

RIVER SUIR FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

SEA SCOPING REPORT

SUMMARY

The Office of Public Works and its partners North Tipperary County Council, South Tipperary County Council, Kilkenny County Council, Waterford County Council, Waterford City Council and Limerick County Council are currently completing a Flood Risk Assessment and Management Study for the River Suir Catchment, which incorporates the relevant areas of the counties listed above. The purpose of this study is to assess the spatial extent and degree of flood hazard and risk within the Suir Catchment, to examine the future pressures that could impact on this risk and to develop a long term strategy for managing the risk that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. The key output from the study will be flood hazard and risk maps and a “Catchment Flood Risk Management Plan” (CFRMP). The OPW are responsible for implementing the Suir CFRAMS.

In accordance with EU regulations a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is being undertaken as part of the study running parallel with the development of the CFRMP. The objectives of the SEA are to consider the environmental constraints, and opportunities, within the catchment, and to look at the environmental consequences of choosing one option relative to the impact of choosing a reasonable alternative option, at a strategic level.

The environmental scoping report is part of the SEA process. This report describes the environmental characteristics of the Suir Catchment and presents our initial understanding of key environmental issues within the catchment relating to flooding and its management. It then identifies a set of proposed environmental objectives from the study based on the key environmental issues. These environmental objectives will be used in the next stage of the study to (1) inform the identification and development of potential flood risk management options; (2) appraise the identified options and to outline the preferred strategic options. The proposed environmental objectives so far identified are set out overleaf.

- Reduce flood risk to people, property and the environment;
- Protect human health, safety and employment by minimising the effects of flooding on key community services, sectors and infrastructure;
- Support the achievement of good ecological status/potential under the EU Water Framework Directive;
- Promote sustainable land use;
- Maintain and enhance where possible biodiversity, flora and fauna particularly at areas of designated environmental importance;
- Assist in achieving favourable status by 2020 for species and habitats of special conservation interests;
- Maintain and enhance where possible angling facilities;
- Protect and enhance where possible landscape and townscape character and visual amenity;
- Protect and enhance where possible features of archaeological and cultural heritage;
- Enhance public access through walkways and cycle paths;
- Promote the principles of sustainable development;
- Enhance natural functioning of the floodplain to achieve a diverse river profile; and
- Reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and maintain flexibility for future responses.

An integral part of the SEA process is consultation with the public and all relevant stakeholders. The report gives a history of consultations which have occurred and outlines proposed future consultations.