



# Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

For

**Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Limerick  
City and County Council**

*Determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental  
Assessment for Limerick City and County Council Climate  
Change Adaptation Strategy prepared under the National  
Climate Change Adaptation Framework*

May 2019

**ON BEHALF OF**

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

Revision	Status	Author(s)	Reviewed	Approved	Issue Date
1.0	Draft	Mairead Foran <i>Environmental Consultant</i>	Jim Dowdall <i>Director</i>	Jim Dowdall <i>Director</i>	18/04/2019
2.0	Draft	Mairead Foran <i>Environmental Consultant</i>	Jim Dowdall <i>Director</i>	Jim Dowdall <i>Director</i>	24/04/2019
3.0	Final draft for Consultation	Mairead Foran <i>Environmental Consultant</i>	Muriel Ennis <i>Principal Environmental Consultation</i>	Muriel Ennis <i>Principal Environmental Consultation</i>	02/05/2019

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Earth's Climate is changing. While natural fluctuations in climate are considered normal, emerging research and observational records from across the world show rates of change that are far greater than those experienced in recent history. Global temperatures have risen and are projected to rise further bringing changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather. Ireland's climate is changing in line with global patterns, and these changes are bringing significant and wide-ranging economic, environmental and social impacts.

Climate change is now recognised as a global challenge with policy responses required in terms of both mitigating the causes of climate change and in adapting to the now inevitable consequences of our changing climate. Action at local level is vitally important to help reduce the risks and impacts of climate change across communities.

This local authority Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy forms part of Ireland's national strategy for climate adaptation as set out in the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) which was produced under the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.<sup>1</sup>

It is tasked with mainstreaming climate change adaptation over time into all functions, operations and services of the local authority. It seeks to inform or 'climate proof' existing plans and policies produced and implemented by the local authority. This is to ensure a considered, consistent and coherent approach, facing head-on the challenges of a changing climate. Crucially, it also helps in building resilience within the local authority organisation itself as well as across all communities.

## 2 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

### 2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or program or variation to a plan or program before a decision is made to adopt it. The SEA Directive<sup>2</sup> requires, inter alia, that SEA is undertaken for certain plans, programs or variations to these.

The SEA Directive has been transposed into Irish law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004) and The Planning and Development Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004). These Regulations have since been 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) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 201 of 2011). The criteria as set out in Annex II of The SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and as also set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004) need to be considered while drafting of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015* (S.I. No. 25/2016). Available at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/46/enacted/en/htm>

<sup>2</sup> 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

This SEA screening report is consistent with the process as recommended by The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government guidance document entitled *Implementation of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment November 2004*, specifically Chapter 3 (SEA: Screening and Scoping) and furthermore uses the criteria for SEA screening criteria set out in the SEA Directive.

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report is also being prepared for this Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in line with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

## 2.2 Climate Change Adaptation

### 2.2.1 International Context

The **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** is an international environmental treaty adopted in May 1992. The framework's objective is "*to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system*". The framework did not set binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions and contained no enforcement mechanisms. However, the framework outlined how specific international treaties may negotiate further action towards its key objective. **The Paris Agreement 2015** is a protocol set within the context of the UNFCCC (ratified by Ireland on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016) and it is aimed at:

- Limiting global warming to less than 2<sup>0</sup>C above pre-industrial level and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5<sup>0</sup>C.
- Building resilience and increasing the ability to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The agreement states the need for Parties to formulate and implement National Adaptation Plans.

### 2.2.2 EU Context

The 2013 EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change encouraged all Member states to adopt comprehensive adaptation strategies. It sought better-informed decision making through the identification and addressing of gaps in knowledge about adaptation. The European Climate Adaptation Platform Climate-ADAPT was developed as a resource mechanism to help users access and share information on adaptation.

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy is a voluntary, bottom-up, approach for cities and local governments to combat Climate Change and move towards a low emission, resilient society. The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy brought the Compact of Mayors and the EU Covenant of Mayors under one international body in January 2017 incorporating over 9,000 cities and local governments.

### 2.2.3 National Context

The 2012 National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (NCCAF) was Ireland's first step in developing a national policy on adaptation actions to combat the impacts of climate change.

The National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development 2014 restated the policy position of the NCCAF, 2012. Greenhouse gas mitigation and adaptation to the impacts of climate change were to be addressed in parallel national plans under an evolving climate policy to 2050.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 was a landmark national milestone in the evolution of climate change policy in Ireland. It provides the statutory basis for the national transition objective laid out in the National Policy Position (as per above). Further to this, it made provision for and gives statutory authority to both the National Mitigation Plan (NMP), published in 2017 and the

National Adaptation Framework (NAF) published in 2018. This Local Adaptation Strategy forms part of the National Adaptation Framework.

The Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines 2018 provides guidance to Local Authorities to develop their own Climate Action Adaptation Strategy. In developing this adaptation strategy Limerick City and County Council has been consistent with these guidelines.

### 3 DETERMINING WHETHER A SEA IS REQUIRED

The objective of the SEA Directive for the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the Environment is to:

*“provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.”<sup>3</sup>*

#### 3.1 Limerick’s Draft Climate Change Adaptation Objectives

The purpose of the Limerick City and County Council’s Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, is to achieve the national objective of becoming a more climate resilient society and economy by 2050. In order to help tackle current and future challenges that climate change can present, Limerick City and County Council have set out a number of key objectives in their strategy, under six thematic principles. Table 1 below outlines Limerick City and County Councils Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Objectives under each relevant Theme.

**TABLE 1 LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCILS DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION STRATEGY OBJECTIVES**

<b>Theme 1: Extreme Weather Event Response</b>	
1	To ensure most efficient response to climate risk and climate events by Limerick City and County Council
2	To ensure that responses to climate events are properly informed and evolve over time to respond to changing circumstances
<b>Theme 2: Land Use And Planning</b>	
1	To ensure that the risk and impact of flooding is adequately integrated into Planning Policy
2	To ensure integration of climate adaptation and mitigation into Land Use and Planning Policy
3	To incorporate climate proofing of infrastructure into Planning Policy
<b>Theme 3: Infrastructure, Built Environment And Service Provision</b>	
1	To increase the climate resilience of Limerick City and County Council building and housing stock where appropriate
2	To increase resilience of infrastructure to climate change
<b>Theme 4: Environment</b>	
1	To work with other agencies, where feasible, to foster a broad response to climate change
2	To encourage the adoption of green solutions to climate change
<b>Theme 5: Economic Development Activities</b>	
1	To incorporate climate change concerns into Limerick’s economic sector, where feasible
2	To identify and promote economic opportunities arising from climate change and adaptation

<sup>3</sup> 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

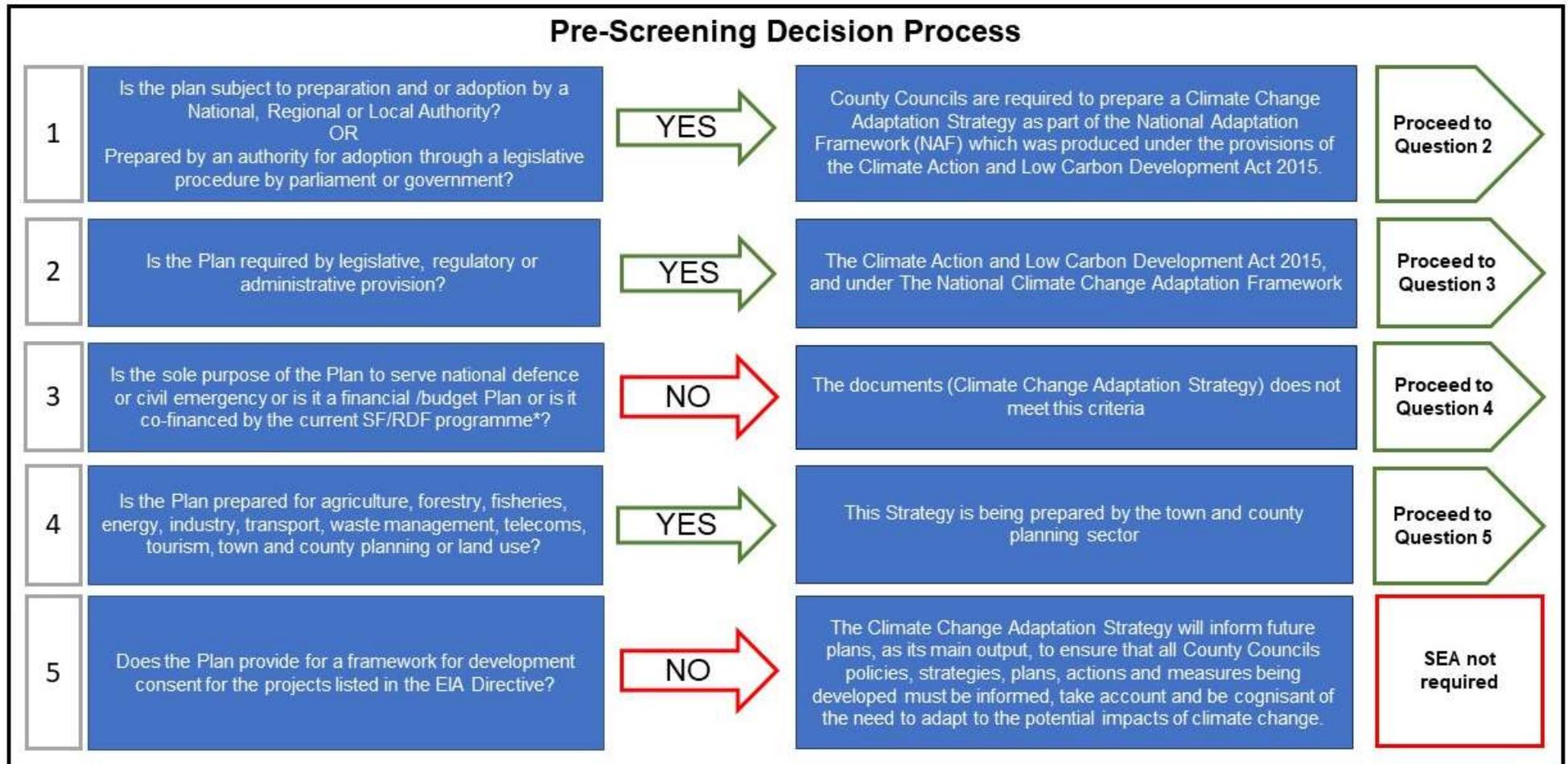
<b>Theme 6: Emerging Issues and Mitigation Actions (MA)</b>	
<b>1</b>	To encourage climate adaptation projects and disseminate lessons learned
<b>2</b>	Work with other Local Authorities and Agencies to ensure a regional response to Climate Change

### **3.2 The requirement to carry out SEA – Pre-Screening Checklist**

In order to determine if this Strategy is considered a plan/programme under Article 3 of the SEA Directive, a pre-screening check is necessary. Figure 1 below provides details of the pre-screening checklist; this checklist is based on the decision tree published by the EPA in the *Development of SEA methodologies for plans and programmes in Ireland*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> P. Scott & P. Marsden., 2001-EEP/DS-2/5 *Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland* Synthesis Report © Environmental Protection Agency 2003



\*SF/RDF: Structural Funds and Regional Development Funds under Council Regulation (EC) Nos. 1260/99 and 1257/99 which operate programming periods of 2000–2006 and 2000–2007, respectively.

FIGURE 1 PRE-SCREENING DECISION PROCESS

## 4 SEA SCREENING DETERMINATION

The Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy was screened using the criteria contained in Annex II of the SEA Directive. Table 2 and Table 3 below, details the screening assessment using the *criteria for determining the likely significance of effects* as set out in the SEA Directive, Annex II.

**TABLE 2 SCREENING DETERMINATION FOR ANNEX II (1.), CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS**

<b>The Characteristics of the Plan and Programmes having regard, in particular, to, the following criteria</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Screening Determination</b>
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	<p>The purpose of this Draft Climate Adaptation Strategy is to identify the risks to Limerick County associated with climate change, and to set strategic goals, objectives and actions to adapt to these changes.</p> <p>Limerick City and County Council's Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy forms part of Ireland's national strategy for climate adaptation as set out in the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) which was produced under the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.</p> <p>Limerick City and County Council's Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, if adopted, will not set a framework for future development consent of projects, i.e. projects listed in both Annex I and Annex II of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive.</p>
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	<p>This Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy will inform other future plans, as its main output, to ensure that Limerick City and County Councils policies, strategies, plans, actions and measures being developed must be informed, take account and be aware of the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>Future individual county development policies, strategies, plans and projects must be considered under the SEA, EIA and/or AA processes.</p>
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	<p>As the Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is aimed at integrating climate change adaptation into Limerick City and County Councils plans, strategies and management team's agendas, the climate change adaptation measures will be implemented via future plans.</p>

	<p>This Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy's main output is to ensure that all policies, strategies and plans for Limerick City and County Council must be informed of the need to adapt to the potential impacts of climate change.</p> <p>Individual county development policies, strategies, plans and projects must be considered individually under the SEA, EIA and/or AA process.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme;</p>	<p>The Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy looks to integrate climate change adaptation into Limerick City and County Council as a management function and/or an important criterion to be considering in developing Local Authority Plans or Actions. The climate change adaptation actions taken will be implemented via future plans as its main output is to ensure that all policies, strategies, plans and measures for Limerick City and County Council must be informed of the need to adapt to the potential impacts of climate change.</p> <p>Individual county development policies, strategies, plans and projects must be considered individually under the SEA, EIA and/or AA process.</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).</p>	<p>As the Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is aimed at integrating climate change adaptation into identified Limerick City and County Councils Plans and Strategies and future Plans and Strategies, with some specific actions to help raise awareness of climate change both within management team and the wider public in Limerick County, these actions can support plans and programmes that are related to waste generation, management, flood resilience and protection.</p> <p>However, these climate change adaptation actions will be implemented via future plans as its main output is to ensure that all policies, strategies, plans and measures for Limerick City and County Council must be informed of the need to adapt to the potential impacts of climate change.</p>

**TABLE 3 SCREENING DETERMINATION FOR ANNEX II (2.), CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS**

<b>Characteristics of the Effects and of the Area Likely to be Affected, taking account of the following criteria</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Screening Determination</b>
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	Limerick City and County Council Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is designed to inform responses throughout the local authority to the effects of climate change, which is now inevitable. At this stage, based on current information, it is difficult to estimate the duration, or indeed it's variability, but it is likely to be long term which justifies the need for an adaptation strategy such as the one being prepared. The adaptation strategy in its role to "climate-proof" existing plans, policies and activities of the Local Authority is an essential first step in dealing with climate change effects from a Local Authority perspective.
The cumulative nature of the effects	Changes in climate change are cumulative and work in combination. This can be seen where climatic factors combine and create what are called "compound events" where combined weather events may contribute to enhanced risk. This is recognised on page 10 of the Limerick City and County Council Climate Draft Change Adaptation Strategy.
The transboundary nature of the effects	In order to deal with transboundary effects, Limerick City and County Council Draft Change Adaptation Strategy has included actions, for example, actions 13.2, 13.3 and 13.4 which state that it will work with regional and sectoral bodies and other Local Authorities to deal with regional adaptation and mitigation responses.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	Limerick City and County Council Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is designed to inform responses to the effects of climate change including working with agencies such as the Department of Health whose primary focus is human health.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;</i></li> <li>- <i>exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; and</i></li> <li>- <i>intensive land-use.</i></li> </ul>	Areas of characteristics and cultural heritage within Limerick County are provided with a level of protection from both planning policy and planning legislation. However, Limerick City and County Council Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is designed to inform responses throughout the local authority to the effects of climate change and does not identify specific areas for development.

<p>The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.</p>	<p>Limerick City and County Council Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is designed to inform responses throughout the local authority to the effects of climate change and does not identify specific areas for development.</p> <p>Any effects uncovered as part of this process will be considered in relation to the characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, and the process will have regard, in particular, to the criteria as listed, according to the legislation.</p>
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## 5 CONCLUSION

This SEA Screening Report was carried out in order to determine the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment for Limerick City and County Council Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy prepared under the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework. It has been concluded, based on the pre-screening check, and review against the environmental significance criteria as set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive, that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required. Furthermore, the purpose of this Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is to inform Local Authority policies, procedures and further plans on the need to incorporate climate change adaptation measures and it does not set out projects, plans or specific measures.

It is likely, that through the implementation of Limerick City and County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, that there would be expected beneficial effects, as it aims to reduce risk from climate change. Specific actions in the strategy propose environmentally friendly adaptation measures, particularly those under *Objective 9: To encourage the adoption of green solutions to climate change (Adaptation Strategy pp. 32-34)*.