

## SEA SCOPING– COVER NOTE

### PART 1

To: [SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

or

SEA gateway  
Scottish Executive  
Area 1 H (Bridge)  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh  
EH6 6QQ

### PART 2

An SEA Scoping Report is attached for the plan, programme or strategy (PPS) entitled:

**ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL AND ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL  
STRUCTURE PLAN**

The Responsible Authority is:

**ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL AND ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL**

### PART 3

**Please tick the appropriate box**

The PPS falls under the scope of Section 5(3) of the Act and requires an SEA under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. ***or***

The PPS falls under the scope of Section 5(4) of the Act and requires an SEA under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. ***or***

The PPS does not require an SEA under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. However, we wish to carry out an SEA on a voluntary basis. We accept that, as this SEA is voluntary, the statutory 5 week timescale for views from the Consultation Authorities cannot be guaranteed.

**SEA SCOPING – COVER NOTE**

**PART 4**

<b>Contact name</b>	<input type="text" value="Piers Blaxter"/>
<b>Job Title</b>	<input type="text" value="Team Leader, Structure Plans"/>
<b>Contact address</b>	<input type="text" value="Aberdeenshire Council&lt;br/&gt;Woodhill House&lt;br/&gt;Westburn Road&lt;br/&gt;Aberdeen&lt;br/&gt;AB16 5GB"/>
<b>Contact tel no</b>	<input type="text" value="01224 664755"/>
<b>Contact email</b>	<input type="text" value="Piers.blaxter@aberdeenshire.gov.uk"/>

**PART 5**

<b>Signature</b> (electronic signature is acceptable)	<input type="text"/>
<b>Date</b>	<input type="text"/>

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## Executive Summary

### Background and context

The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, which came into force on 20 February 2006 establishes a new framework for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in Scotland and is the implementing legislation for the “SEA” Directive 2001/42/EC. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is the environmental assessment of policies, plans, strategies and programmes. The SEA process requires the preparation of an environmental report on which consultations take place. The level of detail to consider in the environmental report as well as the duration of consultations must be stated in this scoping report. This is to enable the Consultation Authorities (Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Historic Scotland) who will review the scoping report, to express an early and effective opinion on the methods proposed to carry out the environmental report. Upon receiving the SEA scoping report, the Consultation Authorities have five weeks to provide comments.

As well as the SEA, Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC requires that where a plan or project may significantly affect a Natura 2000 site (natural heritage designation of international importance – Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection areas, and Ramsar (wetland) sites), an Appropriate Assessment may be required. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the likely significant effects at an early stage.

The Appropriate Assessment consists of two stages:

- a screening exercise of all Natura 2000 sites to identify which sites are likely to be significantly affected by the structure plan, and
- a full Appropriate Assessment of specific Natura 2000 sites.

The screening exercise will not be undertaken until the draft structure plan has been written, which includes the preferred strategic option, plan objectives and policies, as the significant effects required for this assessment will not be known until actual proposals are set out. The screening exercise will be submitted to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and other stakeholders for their comment as a separate screening report. Where significant effects have been identified, as a result of the structure plan, a full Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken, and will be published along with the SEA environment report.

A framework for undertaking the Appropriate Assessment will be included with the screening report to SNH for their agreement.

Natura 2000 sites within the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) will be excluded, as a national plan is being produced by the CNPA.

### Methodology for assessing environmental effects of the structure plan

The SEA scoping report sets out how Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils propose to assess the structure plan’s strategic objectives and policies and alternatives for any significant positive or negative environmental affects. The outcome of this assessment will then be presented in the environmental report, which will be made available to the public when the consultative draft structure plan is placed on deposit for members of the public

to comment on. Alternative strategic objectives and policies will be included the assessment process, in order to ensure that the structure plan objectives and policies are the least damaging to the environment, and have the most positive impact.

Neither the SEA Directive nor the Scottish legislation specifically requires the use of objectives or indicators to assess the structure plan's strategic objectives and policies, but they are very useful in describing, analysing and comparing environmental effects. SEA objectives state the broad intention while the indicators become a benchmark against which the structure plan's performance is measured.

The SEA objectives are separate from the structure plan's objectives although they can influence each other and even overlap. To fulfil the requirements of the SEA Directive, they must cover ten environmental issues, as set out in the SEA legislation: air, water, soil, biodiversity (fauna and flora), climatic factors, human health population, cultural heritage, landscape, and material assets, as well as the interrelationship between them.

The SEA objectives were developed from the following, which are provided in more detail in chapter 3 and appendices 2 to 5:

- identifying the significant problems under 10 environmental issues (biodiversity (flora and fauna); population; human health; soil; water; air and climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage; and landscape);
- integrating the requirements of the plans, programmes, strategies, and environmental protection objectives relevant to the structure plan with the SEA objectives; and
- taking into account any baseline environmental characteristics of the area relevant to the structure plan, and including any relevant environmental problems (e.g. contaminated land, air pollution, or lack of affordable housing).

The following table lists a set of SEA objectives against which the vision, aims, strategic objectives and policies of the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire structure plan will be assessed. While all the SEA objectives will be used in the assessment, it is likely that those highlighted in the table below are unlikely to feature prominently in the assessment.

Further information on the assessment process is provided in chapter 4, which also sets out the proposed framework for assessing the cumulative impact of the structure plan, the compatibility of the structure plans objective's with each other, as well as the proposed mitigation measures and monitoring framework. The proposed consultation timetable of the environment report, anticipated milestones, and the framework for analysing the comments from consultees are provided in chapter 6.

**Possible SEA objectives (Objectives highlighted are unlikely to feature prominently in the SEA assessment)**

SEA Topics	Possible Objectives
Air	1 Protect and improve local air quality.
Water	2 Reduce water pollution and protect, maintain and enhance Water Quality and good ecological status as set out in the Water Framework Directive

SEA Topics	Possible Objectives
	<p>and the general water environment including marine, coastal and river systems, wetlands, loch, estuaries and floodplains.</p> <p>3 Maintain water abstraction, run-off and recharge within carrying capacity (including future capacity).</p> <p>4 Only development supported in SPP7: (Planning and Flooding) will be allowed within functional flood plains.</p> <p>5 Improve and support water efficient technologies.</p>
Soil	<p>6 Reduce area of land contamination in the region.</p> <p>7 Improve and safeguard the efficiency and effectiveness of land use and soil quality and quantity (e.g. controlling soil erosion and sedimentation).</p>
Biodiversity	<p>8 Conserve, protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity.</p>
Climatic factors	<p>9 Reduce the causes of adverse climate change (e.g. reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> levels and NE global footprint).</p> <p>10 Decrease the use of non-renewable energy.</p> <p>11 Reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change e.g. flooding, public service provision, and habitats.</p>
Human health	<p>12 Improve accessibility to good quality open green space and countryside.</p> <p>13 Improve accessibility to open spaces, jobs/ employment, education, public services, and decrease deprivation/social exclusion.</p> <p>14 Increase opportunities for indoor recreation and exercise.</p> <p>15 Protect and improve health.</p> <p>16 Increase the mix of housing types and tenure.</p>
Population	<p>17 Improve the supply of housing land to accommodate in-migration and the predicted increase households.</p> <p>18 Improve the supply of dwellings for the aging population and those with special needs.</p> <p>19 Improve the provision of land for care homes.</p> <p>20 Improve the provision of services to cater for 'non-Scotland' migrants, especially if from overseas (e.g. language and cultural issues/differences).</p>
Cultural heritage	<p>21 Protect, and where appropriate, enhance the historic environment.</p> <p>22 Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the historic environment.</p>
Landscape	<p>23 Protect and enhance and where appropriate restore the quality and distinctiveness of the area's landscape and townscapes.</p> <p>24 Safeguard the landscapes capacity to absorb new development.</p>
Material assets	<p>25 Promote the creation of fixed assets, including affordable housing and water and waste management facilities.</p> <p>26 Enhance and promote commercial and industrial assets.</p> <p>27 Regenerate derelict, vacant or contaminated land.</p> <p>28 Protect residential, commercial and industrial properties from flooding.</p> <p>29 Promote the use of sustainable materials and the adoption of Lifetime standards.</p>

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1. Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council have jointly prepared this Scoping Report for the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council Structure Plan. According to Section 15 of Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, the responsible authorities are required to send to the consultation authorities sufficient details of the plan in respect of which an environmental assessment is being prepared to enable them to form a view on those matters before deciding on the consultation period and the level of detail of the information that must be included in the environmental report. This report is being prepared for consultations with Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Historic Scotland (HS).
- 1.2. Chapter 2 provides some key facts about the structure plan including the overview, name of authority, plan title, the reason why the plan is being drawn, plan subject, period covered, area coverage and frequency of future plan updates. Chapter 3 discusses the requirements of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and how this report meets those requirements. These are the requirements covered during the early (pre-assessment) stages of the SEA process. Chapter 4 looks at how the SEA process including alternatives, scoping in/out issues, assessment framework, mitigation and monitoring frameworks will be handled. Chapter 5 provides the screening phase and sets out the framework for carrying out an Appropriate Assessment of Natura 2000 sites. In Chapter 6 the concluding stages proposed for the environmental report are outlined.



## 2 Key facts about Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council Structure Plan

- 2.1 Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council are preparing this Structure Plan, the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire (excluding the Cairngorms National Park structure plan (known as the Aberdeen City Shire Structure Plan) (the Plan), as a legal requirement under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. The structure plan is a land use plan covering the period 2008 to 2030. This plan is subject to review every five years or as soon as it has become necessary to do so.
- 2.2 The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework for the development of land cover its area of effect, Aberdeen City and part of Aberdeenshire. It does not provide a framework for all development, only actions defined as “development” in legislation, and for which planning permission is a legal requirement. Even then only development of such a scale or nature that it could be considered to have significant effects outwith the immediate locale will be considered. These are often referred to as “strategic” developments.
- 2.3 A Structure Plan is a plan:  
“(a) formulating the planning authority's policy and general proposals in respect of the development and other use of land in that district (including measures for the conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of the land, the improvement of the physical environment and the management of traffic),” (Part 2 s7.1 T&CP(S)Act 1997).
- 2.4 However, the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 is likely to come into force during preparation of this plan. This requires the production of a strategic development plan in which is set out  
(a) a vision statement, being a broad statement of the planning authorities’ views as to how the development of the area should occur .  
(b) a spatial strategy, being a broadly based statement of proposals as to the development and use of land within the area  
(c) an analysis of the relationship of the vision statement and spatial strategy to general proposals for the development and other use of land
- 2.5 Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council have agreed to prepare a structure plan that also meets the requirements of a strategic development plan
- 2.6 At the time of submitting the scoping report no decisions have been made on the vision and objectives for the new plan, this is rightly something that is the subject of a public and stakeholder consultation exercise. However to aid this consultation a working draft vision and working draft objectives for the plan have been produced. These will be reviewed and incorporated as the preferred vision and objectives in the draft plan, in the light of comments received
- 2.7 The working draft vision was developed as an iterative process involving a key stakeholder working group and two seminars held with

the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee. This committee has approved the text below as the draft vision for the plan, and on which consultation (as part of a general consultation on “issues”) should take place:

*“By 2030, Aberdeen City and Shire will be an exciting, modern and environmentally sustainable European city region. Our communities will include everybody and enjoy the highest quality of life. We will be recognised across the world for our leadership in renewable energy, our technological and intellectual excellence, and the unique qualities of our environment.*

*To help achieve the vision, this plan will encourage new development to use land in a way that has less and less of an effect on the wider environment. It will help all the industries that support the vision to be successful. It will allow the area to have enough people, homes and jobs to support the level of services and facilities the community wants, and will provide a range of opportunities in lifestyle.*

*In achieving our vision, we will:*

- manage our natural, built and community resources responsibly;*
- consider the needs of all our different communities fairly, now and in the future; and*
- be confident and courageous when making the hard choices needed to allow change to happen”*

- 2.8 A set of draft objectives are being developed to be consistent with this vision, but they are not at a sufficiently advanced stage to be able to be listed. The draft objectives will be subjected to scrutiny through the SEA process and publicly presented in the draft plan for consultation.
- 2.9 The lead officer with responsibility for managing the SEA of the new Structure plan is Alison Hogge, Planning Policy and Environment, Planning and Environment Service, Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen AB16 5GB.

### **3 Context of the Structure Plan**

- 3.1 To set the context for the Structure Plan, this report considers the three issues addressed in SEA templates developed by Scottish Executive covering the following topics:
- identify the relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives;
  - collect baseline information; and
  - identify environmental problems
- 3.2 This report also adopts the recommendations in the UK-wide Guidance (2005): “A Practical Guide for Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” to concurrently carry out these early SEA stages - describing the baseline, identifying environmental problems and analysing links to other policies so that each of the stages inform each other. The following section provides detailed analysis for this context.

Relationship with other plans and programmes and Environmental Objectives

- 3.3 Table 1 below lists other plans, programmes and environmental objectives relevant to the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council Structure Plan to be analysed in the Environmental Report for their relationship with the structure plan.
- 3.4 Detailed analysis of how they apply to the structure plan and SEA issues are shown at Appendix 2. It should be stated that the modernisation of the planning system; the gradual replacement of National Planning Policy Guidelines with Scottish Planning Policies is resulting in many planning guidance updates. Changes in legislation, regulations, policies and guidelines continue to influence land use planning. Consequently, any changes in policies will be tracked throughout the SEA process, keeping the process iterative and current. However, those changes occur after the plan has been submitted through legislative process for adoption cannot be considered.
- 3.5 Planning Advice Notes have been excluded, as they are only good practice guides, which would be more appropriately reflected in the local development plan or other local-scale plans/strategies.

**Table 1: Other Plans, Programmes and Environmental Protection Objectives**

	<b>Name of plan, programme, strategy or environmental protection objective</b>
	<b>International Level</b>
1	Council Directive 92/43/EEC <i>on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (known as the Habitats Directive)</i>
2	Council Directive 79/409/EEC <i>on the conservation of wild birds (known as the Birds Directive)</i>
3	Council Directive 2000/60/EC <u>Water Framework Directive</u> - integrated river basin management for Europe
4	<b>Council Directive 91/676/EEC on nitrates from agricultural sources (known as the Nitrates Directive)</b>
5	Council Directive 99/31/EC <i>on the landfill of waste (known as the Landfill Directive)</i>

	<b>National Level</b>
1	National Planning Framework for Scotland (2004)
2	DTI (2003) Energy White paper: <i>Our energy future – creating a low carbon economy</i>
3	Securing the future – UK Government sustainability development strategy (2005) (implemented in Scotland through the <i>Choosing Our Future: Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy</i> )
4	Meeting the Needs, Priorities, Actions and Targets for Sustainable Development in Scotland (2002)
5	Climate Change: The UK programme (implemented in Scotland through the <i>Scottish Climate Change Programme</i> , which is under review)
6	BREEAM/ EcoHomes
7	Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (2000)
8	Scotland's Transport Future: The Transport White Paper (2004)
9	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
10	The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
11	UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1994)
12	Scottish Executive (2004) Scottish Biodiversity Strategy: <i>Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in Your Hands. A strategy for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Scotland</i>
13	Scottish Executive Marine & Coastal Strategy (2005) – <i>Seas the Opportunity – A Strategy for the Long Term Sustainability of Scotland's Coasts and Seas</i>
14	The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997
15	Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
16	Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
17	National Waste Strategy
18	<b>sportscotland</b> (2003) Sport 21 2003-2007
19	Scottish Executive (2002) Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 1: The Planning System
20	Scottish Executive (2002) SPP2: Economic Development
21	Scottish Executive (2003) SPP3: Planning for Housing
22	Scottish Executive (2006) SPP4: Planning for Minerals
23	Scottish Executive (1998) National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPG) 5: Archaeology and Planning
24	Scottish Executive (2000) NPPG6: Renewable Energy
25	Scottish Executive (2004) SPP7: Planning and Flooding
26	Scottish Executive (2006) SPP8: Town Centres and Retailing
27	Scottish Executive (1996) NPPG10: Planning and Waste Management
28	Scottish Executive (1996) NPPG11: Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space
29	Scottish Executive (1997) NPPG12: Skiing Developments
30	Scottish Executive (1997) NPPG13: Coastal Planning
31	Scottish Executive (1999) NPPG: 14 Natural Heritage
32	Scottish Executive (2005) SPP15: Planning for Rural Development
33	Scottish Executive (2005) SPP 17: Planning for Transport
34	Scottish Executive (1999) NPPG18: Planning and the Historic Environment
35	Scottish Executive (2005) NPPG19: Radio Telecommunications

36	Scottish Executive (2006) SPP 21: Green Belts
37	Scottish Historic Environment Policies (SHEP) No 1 <i>The Historic Environment</i> [CON 728] (2006)
38	SHEP No 2 <i>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</i> (2006)
39	SHEP No 3. <i>Gardens and Designed Landscape</i> [CON 731] (2006)
	<b>Regional level</b>
1	North East Scotland Biodiversity (2001) North East Scotland Biodiversity Action Plan
2	Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Councils (2005) Forest and Woodland Strategy for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire Council
3	River Dee Catchment Management Plan – Consultative Draft (October 2006)
4	Modern Transport System (MTS), its revision to be known as the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), NESTRANS, and Nestrans Annual Report 2005
5	North East Scotland Area Waste Plan (2003)
6	Economic Growth Strategy for North East Scotland (Local Economic Development Strategy 2003-2010)
	<b>Local level</b>
1	Aberdeen Future - Aberdeen City Community Plan
2	Aberdeenshire Community Plan
3	Aberdeen City Joint Health Improvement Plan
4	Aberdeenshire Joint Health Improvement Plan
5	Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy 2004-2009
6	Aberdeenshire Local Housing Strategy 2004-2009
7	Aberdeen Contaminated Land Strategy
8	Aberdeenshire Contaminated Land Strategy (Under review December 2006)
9	Aberdeen City Local Transport Strategy (Under review)
10	Aberdeenshire Local Transport Strategy (Under review)
11	Aberdeen City Council Air Quality Action Plan 2006
12	Aberdeen City (2006) Air Quality Action Plan
13	Aberdeen City Nature Conservation Strategy (Under review)
14	Cobham Resource Consultants (1997) National programme of landscape character assessment: Banff and Buchan, Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 37
15	Environmental Resources Management (1998) South and Central Aberdeenshire: landscape character assessment, Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 102
16	The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2002) Guidelines for Visual Impact Assessment, Second edition, Spoon Press
17	Turnbull Jeffrey Partnership (1996) Cairngorms landscape assessment, Scottish Natural Heritage Review No 75.
18	Cairngorms National Park National Plan

3.6 Appendix 2 summarises the key points of the relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives.

3.7 From the analysis of the relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives (listed in column 2 of Appendix 2),

we observe that the strategic land use plan should emphasise the following:

- the protection, maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity, the landscape character, and built and cultural heritage;
- sustainable use of water and mitigate the effects of floods and droughts;
- reducing water pollution and enhancing water quality;
- creating sustainable communities with a focus on the sustainable use of natural resources;
- to limit or reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases;
- encourage the increase use of renewable energy resources and more efficient use energy and water in housing;
- limit or reduce the emissions of pollutants;
- promoting quality of life issues;
- ensuring more coherence and cost effectiveness in policy-making;
- supporting economic sustainability consistent with social progress and the environment.
- tackling housing shortage, low demand, abandonment and liveability;
- promoting good design, safe environments, clean environments and good quality services;
- promoting sustainable alternatives to car and reducing congestion traffic pollution through the allocation of land uses;
- promoting economic growth, social inclusion, environmental improvement, health and safety;
- addressing climate change;
- avoiding further degradation of the coastal and marine environment;
- promoting the economy, supporting the community and the public service; and
- setting the planning policy framework for development consents for major residential, commercial, retail, and employment developments.

3.8 Were the structure plan not implemented, the likely changes to the environment would be:

- [To be completed in the Environment Report]

#### Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (baseline data)

3.9 The existing environmental baseline data have been collected from a wide range of sources, including national government/agency websites, consultation authorities, North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC), the 2001 census. Environmental issues such as air, water, soil, climatic factors, landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity and material asset set the context for the collection of the baseline data. This data is then presented in a table covering;

- the latest data for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire;
- comparators: regional or national data against which Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire's status are compared;
- targets where they exist;

- trends where they exists;
- environmental problems/issues – where Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire are performing badly compared with the comparators or targets; and
- referencing the sources of data used.

3.10 The detailed analysis of the baseline data is presented in Appendices 3 and 4. The linkages between the SEA Topics are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Linkages between SEA topics**

SEA Topic	Link with	SEA Topic
Water: Increasing water abstraction of the River Dee from Scottish Water is likely to have an effect on water quality and associated fauna and flora.(e.g. Fresh water pearl mussels and Atlantic Salmon)		Climatic Factors: changes predicted in precipitation (e.g. drier summers and increased water temperature).
Water abstraction from underground water supplies (e.g. boreholes) may dry up and increase the level of demand for mains water supply.		Climatic Factors: changes predicted in precipitation (e.g. drier summers).
Soil: Rise in river and coastal erosion (as rainfall is predicted to increase in the future) will reduce areas of prime agricultural land.		Climatic Factors: changes predicted in weather patterns (e.g. more and heavier flash floods).
Human Health: over crowding, centralisation of services (e.g. training).		Population

Climatic Factors: Habitat changes due to climate change, which will result in invasion of new species (Alien Species) living in the North East. As a result, should we continue to protect the River Dee, which is designated as a Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive from inappropriate development if new species are likely to migrate from the south?		Biodiversity
Climatic Factors: Peatslides / soil erosion from flash floods / increased rainfall.		Soil: degrading of soil quality and reduction in quantity (e.g. from water run-off).
Material assets: Roads		Air and Human health
Material assets: Flood defences.		Climatic factors: increase in storms.
Material assets: second/holiday homes.		Population: increasing number of households
Biodiversity: non-native/invasive species.		Climatic factors: migration of alien species northwards as temperatures rise (if predictions are correct).
Biodiversity: encourage native plants (robustness of biodiversity).		Climatic factors
Population: increase in household numbers will require a need for more housing.		Material assets: there are a high number of vacant properties, which are not being retrofitted/redeveloped.
Climatic factors: rising CO <sub>2</sub> levels.		Material assets: use of sustainable materials.



Material assets: affordable housing		Human health (e.g. reducing the number of people living in deprived conditions)
Biodiversity: Habitats and communities at the local level – issue of quality, variety and migration of species (e.g. wildlife corridors).		Human health (e.g. recreation corridors)

### Environmental problems

3.11 This section summarises the state of the environment within the structure plan area (Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire) by identifying the most significant environmental problems that exist in North East Scotland, as well as presenting the policy measures required to mitigate the environmental problems identified.

3.12 Environmental problems affecting the strategic development plan area were identified through:

- the information collected from the environmental baseline data/trends/comparators, as presented in Appendix 3; and
- discussions with internal consultees within Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire councils (including environmental health, planning policy, natural and built heritage, and the flood prevention teams);

3.13 The significant environmental problems categorised under each SEA topic are summarised in the tables below. Details of the supporting data, key indicators and mitigation/policy measures to address these environmental problems are provided in Appendix 5.

**Table 3: Significant environmental problems: air quality**

SEA Topic	Significant environmental problems
Air	No significant effects near waste management facilities or quarries, but there is an issue of odour from sewerage works near development in Inverurie, Nigg and Torry.
	High traffic volumes is seriously affecting the air quality of Aberdeen's city centre (principally nitrogen dioxide NO <sub>2</sub> ), which has resulted in it being designated an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).
	High NO <sub>2</sub> levels (although not quite exceeding the annual mean NO <sub>2</sub> objective for 2005) along some peripheral routes: Victoria Rd (Torry), North and South Anderson Drive and Anderson Drive, and Great Northern Road, Auchmill Rd, and King St (north of Roselin Terrace).
	New developments within the AQMA, and in areas with high NO <sub>2</sub> levels should not exceed the 2005 NO <sub>2</sub> objective of 40 µg/m <sup>-3</sup> .

**Table 4: Significant environmental problems: water quality**

SEA Topic	Significant environmental problems
Water	A decline and mortalities in the number of species of international importance if water levels fall (for example Salmon deaths in the river Dee during low flows in 2004),
	High nitrate levels adversely affecting the water quality of internationally important rivers (e.g. Ythan Estuary).
	Need to reduce water abstraction by incorporating water efficient technologies into new development (e.g. industrial and domestic) in light of the predicted decrease in summer rainfall.
	A decrease in summer precipitation may lead to a decline in ground water levels in upland areas and reduce the likelihood of new development proposals in these areas.
	Future development may put a constraint on maintaining ground water and river levels.
	Bathing water quality not continuously meeting EC Guideline Standards in Stonehaven, Cruden Bay and Aberdeen (although in 2006, all bathing waters passed).
	53.1km of water courses in the North East are classified as poor or seriously polluted as a result of poor chemistry and biology quality.
	A build-up of nitrates from diffuse pollution within the River Ythan catchment is adversely affecting species that live in the mud flats of the river mouth, which is an internationally designated natural heritage site.
	Peterhead Power Station is likely to be contributing to the poor water quality.
	In the North East, the main cause of poor quality coastline is the result of sewage effluent being released untreated.
Major impact both on the sand dune erosion, wildlife and the enjoyment of other beach users from motorised vehicles.	

**Table 5: Significant environmental problems: soil quality**

SEA Topic	Significant environmental problems
Soil quality	There are 5,900 potentially contaminated sites recorded in North East. These include several hundred high-risk sites such as landfill and gasworks.
	Contaminated land places financial and technological constraints on development. These constraints may dictate the type of development: the feasibility of remedial works may determine that a site is only suitable for industrial use; the cost of remedial works may determine that high-density housing is the only viable economic option.

	Contaminated land impacts the water environment, i.e. ground surface and coastal waters, and the wider environment including for instance local ecology.
	Potential loss of prime agricultural land from climate change – precautionary approach may need to be applied in certain areas (e.g. on prime agricultural land near flood plains, along the coast, and on land of the highest quality).
	Not enough sites for recycling or composting biodegradable municipal waste (large, medium or small scale) to help the local authorities achieve their recycling and landfill targets.
	Coastal erosion mostly where there are no rocks or coastal defences.
	Increase silting of rivers from fluvial flooding.
	Increase in soil erosion from wind and water, which is exacerbated by bad land use practices, such as locating tracks/access roads on steep/ upland ground.

**Table 6: Significant environmental problems: biodiversity**

SEA Topic	Significant environmental problems
Biodiversity	Native species and habitats are increasing, and the NE BAP is meeting the UK BAP targets, but UK priority species and habitats are still declining and require rigorous protection and enhancement.
	Implementation of the NE BAPs is the key issue to enhancing biodiversity.
	Threat of Alien Species effecting water quality and ecological status of the rivers. Native species and habitats are increasing, and the NE BAP is meeting the UK BAP targets, but UK priority species and habitats are still declining and require rigorous protection and enhancement.
	The significance and purpose of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) mean that development in or adjacent to them, such as the River Dee SAC may cumulatively prevent the objectives of these designations being met, and may prevent new development being developed.
	Indirect impact of development on designated sites that are affecting their water table, and therefore the quality of wetland habitats.
	Impact from large-scale leisure and recreation uses.
	Increase of access to designated sites could be damaging to some sites.
	Indirect impacts of development on non-designated sites.
	Large-scale schemes around edge of towns are placing significant development pressure on unprotected open spaces.

	There is significant development pressure for new houses along the coast.
	Fragmented habitats/ open space networks/ wildlife corridors may affect less mobile species from migrating and/or adapting to climate change.
	Need to enhance and augment habitats to avoid their decline within settlements.
	Risk of increasing population near sensitive natural heritage areas.
	Extensive use of land, and cumulative impact is resulting in the loss of biodiversity.

**Table 7: Significant environmental problems: climatic factors**

SEA Topic	Significant environmental problems
Climatic factors	High energy dependence on fossil fuels to provide heat and electricity.
	High energy dependence on fossil fuels for transportation.
	Lack of appropriate locations identified for renewable energy technologies.
	The current layout of low density housing does not reduce energy use (e.g. reducing wind chill, maximising solar gain).
	Few properties incorporate in their design resilience to extreme climate and weather conditions.
	Materials with high CO <sub>2</sub> levels are still increasingly popular (e.g. concrete and tarmac).
	Possible need for a management retreat of settlements below the 5m Ordnance Datum mark.
	Sea defensive walls may be inadequate as sea levels rise.
	Rise in soil erosion from storm events, which will create a greater need for SuDS, and an increase their water holding capacity.
	Rising precipitation and storms will increase fluvial flooding (e.g. 1 in 200 year flood event), which will restrict where new development can be located for some settlements.
	The number of properties at risk from inland fluvial flooding is low, but local flood defensive schemes will still be required.
	Rise in precipitation during the winter months and increase in storms will result in the need for SuDS to prevent pluvial flooding in urban areas.
	Aberdeen consumes more natural resources per person than any other Scottish city and has the largest global footprint in Scotland, which cannot be sustained in the long-term.
	Fragmented habitats resulting from development and changes in the climate may affect less mobile species from migrating and/or adapting to changes in the environment.

	Need to promote appropriate native species in new development schemes to enhance existing biodiversity and preventing the spread of non-native species.
	Increasing need for service provision throughout the year (e.g. as flood events are predicted to increase during winter seasons).

**Table 8: Significant environmental problems: human health**

SEA Topic	Significant environmental problems
Human health	Significant development pressure for urban open spaces.
	There is pressure to reduce the size of open spaces in residential developments.
	Need for larger areas of open spaces, including civic or town parks.
	Poor access to services in rural areas.
	Centralisation of service provision has and will continue to affect marginalised areas.
	Pockets of deprivation through low job opportunities and income could be adversely affecting people's mental health in Aberdeen and in northern Aberdeenshire.
	Overcrowding in Aberdeen is higher than the Scottish average and it could be affecting people's mental health.
	Lack of variety in new house types granted planning consent.
	There will still be a need for a significant proportion of new housing to be larger properties.
	When considered in the context of the existing stock, planning permissions are being given which, over time, will lead to the differences between the housing stock in the City and Shire being more extreme.
	Limited progress has been made to provide sports facilities at Cove, a swimming pool in Mintlaw, and a 6 Badminton Court Hall in Peterhead and Fraserburgh, all of which were identified in the City's and Shire's sports study.

**Table 9: Significant environmental problems: population**

SEA Topic	Significant environmental problems
Population	Increasing number of households is creating more demand for housing (and land).
	The need for more development land is placing pressure on or near sensitive natural heritage areas.
	The growing age of the head of the household may result in more homes needed for their needs (e.g. bungalows or special needs dwellings).
	Aging population will create demand for certain types of houses (e.g. bungalows and services (increasing the need for more land) and care homes.

	In-migration will create greater demand for houses and services in Aberdeenshire.
	Possible need for services catering for 'non-Scotland' migrants, especially if from overseas (e.g. language and cultural issues/differences).
	Retiral 'stealth' in-migration may affect housing and service provision in Aberdeenshire (i.e. an increase need for).

**Table 10: Significant environmental problems: cultural heritage**

SEA Topic	Significant environmental problems
Cultural heritage	Although only a small percentage of the listed buildings in the North East are on the Buildings at Risk Register, the area has one of the highest numbers of properties at risk.
	Only a small number of buildings at risk are undergoing restoration in the North East.
	The majority of the buildings at risk are in rural areas, with few undergoing restoration.
	Poorly designed buildings, especially for the disabled, elderly and children.
	Lack of an existing policy on inclusive design in the Structure Plan.
	Issue of conflicting requirements when ensuring the accessibility of existing buildings.
	Development adversely impacting on a community's' or settlement's 'sense of place' (e.g. historical perspective).
	Safeguarding building functionality (e.g. use, access and space), which is not always considered.
	Poor design when incorporating modern materials.
	Cumulative impact of proposals, which alone may not affect the conservation designation, but cumulatively affect it's overall objective.
	Loss of unknown and locally known architectural remains from new development and other practices, vandalism and coastal erosion.
Adverse impacts on the setting of listed buildings and archaeological remains from new developments.	

**Table 11 Significant environmental problems: landscape**

SEA Topic	Significant environmental problems
Landscape	The insensitive siting and design, as well as type (e.g. dwelling(s), wind farm or quarry) of new development.
	The siting and design of new developments are individually and cumulatively adversely affecting designated landscapes.

	The individual or cumulative impact of dwelling houses may adversely be affecting the purpose of landscape designations, e.g. by affecting the coastal and landscape characteristics of Areas of Landscape Significance.
	The insensitive siting and design of new developments are individually and cumulatively adversely affecting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o the setting of settlements; and</li> <li>o townscapes (e.g. conservation areas).</li> </ul>
	There is an increased need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o assess a settlement's key features(s);</li> <li>o reinforcing a sense of place; and</li> <li>o involving local communities.</li> </ul>
	The inappropriate scale and insensitive siting of enabling development is adversely affecting landscape characteristics (e.g. changing it's landscape character type, not respecting local topography/contours).
	New development not fitting in with the landscape's capacity to absorb further developments (e.g. design, layout and sense of place) – need to promote suitable development capacity.

**Table 12: Significant environmental problems: material assets**

SEA Topic	Significant environmental problems
Material assets	The number of vacant dwellings in Aberdeen is increasing, while in Aberdeenshire the figure is falling.
	More than two-thirds of Aberdeen's housing stock is identified as suffering some form of disrepair, with 43% (higher than the Scottish average) classified as "urgent".
	More than half of the housing stock in the North East is failing to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.
	Aberdeen has a high level of derelict and urban vacant land – need to reduce the under utilisation of these sites through regeneration schemes.
	More retrofitting of dwellings is required to bring them back into habitable use.
	20% of vacant and derelict sites in Aberdeen are greater than 5ha.
	Works have been identified in the North East to ensure that properties are safeguarded from flooding.

	<p>Need to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ new development will not increase the probability of flooding elsewhere;</li> <li>○ development is not sited in an area at risk from fluvial or coastal flooding; and</li> <li>○ existing and new urban drainage systems will not flood properties (especially as storm events are predicted to increase).</li> </ul>
	<p>Predicted rise in sea level may result in existing flood defences being inadequate.</p>
	<p>The predicted rise in storm events and winter precipitation is likely to increase soil/sand erosion from the wind and rain/water, which may prevent existing flood defence schemes functioning properly and result in their failure (e.g. collapse).</p>
	<p>There is a significant wastewater constraint issue in most of Aberdeenshire.</p>
	<p>There is a significant water supply constraint throughout most of the North East, with the exception of a handful of settlements.</p>
	<p>There is a significant shortfall of affordable housing in both Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, especially in one bedroom and 4 plus bedroom dwellings.</p>
	<p>The lack of holiday/second homes will increase house prices as dwellings that would normally have been bought to live in are bought for the purpose of being used as a second/ holiday home.</p>
	<p>A shortage of holiday/second homes will adversely affect the tourist trade in Aberdeenshire's most popular areas.</p>
	<p>Very few new developments (e.g. dwellings, schools, offices etc) are using sustainable materials in the North East.</p>



## 4 Scope and level of detail proposed for strategic environmental assessment

### Alternatives

- 4.1 At the current time no decisions have been taken on the content of the structure plan, no “preferred” alternatives exist. Preferred alternatives will emerge through engagement with stakeholders and will find expression in the draft plan.
- 4.2 The following section summarises how current “baseline” alternatives (i.e. plan objectives and strategic options) have been identified for early consultation. The section on “Methodology for assessing environmental effects” (paragraph 4.13) below sets out the method by which the current working drafts are to be assessed. It also records how future alternatives are to be generated, and the means by which they will be assessed.

### *Plan Objectives*

- 4.1 A draft vision for the plan was developed from workshops with elected members and a “key stakeholder reference group”. This draft vision is a statement of the political aspirations for development in the area. It was developed through an iterative process where 6 working draft visions were constructed and dismissed before the draft vision presented in the “Structure Plan Issues report” was finalised and agreed by Members. Alternative vision statements centred around issues of presentation and the weight to be given to different aspirations of the plan.
- 4.2 The agreed draft vision was used to generate a series of draft aims for the plan. These were statements of what the plan should be seeking to achieve when the aspiration of the vision was applied to different topics that the plan might require to address. These statements were concatenated and reviewed to produce a set of working draft aims. These aims were then analysed to produce specific objectives for the plan to seek to achieve. Again this was a creative and iterative process designed to generate a small number of objectives, which were relevant over a wide range of development types.
- 4.3 The significance of this is that these “working draft objectives” are to be used by stakeholders as part of the qualitative evaluation of the strategic options.

### *Strategic Options*

- 4.6 Working draft strategic options were also developed through an iterative process. Initial analysis identified that the preferred strategic option would require to identify where, how much and when development would be allowed. 8 Basic patterns for spatial distribution of development were identified. Whether additional models could be considered was tested through reference to expert stakeholder groups.
- 4.7 It was concluded that over 120,000 possible permutations of different scales, spatial distributions and phasing could be considered and, to

narrow this down to a manageable number exercises were undertaken with expert stakeholder groups. These exercises tested the 8 basic patterns of distribution against the requirements for a development in the Aberdeen area as articulated by the National Planning Framework, the broad aspirations of other plans and strategies operating in the area, and known planning objectives and constraints. This resulted in 8 specific strategic options being identified for consultation, each composed of elements from two of the basic strategies. These conclusions were tested through reference to a key stakeholder reference group.

- 4.8 A simple approach to issues of scale and phasing were promoted. Low, medium and high growth scenarios were developed based on forecast requirements, average development rates over the past 10 years, and additional “aspirational” growth respectively. Early intervention, sustained development and late intervention scenarios were developed to consider issues of phasing.

*Initial rejection of alternatives*

- 4.9 The work on identifying a set of working draft strategic options, on which to engage with stakeholders, and on a set of working draft objectives, on which to assess the strategic options, has not been the subject of a rigorous environmental appraisal process. For the purpose of transparency Tables 1 and 2 have been produced to identify the main reasons why alternative strategic options and plan objectives were accepted, rejected, or modified to form the current working drafts.
- 4.10 Those alternatives that have significant environmental effects and are feasible are taken forward for further assessment and evaluation. This will be an iterative process with key stakeholder involvement, and a final set of strategic objectives will be presented in the consultative draft SP.
- 4.11 The following table shows the strategic options/spatial strategies to be taken forward for further assessment in the environmental report with justifications. The section on “Methodology for assessing environmental effects” (paragraph 4.13) sets out the assessment process of those alternatives and structure plan objectives to be taken forward for further assessment against the SEA objectives set out in Table 15.

**Table 13: Basic spatial strategies and reasons for accepting or rejection**

<b>Basic spatial strategy</b>	<b>Justification</b>
New settlements	Accepted to complement the Aberdeen City model despite concerns surrounding regeneration, environmental impact and economic development
Development on the existing road and rail corridor	Accepted in part despite concerns on its ability to deliver both the quantity of development land required and regeneration.
Development in a new transport corridor	Accepted to complement the existing transport corridor despite poor assessment in terms of

	infrastructure constraints, development of the economy of the City and delivery of sufficient development land
Development in Aberdeen City	Accepted in part as it met the majority of criteria against which it was judged. Concerns relating to choice of development location, this models ability to provide sufficient volume of land for needs and lack of alternatives in other areas.
Development in new settlements associated with the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR)	Rejected due to impacts on environmental quality, opportunities to regenerate disadvantaged areas and concerns relating to impacts on the transport network
Edge of City Communities	Accepted to complement the Aberdeen City model despite concern about its ability to foster regeneration.
Dispersal throughout the region	Rejected due to environmental impact, infrastructure constraints, the ability to deliver sustainable transportation, sufficient volume of land for development in marketable locations, and economic development aspirations for the City.
Development in growth poles (e.g. a key growth location) across Aberdeenshire	Accepted to complement the Aberdeen City model despite concerns relating to economic development opportunities, sustainable transport options, environmental quality and promotion of the knowledge economy.

### Scoping in/out of SEA issues

- 4.12 In accordance with Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council's have considered which environmental issues that have positive and negative significant environmental effects should be scoped in for further consideration. The details and justification is presented in Table 14.

**Table 14: Environmental Issues Scoped in**

Environmental Issues	Scoped in	Justification
Air	Yes	Due to the nature and scale of the structure plan (e.g. the geographic scale covered by the structure plan, and its place in the planning hierarchy), all the environmental issues have been scoped in for further consideration in the SEA, as the structure plan will significantly affect (either positively or negatively) all 10 environmental issues.
Climatic Factors	Yes	
Water	Yes	
Soil	Yes	
Population & Human Health	Yes	
Biodiversity (Fauna & Flora)	Yes	
Landscape	Yes	
Cultural Heritage (including archaeological and architectural heritage)	Yes	

Material Assets	Yes	
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### **Methodology for assessing environmental effects**

- 4.13 Neither the SEA Directive nor the Scottish legislation specifically requires the use of objectives or indicators in the SEA, but they are very useful in describing, analysing and comparing environmental effects. SEA objectives state the broad intention while the indicators become a benchmark against which the structure plan's performance is measured.
- 4.14 The SEA objectives are separate from the structure plan's objectives although they can influence each other and even overlap. To fulfil the requirements of the SEA Directive, they must cover environmental issues including biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between them.
- 4.15 Table 15 lists a set of SEA objectives against which the vision, aims, strategic objectives and policies of the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire structure plan will be assessed. These are a standard set of SEA objectives derived from analysis of environmental problems; baseline data; and relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives. They will inform the final choice of SEA Objectives. They are not conclusive but subject to consultation outcomes. While all objectives will be used in the assessment it is likely that those highlighted in Table 15 are unlikely to feature prominently in the assessment.

**Table 15: Possible SEA objectives & indicators (Objectives highlighted are unlikely to feature prominently in the SEA assessment)**

SEA Topics	Possible Objectives	Possible SEA Indicators	Indicators from baseline data and environmental problems sections in Appendices 3 and 5	Outcomes from the analysis of other plans etc, which the strategic plan should emphasise on (Appendix 2)
Air	1. Protect and improve local air quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) emissions.</li> <li>• Reduction in the number of days that exceed the National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS) objectives for NO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>.</li> <li>• Achievement or de-designation of Aberdeen as an Air Quality Management Area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving air quality (odour and dust).</li> <li>• Achievement of Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote sustainable alternatives to car and reducing congestion traffic pollution through the allocation of land uses.</li> <li>• Improvement of green spaces, such as more tree planting to combat air quality.</li> </ul>
Water	2. Reduce water pollution and protect, maintain and enhance water quality and good ecological status as set out in the Water Framework and Nitrates Directives and the general water environment including marine, coastal and river systems, wetlands, loch, estuaries and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement to water quality and maintain the ecological status of fresh water bodies in rivers and the coastline.</li> <li>• Increase in the number and duration of bathing water areas passing Bathing water quality EC Guideline Standards.</li> <li>• Reduction in diffuse pollution (e.g. nitrates) within river catchment areas.</li> <li>• Reduction in point source pollution in watercourses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing water quality in Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.</li> <li>• Safeguarding and improving water quality (biology and chemistry).</li> <li>• Reducing adverse impacts on the coast.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable use of water and mitigate the effects of floods and droughts.</li> <li>• Reduce water pollution and enhance water quality.</li> <li>• Prevent water pollution caused or induced by nitrates from point source pollution sources.</li> <li>• Avoid further degradation of the coastal environment.</li> </ul>

SEA Topics	Possible Objectives	Possible SEA Indicators	Indicators from baseline data and environmental problems sections in Appendices 3 and 5	Outcomes from the analysis of other plans etc, which the strategic plan should emphasise on (Appendix 2)
	<p>floodplains.</p> <p>3. Maintain water abstraction, run-off and recharge within carrying capacity (including future capacity).</p> <p>4. Only development supported in SPP7: (Planning and Flooding) will be allowed within functional flood plains.</p> <p>5. Improve and support water efficient technologies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in water abstraction in environmentally sensitive areas.</li> <li>• Closure of the Water of Dye abstraction plant in the River Dee catchment area.</li>   <li>• Reduction in the number of planning applications granted planning permission in functional floodplains.</li>   <li>• Increase in the number of development schemes that incorporate water efficient technologies.</li> <li>• Encourage and increase the number of SuDS retrofitted for existing water systems.</li> <li>• Number of developments in upland areas that use water taken from underground water sources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining ground water and river levels.</li>   <li>• Reducing the likelihood of flooding from new development.</li> </ul>	
Soil	6. Reduce area of land contamination in the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remediation of contaminated land</li> <li>• Reduction of soil/water pollution from landfill waste disposal schemes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remediation of contaminated land.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create sustainable communities with a focus on the sustainable use of natural</li> </ul>

<b>SEA Topics</b>	<b>Possible Objectives</b>	<b>Possible SEA Indicators</b>	<b>Indicators from baseline data and environmental problems sections in Appendices 3 and 5</b>	<b>Outcomes from the analysis of other plans etc, which the strategic plan should emphasise on (Appendix 2)</b>
	7. Improve and safeguard the efficiency and effectiveness of land use and soil quality and quantity (e.g. controlling soil erosion and sedimentation).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the area of Prime agricultural land developed.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of recycling schemes.</li> <li>• Meeting Landfill Allowance Targets.</li> <li>• Reduction in the number of proposals granted planning permission on sites at risk from coastal erosion.</li> <li>• Reduction in the number of proposals granted consent that may increase soil erosion (e.g. increase erosion from water runoff).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding prime agricultural land (Grades 1 to 3.1).</li> <li>• Reducing waste disposal in landfill.</li> <li>• Reducing soil erosion.</li> </ul>	resources.
Biodiversity, fauna and flora	8. Conserve, protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of planning applications given consent on designated sites.</li> <li>• (Achievement) Implementation of Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) actions.</li> <li>• Percentages of BAP species and habitats, which are identified as stable or increasing (although this is not measurable locally for all BAP species – may be possible to link with existing monitoring schemes such as breeding bird census and butterfly monitoring and possible local squirrel survey).</li> <li>• Proportion of required open space being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieving North East Biodiversity Action Plan (NE BAP) targets.</li> <li>• Safeguarding designated areas.</li> <li>• Safeguarding non-designated areas and enhancing biodiversity (reducing loss of habitat and species).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity.</li> </ul>

SEA Topics	Possible Objectives	Possible SEA Indicators	Indicators from baseline data and environmental problems sections in Appendices 3 and 5	Outcomes from the analysis of other plans etc, which the strategic plan should emphasise on (Appendix 2)
		<p>natural/wild areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of wildlife corridors / augmentation of wildlife habitats (however a method of monitoring this would have to be developed).</li> </ul>		
Climatic factors	<p>9. Reduce the causes of adverse climate change (e.g. reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> levels <b>through carbon accounting</b> and North East global footprint).</p> <p>10. Decrease the use of non renewable energy.</p> <p>11. Reduce vulnerability to the effects of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels <b>through carbon accounting</b>.</li> <li>• Reduction in the North East's global (energy) footprint.</li> <li>• Decrease in the proportion of people traveling to work or study by car.</li> <li>• Increase in the proportion of people traveling to work or study by walking or cycling.</li> <li>• Increase in electricity and heat generated from renewable energy sources and CHP located in the area.</li> <li>• Increase in the use of energy efficient technologies.</li> <li>• Increase in the development of alternative transport fuels, including hydrogen.</li> <li>• Reduction in the number of properties at</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in carbon dioxide levels.</li> <li>• Minimising impact on natural resources.</li> <li>• Increasing in proportion of heat and electricity generated from renewable energy sources and Combined Heat and Power (CHP) schemes.</li> <li>• Reducing areas affected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit or reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases.</li> <li>• Encourage the increase use of renewable energy resources and more efficient use energy and water in housing.</li> <li>• Limit or reduce the emissions of pollutants.</li> <li>• Address climate change</li> </ul>



SEA Topics	Possible Objectives	Possible SEA Indicators	Indicators from baseline data and environmental problems sections in Appendices 3 and 5	Outcomes from the analysis of other plans etc, which the strategic plan should emphasise on (Appendix 2)
	to the effects of climate change e.g. flooding, public service provision, and habitats.	<p>risk from flooding (either pluvial, fluvial or tidal).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in those vulnerable to rising sea levels through the improvement and building of new sea defences.</li> <li>• Decrease in the number of new developments NOT incorporating SuDS.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of retrofitted SuDS for existing drainage systems.</li> <li>• Increase in augmented habitats.</li> </ul>	<p>by flooding (sea, fluvial or pluvial).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding biodiversity.</li> <li>• Impact on year-round services.</li> </ul>	
Human health	<p>12. Improve accessibility to good quality open green space and countryside.</p> <p>13. Improve accessibility to open spaces, jobs/ employment, education, public services, and decrease deprivation/social exclusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the proportion of the population within 200m of parks and open spaces.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of town/civic parks created.</li> <li>• Improvement to the issues highlighted in the <i>Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation</i> affecting Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.</li> <li>• Percentage of households within 6 minutes walk of a bus stop</li> <li>• Decrease in the number of those overcrowded (as identified in the Census).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing/maintaining quality and availability of public open space in urban and rural areas.</li> <li>• Improvements to quality of life in currently deprived areas. Increasing sport and recreation facilities in areas of identified need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote quality of life issues.</li> <li>• Promote good design, safe environments, clean environments and good quality services.</li> </ul>

SEA Topics	Possible Objectives	Possible SEA Indicators	Indicators from baseline data and environmental problems sections in Appendices 3 and 5	Outcomes from the analysis of other plans etc, which the strategic plan should emphasise on (Appendix 2)
	<p>14. Increase opportunities for indoor recreation and exercise.</p> <p>15. Protect and improve health.</p> <p>16. Increase the mix of housing types and tenure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The number of sports facilities built</b> (as identified in Aberdeen's and Aberdeenshire's sports strategies/studies).</li> <li>• Reduction in the number of letters of complaint to Environmental Health on noise, odours or air quality.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of regeneration schemes.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of planning permissions granted for the different housing types and the variation between Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving those suffering from mental health (especially of poorer communities) as a result of overcrowding.</li> <li>• Reducing excessive noise disturbance from aircraft.</li> </ul>	
Population	<p>17. Improve the supply of housing land to accommodate in-migration and the predicted increase households.</p> <p>18. Improve the supply of dwellings for the aging population and those with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in the general resident perception surveys.</li> <li>• Increase in the number and tenure of dwellings built.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing trends in household size.</li> <li>• Size of population.</li> <li>• Migration change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set the planning policy framework for development consents for major residential, commercial, retail, and employment developments.</li> </ul>

SEA Topics	Possible Objectives	Possible SEA Indicators	Indicators from baseline data and environmental problems sections in Appendices 3 and 5	Outcomes from the analysis of other plans etc, which the strategic plan should emphasise on (Appendix 2)
	<p>special needs.</p> <p>19. Improve the provision of land for care homes.</p> <p>20. Improve the provision of services to cater for 'non-Scotland' migrants, especially if from overseas (e.g. language and cultural issues/differences).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of care homes built.</li> <li>• Increase in provision of services for overseas immigrants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Years of healthy life expectancy.</li> </ul>	
Cultural heritage	<p>21. Protect, and where appropriate, enhance the historic environment.</p> <p>22. Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the historic environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decline in the number of listed buildings and archaeological sites at risk from human (e.g. neglect or vandalism) or natural (e.g. coastal erosion) impacts.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of buildings renovated/regeneration schemes in urban and rural areas.</li> <li>• Reduce conflict with building impact: form and materials, internal environment, urban and social integration, character, innovation and accessibility (e.g. works required for the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing numbers of buildings at risk.</li> <li>• Safeguarding building functionality (e.g. use and access).</li> <li>• Safeguarding listed buildings, designed landscape etc, and conservation areas.</li> <li>• Safeguarding archaeological sites.</li> <li>• Ensuring that the impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect, maintain and enhance the built and cultural heritage.</li> </ul>

SEA Topics	Possible Objectives	Possible SEA Indicators	Indicators from baseline data and environmental problems sections in Appendices 3 and 5	Outcomes from the analysis of other plans etc, which the strategic plan should emphasise on (Appendix 2)
	environment.	accessibility (e.g. works required for the disabled).	from new build reflects: form & materials, environment, urban and social integration, character and innovation of existing historic buildings.	
Landscape	<p>23. Protect and enhance and where appropriate restore the quality and distinctiveness of the area's landscape and townscapes.</p> <p>24. Safeguard the landscapes capacity to absorb</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reported condition of Aberdeen's and Aberdeenshire's landscapes (non/designated) and townscapes, (including conservation areas).</li> <li>• Reduction in the number of planning applications granted planning permission either as departures or against officers' recommendation. For example where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new developments individually or cumulatively adversely affect designated landscapes; and</li> <li>• the insensitive siting and design of new developments adversely affect the landscape and townscape setting.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reduction in the number of planning applications granted planning permission for enabling development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing designated areas – National Scenic Areas (NSA).</li> <li>• Enhancing designated areas – Areas of Landscape Significance (ALS).</li> <li>• Enhancing townscape quality</li> <li>• Safeguarding landscape character.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect, maintain and enhance the landscape character.</li> </ul>

SEA Topics	Possible Objectives	Possible SEA Indicators	Indicators from baseline data and environmental problems sections in Appendices 3 and 5	Outcomes from the analysis of other plans etc, which the strategic plan should emphasise on (Appendix 2)
	new development.	that <b>have</b> adversely affect landscape characteristics (e.g. changing it's landscape character type, not respecting local topography/contours).		

SEA Topics	Possible Objectives	Possible SEA Indicators	Indicators from baseline data and environmental problems sections in Appendices 3 and 5	Outcomes from the analysis of other plans etc, which the strategic plan should emphasise on (Appendix 2)
Material assets	<p>25. Promote the creation of fixed assets, including affordable housing and water and waste management facilities.</p> <p>26. Enhance and promote commercial and industrial assets.</p> <p>27. Regenerate derelict, vacant or contaminated land.</p> <p>28. Protect residential, commercial and industrial properties from flooding.</p> <p>29. Promote the use of sustainable materials and the adoption of Lifetime standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase and enhancement in the number of wastewater treatment works and water works built.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of waste management facilities built that addresses the need identified in the Area Waste Plan.</li> <li>• Decrease in waiting list figures for affordable housing.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of vacant buildings reused.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of holiday homes built to meet predicted demand.</li> <li>• Decrease in the number of derelict and vacant land.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of flood defences developed or upgraded.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of residential, industry, and commercial properties protected by flood defences.</li> <li>• Increase in the use of sustainable materials in new build and retrofit in planning applications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing number of vacant dwellings.</li> <li>• Reducing number of degraded buildings.</li> <li>• Reducing derelict and vacant land (and buildings).</li> <li>• Safeguarding properties protected from flooding.</li> <li>• Enhancing existing flood defences.</li> <li>• Enhancing existing pumping stations and sewage works.</li> <li>• Enhancing water treatment works.</li> <li>• Ensuring sufficient supply of affordable housing.</li> <li>• Ensuring sufficient supply of second homes.</li> <li>• Increasing proportion of building materials from sustainable sources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote economic growth, social inclusion, environmental improvement, health and safety.</li> <li>• Support economic sustainability consistent with social progress and the environment.</li> <li>• Tackle housing shortage, low demand, abandonment and liveability.</li> <li>• Promote the economy, and support the community and public services.</li> </ul>

*Assessment framework – SEA objectives and indicators*

4.16 The structure plan’s strategic options, plan objectives and policies, as well as the alternatives brought forward for further assessment will be assessed against SEA objectives to be agreed through this scoping process. Significant environmental effects of the plan will be predicted to determine whether the plan has negative, positive, uncertain or neutral effects. In addition, the effects will further be evaluated to determine damage or otherwise to the receptors in relation reversibility or irreversibility of effects, risks, duration (permanent, temporary, long-term, short-term and medium-term) and cumulative (direct, indirect, secondary and synergistic). This will be an iterative process with key stakeholder involvement.

4.17 Table 16 presents the framework that will be used to assess effects of the strategic development plan.

**Table 16: Framework for assessing the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan**

The Structure Plan	SEA Objectives					Overall effect	Comments [Short-term, medium-term and long-term effects; permanent and temporary effects; positive & negative effects; and secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects]	To be assessed for further cumulative impacts in Tables 17 and 18)? Tick if apply
	1	2	3	...	Nth SEA Objective			
Strategic option 1 [name]								v
Strategic option 2 [name]								v
Nth Strategic option								
Plan objective 1 [name] (v4)								
Alternative Plan objective 1 [name] (v3)								
Alternative Plan objective 1 [name] (v2)								v
Alternative Plan objective 1 [name] (v1)								
Nth Policy								
Policy 1 (v3)								
Alternative Policy 1 (v2)								
Alternative Policy 1 (v1)								
Nth Alternative Policy								
<b>Overall Effects</b>								
Key	++ = very positive		+ = positive		+/- = mixed		? = uncertain	
	-- = very negative		- = negative		0 = neutral			

*Cumulative effect assessment framework*

4.18 A further framework for assessing cumulative and synergistic effects of the structure plan and the alternatives are presented in Tables 17 and 18 below. Only those structure plan spatial options, objectives and policies that were identified in Table 15 above (SEA objectives) of having cumulative/synergistic/secondary effects will be included the assessment. The assessment of cumulative effects will be undertaken using the following process:

- further assessing the structure plan options, objectives and policies that were identified in Table 15 (SEA objectives) of having cumulative/synergistic/secondary effects;
- considering the effects that may arise from interaction with proposals within the structure plan as well as those within other plans, programmes and strategies (National Planning Framework, Regional Transport Strategy, and Local Economic Development Strategy);
- taking account of whether any effects will bring the critical environmental capital (e.g. water) close to their capacity or threshold to remain productive or sustainable; and
- being aware of the level of uncertainty in identifying cumulative, secondary or synergistic effects and ensuring that, where uncertainty exists, this is documented.

**Table 17: Cumulative & synergistic effects of the structure plan options, objectives and policies**

Structure plan objectives/policies/	Cumulative effects assessment				Overall effects
	Cumulative/synergistic/secondary effects?	Cumulative/synergistic/secondary effects with other plans or strategies?	Effects on critical environmental capital (e.g. water)?	Does any uncertainty about the cumulative or other effects exist?	
Option/ Plan objective/Policy [name] (version 1)					More study needed
Option/Plan Objective/Policy [name] (version 4)					Potential adverse effect [Suggest appropriate mitigation measures]
Nth option/ plan objective/policy					
Key: positive (+), negative (-), neutral (0), uncertain (?)					



**Table 18: Cumulative & synergistic effects of alternative structure plan options, objectives and policies**

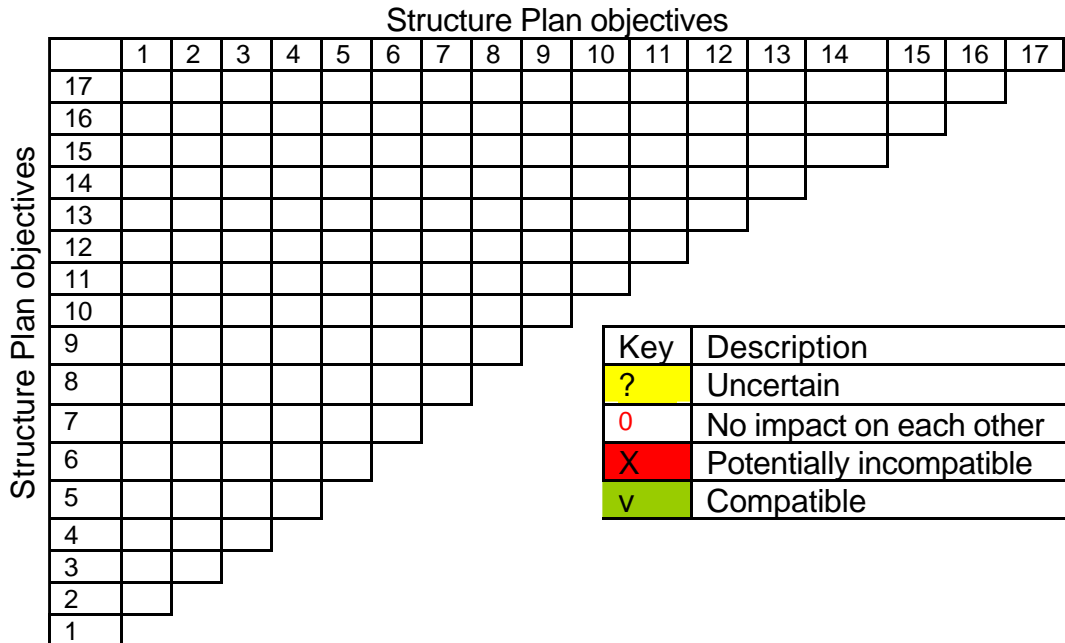
Alternative structure plan objectives/policies/	Cumulative effects assessment				Overall effects
	Cumulative/synergistic/secondary effects?	Cumulative/synergistic/secondary effects with other plans or strategies?	Effects on critical environmental capital (e.g. water)?	Does any uncertainty about the cumulative or other effects exist?	
Alternative Option/Plan objective/ Policy [name] (version 1)					More study needed
Alternative Option/ Plan objective/Policy [name] (version 2)					Potential adverse effect [Suggest appropriate mitigation measures here]
Nth option/plan objective/policy					

Key: positive (+), negative (-), neutral (0), uncertain (?)

*Assessment of compatibility of plan objectives*

4.19 In order to determine the consistency and compatibility of the SP's objectives to each other, an internal compatibility assessment of the SP's objectives will be undertaken using a framework presented in Figure 1 below. At the time of writing, the first drafts of SP's strategic objectives are still being developed.

**Figure 1: Internal Compatibility Assessment of the SP's Objectives**



*Proposed Mitigation Measures*

4.20 The SEA Directive requires that through mitigation measures, recommendations will be made to prevent, reduce or compensate for the negative effects of implementing the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council Structure Plan. It also seeks to ensure that positive effects identified are enhanced. The proposed framework for mitigating significant environmental effects is shown in Appendix 6.

*Monitoring Framework*

4.21 Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council are required to monitor the significant environmental effects arising from the implementation of the structure plan. A monitoring report will therefore be integrated into the adopted plan to constantly monitor the significant environmental effects and the proposed framework for monitoring significant environmental effects of the implementation of the structure plan is shown in Table 19 below.

**Table 19: Monitoring the structure plan**

What needs to be monitored? (e.g. effects)	What sort of information is required? (Indicators)	Where can the information be obtained?	Are there gaps in the existing information and how can it be resolved?	When should the remedial action be considered?	Who is responsible for undertaking the monitoring?	How should the results be presented?	What remedial actions could be taken?
<b>Aims of the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council Structure Plan</b>							
<b>Strategic Objectives of the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council Structure Plan</b>							
<b>Policies of the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council Structure Plan</b>							



## 5 The Appropriate Assessment

- 5.1 Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC requires that where a plan or project may significantly affect a Natura 2000 site (natural heritage designation of international importance – Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection areas, and Ramsar (wetland) sites), an Appropriate Assessment may be required. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the likely significant effects at an early stage.
- 5.2 The Appropriate Assessment consists of two stages:
- a screening exercise of all Natura 2000 sites to identify which sites are likely to be significantly affected by the structure plan; and
  - a full Appropriate Assessment of specific Natura 2000 sites.
- 5.3 Natura 2000 sites within the Cairngorms National Park will be excluded from the Appropriate Assessment as the Cairngorms National Park Authority is producing their own national plan, and the structure plan will stop at the National Park boundary.
- 5.4 The screening exercise will not be undertaken until the draft structure plan has been written, which includes the preferred strategic option, plan objectives and policies, as the significant effects required for this assessment will not be known until actual proposals are set out. The screening exercise will be undertaken in accordance with the Scottish Executive's interim guidelines, *Assessing Development Plans in Terms of the Need for Appropriate Assessment* (May 2006), which sets out the following steps:
- to identify all Natura 2000 sites that may be affected within or outwith the structure plan boundary;
  - to identify the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of each site, which may be affected, in the context of the plan's aims and objectives;
  - to consider the intentions of the aims, objectives, proposals and policies within the plan and the anticipated changes to the interests of any of the sites that the plans implementation may cause or contribute to; and
  - to determine which elements of the plan would be likely to have any significant effect on any interests/feature of any European site, alone or in combination with other projects and plans, directly or indirectly.
- 5.5 The screening exercise will be submitted to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and other stakeholders for their comment as a separate screening report. Where significant effects have been identified, as a result of the structure plan, a full Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken, and will be published along with the SEA environment report.
- 5.6 A framework for undertaking the Appropriate Assessment will be included with the screening report to SNH and other stakeholders for their agreement.

## 6 Next steps

### Proposed Consultation Timescale & Anticipated Milestones

6.1 Table 20 shows the remaining steps needed for the SEA of the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council Structure Plan; and how these steps would be carried out and described in the Final SEA Environmental Report. From Table 20 below, the proposed period for consultation on the draft structure plan and the accompanying environmental report is a minimum of six weeks.

**Table 20: Proposed Consultation Timescale and Methods**

Expected date	Milestone	Comments
5 weeks	Consulting on the Scoping Report by the SE Gateway	
4 weeks	Collating views from the Consultation Authorities on the Scoping Report consultation	
4 weeks	Take the appropriate action on the Scoping report and the plan as the result of the consultations	
4 weeks	Produce the Environmental Report	
January 2008 for 6 weeks	Consulting on the interim Environmental Report and the draft Structure Plan	
2 weeks	Collating views on the Consultation	
5-8 weeks	Take the appropriate action on the environmental report and the plan as the result of the consultations.	
August 2008	Publication of the Environmental Report and the finalised draft Structure Plan and submission to Scottish Ministers	
4 weeks	Take post-adoption measures	

6.2 Key stages in the development of the structure plan can be identified as follows:

- Identification and confirmation of the issues to be considered by the plan by September 2007.
- Identification and confirmation of the spatial strategy by September 2007.
- Production of a draft plan by January 2008.
- Production of a finalised plan by June 2008.
- Production of an Action Programme by September 2008.

### Framework for Analysing Consultees & their Comments

6.3 In order to track and analyse comments and suggestions from the consultation process, a framework for analysis is provided in Tables 21 and 22 below.

**Table 21: People Consulted on the initial draft of the Environmental Report**

Source (examples)	List names
Private individual	
Consultancy	
House builder	
Community group	

**Table 22: Analysis of Comments**

Organisation	Issue	Concern/ Comments	How addressed in SEA Process	SEA Report page [specify number]
Scottish Natural Heritage				
Historic Scotland				
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency				