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The National Roads Authority - an Overview of the Authority's Roles and Functions.

The National Road Needs Study.

National Roads Improvement Programme and the National Development Plan 2000 - 2006.

Compulsory Purchase Order Procedures and Compensation.

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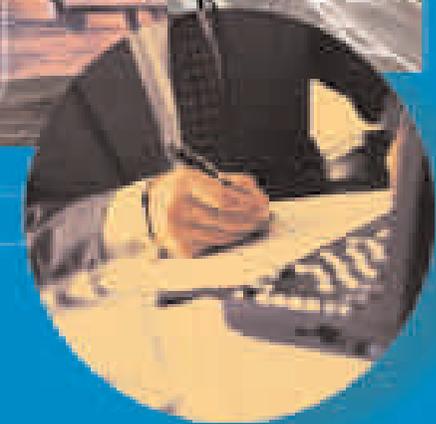
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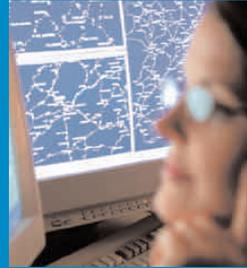
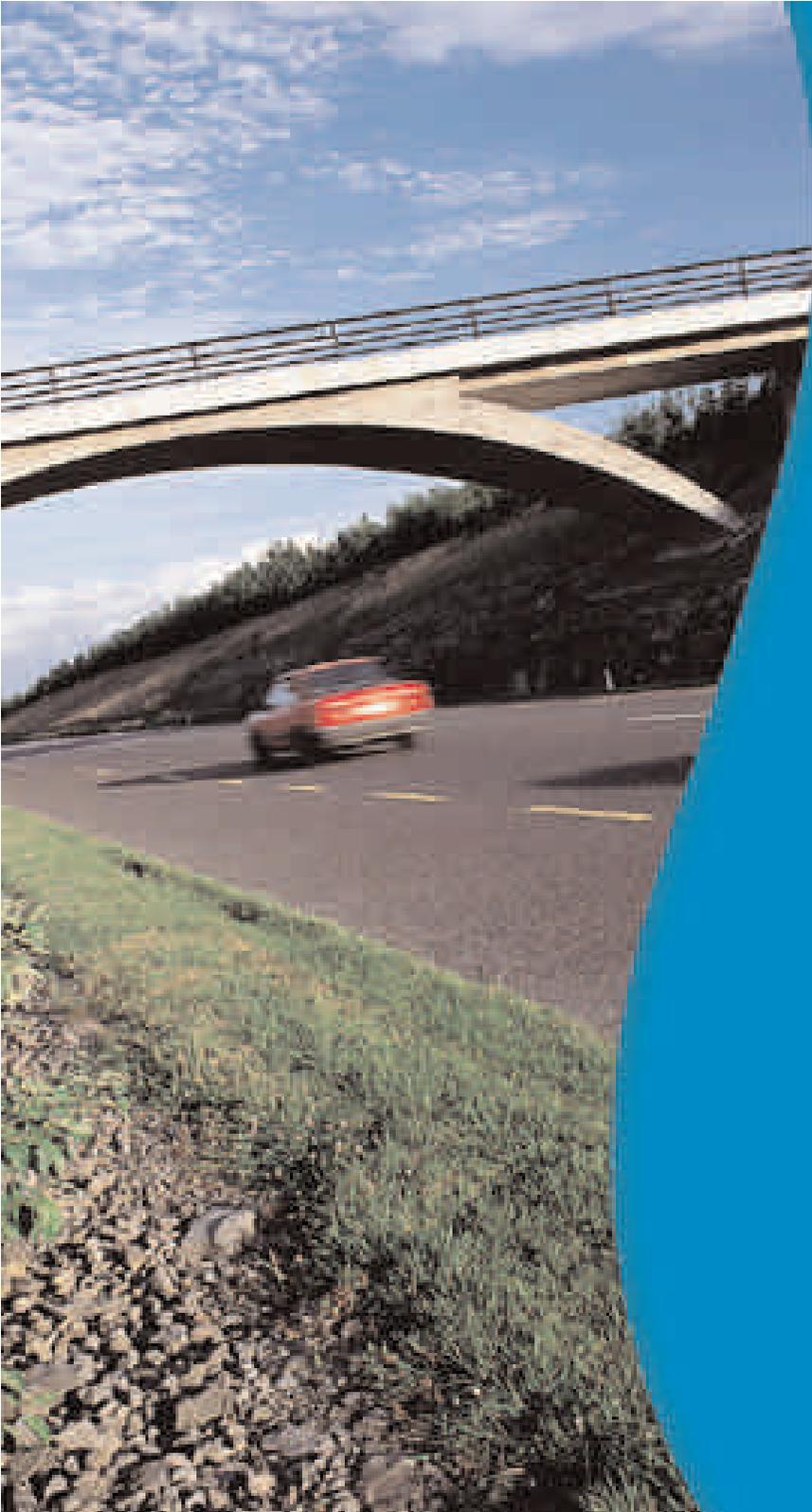
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NRA
National Roads Authority
An tÚdarás um Bóithre Náisiúnta

The National Roads Authority – *Going Places* **National Road Project Planning**



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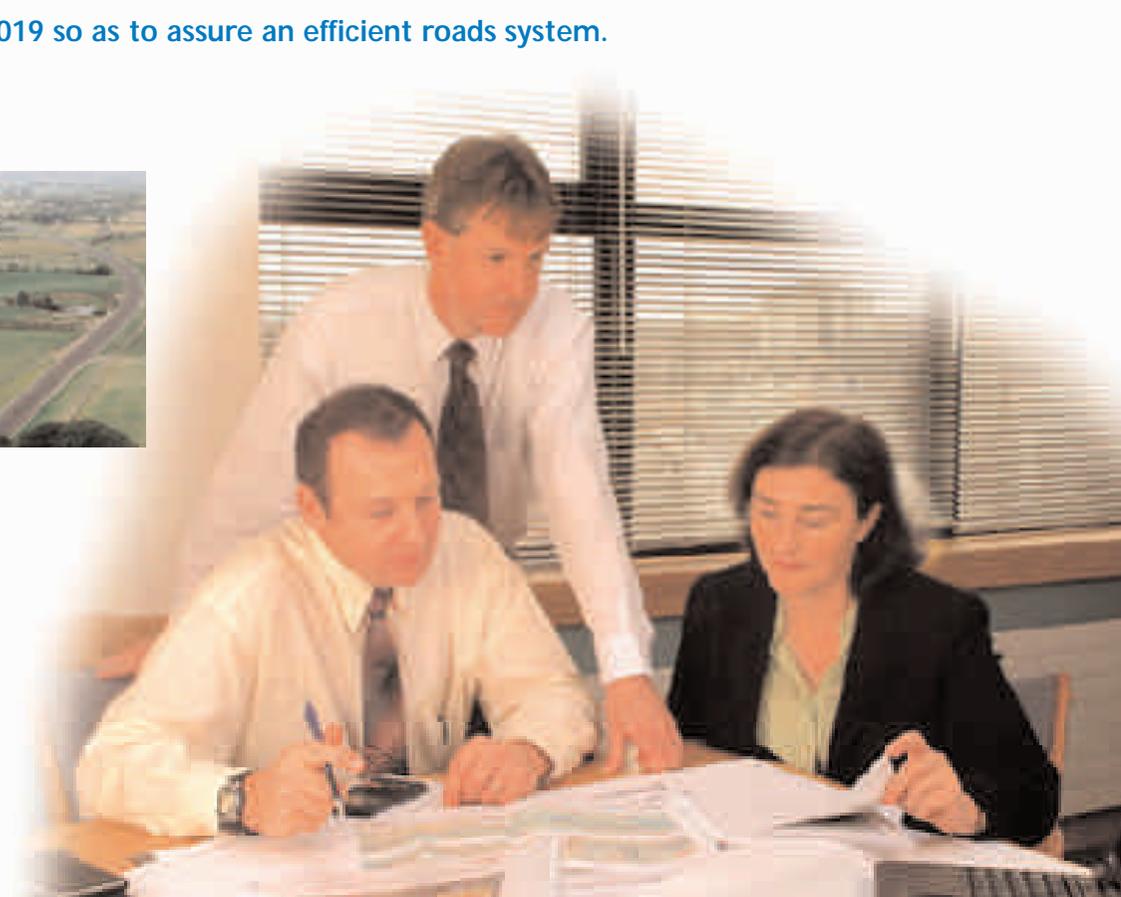


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National Road Project Planning

There are over 5,400km of national roads in Ireland. How was it determined which sections of road were most in need of improvement?

The National Road Needs Study (1998) assessed the adequacy and performance of the network on the basis of the ability of roads to deliver a level of service equivalent to an average inter-urban journey speed of at least 80 kph (50mph) and identified improvements needed up to 2019 so as to assure an efficient roads system.



What impact did the National Road Needs Study have in the formulation of policy for investment in the national road network under the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006?

The findings of the National Road Needs Study were taken into account by Government when determining the overall transport policy provisions of the National Development Plan (NDP), 2000-2006, and the future role to be played by the network of national roads as part of an integrated national transport strategy. The policy to be pursued for national roads is elaborated upon in the Economic and Social Infrastructure Operational Programme, 2000 - 2006.

Who plans and designs national road projects?

Overall responsibility for the planning and supervision of construction and maintenance works on national roads lies with the N.R.A. Priorities within the roads improvement programme are determined by the Authority taking account of the overall policy for national roads as decided by Government. Local authorities, in their role as statutory road authorities, undertake the detailed planning of individual road projects and are responsible for compliance with legal requirements and procedures as regards land acquisition and environmental impact assessments. In recent years, to bring greater efficiency to the process, the Authority, in conjunction with local authorities, has promoted the establishment of National Road Regional Design Offices to co-ordinate the planning and delivery of road projects crossing administrative county boundaries.

What are the procedures involved in the planning, design and implementation of individual national road improvement projects?

The procedures followed by the National Roads Authority and local authorities in the planning, design and implementation of road schemes are specified in the Roads Act, 1993, as amended by the Planning and Development Act, 2000, and in the Authority's National Roads Project Management Guidelines.

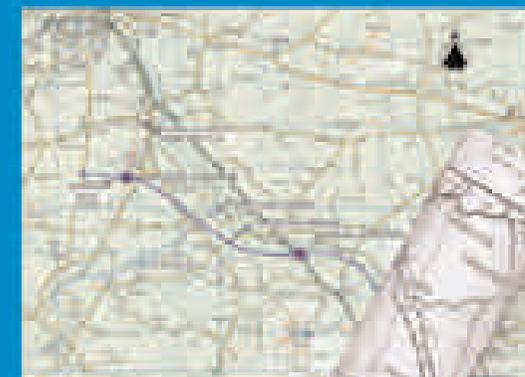
A key objective of the Guidelines is to ensure the efficient delivery of the national roads programme in a manner which minimises adverse human and environmental effects, while maximising the benefits of the new road infrastructure and respecting all applicable legislation. An important element of the Guidelines is the structuring of major projects into the following main development phases:

Phase 1 - Initial Project Planning.

Planning for national road projects takes place in the context of the Government's objectives for investment in road infrastructure. Initially the need for a scheme is agreed between the local authority and the NRA. A project brief is then drawn up and consultants are appointed.

Phase 2 - Constraints Study.

During the early stages of the planning of a national road project, information is gathered in relation to various constraints that exist which could affect the design and location of the scheme. These include physical, (e.g. mountains, rivers, lakes), legal and environmental constraints.



Is the public consulted about the project at this stage?

Yes. Public consultation is a vitally important and integral part of the process and is extensively catered for during the various Phases of major project planning. Indeed, public consultation is, as a matter of practice, pursued much earlier than required by the Roads Act. The Act only provides for formal public consultation when a Compulsory Purchase Order has been made and the Environmental Impact Statement published, i.e. when the specific route proposed to be constructed has been determined.

The public consultation process is intended to inform the general public, and in particular those who might possibly be directly affected, about the road scheme proposal, the manner by which the eventual route will be selected and the considerations that will inform this choice, i.e. environmental, engineering, financial and traffic patterns. This process also provides an opportunity for the public to highlight aspects of concern or special interest to be taken into account by local authorities and their consultants in advancing the planning and design of the road scheme proposal.

What happens at the first round of public information sessions?

Typically, a large-scale map of the Study Area is displayed at the initial public information sessions. Information leaflets/brochures may be made available. Local authority personnel and their consultants will be in attendance to discuss, in general terms at this preliminary planning stage, all aspects of the project and to answer various questions from the general public.

What happens next?

Following this process, surveys are carried out to identify the potential constraints in greater detail. Based on this and any issues raised from public submissions, a Constraints Study Report is prepared to better inform the route selection process.

Every effort is made to devise a route that avoids direct impact on homes and such sites and areas. Where this is not possible, steps are taken to mitigate the effects.

What is the purpose of the second round of public consultation?

It is usual at the first round of public information sessions for the public to be presented with a study area without route corridor options. This process culminates with a published Constraints Report based on the consultants research and public submissions. The second round of public consultation is the logical next interaction with the public where the local authority and its consultants can present the possible route corridor options that have emerged following the identification of constraints and follow-on analysis. The public is again invited to comment on the work-to-date and to make the consultants aware of any local issues that may not have been taken into account in the corridor identification process.

What happens after the second public consultation process is complete?

The consultant evaluates the submissions and comments from the public and adds any new information, gathered from this process, to the body of knowledge previously known about the various corridor options. The options are then further evaluated and reassessed and the working document leading to the Route Corridor Selection Report is finalised. Once this document is complete the consultant will recommend the preferred route corridor option and set out the basis for the recommendation.

The Final Route Selection Corridor Report is published following approval of the NRA. At this stage the adopted route corridor is announced and presented to the public.

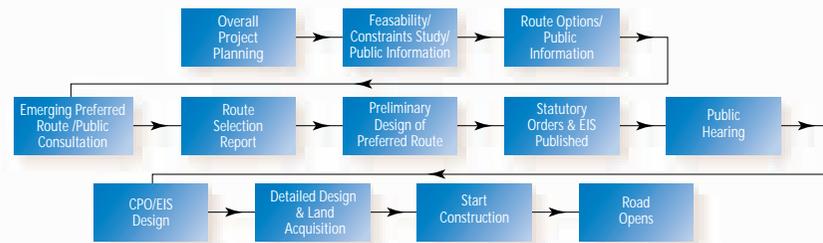
What happens next?

After the approval of the Corridor Selection Report, the local authority applies to the National Roads Authority for sanction to take the selected route corridor forward for detailed planning, for preparation of the EIS and to make the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)/Motorway Scheme in accordance with statutory procedures.

It is at this stage that the detailed route alignment design is progressed within the selected route corridor. Meetings with impacted landowners are then conducted where every effort is made through dialogue to minimise impacts on property.

Phase 4 - Preliminary Design & Statutory Procedures.

Phase 4 involves preparing a preliminary design for the scheme and the determination of more precise land acquisition requirements. It is only at this stage that a clearer picture begins to emerge as to the location of the route and road characteristics such as vertical and horizontal alignments, as well as the specific impacts on individual landholdings and residences. It is during this Phase that the CPO/Motorway Scheme is made to acquire lands/property necessary for the project.



Phase 3 - Route Corridor Selection.

The initial assessment work carried out at Phase 2 is used to define the broad route corridor alternatives which can be some hundreds of metres wide. These are subject to evaluation with the aim of recommending a particular solution. The corridor selection process involves traffic surveys, identification and investigation of possible options, impacts on land holdings/severance, broad assessment of environmental impacts for each option, and the preparation of a budget/cost estimate.

The identification of environmental impacts will include assessment of potential impacts on local communities, homes and farms, archaeology/heritage, flora and fauna, surface water and groundwater. Particular account will be taken of the presence of designated sites under European Directives and national legislation, including heritage areas and Special Areas of Conservation.





How are affected property/land owners and the general public notified that a CPO/Motorway Scheme has been made?

In accordance with the Roads Act, 1993 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act, 2000), prior to the submission of a CPO/Motorway Scheme to An Bord Pleanála, the local authority must inform the public through appropriate notices in newspapers circulating in the area that a scheme has been made, indicating the arrangements for inspection of the scheme by the public and the submission of objections to An Bord Pleanála. In addition, the local authority must directly notify every landowner and occupier whose property is listed in the CPO/Motorway Scheme.

What steps are taken to assess the potential impacts of a project on the environment and how are these issues taken into account in the design of the scheme?

As part of the statutory procedures governing the development of a road scheme, the local authority is obliged to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This is a description of the likely effects on the environment of the proposed road development.

The preparation of the EIS in respect of the selected route is undertaken by the local authority in parallel with the preliminary design work. As environmental impacts are identified, the necessary changes/ ameliorative measures can be incorporated into the scheme design. The EIS will identify, among other things, potential impacts on:

- people and the natural and built environment;
- landscape and visual;
- habitats and ecology;
- archaeology;
- air quality;
- noise;
- water quality, fisheries, and groundwater;
- severance of agricultural land, and
- the inter-relationship between the foregoing.

The EIS must be submitted to An Bord Pleanála for assessment as part of the Board's consideration of the road proposal.

Not all projects fall into the above categories. What happens if a formal EIS is not required by law?

Some national road projects, by virtue of their relatively small size location and absence of significant environmental effects, fall outside the thresholds set in the EIA Directive and other relevant considerations that would require the preparation of a formal EIS. The NRA generally requires local authorities to prepare environmental reports in respect of such projects so as to better inform the route selection process and the identification of environmental impact mitigation measures. These reports will be included as appendices to the Preliminary Design Report and may be viewed by interested members of the public and commented upon when such reports are completed.

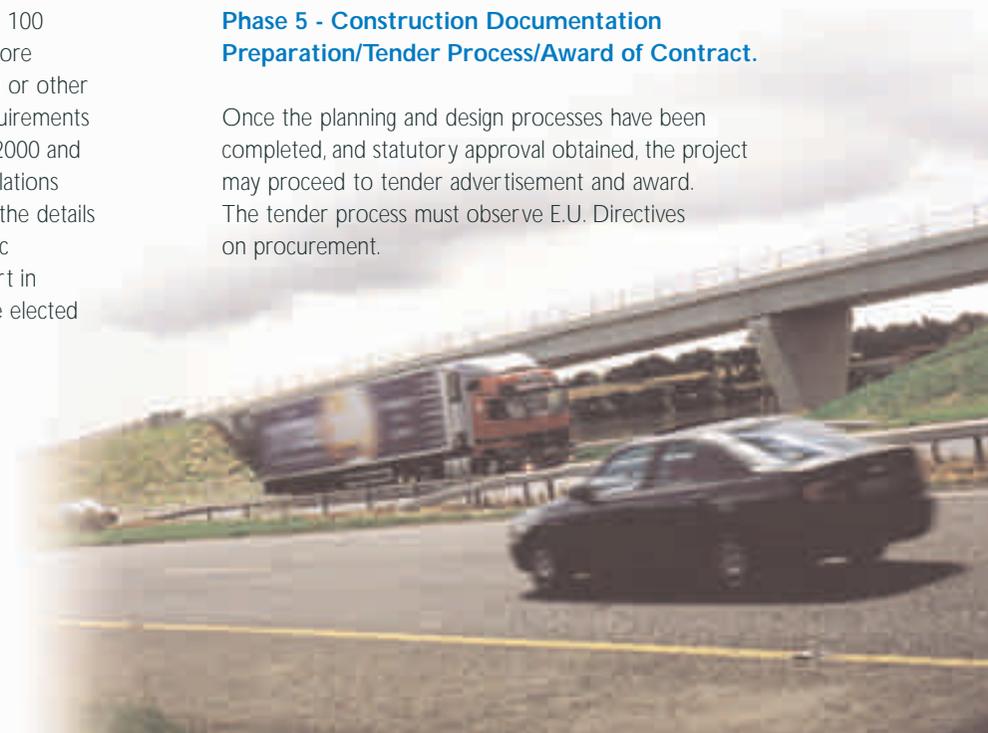
In cases where a proposed road development is 100 metres or more in an urban area and 1km or more in a rural area and does not reach the threshold or other considerations requiring an EIS, the planning requirements of Part XI of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 and Part 8 of 2001 Planning and Development Regulations apply. These require the local authority to make the details of the proposed development available for public inspection and comment and to prepare a report in relation to the proposal for consideration by the elected members of the local authority.

Does the N.R.A. have the final say as to whether a road scheme proceeds to construction?

No. An Bord Pleanála has the final say as to whether or not a national road project may proceed. The Board, before deciding on a Motorway Scheme or a CPO which has been the subject of objections, will arrange for an oral hearing to be held. The oral hearing may also hear evidence on the likely effects on the environment of the proposed road development. An Bord Pleanála having fully considered the EIS and any objections received, and the report of the Inspector conducting the oral hearing, may approve a proposed road development, with or without modifications, or it may refuse to approve it. The decision must be publicised.

Phase 5 - Construction Documentation Preparation/Tender Process/Award of Contract.

Once the planning and design processes have been completed, and statutory approval obtained, the project may proceed to tender advertisement and award. The tender process must observe E.U. Directives on procurement.



What happens if my property is severed or access is cut off?

Every effort is made during the planning process to minimise the possible effects of the project on individuals and communities. Where it proves impossible to avoid severance of holdings or existing local roads, alternative connections and means of access, including, where appropriate, cattle underpasses, will be provided.

A comprehensive scheme of accommodation works will be discussed and agreed between the local authority and affected landowners and their advisers to mitigate the effects of the project on their holdings.

What steps are taken to reduce environmental impacts of new road projects?

Extensive landscaping is a standard feature of major road projects aimed at integrating them visually and physically into the countryside. An estimated 1.5 million trees and shrubs are planted annually along national roads. For example, landscaping for Balbriggan By-Pass, which was opened in 1998, involved the planting of over 600,000 trees and shrubs. Plantings will increase as additional and larger projects are completed under the NDP.

Special measures are taken to cater for wildlife, availing, as appropriate, of expert advice. Badger Watch Ireland and the Department of Zoology, UCD, were consulted as to how best to deal with and protect a badger sett discovered on the line of the Balbriggan By-pass. Underpasses for wildlife are also provided, where appropriate, on major projects.

The construction of road projects can have considerable archaeological implications. How are these addressed?

A Code of Practice on Archaeology and the National Roads Programme was agreed in 2000 between the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and the National Roads Authority.

The Code specifies agreed actions to be undertaken by both sides. For the Authority's part, the principal action is to appoint, or ensure the appointment of, project archaeologists to oversee the smooth running of the archaeological elements of road projects. Two archaeologists have been appointed to the Authority's Dublin office, while one or more archaeologists have been assigned to each of the eleven local authority National Road Regional Design Offices throughout the country.

The Authority is providing substantial funding for archaeological investigations as part of the initial planning and road scheme route selection processes and for archaeological excavations prior to commencement of construction.

The new Code will improve the manner in which archaeological related works are undertaken and managed. It will assist the carrying out of development in a sustainable way, ensuring that our archaeological heritage is identified and preserved to the extent possible, while at the same time meeting specific target dates for the completion of major road schemes. Ultimately the local community and the nation as a whole will benefit by way of increased knowledge and understanding of our past history and heritage, while at the same time facilitating the provision of a safer and more efficient network of national roads.



Where can I find more information on the National Road Needs Study?

Further information in relation to the National Road Needs Study is available in a separate Booklet as part of this series. Copies of the Study may be purchased by contacting the Authority's Publications Unit at (01) 660 2511.

Where can I find more information on the national road objectives of the National Development Plan and the Economic and Social Infrastructure Operational Programme, 2000 – 2006?

Information on the national road objectives of the NDP are provided in a separate Booklet. Copies of the Operational Programme or indeed of the entire Plan, may be purchased from the Government Publications Sales Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (Tel. 01 – 647 6834).