

# SEA STATEMENT

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FOR THE

## INTEGRATED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2019-2024

## STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**for: National Transport Authority**

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# Section 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction and Legislative Context

This is the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement for the Integrated Implementation Plan 2019-2024.

SEA is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a plan, or other strategic action, in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic and social considerations.

Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27<sup>th</sup> June 2001, on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment, referred to hereafter as the SEA Directive, introduced the requirement that SEA be carried out on plans and programmes which are prepared for a number of sectors, including transport.

The SEA Directive was transposed into Irish Law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (Statutory Instrument Number (SI No. 435 of 2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (SI No. 436 of 2004). Both sets of Regulations became operational on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2004. The Regulations have been amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 200 of 2011) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 201 of 2011).

## 1.2 Content of the SEA Statement

Where SEA is undertaken, the Regulations require that "information on the decision" is made available to the public and the competent environmental authorities after the finalisation of the Plan (referred to as an SEA Statement).

The SEA Statement is required to include information summarising:

- a) how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan;
- b) how the following have been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan:
  - the environmental report,
  - submissions and observations made to the planning authority on the Draft Plan and Environmental Report, and
  - any transboundary consultations.
- c) the reasons for choosing the Plan in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- d) the measures decided upon to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementation of the Plan.

## 1.3 Implications of SEA for the Plan

Article 9 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended, sets out criteria for determining whether SEA should be undertaken on certain types of plans. Considering these criteria, the National Transport Authority concluded that an SEA was required for the Plan, as it comprises a 'plan or programme' as defined by the SEA Directive which is likely to have significant environmental effects.

SEA has been undertaken and the findings of the SEA are expressed in an Environmental Report, the first published version of which accompanied the Draft Strategy on public display. The Environmental Report was updated in order to take account of:

- Recommendations contained in submissions; and
- Changes to the Draft Plan that were made on foot of submissions.

The NTA have taken into account the findings of all relevant SEA output during their consideration of the Draft Integrated Implementation Plan and before the Plan was adopted.

## **Section 2 How Environmental Considerations were integrated into the Plan**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Environmental considerations were integrated into the Plan through:

1. Early work undertaken by the Authority to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development;
2. Consultations;
3. Consideration of alternatives;
4. Communication of environmental sensitivities throughout the SEA process;
5. Integration of individual measures into the Plan.

### **2.2 Early work undertaken by the Authority to ensure contribution towards environmental protection and sustainable development**

Far in advance of the placing of the Plan (and associated SEA and AA) on public display, the National Transport Authority undertook early work that has helped to ensure that the Plan contributes towards environmental protection and sustainable development.

This work includes the adoption of the closely related Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 that establishes an overall framework for transport investment in Counties Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow over the next two decades and already contributes towards the environmental protection and management.

Most proposals included within the Plan have been already included within plans that facilitate sustainable mobility including the Transport Strategy, the National Planning Framework 2018 and the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan 2016.

The Transport Strategy (and consequently the Implementation Plan) focuses on improving public and sustainable transport across the Greater Dublin Area while seeking to ensure primacy for transport options that provide for unit reductions in carbon emissions. This involves: promoting public transport, walking and cycling; seeking to reduce car use in circumstances where alternative options are available; and transitioning to lower emission vehicles for transport use. Transport Strategy provisions include those relating to: light rail; including the development of the MetroLink project; heavy rail (inclusive of expanded electrification on the suburban rail lines); cycling facilities; pedestrian movement; interchange facilities; information provision; and park and ride developments.

To date, the Authority has focused significant levels of investment in these sustainable modes, including the reopening of the Phoenix Park Tunnel and the delivery of Luas Cross City. The continuation of this focus is facilitated by the Transport Strategy and it is intended that it will continue under the Implementation Plan.

### **2.3 Consultations**

Relevant environmental authorities identified under the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes), as amended, were sent SEA scoping notices by the National Transport Authority 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 Authority. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency was also sent an SEA scoping notice.

Further detail on submissions made on foot of the SEA scoping notice is provided under Section 3.2.

Furthermore, submissions were made on the Draft Plan and SEA Environmental Report while they were on public display and these resulted in updates being made to the SEA documents (see Section 3.3).

## 2.4 Consideration of alternatives

As part of the Plan-preparation/SEA process, the National Transport Authority considered three alternative scenarios regarding the sequence and degree of implementation of key elements that make up the Plan. These scenarios were as follows:

- Scenario A: Balanced Bus and Rail;
- Scenario B: MetroLink Prioritisation of Funding; and
- Scenario C: MetroLink Reduced Funding.

The most preferable outcome from the environmental assessment of alternatives is identified as being Alternative Scenario A and the approach outlined by this alternative is the one that is followed by the Plan.

This alternative will give rise to orderly development with balanced patterns of land use allocation – resulting in a greater likelihood of financially viable supporting utilities and amenities – as well as earlier attainment of income generation goals (through fares from orderly provision of new housing concentrations at scale). Growth will be balanced as a result of this alternative.

This alternative will also facilitate the greatest improvement in sustainable mobility of all alternatives (reducing and limiting increases in the number of journeys by car taken as a percentage of all journeys taken), thereby facilitating the greatest reduction and limit of increases in greenhouse gas emissions, noise emissions and other emissions to air (with associated effects on human health).

## 2.5 Communication of environmental sensitivities throughout the SEA process

### 2.5.1 Individual Environmental Sensitivities

Environmental considerations were integrated into the Draft Plan before it was placed on public display. Individual sensitivities which were mapped by the SEA and considered by the Team

preparing the Transport Plan included the following:

- Noise Mapping Lden (day, evening, night);
- European Sites
- Potential Habitat Sensitivity
- WFD Surface Water Status
- WFD Groundwater Status
- Groundwater Vulnerability
- Groundwater Productivity
- Source Protection Areas
- WFD Register of Protected Area
- Potential Land Cover Sensitivity Mapping
- Potential Cultural Heritage Sensitivity
- County Geological Sites

Some of these are indicated on Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2.

In addition to considering environmental components individually, some of the environmental information was been weighted and mapped to show overall environmental sensitivity (see Figure 2.3) and overall environmental opportunities/robustness (see Figure 2.4). This mapping indicates at a regional level where the main concentrations of sensitivities might occur.

Heightened areas of sensitivity include those in the uplands and foothills of the Wicklow Mountains, in the bog areas of west Kildare, in river valleys (e.g. the River Boyne in central and North Meath, the River Barrow in West and South Kildare and Slaney in South Wicklow) and at lakes. Lands at the coastal margins and coastal waters are also sensitive, especially within and to the north of Dublin Bay. Lower levels of sensitivity occur elsewhere.

Heightened areas of opportunities/robustness include those within and surrounding the M50 motorway, in much of County Meath, especially south and south-east Meath, in much of County Kildare, especially north-east Kildare, and in County Wicklow, between the Mountains and the coast. Lower levels of opportunities/robustness occur elsewhere.

### 2.5.2 Appropriate Assessment

A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been undertaken alongside the preparation 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 affect the integrity of the European Sites<sup>1</sup>.

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. All recommendations made by the AA were integrated into the Plan.

## **2.6 Integration of individual measures into the Plan**

The SEA and AA processes that have been undertaken alongside the preparation of the Plan have brought about changes to the emerging Plan thereby enabling the mitigation of any potentially adverse environmental effects. All recommendations made by the SEA and AA processes were integrated into the Plan. The changes that have been brought about by the SEA and AA processes are detailed in Table 2.1 and Table 2.2 below.

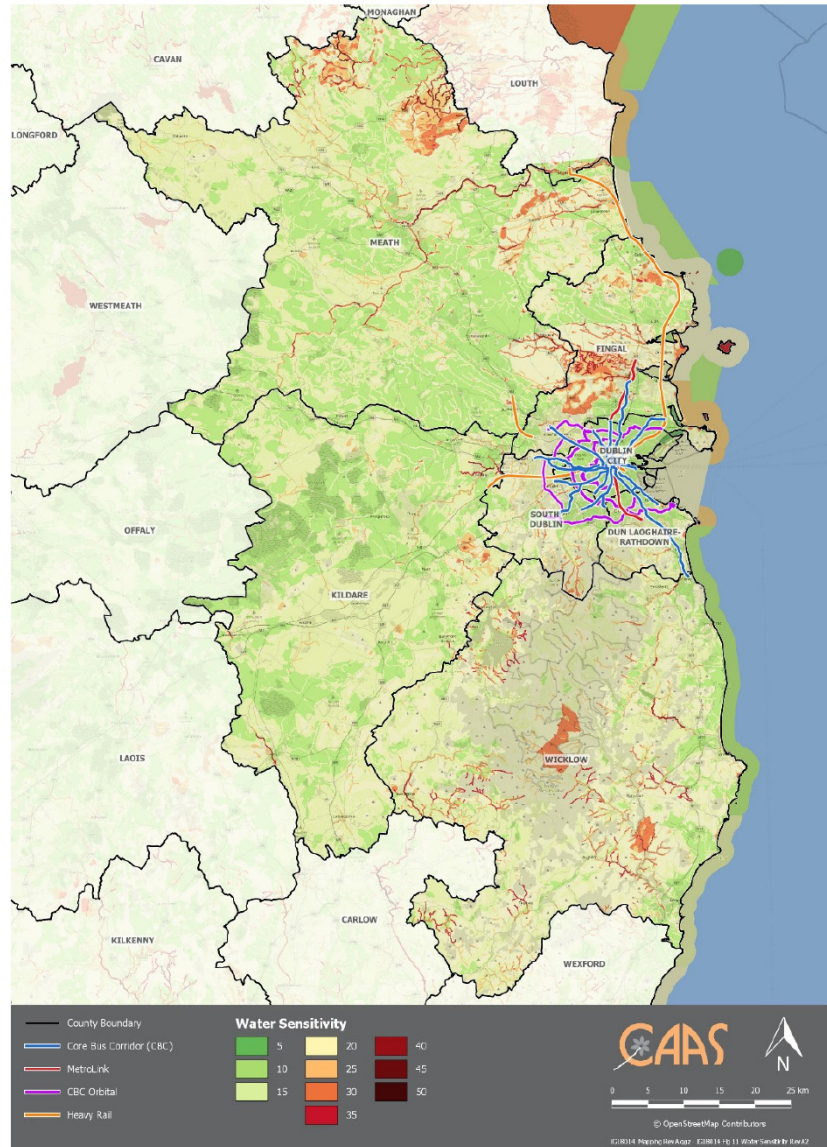
These tables also link the various mitigation measures to specific environmental components and the potential adverse effects that would be present if the changes were not made. The measures generally benefit multiple environmental components i.e. a measure providing for the protection of biodiversity, flora and fauna could beneficially impact upon the minimisation of flood risk and the protection of human health, for example.

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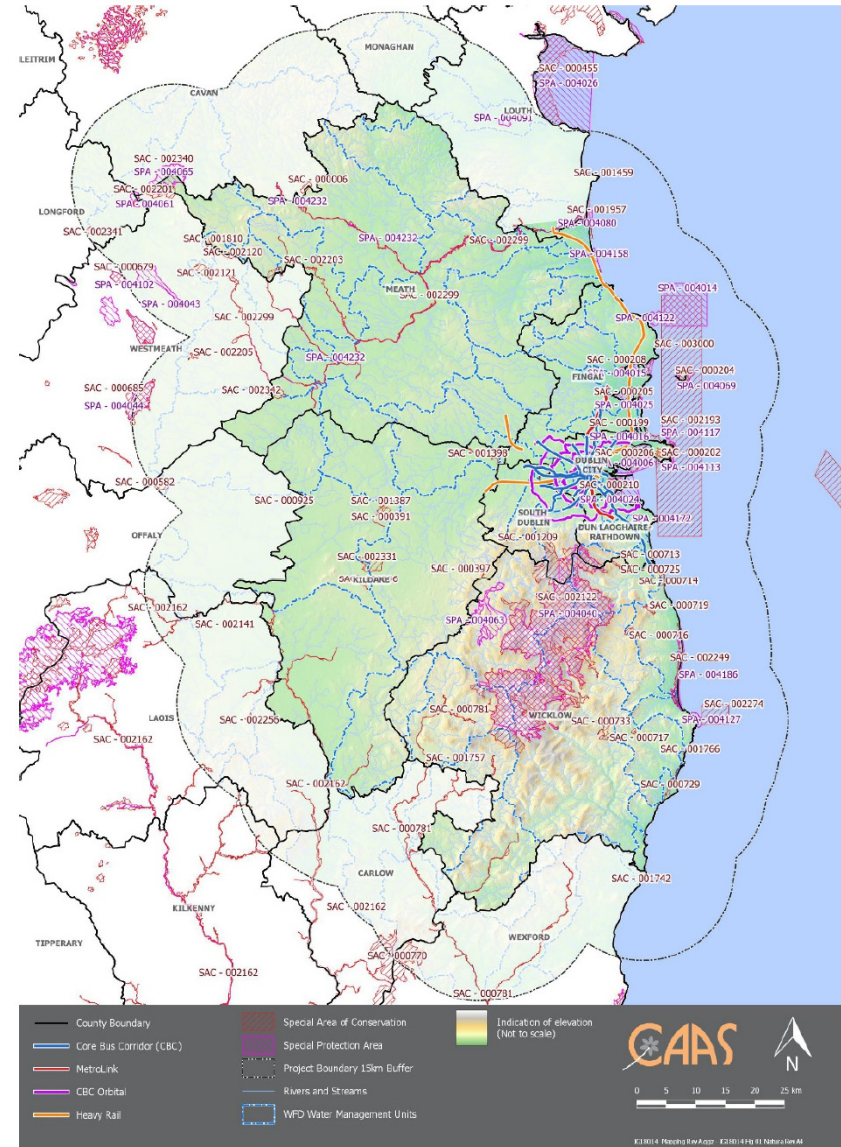
<sup>1</sup> Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be:

(a) no alternative solution available;  
(b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan/programme/project to proceed; and  
(c) adequate compensatory measures in place.





## Overlay of Potential Water Sensitivity



## European Sites

**Figure 2.1 Selection of Individual Environmental Sensitivities from SEA Environmental Report (1 of 2)**