

REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL PORTS POLICY

Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report



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1 INTRODUCTION

The National Ports Policy (NPP) provides the overarching policy framework for the governance and future development of Ireland's state port network. The responsiveness and competitiveness of Ireland's maritime transport industry are underpinned by the 2013 National Ports Policy which has helped foster competition between ports and created relatively low barriers to entry for shipping companies seeking to enter the Irish market. However, since 2013, the national and international environment has changed fundamentally. The Department of Transport (DoT) are therefore preparing a revision to the 2013 NPP.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening of the revised NPP was undertaken in July 2024 under S.I. No. 435/2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200/2011, and determined that SEA of the revised NPP would be required. The next step in the SEA process requires definition of the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the SEA Environmental Report. This scoping step is the focus of this report.

This Scoping Report provides preliminary information on the NPP with a view to establishing the scope, level of detail and approach required for the SEA that will follow. It is intended that the information contained within the report will enable meaningful consultation with the statutory consultees in relation to the revised NPP.

This Scoping Report has been prepared by RPS on behalf of the DoT.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL PORTS POLICY

2.1 Background and Context

The mission of the DoT, as set out in its Statement of Strategy 2023-2025, is to deliver an accessible, efficient, safe, and sustainable transport system that supports communities, households, and businesses. A key goal to fulfilling this mission is ensuring Ireland's international connectivity in an environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable manner while putting safety, security, and accessibility for all at the centre of transport policies. The NPP is a vital component in delivering this Strategy.

The current NPP was approved by Government in 2013. This was at a time when Ireland, and its port sector, were still dealing with the consequences of the financial crisis. Over the subsequent ten years, the broad objectives outlined by the Policy have been achieved. Ports have been categorised in order of National Significance, a move that aligned our ports with the emerging EU trans-European Transport Network (Ten-T Network). The Policy gave Irish ports a clear direction, placing their role firmly within the planning hierarchy and encouraged ports to develop master plans. The 2013 NPP, and subsequently the Harbours Act 2015, facilitated the transfer of the five ports of regional significance, to more appropriate local authority control. The national and international environment for which the 2013 policy was developed has changed fundamentally in recent years.

2.2 Issues Paper for consultation on the NPP review

In 2023, DoT published an Issues Paper to invite submissions from stakeholders and identified the strategic policy issues for the revision of the NPP under the following headings:

- **Climate change:** Ports worldwide are experiencing air and water temperature increases, rising sea levels, and changes in metrics such as seasonal rainfall, wind and wave conditions. Many are also seeing more frequent and severe extreme weather events. Port operators need to take urgent action to strengthen resilience and adapt. Policymakers must provide a sound policy framework to make this happen.
- **The development of offshore renewable energy:** The Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) industry represents an opportunity for Irish ports to develop new revenue streams, which can contribute significantly to regional development and local employment. Irish ports can play a leading role alongside other relevant stakeholders to establish a sustainable ORE sector in Ireland. Appropriate policy and legislative frameworks will be required to facilitate the growth of the ORE sector.
- **An integrated logistics chain:** Policy planning, and execution must be based less on the mode of transport but rather as a function of how cargo and freight can be serviced in the most competitive and sustainable way.
- **Transition to the circular economy:** While oil and coal imports will decline, the growth of renewable energy and its associated supply chain offer vital opportunities to ports. It is important to consider what can be done to prepare and enable Irish Ports to make this transition and maximise the opportunities.
- **Port Capacity:** Port Infrastructure takes a long time to plan and construct. To meet the capacity constraints policy decisions are necessary now.
- **Ports funding:** The cost of port infrastructure, the level of investment it requires, its lack of returns and its role as an essential enabler of the national economy and carbon reduction make examining all possible funding streams for ports an integral part of the discussion on any new policy.
- **Technological Innovation:** The ports industry is facing a range of emerging challenges, including growing freight traffic, increasing pressure to address environmental concerns, operational challenges and the ongoing pandemic-induced disruption. To overcome these challenges, port operators globally are increasingly turning to technology.
- **Upskilling and diversifying the maritime labour force:** With the technological landscape changing in the ports and shipping sector, it is imperative that the existing workforce is future-proofed and upskilled to ensure they can work well in an environment centred around technology. It is important that the maritime industry has the right people with the right skills to effectively harness new technologies.

- Governance: All five ports of Regional Significance have been transferred to local authority control. With the completion of these transfers, it is appropriate to reexamine if ownership and governance structure is working to the optimal level. Accessibility: Transport should be accessible to all. Universal Design, which considers persons of different ages, ability, or mobility can realise this.
- Enhancing Ireland’s maritime connectivity: As an island nation, Ireland requires well developed international maritime connectivity to underpin the functioning of the economy.
- Port Marine Code: The overall maritime regulatory framework for ports has developed over many years with many different obligations in areas such as provision of port reception facilities and port security, amongst others. Given the multitude of regulatory requirements and its growing complexity, should consideration be given to developing a port marine code which would bring all of these marine regulatory obligations into a single document?

2.3 Purpose and Proposed Contents of the National Ports Policy

The 2013 NPP addressed the pressing issues facing the sector at the time and also looked to the future in order to ensure that commercial seaports made a full contribution to facilitating economic recovery and prosperity. The 2013 NPP discussed the organisational and ownership structure of the ports, corporate governance, the planning, and development system in relation to ports policy, and environmental and foreshore issues.

Therefore, the NPP introduced a clear categorisation of the ports sector into Ports of National Significance (Tier 1), Ports of National Significance (Tier 2) and Ports of Regional Significance. Furthermore, it established a set of overarching principles to underpin a policy framework that allowed the commercial ports sector to develop in a sustainable manner. Within the framework, it provided for future decisions on port restructuring designed to suit the very different circumstances that ports face.

Over the subsequent ten years since its implementation, the broad objectives outlined by the policy have been achieved. A revised approach is needed to assist these ports with the environmental, technological, demographic, and geopolitical challenges of the next decade – the revised NPP will therefore build on the 2013 NPP.

Table 2-1 presents the structure of the 2013 NPP and it is assumed that the reviewed NPP will follow a similar structure.

Table 2-1: Potential Structure of the revised NPP

Chapter Number	Proposed Contents of the NPP
1	Introduction
2	Organisational and Ownership Structure
3	Corporate Governance
4	Ports Policy and the Planning and Development System
5	Environmental Issues
6	Port Marine Code
7	Actions and Timelines

3 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

3.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental consequences of implementing plan / programme initiatives. 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. No. 435/2004) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436/2004). Both pieces of legislation were amended in 2011 under S.I. No. 200/2011 and S.I. No. 201/2011.

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 the SEA Process

3.1.1 SEA Screening Stage

The SEA Directive requires that certain plans and programmes, prepared by national, regional, or local authorities, which are likely to have a significant impact on the environment, be subject to the SEA process. A screening of the draft Policy for SEA was undertaken in 2024. In accordance with the provisions of S.I. No. 435/2004 as amended, and specifically Article 9(1), the following can be confirmed:

- The Policy will be a public document;
- It will be prepared by the DoT;
- It is a national scale policy which will be considered by Government;
- It is not specifically required by national legislation;
- The Policy will address the transport sector; and
- It is anticipated that it will require assessment under the Habitats Directive.

With reference to the above, it has therefore been concluded that SEA is required for the NPP under S.I. No. 435/2004, as amended.

3.1.2 SEA Scoping Stage

Under Article 11 of S.I. 435/2004 as amended, the competent authority preparing the plan or programme is required to consult specific 'environmental authorities' on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the Environmental Report. The competent authority in relation to the revised NPP is the DoT. The statutory consultees for SEA are established within the national legislation. It is noted however that in recent years, a number of government departments have changed name and certain responsibilities have migrated between departments. The relevant authorities consulted as part of this SEA scoping are listed below:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC);
- Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM); and
- Department of the Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH).

Under S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended, SEA may be required for all sectoral plans, including land use plans. The following environmental authorities must be consulted, where appropriate:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – all cases;
- Development Applications Unit, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage - where there might be significant effects on architectural or archaeological heritage or nature conservation; and
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications - where there might be significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment.

The main objective of scoping is to identify key issues of concern that should be addressed in the assessment of the NPP and the appropriate level of detail to which these should be considered. The scoping exercise will aim to 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.

3.1.3 Environmental Assessment

An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the revised NPP will be undertaken in due course, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the revised NPP. 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 in accordance with the requirements of Schedule 2 of S.I. No. 435/2004, as amended. 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, the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process will be initiated.

3.1.4 SEA Statement

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

3.1.5 SEA Guidance

The following principal sources of guidance will be used during the overall SEA process and during preparation of the Environmental Report:

- Guidance on SEA Statements and Monitoring, 2023, Environmental Protection Agency;
- Good practice guidance on Cumulative Effects Assessment in SEA, 2020, Environmental Protection Agency;

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Pack, February 2020, Environmental Protection Agency;
- SEA Scoping Guidance Document, 2015, Environmental Protection Agency;
- SEA Spatial Information Sources Inventory, 2022, Environmental Protection Agency;
- GISEA Manual – Improving the Evidence Base in SEA, 2017, Environmental Protection Agency;
- Integrating Climatic Factors into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland – A Guidance Note, 2019, Environmental Protection Agency;
- Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment – Good Practice Guidance, 2015, Environmental Protection Agency;
- Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statements and Monitoring, March 2023, 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) Process Checklist - Consultation Draft, January 2008, Environmental Protection Agency (Updated September 2017);
- Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland. Synthesis Report. 2003. Environmental Protection Agency; and
- 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.

The SEA will also have regard to the findings of the EPA’s 2012 and 2019 reviews of SEA effectiveness in Ireland.

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 AA’s 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 revised NPP is not directly connected to the conservation of any European Sites, however as a national policy, 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 under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) respectively. In acknowledgement of this, early consideration has been given to the need for AA.

4 OTHER RELEVANT PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

As part of the SEA process, it will be necessary to consider the environmental protection objectives established at international, European Union or national level, which are relevant to the revised NPP and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation. For the purposes of scoping, the key legislation and plans/ programmes are included in **Table 4-1** (International and European) and **Table 4-2** (National).

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 NPP. However, it is noted that this is not intended to be a detailed register of all legislation, plans, policies, or programmes, but rather an examination of the key environmental protection objectives relevant to the NPP.

Table 4-1: International and EU Legislation, Plans/Programmes

International and EU Legislation	International and EU Plans/Programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrated Maritime Policy.• European Green Deal.• Fit for 55.• EU Regulation Establishing a Framework for the provision of Port Services and Common Rules on the Financial Transparency of Ports.• S.I. No. 128 of 2019: EU Regulation (Port Services) Regulations 2019.• Regulation (EU) No 1177/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 concerning the rights of passengers when travelling by sea and inland waterway and amending Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 Text with EEA relevance.• S.I. No. 394/2012 - European Union (Rights of Passengers when Travelling by Sea and Inland Waterway) Regulations 2012.• Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Atlantic Maritime Strategy.• Circular Economy Action Plan.• Atlantic Action Plan 2.0.• 2023 IMO Strategy on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships.

Table 4-2: National Legislation, Plans/Policies/Programmes

National Legislation	National Plans/Programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbours Act 1996. • Harbours (Amendment) Act 2000. • Harbours (Amendment) Act 2009 • Harbours (Amendment) Act 2015. • Maritime Area Planning Act 2021. • Marine Protected Areas. • Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. • Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2022-2024. • National Marine Planning Framework. • Climate Action Plans. • The National Planning Framework 2040. • Project Ireland 2040. • National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy. • The Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy. • Irish Maritime Directorate Strategy 2021-2025.

Scoping Question 1

Based on the plans, policies and programmes outlined, are there any other key relevant international, national or regional plans, policies or programmes that should be considered in the SEA Environmental Report on the revised National Ports Policy?

5 SCOPING

5.1 Geographic Scope

The revised NPP will be a national level document. As such, its geographic scope will encompass Ireland but will entail some geographic specificity given the locations of existing ports particularly the ports that fall under the aegis of the Department of Transport.

The responsibility for ports in Ireland falls under the remit of several departments and local authorities. Six port companies currently exist:

- Dublin
- Cork
- Shannon Foynes
- Waterford
- Drogheda
- Galway



Figure 5-1: Ireland's Port Companies

Greenore, Co. Louth is the States only private port, and Rosslare Europort is run on a commercial basis as a division of Irish Rail, although it is not a commercial company operating under the Harbours Act.

The NPP will set out the policy framework for the commercial ports sector that falls under the aegis of the Department of Transport under the Harbours Act. The new NPP will also give consideration to the future governance structure of Rosslare Europort.

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 policy is updated every decade. For the purpose of this SEA, the short-term will consider the period up to 2030, and the medium to long-term horizon will consider the period up to 2050.

5.3 Environmental Scope

In accordance with S.I. No. 435/2004, as amended, consideration has been given to whether the environmental effects, both positive and negative, of the policy are likely to be significant. A summary of the conclusions is presented in **Table 5-1**, with reference to the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, land and soil, geology, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape, and the interrelationship between these factors.

Table 5-1: Potential Environmental issues for consideration in the Environmental Report

SEA Topic	Potential Environmental Issues for Consideration in the ER	Scope In/Out
Population and Human Health (PHH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impacts on recreational use of land (walking, cycling, bird watching etc.).• Impacts on recreational use of water (e.g. bathing, fishing, sailing, rowing, and kayaking).• Effects on connectivity of communities, both physical links and communications.	In

SEA Topic	Potential Environmental Issues for Consideration in the ER	Scope In/Out
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible effects on tourism (e.g. increased numbers of cruise ships and ferries). Impacts on community amenities and facilities to local residents. Effects on disadvantaged communities. Possible need for improving transport connections to and from Ports. Disturbance and nuisance impacts from traffic and cargo handling. Health impacts from emissions and disturbance. Impacts on employment and training opportunities 	
Biodiversity, Flora, and Fauna (BFF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effects on protected areas. Effects on flora and fauna, (including marine mammals and nesting terns and other birds within Ports). Effects on salmonids, other protected fish and shellfish species. Effects on Ramsar sites, UWWTD sensitive waters, NHAs, pNHAs. Effects on sensitive habitats and marine habitats. Effects and opportunities on refuge for fauna. Effects on habitat quality. Potential introduction and spread of alien species and invasive species. Control and management of alien species and invasive species. Potential for habitat loss and fragmentation. Potential for interaction with Habitats Directive, i.e. Article 6 	In
Land and Soil (LS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future infrastructure land requirements and land use change. Land vulnerable to erosion (e.g. coastal areas). Erosion and soil function. Effects on geomorphology (i.e. river channels, landforms). Effects on access to lands. Management of soil arisings during excavation works. Management of contaminated sediments. 	In
Water (W)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on WFD status. Wastewater volumes and treatment. Impact of construction works in close vicinity to coastal waters. Pressures and impacts on ecological status of water bodies. Effects on groundwater table and contamination of groundwater. 	In

SEA Topic	Potential Environmental Issues for Consideration in the ER	Scope In/Out
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Morphological impacts on water bodies. Impacts on water supply (including potable) and water conservation. Impacts on water usage at the Port per unit of freight and passenger throughput. Flood risk. 	
Air Quality (AQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport and industrial related pollution close to the coast. Indirect effects on ambient air quality from shipping and road transport of cargoes and passengers. Direct effects from construction and operational emissions at ports. 	In
Climatic Factors (CF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon performance / footprint of activities and operations within Ports. Greenhouse gas emissions associated with construction of development. Indirect greenhouse gas emissions from road and marine transport. Climate change adaptation and flooding risk. 	In
Material Assets (MA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing of import and export routes. Protection of water-related assets. Effects on shipping; traffic and transportation, roads, railways lines, light houses, airports. Effects on waste generation and circular economy within ports. Effects of increased cargo volumes. Effects of traffic levels accessing and exiting the port estates. Effects on existing and proposed utilities and infrastructure, e.g. for transport, energy and communications. 	In
Cultural Heritage (CH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effects on designated sites and monuments. Effects on water-based archaeological features. Effects on cultural heritage features within the study area, in particular local maritime and industrial heritage. Effects on historic landscapes. Effects on cultural spaces. Effects on industrial and engineering archaeology. Potential for disturbance of previously undiscovered archaeological remains near or within water bodies during development of water-related infrastructure. Effects on areas of architectural significance. Effects on locally important buildings 	In
Landscape (LandS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts to landscapes/seascapes from new infrastructure or larger-scale facilities 	In

SEA Topic	Potential Environmental Issues for Consideration in the ER	Scope In/Out
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effects on the general landscape and amenity as well as seascapes• Effects on areas of designated landscape quality and scenic views.• Potential for positive impacts (such as an enhancement to local amenities and historic buildings) should be considered and targets of improvement set.• Effects on historic landscapes.• Effects on amenity value of natural environment.	

Scoping Question 2

Based on the likely significant impacts outlined above, are there any other effects or impacts that should be considered in the SEA Environmental Report on the revised National Ports Policy?

6 PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

In line with the SEA Directive, an environmental baseline will be compiled for the NPP. 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 NPP 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 and multi-sectoral nature of the draft Policy. The environmental baseline will be presented in the Environmental Report under a number of SEA topic headings as follows:

- Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna (BFF);
- Population and Human Health (PHH);
- Land and Soils (LS);
- Water (W);
- Air Quality (AQ);
- Climatic Factors (CF);
- Material Assets (MA);
- Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage (CH); and
- Landscape (LandS).

Under each of the SEA topic headings 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 revised NPP.

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 number of key documents which provide summary information on key trends will be referenced including the EPA four-yearly State of the Environment Report – Ireland's Environment – An Integrated Assessment (published in 2020) as well as the EPA report The Status of Ireland's Climate, 2020 (published in 2021).

It is intended to utilise geographic information systems (GIS) where possible to display and analyse relevant information.

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 national scope of the NPP, it is recognised that there may be limitations on the extent of the scope of an environmental assessment and therefore it is beneficial to outline such limitations at this early stage.

Table 6-1: Proposed baseline data sources and extent of assessment

SEA Topic	Potential Data Sources	Potential Extent of Assessment based on Data Sources
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPA State of the Environment Report (Ireland's Environment – An Assessment, 2020 [note – relevant for all SEA topics]) EPA Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Tool Central Statistics Office (CSO) database, including Census 2011 and 2016 data EPA Geoportal EPA radon map Noise Maps reported under the Environmental Noise Directive HSE Healthy Ireland Fáilte Ireland and Marine Irish Digital Atlas recreation datasets <i>See also Soils, Water and Air Quality entries</i> 	<p>National datasets are available for population density and distribution/ settlement envelopes and the potential impacts of the NPP can be assessed relative to the available information.</p> <p>Reference will be made to the Institute of Public Health for appropriate information if available, and also the EPA, HSE, as well as CSO Statistics.</p>
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) databases Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) datasets National Biodiversity Data Centre Invasive Species Ireland website EPA Geoportal Ramsar List Biosphere Reserves Fish spawning/nursery sites 	<p>National and regional datasets are available for aspects relating to biodiversity, flora, and fauna.</p>
Land and Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) Mapping (geology, groundwater, minerals/ extraction etc.) including the Geothermal Suitability Mapping Geohazards - Landslide Events & Susceptibility Mapping Geological Heritage Areas/ County Geological Sites DECC Interactive Maps on Licences, Leases and Prospecting Licences Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI) Mapping Teagasc Soil Information CORINE Land Cover Database 	<p>National high-level datasets are available for soil and land use resources at a county/ national scale. This is in keeping with the geographic scope of the NPP and is considered adequate at this scale.</p>

SEA Topic	Potential Data Sources	Potential Extent of Assessment based on Data Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coillte Forestry Database • Built Landuse and Zoning – Myplan.ie • EPA Land Use Review – Phase 1 	
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPA Geoportal for WFD datasets and catchments.ie • EPA database reports e.g. Water Quality in Ireland (latest available) • National Catchment Flood Risk Management Programme (CFRAM), Office of Public Works (OPW) • Groundwater Aquifers • Groundwater Vulnerability • Groundwater Recharge Mapping • Groundwater Flooding • Source Protection Zones 	<p>A suite of national datasets is available for surface waters and groundwaters, transitional and coastal water bodies.</p> <p>The outputs of the CFRAMS mapping are now available online.</p>
Air Quality and Climatic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPA database (air quality) • EPA Irelands Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections Reports • EPA State of the Environment Report (Ireland's Environment – An Assessment, 2020 [<i>note – relevant for all SEA topics</i>]) • Met Éireann TRANSLATE – national climate projections • Climate Ireland • Climate Change Advisory Council's Annual Review 2023 • Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEAI), Energy in Ireland Reports and online GIS • Daly, H. (2022) Irish electricity and gas demand to 2050 in the context of climate commitments, Friends of the Earth. • IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) AR6, Working Group I contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report, Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis • IPCC AR6 Working Group II contribution, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability • IPCC AR6, Working Group III contribution, Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change 	<p>National and regional datasets are available for relevant air quality parameters at a national scale.</p> <p>National reports are available for carbon emissions and greenhouse gases. Regional/ national scale emissions data in GIS from the MapEire Project.</p>

SEA Topic	Potential Data Sources	Potential Extent of Assessment based on Data Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPCC AR6, Synthesis Report, Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report 	
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPA Geoportal DAFM datasets DECC datasets (including GSI) SEAI GIS data ESB and GNI datasets Fisheries Recreation 	National datasets are available for certain resources that may be affected by the NPP.
Cultural Heritage (incl. Architectural, Archaeological)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Monuments Service/ Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) UNESCO World Heritage Sites and tentative List 	National datasets are available for archaeology and architectural heritage; however, the scale of the datasets is directed towards local project-specific sources. Digital data on Architectural Conservation Areas and Records of Protected Structures are not generally publicly available.
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no national datasets available for landscape; a draft Regional Seascape Character Assessment is available, and some information is available at a county level, however not consistent across all of the counties. GSI Physiographic Units 	Very limited spatial/ digital data from existing sources.

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 Strategic Environmental Objectives for each of the identified issue areas. The assessment will be supported by other tools such as GIS-based spatial analysis and other quantitative data as available.

The preceding sections have identified the environmental characteristics and key environmental issues relating to the NPP and the key influences from external plans, policies, and strategies. This section uses that information to set out a series of draft SEA objectives. These will be used in the environmental report to predict the likely environmental effects of the NPP and, subsequently, will inform the development of the monitoring programme implementation of the NPP. 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 NPP.

7.1 Draft SEA Objectives

Set out in **Table 7-1** are the *draft* SEA objectives that are being considered to test the potential environmental impacts of the revised NPP. 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 NPP 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. The development of baseline and further consideration of environmental pressures will also inform the final objectives used for assessment.

Table 7-1: Draft SEA Environmental Objectives

Related to SEA Topic(s)	Draft SEA Environmental Objective(s)
Population and Human Health (PHH)	Objective 1: Minimise the risk to and provide benefit for the community and human health.
Biodiversity, Flora, and Fauna (BFF)	Objective 2: Avoid damage to, and where possible enhance, the biodiversity, flora and fauna within and in the vicinity of ports.
Land and Soil (LS)	Objective 3: Protect the coastline and soils / sediments.
Water (W)	Objective 4: Minimise impacts on water quality, water resource and flood risk.
Air Quality (AQ)	Objective 5: Minimise impacts on air quality, noise and vibration.
Climatic Factors (C)	Objective 6: Minimise emissions of greenhouse gases and ensure climate resilience is enhanced.
Material Assets (MA)	Objective 7: Protect existing and develop new material assets and infrastructure and minimise waste.
Cultural Heritage (CH)	Objective 8: Avoid loss of or damage to heritage features, including architectural and archaeological, and where possible incorporate heritage features into the port estate.
Landscape (LandS)	Objective 9: Protect and maintain landscape character and visual amenity and recognise and respect the value of wider (non-designated) landscapes and seascapes.

Scoping Question 3

Do you have any comments regarding the draft SEA Objectives presented?

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 and will use tools including environmental sensitivity mapping. 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 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 revised NPP. Where significant adverse impacts are identified during the SEA process, relevant and appropriate mitigation measures will be provided in the Environmental Report.

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 policy makers for delivering on the objectives/priorities of the NPP, as well as alternatives within the NPP itself. The identification of alternatives enables more informed decision-making, and the assessment allows more sustainable options to be identified. Given the high-level nature of the revised NPP, the alternatives to be considered are likely to be mainly at the strategic level and must be realistic, reasonable, and relevant.

However, it is anticipated that the environmental report will explore alternatives at a number of levels where feasible: strategic; policy actions etc. EPA guidance on development of alternatives will provide a framework for development of alternatives development and **Table 7-2** provides an overview of the nature of alternatives that may be considered for the revised NPP.

Table 7-2: Potential approaches to the development of alternatives for the NPP

Alternative Type	Description	Example of Considerations with respect to the NPP
Strategic	High-level options that achieve a given objective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business as usual through the 2013 NPP or full NPP review [decision made however the reasons will be recorded for transparency] .
Value and Effects Oriented	<p>Alternatives that address policy priorities, cultural values or safety issues. Such alternatives are most appropriate for addressing public perceptions, concerns and values.</p> <p>Alternatives that address issues identified during scoping. Such alternatives are effective at mitigating potential significant effects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternative funding models for sustainable development and operation at Irish ports.• Consideration of the implementation of the NPP within the context of the wider climate action and environment policy base.• Need for demand management to manage national consumption models to ease the capacity pressures in Irish ports.

Alternative Type	Description	Example of Considerations with respect to the NPP
Spatial	Different technical/ modal alternatives to achieve the same objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative approach to tiered designation of ports. Alternative growth capacity models at Tier 1 and other ports. Alternative modes for regional supply of cargo through ports to achieve the appropriate logistical model. Alternatives to developments at key ports such as Rosslare or Dublin as noted in the Issues Paper.
Modal	<p>Alternatives that look at sectoral feasibility and needs at the strategic level, policies can be formulated to promote one sector versus another.</p> <p>Alternatives for the timing of implementation of plan/ programme measures.</p> <p>These are most suitable at the local level for addressing infrastructure development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative policies to achieve a balance between road/rail onward transport and the national climate targets. Expansion of existing ports versus development of new port facilities. Alternative spatial requirements for cruise and cargo capacity.
Sectoral and/ or Temporal Prioritisation	High-level options that achieve a given objective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment of NPP policies with the key sectoral policies such as the All-Island Strategic Rail Review which recommends a new railway to link to Foynes and a reinstatement of the railway between Rosslare – Waterford.

Scoping Question 4

Do you have any suggestions or comments in relation to the overall approach to alternatives?

8 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Statutory Consultations

As part of the scoping of the SEA for the revised NPP, there will be statutory consultation with the environmental authorities for SEA in Ireland listed in **Table 8-1**. To facilitate discussion during the scoping stage and to inform the preparation of the SEA Environmental Report, a workshop will be convened with the listed consultees. This will include presentations from the NPP and SEA teams to inform discussions on the scope and level of detail for the assessment. All discussions during this workshop, as well as formal written submissions received will be considered in preparation of the SEA Environmental Report.

Table 8-1: Statutory Consultees in the SEA Scoping Process

SEA Statutory Consultees in Ireland
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
Department of the Environment Climate and Communications (DECC)

8.2 Non-statutory Consultations

In addition, given the potential for transboundary impact from the shipping sector outside Ireland, the environmental authorities for SEA on the UK and other member states will be consulted informally and these are listed in **Table 8-2**.

Table 8-2: Informal Consultees in the SEA Scoping Process

SEA Consultees in the UK and EU Member States
Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Department of Agriculture, Environmental and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Scottish National Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland [Scotland]
Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and Cadw [Wales]
Environment Agency, Natural England, and Historic England [England]
Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij (VMM)/ Flanders Environment Agency and Service Public de Wallonie, Direction Générale Opérationnelle Agriculture, Ressources naturelles et Environnement / Wallonia Operational Directorate-General for Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Environment (DGARNE) [Belgium]
Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving (PBL), National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and Rijkswaterstaat (RWS) [The Netherlands]
Naturstyrelsen / Danish Nature Agency [Denmark]
Umweltbundesamt (UBA) / German Environment Agency [Germany]
L'Agence de la transition écologique, anciennement Agence de l'environnement et de la maîtrise de l'énergie (ADEME) /Agency of Ecological Transition, formerly Environment Agency and Energy Management [France]

SEA Consultees in the UK and EU Member States

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency

8.3 Scoping Report Responses

A submission on this Scoping Report may be made via one of the following media:

- By e-mail (*Please title subject line with 'National Ports Policy SEA Scoping Submission'*):
Paul.Chadwick@rps.tetrattech.com
- By post: **National Ports Policy SEA Scoping Submission**,
RPS Consulting Engineers
West Pier Business Campus,
Dun Laoghaire,
Co Dublin,
A96 N6T7,
Ireland

Submissions at this scoping stage of the National Ports Policy process can be made by 18:00 hours on 30th August 2024.