

Sustainability Appraisal English experience (warts 'n' all!)

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[presented by: Angus Morrison-Saunders
(Murdoch University)]



The United Kingdom...



This presentation is
about England...

Outline

- Background to requirement for Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
- Spatial planning in England
- SA guidance
- SA process
- SA practice

Background to SEA in England

- SEA Directive adopted 2001, in force mid-2004 in 27 EU member states. Implemented by statutory instrument in England (details for processes not stipulated)
- Kiev Protocol adopted 2003 by United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Implications for consideration of health.

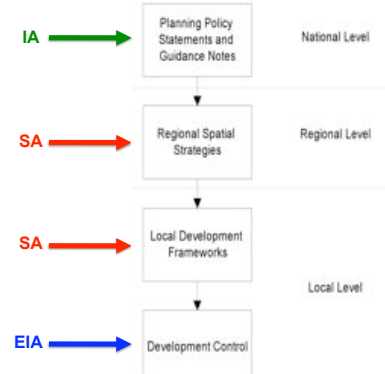


[UNECE wins IAIA's 2010 Regional Award](#)

Background to SA in England

- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by 2008 Planning Act)
 - Introduces new planning system into England & Wales and requires **Sustainability Appraisal**
- Overlaps with SEA... Solution?
 - A combined SA/SEA approach

Planning hierarchy



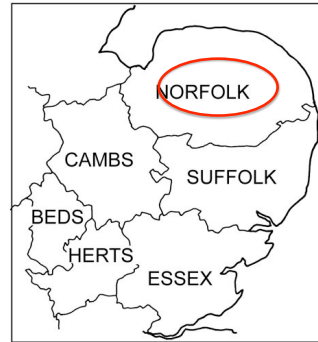
The English Regions



- 9 regions
- each has to produce spatial plan for 10-15 yr period to control development
- must be compliant with national policy
 - *Regional Spatial Strategies*



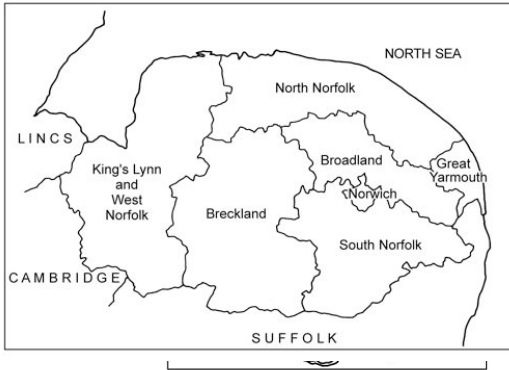
Planning – local level (Eastern Region - counties)



- local authorities within each region
 - e.g. Norfolk
- most regions have 2 tier system of counties and districts
- counties produce spatial plans (minerals, waste, strategic highways)
 - *Local Development Frameworks*



Planning – local level (Norfolk districts)



- where 2 tiers, district produces spatial plan (Local Dev Framework) covering all other planning matters

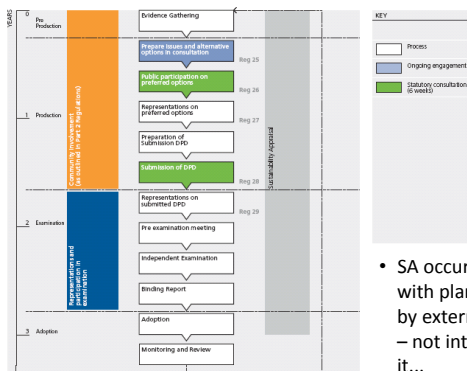
SA Guidance

- Guidance introduced in 2005 detailing how to conduct SA whilst complying with SEA Directive (i.e. the combined SA/SEA approach)
- Some plans have been thrown out for the SA not complying with the SEA Directive – why?
 - SEA Directive requires documentation of positive and negative impacts on environmental variables
 - SA requires comparison of potential plan alternatives against sustainability criteria; process reveals a ‘winner’ but can fail to document specific impacts

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005), "Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents", available at <http://www.communiDes.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/142520.pdf>

SA process

Figure 4.1 – The Development Plan Document Process



- SA occurs in parallel with plan making (often by external consultants) – not integral part of it...

SA process

- Relies on development of sustainability objectives (mostly chosen by consultants?)
- Indicators are developed to provide measures of the extent to which draft plan policies achieve sustainability objectives (targets can be set based on standards)



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SA process – e.g. biomass planting Stakeholder objectives – 2 regions

East Midlands Objectives	South West Objectives
Minimise transport movements	Minimise additional vehicle movements
Enhance rural quality of life	Enhance rural quality of life
Increase water availability	Maintain water availability
Improve public enjoyment of the countryside	Improve public connection with the countryside
Safeguard the historic environment	Safeguard the historic environment
Reduce energy costs to the consumer	Reduce energy costs
Increase amount of energy produced locally	Increase amount of energy produced and used locally
Increase the viability of local economies	Increase the viability of local economies
Enhance tourism potential	Maintain tourism resource
Enhance viability of farming	Enhance viability of farming
Maximise waste management opportunities	Maximise waste management opportunities
Enhance employment	Enhance rural employment
Enhance local landscape character	Enhance local landscape character
Improve water quality	Improve water quality
Protect soil resources	Protect and improve soil resources
Improve air quality	Improve air quality
Protect and enhance biodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
Maintain food security	

- vague 'aspirational' wording of objectives
- unique to context
- objectives not exactly same – but very similar...
- access to same guidance
- national stakeholders (e.g. Env Agency) influence

SA process – example indicators

A SAFEGUARD THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
[A2] Loss or damage to historic landscapes
B PROTECT AND ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY
[B1] Bird population indices - farmland birds
[B3] Characteristic plant and invertebrate species/groups
[B4] Butterfly abundance
C REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS
[C2] CO ₂ , NO, CH ₄ emissions by <i>biomass installation type</i> over lifecycle not just combustion of biomass

Table shows first three objectives and associated indicators

Once full framework developed – every indicator measured for each plan policy alternative; i.e. to select the best alternative

SA practice so far...

(first round commenced 2005, only recently completed – no time to build on experience yet)

- Weak sustainability outcomes
- Timescales too short (not intra-generational)
- Reductionist (i.e. incapable of taking holistic overview)
- No obligation on planners to act on SA findings
- SAs don't identify acceptable tradeoffs (between socio-economic gain and environmental loss)
- Significant improvements needed to deal with above points

Recent analysis of English experience...

Sustainability-focused impact assessment: English experiences

Riki Therivel, Gemma Christian, Claire Craig,
Russell Grinham, David Mackins, James Smith, Terry Sneller,
Richard Turner, Dee Walker and Motoko Yamane

This article considers whether strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of local-level spatial plans in England is leading to a high level of protection of the environment. It is based on an analysis of the sustainability appraisals (SA/SEA) of 45 core strategies, interviews with 14 planners, and 14 questionnaire responses. The findings suggest that the plans will have beneficial social and economic effects, but between mildly positive and mildly negative environmental effects. SA/SEAs act as an environmental counterweight to the plans' more social and economic focus, but have only limited effectiveness. They do not identify what type of development would be environmentally sustainable, nor what would be an acceptable trade-off between environmental costs and social/economic benefits; nor do they lead to environmentally sustainable plans. Significant changes in the SA/SEA and planning processes would be needed to deal with these problems.

Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal, 27(2), June 2009, pages 155–168

Evaluating SA practice...

Bond, A J and A Morrison-Saunders (2010), "Re-evaluating Sustainability Assessment: aligning the vision and the practice", *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*. In press, published online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2010.01.007>

Bond, A and A Morrison-Saunders (2009) Sustainability Appraisal: Jack of all Trades, Master of None?, *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* 27(4):321-329

Bond A and A Morrison-Saunders 2010 Transition Challenge for Sustainability Assessment, presented at: *IAIA10 Transitioning to the Green Economy*, 30th Annual Conference of the International Association for Impact Assessment, 6-11 April 2010, Geneva, Switzerland, (Concurrent Session: 'State of the Art of Sustainable Assessment') Available: <http://www.iaia.org/iaia10/proceedings/submitted-papers.aspx>