

Gas Networks Ireland
Network Development Plan 2020
SEA Screening Report

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Ove Arup & Partners Ireland Ltd

Arup
50 Ringsend Road
Dublin 4
D04 T6X0
Ireland
www.arup.com

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			Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
		Name	Ailsa Doyle	Sinead Whyte	Sinead Whyte
		Signature			
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			Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
		Name	Ailsa Doyle	Clodagh O'Donovan	Sinead Whyte
		Signature	<i>Ailsa Doyle</i>	<i>Clodagh O'Donovan</i>	<i>Sinead</i>
		Filename			
		Description			
			Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
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1 Introduction

Gas Networks Ireland (referred to hereinafter as GNI) has prepared the 2020 ten-year Network Development Plan (referred to hereinafter as the NDP). The NDP provides a view of how the gas network may develop over a ten-year period. It is based on current supply and demand for gas, as well as projections for growth in gas consumption and development of infrastructure over the timeframe of the plan.

Arup has been commissioned by GNI to carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening of the NDP.

SEA screening is defined in the relevant guidance documents¹ as “*the process for deciding whether a particular plan, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA.*”

The purpose of this document is to carry out a screening exercise to determine, in respect of the NDP, if SEA is required to be carried out in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (“SEA Directive”) as transposed by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended.

This SEA Screening Report provides the findings of the SEA screening process for the 2020 NDP.

¹ *Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment- Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities* (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004)

2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is *‘the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt that plan or programme.’* (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004).

The SEA process is comprised of the following steps:

- Screening: Decision on whether or not SEA of a Plan or Programme is required. This is the current stage of the SEA process to which this report relates.

If SEA is considered to be required following Screening, the following steps are required:

- Scoping: Consultation with the defined statutory bodies on the scope and level of detail to be considered in the assessment;
- Environmental Assessment: An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the Plan or Programme;
- Preparation of an Environmental Report;
- Consultation on the Plan or Programme and associated Environmental Report;
- Evaluation of the submissions and observations made on the Plan or Programme and Environmental Report; and
- Issuance of a SEA Statement identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the Final Plan or Programme.

SEA is intended to provide the framework for influencing decision-making at an earlier stage when plans and programmes - which give rise to individual projects - are being developed. SEA should result in more sustainable development through the systematic appraisal of policy options.

3 Guidance and Legislation

3.1 Legislative Overview

The SEA Directive - *Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment* - requires that an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The objective of the SEA Directive is ‘*to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans...with a view to promoting sustainable development*’ (Article 1 SEA Directive 2001).

In Ireland, the SEA Directive has been transposed into national legislation through the following regulations:

- 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)
- 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).

3.2 Guidance Documents

A number of national guidance documents on SEA were reviewed in the preparation of this SEA Screening Report, including:

- Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland (EPA, 2013)
- Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment- Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004)
- Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (European Commission, ND)
- (Draft) SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities (EPA, 2013)
- Integrating Climatic Factors into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note (EPA, 2019)
- Synthesis Report on Developing A Strategic Environmental Assessment (Sea) Methodologies For Plans And Programmes In Ireland (EPA, 2003)

4 Network Development Plan 2020

4.1 Legislative Background

GNI is a wholly owned subsidiary of Ervia and was established in accordance with the Gas Regulation Act 2013, as amended. It owns and operates the natural gas transmission and distribution networks in Ireland.

As Ireland's gas Transmission System Operator (TSO), GNI is required to submit a ten-year NDP to the Commission of Regulation of Utilities (CRU) in accordance with Article 22 of EU Directive 2009/73/EC and Article 11 of the EC (Internal Market in Natural Gas and Electricity) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

GNI is also obliged to submit a long-term development statement to the CRU in accordance with condition 11 of its Transmission System Operator (TSO) and Distribution System Operator (DSO) licences.

The publication of the NDP also satisfies the requirements of Section 19 of the Gas (Interim) (Regulations) Act 2002, as amended by the European Communities (Security of Natural Gas Supply) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 697 of 2007). This requires the CRU to monitor and publish a report outlining gas supply and demand in Ireland over a seven-year period.

4.2 Plan Overview

4.2.1 Gas Trends in Ireland 2019/2020

Annual ROI gas demands for 2019/20 increased 1.5% on 2018/19. This follows increases of 2.0% and 2.3% respectively in the previous years. In the power generation sector, annual gas demand for 2019/20 was 2.2% above 2018/19 levels, following a 3.5% increase the previous year. It is noted that power sector gas demand has grown by over 36% since 2014/15. The increase in power sector gas demands in this period, despite growth in wind capacity can be attributed to increasing electricity demand, reduced electricity interconnector imports from Great Britain, and more recently carbon and fuel prices favouring gas-fired generation ahead of coal in the merit order for electricity generation. Following the introduction of updates to the wholesale electricity market in October 2018, electrical interconnector behaviour has generally displayed efficient behaviour in that the interconnectors are generally importing to Ireland when Irish electricity prices are higher than Great Britain markets, and exporting at times of high wind when Irish electricity prices are lower than in Great Britain.

The Industrial & Commercial (I/C) sector annual gas demand for 2019/20 decreased by 1.6% compared to 2018/19 levels. It is noted that the first half of the gas year demonstrated strong growth in this sector (3.5% based on year-on-year comparison of October – March period), while the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions drove a 7.4% reduction in this sector in the second half of the gas year.

Within the I/C sector, Daily Metered (DM) demand reduced by 1.2%, with the Non-Daily Metered (NDM) portion of I/C demand down by 2.5%. It is worth noting that the NDM sector is heavily influenced by weather.

Residential demand increased by 5.6% for 2019/20, following a decrease of 8.1% in 2018/19 on the previous year. As Residential demand is highly dependent on weather factors the increase in Degree Day (DD) and Composite Weather Variable (CWV) for 2019/20 by 7% and 4% respectively were in line with the demand increase. Similarly, the relatively high demand winter period experienced an even larger increase in DD (13%) and CWV (7%) in 2019/20 over the milder winter of 2018/19 which contributed significantly to the overall demand increase.

In 2019 approximately 47% of Ireland's gas demand was supplied from indigenous sources (Corrib and Kinsale). The balance of supply, almost 53% came through the subsea interconnectors via the Moffat Entry Point in Scotland.

It is noted that 2019/20 marked the final year of commercial volumes of gas supply from the Kinsale gas fields onto the Gas Networks Ireland transmission system via the Inch Entry Point.

In 2019/20 ROI peak day gas demand of 225.4 GWh/d was 3.2% higher than the 2018/19 peak day gas demand. The ROI peak day occurred on the 4th March 2020. Gas demand in the power generation sector, which represented 57% of the total gas demand on the peak day increased by 14.5% in comparison to the 2018/19 peak day. The Gas Networks Ireland system 2019/20 peak day gas demand was up by 0.5% compared to the 2018/19 peak. The NI and IOM combined peak day gas demand was -7.1% lower than in 2018/19.

4.2.2 Plan Overview

GNI's NDP provides a view of how the gas network may develop over a ten-year period. It is based on current supply and demand for gas, as well as projections for growth in gas consumption and development of infrastructure over the time period of the plan.

The purpose of the NDP is to assess the gas network's capacity based on existing and forecast supply and demand in order to guarantee the adequacy of the gas transmission system and security of supply.

In order to inform how the gas network may develop over a ten-year period, and to provide a comprehensive analysis, Gas Networks Ireland has developed three gas demand scenarios for the period 2019/20 to 2028/29, namely Low, Best estimate and High demand scenarios. These scenarios are designed to represent a broad range of likely outcomes and are informed by a range of external and internal factors. The NDP Best Estimate scenario is aligned to the ENTSOG/ENTSOE TYNDP Best Estimate and National Trends scenarios.

In the Best Estimate demand scenario annual ROI gas demand is expected to grow by 23% between 2019/20 and 2028/29 with 7% growth forecast in the Low demand scenario and growth of 45% forecast in the High demand scenarios respectively over the same horizon.

These trends are dominated by the strong continued requirement for gas fired power generation in the electricity system to meet the projected levels of demand growth in the electricity system.

The development of peak day demands across the various scenarios shows the same broad trends as the annual demand forecasts. However, there are a number of key differences, particularly regarding the power generation sector gas demand profile. Over the forecast horizon 1-in-50 peak day demand is predicted to grow by 19.1%, and by 21.5% for the average year peak in the Best Estimate demand scenario.

The Corrib gas field is expected to meet approximately 27% of annual Gas Networks Ireland system demands (35% of ROI demand) in 2020/21, with the Moffat Entry Point providing the remaining 73%.

GNI is targeting the conversion of 24% of heavy goods vehicles (HGV) and 13% of buses to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) by 2030. By the end of the current NDP period (2028/29), GNI is expecting to see annual CNG demand of circa 837.8 GWh/yr. GNI is conducting a project for a nationwide CNG fuelling network, co-located in existing forecourts, on major routes and/or close to urban centres. This will help satisfy the requirements of the EU's (European Union) Alternative Fuels Directive which aims to establish CNG refuelling facilities along the TEN-T Core Road Network.

Capacity limitations are identified on the network and addressed through appropriate capital investment programmes in order to ensure continuity of supply to all customers. In 2019, 11 projects were completed including 3 AGI Capacity Upgrades, 7 Reinforcements of the Distribution Network and 1 CNG station located in Cashel.

GNI continues to mitigate against these modelled system constraints to maintain system resilience and security of supply. The NDP outlines a number of capital projects which will be delivered over the coming years, including future proposed large capital projects and proposed new technologies.

4.2.3 Positioning of the NDP in the GNI Plan Framework

In 2020, GNI prepared a draft Network Implementation Plan (NIP) 2020-2023. The purpose of the NIP is to set out in more detail, the manner in which the short-term capital investment proposals identified in the NDP will be developed in the Plan area over the three-year plan period 2020 - 2023. This includes greater detail on the capital investment proposals included in the 2020 NDP, including their locations, nature, extent etc.

The draft NIP was subject to SEA in accordance with the SEA Directive.

At the time of writing this SEA Screening Report for the 2020 NDP, the draft NIP is being updated following a period of public consultation in accordance with Article 6 of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment.

4.2.4 Plan Area

GNI maintains over 14,390 km of gas pipelines and two sub-sea interconnectors.

The GNI transmission network includes onshore Scotland, interconnectors and the onshore ROI network. The interconnector (IC) sub-system comprises of two subsea interconnectors between ROI and Scotland; and compressor stations at Beattock and Brighthouse Bay. The interconnector system connects to Great Britain's (GB) National Transmission System (NTS) at Moffat in Scotland. It also supplies gas to the Northern Ireland (NI) market at Twynholm and the Isle of Man (IOM) market via the second subsea interconnector (IC2).

GNI builds, develops and operates Ireland's world-class gas infrastructure, maintaining over 14,521 km of gas pipelines and two sub-sea interconnectors.

The GNI transmission network includes onshore Scotland, interconnectors and the onshore ROI network. The interconnector (IC) sub-system comprises of two subsea interconnectors between ROI and Scotland; compressor stations at Beattock and Brighthouse Bay. The interconnector system connects to Great Britain's (GB) National Transmission System (NTS) at Moffat in Scotland. It also supplies gas to the Northern Ireland (NI) market via Twynholm, Scotland and the Isle of Man (IOM) market via the second subsea interconnector (IC2). The NDP Plan area is identified in **Figure 4.1**.



Figure 4.1: NDP Plan Area

4.2.5 Plan Programme

The NDP is an annual rolling document. It is updated by GNI on an annual basis, setting out a view of how the gas network may develop over the next ten-year period.

5 SEA Screening Methodology

5.1 Overview

This SEA screening assessment was carried out having due regard to the legislation and guidance outlined in Section 3 of this report.

The EPA Synthesis Report “*Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland*” sets out a series of procedural tasks to consider when carrying out SEA Screening of plans and programmes.

The report states that the overall characteristics of the plan or programme should first be considered, by means of a ‘pre-screening check’ to see if it falls within the requirements of the SEA Directive (‘Task 1.1’). Should this ‘pre-screening check’ determine that the plan or programme is of a type that falls within the requirements of the SEA Directive, the potential environmental significance of implementing the proposed plan or programme should then be considered, against the significance criteria outlined in Annex II (2) of the SEA Directive (‘Task 1.2’).

5.2 Task 1.1 SEA ‘Pre-Screening Check’

The EPA Synthesis Report “*Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland*” provides a “decision-tree” or flowchart, which simplifies the complex wording of the SEA Directive into a systematic and logical series of questions.

Task 1.1 ultimately helps to determine whether the plan or programme in question constitutes a plan or programme as defined and characterised in the SEA Directive. Task 1.1 therefore enables the rapid screening out of those plans that are not subject to the SEA Directive and which would therefore not require SEA.

The EPA flowchart is illustrated in **Figure 5.1** and makes up Task 1.1 of the SEA Screening methodology.

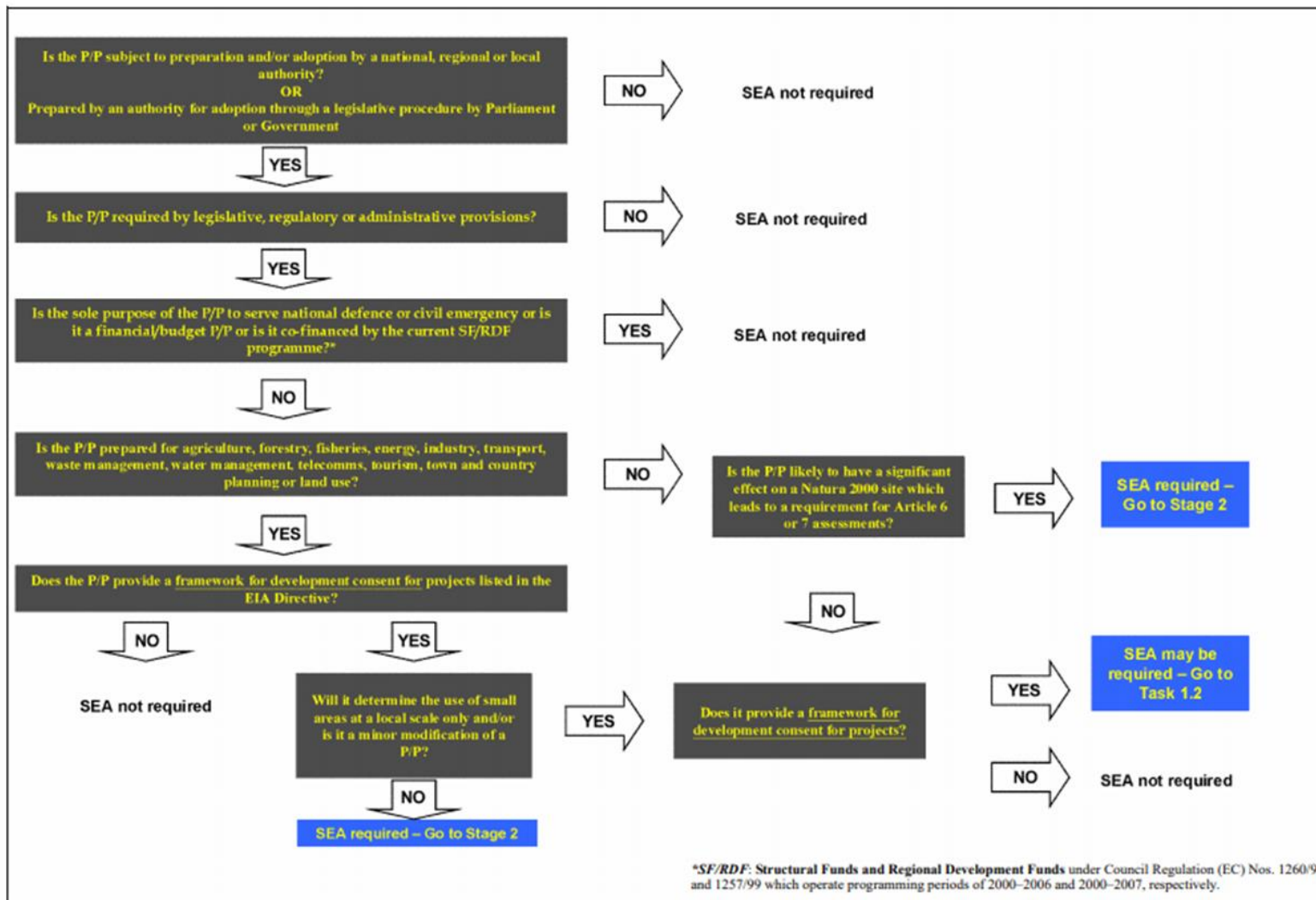


Figure 5.1: Stage 1 Pre-Screening ‘Check’- Flowchart (EPA, 2013)

5.3 Task 1.2 SEA Screening

As outlined in Section 5.2, Task 1.1 helps to determine whether the plan or programme in question constitutes a plan or programme as defined and characterised in the SEA Directive. If it is determined that a plan or programme is a type which is defined in the SEA Directive, it then needs to be determined if that plan or programme has the potential to give rise to negative environmental effects, and if it should therefore be subject to SEA.

‘Task 1.2’ of the SEA Screening methodology constitutes environmental significance screening, which may be undertaken to assess whether a plan or programme, which has not been screened out by Task 1.1, is likely to result in significant environmental effects and should therefore, be taken forward for SEA. Annex II of the SEA Directive sets out the “statutory” criteria that should be addressed when undertaking Task 1.2.

Annex II of the SEA Directive is transposed into national legislation as Schedule 1 ‘*Criteria for determining whether a Plan or Programme (or Modification thereto) is likely to have significant effects on the Environment*’ of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended.

Thus, Task 1.2 of the SEA Screening methodology involves an assessment of the plan or programme against the significance criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended in order to determine if the plan or programme should be subject to SEA.

The ‘Significance Criteria’ and sub-criteria are outlined below, each of which constitutes a heading under which the NDP is assessed and discussed in Section 6.2 of this Screening Report. “*Criteria for determining whether a Plan or Programme (or Modification thereto) is likely to have significant effects on the Environment.*”

1. *The characteristics of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, having regard, in particular, to*
 - *the degree to which the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;*
 - *the degree to which the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, influences other plans including those in a hierarchy;*
 - *the relevance of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;*
 - *environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme;*

- *the relevance of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).*
2. *Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to*
- *the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;*
 - *the cumulative nature of the effects;*
 - *the transboundary nature of the effects;*
 - *the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);*
 - *the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);*
 - *the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:*
 - a) *special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;*
 - b) *exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;*
 - c) *intensive land-use.*

the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.”

6 SEA Screening

6.1 Task 1.1- SEA ‘Pre-Screening’ Check

6.1.1 Application of the EPA ‘Pre-Screening Flowchart’

As outlined in Section 5.2, Task 1.1 of the SEA Screening methodology constitutes the use of the “decision-tree” or flowchart provided in the EPA Synthesis Report “*Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland.*”

6.1.2 Outcome of ‘Pre-Screening Check’- Requirement for SEA

The NDP was assessed using the EPA ‘decision-tree’ or flowchart in order to ascertain the requirement for SEA. The outcome of the EPA flowchart is described hereafter and illustrated in the replicated flowchart in **Figure 6.1**.

Is the NDP subject to the preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR Prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?

GNI is a subsidiary of Ervia, a commercial semi-state multi-utility company with responsibility for the delivery of gas and water infrastructure and services in Ireland. Ervia reports to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) who perform their functions on behalf of the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

A competent authority for the purpose of SEA is defined under S.I. No. 435 of 2004 as “*the authority which is, or the authorities which are jointly, responsible for the preparation of a plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme*”.

As such, the NDP can be considered a document prepared by ‘an authority’ at a national level.

Is the NDP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions

As Ireland’s gas Transmission System Operator (TSO), GNI is required to submit a ten-year Network Development Plan to the (CRU) in accordance with Article 22 of EU Directive 2009/73/EC and Article 11 of the EC (Internal Market in Natural Gas and Electricity) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. GNI is also obliged to submit a long-term development statement to the CRU in accordance with condition 11 of its Transmission System Operator and Distribution System Operator licences.

The publication of the NDP also satisfies the requirements of Section 19 of the Gas (Interim) (Regulations) Act 2002, as amended by the European Communities (Security of Natural Gas Supply) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 697 of 2007). This requires the CRU to monitor and publish a report outlining gas supply and demand in Ireland over a seven year horizon.

Is the sole purpose of the NDP to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget Plan or is it co-financed by the current Structural Funds/Regional Development Funds Programme?

The sole purpose of the NDP is not to serve national defence or civil emergency, and the Plan is not a financial budget, or co-financed by the current Structural Funds and Regional Development Funds programme.

Is the NDP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecoms, tourism, town and country planning or land-use?

The NDP provides a view of how the gas network in Ireland may develop over a ten-year period. It is based on current supply and demand for gas, as well as projections for growth in gas consumption and development of infrastructure. The NDP is therefore considered to represent a plan prepared for the energy sector.

Does the NDP provide a framework for development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive

The NDP outlines a number of capital projects which will be delivered over the coming years, including future proposed large capital projects and proposed new technologies. While it states in Section 10.1 of the NDP that *‘future investment proposals are subject to approval from the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and the relevant consents and permissions’*, it should nevertheless be examined as to whether the NDP could be considered to constitute a Plan which *‘provides a framework for development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive.’*

According to the European Commission *‘Guidance on the implementation of Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment,’* this would *“normally mean that the plan or programme contains criteria or conditions which guide the way the consenting authority decides an application for development consent. Such criteria could place limits on the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in a given area; or they could contain conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission is to be granted; or they could be designed to preserve certain characteristics of the area concerned (such as the mixture of land uses which promotes the economic vitality of the area).”*

The determinant of providing a *‘framework for development consent’* is described in Annex II of the SEA Directive as the degree to which a Plan *‘sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources’*

Section 10.1 of the NDP relates to *‘Capital Investment’* which outlines a number of capital projects which will be delivered over the coming years, including future proposed large capital projects and proposed new technologies. The NDP sets out these capital investment proposals under those planned to be implemented in the *‘Short-Term’* (next 3 years), and those planned to be implemented in the *‘Long-Term’* (next 10 years).

A screening matrix has been prepared with regards the provisions of Section 10.1 of the NDP, to determine if any of the capital investment proposals included therein could be considered to ‘set a framework for development consent’, in accordance with the SEA Directive. Refer to **Table 6.1** for this screening matrix.

It was determined that the NDP does not define criteria or conditions which would guide the way a consenting authority determines an application for development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive.

None of the capital investment projects proposed in the NDP are therefore considered to have the potential to provide a framework for development consent.

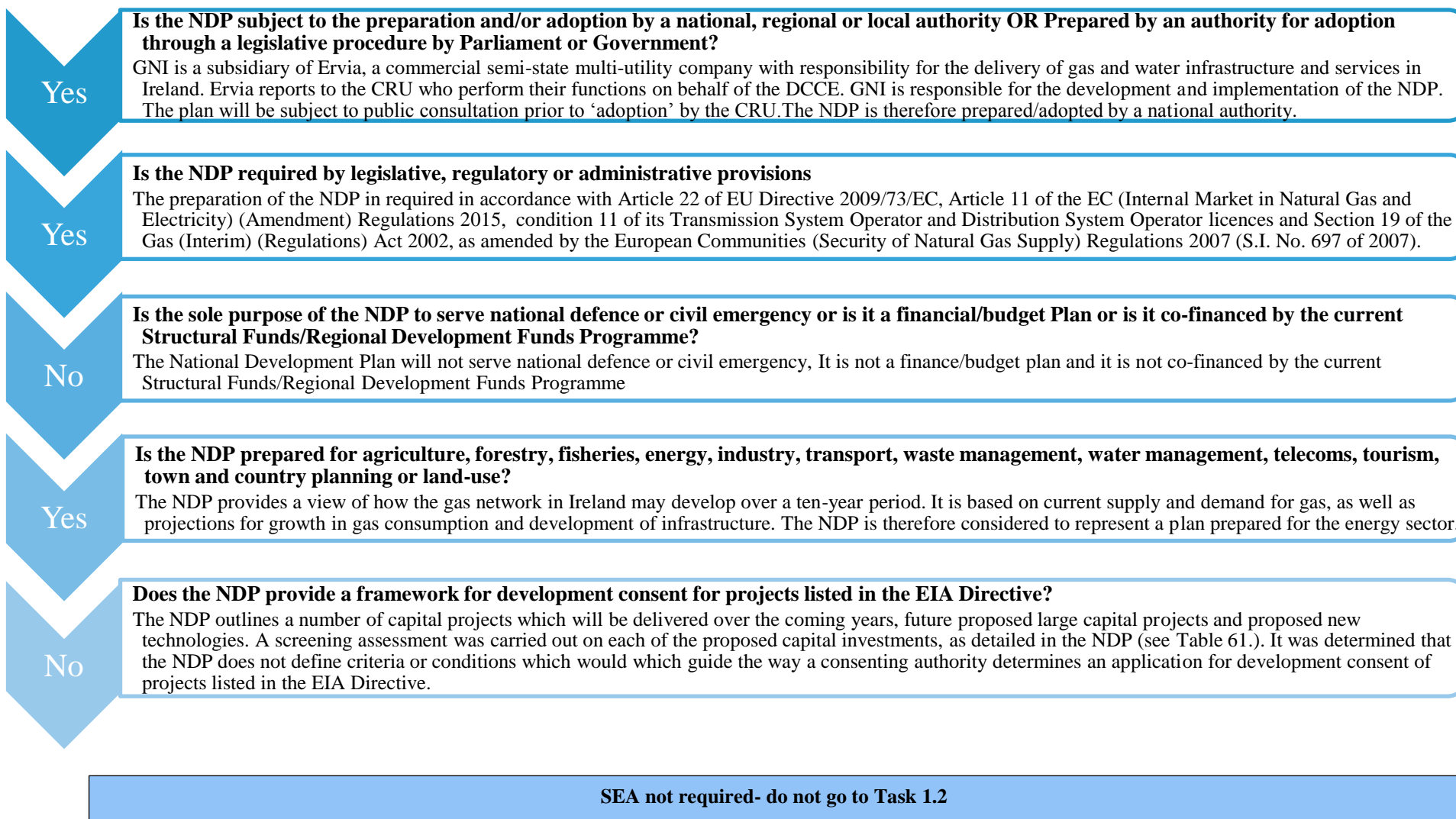


Figure 6.1: Application of EPA ‘Decision -Tree’

Table 6.1: Section 10.1- SEA Screening Matrix

Provisions of Section 10.1 of the NDP ‘Capital Investment’	Screening for the potential to set a framework for development consent in accordance with European Commission Guidance, whereby it is considered whether the capital investment proposals place limits on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in a given area; or • conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission is to be granted; or are they designed to preserve certain characteristics of the area concerned
Short-term Requirements (next 3 years)	
The provision of Above Ground Installations (AGI) capacity upgrade works to: 1 No. AGI in the Northern and Western Region, 3 No. AGIs in the Eastern and Midlands Region and 1 No. AGI in the Southern Region.	<p>The proposal for AGI upgrade works over the next three years is not considered to have the potential to set a framework for development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive. The proposed upgrade works outlined in the NDP do not give rise to limitations on the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in any of the regions in Ireland. The proposed upgrade works do not give rise to conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission was granted, nor do they dictate the preservation of certain characteristics of any of the regions mentioned.</p> <p>Each of these proposed AGI upgrade works are further described in the NIP which is subject to full SEA and AA. Further, these projects will be subject to ‘envirokit²’ assessment, or EIA and AA, if deemed necessary, at project inception stage.</p>
The provision of 1 No. new AGI in the Eastern and Midlands Region.	<p>The proposal for the development of a new AGI in the Eastern and Midlands Region over the next three years is not considered to have the potential to set a framework for development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive. The proposed installation does not give rise to limitations on the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in the Eastern and Midlands Region. The proposed upgrade works do not give rise to conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission was granted, nor do they dictate the preservation of certain characteristics of any of the regions mentioned.</p> <p>This proposed new AGI is further described in the NIP which is subject to full SEA and AA. Further, these projects will be subject to ‘envirokit³’ assessment, or EIA and AA, if deemed necessary, at project inception stage.</p>

² This procedure is supported by a guidance document known as ‘enviroplan’. Together they are a bespoke environmental planning and assessment tool modelled on environmental legal and regulatory requirements and best environmental practice, including requirements pursuant to the EIA Directive (85/337/EEC), as amended and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), as amended. This procedure ensures that environmental and planning matters and appropriate mitigation measures are considered and communicated during the design and project planning stages of all Gas Network Ireland projects.

³ This procedure is supported by a guidance document known as ‘enviroplan’. Together they are a bespoke environmental planning and assessment tool modelled on environmental legal and regulatory requirements and best environmental practice, including requirements pursuant to the EIA Directive (85/337/EEC), as amended and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), as amended. This procedure ensures that environmental and planning matters and appropriate mitigation measures are considered and communicated during the design and project planning stages of all Gas Network Ireland projects.

<p>Provisions of Section 10.1 of the NDP ‘Capital Investment’</p>	<p>Screening for the potential to set a framework for development consent in accordance with European Commission Guidance, whereby it is considered whether the capital investment proposals place limits on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in a given area; or • conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission is to be granted; or are they designed to preserve certain characteristics of the area concerned
<p>The delivery of new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) stations, located along core urban and regional road networks throughout Ireland, including: 1 No. CNG station in the Northern and Western Region. 8 No. CNG stations in the Eastern and Midland Region and 2 No. CNG stations in the Southern Region.</p>	<p>The proposed 11 No. new CNG stations around Ireland are not considered to have the potential to set a framework for development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive. The proposed station installations have not been defined in terms of specific location, extent, operating conditions etc. They therefore do not give rise to limitations on the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in the mentioned regions. The proposed new station installations do not give rise to conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission was granted, nor do they dictate the preservation of certain characteristics in the mentioned regions.</p> <p>The proposed 11 No. new CNG stations are further described in the NIP which is subject to full SEA and AA. Further, these projects will be subject to ‘envirokit⁴’ assessment, or EIA and AA, if deemed necessary, at project inception stage.</p>
<p>The provision of 1 No. new Centralised Gas Injection (CGI) facility in the Southern Region, located on the gas transmission network where Renewable Gas quality will be verified, and the grid injection process will be managed and metered</p>	<p>The proposal to provide 1 No. new CGI facility in the Southern Region is not considered to have the potential to set a framework for development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive. The proposed new facility has not been defined in terms of specific location, extent, operating conditions etc. It therefore does not give rise to limitations on the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in the Southern region. The proposed new facility does not give rise to conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission was granted, nor does it dictate the preservation of certain characteristics in the Southern region.</p> <p>The proposed new CGI facility is further described in the NIP which is subject to full SEA and AA. Further, these projects will be subject to ‘envirokit⁵’ assessment, or EIA and AA, if deemed necessary, at project inception stage</p>

⁴ This procedure is supported by a guidance document known as ‘enviroplan’. Together they are a bespoke environmental planning and assessment tool modelled on environmental legal and regulatory requirements and best environmental practice, including requirements pursuant to the EIA Directive (85/337/EEC), as amended and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), as amended. This procedure ensures that environmental and planning matters and appropriate mitigation measures are considered and communicated during the design and project planning stages of all Gas Network Ireland projects.

⁵ This procedure is supported by a guidance document known as ‘enviroplan’. Together they are a bespoke environmental planning and assessment tool modelled on environmental legal and regulatory requirements and best environmental practice, including requirements pursuant to the EIA Directive (85/337/EEC), as amended and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), as amended. This procedure ensures that environmental and planning matters and appropriate mitigation measures are considered and communicated during the design and project planning stages of all Gas Network Ireland projects.

<p>Provisions of Section 10.1 of the NDP ‘Capital Investment’</p>	<p>Screening for the potential to set a framework for development consent in accordance with European Commission Guidance, whereby it is considered whether the capital investment proposals place limits on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in a given area; or • conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission is to be granted; or are they designed to preserve certain characteristics of the area concerned
<p>Long-Term Requirements (next 10 years)</p>	
<p>The provision of AGI capacity upgrade works to: 6 No. AGIs in the Eastern and Midlands Region and 1 No. AGI in the Southern Region.</p>	<p>The proposal for AGI upgrade works over the next ten years is not considered to have the potential to set a framework for development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive. The proposed upgrade works would not give rise to limitations on the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in any of the proposed regions in Ireland. The proposed upgrade works do not give rise to conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission was granted, nor do they dictate the preservation of certain characteristics of any of the regions mentioned.</p> <p>Each of these proposed AGI upgrade works are further described in the NIP which is subject to full SEA and AA. Further, these projects will be subject to ‘envirokit⁶’ assessment, or EIA and AA, if deemed necessary, at project inception stage.</p>
<p>The provision of 2 No. new AGIs in the Eastern and Midlands Region.</p>	<p>The proposed new AGI installation in the Eastern and Midlands Region is not considered to have the potential to set a framework for development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive. The proposed installation has not been defined in terms of specific location, extent, operating conditions etc. It therefore does not give rise to limitations on the type of activity or development which is to be permitted in the Eastern and Midlands Region. The proposed upgrade works do not give rise to conditions which must be met by the applicant if permission was granted, nor do they dictate the preservation of certain characteristics in the Eastern and Midlands Region.</p> <p>Each of these new AGIs are further described in the NIP which is subject to full SEA and AA. Further, these projects will be subject to ‘envirokit⁷’ assessment, or EIA and AA, if deemed necessary, at project inception stage.</p>

⁶ This procedure is supported by a guidance document known as ‘enviroplan’. Together they are a bespoke environmental planning and assessment tool modelled on environmental legal and regulatory requirements and best environmental practice, including requirements pursuant to the EIA Directive (85/337/EEC), as amended and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), as amended. This procedure ensures that environmental and planning matters and appropriate mitigation measures are considered and communicated during the design and project planning stages of all Gas Network Ireland projects.

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7 Conclusion

In accordance with the EPA Report “*Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland*”, the NDP was assessed using the ‘pre-screening’ flowchart and criteria.

This flowchart allows for rapid screening-out of those plans and programmes that are not likely to have any environmental impact and screening-in of those that definitely do require SEA.

Following this assessment, it was concluded that the NDP does not fall within the requirements of the SEA Directive in that:

- The NDP is subject to preparation and adoption by a National Authority;
- The NDP is required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions;
- The sole purpose of the NDP is not to serve national defence or civil emergency nor is it a financial/budget Plan or co-financed by the current Structural Funds/Regional Development Funds Programme;
- The NDP is prepared for the energy sector; and
- The NDP does not provide a framework for development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive.

In accordance with the EPA methodology, the NDP was therefore not taken forward to ‘Task 1.2’ SEA Screening.

No requirement for SEA is therefore identified as a result of this SEA Screening assessment.

8 References

Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland (EPA, 2013)

Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment- Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004)

Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (European Commission, ND)

(Draft) SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities (EPA, 2013)

Integrating Climatic Factors into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note (EPA, 2019)

Synthesis Report on Developing A Strategic Environmental Assessment (Sea) Methodologies for Plans And Programmes In Ireland (EPA, 2003)