



GRID Implementation Plan 2017-2022

SEA Screening Statement

27 July 2016



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1. Introduction

This report is the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Statement for EirGrid's forthcoming Grid Implementation Plan (IP) 2017-2022 hereafter referred to as the "Plan".

Under EU Directive (2001/42/EC) on the Assessment of Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (hereafter referred to as the SEA Directive), certain plans and programmes require environmental assessment. The EirGrid IP 2017-2022 is the second Grid Implementation Plan the previous plan (which was subject to SEA) was published in April 2012. This report is a screening exercise to consider the application of the SEA Directive for the second Plan.

The SEA process can be defined by four stages as follows:

- Stage 1 – Screening: deciding whether or not SEA is required;
- Stage 2 – Scoping: establishing the spatial and temporal scope of the SEA and a decision-making framework that can be used to evaluate impacts;
- Stage 3 – Identification, Prediction, Evaluation and Mitigation of Potential Impacts; and
- Stage 4 – Consultation, Revision and Post-Adoption. This includes the implementation of statutory SEA monitoring.

Figure 1.1 details the four stages and the key deliverables of the SEA process. Statutory consultation is required with the SEA Environmental Authorities (see Section 1.1 below) for Stages 1 to 3 and with the public at Stage 3. This report constitutes the output of Stage 1 of this four stage process. Figure 1.1 also details the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process as required under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). A separate AA Screening Statement will be produced in relation to the requirements for AA of the Plan.

In addition to the Directive itself, for the preparation of this Stage 1 SEA Screening Statement, regard has been given to the following legislation and guidance:

- European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004) & the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 200 of 2011);
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004) & Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 S.I. No. 201 of 2011); and
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publication entitled Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland – Synthesis Report.

1.1 Competent Authority

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*. EirGrid is therefore the Competent Authority with respect to this Plan and is obliged to determine whether the Plan could give rise to significant effects on the environment. This report details the determination for the need for SEA. This SEA Screening Statement will be issued to the following Environmental Authorities¹:

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government;
- The Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs;

¹ Recent governmental changes may require amendments to the exact name convention of these environmental authorities

- The Department of Agriculture, Marine and Food; and
- The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

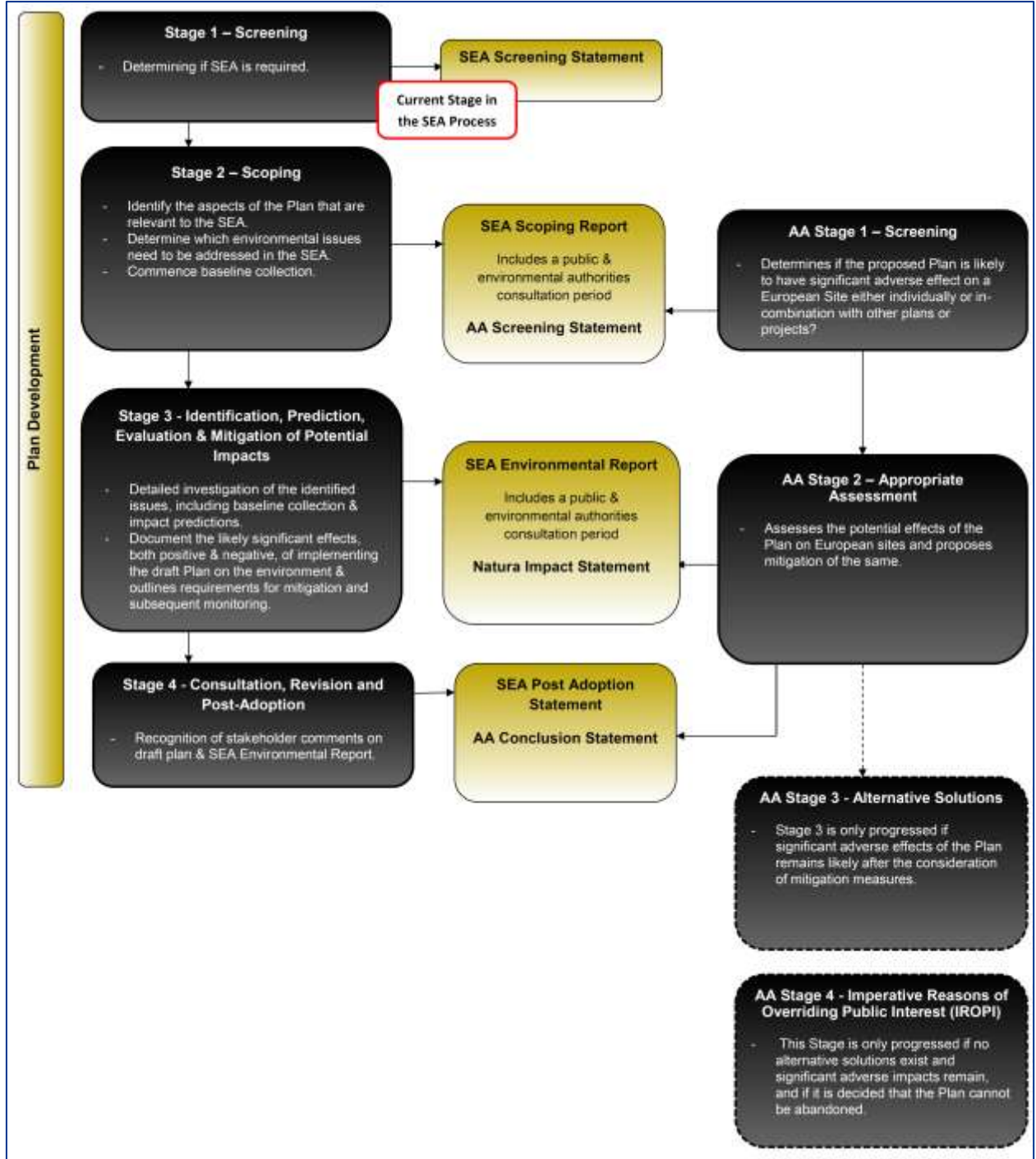


Figure 1.1 SEA and AA Stages and key deliverables

2. Proposed Plan, Plan Area and Programme

2.1 Objectives for the Plan

EirGrid plc (EirGrid) is the national electricity Transmission System Operator (TSO). In its role as TSO in Ireland, EirGrid operates and maintains a safe, secure, reliable, economical and efficient transmission system. EirGrid develops key infrastructural projects, which are vital for the socio-economic development of the State, with due regard for the environment.

GRID25, published in 2008, was a high-level strategy outlining how EirGrid intended to undertake the development of the electricity transmission grid in the short, medium, and longer terms, to support a long-term sustainable and reliable electricity supply to 2025. The GRID25 Implementation Programme (IP) 2011-2016 was a practical strategic overview of how the early stages of the GRID25 strategy were intended to be implemented. The Grid25 IP was informed by an annual rolling operational document - the Transmission Development Plan (TDP), as required by Regulation 8(6) of the European Communities (Internal Market in Electricity) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 445 of 2000) and submitted for approval to the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER). Each of these documents – the strategy, the IP, and the TDP, provide different levels of scale and detail - from the long term visionary statements contained in the Grid25 strategy to the short and medium term objectives and policy set out in the IP, to the specific projects outlined in the TDP. This is set out graphically on Figure 2.1.

EirGrid is preparing an updated grid development strategy, known as *Your Grid, Your Tomorrow: Ireland's Grid Development Strategy*. The GRID Implementation Plan 2017-2022 will be the second IP, which will sit under the new Strategy, and will also take account of the most up to date TDP (envisaged at the time of writing this Screening statement to be the 2016 version) see also Figure 2.1.

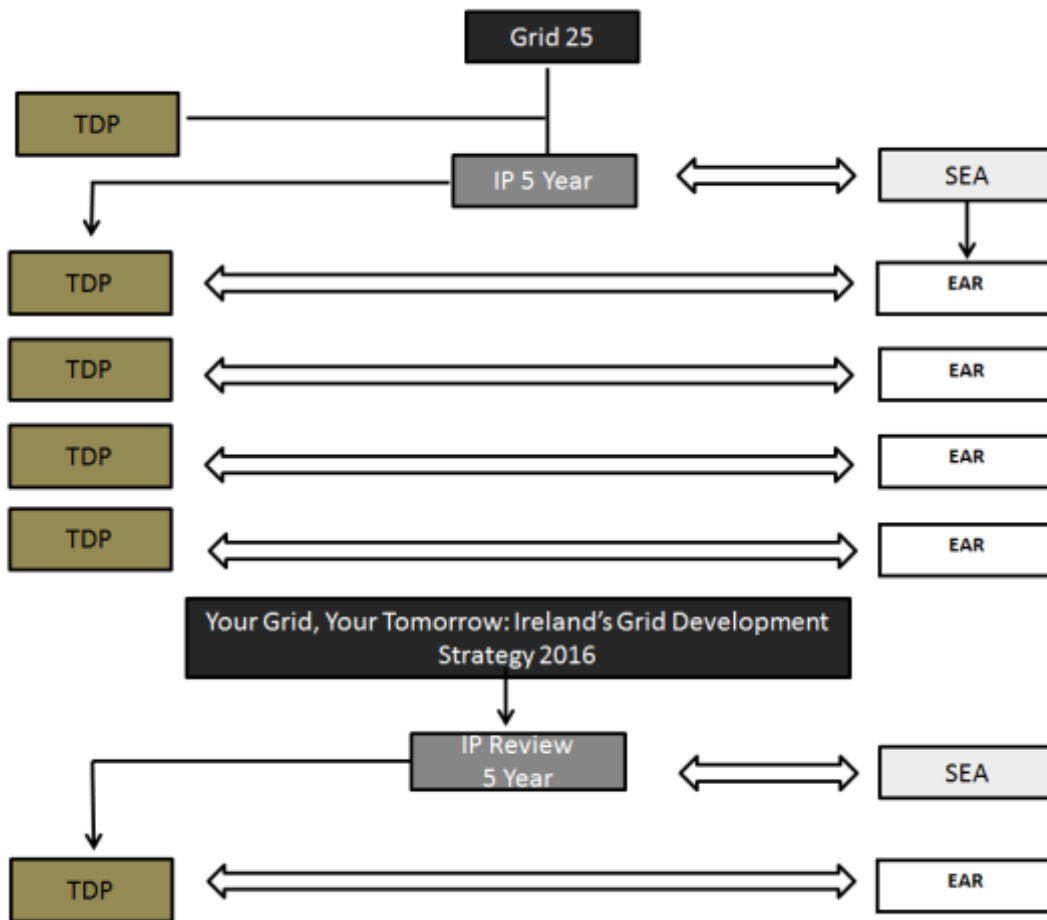


Figure 2.1 SEA Structure for previous Grid25 strategy and associated IP, SEA, EAR² and TDP and the new Your Grid, Your Your Tomorrow: Ireland's Grid Development Strategy and associated IP, SEA, EAR

2.2 Plan Area

The Plan area covers the Republic of Ireland. Three broad planning areas have been delineated that best reflect the conditions and power flows of the transmission system. These are:

- Border, Midlands and West Areas;
- South-East, Mid-East and Dublin Areas; and
- South-West and Mid-West Areas.

These three planning areas are aligned with the eight statutory planning regions in Ireland as outlined in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). The regions and planning areas are illustrated in Figure 2.2.

While EirGrid is the Irish Transmission System Operator (TSO), and this IP relates to grid development in Ireland, the transmission system is being developed as an all-island system. The EirGrid Group owns SONI – the System Operator in Northern Ireland. As such, the IP (and SEA) will have significant regard to grid development in Northern Ireland, primarily from a transboundary impact perspective.

² The Environmental Appraisal Report is produced to accompany each TDP



Figure 2.2 Illustration of the three Planning Areas and the underlying Statutory Regions

2.3 Plan Programme

The Implementation Plan (IP) will be published in early 2017 after the publication of the new Grid Strategy. The plan will cover the five year period up to 2022. It is currently anticipated that a consultation period of twelve weeks will commence in early 2017 to gather feedback on the Draft Implementation Plan.



2.4 Contact Point

The contact point for any comments in relation to this document is shown below:

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A copy of this report can be made electronically available on request to the above contact point. In addition a copy of this report will be made available on request at the EirGrid offices as indicated below:

EirGrid Plc.

The Oval,

160 Shelbourne Road,

Ballsbridge,

Dublin 4.

3. Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

3.1 Relevant Provisions

Article 2 of the SEA Directive indicates that '*plans and programmes*', which are

- Subject to preparation and/ or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government, or
- Which are required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions

Therefore it needs to be determined if the plan is required by legislative or administrative provisions, and if so, the plan is subject to the provisions of the SEA Directive.

In addition, Article 3 (1) of the Directive indicates that an environmental assessment must be carried out for all plans and programmes:

- Which are prepared for certain specified sectors (including land use planning and transport), and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive; or
- Which, in view of the likely effect on protected sites, have been determined to require and assessment under the Habitats Directive.

The above is provided for nationally in Article 9(1) of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004).

In deciding whether a particular plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, regard is given to the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive. This is reproduced in Schedule 1 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004).

The prescribed Environmental Authorities as indicated in Section 1.1 must be consulted during screening.

3.2 Pre Screening Check

A pre-screening check is necessary to determine if the Plan is considered to be a plan/programme under the administrative provisions criteria stipulated in Article 9(1) of S.I. 435 of 2004. A pre-screening check, using the decision tree, as set out in the EPA guideline report *Development of SEA methodologies for plans and programmes in Ireland (2003)* which reflects the requirements of Article 9(1), has been applied and a copy of this decision tree is included below.

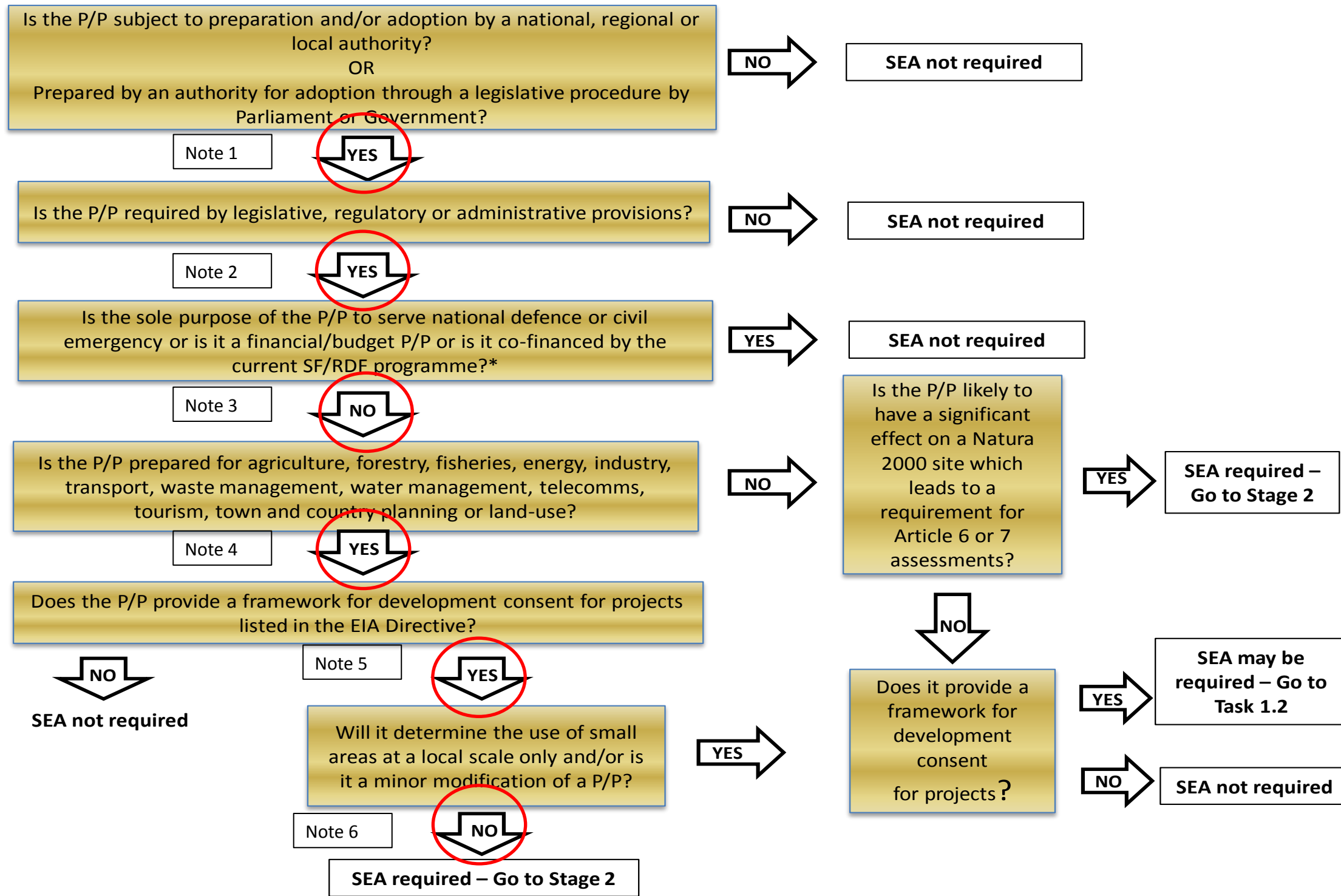


Figure 3.1 Pre Screening check list (adapted from the EPA guideline report *Development of SEA methodologies for plans and programmes in Ireland (2003)*)

3.2.1 Notes on the Screening Checklist

1. Is the P/P subject to 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

Yes. EirGrid is a semi-state company that reports to the CER who perform their functions on behalf of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR). EirGrid are considered to be the “competent authority” under the SEA Directive and Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004) for the purpose of this Plan.

EirGrid is responsible for the development and implementation of the Plan. The plan will be subject to public consultation prior to “adoption” by EirGrid. Therefore it is considered that the Plan is subject to adoption but that this adoption process is not underpinned by any regulatory requirements.

2. Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions?

Yes. The Plan is required by an administrative function within EirGrid.

3. Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current round of SF/RDF?*

No. This does not apply to the proposed Plan.

4. Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecomms, tourism, town and country planning or land use?

Yes. The function of the Plan is in relation to the energy sector, specifically the electricity transmission network.

5. Does the P/P provide a framework for development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?

Yes. According to the EPA guideline report *Development of SEA methodologies for plans and programmes in Ireland (2003)* a “framework for development consent occurs:-

“when the P/P would lead to, or give guidance for the consent of development projects. This may be observed as the demarcation of areas zoned for specific types of development, measures which identify circumstances under which development will be encouraged or allowed, criteria which may be applied to decisions on development consent or forward programmes which identify certain types of development to be pursued in a particular sector.”

The Plan will function as a “framework for future development consent” as it will *inter alia* identify and pursue certain types of development and/or give guidance for consent of development projects that fall within the categories set out in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive.

6. Will it determine the use of small areas at a local scale only and/or is it a minor modification of a P/P?

No. The plan covers the entirety of the Republic of Ireland and is the second Grid Implementation Plan and is not a modification to the existing Plan.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion on the basis that the provisions of Article 9(1) of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations have been met, the SEA process should move to Stage 2 – Scoping Stage.

5. SEA Determination

EirGrid as the Competent Authority have determined that SEA is required for the next Grid Implementation Plan 2017-2022.