

Project Development Co-ordinator
Planning & Regeneration
North Lanarkshire Council

09 February 2022

Via: SEA_Gateway@gov.scot

Our ref: CEA165569

Dear

**Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005:
01703 Scoping – North Lanarkshire Council – East Airdrie Link Road Scheme**

Thank you for your scoping report consultation, sent to the Scottish Government SEA Gateway on 10 January 2022. Our comments on the scope and level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report and on the duration of the proposed consultation period are set out below. Detailed comments are provided in the annex to this letter.

Scope of assessment and level of detail

Subject to the specific comments set out below and in the annex to this letter, NatureScot is content with the scope and level of detail proposed for the environmental report.

Consultation period for the environmental report

NatureScot notes that a period of 6 weeks is proposed for consultation on the Environmental Report and is content with this proposed period.

Concluding remarks

This advice is given by NatureScot, the operating name of Scottish Natural Heritage. We hope that it is of assistance to you, however please contact _____ and/or _____ in the first instance should you require further information or advice.

Please note that this response is in the context of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and our role as a Consultation Authority. We understand that we will be separately consulted on our views regarding the Environmental Report and on the Scheme itself.

Yours sincerely

Operations Manager, Strathclyde & Ayrshire

cc: sea.gateway@sepa.org, SEA.gateway@hes.scot, SEA_GATEWAY@nature.scot

Annex

Setting the Context

We are satisfied that the Scoping Report clearly sets out the context for the scheme, including the areas covered by the five options, and the scheme objectives.

We are generally satisfied that the relationship between other plans, policies and strategies, and the environmental objectives which should be taken on board from these, have been identified. However, we also recommend that:

- Given the potential impacts on woodland habitats, including semi-natural ancient woodland, the relationship between the options and the Scottish Government's Control and Woodland Removal policy is fully considered in the Environmental Report (ER).
- Given the potential impacts on peatland habitat, the relationship between the options and Scotland's National Peatland Plan is fully considered in the ER.

Baseline information

In respect of the current baseline, we make the following comments:

Designated sites (Table 5-2)

- Brownsburn Local Nature Reserve now appears to be approx. 2km from the nearest route option under consideration.
- Black Loch Moss is also an SSSI, but *is not* a National Nature Reserve.
- North Shotts Moss SAC is also part of the Hassockrigg & North Shotts Mosses SSSI.
- Blawhorn Moss SAC is also an SSSI *and is* a National Nature Reserve.
- Clyde Valley Woods SAC is underpinned by a number of individual SSSIs. Part of the site is also a National Nature Reserve.

Full details of designated sites are available from the Sitelink section of our website at <https://sitelink.nature.scot/home>.

Habitats

Part of Drumshangie Moss is identified as Class 1 on the Carbon & Peatland Map 2016. Class 1 areas are nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat and are likely to be of high conservation value.

Protected species

As is noted, Drumshangie Moss is known to support a population of Great-crested newt, a European protected species. Water vole, a nationally protected species, are also present on the site. A number of recent development proposals have been submitted to North Lanarkshire

Council for the area, and recent survey data for these species should therefore be available from the planning authority.

We are generally satisfied with the broad description of the likely evolution of the environment without the scheme, but recommend that ER makes use of specific data on trends relating to sites and species where available (such as through Site Condition Monitoring results for designated sites, or survey information for protected species).

Significant issues

We generally agree with the ‘key sustainability’ issues identified in the Scoping Report, and therefore that significant issues to be considered in the ER will include:

- Impacts on internationally, nationally and locally protected areas.
- Impacts on protected species.
- Impacts on woodland habitats, particularly those areas identified in the Ancient Woodland Inventory
- Impacts on peatland habitats, particularly Class 1 areas.
- Impacts on landscape character
- Impacts on existing active travel routes, including core paths and National Cycling route 75.

In addition:

- Given the linear nature of the proposals and the potential for severance, impacts on existing habitat networks should also be considered.
- Opportunities for nature-based solutions and green infrastructure to be employed in the mitigation of effects or general route management requirements should be identified.

As such, we agree with the topics to be scoped in to the Environmental Report, as set out in Section 6 of the Scoping Report.

Effects on European Natura sites

We note that it is proposed to produce Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) reports independently of the SEA. Where appropriate, the HRA should be set out in a separate record, and a cross-reference provided to it in the Environmental Report.

We would be pleased to advise further on the preparation of the HRA. Please note that SPAs and SACs should now be collectively referred to as ‘European sites’, rather than ‘Natura 2000 sites’.

SEA objectives

While we are generally in agreement with the SEA objectives, we suggest that more targeted assessment questions may help provide a more transparent assessment. For example:

Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

- Will the option/proposal have a likely significant effect on any European site?
As well as informing the SEA, this will help identify the scope of any HRA required.
- Will the option/proposal protect, or minimise impacts on, nationally important habitats in the wider countryside, such as ancient woodland and Class 1 peatland?
- Will the option/proposal lead to licensable impacts on known populations of protected species?
- Will the option/proposal protect, or minimise impacts of new transport infrastructure on, wider biodiversity interests, including ecological networks?
- Does the option/proposal have the potential to deliver net gains for biodiversity, including restored or improved biodiversity networks?

Population and human health

- Will the option/proposal protect, or minimise impacts on, existing green infrastructure and access to it?
- Does the option/proposal have the potential to deliver enhanced green network provision and access to it?

Soils

- Does the option/proposal protect, or minimise impacts on, carbon-rich soils, in particular peat?

Landscape

- Will the option/proposal significantly impact the existing landscape or townscape character?
- Does the option/proposal have the potential to deliver measures which would enhance or restore the character of the existing landscape or townscape?

Report structure

The Environmental Report should include the information set out in Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.