

How effective EIA screening and scoping can minimise project costs

Introduction

Environmental impact assessment (EIA) is often perceived as adding cost and delays to planning applications, but this does not have to be the case. The first step is an effective screening process to ensure that EIA is only carried out when it is really needed to inform the decision-making process. If EIA is required, a robust scoping exercise is an important early stage in the process to ensure it focuses only on the development's likely significant effects.

Screening

- The preparation of a comprehensive screening report, addressing all the topics required by the EIA Regulations and providing evidence for why the development will not lead to significant effects, ensures that the council can be confident that EIA is not required and provides it with all the information needed to issue a robust screening opinion
- This also provides an opportunity to demonstrate that environmental issues will be adequately addressed as part of the application in other supporting documents, such as the Transport Assessment or Flood Risk Assessment
- Providing details of design measures and other mitigation to avoid significant adverse effects in the screening report can assist in screening out the need for EIA
- A robust screening process is also important in avoiding the risk of judicial review, particularly for complex or controversial projects – screening is one of the most common areas of challenge in EIA

Scoping

- While scoping is not mandatory, by tightening the focus of the EIA process to scope topics down or out of the EIA completely it can save both time and money by avoiding unnecessary studies
- The submission of a well-reasoned, evidence-based scoping report can provide councils with the confidence to scope issues out of the EIA and avoid detailed consideration of insignificant effects
- Scoping also helps to identify any issues that are of particular importance to consultees early in the process, avoiding potential problems and delays post-submission
- As a council's scoping opinion is binding, we aim to discuss the draft opinion with the council prior to its formal release to identify and resolve any potential disagreements over the EIA scope



Further information

Neil Trollope
Technical Director
Head of Environment

E: neil.trollope@torltd.co.uk
T: 0203 664 6755

www.torltd.co.uk

Terence O'Rourke has over 25 years' experience in providing screening, scoping and EIA coordination services for a wide range of major development proposals in both the private and public sectors. We have been a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's EIA Quality Mark scheme since its introduction in 2011.

