



18. Environmental Assessment

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18.1 Introduction

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) have both been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Strategy. All recommendations arising from the SEA and AA processes have been integrated into the Strategy. Many of these recommendations have been set out in the SEA Environmental Report; however, some of the more strategic recommendations are detailed below. Compliance with these measures will facilitate environmental protection and management.

18.2 Regulatory Framework for Environmental Protection and Management

In implementing this Strategy, the Authority will cumulatively contribute towards – in combination with other users and bodies – the achievement of the objectives of the regulatory framework for environmental protection and management and will ensure that plans, programmes and projects comply with EU Directives – including the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the Environmental Impact

Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU, as amended by 2014/52/EC) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) – and relevant transposing Regulations.

18.3 Lower-level Decision Making

Lower levels of decision making and environmental assessment should consider the environmental sensitivities identified in Section 4 of the SEA Environmental Report, including the following:

- Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas;
- Features of the landscape that provide linkages/connectivity to designated sites (e.g. watercourses and areas of semi-natural habitat, such as linear woodlands);
- Salmonid Waters;
- Shellfish Waters;
- Freshwater Pearl Mussel catchments;
- Nature Reserves;
- Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas;

- Areas likely to contain a habitat listed in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive;
- Entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and Zones of Archaeological Potential;
- Entries to the Record of Protected Structures;
- Un-designated sites of importance to wintering or breeding bird species of conservation concern;
- Architectural Conservation Areas; and
- Relevant landscape designations.

18.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process

The following Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken for relevant new infrastructure:

Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection

- Environmental constraints (including those identified in Section 4 of the SEA Environmental Report) and opportunities (such as existing linear infrastructure) will assist in the identification of possible route corridor options;



- Potentially feasible corridors within which infrastructure could be accommodated will be identified and these corridors assessed. The selection of the preferred route corridor will avoid constraints and meet opportunities to the optimum extent, as advised by relevant specialists; and
- In addition to the constraints identified above, site-specific field data may be required to identify the most appropriate corridors.

Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection

- Potentially feasible routes within the preferred corridor will be identified and assessed. The selection of preferred routes will avoid constraints and meet opportunities to the optimum extent, as advised by relevant specialists, taking into account project level information and potential mitigation measures that are readily achievable;
- In addition to the constraints identified above, site-specific field data may be required to identify the most appropriate routes; and
- In addition to environmental considerations, the identification of route corridors and the refinement of the route lines is likely to be informed by other considerations.

18.5 Appropriate Assessment

All projects and plans arising from this Strategy will be screened for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. A plan or project will only be authorised after the competent authority has ascertained, based on scientific evidence, Screening for Appropriate Assessment, and subsequent Appropriate Assessment where necessary, that:

- The Plan or project will not give rise to adverse direct, indirect or secondary effects on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or
- The Plan or project will have significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type/and or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; or
- The Plan or project will have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons for overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

18.5.1 Protection of Natura 2000 Sites

No projects giving rise to adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (cumulatively, directly or indirectly) arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation, decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Strategy (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

18.6 Climate Change, Emissions and Energy

As identified in the SEA Environmental Report that accompanies this Strategy, the Strategy facilitates sustainable mobility and associated positive effects, including those relating to:

- Reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and associated achievement of legally binding targets;
- Reductions in emissions to air and associated achievement of air quality objectives, thereby contributing towards improvement or air quality and protection of human health;
- Reductions in consumption of non-renewable energy sources and achievement of legally binding renewable energy targets; and
- Energy security.

In implementing the Strategy, the Authority will support relevant provisions contained in the National Energy and Climate Plan, the Climate Adaptation Strategies of planning authorities within the Greater Dublin Area, the Climate Action Plan (2019), National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018), the National Mitigation Plan (2017) and the Department of Transport's Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Transport Infrastructure, which builds on the 2017 "Adaptation Planning - Developing Resilience to Climate Change in the Irish Transport Sector".

Cognisant of the imperative to reduce emissions, the Authority will seek to ensure primacy for transport options that provide for unit reductions in carbon emissions. This can most effectively be done by promoting public transport, walking and cycling, and by actively seeking to reduce car use in circumstances where alternative options are available.

During the preparation and/or review of policies and plans relating to climate change, carbon emissions and energy usage, the Authority will seek to integrate Strategy objectives, as appropriate.

18.7 Other SEA Recommendations

In implementing the Strategy, the Authority will ensure that the measures included in Table 9.3 of the SEA Environmental Report are complied with.

