



CONSIDERATION OF THE NEED FOR A REVISED STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR 2014UK16RFOP003

1. Directive 2001/42/EC sets out the requirements for assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (also known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA Directive). Article 3(3) provides that minor modifications to plans and programmes subject to the scope of the Directive shall require an environmental assessment only where Member States determine that they are likely to have significant environmental effects ("screening" procedure).
2. Therefore, in the process of amending Operational Programmes, regions are required to review whether a full update of the SEA is required. Where changes made to a Programme are expected to have significant environmental impacts, regions would require a full update to the SEA. Where the changes are not expected to have significant impacts, this is not required; however regions need to set out the reasons why they do not require a full update.
3. By written procedure, the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) agreed that the Managing Authority should seek a modification to the Northern Ireland Investment for Growth and Jobs Operational Programme (OP) in view of the change to activity proposed under Priority Axis 3 – Low Carbon and a number of changes in terms of indicators and financial tables to take

account of additional finances allocated to the Programme. The Managing Authority has concluded that changes to indicators and the additional financial allocation to Financial Instruments represent minor adjustments only that have no capacity to impact on the original SEA assessment.

4. The original Operational Programme development involved a full screening exercise. This process and the conclusions were agreed by the responsible environmental authority – the Department of the Environment for NI (now the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)). The reports are published in full at pages 297 and 389 at [http://www.jobsandgrowthni.gov.uk/downloads/Investment for Growth and Jobs Operational Programme - Appendices.pdf](http://www.jobsandgrowthni.gov.uk/downloads/Investment%20for%20Growth%20and%20Jobs%20Operational%20Programme%20-%20Appendices.pdf)
5. For the modification of the Operational Programme, the Managing Authority, in accordance with Article 3 (5) and the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive has examined the proposed changes and confirms that a revision of the SEA report is not required. This opinion has also been confirmed by the NI Environment Agency and the specific details are outlined below.

Belfast Rapid Transit System (BRT) - Smart Ticketing

6. The premise of a rapid transit system is to increase the use of public transport and improve journey times through a number of actions including the introduction of bespoke traffic lanes and improved access/egress to the vehicles. The current public transport provision involves conventional vehicles which have a single point of access/egress to an on-board ticket validation system operated by the vehicles operative.

7. This results in passengers wishing to board the vehicle having to allow other passengers to alight before boarding the vehicles which results in, particularly at peak times, queues at stops and delays to the service.
8. The introduction of off board ticketing will make a significant contribution to increasing public transport usage and improving journey times by a predicted 25-30% and journey times are a major factor in encouraging private car users to switch to Public transport for travel to, from and within the city. A real-time information system will also be installed both on vehicle and at all stops along the BRT route.
9. One of the key themes of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) is in relation to Transport and it specifically focuses on greenhouse gas emissions. Clearly this project will help in reducing these emissions as well as noise and pollution levels, as it will encourage the public to travel by bus thereby reducing use of the car.
10. Given the reasons as outlined above, the Managing Authority affirms that as this project is about increasing the use of public transport, a revised Environmental Impact Assessment is not therefore required. This opinion has also been confirmed by the NI Environment Agency.

Belfast Rapid Transit System – Energy Efficient Vehicle Depot

11. The existing Public Service Vehicle (PSV) depot is not suitable for operating a modern and improved transport system and the current location is not suitable as it is unable to accommodate the technological requirements for the hybrid vehicles to be used on the BRT routes.

12. There are also a number of economic and efficiency issues including poor thermal performance; energy inefficiency – lighting and heating; asbestos construction materials; poor condition of building fabric and degradation of roof-light fabric. A suitable depot cannot be developed on the current site.

13. A new brown field site within the Belfast Harbour Estate has been identified on which a new bespoke depot can be developed. This presents the opportunity to develop a depot providing the necessary technological requirements and applying the most up to date energy efficient technologies. The Managing Authority can also confirm that this is not a Natura 2000 and no Natura 2000 site is affected.

14. To that end the depot will be developed toward the achievement of BREEAM excellence standard and will incorporate a number of environmentally innovative and energy efficient technologies including; Photo Voltaic System; Solar Hot Water; Rain Water Harvesting; Enhanced Thermal Envelope; LED Lighting; Maximisation of Natural Light; Natural Ventilation; and Building Energy Management System.

15. Given the reasons as outlined above, we believe that as this project is the replacement of an existing inefficient facility a revised Environmental Impact Assessment is not therefore required. This opinion has been confirmed by the NI Environment Agency.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Thermal Improvement Programme for Non-Traditional Housing Stock

16. There is a pressing need to address the poor energy efficiency of much of the social housing stock in Northern Ireland in order to contribute to energy efficiency and fuel poverty targets. A particular issue is that 42% of households in Northern Ireland suffer from fuel poverty.

17. Social housing in NI comprises Tower Blocks and double and single-level dwellings. The ERDF support proposed involves a targeted capital investment programme to improve insulation in properties identified as having a poor energy efficiency rating (SAP).

18. These works will reduce residents' use of their heating systems resulting in a corresponding reduction in energy use and CO2 emissions.

19. The Managing Authority is content that the Thermal Improvement Programme is not likely to have significant environmental effects therefore a revision of the SEA is not required. This opinion has also been confirmed by the NI Environment Agency.

20. This decision will be published on the Programme website at: www.jobsandgrowthni.gov.uk

DfE Managing Authority July 2017