



Strategic Environmental Assessment for Local Implementation Plans: Task 2 Workshops

by C Treleven

UPR SE/101/04

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Prepared for: Association for London Government and Transport for London

Client: Damian Price

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1 INTRODUCTION

In August 2004, ALG/TfL commissioned the Centre for Sustainability (C4S) at TRL Limited to provide support to London Boroughs. The aim of this project was to assist London Boroughs in preparing Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) of their 'Local Implementation Plans' (LIPs).

The project is divided into three Tasks, as follows:

Task 1: Provision of written advice on the SEA of LIPs.

Task 2: Training for representatives of Boroughs, at the ALG's premises in London.

Task 3: Focussed support work, such as the preparation of templates for specific parts of the SEA process.

This report summarises Task 2.

2 Background to the Training

In August 2004, ALG/TfL commissioned C4S to provide a single training day as Task 2 of the project. This was due to take place on 4th October 2004. Approximately 30-35 people could be accommodated on the training day.

In early September, it became clear that demand from Boroughs for places would exceed the available capacity on 4th October. ALG/TfL therefore commissioned C4S to provide a further day of training on 11th October 2004, which was essentially to be a repeat of the training given on 4th October. This pushed the total capacity on the two days up to approximately 70 places.

2.1 Purpose of the training

A key background issue to the training was that both SEA and LIPs were new to Boroughs. However, there is a close parallel between LIPs and 'Local Transport Plans' (LTPs). Local authorities outside London are currently creating the second generation of LTPs for their areas, the first round of LTPs having been finalised in 2000.

Because both SEA and LIP are new tasks for Boroughs, the training needed to provide both knowledge and confidence to Borough representatives. The training days were therefore designed to:

- (i) Work through detailed aspects of SEA, thereby increasing Borough representatives' knowledge.
- (ii) Demonstrate to representatives that they would be able to complete an SEA in the timescale illustrated in the Advice report. This served to build confidence.
- (iii) Offer an opportunity for questions, both on the Advice report and on representatives' initial understanding of SEA.
- (iv) Make links between individual staff members charged in different Boroughs with the SEA task for LIPs.
- (v) Help Boroughs to develop a clear picture of the amount of staff time that they would need to set aside to complete the SEA.

2.2 People issues

Damian Price and Mark Chetwynd of ALG organised and arranged the training. This involved contacting Boroughs well in advance of the training dates, maintaining a list of participants' contact details, and organising the training rooms, equipment and lunch. A key part of the pre-training phase was to circulate the 'Advice' report to the Boroughs' representatives in advance of the training.

Stef Simmons, Colin Treleven and Chris Fry of C4S/TRL designed the training. On Monday 4th October, Stef Simmons, Colin Treleven and Peter Cole of C4S/TRL provided the training. On Monday 11th October, Stef Simmons, Colin Treleven and Chris Fry provided the training.

Mark Chetwynd of ALG attended parts of both training days. On Monday 11th October, both Mark Bennett and Peter Livermore of TfL attended the training.

Prior to each training day, Colin Treleven emailed each Borough participant who had given notice of an intention to attend the training. This email reminded participants of the training date, less than 2 working days before they were due to attend. The email also asked participants whether or not they had received the Advice note of Task 1 of this project. Only 3 people emailed to ask for a copy of the Advice.

3 Format, Content and Delivery of the training

3.1 Format and Content of the training

The training took the form of workshops, with the instructors aiming to involve participants actively in the training. In order to do this, approximately 40-50% of each training day was reserved for practical exercises and questions from Borough representatives. The remainder of the day consisted of more formal PowerPoint presentations. The presentations covered:

- (i) The SEA directive.
- (ii) The Advice note of September 2004.
- (iii) Stages A-E of SEA of LIPs. One presentation was devoted to each of stages A, B and C. A single presentation then covered stages D&E.

The exercises were designed for groups of three participants to work together. This fostered contact between representatives from different Boroughs. In practice, several groups of 4 or even five participants formed spontaneously. This reduced the number of groups to around 7-9 on each day, which enabled the course instructors to visit groups and provide feedback. The time spent with the groups also enabled the instructors to judge how much progress the Borough representatives had actually made.

3.2 Delivery of the training

Both training days were completed without major incident. At least one representative attended from each of the 33 Boroughs, which is a significant success for the training. Most Boroughs sent two representatives. From informal discussions with participants, the majority held either the transport, environment or sustainability brief for their Boroughs. TfL sent representatives to both training days. The GLA was also represented.

At the beginning of each training day, participants were asked a number of questions. Answers to these questions revealed that:

- (i) Very few participants had started work on their Borough's LIP more than four weeks before the 4th/11th training days;
- (ii) Very few participants had started work on the SEA of their Borough's LIP more than two weeks before the 4th/11th training days;
- (iii) Less than half of the participants had yet found time to read all of the Advice report of Task 1.

These answers indicated that the course participants' knowledge of SEA was towards the lower end of the range that the instructors had expected. The instructors used this information to fine tune both the speed of delivery and the content of the training.

During both training days, it became clear that the range of relevant knowledge and experience of participants varied enormously. At least two Borough team leaders attended, with the intention of deciding how to organise the relevant staff to complete the SEA of their LIP. At the other end of the experience scale, one participant came to the training as his very first day of employment with his Borough, and had not yet had chance to visit his own workplace.

At least two participants had substantial experience of SEA. One had completed an SEA of a development plan. The other had completed an MSc in September 2004, in which SEA was taught as a course module.

4 Issues arising at the training

Most issues that arose at the training were revealed during the time reserved for questions. Fortunately, the instructors were able to answer most questions. Highlights were as follows:

(i) The presentations made clear that Boroughs needed to consider two sets of objectives. One set comprises the SEA objectives. The other concerns the LIP objectives. This issue prompted widespread discussion, which led to a conclusion that many of the SEA objectives might well be taken over into the LIP as LIP objectives.

(ii) The presentations included an exercise that led participants to produce a contents page for the Environmental Report on their SEA. Representatives appeared to follow this section of the training with particular interest, probably because one of the clearest deadlines in the timetable for SEA of LIPs relates to production of the Report.

(iii) Several participants raised the question of the range and detail of their SEA. A key point here is the range of options available to Boroughs. This is constrained by the detailed guidance in the Mayor's Transport- and other Strategies. See also the Mayor's LIP Guidance, reference [TfL2004]. Boroughs are also constrained by limitations on their legal powers. For example, Boroughs have control over much infrastructure, such as the provision of residents' parking or the design of some transport interchanges. They have very little control over other issues, such as vehicles or drivers, which are regulated nationally.

(iv) One participant provided comments by email before the training day. One of these comments pointed out that the LIP Guidance required a chapter for the Equality Impact Assessment but not necessarily a chapter on SEA.

In fact, the SEA will result in publication of the Environmental Report. It is most likely that the Environmental Report will be a free-standing publication, independent of the draft LIP. However, there appears to be no provision in the UK's SEA Regulations that would prevent the Report from simply being included as a portion of the LIP, for example as a chapter or an appendix. The other written outputs of the SEA could be handled similarly.

(v) During the afternoon of the 11th October training day, several participants raised questions about the end phase of the SEA. Much of the interest focussed on the extent to which TfL and/or the Mayor would be reviewing the SEAs of LIPS. Helpfully, Mark Bennett answered many of these questions. Some issues relating to the interaction between TfL and the Boroughs have yet to be decided.

(vi) By the 11th October, four London Boroughs had been given a six month extension of time for the production of their LIPs. These were Boroughs that considered that they would be affected by the proposed extension of the congestion charge zone. Clearly, these Boroughs will be able to complete each stage of their LIPs and SEAs with the benefit of experience gained by other Boroughs, which still have to complete their LIPs and SEAs within the original time limit.

(vii) Some Borough representatives raised the issue of consultation with the 'consultation bodies'. There was a consensus among several representatives that there is the potential for efficiency savings here. A common view was that one organisation, such as ALG, should try and ascertain the extent to which the consultation bodies intend to respond to all 33 Boroughs, at each consultation stage. The course instructors already knew that it was unlikely that the consultation bodies would provide detailed replies to all stages. However, several of the consultation bodies seem very likely to respond to the Boroughs' Environmental Reports, once these have been made public. During the week of 18th-22nd October, it has become clear that TfL is about to contact the consultation bodies to discuss the whole issue of consultation.

(viii) A number of Boroughs are already considering how they will gather baseline data that is relevant to their Boroughs. The presentations covered this issue in detail, and listed several sources of baseline data that are available on the internet. However, there was general support amongst Boroughs for a comprehensive list of available sources of data. The instructors offered to prepare this as one of the first elements of Task 3. The instructors recommended that Borough representatives should make

contact with neighbouring Boroughs, and exchange lists of baseline data sources that they have found to be useful.

(ix) One Borough has stated an intention to have an ongoing 'state of the environment' report for that Borough. The report would be constantly updated with e.g. air quality and noise figures for the Borough. The course presenters put this idea to the remainder of the Boroughs, highlighting the advantages that:

- Once set up, it would normally be only a routine or administrative task to update the report. It may even be possible to automate this step. High level input would only be required if a decision were needed. For example, a Borough might need to decide whether or not to monitor a new environmental variable as a result of medical concern, such as monitoring PM_{2.5} particulate levels in addition to PM₁₀ levels.
- The report would be available for many purposes, including the preparation of SEAs for LIPs and development plans. This would reduce duplication of effort.
- Once the report had been running for a while, it would itself indicate the trends in each environmental variable in the Borough.
- In future years, the report would serve as the monitoring system. This would allow rapid compilation of progress reports on the effects of the SEA and LIP.

Clearly, some Boroughs may consider that their residents would welcome an ongoing environmental report, simply from the point of view of informing and protecting the Borough's residents. The presence of such a report would be likely to deter any activities that would have a detrimental effect on the environment.

(x) During some exercises, Boroughs asked about the role of budget limitations in curtailing the choice of alternatives. The contents of the LIP will undoubtedly be influenced by available spending, and this is an unavoidable constraint in the final choice of options. However, in the early stages of SEA, budget does not constrain the analysis of alternatives.

(xi) Informal discussions at the training seminars did identify one Borough with a problem that the instructors knew had already been solved by another Borough. Following the training day, the instructors were able to put the relevant representatives in contact with each other. This adds to direct contacts made between Boroughs, for example in teams of 3-5 during the exercises on the training days.

5 Tentative Arrangements for Task 3

In September 2004, C4S offered a list of eighteen different elements of support that C4S could provide as Task 3 of the project. On 30th September 2004, Damian Price indicated to Colin Treleven the elements of the support that ALG/TfL are likely to want. Table 1 below lists these, together with a few words of explanation about each.

During the training on 4th and 11th October, the instructors told the Boroughs' representatives that several forms of support would be available to them after the training.

During the week of 18th -22nd October, C4S/TRL and ALG/TfL reached agreement on the exact form and order of performance of the various elements of the support.

Table 1: Main elements of SEA support to Boroughs under Task 3

SEA Task	Centralised Support: Information to be maintained on SEA website, unless otherwise stated.
SEA Stage A: Establish baseline	Establish a central register of environmental baseline data sources of relevance to SEA for LIPs.
SEA Stage A: Identify problems and opportunities	Establish a central register of problems and opportunities of relevance to SEA for LIPs.
SEA Stage A: Develop SEA objectives	Develop a menu of LIP SEA objectives which Boroughs can amend to fit the local environmental problems and opportunities.
Sharing best practice	Provision of a dedicated telephone “helpline” to respond to SEA queries, until at least the end of Dec 2004: (i) The majority of help would be by email, with 24 hour turn-around for questions submitted by Boroughs. We would add key questions and our answers to the SEA website, without naming Boroughs, in order to share best practice. (ii) We would have a helpline available for Borough enquiries, with either a person or voicemail available 0900-1700 Mon-Fri. We would answer voicemails within 24 hours.
Sharing best practice	Host LIP SEA best practice pages on the established strategic environmental assessment information service site www.sea-info.net . The pages would contain scoping reports/environmental reports as published, the advice note with updates, other emerging guidance, a frequently asked questions page and links to other useful resources.
SEA Stage B: Define scope of SEA	Provide a generic LIP SEA scoping report template.
SEA Stage B: Develop alternatives	Provide a working paper on documenting and selecting LIP alternatives for an SEA.
SEA Stage C: Assessing impacts	Develop generic significance criteria for SEA of LIPs.
SEA Stage C: Developing mitigation	Develop a menu of possible mitigation measures for LIP SEA.
SEA Stage D: Produce Environmental Report	Provide a generic LIP SEA Environmental Report template. Provide detailed review criteria and a proposed review process to assist with quality assurance.
SEA Stage D: Produce statement	Develop a simple template for an SEA statement.
Management	Attendance by two staff at two monitoring/progress meetings with ALG/TfL

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