

7. Conserving Environmental Quality



7.1 Principles

The policies and objectives for environment and heritage have been developed in accordance with the following principles:

- the natural and built environment, particularly those elements that are non-renewable and most valuable, need to be properly protected, managed and enhanced;
- the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, natural heritage, landscape and the built environment should be promoted as important elements of the long-term economic growth and development of the County;
- the protection of County Sligo's physical heritage (including archaeology and historic buildings) is a tangible representation of the County's past and is a sound basis for economic growth and regeneration;
- the *polluter pays* and the *precautionary* principles are important components of any planning policies that deal with environmental and heritage matters;
- the long term economic, social and environmental well-being of County Sligo requires its environment and heritage resources to be maintained and managed to the highest possible standard.

7.2 Natural environment

County Sligo supports a wide diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats that are the result of sympathetic land management over time. These habitats support a wide range of wild plant and animal species, which are coming under threat due to development pressures and the increasing demand for new development land.

In general, it is an objective to ensure, wherever possible, that developments or activities do not impact adversely upon wildlife and its habitats. A sustainable approach requires that the natural heritage resource, comprising natural habitats and species within the Plan area, should be conserved and protected for the benefit of future generations.

In general, if uncertainty exists regarding the potential impact of a proposed development, full account must be taken of the *precautionary* principle, and the proposed development will be resisted unless or until its effects are more clearly understood.

7.2.1 Natural environment objectives

- A. Seek the conservation and wise management of areas of natural environmental value.
- B. Protect and, where possible, enhance the plant and animal species and their habitats that have been identified under the EU Habitats Directive, EU Birds Directive, the Wildlife Act and the Flora Protection Order.

7.2.2 Designated nature conservation sites

European and national legislation now protects the most valuable of our natural heritage areas. This is achieved through the designation of sites as pNHAs, cSACs and SPAs. All designated cSACs and SPAs will, in the future, be designated as part of the European-wide Natura 2000 network of prime natural heritage sites.

The designation of these sites at national level is the responsibility of the DoEHLG, but it is the responsibility of all to secure their protection for the future. The process of site designation is ongoing, with new sites being added and/or upgraded, in terms of their conservation status, and the boundaries of existing sites being adjusted, as better information becomes available. In addition, there is a range of plants and animals and their associated habitats that are protected under European and national legislation. The lists and maps of pNHAs, cSACs and SPAs provided in Appendix C were compiled in May 2004. For up-to-date information, please contact the County Council or the DoEHLG.

7.2.2.1 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

Proposed NHAs encompass nationally-important semi-natural and natural habitats, landforms and geomorphological features, wild plant and animal species or a diversity of these natural attributes. It is important that the conservation value of these areas, which are proposed from time to time by DoEHLG, be maintained.

7.2.2.2 Candidate Special Areas of Conservation

Under the Habitats Directive, each EU Member State is required to designate cSACs, because they support habitat and plant and animal species that are rare or threatened in Europe and that require particular measures, including the designation of protected sites to conserve them. While cSACs are fully protected under the EU Habitats Directive, the term 'candidate' refers to the fact that the sites are currently under consideration by the European Commission.

7.2.2.3 Special Protection Areas

Under the Birds Directive, each EU Member State is required to designate SPAs for natural areas that support populations of particular bird species that are rare or threatened in Europe and that require particular measures, including the designation of protected areas to conserve them.

7.2.2.4 Objectives for designated nature conservation sites

- A. Maintain, and where possible enhance, the conservation value of all pNHAs, cSACs and SPAs, as identified by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, as well as any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan.
- B. Discourage development that would destroy or damage any sites of international or national importance, designated for their wildlife/habitat significance, including pNHAs, cSACs and SPAs.

7.2.3 Nature conservation outside designated sites

Sites benefiting from statutory protection do not represent the full extent of our natural heritage of wild species, natural and semi-natural habitats, geological features and landforms. The protection and management of special sites is crucial for nature conservation. However, sites need to be seen in the context of the wider countryside. Patches of natural and semi-natural habitat, together with landscape features, which provide wildlife corridors, links or stepping stones from one site to another, are particularly important in countering fragmentation. Connecting landscape features often provide the greatest opportunities for species migration, dispersal and genetic exchange.

The EU Habitats Directive states that Member States shall endeavour, where they consider it necessary, in their land use planning and development policies and, in particular, with a view to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, to encourage the management of landscape features that are of major importance for wild fauna and flora. Such features are those which, by virtue of their linear and continuous structure (e.g. rivers), or their function as stepping stones (e.g. small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. The features vary from area to area and include: hedgerows, ditches and banks, stone dykes/walls, linear tree belts/shelter belts, larger semi-natural or ancient woodlands, plantations, estates or parklands, heathlands, green roads, river corridors, canals, lakes, reservoirs, ponds, habitat mosaics or networks of other locally important habitats.



Burnet moths
on thistle



Harebells



Common spotted
orchid

7.2.3.1 Objectives for nature conservation outside designated sites

- A. Protect the integrity and continuity of landscape features that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna, and only accommodate potentially damaging development that can:
 - demonstrate a clear need to locate in the area concerned;
 - provides for satisfactory measures.
- B. Encourage appropriate management of landscape features, particularly through the development control process and by the use of planning agreements with landowners and developers, where appropriate.
- C. The Council shall actively propose the designation of Inishmurray Island as a Special Amenity Area and shall seek an Order to that effect. If deemed appropriate by the Council, other areas of the County will be examined for proposed designation as Special Amenity Areas.

7.2.4 Areas of geological interest

To date, sites of geological interest have not been comprehensively covered by the existing nature conservation designations. The DoEHLG and the GSI are currently drawing up of a list of sites of national geological interest that will be proposed as NHAs. In the interim, Sligo County Council

has listed in this Plan the geological features of national and local importance with the objective of maintaining their conservation value. The list has been produced in consultation with the GSI and is included in Appendix D.

7.2.4.1 Objectives for sites of geological interest

- A. Seek the preservation of important features of geological interest within the County.
- B. Maintain the conservation value of those features or areas of geological interest that are listed in this Plan.

7.2.5 Management of sensitive sites

Although areas that are environmentally sensitive are not automatically considered unsuitable for development, it is important that any development proposal is carefully assessed in relation to the capacity of the area to accommodate it.

7.2.5.1 Objectives for management of sensitive sites

- A. Apply the precautionary principle in relation to development proposals in sensitive areas of natural heritage value, by requiring a scientific/ecological risk assessment to ensure that the development will not undermine the conservation objectives for these sites.
- B. Work with landowners, the DoEHLG and other stakeholders to contribute to the effective management of sites of natural conservation value.

7.2.6 Trees and hedgerows

Trees and hedgerows within County Sligo contribute significantly to biodiversity and landscape character. In addition, hedgerows constitute an important natural and historic resource, given their contribution to landscape quality, their ecological importance as wildlife habitats and historical significance as townland and field boundaries. While the relative importance of hedgerows is difficult to assess without a detailed survey, in general, the following categories are worthy of protection:

- ancient hedgerows - field systems dating prior to the mid-17th Century;
- townland boundaries;
- hedgerows that have a farming, landscape, cultural function;
- hedgerows incorporating archaeological features;
- hedgerows that are important as wildlife corridors between habitats;
- hedgerows adjacent to roads, green lanes, tracks and wooded ground;
- banks and ditches that may have the above characteristics.



7.2.6.1 Objective for trees and hedgerows

- A. Promote the protection of trees and hedgerows from development that would impact adversely upon them, and the enhancement of existing hedgerows by seeking increased coverage, in conjunction with new development.

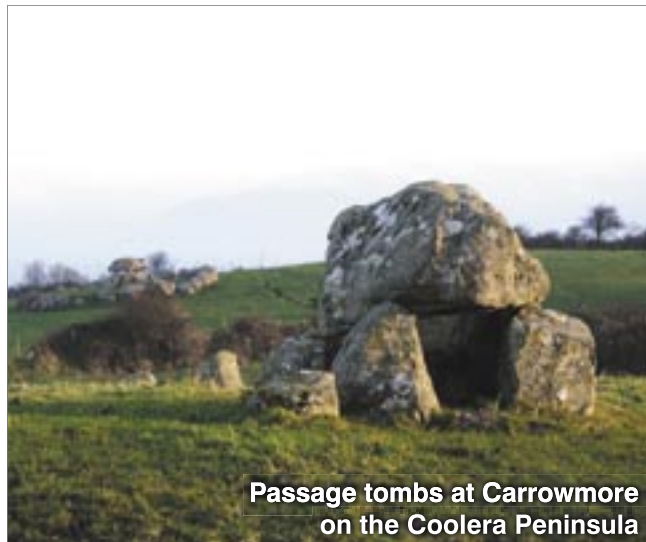
7.2.7 Local biodiversity action plan

7.2.7.1 Objective for local biodiversity action plan

- A. Seek the development and implementation of a local biodiversity action plan for County Sligo through the County Sligo Heritage Forum and the County Sligo Heritage Office, as required by Government policy and outlined in the *National Heritage Plan (2002)* and *National Biodiversity Plan (2002)*.

7.3 Archaeological heritage

Archaeology is the scientific study of past human societies and activities through material objects. The archaeological resource consists of material remains in the form of sites and monuments, artefacts and environmental evidence. It is a non-renewable resource and an irreplaceable link with our past. Archaeological sites and monuments vary greatly in form, date, extent and condition. Many sites have disappeared from the landscape, while others survive beneath the current ground surface. The archaeological heritage is



Passage tombs at Carrowmore on the Coolera Peninsula

a resource that can be used to gain knowledge and understanding of the past and is, therefore, of great cultural and scientific importance. County Sligo, with over 6,500 known archaeological sites and monuments, has one of the highest densities of archaeology of any Irish county.

In Ireland, archaeological sites are legally protected from unauthorised damage or interference through the provisions of the National Monuments Acts 1930-1994, the National Cultural Institutions Act 1997 and the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2002. The National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 provides for a statutory inventory of known sites and areas, called the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).

7.3.1 Record of Monuments and Places

The RMP is a statutory inventory of known archaeological sites and areas with accompanying maps, on which sites and monuments are marked and numbered. The RMP includes all known monuments (e.g. megalithic tombs, ring forts, castles) dating to before 1700 AD and some sites post-dating 1700 AD. An area of archaeological potential encircles each monument.

The RMP also includes some significant 'Zones of Archaeological Potential' (ZAPs), which indicate the presence of extensive archaeological remains over a given area, e.g. Knocknarea, Carrowmore. The RMP sites and ZAPs are identified by the DoEHLG. Copies of the RMP for County Sligo are available for inspection at County Council offices and public libraries.

The most significant archaeological complexes in County Sligo are located at Carrowmore/ Knocknarea and Carrowkeel (refer to Appendix G – Monuments in State Care).

When approving and undertaking development, full consideration of the protection of the archaeological resource is essential, if unnecessary and damaging conflict is to be avoided. Previously unidentified archaeological sites may be uncovered during development work, while archaeological deposits, which will be damaged by development, must be investigated and recorded in great detail. Where archaeological excavation is inappropriate, the archaeology may be preserved in situ and the development proposals consequently altered.

7.3.2 Objectives for the protection of archaeological heritage

- A. Facilitate access to national monuments in state and local authority ownership.
- B. Safeguard the archaeological value of sites, their setting and the interrelationship between individual archaeological monuments listed in the RMP, having regard to the recommendations of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- C. Protect and preserve the archaeological value and setting of sites discovered since the publication of the RMP (1995).
- D. Protect ZAPs identified in the RMP.
- E. Have regard to archaeological concerns when considering proposed infrastructural developments, including roadworks, sewerage, water supply, telecommunications and electricity located in close proximity to Recorded Monuments and Places and ZAPs.
- F. The Planning Authority will facilitate the development of access/routes and appropriately designed public/tourism facilities by the Office of Public Works at Monuments in State Care within County Sligo.

7.4 Built heritage

7.4.1 Record of Protected Structures

It is an objective of the Plan to seek the protection and conservation of buildings and structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social and technical importance. The principal mechanism for protection is through inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). This provides recognition of the structures' importance, protection from adverse impacts and potential access to grant aid for conservation works.

The *Sligo County Development Plan 1999–2004* contained a list of 'Buildings and structures to be preserved'. This list, consisting of 51 items, became the RPS for County Sligo on 1st January 2000 under the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act, 1999. The RPS was reviewed in tandem with the review of the County Development Plan.

As part of the review process, the Council carried out an assessment of the County's built heritage, including the structures already listed, in order to form an opinion as to whether:

- a. the existing Protected Structures were of sufficient special interest to warrant continued inclusion; and
- b. the existing list should be extended.

The assessment addressed a broader range of building types than those previously represented, and extended to structures lying within the curtilage of existing Protected Structures. It also took account of the built heritage provisions contained in statutory plans adopted for the County Council's area during the 2003-2004 period, namely: *Strandhill Local Area Plan 2003-2009*, *Enniscrone Local Area Plan 2004-2010* and *Sligo & Environs Development Plan 2004-2010*.



Lisadell House, Lissadill, Carney

The identification of buildings and structures for proposed inclusion on the RPS was based on the then *Draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Architectural Heritage Protection* (DoEHLG, 2001). Following the public display and consultation process, some items were deleted from the Record and many new buildings/structures were added to it. The result is a much-extended RPS¹ for County Sligo (see Appendix E).

The compilation of the RPS will be an ongoing task. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, with the DoEHLG, has completed a survey of architectural heritage in County Sligo and is expected to publish its work by the end of 2005. Once available, this will serve as a major source for the future refinement of the RPS.

The owner or occupier of a Protected Structure is entitled to ask the Council for a written declaration indicating the type of works that would or would not materially affect the character of that structure or any element of it that contributes to its special interest. Declarations provide guidance as to what works would or would not require planning permission in the context of the protection of the architectural heritage. As the cost of preparing declarations falls on the Council and as funds for this purpose are likely to be limited, there may well be considerable delays in obtaining declarations. The extent of the delay may vary from time to time depending on the demand for declarations and the funds available. In cases where there are time constraints, the Council will be open to approaches from owners/occupiers of Protected Structures who wish to fund the cost of declarations from their own resources.

7.4.1.1 Objectives for the protection of structures

- A. Seek the protection of all structures, or parts of structures, of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest by including them in the RPS for County Sligo.
- B. Secure the protection of all structures included on the RPS.
- C. As appropriate during the lifetime of this Plan, extend the RPS in order to provide a more comprehensive schedule for the protection of structures of special importance in the County.

¹The full version of the current RPS can be inspected or purchased at the Planning Office of Sligo County Council (Riverside, Sligo)

7.4.2 Protection of non-structural elements

Non-structural elements, such as historic gardens, stone walls, ditches and street furniture, make a significant contribution to our built heritage. A lack of awareness of their inherent and associative value can result in the loss of these elements and subsequent erosion of heritage assets.

Stone walls are an integral part of our rural/demesne landscape, often providing significant historic reference and contributing to the character of areas. They can be vulnerable to needless damage or destruction during development, as well as inappropriate and poor reconstruction.

There is a number of significant historic garden/estate landscapes in County Sligo. It is essential that appropriate appraisal and surveying informs the consideration of development proposals for these sensitive sites.



Estate landscape, Markree Demesne



Stone walling

Non-structural elements make a significant contribution to our built heritage

7.4.2.1 Objectives for the protection of non-structural elements

- A. Protect important non-structural elements of the built heritage, including historic gardens, stone walls, landscapes, demesnes, curtilage features and street furniture.
- B. Promote awareness and best practice in relation to the protection of non-structural elements.

7.4.3 Architectural Conservation Areas

In some towns and villages, there are significant groups of heritage structures that require protection and conservation. In the countryside there are also concentrations of particular building types or buildings related to a certain period of history. The need to protect these buildings and the character of their settings is acknowledged in this Plan. It is therefore intended, where appropriate, to establish Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), in conjunction with the preparation of local area plans and other land use plans.

The main consequence of ACA designation is the control of inappropriate development for the purpose of preserving and enhancing the character of the area concerned. The designation of ACAs will give protection to parts of the built heritage that may not warrant inclusion in the RPS, but without which, areas would be characterless.

7.4.3.1 Objective for Architectural Conservation Areas

- A. Where appropriate, identify and designate ACAs, in conjunction with the preparation of local area plans and other land use plans, and establish special planning controls for these areas.



Collooney



Ballymote



Easky



Coolaney

Concentrations of traditional building types contribute to the character of settlements

7.4.4 Town and village streetscapes

The Council acknowledges that many historic buildings in Sligo's towns and villages have been altered in recent years and not always in the most sympathetic manner. While individually, many buildings in Sligo's towns and villages may not warrant inclusion on the RPS, or even within an ACA, nonetheless it is the ensemble of many ordinary traditional building types, their plot patterns, their fenestration, materials, meandering building lines and subtle variations in building height that contribute to the inherent character of a particular settlement. These details should be considered very carefully before allowing the alteration or replacement of buildings to occur.

7.4.4.1 Objectives for Sligo's streetscapes

- A. Generally, encourage the reuse of older buildings through renovation and rehabilitation in preference to their demolition and reconstruction.
- B. Encourage the restoration or appropriate replacement of original doors, sash/casement timber windows and slate roofs over their replacement with modern materials (such as PVC windows and doors) or designs that may be insensitive in their detailing or relief to traditional façades and roofs.
- C. Encourage and advise on the restoration of traditional shop fronts.
- D. For new or replacement buildings, encourage the retention of subtle variations in building lines, building heights and plot widths, which are a trademark of the traditional Irish streetscape.
- E. Ensure that modern design solutions have regard for the traditional context and streetscape elements, and utilise some of the traditional architectural idioms in their composition, form and/or design.



Benwiskin, Dartry Range

7.5 Landscape assessment and protection

A detailed landscape characterisation and appraisal study was commissioned by Sligo County Council and completed by CAAS Environmental Consultants in 1997. This resulted in a Development Control Policy Map, which formed part of the *Sligo County Development Plan 1999-2004*. The Map classifies the County according to its visual sensitivity and ability to absorb new development without compromising the scenic character of the area. It indicates, inter alia, designated:

- **Normal Rural Landscapes:** areas with natural enclosing features (e.g. topography, vegetation), which have the capacity to absorb a wide range of new development forms – these are the main farming areas of the County.
- **Sensitive Rural Landscapes:** areas that tend to be open in character, with intrinsic scenic quality and a low capacity to absorb new development – e.g. Knocknarea, Aughris Head, Coney Island.
- **Visually Vulnerable Areas:** distinctive and conspicuous natural features of significant natural beauty or interest, which have extremely low capacity to absorb new development – examples are the Ben Bulbin plateau, the Sligo coastline, lake-shores.
- **Scenic Routes:** public roads that coincide generally with popular tourist routes passing through or close to Sensitive Rural Landscapes, or adjoining Visually Vulnerable Areas, and affording unique scenic views of one or more distinctive natural features.

The Map has proven robust in both facilitating development and conserving fragile landscapes and has been modified for this Development Plan only in the light of development control experience since 1999 (see Section 9 and attached Development Control Policy Map).

The designation of Scenic Routes provided a basis for protecting views and prospects of certain Visually Vulnerable features. Appendix F contains a list of the scenic views to be preserved: these include all the views listed in the 1999-2004 Plan, together with views from the additional Scenic Routes designated on the revised Development Control Policy Map. This list also contains the scenic views identified in the *Strandhill Local Area Plan 2003-2009* (see Appendix F of that Plan).

7.5.1 Landscape assessment and protection objectives

- A. Seek to preserve the landscape character of County Sligo by assessing all development proposals against the provisions of the Development Control Policy Map.
- B. Discourage any developments that would be detrimental to the unique visual character of designated Visually Vulnerable Areas.
- C. Strictly control new development in designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes, while considering exceptions that can demonstrate a clear need to locate in the area concerned.
- D. Ensure that any new development in designated Sensitive Rural Landscapes:
 - does not impinge in any significant way on the character, integrity and distinctiveness of the area;
 - does not detract from the scenic value of the area;
 - meets high standards of siting and design;
 - satisfies all other criteria with regard to, inter alia, servicing, public safety and prevention of pollution.
- E. Preserve the scenic views listed in Appendix F by controlling development along designated Scenic Routes and other roads, while facilitating developments that may be tied to a specific location or the demonstrated needs of applicants to reside in a particular area. In all cases, strict location, siting and design criteria shall apply, as set out in Section 9.

7.6 Water, air and noise

7.6.1 Water quality

Water quality includes surface water, groundwater, estuarine and coastal waters. The main sources of water pollution are agriculture, forestry, industrial discharges, wastewater treatment plant discharges and effluent discharges from unserviced developments. It is Sligo County Council's policy to control the aforementioned developments and activities to ensure they do not adversely affect water quality, by enforcing the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977 and 1990, and all subsequent Regulations. In 1999, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) required each local authority to prepare a Measures Report outlining proposals for the implementation of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977 Water Quality (Standards for Phosphorus) Regulations 1998, which specify water quality standards to be achieved by 2007. Under the Phosphorus Regulations, it is the policy of Sligo County Council to adopt a catchment management approach to the protection of all waters in the County.

7.6.1.1 Estuarine and coastal waters

Two areas of the County are included in the current EPA programme for estuarine and coastal water quality monitoring¹:

- The Garavogue Estuary and Sligo Bay (including Ballysadare Bay and Drumcliff Bay). Water quality of the Garavogue Estuary is mostly high, though there are indications that organic effluent discharges occasionally cause localised pollution in the vicinity of Sligo Dock². The City's wastewater treatment plant is expected to address this. Overall, water quality in Sligo Bay has remained very high.
- Part of Killala Bay (and Moy Estuary). Water quality indices generally indicate very high water quality.

¹For further information, refer to the *National Environmental Monitoring Programme for Transitional, Coastal and Marine Waters – A discussion document*, Environmental Protection Agency, October, 2003.

²This is not pronounced relative to other Irish estuaries.



River Moy at Banada

Responsibility for monitoring tidal waters lies with the DCMNR, the DoEHLG and their executive agencies. The County Council is responsible for bathing water quality in its area, as well as monitoring bathing water quality and making such information available to the public during the summer season.

7.6.1.2 Bathing water quality

There are three designated bathing waters in County Sligo, at Mullaghmore, Rosses Point and Enniscrone. Applications for Blue Flag Beach¹ status are made annually for each bathing area and it is the Council's objective to achieve Blue Flag status on these three beaches. The overall objective is to ensure that the quality of bathing water is maintained and, where necessary improved, so that it complies with specified standards designed to protect public health and the environment.

7.6.1.3 River water quality

Of the 42 rivers sampled during 1998-2000, thirty-one were classified as having satisfactory water quality and it is the Council's objective to maintain this status². For the eleven remaining rivers, which were classified as unsatisfactory, it is the Council's objective to improve this status to satisfactory water quality.

There are two designated salmonid rivers in the County: the Moy and Owengarve. It is the policy of the Council to strictly control development and activities in the catchments of these rivers in order to protect their water from pollution.

7.6.1.4 Lake water quality

The EPA's National Lake Monitoring Programme lists 18 lakes in County Sligo (see Table 7.A). The four larger lakes are targeted for particular attention under the Phosphorus Measures Report: Lough Gill, Lough Talt, Lough Easky and Lough Arrow. All four lakes are major water abstraction sources, therefore it is the policy of the Council to control development and activities in their catchments in order to protect water quality.

¹To receive a Blue Flag, a bathing site, in addition to maintaining a high standard of water quality, must meet specified objectives with regard to the provision of safety services and facilities, environmental management of the beach area and environmental education.

²*Water Quality in Ireland 1998-2000*, Environmental Protection Agency, 2000.

The most recent monitoring indicates that each of these lakes has satisfactory water quality, with Lough Talt and Lough Easkey having the highest rating, as classified by the EPA. It is the Council's objective to maintain or improve the quality of all lakes within the County, and to comply with the terms of the Phosphorus Regulations.

Table 7.A EPA's National Lake Monitoring Programme

Lake type	Lake	Grid reference
branded fishery lakes*	Talt	G-39-15
Framework Directive lakes	Arrow	G-79-11
lakes over 50 ha	Cloonacleigha	G-61-15
	Easky	G-44-22
	Gara	G-71-00
	Gill	G-75-34
	Templehouse	G-61-10
abstraction lakes	Bellanascarrow	G-68-15
	Dargan	G-72-28
important trout fishery lakes	Colgagh	G-73-36
	Bo	G-79-18
	Nasool	G-79-07
	na Leibe	G-73-12
	Bree	G-56-28
	Aghree	G-51-29
	Gal	G-43-21
	Rumduff	G-43-21

* Branded fishery lakes are designated by Bord Fáilte and the Central Fisheries Board and are considered significant in terms of their value as salmon and trout fisheries.

7.6.1.5 Groundwater quality

It is the policy of the Council to protect groundwater from pollution by controlling development activities that may have an adverse affect on groundwater quality.



7.6.1.6 Water quality objectives

- A. Ensure the continuation of measures to enforce water pollution and waste management legislation.
- B. Seek to achieve consistency between development control and environmental pollution control measures.
- C. Aid in the establishment of catchment management committees to prepare catchment management plans. These committees should consist of statutory bodies, with responsibilities for environmental protection, and relevant community groups.
- D. Require farmers in high-risk areas to prepare nutrient management plans.
- E. Introduce bye-laws under the Local Government (Water Pollution) (Amendment) Act 1990, where it is considered necessary for the regulation of agricultural/forestry activities.
- F. Continue monitoring, auditing and reviewing County Sligo's environmental status with regard to the water quality of rivers, lakes and estuarine and coastal waters.
- G. Strictly limit and control new development in or near the catchment areas of water bodies, particularly salmonid rivers and those that are the source of drinking water supplies.
- H. Protect the quality of estuarine and coastal waters, by controlling land-based discharges to these waters.
- I. Achieve annual Blue Flag status on Sligo's three designated bathing water beaches.
- J. Prepare a Groundwater Protection Scheme for the County in conjunction with the GSI.
- K. Maintain satisfactory water quality and improve all unsatisfactory waters in the County.
- L. Participate in the Western River Basin District project as part of the implementation of the EC Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).
- M. Implement the Measures Report prepared under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977 (Water Quality Standards for Phosphorus) Regulations 1998.
- N. Safeguard water quality by restricting development that is likely to lead to its deterioration.
- O. Safeguard the following drinking water sources by restricting afforestation and agricultural, commercial, industrial and domestic development within their catchments:
 - Bellanascarrow Lake
 - Lough Easky
 - Lough Talt
 - Lough Gill
 - Kilsellagh Source Catchment
 - Gortnaleck and Lyle streams
 - Calry Source Catchment
 - Riverstown Source Catchment
 - Group Water Scheme Source Catchments
- P. Prepare and enforce Source Protection Plans for drinking water catchments within the County.
- Q. All discharges to waters and sewers shall be licensed in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts 1977 & 1990.

7.6.2 Air quality

Sligo is fortunate in enjoying a high-quality environment, with very little industry contributing to problems of air pollution. However, emissions caused by the increase in car use and the burning of fossil fuels for heat, light and business operation are having an overall detrimental effect on our environment. In this regard, steps will be taken to reduce our dependence on bituminous coal. Some progress has already been made through the ban, in October 2003, on the marketing, sale and distribution of this kind of coal in Sligo City and the adjoining townlands of Finisklin, Ballydoogan and Knappaghmore. At the present time there are no government plans to extend the ban to smaller towns and villages in County Sligo. As a result of national increase in the sale of smokeless fuel, it is expected to reduce the amount of sulphur dioxide released by 8,000-10,000 tonnes per annum countrywide. The Council will seek to implement the provisions of the Air Pollution Act 1987.

In association with the foregoing, the Council will promote an increase in the use of alternative energy sources through the design and servicing of buildings – e.g. improving solar gain through building orientation and using solar panels and ground source heat pumps.

A reduction in the number of car trips will also be facilitated through more sustainable development patterns in towns and villages that encourage walking and cycling. The Council will also promote rural public transport initiatives and a greater shift from road to rail for freight transport.

7.6.2.1 Air quality objectives

- A. Support the ban on bituminous coal in Sligo City and Environs and encourage the use of smokeless fuel throughout the County.
- B. Encourage a more energy-efficient approach to the design and servicing of buildings for residential, commercial, industrial and other uses, including public buildings.
- C. Facilitate and encourage an increase in the supply and use of public transport.
- D. In conjunction with the EPA, ensure that all existing and new developments are operated in a manner that does not contribute to a deterioration in air quality.
- E. Promote the retention of trees, hedgerows and other vegetation, and encourage afforestation and tree planting as a means of air purification and filtering.

7.6.3 Noise

In Irish law, noise is dealt with under the EPA Act 1992 and the EPA Noise Regulations 1994. Most large-scale activities that result in high noise levels are subject to an Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) licence from the EPA¹.

7.6.3.1 Noise control objective

- A. Seek to protect the amenity of dwellings, businesses, community facilities and other existing development, when assessing proposals for development that is likely to generate significant levels of noise.

¹ Applicants are advised to consult *Environmental Noise Survey Guidance*, EPA, 2003.

