

## An Aid to *The Nore Vision* and Reviewing this Report

**What is *The Nore Vision*?** First and foremost, *The Nore Vision* is an evolving initiative. To date, *The Nore Vision* has been a consultation process funded by Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, Laois Partnership, North Tipperary LEADER Partnership and South Tipperary Development Company through LEADER funding under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

**Who is *The Nore Vision*?** *The Nore Vision* is ‘you’. It is every stakeholder who has participated in the consultation process, sharing their hopes and ideas for the future of River Nore and its tributaries, whether an individual, or as a representative of a group, organisation or agency. *The Nore Vision* is overseen by a voluntary steering group with members drawn from the community, development organisations, local authorities and statutory agencies.

***The Nore Vision* process:** From October 2017 to March 2018, over 200 people participated in consultation workshops for *The Nore Vision* including residents, landowners, community groups, development organisations and government agencies. *The Nore Vision* consultations revealed that while people, groups and agencies have a range of perspectives and priorities when it comes to the River Nore and its tributaries, there is a great deal of common ground when it comes to their ‘Vision’ for the future.

***The Nore Vision* report:** This report brings together the contributions of all the stakeholders that participated in the consultation and presents their collective aspirations and ideas for the future of the Nore and its tributaries. It also reveals the extent of people, groups, organisations and agencies working on matters related to the Nore. The consensus that is documented in this report from around the catchment and across interests is a valuable outcome of the consultation process. This is summarised into the five priority themes of ‘*The Nore Vision*’ towards the end of the report. This is the statement of the shared aspirations of stakeholders for the future of the River Nore and all of its tributaries (the River), the land that drains into them, and the people who live and work there. It sets out the future that the participants in the 2017/2018 consultation process for *The Nore Vision* wish to see for the catchment during their lifetime.

**Reviewing *The Nore Vision* report:** As a participant in *The Nore Vision* consultation process, you are now invited to read the report and provide feedback on the wording of that report using a copy of *The Nore Vision* Feedback Form. Please bear in mind when making your feedback that consensus is sought on *The Nore Vision*. In addition to the report that is being reviewed, two supplementary documents are provided for your own information: one presents the interests and concerns of participants in the community workshops while the other gives those of stakeholders from development organisations and government agencies.

**Next steps for you:** When the final wording of *The Nore Vision* report is agreed, you (or your group, organisation or agency) will be invited to ‘sign up’ to *The Nore Vision* by indicating your support for it, your willingness to share it with others and to seek out opportunities to deliver elements of the agreed Vision, especially in cooperation with other stakeholders. You will be able to use *The Nore Vision* report to support your work in the following ways:

Use it to help identify projects to either initiate or in which you could collaborate with other stakeholders.

Use it to identify others with whom you might collaborate (e.g. for joint funding applications, river-related projects, educational awareness initiatives, etc) or from whom you may seek advice, funding or other resources.

Make reference to *The Nore Vision* report in your funding applications, etc, to support the need for your work or your proposal, where it will serve to deliver elements of the Vision. *The Nore Vision* consultation process has been wide-ranging, thorough and independent; therefore, it provides evidence to corroborate the need and/or desirability of projects and initiatives that will help to realise the Vision.

### Is anything happening because of *The Nore Vision* consultation process already?

Yes there is.

*The Nore Vision* Steering Group continues to work on a voluntary basis and is considering ways to progress from the consensus recorded in *The Nore Vision* report towards actions that will help to achieve the Vision into the future.

*The Nore Vision* Steering Group will make a submission to the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2020-2026 by 15<sup>th</sup> June based on the review copy of *The Nore Vision* report.

The LEADER companies involved in *The Nore Vision* are working on a joint funding application to develop a mechanism or structure to support *The Nore Vision* into the future. This work will continue to be overseen by the voluntary steering group of *The Nore Vision*.

Kilkenny LEADER Partnership have applied for funding to integrate a range of riverside recreational and educational amenities along part of the River Nore in Kilkenny.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) plans to help advise each group planning activities and/or works on the Nore and its tributaries through *The Nore Vision* framework.

The Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO) have been encouraging LEADER companies elsewhere to use the model of *The Nore Vision* to consult with multiple stakeholders in other river catchments.

# THE NORE VISION - DRAFT

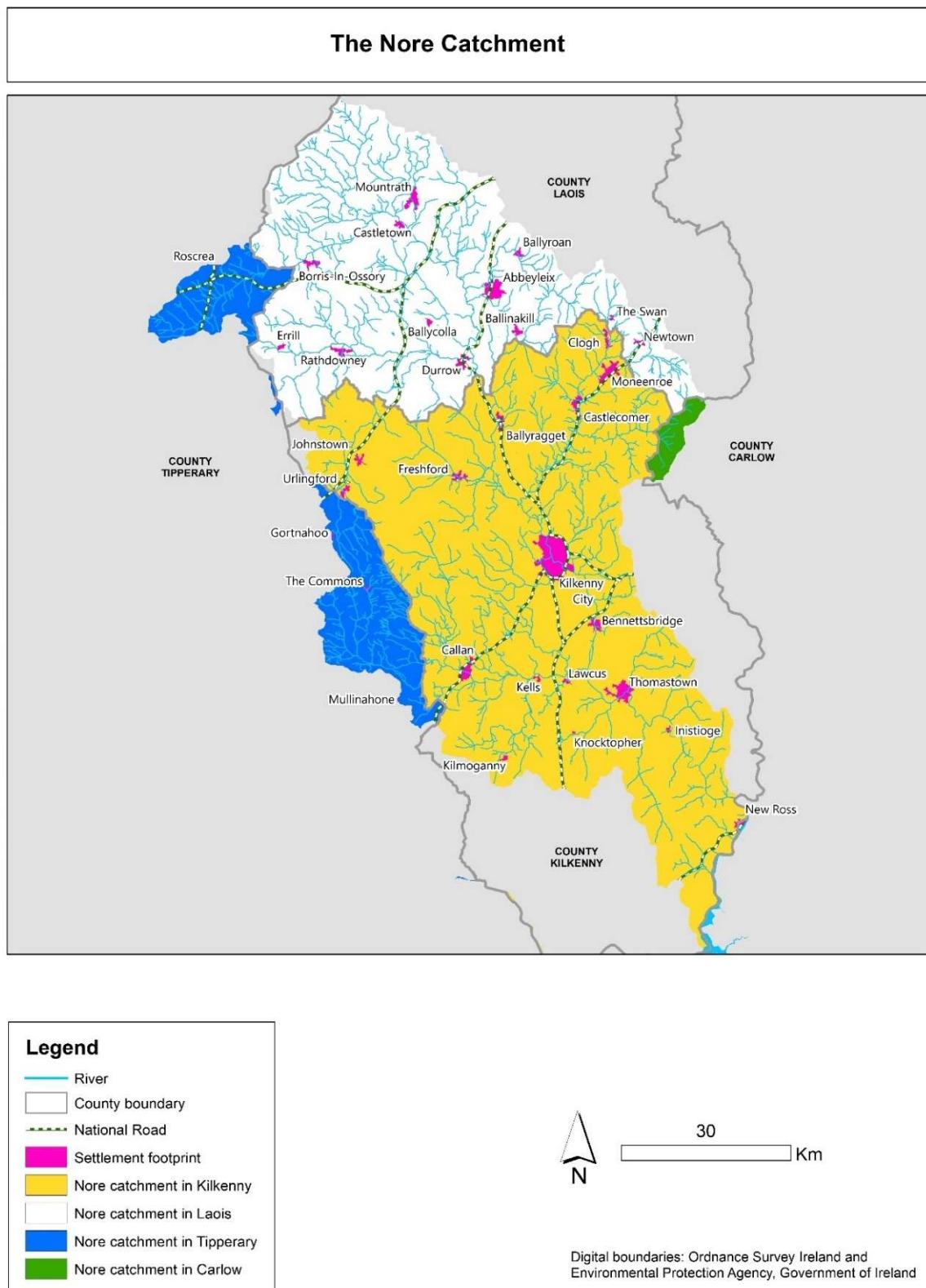
What we want for the River, its land and people.



## 1.0 Introduction

*The Nore Vision* is a statement of the shared aspirations of stakeholders for the future of the River Nore and all of its tributaries (the River), the land that drains into them, and the people who live and work there. It sets out the future they wish to see for the catchment (figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: The Nore catchment in Kilkenny, Laois, Tipperary and Carlow.



## 2.0 Objective

*The Nore Vision* is a project, initiated by Kilkenny LEADER Partnership (KLP) in collaboration with Laois Partnership, North Tipperary LEADER Partnership and South Tipperary Development Company, which sought to bring together representatives of all sectors with an interest in the River and its catchment (the area of land within the watershed that drains into the River). The project's aim was to share experiences and views, identify interests related to the River, and explore where overarching agreement could be identified on the preferred future for the River and its hinterland. *The Nore Vision* process was catchment-wide in its ambition from the start with discussions among stakeholders across the four counties of Kilkenny, Laois, Tipperary and Carlow during its evolution. The multi-stakeholder approach sought to leverage the opportunity of the collaborative initiative of *The Nore Vision* to achieve common goals and strong engagement and support across diverse yet complementary interests.

A Steering Group consisting of representatives of statutory agencies and other key stakeholders was formed to oversee the project. (The membership of *The Nore Vision* Steering Group is set out in Appendix 7.1.)

Agreement on all issues would not have been realistic and was not sought; instead, the project focused on identifying where consensus could be found and building from that point.

Agreeing a Vision was seen as enabling a number of benefits:

- Establishing a shared understanding that would inform actions by stakeholders within the catchment;
- Creating impetus and facilitating stakeholders working collaboratively to deliver elements of the Vision;
- Providing support for projects, and their funding applications, in line with the Vision;
- Forming the basis for the development of agreement of more detailed objectives within the overall Vision.

In addition to this range of practical benefits, it is reasonable to anticipate that where consensus is established on the overall 'vision' for the future of the River and its catchment, then there is a stronger basis on which to work through the different ways in which particular challenges may be addressed in order to reach agreement on the optimum approach(es) to take.

The project's ambition is that all stakeholders, whether agencies, organisations or individuals, sign up to the approved Vision document as an expression of their agreement with and support for the aspirations it contains.

*The Nore Vision* is seen as an ongoing project, with the potential for further development, inclusion of greater detail, and so forth. This is particularly the case with the cross-boundary approach that has been pursued to engage with the various local authorities responsible for various parts of the Nore catchment. The project began its roll out in County Kilkenny, supported through Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, and subsequently Laois (LEADER) Partnership facilitated the ongoing consultation process of the Vision in the headwaters of the catchment that fall within County Laois. Inter-county communications and building shared understanding, in this case about taking a catchment-based approach, is an intentional feature of *The Nore Vision*. Similarly, North Tipperary LEADER Partnership and South Tipperary Development Company facilitated the stakeholder consultations in the Nore catchment within Tipperary. A small section of the eastern headwaters of the Nore is located in County Carlow and the community consultation in that area completed the programme of engagement across the whole catchment.

## 3.0 Approach

This Report was developed based on consultation with all stakeholders, including specific workshop sessions with statutory agencies and development companies, resource and interest group representatives, transition year students in one secondary school, and a series of community consultations across the catchment (5 in Co. Kilkenny, 2 in Co. Laois, 2 in Co. Tipperary and 1 in Co. Carlow/South Laois).

### 3.1 Consultation workshops

#### **Statutory Sector Workshops**

All agencies, authorities and bodies identified as having an interest in water quality, environmental resources, land management, heritage and education were invited to input to *The Nore Vision*. Representatives from the following bodies participated in an initial workshop for statutory stakeholders. Where representatives came from a particular section within a larger organisation, their section(s) is/are noted.

- Bord na Móna
- Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine (DAFM) - Nitrates
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Water
- Kilkenny County Council – Environment, Heritage, and Planning
- Laois County Council – Environment
- Local Authorities Water & Communities Office (LAWCO)
- National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS)
- Office of Public Works (OPW)
- Teagasc - Agricultural Catchments Programme and Farm Advisory Service
- The Heritage Council – Education

A second workshop for representatives from statutory agencies was held as the project progressed and representatives of the following bodies participated:

- Fáilte Ireland
- Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI)
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)
- Irish Water
- Kilkenny LEADER Partnership (CKLP)
- Laois County Council – Planning
- Laois Partnership
- North Tipperary LEADER Partnership (NTLP)
- South Tipperary Development Company (STDC)
- Tipperary County Council – Planning

In addition, the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) input to the process via email. Participants outlined their agency's **interests** in and **concerns** for the River Nore, their **priorities or plans** in the catchment and their **engagement with communities** or their work involving **co-operation with others**. These areas broadly reflect the questions asked of all stakeholders in *The Nore Vision* (see the Community Workshops below). Some agencies articulated a vision for the Nore catchment and for the sake of consistency, all of the bodies involved were communicated with again and asked if they wished to add to their contributions.

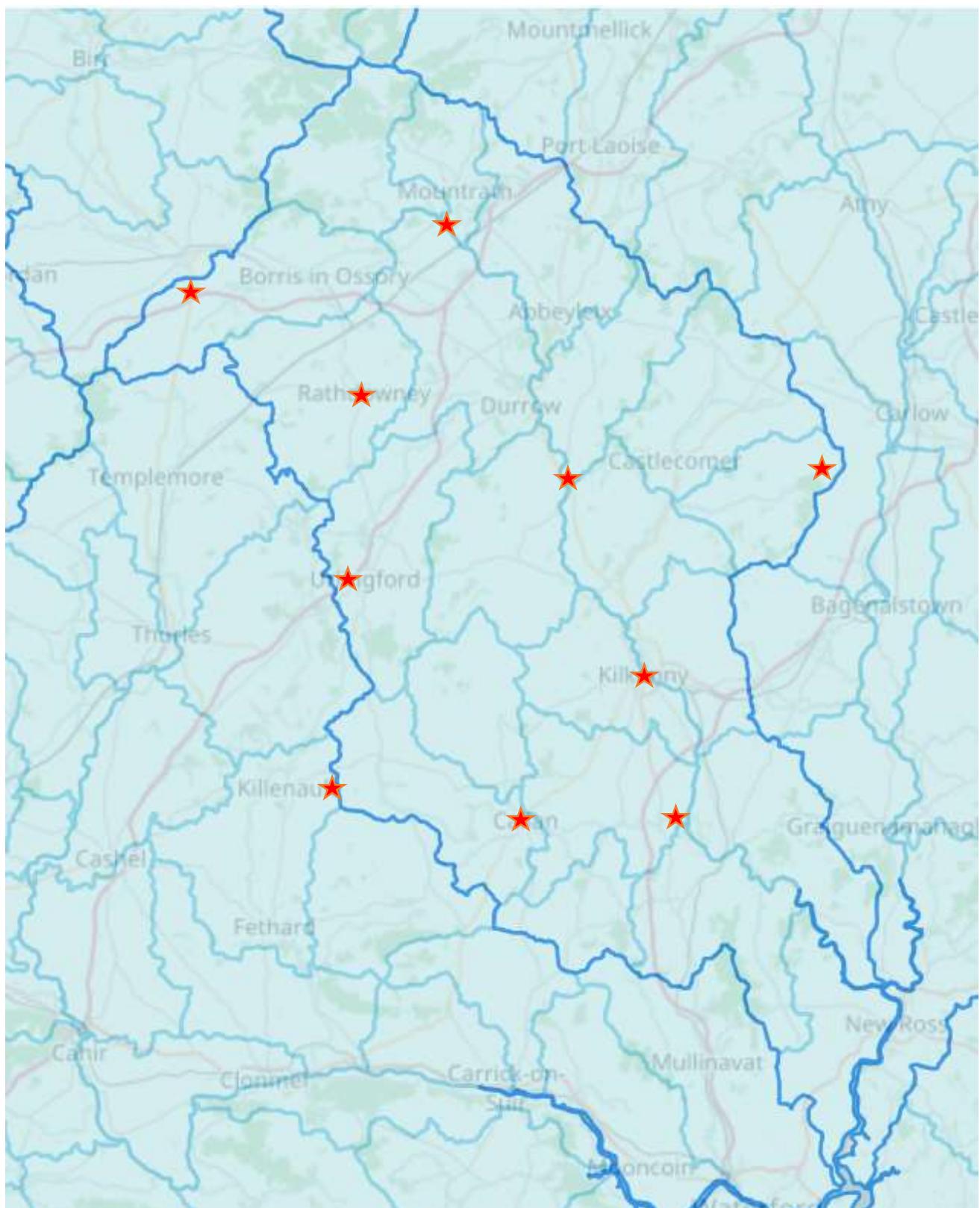
Along with the statutory agencies and bodies listed above, academics in Human and Physical Geography from Trinity College Dublin (TCD) also participated in a workshop.

#### **Community Workshops**

Ten community workshops were held around the catchment to reflect the different interests and issues across the geographic area. The events were publicised locally through traditional print media, on local radio and via *The Nore Vision* Facebook page and through outreach work by the LEADER companies across their local networks (see example of a local press article in Appendix 7.2 and of a poster in Appendix 7.3).

Figure 3.1 shows the Nore catchment (in dark blue), its 21 sub-catchments (light blue) and the locations of the ten community workshops (red stars).<sup>i</sup>

Figure 3.1: Location of community workshops for *The Nore Vision*.



Source of map: [catchments.ie](http://catchments.ie)

Participants at the community workshops included young parents and retired residents, farmers (full-time, part-time and organic), activity entrepreneurs, craft workers, café owners, manufacturers, activists in environmental and wildlife conservation, enthusiasts of cultural heritage, recreation and sports, volunteers involved in community development and enhancement, as well as representatives from across the political spectrum.

At each workshop, those attending were prompted to think about the ways that they interact with the River (their earliest memories of it, what activities they have done or do either in or alongside it, what is most important about it for them, etc.). A presentation was then given introducing *The Nore Vision*, looking at the catchment, recent and ongoing initiatives around the River, and explaining the purpose of the workshop; which was to hear the views of those present on the future of the River and its catchment. Participants were then asked two questions, each in two parts<sup>ii</sup>: These were:

- Interests and concerns
  - “What is your interest in the River and its catchment?”
  - “What concerns would you have for the River and its catchment?”
- Vision and the steps to achieve it
  - “Within your lifetime, what do you want to see happen to the River and its catchment?”
  - “What are the steps needed to achieve these goals (your vision)?”

The majority of the workshop was spent in small group discussions around these questions, with outputs captured on post-it notes and flipcharts at the community workshops, and by facilitators (figure 3.2 and figure 3.3). These small groups then shared their deliberations with the whole meeting.

Figure 3.2: Filling up post-it notes with proposals for the Vision and steps to achieve it in Castletown Community Centre, Co. Laois.



Figure 3.3: Local, catchment-wide and online maps were useful workshop tools including at Lismackin Community Centre, Tipperary.



An open invitation was also made in workshop sessions and via social media to any interested group or individual to contribute their views in the event that they were unable to attend a meeting. A number of submissions were received via email and through *The Nore Vision* Facebook page that had been set up to support the project. These were incorporated with the material generated in the workshops.

### 3.2 Compilation of data

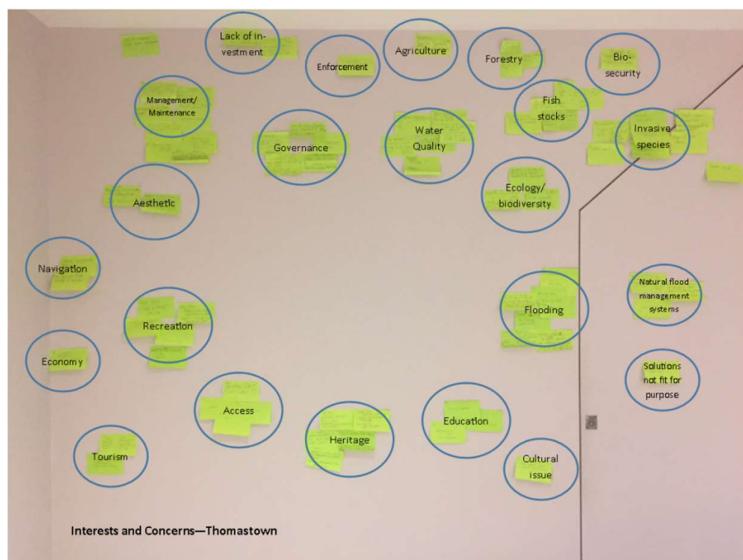
#### **Statutory Stakeholder Inputs**

Contributions collected from representatives of agencies, authorities or other bodies were transcribed and these were then checked by the representatives concerned. These contributions are presented in table format in Chapter 4.0 below. They provide an insight into the remit of the different bodies and organisations, the challenges they are seeking to address and possible approaches to this. Statutory stakeholders' interests and concerns are available in a separate document at [www.cklp.ie](http://www.cklp.ie).

#### **Community Stakeholder Inputs**

The outputs from the different community consultations and the additional submissions received from community stakeholders were combined and "issue maps" created for (a) the interests and concerns of participants and also for (b) their visions and related steps. This was done by sorting the post-it notes collected at each meeting into the different issues of interest or themes that were raised, and then setting these out on a wall, adding the different coloured post-it notes from each of the different meetings one at a time. This process is illustrated in the photographs on the following page which show how the issues identified from the first five consultations were mapped. This process was repeated for the workshops across the catchment. These "issue maps" made it possible to identify firstly what issues were brought up and how these fell into discrete themes or groups, and secondly to see if a similar range of issues was identified at each of the different workshops. Clearly, the material that was raised varied somewhat between workshops, reflecting the different make-up of the stakeholders present and capturing some of the spatial differences along the River and its catchment too.

## 1. Issues of interest raised at 1<sup>st</sup> (Thomastown) Community Workshop



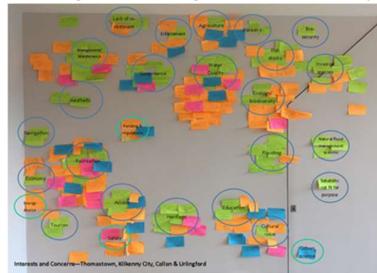
-> 2. including 2<sup>nd</sup> (Kilkenny city) Workshop output



-> 3. Including 3<sup>rd</sup> (Callan) Workshop output



-> 4. Including 4<sup>th</sup> (Uringford) Workshop output



-> 5. Including 5<sup>th</sup> (Ballyragget) Workshop



-> 6. Issues of interest raised at first 5 Community Workshops & incl. input from School Visit.



However, as can be seen in the photographs, there was a strong degree of consistency in both the concerns expressed and in the characteristics of the Vision that were identified across all community workshops. The labelled circles indicate themes or groups of issues that emerged consistently at the workshops. The larger first photograph illustrates the themes emerging from the first consultation, and the smaller photographs show how these were reflected and expanded at the other workshops. While there was a difference in the importance of issues, and nuances drawn out within particular issues, the map of issues remained consistent throughout the consultations in the catchment.

The inputs raised by the Resource and Interest Stakeholders Group were also sorted by issue and then this list compared and combined with the list generated by the Community Stakeholders' workshops.

### 3.3 Interpreting the material collected

The Community Stakeholder workshops were promoted to the general public and open for anyone to attend. It cannot be claimed that those who attended were necessarily representative of society, but the opportunity was provided to hear all views and gain as wide an appreciation as possible of the concerns and aspirations that are held in relation to the River and its catchment.

The Resource and Interest Stakeholder workshop involved those invited from the widest possible range of representative groups (see Appendix 7.4.) with any interest in the River and its catchment. Comparing the issues and proposals raised by these groups with those from the local communities provided a means of identifying any anomalies. Figure 3.4 reveals how the Resource and Interest Stakeholder workshop reflected the views coming from the community workshops around the catchment and vice versa.

Figure 3.4: Comparison of concerns and vision proposals across the Community Workshops and Resource Users & Interest Group Workshop.

Issue	Concerns	Vision	Resource & Interest Gp	Issue	Concerns	Vision	Resource & Interest Gp
<u>Blue catchment/ river</u>		✓	✓	<u>Recreation</u>	✓	✓	✓
<u>Water quality</u>	✓	✓	✓	- safety	✓	✓	✓
- litter/ rubbish	✓	✓	✓	- tourism / economy	✓	✓	
- agriculture	✓	✓	✓	- energy	✓	✓	
- forestry	✓	✓	✓	- navigation			
<u>Flooding</u>	✓	✓	✓	<u>Education</u>	✓	✓	✓
- Natural flood mitigation	✓	✓	✓	- culture / attitudes	✓	✓	✓
- Solutions not fit for purpose	✓			- citizen science	✓	✓	
<u>Ecology/ Biodiversity</u>	✓	✓	✓	<u>Governance</u>	✓	✓	✓
-Invasive species	✓	✓	✓	- Maintenance/ management	✓	✓	✓
- Biosecurity	✓	✓	✓	- Funding/ Regulatory Challenges for Groups	✓	✓	✓
- fishing (angling)	✓	✓	✓	- enforcement	✓	✓	
<u>Heritage</u>	✓	✓	✓	- lack of investment	✓		
<u>Access</u>	✓	✓	✓	<u>Aesthetics/ wellbeing</u>	✓	✓	✓

The issues and suggested actions identified in the Statutory Sector Workshop were then compared to those coming from the community stakeholders to assess the degree of shared interests, concerns and plans or 'vision' across the entire stakeholder consultation.

### 3.4 Constructing the Draft Vision

The material was considered in two parts; the first looked at the interests and concerns that stakeholders identified (see documents at [www.cklp.ie](http://www.cklp.ie)) and the second set out ideas for the Vision for the future and specific actions that would help deliver this (Chapter 4.0 and Chapter 5.0), all of which emerged from the various workshops. This structure reflects the sequence of how the stakeholders' discussions progressed within each workshop. Rather than present interests and concerns, and the "vision" responses to these together, an unedited record of the interests and concerns expressed at community workshops, as well as those from the statutory consultations, are available in separate documents online. The Vision with its constituent parts is presented here since it forms the central focus of the project.

There is understandable overlap between a number of the topics raised. For example: the necessity for safe access to support development of *recreation* on or by the River; the importance of *public awareness* and *education* around river matters and the need for a catchment-wide approach to eradicating *invasive species*; or the central role of *governance* arrangements and the *support required by voluntary/community groups* in undertaking actions around the River. While acknowledging such overlaps, which would be expected in a dynamic, living system, clear themes emerged across all stakeholder consultations and these were used to structure the text. There was remarkable consistency between the topics raised, both across the different workshops, but also between the issues and the elements of the Vision generated. In other words, stakeholders actively sought responses to the issues they identified; generating proposals intended to resolve problems, lead to improvements, or generate new assets within the catchment.

Care has been taken not to stray beyond the material that was received, or to elaborate either issues or proposals beyond aligning those that are related or complementary and presenting them in clear and simple English. The intention is to ensure that stakeholders who participated in the workshops would be able to recognise outputs from the meetings in which they engaged. The Vision is a composite of inputs from all the workshops and, as such, ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts’. So, where different workshops may have considered another dimension to a particular issue, these will have been brought together in the text. This assimilation seeks to blend the different points raised, not so that they are in any way lost or diluted but rather that they are reinforced and expanded.

### **The Nore Vision - priority themes**

Chapter 6.0 condenses the Vision into five over-arching “priority themes”, each summarised into a couple of sentences.

#### **3.5 Checking back with the stakeholders [Current review of The Nore Vision]**

Once the Draft Vision had been compiled from all of the consultations, *The Nore Vision* Steering Group released it for review. For the important reason that key messages should not be lost in compiling the workshop feedback, the Draft Vision text was made available publicly and specifically to all those stakeholders that had participated in generating the initial inputs at workshops. This also served to share the entirety of inputs generated across all of the consultation workshops with each stakeholder. Electronic copies were provided with an open invitation for comment and feedback. All interested parties were invited to submit feedback, which was accepted in written or digital format. This was important to identify where there was a lack of clarity, a point had not been correctly understood, or had been missed, but also where further elucidation could be captured. While it was not possible to accommodate a significant increase in the level of detail in the Vision, this further consultation was important to ensure that the document is true to the shared Vision articulated at the workshops and to consolidate the sense of ‘ownership’ of the final Vision to encourage people, enterprises, groups, organisations and agencies to ultimately sign up to it.

#### **3.6 Revision and publication of Vision [Final stage of The Nore Vision to be completed]**

A record was kept of all the feedback received, and wherever possible this was incorporated into the document. Where difficulties arose over accommodating conflicting perspectives, or disputed facts, these were noted and moved to a section at the end of the Vision, indicating that further work to look for agreement or consensus on these matters is desirable.

The publication of *The Nore Vision* was publicised through all media platforms and made available online and via libraries across the catchment. All stakeholders were invited to sign up to the document as an indication of their support for its contents and to indicate their willingness to take this into consideration in the operation of their own organisation, agency, group, business or individual actions.

The Vision remains open for any person, group, enterprise or agency with an interest in the River or its catchment to sign up to it. As is evident in the Vision itself, one of the clear aspirations of the stakeholders involved in its development is that it should continue as a useful blueprint, informing and supporting compatible action across and even beyond the catchment.

## Section 4.0 Statutory Stakeholder Inputs

While a range of agencies and organisations with different areas of interest and responsibility took part in *The Nore Vision*, strong common themes were identified across different groups of them.

Again and again, stakeholders spoke of the importance of having a **joined-up approach** to river management and maintenance and of fostering a culture of collaboration that would run right across agencies and organisations, in terms of how they work with each other and/or in terms of how they work with communities. Stakeholders gave numerous examples of the ways in which they are working with other agencies towards common goals and responsibilities. Partnership and cooperation is flagged as both desirable and effective. They also gave instances of projects and programmes that involve working with communities. Those with a strong remit in community development called for a new way-of-working that supports communities to carry out appropriate projects.

Work in the area of **water quality** is focused on protecting human and environmental health. This includes protecting sources of drinking water and groundwater, monitoring pesticides in the drinking water of the catchment, working with farmers through education and incentives along with inspections to assess agricultural practices, improving urban waste water treatment and domestic water supply infrastructure, and protecting and improving water quality in priority Areas for Action.

**Natural heritage and flood management** are other key areas across which numerous bodies work. Responsibilities include conserving habitats and wildlife, especially those that are threatened. Other work described is the rehabilitation of peatlands. State protection from floods and flood management focus on hard engineering while soft engineering options are being explored in the community development sector.

**Cultural heritage and recreation** are of interest to a range of bodies and organisations who work in various ways to conserve the heritage or to open up opportunities to engage with it for enjoyment, education and “a sense of belonging”. The interconnectedness of natural and cultural heritage, recreation and education came through in discussions. Realising the synergies across these interests is seen as a way to improve not only the quality of life and economic opportunities for locals but to help create the “brilliant visitor experiences” sought by tourists too.

**Public education, engagement and empowerment** was another common theme raised by different agencies and organisations. Individuals, businesses and communities are seen as key agents in the future of rivers and natural resources in general. Some stakeholders described the need for improved public communication and education, while others went further and called for more community-friendly engagement and participation. The potential for the public to be partners and to generate important knowledge to help with conservation and management is recognised in terms of citizen science also.

The following table details the inputs of the agencies and organisations (table 4.1). A separate document recording their concerns and interests is available at [www.cklp.ie](http://www.cklp.ie). Where a number of participants at the Statutory Workshop provided an indepth look at a programme or plan from their agency, those detailed descriptions are presented in boxes located directly after table 4.1 as follows:

- Box 4.1: Kilkenny County Development Plan 2020-2026
- Box 4.2: Agricultural Catchments Programme
- Box 4.3: Sustainability Farms

Table 4.1: Inputs to The Nore Vision from stakeholders in the statutory sector.

	<i>Priorities &amp; plans</i>	<i>Sharing information, community engagement &amp; inter-agency co-operation</i>
<i>Bord na Móna</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bord na Móna's short-term priorities within the Nore catchment include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bog restoration at Knockahaw (Laois);</li> <li>• bog rehabilitation at Templetoohy (Tipperary) and Bawnmore (Kilkenny);</li> <li>• continued peat extraction at Coolnamona (Laois);</li> <li>• exploring opportunities for after-use projects, including renewable energy, commercial, amenity, environmental, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Peat production for electricity generation will cease on Bord na Móna land by 2030.</li> <li>- A rehabilitation programme for at least part of Littleton Bogs will commence in 2018 to include bog restoration at Knockahaw (partially within the Nore catchment, a drained, uncut bog with high conservation potential) plus development of wetlands and birch woodland habitats.</li> <li>- Ongoing assessment of Bord na Móna's land-bank for post-peat production developments includes renewable energy, e.g. Bruckana Windfarm (Kilkenny).</li> <li>- Development on cutaway bogs must comply with planning regulations, land-use policies and the National Peatland Strategy. Opportunities include amenity/ local community projects, wild space for biodiversity, and ecosystem services (carbon flux mitigation, water attenuation and water quality). A good example of a multi-functional land-use development on a cutaway bog is Lough Boora Discovery Park (Offaly).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Abbeyleix Bog</a>, now leased to the local community, is an excellent example of a community-led bog restoration and conservation project in the Nore catchment.</li> <li>- There is ongoing consultation with stakeholders about bog restoration plans for Knockahaw in 2018.</li> <li>- There will be consultation with stakeholders for cutaway bog rehabilitation in the Littleton bog group in 2018.</li> </ul> <div style="background-color: #e0f2e0; padding: 10px;"> <p><b>Vision</b> – Bord na Móna will continue to operate in an environmentally responsible manner within the Nore catchment as it transitions from peat-based business to other more sustainable businesses and will continue to work with other stakeholders to improve environmental quality in the Nore catchment.</p> </div>

	<i>Priorities &amp; plans</i>	<i>Sharing information, community engagement &amp; inter-agency co-operation</i>
Dept. Agriculture, Food & Marine (DAFM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of Nitrates Action Plan (NAP) 2018-2021 (in draft form) – with additional proposed measures, e.g. breaking loss pathways of nutrients and sediment to waters.</li> <li>- Ensuring NAP actions are effectively implemented on farm.</li> <li>- Continued implementation of RDP 2014-2020 incentives for extra measures to protect water.</li> </ul>	
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure full compliance with relevant EU and national legislation.</li> <li>- Ensure that EPA licensed facilities comply with license conditions.</li> <li>- Prevent deterioration in water quality.</li> <li>- Meet the objectives for designated protected areas.</li> <li>- Protect high status waters.</li> <li>- Supporting the implementation of targeted actions in Areas for Action and addressing more complex issues which will build knowledge for the 3rd cycle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The EPA is working to assist the various stakeholders involved in disseminating information, assessing impacts and implementing measures.</li> </ul>
Fáilte Ireland	<p>- FI's Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) approach aims to create a cluster of experiences to help spread visitors around Ireland and across the year (fewer honeypots and less seasonality). Research in Ireland's four main international markets shows a high interest in outdoor activity / being out in nature and that visitors expect water experiences. The new insight is that people want to be on the water rather than in it e.g. boat trips rather than canoeing. The extent of this interest surprised FI. Is this of interest to the Nore?</p> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Vision</b> – brilliant visitor experiences and all the basics to attract visitors e.g. accommodation, amenities.</p> <p><b>Steps</b> – what does the consumer want, what does the Nore have to offer visitors. Link in with IAE to market and package them to make them enticing. FI can support a consultation for particular local projects with high potential.</p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How VEDP works: FI consultants workshop with local community (especially businesses) and generate action plan that community owns. FI then works with them to collaborate across agencies to support/fund businesses on the ground.</li> <li>- The national Capital Works Management Framework<sup>iii</sup> is a useful tool to manage project feasibility studies, planning, environmental assessment, design, etc, to increase chance of a project being successful in securing public funds.</li> </ul>

*Priorities & plans**Sharing information, community engagement & inter-agency co-operation*

- Collaboration with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes on a national Zone of Contribution (ZOC) project to look at 250 wells and work with group water schemes to draw up ground water ‘catchment maps’ or the ZOC for each scheme, which might supply anywhere between 50 and 1,000 connections. This info is available on GSI website. It allows group water schemes to see and manage the ZOC.
- As part of this work, GSI has mapped 27 group water schemes in the Nore catchment. This information is available on the Groundwater Viewer<sup>iv</sup> and can be uploaded to local authority geographic information systems (GIS) and used in considering planning applications.
- GSI has developed an intrinsic Groundwater Vulnerability Map, informed by criteria such as thickness and permeability of subsoil, across catchments. In conjunction with the National Aquifer maps and the Groundwater Protection Schemes (GPS)<sup>v</sup>, this is helpful for planning, and addressing problems of well-water contamination, etc. as often the owner of the well or the group water supply scheme with a water quality problem does not own the area of ground where a problem may arise, because of its vulnerability. This promotes and facilitates collaboration to address problems. Karst mapping and dye tracer testing further help identify areas susceptible to groundwater contamination.
- The mapping allows identification of Source Protection Areas and this is also done for public water supply sites to inform local authority planning decisions. There are 13 Source Protection Areas for public drinking water supplies in the Nore catchment.
- Circular letter SP 5-03 states that County Development Plans need to refer to GSI’s GPS to take ground water protection into consideration when assessing planning applications. Circular letter PPSP 1/10 refers to the EPA’s Code of Practice on Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems serving Single Houses and GSI’s GPS advising that relevant info on groundwater resources and their vulnerability should be included in all planning applications.

- Attends the Ploughing, BT Young Scientist Competition and participates in Science Week.
- Engages with other agencies (EPA, LAWCO, Irish Water, NFGWS and local authorities).
- Contributes to training and education outreach as appropriate e.g. Site Suitability assessment course for on-site wastewater treatment systems; Geology and Hydrogeology for other organisations; individual schools outreach initiatives e.g. ‘Discover your tap water’.
- Field mapping personnel knock on doors to ask for access and information on water levels in domestic settings, quarries, etc. and interact and hear public opinion this way.
- GSI staff sit on steering committees, WFD Regional Operational committees, technical advisory groups for industry and academia (e.g. iCRAG, SEAI/SFI), initiate short call research.
- Provides training to EPA, Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG), consultants and carry out education outreach as appropriate.
- Gives presentations to individual group water schemes.

**Vision** – Support the delivery of high quality drinking water, and the understanding of groundwater resources providing drinking water and supporting ecosystems. Help protect and manage groundwater resources in the Nore catchment in a sustainable way.

	<i>Priorities &amp; plans</i>	<i>Sharing information, community engagement &amp; inter-agency co-operation</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recommendations are included in each ground water report and this supports those looking for funds to help with plans for upgrades to infrastructure or further investigation into groundwater flow direction, etc.</li> <li>- GSI is undertaking a national 5-year mapping project (Groundwater 3D or GW3D) looking at sand and gravel deposits as potential aquifers (water resource) in their own right; examining contaminant flow pathways (e.g. transition zone); undertaking karst mapping and tracer test work for specific drinking water supply and flooding projects and looking at available hydrochemistry data and relating it to different rock/aquifer types.</li> <li>- GSI has developed the list of County Geological Sites to be considered in planning deliberations, e.g., the glacial channels around Inistioge.</li> <li>- GSI (Tellus programme)<sup>vi</sup> maps the presence of naturally occurring chemical contaminants in the bedrock, ground and water. These 'geogenic' sources refer to naturally occurring elevated concentrations of certain elements which can have negative health effects in humans or animals.</li> </ul>	
<i>The Heritage Council</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Heritage education and awareness to nurture a 'sense of belonging' 2018-2022.</li> <li>- Education element – on biodiversity, community, folklore.</li> <li>- Heritage Week annually supports increased public awareness of issues, including water quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Piloting secondary school heritage programme in Laois (e.g. for biodiversity, heritage and history) in partnership with educators and heritage officers.</li> <li>- Heritage Council works with community-based fora e.g. Walled Town Network.</li> <li>- Use built and cultural heritage to help people engage with the Nore and value it.</li> </ul>

	<i>Priorities &amp; plans</i>	<i>Sharing information, community engagement &amp; inter-agency co-operation</i>
Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IFI works with the Floodplain Management Programme to help restore rivers' historical channels.</li> <li>- IFI gets involved in a variety of habitat programmes through the National Strategy for Angling Development (NSAD). There are various streams of funding for both IFI and stakeholder work and IFI periodically advertises rounds of funding. IFI has been involved in some significant infrastructural programmes to improve fisheries habitat. One example of this is the fish passage improvement works at Castletown Weir on the River Nore. Large projects such as this are complex, multi-stage, infrastructural projects.</li> <li>- Stakeholders can apply for NSAD funding for projects.</li> </ul> <p><b>Vision</b> – high compliance with WFD e.g. ‘good’ status of all elements – water, fish and habitat. Significant surplus of salmon numbers returning to the Nore.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IFI has built up expertise and local knowledge of many fisheries-related habitat issues and this knowledge can help to advise stakeholder applications.</li> <li>- IFI works with other public agencies to help to deliver elements of the Water Framework Directive.</li> <li>- IFI is a statutory consultee on the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme.</li> <li>- IFI’s community animator for the South based in Clonmel works with community groups to develop their capacity to meet compliance for development and to deliver projects.</li> <li>- IFI has an education and outreach programme including the ‘Something Fishy™ schools programme (<a href="http://www.somethingfishy.ie">www.somethingfishy.ie</a>) which promotes fisheries and water awareness in primary schools. IFI actively works with the promotion of angling and facilitates an outreach programme.</li> </ul>
Irish Water (IW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The implementation of a detailed pesticide monitoring programme throughout the Nore catchment has commenced which will provide a more detailed understanding / picture of pesticides within the catchment over time.</li> <li>- A priority is to raise education levels and change behaviour, in collaboration with other stakeholders such as LAWCO, Teagasc, etc., to prevent pollution incidents and the problems of pesticides (and other pollutants) from reaching the water in the 1<sup>st</sup> instance.</li> </ul> <p><b>Vision</b> – As with all of the catchments which are used as drinking water sources, Irish Water’s vision for the Nore Catchment is for a catchment that provides safe and reliable source water to supply the drinking water needs of its communities, to raise awareness and education levels with regards to the protection of these important drinking water sources, and to change behaviours for the better to protect these drinking water sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IW recognises that it cannot achieve success in terms of ensuring water quality working in isolation and is committed to engaging with other agencies and stakeholders and working together.</li> <li>- IW funds the Water Awards in Tidy Towns competition.</li> <li>- IW has Regional Information Specialists who engage with the local communities and visit schools</li> <li>- IW attends the Ploughing and similar events.</li> <li>- IW Communications Department working at both national and regional level.</li> </ul>

	<i>Priorities &amp; plans</i>	<i>Sharing information, community engagement &amp; inter-agency co-operation</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4 recommended Areas for Action under WFD targeted for collaborative project with LAWCO.</li> <li>- Prevent deterioration and improve water quality by screening plans for impact on Natura 2000 sites, e.g. discharges from development sites, silt/wastewater affecting Freshwater Pearl Mussel.</li> <li>- <i>The Nore Vision</i> will feed into County Development Plan 2020-2026 (see box 4.1).</li> <li>- Plan to complete and disseminate the River Nore Heritage Audit Project and associated lesson plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information and data sharing.</li> <li>- Education and awareness to ensure waters achieve at least good quality status, while ensuring that no deterioration occurs. For example, Environment Section plans continued public engagement by visiting schools, trade shows, etc., and providing information and advice on water quality matters.</li> <li>- New collaborative approach between public bodies, private sector and citizens to improve and protect waters through focused surveys and investigations to understand problems and identify solutions. New team will recommend specific measures where available through a range of schemes including GLAS, forestry initiatives and locally led schemes.</li> </ul>
Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support the ongoing development of <i>The Nore Vision</i>.</li> <li>- Implementing community re-engagement with the rivers locally through LEADER “Turn to the River” Funding – Biodiversity, Amenity and Heritage.</li> <li>- Implementing LEADER “River Valleys Development Funding Programme” which will support enterprises and communities in the area to develop projects for biodiversity, tourism and amenities.</li> <li>- Pursue a minimum 3-year LEADER Cooperation Project with Local Action Groups (LAGs) of the Nore catchment to pursue actions arising from <i>The Nore Vision</i> e.g. Catchment Network / Trust Model, invasive species, Citizen Science projects.</li> <li>- Pilot Natural Flood Risk Management Initiatives in the Nore catchment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possible “postcards” via social media to highlight issues, using humour and illustrative visuals.</li> <li>- Cooperate with LAWCO, Heritage Council, LAs to develop youth-focused education on river, water and biodiversity of the Nore catchment.</li> <li>- Work with Teagasc and LAGs to help to improve agri-environment schemes e.g. pilot an option for a watercourse buffer margin that is adaptable to the local area with a points-based system based on the land quality. Buffer areas could double-up as access routes. → good for biodiversity, for derogations, for carbon-fixation / climate change. Pilot through a European Innovation Partnership (EIP).</li> <li>- Collaborate on funding applications for ‘hard science’ projects e.g. LIFE, EIP, agri-environment initiatives.</li> </ul>
Laois Co. Co. – Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initial priorities are the 3 recommended Areas for Action identified under WFD Characterisation process for the Nore catchment within Laois.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaboration with EPA, DAFM and other stakeholders is important to this work.</li> </ul>

*Priorities & plans**Sharing information, community engagement & inter-agency co-operation*

- Need to input into planning process → develop objectives in development plan.

**Vision** - Increase education (understanding, knowledge and expertise of the river) to build relationship with river among communities to increase projects.

**Steps** – education projects, capacity-building through consulting re: planning and projects, developing projects to give value to community and attract visitors.

- Education/information initiatives to raise awareness of value of catchment in terms of biodiversity, etc. Education creates knowledge that enables ‘getting boots wet’.
- Early stakeholder management and coordination within and between regulatory and public bodies essential.
- Capacity building within communities leads to development of ecological understanding.
- Developing community capacity to navigate statutory requirements for project delivery.

- Developing angling/biodiversity.
- Developing amenity/tourism prospects in and around watercourses, e.g. blueways, walkways - high usage of waterways for walking, kayaking, swimming, etc.
- Developing commercial opportunities on back of Nore e.g tourism, energy.

**Vision** – communities turning back to the river, with commercial spin-off.

**Steps** – make it easier for this to happen e.g. more supports to achieve it, general awareness-raising campaigns and joined-up approach to accessing EU funds and national opportunities.

- Communities informed to understand and appreciate the Nore and empowered to initiate/support relevant projects, e.g. animation funding for work on Erkina Blueway
- Collaborate through *The Nore Vision* on river education programmes, invasive species & citizen science mapping
- Help to improve agri-environment schemes e.g. pilot an option for a watercourse buffer margin that is adaptable to the local area with a points-based system based on the land quality. Buffer areas could double-up as access routes → good for biodiversity, for derogations, for carbon-fixation/climate change. Pilot through a European Innovation Partnership (EIP).
- Collaborate on funding applications for ‘hard science’ projects e.g. LIFE, EIP, agri-environment initiatives.

	<i>Priorities &amp; plans</i>	<i>Sharing information, community engagement &amp; inter-agency co-operation</i>
National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To maintain habitats and species and to improve biodiversity where possible.</li> <li>- To maintain good water quality and to work towards improvements.</li> <li>- Site Specific Management Plans for the SAC are legal documents produced and published by NPWS. The plan for the Nore SAC has not been published to date.</li> <li>- Species management plans are legal documents produced by NPWS.</li> <li>- Constraints on NPWS staffing and recruitment influence what is achievable e.g. because lack of funding ensures a focus on merely protecting habitats at the expense of improving their prospects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for partnership and co-operation amongst agencies.</li> <li>- More engagement with the public from the Dept of Culture, Heritage &amp; Gaeltacht would enhance awareness of NPWS message.</li> <li>- Trust among stakeholders is important – how do you build trust?</li> </ul> <p><b>Vision</b> – a river and its tributaries with clean gravel, wooded banksides and flooded wetlands.</p>
North Tipperary LEADER Partnership	<p>-Tipperary Local Development Strategy 2014-2020 includes a specific objective focused on Water Resources under the Rural Environment Theme. The objective is concerned with safeguarding our water resources and would invite projects that raise awareness about conserving, protecting and safeguarding water resources. It also makes funding available for feasibility and conservation planning and implementation of same.</p> <p>The budget for this objective and its actions is currently around €270,000.00. It is NTLP's priority to support promoters to implement projects, in line with this objective and actions, in the northern part of Tipperary.</p> <p><b>Vision</b> – For communities to be fully supported with agency/professional guidance and funding to develop good quality projects at a local level. There are economic, environmental and social benefits for rural communities in being mindful of rivers and their habitats.</p> <p><b>Steps</b> - The first step would be the development of a toolkit for local communities wanting to do a river project i.e.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What agencies need to be consulted?</li> <li>2. What expertise is required and where to access it?</li> <li>3. Funding opportunities matched with the level of professional input required.</li> <li>4. Types/grades of projects matched to the capacity of the groups on the ground interested in doing a river project but not sure what to pursue, e.g., simple planting of riparian habitats versus in-river infrastructure work – level of complexity can be vastly different.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community projects can be great. Ballyartella Weir Fish Counter on Lough Derg is the only Brown Trout counter nationally – these figures are fed back and have an influence on policy nationally. This fish counter would not exist without the initiative of the local angling group and involved the collaboration of Lough Derg Angling Association, NTLP and IFI.</li> </ul>

	<i>Priorities &amp; plans</i>	<i>Sharing information, community engagement &amp; inter-agency co-operation</i>
Office of Public Works (OPW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduction of risk to life. Manage and reduce exposure to flood risk.</li> <li>- 6-year flood risk management plans are to be published shortly.</li> <li>- Recommendation to progress Flood Relief Schemes through stages of design and further public consultation (to refine design and prepare for planning and assessment – including environment assessment where required). This is followed by public exhibition and (if and as appropriate) implementation of Flood Relief Schemes for Ballyhale, Inistioge, Thomastown, Freshford and Rathdowney.</li> <li>- Recommendation to undertake detailed, local assessment of costs of potential measures for Callan, Kilkenny (Breagagh) and Mountrath.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extensive consultation undertaken during the CFRAM Study.</li> <li>- Further consultation to take place at detail design stage.</li> <li>- Maps and reports will be available via website.</li> </ul> <p><b>Vision</b> – the OPW will shortly publish the Flood Risk Management Plan for the Nore River Basin. The purpose of the plan is to set out the strategy, including a set of proposed measures, for the cost-effective and sustainable, long-term management of flood risk in the River Basin, including the areas where the flood risk has been determined as being potentially significant.</p>
South Tipperary Development Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Instigate a Community Training programme to support communities along the Nore and its tributaries to develop projects that enable them to re-engage with the River.</li> <li>- Support communities and individuals in developing amenity and tourism projects based on the river and its habitat.</li> <li>- Encourage awareness of the biodiversity of the river.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning for other successful “water-based” projects, e.g. development of blueways.</li> <li>- Facilitate site visits to other parts of the country to learn how other communities have utilised rivers to develop the community from an economic and energy perspective.</li> <li>- Supporting communities to understand the necessity to protect the river as a community resource.</li> </ul>
Teagasc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Info/data sharing and use it to shape policy</li> <li>- Education of advisors and farmers must be continuous.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multiplicity of agencies must collaborate in light of low resources. By working together, agencies present a more powerful message to the public, unlike currently where the public deal with different agencies about related issues.</li> <li>- 40 Teagasc Discussion Groups throughout the Nore catchment across beef, dairy and tillage. Discuss topics such as grassland management, financial management, breeding, etc. Scope for environmental topics, e.g., water quality.</li> <li>→ idea – working with the Teagasc Advisor lead for each discussion group, bring in a heritage or fisheries speaker to cover that topic with farmers.</li> </ul>
Tipperary Co. - Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of contribution scheme incentives e.g. Nitrates Directive on farms, encourages positive action by farmers developing facilities to handle waste, etc.</li> <li>- Tourism and employment development pressures, and education around these.</li> <li>- A new draft Section 28 Planning Guidance is being developed to inform how Irish Water and Planning interact.</li> </ul>	

	<i>Priorities &amp; plans</i>	<i>Sharing information, community engagement &amp; inter-agency co-operation</i>
The Waters & Communities Office (LAWCO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supports local authorities to deliver WFD through regional structures.</li> <li>- Engages local communities and promotes public participation in the management of our natural water environment.</li> <li>- Supports linkages e.g. across local authorities, EPA, DHPLG, public bodies and stakeholders, etc.</li> <li>- Recognises that there is a need to achieve a cultural shift in valuing water across society e.g. among communities and landowners, etc.</li> <li>- Key roles – WFD, shared Local Authority service, community participation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seek full engagement/participation in the sustainable management of our natural waters from all public agencies and stakeholders. This is done through regional structures (Regional Committees and Regional Operational Committees). Extensive public consultation, engagement and support ongoing by LAWCO Community Water Officers. Supporting public engagement and implementation of Ireland's River Basin Management Plan (2018-2021).</li> <li>- It is important that organisations do not operate in silos but collaborate to achieve required water environmental objectives of “good status or higher”.</li> <li>- It is important that within each organisation (known as implementing body), that the entire organisation has ‘buy-in’ and not just individuals within it.</li> <li>- Process of engagement/participation must be community friendly.</li> </ul>
Trinity College Dublin (TCD) – Human & Physical Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Achieve a cultural shift in valuing water across society e.g. among communities and landowners.</li> <li>- Identify and build relations with one (or more) affected communities in the Nore catchment willing to fully engage in a participative process of flood risk management.</li> <li>- Identify funding sources and suitable partner communities to explore flooding solutions in upstream sub-catchments.</li> <li>- Partner with others regarding information sharing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build relationships with local ‘champions’ and brief local community groups on research plans and how it will have multiple benefits across the community.</li> <li>- Potential business opportunities with developing expertise in building e.g., leaky dams. Anticipated that over next 5 years, Natural Flood Management will be deployed nationwide and there will be high demand for people with specific experience. Researchers can help train local people who may have potential to develop this soft engineering technology.</li> <li>- Community participation and ownership of flood risk management interventions is central to the natural flood risk management approach, and to holistic catchment management more generally. This means developing research methods and approach to flood risk that actively involves affected communities from the start. A key part of this approach (as demonstrated by successful UK projects) is recognising all forms of expertise that can be drawn together by identifying shared questions/problems, building shared knowledge, and designing shared interventions. This approach unsettles the more familiar situation of ‘experts’ and ‘lay’ people and can result in less predictable outcomes; this can require greater commitment by participants.</li> </ul>

**Box 4.1: Agricultural Catchments Programme**

- Want to improve the sustainability of farms.
- Recognises farming is both a part of the problem and a part of the solution.
- Recognises huge potential for working with farmers.
- Must be a 2-way process) → genuine engagement with the farmers.
- 300 farmers in ACP nationally (nearest site of the ACP to the Nore catchment is Wexford).
- ACP is collecting scientific baseline data -> soils, water, rainfall...
- Next stage is to identify issues
- Through relationships and genuine engagement -> farmer education and input to European Innovation Partnerships (EIP) proposals
- Teagasc ACP – interest in outreach/ education programmes
  - look at the successful engagement with farmers in Kilkenny for the field names project..
- ACP is open to collaboration and interested in working with *The Nore Vision* and with Sustainability Farms

**Box 4.2: Sustainability Farms**

**Teagasc (Advisory) & Glanbia Initiative**

- 30 Monitor/ Sustainability Farms (6 located in Nore catchment).
- Addresses nutrient management -> soil tests now & in 3 years -> provides evidence for the impact of each farm's fertiliser plan.
- Addresses farm facilities -> in terms of pollution management
- Sustainability Farms are examples of 'demonstration farms' -> overlaps with the work of the ACP.
- Other potential synergies with *The Nore Vision* e.g. open source Sustainability Farm – Glanbia and Teagasc initiative at Teagasc facility in Kildalton -> demo to farmers re: all aspects of sustainability (water quality, biological, heritage).

**Box 4.3: Kilkenny County Development Plan 2020-2026**

- *The Nore Vision* process will feed into the County Development Plan (currently in 2014-2020). Its review starts in April 2018 and work will begin on new 6-year plan (2020-2026), through objectives with Heritage, etc.
  - The Nore is a Natura 2000 site;
  - Acknowledges the river as an ecological and recreational asset;
  - Rivers provide rich landscape settings for towns and villages;
  - Rivers will be maintained in an open, semi-natural condition where possible;
  - Their corridors and valleys will be protected and their flood plains maintained as buffers;
  - Public access to rivers and understanding of rivers will be promoted.

City Plan has an objective to focus on the river.

- River Nore and its tributaries provide a rich landscape setting for the city and is its primary green infrastructure. The river valley/corridor will be protected.
- Specific projects of interest are the Brewery site, pedestrian bridges and extension of riverside linear park.

## 5.0 Community Stakeholder Inputs

The vision of community members resource users, interest groups and political representatives reflected closely the areas of concern they identified, and were remarkably consistent across the different consultation workshops conducted in different parts of the catchment.

One central goal emerged in the workshops, and this is set out immediately below. Within this core objective, different elements of the vision are presented under the headings of the various themes that emerged in the workshops. There was a clear appreciation of the interconnectedness of all the elements discussed and an understanding of a shared and common interest in a “healthy” River and catchment that would benefit all stakeholders.

The main themes (principal headings) below were identified in *all of the* stakeholder workshops.

### Core Vision

- A clean river for everyone and all activities.
- People to love the Nore and value it; aesthetically, spiritually and emotionally.
- People to cherish and care for the River, and “turn towards the River”.
- Renewed community-wide awareness and appreciation of the Nore catchment as a resource for all living things.
- The first “Blue River/catchment” (all parts of the water body being of high ecological status), with a maintained Blueway.
- Sustainable development of the whole catchment with agreed standards (e.g. for access points).
- Restore the River to what it was when we were young, and have ongoing maintenance.
- Establish a structure to manage the River.
- Agree and implement a catchment-level plan from *The Nore Vision* through a joined-up, partnership approach underpinned by co-operation across agencies and with communities of the catchment.

### Water Quality

- A clean river
- Water of high ecological status that is free of pollution and safe to drink.
- The Nore to be a “Blue River”<sup>vii</sup> from source to sea.
- The water quality must be thoroughly monitored, with increased independent testing, and effective control of pollution.
- Identify where the aquifers<sup>viii</sup> are and protect these.
- All waste water treatment plants to have adequate capacity and deliver tertiary treatment<sup>ix</sup> of sewage throughout the catchment.
- Particular attention is needed to remove the phosphates both at treatment plants and through the use of reedbeds where streams meet tributaries of the Nore. Grants should be made available for farmers/landowners to do this (e.g. to establish reedbeds).
- Similarly, screens and filters should be used to capture micro-beads from toiletries, micro-fibres from laundry, and other undesirable elements before they enter the river system. Such screens and filters could be installed at the outflow of reedbeds (see above), in water treatment plants or domestic units.
- Better planning regulations for siting of oil tanks and other potential pollution risks – not near rivers.
- Increased education to reduce household chemical use, and other initiatives to support this such as the re-introduction of the “Chem Car” (collection for hazardous household chemicals). This may in turn reduce the need for de-sludging of septic tanks.
- Initiatives to reduce abstraction and demand for treated water supply, such as harvesting/collecting of rainwater and use of grey water for flushing toilets.
- High quality water will support healthy wildlife and recreational activities on the River, and these in turn are indicators of a clean and healthy river.

## Flood Mitigation

- The Nore and its catchment to be resilient: able to withstand and play an important role in dealing with extreme flood events.
- Adopt a catchment approach to flood amelioration, not only building defences but using natural methods, and protecting water meadows and floodplains still in existence.
- Working with natural processes to reduce flood risk which in turn gives lots of other benefits, e.g. improved water quality.
- Carry out a study of the floodplains to ensure that these are protected and left undeveloped.
- Use soft engineering wherever possible for flood mitigation and management so that the River is not a threat to the people who live beside it.
- Use a “farming water” approach and look at experience elsewhere, such as the UK Environment Agency river and floodplain restoration, headwater, soil and land management, offline storage areas and floodplain woodland.
- Undertake continuous cover forestry<sup>x</sup> to reduce impacts of removing forest cover in headwaters of the catchment.
- Conduct pilots to establish the effects of native forestry on water retention and its possible role in flood prevention/mitigation.
- Stabilise embankments and address erosion. For example, use smaller measures, such as leaving the roots when trees are felled to help stabilise the riverbank.
- Previously, there was at least a 24hr flood warning period for the stretch of river to Thomastown; now there is no time to take action. This is the **knock-on effect** of flood protection measures taken in Kilkenny city and needs to be addressed.
- With global warming, there will be a greater need for communities to work in a collaborative way with ALL river stakeholders to help build community flood resilience.
- Berm the riverbank.

## Natural Heritage: Ecology & Biodiversity

- Freeze the loss of our natural assets and environment. Be careful about what is seen as progress.
- Have the banks covered with wildflowers, with plenty of wildlife to be seen; butterflies, bees, otters, etc. Have clear, running water in the River Nore with plenty of healthy fish and crustaceans.
- Recognise the value and benefits of a catchment. It's not rocket science; the environment has value that's not being recognised. At a heritage walk through Grennan Castle and woods, the overall reaction was outstanding. Walking along the banks, local people can benefit.
- Identify the species that are threatened and the measures necessary to protect them.
- Provide specific support for ecology and biodiversity within the catchment including:
  - Species recovery, e.g. kingfisher, freshwater pearl mussel, otter, minnow, trout, salmon, crayfish, eels, through enhancement of habitat and restocking.
  - Encouragement of plants, birds, fish and wild animals such as otters.
  - Provision of bird boxes, bat boxes, etc. – at bridges and elsewhere.
  - Wildlife enhancement, willow stabilisation, otter holts, spawning areas.
  - Restrict cutting of hedgerows and encourage best practice management to benefit birds and wildlife.
  - Habitat creation and renewal.
  - Diversified forestry planting, with emphasis on broadleaf and native species.
  - REPS (Rural Environment Protection Scheme) was a good idea and restored wildlife: hares, hawks, otters, cranes and kingfishers all returned.
- Conserve *all* this environment and *all* its biodiversity (habitats and species), not just protected habitats and species.
- Develop whole catchment plans for the protection of biodiversity, e.g. to deal with invasive species.
- Promote a more natural environment:

- Leave the land to be more natural near the River for a certain distance creating a wildlife corridor.
  - Remove fallen trees but leave the roots to secure riverbanks and let vegetation be natural, not manicured.
  - Re-wilding: re-introduce native species – otter, water hen, etc.
  - Limit light pollution (Dark City/County accreditation may be possible for some stretches of the River).
- Secure multiple benefits that support important wildlife (see example below) and engage through recreation with wildlife walks, heritage.
- **Freshwater pearl mussel preservation** - Steady small steps to recover floodplain function along the River (and so species-rich wetland in riparian zones) and have more sustainable upper catchment land use with peat restoration wherever possible. This will help restore a functioning freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera durrovensis*) population in key areas of the River where there remains good near-bed velocity flow and thus more natural riverbed habitat and cleaner conditions. (This is mainly driven by areas of higher gradient and the persistence of boulders and larger stones in the River, which create good preferential velocities.) Keep the population functioning through the release of short-term captive bred mussels with the view to having some small, sustainable habitat areas for this mussel into the future.  
For this to happen, potential key habitat areas need to be mapped, and the floodplain function assessed. If the landowner would agree, a management plan would need to be prepared to provide the necessary riparian management. The habitat would be supplemented with captive bred mussels. The habitat areas will of course be influenced by all the inputs to the River from upstream, so some level of protection of the upper catchment and downstream would be needed, but this could be done in steady small steps. The protection and recovery of the best habitat areas is very urgent, as the number of mussels continues to decline and with it the remaining genetic diversity of this population.

### Invasive species

- A catchment-wide, long-term, strategy to eradicate invasive species:
  - Invasive plants should be removed in one co-ordinated sweeping movement starting at the top (headwaters) of the catchment. Get all angling clubs, farmers, and other community groups, involved.
  - An education programme to raise awareness of invasive species and ways to tackle them.
  - Investigate the “rust” being used in the UK to weaken Himalayan balsam, apparently without other negative impacts.
- Teagasc education programme on how and when to remove invasive plants.
- Take measures to prevent the Asian clam, crayfish plague or other invasive species and diseases coming into the River Nore and killing native species.

### Serenity & Well-being

- The River is a huge asset and source of pleasure and quality of life, where people experience nature and enhance their wellbeing.
- Develop a greater appreciation of the tributaries and overall beauty of the River.
- Protect the River as a serene place where a person can slow down and enjoy the simple things in life. Some places need to be kept ***peaceful***, others should be ***playful***, e.g. have amenities.
- Enable the public to enjoy the River and walks feeling secure and safe.
- Ensure the River is an unspoilt place that people would take pride in.

### Culture & Attitudes

- See towns turn towards the River; using the River in harmony with nature, farmers, etc. and not turning our backs and putting shit in it. These are the arteries of the land.

- Get the local community to feel that the River is theirs, so that they want to get involved and mind the litter, etc. People need to work together.
- Identify and support guardians and champions of the River.
- Recognise the territorial use of the swimming pool to youngsters and its importance to them.

## Cultural & Built Heritage

- Discover, identify and document cultural and other heritage along the River that is currently ***undocumented***.
- Compile a thorough ***baseline heritage inventory, recording and mapping*** the heritage along the River and its tributaries. Much of it is hard to see, and maps should include these sites and those where features may no longer exist but are known to have been located (e.g. Paddy Matthew's work).
- Map the townlands and features, like swimming holes, before they are lost. Keep this resource open for new additions.
- There should be more ***markers*** to alert people and inform them about the heritage along the River, and signage to engage people to make them aware of the heritage and features as they walk along the River, for example, the source of the River at Gorteenashlingaun and the walled cutting on the Nore 010 tributary near Clonakenny.
- Restore and find new uses for old buildings.
- ***Preservation plans*** should be developed for heritage in the catchment. Consider using village enhancement projects to support these.
- Listen to folk who worked in industries historically found in the catchment, and capture this knowledge before it is lost. There is low awareness of it.
- Aspects of heritage to highlight:
  - Nore mythology, e.g. Eoir (old name for the River), the Salmon of Knowledge, etc.
  - Names of the bridges over the River.
  - Norman history along the Nore - linking it with the Norman Way (in Wexford).
  - Castle and the River coming in the Durrow Road – the history. Link in with history groups.
  - Recognise and make the most of the mining heritage along the River, for example diverted rivers underground where there are walled shafts and underground channels, and the unused mine chimney.
  - Callan was named after King Caille who drowned in the River trying to save a servant. Make this a feature to be proud of and empower the community to organise maintenance of amenity; Abbey Meadows, riverbank treatment to include the historic Motte and Bailey.
  - Wildlife heritage; rare flora and fauna, etc.
- Heritage provides beauty spots and tourist attractions.
- Ensure adequate access to appreciate heritage, without causing damage.

## Access

- Improved river access for water users and walkers alike. Make the River more visible and accessible, and therefore more valuable, to the local community and to visitors.
- Provide increased provision of safe access for water users and land-based recreationalists (walkers, anglers, etc.) along the riverbank. This includes provision of adequate visual access to the River.
- Prevent the loss of Rights of Way leading to or along the River. This is in the interest of tourism; consider the trails down to New Ross from Ballacolla on the Barrow.
- Access issues for landowners are valid and need to be recognised.
- Walking is free and walkers spend their money elsewhere in the area – this is proven. But there is a need for funding support for the provision of the walks. Provide an adequate return to landowners for provision of access and maintenance, so that it is worthwhile for farmers.

- Payment of an annual grant to landowners for allowance of walkway, like work done by LEADER. Cover routes throughout the catchment. For example, GLAS (Agri-environment Scheme) provides extra payment as incentive (to landowners to deliver public goods like wildlife habitat). This should be improved and expanded.
- Provide clarity on public liability for landowners e.g. *Trails Ireland* can help with this.
- Provide insurance for farmers to allow access, with clear explanation of the cover provided.
- Develop a Greenway along the River.
- Consider the careful provision of parking. There is a balance to be achieved here.
- Dogs to be kept under control along the riverbank.

## **Recreation**

- Encourage greater use by all age groups of the amenities along the River and in the River.
- Create amenity for the community first and foremost.
- The River as a focal amenity in the towns; accessible, enjoyable, e.g. like the Discovery Park.
- Increased use of tributaries and amenities appropriate to the scale of the River.
- Recreation opportunities overlap with both biodiversity and tourism interests.
- Used for diverse recreation: walkers, canoeists, anglers, naturalists, etc.
- Foster cross-sector partnership, e.g. between anglers, canoeists, walkers, etc.
- Plan to deal with the “collateral damage” of increasing numbers of people engaging with the River, e.g. for litter disposal, maintenance of fences, etc. An integrated approach is needed so that farmers and landowners have access to insurance for provision of access.

### **Water-based recreation**

- Establish a Blueway along the River. Everybody should be able to use it and people should use it responsibly, taking a “leave no trace” approach. For example, develop recreational facilities such as the proposed Erkina Blueway which will benefit tourism and local interest.
- White-water centre with river education unit for school tours, to learn about wildlife, fish, flora, tributaries, the Nore catchment area: a fun centre.
- Water sports education, delivered in a way that is inclusive of children and young people.
- Build and maintain features on the River for watersport activities (e.g. Clonmel slalom courses, weirs, etc.).
- Realise the potential of water sports to increase participation in sports, both recreational and competitive.
- Hold regattas with races, greasy pole to encourage enjoyment of the River, etc.

### **Boating, kayaking & canoeing**

- Develop boating and rafting.
- More boating holidays.
- Boat tours on the history of river.
- From Kilkenny downriver as a commercial amenity for tourists and locals.
- Provide boat and equipment storage for clubs involved in recreation and high-performance water sports.
- Need to popularise boating again as users have declined in Inistioge.
- Establish a kayaking centre with parking, showers and boat wash-down facilities. Create a beginner’s section and a more advanced section.
- Structured development of kayaking, to address the risk that clubs are not sufficiently trained, insured, qualified.
- Establish a canoe trail on the King’s river.
- The River to be made navigable again for small boats, without creating any environmental damage. (Up to 1835, 80t ships came all the way up to Thomastown.)

## **Swimming**

- Increased river swimming, with amenities like those in Thomastown replicated elsewhere. Thomastown River Trust is a brilliant example of what should and could be done in other places, such as Callan.
- Opportunities for swimming throughout the catchment to be facilitated, such as:
  - Swimming area for Kilkenny – near Green’s bridge (like at Thomastown) or at 3<sup>rd</sup> field in the meadows at the Linear Park at very low water. There’s a river lifeguard.<sup>xi</sup>
  - Castletown is a swimming area – not many other places along this sub-catchment. Create a designated and life-guarded bathing area in Castletown.
  - The Paupers’ Hole was a sandy place where the children from the workhouse in Tramore were brought to wash. There was a weir there for the mill race. The weir was never reinstated after the bypass (around Callan) was built, so that the “Paupers Hole” (swimming hole) is gone and there is now nowhere to swim. During the 1980s, there would be 60-70 people a day going there. The landowner did not like it because the courting couples disturbed the hay.
- Provide ropes, swings, diving boards and access to swim in the River.
- Make use of the standing waves for surfing in Ballyragget and in Kilkenny at Green’s bridge. These are hard to find (rare).

## **Angling**

- Create clear access to walk and fish the River, with accessible and affordable opportunities for all to fish (rather than just corporate entities).
- Improved fish stocks and more diverse angling; with “more ‘life’ in the River”, increased numbers of native fish (salmon, trout, lampreys, eels, pike, perch, etc.).
- Clear, pure, uncontaminated river water for insect life/larvae will lead to better fish stocks and improved fishing.
- Recover the salmon population to what it was 30-40 years ago, and ultimately that it will support commercial snap-net fishing again.
- Restock the River with brown trout and salmon as in the past.
- Encourage youngsters to go fishing.

## **Walking**

- Increased number of walkways, with improved standards along existing walks, and improvements in related signage.
- Establish joined-up walkways along the whole main channel and the main tributaries of the River (from source to sea), using the Tidy Towns model to get buy-in (from those along the route). Stretches proposed for walks include (or should encompass):
  - Walkways to the River from Ballyragget.
  - Along the King’s River.
  - Loop walk along the River in Bilboa, including cycle routes and mountain biking through woodlands.
  - Create walking routes between river spots and forestry walks, using Coillte forestry road network and adding information boards, picnic tables (e.g. in granite).
  - Browns Barn, where there is a walk in Freshford for the kids (and another swimming place), and where all that is of interest in the area could be highlighted (e.g. by signage).
  - Walk out to Kells.
  - An old road (replaced by the N62) that runs past an overgrown mill through Gortnagowna to Clonakenny could be used as a walking trail.
- Make stretches of walkways wheelchair accessible but try to avoid hard surfaces elsewhere and develop as “green” walkways and routes where possible.
- Provide more family friendly opportunities, for example proper walkway and cycle path (combined), with signs about local wildlife, and seating in prime locations, such as areas of wildlife interest.
- Plant riverbanks with coppice of varying sizes depending on location: willow, hazel, ash, oak, alder plus reeds ... that combined with nearby fen habitat would provide a bird sanctuary. Walkway to be located within this

planted area along the riverbanks, fenced off from adjoining farmland, and with a rustic bridge over the river channel. Altogether this creates an inter-related attraction.

- Encourage nature walks. Engage through recreation with wildlife walks, heritage, etc.
- Provide funding for stiles, kissing gates and benches/seats.
- Control overgrowth at Linear Walk so that the River can be seen. Further from the River, plant more woodland as this will help with drainage and to support the riverbanks. Extend the walk to the proposed new road, so that you can walk from road bridge to road bridge. And maintain the walk.
- Provide access in Callan town at Motte field and Abbey meadow. Walkway around the Motte should go by a sewage outflow to get people to address it!!
- There is great potential to create a walk in the beautiful scenery between the sources of the Nore and the Suir rivers.

#### **Facilities & infrastructure**

- Increased provision of amenities: picnic areas, playgrounds, fishing shelters, parking, signage.
- Provide public toilets. Look at cost-effective models used on the Continent, for example, where payments are made to local business owners (coffee shops, pubs, etc.) to provide access to a well-maintained toilet. This supports local businesses too. An App tells people where these toilets are. This can be a catalyst to support other activities. Look at Durrow's Scarecrow festival that faces onto the River as it's at the bridge.
- Better signage and interpretation (e.g. on heritage and wildlife) around the River, with information and notice boards for locals and tourists (joined-up thinking).
- Give access along the length of the River, fence and use stiles.
- Create stop points along the River.
- Use imaginative approaches to interaction with the Nore, e.g. "a walking train" or "no phone km".
- Provide physical facilities and infrastructure for sports, kayaking, etc.
- Establish an interactive and interpretive centre in the Old Brewery Area.
- Decking/pontoons at each town along the River for kayakers, swimmers, fishermen, etc.
- Provide slipways to the River (as in Millstreet, Cork).<sup>xii</sup>
- Integrated wetland areas.
- Dog swimming pool.

#### **Safety & oversight**

- Providing lifebelts, as well as access and facilities, is vital to promote the use of the River, especially amongst the young.
- River wardens on Linear Park.
- Engage the local community to take ownership of their River. This will encourage more care and oversight and a greater ability to ensure safety.

#### **Pilot projects**

- Carry out pilot projects to show families what free fun you can have by/in the River. Pick easy, quick wins. This needs good, safe access.
- Pick a tributary of the Goul (near Freshford) as a pilot or model for some quick wins from actions. Do everything possible to raise appreciation and use of the River, and make use of the huge potential of the community-owned park.
- Recreation at the Abbey Meadow – canoeing, fishing, swimming.
- Optimise the use of existing facilities, e.g. Freshford Millennium Park, great for accessible use by young families.
- Amenity area near Parks Grove, near Ballyragget.
- Hold a catchment-wide river festival.<sup>xiii</sup>

## Tourism & Economy

- A ‘whole catchment’ approach is necessary, particularly regarding the tourism visitor potential. There are 700,000 visitors to Ireland every year that engage in walking compared to 600,000 that engage in all other recreational activities put together.<sup>xiv</sup> All that is needed (to support walkers) is a pristine environment and access to it.
- The impacts of the Nore being a tourism river, and all the associated activities, must be carefully managed so as not to damage the resource.
- The River is a tourism attraction and should link with a Greenway/Blueway, and have a heritage trail linking heritage sites. This would have economic benefits across the catchment.
- A greater emphasis on water tourism, and for Kilkenny and its surrounding areas to become a hub for outdoor/river activities.
- Restore angling tourism as this will lead to increased revenue generation. The value of salmon fishing is approximately €5,000 per fish. This value needs to be taken into account when considering the potential and importance of the River.
- Tie in with *Three Sisters 2020* – Kilkenny, Waterford & Wexford.
- Create a “Wild Atlantic Way” for the River Nore: from (the headwaters) to ... New Ross. Look at the Norman influence, medieval city, bridges, castles, etc., and other heritage and wildlife along the way and support this with signage. The Nore as a focus for ‘middle-Ireland’ tourism ... River Valleys of Midlands ...
- Opening up the River brought boating and boaters to Inistioge village, benefitting pubs and shops in the past. (They excavated 3,500 tonnes of silt from Inistioge in the 1970s.) This could be repeated.
- Consider establishing a tourism “village” in woodlands, e.g. cabins, eco-camping accommodation. Bilboa is just one hour from Dublin.
- Tourism will increase with the provision of better facilities in the local area.
- Link business and centres in town with the River.

## Agriculture

- Farmers are much more responsible now for controlling negative agricultural impacts. Positive actions should be supported through practical schemes and payments, balanced with inspections and enforcement of regulations (such as for management of silage effluent) through loss of Single Farm Payments, etc.
- Agri-environmental schemes improvements, such as:
  - Use of smart technology to encourage more tailored agri-environmental schemes;
  - Controls dictated by local conditions, e.g. slurry spreading (rather than “calendar farming”).
  - Improvements in the GLAS Scheme, for example through use of the 1.5m/5ft setback corridor to accommodate walkways and angling pitches, and promotion of native vegetation and biodiversity;
- To make a living from farming here nowadays, you can plant forestry or another option is agri-tourism. Two schemes are important for this (1) GLAS Scheme – native vegetation and biodiversity e.g. birds and bees and (2) Walk Scheme. Need to *improve* the GLAS Scheme and *re-open* Walk Scheme to support agri-tourism.
- Livestock should be fenced off from the River and farmers should be encouraged in this through provision of support for alternative water supplies (piping and troughs). Promote the use of hydraulic pumps to get water to livestock.
- No use of pesticides/insecticides along the River.
- Investigate/pilot/introduce new technology for handling slurry, e.g. injector systems, and anaerobic digestion for treatment and energy generation.

## Energy

- Use the River as a resource to generate electricity, for sustainability and power security.
- Develop small hydro-power stations for local communities using new technology.

- Use water to generate energy to power community facilities and/or generate income to support community facilities.

## Governance

### One body

- There should be one body (a River Management Group) over the River, with the co-ordination of all others in a model like *The Nore Vision*:
  - This body needs to take a catchment-wide approach, for example to tackle invasive species.
  - It should be a source of information on water sports, fishing, tourism, amenity, swimming, proactive development, ecology, etc.
  - It must have authority, with responsibility vested to it by other stakeholders.
  - It must be a fully functioning body, operate on a participatory model and ensure clear communications.
  - It should meet on a quarterly basis, with provision for forward planning.
  - The River is very contentious as everyone wants to have a say. Dealing with statutory bodies is a nightmare, with disputes between the agencies themselves.
  - Representatives of the community voice are needed. No political change is required, or changes that take from the statutory bodies.
  - All stakeholders should be represented e.g. with one rep from each stakeholder group (NGO, community, etc.).
  - It should not re-invent the wheel.
  - This overarching body should allow for joined-up approaches and co-ordination between interest groups for planning, management, etc.
  - Such a proper river management system for the River Nore and its tributaries could be put into a trust, with stakeholders involved in running it.
- There should be a one-stop-shop for information in relation to all matters concerning the River. A simplified system is necessary even if there are still many agencies, possibly with named people in charge of every 25km or so stretch of river with which they would be familiar.
- News about the River - development plans, ecological status, events, amenity plans, flooding, drinking and waste water issues, discharge licenses - is consolidated and communicated in a “plain English” unit (newsletter, website, podcast, etc) rather than in dribs and drabs from the OPW, EPA, NPWS, Local Authorities, Heritage Council, etc. The River Nore should have a Communications Officer. Motivated communities who want to work and get things done are being prevented. One decision-maker.
- A body (such as described above) will be needed to maintain a Blueway.

### One plan

- An agreed masterplan is needed to break the cycle where poor water quality leads to people not using the River. That in turn means that the River becomes neglected, which further reinforces the problems of poor water quality and so forth. The plan would not be concerned with only immediate needs:
  - The plan should include shared goals, and achievable steps to reach these goals.
  - The plan should include a long-term strategy, considering intergenerational work. Longevity and resilience (e.g. of strategies and the plans to implement them so that they can respond to future threats and opportunities).
  - The plan should be reviewed regularly.
  - It should contain clear, widely understood, and measurable objectives.
- Develop an action log with items to follow-up, by whom and by when.
- Ensure there are regular follow-up meetings to track progress.

### **Joined-up, partnership approach with co-operation and co-ordination**

- Joined-up thinking for the whole of the River and catchment is necessary. This requires:
  - Effective communication between agencies.
  - Clarity over responsibility for specific functions and responsibilities.
  - Accountability for actions.
- The County Development Plan and Local Development Plans need to consider all aspects of the River much more thoroughly, particularly when large developments take place – use joined-up thinking!
- Co-operation and a co-ordinated approach between all agencies and in working WITH communities and NGOs.
- This is a complex subject with multiple views; there is a need for people to be patient, measured, realistic, and aspirational. It is essential to keep the conversation going.
- Take the obstacles out of our way! – red tape, bureaucracy – so that motivated communities who want to work and get things done are not prevented from doing so.
- Foster a working partnership between landowners and river users.
- Support autonomy for the community to look after itself and not all be taken care of.
- Engage with people who know the River.

### **Regulation & enforcement**

- Rules are overcomplicated and need to be simplified and explained. Ensure there is proper educational signage.
- Improved reporting structure and responses for issues like pollution.
- Make sure the rules are followed, and provide funding to do this through adequate staff, to control litter problems, protect wildlife, etc.
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>xv</sup> controls should be enforced; there should be protection of land up to 50m from the riverbank. This is fair enough if people understand why.
- Ensure laws are observed on the use of herbicides and pesticides.

### **Community Engagement**

- Community-led river initiatives are supported (financially, technically and socially).
  - Technocratic processes and community engagement programmes offered by State agencies are made transparent and accessible to lay people;
  - Support community leaders - through funding, education, technical support, materials and facilities - to identify and act on local projects;
  - Invest in participatory planning methodologies that facilitate individuals to have meaningful involvement in the planning and execution of works.
- Reduce the burden of regulatory requirements for community groups to engage in projects related to the River.
- Simplify and clearly explain the requirements for funding available to small groups for riparian projects.
- Sustainable rural development needs to be combined with sustainable community development, and this needs constant support, including:
  - Facilitation
  - Funding (e.g. LEADER)
  - Community group volunteers need constant support, e.g. community development workers from LEADER.

### **External links**

- Link with other areas doing similar things (to *The Nore Vision*), as it needs weight to persuade agencies to use different approaches and action, e.g. OPW flood measures concentrate on hard engineering.

## Maintenance

- Establish a proper programme of reasonable maintenance of the River and associated areas and ensure sufficient access to the River for informed maintenance. Ensure it is clear who is responsible for the work and that people, particularly landowners, are aware of this system. An interactive map showing who is responsible for what along all stretches of the River should be produced and responsibility for keeping this up-to-date be given to a named agency.
- Provide a simplified system for contacts regarding getting maintenance/clearance done or enabling citizens to do this appropriately.
- Undertake river restoration e.g. making the River more sinuous, having leaky barriers, cross-slope woodland, riparian woodland, headwater management, etc.
- Identify appropriate solutions to issues rather than using contested terms like “cleaning up the River” and make these known so that people are informed about what are appropriate maintenance works.
- Clear silt build-up under the arches of bridges, remove trees in the river channel, ensure no pipes are discharging into the River, that trees are not causing a tunnelling effect, establish buffer zones and integrated wetland areas.
- Fence 4-5ft from riverbank on both sides of the River.
- Have co-ordinated approach to soil and land management – floodplain woodland, floodplain restoration (see flooding), etc.
- Introduce Thomastown-like maintenance to Inistioge and its riverside environment.
- Look at rivers in France for an example of good practice in river management.

## Rubbish

- The River and its tributaries to be litter free.
- Rubbish and litter to be removed.
- Littering should not be a painless crime. Controls and penalties must be enforced, particularly at honeypots. (Education alone is not enough.)
- Install cameras in beauty/tourist spots to prevent dumping.
- Public and youth education to prevent litter and dumping of rubbish.
- Introduce returnable glass bottles scheme.
- Ban chewing gum.

## Education & Public Awareness

It's today's kids' lifetime that is the span of time that will be needed to rehabilitate the River, but we are still losing so much of it.

- Young people need to get to know the River in order to like it. It is important that they get to touch, feel, and experience the River directly (for which access is required). How many kids have seen frogspawn (or similar natural wonders)? Several different initiatives are identified that support this goal:
  - Create a mobile outdoor classroom for kids (and adults) to get them out to nearby, local rivers so that people do not need to travel. Show them what they have, how it works and learn its value. Link this to the syllabus where relevant (geography, science, history) and to Transition Year (TY) projects. The River is there, just ... add crisps and coke and you're sorted!
  - Make it fun! Create a project for schools and communities to name every single stream (e.g. in the Slieveardagh region) and use this to encourage people to value the River.
  - Re-establish contact with the River and the pride of place that comes from knowing what we have and valuing it.
  - Pilot a tailored “local” catchment education programme.
  - Specific programmes to engage schools, such as those run by the National Federation of Group Water Schemes (primary and secondary level), the Green Flags initiative.

- A whole school education programme on all aspects of the River; safety, sports, ecology, habitats, heritage, etc. for both national and secondary schools. This needs to highlight the significance of the River in the past, present and future in all its roles.
  - Primary education and Transition Year programmes, with projects on the local river, places that are relevant to students.
  - Embedded education programme on catchments and their management to be provided for inclusion in secondary school subject curricula such as Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). Also, consider the role of the river environment in wellbeing and mental health initiatives in schools.
  - Increase youth involvement; engagement with the River can make a serious difference to youth (see **citizen science** below).
  - *Keep Kilkenny Beautiful* and *Kilkenny Anglers* clubs initiatives (and others) for primary and secondary school children to support education, and indirectly help inform parents.
  - Arrange Civil Defence training in water safety starting at primary but for all school levels.
  - Provide affordable, locally accessible, swimming lessons for kids. This will increase swimming activity as kids are keen and parents will be less worried about them swimming. This will increase interest in, exposure to, and care for the River.
- Wider public education initiatives were also identified:
  - Provide signs and interpretive information boards (on wildlife, heritage, etc., that can be seen along the River) at specific “stop points”. For example, explaining how Thomastown was one of the most important ports in medieval Ireland, so that general knowledge and awareness is raised.
  - Provide education on invasive species; raise awareness about these and what action can be taken. Training, from LEADER and others, to be provided for local groups in invasive species recognition and correct control (also on citizen science initiatives, schools programmes and a variety of initiatives e.g. “follow your stream” for schools, etc.).
  - Provide education on waste that can damage the River:
    - that what goes into the sink or down the toilet ends up in the River,
    - what not to flush or throw down your drain (including medicines),
    - the need to reduce detergent use and how this can be done.
  - Promote behavioural change, such as the use of vinegar to clean with, labelling to allow choice re: products and damage to the River, etc.
- All people should take more responsibility for:
  - What goes down the drain;.
  - Keeping the drains clear.
  - Not creating rubbish/litter.
- Actively celebrate the importance of the River:
  - Organise and deliver a series of events that encourage river use; a calendar of events, with a small grants scheme similar to Waterways Ireland.
  - Replicate the World Rivers Day initiative in Thomastown in communities all along the Nore catchment.
  - Celebrate our heritage; the history of the River is important and it is good to celebrate this precious lifeblood of the community.
- Several characteristics of effective and successful learning were identified:
  - The key is to make the learning local and relevant to people; make them aware of the River and its heritage and features to popularise it.
  - It is vital to have interested educators who will “get down and dirty” on the riverbanks, in the River, which means they need places they can get into along tributaries.
  - For ideas on best practice, look at “The River Field” site near Lismaine Bridge.
- Enable local action:
  - Set up a Tidy Towns-style competition for all towns and villages along the River Nore.

- Along the tributaries make a scheme like the CIS (Community Involvement in Road Work Scheme) where communities can apply for support where they undertake recognised work (like the Dinin, a good practice model) – being proactive rather than reactive.
- Re-introduce the “Chem Car” (for local hazardous waste collection).

### **Research & Citizen Science**

- Monitoring to be carried out on arteries (tributaries) to the River and to check the results of actions carried out.
- A system of periodic surveys to be carried out on plant, insect and other wildlife on the Nore to identify threats, and assess the quantity and quality of populations, as well as their location and origin, for species of:
  - Fish
  - Birds
  - Other wildlife.
- A survey of predators to be carried out to inform measures for control and elimination (e.g. mink).
- Get studies done; facilitate, support, fund and promote these in a thoughtful and planned way.
- Facilitate college-level study of the River (with access, parking, etc.) and engage these students in generating data that is needed.
- Involve young people in surveying/recording river life.

## 6.0 *The Nore Vision – 5 Priority Themes*

This section identifies the over-arching priorities from *The Nore Vision*, which were encapsulated within the call to “cherish and care for the Nore”. Inputs from the statutory stakeholders (Chapter 4.0) clearly relate to the themes that emerged from the contributions of community stakeholders to *The Nore Vision* (Chapter 5.0). These complementarities and synergies are summarised here as *The Nore Vision – 5 Priority Themes*.

### **1. Governance, Partnership, Planning, Management & Maintenance**

One management structure and one plan informed by *The Nore Vision*.

A joined-up, partnership approach characterised by co-operation and co-ordination of objectives and action by agencies, communities, enterprises, and individuals.

Clarity on management/maintenance responsibility, execution and accountability.

### **2. Water Quality**

That the water of the Nore is free from pollution, safe to drink and of high ecological status.

That all private and public uses of the Nore's water resources are co-ordinated, planned and managed throughout the catchment (freshwater abstraction and wastewater discharges across private, industrial and public sectors).

### **3. Natural Heritage & Floodplains**

Conserve the biodiversity of the Nore catchment for current and future generations and develop sustainable flood mitigation measures through a joined-up approach to land and vegetation management across households, landowners, local authorities and national bodies, particularly those involved in agriculture, forestry and flood protection.

### **4. Cultural Heritage, Access, Amenity & Tourism**

Record, share and conserve cultural and built heritage of the Nore catchment for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

Facilitate adequate, safe, insured and suitably funded access to the Nore for the benefit of diverse users.

Encourage and support water- and land-based recreation and amenity throughout the Nore.

Optimise the benefits from all of the above for tourism and other economic opportunities.

### **5. Public Education, Engagement & Empowerment**

Support those living and working in the catchment to value and take pride in the Nore and its diverse resources by raising public awareness and engaging children, young people and adults with locally informed and delivered educational programmes, empowerment through citizen science, enjoyable river-based activities and easy-to-access public funding for communities.

The integrated nature of these five priorities is demonstrated by the following graphic (figure 6.1).

*Figure 6.1: The interconnectedness of the five priority themes.*

Photo credit: Leslie Byrne



## 7.0 Appendices

### Appendix 7.1: Members of The Nore Vision Steering Group.

The Steering Group is comprised of members who have been participating in and guiding *The Nore Vision* from the outset and those who have joined as the process has evolved and expanded. Representation at steering group meetings varies, with colleagues attending in lieu of listed members as schedules demand or as people move to new positions or agencies, therefore this is not an exhaustive list.

Name	Representing	Interests / Position
Ms Anne Goodwin	Laois Partnership	CEO
Mr Alan Cullagh	Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)	Development Inspector
Dr Amanda Greer	Community	Conservation, invasive species removal expert
Ms Ann Phelan	Local Authority Waters & Communities Office (LAWCO)	Community Water Officer, Southern Region
Mr Basil Mannion	LAWCO	Community Water Officer, Mid Region
Mr David McInerney	IFI	Southeastern River Basin District Director
Ms Dearbhala Ledwidge	Kilkenny County Council	Heritage Officer
Mr Declan Rice	Kilkenny LEADER Partnership (CKLP)	CEO
Dr. Fran Igoe	LAWCO	Southern Region Coordinator
Ms Gabrielle Carroll	CKLP	Enterprise & Project Officer
Mr Ger Lyster	Community	Full-time farmer along river, Trail Kilkenny participant
Mr Gerry Gallagher	Office of Public Works (OPW)	Project Engineer
Ms Helene O'Keeffe	The Heritage Council	Head of Education
Ms Isabel Cambie	South Tipperary Development Company (STDC)	CEO
Mr Jimi Conroy	National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS)	Conservation Ranger
Mr Leslie Byrne	Community	Land/business owner along river
Ms Mairead Rohan	CKLP	Community Development Officer
Mr Mark Clancy	Laois Partnership	Project Officer
Mr Mark Rylands	STDC	Project Officer
Mr Michael Murray	North Tipperary LEADER Partnership (NTLP)	CEO
Mr Paddy Phelan	Three Counties Energy Agency (3cea)	Manager
Mr Pat Boyd	Community	River recreation, member of Breagagh Conservation Group (Tidy Towns)
Mr Seamus Foley	Kilkenny County Council	Engineer – Environment
Mr Michael Nugent	Kilkenny County Council	Environmental Enforcement Officer
Mr Stan Cullen	Laois County Council	Engineer - Environment
Ms Trisha Purcell	NTLP	Development Officer

## Appendix 7.2: Example of an article in the local press promoting *The Nore Vision*.

# What does Laois want for the future of the River Nore?



by Conor Ganly 31 Jan 2018  
Email: news@leinsterexpress.ie

share 0 comments



World War I reenactment on the River Erkina in Durrow, a tributary of the River Nore.

Communities in Laois are being invited to give their views on The Nore Vision, a keystone project for one of Ireland's major rivers.

Laois Partnership has joined forces with Kilkenny LEADER Partnership (KLP) to bring The Nore Vision to south-west Laois. The Nore Vision team will meet with communities along the River Nore and its tributaries to hear what locals want for the river, its land and people.

The Nore Vision is a partnership of residents, nature lovers, landowners and agencies seeking to imagine a brighter future for their river, the land that feeds it and its communities. It asks 'what do we want for the future of the river' and 'how do we make that future happen?'

Anne Goodwin, Laois Partnership's CEO,

"What people like about The Nore Vision's approach to the future of our valuable freshwater resources is that it begins with what we have in common."

"Everyone lives in a river catchment, drinks water and affects their local water quality each day by everything from doing laundry and cooking to showering and flushing toilets. This is about us all sharing responsibility for our rivers and creating a vision that obliges us to work together in order to achieve the future that we want for our rivers," he said.

Following on from workshops held in Kilkenny, the upcoming gatherings in Laois will hear about people's interest in the river, their concerns as well as their hopes and ideas for the future. These meetings provide the communities living along the Nore, and tributaries such as the Delour, Erkina, Goul and Gully, with an opportunity to have their say.

Mark Clancy, LEADER Project Officer with Laois Partnership

"The Nore Vision covers a wide range of interests from ecology, flooding and management to heritage, education and more. It's about the quality of life in our communities and their attractiveness as places to do business and as visitor destinations," he said.

"At these upcoming community workshops, we want to hear from those who use and enjoy their local rivers as well as from other residents, landowners and businesses, whatever their interests may be. There will be differing views at these workshops but there is also plenty that people can agree on. That is our focus with The Nore Vision, to start where we agree and then work towards a shared understanding of a desirable future for the Nore."

Agencies including Laois County Council, Local Authority Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO), OPW, NPWS, IFI and The Heritage Council are working with Laois Partnership and KLP on the Vision.

The River Nore Catchment is 2,500 square kilometres, extending from north Tipperary, through Laois and into Kilkenny.

Dates and venues for The Nore Vision community workshops in Laois are:

Rathdowney - The Old Convent School, Main St. on Wednesday, February 14th at 7:30pm

Castletown - Castletown Community Centre on Thursday, February 15th at 7:30pm

To learn more, visit [The Nore Vision on Facebook](#), share your photos of what you love, don't love or would love to see happen with the Nore on Instagram – [thenorevision](#) – or get in touch via [TheNoreVision@gmail.com](mailto:TheNoreVision@gmail.com).

# NORE VISION

WHAT WE WANT FOR THE RIVER, ITS LAND AND PEOPLE

**IN THE SLEIVEARDAGH HILLS, FROM THE COMMONS TO GORTNAHOO, FROM BALLINGARRY TO MULLINAHONE, PLEASE JOIN *THE NORE VISION* FOR A MEETING IN KILLENAULE TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF LOCAL RIVER NORE TRIBUTARIES: GOUL, KING'S & MUNSTER RIVERS**  
**WHEN**  
**Monday 26 March 2018**  
**7:30pm - 9:30pm**

**WHERE**  
**Slieveardagh Rural Development Culture & Enterprise Centre**

**Address**  
River Street, Killenaule, County Tipperary

**FEATURING • people • places • maps • ideas • stories • dreams • experiences • shared understanding • a desirable future**

**THE NORE VISION—ON FACEBOOK**

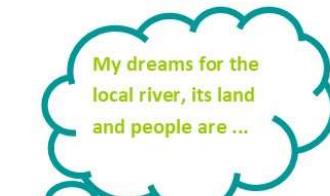
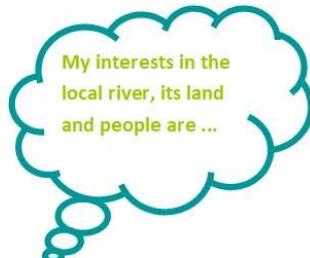


'The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas'.

**THE NORE VISION** is supported by South Tipperary Development Company with North Tipperary LEADER Partnership, Tipperary LCDC, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, Laois Partnership, Local Authority Waters & Communities Office, Office of Public Works, Inland Fisheries Ireland, National Parks & Wildlife Service, The Heritage Council, Local Authorities, plus representatives of community group, resident and landowner interests.

## A VISION IS ...

... a motivating force that compels people to action towards a shared understanding of a desirable future.



#### **Appendix 7.4: Resource Users and Interests Stakeholders – groups and organisations represented.**

The table below shows that 16 groups were represented at the Resource and Interest Stakeholder Workshop, while representatives from nine of these groups also attended at least one of the community workshops around the catchment. Representatives from a further 20 groups identified themselves at the community workshops.

Organisation	R&I Workshop	Community Workshops
An Taisce	✓	
BirdWatch Ireland - Kilkenny	✓	✓
Breagagh Conservation Group	✓	✓
Glanbia Co-operative Society Ltd	✓	
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association	✓	
Irish Farmers Association	✓	
Irish Mining & Quarrying Society	✓	✓
Irish National Flood Forum	✓	✓
Kilkenny Aqua Canoe Club	✓	✓
National Federation of Group Water Schemes	✓	✓
Nore Dragon Paddlers	✓	
Nore River Trust	✓	✓
Streamscapes	✓	
Thomastown Community River Trust	✓	✓
Thomastown Paddlers Canoe Club	✓	
Trail Kilkenny	✓	✓
Abbeyleix Bog		✓
Ballyragget Tidy Towns		✓
Bilboa Community Group		✓
BirdWatch Ireland - Laois		✓
Bourneia Reaching Out (Heritage)		✓
Camphill Communities		✓
Canoeing Ireland		✓
Grange Development Group		✓
Irish Countrywomen's Association		✓
Irish Wildlife Trust		✓
Laois Kayak & Canoe Club		✓
Laois Sports Partnership		✓
Mountrath Development Association		✓
Slievardagh Rural Development		✓
South Laois River Drainage Committee		✓
Streamwatchers		✓
Thomastown Community Network		✓
Tidy Towns		✓
Trout Anglers Federation of Ireland		✓
Woodenbridge Paddlers Canoe Club		✓

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<sup>i</sup> In alphabetical order, these are: Ballyragget (Kilkenny), Bilboa (Carlow/South Laois), Callan (Kilkenny), Castletown (Laois), Kilkenny city, Killenaule (South Tipperary), Lismackin (North Tipperary), Rathdowney (Laois), Thomastown and Urlingford (Kilkenny).

<sup>ii</sup> Given their statutory responsibilities, the statutory agencies were asked specifically in relation to their respective agency, to discuss what are:  
Its interests in the River Nore and its catchment;  
Its concerns in relation to/for the River and its catchment;  
The priorities it has identified for the River and its catchment;  
Any future plans in consideration or agreed for the River and its catchment; and  
Community engagement in planning or execution of works in relation to the River and its catchment.

<sup>iii</sup> See - <http://constructionprocurement.gov.ie/>

<sup>iv</sup> See: <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aac3c228>

<sup>v</sup> See: <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/programmes-and-projects/groundwater/projects/protecting-drinking-water/what-is-drinking-water-protection/Pages/County-groundwater-protection-schemes.aspx>

<sup>vi</sup> See: <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/programmes-and-projects/tellus/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>vii</sup> Blue represents “high status” according to EPA ecological status assessment colour coding.

<sup>viii</sup> An aquifer is an underground layer of rock that can store or transmit groundwater.

<sup>ix</sup> In waste water treatment, primary treatment removes the solids or sludge from sewage, secondary treatment begins to break down the biological content in the remaining sewage liquor, and tertiary treatment is an additional step to improve effluent quality before its discharge into the River.

<sup>x</sup> This is the production of commercial timber while retaining forest cover.

<sup>xi</sup> A lifeguard is on duty in July/Aug at the Weir-Kilkenny and Bishop’s Meadows.

<sup>xii</sup> Under the 2017 Town & Village Renewal Fund, Millstreet was granted funding for the development of a Blueway, pontoon, slipway and carpark.

<sup>xiii</sup> Examples given at meetings included the Abhainn Rí Festival in Callan and the Open Waters Festival in Thomastown.

<sup>xiv</sup> Nearly 2.1 million overseas visitors to Ireland in 2016 engaged in cross-country walking and hiking, compared with 821,000 who engaged in cycling, golf, angling and equestrian activities combined. One quarter of domestic holidaymakers engaged in walking or hiking compared with 20% for the other four activities combined. Source: Fáilte Ireland (2018). Tourism Facts 2016.

<sup>xv</sup> Areas protected under the EU Habitats Directive.