

Section 3 SEA Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the Iterative Approach

This section details how the SEA has been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan. Figure 3.1 lays out the main stages in the Plan/SEA preparation process.

The Plan and associated SEA, AA and SFRA documents were prepared in an iterative manner whereby multiple revisions of each document were prepared, each informing subsequent iterations of the others.

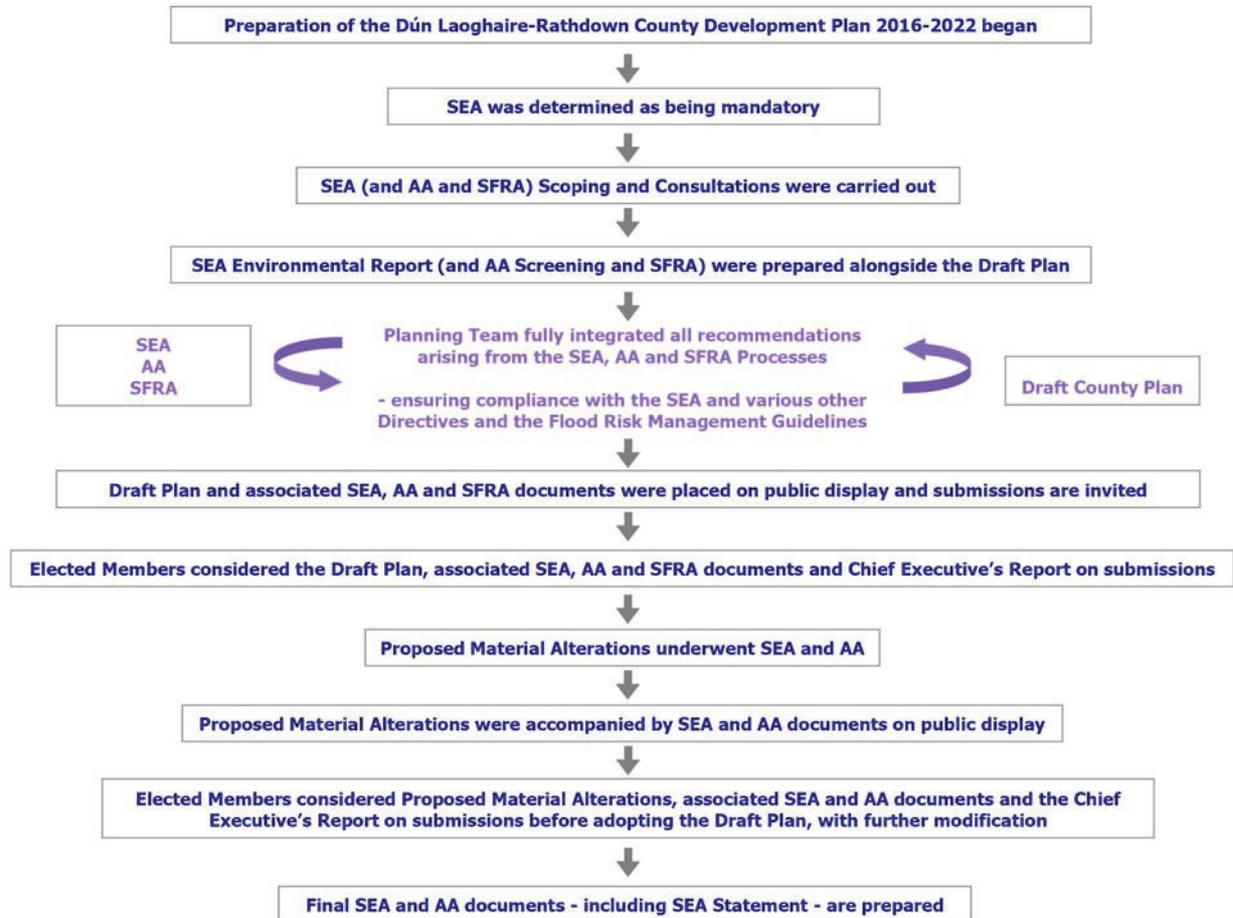


Figure 3.1 County Development Plan and SEA Stages

3.2 Appropriate Assessment and Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment

3.2.1 Appropriate Assessment

Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been undertaken alongside the preparation and adoption of the Plan. The requirement for AA is provided under the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 1992/43/EEC). The AA concluded that the Plan will not have a significant adverse effect on European Sites, and that the integrity of the European Sites, in view of their conservation interests, will not be adversely affected.

The preparation of the Plan, SEA and AA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA have informed both the Plan and the SEA. Various policies and objectives have been integrated into the Plan through the AA process.

3.2.2 Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment

Many elements of Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment as detailed in the EPA's (2013) Practitioner's Manual have been aligned with in the undertaking of the SEA for the Plan. These include:

Scoping

- Biodiversity-relevant issues were identified for consideration at scoping stage and these are now detailed in Section 4.3.
- Reference to a zone of influence is provided, including at Section 4.3.

Baseline

- Biodiversity data sources relevant for this County level assessment have been identified and datasets collated/gathered.
- The biodiversity baseline addresses designated sites and other habitats and species of ecological value.
- AA information has been incorporated into the SEA baseline.

Alternatives

- Impacts upon biodiversity are considered under each of the alternatives and potential conflicts can be mitigated under 3 alternatives.

Impact assessment

- Effects on biodiversity are identified and assessed and the AA gives consideration to the interrelationship between biodiversity and potential effects on European sites.

Mitigation and monitoring

- Taking into account all measures contained within the Plan, all the proposed mitigation measures deriving from the various processes were generally consistent and compatible.
- Indicators and associated targets have been included in SEA for monitoring European sites.

Reporting

- This SEA ER addresses all biodiversity-related considerations relevant for this county level assessment.
- This SEA ER contains all biodiversity-relevant information, data, figures and maps relevant for this County level assessment.
- This SEA ER has been informed by the AA findings.

Communication and consultation

- Submissions from both the EPA and NPWS have been taken on board.
- The preparation of the Plan, SEA and AA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the AA have informed both the Plan and the SEA.

3.3 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been undertaken alongside the preparation and adoption of the Plan.

The requirement for SFRA is provided under 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DECLG, 2009).

The preparation of the Plan, SEA and SFRA has taken place concurrently and the findings of the SFRA have informed both the Plan and the SEA. All recommendations made by the SFRA and SEA in relation to flood risk management have been integrated into the Plan.

3.4 Scoping

3.4.1 Introduction

In consultation with the relevant authorities, the scope of environmental issues to be dealt with by the SEA together with the level of detail to which they are addressed was broadly decided upon taking into account the collection of environmental baseline data and input from environmental authorities. Scoping

allowed the SEA to become focused upon key issues relevant to the environmental components which are specified under the SEA Directive².

As the Plan is not likely to have significant effects on the environment in another Member State transboundary consultations as provided for by Article 7 of the SEA Directive were not undertaken.

3.4.2 Scoping Notices

All relevant environmental authorities³ identified under the SEA Regulations as amended, were all sent SEA scoping notices by the Council indicating that submissions or observations in relation to the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report could be made to the Council.

3.4.3 Submissions

Submissions were made by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Geological Survey of Ireland) during the SEA Scoping/ Plan-preparation process. These submissions influenced the scope of the assessments as detailed in the final SEA Scoping Report.

3.5 Environmental Baseline Data

The SEA process is informed by the environmental baseline (i.e. the current state of the environment) to facilitate the identification and evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the provisions of the Plan and

² These components comprise biodiversity, fauna, flora, population, human health, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.

³ These comprise: Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin City Council, South Dublin County Council and Wicklow County Council.

the alternatives and the subsequent monitoring of the effects of implementing the provisions of the Plan as adopted.

3.6 Alternatives

The SEA Directive requires that reasonable alternatives (taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme) are identified, described and evaluated for their likely significant effects on the environment. In accordance with this requirement, three alternative scenarios for the Plan are examined in Section 6.

3.7 The SEA Environmental Report

In this SEA Environmental Report, an earlier version of which was placed on public display alongside the Draft Plan, the likely environmental effects of the Plan and the alternatives are predicted and their significance evaluated.

The Environmental Report provides the Council, stakeholders and the public with a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of implementing the Plan.

Mitigation measures to prevent or reduce significant adverse effects posed by the Plan are identified in Section 9 - these have been integrated into the Plan.

The Environmental Report has been updated in order to take account of recommendations contained in submissions and in order to take account of changes which are made to the original, Draft Plan that was placed on public display earlier in the process.

The Environmental Report is required to contain the information specified in Schedule 2 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 435 of 2004) as amended (see Table 3.1).

3.8 The SEA Statement

On the making of the Plan by the Council, an SEA Statement will be prepared which will include information on:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan, highlighting the main changes to the Plan which resulted from the SEA process;
- How the SEA Environmental Report and consultations have been taken into account, summarising the key issues raised in consultations and in the Environmental Report indicating what action was taken in response;
- The reasons for choosing the Plan in the light of the other alternatives, identifying the other alternatives considered, commenting on their potential effects and explaining why the Plan as adopted was selected; and
- The measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementing of the Plan.

3.9 Difficulties Encountered

The lack of a centralised data source that could make all environmental baseline data for the County both readily available and in a consistent format posed a challenge to the SEA process. This difficulty is one which has been encountered while undertaking SEAs at Local Authorities across the country and was overcome by investing time in the collection of data from various sources and through the use of Geographical Information Systems.

In addition the fact that the CFRAM maps were not yet finalised for the Eastern District posed a challenge to the SFRA.

Table 3.1 Checklist of Information included in this Environmental Report

Information Required to be included in the Environmental Report	Corresponding Section of this Report
(A) Outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	Sections 2, 5 and 8
(B) Description of relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the evolution of that environment without implementation of the plan or programme	Section 4
(C) Description of the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	Sections 4, 7 and 8
(D) Identification of any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme, particularly those relating to European protected sites	Section 4
(E) List environmental protection objectives, established at international, EU or National level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and describe how those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account when preparing the Plan	Sections 5, 7, 8 and 9
(F) Describe the likely significant effects on the environment	Sections 7 and 8
(G) Describe any measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse environmental effects of implementing the plan or programme	Section 9
(H) Give an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives considered, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken (including any difficulties)	Sections 6, 7 and 8
(I) A description of proposed monitoring measures	Section 10
(J) A non-technical summary of the above information	Non-Technical Summary
(K) Interrelationships between each environmental topic	Addressed as it arises within each Section