

Chapter 10: Landscape, Coast/ Marine and Blue Green Infrastructure



Strategic Objectives

- Protect our sensitive landscapes and seascapes which contribute to the distinctiveness of Waterford as a place and its people.
- Establish Blue Green Infrastructure as a key component in the planning process and promote the sustainable development of recreational trails that do not adversely impact landscapes and ecological integrity.

10.0 Landscape/ Seascape

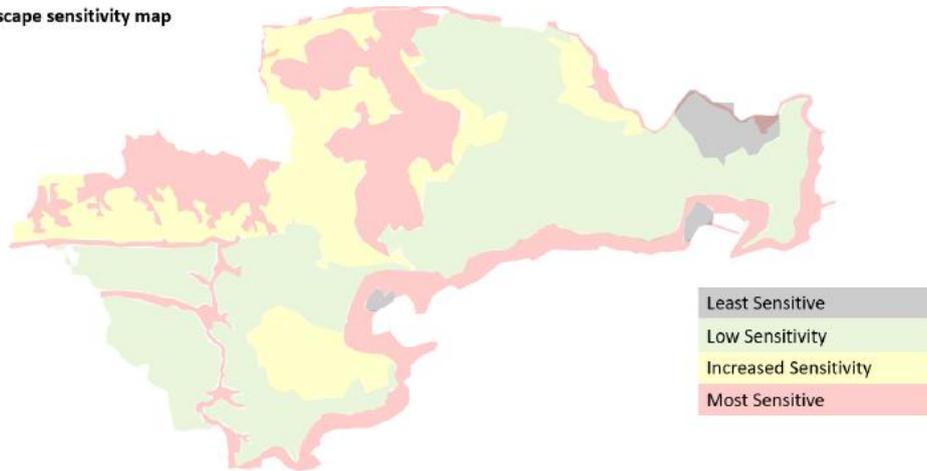
The European Landscape Convention (2000) promotes the protection, management and planning of all landscapes including, rural, peri-urban and degraded landscapes. Article 5 of the ELC urges recognition in law that landscape is an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of diversity of shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of identity. The convention advocates the establishment and implementation of landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning, and urges the participation of the general public, and local and regional authorities in these policies. The management of Waterford's landscape involves:

- Ensuring adequate protection to our most sensitive and vulnerable landscapes through appropriate policies and objectives.
- Providing for development that will enhance and benefit the receiving environment; and
- Protecting the landscape from inappropriate and unsustainable development;

A Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment was prepared for Waterford City and County in 2020 (Figure 10.0 and Appendix 8) and identified seven landscape types; coastal landscapes, river corridor and estuary landscapes, farmed lowland landscapes, foothill landscapes, upland landscapes and urbanising landscapes. These landscapes are subject to varying forces for change and in turn have varying capacity to accommodate development that can impact on that particular landscape character.

Figure 10.0 Waterford Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment

Landscape sensitivity map



All development proposals will be evaluated to assess their compliance with standards and legal requirements of the following where they apply;

- 2014 National Landscape Strategy
- 2020 Waterford Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Policy Objectives

<p>L 01</p>	<p>National Landscape Strategy</p> <p>We will support provisions of the 2014 National Landscape Strategy and provide for the sustainable management of all of County Waterford’s landscapes including archaeological landscapes, waterway corridors, coastal, upland, rural and peri-urban landscapes.</p>
<p>L 02</p>	<p>Protecting our Landscape and Seascape</p> <p>We will protect the landscape and natural assets of the County by ensuring that proposed developments do not detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of their area and ensuring that such proposals are not unduly visually obtrusive in the landscape, in particular, in or adjacent to the uplands, along river corridors, coastal or other distinctive landscape character units.</p>
<p>L 03</p>	<p>Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment</p> <p>We will assess all proposals for development outside of our settlements in terms of the 2020 Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (Appendix 8) and the associated sensitivity of the particular location. We will require a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for proposed developments with the potential to impact on significant landscape features within the City and County. Proposals for significant development (e.g. renewable energy projects, telecommunications and other infrastructure and the extractive industry) shall be accompanied by a LVIA</p>

	which includes Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) which indicate the landscape impact zone within which the proposed development may be seen. There will be a presumption against developments which are located on elevated and exposed sites and where the landscape cannot accommodate such development with reasonable and appropriate mitigation.
LS 04	<p>Scenic Routes and Protected Views</p> <p>We will protect the scenic routes and specified protected views identified in our Landscape Character Assessment (Appendix 8), including views to and from the sea, rivers, landscape features, mountains, landmark structures and urban settlements from inappropriate development that by virtue of design, scale, character or cumulative impact would block or detract from such views.</p>

10.1 Coastal Zone Management and Marine Spatial Planning

Waterford's coastline is a valuable natural resource providing a buffer for extreme weathers, an important wildlife area for a range of protected habitats and species, and a scenic landscape asset of tourism value. The coastal zone is generally taken as the area between Mean High Water Mark (MHWM) and the nearest continuous road. A growing body of evidence illustrates that rising sea levels, increasing storm frequency and wave energy will increase the rate of erosion, loss of habitats and incidence of flood-related events in vulnerable areas of the Waterford coast. The impacts of climate change may have wide reaching implications for the heritage and tourism value of the coastline. It is necessary that future management and development of coastal areas is carried out in a manner that protects coastal functions and values including natural coastal defence, habitat value and landscape/seascape character.

The Marine Planning and Development Management Bill (2021) seeks to establish a new consent process for the maritime area which will replace existing State and development consent regimes and streamline arrangements on the basis of a single consent principle i.e. one state consent (Maritime Area Consent) to enable occupation of the Maritime Area and one development consent (planning permission), with a single environmental assessment. In order to obtain authorisation for a proposed maritime usage a prospective developer will be required to apply to the relevant Minister for Maritime area consent (MAC). If such an application is successful, the prospective developer will be granted a MAC, conditional on securing planning permission from a coastal planning authority or An Bord Pleanála. Requirements in respect of environmental impact assessment (EIA), and in respect of appropriate assessment (AA) under the Habitats Directive will be fulfilled in the processing of the application for planning permission. If a proposal does not require planning permission, the EIA and AA assessments/screening will be undertaken by a coastal planning authority or An Bord Pleanála.

Coast and Marine Policy Objectives

<p>C&M 01</p>	<p>Protecting our Coast and Marine</p> <p>All development proposals will be required to comply with standards and legal requirements of the following where they apply;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Seascape Character Assessment • NMPF National Marine Planning Framework • Marine Planning and Development Management Bill 2021 and Act when finalised.
<p>C&M 02</p>	<p>Marine Assets</p> <p>We support the implementation of the National Marine Planning Framework including the identification of Marine Protection Areas in the future management and sustainable development of the Waterford coast and associate maritime area.</p>
<p>C&M 03</p>	<p>Managing Marine and Coast Areas</p> <p>To incorporate the findings of the National Seascape Assessment with the Waterford Landscape Character Assessment to inform future management and sustainable development of the Waterford coast and maritime area.</p>
<p>C&M 04</p>	<p>Natural Coastal Defences</p> <p>We recognise the value of the County’s natural coastal defences including estuaries, dunes and sand dunes and ensure their protection form inappropriate development and interference.</p>
<p>C&M 05</p>	<p>Scenic Coastal Areas</p> <p>To protect the scenic value of Waterford’s Coastal Zone including landward and seaward views and continuous views along the coastline and manage development so it will not materially detract from the visual amenity of the coast.</p>
<p>C&M 06</p>	<p>Public Coastal Access</p> <p>We will facilitate appropriate public access to the coast and the sustainable development of coastal walkways subject to ecological, Habitats Directive and climate risk assessments.</p>

10.2 Geological Heritage

Geology is now recognised as an intrinsic component of natural heritage and it is appropriate that due regard is given to conservation of geological heritage features. Geological heritage is significant in County Waterford due to its interesting mining history along the Copper Coast which was designated a UNESCO European Geo-Park in 2004, one of only two Geoparks on the island of Ireland.

The Geological Survey of Ireland established the Irish Geological Heritage (IGH) programme in 1998 with the objective of identifying and selecting sites that best represent the geological heritage of Ireland for designation as Natural Heritage Areas. The GSI identified [54](#) County Geological Sites of Interest in County Waterford. Some of these sites may merit National designation as Natural Heritage Areas. These sites are listed in Appendix 11.

Geology Policy Objectives	
G 01	<p>Protecting our Geological Heritage</p> <p>We will contribute towards the appropriate protection and maintenance of the character, integrity and conservation value of features or areas of geological interest. We will protect from inappropriate development the scheduled list of Geological Heritage Sites detailed in Appendix 11.</p>
G 02	<p>UNESCO Copper Coast Geopark</p> <p>We will promote and support the geological heritage of the UNESCO Copper Coast Geopark and provide for the sustainable management of this coastal amenity</p>

10.3 Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI)

BGI is now recognised as an important concept in land use planning and environmental protection. It relates to the network of open spaces, parks, gardens, green corridors, woodlands, waterways, urban tree lines and open countryside. Green spaces provide environmental, social, economic and physical benefits and give added value where integrated in the development process. These include:

- Climate change adaptation;
- Biodiversity management and enhancement;
- Water management including drainage and flood attenuation, filtration and pollution control;
- Health and well being;
- Visual amenity and sense of place; and,
- Sustainable mobility.

The BGI approach provides an opportunity for all to live and work in proximity to connected areas of green space to enjoy the benefits of a healthy environment. The Development Plan will seek to ensure protection of these elements and strive to create new areas of open space which connect the urban fabric.

BGI Policy Objectives	
BGI 01	<p>Managing our BGI Assets</p> <p>To conserve, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of Waterford in recognition of its importance as a non-renewable resource and as a natural asset for health and well-being of our communities.</p>
BGI 02	<p>Enhancing the role of BGI</p> <p>To establish BGI as a key component in the planning process and designing the future for Waterford so that environmental resilience is achieved through implementation of this plan.</p>
BGI 03	<p>BGI Strategy</p> <p>We will develop a BGI Strategy the City and County during the lifetime of this plan.</p>
BGI 04	<p>Development Proposals</p> <p>We will assess all proposals for development with the aim of no net loss of biodiversity and to achieve gain for BGI and ecosystem services. In particular we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the retention and creation of open drainage ditches instead of underground pipes where appropriate as these provide additional habitats and water source for wetland species; and, • Promote the integration of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in design concept and layout.
BGI 05	<p>Maintaining and Enhancing Amenity through BGI</p> <p>We will continue to invest in the maintenance and enhancement of BGI and support the provision of new parks, green space corridors and other public open spaces across our urban and rural settlements.</p>

10.3.1 Greenways

The scenic and varied landscape of Waterford City and County lends itself exceptionally well for walking, cycling and water based activities. Greenways are shared off-road routes designed to provide recreational opportunities for walking and cycling. Waterford City and County Council continues to support and promote the provision of infrastructure to facilitate outdoor recreation and shall continue to do so during the life time of this plan. The Waterford Greenway opened in 2017 and has recorded user numbers in the order of 250,000 per annum. The Greenway provides a central recreational asset that in turn promotes visitors numbers to other attractions such as Mahon Falls, Copper Coast Geopark, upland and coastal walking trails. The challenge is to maintain a high quality standard of visitor attraction whilst avoiding over tourism and degradation of the natural environment consistent with the National Greenway Strategy.

Along with the development and management of existing outdoor trails Waterford's role is central in the expansion of regional and national Greenway networks including a Waterford Greenway to

South East Greenway link and potential for further regional Greenway development. There is a number of strategic walking /amenity trails in Waterford that has the potential to be major tourism attractions including: St. Declan’s Way, River Suir and the Blackwater Blueway. A Recreational Trails Office is in place to co-ordinate the development, upgrade and promotion of trails in Waterford City and County.

10.3.2 Blueways

Blueways are approved and branded multi-activity recreational trails and sites, based on and closely linked with waterways, where providers facilitate access to activities and experiences. Blueway development at a national level is coordinated by the Blueway Ireland Steering Group. As an activity tourism and outdoor recreation product Blueways facilitate healthier lifestyles, social interaction and economic development. The experience is enriched by promoting it within the context of local heritage and culture. Waterford has the benefit of two navigable rivers –the Blackwater and Suir and an extensive coastline with estuaries, bays, coves and beaches that provide a strong basis for activity based tourism such as sailing, kayaking, angling and surfing. Whilst areas such as Ardmore, Dungarvan, Tramore and Dunmore East are well established in the waterway leisure industry there is potential for development of Blueway related activity on the River Blackwater and links to the River Suir Blueway and Greenway upstream in Co. Tipperary. Proposals for new Greenways and Blueways should have regard to the corridor and route selection process and mitigation referred to in Chapter 5 Transport and Mobility.

Greenways & Blueways Policy Objectives	
BGI 06	<p>Enhancing Waterford Greenway</p> <p>To support the enhancement of the existing Waterford Greenway and expansion of the Greenway network in Waterford City and County by examining the feasibility of developing a Waterford to Tramore Greenway and extending the Waterford Greenway to the west of Dungarvan.</p>
BGI 07	<p>Greenway Network</p> <p>To support the development of a South East Greenway network with Waterford City as its hub, linking Waterford City with South Kilkenny, New Ross and Rosslare.</p>
BGI 08	<p>Cycle Network</p> <p>To support the maintenance, upgrade, development and promotion of Waterford’s Cycling Trail network including EuroVelo 1-Atlantic Coast Route.</p>
BGI 09	<p>Developing our Blueways</p> <p>To support the sustainable environmental and economic development of Blueways on Waterford’s waterway corridors and coastline including the development of water based sport activities, improvement of quays and slipways and enhanced interpretation and safety that do not cause landscape or environmental degradation and avoid adverse impacts on ecological integrity including the Natura 2000 Network and built heritage.</p>

10.4 Walking Trails and Public Rights of Way

The Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) requires a County Development Plan to preserve public rights of way, which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility. Waterford has a county wide network of walking trails allowing access to a great range of scenic landscapes. The Council recognises the importance of maintaining established rights of way and supports initiatives for establishing new walking routes and enhanced accessibility.

Table 10.0 Waterford Trails

UPLAND/MOUNTAIN TRAILS

Trail Networks

Nire Valley Walks

Coumduala Loop

Coumlara Loop

Gap Walk

Sgilllogues Walk

Rathgormack Walks

Boolas Loop

Glenpatrick Bridge Loop

Lough Moghra Loop

Rathbeag Loop

Mahon Valley Walks

Mahon Falls Walk

Crough Wood Walk

WOODLAND TRAILS

Trail Networks

Lismore Walks

Lady Louisa Walk to Roundhill

The Towers Walk

Glenshelane Woodland Walks-Coillte

Glenshelane Blue Trail

Glenshelane Green Trail

Glenshelane Red Trail

Glenshelane Grotto Walk

Colligan Woodland Walks-Coillte
Inchidrisla Loop
Greenane Loop
Villierstown/Dromana Woodland Walks
The Sailors Rock
Dromana Well Walk
COASTAL TRAILS
Trail networks
Dunmore East Walks
Dunmore East Woods Walk
Dunmore East Coastal Walk inc Dunmore East to Portally and Portally to Ballymacaw
Tramore Walks
Tramore Dunes Walk
Tramore Nature Park
Doneraile Walk
Waterford Estuary Walks
St Ita's Walk, Faithlegg
Cheekpoint Maritime Loop
Passage East to Hurt Hill Loop
Standalone Coastal Trails
Ardmore Cliff Walk
The Cunnigar Walk
Nature Trails.
Anne Valley Walk
Fenor Bog Walk
Waterford City Walks
St John's River
Kilbarry Nature Park
Glenville to Blenheim
Long Distance Trails/Greenways
Waterford Greenway including spurs to Kilmeaden and Abbeyside
East Munster Way
St. Declan's Way

10.5 Comeragh Mountains

The Comeragh Mountains from the Nire Valley in the west to Coumshingaun in the east is a very popular area attracting visitors and walkers to County Waterford. The Council recognises the tourism value of this area for local communities and acknowledges the area is actively farmed, in private ownership and with high wildlife value subject to habitat protection and scenic landscape designations. All these uses bring forces for change and require to be managed with recognition and consideration of all uses and values for the overall socio-economic, landscape and environmental benefit of the area. Appropriate recreational and tourism developments in the Comeragh Mountain Area which will enhance the economic prospects of the area will be considered, subject to appropriate environmental assessment and development management standards to ensure protection of the unique character of the area.

Amenity Management Policy Objective	
BGI 10	<p>Trail Development</p> <p>We will work in collaboration with state bodies, development agencies, landowners and local communities to support the maintenance and promotion of existing trails and outdoor recreational amenities. We will examine the sustainable environmental and economic development potential of additional trails and outdoor recreational amenities and associated infrastructure whilst ensuring adherence to best practise principles in relation to upland path repair and management. Derived proposals will ensure no adverse impacts on ecological integrity including the Natura 2000 Network.</p>
BGI 11	<p>Trail Support Facilities</p> <p>To develop comprehensive plans for all proposed recreational trails that incorporate planning and design of sustainable trails and supporting infrastructure such as car parking and lighting and in consultation with local communities to ensure no adverse impact on local land use, the ecological integrity of the Natura 2000 Network and the environment.</p>
BGI 12	<p>Integrated Management of our Uplands</p> <p>We will commission an integrated management plan and management structure addressing recreation, conservation, landscape and socio-economic development issues in Waterford's uplands.</p>
BGI 13	<p>Community Engagement and Sustainable Amenities</p> <p>We will support communities and ensure recreational trails and outdoor recreational amenities and associated facilities are developed in sympathy with the natural environment and do not pose adverse impacts on habitats, species, the ecological integrity of the Natura 2000 Network and landscape amenity or affect ecosystem services including flood risk and climate change impacts such as coastal erosion. In doing so ensuring to realise the positive impacts of development of outdoor recreational amenities and trails including health & well being, social, cultural,</p>

	economic and tourism benefits as well as enhanced community resilience.
BGI 14	<p>Rural/ Trails Strategy</p> <p>To develop a Rural Development Strategy and a Recreational Trails and Outdoor Recreation Strategy, with involvement of key stakeholders in the development of each. We will also support the objective of the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy or any update thereof.</p>
BGI 15	<p>Managing our Amenity Assets</p> <p>To actively monitor and maintain trail and outdoor recreational amenity management standards and carry out interventions including trail surface repairs, diversion and access management where required.</p>
BGI 16	<p>Visitor and Habitat Management</p> <p>Where relevant, the Council and those receiving permission for development under the Plan shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Management measures may include ensuring that new projects and activities are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Visitor/Habitat Management Plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.</p>
BGI 17	<p>Increases in Visitor Numbers to Semi-Natural Areas</p> <p>Seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new any projects, such as greenways, are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities, such as riparian zones.</p>