CHAPTER 11
TOURISM & RECREATION

11.0 Introduction

Tourism and recreation make a positive contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of County Wicklow. In 2017, 275,000 overseas tourists visited the County generating revenue of €73m with a further 319,000 domestic visitors generating an estimated €49m in revenue. The tourism sector took a significant hit as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic[1].

The County's tourism and recreational attractions are important assets, which form the basis of the County's tourism industry and which are fundamental to the enjoyment of the County by both visitors and residents. Attractions range from areas of scenic beauty, which provide attractive natural bases for outdoor pursuits, such as the Wicklow mountains, which comprise mountain peaks, valleys, rivers and lakes, the coastline with long stretches of sandy beaches and dunes and the numerous woodlands. The County has a rich heritage of archaeological and historical sites, manor homes and gardens, and attractive towns and villages. In addition, there are a number of golf and resort hotels, and adventure centres, which are within driving distance of Dublin that are attracting increasing numbers of visitors and business related events.

Wicklow's close proximity to Dublin offers significant opportunities to expand the existing tourism offer and brand for the County. With Dublin's increasing importance as a popular destination for city-breaks, Wicklow's scenic beauty and rich built and natural heritage provide opportunities to attract visitors from the nearby City-region. Furthermore, the County can benefit from the constrained capacity of the capital city and act as an accommodation base for those visiting Dublin and the east.

While County Wicklow is a particularly attractive location for day-trippers, the additional enhancement of the visitor experience is needed to increase dwell time – particularly in the west, east and south of the County, and ensure the County fully benefits from growth in the tourism sector. The implementation of strategies and programmes by the tourism agencies aim to ensure that visitors are aware of, and directed to, a broad range of attractions across the County, thereby better managing visitor numbers at sites.

Although the County must continue to provide for the positive development of tourism and recreational assets, it is necessary that these facilities are managed in a sustainable manner so as to protect against any potential detrimental impacts on the environment and local communities. In this respect, the Council is conscious that development can potentially harm and damage the assets it seeks to exploit, in particular through excessive visitor numbers, inappropriate development, various types of pollution and other forms of adverse impact. The relationship between tourism / recreation and the environment must be managed in a way that continues to support local communities and remains viable in the long term.

The County's rich heritage and wealth of natural amenities are significant assets and need to be managed in a sustainable manner. There are significant opportunities to capitalise on the potential of these assets, grow tourism and enhance the development of outdoor pursuits in a manner that respects and protects the intrinsic character of the County. This chapter will aim to promote and facilitate the development of sustainable tourism and recreation and will set out objectives to deal with land use matters pertaining to the planning and development of the tourism and recreation sectors, including general matters, tourism related developments including tourist accommodation,

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[1] In 2020 revenue from the tourism sector declined by €6bn – Failte Ireland CEO statement: Oireachtas Joint Committee on Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport & the Gaeltacht

facilities and interpretive centres, integrated tourism/leisure/recreational complexes, tourist / recreational infrastructure and the promotion of specific tourist themes and products.

11.1 Context

The tourism and recreation objectives of the County Development Plan have been prepared in line with national, regional and local strategies. The Government's Tourism Policy Statement '*People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025*' sets the Government's primary objectives for tourism i.e. to increase overseas visitors and revenue and the associated employment whilst protecting our natural, built and cultural assets. The '*Action Plan for Rural Development Realising our Rural Potential*' (Department of Rural and Community Development 2018) highlights the potential of activity tourism to contribute to economic growth in rural areas.

11.1.1 Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework

The NPF acknowledges that tourism is one of the sectors that will not only sustain rural employment, but also contribute to driving the national economy. Enhanced Amenities and Heritage is identified as one of the ten national strategic outcomes. The NPF acknowledges that this '*will require investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. It also includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways. This is linked to and must integrate with our built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place*'.

The NPF recognises that tourism and agriculture are inextricably linked in rural areas, given that agriculture, in many places, creates and maintains the landscapes upon which tourism trades. It notes that the maintenance of access to our landscapes and the creation of new accesses are dependent on maintaining good links with the agricultural sector. Likewise, the built, cultural and natural assets which constitute the 'raw material' of the tourism industry are also essential to the 'production capability' of the sector. Tourism has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Ireland.

The NPF recognises that our coastal areas are also a key driver for Ireland's tourism sector and advocates that such a remarkable but fragile resource needs to be managed carefully to sustain its character and attributes in physical, environmental quality and biodiversity terms.

Relevant National Policy Objectives	
NPO 22	Facilitate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level.
NPO 23	Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.
NPO 41a	Ensure that Ireland's coastal resource is managed to sustain its physical character and environmental quality.
NPO 60	Conserve and enhance the rich qualities of natural and cultural heritage of Ireland in a manner appropriate to their significance.

11.1.2 Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES)

The RSES highlights that the Region is home to areas of rich heritage and immense natural beauty that support a varied tourism and recreation offering. There is an inextricable link between the Region's landscape, agriculture and tourism offer. The vast array of built, cultural and natural assets that are the cornerstone of our tourism product need adequate resources to sustain them. Our natural and cultural landscapes are a finite resource with varying degrees of carrying capacity. The quality of our natural scenery and physical environment, built heritage, and the range of activities for visitors, are areas in which national, regional and local government have a key role to play, through conservation and preservation of that which is irreplaceable and the sustainable development of that which enhances the visitor's overall experience.

The following are identified as growth enablers for the Region:

▪ Supporting rural areas by harnessing natural resources to develop renewables, recreation and tourism opportunities including green infrastructure planning and the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways.
▪ Promoting the Region for tourism, leisure and recreational activities including development of an integrated greenway network while ensuring that high value assets and amenities are protected and enhanced.
▪ Promoting the Region as a key destination for tourism, leisure and recreation activities and support the development of an integrated network of greenways, blueways and peatways while ensuring that high value assets and amenities are protected and enhanced.

The RSES acknowledges the importance of 'destination towns' – '*To come to an area, visitors need reassurance that there will be enough attractions to see and activities to do during the day, a sufficient range of accommodation options and a night-time economy to provide evening options. The most effective and efficient way to deliver this for visitors is through destination towns'*. The Strategy notes that many towns already deliver these facilities and attractions. However there is scope to for improvement and investment across a wide range of services including transport links, accommodation supply, public realm attractions, restaurants, a night-time economy and visitor management.

The RSES notes that there is potential to develop Wicklow-Rathnew as a recreation and tourism hub due to its attractive coastal location and its proximity to key destinations such as the Wicklow Mountains, Glendalough and Brittas Bay and the key attractions within the town including the Wicklow Gaol, the Murrough, coastal walks, beaches, architectural heritage, sports facilities and as a terminus of the planned Greystones – Wicklow Coastal Route.

Relevant Regional Policy Objectives	
RPO 4.57	Support the development of Wicklow-Rathnew as a tourism hub having regard to its accessibility to key tourist destinations in the Region.
RPO 6.8	To support the sustainable development of tourism in the Region in line with the strategic objectives of both the Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands experience brand propositions.
RPO 6.15	Support the preparation and implementation of Visitor Experience Development Plans within the Region to underpin the overarching regional tourism brands and to deliver greater tourism benefits and to promote the natural and cultural assets of the Region.
RPO 6.16	Support working with relevant landowners and recreational/ tourism agencies to increase access to the countryside and coastal areas to ensure maintenance of the existing network.
RPO 6.17	Support the maintenance of, and enhanced access to state and semi-state lands such as National Parks, Forest Parks, Waterways, etc., together with Monuments and Historic

	Properties, for recreation and tourism purposes. Access should be planned and managed in a sustainable manner that protects environmental sensitivities, ecological corridors, and the ability of local infrastructure to support increased tourism.
RPO 6.18	Support the preparation and implementation of local authority tourism strategies and diaspora strategies. All tourism strategies and plans should include clear monitoring protocols to monitor the ongoing effect of tourism on sensitive features with particular focus on natural and built heritage assets.
RPO 6.21	EMRA will work with local authorities and Fáilte Ireland to identify destination towns within the Region for the prioritisation of investment and supports to drive tourism growth in the Region, to spread the benefit of tourism throughout the Region and to encourage the increase of tourism product development.

11.1.3   Fáilte Ireland Strategies

In March 2015, the Government published the **Tourism Policy Statement People, Place and Policy – Tourism to 2025** which sets out clear and ambitious targets for the development of Irish tourism. The ambition of this policy statement is to have a vibrant, attractive tourism sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country; is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; helps promote a positive image of Ireland overseas, and is a sector in which people want to work.

Fáilte Ireland's **Tourism Development & Innovation A Strategy for Investment 2016 – 2022** is a broad strategy for investment in the tourism sector and seeks to identify the areas of investment that need focus on what will deliver sustainable growth in the Irish tourism sector resulting in higher revenue and more jobs.

The tourism sector's best prospects for growth lie in generating increased levels of overseas revenue. The focus of the Government's 2025 Tourism Policy is to increase the economic contribution of tourism to the Irish economy, by increasing the value of tourism service exports.

Failte Ireland, the national tourism development authority, aims to guide and promote tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy. Its current strategy for Wicklow is encompassed in the 'Ireland's Ancient East' programme.

Ireland's Ancient East

Ireland's Ancient East (IAE) has been developed by Fáilte Ireland as a branded visitor experience encompassing the rich heritage and cultural assets that Ireland has to offer in the midlands/eastern half of the country. The initiative is designed to allow visitors peel back the layers of time and to go off the beaten track to experience thousands of years of history. Covering the South and East and part of the Midlands, it focuses on the wealth of cultural and heritage attractions in the area. The new destination brand has been designed to appeal to the key customer segments – namely the Culturally Curious and the Great Escapers, and to present this large geographic area in a cohesive and unified manner. Fáilte Ireland has established a strategic partnership with the OPW which will enable key heritage assets to be opened and made accessible through a sensitive, sustainable tourism approach.

The key strategic objectives of the Ireland's Ancient East initiative are:
▪ To drive growth in international visitor numbers, tourism revenue and associated tourism employment in the regions which currently underperform in these areas.
▪ To move Ireland's east and south from a transit and day tripping zone to a destination which attracts international overnight visitors.
▪ To develop a world class visitor experience, which delivers fully on the brand promise.
▪ To differentiate the Ireland's East and South destination, within the international tourism marketplace, on the basis of the quality of its heritage experiences and a clear and memorable narrative, which links all experiences within it.

- To disperse visitor traffic across the geography by encouraging the exploration of both the well-known attractions (in some cases congested) and lesser known sites and experiences (hidden gems).
- To ensure Ireland's Ancient East is delivered in accordance with the principles of sustainable tourism, ensuring that economic, social and environmental benefits are delivered in a balanced way.

Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns

The Guidelines were prepared as a practical aid for the development of 'destination towns'. A tourism destination town is defined as '*a town in which a visitor can spend an overnight, and in which a cluster of products, services, activities and experiences are offered. It incorporates various stakeholders and intangible elements, such as its character, image and identity, and can function as a touring base for visitors'*.

The Guidelines note that successful destination towns work collaboratively and strategically in providing the necessary products and services to support the tourism industry. In order for a tourist to consider a town as a destination where they would stay at least one night, it must broadly have at least one attractor/asset that can drive demand, a variety of things to do and see and a variety of places to sleep and eat. These towns have the opportunity to increase visitor dwell time and expenditure in local business and communities.

The Guidelines point out that, generally the factors that make a town a quality place for residents are also what make it a good place for tourists.

Strong Character & Sense of Place	Rich diversity of functions and activities	Adaptable urban structure to accommodate longer term changes	Well-connected network of streets
Priority in town centre for pedestrians	Coherent, legible and attractive streetscapes	Good quality and attractive public realm	Survival of the main street
Unlocking under-used and vacant sites	Ensuring clean and safe environment	Addressing traffic and congestion	Integration of green spaces 7 linkages within and around the town

11.1.4   Local Strategies

Wicklow Tourism Strategy & Marketing Plan 2018 - 2023

The Strategy notes that the County is performing well but has enormous untapped potential arising from its natural and built assets, proximity to large markets and relationship to the stories and promise of Ireland's Ancient East. It is recognised that tourism growth strategy should maximise off-peak visits, deliver business year round, be high value, attract international as well as domestic visitors and it must maximise the positive economic impact, achieving overnight stays as a priority.

The Strategy identifies five priority actions as follows:
- Develop new accommodation;
- Develop the key settlements of Bray, Wicklow, Greystones, Arklow, Blessington and Enniskerry as visitor hubs;
- Masterplan for Glendalough;
- Grow thematic experiences;
- Develop a common narrative.

County Wicklow Statement of Tourism Strategy 2017 – 2026

The Statement identifies a number of goals for tourism in Wicklow including the establishment of Wicklow as a year round destination, capture more overnight tourism, encourage the provision of alternative forms of accommodation, convert day visitors to staying visitors, integrate development of tourism infrastructure and assets and deliver sustainable development.

County Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2020 - 2025

The County Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy provides a blueprint for realising the potential of Wicklow's outdoor recreation assets in a manner which prioritises environmental sustainability. The Strategy identifies five outdoor recreations hubs / clusters – Glendalough, Rathdrum, Blessington/Baltinglass, Tinahely/Shillelagh and East Coast maritime. Objectives identified include: Expansion of the trails network, preparation of an outdoor recreation transport plan and increase awareness of environmental and cultural responsibilities.

11.2 Strategy for Tourism & Recreation

Tourism services and facilities should be clustered within towns and villages. This will serve to protect the quality of the landscape and environment, foster strong links to a whole range of other economic and commercial activities, sustain the host communities and utilise existing ancillary services and facilities such as water and wastewater infrastructure, power supply etc, rather than creating a requirement for further development in the Irish landscape.

The development of tourism and protection of the environment requires careful management and a balanced approach.

Outdoor Recreation

Wicklow has excellent outdoor recreation assets including the Wicklow mountains, forests, lakes, rivers and beaches. It has the capacity to become a year round international outdoor activity destination.

Wicklow Mountains National Park covers 20,000 hectares making it the largest national park in Ireland. The Park is an invaluable recreational space for locals and tourists. The most visited area is Glendalough, which attracted 732,824 visitors in 2018 and was third on Ireland's top ten 'free to enter' attractions for 2018. Powerscourt House Gardens and Waterfall were ninth on the top ten fee-charging attractions during 2018 with 472,523 visitors.

The popularity of Glendalough as a tourism destination has created a number of challenges particularly in terms of access and visitor management. The County Council in partnership with Failte Ireland, NPWS and the OPW are in the process of creating a Visitor Experience and Management Masterplan for Glendalough and the Wicklow Mountains National Park. In terms of sustainable tourism development it is important to manage access to the landscape at key points and to distribute visitors in a more sustainable manner.

There is potential to expand the network of walking routes connecting with the Wicklow Way and create a world-class network of trails. There is also potential to develop Wicklow as a destination for cycling and e-biking.

Tourist Hubs and Destination Towns

In conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, the Planning Authority will support the development of Bray, Wicklow-Rathnew, Arklow, Greystones, Blessington, Baltinglass, Enniskerry and Rathdrum as significant tourism hubs. Many other settlements also act as tourism hubs but on a smaller scale. Many of the settlements surrounding the Wicklow Mountains act as tourist hubs including Laragh, Roundwood and Rathdrum. In addition, the Planning Authority will

support the development of the south-west of the county, particularly for development related to rural, archaeological, heritage and outdoor recreational tourism and the urgent need for increased accommodation.

In particular, Wicklow-Rathnew has been identified by Fáilte Ireland and the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly as a tourist destination town. The Planning Authority will support and facilitate the continued development of Wicklow-Rathnew as a tourist destination town.

Fáilte Ireland is actively developing visitor experience development plans such as the Vikings Visitor Experience Development Plan. This sets out to strengthen the county's offering as a Viking destination. Another bespoke programme is the 'Great houses and Gardens Experience'. The Council will support such programmes that help deliver sustainable tourism within the county.

Coillte in partnership with Fáilte Ireland are redeveloping Avondale House and Forest Park into a state-of-the-art visitor destination. The redevelopment is hugely significant from a tourism and economic perspective for the County and the region and has the potential to leverage further tourism development and investment.

The development of the Avonmore Way link bridge will facilitate an important link between Rathdrum and Laragh. This will be a significant addition to the County's tourism and recreation infrastructure.

The Planning Authority will support the development of a heritage and Famine remembrance walking trail linking the villages of Carnew and Shillelagh to allow the village of Carnew to be connected to the Arklow-Shillelagh greenway and thus benefit the regions tourism and recreation infrastructure.

Greenways

Greenways are significant tourism assets in addition to creating opportunities to improve the health and well-being of the local population. They boost the appeal of a place, add value to the existing tourism offering and facilitate year-round tourism activities. The NPF highlights the work that has been done on developing greenways and blueways and notes that developing this network further will diversify our rural economy by embracing the potential for a major expansion in the demand for activity based tourism.

The extension of the Blessington Greenway to a 43km route of walking and cycling incorporating the villages of Ballyknockan, Valleymount and Lackan will be an important piece of tourism infrastructure and provide economic and social benefits to the County. The development of the South Wicklow Greenway Arklow to Shillelagh will also be an important development in terms of its economic and social benefits (see also Chapter 18 'Green Infrastructure').

Accommodation

It is important to facilitate an adequate range of tourist accommodation options including hotels, self-catering, camping, glamping[2] etc. that will facilitate increasing the amount of overnight visitors to the county. All tourist accommodation should be primarily directed into existing settlements where existing services can be availed of and where the development will support the vibrancy of those settlements. All tourist development should be of a scale that the settlements can sustain.

The Planning Authority will carefully manage the development of accommodation in the rural area to ensure that the role of settlements as tourist hubs would not be undermined. Exceptions to this include farm diversification proposals or tourist accommodation provided in association with the restoration of a historic structure including protected structures.

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[2] 'Glamping', an upmarket style of camping and structures are usually fixed or semi-permanent, is becoming increasingly popular

It is important that all applications for tourist accommodation are of a high standard of design and do not unduly detract from the character of the landscape or settlement in which they are situated.

Strategic Objectives

- To facilitate the expansion of existing and the development new tourism and recreation related development, in line with the principles for sustainable tourism set out to follow;
- To facilitate Fáilte Ireland and Wicklow County Tourism initiatives for the development of tourism in the County;
- To direct tourism development primarily into settlements and facilitate the development of these settlements as tourism hubs;
- To facilitate the development of Bray, Wicklow-Rathnew, Arklow, Greystones, Blessington, Baltinglass and Tinahely/Carnew as year round tourism destination towns;
- To integrate the County's transport and tourism strategies to promote increasingly sustainable travel patterns among visitors to the County;
- To ensure the effective management and enhancement of the appearance of the key settlements within the County;
- To protect Wicklow's principal strengths and capitalise on the distinct tourism and recreational attractions that are on offer – scenic beauty, woodlands and waterways, coastal areas and beaches, and built and natural heritage;
- To facilitate the development of alternative tourism products within the County such as eco tourism, craft /artisan centres, having regard to the ability of an applicant to demonstrate compliance with the principles of sustainable tourism;
- To preserve the character and distinctiveness of scenic landscaped as described in the Landscape Categories of the County set out in Chapter 17;
- To ensure a focus on high quality tourism and recreation facilities that are of benefit to visitors and the community alike;
- To protect the environmental quality of the County.

Subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of an area, and subject to compliance with all other objectives of this plan, it is the objective of the Planning Authority to favourably consider development proposals that contribute towards the achievement of these strategic objectives.

Fáilte Ireland has developed five key principles that ensure developments achieve a balance between appropriate tourism development and economic, environmental and social sustainability. Developments will be assessed having regard to compliance with these, as well as the listed objectives set out in Section 11.3 to follow.

Principle 1: Tourism, when it is well managed and properly located, should be recognised as a positive activity which has potential to benefit the host community, the place itself and the visitor alike. Sustainable tourism planning requires a balance to be struck between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community.

Principle 2: Our landscapes, our cultural heritage, our environment and our linguistic heritage all have an intrinsic value which outweighs their value simply as a tourism asset. However sustainable tourism planning makes sure that they can continue to be enjoyed and cherished by future generations and not prejudiced simply by short term considerations.

Principle 3: Built development and other activities associated with tourism should in all respects be appropriate to the character of the place in which they are situated. This applies to the scale, design and nature of the place as well as to the particular land use, economic and social requirements of the place and its surroundings.

Principle 4: Strategic tourism assets – including special landscapes, important views, the setting of historic buildings and monuments, areas of cultural significance and access points to the open countryside, should be safeguarded from encroachment by inappropriate development.

Principle 5: Visitor accommodation, interpretation centres, and commercial / retail facilities serving the tourism sector should generally be located within established settlements thereby fostering strong links to a whole range of other economic and commercial sectors and sustaining the host communities. Sustainable tourism facilities, when properly located and managed can, especially if accessible by a range of transport modes, encourage longer visitor stays, help to extend the tourism season, and add to the vitality of settlements throughout the year.

Underlying these principles for Sustainable Tourism, the definitions of economic, environmental and social sustainability against which any tourism project assessed are defined as follows:

Economic sustainability must be considered to ensure that the tourism sector is managed. The key strengths of the County include landscape, heritage, natural environment, lifestyle and amenity pursuits. The sector is highly affected by seasonality and there are extremes in visitor numbers at key attractions contrasted with smaller attractions which struggle to maintain visitor numbers. These 'peaks and troughs' should be carefully managed to ensure the protection of natural resources. Tourism innovation should also be encouraged – particularly where it brings about environmental benefits. Finally, for projects to be economically sustainable they should meet the needs of the permanent and visitor population alike, so the preparation of robust business plans for all such developments will ensure proposals are viable and sustainable.

Environmental sustainability will be central to the development and protection of a viable tourism sector and this is a key consideration in the County where tourism attractions are located in environmentally sensitive areas and close to historic areas where the quality of the built heritage and environment must be protected from inappropriate development – whether tourism related or not.

Social Sustainability is arguably more difficult to assess. Many of the potentially negative impacts of tourism development can however be addressed through careful consideration of the social and cultural nature of the receiving environment. The impacts that large-scale developments can have on existing local communities can be assessed having regard to the impact of visitor numbers on local quality of life, culture and heritage – with a particular emphasis placed on unique areas such as culturally sensitive areas where small impacts over time may have a significant cumulative effect.

11.3 Tourism & Recreation Objectives

General Objectives

CPO 11.1   To promote, encourage and facilitate the development of the tourism and recreation sectors in a sustainable manner.

CPO 11.2   To ensure that all tourism and recreation developments are designed to the highest quality and standards.

CPO 11.3   To generally require tourism and recreation related developments to locate within existing towns and villages, except where the nature of the activity proposed renders this unfeasible or undesirable. Within existing towns and villages, the Planning Authority will promote and facilitate the development of tourist related uses at appropriate sites. In all cases, the applicant must submit a robust assessment setting out the sustainability of any proposal with respect to economic, environmental and social sustainability, as defined herein.

CPO 11.4   To only permit the development of a tourism or recreational facility in a rural area in cases where the product or activity is dependent on its location in a rural situation and where it can be demonstrated that the proposed development does not adversely affect the character, environmental quality and amenity of the rural area or the vitality of any settlement and the provision of infrastructure therein. The natural resource / tourist product / tourist attraction that is essential to the activity shall be located at the site or in close proximity to the site, of the proposed development. The need to locate in a particular area must be balanced against the environmental impact of the development and benefits to the local community.

CPO 11.5   The Planning Authority recognises that certain tourist facilities that are located in rural areas may be provided as stand alone development, and that ancillary uses (e.g. club house, café, restaurant, shop etc) may be required in order to ensure the long term viability of the tourist facility. Additional uses will only be permitted in cases where the additional use is integrated with and connected to the primary use of the site as a tourist facility, and in cases where the Planning Authority is satisfied that the additional use is ancillary to the primary use of the site as a tourist facility. The additional use shall be located adjacent to the tourist facility, and avail of shared infrastructure and services, insofar as possible.

CPO 11.6   To ensure that tourism and recreation related developments are appropriately located in the County. Subject to the following exceptions, all tourist and recreation related developments are 'open for consideration'[3] in all landscape areas:
- The following tourist uses will **not** be permitted within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (both the Mountain Uplands Area and the Coastal Area): Static caravans and mobile homes [4];
- Holiday homes will not be permitted in any landscape category other than urban zones except where they comply with objectives CPO 11.13, CPO 11.14, CPO 11.15 and CPO 11.16.

CPO 11.7   To favourably consider proposals for tourism and recreation related development, which involve the reinstatement, conservation and/or replacement of existing disused buildings and to adopt a positive interpretation to plan policies to encourage such developments. This shall be subject to all other objectives being complied with, and subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. In all areas, preference will be given to the conversion and adaptation of existing buildings rather than the provision of new development on greenfield sites.

CPO 11.8   To facilitate the provision of tourist information / interpretive centres and cultural venues at appropriate locations where they can be integrated with existing settlements or existing tourism facilities.

CPO 11.9   To facilitate the development of tourism facilities and infrastructure related to the film industry, including film trails / routes, signage and visitor attractions.

Accommodation

CPO 11.10   To facilitate the development of a variety of quality accommodation types, at various locations, throughout the County.

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[3] Uses that are 'open for consideration' are uses that will only be permitted in cases where the Planning Authority is satisfied that the use would not conflict with the general objectives for that landscape area and permitted or existing uses, as well as being consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and the strategies / objectives of this plan.
[4] This refers to the development of any *new* static caravan and mobile home parks; expansion of existing facilities will be considered subject the suitability of the site, a modest scale and high quality design.

CPO 11.11   To positively consider the development of new hotels[5] in all parts of the County, with particular preference for locations in larger settlements (Levels 1-6 of the County settlement hierarchy). In other, more rural locations (villages / rural areas), it must be demonstrated that

- the area proposed to be served by the new development has high visitor numbers associated with an existing attraction / facility;
- a need for new / additional hotel type accommodation for these visitors has been identified having regard to the profile of the visitor and the availability and proximity of existing hotels in the area; and
- the distance of the location from a significant settlement is such that visitors to the area / attraction are unlikely to avail of existing hotel facilities.

CPO 11.12   To positively consider the (part) conversion of existing dwellings to Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs) [6] and Guesthouses[7], to be operated by the owner-occupier of the dwelling. Applications for new build B&Bs / guesthouses will in the first instance be evaluated as private dwellings and the objectives and standards applicable in that area type (e.g. large town, rural town, rural area etc) will be applied.

CPO 11.13   To require new holiday home / self-catering developments to locate within either established settlements or at established tourism / recreation facilities, other than those developments involving the renovation / conversion of existing buildings.

CPO 11.14   To require the developers / owners of new holiday homes / self catering developments to enter strict legal agreement (under Section 47 of the Planning & Development Act) with the Planning Authority specifying that:

- the units may only be used for tourism purposes and shall not be allowed to be used as a permanent residences;
- in the case of small-scale developments[8], the entire development, including all buildings, land and any on-site tourist facility, shall be held in single ownership and shall not be subdivided. All units shall be available for short term letting only of a maximum duration of 4 weeks; and
- in the case of larger scale developments [9]all lands, including any on-site tourist facility shall be held under the management of a single Estate Company (including all lands included in the site boundary and land which adjoins, abuts or is adjacent to the land to be developed and which is under the control of the applicant or the person who owns the land which is the subject of the application) and
- in the event that any unit is sold or leased, the owner/lessee shall enter a legal agreement with the Estate Company stipulating that the purchaser, lessee and any successors in title be, and remain, members of the Estate Company, and stipulating that the unit may only be used by the owner/lessee for holiday use for a maximum of 3 months in any year and shall at all other

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[5] A building, or part thereof, where sleeping accommodation, meals and other refreshments and entertainment, conference facilities, etc., are available to residents and non-residents, and where there is a minimum of twenty rooms en suite. A hotel includes an 'apart hotel'.

[6] A dwelling house of which part of the bedroom accommodation is available for overnight rental by members of the public and breakfast may be provided as part of the service but no other meals.

[7] A building, or part thereof, where sleeping accommodation, meals and other refreshments are available to residents and non-residents, and which has a minimum of five rooms and no more than nineteen rooms.

[8] Small-scale holiday home / self-catering developments are generally those associated with on-farm accommodation and small-scale tourist attractions or developments, and would not normally be in excess of 10 units.

[9] Large-scale holiday home / self-catering developments are generally those associated with significant tourism / recreation complexes such as hotels, golf courses, adventure centres etc.

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times be used/leased/marketed by the Estate Company for short term (maximum 4 weeks) tourism use.

CPO 11.15   Holiday home / self-catering developments on a farm holding shall be provided by farmhouse extension or by the utilisation of other existing dwellings / structures on the property. Only where it has been demonstrated that these are not viable options, will permission be considered for new build development. Any new build development shall be in close proximity to the existing farmhouse.

CPO 11.16   To facilitate modest camping / glamping facilities as part of farm diversification proposal. In such instances the farm should remain as the predominant land use on the landholding and documentary evidence shall be submitted to substantiate the proposed development.

CPO 11.17   To facilitate the development of hostels[10] along established walking / hiking routes and adjacent to existing tourism / recreation facilities.

CPO 11.18   To encourage touring caravan and camping/glamping sites to locate adjacent to or within existing settlements or established tourism facilities (subject to the exclusion set out in Objective CPO 11.6), having due regard to surrounding land uses and proper planning and development of the area.

CPO 11.19   To give sympathetic consideration to the improvement of, and extension to, existing tourist accommodation related developments, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and subject to compliance with all other objectives of this plan.

Integrated Tourism/ Leisure/ Recreational Complexes

Integrated tourism / leisure / recreational (ITLR) complexes are medium to large-scale leisure and recreational developments that will often include accommodation facilities. The development of a limited number of exceptionally high quality integrated tourism, leisure and recreational complexes at appropriate locations, particularly untraditional tourist locations, can have positive results in terms of realising the creation of new tourism products and in terms of promoting tourism growth.

They will normally include some of the following uses: Hotel and associated facilities, restaurants / cafes, conference centre, golf course, equestrian centre, trekking centre, fitness centre, indoor/outdoor water facility, fishing facility, indoor/outdoor ski centre, museums/art galleries, nature trails, walking routes and associated facilities. They may also include tourist related residential and retail facilities that are ancillary to the main tourist attraction.

CPO 11.20   To support development at existing / proposed integrated tourism / leisure / recreational complexes at the following locations:
- Druids Glen Golf Club, Woodstock Demesne (Map 11.01);
- Brook Lodge, Macreddin West, Aughrim (Map 11.02);
- Rathsallagh House, Dunlavin (Map 11.03).
- Belmont Demesne, Greystones (Map 11.04)

CPO 11.21   To consider applications for the development of further ITLR facilities having regard to:
- accessibility from the east and west transport corridors;
- accessibility to major towns and/or centres of population;
- proximity to designated tourism/visitor areas;

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[10] A building, or part thereof, which would provide meals, sleeping accommodation and maybe other refreshments and entertainment to residents only, and is other than a hostel where care is provided.

- the existence of other such facilities or major tourist accommodation sites in the vicinity;
- the adequacy of the site area and site features to accommodate a range of integrated tourist / leisure / recreational activities; and
- the Planning Authority will support the development of integrated tourism/leisure/recreational complexes on estate holdings with large estate houses that are directly attached to villages or towns.

CPO 11.22 To require all applications for development at identified or new ITLR sites to comply with the following requirements:
- Development shall be carried out on the basis of an integrated, comprehensive master plan and business plan, to be agreed at the outset of the development with the Planning Authority;
- the development as a whole shall be held in the single ownership of the developer. In the event that certain elements of the development will require to be sold / leased to make the project viable, this shall be stated at the outset and measures proposed to operate / manage / market the entirety of the facility as a single entity;
- any holiday home / self catering type accommodation proposed as part of the facility shall accord with CPO 11.14; and
- all development shall be so designed to respect the character of the area and any existing heritage features on the site, including demesne houses or other protected features.

Other Visitor Facilities

CPO 11.23 The Planning Authority will encourage the opening up of heritage Country houses for sympathetic uses including – but not limited to, for use as places of Retreat, Study and Education subject to the following criteria being fulfilled:
- The facility shall be accommodated within the existing house or a small scale sympathetic extension thereto;
- the house shall be of a sufficient size to provide the facilities required including overnight accommodation, restaurant / dining facilities and meeting / seminar facilities;
- courses shall be operated by the house owner; and
- visitor stay shall be short term only.

Any development of such estates should have regard to the following criteria within an overall planning application:

- Proximity to existing tourism/visitor areas;
- an adequate site area to provide the appropriate facilities without compromising the existing attractions of the location;
- the preservation of the character of the existing landscape; and
- any development, including ancillary residential shall be retained in single or common ownership and/or shall be the subject of a concise legal management contract that ensures the continued future appropriate maintenance and management of the property.

Tourism & Recreation Infrastructure

CPO 11.24 To promote and facilitate improvements to tourism and recreation infrastructure within the County. The Planning Authority will favourably consider proposals for developments that place a particular emphasis on improving traffic flow, sign posting, car parking facilities and touring caravan facilities, service/rest facilities etc, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and the objectives of this plan.

CPO 11.25   To cooperate with Wicklow County Tourism, Bord Failte and other appropriate bodies in facilitating the development and erection of standardised and branded signage for tourism facilities and tourist attractions.

CPO 11.26   To positively consider applications for new developments that provide facilities and services for travelling tourists (such as rest facilities, cafes, etc) at appropriate locations in the County. Only where it is not viable or convenient to provide such services in existing settlements / established visitor facilities, will alternative locations be considered and these should be conveniently located adjacent to the national road network.

CPO 11.27   To promote the development of infrastructure to support tourist driving trails around Wicklow 'a circle of Wicklow' taking in villages.

CPO 11.28   To support tourist/visitor park and ride facilities at appropriate locations that will facilitate access to upland amenity areas.

Tourism and Recreation Themes & Products

CPO 11.29   In conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, to support the development of Bray, Wicklow-Rathnew, Arklow, Greystones, Blessington, Baltinglass, Enniskerry, Rathdrum and Tinahely/ Shillelagh/ Carnew (South West Wicklow) as tourism hubs.

CPO 11.30   To support and promote the development of rural towns and villages, particularly those distant from the largest centres(as detailed in Objective 11.27) such as in west and south west Wicklow, as local tourism hubs particularly with respect to the provision of accommodation and service bases for outdoor recreation activities.

CPO 11.31   To develop Wicklow-Rathnew as a recreation and tourism hub and destination town due to its attractive coastal location, heritage assets and its proximity to key destinations such as the Wicklow Mountains, Glendalough and Brittas Bay and the key attractions within the town including the Wicklow Gaol, the Murrough, coastal walks, beaches, architectural heritage, sports facilities and as a terminus of the planned Greystones – Wicklow Coastal Route.

CPO 11.32   To encourage eco-tourism projects[11] or those tourism projects with a strong environmentally sustainable design and operational ethos.

CPO 11.33   To facilitate and promote the development of small-scale tourist enterprises that are developed in conjunction with established rural activities such as agriculture. Such enterprises may include open farms, health farms, heritage and nature trails, pony trekking etc.

CPO 11.34   To support the development of a strategic national network of trails.

CPO 11.35   Support and facilitate the delivery of the Blessington Greenway and the South Wicklow Greenway Arklow to Shillelagh including facilities ancillary to these routes (such as sign posting, car parks) and the development of linkages between these trails and other local routes.

CPO 11.36   To support and promote the development of tourism infrastructure, services and accommodation so located so as to service and support users of the Blesssington Greenway and future extensions thereto, in particular (but not limited to) those located in the following settlements – Blesssington,

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[11] Ecotourism is now defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education" (**International Ecotourism Society** TIES, 2015). Education is meant to be inclusive of both staff and guests.

Ballyknockan, Lackan and Valleymount – with particular support for developments that include the renovation of existing building stock, especially historic / vernacular buildings'.

CPO 11.37   To protect and enhance existing and support the development of new, walking cycling routes / trails [12], including facilities ancillary to trails (such as sign posting and car parks) and the development of linkages between trails in Wicklow and adjoining counties. In particular, to encourage and facilitate:

- on-road cycling routes across the Wicklow Mountains (in particular across the Sally Gap) and along coastal routes;
- the development of a new walking route from Bray Head, via the Sugarloaf Mountains, joining up with The Wicklow Way;
- hill walking trails in West Wicklow;
- the development of a lakeshore walk around the Vartry reservoir;
- the development of a walking route along the disused Great Southern and Western Railway line (Naas to Tullow branch) through Dunlavin and Baltinglass subject to consultation and agreement with landowners;
- the development of a coastal route from Bray to Arklow as well as links between this potential route and the coast road;
- The Wicklow Way and St. Kevin's Way (as permissive waymarked routes).
- The Wicklow to Glendalough "pilgrim walk" incorporating ancient wells.
- 'Mountains to the Sea' amenity route incorporating Glendalough, Laragh, Annamoe, Roundwood, Newtownmountkennedy and Kilcoole-Newcastle.
- The development of an amenity and active travel walking and cycling route between the Bray Harbour area northwards to the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown administrative area to provide for future connection to the proposed Woodbrook DART station.

CPO 11.38   To support the development of craft/artisan centres at established tourist facilities.

CPO 11.39   To promote and facilitate new and high quality investment in the tourism industry in Wicklow, with particular reference to tourist and recreation activities that relate to one or more of the following themes: Ireland's Ancient East, Christian and pre-Christian heritage, mining heritage, scenic beauty, houses and gardens, waterways.

CPO 11.40   To support the development of Avoca Mines as a tourist attraction having regard to the public safety issues associated with historical mine sites. The development of a mining heritage centre could incorporate a range of projects incorporating tourism, nature exploitation, scientific and ecological research, adventure, craftwork and environmental projects. Any development shall accord with the principle of sustainable tourist development and shall particularly ensure the preservation and enhancement of mining heritage.

CPO 11.41   To promote, in co-operation with landowners, recreational users and other relevant stakeholders, on the basis of "agreed access", the more extensive use of the coastal strip for such activities as touring, sight-seeing, walking, pony trekking, etc. as a tourism and recreational resource for the residents of County Wicklow and other visitors.

CPO 11.42   To promote and encourage the recreational use of coastline, rivers and lakes and the development of 'blueways'[13] in the County subject to normal environmental protection and management criteria. Where such recreational uses involve the development of structures or facilities, the Planning Authority will ensure that the proposals will respect the natural amenity and character of the area,

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[12] In addition to those set out in Objective 11.32
[13] Blueways are recreation and tourism initiatives centred on outdoor activity along the environs of waterways. Blueways provide opportunities to enjoy a wide range of activities such as canoeing, cycling and walking.

listed views and prospects onto and from the area in question. Where possible, such structures should be set back an appropriate distance from the actual amenity itself and should not adversely affect the unique sustainable quality of these resources.

CPO 11.43   To support and facilitate the development of Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation as a significant tourism asset.

CPO 11.44   To develop Arklow as an Eco Educational Tourism destination and support and facilitate the development of the 'Harbour to Headwaters' Eco Educational Tourism trail project on the Avoca River Catchment, which includes NORRI Oyster Restoration Reef and East Wicklow River Trusts Avoca Vision Project, two interconnected environmental restoration projects of significant importance.

CPO 11.45   To support the development of the following outdoor recreation hubs/clusters – Glendalough, Rathdrum, Blessington/Baltinglass, Tinahely/Shillelagh and East Coast Maritime.

CPO 11.46   To support the development of the Hillfort Complex at Baltinglass as a cultural and educational attraction.

Environmental Protection

CPO 11.47   Where relevant, the Council and those receiving permission for development under the plan, shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant environmental effects, including loss of habitat and disturbance. Management measures may include ensuring that new projects and activities are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities; visitor/habitat management plans will be required for proposed projects as relevant and appropriate.

CPO 11.48   Ensure the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourists/tourism-related traffic volumes in particular locations/along particular routes shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate. Such a consideration should include potential impacts on existing infrastructure (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) resulting from tourism proposals.

CPO 11.49   Where projects for new tourism projects identified in this chapter are not already provided for by existing plans / programmes or are not already permitted, then the feasibility of progressing these projects shall be examined, taking into account planning need, environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the objectives of the plan relating to sustainable development.
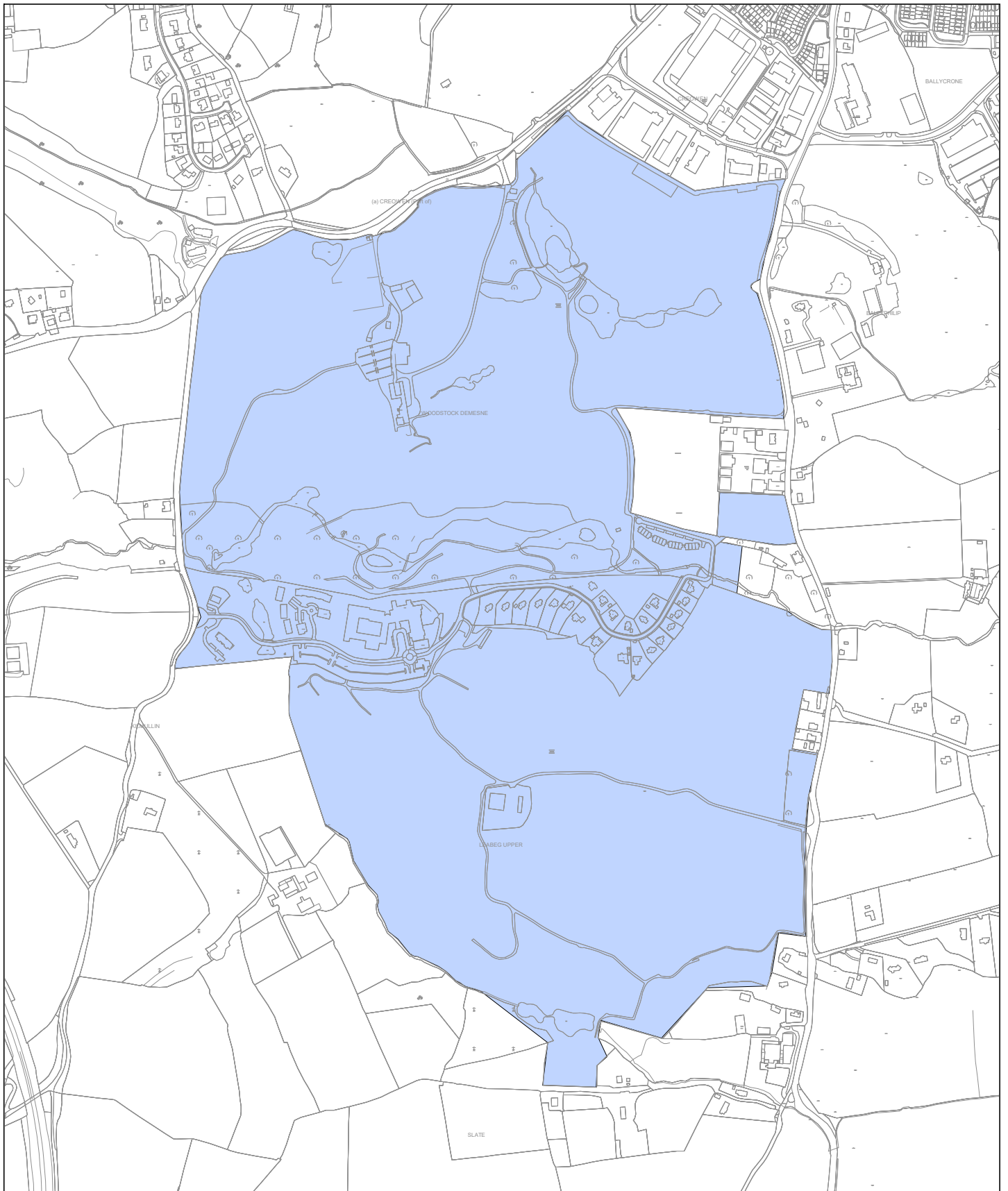
Zoning for Integrated Tourism/Leisure/ Recreational Complex Druids Glen Golf Club, Woodstock Demesne
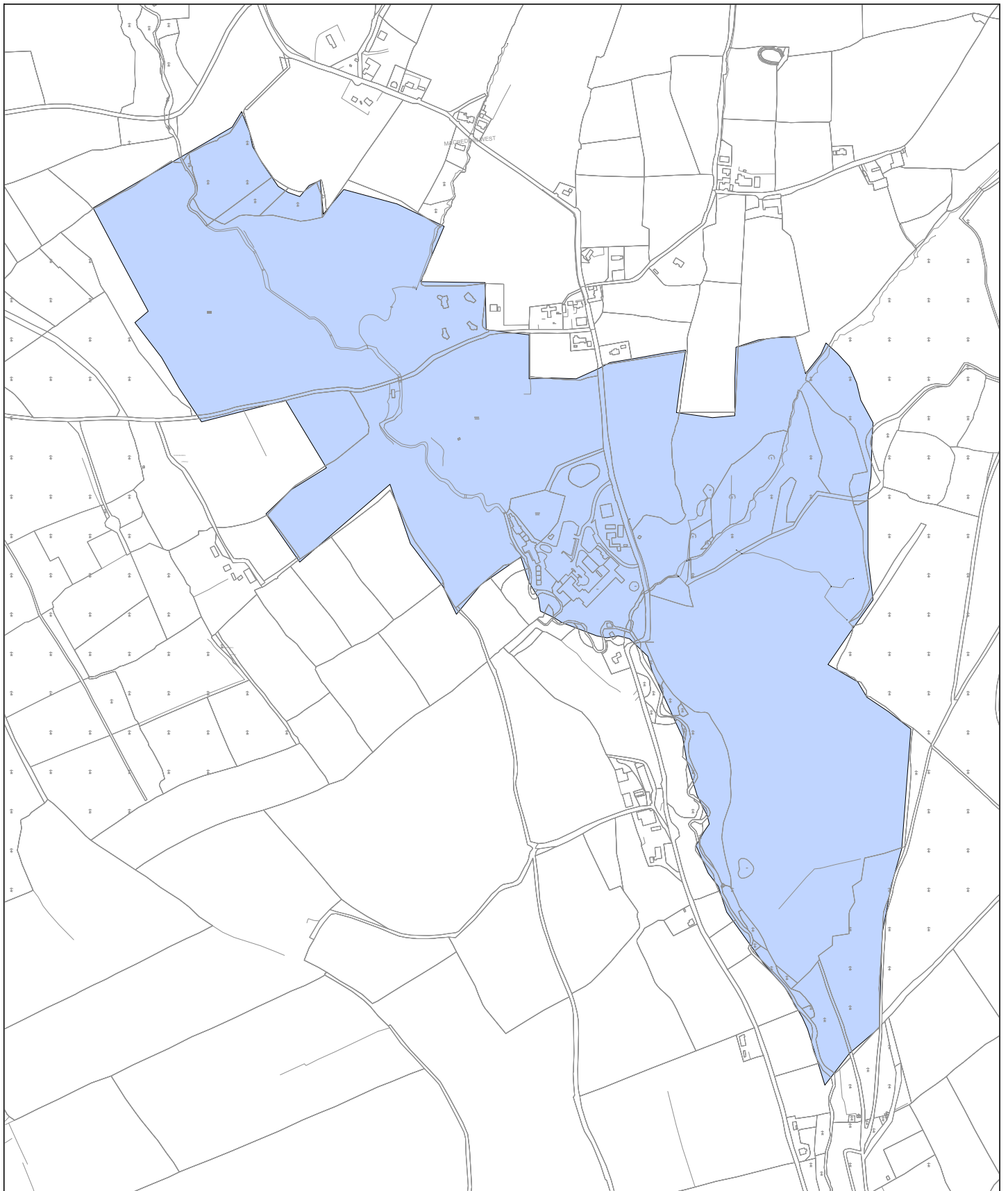
Map No. 11.01

Legend

Tourism / Leisure / Recreational Complex

257   Scale 1:10,000 @A4

WICKLOW
ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

Zoning for Integrated Tourism/Leisure/ Recreational Complex Brook Lodge, Macreddin West, Aughrim
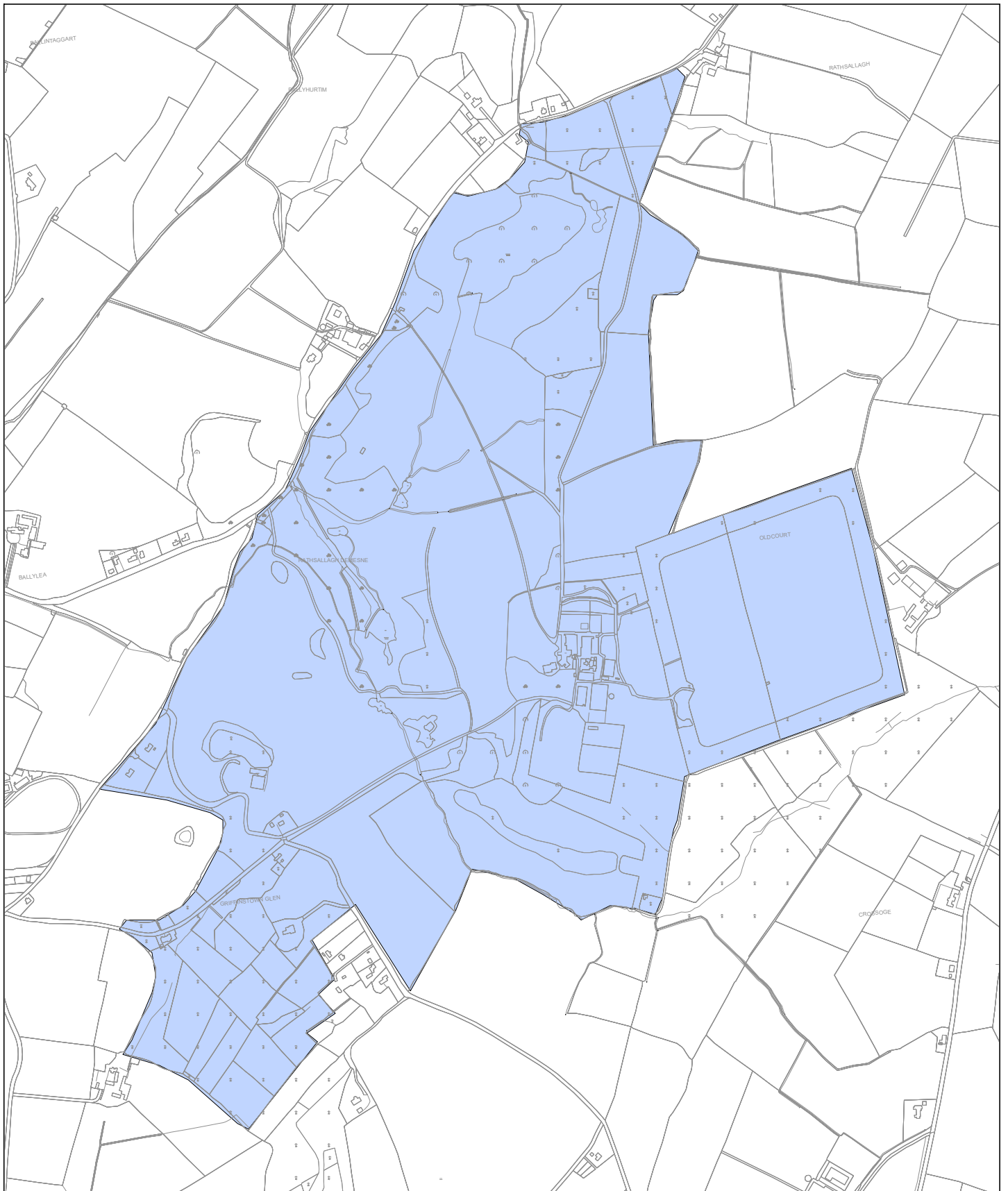
Map No. 11.02

WICKLOW
ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

Legend

Tourism / Leisure / Recreational Complex

258

Scale 1:10,000 @A4

Zoning for Integrated Tourism/Leisure/ Recreational Complex Rathsallagh House, Dunlavin

Map No. 11.03

WICKLOW
ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

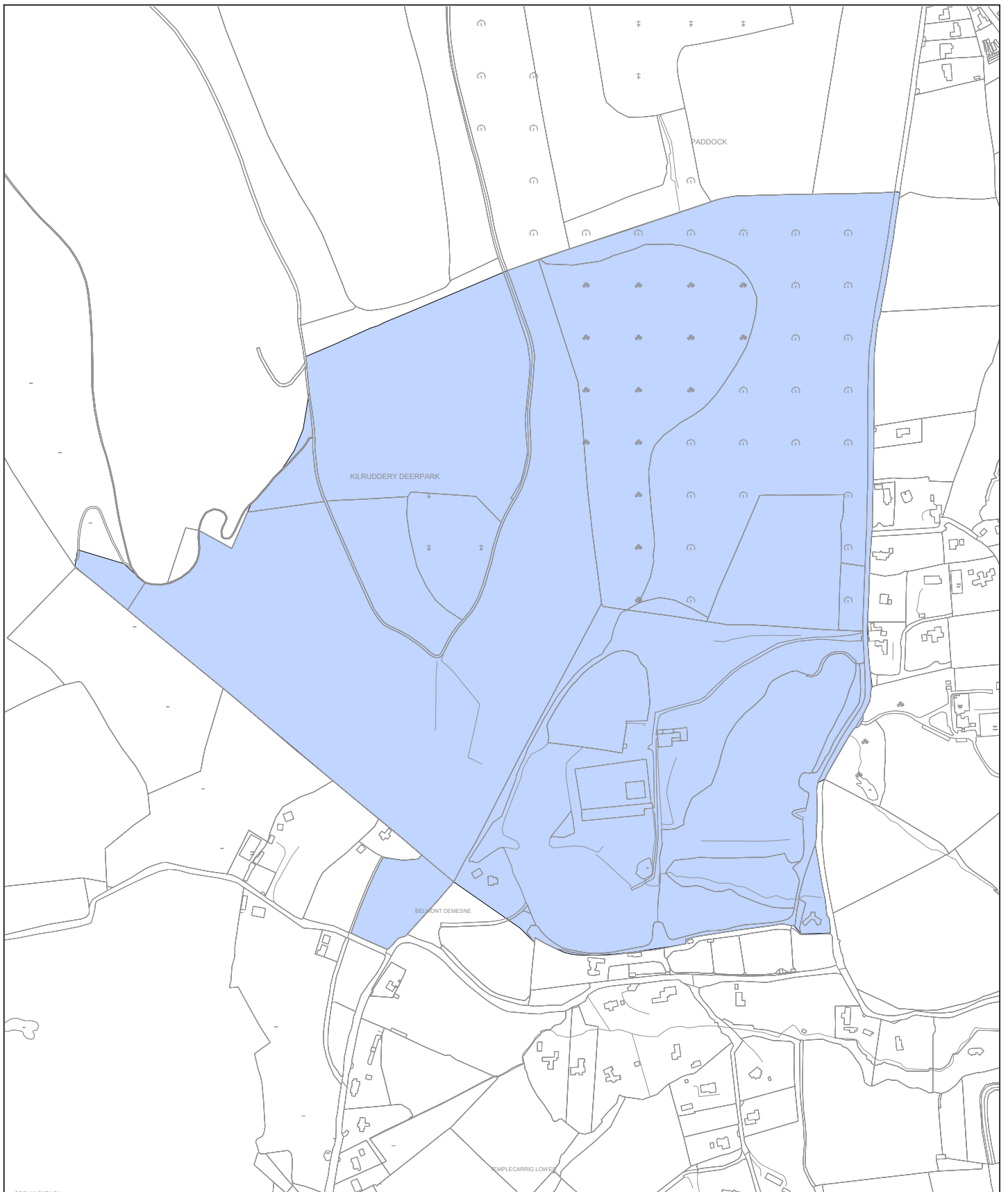**Legend**

Tourism / Leisure / Recreational Complex

259   Scale 1:12,000 @A4

Zoning for Integrated Tourism/Leisure/ Recreational Complex Belmont Demesne, Greystones

Map No. 11.04

WICKLOW
ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

Legend

Tourism / Leisure / Recreational Complex

260   Scale 1:7,500 @A4

PADDOCK

KILRUDDERY DEERPARK

BELMONT DEMESNE

TEMPLECARRIG LOWER