

## SHETLAND'S LOCAL PLACE PLANS

### Leaflet 18 - Using Environmental Assessment Topics to Test Your Ideas

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#### Why think about environmental assessment?

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement for many public plans in Scotland under the **Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005**. While Local Place Plans (LPPs) themselves are not automatically subject to SEA, using SEA topics as a checklist helps communities make sure proposals for land and building use are sustainable and environmentally responsible.

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#### The 10 SEA Topics

SEA considers the likely significant effects of development on these environmental factors:

1. **Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna** – Will proposals harm, protect or enhance habitats and species?
  2. **Population and Human Health** – Will proposals improve wellbeing and reduce health risks?
  3. **Soil** – How will development affect soil quality or lead to erosion?
  4. **Water** – How will proposals impact water quality, drainage, or flood risk?
  5. **Air** – How will they affect air quality or emissions?
  6. **Climatic Factors** – Will they help mitigate or adapt to climate change?
  7. **Material Assets** – Will they use land, buildings, and infrastructure efficiently?
  8. **Cultural Heritage (including Archaeology)** – Will they protect historic sites and traditions?
  9. **Landscape** – Will they respect and enhance local character and views?
  10. **Inter-relationships between these factors** – How do impacts on one topic affect others (e.g., soil erosion affecting water quality and biodiversity)?
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#### How to apply SEA topics to your LPP

For each proposal in your Local Place Plan:

- **Identify potential impacts** – Positive or negative for each SEA topic
  - **Consider alternatives** – Could the same goal be achieved with less impact?
  - **Add mitigation measures** – Steps to reduce harm (e.g., planting trees, using permeable surfaces)
  - **Look for enhancements** – Opportunities to improve biodiversity, heritage, or community wellbeing
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#### Links to planning policy

- **Shetland Local Development Plan (2014)**  
SEA topics align with LDP policies on **Natural Heritage (NH1–NH7)**, **Historic Environment (HE1–HE4)**, **Water Environment**, and **Sustainable Development (GP1)**.
  - **National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)**  
SEA topics reflect NPF4 policies on **Climate (Policy 1)**, **Biodiversity (Policy 3)**, **Natural Places (Policy 4)**, **Historic Assets (Policy 7)**, **Flood Risk (Policy 22)**, and **Design & Place Quality (Policy 14)**.
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## Links to The Shetland Partnership Plan

SEA thinking supports the Partnership Plan priorities:

- **Participation** – Communities shape sustainable proposals
- **People** – Health and wellbeing considered in land use
- **Place** – Protecting Shetland's unique environment
- **Money** – Efficient use of resources and infrastructure

## Some examples in an LPP context

- Housing: Check soil stability, flood risk, and energy efficiency
  - Transport: Assess air quality, climate impact, and landscape effects
  - Energy: Consider biodiversity, visual impact, and material assets
  - Community spaces: Can enhance cultural heritage and human health
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## For information and support:

- [National Planning Framework 4 - gov.scot](#)
- [What is a Development Plan? – Shetland Islands Council](#)
- [The Shetland Partnership Plan – Shetland Partnership](#)
- [Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\) - Environmental assessment - gov.scot](#)