

## WASTE HIERARCHY

The waste hierarchy set out by national and European legislation requires that the following priority apply in the development and implementation of waste management policy:

- (i) prevention
- (ii) re-use / preparation for re-use
- (iii) recycling
- (iv) recovery
- (v) disposal.

The waste recovery facility at Huntstown Quarry provides for recovery of excavated inert, uncontaminated soil and stone waste by using it to backfill a number of worked-out quarries to original ground level.

Recovery is defined in the Waste Framework Directive as *'any operation, the principal result of which, is waste serving a useful purpose by replacing materials which would otherwise have been used to fulfil a particular function, or waste being prepared to fulfil that function, in the plant or in the wider economy'*.

The inert soil waste imported to the waste recovery facility at Huntstown is excavated at construction / development sites or for utilities installation / maintenance. Given that excavation and handling of such materials incurs a cost, it can be implicitly assumed that engineering designers and/or works contractors will avoid or minimise, insofar as possible, the volume of excess soil material excavated in order to execute the planned development or maintenance works.

It can also be implicitly assumed that excess excavated soil material will only be exported off-site where it is not possible to re-use it within the development site or to backfill temporary excavations.

Where soil waste is inert, it can be re-used at off-site locations for practical and beneficial purposes without the need for treatment, processing or other form of recycling.

It is therefore evident that where excess inert soil is generated by development or utilities related works and requires to be exported off site, the highest tier activity on the waste hierarchy to which it may be assigned is a waste recovery activity. The restoration of the worked-out quarry voids at Huntstown by backfilling them to former ground levels using imported waste soil will :

- facilitate their long-term restoration to grassland habitat, similar to that which existed prior to limestone rock extraction;
- better integrate the site into the surrounding urban-fringe environment;
- make the restored lands available for a range of productive long-term uses; and
- provide for better protection of the underlying groundwater resource, which is currently assessed as vulnerable due to the absence of any protective soil cover.

In so doing, it will achieve a desirable outcome which would not otherwise be possible or would require extensive use of natural soil resources.