

# National SEA Forum 2018: SEA and the planning review

## Workshop Report

### Workshop 1: Embedding SEA into a new LDP preparation process

**Facilitators:** Jennifer Murphy, South Lanarkshire Council  
Carrie Thomson, Scottish Government

### Introduction

The workshop was held three times over the course of the Forum. All forum attendees had the opportunity to participate in the workshop.

### Workshop content

The facilitators introduced themselves and invited participants to do the same. This was followed by a brief introduction to the purpose and intended outcomes of the workshop. Participants were divided into three groups with a mixture of organisations in each group – local authority/national parks, Consultation Authorities, Scottish Government and others.

Each group were given the components of a flow chart, representing the various stages of the new proposed LDP process, the SEA process and consultation and engagement. They were invited to consider how the new LDP process could be aligned with the SEA process. This generated a lot of discussion within the groups. At the end of each task, the constructed flow charts were displayed on the wall and a group representative explained their rationale. The groups were also asked to capture key concerns, challenges and opportunities regarding how the processes would be aligned. Their suggestions were noted on post it notes and placed in a designated area.

In the final part of the workshop participants were asked to give their ideas and examples from practice on how to more effectively engage the public and others on the SEA process. They were asked to note their suggestions on post it notes and place these in a designated area.

### Findings

The following section provides a summary of comments received on the constructed flowcharts from the nine tables:

### Flowcharts

#### Session 1 - Table 1:

- It's too late to have Scoping at Gatecheck!
- The SEA should inform the evidence report so therefore the assessment and Environmental Report should be prepared before the evidence report.
- Important to front load as much SEA work as possible at the Gatecheck stage.

#### Session 1 - Table 2:

- Suggested it may be possible to have a Scoping workshop following the Scoping Report to discuss findings.
- Suggested it would be beneficial to have the Post Adoption Statement closer to the Environmental Report to ensure alignment of SEA findings within the final LDP.

#### Session 1 - Table 3:

- SEA work should be front loaded supported by technical reports.
- Monitoring and cumulative effects important.
- View the early stages of SEA and LDP development as circular process rather than linear.
- Assessment should go beyond environmental issues.

### **Session 2 - Table 1:**

- There should be engagement across the process.
- Recognised it is a circular rather than a linear process.
- Need to consider mitigation and enhancement measures and how they are taken account of.
- There is a potential for a final Environmental Report to collate overall findings – not for public consultation but to complement Post Adoption Statement.

### **Session 2 - Table 2:**

- The flowchart from this group was more linear.
- Key issue around Local Place Plans – where do they sit and fit?
- Timescales and timeframes for Local Place Plans within the LDP and SEA processes and how to manage expectations.
- Need definitions around aims of Local Place Plans, LDPs and how sites are managed.

### **Session 2 - Table 3:**

- Important to have engagement on both processes at the same time.
- Recognise the potential for Gatecheck to reduce debate later on.
- Question is really about where and when rather than how much?

### **Session 3 - Table 1:**

- What is going on at Gatecheck? – more information required.
- What needs to be agreed at Gatecheck?
- Local Place Plans – where and when? Important for potential impacts on SEA and LDP.

### **Session 3 - Table 2:**

- Engagement should take place at the earliest opportunity – at the very beginning.
- Scoping Report more closely aligns to evidence report.
- How do we align HRA to both the LDP and SEA processes?
- Will there be consultation/engagement after examination?
- Key issue around Local Place Plans – where do they sit and fit?
- Timescales and timeframes for Local Place Plans within the LDP and SEA processes and how to manage expectations.
- Need definitions around aims of Local Place Plans, LDPs and how sites are managed.

### **Session 3 - Table 3:**

- Consultation just with Consultation Authorities at Gatecheck.
- Need to 'get real' with engagement and deliverability.

### **Concerns/Challenges**

- Resource implications of potential SEA of Place Plans on Planning Authority.
- The purpose of the Local Place Plan and its relationship to the LDP must be clearly defined.
- How will the SEA fit with amendments to the Plan within the ten year cycle?
- Who decides whether Place Plans align with the LDP?
- Communities tend to comment based on the preservation of an area – not looking at the future – expectations.
- Need to challenge idea within local authorities that SEA is 'done' by some junior person and is separate from 'real planning'.
- Gatecheck stage too late for Scoping. Opportunities for SEA at evidence report stage.
- Fear of legal challenge – rigidity of process: if it's in legislation it can/could be challenged if it rarely or never is.
- Resources – not everyone has expertise.
- LDP evidence and SEA evidence and process still seen as separate.

- Draft Plan and Environmental Report stage: Do alternatives need to receive equal treatment? (for example, level of detail). Also if it alternatives only appear in Environmental Report – perception that these won't go forward.
- Concern that we should be able to engage effectively and that LDP sets the right context for Local Place Plan. Important and should avoid conflict.
- Split work from Plan into SEA alternatives.
- Need to SEA if LPPs allocate sites not in LDP.
- Need to learn lessons from 1997 system and SEA – especially approach to updating LDPs within 10 year period and consideration of any expedited procedures and SEA.
- Local Place Plan – are/will communities or community groups be classed as 'Responsible Authorities' under the SEA Act? Do they need to SEA in that case?
- LOIP/Community Plan engagement – work to be done with colleagues in how that feeds into LDP spatially.
- Local Place Plans – how will they fit into the LDP process?
- What does 'have regard to' mean? Is it worth the cost?
- LDPs and LPPs potential for conflict as different timelines and priorities.
- Does the evidence report = test of soundness (England)?
- Where will the money come from for the Local Place Plan?
- Regional Partnerships – how to various LDPs and LPPs feed in?

### **Opportunities**

- Engagement of young people in the process as it moves forward.
- To properly embed SEA into LDP process as part of evidence report and Gatecheck.
- Address systemic issue of SEA being something that is 'done' to the Plan rather than informing it.
- Better use of technology to link between Plan and environmental findings.
- Encourage clearer and more explicit mitigation measures into the Plan itself to ensure they are carried forward and delivered.
- Opportunity to engage with locals and get better reflection of local issues in the LDP.
- Making the environment a 'live' document – addressing iteration.
- More information about SEA available and set out in the Plan.
- Don't do the work twice (HRA)!
- Make an early engagement with the SEA that includes the alternative spatial strategies. Then with that feedback the Draft Proposed Plan with preferred alternative can be published.
- Highland Council include SEA allocation assessment in display information for community engagement – get local view on environmental effects.

### **Public Engagement**

- Highland Council include SEA allocation assessments in display information for community engagement – get local view on environmental effects.
- Speaking at Community Council meetings.
- Charettes
- Place Standard consultations – Locality Plans
- Combine SEA engagement with Plan engagement.
- If draft proposed plan pull in some information boxes that link to SEA findings – missing link between MIR alternatives and proposed plan.
- Spatial platform to consult on proposed plan, e.g. interactive map. If you click on proposed allocation – relevant policy box pops up along with box summarising environmental effects.
- Ownership of process vital to accept outcomes – must have early and comprehensive engagement.
- Use plain English. Terminology – don't use SEA as a term!
- If SEA is properly embedded as the environmental evidence for the Plan it breaks down some of the perceived barriers.
- Engage with young people in schools and colleges.

- Engaging supporters as well as objectors.
- Use the Post Adoption Statement to support public engagement – cost?
- Have clear parameters for consultation.
- Use of maps with story - telling people what the maps show.
- Plain language in summaries.
- SEA is a thread that runs through the engagement on the LDP – avoid treating this as a separate workstream.
- Neighbourhood walks (for early stages of engagement) (used in the SEA of the Local Plan of Nembro? in Italy).
- People hone in on site assessments but it is a strategic assessment.
- Crowd source environmental assessment? Increase public involvement in assessing sites.
- Place Standard with Community Planning colleagues – but need to go back to county.
- Nuclear option? Accept that environmental assessment is not public.
- Visual depiction – to explain alternatives to people in layman's terms – issues and opportunities Council see in their area.
- Digital – making LDPs accessible. Can I put my postcode into an app/website to tell me what's changing etc?
- Call it something that isn't 'Strategic Environmental Assessment'.
- Make it spatial – what matters near me?
- Marketing in a better way.
- Jargon free and plain English.
- Social media is key.
- QR codes.
- Involvement with schools on specific issues – integrate with teaching.
- Place check sessions at particular locations.
- More use of social media.
- Greater use of infographics to translate technical information/results.
- Workshop sessions with invited guest on specific topics.
- Participative method based on the involvement of and active listening to lay people. Check book 'European and International Experience of SEA' by Barry Sedten and Jim Dusik.

### **Key points from flowchart exercise**

- Some similarities, particularly the emphasis on SEA supporting frontloading of plans.
- Lots of questions on the new aspects of the new LDP process, particularly Gatecheck and local place plans.
- Discussion around the best timing for the Scoping Report with a number of variances considered and preferred. Some felt that this should be carried out to inform the Evidence Report and that preparing it at the same time as the Gatecheck would be too late and an opportunity missed.
- Recognition of opportunities for read across both processes.
- Flowcharts demonstrated that consultation and engagement was integral to both processes and potential benefits were identified for carrying these out at the same time.

The flowcharts prepared by the nine groups are shown below:

