

Report

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	29 June 2022
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Strategic Environmental Assessment Progress 2021 - 2022
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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. SEAs are a valuable resource in raising the profile of environmental considerations and for facilitating holistic approaches to address the climate and ecological emergencies.
- 3.4. 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).
- 3.5. 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.

- 3.6. As part of the SEA process, the Council is also required to formally consult 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 2021/2022, 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. Four 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
Housing and Technical	Anti-social Behaviour Policy
Community and Enterprise	Litter Strategy
Social Work	Community Justice, Communications and Engagement Strategy
	Strategic Commissioning Plan

- 4.4. Two 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 2021/2022

Lead Resource	Plans
Community and Enterprise	Supporting Planning Guidance: Carrying out development at a dwellinghouse
	Supporting Planning Guidance: Electric vehicle charge points

- 4.5. The new Community Plan and Council Plan are currently subject to a full SEA. In March 2022, workshops were held to facilitate the scope of their assessments. A

Scoping Report for each of these plans was prepared and submitted to the SEA Gateway for consideration by the Consultation Authorities thereafter. Both plans will be assessed, and the findings set out in Environmental Reports for consideration by the statutory Consultation Authorities in May/June 2022.

- 4.6. The Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy was subject to a full SEA in 2021/2022. The findings of the SEA were published in an Environmental Report and issued to the SEA Gateway in March 2022. Following approval of the Strategy by Committee, a Post Adoption Statement will be prepared setting out how the SEA findings have been taken account of in the final adopted Strategy.
- 4.7. The final stage of the SEA process is the preparation and submission of a Post Adoption Statement to the SEA Gateway. In 2021/2022, the Local Development Plan 2 was adopted in June 2021 and a Post Adoption Statement setting out how the findings of the SEA had been considered in the adopted Plan was prepared and submitted to the SEA Gateway as statutorily required.
- 4.8. In March 2021, it was ascertained that no further SEA work would be carried out for the current Air Quality Strategy and Contaminated Land Strategy as work on these strategies would begin afresh.
- 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 is a useful tool to help address both the climate and ecological emergencies.

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 (Community and Enterprise Resources)

8 June 2022

Link(s) to Council Values/Vision/Priorities

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

Previous References

- ◆ Executive Committee, 25 March 2009
- ◆ Executive Committee, 2 March 2022

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 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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