

## South Ayrshire Council Main Issues Report Strategic Environmental Assessment

### Environmental Report



08 March 2010



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## Non-Technical Summary

### INTRODUCTION

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) provides a summary of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of South Ayrshire Council's Main Issues Report as part of the Local Development Plan process. It has been designed to help consultees and interested members of the public to easily understand the findings of the environmental assessment process.

The SEA aims to integrate environmental considerations into the Plan and this is achieved in the following ways:

1. The SEA allows for the potential environmental effects of the Plan to be predicted and, where appropriate, used to inform the development of policies in the Plan, and
2. Setting out predicted environmental effects in the Environmental Report so that the public and other stakeholders can give their view on the Plan and its potential effects.

The Environmental Report is the main consultation document in the SEA and provides detailed information of South Ayrshire's environment and current issues, an assessment of potential environmental effects along with recommendations and measures to monitor significant residual effects during the life of the Plan.

### CONSULTATION

The consultation period for the Main Issues Report and its accompanying draft Environmental Report is as follows:

Consultation Period: **01 April to 13 May 2010**

Comments can be made by letter or email to **Neale McIlvanney**:

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Planning & Enterprise.  
South Ayrshire Council,  
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Email: [Neale.McIlvanney@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:Neale.McIlvanney@south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

Copies of the Environmental Report and Main Issues Report have been made available to view at:

- South Ayrshire Council Offices;
- Local Libraries; and,
- Ayr Town Hall.

**BACKGROUND TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN & MAIN ISSUES REPORT**

The South Ayrshire Local Development Plan will replace the Ayrshire Structure Plan and South Ayrshire Local Plan as the development plan for the area and will set out how the Council intends to shape its towns, villages and countryside over the next ten to twenty years. The Local Development Plan will be the primary tool used to determine planning applications.

The Main Issues Report is a significant stage in the Local Development Plan preparation, which will set out general proposals for development in the area on major economic, environmental and social issues.

Presented in the Main Issues Report are preferred options for the future direction of significant policy issues alongside any reasonable alternative and a strategy identifying where development should and should not occur.

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

The Environmental Report has informed the Main Issues Report throughout its development. The key steps of the SEA that have been completed to date include:

- **Screening:** This determined whether the Main Issues Report had the potential to have significant environmental effects and therefore if an SEA was required;
- **Scoping:** Scoping sets out sufficient information on the South Ayrshire Council Main Issues Report to enable the Consultation Authorities (i.e. Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Environment Protection Agency) and others to form a view on the scope, level of detail and consultation period that would be appropriate; and,
- **Environmental Assessment:** An environmental assessment has been undertaken of the Main Issues Report’s preferred vision and alternative options, site selection methodology and options for policy development and their alternatives to assess the potential effects against current environmental conditions in South Ayrshire.

Following the consultation period, there will be a review of the responses received and action taken where appropriate to incorporate these findings into the Local Development Plan and Final Environmental Report.

**ENVIRONMENT OF SOUTH AYRSHIRE**

Information on the current environment within South Ayrshire was required for the development of the SEA objectives and to aid in the environmental assessment process. Detailed in this section is a brief summary of the state of the environment.

***Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna***

There are several international, national and local sites designated for their biodiversity value in South Ayrshire. For example, the Lendalfoot Hills Complex is a Special Area of Conservation which is situated to the southwest of the local authority area and is important for a number of key habitats including grassland and wet and dry heaths.

Numerous non-statutory wildlife sites and ornithological sites are also present, with wildlife and green corridors important for biodiversity passing through the main settlements. European protected species in South Ayrshire include bats, Great-crested newt, otters, dolphins and marine turtles. The Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) further identifies several UK priority habitats present as well as 11 priority species.



A new Biosphere reserve is proposed to the south of the area; Galloway and Southern Ayrshire. These are sites recognised under UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere programme, which innovates and demonstrates approaches to conservation and sustainable development.

**Cultural Heritage**

Cultural heritage is seen to be an important asset in South Ayrshire, bringing benefits of tourism which, in turn, benefits the economy. A range of designated sites are present including Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes, along with other features such as Conservation Areas, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), buildings on the ‘at risk’ register and over 1,000 archaeological sites.

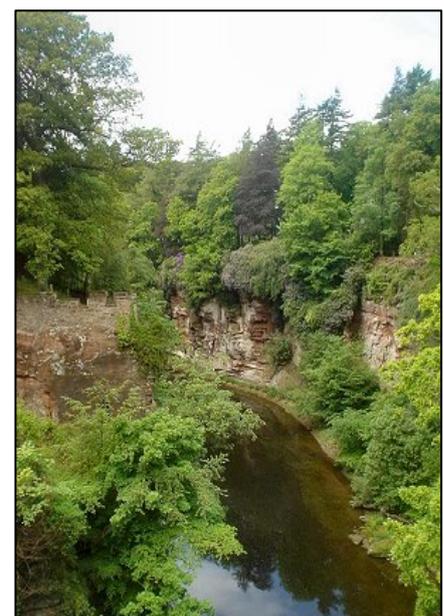
Threats to cultural heritage assets in South Ayrshire include coastal flooding and coastal erosion, both of which pose a threat to historic and archaeological sites. Designed landscapes in Ayrshire have also been adversely affected in recent years by various forms of development, for example, Auchincruive has been developed for use by the West of Scotland Agricultural College with the original woodland features now largely lost (SNH, 2009).

**Water Environment**

South Ayrshire contains numerous water features including the extensive coastline, small lochs and reservoirs and four main river catchment areas; River Ayr, Doon, Girvan and Stinchar. The River Ayr is the largest of the catchments.

Water quality ranges from good to poor across South Ayrshire. Coastal stretches are all of moderate water quality with the exception of Ayr Estuary, classified as poor.

Flooding occurs along much of the South Ayrshire coastline including coastal areas of Ayr, Troon, Girvan and Ballantrae. Other areas of flood risk are present to the east and south of Ayr, around Prestwick Airport, north and northeast of Girvan and around Dailly.



Pressures on the waterbodies include the risk of pollution through disused coal mines, agriculture, road transport and urban development.



**Soils and Geology**

South Ayrshire is located within the Central Belt and Southern Uplands geological areas, with a prominent feature being the Ballentrae and Girvan Cover located in the Central belt area. There are 15 geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) present, with the largest being Girvan to Ballantrae Coast.

Mineral gleys and brown earth soils are the most prominent soil types. In the north of the local authority area there are areas of prime quality agricultural land capable of producing a wide to moderate range of crops. There are 37 vacant and derelict sites in South Ayrshire, many of which are constrained due to contamination and the cost of land remediation and acquisition.

**Landscape**

South Ayrshire has a diverse landscape with 70km of coastline along with lowland areas and upland moorland. Further to this, six Scenic Areas have been designated by South Ayrshire Council for the quality of their landscape. Pressures on the landscape include urban expansion, tourism development, energy-related and transport development and climate change.

**Air Quality**

Air pollution in South Ayrshire is generally very good and as such, no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) have been declared to date. Several locations in the local authority area came close to the limit of annual nitrogen dioxide concentrations in 2008 (both in Ayr). South Ayrshire has a high rate of car ownership with congestion problems identified in Ayr and Prestwick particularly.

**Climatic Factors**

Emissions targets have been introduced Scotland-wide to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Scottish Climate Change Bill includes a target of an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050 from the baseline year of 1990. Carbon mapping shows roughly the highest emissions are in the vicinity of Ayr and Prestwick.

In terms of renewable energy development, there are three wind farms present in South Ayrshire either consented or operational with several schemes run by the Council for small scale renewable energy use such as solar panels.

Future predictions are that weather will become less predictable with a greater likelihood of extreme weather events with rising sea levels potentially posing a threat to development along South Ayrshire’s coast. It is considered important that adequate land resources are made available for future renewable energy development in the local authority area.

**Noise**

Common complaints to the South Ayrshire Council Environmental Health Department with regards noise include excessive residential noise, construction related noise, vibration from heavy goods vehicles and quarry blasting. Over the next five years, Noise Management Areas (NMAs) will be identified which should protect residents from high levels of environmental noise.

**Human Health**

South Ayrshire’s population is considered to be in general good health with low rates of obesity. The local authority area has an extensive network of walking and cycling routes including National Cycle Network (NCN) 7 and numerous other local routes. Forest and country parks are also located in South Ayrshire along with open space, activity and leisure centres as well as golf courses and sports clubs, all of which encourage physical activity and well-being.

**Population**

South Ayrshire has a population of approximately 111,700 with the majority situated in the major settlements of Ayr, Troon and Prestwick, followed by the smaller towns of Girvan and Maybole. Recent data shows that the local authority area has a greater percentage of people of pensionable age compared with the national average. Population levels are predicted to decline in the future (to 2031) with a growth in the number of people of pensionable age (rise of 26%).



The local economy has suffered numerous challenges in recent years with a decline in engineering, textiles, coal mining and fishing which has affected businesses and employment. Recent data indicates that unemployment has increased with localised high unemployment rates in areas of Girvan and North Ayr. Due to its relatively rural nature, South Ayrshire has a high rate of car ownership compared with the rest of Scotland with a lower rate of public transport use.

**Material Assets**

Material assets incorporate natural resources and how they are used, for example in sustainable building methods, the transport infrastructure and waste management. Several quarries are located in South Ayrshire including Tormitchell quarry, Barbrae, Hillhead, Hallyards and Craigiehill quarries. Hillhead is one of the largest hard rock quarries in Central Scotland producing a wide variety of crushed rock products.

A large range of renewable energy technologies are supported by South Ayrshire Council including wind farms, individual turbines and solar panels. Civic amenity

sites provide recycling facilities for various items as well as a Council run recycling collection service.

South Ayrshire’s transport infrastructure incorporates the A77 trunk road which forms the main spine of the road network linking Ballentrae, Girvan, Maybole, Air and Prestwick to Kilmarnock and Glasgow in the north and Stranraer to the south. The A78 also links the A77 to the north of Prestwick with Troon and continues north to Irvine, Largs and Greenock. Congestion occurs in various locations on the road network including Maybole, Ayr and Prestwick town centres.



There are numerous public transport services, the majority of which stem from Ayr to the rest of South Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, Glasgow, Lanarkshire and Dumfries and Galloway. There is a poor bus and rail interchange to rural communities in South Ayrshire. Glasgow Prestwick International Airport provides national and international services and is served by rail.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FINDINGS**

Overall minor to moderate long-term benefits were found to be achievable to South Ayrshire’s natural and built environment through the measures proposed in the Main Issues Report. These benefits have been achieved, in part, through the continuous incorporation of SEA recommendations into the development of the Plan.

Recommendations were made for changes to components of the Main Issues Report where potential adverse effects were identified or where it was thought that there would be the potential for additional benefits to the environment. These changes included measures to protect and, where possible, enhance environmental features along with an assurance that areas of flood risk would be avoided when proposing new development.

Some adverse effects remained after mitigation, particularly associated with the alternatives to the preferred options. In addition, several of the preferred options had potential adverse effects, although the extent of these was uncertain. The effects related to coastal development as well as the options associated with Glasgow Prestwick International Airport and A77 Corridor Study. The cumulative assessment of all potential residual effects however, found that benefits were achievable to all of the SEA environmental topics, with some uncertainty as to the extent of some effects.

Most significant was the anticipated benefits to the population of South Ayrshire. Moderate to major long term benefits were thought possible through the potential for economic growth by encouraging new industry and businesses along with improved accessibility and a higher quality environment. Through this, the quality of life for residents of South Ayrshire could be enhanced, making the area a more attractive place to live and work.

**MONITORING OF EFFECTS**

The purpose of SEA monitoring is to ensure that mitigation is effective and that any early or unexpected effects are recognised and addressed so that appropriate action can be taken to resolve any issues. Over time, environmental benefits in South Ayrshire will become apparent through trends in environmental data. Monitoring is a key aspect of the process and will provide essential information on which to base future development.

A monitoring strategy has been developed, along with targets relating to the SEA objectives. Monitoring should be undertaken for the potentially significant environmental effects of the Main Issues Report and emerging Local Development Plan.

**PROGRAMME**

The Environmental Report will be presented for public and statutory consultation at the same time as for the Main Issues Report. The consultation period will commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 and will run for a period of six weeks to allow for comments to be made.

Activity	Publication Date
Environmental Report and Main Issues Report.	01 April 2010.
Public and Statutory Consultation.	01 April to 13 May 2010.
SEA Post-Consultation Document.	June 2010.
Revised Environmental Report submitted and proposed Plan published.	February 2011.
Public and Statutory Consultation.	From February 2011 for 6 weeks.
Environmental Assessment of any modifications to the LDP.	Autumn 2012.
Adoption of LDP.	Winter 2012 / 2013.
Post – Adoption Statement.	Winter 2012 / 2013.

The Post-Adoption Statement is the final stage in the SEA process and will be published shortly after the Local Development Plan has been formally adopted. It will describe how consultation comments on the Environmental Report have been taken into account within the Local Development Plan.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic tool for considering the likely environmental effects of Plans, Programmes and Strategies (PPS). The purpose of this Environmental Report is to identify and record the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the actions outlined in the emerging South Ayrshire Council Main Issues Report (MIR) as part of the Local Development Plan (LDP) process. Where appropriate, the Environmental Report will also identify reasonable alternatives, mitigation and / or recommendations to options outlined in the MIR in light of any significant effects.

### 1.1.1 Statutory Requirement

The Environmental Report has been prepared in accordance with Section 5 (3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 (hereafter referred to as the SEA Act). The Act requires an SEA to be carried out on certain plans and programmes prepared by public authorities that are envisaged to have a likely significant environmental effect. The SEA Act identifies a number of stages to be undertaken for an SEA and these are outlined below.

#### **Screening**

This process determines whether the specified PPS has the potential to have significant environmental effects and therefore if an SEA is required. Under Section 5 (3) (a) of the SEA Act, a Screening Report was not necessary for the South Ayrshire Council MIR. However in this instance, a basic report was submitted, including the potentially significant environmental effects of the MIR to illustrate a comprehensive and robust approach.

#### **Scoping**

Section 15 of the SEA Act requires a scoping exercise to be undertaken in advance of preparing the Environmental Report. This sets out sufficient information on the South Ayrshire Council MIR to enable the Consultation Authorities (CAs) (Historic Scotland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)) to form a view on the consultation period as well as the scope and level of detail that will be appropriate for its accompanying Environmental Report.

#### **Environmental Report**

Aims to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Masterplan and its reasonable alternatives (Section 14(2) of the Act). The Environmental Report is the key consultation document in the SEA process because it provides an explanation of the environmental effects along with an opportunity to comment. This document will form an Environmental Report which will be updated and refined alongside the plan making process.

#### **Consultation**

The Environmental Report will be presented for public and statutory consultation during the same period as is proposed for the draft MIR. The consultation period will commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 and will run for six weeks to allow for full representations to be made.

**Post – Adoption Statement**

Provides information on the adopted plan and how consultation comments were taken into account. This will be undertaken and published once the LDP process is completed.

**Monitoring**

Section 19 of the SEA Act requires the Responsible Authority to monitor significant environmental effects of implementing the PPS. This must be done in such a way as to also identify unforeseen adverse effects and to take appropriate remedial action.

The Environmental Report represents the major output from the SEA process. The purpose of this report is to provide information on the MIR; identify, describe and evaluate the likely environmental effects of the plan and reasonable alternatives; and to provide an early and effective opportunity for the Consultation Authorities and the public to offer views on any aspect of the plan and this report.

**1.2 Key Facts**

Set out in Table 1-1 are key facts that relate to the South Ayrshire Council LDP MIR.

*Table 1-1: Key Facts relating to the LDP MIR*

Key Facts	Detail
<b>Responsible Authority</b>	South Ayrshire Council, Planning Service.
<b>Title of Plan / Programme</b>	Local Development Plan Main Issues Report.
<b>What Prompted the Plan</b>	The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 requires the production of a Local Development Plan.
<b>Plan Subject</b>	Land Use Planning.
<b>Period Covered by Plan</b>	2010 – 2013.
<b>Frequency of Updates</b>	5 years.
<b>Plan Area</b>	South Ayrshire Council area.
<b>Plan Purpose and / or Objectives</b>	The MIR will assess options for the delivery of strategically important development projects in South Ayrshire to be included in the LDP.
<b>Contact Point</b>	Local Development Plan Contact: Neale McIlvanney, South Ayrshire Council, Burns House, Burns Statue Square, Ayr, KA7 1UT 01292 616648 <a href="mailto:Neale.McIlvanney@south-ayrshire.gov.uk">Neale.McIlvanney@south-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>  Strategic Environmental Assessment Contact: Vicky Smith Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd 95 Bothwell Street Glasgow G2 7HX 0141 243 8514 <a href="mailto:Vicky.smith@jacobs.com">Vicky.smith@jacobs.com</a>