

Panel Question (i)

Are the Sustainability Appraisal and the Strategic Environmental Assessment robust?

1.1 ODPM Guidance¹ suggests a quality assurance approach which can be used to determine 'robustness'. The guidance highlights the following considerations: "choice of a good SEA team, the collection of appropriate information, the use of effective prediction techniques, consultation, and integration of the SEA findings into the plan or programme." (p. 84). The Guidance provides a checklist designed to "help test whether the requirements of the SEA Directive are met, identify any problems in the Environmental Report, and show how effectively the SEA/SA has integrated environmental considerations into the plan-making process." (See Appendix 2).

Choice of SEA team

1.2 Entec was chosen following competitive tender on the basis of its relevant technical expertise and the interdisciplinary team assembled. A consortium with two other consultants was formed², one of which was well known in the sustainability field and the second as public health policy specialists. This gave the team a high level of interdisciplinary competence around sustainability and spatial planning.

Collection of appropriate information and use of use of effective prediction techniques

1.3 The Quality Assurance Checklist (Appendix 2) gives clear details of how these issues were addressed in the SEA/SA process and the measures taken to ensure robust information sources and use of acceptable techniques.

Consultation

1.4 The Scoping Report was sent out for the required 5 week public consultation in February – March 2005 and was made available on the RSS Appraisal website³. Responses from statutory consultees and other interested parties were collated and analysed by the SEA team and lodged on the website⁴. Furthermore, four interactive appraisal workshops were held⁵. To ensure impartiality throughout the appraisal, policy writers did not participate. Members of the NWRA Planning Team attended occasionally, but only to explain technical or contextual aspects in advance of the appraisal. Finally, the SEA/SA Report and documents were made available alongside the Draft RSS document during the formal public consultation period and comments were invited.

Integration of the SEA/SA findings into the plan or programme

1.5 The appraisal team and the planning team met regularly throughout the appraisal, from the inception meeting in Nov 2004 to the last appraisal meeting in Nov 2005, which included face-to-face meetings with individual policy writers.

¹ ODPM (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. ODPM, London

² Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants (<http://www.levett-therivel.fsworld.co.uk/>) and Ben Cave Associates (<http://www.caveconsult.co.uk/>)

³ RSS Scoping Report: http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=91&expand=89

⁴ Analysis of Scoping Report Responses:

http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=91&mode=details&id=517

⁵ See Table 2.3 and Sections 2.3 and 2.4 of the SA Report for more details on how the appraisal workshops were conducted and the participants involved.

Appraisal reports and guidance notes on RSS options⁶, sustainability⁷, health⁸, waste⁹, interim draft policies¹⁰ were produced, distributed to NWRA planners and placed on the RSS Appraisal website (see para 1.2 above).

1.6 An audit of the SA Objectives¹¹ against the Countryside Agency's Rural Proofing Checklist¹² was carried out to ensure that rural areas were taken into account. A report of this exercise¹³ confirms that, of the 15 questions in the Rural Proofing Checklist, only two were not covered by the SA Objectives. However, these two questions refer to service delivery and so are not considered relevant to regional spatial planning. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the SEA/SA does sufficiently address the impacts of the RSS on the region's rural communities and landscapes.

1.7 A mid-term compliance check was undertaken by NWRA by Entec to provide NWRA with independent and expert advice on the fulfilment of requirements of the SEA/SA Regulations. This served as a quality assurance measure in line with good practice. Entec gave the following endorsement: *"It is Entec's view that to date the NWRA are compliant with the UK and European requirements regarding the European Directive on SEA. This has been arrived at through a review of the Quality Assurance Checklist but, more importantly a review of the Directive and UK regulations (as it is against these that a legal challenge would be mounted)."*¹⁴

1.8 It should be noted that the SEA/SA process is ongoing and will not be completed until the Final RSS is approved and adopted.

1.9 During the formal public consultation, an objection was raised¹⁵ about the apparent absence of assessment of the environmental effects of peat extraction in the SEA/SA. The NWRA acknowledges that this is an oversight in the Environmental Report, although it should be noted that the relevant RSS policy (EM7) is consistent with the Government's view set out in MPG13¹⁶. This issue is discussed further in Matter 6B(iv).

1.10 To ensure that the full process of SEA/SA is completed to a satisfactory standard, it will be necessary for GONW to follow a similarly robust approach in undertaking SEA/SA as well as assessments under the Habitats Regulations, on both the proposed modifications and the final version of RSS.

⁶ Appraisal of RSS Options Report (May 2005):

http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=89&mode=details&id=477

⁷ Notes on Sustainability for RSS Policy Authors (Aug 2005):

http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=118&mode=details&id=518

⁸ Notes on Health for RSS policy writers (Sept 05):

http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=118&mode=details&id=526

⁹ Sustainability Appraisal of RSS Waste Management Policies – Key Points (Nov 2005):

http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=118&mode=details&id=532

¹⁰ RSS Interim Draft – Sustainability Appraisal Report (Nov 2005):

http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=118&mode=details&id=533

¹¹ A complete list of the SA Objectives are available in the Appendix.

¹² Rural Proofing - policy makers' checklist (Revised 2002) Countryside Agency. Report CA 35. Cheltenham. URL: <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/EssentialServices/ruralProofing/index.asp>

¹³ See section 3 of the Technical Papers of the Sustainability Appraisal Report of draft RSS: Rural Impact – Scoping of Objectives.

¹⁴ Letter dated 2nd Aug 2005 from Entec UK Ltd (consultants appointed to undertake SEA/SA of RSS). This was requested by NWRA to provide an interim report on compliance of the RSS SEA/SA process with UK legal and European requirements regarding the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).

¹⁵ Objection raised by Ramblers Association (Manchester & High Peak Area) asserting that the continued extraction of peat is unsustainable in environmental and biodiversity terms.

¹⁶ MPG13: Guidelines for Peat Provision in England (1995)

Panel Question (ii)

Does the draft RSS achieve the right balance between economic growth, social inclusions, including equality and diversity issues and environmental protection / enhancement?

2.1 The Regional Development Principles create a foundation where all planning decisions must be made with sustainability at their heart. DP1 requires plans to presume against damage to the region's environmental, social and economic assets, and development should "protect and enhance quality of life". Plans and strategies should insist on the necessary identification and evaluation of the consequences of development. Transparency ensures that decisions are made fairly and that people can understand any likely effects on their lives. However, Assembly officers suggest that DP1 could be further strengthened with a practical recommendation for all Local Authorities to adopt the use of the NW Sustainability Checklist for Developments (NW SCD).¹⁷

2.2 The North West RSS SA Objectives (see Appendix 1) were derived from the region's Integrated Appraisal Toolkit¹⁸ (IAT) by regional partners working in conjunction with Entec UK. The RSS SA Objectives ensure that all aspects of sustainability are covered in a single framework and the RSS Objectives were scoped against them to ensure compatibility and completeness. The need for environmental protection has included a Habitats Regulations Assessment¹⁹ which is currently being undertaken by NWRA.

2.3 The appraisal process involved a series of interactive workshops attended by stakeholders from a range of different sectors. Two members of the Regional Equality and Diversity Leadership group attended some of these workshops and, in doing so, contributed valuable input to the RSS policy appraisal. The SEA/SA report does mention that inequality was not mentioned extensively and that design principles (DP1) could have greater recognition of the needs of people with disabilities and BME communities. Though this issue is addressed in other policy areas, such as RDF3 where it recommends that "Plans and strategies in the Region's rural areas should...seek to empower local communities to address their own needs". Policy W7 states plans should "...meet the needs of a diverse range of people". However, the SEA/SA report recommends the production of a technical paper²⁰ to identify how spatial planning could be supportive of diversity and equality issues.

¹⁷ Briefing Paper 20 - Suggested Wording Changes to Draft RSS, NWRA, September 2006.

¹⁸ The Integrated Appraisal Toolkit (IAT) is the North West's general and widely used sustainability appraisal toolkit that can be applied to policies and projects to ensure that they integrate fully the region's economic, social and environmental objectives to ensure sustainable development. The first edition ("Implementing Action for Sustainability: An Integrated Appraisal Toolkit for the North West 2003") was used as the basis for RSS SA Framework. The IAT has since been updated and is also available for use on-line: <http://www.sdtoolkit-northwest.org.uk/>. As part of the commitment to ensuring effectiveness and good join-up of the tools available for NW policy makers, we also commissioned Entec to produce a technical paper reviewing how the IAT can be applied to the SEA process. This paper is available here:

http://www.nwra.gov.uk/downloads/documents/aug_06/nwra_1156410482_SEA_and_the_Integrated_Apprais.pdf

¹⁹ See Briefing Paper 21 for further details on progress with Habitats Regulations Assessment exercise.

²⁰ Pending the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07) no funding currently exists beyond 31st March 2008, to support the Assembly's RPB function (including the employment of staff). Therefore the Assembly is only able to commission new research that will be completed by 31st March 2008. Until the medium - long term funding situation is resolved, the Assembly is also unable to give a firm timescale commitments on undertaking a future review of RSS, as it may not be possible to comply

Panel Question (iii)

Do the proposals in the draft RSS sufficiently provide for tackling climate change and mitigating its impact?

3.1 The inclusion of Climate Change in Policy DP1 demonstrates the seriousness with which the RSS values the need to address this issue and builds upon the work in the Partial Review of RPG13 and the EiP Panel Report recommendations²¹. Two elements are highlighted: reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation.

3.2 The CURE/Tyndall Centre research report²² into the implications of Climate Change in the region identifies five environmental receptors likely to be impacted upon, as set out below

Flooding

3.3 Perhaps the most significant of these for the region is flooding where the climate scenarios predict (acknowledging uncertainty) warmer / wetter winter weather. The NWRA's response to Matter 6A(iii) demonstrates how draft RSS has accounted for flood risks, and details the Regional Flood Risk Assessment methodology currently being developed by the Environment Agency²³.

Building design & construction

3.4 Changes are required in building fabric, geotechnical issues and design to incorporate natural ventilation. Take-up of air conditioning in housing and commercial buildings may be rapid, and design of external envelope and landscape will need to deal with extreme weather effects. Policy DP1 contains wording in Draft RSS which largely addresses this issue in calling for high quality design. It is also supported by policies L4, which promotes 'Lifetime Homes' and the 'Code for Sustainable Homes' standards in new housing. Policies EM16 and 17 call for energy conservation and efficiency in the construction and the design of buildings²⁴.

Coastal impacts

3.5 Policies RDF4 and EM6 include specific clauses that deal with climate change through both mitigation and adaptation.

Tourism

3.6 The CURE/Tyndall Centre report explains that the predicted hotter drier summers may increase tourism numbers at popular destinations. This could result in increased pressure on these sites and on the transport infrastructure. Policy W6 promotes 'sustainable tourism' whilst RDF4 requires the enhancement of coastal communities

with all the procedural process requirements of PPS11 over next 18 months, to ensure submission of a Draft RSS to Government before 31st March 2008.

²¹ RPG13 Partial Review – Examination in Public Panel Report (2004).

²² CURE & Tyndall Centre North (2003) *Spatial Implications of Climate Change for the North West*. A research report commissioned by the North West Regional Assembly.

²³ This policy could be strengthened with a recommendation for all Local Authorities to adopt the use of the NW Sustainability Checklist for Developments. This Checklist provides several simple and focused questions relating to water resource planning issues that would help planners and developers alike.

²⁴ See further discussion in Matter 6C: Energy.

through regeneration based opportunities for sustainable growth in coastal tourism and recreation.

Water supply and capacity issues

3.7 These are largely covered in Matter 6A(iv). Furthermore, the NWRA endorses the EA suggested amendments to Policy EM5 requiring local authorities to work with the EA and water companies when planning new development.²⁵

Impact on rural areas

3.8 RDF3 makes reference to 'sparse rural areas'²⁶ and the supporting text highlights the special need for attention and support for diversification due to the potential physical impacts of climate change on agriculture and the likely resulting adverse effect on the economies of these areas.

Regional Transport Strategy

3.9 Matter 5A(i) acknowledges the Government's view²⁷ that the demand for travel will continue to grow over the next 30 years. Since transport is a major contributor to climate change through CO₂ emissions from aviation and motor vehicles, this predicted growth in transport will have major ramifications for policy making. The demand for travel is spatially influenced by the location of development. An important focus for many RSS policies should be in managing the demand and the type of transport used. NWRA is suggesting the Panel may wish to consider a new policy for demand management²⁸ which also supports efforts to reduce carbon emissions. This is set out under Matter 5A(i).

3.10 RSS was prepared within the national policy context on aviation²⁹, which leads to a potential conflict with rising carbon emissions from aviation and the resulting contribution to climate change³⁰. The SEA/SA has recognised this and NWRA believes RSS mitigates and adapts to climate change impacts.

Other general policies

3.11 The greening of cities is identified in the CURE/Tyndall Centre report as a major adaptation strategy. This is promoted under EM3 and supported by more detailed guidance in the NW Green Infrastructure Guide³¹. Moreover, EM3 seeks to mitigate the effects on biodiversity by measures that facilitate the movement of species or ecological succession.

²⁵ This could be further strengthened with a practical recommendation for all Local Authorities to adopt the use of the NW Sustainability Checklist for Developments which has several questions relating to water resource planning issues.

²⁶ These 'sparse areas' are defined by Defra's Rural Strategy 2004, Annex A "A new Rural Definition"

²⁷ UK Government Transport White Paper: The Future of Transport: A Network for 2030, Department for Transport, July 2004

²⁸ Policy RT2: A Regional Framework for Managing Travel Demand (formerly RT6 Parking Policy and Provision). See Panel Question 5B(i) for further discussion on demand management.

²⁹ Air Services White Paper. Department for Transport (2003).

³⁰ In terms of carbon emissions, National Policy is aiming for an overall total reduction across all sectors. This means that emissions from the aviation sector could be allowed to rise provided the overall UK total reduces: "The Government is committed to a comprehensive approach, using economic instruments to ensure that growing industries are catered for within a reducing total." (Para. 3.37, Air Services White Paper. Department for Transport (2003)).

³¹ The North West Green Infrastructure Guide is currently in draft form.

Panel Question (iv)

Does the draft RSS provide a framework that can meet the aim of reducing the need to travel?

4.1 Reducing car and lorry traffic; encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport, improving access to and encouraging the use of ICT, and (to some extent) reducing road freight movement are addressed by the RTS and RSS policies. As pointed out in Matter 5A(i), policies RT1 to RT5 support sound management of the region's highway network which is widely used by the sustainable transport modes (e.g. buses, bicycles and pedestrians), as well as by cars and lorries.

4.2 Reducing the need to travel will not be delivered by the RTS. The location of development is critical and DP1 addresses this by requiring proposals and schemes to "contribute towards reducing the need to travel and assist people to meet their needs locally". It calls for the sequential approach to addressing development needs which requires that each new proposal or scheme is "genuinely accessible by public transport, walking and cycling..." and that it is located on previously developed land that is within settlements.

4.3 Reducing people's travel needs is challenging and involves influencing personal preferences to change choice of travel mode. A more helpful way to focus attention to refine the question to 'reducing the need to travel **by car**'. Reducing car dependency is one of the objectives of the RTS and this may be addressed through a demand management approach, as set out in Matter 5B. The Panel may wish to consider the proposed new demand management policy.

APPENDIX 1

Regional Sustainability Objectives developed for the Sustainability Appraisal of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

Developed in conjunction with North West partners and Entec UK Consultants.

Regional Sustainability Objectives³² - RSS Appraisal

<p>1. To reduce the disparities of sub-regional and regional economic performance</p> <p>1a. Will it provide job opportunities in areas with residents most at need?</p> <p>1b. Will it reduce economic disparities within the region and with other UK regions?</p>
<p>2. To exploit the growth potential of business sectors</p> <p>2a. Will it increase employment opportunities within the region?</p> <p>2b. Will it help to diversify the regions economy?</p> <p>2c. Will it promote growth in key sectors of the regional economy?</p> <p>2e. Will it help to develop the region's knowledge base?</p>
<p>3. To develop and market the region's image</p> <p>3a. Will it support the preservation and/or enhancement of high quality built , natural and historic environments within the region?</p> <p>3b. Will it promote the area as a destination for short and long term visitors, for residents and investors?</p>
<p>4. To deliver urban renaissance</p> <p>4a. Will it improve economic, social and environmental conditions in the most deprived areas and for the most deprived groups?</p> <p>4b. Will it improve the quality of the built and historic environment</p> <p>4c. Will it improve the quality of public open space?</p>
<p>5. To deliver rural renaissance</p> <p>5a. Will it support rural diversification?</p> <p>5b. Will it support and encourage the growth of rural businesses?</p> <p>5c. Will it retain and promote the economic growth of market towns?</p> <p>5d. Will it retain and promote access to village services?</p>
<p>6. To secure economic inclusion</p> <p>6a. Will it meet the employment needs of local people?</p> <p>6b. Will it encourage business start-up, especially from women and BME groups?</p> <p>6c. Will it improve physical accessibility to jobs with the location of sites and/or public transport links being close to areas of high unemployment?</p>
<p>7. To develop and maintain a healthy labour market</p> <p>7a. Will it address the skills gap and enable skills progression?</p> <p>7b. Will it increase the levels of participation and attainment in education?</p> <p>7c. Will it provide a broad range of jobs and employment opportunities?</p>

³² Also available from: http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=90&mode=details&id=467

<p>8. To reduce social exclusion 8a. Will it reduce poverty and social exclusion in those areas and communities most affected?</p>
<p>9. To reduce the need to travel, improve choice and use of sustainable transport modes 9a. Will it reduce car and lorry traffic? 9b. Will it encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport? 9c. Will it reduce freight movement? 9d. Will it improve access to and encourage the use of ICT?</p>
<p>10. To improve physical health and mental health and reduce health inequalities 10a. Will it reduce deaths in key vulnerable groups 10b. Will it promote healthier lifestyles? 10c. Will it reduce health inequalities among different groups in the community? 10d. Will it reduce isolation for vulnerable people?</p>
<p>11. To improve access to good quality affordable and resource efficient housing 11a. Will it provide an appropriate mix of housing to meet all residents needs including affordable? 11b. Will it reduce the number of unfit and empty homes? 11c. Will it support the development and operation of resource efficient housing?</p>
<p>12. To reduce crime, disorder and the fear of crime 12a. Will it reduce actual levels of crime (including hate crime)? 12b. Will it reduce the fear of crime? 12c. Will it reduce prejudice (racial or homophobic)?</p>
<p>13. To enable groups and communities to contribute to decision making 13a. Will it identify and engage with hard to reach stakeholders? 13b. Will it encourage wider community involvement in design, or the provision of services? 13c. Will it enable the community to contribute to and have influence in decision-making and be involved in its implementation?</p>
<p>14. To develop strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds and communities 14a. Will it create a sense of belonging and wellbeing for all members of the community? 14b. Will it support community development? 14c. Will it improve relations between all groups and religions?</p>
<p>15. To improve access to and use of basic goods, services and amenities for all groups 15a. Will it improve access to cultural, sporting and leisure facilities including natural green spaces? 15b. Will it improve access to essential services and facilities? 15c. Will it improve the range and quality of cultural, sporting and leisure facilities? 15d. Will it improve access to basic goods, promoting the use of those that are locally sourced?</p>

<p>16. To protect enhance and manage the Region's rich diversity of cultural and built environment and archaeological assets</p> <p>16a. Will it protect and enhance the character and appearance of archaeological sites, historic buildings, townscape, landscape, parks and gardens and their settings?</p> <p>16b. Will it improve access to buildings of historic/cultural value?</p>
<p>17. To protect and enhance the biodiversity, local character and accessibility of the landscape across the region?</p> <p>17a. Will it protect and enhance the character and appearance of the regions townscape and countryside maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place?</p> <p>17b. Will it protect and enhance the biodiversity of the region's landscapes?</p> <p>17c. Will it protect and enhance the accessibility of the landscape across the region?</p>
<p>18. To protect and improve local environmental quality</p> <p>18a. Will it reduce light and noise pollution and graffiti?</p> <p>18b. Will it redress environmental inequalities within the regions urban and rural areas?</p>
<p>19. To protect and enhance the viability of endangered species, habitats and sites of geological importance</p> <p>19a. Will it protect and enhance existing designated wildlife and geological sites and species populations?</p> <p>19b. Will it protect and enhance habitats and species, provide opportunities for new habitat creation and reverse the fragmentation of wildlife corridors?</p> <p>19c. Will it increase the economic benefit derived from the region's natural environment?</p>
<p>20. To Protect and improve the quality of inland and coastal waters</p> <p>20a. Will it reduce or manage flooding?</p> <p>20b. Will it maintain and enhance ground and surface water quality?</p> <p>20c. Will it improve the quality of coastal waters?</p>
<p>21. To protect and improve air quality</p> <p>21a. Will it maintain and improve local air quality?</p> <p>21b. Will it address the causal factors of poor air quality in AQMA's?</p>
<p>22. To restore and protect land and soil</p> <p>22a. Will it reduce the amount of derelict, contaminated, degraded and vacant/underused land?</p> <p>22b. Will it encourage the development of brownfield land in preference to greenfield?</p> <p>22c. Will it reduce the loss of good soils to development?</p> <p>22d. Will it maintain and enhance soil quality?</p>
<p>23. To mitigate and adapt to climate change</p> <p>23a. Will it reduce or minimise greenhouse gas emissions?</p> <p>23b. Will it maintain water abstraction, run-off and recharge within carrying capacity?</p> <p>23c. Will it contribute to the ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change?</p>

24. To ensure the prudent use of natural resources and the sustainable management of existing resources

- 24a Will it minimise the demand for raw material?
- 24b. Will it support the repair and re-use of existing buildings?
- 24c. Will it reduce minerals extracted and imported?
- 24d. Will it promote the use of recycled and secondary materials?

25. To minimise the requirement for energy use, promote efficient use and increase the use of energy from renewable resources

- 25a. Will it minimise the need for energy?
- 25b. Will it maximise the production and/or use of renewable energy?
- 25c. Will it increase energy efficiency (e.g.energy efficiency in buildings, transport modes, etc)?
- 25d. Will it minimise the use of fossil fuels?

26. To manage waste sustainability, minimise waste, its production, and increase re-use, recycling and recovery rates

- 26a. Will it increase waste recycling and reuse?
- 26b. Will it minimise the production of waste?
- 26c. Will it reduce the amount of residual waste to landfill?

Appendix 2: SEA/SA Quality Assurance Checklist

Source: ODPM (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. ODPM, London (Appendix 9, p. 84)

Objectives and context	Provision within SEA/SA of North West RSS
The plan's or programme's purpose and objectives are made clear.	Draft RSS Vision and Objectives are set out in section 1.3 of SEA/SA report.
Environmental issues and constraints, including international and EC environmental protection objectives, are considered in developing objectives and targets.	Section 1 of SEA/SA Technical Papers Report:
SEA/SA objectives, where used, are clearly set out and linked to indicators and targets where appropriate.	Links between SA objectives and associated indicators, targets and source are given in Table 5.1 Scoping Report.
Links with other related plans, programmes and policies are identified and explained.	Scoping Report Section 3.1.1 details assessment of synergies and conflicts with other plans, programmes and objectives. Detailed analysis in Appendix B and summarised in Table 3.1 of Scoping Report. Update review is also given in Appendix A of SEA/SA Report.
Conflicts that exist between SEA objectives, between SEA and plan objectives and between SEA objectives and other plan objectives are identified and described.	Appendix C of SEA/SA Report.
Scoping	
Consultation Bodies are consulted in appropriate ways and at appropriate times on the content and scope of the Environmental Report.	The Scoping Report was sent out for a 6 week public consultation in Feb – March. Scoping report was made available on RSS Appraisal website ³³ . Responses from consultation bodies and others interested parties were collated and analysed. Resulting report was made available on website ³⁴ .
The assessment focuses on significant issues.	Chapter 4 of Scoping Report describes how the assessment was focused on areas in the NW 'likely to experience significant change' which the SA objectives and targets are designed to address.
Technical, procedural and other difficulties encountered are discussed; assumptions and uncertainties are made explicit.	These are described in section 2.6 of the Scoping Report.

³³ RSS Scoping Report: http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=91&expand=89

³⁴ Analysis of Scoping Report Responses: http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=91&mode=details&id=517

Objectives and context	Provision within SEA/SA of North West RSS
Reasons are given for eliminating issues from further consideration.	The Scoping Report provides justifications for issues which are 'scoped out' of the full appraisal.
Alternatives	
Realistic alternatives are considered for key issues, and the reasons for choosing them are documented.	Chapter 4 of SEA/SA Report addresses this issue. Two workshops were held to appraise the RSS Options (March and April 2005). Recommendations were passed to NWRA Planning Team via Options Appraisal Report. ³⁵ Choice of preferred option given after each section analysis.
Alternatives include 'do minimum' and/or 'business as usual' scenarios wherever relevant.	Included where relevant in Chapter 4 of SEA/SA Report.
The environmental effects (both adverse and beneficial) of each alternative are identified and compared.	Included where relevant in Chapter 4 of SEA/SA Report.
Inconsistencies between the alternatives and other relevant plans, programmes or policies are identified and explained.	Included where relevant in Chapter 4 of SEA/SA Report.
Reasons are given for selection or elimination of alternatives.	Included where relevant in Chapter 4 of SEA/SA Report.
Baseline information	
Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and their likely evolution without the plan or programme are described.	Provided by Baseline Tables in Section 2 of SEA/SA Report Technical Papers.
Environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected are described, including areas wider than the physical boundary of the plan area where it is likely to be affected by the plan.	<p>Provided by Baseline Tables in Section 2 of SEA/SA Report Technical Papers and linked to relevant SA objectives.</p> <p>Environmental protection is being addressed via a Habitats Regulations Assessment³⁶ and possible Appropriate Assessment of selected Draft RSS policies currently being undertaken by NWRA.</p>

³⁵ Appraisal of RSS Options Report (May 2005):
http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=89&mode=details&id=477

³⁶ See Briefing Paper 21 for further details on progress with Habitats Regulations Assessment exercise.

Objectives and context	Provision within SEA/SA of North West RSS
Difficulties such as deficiencies in information or methods are explained.	Baseline Tables in Section 2 of SEA/SA Report Technical Papers list objectives and associated available data set, also listing where data sets are unavailable or no appropriate set has yet been identified.
Prediction and evaluation of likely significant environmental effects	
Effects identified include the types listed in the Directive (biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climate factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape), as relevant; other likely environmental effects are also covered, as appropriate.	Summarised in Table 3.1 of SEA/SA Report, based on baseline data identified against each SA objective in SEA/SA Technical Papers (section 2).
Both positive and negative effects are considered, and the duration of effects (short, medium or long-term) is addressed.	The Appraisal process involved interactive discussion workshops with the analysis being recorded within an overall matrix, which recorded the following: direction (positive/negative) of effect, severity, geographical scale, timing, and cumulative effects. This is detailed in section 2.2 of the SEA/SA Report and a completed set of matrices is available in the SEA/SA Technical Report (section 5).
Likely secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects are identified where practicable.	
Inter-relationships between effects are considered where practicable.	
The prediction and evaluation of effects makes use of relevant accepted standards, regulations, and thresholds.	The strategic nature of RSS is such that the quantification of impacts in relation to accepted standards and thresholds is not feasible, although tools are now beginning to emerge which may provide a mechanism for this in future. Notwithstanding, the SA does attempt to predict the direction that the RSS may take the region against certain accepted standards, for example the likely direction of impacts upon AQMAs, PDL targets.
Methods used to evaluate the effects are described.	Measuring significance is described in section 2.2.2 of SEA/SA Report.
Mitigation measures	
Measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the plan or programme are indicated.	Proposed mitigation measures and recommendations are presented in section 5.8 of SEA/SA Report. The Habitats Assessment Regulations ³⁷ exercise (currently underway) will provide a set of recommendations for avoiding likely significant impacts on the nature conservation sites of European importance.

³⁷ See Briefing Paper 21 for further details on progress with Habitats Regulations Assessment exercise.

Objectives and context	Provision within SEA/SA of North West RSS
Issues to be taken into account in project consents are identified.	Suggested recommendations for mitigation and enhancement set out in Table 5.6 of the Environmental Report include reference to issues for consideration at the local and site-specific level.
The Environmental Report	
Is clear and concise in its layout and presentation.	NWRA considers that this is the case.
Uses simple, clear language and avoids or explains technical terms.	
Uses maps and other illustrations where appropriate.	Appendix B of SEA/SA Report contains a range of relevant baseline maps on date relevant to SA objectives.
Explains the methodology used.	Methodology and approach used are described in Chapters 2 and 5 of the SEA/SA Report.
Explains who was consulted and what methods of consultation were used.	The Consultation process including workshop participants and consultees are given in Section 2.5 of the SEA/SA Report. Interim Draft policy appraisal is described in section 5.2.
Identifies sources of information, including expert judgement and matters of opinion.	Baseline Tables (Section 2 of Technical Papers of SEA/SA Report) give information sources where stated. The appraisal process is described clearly and explicitly states the involvement of a range of North West stakeholders as workshop participants for completion of the appraisal matrices.
Contains a non-technical summary covering the overall approach to the SEA, the objectives of the plan, the main options considered, and any changes to the plan resulting from the SEA.	Non Technical Summary published alongside main SEA/SA report and made available on website ³⁸

³⁸ Non-Technical Summary of the Sustainability Appraisal:
http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=133&mode=details&id=581

Objectives and context	Provision within SEA/SA of North West RSS
Consultation	
<p>The SEA is consulted on as an integral part of the plan-making process.</p>	<p>Appraisal workshops were held regularly throughout the SEA/SA and RSS preparation (Nov 2004 - Nov 2005). Appraisal reports and guidance notes for RSS policy writers were produced and passed to NWRA policy writing team, and also placed on the RSS Appraisal website³⁹. The SEA/SA team also conducted face-to-face meetings with individual policy writers during the RSS preparation.</p> <p>The Scoping Report responses were collated, and analysed by SEA/SA Team. Resulting report was made available on website⁴⁰</p> <p>The SEA/SA was made available alongside the Draft RSS document during the formal public consultation period and members of the public invited to comment on it.</p>
<p>Consultation Bodies and the public likely to be affected by, or having an interest in, the plan or programme are consulted in ways and at times which give them an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinions on the draft plan and Environmental Report.</p>	<p>The SEA/SA Report and its associated documents were included alongside the Draft RSS document during the formal public consultation (period 20th March – 12th June 2005).</p>
Decision-making and information on the decision	
<p>The environmental report and the opinions of those consulted are taken into account in finalising and adopting the plan or programme.</p>	<p>Ongoing as part of Examination in Public process.</p>
<p>An explanation is given of how they have been taken into account.</p>	<p>Ongoing as part of Examination in Public process.</p>
<p>Reasons are given for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered.</p>	<p>Ongoing as part of Examination in Public process.</p>
Monitoring measures	
<p>Measures proposed for monitoring are clear, practicable and linked to the indicators and objectives used in the SEA.</p>	<p>Chapter 6 of the SEA/SA Report proposes measures for monitoring the implementation of the RSS.</p>

³⁹ RSS Appraisal website: <http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/planning/rssappraisal.php>

⁴⁰ Analysis of Scoping Report Responses: http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/documents/index.php?group_id=91&mode=details&id=517

Objectives and context	Provision within SEA/SA of North West RSS
Monitoring is used, where appropriate, during implementation of the plan or programme to make good deficiencies in baseline information in the SEA.	To be reported post adoption of the RSS.
Monitoring enables unforeseen adverse effects to be identified at an early stage. (These effects may include predictions which prove to be incorrect.)	To be reported post adoption of the RSS. The SEA/SA Report recommends an approach to documenting the monitoring date which includes identifying when remedial action should be taken and what time (see section 6.2.1)
Proposals are made for action in response to significant adverse effects.	