Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Lewis Hurley

What is SEA?

- Environmental assessment process set by the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC
- Implemented through the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005
- Assessment of plans, programmes and strategies (Incorporates assessment of policies)
- Assess proposed options and the <u>reasonable alternatives</u> to these.
- Considers cumulative effects

The SEA Directive

- All plans and programmes prepared for:

Agriculture **Forestry** **Fisheries** **Energy** **Industry** **Transport**

Waste management **Water management** **Tele-communications** **Tourism** **Town and country planning / land use**

- <u>AND</u> which set the framework for projects requiring EIA under the 'EIA Directive'
- 2005 EA Act - Applies to <u>all PPS</u> in the public character that will have a significant environmental impact

Indentifies significant effects on:

Biodiversity / Flora / Fauna

Population

Human health

Soil

Water

Air

Climatic factors

Material assets

Cultural heritage

Architectural heritage

Landscape

And the inter-relationships between them

Principal stages of SEA

- Pre-Screening
  - Self exemption for PPS with no or minimal environmental effects
  - Applies to expanded range of PPS
- Screening
  - Will the effects be significant?
- Scoping
  - What information needs to be considered – consult with specialist authorities
  - PPS set by the Directive can go straight to Scoping
- Assessment and Environmental Report
  - Communication tool for the options assessment, include a NTS
- Consultation
  - Public consultation, stakeholders, key environmental authorities
- Post adoption
  - Detail how the environment was considered in the final PPS

Principle stages of SEA and plan making

What does the assessment entail?

1. What’s the relevant policy context?
2. What are the key environmental objectives we need to consider?
3. What’s the current baseline environmental situation?
4. What will the situation be without the PPS?
5. What’s the situation under the reasonable alternatives/options? (including the proposed plan options)
6. Are there any cumulative or synergistic effects?
7. How can we mitigate / improve effects?
8. How will we monitor effects

Process Summary

Evidence of environmental issues

↓

What are the options available?

↓

Evaluate options

↓

Suggest improvements

↓

Consult with stakeholders

↓

Monitor its success (or failure)

What are the benefits of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):

- SEA of high level strategies offers better protection and consideration of the environment with fewer unforeseen environmental impacts
- Wider access and greater transparency into decision making
- Better consideration of the linkages been various PPS
- Remedial action for unforeseen adverse effects
- Enhancement of consultation process
  - (integration & early engagement at scoping = early consideration of effects)
- SEA Reports can act as a translator for complex policy
- SEA can be used to form the plan itself if frontloaded
- Provides a structure for environmental thinking by decision makers

Links to Ecosystem Services

- Link SEA Topics & ecosystem services e.g.
  - **Soils**
    - Soil quality, erosion control, carbon store, soil formation, nutrient cycling
  - **Water**
    - Fresh water supply, water quality, coastal defence, pollution control/dilution, water cycling, nutrient cycling