



To: Chief Executives, City and County Councils
Chief Executive, Office of Planning Regulator
Chairperson, An Bord Pleanála
Directors, Regional Assemblies

Cc: Senior Planners, City and County Councils
Deputy Regulator, Office of Planning Regulator
Director of Planning, An Bord Pleanála
Assistant Directors, Regional Assemblies

Circular Letter: EUIPR 01/2022

9 March 2022

**Adoption of updated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Guidelines for
Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities
and**

Update to the Government's Website with information on SEA

A Chara,

I am requested by Mr Peter Burke, T.D., Minister of State for Planning and Local Government to inform you of the adoption of the updated **Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities** on the 8 March 2022. These Guidelines have been issued under Sections 23(8) and 28(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Guidelines will be available to view or download in the coming days on the Government's website at the following web address:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3539d-strategic-environmental-assessment-sea/>.

These Guidelines were subject to a period of public consultation between 15 October and 19 November 2021. Copies of the submissions received will also be made available on the Government's website alongside the Guidelines.

The Department's original SEA Guidelines date from 2004 and were published just after the transposition of the European Union's SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) into Irish law, including into Ireland's land use planning system.

While the SEA Directive has remained unchanged since it entered into force in 2001, the approach to complying with its requirements and undertaking the various procedural steps has evolved. The updated SEA Guidelines reflect these changes, incorporating



elements of good practice collected from academic research and providing useful links to online sources of information.

The updated SEA Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities present an enhanced emphasis on key aspects of SEA procedure, including screening for SEA, effective scoping during SEA, addressing amendments late in the SEA process and ensuring that monitoring of the effects of the implementation of the plan on the environment takes place throughout the lifetime of the plan.

Updates to the Government's Website with information on SEA

The Government of Ireland's website will host a page on SEA which will be a useful source of information for interested stakeholders including Regional Assemblies, Planning Authorities, SEA practitioners and other plan and programme-makers.

The Government website address for SEA is as follows:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3539d-strategic-environmental-assessment-sea/>

This SEA web page will include contact details of the statutory SEA environmental authorities.

For example, under S.I. No. 436 of 2004 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011), the following SEA environmental authorities must be consulted, where appropriate, with respect to plans and programmes (which plans include Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, County Development Plans and Local Area Plans):

- (1) the Environmental Protection Agency – in all cases;
- (2) the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage – in all cases;
- (3) the Development Applications Unit, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (in addition to (2) above) – where there might be significant effects on architectural or archaeological heritage or nature conservation;
- (4) the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications – where there might be significant effects on fisheries or the marine environment;
- (5) Any adjoining planning authority whose area is contiguous to the area of the planning authority.

For plans and programmes other than those covered by S.I. No. 436 of 2004, as amended, the need to carry out SEA is addressed by S.I. No. 435 of 2004 (European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004), as amended by S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (European Communities



(Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011). The contact details for the relevant environmental authorities that must be consulted under those Regulations will also be found at the same web address.

Any queries in relation to this Circular letter should be emailed to euplanningregulation@housing.gov.ie.

Is mise le meas,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eamonn Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish under the name.

Eamonn Kelly
Principal Officer
EU and International Planning Regulation