

Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

For

**Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Meath
County Council**

*Determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental
Assessment for Meath County Council Draft Climate
Change Adaptation Strategy prepared under the National
Climate Change Adaptation Framework*

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ON BEHALF OF

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Earth's Climate is changing. While natural fluctuations in climate are considered normal, emerging research and observational records from across the world show rates of change that are far greater than those experienced in recent history. Global temperatures have risen and are projected to rise further bringing changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather. Ireland's climate is changing in line with global patterns and these changes are bringing significant and wide ranging economic, environmental and social impacts.

Climate change is now recognised as a global challenge with policy responses required in terms of both mitigating the causes of climate change and in adapting to the now inevitable consequences of our changing climate. Action at local level is vitally important to help reduce the risks and impacts of climate change across communities.

This local authority Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy forms part of Ireland's national strategy for climate adaptation as set out in the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) which was produced under the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.¹

It is tasked with mainstreaming climate change adaptation over time into all functions, operations and services of the local authority. It seeks to inform or 'climate proof' existing plans and policies produced and implemented by the local authority. This ensures a considered, consistent and coherent approach, facing head-on the challenges of a changing climate. Crucially, it also helps in building resilience within the local authority organisation itself as well as across all communities.

2 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or program, or variation to a plan or program, before a decision is made to adopt it. The SEA Directive² requires, inter alia, that SEA is undertaken for certain plans, programs or variations to these.

The SEA Directive has been transposed into Irish law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004) and The Planning and Development Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004). These Regulations have since been amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 200 of 2011) and the Planning and Development (SEA) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 201 of 2011). The criteria as set out in Annex II of The SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and as also set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004) need to be considered while drafting of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategies.

¹ *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015* (S.I. No. 25/2016). Available at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/46/enacted/en/htm>

² Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27th June 2001, on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment

This SEA screening report is consistent with the process as recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publication entitled *Development of Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland – Synthesis Report 2003*, specifically Stage 1 (Screen of Plans and Programmes) and furthermore uses the criteria for SEA screening criteria set out in the SEA Directive.

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report is also being prepared for this Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in line with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

2.2 Climate Change Adaptation

2.2.1 International Context

The **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** is an international environmental treaty adopted in May 1992. The framework's objective is "*to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system*". The framework did not set binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions and contained no enforcement mechanisms. However, the framework outlined how specific international treaties may negotiate further action towards its key objective. **The Paris Agreement 2015** is a protocol set within the context of the UNFCCC (ratified by Ireland on 4th November 2016) and it is aimed at:

- Limiting global warming to less than 2°C above pre-industrial level and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.
- Building resilience and increasing the ability to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The agreement states the need for Parties to formulate and implement National Adaptation Plans.

2.2.2 EU Context

The 2013 EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change encouraged all Member states to adopt comprehensive adaptation strategies. It sought better informed decision making through the identification and addressing of gaps in knowledge about adaptation. The European Climate Adaptation Platform Climate-ADAPT, was developed as a resource mechanism to help users access and share information on adaptation.

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy is a voluntary, bottom up, approach for cities and local governments to combat Climate Change and move towards a low emission, resilient society. The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy brought the Compact of Mayors and the EU Covenant of Mayors under one international body in January 2017 incorporating over 9,000 cities and local governments.

2.2.3 National Context

The 2012 National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (NCCAF) was Ireland's first step in developing a national policy on adaptation actions to combat the impacts of climate change.

The National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development 2014 restated the policy position of the NCCAF, 2012. Greenhouse gas mitigation and adaptation to the impacts of climate change were to be addressed in parallel national plans under an evolving climate policy to 2050.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 was a landmark national milestone in the evolution of climate change policy in Ireland. It provides the statutory basis for the national transition objective laid out in the National Policy Position (as per above). Further to this, it made provision for and gives statutory authority to both the National Mitigation Plan (NMP), published in 2017 and the

National Adaptation Framework (NAF) published in 2018. This Local Adaptation Strategy forms part of the National Adaptation Framework.

The Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines 2018 provides guidance to Local Authorities to develop their own Climate Action Adaptation Strategy. In developing this adaptation strategy Meath County Council has been consistent with these guidelines.

3 DETERMINING WHETHER AN SEA IS REQUIRED

The objective of the SEA Directive for the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the Environment 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 and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.”³

3.1 Meath’s Draft Climate Change Adaptation Objectives

The purpose of the Meath County Council’s Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is to achieve the national objective of becoming a more climate resilient society and economy by 2050. In order to help tackle current and future challenges that climate change can present, Meath County Council have set out a number of key objectives in their strategy, under six thematic principles. Table 1 below outlines Meath County Councils Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy objectives per theme.

TABLE 1 MEATH’S DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

Theme 1: Economy
To use Climate Action as a driver for growth in County Meath
To promote and market County Meath as a Climate Ready region
To promote local jobs and local workspaces
Theme 2: Mobility
To Increase the efficiency of the transport system
To explore policies to help the transition to a climate resilient low carbon society, with emphasis on transportation modes and types
Promote and encourage active transport.
Theme 3: Built Environment
To ensure that climate adaptation is mainstreamed into all activities and operations.
To ensure that climate resilience is considered for all council-lead developments
Theme 4: Clean Energy
Encourage robust evidence based approached to inform policy and decision making in relation to the promotion of clean energies.
Support and encourage Communities in their pursuit of sustainable energy capacity building.
Theme 5: Resource Management
Continue to inspire communities to sustainably manage waste
Theme 6: Water

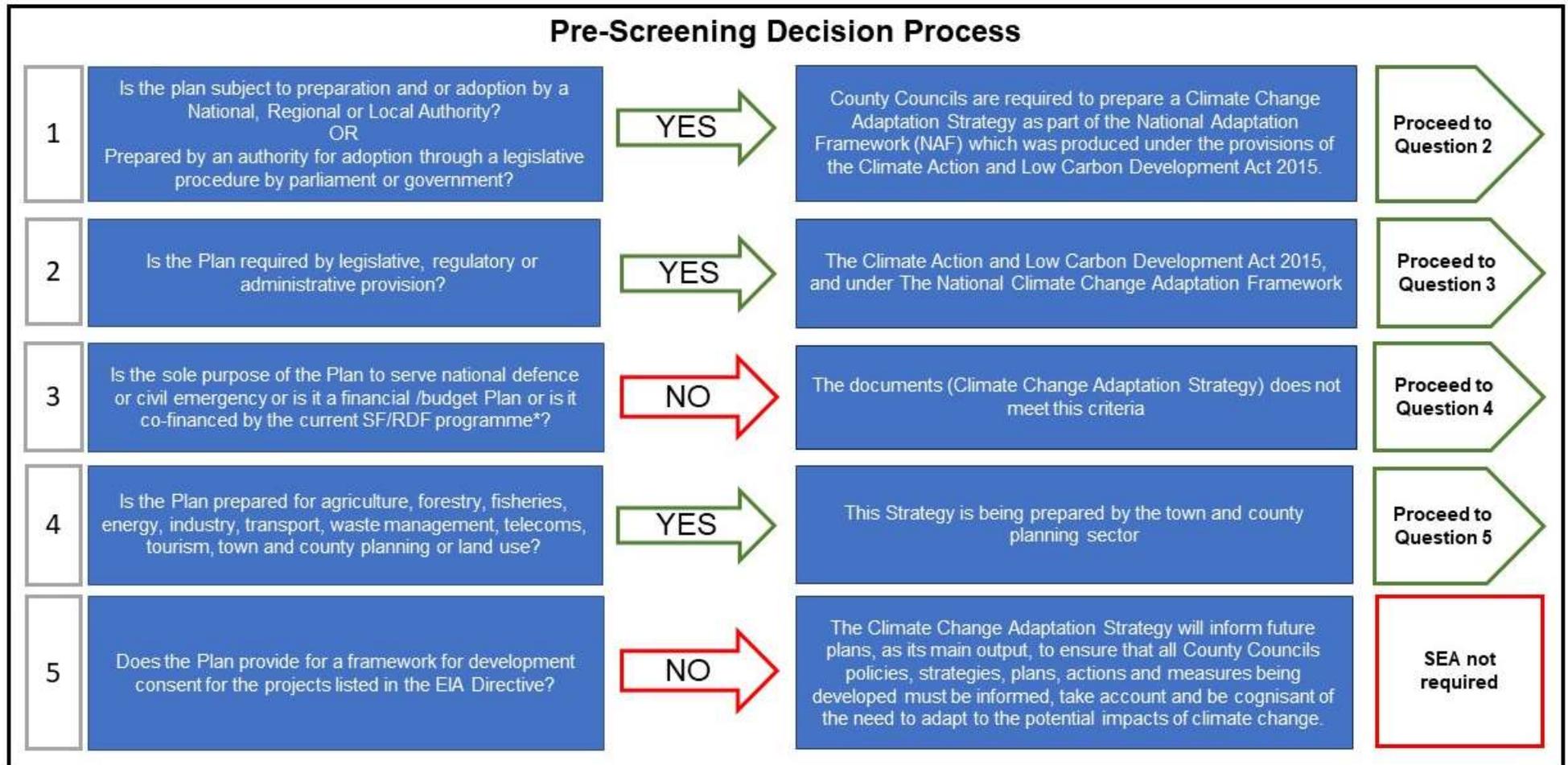
³ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers, of 27th June 2001, on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment

To liaise and work with other bodies, agencies responsible for the management of water courses
To provide for adequate and quality water supply in times of extreme weather conditions
Theme 7: Natural Resources
To liaise and collaborate with the agricultural community in their pursuit and climate resilience..
To promote and encourage the use natural resources to help us mitigate and adapt to climate change
To use natural resources to mitigate and adapt to climate change
To build capacity and resilience within communities
Theme 8: Planning
To promote and integrate climate action policy into all regional and local planning policies
To Integrate climate action considerations into landuse planning policy
To promote and maximize the most efficient and sustainable use of land
To mitigate the risk and impact of flooding
To protect and encourage climate resilient transport Infrastructure

3.2 Requirement to carry out SEA – Pre-Screening Checklist

In order to determine if this Strategy is considered a plan/programme under Article 3 of the SEA Directive, a pre-screening check is necessary. Figure 1 below provides details of the pre-screening checklist; this checklist is based on the decision tree published by the EPA in the *Development of SEA methodologies for plans and programmes in Ireland*.⁴

⁴ P. Scott & P. Marsden., 2001-EEP/DS-2/5 *Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland* Synthesis Report © Environmental Protection Agency 2003



*SF/RDF: Structural Funds and Regional Development Funds under Council Regulation (EC) Nos. 1260/99 and 1257/99 which operate programming periods of 2000–2006 and 2000–2007, respectively.



FIGURE 1 PRE-SCREENING DECISION PROCESS

4 SEA SCREENING DETERMINATION

The Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy was screened using the criteria contained in Annex II of the SEA Directive. Table 2 and Table 3 below, details the screening assessment using the *criteria for determining the likely significance of effects* as set out in the SEA Directive, Annex II.

TABLE 2 SCREENING DETERMINATION FOR ANNEX II (1.), CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

The Characteristics of the Plan and Programmes having regard, in particular, to, the following criteria	
Criteria	Screening Determination
The degree to which the 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.	<p>The purpose of this Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is to identify the risks to Meath County associated with climate change, and to set strategic goals, objectives and actions to adapt to these changes.</p> <p>Meath County Council's Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy forms part of Ireland's national strategy for climate adaptation as set out in the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) which was produced under the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.</p> <p>Meath County Council's Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, if adopted, will not set a framework for future development consent of projects, i.e. projects listed in both Annex I and Annex II of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive.</p>
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	<p>This Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy will inform other future plans, as its main output, to ensure that Meath County Councils policies, strategies, plans, actions and measures being developed must be informed, take account and be aware of the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>Future individual county development policies, strategies, plans and projects must be considered under the SEA, EIA and/or AA processes.</p>
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	<p>As the Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is aimed at integrating climate change adaptation into Meath County Councils plans, strategies and management team's agendas, the climate change adaptation measures will be implemented via future plans.</p>

	<p>This Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy's main output is to ensure that all policies, strategies and plans for Meath County Council must be informed of the need to adapt to the potential impacts of climate change.</p> <p>Individual county development policies, strategies, plans and projects must be considered individually under the SEA, EIA and/or AA process.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme;</p>	<p>The Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy looks to integrate climate change adaptation into Meath County Council as a management function and/or an important criterion to be considering in developing Local Authority Plans or Actions. The climate change adaptation actions taken will be implemented via future plans as its main output is to ensure that all policies, strategies, plans and measures for Meath County Council must be informed of the need to adapt to the potential impacts of climate change.</p> <p>Individual county development policies, strategies, plans and projects must be considered individually under the SEA, EIA and/or AA process.</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).</p>	<p>As the Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is aimed at integrating climate change adaptation into identified Meath County Councils Plans and Strategies and future Plans and Strategies, with some specific actions to help raise awareness of climate change both within management team and the wider public in Meath County, these actions can support plans and programmes that are related to waste generation, management, flood resilience and protection.</p> <p>However, these climate change adaptation actions will be implemented via future plans as its main output is to ensure that all policies, strategies, plans and measures for Meath County Council must be informed of the need to adapt to the potential impacts of climate change.</p>

TABLE 3 SCREENING DETERMINATION FOR ANNEX II (2.), CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

Characteristics of the Effects and of the Area Likely to be Affected, taking account of the following criteria	
Criteria	Screening Determination
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	Meath County Council Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is aimed at integrating climate change adaptation into the Local Authorities plans, strategies and management agendas, this in itself will help develop climate resilience. The climate change adaptation actions will be implemented via future plans as its main output is to ensure that all policies, strategies, plans and measures developed by Meath County Council must be informed of the need to adapt to the potential impacts of climate change.
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)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;</i> - <i>exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; and</i> - <i>intensive land-use.</i> 	Individual policies, strategies, plans and measures must be considered individually under the SEA, EIA and/or AA process.
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	Any and all effects uncovered as part of this process will be considered in relation to the characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected and the process will have regard, in particular, to the criteria as listed, according to the legislation.

5 CONCLUSION

This SEA Screening Report was carried out in order to determine the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment for Meath County Council Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy prepared under the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework. It has been concluded, based on the pre-screening check, and review against the environmental significance criteria as set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive, that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required. This is due to the fact that this Strategy does not provide a framework for development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive. Furthermore, the purpose of this Draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is to inform Local Authority policies, procedures and further plans on the need to incorporate climate change adaptation measures and it does not set out projects, plans or specific programmes.