

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The River Suir has overflowed its banks on numerous occasions, particularly during times of extreme weather conditions, resulting in flooding of thousands of acres of land in the Suir Valley. The floods of 1968 in Thurles and more recently, November 2000, in the towns of Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir caused extensive damage to properties and within the vicinity of the Suir.

The overriding purposes of the River Suir Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study (CFRAMS) are to assess the spatial extent and degree of flood hazard and risk within the Suir Catchment; to examine future pressures that could impact on flood risk and develop a long-term strategy for managing flood risk that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. The outcome of the CFRAMS will be a Catchment Flood Risk Management Plan (CFRMP). The extent of the Suir Catchment is shown in **Figure 1-1** below and in more detail in **Figure 1-1**, in Appendix A.

Figure 1-1: Suir Catchment



The study will focus primarily on developed areas subject to significant development pressure known to have experienced flooding in the past or believed to be at risk of flooding in the future. These Areas of Potential Significant Risk (APSRs) are shown on **Figure 1-2**, Appendix A and listed below:-

- Ardfinnan
- Ballymacarbry
- Ballyporeen
- Bansha
- Borrisoleigh
- Cahir
- Carrick on- Suir
- Clogheen

- Clonmel (including Marfield and Knocklofty).
- Fethard
- Fiddown
- Golden
- Holycross
- Kilsheelan
- Mullinavat
- Newcastle
- Piltown
- Portlaw
- Templemore
- Thurles
- Tipperary Town
- Waterford City.

Plate 1-1: Flooding Piltown APSR, 2004



1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental quality and consequences of Policy, Plan or Programme initiatives by statutory bodies. The purpose is to ensure that the environmental consequences of plans and programmes are assessed both during their preparation and prior to adoption. The SEA process also gives interested parties an opportunity to comment on the environmental impacts of the proposed plan or programme and to be kept informed during the decision making process.

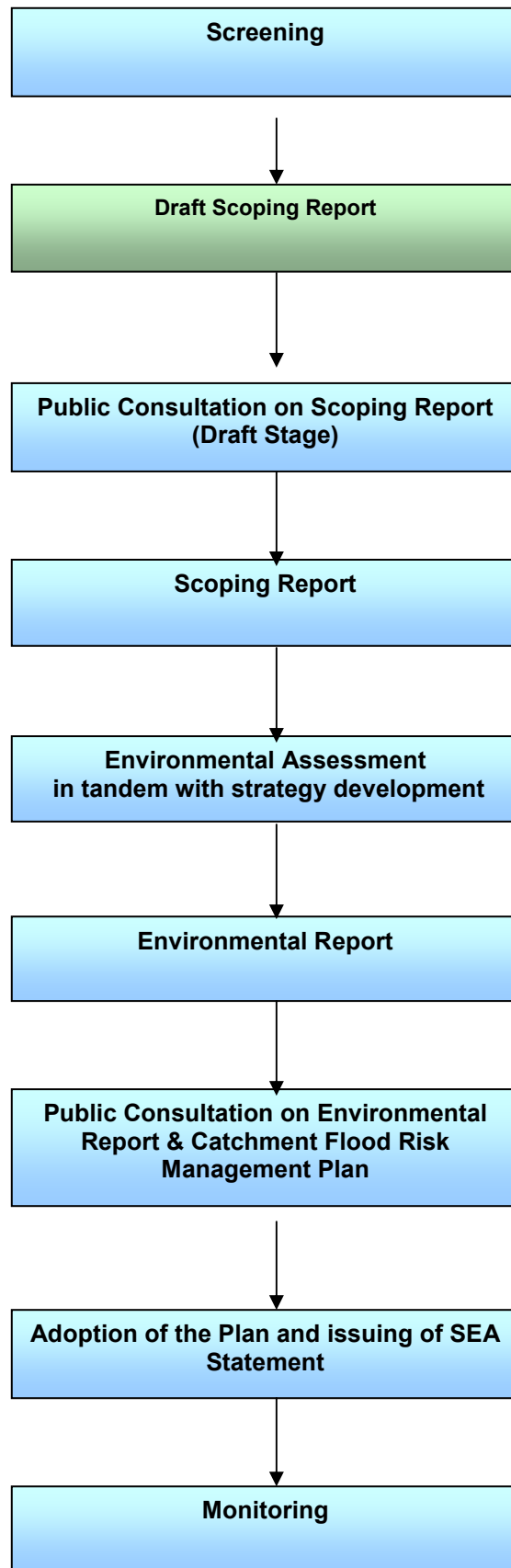
The European Directive (2001/42/EC) on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (the SEA Directive), was transposed into national legislation in Ireland by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435/2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436/2004). **Figure 1-3** shows an overview of the SEA Process.

Certain plans and programmes prepared by statutory bodies, and which are likely to have a significant impact on the environment, will now require an SEA to be carried out. As a result of SEA Regulations the OPW has requested the preparation of an SEA in tandem with the preparation of the Flood Risk Management Plan for the Suir Catchment.

The stages of the SEA are summarised in **Figure 1-3** and comprise the following:-

- Screening of Plans and Programmes to establish whether they must undergo an SEA;
- Scoping Report;
- An Environmental Report - containing the findings of the Assessment on the likely significant effects on the environment of the Plan;
- Consultation on the Draft Plan and associated Environmental Report;
- An SEA Statement - identifying how environmental considerations and consultations have been integrated into the Final Plan; and
- Monitoring Programme.

Figure 1-3: SEA Stages



1.3 Scoping and the Scoping Report

1.3.1 Purpose of Scoping

The purpose of scoping is to develop an understanding of the environmental parameters that may be affected by the key measures proposed by the plan, and to set a framework for identifying and evaluating the impact of these measures on these environmental parameters.

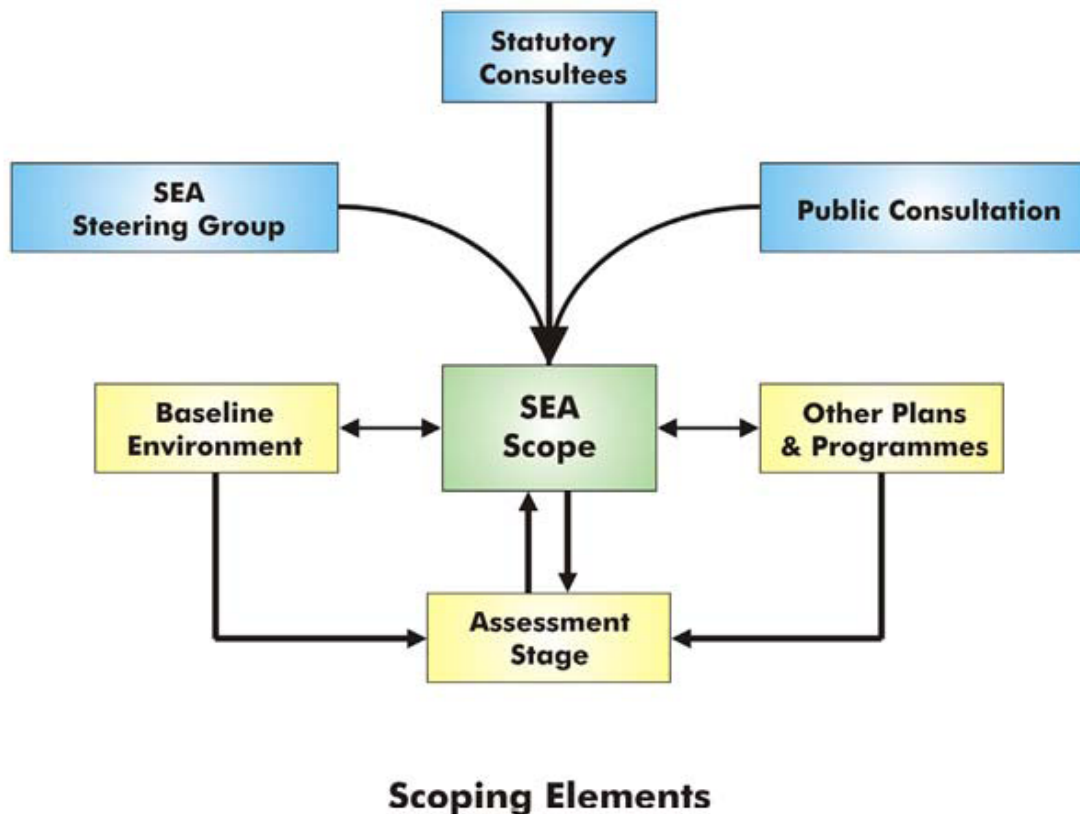
The aim of the scoping stage is to decide on the extent and level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report. This is done through consultations with the designated environmental authorities. The main stages in the scoping process are:-

1. To determine the key goals and objectives of the plan that relate to the environment;
2. To determine the key environmental issues to be assessed;
3. To report on relevant international, national and local policies, plans and programmes that may influence the plan;
4. To develop environmental objectives, indicators and targets for the findings in stages 1 and 2 above; and
5. To identify reasonable alternative strategies of achieving the strategic goals of the plan.

1.3.2 The Scoping Process and Scoping Report

Figure 1-4 provides an overview of the process of the SEA Scoping Stage.

Figure 1-4: Stages of SEA Scoping



The Scoping Report forms the output from the statutory scoping process as required by Article 11(1) of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, S.I. 435 of 2004. The purpose of this report is to present the current understanding of the key environmental issues relating to flood risk and its management in the Suir Catchment and to inform the identification and assessment of possible flood risk management options at a strategic level. It also aims to generate comments from stakeholders on the scope and the SEA approach that has been adopted for the Suir CFRAMS.

Scoping is an iterative process, whereby the baseline information collated should influence the SEA, and vice versa, and the outcome of consultation should genuinely influence the SEA objectives and the scope of the assessment.

This report outlines our initial understanding of the Suir Catchment at the present time. This will develop as the project progresses and will be informed by the views and knowledge of external stakeholders and the general public by way of a series of consultations.

1.4 Consultation

Under S.I. No. 435 of 2004, designated environmental authorities must be consulted in relation to the scope and level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report. The designated environmental authorities, as well as identified primary and secondary stakeholders were informed about the CFRAMS and the preparation of the SEA. This was done in the form of a letter and an information brief, which outlined the details of the CFRAMS and the SEA. The SEA stakeholders that were contacted are listed in **Table 1-1**. The stakeholders were requested to comment and/or submit relevant environmental information on the catchment. The comments received are presented in Appendix B.

The Draft scoping report was published on the OPW and Local Authorities (within the Suir Catchment) websites and a notice of this will be published in local newspapers. A copy of the draft scoping report was also put on display in a public library of each relevant County Council (North Tipperary, South Tipperary, Waterford, Limerick, Cork and Kilkenny), including contact details so that interested parties can submit comments and feedback on the report. A copy of the draft scoping report was also issued to key stakeholders listed below in Table 1-1. Comments and submissions received on the report were reviewed and processed and the draft scoping report was updated where applicable or in some instances comments will be brought forward for inclusion in the options assessment stage and the environmental assessment stage.

The Final Scoping Report will be published on the OPW and Local Authority websites and a notice of this will also be published in local newspapers. Copies of responses received from key stakeholders on the Draft Scoping Report are also contained within Appendix B.

In due course, the Environmental Report will be issued for public consultation along with the Draft CFRMP and the public will have the opportunity to comment on both the strategy and the Environmental Report. Four public information days will be held at 4 different locations within the Suir Catchment Area. These consultations will be held to gather views about the preferred strategy and decide on any amendments prior to any implementing stage.

Table 1-1: SEA Stakeholders

SEA STAKEHOLDERS	
Environmental Authorities	Secondary Stakeholders
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Dept. of Environment Heritage & Local Government (DoEHLG) Dept. of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR)	National Roads Authority (NRA) BirdWatch Ireland Iarnród Éireann Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Landscape Alliance Ireland Bat Conservation Ireland
Primary Stakeholders	Geological Survey of Ireland An Taisce, The national Trust for Ireland Waterways Ireland Irish Wildlife Trust Inland Waterways Association of Ireland Sustainable Water Network (SWAN)
Office of Public Works (OPW) South Tipperary Council North Tipperary Council Waterford City Council Waterford County Council Kilkenny County Council Limerick County Council Cork County Council South Tipperary County Development Board North Tipperary County Development Board Waterford City County Development Board Waterford County Development Board Kilkenny County Development Board South East Regional Authority River Basin District – South Eastern Region (ERBD) Eastern Region Fisheries Board (ERFB) National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Central Fisheries Board The Heritage Council Coastal Marine Resource Centre	Coillte Teagasc Marine Institute Irish Farmers Association (IFA) National Safety Council Bord Failte Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Department of Transport National Monuments Section, Dept of Environment BGE Distribution Transmission Business Unit ESB

1.5 Interaction with Other Plans and Programmes

The SEA Directive requires that the SEA process should include the review of other Plans/Programmes, which are related to the Plan/Programme being assessed i.e. the CFRMP. Any identified actions from this study will need to comply with relevant international and national legislation such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Habitats and Bird's Directives that stringently protect Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protected Areas (SPAs) within the catchment. The requirements will be expressed in the environmental objectives. A preliminary list of relevant plans, programmes and policies and their objectives is given in Appendix C.

1.6 Key Guidance Documentation

The following sources of guidance have been used during preparation of the Environmental Report and during the overall SEA process:-

- Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland, Synthesis Report, Environmental Protection Agency (2003).
- Implementation of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC: Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment – Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities, Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government Guidelines (2004).
- A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005).
- Experience drawn from other SEA's carried out in Ireland and the UK – this includes the pilot SEA for the Replacement Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region (2005), which was the first SEA for a waste management plan carried out in Ireland, on a pilot level before the introduction of SEA legislation.
- Scottish Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research (SNIFFER).
- EPA Guidance Note "Advice Note No. 6 Restoring Public Water Supplies Affected by Flooding.
- The Regional Planning Guidelines.

1.7 Public Consultation

This Final Scoping Report is a statement of our understanding of the catchment at the present time. This will develop as the project progresses and by views and knowledge of external stakeholder and the general public who are encouraged to provide feedback and input. Whilst the scoping stage is now complete any comments are still welcome and will be considered during the option assessment stage and the environmental assessment stage which are due to commence within the next 12 months.

Accordingly, comments on the contents of this report are welcomed. This report along with a brief Non Technical Summary (NTS) are available on the websites of the OPWs (www.opw.ie) and participating Local Authorities.

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All comments received will be recorded and acknowledged and used to inform the future development of the study. This report will be formally issued to the E.P.A, DCENR and DoEHLG