



programme to measure achievement of the SEA objectives through implementation of the FRMPs. The SEA objectives are:

- Minimise risk to human health and life;
- Minimise risk to community;
- Minimise risk to flood-sensitive social amenity sites;
- Support the objectives of the WFD;
- Support the objectives of the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive;
- Avoid damage to, and where possible enhance, the flora and fauna of the catchment;
- Protect, and where possible enhance, fisheries resource within the catchment;
- Protect, and where possible enhance, landscape character and visual amenity within the zone of influence; and
- Avoid damage and reduce risk of flooding to, or loss of, features of cultural heritage importance and their setting.

### 1.5 Stakeholder Input

A key aspect of the CFRAM process is consultation and engagement. Consultation is being undertaken throughout this study to ensure that the knowledge, experience and views of stakeholders and the general public are taken into account. To date we have provided updates on the project website, distributed newsletters, issued questionnaires to environmental stakeholders such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Inland Fisheries Ireland and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and held a technical workshop on environmental issues to which we invited local planning authorities and a range of environmental organisations. As the study progresses further consultation will be undertaken, including a number of public consultation days at which members of the public will be able to have their say. Details of all future consultation events will be made available on the website. Stakeholder input has been invaluable to the SEA process for the Western CFRAM with a number of important issues highlighted through the consultation process, including identification of key areas to consider such as the importance of the nature conservation and fisheries in the RBD, significant data gaps including coastal issues, group water schemes and updated datasets and additional local plans that should be reviewed.

### 1.6 The Next Steps

Following the SEA scoping consultation phase, the environmental assessment phase using the finalised SEA objectives, will start. The outcome of this will be detailed in a SEA Environmental Report. If you have any general queries relating to the Western CFRAM study please contact us at:

Email: [western-cfram@jbaconsulting.co.uk](mailto:western-cfram@jbaconsulting.co.uk),

Write to: JBA Consulting, Unit 24, Grove Island, Corbally, Limerick

Via the 'get involved' tab on the project website: <http://www.westcframstudy.ie/>

## Strategic Environmental Assessment

### 1.1 Introduction

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is currently undertaking a Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study in the Western River Basin District, in partnership with Local Authorities. The Western CFRAM Study is part of national policy for flood risk management. The Programme is being carried out between 2011 and 2015 and the results will help long-term planning for reducing and managing flood risk across Ireland. The study will produce catchment-based Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs), including flood maps, which will set out measures and policies to manage flood risk, whilst taking account of climate change.

Further details on the Western CFRAM study can be found on the project website (<http://www.westcframstudy.ie/>).

### 1.2 The Strategic Environmental Assessment Process

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) aims to ensure that environmental issues and opportunities are considered when developing plans and programmes, such as FRMPs. It is a requirement of European and Irish legislation that a SEA is undertaken for the Western CFRAM study. The SEA can be summarised in a number of stages:

**1. Screening** - to determine whether or not a SEA is required. This was conducted by the OPW in 2011.

**2. Scoping** - to identify key environmental issues and receptors in the Western RBD that could be affected by flooding or flood risk management, either negatively or positively. This stage identifies issues that need to be "scoped in" to further assessment, and sets a framework for this through developing environmental objectives.

**3. Environmental Assessment** - using the framework developed at the Scoping Stage this phase assesses the predicted environmental impact of a number of alternative options for flood risk management, alongside development of mitigation and monitoring. The results of this will be detailed in an SEA Environmental Report.

**4. Consultation** - The draft FRMP and Environmental Report are issued for consultation at the same time and any comments arising are then incorporated and a SEA Statement produced outlining how the environment has been considered during the plan development.

The Western CFRAM study is currently at the Scoping Stage and this leaflet provides a summary of the full SEA Scoping Report which can be found at:

<http://www.westcframstudy.ie/downloads.aspx>.

### 1.3 The Environmental baseline

A number of environmental receptors were investigated as part of the Scoping Stage, as detailed in the table below. A summary is included of the key findings, along with a conclusion on if they will be considered during later stages of the project.

Receptor	Summary of findings	Further consideration needed?
Geology, soils and land use	Land use can be a major influencing factor on flooding, particularly in peatland and forestry areas where drainage and deforestation/ afforestation can have a significant impact. Flooding can also impact on the soil resource through waterlogging and erosion.	Yes
Water	The water environment, both quality and quantity aspects, is a key issue within the Western River Basin District. Flood risk management may also provide opportunity to achieve the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.	Yes
Morphology, fluvial and coastal processes	Flood risk management has the potential to significantly impact upon hydromorphological conditions and fluvial and coastal processes, particularly where structural measures and in-channel working are proposed.	Yes
Air and climate	It is considered that impacts on air quality will be short-term and localised. Climatic factors are already being assessed through including climate change scenarios in the development of options.	No
Biodiversity, flora and fauna	The biodiversity resource of the Western River Basin District is extremely rich, with numerous designated sites with water dependent habitats (e.g. peatlands, turloughs) and species (e.g. Otter, White-clawed Crayfish and Freshwater Pearl Mussel). Flood risk management may adversely impact on these biodiversity receptors, and may also provide opportunity to enhance them.	Yes
Fisheries and angling	The rivers of the Western River Basin District support important fish populations (e.g. Atlantic Salmon and Brown Trout), which provide numerous angling opportunities, with coastal waters also important for shellfish. Flood risk management can impact on fisheries through in-channel working and barrier removal/ creation; this can be both positive and negative.	Yes

Receptor	Summary of findings	Further consideration needed?
Landscape	The landscape of the Western River Basin District contains a number of locally important features, along with two national parks. Flood risk management has the potential to have an impact on local landscape character.	Yes
Cultural heritage and archaeology	The historic environment is of particular importance, with numerous monuments and structures of archaeological and/or architectural note, many associated with rivers or the coastal environment. Flooding and flood risk management therefore has the potential to adversely or beneficially impact on these features.	Yes
Amenity, tourism and recreation	The rivers, lakes and coastal areas of the Western River Basin District provide an important amenity and recreational resource for the local population and also visiting tourists; this could be impacted upon by flooding or flood risk management.	Yes
Population and health	Flooding can endanger people and property. Throughout the Western River Basin District there are also numerous social infrastructure assets where vulnerable populations are located (e.g. hospitals, health centres, nursing/ residential homes).	Yes
Infrastructure and material assets	Flooding of infrastructure (e.g. transport networks, airports, educational institutions) can cause disruption to the local community and economy. Flooding of Garda or fire stations, along with route disruption, could also endanger lives.	Yes

The CFRAM study also needs to comply with the Habitats and Birds Directives to ensure that adverse impacts on internationally important nature conservation sites do not arise. Therefore an Appropriate Assessment will be carried out with the findings of the assessment informing the development of the FRMP.

### 1.4 SEA Objectives

Building on the information collected during the Scoping Stage, a series of SEA objectives have been developed to evaluate the environmental impacts of possible flood risk management measures. These objectives will also be used as part of a monitoring