

# LARAGH-GLENDALOUGH SETTLEMENT AND TOURISM PLAN

## 1.1 Context

### **Purpose and Status of Plan**

The purpose of the Laragh-Glendalough Settlement and Tourism Plan is to put in place a structure that will guide the future sustainable development of Laragh and Glendalough. This plan, in conjunction with the strategies, objectives and standards of the County Development Plan will inform and manage future development in the area.

The aim of this plan is to establish a framework for the planned, co-ordinated and sustainable development of Laragh and Glendalough, and to enhance and facilitate the balancing of tourism, economic, social and environmental infrastructure in order to maintain and develop a high quality of life without compromising the protection of the environment and the needs of future generations.

In addition to the objectives set out in the County Development Plan, that are relevant to the development of Laragh-Glendalough, it is an objective of this plan to identify the special characteristics of Laragh-Glendalough and accordingly craft objectives to meet the area's specific needs. As this plan will be part of and form a subset of the County Development Plan, it is not proposed to include a repetition of the objectives or strategies as set out in the County Development Plan. Unless standards or objectives for a particular development are included in this plan, the provisions of the County Development Plan shall apply. The plan will however seek to formulate appropriate Laragh-Glendalough specific development objectives and guidance, compatible with those of the County Development Plan, to assist the Development Management process in managing sustainable progress for the town.

### **Settlement Profile**

Taken together, Laragh and Glendalough form a picturesque rural area located approximately 15 kilometres inland from the N11. The settlement comprises two main elements – (i) the village of Laragh, and (ii) Glendalough, which comprises a historic monastic settlement and the wider Glendalough Valley with the Upper and Lower Lakes. The Upper Lake acts as the main gateway to the Wicklow Mountains National Park, which is managed primarily for the conservation of natural habitats and species, but also for the promotion of recreational and educational activities. Glendalough also has a strong historic association with lead mining, the evidence of which remains, most notably at the now deserted 'miner's village' at the top of the Upper Lake.

The area performs two main functions - firstly, Glendalough acts as a prime tourist attraction, attracting both international and local visitors; and secondly, the village of Laragh provides a service function, providing for the day-to-day needs of the local population and some of the service needs of visitors.

The retail and social services that Laragh provides includes a number of convenience shops, a primary school, post office, Brockagh Community Centre, Catholic and Church of Ireland Churches and GAA pitches. Tourist infrastructure in the area includes a variety of service and accommodation options including The Glendalough Hotel and craft shops, Lynham's Hotel, The Wicklow Heather Restaurant and accommodation, Celtic Crafts shop, the Woolen Mills Factory Outlet, and a number of B&Bs, guest houses and youth hostels. While there is no dedicated tourist office, visitor information is provided about the Monastic City at the Office of Public Works (OPW) run 'Glendalough Visitor Centre', and about the National Park at the Upper Lake Information Office.

Notwithstanding the fact that Glendalough is one of Ireland's prime tourist attractions, it is considered that the economic benefit that should be resulting from the nearly 1 million visitors that come to the area every year, is not being fully realised. This is considered to be due to a number of factors, including the spatial disconnect between the village of Laragh and the attractions of the Lakes and Monastic City at Glendalough, the short duration of visitors' stay, the lack of co-ordination amongst information providers / stakeholders, signage problems, and problems in tourist infrastructure including a lack of public transport, the physical limitations of the road serving the Upper Lake, and the lack of an adequate traffic management system to deal with periods of peak demand. Dealing with these issues, whilst ensuring that the integrity and value of the area's natural, built and archaeological heritage is maintained, is key to realising the future success and viability of the Laragh and Glendalough tourist product. A fundamental aim of this plan is therefore to promote Laragh as a tourist hub, where visitors gather to stay the night, to dine, shop, and to organise visits to the main attractions of Glendalough and to take part in the other tourist activities that the area has to offer. Of equal importance is the promotion of a number of sustainable transportation options so that visitors can travel to the key attractions that Glendalough offers, in an enjoyable manner, whilst also ensuring that the quality of attractions is improved.

Thus the Tourism Strategy will aim to manage the experience of existing visitor numbers in a different way so that the quality of the area's heritage assets is protected, the quality of the visitor experience is enhanced and the economic benefits to the local population are maximised.

The Settlement Strategy will aim to ensure that Laragh village has the capacity to provide for the future housing, employment and social needs that result from projected levels of growth.

There are a wide number of stakeholders involved in the management, development and promotion of the Laragh-Glendalough area, including members of the public and local business interests, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Office of Public Works (OPW), Coillte, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Failte Ireland and Wicklow County Tourism. Along with Wicklow County Council and other relevant interest groups, all stakeholders have different remits of responsibility and have different objectives regarding the management and development of the area. There is a need for the establishment of a single co-ordinating forum for stakeholders that are involved in the management, development and promotion of the area. The establishment of such a forum would be likely to result in far reaching benefits including a resolution of traffic management and parking issues, better protection of heritage, better co-ordination of marketing strategies and dissemination of visitor information, an improvement of the visitor experience and increased benefits for the local population. Importantly, it is considered that the establishment of such a forum is essential for the successful achievement of UNESCO World Heritage Status for Glendalough, which forms part of the Early Medieval Monastic Sites series, in consultation with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

The successful protection and enhancement of the Laragh-Glendalough area will ensure the development of sustainable tourism options associated with a range of themes, including for example outdoor recreational activities, exploration of monastic, archaeological and historical heritage and traditional skills and crafts. Importantly, the theme of 'spiritual heritage' is making a growing economic and social contribution, as growing numbers of visitors are attracted by the peace and tranquillity of the area, for prayer, retreat and religious activities. In order to ensure the successful development of these unique tourist products and themes, it is essential that the distinct heritage on which they depend, is strictly safeguarded for the enjoyment of existing and future generations.

## **Growth Parameters**

Under the Wicklow County Settlement Hierarchy, Laragh is designated a Level 7 'Large Village'. In 2011 the population of the 'settlement' of Laragh, was estimated to be 378 people. The Settlement Strategy indicates that the settlement is targeted to increase by 30 housing units from 142 houses in 2011 to 172 by 2022.

## **Waste Water Treatment**

Laragh is served by the Laragh Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is located at Brockagh. The plant provides preliminary, primary and secondary treatment. Treated effluent is of good quality and discharges to the Avonmore River. The plant is currently the subject of a Waste Water Discharge Licence that was granted in December 2009. The plant has a design capacity of 1,000p.e. and has a current loading of 902<sup>1</sup>. No new development shall be permitted unless there is adequate capacity in the wastewater collection and treatment system.

Developments in the vicinity of Glendalough are mainly served by private waste water treatment plants, including small scale treatment plants at the car park, OPW interpretive centre and Glendalough Hotel and a number of private waste water treatment plants.

## **Water**

Water supply to the Laragh Water Supply Scheme is sourced from a surface water source at Glenmacnass which is fed to the Laragh Reservoir by gravity from the Glenmacnass Treatment Works. The Laragh distribution system extends to Glendalough in the west.

At present, water supply is able to meet demand but in times of dry weather and high demand, such as the tourist season, supply can be limited.

The delivery of a new Mid-Wicklow Regional Water Supply Scheme (Roundwood, Laragh, Rathdrum, Avoca/Ballinaclash, Aughrim/ Annacurragh and Redcross) is being considered by Irish Water and would resolve the water supply constraints in the area into the future.

## **Roads and Transportation**

Laragh-Glendalough is located near to the centre of the county and is an accessible location, with transportation links from all points of the county crossing through the settlement. The settlement is connected by a number of key transportation routes including the R756 from Hollywood in the west and the R755 that has links to Ashford, Roundwood and Rathdrum to the east and south. In addition, Laragh acts as the gateway to the attractions at Glendalough, which is located at the end of the R757 and also has access to the scenic R115 Military Road across the Sally Gap.

Laragh village and the Glendalough area suffer from traffic congestion during periods of peak demand, which has the effect of reducing the amenity and safety of the area.

<sup>1</sup> Annual Environmental Report 2014 – Laragh, Irish Water

The vision of the current plan is centred on a strategy to develop Laragh as a gateway and hub, from which visitors travel to the attractions at Glendalough by means such as walking, cycling or organised transport. An important component of realising this strategy is the implementation of a traffic management plan for the overall area. This traffic management plan has been prepared - 'Visitor Access Arrangements at Laragh-Glendalough' (WCC, NTA, Brady Shipman Martin, 2012). The plan forms the back bone of the LG Settlement and Tourism Plan and has many strands to be implemented on a phased basis. Work is currently being undertaken on the preparation of preliminary design concepts for certain traffic management and environmental improvements.

## 1.2 Laragh-Glendalough Settlement and Tourism Strategy

### Settlement and Tourism Vision

It is the vision that the area of Laragh and Glendalough will be a prime high quality and long-stay tourist destination. The area will be renowned for the natural beauty of the area and the exceptional quality and setting of its unique natural, archaeological and built heritage. Laragh will be a strong, vibrant and attractive rural village, that provides a good range of the essential day to day service and community needs of the local village population and its hinterland, and also provides a full range of infrastructure and services for the needs of visitors. While the heritage and amenity of Glendalough will be safeguarded through the management of future development at Glendalough, Laragh will be developed as the service centre for the area and will become an accessible 'gateway' to the attractions at Glendalough and the surrounding area. The village will have a good range of housing options, and the area as a whole will provide employment opportunities for the local labour force, in a range of employment options, with a strong focus on the provision of employment in the tourist industry.

### Settlement and Tourism Objectives

Unless standards or objectives for a particular development are included in this plan, the provisions of the County Development Plan shall apply. All development proposals shall comply with the qualitative and quantitative development standards set out in the county development plan.

The objectives included herein shall apply to all lands that are located within the 'Plan Boundary', as shown on the map, unless otherwise stated. The 'Settlement Boundary' is the boundary of Laragh village, as shown on the map. The following objectives should be considered in conjunction with the objectives set out in the zoning tables.

It is an objective of the Council to:

### Housing

- LG1** Allow for growth of an additional 30 units within the settlement boundary of Laragh during the period 2011 and 2022.
- LG2** Within the Settlement Boundary, allow for new residential developments, including a mix of residential options within an attractive and accessible setting, at appropriate locations which have safe access to the public road network, which have pedestrian links to the Primary Development Area, and which are served by appropriate water services infrastructure, and which, if possible are in proximity to community and public services.

**LG3** Within the settlement boundary promote densities in the order of 10 dwelling units per hectare (save as indicated under LG27). A higher or lower density may be considered appropriate, having regard to the context of the site and the prevailing density in the vicinity of the site.

## **Tourism**

**LG4** Promote the development of the Glendalough tourist experience in a more sustainable manner that involves managing the movement and experience of visitors in a way so that the integrity of the rich natural and archaeological heritage of Glendalough is protected to the highest degree, while opportunities for yielding economic benefit from the attractions are maximized.

**LG5** Increase the length and quality of the stay of visitors to the area through promoting the development of new and improved tourist infrastructure (including for example tourist information, tourist accommodation, tourist shops ('tourist retail'), cafes, restaurants, public houses, tourist attractions and public infrastructure), facilities and attractions.

**LG6** Promote Laragh village as a tourism hub that is the first stop for visitors to Glendalough and the wider area, and that is the point from which visits to Glendalough and other attractions in the vicinity are organized. In order to ensure that Laragh village becomes the focus for the provision of the service needs of visitors, the planning authority will allow for the development of tourist-related developments on appropriate lands and which are of a high quality and an appropriate scale and design, in accordance with the following (save as otherwise indicated):

(i) Within the Settlement Boundary, tourist-related developments will generally be permitted.

(ii) Within the Tourism Corridor Area, the planning authority will generally limit the amount and type of tourist related developments in this area to a total amount, scale and design that is commensurate with the overarching objective to protect the integrity of the natural, built and archaeological environment of the area and the protection of listed prospect no.23.

(iii) Within the Tourist Attractions Area, the planning authority will generally not permit the development of new tourist related developments, except in the following cases: (i) where a development involves the redevelopment or reuse of an existing building, (ii) where a development involves an extension to an existing tourist related development, or (iii) where a development is a strictly necessary addition that improves the visitor experience or that contributes to the better management of traffic and infrastructure in this area. The development of new tourist related developments will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that the integrity of the heritage sites and prospects are not diminished.

**LG7** Particularly promote tourist developments that are associated with the following tourism products or themes: (i) monastic, archaeological and historical heritage, (ii) outdoor recreational activities, (iii) retreats and spirituality, (iv) mining heritage, (v) the Military Road, (vi) traditional skills and crafts, and (vii) natural heritage and education.

**LG8** Facilitate the appropriate development of the following sites for mixed use tourist developments, whilst ensuring the protection of the character and setting of natural and built heritage, as relevant to the site:

- The Old Mill Building for a mixed use tourist development. Any proposed development shall be of an exceptionally high quality design and shall include uses that reflect its landmark location within the settlement.


















Notwithstanding the fact that all areas are designated for mixed use development, at locations where different types of land uses adjoin, the Council shall ensure that the amenity and visual integrity of these areas are protected. At these locations, developments shall be designed in order to avoid abrupt transitions in scale and use, through incorporating design solutions including landscaping, screening and appropriate layout of site, that provide buffer areas between different land uses. This is particularly important where there are adjoining residential and employment uses.







# Laragh-Glendalough Settlement and Tourism Plan

## WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2016-2022

-  Protected Structures
-  National Monument
-  Prospect
-  Area of Archaeological Potential or Significance
-  County Geological Sites
-  Wicklow Mountains National Park
-  Nature Reserve

-  Settlement Boundary
-  Plan Boundary

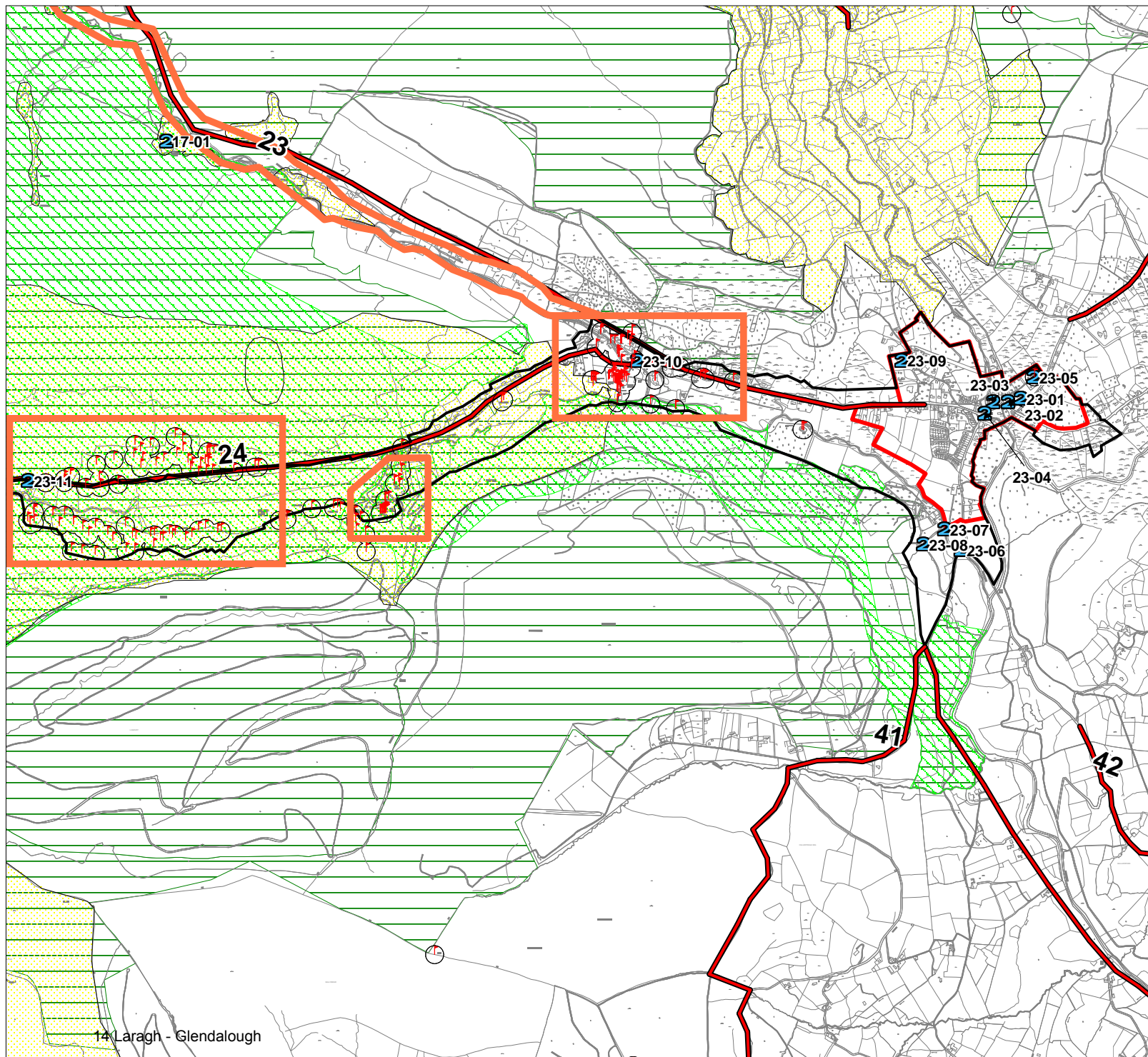
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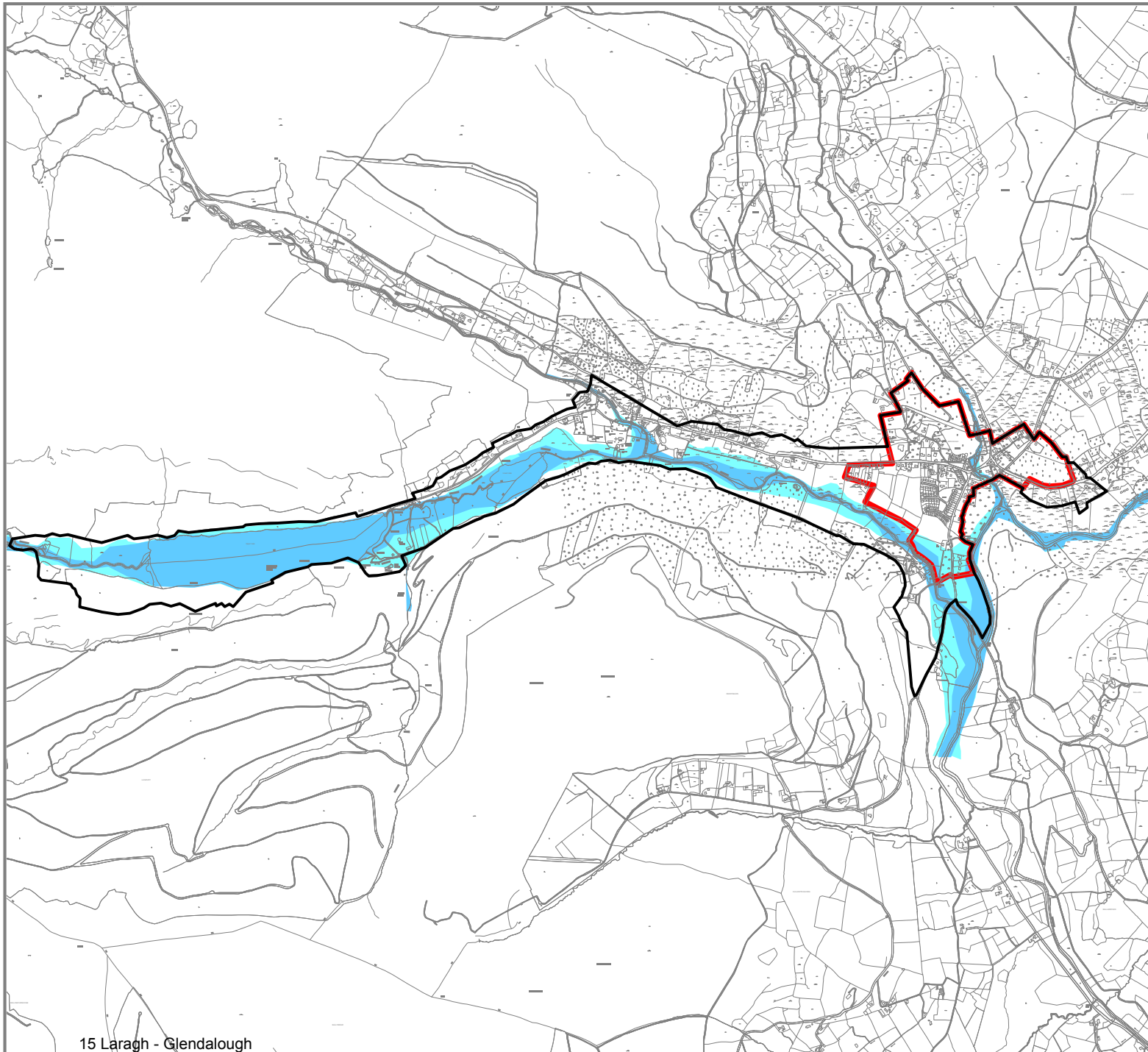


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Maps are not to scale


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


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## WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2016-2022

 Flood Zone A: High likelihood of flooding

Where the probability of flooding from rivers and the sea is highest (greater than 1% or 1 in 100 for river flooding or 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding)

 Flood Zone B: Moderate likelihood of flooding

Where the probability of flooding from rivers and the sea is moderate (between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 and 1% or 1 in 100 for river flooding and between 0.1% or 1 in 1000 year and 0.5% or 1 in 200 for coastal flooding)

 Settlement Boundary

 Plan Boundary

### Disclaimer

These Indicative Flood Zones were based on information available at the time of drafting and amending this plan. Any new data and analysis carried out after this date has not been integrated into this map but should be used in conjunction with this map for development proposals. All information may be substantially altered in light of future data and analysis.

Full Disclaimer is included in SFRA

### Title: Indicative Flood Zones



Maps are not to scale

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