

Interim Advice Note 80 / 06

VOLUME 11

**ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT**

SECTION 2:

**PRINCIPLES OF
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT**

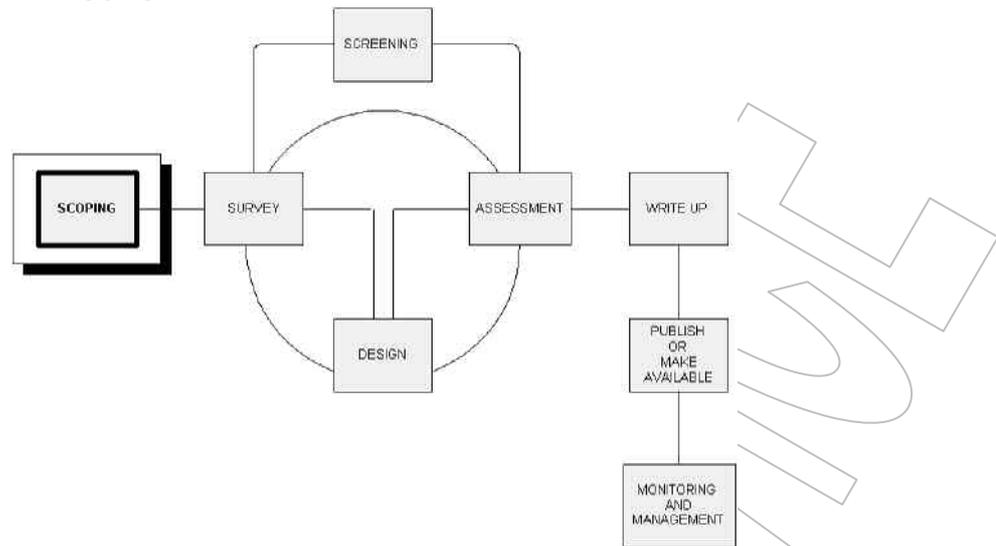
PART 4

SCOPING

Contents

1. Scoping a Project

1 SCOPING A PROJECT



- 1.1 Scoping seeks to decide which environmental topics are to be examined in EIA and environmental assessments and how much effort should be expended – either a Simple or Detailed assessment. Scoping can be an on-going activity that is re-activated at key stages in the project planning process as new information or available alternatives are narrowed to a preferred approach to the project. It can also be a useful exercise to carry out on projects that have not been developed for a period of time.
- 1.2 Scoping can be an internal process and an external activity in which stakeholders are engaged in defining the assessment activities. The Highways Agency should be equipped with an appreciation of those issues that are likely to have an important bearing on project delivery. While the scope of trunk road environmental assessment is set in the context of individual environmental topics, it should also recognise the inter-relationships between topics, and also other priorities that may emerge from stakeholders and local communities.
- 1.3 The benefit of scoping is to identify those topics needing further assessment and design consideration, as well as save assessment effort and resources on aspects that do not. For the majority of very small projects, with no or negligible effects, it may only be necessary to undertake scoping, and screening if relevant as IAN 79, and then apply good practice design or standing advice considering the use and benefits of mitigation. However, it is always possible that, as understanding of the project and its receiving environment increases through the project design process, a more detailed level of assessment would be needed.
- 1.4 Scoping should be undertaken at each point in the delivery of projects ahead of assessment activity that will inform the next milestone or decision. The Designer must agree the scope of the environmental assessment for that stage in the delivery process with the Highways Agency.
- 1.5 These scoping results, as well as the environmental issues and project options feasible at that planning stage, will inform the SECTION 3 levels of assessment to apply at any Stage. The consequential approach to assessment introduced in IAN 76 strongly supports the objectives that the level, and corresponding detail, of the coverage of the assessment should: inform option and design choice; be appropriate

to the type of decision that can be reasonably taken at each stage; and, provide the public with accessible reporting which reflects the assessment that has been carried out and gives due weight to significant impacts.

- 1.6 The Designer and Highways Agency need to explore the level of environmental risk and identify possible significant effects. For example the Designer should be in a position to appreciate whether the project would require the disturbance of land for any of the works. Such disturbance may be temporary (e.g., trenching to introduce new cabling) or permanent (e.g., to construct foundations for a communications mast or gantry) and vary in scale from temporary topsoil storage to land use change with a new trunk road alignment. Environmental issues are often amongst the key issues affecting project delivery. These may relate to matters of scheduling of works, such as where breeding birds are concerned or where archaeological excavations need to be completed. They may relate to matters of principle on whether the scheme can proceed, for example as in relation to a Special Protection Area for nature conservation or a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. All environmental effects that are likely to be significant, or risk being significant, should be assessed.
- 1.7 There is no general definition of what constitutes significance in this context. Significance criteria are introduced generically in IAN 81 (DMRB 11) and specifically to each topic in SECTION 3. The following factors should be considered:
- i. The characteristics of the project in terms of its size, cumulative impacts, use of natural and man made resources, production of waste, pollution incidents and risk of accidents;
 - ii. The importance of the receiving environment, i.e., of international, national, regional, county or local importance. Designations reflect existing land use, abundance, protected status, quality, population density, ability to absorb the project and regenerative capacity of natural resources. Undesignated land may also be important;
 - iii. Whether the effect is temporary or permanent; if temporary, its duration; and
 - iv. The scale of the change following mitigation or enhancement e.g. the land area, number of people affected and degree of change from the existing situation.
- 1.8 The statutory environmental bodies, local authorities and other key stakeholders are likely to have views on the scope of environmental assessments. It is good practice in the case of statutory environmental impact assessment to consult with these interests to ensure that the issues to be addressed are appropriate. Similarly, where it is appropriate to supplement the topic guidance in SECTION 3, their advice can also be provided on surveys and data.
- 1.9 Scoping results should be recorded, more formally where the project is likely to raise significant environmental issues. The Highways Agency will have established internal procedures for recording the results of the scoping process. Where a potential impact has been fully investigated but is found to be of little or no significance, it is sufficient to validate that level of assessment by recording the:
- i. The work that has been done, e.g., a desk top study and walkover survey by a qualified expert;
 - ii. What this has shown, i.e., what impact if any has been identified; and
 - iii. Why it is not significant.

This can be done in a few of paragraphs.

1.10 Guidance on reporting the results of the scoping exercise is presented in IAN 82.