

Appendix J Sustainability Appraisal Signposting

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J1 BACKGROUND

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the Wash SMP has been provided as a 'signposting exercise' as agreed with the Environment Agency and stakeholders at the commencement of this exercise. The SA is intended to evaluate the social, economic and environmental effects of a plan or strategy. As a process it has strong links with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process which has a focus solely on environmental effect. In this respect, SAs typically provide an inclusive SEA, so the SEA provides the environmental assessment for the SA, with the wider SA then assessing the social and economic effects.

The situation with the SMP is slightly different. The decision has been taken nationally by the Environment Agency to provide a stand alone SEA for SMPs, but to provide a signposting exercise for the SA. The SA signposting exercise therefore needs to refer to both the SMP and the SEA (Environmental Report) in order to demonstrate that the appropriate process has been followed and constituent steps provided.

J2 THE SA SIGNPOSTING EXERCISE

Figure J1 provides an outline of the SA, SEA and SMP process and illustrates how the three processes are linked together to provide a final deliverable of the SMP (including a SA signposting) and a stand alone SEA Environmental Report. It is important to remember that the SMP process itself is considered by many to be akin to a large scale SA, since the SMP guidance provides a clearly defined approach to develop policy in response to social, economic and environmental drivers. The signposting exercise therefore simply directs the observer towards elements of the SEA and SMP process where considerations and measures recommended in government guidance (the key source has been the DCLGP document on the provision of SA for RSS and LDF documents) have been followed. Figure J1 provides a graphical account of where SA measures have been provided within the SEA and SMP process via a series of coloured flags. The intent is to offer a simple record of where in the SMP or SEA key stages of the SA have been addressed. The small right-pointing flags (in the right column) denote the relevant elements of the SMP document; the corresponding left-pointing flags show the corresponding parts of the SA.

In summary the SMP provides policies in response to social, economic and environmental drivers. The SA 'signposts' the relevant considerations in the SMP itself.

J3 SA ISSUES AND THE SMP

The SEA for the SMP has been scoped to include the wider human environment (including heritage features and quality of life factors etc); as such the majority of key issues which the SA would be expected to address have been provided within the SEA. In addition to this, the considerations within the SEA have (in response to SMP guidance) provided the core materials which have shaped the development and informed the selection of SMP policy.

The actual range of issues which lie outside the scope of the SEA, but within the scope of the SMP are therefore relatively small. As the SMP is finalised, such issues are clearly expressed and discussed in the SA appendix of the main SMP document.

J4 WIDER ISSUES OF PROCESS COMPLIANCE

The wider project planning of the SMP has ensured that the three processes are linked chronologically and common consultation periods provided. The SMP, SEA and SA signposting all therefore share common consultation and the requirements of the SEA and SA are factored into the Action Plan which accompanies the SMP. It is considered that the process to date has provided a full account of SA issues.

Integration with the SEA Process and the assessment of environmental, social and economic factors.

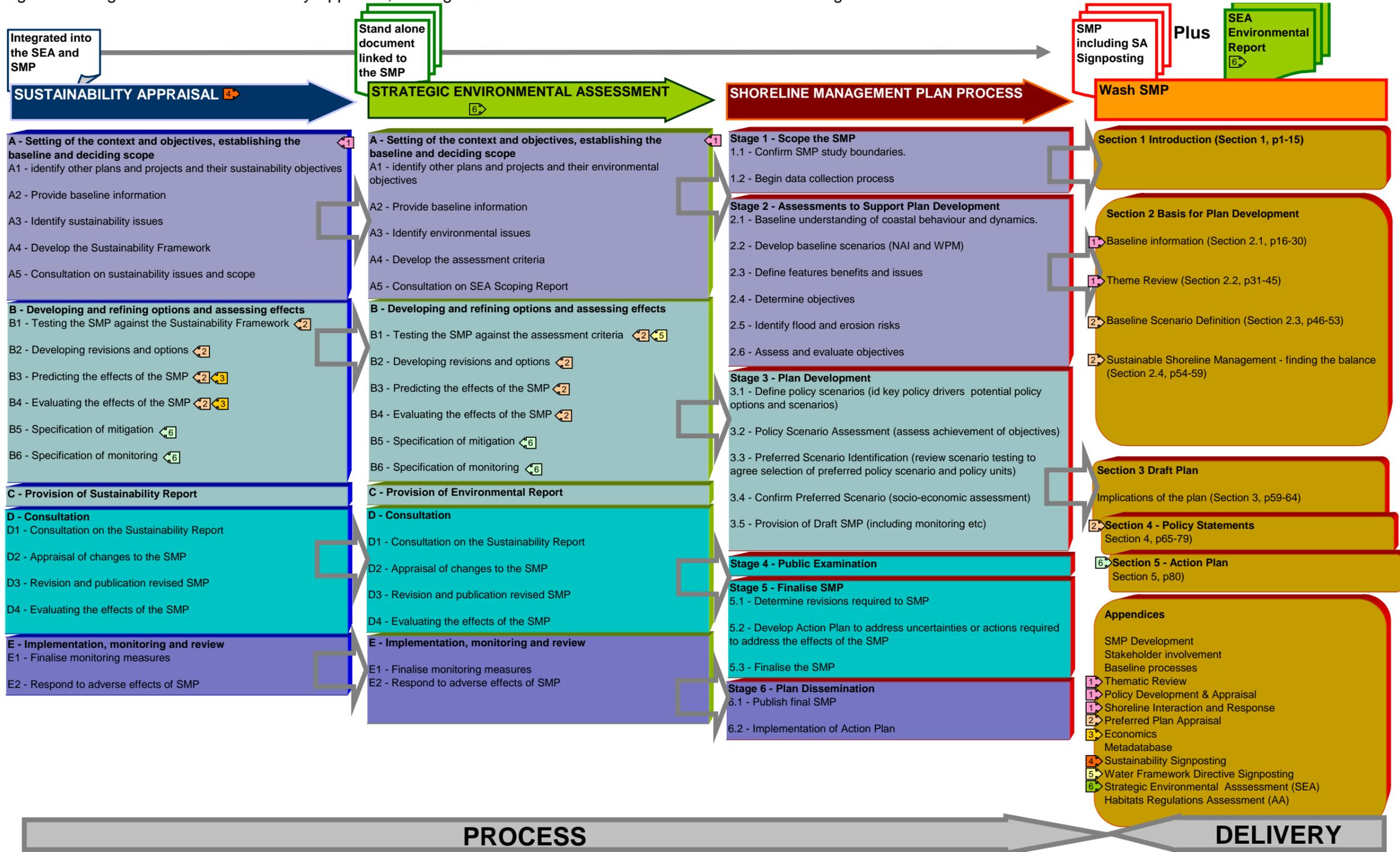
The SEA process outlined a series of environmental Issues that are considered to represent the key issues relating to the Wash coast. Some issues identified were generic (relating to the coast as a whole) others were specific to the actual nature of the Wash. Collectively the suite of issues is considered to provide a summary of the matters relating to the environment in its wider context. The environment within the terms of the SEA Regulations (and accompanying guidance) includes not only habitats and species, but also receptors which support life (air, water etc) and a consideration of the social and cultural environment (so features which support communities – tourism, commerce etc). Additionally cultural heritage features are also considered part of ‘the environment’.

Within the scope of this definition of the environment the following issues have been identified within the SEA:

- 1) Threats from tidal inundation to approximately ten percent of the nation's high quality agricultural land;**
- 2) Protection of vulnerable, low lying coastal communities and the socio-economic features and issues which support them in regard to the effects of sea level rise;**
- 3) The loss of designated intertidal habitat located seaward of existing defences due to sea level rise;**
- 4) Threat to biodiversity due to sea level rise and the interactions between various coastal habitat types;**
- 5) Maintenance of environmental conditions to support biodiversity and the quality of life; and**
- 6) Potential threats to low lying historic and archaeological features located behind current defences, in areas adjacent to early defences and the loss of the record this provides of settlement in The Wash.**

This list of issues has been drawn fairly widely and includes matters which are also social and economic (typically a consideration of the SA). The SMP is in itself limited to the factors that it can affect and it is considered that there are no remaining social or economic factors (ie factors that would be considered in an SA, as opposed to the environmental focus of the SEA) which have not been considered in the SMP process. The SMP guidance makes it extremely clear that the economic assessment of the plan is limited to certain parameters and these are specified as a cost benefits ratio for the approximate cost of the frontage as a multiplier of the cost of its defence (see appendix H – Economics). It is considered that this economic analysis in addition to the SEA assessment encompasses all of the factors that should be assessed within an SA.

Figure J1 Integration of the Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Shoreline Management Plan Processes



Key: the small right-pointing flags (in the right column) denote the relevant elements of the SMP document; the corresponding left-pointing flags show the corresponding parts of the SA.