

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Environmental assessment is a process by which environmental information is collected and used to inform decision making. Environmental Assessment is required under European Directive 85/337 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. In respect of trunk road projects in Northern Ireland, Article 67 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 applies.

The main aims of the environmental assessment process are:

- To ensure full consideration of the likely environmental effects (whether beneficial or adverse) of possible schemes so that decisions can be made with a knowledge of their environmental consequences, including the decision whether or not to proceed with the further development of a scheme;
- To aid the identification of ways in which the environmental effects can be minimised through route selection and other measures;
- To ensure consideration of the likely environmental effects of alternative route options; and
- To allow the public and other stakeholders to comment on proposals taking account of their environmental implications.

Environmental assessment is a continuous process and will be used to inform all decisions regarding the development of the A5 road scheme.

The environmental assessment includes an investigation of the following environmental factors:

- **AIR QUALITY**

The assessment includes gathering and assessing information relating to local air quality and emissions of pollutants. Air Quality receptors (such as schools and residential areas) will be identified and an air quality model will be used to predict the potential changes to air quality as a result of the road.

- **CULTURAL HERITAGE**

The heritage assessment will include a review of existing information, followed by a field walking exercise. This will enable our specialists to identify and value the heritage assets of the study area. Heritage assets include archaeological remains, historic buildings and historic landscapes.

▪ **DISRUPTION DUE TO CONSTRUCTION**

This topic investigates the potential impacts to both the human and natural environment, associated with the construction phase of the project. We will investigate not only the effects of construction itself, but also any disruption caused by advance work relating to utilities. This may extend beyond the highway boundary.

▪ **ECOLOGY AND NATURE CONSERVATION**

Our ecologists are currently on site collecting baseline information. Our team will use this information to describe and assess the potential effects on plants and animals within the study area.

▪ **LANDSCAPE EFFECTS**

The assessment includes determination of both a road scheme's impact on the landscape and on its visual impact on local people. The assessment will comprise a full consideration of a scheme's likely impact, not just on the views which people experience now and in the immediate future, but on the landscape as an entity in its own right. Our landscape specialists will be visiting the site during the next 6 months as part of the data collection exercise.

▪ **LAND USE**

The assessment of the effects of land-take, for a road scheme, can cover a wide range of land values and primary uses. Our specialists will assess the potential effects relating to loss of agricultural land and development land and loss of land and buildings used by the community and individuals (for example public open space).

▪ **TRAFFIC NOISE AND VIBRATION**

The assessment includes gathering and assessing information relating to ambient noise levels. Noise receptors (such as schools and residential areas) will be identified and a model will be used to predict the potential changes to ambient noise levels as a result of the road.

▪ **PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS, EQUESTRIANS AND COMMUNITY EFFECTS**

Our environmental team will assess the scheme's impact on the journeys which people make in its locality. We will consider journeys made by people as pedestrians (including ramblers), cyclists and equestrians.

▪ VEHICLE TRAVELLERS

This topic includes the assessment of impacts on vehicle travellers. The two aspects covered are view from the road and driver stress.

▪ ROAD DRAINAGE AND THE WATER ENVIRONMENT

Our hydrological specialists will assess the potential impacts that the road project may have on the water environment. These include possible impacts on the quality of water bodies and on the existing hydrology of the catchments through which roads pass. The specialists will liaise with the design team to ensure that sustainable water management measures are integrated into the design.

▪ GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Soils and geology play an important part in determining the environmental character of an area. Road schemes can have an impact on both the geology and the soils of an area. Our specialists will assess the potential impacts of the development on both the soil and the underlying rocks. Existing soil conditions of a site can also constrain a proposed development for example, where land which has been contaminated by wastes from some previous industrial use. Our contaminated land team are currently undertaking an assessment for contaminated land and may in the future need to complete intrusive surveys (for example bore holes) to fully understand the ground conditions at affected.

▪ IMPACT OF ROAD SCHEMES ON POLICIES AND PLANS

The development plan system provides the basis on which decisions about the development and use of land are made. Development plans are prepared by local planning authorities within the framework of national policies and regional and any strategic planning guidance. Our environment team will assess the proposed road scheme in terms of the wider context of national, regional, strategic and detailed planning policies. We will assess the impact of a proposed road scheme on land-use policies and proposals at all levels of the planning process.