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**Ireland  
2040  
Our Plan**



NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

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**Strategic  
Environmental  
Assessment  
Scoping Report**



**An Roinn Tithochta, Pleanála,  
Poball agus Rialtais Áitiúil**  
Department of Housing, Planning,  
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# 1

## Introduction

The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government [DHPCLG]<sup>1</sup>, formerly the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG), is currently preparing a National Planning Framework [NPF] called 'Ireland 2040 Our Plan' which will provide context for planning development for the next decade and beyond. It will have a focus on economic development and investment in housing, water services, transport, communications, energy, health and education infrastructure. The objectives of the NPF will be to establish a broad national plan for the Government in relation to the strategic planning of urban and rural areas, to secure regional development, and to secure the co-ordination of regional spatial and economic strategies and city and county development plans. The NPF will be a long-term, 20 year development strategy which sets out the vision for Ireland in terms of economic activity, social progress and environmental quality, through co-ordinated policy, investment and action at national, regional and local levels.

The framework will succeed the previous National Spatial Strategy first developed in 2002<sup>2</sup>.

This Scoping Document forms part of the official Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping under S.I. 435 of 2004 as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011. The purpose of the document is to provide preliminary information on the proposed NPF, with a view to establishing the scope, level of detail and approach required for the SEA which will follow. It is intended that the information contained within the report will enable meaningful consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees in relation to the proposed NPF.

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<sup>1</sup> The recent national elections in Q2-Q3 of 2016 gave rise to changes in government department structures including the re-organisation of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) to the Department of the Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG). The responsibility for delivery of the NPF lies with the DHPCLG.

<sup>2</sup> National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 People, Places and Potential, DEHLG



In parallel to the SEA scoping, the DHPCLG are also presenting for consultation an Issues and Choices Paper which will outline the scope of issues to be addressed under the NPF. Further information on the Issues and Choices Paper can be found at [www.Ireland2040.ie](http://www.Ireland2040.ie).

## 1.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental consequences of implementing plan / programme initiatives prepared by authorities at a national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative means. The purpose is to ensure that the environmental consequences of plans and programmes are assessed both during their preparation and prior to adoption. The SEA process also gives interested parties an opportunity to comment on the environmental impacts of the proposed plan or programme and to be kept informed during the decision making process.

The European Directive (2001/42/EC) on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (the SEA Directive), was transposed into national legislation in Ireland by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435/2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436/2004), as amended.

Under Article 3 of the Directive, an environmental assessment shall be carried out for plans and programmes, including those related to land use planning. The Department undertook SEA Screening in 2016 and determined that SEA of the NPF would be required (see to Section 3.1.1 for more information on the screening process). The next step in the SEA process requires definition of the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the Environmental Report. This scoping is the focus of this report.

This Scoping Report has been prepared independently on behalf of DHPCLG by RPS.

## 2

# Description of the National Planning Framework

## 2.1 Background

In 2002, the Government launched the National Spatial Strategy [NSS] as a spatial plan to underpin balanced regional development. The plan was based on the identification of nine 'gateways' comprising twelve cities and towns and nine 'hubs' comprising eleven towns. Each was to be built up with critical scale and mass to provide a focus to influence wider regional development and provide a spatial framework to encourage development away from the Greater Dublin Area.

The NSS was important because it established spatial planning at a national level in Ireland, but was significantly undermined by a number of factors. These included

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 was aligned with the NSS but it was superseded by the economic downturn.

€300m NSS 'Gateway Innovation Fund' launched in 2007, did not materialise;

But other criticisms have also been levelled at the NSS such as: it designated too many centres; created a perception of 'winners and losers'; wasn't adequately supported by the political system; relaxation of controls on new rural housing; lacked an economic dimension; and did not have statutory legislative backing.

Fifteen years on, some of the key ambitions of the NSS have not been realised with development-driven planning and sprawl continuing to be prevalent. The reality of the NSS has led to unanticipated consequences in terms of population growth and regional development with as much growth in settlements outside those that were designated as gateways and hubs. In most cases the rapid growth trajectory of the fastest growing towns in Ireland over the past twenty years had commenced prior to 2002, but publication of the NSS did not alter this. Many of these trends were identified in a review of the NSS undertaken by the DECLG in 2010<sup>3</sup> and it is now considered time to revisit national spatial planning based on lessons learned from the past.

## 2.2 Role of the National Planning Framework

The purpose of the NPF is to provide a focal point for spatial plans throughout the planning hierarchy. It will provide a framework for the new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) by the three new Regional Assemblies and the associated enhancement of the economic development focus of local authorities as per the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The NPF will co-ordinate the strategic planning of urban and rural areas in a regional development context to secure overall proper planning and development as well as co-ordination of regional spatial and economic strategies and city and county development plans in addition to local economic and community plans and local area plans and local development. Figure 2.1 shows the proposed planning hierarchy going forward.

3 Implementing the National Spatial Strategy: 2010 Update and Outlook Harnessing Potential, Delivering Competitiveness, Achieving Sustainability October 2010, DECLG

**Figure 2.1:**  
Ireland's Planning Policy Hierarchy Post 2016<sup>4</sup>



## 2.3 The Purpose of the NPF

The NPF is a long-term strategy for the next 20 years which will set the groundwork for the spatial development of Ireland. The starting point for the strategy is to lay the groundwork for a better quality of life for all and a basis for sustainable economic growth. It is intended that the NPF will both provide a strong focus to guide and inform regional and county/city plans and set the framework for integrated investment decisions. The NPF development will address both opportunities and challenges to deliver policy directions across a broad spectrum. As outlined in the accompanying Issues and Choices Paper, prepared by the DHPCLG to inform this consultation, the emerging policy areas to be considered include the following broad headings:-

1. Ireland's national planning challenges
2. Planning for people – society and quality of life
3. Vision for our capital, our cities and towns
4. Key strengths and opportunities for our regions
5. A future for rural Ireland
6. Ireland in an all-Island context
7. Realising opportunities for integrated land and marine development
8. Equipping Ireland for future development – infrastructure
9. Making a virtue out of Ireland's unique environment – sustainability

## 2.4 Approach to Developing the National Planning Framework

The DHPCLG is leading the preparation of the NPF on behalf of Government, with input from other Departments and Agencies which are themselves tasked with developing policy on long term and place-based public policy and investment. The purpose of this inclusive approach is to allow shared national development goals, including improved living standards, quality of life, prosperity, competitiveness and environmental sustainability, to be more broadly considered with the intention of providing greater clarity for the private sector and unlocking investment.

The framework is also intended to assist the achievement of more effective regional development and as such the regional dimension is critical to successful outcomes. The RSES which will support the delivery of the NPF by both feeding into and feeding off the national framework, removing the top down perception and replacing it with a shared responsibility and understanding.

The NPF process was initiated in December 2015 with the publication of the NPF Road Map to inform people that a new NPF is proposed as a successor to the National Spatial Strategy. Following on from this and in advance of formal public consultation, the NPF Unit carried out a series of focussed, high level stakeholder meetings in June 2016. These events provided an opportunity for stakeholders as representatives from the business community, infrastructure providers, higher education, governance and society, environmental bodies and recreation sectors to contribute to the discussion on the formation of the new NPF and assist in exploring concepts and ideas.

The current stage of the process involves pre-draft public consultation with the publication of an Issues and Choices Paper available alongside this scoping report. The DHPCLG have prepared the Issues and Choices paper to inform the first formal consultation period and invite submissions which will help define the first draft of the NPF in due course. Further opportunities will then be afforded to stakeholders to ensure the process is as inclusive as possible with further opportunity for the public to make submissions.

A draft of the NPF will be prepared with a view to having a final document produced in Q3 2017.

## 2.5 Governance

The NPF process is being led by the DHPLG and overseen by a High Level Cross Departmental Steering (CDS) Group, chaired by the Minister for Housing Planning Community and Local Government and consisting of senior personnel across government departments.

An advisory group is also in place to facilitate the participation of a range of interests under the broad umbrellas of economic, environment, social and knowledge sectors.

An environmental steering group has also been established to oversee the integration of environmental requirements in the preparation of the NPF e.g. SEA, AA and SFRA.

## 2.6 Supporting Studies

In developing the NPF and the RSES's it will be important to establish a strong empirical evidence base to support policy formulation and implementation. Key aspects will include the development of economic and demographic projections based on past trends and the generation of a range of future spatial development scenarios. The ESRI have been commissioned to undertake the key modelling inputs with oversight from a Demographic and Econometric Steering Group. This work will also inform the RSES's. The All Island Research Observatory are also carrying out spatial mapping to underpin spatial trends and options regarding future growth.

## 3

# Environmental Assessment Process

## 3.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental quality and consequences of policy, plan or programme initiatives by statutory bodies. The purpose is to ensure that the environmental consequences of plans and programmes are assessed both during their preparation and prior to adoption. The SEA process also gives interested parties an opportunity to comment on the environmental impacts of the proposed plan or programme and to be kept informed during the decision making process.

The European Directive (2001/42/EC) on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (the SEA Directive), was transposed into national legislation in Ireland by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435/2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436/2004). Both pieces of legislation were amended in 2011 under S.I. 200/2011 and S.I. 201/2011. The SEA process is comprised of the following principle steps:

- Screening: Decision on whether or not an SEA of the NPF is required;
- Scoping: Consultation with the defined statutory bodies on the scope and level of detail to be considered in the assessment;
- Environmental Assessment: An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the NPF, leading to the production of an Environmental Report;
- Consultation on the draft NPF and associated Environmental Report;
- Evaluation of the submissions and observations made on the draft NPF and Environmental Report prior to finalising the NPF;
- Issuance of an SEA Statement identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the final NPF.

Figure 3.1 shows the key steps required to complete the statutory SEA process in accordance with the relevant national legislation.

**Figure 3.1:**  
**Overview of SEA Process**



### 3.1.1 SEA Screening Stage

The SEA Directive requires that certain plans and programmes, prepared by statutory bodies, which are likely to have a significant impact on the environment, be subject to the SEA process. A screening of the NPF for SEA was undertaken by the DHPCLG after which it was determined that the administrative provisions of Article 9(1) of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations (S.I. 435 of 2004) have been met and that an SEA is required.

### 3.1.2 SEA Scoping Stage

Under Article 6 of the SEA Directive, the competent authority preparing the plan or programme is required to consult with specific “environmental authorities” (statutory consultees) on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the Environmental Report. The competent authority in relation to the NPF is the DHPCLG. The statutory consultees for SEA are established within the national legislation. It is noted however that in recent months, a number of government departments have changed name and certain responsibilities have migrated between these newly named departments. The SEA legislation has not yet been updated to reflect these changes however, for clarity the relevant new department is noted in the Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Statutory Consultees for SEA	
Statutory Consultees under National SEA Legislation	Newly Named Departments
Environmental Protection Agency	N/A
Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG)	Department of the Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG)
Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG)	Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA)
Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR)	Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment (DCCAIE)
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)	N/A

In addition to statutory consultees, members of the environmental steering group have been provided a copy of this scoping report for review and comment. (It is acknowledged some of the environmental steering group members are also prescribed bodies for the purposes of SEA).

The need for transboundary consultation has been identified within the SEA process and this scoping documentation will therefore be sent to the relevant authority for SEA in Northern Ireland: Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

The main objective of scoping is to identify key issues of concern that should be addressed in the assessment of the plan and the appropriate level of detail to which they should be considered. The scoping exercise should answer the following questions:

- What are the relevant significant issues to be addressed by the SEA?
- Against what environmental objectives should the potential options be evaluated?

While the issuance of a Scoping Report is not a formal requirement of the SEA Regulations, it is recommended as good practice. A Scoping Report can inform stakeholders about the key environmental issues and the key elements of the plan/programme. In addition, the Scoping Report can be used as a tool to generate comments from stakeholders on the scope and approach of the SEA. This Scoping Report has been compiled on behalf of DHPCLG as the competent authority for the plan.

### 3.1.3 Environmental Assessment

An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the NPF will be undertaken in due course. This will include, as relevant, a description of the baseline, an assessment of likely significant impacts, mitigation measures to offset negative impacts and provision of a monitoring programme. The output from this stage is an Environmental Report. Further details on these issues are presented later in this document. In parallel to this assessment, Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening will also be undertaken and this will inform the SEA and development of the NPF.

Public consultation will be carried out on the draft NPF, the SEA Environmental Report, the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and associated documentation in support of the AA. The submissions and observations made on these documents will be reviewed and considered during finalisation of the NPF.

### 3.1.4 SEA Statement

An SEA Statement identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the NPF will be provided for information alongside the final NPF.

### 3.1.5 SEA Guidance

The Environmental Report will contain the findings of the assessment of the likely significant effects on the environment resulting from implementation of the proposed NPF. It will reflect the requirements of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and also the transposed regulations in Ireland (S.I. 435/2004) as amended in 2011. The following principal sources of guidance will be used during the overall SEA process and during preparation of the Environmental Report.

- SEA Spatial Information Sources, 2015, Environmental Protection Agency.
- SEA Scoping Guidance Document, 2015, Environmental Protection Agency.
- Integrating Climate Change into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note, 2015, Environmental Protection Agency.
- Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment – Good Practice Guidance, 2015, Environmental Protection Agency.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Pack, 2013, Environmental Protection Agency.
- Environmental Protection Agency's 2012 Review of SEA Effectiveness in Ireland.
- GISEA Manual – Consultation Draft. April 2009. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment – Streamlining AA, SEA and EIA Processes: Practitioner's Manual. EPA Strive Programme 2007-2013. Strive Report Series No. 106.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Checklist - Consultation Draft. January 2008. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland. Synthesis Report. 2003. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC). Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment. Guidelines for Regional Planning Authorities. November 2004. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- Guidelines on SEA. Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

The SEA will also have regard to the findings of the EPA's 2012 Review of SEA Effectiveness in Ireland.

### 3.1.6 Department Circulars

In addition the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government have issued a number of relevant circulars in relation to SEA which will have relevance for the environmental assessment of the proposed NPF and will be taken into account during the course of the SEA. These circulars are as follows:

PSSP 6/2011: 'Further Transposition of the EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)'.

Circular PL 9 of 2013: 'Article 8 (Decision Making) of EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as amended'.

## 3.2 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The EU Habitats Directive places strict legal obligations on member states to ensure the protection, conservation and management of the habitats and species of conservation interest in all European Sites. The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

Article 6 of the Directive obliges member states to undertake an ‘appropriate assessment’ (AA) for any plan or project which may have a likely significant effect on any European Site. The outcomes of such AAs fundamentally affect the decisions that may lawfully be made by competent national authorities in relation to the approval of plans or projects.

### Article 6(3) states:

*Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.*

### Article 6(4) states:

*If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the [Natura 2000] site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest [IROPI], including those of a social or economic nature, Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.*

The NPF is not directly connected to the conservation of any European Sites, however as a national strategic plan, it has the potential to impact on habitats and species for which Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) have been designated. In acknowledgement of this, early consideration has been given to the need for AA and an AA screening has been carried out in parallel to the SEA Scoping. It has been concluded, through the AA Screening Stage that full AA is warranted for the NPF and as such a Natura Impact Statement will be prepared. The NIS will consider the potential for the emerging policy and measures to impact on the integrity of any European Sites, in view of the conservation objectives of the site.

It is noted that there are requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives that are not encompassed by AA (e.g. annex IV species as per Articles 12 and 13 of the Habitats Directive, landscape features outside designated sites which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna as per Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and disturbance and deterioration of bird habitats as per article 4(4) of the Birds Directive) and these will be addressed in the SEA.

## 3.3 Strategic Flood risk Assessment (SFRA)

Increased flood risk as a result of land use planning has, above all else has been one of the most costly [environmental, social and economic] legacy issue of previous national and regional and local land use decisions. The decisions taken now in the NPF will both assist the legacy issue and future proof new plans. The objective of the SFRA is to inform the policy decisions surrounding the potential themes of the NPF such as:

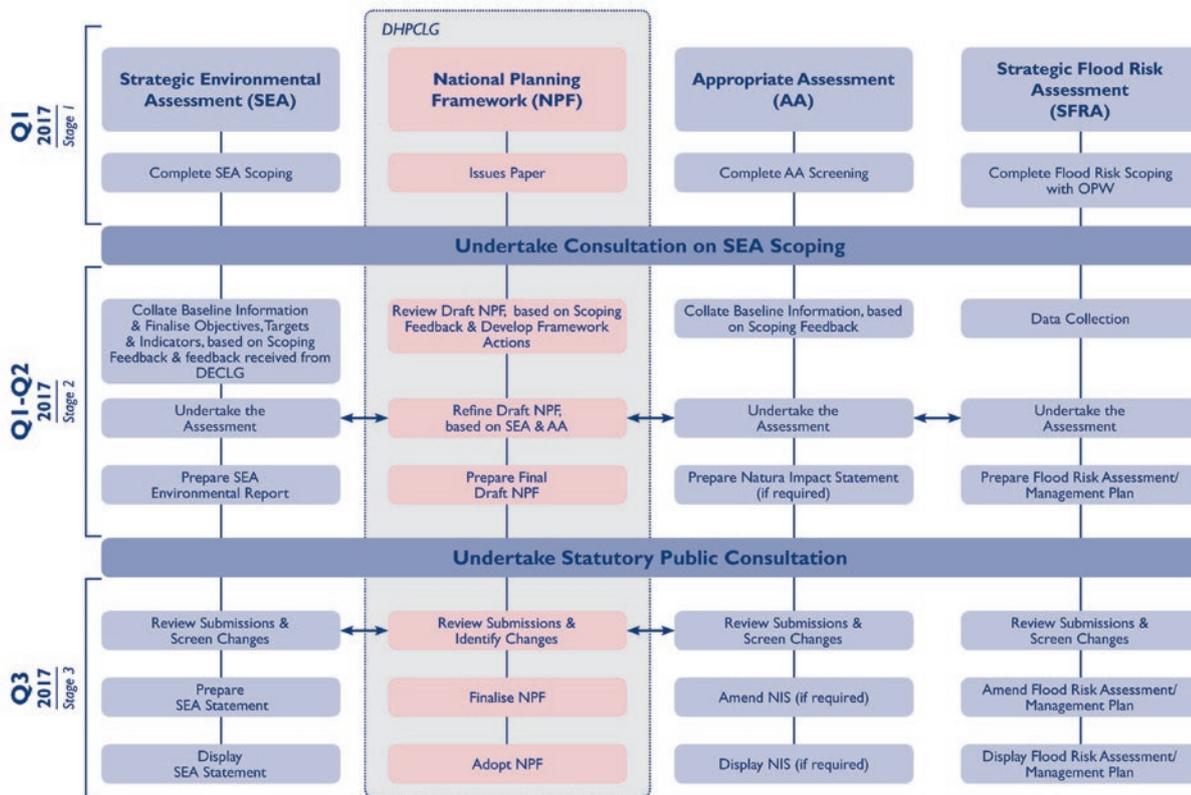
- Maximising the potential of our cities, towns and rural areas to be successful, sustainable places;
- Identifying infrastructural priorities;
- Transitioning to a low carbon society; and
- Ensuring the resilience of our natural resources and cultural assets.

The SFRA will provide an assessment of all types of flood risk within a national context to assist DHPCLG to make informed strategic planning decisions in respect of the NPF. The flood risk information will enable DHPCLG to apply the Guidelines<sup>5</sup> to appraise development and growth areas and identify how flood risk can be reduced as part of the NPF.

### 3.4 Integration of the Processes

The NFP process is running in parallel with the SEA, AA and SFRA processes as outlined in Figure 3.2. Timelines are approximate.

**Figure 3.2:**  
**Integration of Plan, SEA, AA and SFRA**



5 The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, November 2009’ (DEHLG/OPW) and Circular PL02/2014 (August 2014) referred to hereafter as ‘The Guidelines’

## 4

## Other Relevant Plans and Programmes

As part of the SEA process, it will be necessary to consider the environmental protection objectives, established at the international; European and national level which are relevant to the NPF and how they have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan. In particular the interaction of the environmental protection objectives and standards included within these plans and programmes with the NPF requires consideration. For the purposes of scoping, the list below summarises key related legislation and documents which will be considered.

A more detailed list will be compiled as part of the Environmental Report and suggestions are welcomed as part of the scoping consultation as to environmental protection objectives that are relevant to the NPF. However it is noted that this is not intended to be a register of all legislation/plans/policies/programmes but rather an examination of the key environmental protection objectives relevant to the NPF.

**Table 4.1 – International and EU Legislation, Plans/Policies/Programmes**

International and EU Legislation	International and EU Plans/Policies/Programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEA Directive (2001/42/EC),</li> <li>• EIA Directive (85/337/EC as amended),</li> <li>• EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),</li> <li>• EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC- codified version of 79/409/EEC),</li> <li>• EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and associated directives which have been subsumed as follows: Drinking Water Abstraction Directive; Sampling Drinking Water Directive; Exchange of Information on Quality of Surface Freshwater Directive; Shellfish Directive; Freshwater Fish Directive; Groundwater (Dangerous Substances) Directive; and Dangerous Substances Directive.</li> <li>• EU Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC);</li> <li>• EU Bathing Water Directive(revised) 2006 [2006/7/EC];</li> <li>• Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC),</li> <li>• EU Sewage Sludge Directive (86/278/EEC);</li> <li>• EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC);</li> <li>• EU Nitrates Directive (91/676/EC);</li> <li>• EU Integrated Pollution Prevention Control Directive (2008/1/EC);</li> <li>• EU Plant Protection (Products) Directive 2009/127/EC;</li> <li>• EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)</li> <li>• EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)</li> <li>• EU Renewables Directive (2009/28/EC);</li> <li>• EU Biofuels Directive (2003/30/EC);</li> <li>• Indirect Land Use Change Directive (2012/0288(COD));</li> <li>• Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive 2014/94/EU;</li> <li>• EU Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU).</li> <li>• EU Seveso Directive <a href="#">2012/18/EU</a>;</li> <li>• EU Soils Directive; and</li> <li>• EU Air Framework Directive 2008/50/EC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Seventh Environmental Action Programme (EAP) of the European Community 2013- 2020,</li> <li>• The EU Biodiversity Strategy,</li> <li>• Bern Convention (Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats),</li> <li>• Kyoto Protocol 1997,</li> <li>• Bali Road Map 2007,</li> <li>• Cancun Agreements 2010,</li> <li>• Doha Climate Gateway 2012,</li> <li>• 2030 EU Climate and Energy Framework,</li> <li>• Paris Agreement (COP21)</li> <li>• EU Climate Change Programme (ECCP II);</li> <li>• The Valletta Convention (1992),</li> <li>• EU Common Agricultural Policy.</li> <li>• EU REACH Initiative;</li> <li>• Stockholm Convention;</li> <li>• Ramsar Convention;</li> <li>• OSPAR Convention;</li> </ul>

**Table 4.2 - National Legislation ,Plans/Policies/Programmes**

National Legislation	National Plans/Policies/Programmes
<p>Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended);</p> <p>European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, (S.I. 435 of 2004) as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011; The Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000;</p> <p>European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011 as amended);</p> <p>Waste Management Act 1996 as amended;</p> <p>Quality of Bathing Waters Regulations 1988 (S.I. 84 of 1988) as amended;</p> <p>European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003, (S.I. 722 of 2003);</p> <p>European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Water) Regulations (S.I. 272 of 2009);</p> <p>European Communities Environmental Objectives (FPM) Regulations 2009 (S.I. 296 of 2009);</p> <p>European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010 (S.I. 9 of 2010);</p> <p>European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 31 of 2014);</p> <p>Quality of Bathing Waters Regulations 1988 (S.I. 84 of 1988) as amended;</p> <p>Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.</p>	<p>National Climate Mitigation Plan [in prep];</p> <p>National Climate Change Adaptation Framework 2012;</p> <p>Bioenergy Plan [in prep];</p> <p>Renewable Electricity Plan [in prep];</p> <p>Water Services Strategic Plan 2015;</p> <p>National Water Resources Plan [in prep];</p> <p>Lead Mitigation Plan [in prep];</p> <p>National Wastewater Sludge Management Plan 2016;</p> <p>Seafood Operation Programme 2014;</p> <p>Aquaculture Plan 2014;</p> <p>The National Biodiversity Plan 2011;</p> <p>National Peatlands Strategy 2011;</p> <p>Regional Waste Management Plans 2015;</p> <p>Construction 2020;</p> <p>NPWS Conservation Plans and/or Conservation Objectives for SAC and SPAs;</p> <p>National Heritage Plan (2002);</p> <p>National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (2002);</p> <p>National Development Plan from 2007 to 2013;</p> <p>Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland (1997) (DEHLG);</p> <p>National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015 – 2025.</p> <p>Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines;</p> <p>Wind Energy Guidelines;</p> <p>Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020;</p> <p>Forestry Programme 2014-2020;</p> <p>Foodwise 2025;</p> <p>Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS);</p> <p>Organic Farming Scheme;</p> <p>Teagasc Better Farm Program;</p> <p>Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland (Energy White Paper) 2007 and 2015 update;</p> <p>National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP);</p> <p>Strategy for Renewable Energy 2012-2020;</p> <p>Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan;</p> <p>All Island Grid Study 2008;</p> <p>EU White Paper on Transport 2011;</p> <p>EU Action Plan on Urban Mobility 2009;</p> <p>Smarter Travel 'A New Transport Policy for Ireland' 2009-2020;</p> <p>National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020,</p> <p>National ITS Strategy (Draft);</p> <p>Investing in our transport future – A Strategic Framework for Investment in Land Transport;</p> <p>National Ports Policy 2013;</p> <p>National Aviation Policy 2015;</p> <p>Greater Dublin Area (GDA) Transport Strategy 2016-2035;</p> <p>National Policy Framework for the Development of Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport (Draft);</p> <p>Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport 2013;</p> <p>Electric Vehicles Grant Scheme and VRT Relief;</p> <p>Social Housing Strategy;</p> <p>Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015 (2009);</p> <p>National Landscape Plan 2015-2025; and</p> <p>Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies</p>

# 5

## Scoping

### 5.1 Geographic Scope

The aim of the NPF is to set a long-term national, framework within which government departments and agencies, the regional assemblies and local authorities, as well as wider private sector and community interests will work together to ensure proper planning and sustainable development and in particular the optimal development of the country as a whole. The NPF will co-ordinate the strategic planning of urban and rural areas to secure overall proper planning and development as well as co-ordination of regional spatial and economic strategies and city and county development plans in addition to local economic and community plans and local area plans and local development. The framework is national in nature and is intended to give context to lower level plans including the RSES, city and county development plans and local area plans (see Figure 2.1). As such the assessment will be primarily focussed at activities occurring at the national to regional scale. Recognition will be given within the NPF to spatial planning in Northern Ireland also, particularly in the context of cross border place making and marine spatial planning.

### 5.2 Temporal Scope

In line with the SEA Directive, short, medium and long-term impacts (including reference to secondary, cumulative, synergistic, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects) will be considered during the assessment. The recommendations put forward in the NPF have a longer perspective and will take a number of years for certain aspects to be implemented and take effect. As a result the time lines proposed for assessment of long-term impacts extends beyond the timeframe of the actual plan. For the purpose of the SEA, a short term horizon of 2022, a medium term horizon of beyond 2028 and a long term horizon of beyond 2040 will be considered.

### 5.3 Scoping of Strategic Environmental Assessment Topics

In accordance with S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended, consideration has been given to whether the environmental effects, both positive and negative, of the NPF are likely to be significant. The DHPCLG Issues Paper has been reviewed to inform consideration of the scope of impacts that may result from the NPF. A summary of the conclusions are presented in the following sections, with reference to the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, geology, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.

### 5.3.1 Population and Human Health

The NPF is first and foremost a spatial framework to guide development and investment in housing, water services, transport, communications, energy, health and education infrastructure. It will shape the Ireland of the future by determining how settlement patterns develop and how they are supported by inter-related strategies for economy and development. The NPF has significant potential to effect population and human health of future generations for both better and worse.

Key supporting national policy: <i>HSE Healthy Ireland Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2015-2025</i>		
SEA Issue	Scope In/Out	Potential Significant Environmental Issues for Consideration in the Environmental Report
Population and Human Health	In	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More coherent population distribution;</li> <li>• Better understanding and realisation of settlement needs;</li> <li>• Refocus of urban rural partnerships;</li> <li>• Improved health and wellbeing by encouraging physical activity and reducing pollution and hazards;</li> <li>• Better integration of services;</li> <li>• Strengthening of communities and neighbourhoods;</li> <li>• Improved integration of settlement pattern and nature through access to greenspace and outdoors;</li> <li>• Inclusion of sustainable transport; and</li> <li>• Opportunities to improve community cohesion.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressing historic settlement patterns leading to sprawl and unbalanced regional development;</li> <li>• Increased requirements for water and wastewater treatment to service population growth;</li> <li>• Increased requirements for transport services to service population growth and commuter belt;</li> <li>• Increasing car dependency and associated air quality emissions;</li> <li>• Changing demographic patterns and needs e.g. increase in aging population;</li> <li>• Uneven distribution of health;</li> <li>• Increasing rates of obesity;</li> <li>• Homelessness and housing availability and affordability;</li> <li>• Access to education, childcare, healthcare; and</li> <li>• Avoidance of inequalities.</li> </ul>
<b>Draft SEA Objective</b>		<i>To create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a more healthy Ireland.</i>
<b>Suggested draft SEA Target(s)</b>		a) Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life. b) Increase by 20% proportion of the population undertaking regular physical activity

### 5.3.2 Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

The spatial dimension of the NPF has direct and indirect relevance for biodiversity, flora and fauna in Ireland. On the one hand, it presents a threat to the wellbeing and survival of our native flora and fauna through habitat loss and disturbance. It also offers the opportunity to integrate nature into decision making and allow the benefits of biodiversity to be appreciated and where appropriate harnessed. The natural environment provides ecosystem services in the form of food, fuel, water purification, flood alleviation and more.

Key supporting national policy: <i>National Biodiversity Plan 2010-2016</i>		
SEA Issue	Scope In/Out	Potential Significant Environmental Issues for Consideration in the Environmental Report
<b>Biodiversity Flora and Fauna</b>	In	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved integration of key conservation legislation in overarching land use planning decisions;</li> <li>• More coherent protection and enhancement of biodiversity as a whole on a national, regional and local level;</li> <li>• Consideration of the economic potential of biodiversity, flora and fauna to contribute to communities and regions;</li> <li>• Integration of ecosystem services into decision making;</li> <li>• Potential for interactions with landscape features e.g. provision of green infrastructure;</li> <li>• Potential for interactions with population and human health e.g. access to outdoors and wildlife; and</li> <li>• Better integration with water quality objectives under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), Marine Strategy Framework Directive</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects on protected areas: European (e.g. SACs, SPAs, Ramsar sites) and National (e.g. (p)NHAs);</li> <li>• Effects on protected species;</li> <li>• Potential for habitat loss and fragmentation ;</li> <li>• Potential introduction / spread of alien species and invasive species;</li> <li>• Potential for interaction with Habitats Directive, i.e. Articles 6, 10,12;</li> <li>• Disturbance effects from recreation or tourism activities;</li> <li>• Loss or disturbance of habitats and species from land use change and changes to land management; and</li> <li>• In-combination / cumulative effects without land use plans and programmes e.g. forestry, fisheries, agri.</li> </ul>
<b>Draft SEA Objective</b>		<i>To preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, particularly EU designated sites and protected species</i>
<b>Suggested draft SEA Target(s)</b>		Require all regional, county and local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green infrastructure provisions in their land use plans.

### 5.3.3 Soil

The Irish economy relies heavily on its agricultural base and as such the importance of the soil resource cannot be under estimated. In addition to supplying the raw material for the agri and forestry sectors, it also provides other essential services such as it is: a groundwater resource; habitat for flora and fauna; provides nutrient cycling; and hosts historical artifacts and evidence. Despite this, there is very little policy or legislative protection for soils in Europe or Ireland.

<b>Key supporting national policy:</b> <i>no specific national or EU policy available. Existing EU policies relate to soil in the context of waste, water, agriculture etc.</i>		
SEA Issue	Scope In/Out	Potential Significant Environmental Issues for Consideration in the Environmental Report
Soil	In	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage sustainable soil management;</li> <li>• Value soils including prime agricultural land;</li> <li>• Protect soils with high carbon content e.g. peatlands;</li> <li>• Utilisation of existing brownfield sites;</li> <li>• Remediation of contaminated sites; and</li> <li>• Zoning and development of lands to ensure sustainable development</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intended and unintended land use change;</li> <li>• Inappropriate agricultural and forestry activities;</li> <li>• Loss of prime agricultural land for development;</li> <li>• Erosion of soils;</li> <li>• Spread of invasive species;</li> <li>• Soil pollution;</li> <li>• Effects on geomorphology (i.e. landforms and river channels);</li> <li>• Sealing of soils; and</li> <li>• Increase in extent of built up areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Draft SEA Objective</b>		<i>Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource</i>
<b>Suggested draft SEA Target(s)</b>		Maintain built surface cover nationally to below EU average of 4% <sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.epa.ie/irelandsenvironment/environmentalindicators/#land\\_and\\_soil](http://www.epa.ie/irelandsenvironment/environmentalindicators/#land_and_soil)

### 5.3.4 Water

Ireland is currently preparing the second cycle River Basin Management Plans which is the mechanism by which the objectives of the WFD can be implemented. The WFD aims to maintain the “high status” of waters where it exists, prevent deterioration in existing status of waters and to achieve at least “good status” in relation to all waters. A significant aspect of achieving those objectives lies in land use planning strategy, where people live and work and what infrastructure is provided. As such this is a key area of interaction for the NPF.

<b>Key supporting national policy:</b> <i>River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures; Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Programme of Measures; Water Services Strategic Plan (Irish Water).</i>		
SEA Issue	Scope In/Out	Potential Significant Environmental Issues for Consideration in the Environmental Report
Water	In	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce flooding by ensuring new development does not increase current risk;</li> <li>• Reduce flooding by ensuring new development is not located in areas of high flood risk;</li> <li>• Improve water quality by influencing the location and type of development within all catchments, but particularly those with water quality issues;</li> <li>• Improve water quality by identifying and addressing its impacts on the water environment; and</li> <li>• Improve water infrastructure networks and ensure</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating growth and development without compromising achievement of WFD objectives;</li> <li>• Facilitating growth and development without compromising achievement of MSFD objectives;</li> <li>• Facilitating upcoming marine spatial planning requirements;</li> <li>• Ensure adequate drinking water and wastewater treatment is available to accommodate planned growth and development;</li> <li>• Protect water dependant ecosystems from pollution;</li> <li>• Prevent the introduction and / or spread of invasive species;</li> <li>• Morphological impacts on water bodies from engineering and other works, taking into account of flood risk;</li> <li>• Water pollution from point or diffuse sources;</li> <li>• Impacts on water bodies from construction of new wastewater treatment facilities and infrastructure;</li> <li>• Impacts on water bodies from abstraction (including fish passage);</li> <li>• Impacts on combined storm water overflows.</li> </ul>
<b>Draft SEA Objective</b>		<i>Ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the WFD and MSFD</i>
<b>Suggested draft SEA Target(s)</b>		The stated expected outcomes of the second cycle of the River Basin Management Plan are achieved by 2021.

### 5.3.5 Air Quality

The EPA has reported that emissions of NO<sub>x</sub> are currently above the 2010 limit in the EU Directive on National Emissions Ceilings, much of this related to road transport. It is therefore essential for the protection of the environment and human health that national planning takes account of the need to reduce overall car dependency in Ireland.

Key supporting national policy: <i>National Clean Air Strategy; Smarter Travel; Biofuels Plan; National Alternative Fuels Framework; Renewable Electricity Framework</i>		
SEA Issue	Scope In/Out	Potential Significant Environmental Issues for Consideration in the Environmental Report
Air Quality	In	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce direct emissions from energy generation;</li> <li>• Reduce transport related emissions and increase energy efficiency across all transport modes;</li> <li>• Encourage modal shift, especially in towns and cities; and</li> <li>• Integrate</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car dependant culture;</li> <li>• Social isolation in rural areas;</li> <li>• Increasing NO<sub>x</sub> and particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>) emissions as a result of road transport;</li> <li>• Modal shift away from road transport;</li> <li>• Switch to alternative fuels;</li> <li>• Reduce transport demand;</li> <li>• Naturally occurring concentrations of radon; and</li> <li>• Combustion emissions resulting from alternative fuels e.g. biofuels</li> </ul>
<b>Draft SEA Objective</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole resulting from emissions to air.</li> <li>• Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggested draft SEA Target(s)</b>		Decrease in proportion of journeys made by private car compared to 2014 National travel Survey levels. <sup>7</sup>

### 5.3.6 Climatic Factors

A key consideration in relation to the NPF is in relation to planning for climate change into the future. This is both in terms of planning for predicted effects of climate change e.g. avoiding flood risk areas; and also ensuring that Ireland's commitments to move to a zero carbon economy by 2050 are supported by land-use policy decisions now e.g. degree of fossil fuel car dependency.

Key supporting national policy: <i>The National Policy Statement on climate change (DECLG, 2014)</i>		
SEA Issue	Scope In/Out	Potential Significant Environmental Issues for Consideration in the Environmental Report
Climatic Factors	In	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pathways to carbon neutrality across the relevant sectors;</li> <li>• Reduce direct emissions from the generation of energy;</li> <li>• Enhance renewable energy offering;</li> <li>• Encourage modal shift, especially in towns and cities; and</li> <li>• Reduce transport related emissions and increase energy efficiency across all transport modes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• culture;</li> <li>• Social isolation in rural areas;</li> <li>• Radon;</li> <li>• Climate adaptation and mitigation plans;</li> <li>• Flood risk; and</li> <li>• Coastal zone management</li> </ul>
<b>Draft SEA Objective</b>		Minimise emissions of greenhouse gasses
<b>Suggested draft SEA Target(s)</b>		<p>a. Achieve transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.</p> <p>b. A net reduction in the GHG emissions from the transport as outlined in the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory. (Inventory for 2015 reported a 3.7% increase in carbon dioxide equivalent emissions).</p> <p>c. The Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC) set a target for all Member States to reach a 10% share of renewable energy in transport by 2020.</p> <p>d. Reduce overall emissions of carbon</p>

### 5.3.7 Material Assets

There is no clear definition of material assets under the SEA Directive, however it typically overlaps with other areas such as biodiversity, water, land, soils etc. In the context of the SEA for the NPF, this section addresses issues relating to land use and services in the main.

<b>Key supporting national policy:</b> <i>National Forestry Programme 2014-2020; Foodwise 2025; Rural Development Plan; Regional Waste Management Plans</i>		
SEA Issue	Scope In/Out	Potential Significant Environmental Issues for Consideration in the Environmental Report
<b>Material Assets</b>	<b>In</b>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan for settlement to be aligned with required transport, water, energy infrastructure;</li> <li>Balance competing requirements for land use and natural resources; and</li> <li>Investment in supporting infrastructure e.g. water infrastructure.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competing land uses;</li> <li>Shift toward intensification in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, renewable energy sectors;</li> <li>Conflicting policy and guidance between sectors; and</li> <li>In-combination impacts on biodiversity, water, soils, landscape, cultural heritage , soils etc. from competing sectors.</li> </ul>
<b>Draft SEA Objective</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consolidate growth and limit urban sprawl</li> <li>Optimise existing infrastructure and provide new infrastructure to match population distribution proposals in the NPF</li> </ul>
<b>Suggested draft SEA Target(s)</b>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.</li> <li>% increase in budget spend on water and wastewater infrastructure.</li> <li>Completion of the broadband intervention strategy by 2021.</li> </ol>

### 5.3.8 Cultural Heritage

The main issue for archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage associated with the implementation of the NPF is the resulting potential for both direct and indirect impacts on archaeological and architectural features and their settings as a result of infrastructure requirements, settlement patterns and changes to land cover. Cultural heritage features are often tightly linked to landscape and visual considerations of the wider setting of recognised sites.

<b>Key supporting national policy:</b> <i>Built Heritage Policy; Architectural Heritage Policy; National Landscape Strategy; Culture 2025</i>		
SEA Issue	Scope In/Out	Potential Significant Environmental Issues for Consideration in the Environmental Report
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<b>In</b>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of cultural heritage into the design of future developments</li> <li>• Promotion of the cultural heritage resource as a source of economic benefit for communities e.g. tourism;</li> <li>• Promotion of Ireland’s cultural wealth; and</li> <li>• Cultural contribution to wider social and economic goals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To preserve and protect the cultural heritage including architecture, archaeology and cultural heritage;</li> <li>• Impacts on archaeological features and setting;</li> <li>• Impacts for underwater archaeological features during construction of new infrastructure and/ or upgrades</li> </ul>
<b>Draft SEA Objective</b>		Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological or architectural heritage.
<b>Suggested draft SEA Target(s)</b>		<i>No unauthorised physical damage or alteration of the context of cultural heritage features.</i>

### 5.3.9 Landscape

The National Landscape Strategy (NLS) for Ireland (2015-2025) was produced in line with Ireland’s obligations under the European Landscape Convention. Existing pressures on landscape and visual resources are primarily related to infrastructure development and significant land use change such as afforestation. Issues of spatial planning, land use and soil quality are interdependent, and this should be reflected in integrated policies and plans at national, regional and local levels. The main drivers of land use change over the coming decade will be the forestry and agricultural policies including the Forestry Programme 2014-2020 and Food Wise 2025.

Key supporting national policy: <i>National Landscape Strategy; Foodwise 2025; Forestry Programme 2014-2020; Bioenergy Plan</i>		
SEA Issue	Scope In/Out	Potential Significant Environmental Issues for Consideration in the Environmental Report
Landscape	In	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To integrate landscape considerations into the design of future developments; and</li> <li>To develop requirements for design statements for villages, towns, cities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impacts on designated landscapes;</li> <li>Impacts on landscape character;</li> <li>Indirect land use changes associated with other key policies e.g. forestry and biofuels; and</li> <li>No national landscape character assessment.</li> </ul>
<b>Draft SEA Objective</b>		To provide a framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention.
<b>Suggested draft SEA Target(s)</b>		<i>Avoid damage to designated landscapes as a result of NPF implementation.</i>

## 6

# Preliminary Environmental Baseline

In line with the SEA Directive, an environmental baseline will be compiled for the NPF. This will include; a description of the state of the environment at present; a discussion of the key problems/ issues currently being faced nationally; and a description of the expected evolution of the environment should the NPF not be implemented.

The SEA Environmental Report will present a full description of the relevant aspects of the national environmental baseline data. The baseline will reflect the strategic nature of the NPF. The environmental baseline will be presented in the Environmental Report under a number of Strategic Environmental Assessment topic headings as follows:

- Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna (BFF);
- Population (P);
- Human Health (HH);
- Soils (S);
- Water (W);
- Air Quality (AQ)
- Climatic Factors (CF);
- Material Assets (MA);
- Architectural Archaeological and Cultural Heritage (AACH); and
- Landscape (L).
- Under each of the SEA topic heading the current state of the environment will be identified along with the key problems/ issues and the expected evolution of the environment in the absence of the plan. The data sources that will be used to compile the current state of the environment are identified in Section 6.1.

## 6.1 Baseline Data Sources

It will be key that the current state of the environment is described using the most up to date environmental data, information and reports. Where updates of significant environmental data and associated reports become available during the SEA process, consideration will be given to incorporating the new information into the description of the current state of the environment. Where data gaps are found for particular aspects of the current state of the environment, the significance of these data gaps will be clearly stated. In addition, it will be stated whether these gaps can be reasonably and realistically addressed during the SEA process.

A key document that will be referenced will be the EPA State of the Environment Report which was published in Q4 2016. The broad environmental messages identified by the EPA relate to:

- **Environment and Health and Wellbeing** - Recognising the benefits of a good quality environment to health and wellbeing.
- **Climate Change** - Accelerate mitigation actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement adaptation measures to increase our resilience in dealing with adverse climate impacts.
- **Implementation of Legislation** - Improve the tracking of plans and policies and the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation to protect the environment.

The NPF will be put in context in relation to these three components and furthermore will have regard to the key topic messages of: Restore & Protect Water Quality; Sustainable Economic Activities; Nature & Wild Places; and Community Engagement

It is intended to utilise Geographical Information Systems (GIS) where possible to display and analyse information relevant to the region. Table 6.1 provides a preliminary overview of each of the SEA Topics that will be outlined in the SEA baseline. The table also includes a non-exhaustive list of the potential data sources that will be used to compile the baseline and in addition it outlines the preliminary extent of the assessment based on these available data sources. Given the strategic nature of the NPF, it is recognised that there are limitations on the extent of the scope of an environmental assessment and therefore it is beneficial to outline such limitations at this early stage.

<b>Table 6.1 – Baseline Data Sources and Extent of Assessment</b>		
<b>SEA Topic</b>	<b>Potential Data Sources</b>	<b>Potential Extent of Assessment based on Data Sources</b>
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) database; National Biodiversity Data Centre; Ireland's National Biodiversity Plan (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht); Invasive Species Ireland website; WFD Ireland website; MSFD Ireland website EPA Geoportal.	National and regional datasets are available for aspects relating to biodiversity, flora and fauna. Given the scale of the NPF the assessment will be focussed on designated sites such as SPA, SAC, NHA.
Population	Central Statistics Office (CSO) database, including census 2011 data and available 2016 data	National datasets are available for population density and distribution and the potential impacts of the NPF can be assessed relative to the available information.
Human Health	EPA Geoportal; Central Statistics Office (CSO) database, including census 2011 data and available 2016 data. HSE Healthy Ireland See also Soils, Water and Air Quality entries.	Reference will be made to the Institute of Public Health for appropriate information if available and also the HSE.
Soils	Corine Landcover and Land Use Database; Coillte Forestry Database; Teagasc Soil Information; Geological Survey of Ireland Online Mapping.	National high level datasets are available for soil and land use resources at a county/national scale. This is in keeping with the strategic nature of the NPF and is considered adequate at this scale.
Water	EPA ENVision (Environmental Mapping); EPA Geoportal; EPA database reports including but not limited to: Water Quality in Ireland (latest available); Integrated Water Quality Reports (latest available); and Quality of Estuarine and Coastal Waters (latest available) National Catchment Flood Risk Management Programme (CFRAM), Office of Public Works (OPW);	National datasets are available for surface water and groundwater.
Air Quality	EPA database (air quality); Local Authority air quality monitoring network.	National and regional datasets are available for relevant air quality parameters.

**Table 6.1 – Baseline Data Sources and Extent of Assessment**

SEA Topic	Potential Data Sources	Potential Extent of Assessment based on Data Sources
Climatic Factors	EPA Irelands Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections 2012-2030; Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEAI), Energy in Ireland Report (1990-2012) EPA SAFER database	National datasets are available for carbon emissions and greenhouse gases.
Material Assets	EPA Geoportal; Geodirectory; Irish Water; OPW flood data; DAFM datasets; DCCAIE datasets	National datasets are available for certain resources that may be affected by the NPFP.
Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural, Heritage	National Monuments Service (Archaeological Survey Database); National Inventory of Architectural Heritage; and Discovery Ireland Programme.	National datasets are available for archaeology and architectural heritage, however the scale of the datasets are directed towards local project specific sources.
Landscape	There are no national datasets available for landscape and the information that is available at a county level is not consistent across all of the counties.	Limited

## 7

## Proposed Framework for Assessing Environmental Effects

A key purpose of scoping is to set out sufficient details about the proposed methodological framework for the assessment of environmental effects to allow the consultees to form a view on this matter. It is proposed to use an objectives-led assessment which will involve comparing the proposed alternatives against defined SEA Environmental Objectives for each of the identified issue areas.

The preceding sections have identified the environmental characteristics and key environmental issues relating to the NPF and the key influences from external plans, policies and strategies. This section uses that information to set out a series of draft SEA environmental objectives, indicators and associated targets. These will be used in the environmental report to predict the likely environmental effects of the NPF and, subsequently, monitor implementation of the plan. The use of these objectives ensures that following this scoping stage the SEA focuses only on those issues that are most relevant and significant to the study in the NPF.

Set out in Table 7-1 are the draft SEA objectives that are being considered to test the potential environmental impacts of the NPF. These objectives are based on the current understanding of the key environmental issues identified. The detailed assessment criteria are examples of the issues that will be considered during the assessment of whether the plan, including the proposed alternatives, meets the proposed SEA objectives. It should be noted that these are draft objectives only and are provided for the purpose of discussion at this scoping stage. The SEA team welcomes feedback on the draft objectives with a view to updating them prior to any assessment.

**Table 7.1 – Draft SEA Environmental Objectives**

Related to SEA Topic(s)	Draft Objective and Targets	Suggested draft SEA Target(s)
Population and Human Health (PHH)	<b>Objective 1:</b> To create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a more healthy Ireland.	a. Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life. b. Increase by 20% proportion of the population undertaking regular physical activity
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna (BFF)	<b>Objective 2:</b> To preserve, protect, maintain and where appropriate restore the terrestrial, aquatic and soil biodiversity, particularly EU designated sites and protected species.	a. Require all regional, county and local level land use plans to include ecosystem services and green infrastructure provisions in their land use plans.
Soil (S)	<b>Objective 3:</b> Protect soils against pollution, and prevent degradation of the soil resource.	Maintain built surface cover nationally to below EU average of 4% <sup>8</sup>
Water (W)	<b>Objective 4:</b> To ensure that the status of water bodies is protected, maintained and improved in line with the requirements of the WFD and MSFD.	a. The stated expected outcomes of the second cycle of the River Basin Management Plan are achieved by 2021. b. The stated expected outcomes of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive are achieved by 2021.

Table 7.1 – Draft SEA Environmental Objectives		
Related to SEA Topic(s)	Draft Objective and Targets	Suggested draft SEA Target(s)
Air Quality (AQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Objective 5(i):</b> To avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole resulting from emissions to air.</li> <li>▪ <b>Objective 5(ii):</b> Maintain and promote continuing improvement in air quality through the reduction of emissions and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency.</li> </ul>	a. Decrease in proportion of of journeys made by private car compared to 2014 National travel Survey levels. <sup>9</sup>
Climatic Factors (C)	<b>Objective 6:</b> To minimise emissions of greenhouse gasses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Achieve transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050</li> <li>b. A net reduction in the GHG emissions from the transport as outlined in the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory. (Inventory for 2014 reported a 2.5% increase in carbon dioxide equivalent emissions)</li> <li>c. The Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC) set a target for all Member States to reach a 10% share of renewable energy in transport by 2020.</li> <li>d. Reduce overall emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) by at least 80-95% of 1990 levels by 2050.</li> </ul>
Material Assets (MA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Objective 7(i):</b> Consolidate growth and limit urban sprawl.</li> <li>▪ <b>Objective 7(ii):</b> Optimise existing infrastructure and provide new infrastructure to match population distribution proposals in the NPF.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Achieve transition to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.</li> <li>b. % increase in budget spend on water and wastewater infrastructure.</li> <li>c. Completion of the broadband intervention strategy by 2021.</li> </ul>
Cultural Heritage (CH)	<b>Objective 8:</b> Protect places, features, buildings and landscapes of cultural, archaeological or architectural heritage.	a. No unauthorised physical damage or alteration of the context of cultural heritage features.
Landscape (L)	<b>Objective 9:</b> To provide a framework for identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes having regard to the European Landscape Convention.	a. Avoid damage to designated landscapes as a result of NPF implementation

## 7.1 Draft Indicators and Targets

Targets will be considered over the duration of the baseline data collection and assessment, and through the consultation process, in order to meet the SEA environmental objectives of the NPF. In each case, any target that is set must be attributable to the implementation of the NPF. The indicators will also be selected bearing in mind the availability of data and the feasibility of making direct links between any changes in the environment and the implementation of the plan. These indicators will be developed during the study, including in response to comments received on this Scoping Report. Draft Targets have been presented in Section 5 within this document.

## 7.2 Impacts, Mitigation and Monitoring

In line with the requirements in the legislation the likely significant effects on the environment will be assessed. This includes reference to secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects as well as the interrelationships between the environmental issue areas. Where possible and practical, assessment of these impacts will be quantitative. Any problems encountered during the assessment of impacts, including technical difficulties and/or lack of information, will be highlighted and described, as appropriate.

With regard to cumulative impacts, the use and application of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) will be considered, where possible, at the various key stages in the SEA process. GIS, along with other methodologies and depending on the availability of relevant spatial data, will assist in determining the cumulative vulnerability of various environmental resources nationally/regionally for the NPF.

Where significant adverse impacts are identified during the SEA process, relevant and appropriate mitigation measures will be provided in the Environmental Report. In order to ensure implementation of the recommended measures, monitoring arrangements will be provided and will include, where feasible, details as to the frequency of monitoring, and analysis and reporting on monitoring. As part of the monitoring programme, relevant and appropriate thresholds will be included to determine when remedial action is required for the particular aspect of the environment being monitored.

## 7.3 Outline of Alternatives

The assessment of reasonable alternatives as part of the SEA process is required as part of an Environmental Report under Article 5(1) of the SEA Directive. Alternatives can be described as a range of options available to the plan makers for delivering the objectives of the NPF. The identification of alternatives enables more informed decision-making and the assessment allows more sustainable options to be identified. The strategic alternatives to be considered must be realistic, reasonable and relevant. It is anticipated that the environmental report will explore alternatives at a number of levels: strategic; policy actions etc. Recent EPA guidance on development of alternatives will provide a framework for development of alternatives development.

## 8

## Next Steps

As part of the statutory scoping of the SEA for the National Planning Framework, there will be statutory consultation with the designated consultees for SEA in Ireland. In addition, transboundary consultation will be undertaken with Northern Ireland.

**Table 8.1 – Consultees in SEA Scoping Process**

Consultee
Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (formerly DECLG)
Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment (formerly DCENR)
Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (formerly DAHG)
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (formerly NIEA)

To further facilitate meaningful discussion, a workshop will be convened in Q1 of 2017 with the above listed consultees. This will include presentations from both the NPF team and the SEA/AA team to inform discussions on the scope and level of detail of the assessment. All discussions during this workshop, as well as formal written submissions received will be considered in preparation of the Environmental Report and the NPF.

In addition, the SEA Scoping Report and the accompanying Issues Paper will be placed on the DHPCLG website to facilitate wider stakeholder involvement. Notice and the web-link will also be sent to all Local Authorities for inclusion on their websites to ensure a wider stakeholder pool is made aware of the scoping phase.

Written submissions at this first stage of the National Planning Framework process can be made between 9am on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February and 12 pm on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

**You can make a submission by:**

Going on-line: just log on to our **website** [www.Ireland 2040.ie](http://www.Ireland2040.ie) and follow the instructions provided;

E-mail to the following address: [npf@housing.gov.ie](mailto:npf@housing.gov.ie)

Writing to the following address: **NPF Submissions, Forward Planning Section, Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, Custom House, Dublin D01 W6X0**





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**Ireland**  
**2040**  
**Our Plan**



NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

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**An Roinn Tithíochta, Pleanála,  
Poball agus Rialtais Áitiúil**  
Department of Housing, Planning,  
Community and Local Government

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