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**Údar:** Heritage Group

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**Comhairliúchán:**

Draft Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022 - 2028

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## Appendix 11: Natural Heritage Assets

**Caibidil:** Volume 3: Appendices » Appendix 11: Natural Heritage Assets

### Rural Development

There is a creeping level of urbanism in rural areas, which affects the demands upon the rural environment, and will lead to further exponential demands of urbanisation to these rural areas, which would be unfortunate and increasingly demanding upon the local area and deteriorate the rural landscape.

### Water

Fluoride and other harmful hazardous chemicals should be stopped and taken out of the public water supply immediately.

### Roads

Digging up road verges impacts the local community and road safety. Widening of country roads increases road speed, and digging up verges to create open ditches creates dangerous road hazards. Grass verges slow the flow of water runoff and reduce the likelihood of downstream flooding. The loss of attractive native plants and trees from the planted verges damages the local environment, and is unpleasant habitat loss. The roads budget should be cut accordingly, and this unnecessary and unpopular verge removal should be stopped.

### 5G Masts

5G Masts and 5G infrastructure and technology needs to be scrutinised by the community, and needs to require planning permission. The felling of the trees for 5G was very unwelcome and unpopular and should not have happened during nesting season, those felling trees for 5G should be prosecuted, the felling of these trees was a significant loss to the urban and rural landscape with this ecocide. Much of this tree felling was undertaken in the nesting season, and the trees cut down were generally planted ornamental trees in our urban environment. These trees should be replanted as part of the Waterford Development Plan, and increase the numbers of trees in the urban and rural environment, it would be preferable that flowering and fruiting native trees are planted to sustain the needs of the environment including pollinators and wildlife. Flowering trees such as cherry are generally very pleasant, and those who felled these trees had no justification.

5G technology is considered to be very hazardous to health and wellbeing, and is widely condemned. No 5G masts or boosters should be sited within 250m of residential properties, schools or occupied premises. All 5G masts and boosters should require planning permission to give the community a say in where these hazardous emitters are located or used.

### **Graveyards**

Graveyard byelaws are needed urgently to preserve the ancient early Christian and heritage graveyards and gravesites within the county (including cillins, barrows, etc.), as some of these ancient graves have continued to be exploited and dug up for new graves throughout millennia in West Waterford, or demolished for development or farming. There is an urgent need to establish Graveyard byelaws similar to the rest of the country and to make mandatory the 'Care and Conservation Guidelines for graveyards'.

And, where historic graveyards intend to resell old graves and open up ancient or old grave plots, the entire graveyard should be referred to planning as a new planning application, and follow guidelines such as minimum separation distances etc. This is due to the material change of a 'ancient graveyard from that of a historical site' to a modern graveyard, and the demands put upon a new graveyard, including new headstones and the change in character to these places, traffic, and the desecration and digging up of ancient burial sites, including the change of character, changing ground levels, access and walkways which are not contemporary to the ancient burial grounds in comparison to new modern flat access graveyards.

There is a preference amongst some to claim an old grave and then demand modern walkways to this, thus changing the character of the place to suit this new modern burial in an old site. Realistically this is a loss of character and damages the heritage value of the whole graveyard for future generations, and should be strongly avoided. Graveyard byelaws should be similar to Cork and Kerry where there are a maximum number of three burials per plot. Unfortunately some of the ancient graveyards in West Waterford have many hundreds per plot, this undermines heritage preservation.

### **Weedkiller and chemical use including Groundwater Protection and habitat management**

There is reasonable cause for concern regarding the lack of active groundwater protection schemes to springs, water sources and watercourses, where farms and landusers are spraying weedkillers killing off whole fields of grass / crops within the catchment of water sources. And the excessive use of nitrogen fixing fertilisers and largely 'anti-environmental' industrial monoculture farming practices harms biodiversity and soils. We need more diverse habitats and preserved habitat corridors, including the likes of hedgerows which have been heavily decimated in the last years. The use of weedkillers is excessive with landusers spraying many acres at a time prior to ploughing the field, to 'tidy up', or even to 'dry the crop - prior to harvesting!' And can be seen in the dramatic reduction of pollinators, insects, and native birds.

Ideally, Waterford requires to plant more native trees, more native diverse hedgerows which fruit and flower and support the variety of habitats. Waterford needs to preserve and encourage healthy soil. Encourage Small cottage farmers, organic, environmentally sensitive and permaculture farming practices, developing a dynamic of environmental health and responsibility which is more evident in smaller scale kitchen market farms.

The contamination of watercourses and soils is devastating, the contamination of groundwaters and aquifers is short sighted and probably irreversible, as all future generations will have to live with the contamination from these reckless industrial chemicals, weedkillers, fertilisers and pollution caused by industry, landusers and agriculture and careless environmental practices.

Waterford needs to ban weedkillers and the offending chemicals substances at source, and enforce groundwater protection plans to prevent further contamination.

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**Documents Attached:** Níl