being conflicted with.

3.11 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies that generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level e.g. the environmental protection objectives of various European Directives that have been transposed into Irish law and which are required to be implemented. The SEOs are set out under a range of topics (see Table 3.1) and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Proposed Variation and the alternatives are evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if – in the case of adverse effects – unmitigated.

Table 3.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Environmental Component	Guiding Principle	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	No net contribution to biodiversity losses or deterioration	**BFF**	• Preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate, restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, of international, EU and nationally designated sites, protected species and habitats. • Ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, regarding its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function. • Maintain and where appropriate, enhance the biodiversity value of local designated and non-designated ecological and heritage areas, which function as stepping stones for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. • Enhance biodiversity in line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and its targets.

Environmental Component	Guiding Principle	SEO Code	Strategic Environmental Objectives
Population and Human Health	Improve quality of life for all ages and abilities based on high-quality, serviced, well connected and sustainable residential, working, educational and recreational environments	**PHH1**	• Provide high quality residential, community, working and recreational environments with access to sustainable transport options. • Promote economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection. • Ensure that existing population and planned growth is linked with the required infrastructure and the services. • Protect human health and well-being from environment-related pressures.
Soil (and Land)	Ensure the long-term sustainable management of land	**S**	• Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource • Promote the sustainable use of infill and brownfield sites over the use of greenfield • Safeguard areas of prime agricultural land and designated geological sites
Water	Protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water resource	**W**	• Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive • Ensure water resources are sustainably managed to deliver proposed regional and County growth targets in the context of existing and projected water supply and wastewater capacity constraints ensuring the protection of receiving environments • Avoid inappropriate zoning and development in areas at risk of flooding and areas that are vulnerable to current and future erosion • Integrate sustainable water management solutions (such as SuDS, porous surfacing and green roofs) into development proposals
Material Assets	Sustainable and efficient use of natural resources	**MA**	• Make best use of existing infrastructure, promote the sustainable development of new infrastructure and protect existing assets, to meet the needs of the county and Donegal's population. • Promote the circular economy, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiencies. • Ensure there is adequate sewerage and drainage infrastructure in place to support new development • Reduce the energy demand from the transport sector and support moves to electrification of transport modes.
Air	Support clean air policies that reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and public health	**A**	• 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 • Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency • Promote continuing improvement in air quality • Reduction of emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter which are responsible for acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone pollution • Meet Air Quality Directive standards for the protection of human health — Air Quality Directive • Significantly decrease noise pollution and move closer to WHO recommended levels
Climatic Factors	Achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient economy that is cognisant of environmental impacts	**C**	• Minimise contribution to Climate Change by adopting mitigation and adaptation measures. • Integrate sustainable design solutions into the county's infrastructure (e.g. energy efficient buildings; green infrastructure). • Contribute towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with national targets. • Encourage and promote development resilient to the effects of climate change. • Promote the use of renewable energy, energy efficient development and increased use of public transport.
Cultural Heritage	Safeguard cultural heritage features and their settings through responsible design and positioning of development	**CH**	• Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological and / or architectural heritage.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the landscape character	**L**	• To implement the Development Plan's framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention.

Section 4 Alternatives

4.1 Introduction

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme, or variation to these) are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment. Summaries of the alternatives for the Proposed Variation and their assessment are provided below.

4.2 Limitations in Available Alternatives

The alternatives available for the Proposed Variation are significantly limited by the provisions of higher-level planning objectives, including those of Ministerial Guidelines, the Revised National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region and the existing County Development Plan. These documents set out various requirements for the content of the Variation including on topics such as population, land use zoning and densities.

The alternatives focus on alternatives relating to the new Area Plans for An Clochán Liath, Ballyshannon, Bridgend, Carndonagh, Donegal Town, and Killybegs. There are no significant reasonable alternatives available relating to the other elements of the Proposed Variation.

4.3 Alternatives Description and Assessment Summary

4.3.1 Local Transport Plan Alternatives

Informing the Variation's Area Plans with a Local Transport Plan, which focuses on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes, (**Area Based Transport Assessment Alternative 1**) would provide a more coordinated and more orderly provision of transport infrastructure and services, with delivery of projects, and associated benefit with respect to sustainable mobility and compact development, more likely. This approach would be more likely to improve the potential for meeting important objectives relating to emissions and energy use. Potentially adverse impacts on environmental components including ecology and water would need to be adequately mitigated at project level.

Not informing the Variation's Area Plans with a Local Transport Plan, which focuses on delivering travel solutions that support moving people from the private car to more sustainable modes, (**Area Based Transport Assessment Alternative 2**) would provide a less coordinated and less orderly provision of transport infrastructure and services, with delivery of projects, and associated benefit with respect to sustainable mobility and compact development, less likely. This approach would be less likely to improve the potential for meeting important objectives relating to emissions and energy use. Potentially adverse impacts arising from more coherently planned transport developments on environmental components, including ecology and water, could be mitigated at both Development Plan and project level.

Selected Local Transport Plan Alternative for the Variation: Alternative 1

4.3.2 Transport Infrastructure Alternatives

Under **Transport Infrastructure Alternative 1**, new transport infrastructure would be considered subject to environmental constraints, including those related to habitats and potential impacts (e.g. disturbance from lighting). This would include minimising river crossings, avoiding sensitive habitats, not increasing barriers to flood waters and sustainable design and construction techniques. By focusing on mitigation at both plan and project levels, Alternative 1 would offer the most certainty for environmental

protection and management and would be more likely to result in important individual projects (relating to sustainable mobility and emissions/energy objectives) receiving permission.

Under **Transport Infrastructure Alternative 2**, all additional environmental mitigation would be left to be defined in the future, at project level. This would offer the least certainty for environmental protection and management and would be more likely to result in important individual projects (relating to sustainable mobility and emissions objectives) not been given permission.

Selected Transport Infrastructure Alternative for the Variation: Alternative 1

4.3.3 Opportunity Sites Alternatives

Opportunity Sites within the various settlements a wide range of development opportunities by reason of their strategic location, scale, nature and/or current use. Whether and how these sites are developed is an important component to the success of the Area Plans in achieving sustainable development.

Not including specific guidance for future planning applications at Opportunity Sites (**Opportunity Sites Alternative 1**) would reduce the likelihood of sustainable development. Development would be market-led and would seek to comply with relevant planning provisions in the absence of specific guidance. The sustainable development of the Area Plan settlements would be less likely than under Alternative 2.

By including guidance for future planning applications at Opportunity Sites while, at the same time, allowing for flexibility in areas such as final design, layout and uses, **Alternative 2** would increase the likelihood of sustainable development.

Including detailed criteria for future planning applications at Opportunity Sites with such criteria not allowing for flexibility in areas such as design, layout and uses (**Opportunity Sites Alternative 3**) would potentially hinder compliance with rigid criteria in the longer term, in a context of evolving market needs and planning requirements.

Selected Opportunity Sites Alternative for the Variation: Alternative 2

4.3.4 Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives

Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 1: "More Consolidated, More Compact Development"

Under this Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative, Area Plan settlements would be facilitated in meeting 2030 population targets, resulting in balanced, orderly development and implementation of the Development Plan's Core Strategy.

The approach under this alternative would allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Area Plans to the highest degree.

The infrastructure required to be in place to achieve the growth targets is already in place or planned under this alternative.

The development of urban core/town centre and adjacent areas would be more compact and sustainable under this scenario and would better support the longer-term viability of the Area Plan settlements. A higher number of residential units, in comparison with Alternative 2, would be expected to take place within the existing built-up footprints on brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites at appropriate densities, with a greater focus on use of consolidation and regeneration sites, with potential for wider regeneration benefits to central areas, including housing provision. Regeneration, reuse and redevelopment of more central and brownfield and infill lands and optimising the use of vacant, derelict, and underutilised sites and buildings would be more likely to be achieved.

Giving a strong preference to lands that have both greater capacity to satisfy the principles of active travel and a more realistic opportunity of being developed over the lifetime of the Area Plans would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of the settleemnts as envisaged by the wider planning framework to the greatest degree.

There would be greater potential and viability for integrated land use and transportation under this alternative, including proximate development patterns linked by active travel infrastructure and public transport. Associated benefits and improvements to the public realm and appearance of the built environment, including liveability and quality of life improvements, would be more likely.

This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would make the greatest contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of lands (including those within urban core/town centre and adjacent areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the Area Plan settlements and beyond. There would be a reduced need for greenfield land consumption under this alternative. This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would be considered the most effective out of both Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives considered in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for the Area Plan settlements.

The approach under Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 1 'More Consolidated, More Compact Development' would benefit the protection of various environmental components. Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to a significant degree. Less residual environmental effects would result.

Under this alternative there would be:

- More optimum use of land and resources, with positive role for addressing climate change, such as potential for reduced carbon heavy travel patterns.
- Greater potential for modal shift to sustainable travel such as walking, cycling and public transport, with knock on benefits for climate resilience in the Area Plan settlements.
- Use of already serviced lands in more central and built-up urban core/town centre areas could lead to potential reduced costs for delivery of new supporting infrastructure.
- Creation of more liveable built environments, with greater accessibility to services and amenities for local communities.

Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative 2: "Less Consolidated, Less Compact Development"

Under this Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative, Area Plan settlements would be facilitated in meeting 2030 population targets, resulting in implementation of the Development Plan's Core Strategy.

The approach under this alternative would not allow for water supply, waste water, compact growth, public transport and co-ordinated development considerations to be integrated into the Area Plan settlements to the highest degree.

Additional infrastructure would be required to accommodate sporadic development, more than would be required for Alternative 1 'More Consolidated, More Compact Development'.

The development of the Area Plan settlements would be less compact and less sustainable under this scenario and would not optimally support the longer-term viability of the settlements. A lower number of residential units, in comparison with Alternative 1, would be expected to take place within the existing built-up footprints on brownfield, infill and under-utilised sites at appropriate densities. Under this alternative there would be potential for greater proportion of

housing to be delivered outside of the built-up areas, including on urban fringe and outer areas and on greenfield sites, creating unsustainable travel patterns with a reliance on the private car. Giving less of a preference to lands that have both greater capacity to satisfy the principles of active travel and a more realistic opportunity of being developed over the lifetime of the Area Plans and would allow for the proper planning and sustainable development of the Area Plan settlements as envisaged by the wider planning framework to a lesser degree.

There would be greater potential for negative impacts on the vitality and viability of the built-up areas, due to increased and sustained levels of vacancy and dereliction for existing buildings and brownfield lands. This alternative would be likely to result in a more dispersed pattern of low-density urban core/town centre development, that would be more difficult to serve with active travel infrastructure and public transport.

This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would make less of a contribution towards the protection and management of the environment by facilitating development of lands (including those urban core/town centre and adjacent areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services. Demand to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the Area Plan settlements would be provided for. This Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative would be considered the least effective out of both Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternatives considered in the delivery of a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient future for the Area Plan settlements.

The approach under Alternative 2 'Less Consolidated, Less Compact Development' would benefit the protection of various environmental components to a lesser degree. Although potentially adverse effects associated with land use development would exist, they would be mitigated to in many cases; however, more residual environmental effects would result.
Under this alternative there would be:

- An increase in car dependency and associated carbon heavy travel patterns, which would undermine efforts aimed at securing climate resilience.
- Increased peripheral pattern of residential development with potential for self-contained and disconnected built environments.
- Reduced potential for modal shift to sustainable travel options such as walking, cycling and public transport.
- Potential for increased costs associated with the delivery on new supporting infrastructure (roads, footpaths etc.) in more peripheral areas.
- Increased costs for the delivery of necessary supporting infrastructure for urban fringe, outer areas and greenfield sites.

Selected Compact Development/Land Use Zoning Alternative for the Variation: Alternative 1 "More Consolidated, More Compact Development"

4.4 Reasons for Choosing the Selected Alternatives in light of Other Reasonable Alternatives Considered

Selected alternatives for the Variation from each of the types of alternatives that emerged from the planning/SEA process are indicated above.

These alternatives have been integrated into the Proposed Variation that is being placed on public display having regard to both:

1. The environmental effects which were identified by the SEA and are detailed above; and
2. Planning – including social and economic – effects that also were considered.

Section 5 Summary of Effects arising from the Proposed Variation

Table 5.1 summarises the overall environmental effects arising from Proposed Variation provisions. The effects encompass all in-combination/cumulative effects arising from implementation of the Proposed Variation and associated documents, including the Donegal Six Strategic Towns Local Transport Plans that have informed and accompany the Proposed Variation. The Proposed Variation would contribute towards the proper planning and sustainable development of the relevant settlements and the wider County and the effects are consistent with those identified by the SEA for the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030.

Environmental impacts which occur will be determined by the nature and extent of multiple or individual projects and site-specific environmental factors. Environmental impacts which occur will be determined by the nature and extent of multiple or individual projects and site-specific environmental factors.

The potentially significant adverse environmental effects (if unmitigated) arising from implementation of the Proposed Variation are detailed as are residual effects, taking into account mitigation integrated into both the Proposed Variation and the Donegal County Development Plan.

The scope of the assessment (including description of baseline, the relationship to other plans and programmes and the evaluation of effects) has considered the environment of both Ireland and Northern Ireland. Taking into account, *inter alia*, the detailed mitigation which has been integrated into the existing Development Plan and associated Proposed Variation, it has been determined that: significant residual adverse environmental effects will not occur in Ireland; and significant environmental effects will not occur in Northern Ireland.

Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening and Stage 2 AA are being undertaken alongside the Proposed Variation. The requirement for AA is provided under the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 1992/43/EEC). The emerging conclusion of the AA is that the Proposed Variation will not affect the integrity of any European Site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.[17] The preparation of the Proposed Variation, SEA and AA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA have informed the SEA.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been undertaken as part of the preparation of the Proposed Variation. Requirements in relation to SFRA are provided under 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (Department of Environment and Office of Public Works, 2009) and associated Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Circular PL2/2014. The SFRA has informed both the land use zoning and the written provisions of the Proposed Variation.

[17] Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: (a) no alternative solution available, (b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan, or variation to the Plan, to proceed; and (c) adequate compensatory measures in place.

Table 5.1 Overall Findings –Effects arising from the Proposed Variation

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP, the Northern and Western RSES, the Donegal County Development Plan and adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans.			SEO Codes
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	**Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated**	**Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects**	
Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna	• Contribution towards protection of ecology (including designated sites, ecological connectivity, habitats) by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contribution towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and associated ecosystem services, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats. • Contribution towards protection and/or maintenance of biodiversity and flora and fauna by contributing towards the protection of natural capital including the environmental vectors of air, water and soil. Biodiversity and flora and fauna includes biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species (including birds and bats), listed/protected species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats (including terrestrial and aquatic habitats), and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna – including terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity and flora and fauna.	Arising from both construction and operation of development and associated infrastructure: • Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European Sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna; • Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and • Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.	• Loss of an extent of non-protected habitats and species arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces. • Losses or damage to ecology (these would be in compliance with relevant legislation).	**BFF**
Population and Human Health	• Promotion of economic growth to encourage retention of working age population and funding of sustainable development and environmental protection and management. • Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond • Contribution towards the protection of human health by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contributes towards protection of human health as a result of contributing towards the protection of natural capital including environmental vectors, such as air and water.	• Potential adverse effects arising from flood events. • Potential interactions with human health if effects arise from environmental vectors.	• Potential interactions with residual effects on environmental vectors – please refer to residual adverse effects under "Soil", "Water" and "Air and Climatic Factors" below.	**PHH**

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP, the Northern and Western RSES, the Donegal County Development Plan and adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans.			SEO Codes
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	**Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated**	**Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects**	
Soil	• Contribution towards the protection of soils and designated sites of geological heritage by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contribution towards the protection of the environment from contamination.	• Potential adverse effects on the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource, including as a result of development on contaminated lands. • Potential for riverbank erosion.	• Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces. • Coastal and riverbank erosion will continue to occur naturally over time and is likely to be enhanced by climate change.	**S**
Water	• Contribution towards the protection of water by facilitating development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that have relatively low levels of environmental sensitivities and are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop more sensitive, less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contributions towards the protection of water resources including the status of surface and groundwaters and water-based designations. • Contribution towards flood risk management and appropriate drainage.	• Potential adverse effects upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology. • Increase in flood risk and associated effects associated with flood events.	• Any increased loadings as a result of development to comply with the River Basin Management Plan. • Flood related risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to extreme weather events – however such risks will be mitigated by measures that have been integrated into the Proposed Variation.	**W**
Material Assets	• Contribution towards appropriate provision of infrastructure and services to existing population and planned growth by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • Contribution towards compliance with national and regional water services and waste management policies. • Contribution towards increase in renewable energy use by facilitating renewable energy and electricity transmission infrastructure developments. • Contribution towards limits in increases in energy demand from the transport sector by facilitating sustainable compact growth. • Contribution towards reductions in average energy consumption per capita including promoting sustainable compact growth, sustainable mobility, sustainable design and energy efficiency.	• Failure to provide adequate and appropriate waste water treatment (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Failure to adequately treat surface water run-off that is discharged to water bodies (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Failure to comply with drinking water regulations and serve new development with adequate drinking water (water services infrastructure and capacity ensures the mitigation of potential conflicts). • Increases in waste levels. • Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.	• Exceedance of capacity in critical infrastructure risks remain, including due to uncertainty with regard to climate – however, such risks will be mitigated by: measures, including those requiring the timely provision of critical infrastructure, and compliance with the Water Framework Directive and associated River Basin Management Plan. • Residual wastes to be disposed of in line with higher-level waste management policies. • Any impacts upon public assets and infrastructure to comply with statutory planning/consent-granting framework.	**MA**

Environmental Component	Environmental Effects, in combination with the wider planning framework Effects include in-combination effects that are planned for through the wider planning framework including the NPF and associated NDP, the Northern and Western RSES, the Donegal County Development Plan and adjacent Development Plans and lower-tier land use plans.			SEO Codes
	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	**Potentially Significant Adverse Environmental Effects, if unmitigated**	**Likely Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects**	
Air and Climatic Factors	• Contribution towards climate mitigation and adaptation by facilitating compact development of lands (including those within and adjacent to locations within Urban Core/Town Centre areas) that are served (or can be more easily served) by infrastructure and services, thereby helping to avoid the need to develop less well-serviced lands elsewhere in the County and beyond. • In combination with other plans, programmes etc., contribution towards the objectives of the wide policy framework relating to climate mitigation and adaptation, and associated contribution towards maintaining and improving air quality and managing noise levels, including through measures relating to: o Sustainable compact growth; o Sustainable mobility, including walking, cycling and public transport; o Drainage, flood risk management and resilience; and o Sustainable design, energy efficiency and green infrastructure.	• Potential conflict between development under the Plan as varied and aiming to reduce carbon emissions in line with local, national and European environmental objectives. • Potential conflicts between transport emissions, including those from cars, and air quality[18]. • Potential conflicts between increased frequency of noise emissions and protection of sensitive receptors[19]. • Potential conflicts with climate adaptation measures including those relating to flood risk management.	• An extent of travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air. This has been mitigated by provisions that have been integrated into the Proposed Variation, including those relating to sustainable compact growth and sustainable mobility. • Interactions between noise emissions and sensitive receptors. Various provisions have been integrated into the Proposed Variation to ensure that noise levels at sensitive receptors will be minimised.	**AC**
Cultural Heritage	• Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage elsewhere by facilitating development within settlements. • Contributes towards protection of cultural heritage within settlements, by facilitating brownfield development and regeneration.	• Potential effects on protected and unknown archaeology and protected architecture arising from construction and operation activities.	• Potential effects on known architectural and archaeological heritage and unknown archaeology however, these will occur in compliance with legislation.	**CH**
Landscape	• Contributes towards protection of wider landscape and landscape designations by facilitating development within settlements.	• Occurrence of adverse visual impacts and conflicts with the appropriate protection of designations relating to the landscape.	• Landscapes will change overtime as a result of natural changes in vegetation cover combined with new developments that will occur in compliance with the Development Plan's landscape protection measures.	**L**

[18] Although road transport interventions would be likely to result in an overall reduction in traffic flows and associated interactions with air, noise and human heath, there would be potential for displacement of traffic to lead to localised increases traffic flows and associated localised potential impacts in terms of increased population exposure to air pollutants and/or elevated noise levels, both within the Area Plan settlements and beyond.

[19] Although road transport interventions would be likely to result in an overall reduction in traffic flows and associated interactions with air, noise and human heath, there would be potential for displacement of traffic to lead to localised increases traffic flows and associated localised potential impacts in terms of increased population exposure to air pollutants and/or elevated noise levels, both within the Area Plan settlements and beyond.

Section 6 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

6.1 Mitigation

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the Proposed Variation. Various environmental sensitivities and issues have been communicated to the Council through the SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) processes. By integrating related recommendations into the Proposed Variation, the Council has ensured that both the beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Variation have been and will be maximised and that potential adverse effects have been and will be avoided, reduced or offset.

Mitigation was achieved through:

- Strategic work undertaken by the Council to ensure evidence-based planning;
- Considering alternatives for the Proposed Variation;
- The integration of environmental considerations into zoning provisions of the Proposed Variation;
- The integration of individual SEA, AA and SFRA provisions into the text of the Proposed Variation; and
- The integration of individual provisions into the text of the existing, already in force, County Development Plan.

6.2 Monitoring

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. Monitoring is based around indicators that allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives identified at Table 3.1 and used in the evaluation. Monitoring indicators, targets, sources and remedial action is provided at Table 6.1 overleaf.

Table 6.1 Indicators, Targets, Sources and Remedial Action

Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action[20]
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	• Condition of European sites	• Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions and to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species • Confirmation of compliance with Plan provisions relating to the protection of European Sites and sustaining resources	• DHLGH report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years) [21] • DHLGH National Birds Directive Monitoring Report for the under Article 12 (every 6 years) [22] • Internal review of local land use plans • Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where condition of European sites is found to be deteriorating this will be investigated with the Regional Assembly and the DHLGH to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance.
	• Number of spatial plans that have included ecosystem services content, mapping and policy to protect ecosystem services when their relevant plans are either revised or drafted	• Require all local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green/blue infrastructure provisions and to have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species	• Internal review of local land use plans	• Review internal systems
	• SEAs and AAs as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc.	• Screen for and undertake SEA and AA as relevant for new Council policies, plans, programmes etc.	• Internal review of new Council policies, plans, programmes etc. under the County Development Plan	• Review internal systems
	• Status of water bodies	• Included under Water below	• Included under Water below	• Included under Water below
	• Compliance of planning permissions with Plan measures providing for the protection of Biodiversity and flora and fauna – see County Development Plan Chapter 11 "Natural, Built and Archaeological Heritage"	• For planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that they comply with all Plan measures providing for the protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna – see County Development Plan Chapter 11 "Natural, Built and Archaeological Heritage"	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Review internal systems
Population and Human Health	• Implementation of Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by County Development Plan Chapter 7 "Economic Development"	• Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to the promotion of economic growth as provided for by County Development Plan Chapter 7 "Economic Development"	• Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Review internal systems • Consultations with DCEE
	• Number of spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors resulting from development permitted under the Plan	• No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Plan	• Review of published information from the Health Service Executive and EPA • Internal consultations with the Council's Environment Department	• Consultations with the Health Service Executive and EPA

[20] Where remedial action is required, consultations with government agencies (e.g. DCEE, DT, EPA, HSE, NPWS, Regional Assembly, Uisce Éireann) may be undertaken in order to confirm causes of any identified changes in the environment and in order to develop appropriate responses.

[21] Including confirmation with development management that the following impacts have been considered and including use of monitoring data, where available: biodiversity/habitat loss; nitrogen deposition impacts on European sites; recreational disturbance resulting from implementation of tourism and recreation policies and objectives particularly in riparian areas; biodiversity enhancement; and disturbance /visitor pressure impacts of recreation, amenity and tourism development.

[22] Including confirmation with development management that the following impacts have been considered and including use of monitoring data, where available: biodiversity/habitat loss; nitrogen deposition impacts on European sites; recreational disturbance resulting from implementation of tourism and recreation policies and objectives particularly in riparian areas; biodiversity enhancement; and disturbance /visitor pressure impacts of recreation, amenity and tourism development.

Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action[20]
	• Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures	• Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to active travel	• CSO data • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DCEE and NTA to develop a tailored response.
	• Number of spatial plans that include specific green infrastructure mapping	• Require all local level land use plans to include specific green infrastructure mapping	• Internal review of local land use plans	• Review internal systems
Soil (and Land)	• Proportion of population growth occurring on infill and brownfield lands compared to greenfield (also relevant to Material Assets)	• As per the revised NPF, to limit the rate of increase land that is sealed or artificialised per year and promote the reversal of this in suitable areas e.g., flood zones, high density areas • In accordance with the NPF, deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints and ensure compact and sequential patterns of growth • To map brownfield and infill land parcels	• EPA Geoportal • Compilation of greenfield and brownfield development for the DHLGH • Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where the proportion of growth on infill and brownfield sites is not keeping pace with the targets set in the NPF and the RSES, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly to establish reasons and coordinate actions to address constraints to doing so.
	• Instances where contaminated material generated from brownfield and infill must be disposed of	• Dispose of contaminated material in compliance with EPA guidance and waste management requirements	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission where contaminated material must be disposed of	• Consultations with the EPA and Development Management
	• Environmental assessments and AAs as relevant for applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission	• Screen for and undertake environmental assessments and AA as relevant for applications for brownfield and infill development prior to planning permission	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Review internal systems
Water	• Status of water bodies as reported by the EPA Water Monitoring Programme for the WFD	• Subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive, not to cause deterioration in the status of any surface water or affect the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status' • Implementation of the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan	• EPA Monitoring Programme for WFD compliance [23]	• Where water bodies are failing to meet at least good status this will be investigated with the DHLGH Water Section, the EPA Catchment Unit, the Regional Assembly and, as relevant, Uisce Éireann to establish if the pressures are related to Plan actions / activities. A tailored response will be developed in consultation with these stakeholders in such a circumstance. • Where planning applications are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the WWTP or failure of the WWTP to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will consider whether it is necessary to coordinate a response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Uisce Éireann to achieve the necessary capacity.
	• Number of incompatible developments permitted within flood risk areas	• Minimise developments granted permission on lands which pose - or are likely to pose in the future - a significant flood risk	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where planning applications are being permitted on flood zones, the Council will ensure that such grants are in compliance with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines and include appropriate flood risk mitigation and management measures.

[23] Including monitoring of water quality and nitrogen deposition due to bioenergy and agricultural projects where available

Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action[20]
Material Assets	• Programmed delivery of Uisce Éireann infrastructure for all key growth towns in line with Uisce Éireann Investment Plan and prioritisation programme to ensure sustainable growth can be accommodated • Number of new developments granted permission which can be adequately and appropriately served with waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan	• All new developments granted permission to be connected to and adequately and appropriately served by waste water treatment over the lifetime of the Plan • Where septic tanks are proposed, for planning permission to be only granted when applications demonstrate that the outfall from the septic tank will not – in-combination with other septic tanks – contribute towards any surface or ground water body not meeting the objective of good status under the Water Framework Directive • Facilitate, as appropriate, Uisce Éireann in developing water and wastewater infrastructure • See also targets relating to greenfield and brownfield development of land under Soil and broadband under Population and Human Health	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where planning applications are rejected due to insufficient capacity in the WWTP or failure of the WWTP to meet Emission Limit Values, the Council will consider whether it is necessary to coordinate a response with the Regional Assembly, EPA and Uisce Éireann to achieve the necessary capacity.
	• Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures	• Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to active travel	• CSO data • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DCEE and NTA to develop a tailored response.
Air	• Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels • NO_2 (Nitrogen Dioxide), PM_{10} (particulate matter with diameter of 10 microns or less) and O_3 (Ozone) as part of Ambient Air Quality Monitoring	• Decrease in proportion of journeys made by car compared to previous levels • Improvement in Air Quality trends, particularly in relation to transport related emissions • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to sustainable mobility and travel	• CSO data • EPA Air Quality Monitoring • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, DHLGH, DCEE and NTA to develop a tailored response. See also entry under Population and human health above
Climatic Factors	• Implementation of Plan measures relating to climate reduction targets	• For review of progress on implementing Plan objectives to demonstrate successful implementation of measures relating to climate reduction targets	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Review internal systems
	• A competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy	• Contribute towards transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050	• Confirmation of progress in implementing of Donegal County Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 • EPA Greenhouse Gas Emissions reporting • Internal review of implementation of Plan provisions relating to renewable energy in transport, including facilitating the development of electricity charging and transmission infrastructure	• Where targets are not achieved, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly and the Climate Action Regional Office to establish reasons and develop solutions.
	• Share of renewable energy in transport	• Contribute towards the National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 sectoral target for transport (RES-T) of 14%, by 2030 (this may be increased following a provisional European agreement on 30 March 2023 for a binding overall RES target of at least 42.5% by 2030)		

Environmental Component	Indicators	Targets	Sources	Remedial Action[20]
	• Greenhouse gas emissions	• Contribute towards the target of aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions of at least 51% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2030 (helping to set Ireland on a path to reach net-zero emissions by 2050)		
	• Energy consumption, the uptake of renewable options and solid fuels for residential heating	• To promote reduced energy consumption and support the uptake of renewable options and a move away from solid fuels for residential heating		
	• Proportion of journeys made by private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels	• Decrease in the proportion of journeys made by residents of the settlements using private fossil fuel-based car compared to previous levels • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to sustainable mobility and travel	• CSO data • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Where trends toward carbon reduction are not recorded, the Council will liaise with the Regional Assembly and the Climate Action Regional Office to establish reasons and develop solutions.
	• Proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures	• Increase in the proportion of people reporting regular cycling / walking to school and work above previous CSO figures • Progress in successfully implementing Plan measures relating to active travel	• CSO data • Internal review of progress on implementing Plan objectives	• Where proportion of population shows increase in private car use above previous CSO figures, the Council will coordinate with the Regional Assembly, the DHLGH, DCEE and NTA to develop a tailored response.
Cultural Heritage	• Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, protected from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan	• Protect entries to the Record of Monuments and Places, and the context of these entries within the surrounding landscape where relevant, from adverse effects resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where monitoring reveals visitor or development pressure is causing negative effects on designated archaeological or architectural heritage, the Council will work with Regional Assembly, Fáilte Ireland and the National Monuments Service and other stakeholders, as relevant, to address pressures through additional mitigation.
	• Percentage of entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan	• Protect entries to the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context from significant adverse effects arising from new development granted permission under the Plan	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	
Landscape	• Number of developments permitted that result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan	• No developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially with regard to landscape and amenity designations included in Land Use Plans, resulting from development which is granted permission under the Plan	• Internal review of development management / grants of permission	• Where monitoring reveals developments permitted which result in avoidable adverse visual impacts on the landscape, the Council will re-examine Plan provisions and the effectiveness of their implementation