

Report

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 June 2023
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Strategic Environmental Assessment Progress 2022 - 2023
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ inform the Committee of the progress in carrying out Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) on the Council's policies, plans, programmes and strategies

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendations:-

- (1) that the statutory requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) to inform the development of Council led policies, plans, programmes and strategies be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires the Council, as a 'Responsible Authority', to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment of all its policies, plans, programmes and strategies (plans).
- 3.2. The SEA process helps to integrate environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans. The SEA is carried out in a staged process alongside the preparation of the proposed plan. Throughout the process, the plan can be adjusted to mitigate negative, or enhance beneficial, environmental effects.
- 3.3. SEAs help to promote the Council's commitment to sustainability and are a key priority within the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy. SEAs are a valuable resource in raising the profile of environmental considerations and for facilitating holistic approaches to address the climate and nature emergencies.
- 3.4. A Corporate SEA Working Group meets regularly to oversee the progression of SEAs across the Council. Its remit also includes development and mainstreaming of employee knowledge and understanding of the SEA process and development of the skills needed to undertake assessments. The Group is chaired by the Planning Officer (SEA).
- 3.5. The SEA process is further supported by the publication of the biennial South Lanarkshire State of the Environment Report which provides the baseline environmental data. The 2021 edition of this report was approved by the Executive Committee in March 2022. Work on the 2023 edition is currently progressing.

- 3.6. As part of the SEA process, the Council is also required to formally engage with the statutory Consultation Authorities (Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and NatureScot). This is facilitated by the Scottish Government's SEA Gateway.
- 3.7. In March 2009, the Executive Committee delegated authority to the Chief Executive to make determinations on whether a Council led plan is exempt from SEA or if a full SEA would be carried out. In January 2020, the Chief Executive delegated this authority to the Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources). These determinations are collated by the SEA Gateway and issued to the statutory Consultation Authorities for consultation and agreement. This process is facilitated within the Council by the Planning Officer (SEA).
- 3.8. Although it is not a legal requirement to report on SEA progress to Committee, it is considered good practice to keep members informed.

4. Progress in Carrying Out SEAs

- 4.1. The Council has a statutory duty to consider and carry out an SEA for all its policies, plans, programmes and strategies as they are being developed or refreshed. During 2022/2023, a number of Council led plans were subject to SEA.
- 4.2. The SEA Act requires the Council to assess whether plans are within the scope of the legislation and whether SEA is required. This can be considered through either Pre-screening or Screening.
- 4.3. Three assessments of plans were completed at the Pre-screening stage. At this stage, the Council informed the Scottish Government's SEA Gateway of its opinion that these plans were exempt from SEA as their implementation would have no, or minimal, effect on the environment. These are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Pre-screening completions 2022/2023

Lead Resource	Plan
Community and Enterprise	Economic Development Strategy
Finance and Corporate	Digital Strategy
South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Ltd	Leisure and Culture Strategy

- 4.4. Four plans were finalised at Screening stage. A formal determination was made and agreed by the Consultation Authorities that further SEA work was not required for them. These are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Screening completions 2022/2023

Lead Resource	Plan
Community and Enterprise	Supporting Planning Guidance: Community Infrastructure Assessment
	Tourism Strategy
	Development Framework Hagshaw Energy Cluster: Planning for Net Zero
	Supporting Planning Guidance: Local Nature Reserves

- 4.5. During 2022/2023, the Community Plan, Council Plan, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy and the Local Housing Strategy were all subject to full SEA. Workshops, involving staff from across the Council and partners, were held to facilitate

the scope of each assessment. These were considered by the Consultation Authorities and agreed. Following a comprehensive process, the assessment findings for each of these plans were set out in Environmental Reports and submitted to the SEA Gateway. The conclusions of the four individual assessments were well received by the Consultation Authorities.

4.6. The final stage of the SEA process is the preparation and submission of a Post Adoption Statement to the SEA Gateway. The Post Adoption Statement sets out the key findings from the SEA and how these have been taken account of in the final adopted plan. In 2022/2023, the Community Plan, Council Plan and the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy were adopted, and Post Adoption Statements were submitted, as statutorily required. The Post Adoption Statement for the Local Housing Strategy was prepared and submitted in May 2023.

4.7. The Strategic Environmental Assessment work continues to promote the protection and enhancement of the South Lanarkshire environment for our people and communities.

5. Employee Implications

5.1. SEAs are resourced by existing staff.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. SEAs are resourced within existing budgets.

7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

7.1. Strategic Environmental Assessment is a valuable tool for the Council and partners in strategic planning. It safeguards South Lanarkshire's natural and built environment and is a useful tool to help address both the climate and nature emergencies.

8. Other Implications

8.1. Failure to make a formal determination in relation to a plan could result in the SEA process having to be restarted, leading to a delay in the development of the plan. Council actions in relation to SEA are also open to legal challenge and it is, therefore, important to ensure compliance with the legislation.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a significant change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required. The report is for information only and consultation on its contents is not required.

David Booth
Executive Director

26 May 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ Focussed on people and their needs
- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable

Previous References

- ◆ Executive Committee, 25 March 2009

List of Background Papers

- ◆ South Lanarkshire State of the Environment Report 2021 (approved by Executive Committee, March 2022)

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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