

**Meath County Development Plan  
2013-2019 DRAFT VARIATION NO.5  
Strategic Environmental Assessment  
(SEA) Screening Report**

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Meath County Council (MCC) is preparing Variation No. 5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (hereafter referred to as the 'Draft Variation') in accordance with Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The core objective of the Draft Variation is to facilitate the provision of increased, and much needed, social and affordable housing supply in the County in line with Pillar 2 of the Government's 'Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness'<sup>1</sup>, to accelerate the delivery of social and affordable housing.

The Core Strategy of the County Development Plan (Table 2.4 refers) originally provided a housing allocation of 20 units for Donore over the 2013 – 2019 period. As part of the Variation it is proposed to increase the household unit allocation in Donore by 31 units to facilitate the provision of social and affordable housing. Therefore, the resulting effect of the Draft Variation is that the existing Residential Phase II (Post 2019) classification is to be removed from an area of A2 (new residential) zoned land in Donore and a new policy is to be applied:

***“RD POL 2: ‘To provide for social and affordable housing on lands off the Staleen Road, north of St. Mary’s Heights and south of An Riasc Housing Developments’.”***

As set out in the following sections, this report constitutes a screening of the Draft Variation for the requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the requirements of Article 13K of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) on the “*determination of need for environmental assessment of variation of development plan*”.

The Screening for SEA has taken account of observations and submissions received from the Environmental Authorities consulted as part of the process for Screening for SEA (refer to section 1.3.3 of this report).

### 1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluating, at the earliest possible stage, the likely environmental effects of implementing a plan, in order to ensure that environmental considerations are addressed in an appropriate manner as part of the decision-making process, during the preparation of the plan and prior to its adoption.

SEA derives from European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment<sup>2</sup>. This directive, which is commonly referred to as the 'SEA Directive', was transposed into Irish law through:

- The European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, (S.I. No. 435 of 2004) as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011; and
- The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, (S.I. No. 436 of 2004) as amended by S.I. 201 of 2011.

The latter regulations (S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended by S.I. 201 of 2011) apply “*to consideration of the likely significant effects on the environment of a development plan, a variation of a development*

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<sup>1</sup> [http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland\\_Action%20Plan.pdf](http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland_Action%20Plan.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

*plan, a local area plan (or an amendment thereto), regional planning guidelines or a planning scheme in respect of a Strategic Development Zone*<sup>3</sup> and as such apply to the proposed Draft Variation. (Emphasis added).

Article 1 of the SEA Directive states:

*“The objective of this directive 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.”*

The transposing Regulations require that SEA is mandatory for certain plans and programmes that are above specified thresholds (e.g. preparation of a new County Development Plan with a population or target population greater than 10,000 persons or a Local Area Plan with a population or target population greater than 5,000 persons).

Where plans or programmes fall below or outside of the specified thresholds, as is the case for a proposed variation to a development plan, ‘screening’ is required to determine whether the making and implementation of a particular plan or programme will, or will not, lead to significant environmental consequences for the area of the plan or programme.

Screening for the purposes of Strategic Environmental Assessment is defined as “[t]he determination of whether implementation of a P/P [Plan or Programme] would be likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment. The process of deciding whether a P/P [Plan or Programme] requires SEA.” (SEA Park, EPA 2018).<sup>4</sup>

The screening process is carried out with regard to the “Criteria for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment”, as set out in Schedule 1 of Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended, and Schedule 2A of Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

Where screening determines that implementation of the plan or programme would be likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment, then the plan or programme must be subject to full strategic environmental assessment.

### **1.3 Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment**

#### **1.3.1 Requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment**

Article 13K of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, determines the need for environmental assessment (i.e. SEA) of a variation of a development plan. Specifically, Article 13K(1) requires screening for SEA:

*“[w]here a planning authority proposes to make a variation of a development plan under section 13 of the Act, it shall, before giving notice under section 13(2) of the Act, consider whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A.”*

Therefore, SEA is not mandatory for a variation of the a development plan, however, Draft Variation No.5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 must be subject to screening for SEA taking

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2011/si/201/made/en/print>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/SEA%20Pack%202018.pdf>

account of the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (*or as in* Schedule 1 of S.I. 436 of 2004, as amended).

Article 13K(3)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, requires that where the planning authority has not made a determination that the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, notice shall be given *“to the environmental authorities specified in article 13A(4), as appropriate.”* This is discussed further in Section 1.3.3 of this Report.

### 1.3.2 Appropriate Assessment and relationship to Screening for SEA

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ (AA) be carried out where a plan or project is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site. Natura 2000 sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

The first test is to establish whether appropriate assessment (AA) is required for the particular plan or project. This test is referred to as Screening for AA screening and the purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of the site’s conservation objectives.

As set out in Department Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08<sup>5</sup> (15 February 2008), screening for AA is of relevance to screening for SEA, in that *“where following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation status of a Nature 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting the precautionary approach:*

- *an appropriate assessment of the plan must be carried out, and*
- *in any case where a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out.”*

Hence, where the Draft Variation requires appropriate assessment (AA) it will also require strategic environmental assessment (SEA).

### 1.3.3 Consultation with Environmental Authorities

In accordance with Article 13K(3) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, Meath County Council gave notice **that implementation of the Draft Variation would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment** to the following specified environmental authorities and sought submissions or observations prior to finalising this Screening for SEA:

- (i) the Environmental Protection Agency;
- (ii) the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (*previously the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government*);
- (iii) where it appears that the LAP might have significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (*previously the Minister for Agriculture, Marine and Food*), and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (*previously the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources*);
- (iv) where it appears that the LAP might have significant effects in relation to the architectural or archaeological heritage or to nature conservation, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (*previously the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs*); and

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/general/circular-sea-01-08.pdf>

- (v) the planning authorities adjoining the area of Meath County Council – *i.e.* the County Councils of Louth, Fingal, Kildare, Offaly, Westmeath, Cavan and Monaghan.

Submissions or observations were received from the EPA and Louth County Council as noted in Section 4.0 of this Report.

## 2.0 Planning Context

### 2.1 Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019

The Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 was adopted on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and came into effect on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013. Since the adoption of the County Development Plan, four Variations have been proposed and adopted.

The Core Strategy of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, allocated 20 residential units to Donore. (Chapter 2, Table 2.4 Housing Allocation and Zoned Lands Requirements refers). The 2 year review (December 2014) of the Development Plan noted that a total of nine residential units had been permitted, but remained unbuilt. At present four residential units are currently under construction.

In responding to the Housing Crisis, the Government published *Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*, in July 2016, which sets a target of doubling the annual level of residential construction to 25,000 units and delivering 47,000 units by 2021. Under Rebuilding Ireland, Meath County Council's target for the provision of social housing units through capital mechanisms, for the period 2017-2021, has been set at 1,251 units. This is a minimum target, and Meath County Council are committed to maximising delivery across all delivery mechanisms, including direct construction, for the period concerned.

In recent years residential construction in County Meath has not kept pace with population growth. As per the 2016 Census the population of the County increased by 5.9% since 2011 while residential construction only increased by 1.4% (952 units). The absence of any significant residential development has placed pressure on the existing housing stock, with increased rents, house prices, and homelessness evident within the County and across the region. Therefore, the demand for additional social and affordable housing in the County and wider region has increased significantly.

Meath County Council is preparing Variation No.5 of the Meath County Development Plan to directly address these requirements.

## 2.2 Draft Variation No.5

### 2.2.1 Strategic Aims and Objectives of Draft Variation No.5

The core objective of the Draft Variation is to facilitate the provision of increased, and much needed, social and affordable housing supply in the County in line with Pillar 2 of the Government's 'Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness'<sup>6</sup>, to accelerate the delivery of social and affordable housing.

The Core Strategy of the County Development Plan (Table 2.4 refers) originally provided a housing allocation of 20 units for Donore over the 2013 – 2019 period. As part of the proposed Variation the household unit allocation in Donore will increase by 31 units to facilitate the provision of social and affordable housing.

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<sup>6</sup> [http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland\\_Action%20Plan.pdf](http://rebuildingireland.ie/Rebuilding%20Ireland_Action%20Plan.pdf)

The lands in Donore identified for the additional allocation of housing (the subject of the Draft Variation – refer to Figure 1) are in the ownership of Meath County Council and are appropriately located and are readily available and serviceable.

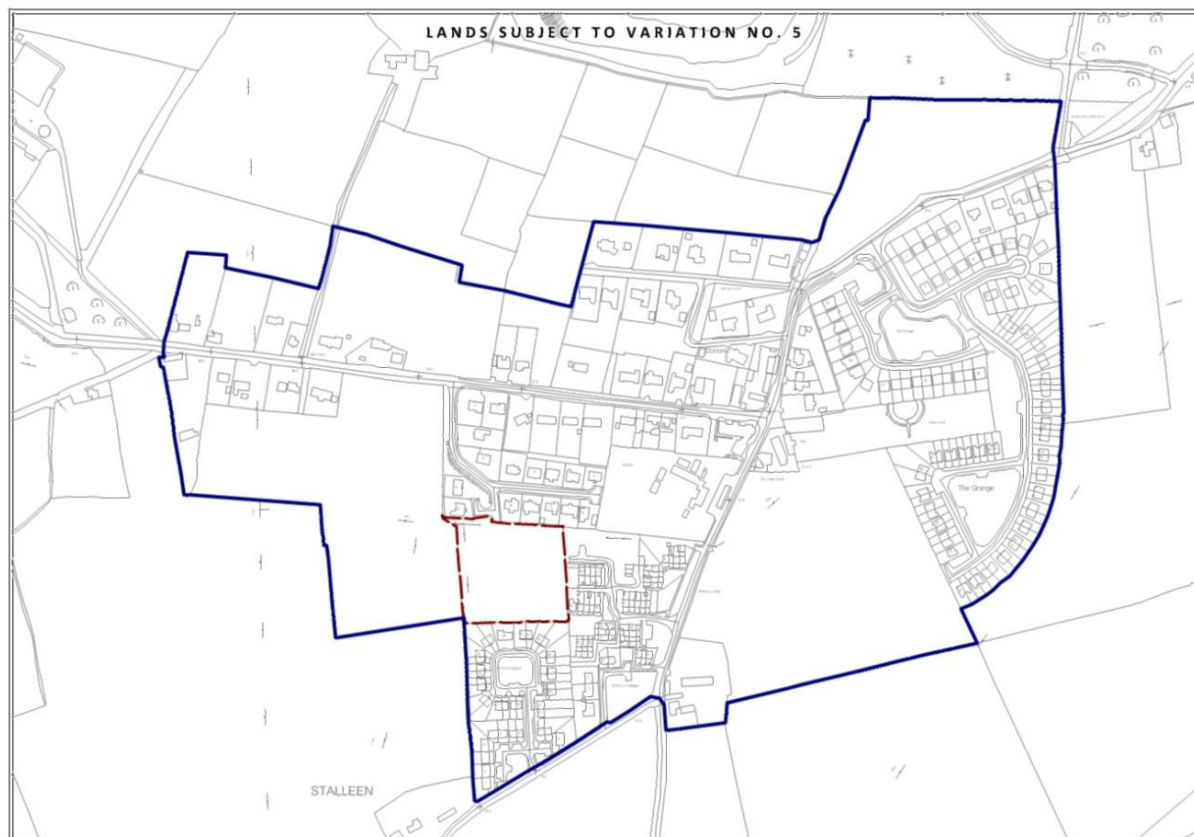


Figure 1: Variation No. 5 Subject lands in Donore

While the lands are currently zoned for A2 ‘Residential Use’ in the Meath County Development 2013-2019, they are designated ‘Residential Phase II (Post 2019)’. Therefore, the resulting effect of the Draft Variation is that the existing Residential Phase II (Post 2019) classification is to be removed from an area of A2 (new residential) zoned land in Donore and a new policy is to be applied:

*“RD POL 2: ‘To provide for social and affordable housing on lands off the Stalleen Road, north of St. Mary’s Heights and south of An Riasec Housing Developments’.”*

The proposed Variation will therefore increase the availability of serviceable zoned land for social and affordable housing in Donore and assist in satisfying housing need in line with the recommendations included in ‘Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness and Social Housing Strategy 2020’ and in compliance with Circular PL8/2016<sup>7</sup>.

### 2.2.2 Content of Draft Variation No.5

The proposed Draft Variation provides for alterations to the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.

The principle alterations are:

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/circular\\_aph2-2016\\_pl8-2016\\_-\\_identifying\\_planning\\_measures\\_to\\_enhance\\_housing\\_supply.pdf](https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/circular_aph2-2016_pl8-2016_-_identifying_planning_measures_to_enhance_housing_supply.pdf)



### 1. Volume 1: The Written Statement

- Amendments to Tables 2.4 and 2.5 acknowledging re-allocation in the Core Strategy of additional 31 available housing units to Donore for provision of social and affordable housing.

### 2. Town and Village Statements: Donore Village Statement

- Insert new text following the Introductory **Table** and in body text under **04 Residential Development**, to reflect re-allocation to Donore of additional 31 available housing units in the Core Strategy for provision of social and affordable housing.
- Insert the following policy under **Residential Development Policies**  
**RD POL 2 'To provide for social and affordable housing on lands off the Staleen Road, north of St. Mary's Heights and south of An Riasc Housing Developments'.**

### 3. Volume 5 the Book of Maps: Donore Land Use Zoning Objectives Map

- Remove the hatching (Residential Phase II (Post 2019) classification) from the subject land.
- Insert a new objective on the subject lands i.e. RD 2 and amend the legend accordingly. (See Figure 2).

Therefore, Draft Variation No. 5 proposes a change to the phasing/timing of a small area of residential development on existing Phase II zoned land in Donore. There is no change to the extent of existing zoned residential development land in the village.

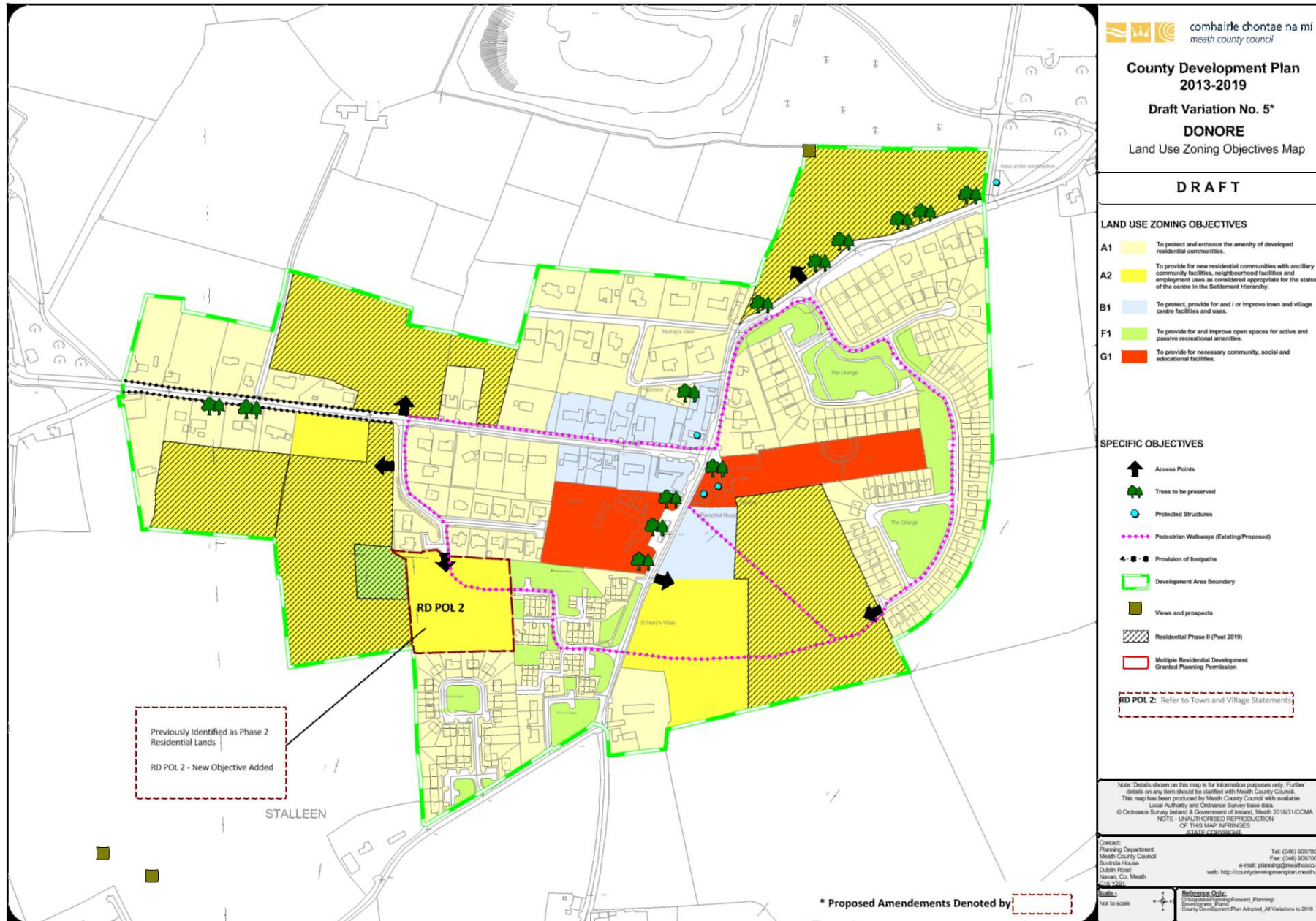


Figure 2: Draft Variation No. 5: Donore Land Use Zoning Objectives Map

### 3.0 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

#### 3.1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

A separate report has been prepared providing Information for Screening for Appropriate Assessment, and as noted at Section 1.3.2 of this report, a relationship exists between the outcome of screening for AA and consideration of screening for SEA.

As set out in Table 1 of this report, 5 European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) are located within 15km of Donore (refer to Figure 3). Sites of national importance were also considered in the screening exercise. While 16 proposed Natural heritage Areas (pNHA) are located within the zone of influence of the Donore, no Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are within this area.

Table 1: European Sites within 15km of Donore

European Site	Site Code	Distance (straight line) to Donore
<b>Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) / candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC)</b>		
River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC	002299	c.1.3km to northwest
Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC	001957	c.7.0km to east/northeast
<b>Special Protection Areas (SPA)</b>		
River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA	004232	c.1.3km to northwest
Boyne Estuary SPA	004080	c.7.0km to east/northeast
River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA	004158	c.11.0km to east

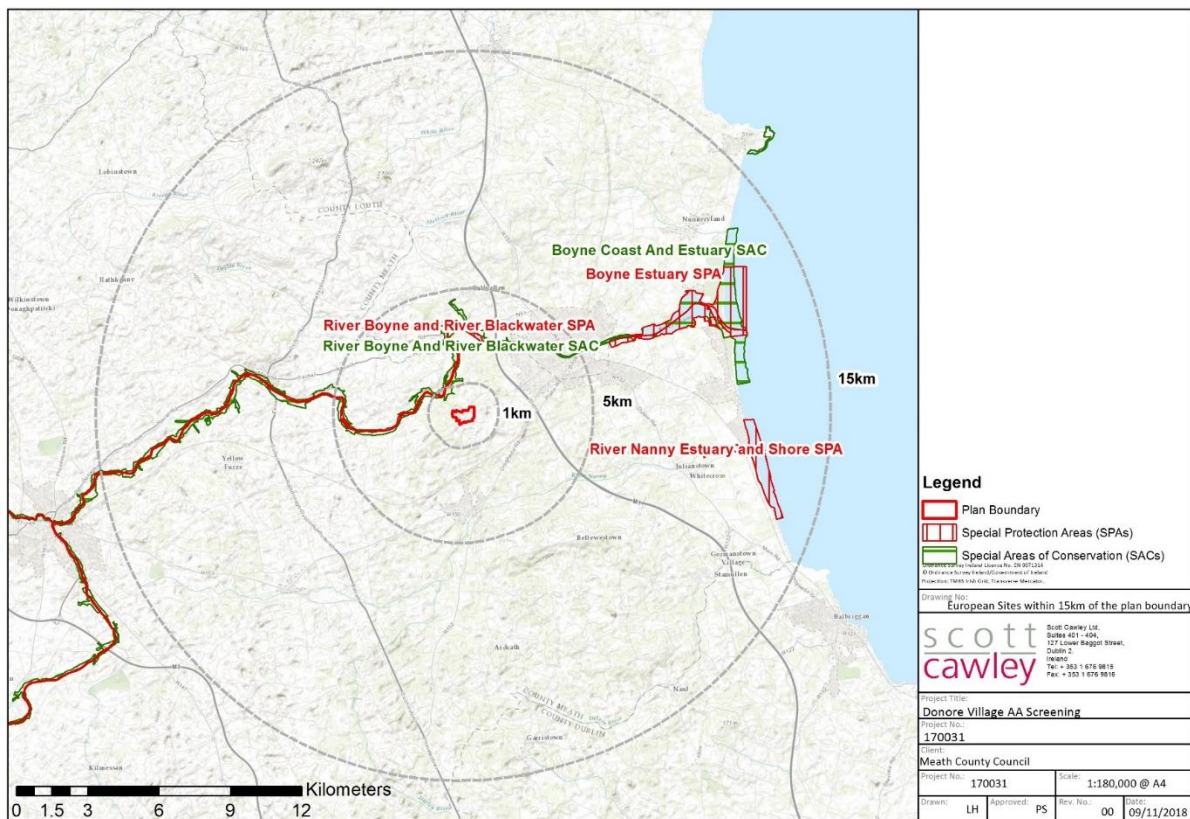


Figure 3: European Sites within 10km of Donore (Scott Cawley, 2018)

The AA screening process identified that 5 European Sites lie within the potential zone of influence of the proposed Variation. The Screening for AA notes that the European sites were not regarded to have viable source-pathway-receptor relationships with the plan area as the nearest watercourse is located c.700m from Donore village at the closest point. The lack of hydrological and ecological connectivity and the distance from the European site has ruled out any risk of significant effects and Appropriate Assessment of the Draft Variation is not required.

Therefore, strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is not required for the Draft Variation because of a requirement for appropriate assessment (AA).

Further detail is provided in the Screening for AA Report, which accompanies the Draft Variation.

### 3.2 Flood Risk Assessment

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was carried out to inform the preparation of the proposed Draft Variation. The SFRA builds on the previous assessments published under the County Development Plan and its variations.

The overall finding of the review is that there has been no change to the flood risk information for Donore and it remains at low risk from fluvial and tidal flood sources. The SFRA notes that flood risk in Donore is low and it is recommended that any new development should be managed in line with existing approved policies (i.e. WS POL 29 to WS POL 36) as set out in Volume 1, Section 7.15 of the County Development Plan 2013-2019. Of particular relevance is WS POL 31 which states that any future development should have regard to the surface water management policies of the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS). This is in the interests of managing potential pluvial flood risk.

### 3.3 Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment

A screening assessment for likely significant effects has been carried in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended. In so doing the Screening of the Draft Variation has taken account of the specified criteria for determining the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Draft Variation as set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (or in Schedule 1 of SEA Regulations 2004, as amended).

The screening assessment is presented in the following with reference to the specified Schedule 2A criteria.

#### 3.3.1 The characteristics of the plan or programme having regard, in particular, to:

- |  |
|--|
| <p><i>i. the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions, or by allocating resources;</i></p> |
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The Draft Variation is prepared within the context of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, which has undergone full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Draft Variation No. 5 has very limited effect on land use zoning being primarily linked to a change in the phasing of delivery of housing on a small area of existing zoned land in Donore. There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in the village.

Therefore the potential effects of the Draft Variation are limited to land use zoning within Donore. It is considered that Draft Variation No. 5 has a minimal and insignificant effect in setting a framework for a social and affordable residential development of 31 units on a small area of existing residential zoned land in the village. The Draft Variation does not propose

zoning of any new lands and no changes are envisaged to the location, nature, size and operating conditions of the existing land use zoning or in terms of allocating resources.

*ii. the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy;*

The Draft Variation is prepared within the context of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, which has undergone full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Draft Variation No. 5 has very limited effect on land use zoning being primarily linked to a change in the phasing of delivery of housing on a small area of existing zoned land in Donore. There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in the village.

Therefore the potential effects of the Draft Variation are limited to land use zoning within Donore and there is minimal influence on plans or programmes in a hierarchy – other than seeking to accord with the requirements of ‘Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness and Social Housing Strategy 2020’, in the provision of available lands for social and affordable housing.

Draft Variation No. 5 has no influence on lower tier plans.

*iii. the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development*

The Draft Variation has no effect on environmental considerations. The variation relates to existing residential zoned lands and all existing environmental considerations – as assessed for the County Development Plan 2013-2019 are applicable. There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in Donore.

The Draft Variation seeks to address the acknowledged requirement for delivery of social and affordable housing by using existing zoned land and therefore maintains the principle of promoting sustainable development.

*iv. environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme;*

There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in Donore – all of which have been subject to SEA as part of the making of the County Development Plan. There are no environmental problems relevant to the Draft Variation.

*v. The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)*

The Draft Variation has no relevance or effect on the implementation of any European Union legislation on the environment.

### 3.3.2 Characteristics of the effects and of the area to be affected having regard, in particular to:

*i. The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;*

No environmental effects are anticipated to arise as a result of implementing the Draft Variation, which has a very limited effect on land use zoning primarily linked to changing the phasing of delivery of housing on a small area existing of zoned land in Donore. There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in the village.

*ii. The cumulative nature of the effects;*

There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in Donore and no cumulative effects are anticipated as a result of implementing the Draft Variation.

*iii. The trans-boundary nature of the effects;*

No international, national, regional or inter-county transboundary effects will arise as a result of implementing the Draft Variation.

*iv. The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);*

There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in Donore and no risks to human health or to the environment due to accidents, or other considerations, in the implementation of the Draft Variation have been identified.

*v. The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);*

Draft Variation No. 5 has very limited or negligible effect on land use zoning, being primarily linked to changing the phasing of delivery of housing on a small area of existing residential zoned land in Donore. There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in the village.

The Draft Variation allows for an additional 31 units available for social and affordable housing to be provided on existing (Phase II (Post 2019) residential zoned lands in Donore. Therefore, while the spatial extent of any potential effects would be limited to Donore village – however, the magnitude of any potential effects is negligible/insignificant.

*vi. The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:**- a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage*

The Draft Variation allows for an additional 31 units available for social and affordable housing to be provided on existing (Phase II (Post 2019) residential zoned lands within the village of Donore. There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in the village.

The Draft Variation would have no effect on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.

*- b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,*

The Draft Variation allows for an additional 31 units available for social and affordable housing to be provided on existing (Phase II (Post 2019) residential zoned lands within the village of Donore. There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in the village.

The Draft Variation would not give rise to any exceedance of environmental quality standards or limit values.

*- c) Intensive land-use,*

The Draft Variation allows for an additional 31 units available for social and affordable housing to be provided on existing (Phase II (Post 2019) residential zoned lands within the village of Donore. There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in the village.

The Draft Variation would not give rise to any issues of intensive land use.

vii. *The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status*

The Draft Variation allows for an additional 31 units available for social and affordable housing to be provided on existing (Phase II (Post 2019) residential zoned lands within the village of Donore. There are no changes to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in the village.

There are no national, European or international designated sites; Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for flora and fauna, Special Protection Areas (SPA) for birds or Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) on or surrounding the lands that are the subject of the Draft Variation.

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report on the Draft Variation found no likelihood of potential for impact on Natura Site(s).

The Draft Variation would not give rise to any effects on national, European or international designated sites.

#### 4.0 Submissions from Environmental Authorities

Notice was provided to the following specified Environmental Authorities in accordance with Article 13K(3) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended:

- (i) the Environmental Protection Agency;
- (ii) the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government;
- (iii) the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; and
- (iv) planning authorities adjoining the area of Meath County Council – *i.e.* the County Councils of Louth, Fingal, Kildare, Offaly, Westmeath, Cavan and Monaghan.

Submissions or observations were received from Louth County Council and the EPA. Louth County Council responded with no specific comments. The EPA provided a detailed response outlining:

- the role of the Agency in relation to SEA;
- the appropriate criteria to be used in SEA Screening;
- available guidance and background information for SEA; and
- information on relevant environmental authorities and public consultation

A copy of the EPA submission and the Louth County Council submission are attached at Appendix 1 to this Report. These points raised by the EPA been taken in account in the Screening for SEA.

#### 5.0 Recommendation

It has been assessed that the implementation of Draft Variation No. 5 to the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 will not give rise to any adverse environmental effects and therefore, the Draft Variation does not require strategic environmental assessment (SEA).

This conclusion has been drawn through consideration of the following factors:

- The Draft Variation is limited to the village of Donore,
- There is no change to the extent of existing lands zoned for development in Donore.

- The principle change arising from the Draft Variation is a change to the phasing/timing of delivery of 31 units for social and affordable housing on a small area of existing (Phase II) residential zoned lands.
- The environmental effects of development of the subject lands, which are already zoned for (Phase II) residential development, have been assessed under the preparation of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.
- The Draft Variation does not require Appropriate Assessment.
- The magnitude and spatial extent of the any potential environmental effects from the Draft Variation are negligible/insignificant.

## **6.0 Determination under Article 13K(4)**

Taking account of relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, and having regard to the submissions received from the environmental authorities, it can be determined in accordance with Article 13K(4) of the Planning and development Act 2000, as amended, that Draft Variation No.5 to the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 will not result in any significant adverse environmental effects and therefore the Draft Variation does not require environmental assessment through the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) process.



## 7.0 References

### 7.1 European

*European Parliament and Council Directive 2001/42/EC of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.*

*Council Directive Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.*

### 7.2 National

*Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08 Appropriate Assessment of Land Use Plans.* Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008.

*European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004).*

*Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 or 2004).*

*European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 200 of 2011).*

*Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 201 or 2011).*

*Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.*

*Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.*

*Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework,* Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018.

### 7.3 County

*Meath Development Plan 2013-2019.* Meath County Council, 2013.

*Strategic Environmental Assessment SEA Statement for Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.* Meath County Council, 2013.

### 7.4 Guidelines

*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.* Environmental Protection Agency, 2004.

*Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment.* Environment Directorate-General of the European Commission, 2003.

*Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment - Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes - Practitioner's Manual.* Environmental Protection Agency, 2013.

*Local Area Plans Guidelines for Planning Authorities,* Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013.

*SEA Pack.* Environmental Protection Agency, 2018.

*SEA of Local Authority Land Use Plans - EPA Recommendations and Resources.* Environmental Protection Agency, 2018.

*SEA Process Checklist - Consultation Draft.* Environmental Protection Agency, 2008.

*SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities.* Environmental Protection Agency, 2008.

*Synthesis Report on Developing a Strategic Environmental Assessment (Sea) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland.* Environmental Protection Agency, 2003.

*The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities,* Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009.

**APPENDIX 1: Submissions received from Environmental Authorities**

- Environmental protection Agency (EPA)
- Louth County Council



Regional Inspectorate,  
Inniscarra,  
County Cork, Ireland  
Cigireacht Réigiúnach, Inis Cara

Chontae Chorcaí, Éire  
T: +353 21 487 5540  
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E: info@epa.ie  
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LoCall: 1890 33 55 99

Ms Louise Heeney  
Forward Planning  
Meath County Council  
Planning Department  
Buvinda House  
Navan  
Co. Meath  
C15 Y291

16<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Our Ref: 181002.1

## **Re. Proposed Variation No. 5 to the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019**

Dear Ms Heeney,

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) acknowledges your notice, dated the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018, regarding the above and notes its contents.

We are one of the five environmental authorities specified in the SEA Regulations. Our role as an SEA environmental authority focuses on promoting full integration of the findings of the SEA into the plan and advocating that the key environmental challenges for Ireland are addressed. The EPA's functions as an SEA environmental authority do not include approving or enforcing SEAs or plans.

As a priority, we focus our efforts on reviewing and commenting on key sector plans. For land use plans at county and local level, we provide a 'self-service approach' via our guidance document 'SEA of Land Use Plans – EPA Recommendations and Resources'. This document is updated regularly.

Where we provide specific comments on plans and programmes, our comments will focus on the EPA's remit and areas of expertise (in particular water, air, climate change, waste, resource efficiency, noise, radon and the inter-relationships between these and other relevant topics e.g. biodiversity), as appropriate and relevant to the particular plan or programme.

### **SEA Determination**

Meath County Council should determine whether or not the implementation of the proposed Variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The criteria set out in Annex II of Directive 2001/ 42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (The SEA Directive) and in *Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004)* should be taken into account. Meath County Council is obliged to take the

relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A into account in making its determination as to whether or not the Variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

### **Available Guidance**

Guidance on the SEA Process, including an SEA Pack, Integration Guidance, SEA Checklist, List of SEA Spatial Information Sources and guidance on Integrating Climate Change into SEA, is available on the EPA website and should be considered in the preparation of the SEA. This can be consulted at the following address: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/>

Guidance on *Developing and Assessing Alternatives in SEA* (EPA, 2015) is also available at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/developingandassessingalternativesinsea.html>

### **EPA State of the Environment Report 2016**

The EPA has published our latest 'State of the Environment Report' - [\*Ireland's Environment 2016 – An Assessment\*](#) (EPA, 2016). The recommendations, key issues and challenges described within this report should be taken into account, as relevant and appropriate to the Plan area.

### **SEA WebGIS Search and Reporting Tool**

The EPA WebGIS Search and Reporting application is an online GIS based web application that will allow users to explore, interrogate and produce an indicative report on key aspects of the environment in specific geographic areas. These reports are indicative and will provide an overview of key aspects of the environment within a specific plan area. This may be used to inform the SEA screening and scoping stages for Plans and Programmes with reference in the first instance to the land use sector, though it is also applicable to other sector plans. It may be accessed via [www.edenireland.ie](http://www.edenireland.ie)

### **River Basin Catchment Management Tool**

The EPA WFD Application provides a single point of access to catchment data which will be useful for a range of catchment science and management purposes, not just those that are specific to the Water Framework Directive. The Application is accessible through EDEN <https://wfd.edenireland.ie/> and is available to public agencies.

### **Future Modifications to the Plan**

Where changes to the Variation are made prior to finalisation, or where modifications to the Plan are proposed following its adoption, these should be screened for potential for likely significant effects in accordance with the criteria as set out in *SEA Regulations Schedule 2A Criteria* (S.I. No. 436 of 2004).

### **Infrastructure Planning**

In proposing the Variation, and any related amendments, variations etc. of the Plan, and in implementing the Variation, adequate and appropriate infrastructure should be in place, or required to be put in place, to service any development proposed and authorised during the lifetime of the particular Variation.

### **Appropriate Assessment**

The requirements of Article 6 of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, the Habitats Directive should be taken into account. Appropriate Assessment, in accordance with the Directive is required for:

*“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (Natura 2000 sites) but likely to have significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment of its implications for the site in view of the sites conservation Objectives...”*

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) should be consulted with regard to screening of the Variation for Appropriate Assessment. Where Appropriate Assessment is required, any findings or recommendations should be incorporated into the SEA and *Plan*, as appropriate.

### **Environmental Authorities**

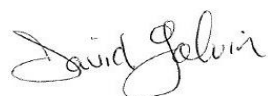
Under the SEA Regulations (*S.I. No. 436 of 2004*, as amended by *S.I. No. 201 of 2011*), notice should also be given to the following:

- The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, where it appears to the planning authority that the plan or programme, or modification of the plan or programme, might have significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment
- where it appears to the competent authority that the plan or programme, or amendment to a plan or programme, might have significant effects in relation to the architectural or archaeological heritage or to nature conservation, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and
- any adjoining planning authority whose area is contiguous to the area of a planning authority which prepared a draft plan, proposed variation or local area plan.

A copy of your decision regarding the determination, including, as appropriate, the reasons for not requiring an environmental assessment, should be made available for public inspection at your offices, on your website and should also be notified to any Environmental Authorities already consulted.

Should you have any queries or require further information in relation to the above please contact the undersigned. I would be grateful if an acknowledgement of receipt of this submission could be sent electronically to the following address: [sea@epa.ie](mailto:sea@epa.ie).

Yours sincerely,



**David Galvin**  
*Scientific Officer*  
*SEA Section*  
*Office of Evidence and Assessment*  
*Environmental Protection Agency*  
*Regional Inspectorate*  
*Inniscarra, County Cork*



Comhairle Contae Lú  
Louth County Council

23rd October 2018

Forward Planning  
Meath County Council  
Planning Dept  
Buvinda House  
Dublin Road  
Navan  
Co Meath

**Re: Proposed Draft Variation No.5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your email dated 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 concerning the variation process and the determination as to whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Louth County Council thanks you for the notification and welcomes the opportunity to comment, however I wish to advise that Louth County Council has no observations to make on this occasion.

Yours sincerely,

Marguerite Quinn  
Senior Executive Planner  
Louth County Council

Comhairle Contae Lú  
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*Cuirfeair fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras Gaeilge - Correspondence in Irish is welcome*