

Report

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	26 May 2021
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Strategic Environmental Assessment Progress
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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 SEA to inform the development of Council led policies, plans, programmes and strategies be noted; and
- (2) that progress in conducting SEAs 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 is a key priority within the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy. The Corporate SEA Working Group continues to meet 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).

3.4. 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 2019 edition of this report was approved by the Executive Committee in February 2020. The 2021 edition is currently being prepared and will be reported to the Executive Committee by early 2022.

- 3.5. As part of the SEA process, the Council is also required to formally consult with the statutory Consultation Authorities (Historic Environment Scotland, Scotland Environment Protection Agency and NatureScot, formerly known as Scottish Natural Heritage). This is facilitated by the Scottish Government's SEA Gateway.
- 3.6. 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 of 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).
- 3.7. Although it is not a legal requirement to report on SEA progress to Committee, it is considered good practice to keep members informed.

4. SEA's Progress

- 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 2020/2021, a number of Council led plans were subject to SEA. Due to Covid19, development of some plans, for example, the Open Space Strategy and the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, was delayed and this is reflected in the SEA work undertaken in the past year.
- 4.2. The SEA Act requires the Council to assess whether plans are within the scope of the legislation and whether a 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 their 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 2020/2021

Lead Resource	Plans
Community and Enterprise	Consultation, Communication and Engagement Strategy for Planning and Building Standards
Finance and Corporate	Community Engagement and Participation Strategy
	Community Wealth Building Strategy

- 4.4. No plans were finalised at Screening stage during 2020/2021.
- 4.5. Three plans are currently subject to full SEA and are at Environment Report stage. Details of these plans are set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Plans at Environment Report stage, March 2021

Lead Resource	Plans
Community and Enterprise	Air Quality Strategy
	Contaminated Land Strategy
	Local Development Plan 2

- 4.6. A final Environment Report for Ministers was prepared and submitted alongside the final modified Local Development Plan 2 in February 2021.

- 4.7. The final stage of the SEA process is the preparation and submission of a Post Adoption Statement to the SEA Gateway. In 2020/2021, no Council led plans were subject to this stage.
- 4.8. During 2020/2021, work on translating the State of the Environment Report to Glow, the digital learning platform, was further progressed. This initiative, the first of its kind in Scotland is available as a teaching resource in our schools. The State of the Environment Glow site assists teachers in planning relevant lessons and also contains a useful 'who's who' element which facilitates improved collaboration between schools and officers with regards to environmental matters.
- 4.9. 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. Other Implications**
- 7.1. 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.
- 8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**
- 8.1. 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 helps to raise the profile of climatic factors, including climate change.
- 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.

Michael McGlynn
Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

7 May 2021

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ Make communities safer, stronger and sustainable

Previous References

- ◆ Executive Committee - 25 March 2009
- ◆ Executive Committee - 13 May 2020

List of Background Papers

- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council Sustainable Development Strategy 2017 – 2022 (approved by Executive Committee, December 2017)
- ◆ South Lanarkshire State of the Environment Report 2019 (approved by Executive Committee, February 2020)

Contact for Further Information

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

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