



# The Scottish Strategic Environmental Assessment Review

## A Summary



## Foreword

Protecting and improving the environment brings many benefits for Scottish life. Clean air, land and water provide for healthier lives. Green spaces and access to wild places improve our well-being. While our beautiful landscapes and enviable cultural heritage provide an invaluable asset upon which our tourism industry depends.

Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) plays a vital role in protecting and improving all of these aspects of the environment and more by ensuring that policy-makers across Scotland embed environmental considerations into the plans and programmes that they prepare.

In passing the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act in 2005, the Scottish Parliament significantly extended the application of SEA and highlighted its desire that Scotland becomes a leader in this field.

Some six years on, and a decade since the original European SEA Directive, this review is the first full test of how Scottish practice and experience is developing. It asks challenging questions about SEA's effectiveness at delivering improved environmental outcomes. It also investigates whether it can be delivered not just more effectively, but also more efficiently and proportionately.

As statutory Consultation Authorities, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland are well placed to help Scotland's public bodies focus their assessments on the key environmental issues facing the country and to help them fully embrace today's environmental challenges by finding new and innovative ways to address them in the plans and programmes they prepare.

This review is intended to help unlock the full potential of SEA and ensure that Scotland's public policy making contributes effectively to environmental protection and improvement and to the challenging targets set by the Scottish Government to address climate change.

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## Introduction

### Background

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive<sup>1</sup> came into force on 21 July 2001. For the first time it placed a requirement for certain plans and programmes to be subject to a formal environmental assessment as part of their preparation.

The objectives of the SEA Directive are to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development<sup>2</sup>.

The SEA Directive was transposed into Scottish legislation in 2004. The Scottish Parliament passed the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act in 2005 which extended the application of SEA beyond the requirements of the Directive to cover all public plans, programmes and strategies (PPSs) where they are likely to lead to significant environmental effects. Scottish Ministers, in passing this Act, had the ambition for Scotland to become a world leader in SEA. For an introduction to SEA in Scotland, please refer to the Scottish Government's *Basic Introduction to SEA* guidance<sup>3</sup>.

Some ten years on from the coming into force of the directive, and nearly six since the passing of Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act, this review is the first full consideration of the efficiency and effectiveness of SEA process and practice in Scotland.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) led and authored this review, in association with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Historic Scotland and with the support of Scottish Government. It was also informed by a project steering group of wider partners and stakeholders. This report summarises the main conclusions and sets out recommendations for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of SEA process and practice in Scotland.

#### Project Lead

Scottish Environment Protection Agency

#### Supported By

Historic Scotland  
 Scottish Natural Heritage  
 Scottish Government

#### Project Steering Group

Cairngorms National Park Authority  
 East Ayrshire Council  
 Orkney Islands Council  
 Perth & Kinross Council  
 South Lanarkshire Council  
 University of Aberdeen

<sup>1</sup>Directive EC 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment

<sup>2</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/pdf/030923\\_sea\\_guidance.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/pdf/030923_sea_guidance.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>[www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/921/0096200.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/921/0096200.pdf)

## Objectives

The review has two key objectives:

### Environmental protection and improvement

To identify the extent to which SEA helps to achieve effective environmental protection and improvement and sustainable development by integrating environmental considerations into the preparation of plans, programmes and strategies (PPSs) in Scotland.

### Better regulation

To identify opportunities for improving and/or streamlining the SEA process and practice to make it more efficient and proportionate for those undertaking SEAs or being consulted on them.

In considering these objectives, the review also covers a number of cross cutting issues such as:

- > the coverage and usefulness of guidance;
- > the role and performance of the statutory Consultation Authorities (CAs);
- > how stakeholders and the wider public are engaged in the process.

## Research method

The review was informed by three key data gathering processes:

### Practitioner workshops

Over 60 SEA practitioners and stakeholders attended one of three workshops. Participants undertook a SWOT<sup>4</sup> analysis of six key aspects of Scottish SEA practice. They then prioritised a series of actions aimed at addressing the main weaknesses and maximising the main opportunities. The workshop findings focused the review on the key issues.

### Casework analysis

An analysis of documentation associated with 32 SEA cases was undertaken. This secured evidence about the effectiveness of SEA as a tool to embed environmental considerations into plan-making by analysing how environmental effects are being identified and taken into account as a PPS is prepared and adopted. The casework analysis was based on a quantitative approach where a system of scores was developed and used to record what environmental effects were being identified, how they were being addressed and how consultation comments were taken into account.

### Surveys

A comprehensive survey was conducted to secure SEA practitioner and interest group views on the performance of SEA in Scotland. This was tailored to secure the views of practitioners (i.e. those undertaking SEAs), plan-makers and stakeholders. 111 respondents expressed their views on one of these surveys, around 50% being practitioners, 35% stakeholders and 15% plan-makers. About half of the questions were opinion based asking respondents to score on a 1 to 5 scale in response to a statement or question, while the rest were open questions allowing free text answers, thereby allowing respondents to express their views and ideas.

### Developing findings and recommendations

This research generated large volumes of data about practitioners' views and casework based evidence on every aspect of SEA as practiced in Scotland. From this, findings were able to be drawn about both the fundamental issues to be considered and also about those detailed areas of practice where improvements could enable improved efficiency. This resulted in 10 recommendations. A summary of the main findings and the 10 recommendations is set out in the following pages. More detailed findings are set out in Annex 1 and the full recommendations are set out in Annex 2.

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<sup>4</sup>Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis

# Main findings

## Key conclusions

This review concludes that the fundamental components of SEA in Scotland – the legislation, common practice, engagement processes, reporting mechanisms etc – are generally sound and fit for purpose. There is no requirement to fundamentally reconsider how to legislate for or to undertake SEA in Scotland. The extended scope and reach of SEA embraced in the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 is very well regarded by practitioners and stakeholders, is generally working effectively and places Scotland among the leaders in this field. The Act allows public authorities to fully consider how many of their PPSs contribute to the Scottish Government's environmental objectives and it also allows SEA to play an active part in considering the climate change implications of all Scottish PPSs.

However, as practice and experience has developed since SEA's introduction, there is considerable scope for changes that would make it more effective at protecting and improving the environment, more proportionate and more flexible to accommodate novel, resource efficient approaches.

## What is working well?

There are many aspects of SEA practice that are generally working well and upon which any improvements should be built. These include:

- > In many Responsible Authorities, SEA has been embedded into the corporate culture and is seen as an integral and beneficial part of policymaking. Here, SEA tends to operate most efficiently and proportionately.
- > Many practitioners, through experience, are developing a range of innovative and efficient ways to undertake SEA within the framework set by the legislation.
- > SEA is providing new opportunities for stakeholders and key agencies to become involved in public sector planning and allowing key environmental issues to be identified and addressed at an earlier stage.
- > Where SEA is undertaken well and particularly where there is good integration between the assessor, the policy-maker and senior decision-makers, a significant influence on PPS preparation is demonstrated.
- > SEA is enabling public authorities to comprehensively and consistently consider how their PPSs contribute to national policy objectives such as sustainable development, climate change mitigation and adaptation and the transition to a low carbon economy.
- > The Consultation Authorities' performance is very high (99% on time on average) and the services they provide are generally highly regarded and considered useful.
- > There is a comprehensive range of Scottish guidance in place that is well used and generally highly regarded.
- > The services offered by the Scottish Government SEA Gateway are well used and highly regarded.
- > The broader scope of the SEA legislation, allied to the strong support and guidance frameworks put into place, has contributed to the rapid learning in SEA which has taken place across the country.

## What can be improved?

Key opportunities for improvement include:

- > Improving the understanding of, and buy in to, SEA among policy-makers and senior decision-makers, including elected members.
- > Ensuring that SEA is applied across all sectors.
- > Making targeted improvements to the SEA process to allow it to operate more efficiently.
- > Improving the scope of assessments to be more focused on the issues of significance.
- > Improving the integration between SEA and PPS preparation, particularly in the early stages.
- > Refocusing Consultation Authority and stakeholder engagement to earlier stages in SEA to allow for greater front loading of information about key issues. This will also require Responsible Authorities to provide appropriate information at an earlier stage to make such engagement work.
- > Significantly improving the simplicity and clarity of SEA documents and making them more engaging tools for public consultation.
- > Improving the identification and implementation of mitigation and enhancement measures.
- > Ensuring that the time and resources used for SEA are in balance with its benefits for public policy.
- > Using SEA to enable public bodies to better consider the impact of PPSs on the ambitious targets set in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

## Is SEA making a difference?

In short, yes it is, but there is room for improvement.

### Making a difference: SEA as a plan shaper

Where SEA is undertaken well and particularly where there is good integration between the assessor, the plan-maker and senior decision-makers, then this review has found the SEA demonstrates a significant influence on the plan preparation process and the level of environmental consideration within a PPS. In this context, SEA is working as a **plan shaper**.

Casework analysis has shown that 69% of all significant adverse environmental effects identified in Environmental Reports or in Consultation Authority responses were being fully or partially taken into account by Responsible Authorities and resulting in changes to the content of a PPS or some other form of mitigation measure. This is backed up by examples provided by practitioners and stakeholders. In addition, there appears to be evidence that SEA is driving more robust and transparent plan making processes, whereby the environmental implications of PPSs are considered early and consistently.

### Greening the edges: SEA as a fine tuner

However, where SEA is undertaken as a separate process and/or after substantive policy decisions have been taken, it is having a much more limited influence. In this context, SEA is working as a **fine tuner** at best. In these cases, it is difficult to view SEA as proportionate, as the outcomes are often outweighed by the inputs required by the process. Such cases may also be more vulnerable to challenge.

Casework analysis showed that 11% of significant adverse environmental effects identified in Environmental Reports or in the consultation were not being taken into account in any way by Responsible Authorities. Many examples were also cited where the SEA was ineffective due to its late application, poor integration with plan-making or because senior decision makers had already determined substantive policy direction.

### The challenge: To better shape Scottish public policymaking

In most cases, the situation is somewhere in between, with SEA exerting greater or lesser influence depending upon factors such as the nature and content of PPS, the level of buy in from plan-makers and senior decision-makers, the level of integration between SEA and PPS and the availability of SEA experience and resource within an authority.

The challenge going forward is to ensure that SEA aims high and makes a real difference: a plan shaper and not a fine tuner.



## Is SEA being undertaken efficiently?

In short, not as efficiently as it could be. This review has found that there are many opportunities to improve the way SEA is undertaken to improve its efficiency. Of particular importance are:

### Process improvements

There are many small improvements that can be made to tighten the steps taken in SEA which, when considered together, may significantly enhance efficiency. Such small adjustments include:

- > removing unnecessary steps;
- > simplifying templates and procedures;
- > reducing advertising costs.

### Better focus

Focusing the SEA on the important issues plays a fundamental role in securing proportionality. Too often assessments cover too many issues that are not 'significant' and often in too much detail. This can generate long and complex outputs. Improving the scoping process to ensure it directs the focus of the assessment to truly significant matters is therefore key to improving efficiency.

### Providing information and resolving issues earlier

In many cases, issues are not identified or discussed until the Environmental Report is published, by which time the draft PPS is complete. Earlier discussion about the key issues and the information required to assess the effects of a PPS allows for more timely identification and resolution of these issues, thus avoiding problems at a later and potentially more difficult stage.

### Effective timing and integration

SEA can be more efficiently applied when it starts early and is fully integrated into the PPS preparation process. Assessments that commence late and are bolted on as a separate exercise are less likely to influence policy content and can cause significant delays in plan preparation.

### Corporate culture

The review found that those authorities that have built SEA into all policy-making as part of their corporate culture have benefited. Where this does not occur, SEA experience, expertise and learning is much less readily shared across an organisation, causing duplication of effort and missing opportunities for shared learning.



## Elements of a good SEA

Evidence gathered in this review suggests that SEA is most proportionate and influential where:

- > It is commenced as early as possible in the PPS preparation process.
- > It is a fully integrated part of the policy making process.
- > Key issues are identified early and generate early and meaningful stakeholder engagement on the environmental effects of the plan.
- > PPS development is continually challenged by the SEA and improvements are continuously made through iteration.
- > The key findings of the assessment are clear and policy-makers are fully aware of them and how to address them at a point when they can still make changes to the PPS.
- > The measures to address potential adverse effects are clearly identified and a programme for their implementation set out.
- > SEA is used to stimulate the identification of new, environmentally sustainable, alternatives.
- > The key findings and recommendations from the SEA are included in the PPS content.
- > A SEA co-ordinator or team can provide continuous support or undertake the SEA in-house, and are often able to develop more continuous dialogue with stakeholders and CAs that builds on the organisation's collective experience.
- > Both plan-makers and senior decision-makers recognise the requirements of the 2005 Act, but also believe that SEA can provide benefits for their policy.



## Recommendations

Building on the findings of this review, ten measures are identified to promote better efficiency and effectiveness in Scottish SEA practice. The full recommendations are set out in Annex 2.

### Recommendation R1 Promoting the value of SEA

There is a need to significantly raise the profile of SEA beyond the immediate “SEA community”. This is to ensure that senior officials and decision-makers are fully aware of the requirement to undertake SEA and of the benefits that a well planned, well focused and proportionate SEA can have in PPS preparation.

Improved buy in to the practical benefits of SEA among senior decision-makers is a fundamental pre-requisite to improve effectiveness and proportionality.

### Recommendation R2 Improving efficiency and proportionality

There are opportunities to reduce duplication, eliminate work that does not add value and to streamline the assessment process by making changes to the SEA legislation, guidance or process.

Responsible Authorities can also improve efficiency through:

- > early application of SEA in plan-making;
- > greater focus on the key issues of importance;
- > improving clarity in SEA documents;
- > earlier and focused engagement with Consultation Authorities and stakeholders to identify the key issues of importance;
- > considering opportunities for greater sharing of SEA services within and potentially across authorities.

Consultation Authorities can also improve efficiency through:

- > early and continuous engagement with Responsible Authorities;
- > greater use of standing advice;
- > the preparation of short “key environmental issues and trends” documents to provide clarity on key issues of significance for a particular authority.

#### Case Study

#### Sharing services – Scottish Government SEA Unit

The Scottish Government established an in-house team to undertake SEA for its plans, programmes, strategies and policies in 2009. The team works across all Scottish Government Directorates, providing technical assistance to policy makers. Scottish Government SEAs are now being delivered in a much more efficient way. It is estimated that the team’s work generated a net saving of £170,000 in 2010–2011 alone. The availability of in-house advice is also helping to ensure that SEA is delivered in a more proportionate way, and that assessment findings form an integrated and useful part of policy and decision making processes.

### Recommendation R3

#### Focusing assessments: Improving scoping and the evidence base

Effective scoping is vital to ensure that an SEA is relevant, focused and proportionate to the PPS it addresses.

Responsible Authorities should have confidence to tightly scope assessments to focus on the issues of real significance. Responsible Authorities and Consultation Authorities should have early discussions about the key issues and information required to assess the effects of a PPS.

To assist this, Consultation Authorities should reprioritise their focus towards scoping and reduce inputs at later stages. This can then be used as a vehicle for early and effective engagement on the significant environmental issues with stakeholders.

Better use of relevant baseline information, particularly spatial information, to determine the scope and level of detail of assessments is also recommended.

### Case Study

#### South Lanarkshire State of the Environment Reporting

To support its SEA activities, South Lanarkshire Council has prepared, and periodically updates, a State of the Environment (SoE) Report that identifies the key environmental issues and trends for the area. This information is used as a basis for the environmental baseline in Environmental Reports. For example, the assessment for the Council's Minerals Development Plan used the SoE Report to help illustrate how the actions within the mineral plan would affect existing trends – whether they would be improved or exacerbated by the minerals policies. The gathering and use of baseline data in this way targets the baseline to key issues and is also facilitates consultation as it is easy to follow. Further information: [www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/52/minerals\\_local\\_development\\_plan](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/52/minerals_local_development_plan)

### Case Study

#### Clackmannanshire Local Development Plan Main Issues Report

Clackmannanshire Council integrated the summary findings from the SEA into the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report (MIR). The likely environmental effects of implementing the various options being considered are discussed at relevant points throughout the MIR and as part of the evaluation of different policy options. Integrating the SEA and MIR processes so closely has allowed the key findings from the Environmental Report to be clearly identifiable within the plan itself and allows it to inform the consultation process. Further information: [www.clacksweb.org.uk/document/2992.pdf](http://www.clacksweb.org.uk/document/2992.pdf)

### Recommendation R4

#### Ensuring SEA has a voice in decision making

Integrated approaches where plan-making and the SEA are undertaken together can play a significant role in improving the influence of SEA and on the proportionality of the assessment.

Responsible Authorities should commence SEA at the earliest possible stage and adopt integrated approaches where assessors and policy-makers work together to ensure SEA findings are effectively considered and integrated into PPSs.

The key findings of the SEA and the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures should be embedded into the content of PPSs to promote greater integration and clarity.

## Recommendation R5 Greater clarity

Environmental Reports should be made clearer, with greater clarity on (a) what significant environmental effects are likely and (b) the actions to be taken by policy-makers and decision takers to address adverse effects or achieve enhancements.

In particular, better use should be made of clear non technical summaries that are ideally integrated into PPS content to support consultation processes.

## Case Study Shaping Perth's Transport Future

Shaping Perth's Transport Future sets out a strategy to address key transport problems in and around Perth and support the future development of the area. The assessment of several transport corridors provided a strategic overview of the likely implications of each option upon the environment and made good use of clear, colour coded, constraint mapping and compatibility assessments to assess each options against environmental objectives. The report provided a series of key recommendations and mitigation measures to be taken forward through the Local Development Plan for the area. Further information: [www.pkc.gov.uk/transportconsultation](http://www.pkc.gov.uk/transportconsultation)

## Recommendation R6 Addressing environmental challenges: mitigation and enhancement

Greater emphasis should be placed on using SEA to promote enhancements to PPSs and on ensuring that there is an effective framework in place for delivering mitigation measures.

Responsible Authorities should clearly set out what mitigation measures are required and put in place a robust framework which clearly identifies measures to address potential effects and who should be responsible for implementing them and when.

## Case Study Shetland Islands Council – SEA Information Day

In March 2011, Shetland Islands Council organised an event to raise awareness of SEA and highlight the ways in which it can add value to the plan making process. It involved a wide range of council officials including those leading on plan preparation and key decision makers such as heads of service and elected members. The CAs and the Scottish Government SEA Unit also attended. The objectives of the event were to develop a corporate approach to SEA and consider ways to could share information and experience more effectively.

## Recommendation R7 Working together to provide guidance and support

As part of the current review of the SEA Toolkit, the Scottish Government in association with SEA practitioners and stakeholders should develop good practice advice in a number of critical areas, including:

- > consideration of cumulative effects;
- > consideration of alternatives;
- > determining significance;
- > achieving more proportionate SEAs.

Enabling the sharing of experience among the SEA community – both formally and informally - would also help practitioners to resolve issues.

It is recommended that Consultation Authorities adopt a “continuous engagement” style of involvement in SEA to provide enhanced and better targeted support to Responsible Authorities.

## Recommendation R8 Assisting delivery of climate change targets

SEA should play an enhanced role in helping Scottish public bodies to meet their responsibilities under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

Responsible Authorities should consider aligning indicators used in assessments and monitoring to national climate change objectives.

## Recommendation R9 A more engaging process

Responsible Authorities should seek to engage stakeholders earlier in the SEA process and in particular at the scoping stage to secure early input into determining the key issues for the assessment.

Responsible Authorities should consider training and/or workshop sessions as part of SEAs to assist stakeholder engagement.

A simple, national email alert service to inform stakeholders of upcoming SEA consultations should also be established.

### Case Study

#### **Marine Scotland SEA of Draft Plan for Offshore Wind in Scottish Territorial Waters**

The public consultation on the SEA of this draft plan generated over 800 responses. Most of those who engaged in the process used the SEA to help shape their comments on the draft plan, with many referring to environmental challenges arising from offshore renewable energy development that were explained in the Environmental Report. The high level of response was attributable to the extensive programme of consultation which included regional and sectoral workshops, direct liaison with local and national stakeholder groups, a feedback process and widespread national and local publicity. Further information: [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/05/14155353/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/05/14155353/0)

## Recommendation R10 Continuing to reflect on experience

Consideration should be given to further work in the following areas:

- > how mitigation measures are being implemented;
- > strengthening post adoption procedures;
- > the development of an auditing process to sample SEA processes and documents for quality and compliance issues;
- > the effectiveness of monitoring regimes; and
- > understanding the comparative costs and benefits of SEA in financial terms.



## Annex 1 – Summary of findings

The review analysed almost all aspects of SEA practice in Scotland and includes very many detailed findings in each of these aspects. A summary of these is set out below. Where applicable, recommendations to address a particular issue are highlighted (indicated as R1 to R10).

### SEA activity and pre screening/screening processes

- > 396 PPSs have been subject to SEA between July 2004 and December 2010, with a further 159 screened out on the basis they will not lead to significant environmental effects.
- > Local Authorities act as RA for over 80% of all SEA activity.
- > The Scottish Government accounts for 11% of all SEA activity.
- > There are generally low rates of SEA activity among the rest of Scotland's public bodies (6% of all SEA activity) with many having undertaken no SEAs. [R1]
- > There are very wide variations in rates of SEA activity and in use of pre-screening across Scottish public bodies and Local Authorities. [R1]
- > The town and country planning and land use sector accounts for 42% of all SEAs undertaken.
- > The telecommunications and industry sectors recorded no SEA activity between July 2004 and December 2010. [R1]
- > There is no evidence of RAs using the pre-screening process inappropriately, although there are varying rates of use between authorities.
- > There is no evidence that screening is being used inappropriately. Rather evidence suggests RAs are adopting a precautionary approach and "screening in" where there is any doubt.
- > There may be scope to remove the need for formal screening where RAs are of the view that SEA is needed. [R2]
- > The screening template and guidance are considered complex and there is scope to simplify and update them to take on board good practice. [R2, R7]
- > Determining significance is proving challenging. This is key to encouraging more proportionate approaches to SEA. There is scope for providing improved support through good practice guidance. [R7]
- > The content of Screening Reports is considered "about right" with no need for change.
- > There is scope to amend advertising requirements at the screening stage to reduce costs and promote better ways to communicate screening determinations. [R2]

## Focusing the assessment – the scoping process

- > Effective scoping is fundamental to delivering effective, proportionate and focused SEAs.
- > Most practitioners feel the benefits of a good scoping process more than justify the time it takes to prepare scoping reports. These were generally found to be working well as a consultation device.
- > In many cases, however, scoping currently does not focus on the key issues. Accordingly, there is considerable scope to improve the focus of SEAs on the key issues of importance. [R2, R3, R7]
- > There can be a poor alignment between baseline information and the scope of the assessment. This can make assessments generalised and disproportionate as the assessor may fail to recognise, and focus on, key problems and significant environmental effects. [R2, R3, R7]
- > Considering the plan hierarchy is important in effectively scoping the SEA, particularly where parts of the PPS are set by higher tier plans that have already been subject to SEA. A “plan-mapping” process which clearly identifies the most important and influential PPSs is often helpful. [R2, R3, R7]
- > There is scope to prioritise CA effort to the scoping stage as part of early engagement and having early discussions with RAs to identify the key issues and information required to assess the effects of a PPS. CA responses were found to be more influential at this stage. [R2, R3, R7]
- > There is scope for RAs to augment formal scoping reports with other methods such as stakeholder workshops [R3, R9] to encourage early engagement and focus on the key issues.
- > RAs could engage stakeholders more proactively at the scoping stage. [R3, R9]
- > Timing of scoping is critical – too early and the PPS may not be developed enough to know what scope is appropriate, too late and substantive decisions on the PPS may have already been taken. [R3, R4]
- > RAs adopt a precautionary approach and tend to “scope in” environmental topics when in doubt.
- > Air is the most commonly “scoped out” topic.

## Using baseline information

- > Generally, gathering baseline information was considered relatively straightforward, although difficulties noted include: time and cost, disaggregated datasets and lack of trends data.
- > Those RAs with access to an up to date State of the Environment Report for their area found this significantly advantageous. [R3]
- > Cultural heritage and biodiversity were considered the most straightforward topics to secure data for. Soil, material assets and human health were considered the most difficult topics to secure data for.
- > Interpretation of data was a difficult issue for many topics. [R3, R7, R8]
- > Trends data are often more difficult to secure. [R3]
- > Baseline information in ERs can be long and not focused on the key issues. This can hamper effective scoping and drives RAs to “over collect” data that may not be needed. Whilst baselines may appear to be comprehensive, their value in the process is limited if they are not effectively rolled forward to inform conclusions within the assessment. [R2, R3]
- > CAs spend a considerable effort in scoping and ER responses advising on baseline data. Some of this may be better achieved through standing advice. [R3]
- > The proposal for a “Scotland’s Environment” website with comprehensive and up to date data from different relevant organisations represents a key opportunity to improve efficiency in baseline preparation. [R3]

## Preparing environmental reports

### SEA Practitioner's Perspective

- > By far the most common approach to assessment in the case study sample was adoption of environmental or SEA objectives against which the PPS was tested via an assessment matrix.
- > This approach has many benefits, including its relative simplicity, its systematic nature, its transparency and its ability to demonstrate differences between alternatives.
- > Practitioners cite concerns that this approach can lead to long reports, involves duplication and reduces the focused analysis needed to identify and address key issues of significance.
- > Other issues crucial to successful preparation of ERs include timing and integration between assessor and plan-maker. Practitioners felt that preparation of ERs generally took too much time and resource. **[R3, R4, R5]**

### Plan-Maker's Perspective

- > Close integration between plan-maker and SEA assessor is crucial to produce a focused and proportionate ER that influences decision making and therefore provides benefits from the SEA process. **[R4]**
- > The form and content of ERs can make it difficult for plan-makers to be clear about the key issues and what to do about them. There is scope to significantly improve ER clarity. **[R4, R5]**
- > When planned effectively, SEA does not add time to the plan preparation process. **[R4]**
- > Some awareness raising among plan-makers is vital for making SEA work. "Buy in" from key decision-makers is an important feature of effective SEA. **[R1]**

### Stakeholders/CA Perspective

- > There is scope for much greater clarity in ERs. Their form and content can be difficult to follow, particularly in terms of identifying the key issues and how they have been considered/addressed. **[R5]**
- > There is considerable scope for more integration of SEA findings into PPSs to help improve clarity. **[R4]**
- > There are some concerns amongst stakeholders about ER quality. Scope for further investigation and for periodic quality auditing of SEA process and outputs. **[R10]**
- > Significant scope for CAs to prioritise responses at scoping stage and to limit ER responses to comments on significant environmental effects and how they have been addressed. **[R3]**

## Identifying significant environmental effects

- > Determining significance is the biggest single “process” problem identified by practitioners in SEA.
- > Fewer than half of practitioners found identifying significant effects straightforward. Particularly difficult were topics such as soil, material assets and climatic factors. Cultural heritage and biodiversity were considered easier. [R3, R7]
- > Identifying cumulative effects was considered to be even more difficult for all topics (only 34% of practitioners consider this straightforward). [R7]
- > Generally, those topics with some form of spatially expressed designation system appear easier to identify significant effects on.
- > Reasons given for difficulties include:
  - data availability and interpretation; [R3]
  - lack of case study examples to learn from; [R7]
  - specialist skills needed to identify/interpret effects for some topics (e.g. soil); [R7, R8]
  - timing of the SEA; [R4]
  - lack of clarity about PPS content when undertaking assessment; [R5] and
  - distinguishing effects from the plan or policy in question when many other drivers may be the cause of an effect. [R7]
- > Difficulties in determining significance appear to result in more detailed assessments that “cover all the bases” rather than focusing on the key issues of importance. This can lead to disproportionate processes and outputs.
- > Casework analysis showed more significant adverse environmental effects identified for biodiversity (28%) and landscape (15%) and least on material assets (3%), air (6%) and soil (6%).
- > Key difficulties with identification of cumulative effects include:
  - lack of clarity about what constitutes a cumulative effect;
  - need to develop a suitable method;
  - distinguishing cumulative effects arising from a particular PPS from effects arising from other drivers.

## Considering alternatives

- > There is some evidence that SEA is driving more effective evaluation of alternatives that would not normally have occurred;
- > Many practitioners however find it difficult to identify alternatives in the PPS as these may vary greatly in scale and nature;
- > Key difficulties include:
  - Determining the alternatives to be assessed; [R7]
  - Determining the level of detail to assess each alternative; [R7]
  - Wide range and number of potential alternatives for high level PPSs; [R7]
  - Some PPSs driven by legislation that tightly prescribe form, content and objectives of a PPS, which dramatically reduces alternatives; [R7]
- > Timing the evaluation of alternatives is crucial as if considered too late then some alternatives will be precluded; [R4]
- > SEA provides a significant opportunity to stimulate new, environmentally sustainable, alternatives. [R4]

## Mitigation and enhancement

- > Most practitioners consider that consideration and implementation of effective mitigation measures in SEA is vital.
- > Most practitioners found identifying mitigation measures to be straightforward. However, many are also of the view that mitigation is currently poorly undertaken. [R6]
- > A key reason given for this is that there is no strong mechanism to ensure that mitigation measures actually take place. In many cases, mitigation and enhancement measures are identified, but a clear framework/roadmap for their delivery is not put in place. [R6]
- > In some cases, mitigation measures are lost in the detail of the ER or traded off against other measures designed to address more minor effects. [R5, R6]
- > There is considerable scope to improve consideration of mitigation, particularly through the inclusion of the required measures within the PPS. [R4, R5, R6]
- > The most common mitigation measures to address significant adverse effects identified are:
  - changes to the PPS being subject to SEA (34% of all measures);
  - project level mitigation (20%);
  - mitigation through action in lower tier PPSs (18%).
- > Strengthening adoption processes may be required to give SEA greater weight at the end of the PPS preparation process to ensure mitigation measures are implemented. [R6, R10]
- > Enhancement opportunities are being identified (particularly in relation to biodiversity), however these tend to be reasonably limited from casework analysis and there is greater scope for this to occur. [R6]

## Influence of SEA

- > There is a commonly held perception, particularly among stakeholders, that SEA is not significantly influencing PPS content. [R1]
- > Casework analysis however, shows that 69% of significant adverse environmental effects are taken fully or partially into account and only 11% are not taken into account in any way.
- > Some of the SEA's influence is also not documented (particularly the where there is an iterative approach of development of policy → testing by SEA → refinement of policy → re-testing by SEA etc). [R4, R5]
- > Barriers to SEA influence include:
  - Outputs are complex and hard to interpret; [R5]
  - Nature of SEA methods (often seen as a cut and paste or tick box exercise); [R4]
  - Separate plan-making and SEA processes; [R4]
  - Influence of other drivers more powerful than the SEA;
  - Weak post adoption processes; [R6, R10]
  - Lack of buy in from key decision-makers. [R1]
- > SEA is most influential where:
  - There is high integration between plan-making and SEA processes; [R4]
  - The key findings are clear and plan-makers are fully aware of how to address them; [R5]
  - The PPS and the SEA are undertaken iteratively where PPS development is continually tested by the SEA; [R4]
  - SEA commences early in the PPS preparation process; [R2, R4]
  - An SEA co-ordinator or team can provide continuous support or undertake the SEA; [R1, R2]
  - Plan-makers and senior decision makers are bought into the requirements and benefits of SEA. [R1]
- > Significant adverse environmental effects are much more likely to be taken fully into account in very high level PPSs, while more local level PPS appear to be more constrained in this regard.

## Post adoption and monitoring

- > Historically, there have been considerable time delays between adoption of a PPS and publication of the associated post adoption statement.
- > The post adoption stage is a key tool for improving transparency in decision making. This relatively poor performance in publishing post adoption statements reduces transparency. **[R6, R10]**
- > Clarity of post adoption statements varies and required mitigation measures are often omitted or poorly set out. **[R6, R10]**
- > There is scope for considerable improvement in post adoption processes to ensure that SEA findings are properly taken into account and that how they have been taken into account is made clear. **[R6, R10]**
- > It is still too early to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of SEA monitoring regimes. **[R10]**
- > Many stakeholders considered that there was scope in SEA monitoring for more links with environmental performance indicators set at the national level. **[R8]**
- > There are some concerns that reporting on monitoring findings is not occurring. **[R10]**
- > Both adoption and monitoring processes could be improved through greater integration of SEA findings and recommendations into the content of PPSs. **[R4, R5, R10]**

## Improving efficiency and proportionality

- > Improving proportionality is an important issue for all participants in SEA, but views were divided as to whether SEA is currently disproportionate to its contribution to plan-making.
- > The cost of undertaking an SEA varies considerably depending on the PPS.
- > There is a need to better understand the comparative costs and benefits of SEA in financial terms in order to identify further opportunities for efficiency savings. **[R10]**
- > The effectiveness of scoping has a large influence on proportionality. Effective scoping that focuses on key issues of significance enables more targeted and resource efficient SEAs. **[R3]**
- > There is scope to promote flexible approaches to enable simpler, more proportionate processes and outputs. **[R2, R3, R4, R5]**
- > Timing has a key influence on proportionality. Late application of SEA often requires more effort and duplication of activities. This can cause time delays and also reduce the influence of the SEA. **[R4]**
- > Clearer SEA documents will help plan-makers to quickly understand the key issues of relevance that they need to address. **[R5]**
- > There is scope for many specific process improvements across all stages of SEA that will together improve efficiency of SEA application generally. **[R2]**
- > Responsible Authorities should consider sharing SEA resources (officers or teams) across authority departments or between different authorities to promote efficiency. **[R2]**
- > There is scope for CA activities to be streamlined, reprioritised and refocused to improve both efficiency and the influence over PPSs. **[R2, R3, R4]**
- > There is scope for CAs to develop a “continuous dialogue” type approach to engaging with RAs whereby there is greater frontloading of discussions and issue resolution. **[R3, R7]**
- > Development of key issues and trends documents by CAs could help RAs to secure key information quicker and without the need for bespoke interpretation by CAs. **[R3]**
- > Use of SEA officers/teams to co-ordinate SEA activities across authorities is already proving beneficial where it occurs, including improved resource efficiency and more consistent and proportionate approaches. **[R1, R2]**

## Consulting the Consultation Authorities

- > The CAs have consistently met very high “on time” performance standards (average for 2009 and 2010 was 99% on time).
- > Over 80% of practitioners consider the CAs provide useful or very useful SEA consultation services.
- > There is no evidence of any significant duplication across the CAs or CAs covering the same issues in responses.
- > There is scope for CAs to provide more information through standing advice and less by bespoke responses which would improve efficiency. [R2, R3]
- > CA comments are more influential at the scoping stage. There is therefore scope for CAs to prioritise activities to focus more heavily on the scoping stage whilst keeping ER responses focused just on the assessment of effects on the environment. [R3]
- > Most CA responses were considered to be reasonable. However a small number were not and there is scope to address the issues raised by these examples.
- > There is scope for CAs to develop a “continuous dialogue” type approach to engaging with RAs whereby there is greater frontloading of discussions and issue resolution. [R2]
- > There is no strong evidence to support the identification of additional statutory CAs.
- > Consultation processes administered by the Scottish Government SEA Gateway are universally viewed as very positive and helpful.

## Stakeholder engagement

- > SEA has the potential to drive enhanced stakeholder engagement particularly in those PPSs where this would not normally happen.
- > However, stakeholder engagement levels in Scottish SEA are very low. [R9]
- > Stakeholders are generally sceptical about the influence their views have on SEA and on decision making. [R1]
- > NGOs were the biggest group of stakeholders engaging, followed by individuals.
- > Beyond the statutory CAs, there appears to be a very low level of engagement in SEA by public bodies - despite these agencies having relevant information and expertise about the environment that could be helpful to RAs in identifying significant environmental effects.
- > Spatial and national PPSs attract the most stakeholder engagement.
- > Biodiversity is the most common topic (25%) referred to by stakeholders.
- > There is scope for improving the way stakeholders are informed about consultations – e.g. by email alert. [R9]
- > Barriers to stakeholder engagement in SEA are seen as:
  - The lengthy and complex nature of SEA documentation; [R5]
  - Separately publishing the PPS and the SEA; [R5]
  - Stakeholders’ understanding of the SEA process; [R7]
  - The perception that time spent on responding is disproportionate to the level of influence it may have; [R1]
  - Lack of awareness that an SEA is being consulted upon. [R9]

## SEA and climate change

- > SEA has the potential to play a more significant role in promoting consideration of climate change within Scottish public sector policy-making.
- > In particular, it can play an important role in helping public authorities to demonstrate how a PPS meets the public bodies' duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. [R8]
- > Scope exists for aligning SEA reporting on climate change with established national and local indicators to promote consistency in approaches and reporting. [R8]
- > There is some support for use of carbon accounting methods within SEA, although tools are varied and often complex. [R8]
- > Scope for improving accessibility and use of the UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) within SEAs. [R8]
- > Due to the scale of the challenge to meet Scotland's climate change targets, there are benefits in "scoping in" climatic factors even where effects are likely to be less significant. [R8]

## Sharing experience, developing skills

- > Considerable topic based and generic SEA guidance already exists which is generally well used and in the vast majority of cases found to be helpful.
- > The SEA Toolkit in particular is well used and generally well regarded;
- > Priority areas for new guidance (top 3) seen as:
  - cumulative effects;
  - determining significance ;
  - monitoring. [R7]
- > Strong feeling that new or revised guidance should be based on "sharing good practice". [R7]
- > Skills and experience in SEA are not often transferred across an organisation. SEA can be pigeonholed into one department rather than mainstreamed across an organisation. This can have subsequent impacts on SEA activity across an organisation and the time and resources required to undertake SEA. [R7]
- > There is considerable scope for developing better informal avenues for sharing experiences and views on SEA issues and problem areas. [R7]
- > Training needs were identified for the following areas:
  - Some of the specialist SEA topics – notably soils, human health and climate change; [R7, R8]
  - For plan-makers and senior decision-makers; [R1, R7]
  - For stakeholders. [R7, R9]



## Annex 2 – Recommendations in full

Set out below are the full recommendations of this review. An indication of the parties that are considered to be most appropriate to take them forward is also suggested. It should be noted that these recommendations are suggested ways forward and do not represent commitment by any party. It is anticipated that following this review a plan developed by a range of SEA interests may be formulated to implement the recommendations.

### Recommendation R1 Promoting the value of SEA

#### Summary

There is a need to significantly improve the buy in to SEA beyond the immediate SEA community. In particular, improving awareness of and commitment to the practical benefits of SEA for robust policy development among senior decision-makers is a fundamental pre-requisite to improve effectiveness and proportionality.

Recommendation	Lead	Chapter
<p>(a) Rates of SEA activity across all public bodies and sectors should be kept under review. The Scottish Government should engage with underperforming sectors or authorities to raise awareness and promote compliance.</p> <p>This should include scrutiny of pre-screening statements to consider if there are issues of inappropriate or inconsistent use and if cumulative effects are being adequately considered.</p>	Scottish Govt (SG)	4.1
<p>(b) Undertake a programme of SEA profile raising at all relevant levels to ensure that those beyond the immediate SEA Community are fully aware of their responsibilities and of the benefits that a well planned, well focused and proportionate SEA can have in policy development.</p> <p>Targeting of senior managers and decision takers in public bodies should be prioritised.</p>	SG, supported by Responsible Authorities (RA) and Consultation Authorities (CA)	4.5 4.10

## Recommendation R2 Improving efficiency and proportionality

### Summary

There are opportunities to reduce duplication, eliminate work that does not add value and to streamline the assessment process. Earlier and better focused engagement with Consultation Authorities and stakeholders to identify the key issues of importance can resolve issues earlier and thereby improve efficiency;

Improving efficiency and proportionality will also result from actions in recommendations R3, R4, R5 and R7.

Recommendation	Lead	Chapter
(a) Remove the need for screening for PPSs qualifying under section 5(4) of the SEA Act and where RA intends to undertake SEA. This would require legislative change.	SG	4.2
(b) Simplify the screening template.	SG	4.2
(c) Consider scope to merge the screening and scoping templates to encourage joint processes.	SG	4.2
(d) Consider removing the need for newspaper advertising when alternatives developed. This would require legislative change.	SG	4.2
(e) Maximise the potential of the planned Scotland's Environment website to ensure that datasets are easily accessible in forms that are useable by SEA practitioners.	SG and partners	4.4
(f) CAs should prioritise the scoping stage and restrict comments to key issues of importance at that stage (for example, helping RAs determine what is significant and the appropriate level of detail for the assessment).  Formal comments at the Environmental Report (ER) stage should be scaled back and focused clearly on the accuracy of how significant environmental effects have been identified and addressed.	CA	4.13
(g) CAs should identify appropriate ways to eliminate inconsistencies and requests for inappropriate levels of detail in their responses.	CA	4.13
(h) RAs should investigate the potential to develop shared services – internally and externally – to deliver their SEA functions more efficiently and take advantage of economies of scale.	RA	4.12
(i) RAs should commence SEAs early and engage in early and effective dialogue with CAs and stakeholders to enable them to highlight the important issues at the earliest opportunity in plan/policy development.	RA	4.5 4.12

## Recommendation R3

### Focusing assessments: Improving scoping and the evidence base

#### Summary

Effective scoping ensures SEAs are relevant, focused and proportionate to the PPS they assess. RAs, with CA support, should have confidence to tightly scope assessments to focus on the issues of real significance. To facilitate this:

- > RAs and CAs should have early discussions about the key issues and information required to assess the effects of a PPS. This can then be used as a vehicle for early and effective engagement on the significant environmental issues with stakeholders.
- > CAs should reprioritise their focus towards scoping and reduce inputs at later stages.
- > RAs should make better use of focused baseline information, particularly spatial information, to determine the scope and level of detail of assessments.

Recommendation	Lead	Chapter
(a) RAs should include well developed and focused environmental baselines in scoping reports to enable CAs and other stakeholders to clearly advise on its appropriateness for use in the ER.	RA	4.3 4.4
(b) In conjunction with (a), RAs should use baseline data to scope and focus the SEA objectives where these are used in the assessment.	RA	4.4
(c) Greater use should be made of spatial data to identify key issues of importance and to communicate these effectively.	RA	4.4
(d) CAs, in collaboration with RAs, should prepare clear, short and focused “key environmental issues and trends” documents for local authorities to help them identify the key issues for an assessment and the level of detail that may be suitable. This could be done collaboratively across CAs or individually and should be subject to periodic review.	CAs (with RAs and partners)	4.3 4.4 4.13
(e) RAs should clearly set out in scoping reports an analysis of the other relevant PPSs, focusing only on those of most significance. A “plan mapping” process could be used.	RA	4.3 4.7
(f) CAs should prioritise their efforts to the scoping stage to help RAs ensure ERs are proportionate and focused on the key issues.	CA	4.3 4.13
(g) RAs should use methods such as workshops, state of the environment reports and early consultation with stakeholders to support scoping consultations.	RA	4.3 4.14

## Recommendation R4 Ensuring SEA has a voice in decision making

### Summary

Integrated approaches where plan-making and the SEA are undertaken together plays a significant role in improving the influence of SEA and on the proportionality of the assessment.

RAs should adopt integrated approaches where assessors and policy-makers work together to ensure SEA findings are effectively considered and integrated into PPSs.

Early consideration of how SEA fits into the PPS preparation schedule is important for effective integration and for minimising delays.

Recommendation	Lead	Chapter
(a) RAs should adopt integrated approaches where the PPS preparation and SEA processes commence early and take place together. Plan-makers and assessors should work together to ensure that the SEA findings are jointly considered and integrated into the PPS. RAs should give early consideration as to how SEA fits into the PPS preparation schedule to minimise delays.	RA	4.5 4.10
(b) RAs should formally embed SEA key findings and required actions into PPSs to promote greater transparency and to directly link environmental considerations into the PPS.	RA	4.5 4.10
(c) Whilst it is recognised that the PPS should be the primary driver of alternatives, RAs where possible should use SEA (and where appropriate, SEA stakeholders) as a means of stimulating further PPS alternatives to maximise environmental outcomes whilst achieving PPS objectives.	RA/Stakeh'rs	4.7
(d) CAs should consider ways in which they may be able to offer early and more continuous informal engagement with RAs, with earlier provision of advice and information. This may be similar to the "key agency" role performed in the land use planning process. This will also require RAs to work in a fashion that facilitates such an approach.	CA/RA	4.13

## Recommendation R5 Greater clarity

### Summary

Environmental Reports should be made clearer, with greater clarity on (a) what significant environmental effects are likely and (b) the actions to be taken by policy-makers and decision takers to address adverse effects or achieve enhancements.

In particular, better use should be made of clear, free standing, non technical summaries that better support consultation processes.

Recommendation	Lead	Chapter
(a) RAs should improve the clarity of ERs, making it very clear to plan-makers and to stakeholders: - what significant environmental effects are likely (including from the different alternatives); and - the actions to be taken by plan makers and decision takers to address significant adverse environmental effects or achieve enhancements.	RA	4.5 4.9 4.10
(b) RAs should make Non Technical Summaries (NTSs) clearer, with emphasis on the key findings and important matters that have been addressed in the PPS, or need to be addressed through mitigation.	RA	4.5 4.9 4.10
(c) NTSs should be incorporated into the draft PPS so that the plan-maker, stakeholder and consultees can clearly identify the significant issues and/or the key changes that have been made to the PPS as a result of the SEA.	RA	4.5 4.10
(d) To ensure transparency, RAs should include in ERs a summary of the key changes made to the PPS (or in the choice of alternatives) during its preparation as a result of the SEA. This might also include an indication of where higher level PPSs have restricted the consideration of alternatives.	RA	4.5 4.10
(e) RAs adopting mitigation measures that require actions by lower tier PPSs should make these requirements on other authorities very clear and should work proactively to ensure that these measures are implemented by other RAs as and when appropriate.	RA	4.5 4.9 4.10

## Recommendation R6 Addressing environmental challenges: mitigation and enhancement

### Summary

Greater emphasis should be placed on using SEA to promote enhancements to PPSs and on ensuring that there is an effective framework in place for delivering mitigation measures identified to address significant adverse environmental effects.

In particular, RAs should clearly set out the mitigation measures are required and put in place a robust framework which clearly identifies measures to address potential effects and who should be responsible for implementing them and when.

Recommendation	Lead	Chapter
(a) A more detailed study to consider the effectiveness of mitigation implementation should be conducted. This should focus on evaluating how mitigation measures are being implemented and their success in addressing the environmental effects for which they were designed.	SG/ academia/ others	4.9
(b) RAs should provide clear information in ERs and post adoption statements about the mitigation measures identified and provide a clear and deliverable framework setting out how, when and by whom they will be implemented.	RA	4.9
(c) To secure added value from SEA, RAs should give greater emphasis to using SEA as an opportunity to maximise the environmental benefits of a PPS through enhancement.	RA	4.9
(d) RAs should embark on earlier preparation of post adoption statements and use them as a final check as to how environmental considerations have been embedded into PPS content.	RA	4.9 4.11
(e) The Scottish Government should continue to monitor the number of post adoption statement submissions and where appropriate enforce more timely submissions from RAs.	SG	4.11

## Recommendation R7 Working together to provide guidance and support

### Summary

As part of the current review of the SEA Toolkit, the Scottish Government in association with SEA practitioners and stakeholders should develop good practice advice in a number of critical areas, including: consideration of cumulative effects, consideration of alternatives, determining significance and achieving more proportionate SEAs. Enabling the sharing of information and advice between SEA practitioners and participants is also needed.

CAs can provide enhanced and better targeted support by adopting a more “continuous dialogue” style of engagement with RAs.

Recommendation	Lead	Chapter
(a) As part of the review of the SEA Toolkit, good practice and case studies should be published in the following areas: <b>Sharing Good Practice</b> (1) Preparing concise, focused environmental baselines and linking environmental objectives to baseline; (2) Case studies of typical significant environmental effects in relation to SEA topics and different PPS types; (3) Worked examples of cumulative effects (potentially adapting existing research on cumulative effects for use in Scottish practice); (4) Analysing other relevant PPSs and making effective use of the PPS hierarchy to streamline assessments; (5) How to set out effective programmes for implementing mitigation and enhancement measures; (6) Examples of clear post adoption statements. <b>New Guidance</b> (7) Priority topics for future guidance includes: (i) Effective monitoring; (ii) Achieving proportionality in SEAs, including examples of innovative and concise, but compliant, approaches to ERs; (iii) Considering human health; (iv) Considering material assets.	SG, CA, RA, SEA Forum Members, Stakeh'rs, Academia	4.3 4.4 4.5 4.6 4.7 4.8 4.9 4.11 4.12 4.15
(b) Investigate the potential for all guidance to be incorporated into a single web based portal for all Scottish information and advice.	SG	4.3
(c) The national SEA Forum, as well as other channels such as SNH's Sharing Best Practice series, should be used to discuss, develop and promote case studies to provide examples to RAs. These may focus on those issues that are difficult to address in formal guidance.	SG, CA, RAs, SEA Forum Members, Stakeh'rs	4.15
(d) Consider whether a discussion/information sharing network would be useful and, if so, establish such a network to agreed specification and function.	All	4.15

(e) Provide specialist training and/or sharing experiences in dealing with SEA topics proving most difficult, specifically: - soil - human health - climate change - material assets - consideration of cumulative effects.	SG/CAs/ Academia	4.3 4.6 4.15
(f) RAs should establish training events aimed specifically at plan-makers and/or stakeholders to help them understand the SEA process and interpret the SEA findings into discussions on policy and PPS content.	RAs	4.1 4.15

## Recommendation R8 Assisting delivery of climate change targets

### Summary

SEA should be afforded an enhanced role in delivering the Scottish Government's climate change policy objectives. RAs should use SEA more effectively to meet their responsibilities under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and should also better align indicators used in assessments and monitoring to established national and local climate change objectives.

Recommendation	Lead	Chapter
(a) RAs should use SEA as a vehicle for demonstrating how they have met the public bodies duties (and where applicable section 72 duties) under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act.	RA	4.17
(b) RAs should scope in climatic factors in cases where the impact of a particular qualifying PPS may be relatively small but an SEA is being taken forward in any case.	RA	4.3 4.17
(c) RAs should align climate change indicators used in SEA assessments and monitoring to established national and local indicators.	RA	4.11 4.17
(d) RAs should, where possible, use simple carbon quantification tools in SEA's (particularly in relation to sectors such as planning, transport and energy) in order to allow more accurate consideration of the carbon impacts of PPS alternatives.	RA, SEPA, SG	4.4 4.17

## Recommendation R9 A more engaging process

### Summary

Stakeholders have a vital role to play in helping RAs to scope SEAs and to advise on environmental issues. RAs should engage stakeholders earlier in the SEA process and in particular the scoping stage to secure early input into determining the key issues for the assessment.

Recommendation	Lead	Chapter
(a) RAs should involve stakeholders beyond the three CAs at the scoping stage and encourage/facilitate more continuous dialogue with stakeholders through the assessment process.	RA	4.3 4.13 4.14
(b) RAs should as far as possible combine engagement and consultation on the SEA and the PPS so that these are a single process.	RA	4.5 4.10 4.12
(c) RAs should develop innovative ways to give stakeholders effective opportunities to make their views known through a variety of mechanisms, including social media.	RA	4.5 4.14
(d) Develop an email alert service for consultations to ensure that stakeholders are informed of live and upcoming SEA consultations.	SG SEA Gateway	4.14
(e) Public bodies should be encouraged play a more prominent role in early engagement with SEA in order to provide targeted information and advice to RAs about the key issues of significance.	Scottish public bodies	4.1 4.14

## Recommendation R10 Continuing to reflect on experience

### Summary

This review has not been able to focus on some issues in detail. Accordingly, consideration should be given to further work in the following areas:

Recommendation	Lead	Chapter
(a) A more detailed study to consider the effectiveness of mitigation implementation. This should focus on evaluating how mitigation measures are being implemented and their success in addressing the environmental effects for which they were designed.	SG/ Academia/ CA/RA	4.9 4.10 4.11
(b) To investigate the need to strengthen and formalise adoption procedures in order to ensure the SEA and views expressed are fully taken into account. Depending on the findings, there may be a need to consider the scope for the CAs or others to be afforded an enhanced scrutiny role.	SG/ Academia/ CA/RA	4.9 4.10 4.11
(c) Investigate options for the development of a formal auditing process to sample SEA processes documents on quality and compliance issues.	SG/ Academia/ CA/RA	4.5 4.14
(d) A study of how monitoring processes are working. This will need to take place once there are sufficient examples of SEA monitoring regimes established and results reported.	SG/ Academia/ CA/RA	4.11
(e) A focused assessment of the relative costs and benefits of SEA to Scotland's environment and economy.	SG/ Academia/ CA/RA	4.12



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[www.sepa.org.uk](http://www.sepa.org.uk)

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