

SEA 20 Years of Practice in Ireland, SEA influencing EIA?

Ireland's EIA Conference 2026

EIA & RENEWABLE ENERGY

Thursday, 05 March 2026

Radisson Blu Hotel, Athlone

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SEA Section ORM, EPA

Areas to be covered

- Key Aspects of EPA SEA role
- Ireland's SEA Story
- Ireland's SEA Statistics
- SEA Guidance
- State of Environment Reporting
- SEA and Monitoring
- SEA - the Way Forward

Role of the EPA in SEA



- ❑ We are a **Statutory Environmental Authority** under the SEA Regs. Consulted at all stages of SEA process.
- ❑ The other 3 (4) SEA Authorities are **DHLGH, DCEE, DAFM**.
- ❑ EPA aim to promote **full and transparent integration** of the findings of Strategic Environmental Assessments into plans/programmes and related environmental monitoring.
- ❑ **Key environmental challenges** set out in Ireland's SoER are considered and addressed.

Key Aspects of EPA role in SEA Effectiveness



- ❑ **Coordinate and provide Secretariat for National SEA Forum**
- ❑ **Commission SEA Effectiveness Reviews – I/II**
- ❑ **Preparation of SEA related Guidance and Applied SEA Research**
- ❑ **Promotion of Good Practice in SEA**
 - ❑ **Promotion of sector SEA take up -Advocacy Role**

Focus on Key Stages in Ireland's SEA Storyline

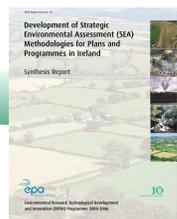


SEA Forum

Guidance

Review & Update Guidance

2001
SEA
Directive

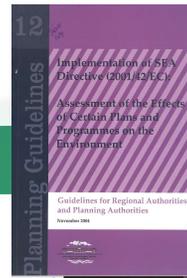


SEA Method.
2003

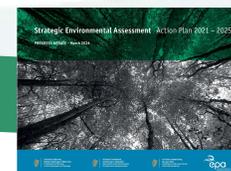
2004
SEA
Regulations



2004
Guidelines



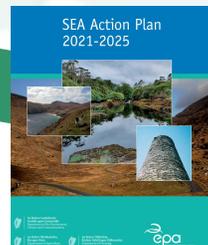
Action Plan
Rev. 2024



2022
Guidelines



2020
SEA
Action
Plan II



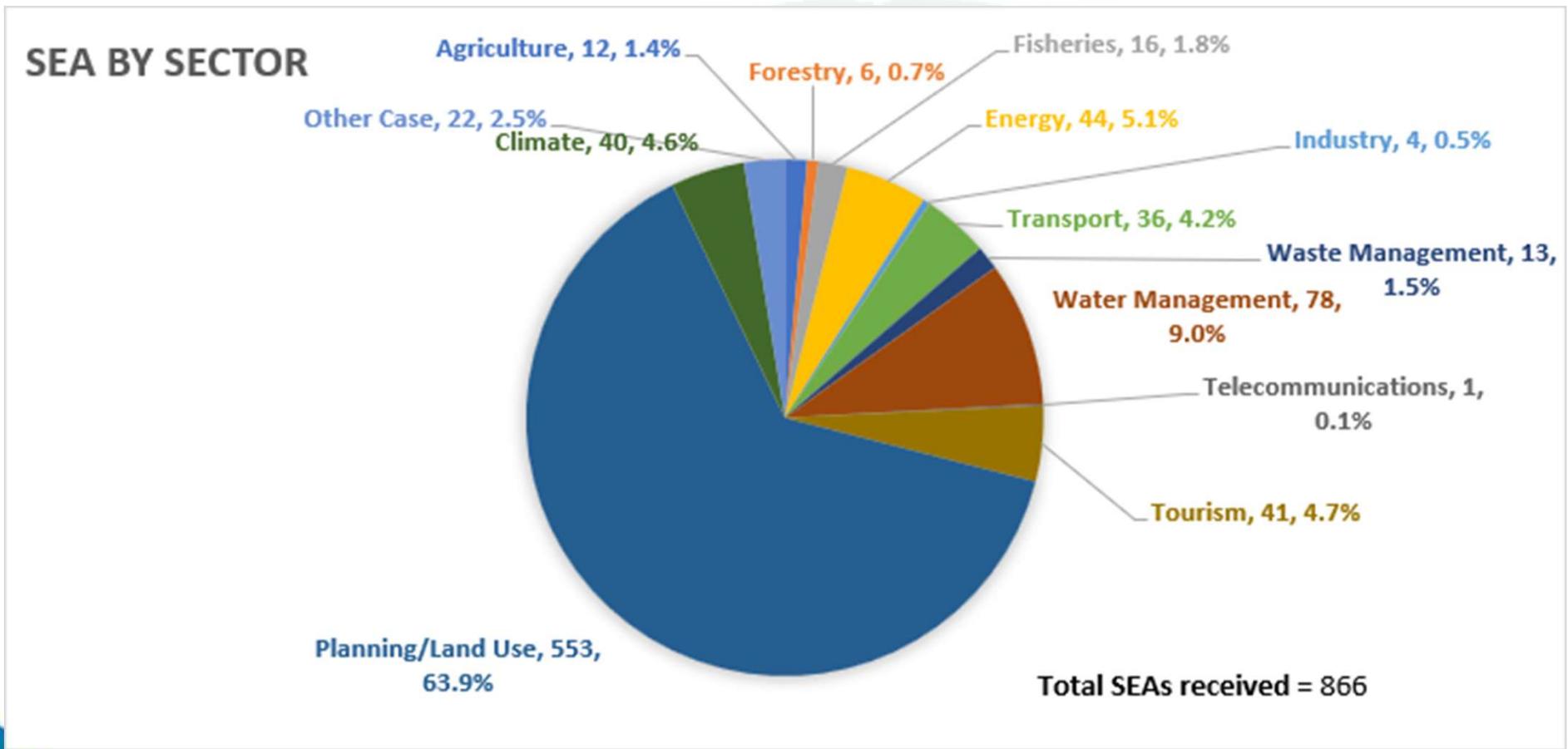
Action Plan I
2012- 2018



Action Plan Rev.
2018



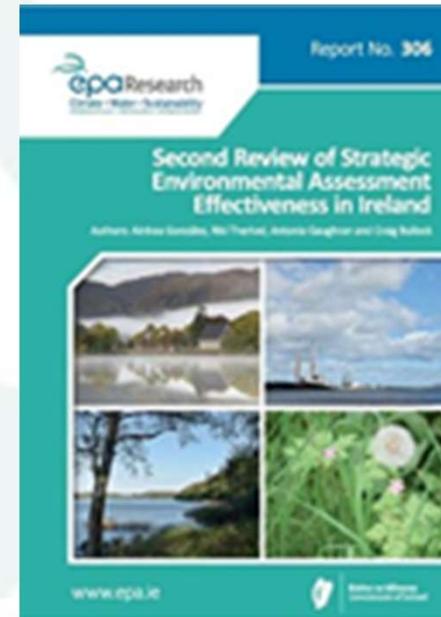
SEA BY SECTOR & LEVEL OF ACTIVITY Q4 2025 - 866



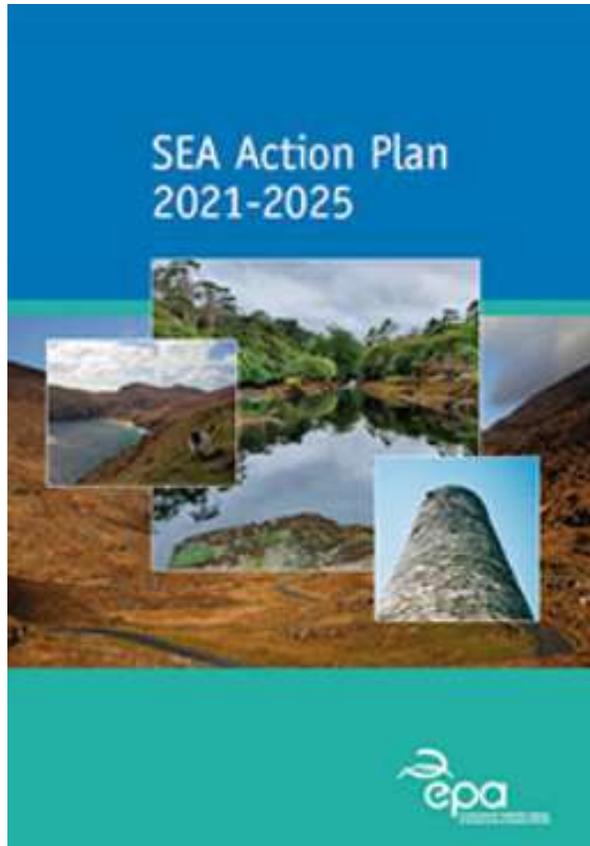
SEA Effectiveness: Review II



- ❑ SEA application - wide range of sectors
- ❑ Guidance informing SEA process
- ❑ Need for Effective/Proactive Consultation
- ❑ Alternatives - Remain Challenging
- ❑ Integration of SEA findings- Variable
- ❑ Monitoring – significant room for improvement

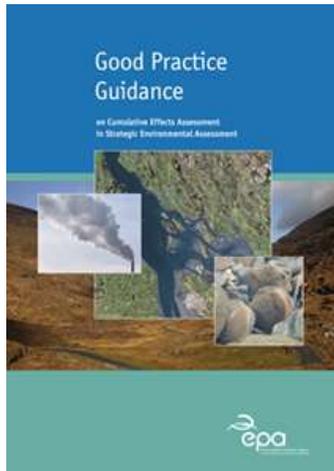


SEA Action Plan II 2021 – 2025



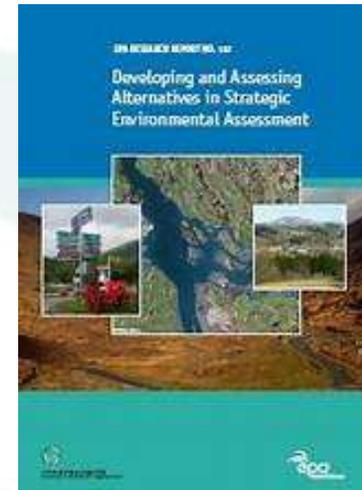
1. Governance
2. Data
3. Monitoring
4. Guidance
5. Training
6. Research
7. 28 Actions

SEA Guidance/ Research – Procedural & Sectoral/ Topic :Transforming SEA Practice



■ Procedural Guidance:

- Alternatives
- Monitoring & SEA Statements
- Cumulative Effects
- Screening
- Integration



■ Sectoral/ Topic Guidance:

- Land Use Planning
- Climate
- Forestry, Energy, Waste, Water
- Tourism



■ In prep: Research; Health in SEA Toolkit

■ <http://www.epa.ie/monitoringassessment/assessment/sea/resources/>



State of the Environment Reporting



Ireland's State of the Environment Report 2024



SoER (Once every 4 Years)



Executive Summary

Thematic

- Air
- Noise
- Climate
- Water
- Marine
- Nature
- Soil
- Land

Sectoral

- Transport
- Energy
- Agriculture
- Industrial
- Circular Economy
- Health & Well-being

Implementation

- Environmental Performance, Policy and Implementation

SOER - CONCLUSIONS



Chapter 17: Conclusions



Delivering a national policy position on the environment



We urgently need to have a national policy position on the environment to address the complex interactions, synergies and trade-offs across environmental policy areas and to deal with its interactions with other policy domains.

Driving policy implementation



We must rigorously implement existing environmental plans and programmes to achieve the benefits that they were developed to deliver.

Transforming our systems



Transformation of our energy, transport, food and industrial sectors is critical to achieving a sustainable future.

Scaling up investment in infrastructure



Investment in water, energy, transport and waste management infrastructure is essential to protect the environment now and into the future.

Protecting the environment to protect our health



Protecting the environment is key to protecting our health and we must act to reduce the modifiable risks to our health from environmental exposures.

SEA and Monitoring: ARTICLE 10 SEA DIRECTIVE



Article 10 Monitoring

1. Member States **shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes** in order :

to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects, and

to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.

2. In order to comply with paragraph 1, **existing monitoring arrangements** may be used if appropriate, with a view to avoiding duplication of monitoring. A

SEA & Monitoring –The Way Forward



- ❑ **SEA and Monitoring Sub Group** to continue alongside **National SEA Forum**
- ❑ Implement **Efficient and Effective Monitoring and Reporting** of PPSs
- ❑ Report on **Environmental Performance of PPSs** alongside Interim Review of PPSs
- ❑ **Standardise Environmental Indicators** - National, Regional, Local
- ❑ Link with **National Environmental Monitoring Programmes**
- ❑ Review and update **SEA and Monitoring Guidance** based on experience- Failte Ireland , Uisce Eireann, EIRGRID ,EPA , RAs
- ❑ Link with **Key messages in EPA's SoER**
- ❑ Address significant National **Environmental Data Gaps**



SEA-EIA LINKS - the IMPORTANCE OF TIERING

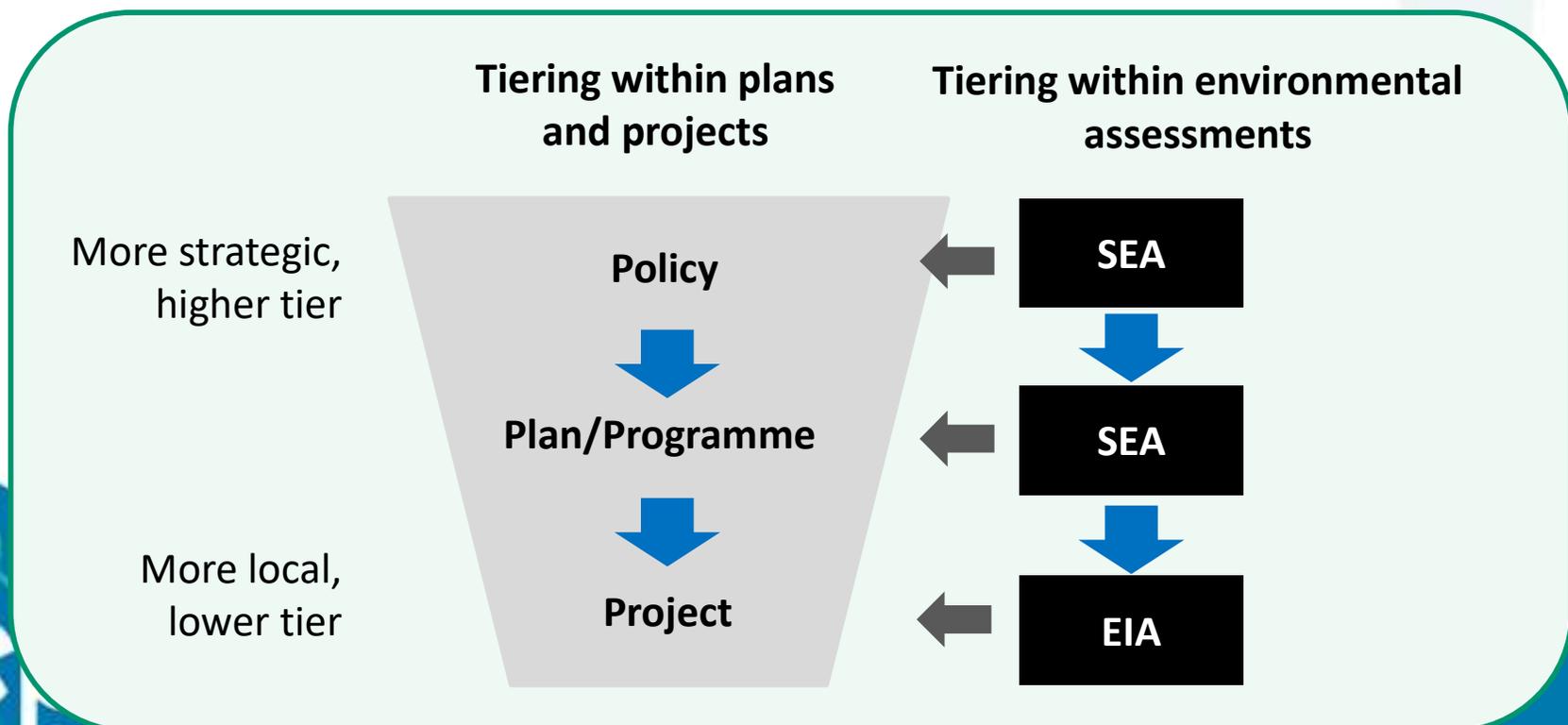


Project background

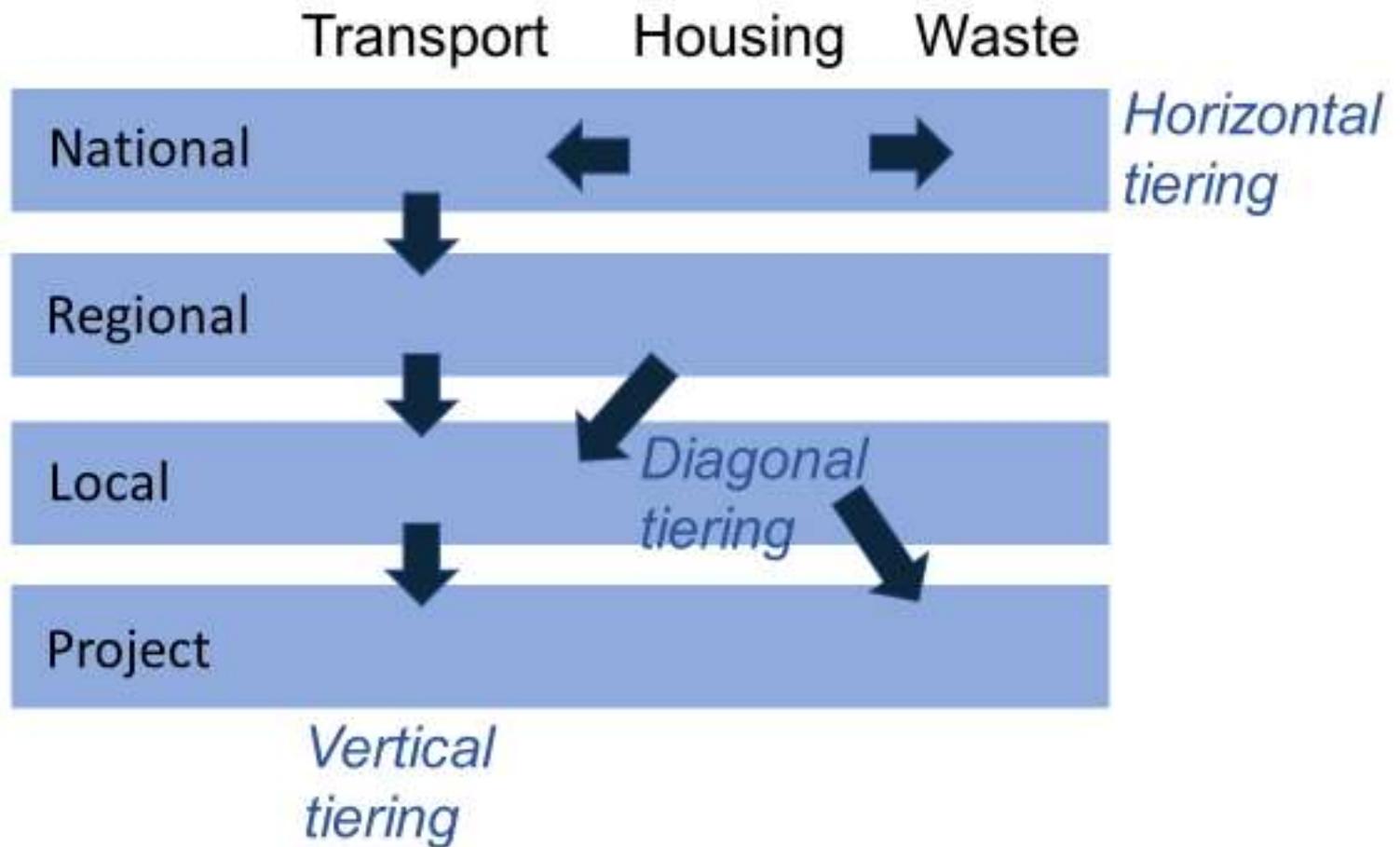
- **EPA funded**
- **Establish status of SEA-EIA links in Ireland**
- **Learn from international best practice**
- **Recommendations for how SEA and EIA can better ‘talk’ to each other - GUIDANCE**

Tiering is...

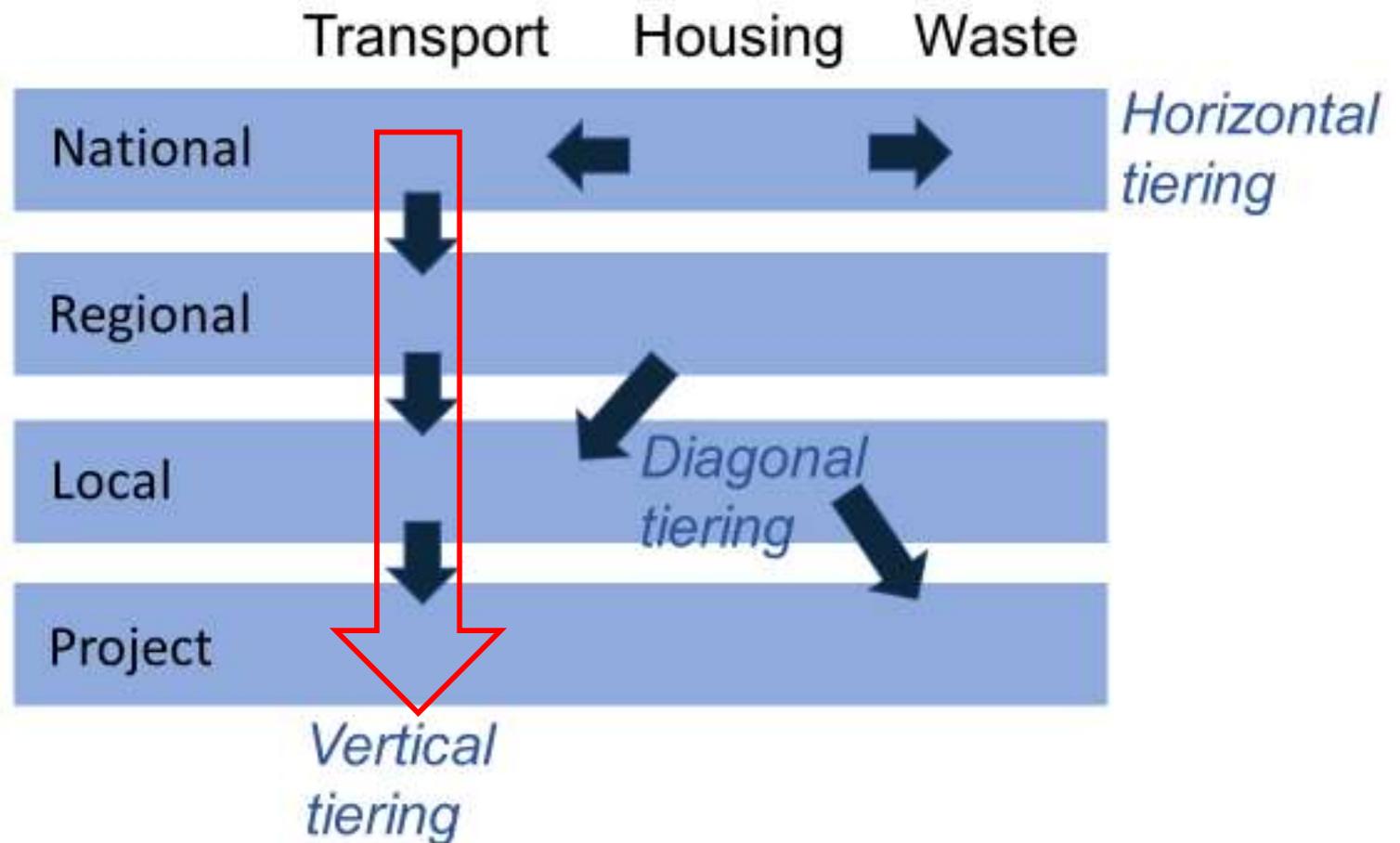
the organised transfer of information and issues from one planning level to another, supported by environmental assessments.



Types of tiering



Tiering down (SEA informs EIA)



Benefits of tiering within plans



- **Informs/influences** development of lower-tier plans and projects
- **Reduces problems** in development of projects
- **Strategic decisions** for strategic development **can be made early**
- **Strategic mitigation** can be put in place
- **Better consideration of “cumulative impacts”**
- **Assesses public concerns** about higher-tier plans,

Constraints to tiering

- SEA and EIA have **distinct purposes**
- **No legal requirement** for tiering
- **SEA is not required for policies**
- **Plan may not integrate SEA findings**
- **Planning is not a linear, hierarchical process**
- Possible substantial **time lag between tiers**;
better to go straight to the source
 - **Resource implications of tiering**



Guidance Note on SEA-EIA Tiering

Environmental Protection Agency



Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment - Environmental Impact Assessment Tiering

Authors: Riki Thérivel and Ainhoa González Del Campo



www.epa.ie



COMMUNICATION: SEA to EIA

This area is zoned for renewable energy.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

ZONED FOR RECREATION

ZONED FOR INDUSTRY

You need to think about bird protection here but soil isn't so important

I will update the G.I.S. maps for the S.E.A.

We have identified this alternative as the most sustainable option.

Yes, I agree

To mitigate negative effects you need to plant trees in zones A and B

We'll pass these requirements on to the projects.

Wow! These trees are coming on well and so the local biodiversity is

SCREENING

We would focus on bird species at project level and screen out soil factors.

DATA

We will add this to the data for the site

ALTERNATIVES

This should guide project developments

MITIGATION

MONITORING

We have gained valuable information

SCOPING

Should I fly down to her?

BIRD SPECIES
Yes, that makes sense

I've collected some valuable data

OK. I will pass that on to the S.E.A.

Good to know that we can focus on where to locate housing

And we also need to consider housing densities and layouts in our project

Better get those trees planted then!!

Great that the S.E.A. has informed the E.I.A. process.

for future plans and projects

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

REPO

HOUSING

INDUSTRY
 RECREATION

ENERGY
 WATER

RARE SPECIES CHECKLIST

FLORA

AGREEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ON THE GROUND



Environmental Protection Agency
An tAidmheireacht um Chaomhú Comhshuí

SEA informing EIA Scope

SEA identifies issues that need further assessment and scrutiny at project level

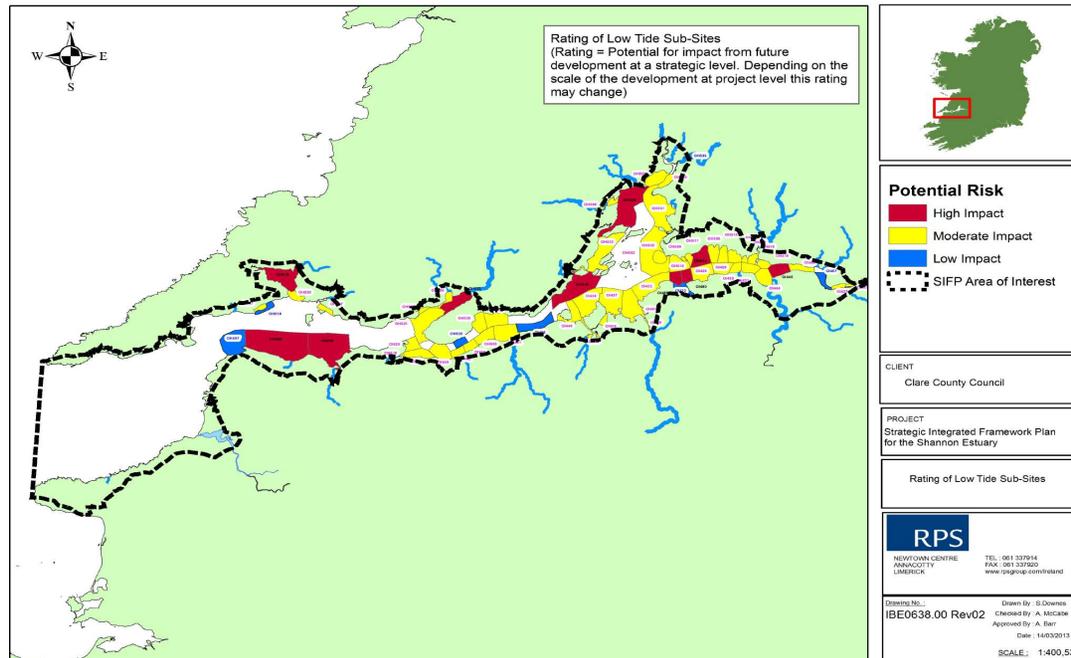


So that at EIA level

- Issues are scoped in/out
- Assessments are more focused



Shannon Strategic Integrated Framework Plan 2013-2020



- ✓ SEA explains level of detail of plan, and types of projects that it influences
- ✓ SEA provides (GIS) data relevant for project level

Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan 2018

SEA defines certain
mitigation measures that
are to be implemented at
project level



So the EIA has guidance on
how to mitigate key project
(cumulative) impacts

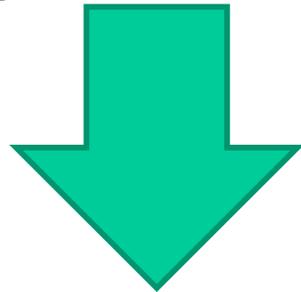


Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan 2018

| Potential Effect | Development Phase | Suggested Project Level Mitigation Measures | Timescale |
|---|-------------------|--|--|
| Geology, geomorphology and hydrography | | | |
| Changes in hydrodynamic/coastal processes and seabed morphology | CD CC OD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site specific geophysical and geotechnical surveys to establish a baseline and inform the impact assessment for individual developments • Modelling of hydrodynamics and sediment transport • Avoidance of placement of devices in areas where sediment transport pathways are modelled as highly sensitive to change • Modelling the effects on coastal processes should form part of pre-project activities to optimise location • Avoidance of placement of devices within zones where coastal processes are modelled as highly sensitive to change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site/cable route selection stage • Project design stage • EIA stage |
| Seabed contamination and water quality | | | |
| Accidental release of contaminants (hydraulic fluids/vessel fuel) | CD CC OD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out potentially hazardous operations under appropriate weather/tide conditions • Use low toxicity and biodegradable materials • Use minimum quantities • Design for minimum maintenance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project design stage • EIA stage • Project installation • Project operation and maintenance |

SEA/ EIA and Monitoring

SEA can establish what data/knowledge gaps need to be filled in



Thus EIA is guided on how to monitor key project impacts

And it can feed information back to the SEA...



SEA – The Way Forward for Ireland 2026 - 2030



- ❑ **Continue** to apply SEA to key Sector Plans – RSESs x3,
Water related Plans, Flood Risk, Energy, Nature Restoration Plan?

- ❑ **Continue** to prepare priority SEA Guidance – Scoping, Monitoring, Biodiversity, Agriculture, Climate Updates

- ❑ **Focus** on Effective Scoping & Environmental Monitoring & Reporting
 - ❑ **Review** influence of SEA on Key Sector Plans

- ❑ **Review** findings of 2025 EC SEA Effectiveness Study and apply recommendations

Thank you



Go raibh maith agaibh



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