



**Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**  
**Determination under Article 9(2) of the European Communities**  
**(Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes)**  
**Regulations, 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended**

**CONCERNING *OUR RURAL FUTURE* – RURAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**POLICY 2021 – 2025**

The Department of Rural and Community Development is committed to ensuring the effective implementation of its statutory and other responsibilities towards the environment and biodiversity, as well as towards achieving a climate neutral future. *Our Rural Future* – Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025 is a further articulation of the Government’s commitment to sustainable rural development.

In accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (hereafter ‘the SEA Directive’)<sup>1</sup> “[a]n environmental assessment, in accordance with Articles 4 to 9, shall be carried out for plans and programmes referred to in paragraphs 2 to 4 which are likely to have significant environmental effects.”<sup>2</sup> Section 9 (4) of SI No. 435/2004 requires the screening of individual plans or programmes, based on the criteria in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, which will support a determination as to whether or not significant effects on the environment would be likely to arise. This Determination is prepared to those ends.

This Determination is made following consideration of the information contained in the SEA Pre-Screening Report (attached, Appendix 1). Pursuant to that analysis and an evaluation of

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 3.1

the relevant information, including in particular, the object and purpose of the proposed Rural Development Policy and the nature of its Measures, the Minister is satisfied and agrees that the recommendation of the SEA Screening Report that, whilst there is a possibility that the proposed Rural Development Policy could impact upon environment, appropriate safeguards, mechanisms and conditions have been designed into the Policy to the extent that the Policy is not likely to have significant environmental effects for the purposes of Section 9 (4) of SI No. 435/2004.

*Our Rural Future* screens out on two specific grounds: 1) it is not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions and 2) it does not create a framework for development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive.

Additionally, in many cases Measures or their frameworks for delivery have already been subject to SEA, such assessments are foreseen, or are already underway. Other Measures will, in due course, be subject to Screening for SEA based on detailed operational plans and programmes based on accurate geographic information which is currently unavailable. Individual policies, strategies and plans for, or related to, the implementation of any Policy Measure contained in *Our Rural Future* must be considered on their own merits under the SEA process at the appropriate level of governance control.

The Policy, through an explicit Environmental Commitment, which will assist in guiding oversight mechanisms, emphasises any Measures giving rise to, or potentially giving rise to environmental impacts will be subject to screening and further consideration under SEA, if not already complete. It would therefore be duplicative or ineffective to pursue SEA at the level of *Our Rural Future*, hence SEA is deemed not to be required for *Our Rural Future* – Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025.

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, having carefully considered the information in the SEA Pre-Screening Report, and having regard to the advice of Officials, agrees with and adopts its reasoning and conclusions. The Minister determines, pursuant to Article 9(2) of S.I. 435 of 2004, as amended, that SEA is not required at the level of *Our Rural Future* – Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather Humphreys". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Heather Humphreys, TD**  
**Minister for Rural and Community Development**  
**22/03/2021**