



Regional Inspectorate,  
Inniscarra,  
County Cork, Ireland  
Cigireacht Réigiúnach, Inis Cara

T: +353 21 487 5540  
F: +353 21 487 5545  
E: info@epa.ie  
W: www.epa.ie  
LoCall: 1890 33 55 99

Mr Andrew Caldicott  
Assistant Principal – Air Quality Division  
Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment  
Newtown Road  
Wexford  
Y35 AP90

6<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Our Ref: 180301.1

## **Re. Draft SEA Screening on Clean Air Strategy**

Dear Mr Caldicott,

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) acknowledges your correspondence, dated the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018, regarding the above and notes its contents.

The EPA welcomes the preparation of Ireland’s first ever national Clean Air Strategy. The overall objective of the Strategy to integrate air quality considerations into policy making across government departments has the potential to be a significant driver to improve Ireland’s ambient air quality and as a result reduce the impacts of air pollution on human health and the environment. The achievement of this objective will require action at different levels including relevant Government Departments, Regional Assemblies, local authorities, sectors and their respective associated plans, programmes and strategies including the planning hierarchy and will involve engagement and collaboration with a range of stakeholders.

### *National Planning Framework (NPF)*

*Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework*, (DHPLG, 2018), in Chapter 9, recognises the need to address air quality problems. NPF National Policy Objective 64 includes the following commitment “*improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative designs.*” This national-level policy commitment has the potential to contribute significantly to the protection and improvement of air quality at regional, county and local level. The National Clean Air Strategy will be a key element in delivering this policy commitment.

### *Regional Spatial Economic Strategies (RSEs)*

The Regional Spatial Economics Strategies currently being prepared for each of the 3 Regional Assembly areas provide a significant opportunity to further promote specific environmental and sector related policies and objectives to protect and improve national air

quality. The RSEs will reflect relevant the NPF Goals and objectives and are currently being subject to SEA. Air quality and the links with human health will be among the key environmental aspects to be addressed in both the SEA and Strategy process. As part of the SEA process the relationship with other key relevant Plans Programmes and Strategies will also need to be taken into account.

Each local authority land use plan, including county development plans and local area plans, will be required to be aligned with policies, objectives and commitments in both the NPF and the RSEs. At implementation phase of the NPF and RSEs, SEA related environmental monitoring will need to reflect the results and trends from relevant national environmental monitoring programmes including air quality. In this context, there would be merits in including specific air quality targets and indicators in the Strategy.

The role of the Clean Air Strategy at national, regional and local level as highlighted above should be reflected in the final Strategy, its commitments, actions, implementation, monitoring and ongoing progress reports.

### **SEA Determination**

We note your determination with regards to the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the National Clean Air Strategy (the Strategy).

### **Observations on the Draft SEA Screening Report**

- Section 1 refers to other plans and programmes which have undergone SEA, while the National Adaptation Framework was screened for SEA, it was screened out. This should be reflected in the text.

#### *Further SEA or AA Assessment*

- In Section 5, the statement that “*Further SEA or AA assessment of some individual actions and measures included in the National Clean Air Strategy may need to be considered based on their timescale for implementation*” should be clarified with reference to specific actions/measures.
- Where new plans and programmes are likely to arise from the implementation of the Strategy, the requirements of the SEA Directive should be included as a commitment in the Strategy.
- The reference in Section 5 of the report to: “*Further SEA or AA assessment of plans or programmes informed by the Strategy may need to be carried out, but this task is appropriate to the authorities relevant to the development of those plans or programmes*” also needs clarification. These further assessments should refer to screening for SEA and AA in the first instance.

#### SEA Directive/ Regulations

- In Section 3, reference to S.I. No. 201 of 2011, which updates aspects of S.I No 436 of 2004, should also be considered for completeness.
- In relation to “*setting the framework for future development consent of projects*”, Article 3(4) of the SEA Directive also requires plans and programmes, which set the framework for future development consent of projects, other than those listed in the Annexes to the EIA Directive and likely to have significant environmental effects, to be considered in the context of SEA requirements.

### **Additional Comments to Consider**

For your consideration, please find attached the Agency’s previous submission, dated 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017, on the Strategy consultation document. The relevant aspects of this submission should also be considered in finalising the Strategy. Key aspects covered in our previous submission include:

- Relevant aspects of EPA's State of the Environment Report
- The need for more localised and real time air quality data
- Developing air-related enforcement and advocacy capabilities at local authority level
- Implementing legislative changes and incentivising behavioural change to support 'clear air'
- Delivering on the Strategy objectives through effective governance.

### **Environmental Authorities**

Under the SEA Regulations (S.I. No. 435 of 2004, as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011), notice should also be given, where relevant, to the following:

- The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, where it appears to the competent authority that the plan or programme, or modification of the plan or programme, might have significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment
- where it appears to the competent authority that the plan or programme, or amendment to a plan or programme, might have significant effects in relation to the architectural or archaeological heritage or to nature conservation, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

A copy of your decision regarding the determination, including, as appropriate, the reasons for not requiring an environmental assessment, should be made available for public inspection at your offices, your website and should also be notified to any Environmental Authorities already consulted.

Should you have any queries or require further information in relation to the above please contact the undersigned. I would be grateful if an acknowledgement of receipt of this submission could be sent electronically to the following address: [sea@epa.ie](mailto:sea@epa.ie).

Yours sincerely,

p.p.



**Tadhg O'Mahony**  
*Senior Scientific Officer*  
*SEA Section*  
*Office of Evidence and Assessment*  
*Environmental Protection Agency*  
*Regional Inspectorate*  
*Inniscarra, County Cork*