

Appendix J

Sustainability appraisal signposting

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J1 Background

The sustainability appraisal (SA) for the North Norfolk SMP has been provided as a 'signposting exercise' as agreed with the partners and key stakeholders at the start 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 mainly on environmental effects. In this respect, SAs typically provide an inclusive SEA. The SEA therefore provides the environmental assessment for the SA, with the wider SA assessing the social and economic effects.

The situation with the SMP is slightly different. The decision has been taken nationally by Defra to provide a stand-alone SEA for SMPs. The Environment Agency-led SMPs in Anglian also include a signposting exercise for the SA. The SA signposting exercise therefore needs to refer both to the SMP and the SEA (environmental report) to show that the correct process has been followed and constituent steps provided.

J2 The SA signposting exercise

Figure J1 gives an outline of the SA, SEA and SMP processes. It shows how the three processes are linked together to provide a final 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 similar to a large-scale SA, as the SMP guidance provides a clearly-defined approach to developing policy in response to social, economic and environmental drivers. The signposting exercise therefore simply directs the reader 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 in the SEA and SMP process through 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.

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 historic environment features, quality of life factors etc). This means that most of the key issues the SA would be expected to address have been considered in the SEA. Also, the considerations in the

SEA have (in response to SMP guidance) provided the core materials that have shaped the development and informed the selection of SMP policies.

The actual range of issues that lie outside the scope of the SEA, but within the scope of the SMP, is therefore relatively small.

J4 Wider issues of process compliance

The wider project planning of the SMP has made sure that the three processes are linked chronologically and that they have common consultation periods. The SMP, SEA and SA signposting will all therefore share a common consultation period. The requirements of the SEA and SA are factored into the action plan that accompanies the final SMP. We believe that the process to date has provided a full account of SA issues.

The SEA process outlined a series of environmental issues that are considered to represent the key issues relating to the north Norfolk coast. Some issues identified were generic (relating to the coast as a whole), while others were specific to the actual nature of the north Norfolk coast. 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 that support life (air, water etc) and a consideration of the social and cultural environment (that is, features that support communities – tourism, commerce etc). Also, cultural heritage features are considered part of ‘the environment’. Within the scope of this definition of the environment, the following issues have been identified in the SEA:

- Threats from inappropriate coastal management to coastal communities, traditional activities and culture.
- Protection of coastal towns and settlements and maintenance of features that support tourism and local commerce.
- Threats from inappropriate coastal management on the coastal landscape and AONB with regard to providing a mosaic of landscape features that is characteristic of the north Norfolk coast.
- Need to maintain a balance of providing navigation and access to channels behind barrier islands while recognising their value to local communities.
- Potential loss of historic and archaeological features on a dynamic coastline.
- Threats to biodiversity on a dynamic coast and the interactions between various coastal habitat types.
- Threats to the environmental conditions to support biodiversity and the quality of life.
- Continuation of coastal processes needed to maintain the integrity of critical coastal habitat and species.

This list of issues has been drawn fairly widely and includes matters that 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 we believe there are no other social or economic factors (that is, factors that would be considered in a SA, as opposed to the environmental focus of the SEA) that have not been considered in the SMP process.

The SMP guidance makes it very clear that the economic assessment of the plan, in addition to the socio-economic element fully included in policy appraisal, is limited to a high-level check of economic viability. This is based on the cost of defence investment versus the benefits of flood and erosion damage prevented (see appendix H – economics). This economic analysis, in addition to the SEA assessment, encompasses all the factors that should be assessed in a SA.

Figure J1: Integration of the sustainability appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Shoreline Management Plan processes

