

BMW Regional OP Modification

SEA Screening Report

June 2009

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
1.1	Background	3
1.2	Strategic Environmental Assessment	3
1.3	SEA Screening	4
1.4	SEA Regulations	5
1.5	Application of the SEA Directive to the Regional OP 2007-13	6
2	PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE BMW REGIONAL OP	7
3	SEA SCREENING METHODOLOGY	10
3.1	EPA Guidelines	10
3.2	European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations (S.I. No. 435 of 2004	12
4	SEA SCREENING RESULTS	15
4.1	EPA Guidelines	15
4.2	European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations (S.I. No. 435 of 2004	17
4.3	SEA Screening Conclusions	22
	APPENDIX 1 SEA Scoping Matrix for the BMW OP (2006)	25

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The BMW Regional Assembly as Managing Authority for the BMW Regional Operational Programme presented a paper at the Operational Programme Monitoring Committee on May 19th setting out proposed changes to the Operational Programme financial plan and the introduction of additional co-financed actions to take account of the changed socio-economic and budgetary conditions which have given rise to implementation difficulties.

The proposed changes to the financial plan and the inclusion of additional co-financed actions are a direct result of significant budgetary cutbacks, but their effects are consistent with the interventions that were included in the approved OP and do not represent a significant departure from the goals originally set for the OP. The overall strategic focus of the OP remains unchanged and the overall objective of the OP remains:

“To facilitate innovation, ensure sustainable development, improve accessibility and develop the urban fabric within the region, in order to enhance overall productivity and competitiveness”

The changes proposed will ensure that the important economic, social and environmental objectives of the OP are met despite the changed socio-economic and budgetary circumstances. The additional expenditures identified are consistent with the approved NSRF and OP strategy and are being included on a prudent basis to ensure drawdown of the ERDF allocation. The proposals are as follows:

- Gateway/Hub Investment Fund
- Inclusion of Science Foundation Ireland Research Awards
- Inclusion of Water Supply and Waste Water Treatment
- Inclusion of additional Strategic Road Projects
- Funding of environmental investments in non-gateway locations
- Investment in railcars
- Inclusion of ocean energy theme
- Increase co-financing rate

The purpose of this screening report is to consider whether the changed financial plan and additional actions will give rise to additional significant environmental effects that were not identified and assessed in the application of the SEA procedure applied to the BMW OP, which was approved in October 2007.

1.2 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

Strategic environmental assessment is the formal systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before the programme is formally adopted. The main objective of the SEA Directive (2001/41/EC)

which came into force in Ireland on 21st July 2004 is to provide for a high level of protection for the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation, adoption and modification of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.

Directive 2001/41/EC which provides for the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (“SEA Directive”) came into force in Ireland on 21st July 2004. The Directive applies to plans and programmes for which the first formal preparatory action is taken on or after 21 July 2004. The Directive has been transposed into Irish Law through two sets of Regulations:

- European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004); and
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 436 of 2004).

The SEA process involves a screening stage arising from which, a decision can be made on whether the preparation of an environmental report is required. This is followed by a scoping stage the purpose of which is to consider what the potential environmental effects may be and to identify any significant effects. Finally an environmental report is prepared which describes the environmental effects along with a consideration of alternatives to the draft programme, mitigation measures and appropriate monitoring arrangements

The main objective of the SEA Directive is to *“provide for a high level of protection for 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.”* The authority responsible for preparing the plan or programme is usually responsible for undertaking the SEA.

1.3 SEA SCREENING

Screening is the first stage in the SEA process and is the term given to the process where the need for an SEA of a given plan or programme is determined. There are various guidance documents which assist the SEA screening process, but the key to deciding if full SEA is required is whether the plan or programme (or modification to the plan or programme) would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

If SEA is deemed necessary (i.e. significant effects on the environment are likely), the full SEA process must be completed. This requires:

- The preparation of an Environmental Report, where the likely significant environmental effects are identified and evaluated;
- Consultation with the public, environmental authorities, and any EU Member State affected, on the environmental report and draft plan or programme;

- Consideration of the findings in the Environmental Report and the outcome of the consultations in deciding whether to adopt or modify the draft plan or programme; and
- Publicising the decision on adoption of the plan or programme and how the SEA influenced the outcome.

However, if the SEA screening process concludes that SEA is not required (i.e. significant effects on the environment are unlikely), then the preparation of an Environmental Report (and the other actions listed above) are not required.

In all cases, the authority preparing the Plan or Programme is required to make a copy of the SEA Screening Report available for public viewing and also notify the designated environmental authorities of the intention to prepare an SEA Screening Report, thus giving the designated environmental authorities an opportunity to comment on whether or not they consider significant effects on the environment likely to arise.

This Screening Report sets out the BMW Regional Assembly's view of the SEA screening process as per the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations (S.I 435 of 2004).

1.4 SEA REGULATIONS

Article 9 of the SEA Regulations refers to the requirement to carry out environmental assessment (i.e. SEA). This Article states:

"... an environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes

(a) which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications and tourism, and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, or

(b) which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but, either individually or in combination with other plans, are likely to have a significant effect on any such site."

Plans and programmes are defined in Article 2 as:

"...plans and programmes, as well as any modifications to them

(a) 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, and

(b) *which are required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions;* "

Regarding the modification to the BMW Regional OP 2007-13, this can be considered to be a programme as defined under Article 2 of the SEA Regulations and consequently should be subjected to a first stage SEA screening process.

1.5 APPLICATION OF THE SEA DIRECTIVE TO THE REGIONAL OP 2007-13

A Screening Report was prepared by ERM Environmental Consultants on behalf of the BMW Regional Assembly in 2006 when the OP was being prepared and following consultation with the designated environmental authorities, it was decided to prepare an environmental report.

Arising from this exercise, an SEA Scoping Report was prepared in December 2006 to consider what the potential environmental effects of the proposed OP may be and to identify any significant effects. The SEA Scoping Matrix for the BMW OP (section 1.7 of the Environmental Report) sets out all potential environmental effects identified (positive, negative, major and minor). A copy of this is attached to this paper.

Finally, an Environmental Report was prepared by ERM Consultants on behalf of the Managing Authority in January 2007 which described the significant effects on the environment that may arise as a result of the implementation of the OP. A draft of this report as well as a draft of the Operational Programme was issued to the designated environmental authorities in January 2007. In accordance with the SEA Directive, the Environment Report also set out alternatives to the draft programme, mitigation measures and appropriate monitoring arrangements for the OP.

A non technical summary of the Environmental Report was included in section 3.17 of the approved OP and an SEA statement summarising how the SEA process influenced the preparation of the OP was attached in Annex 8 of the approved OP. This included a response to the public consultation and proposed monitoring measures.

2. PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE BMW REGIONAL OP

The proposed changes to the Operational Programme and financial plan do not represent a significant departure from the goals originally set for the OP and the overall strategic focus of the OP remains unchanged. The additional expenditures identified are also consistent with the approved National Strategic Reference Framework and OP strategy. The 8 proposed modifications are described hereunder.

Gateway/Hub Investment Fund

The objective of Priority 3 of the BMW OP is to strengthen the spatial structuring of the BMW region by investing in integrated sustainable initiatives in order to enhance the competitiveness, sustainability and social cohesion of the region's growth centres and to modernise the region's transport infrastructure.

It was originally intended that an urban regeneration measure would be funded by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government as a successor to the urban renewal programme 2000-06, but targeted at the designated gateways and hubs only. However, the Department does not have the resources to proceed with this in light of the current economic and budgetary circumstances.

It is now proposed that support will be made available from the 7.5% advance (€17.15m ERDF) available over the first three years of the programme for actions which will contribute to enhancing the attractiveness of the Gateways/Hubs and how they can contribute to improving its development potential through enhancement of the economic, social and environmental conditions of the growth centre, through integrated investments. These investments are the same as those envisaged in the original OP and the only modification is the mechanism by which they will be selected and financed.

Inclusion of Science Foundation Ireland Research Awards

The overall objective of Priority 1 of the BMW Regional OP is to enhance the research, innovation and ICT infrastructure and capacity of the BMW region, to promote entrepreneurship and enterprise development and to support collaboration and technology transfer between research institutions and the business sector that responds to the economic development needs of the region. Consistent with this objective, it is proposed to include a number of Science Foundation Ireland research programmes in Priority 1 of the BMW Regional OP.

Centres for Science, Engineering and Technology Programme (CSET) – CSETs help link scientists and engineers in partnerships across academia and industry to address crucial research questions, foster the development of new and existing Irish-based technology companies, attract industry that could make an important contribution to

Ireland and its economy, and expand educational and career opportunities in Ireland in science and engineering

Principal Investigator Programme (PI) - The SFI PI Programme supports those fields of science and engineering that underpin biotechnology, information and communications technology, and sustainable energy and energy-efficient technologies and may be 3-5 years in duration

Strategic Research Clusters (SRC) - The SRC Programme has been designed to facilitate the clustering of outstanding researchers to carry out joint research activities in areas of strategic importance while also giving the time and resources to attract and cultivate strong industry partnerships that can inform and enhance their research programmes.

The type of activity funded will largely involve funding of human resource and are similar to those under the Programme for Research in Third level Institutions (PRTLTI), which were deemed to have no environmental impacts in the Environmental Report.

Inclusion of Water Supply and Treatment

The rationale underpinning Priority 2 of the BMW Regional OP as set out in section 4.5 is that the provision of environmental services such as water supply and treatment facilities can strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and economic growth. In line with this, consideration is being given to the inclusion of a number of water supply and treatment projects which are additional to the source protection and village sewerage schemes already included in the OP. As the primary objective of this action is to improve the quality of water supplies, its broad environmental benefit will be similar to that which has already been assessed.

These investments will be consistent with the proposed management plans for each of the river basin districts established under the Water Framework Directive¹. These plans will outline the current status of waters, the proposed environmental objectives for the waters, and the measures which may be necessary in order to achieve these objectives. Public comment will be taken into consideration in preparing the final river basin management plans, which are due for publication by 22 December 2009. The river basin management plans will be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment. The wider environmental impacts of the objectives and programme of measures proposed in the draft river basin management plans have been presented in an independent Environmental Report which is available on the website www.wfdireland.ie. Consultations on the Environmental Report will run in parallel to the draft plan consultations and final a

¹ The Water Framework Directive establishes an original, integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater within Europe. It impacts on the management of water quality and water resources and affects conservation, fisheries, flood defense, planning and environmental monitoring.

Strategic Environmental Assessment statement will be published alongside the finalised river basin management plan in December 2009.

Inclusion of additional strategic road projects

The draft BMW Regional OP 2007-13 that was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment envisaged a budget allocation of €100m to strategic road projects within the region, particularly routes that enhance connectivity between the designated growth centres within the region. This was reduced to €50m prior to the approval of the OP arising from the negotiations with the EU Commission. This €50m allocation will be taken up in full by the N52 Tullamore Bypass which is currently under construction and is subject to a separate approval decisions as a major project under the OP. It is now proposed to restore the upper limit of investment in strategic routes to €100m as originally proposed and assessed.

Funding of environmental investments in non-gateway locations

Under the current BMW Regional OP, investment in the natural and cultural heritage and investment in water conservation and recycling facilities are included under Priority 3 (Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks) and as such is restricted to projects that are in the vicinity of gateways and hubs only. Under Articles 4 and 5 of the ERDF Regulation (EC) 1080/2006 such investments are treated as environment-related.

It is proposed to transfer these investments to Priority 2 (Environment and Risk Prevention) and to co-finance strategic projects both within and outside the designated gateways and hubs in order to have a broader environmental benefit on the region as a whole. The overall number of projects supported is unlikely to change due to budgetary restrictions.

Investment in Railcars

Under Priority 3 there is currently an intervention aimed at investment in public transport services which includes investment in rail (signalling, improvement of crossings, improvement of structures, removal of speed restrictions and park and ride infrastructure). As part of this intervention it is proposed to include the purchase of railcars that will serve destinations in the BMW region in a revised Implementation Plan for this theme. This investment will respond to the increased demand for public transport services and in the region and will facilitate commuting to employment for the region's labour force. In preparing the Environmental report on the draft BMW Regional OP, it was the provision of public transport services that was taken into account, which included rolling stock such as railcars.

Inclusion of Ocean Energy theme

Currently under Priority 2, there is provision for investment in energy efficiency, renewable energy deployment (including ocean energy) and integration measures through Sustainable Energy Ireland. It is now proposed to introduce a further Implementation Plan to set out the arrangements for delivery of the ocean energy deployment theme thus incorporating this new strand of SEI's renewable energy development programme.

This involves the establishment of a grid-connected test facility at Belmullet for wave devices, based on the strategy of retaining and attracting existing device and project developers, creation of a unique pre-operational facility, and the build-up of a cluster of industry and expertise that can contribute to maximising supply chain value-added in Ireland. In addition, operation and maintenance of the existing quarter scale test site in Galway is ongoing. Contracts with ESBI and the Marine Institute are in place to support these activities, as well as interim Project Management for the Test facility.

The lack of an effective planning and permitting system for offshore renewables is a very major threat to achievement of the objectives of the Ocean Energy Programme. In order to address this, a specific Strategic Environmental Assessment for Ocean Energy in Irish waters is being undertaken and a partnership with industry, MI and the Geological Survey of Ireland, for resource measurement, assessment and evaluation is being put in place.

Increase Co-financing Rate

Finally it is proposed to seek EU Commission approval to increase the intervention aid rate from 40% to 50%. This proposal responds to the constraints on the public finances.

3. SEA SCREENING METHODOLOGY

This section introduces two complementary methodologies that can be applied to an SEA screening process. Both are applied in section 4 of this report to determine whether a full SEA is required for the proposed modifications to the BMW OP.

The first is a screening methodology based on guidance prepared by ERM Ireland, on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The second SEA screening methodology is based on the criteria contained in Schedule 1 of S.I. 435 of 2004 (SEA Regulations - please see Section 1.3 above).

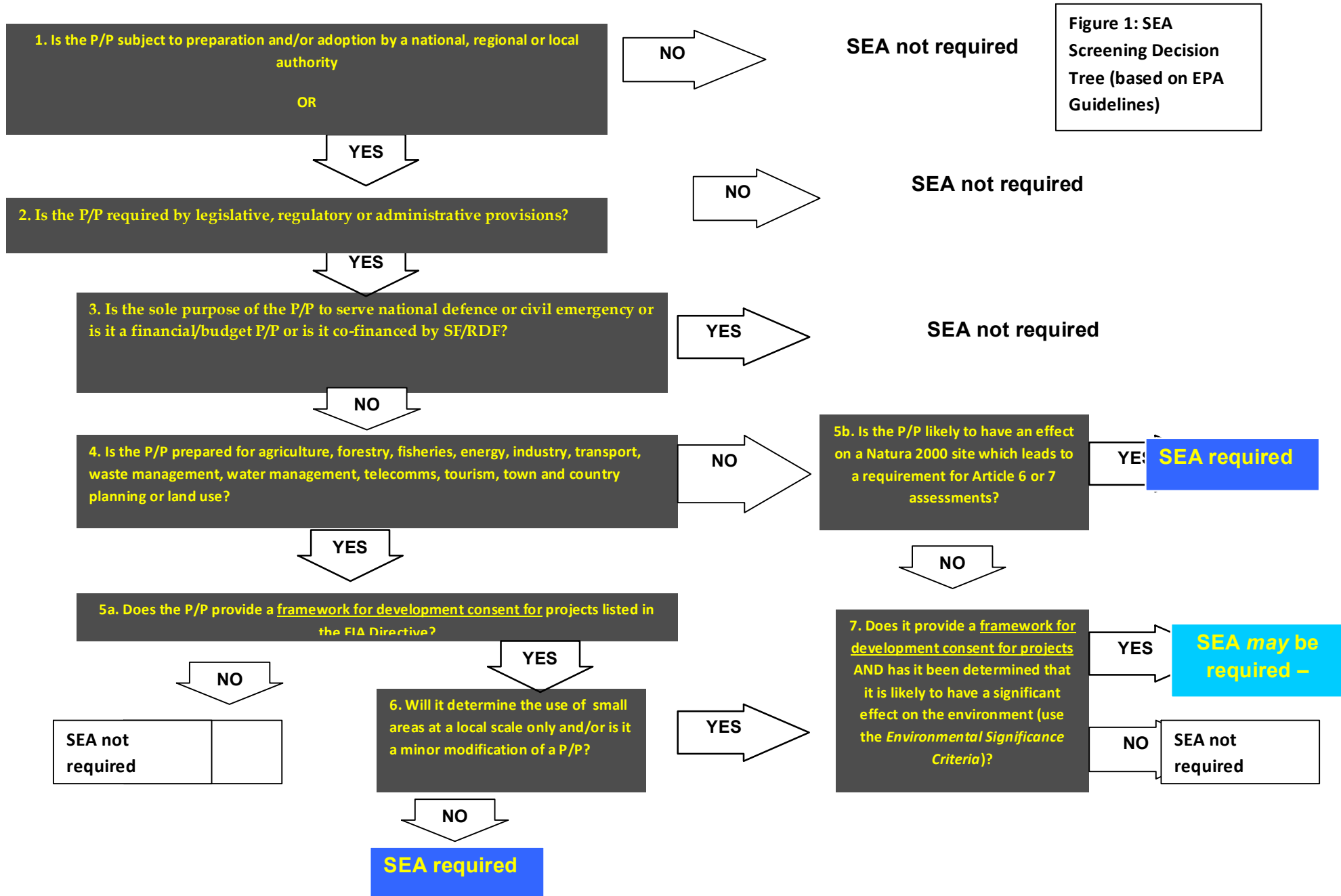
3.1 EPA GUIDELINES

In 2003, ERM Ireland was commissioned by the EPA to develop Strategic Environmental Assessment Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland. This screening methodology is based on the SEA Directive, rather than the Irish Regulations (which were not published when the EPA Guidelines were completed). The focus of the methodology is a screening flowchart, based on administrative questions regarding the nature and purpose of the plan or programme in question. The origin of these questions is the text of Articles 2 and 3 from the SEA Directive, which address the Plans & Programmes to which SEA applies.

As can be seen in *Figure 1*, there are four possible outcomes from this screening check:

- The plan or programme applies to one or more of the eleven sectors quoted in the SEA Directive and provides a framework for development consent of projects requiring EIA. **SEA is required.**
- The plan or programme will significantly affect a Natura 2000 site and therefore requires an assessment under the Habitats Directive. **SEA is required.**
- The plan or programme does not fall into any of the sectors covered by the Directive, would not significantly affect a Natura 2000 site nor does it provide a framework for development consent. It is therefore screened out by the pre-screening check and no further consideration of its possible impacts is required (i.e. **SEA not required**).
- The plan or programme is not screened out and may require more detailed checks to be undertaken to determine if SEA is required (this will apply to small-scale plans or programmes or minor modifications of P/P). This may involve the application of 'Environmental Significance Screening Criteria'.

This methodology is applied to the proposed modifications to the BMW Regional OP in section 4.1.



3.2 EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF CERTAIN PLANS AND PROGRAMMES) REGULATIONS (S.I. NO. 435 OF 2004)

The second SEA screening methodology that can be used is taken from the Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 435 of 2004.

The key to deciding if SEA is required is whether the modifications to the BMW Regional OP would be likely to have *significant effects on the environment*. Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 435 of 2004 lists criteria for determining whether a plan or programme (of modification thereto) is likely to have significant effects on the environment. The criteria are:

1. *The characteristics of the plan 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,*
 - *the relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans 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.*

If, based on the above criteria, it is considered that significant effects on the environmental are likely, full SEA is required.

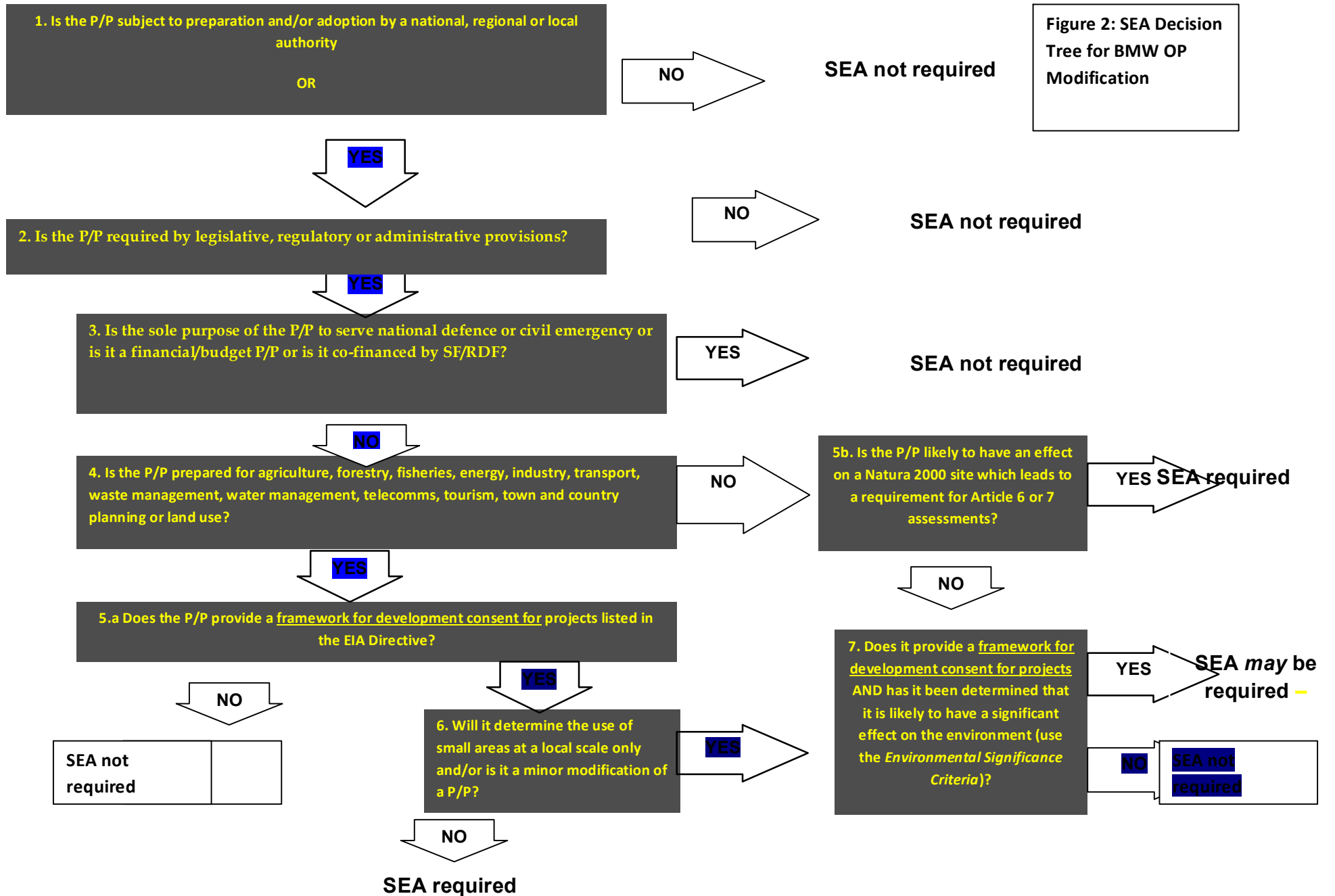
This methodology is applied to the modifications to the BMW Regional OP in section 4.2.

4. SEA SCREENING RESULTS

4.1 EPA GUIDELINES

The SEA screening check in *Figure 1* was undertaken with regards to the proposed modifications to the BMW Regional OP. The process is illustrated in *Figure 2*. Each of the ‘steps’/questions was completed, and the ‘answer’ and subsequent pathway taken is indicated by the colour dark blue in the ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answer blocks.

Figure 2: SEA Decision Tree for BMW OP Modification



Based on the EPA's SEA guidelines (*Figure 2*), a full SEA would not be required for the proposed modifications to the BMW Regional OP. The key steps/questions in *Figure 2* are questions 6 and 7.

Question 6 asks: ***will it determine the use of small areas at a local scale only and/or is it a minor modification of a plan/programme?*** This is answered **YES** because the proposed changes in the Operational Programme mainly involve changes to the financial plan or structure of the OP or inclusion of actions consistent with the existing actions, rather than the introduction of new areas of investment that were not subjected to an SEA assessment in 2006/07. Therefore, they are of a minor nature and do not impact on the overall strategic focus of the OP. Moreover they do not include the introduction of new areas of investment that were not subject to an SEA.

Question 7 asks: ***does the Plan/Programme (modification) provide a framework for development consent for projects AND has it been determined that it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment (using the Environmental Significance Criteria)?*** This is answered **NO** because although the modified OP does provide resources to enable project actions to avail of EU co-financing, it has been determined using the environmental significance criteria (as per section 4.2 below) that the modified programme does not have any significant effects on the environment, that had not already been assessed in the Environmental Report in 2007. Furthermore, the selection of locations for additional water services and rural water projects will be determined in the context of the relevant River Basin Management Plans required under the Water Framework Directive, which are subject to a full SEA process.

4.2 EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF CERTAIN PLANS AND PROGRAMMES) REGULATIONS (S.I. NO. 435 OF 2004)

The BMW Regional Assembly assessment of the potential for significant environmental effects, based on a rating scheme of low (L), medium (M) or high (H), is provided in column 3 of *Table 4.1*. This rating scheme was applied in this instance as a way of assessing the potential for significant environmental effects from a semi-quantitative perspective.

Table 4.1 Screening criteria assessment (based on Schedule 1 of S.I. 435 of 2004)

Criteria	Assessment	Potential for significant effects (L - low, M - medium, H - high)
<i>1. The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to:</i>		
the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,	The modifications to the BMW Regional OP do not specifically set the framework for projects or other activities (this is usually the role of a Development Plan). However the OP does make EU co-financed resources available in order for projects and other activities to take place. Furthermore, the selection of locations for additional water services projects will be determined in the context of the relevant River Basin Management Plans required under the Water Framework Directive.	<i>L</i>
the degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy,	The BMW Regional OP 2007-13 is a strategic document and the modifications proposed are entirely consistent with the approved strategy, objectives and proprieties of the OP. The inclusion of investment in railcars, water services and ocean energy deployment may have positive environmental effects	<i>M (positive)</i>
the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,	The modified OP does have some potential to promote sustainable development through the co-financing of additional railcars, water services and ocean energy deployment. The programme will also contribute to more balanced regional development and has the potential to stimulate economic development in a more sustainable manner.	<i>L</i>
environmental problems relevant to the plan,	The OP approved in 2007 does list a range of environmental challenges facing the region, but prioritises the issue of water quality in the region. The inclusion of water supply and treatment as eligible investment is consistent with this.	<i>L (positive)</i>

Criteria	Assessment	Potential for significant effects (L - low, M - medium, H - high)
the relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection).	The additional actions envisaged are not specifically designed to implement relevant EU environmental legislation, but all will be implemented in a manner that is consistent with and compliant with applicable EU environmental legislation e.g., the Drinking Water Directive, Water Framework Directive.	<i>L</i>

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 probability and frequency of the effects will depend on the duration of the implementation of individual projects funded arising from the modifications	<i>M</i>
the cumulative nature of the effects,	There are some potential cumulative effects arising from increased car use, but also potential cumulative positive effects arising from increased use of sustainable transport and the deployment of sustainable energy	<i>L</i>
the trans-boundary nature of the effects,	Trans-boundary effects are considered to be unlikely	<i>L</i>
the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),	It is considered that there is a very low risk to human health from the implementation of the proposed modifications	<i>L</i>
the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),	While the BMW Regional OP applies to the entire BMW region, the spatial extent of the effects from the modified Operational Programme will depend on the location of the projects that will be co-financed arising from the modification.	<i>L-M</i>
<p>the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, - intensive land-use, 	As the OP is set at a strategic level it is difficult to determine potential effects on specific areas. However, it is recognised that there is a potential for some positive and negative effects as recognised in the Environmental Report of the draft OP in 2007. Where deemed appropriate a local authority may request that an Environmental Impact Assessment be conducted prior to considering a planning application. Similarly an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive is required in Special Protection Areas or Special Areas of Conservation.	<i>L - M</i>

<p>the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.</p>	<p>As the modifications proposed are at a strategic level, it is difficult to determine potential effects on specific areas. However, it is recognised that there is a potential for some positive and negative effects as recognised in the Environmental Report of the draft OP in 2007.</p>	<p><i>L - M</i></p>
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As observed above in *Section 4.2*, the application of high, medium and low ratings represents a semi-quantitative indication of the potential for significant effects on the environment. It is important to note that there is no quantitative ‘trigger’ point in terms of the number of assessment criteria which have a “high” rating, however the cumulative effect of the ratings allow an informed judgement on whether full SEA is required.

Based on the assessment in *Table 4.1*, in which it has been judged that no high ratings have been applied, it is recommended that a full SEA is not required to be undertaken for the proposed modifications of the BMW Regional OP.

4.3 SEA SCREENING CONCLUSIONS

The two SEA screening methodologies have concluded that a full SEA is not required for the proposed modifications to the BMW Regional OP.

The proposed physical changes in the Operational Programme are of a minor nature, the changes relate primarily to a re-prioritisation of the financial plan or structure of the OP and the inclusion of actions consistent with the existing approved actions, rather than the introduction of new areas of investment that were not subjected to an SEA assessment in 2006/07.

It is considered by the BMW Regional Assembly that the environmental effects of the proposed modifications to the BMW Regional OP (additional actions and changes in the financial plan) are also minor and do not give rise to any additional significant effects on the environment over and above those assessed in the Environmental Report published in 2007 (as per Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 435 of 2004). Furthermore, any effects that may arise from the additional actions (positive and negative) have already been identified and assessed in the Environmental Report.

The following table sets out the eight proposed changes to the BMW Regional OP and the relevant finding in the scoping assessment and in the final Environmental Report. The table also includes a brief commentary on how the changes ‘fit’ with areas of intervention that were already subject to the SEA process.

Proposed Additional Actions	Relevant Finding in the Environmental Report	Commentary
Gateway/Hub Investment Fund	Urban regeneration projects will have positive effects on material assets and landscape and will benefit the local population	Scale and scope of proposed actions is consistent with that proposed in the approved OP and subjected to SEA
Include SFI Research	Research actions are not expected to have any major or minor positive or negative environmental effects	SFI research initiatives are similar in scale and scope to those proposed under the Building Research Capacity theme in the approved OP
Water Supply and Treatment	Water services interventions may result in significant positive effects on local and	Water services infrastructure investment will also have significant positive effects on

	regional biodiversity resources and water quality	local and regional biodiversity resources and water quality. Selected projects will be consistent with approved River Basin Management Plans which are being subjected to a full SEA process.
Additional Strategic Roads	Road projects will have minor adverse effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna and on air quality. Improved accessibility will benefit the population and possible effects on the landscape along the chosen routes	The inclusion of additional road projects would not alter the findings set out in the environmental report on the effects (negative and positive) of road improvements as this was based on the planned investment which is now being restored. All major road projects are subject to the provisions of the EIA Directive, which have been undertaken.
Moving environmental actions to Priority 2	No altered environmental effects	No altered environmental effects.
Railcars	Improvements in the region's public transport services will result in minor positive effects on population, air quality and material assets	The same finding applies to the provision of additional railcars
Ocean Energy Research	The promotion of sources of renewable energy will result in positive effects on air quality	The Irish Government's offshore renewable energy strategy, of which this action forms a part, is currently subject to a separate SEA process led by the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources.
Amend co-financing rate	No environmental effects	No environmental effects

Further to this, and in accordance with national and EU regulations, assessment screening under the Habitats Directive and/or under the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations will be applied to infrastructure projects, including roads, where required.

Consequently, it is the view of the Managing Authority that a full Environmental Report is not required.

This Screening Report has been submitted to the designated environmental authorities who were given an opportunity to comment on whether or not they agree with this conclusion. The designated environmental authorities are:

- Environmental Protection Agency;
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government; and
- Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

In addition, the draft Screening Report was sent to all members of the BMW Regional OP Monitoring Committee along with the revised text of the OP for approval by written procedure. Arising from this process, a suggestion was made by the DG Environment representative that a reference should be made to the fact that the river basin management plans being developed under the Water Framework Directive are being subjected to an SEA process. This has now been noted in sections 4.1 and 4.3 of this Screening Report.

Final Decision

As no adverse responses were received, it is concluded by the BMW Regional Assembly on the basis of this Screening Statement, that a full Environmental Report into the proposed amendments to the BMW Regional OP is not required..

Appendix 1: *SEA Scoping Matrix for the BMW OP(2006)*

	Biodiversity, fauna & flora	Population	Human health	Water	Air & climate	Material assets	Cultural heritage	Landscape	Interrelationships
<i>Priority 1: Innovation and the Knowledge Economy</i>									
Applied Research Enhancement, incubation facilities and related collaboration initiatives.									
Micro-enterprise innovation									
Competitive Research Funding for HEIs									
Broadband Provision		▲						?	▲/?
<i>Priority 2: Environment and Risk Prevention</i>									
Rural Water Source Protection	▲		▲	▲					▲
Village Sewerage Schemes	▲		▲	▲					▲
Renewable Energy					▲				
<i>Priority 3: Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks</i>									
Urban Regeneration		▲				▲		▲	▲

Key Linking Routes	▼	▲			▼			?	?
Public Transport		▲			▲	▲			▲
<i>Priority 4: Technical Assistance</i>									
Technical Assistance									

▲ = Major potential positive environmental effects

▲ = Minor potential positive environmental effects

? = Unknown potential environmental effects

▼ = Minor potential negative environmental effects

▼ = Major potential negative environmental effects

□ = No significant effects