

Meeting No 5: 4th December 2007**Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report**

1. Introduction

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report has been circulated to the Steering Group Members. The purpose of this paper is to highlight particular areas of the report upon which discussions during the steering group meeting can be most usefully focus.

2. Purpose of SEA Scoping Report

The Responsible Authority, in consultation with the statutory Consultation Authorities (Historic Scotland, SEPA and SNH), are required to consider appropriate consultation periods, scope and level of detail that will be appropriate for the Environmental Report of the SEA.

The purpose of the SEA Scoping Report is to set out sufficient information on the Firth of Clyde Marine Spatial Plan (FoCMSP) to enable the Consultation Authorities to form a view on the aspects under consideration.

The Scoping Report was submitted to the Scottish Government's SEA Gateway, on the 5th of November for distribution to the Consultation Authorities. Under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 responses to the consultation process must be made within 5 weeks. The project team would also welcome any additional comments on the scoping report from Steering Group members.

3. Content of the SEA Scoping Report

The Scoping Report is in 7 Sections:

- Section 1 Summary of key facts about the FoCMSP
- Section 2 Further details of the FoCMSP and its general context
- Section 3 The relationship with other Plans, Programmes and Strategies
- Section 4 Outline of environmental baseline and potential issues
- Section 5 Outlines the proposed approach to the SEA
- Section 6 Outlines proposed consultation timescales and methods
- Section 7 Key milestones for the preparation of the Plan

4. Areas for Further Consideration

The SEA process is designed to assist in evaluating and, more importantly, improving the environmental sustainability of Policies (strategies), Programmes or Plans (PPPs). SEA examines the potential environmental impacts of *alternative* PPP objectives against a set of environmental objectives/targets.

In this context, the Steering Group are asked to focus firstly on the proposed high level strategic options for the FoCMSP and secondly on the proposed SEA objectives against which these will be assessed.

4.1 Scenarios

The four high level strategic options or scenarios for the development of the FoCMSP are set out in Section: 5.2 Alternative Options for the Firth of Clyde Marine Spatial Plan

The Scenarios are:

Scenario 1 Status Quo

Scenario 2 Biodiversity and Habitats

Scenario 3 Development and Growth

Scenario 4 People and Society

Three of these alternatives focus the plan on delivering policies with an emphasis on environmental, economic or social benefits; the fourth is a “continue as we are” alternative, under which no FoCMSP would be developed. These options are broadly based on those identified within the Scottish National Planning framework.

Application of SEA will assist in determining which of these scenarios, or as anticipated, combination of elements from different scenarios, should inform the development of lower level objectives, policies, proposals and targets within the FoCMSP.

The steering group are asked for their views on choice of these alternatives as a starting point for the development of the FoCMSP.

4.2 Sea Objectives and Criteria

The proposed framework within which these and other lower level options will be assessed are set out in section: 5.4.1 SEA Objectives and Criteria

The potential impacts of the four scenarios identified are required to be assessed against a suite of SEA objectives and criteria, listed in Table 3. This process will inform the formulation of a final favoured option that will determine the overall balance of emphasis among the Plan’s three high level social, economic and environmental aims. The selected option will inform the development of the FoCMSP’s lower level objectives, policies and proposals. Alternative options for these lower level elements will themselves be subject to assessment against the selected SEA objectives and criteria.

The steering group are asked to consider and comment upon the SEA Objectives and Criteria contained within Table 3.

5. Comments

The Steering Group Members are requested to submit any written comments to the Project Team by Thursday 13th December to enable them to be collated with those received from the Consultation Authorities.