



the environment, society and the economy

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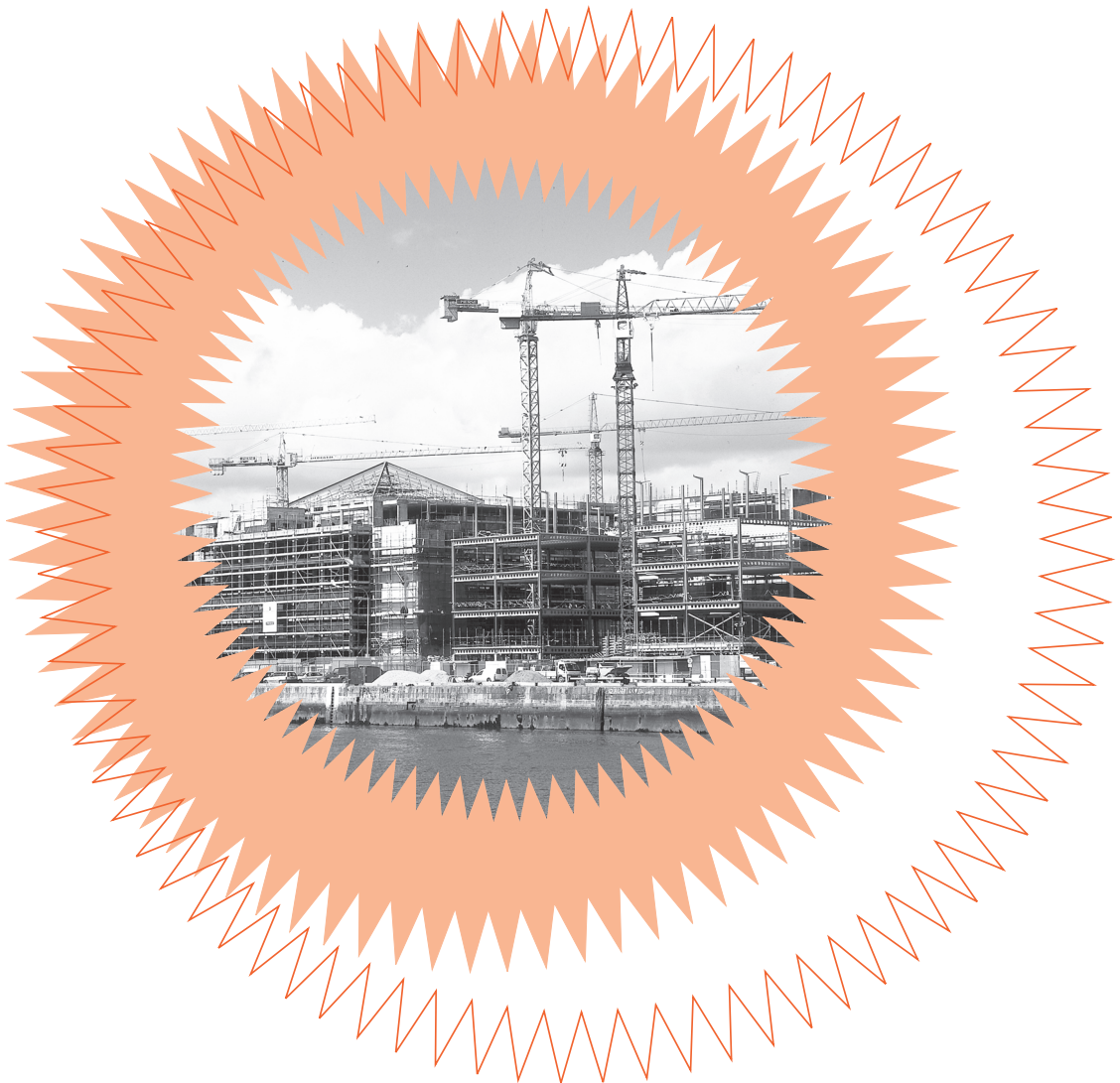
# 4 Sustainable economic development in action

the environment, society and the economy

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#### **4 Sustainable economic development in action**

Aim: To examine a variety of economic activities in Ireland and consider the efforts to minimise the impact of these activities on the environment and the role of the EPA in this process.



## SYLLABUS STATEMENT

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### Elective Unit 4.5 – Environmental Impact

Students should study:

- › sustainable economic development so as to control its environmental impact. Students should examine past experiences, future prospects and the necessity for environmental impact studies.

## OUTCOMES

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Having completed this unit students should be able to:

- › outline the environmental impact of a variety of economic activities in Ireland
- › identify the measures through which the impact on the environment of these activities is being minimised
- › identify some of the major issues for the future protection of the environment
- › explain the purpose and functions of the EPA
- › outline the Environmental Impact Assessment process.

## the video clips

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### 1 POLLARDSTOWN FEN

From ECOEYE, series 2, programme 1

### 2 PFIZER IRELAND PHARMACEUTICALS, CORK

From ECOEYE, series 1, programme 5

### 3 TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

From ECOEYE, series 2, programme 4

### 4 SUSTAINABLE FISHING IN IRISH WATERS

From ECOEYE, series 1, programme 6



## Pollardstown Fen

- 1 What factors have contributed to make Pollardstown Fen a unique wetland habitat?

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- 2 List three examples of the diverse inhabitants – the fauna and flora – of Pollardstown Fen.

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- 3 What has happened to most fens like this in Ireland and Europe?

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- 4 The Kildare bypass runs close to the town. How did the County Council propose to deal with the effects of road noise and the visual impact of the road on local residents?

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- 5 Why was Pollardstown Fen at risk from the road development?

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- 6 How did people who wanted to protect Pollardstown Fen from the effects of the bypass put pressure on the Irish Government to safeguard this site?

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- 7 Kildare County Council and the National Roads Authority (NRA) came up with the solution of 'tanking' to overcome some of the problems associated with building the bypass near the fen. What is 'tanking'?

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- 8 The tiny whorl snail that inhabits the fen is listed in the EU Habitats Directive as being in need of special protection. What is this snail an indicator of?

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## Pfizer Ireland Pharmaceuticals, Cork

- 1 Pfizer Ireland Pharmaceuticals in Cork is Ireland's largest pharmaceutical company. What is the company's attitude to its environmental impact?  
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- 2 On which two areas does the environmental awareness campaign among the workers focus?  
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- 3 What are the areas of the environment that Pfizer monitors for their waste outputs?  
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- 4 We are told that the plant operates under an integrated pollution control licence. Who issues this licence to the company?  
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- 5 What does the company have to do under this integrated pollution control licence?  
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- 6 What is the view of the EPA inspector on the company's record on pollution control?  
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- 7 There is a liaison group comprising representatives of the industries and the residents of Little Island in Cork Harbour. What does this group do?  
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- 8 In what ways do you think that the Pfizer Ireland Pharmaceuticals is a good example of sustainable economic development?  
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## Tourism and the environment

- 1 Why is a clean, green image very important for Ireland?

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- 2 How do most tourists interviewed in the video view Ireland?

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- 3 What kind of pressure on the environment is evident from the coastal scenes depicted in the video?

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- 4 What are the environmentally friendly practices being followed by the hotel in the video?

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- 5 What is the name of the award scheme for environmental management in hotels and leisure centres?

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- 6 In the video it is suggested that an environmental rating and accreditation scheme for hotels is needed. What do you think the benefits of such a scheme would be?

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- 7 There were six million overseas visitors to Ireland in 2001. Discuss the kinds of pressures this might put on the environment.

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## Sustainable fishing in Irish waters

- 1 How is sustainable development explained in the video clip?

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- 2 Give an example of a fish stock that has recovered following the adoption of conservation measures in recent decades.

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- 3 Give an example of a fish stock under pressure at present.

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- 4 Outline one sensible way mentioned in which fish stocks can be conserved.

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- 5 What is Bord Iascaigh Mhara responsible for?

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- 6 What has been done to help the recovery of lobster stocks off the Wexford coast in recent years?

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- 7 About how many people are employed in the Irish seafood industry?

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- 8 Name some of the ways in which fishermen can diversify their work in order to sustain their way of life.

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## THE ROLE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Read the following information to the students.

The EPA was established by the Irish Government in 1992. Its main aim is contained in its mission statement:

**To protect and improve the natural environment for present and future generations, taking into account the environmental, social and economic principles of sustainable development.**

From [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)

The guiding principles for the EPA are those of Irish environmental policy generally:

- > the precautionary principle, which requires that emphasis should be placed on dealing with the causes, rather than the results, of environmental damage and that, where significant evidence of environmental risks exists, appropriate precautionary action be taken even in the absence of conclusive scientific proof of causes
- > the integration of environmental considerations into all policy areas
- > the polluter pays principle regarding cost allocation and action by public authorities
- > the principle of shared responsibility for the environment, which requires a broadly – based involvement of public bodies, private enterprise and the general public so as to achieve environmental policy objectives.

Moving towards sustainability,  
Department of the Environment, 1995

### INTERNET SEARCH

Ask the students to look up the EPA's website at [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie), and complete the following assignment.

#### Assignment

- 1 List and explain the main functions of the EPA.
- 2 Outline in detail the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. For information relevant to this question, consult Planning Leaflet 9 – Environmental Impact Assessment, available in the 'Built environment' section of the ENFO website ([www.enfo.ie](http://www.enfo.ie)).

When answering questions 1 and 2 students should be sure to discuss

- > the aims of EIA procedure
- > the type of developments that require an EIA
- > the components an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must include
- > the role of the EPA in the EIA process.







## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

road construction and the environment

In this unit the students have looked at four video clips discussing important areas of economic activity in Ireland and considering the efforts to minimise their impact on the environment.

Open a group discussion on the construction of the Kildare bypass under the following headings. Use the bullet points as prompts/aids in the discussion.

### ECONOMIC ACTIVITY: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

#### Question

What are the potential threats to /pressures on the environment from this activity?

#### Example answers

- > intrusion of the roads on the landscape
- > damage/destruction of natural habitats
- > increase in air pollution
- > increase in noise pollution
- > damage/destruction of heritage sites on the route of the road.

### MINIMISING THE IMPACT

#### Question

What efforts are being made to minimise the threats and pressures?

- > building below ground level to reduce noise and visual impact
- > 'tanking' to minimise the effect of the road on the nearby wetland habitat
- > including archaeological investigation as part of the development.

### ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

#### Examples

- > Is it possible to protect heritage sites when there is large-scale road development?
- > Can a balance between investment in roads and investment in public transport be reached that would minimise the overall environmental impact of transport?

Now divide the class into groups and give each group one of the following economic activities to prepare a report on:

- > **Tourism**
- > **Fishing**
- > **The pharmaceutical industry**

Each group should use the same headings and questions as were used for the road construction discussion. Video clips can be used as an aid.

Each group should report back using the form given in the students' sheet. Suggestions from members of the other groups should also be considered by each group of students.



# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

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## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

### Question

What are the potential threats to /pressures on the environment from the activity named above?

### Answers

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## MINIMISING THE IMPACT

### Question

What efforts are being made to minimise these threats and pressures?

### Answers

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## ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

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