



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Summary of Responses to Consultation on SEA Scoping Report of the emerging Draft Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland

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# 1 Introduction

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) is currently preparing a Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland. This Policy Statement seeks to underline the importance of mineral exploration and mining and the role that they can play in Ireland's and the European Union's transition to the circular economy and net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, supporting primary and secondary economic activity and associated jobs creation and progressing many of our national, European, and international policies and commitments

As part of this process, the emerging draft Policy Statement was screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (as amended). On 24 May 2021, the SEA Scoping Report was published on gov.ie.

A total of **21** submissions were received as part of this consultation representing public bodies, industry bodies, eNGOs and individuals. Each of these submissions is published on the consultation webpage. <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/ec242-public-consultation-on-scoping-report-for-the-environmental-assessment-of-the-emerging-draft-policy-statement-on-mineral-exploration-and-mining-in-ireland/>

## 2 Summary of Responses to Consultation

As part of this consultation, four questions were posed on the SEA Scoping Report. A summary of the responses to these questions is presented here. These responses will inform the scope of the Environmental Assessment.

### 2.1 Question 1. Based on the plans, policies and programmes outlined in the SEA Scoping Report, are there any other key relevant international, national or regional plans, policies or programmes that should be considered in the SEA Environmental Report on the Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining?

- Additional national and European legislation, regulation, plans, policies, strategies and guidelines were identified by respondents
- Transboundary effect and Northern Ireland legislation, plans, policies
- Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)
- Sustainability of materials, landscape, fossil fuel demand for mining, ground stability
- Importance of exploring and developing Irish indigenous raw materials

### 2.2 Question 2. Based on the likely significant impacts outlined above, are there any other effects or impacts that should be considered in the SEA Environmental Report on the Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining?

- Additional impacts identified or further emphasised by organisation, including effects on marine waters / environment, commercial sea fishing activities, air quality, noise, material assets, water quality
- Use of datasets
- Transboundary effects of impacts on marine waters, landscape, habitats, drinking water, fisheries
- Best practice exploration and mining methodologies for positive effects
- Separation of likely significant impacts mineral exploration and mining due to different spatial and temporal scale of activities

- Role of Irish minerals sector in transition to carbon-neutral future
- Impacts on economy, employment
- Impacts on air quality, finite resources
- Carbon footprint/greenhouse gas emissions associated with exploration and mining activities.

### **2.3 Question 3. Do you have any comments regarding the draft SEA Objectives presented in the Scoping Report?**

- Additional aspects provided for SEA Objectives, such as ecological corridors, post mine closure and ongoing environmental management, water and air quality, promote recycled minerals, support national climate commitments
- Inclusion of key soil functions and threats, drinking water sources
- Welcome recognition for the need to consider transboundary issues for potential impact on the natural environment
- Inclusion and expansion on particular marine environment aspects, particularly transboundary effects
- Inclusion of mined material in protecting human health, critical supply of minerals and metals to the Irish economy, importance of “social licence”
- High risk of mineral exploration and funding could negatively impact resources discovery

### **2.4 Question 4. Do you have any suggestions or comments in relation to the overall approach to alternatives?**

- Information and responses provided by multiple respondents on the approach to alternatives and consideration of the alternatives
- Transboundary effects and issues, such as on marine habitats, noise
- Inclusion of EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive descriptors not addressed by the Water Framework Directive
- Inclusion of Ireland’s UNESCO Global Geopark Programmes
- Consideration of action areas approach rather than a whole country approach for Alternative Type “Value and Effects Oriented”

- EU policies in relation to responsible sourcing of raw materials and implications for Member States
- Impacts on employment opportunities in Midland's Region, responsible and local sourcing of raw materials, carbon footprint from outsourcing raw material requirements
- Mineral exploration as a source of information on environment (subsurface) and uses of this knowledge for other sectors
- Social Impact Assessment

## **2.5 Summary of other topics**

A summary of topics received as part of this public consultation but which may not have been captured by the questions posed within the SEA Scoping Report are presented below. This is not a definitive list, but the information provided in the submissions received as part of this consultation will inform the draft Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland, SEA Environmental Report and AA Natura Impact Statement.

- Marine Environment, marine sand and gravel, deep sea mining
- Transboundary effects
- Raw materials for climate action, green economy, renewable technology
- Other uses of metals and minerals which are necessary for societal needs beyond critical raw materials and renewable technologies.
- Mineral exploration and mining should be considered separately
- Local and responsible mining
- Informed decision making, public consultation
- Community, Public awareness and engagement
- Conservation of Ireland's landscape, finite resources
- Historic mine sites
- Employment, economy, skills, education
- Mine closure, remediation, monitoring
- Uranium ban, excluded areas, mineral prioritisations

Geothermal Energy was referred to in some submissions. Although not within the scope of this Policy Statement, the Department is currently preparing a draft Policy Statement on Geothermal Energy, which is planned to go for public consultation by end of 2021.

### **3 Next Stage of Public Consultation**

The submissions received as part of this SEA Scoping consultation have been reviewed and will inform the preparation of

- An Environmental Report (ER) for the SEA process,
- A draft Natura Impact Statement (NIS) for the AA process and
- DECC will integrate the SEA/AA findings into a draft Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland.

When these three documents are prepared, they will be published for public consultation on [gov.ie](http://gov.ie).