

Assessment

At this stage, significant environmental effects are predicted and evaluated.

- Plans or programmes may be predicted to be negative, positive, uncertain or neutral effects.
- Their evaluation will address issues such as reversibility or irreversibility of effects, risks, duration (permanent, temporary, long-term, short-term and medium-term) and cumulative (direct, indirect, secondary and synergistic).
- Mitigation measures make recommendations to avoid, reduce, address, and compensate significant effects. They suggest replacing, modifying or including additional statements in the documents.
- A monitoring report would normally be integrated into the adopted plan to constantly monitor the significant effects.

Consultation

SEA requires consultations with Consultation Authorities and stakeholders at varying degrees throughout the entire process. The statutory Consultation Authorities include Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Historic Scotland (HS).

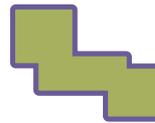
What are the implications?

Among other things Responsible Authorities may have to:-

- Carry out SEA for plans or programmes they initiate.
- Act as consultees for other authorities' SEA;
- Provide baseline information for the SEA process;
- Monitor significant impacts identified in plans or programmes;
- Ensure quality assurance in the SEA process;
- Commit their time, talents (expertise) and treasure (resources) to training and the SEA process.

Support and resources

The SEA Steering Group has identified the following three routes:- (i) using external consultants, (ii) doing SEA in house and (iii) combining (i) and (ii). Resources available include in-house training, SEA templates, SEA case studies and practical support. Although the Steering Group recommends option (ii) above, the choice of the preferred route is left to each Service or community partners.



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Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

From 21 July 2004, all public bodies are required to undertake SEA for certain plans or programmes. This leaflet explains the process to help the understanding of the law and promote engagement in the process. The process is regulated by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004 and the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

What is SEA?

SEA is the environmental assessment of strategies, policies, plans and programmes. Other assessments include environmental appraisal, sustainability appraisal and strategic sustainability assessment. SEA is:

- Preparing an environmental report on the likely significant effects of the draft plan or programme;
- Carrying out consultation on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report;
- Taking into account the environmental report and the results of the consultation in decision-making and
- Providing information when the draft plan or programmes is adopted showing how the results of the SEA have been taken into account.

Why is SEA necessary?

SEA is necessary because it seeks to:

- Address the limitations of project EIA.
- Address the effects of policies, plans and programmes on the environment,
- Integrate the environment and sustainable development into planning processes,
- Provide high protection to the environment,
- Promote sustainable development and
- Promote a more open, transparent and evidenced-based planning culture.

Who should carry out SEA?

Responsible authorities (RA) should undertake SEA. They are:

- Persons, bodies or office holders exercising functions of a public character such as Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council or Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership.

- The Scottish Ministers, Parliament, Parliament Corporate Body & Non-ministerial office holders.
- Scottish public authorities with mixed functions, or no reserved functions, or individuals and bodies that the Scottish Ministers may specify by an order such as Scottish Enterprise Grampian.

What are the processes of SEA?

SEA processes include the following stages:

- Making a screening determination,
- Writing a Scoping Report,
- Preparing an Environmental Report,
- Assessing (including Predicting, Evaluating, Mitigating and Monitoring),
- Conducting consultations and
- Dealing with adoption and post-adoption issues.

Screening

This process helps to identify the plans or programmes that require SEA.

- Two conditions without which SEA will not be undertaken are as follows:
 - Plans or programmes must be prepared by or for responsible authorities.
 - Plans or programmes must be formally required
- Two mandatory requirements for SEA include the following:
 - Plans or programmes must be prepared for agriculture, fisheries, forestry, energy, industry, telecommunications, transport, tourism, town and country planning, waste management and water management; and also set the framework for project EIA.
 - Plans or programmes determined to require an assessment under Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.



- Two types of plans or programmes, for which SEA is not normally required, will require SEA if they are likely to have significant environmental effects.
 - Plans or programmes that determine the use of small areas at the a local level.
 - Minor modifications to plans or programmes.
- Two other types of plans or programmes outwith the above categories but likely to have significant environmental effects.
 - Plans or programmes that set the framework for future development consents.
 - Plans or programmes that neither relate to individual schools, nor exempted from the process; and which require pre-screening.

Scoping

This is the process by which details to be included in the environmental report are determined. The following issues may be covered at this stage: -

- Baseline data relevant to the report.
- Other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives.
- Environmental problems and issues in the area.
- SEA objectives, indicators and targets.
- How the above issues add value to each other.
- Assessment methods.
- The framework for mitigating and monitoring significant effects.
- The relevant SEA topics/issues such as air, biodiversity and soil.
- Possible framework for alternatives/options.

