

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR WATER

**Acid deposition:** A comprehensive term for the various ways acidic compounds precipitate from the atmosphere and deposit onto surfaces.

**Acidification:** Refers to the lowering of pH in soils or water. Commonly associated with changes caused by external processes such as acid precipitation and acidic runoff.

**Ammonia:** Ammonia is a common naturally occurring substance. The main natural sources of ammonia are from decaying organic matter and from the excreta of humans and animals. The main man-made sources of ammonia are from the use of fertilisers and waste disposal sites or industrial processes. When ammonia enters the environment in excessive quantities it can result in acidification and eutrophication of ground and water bodies, which can harm plant and animal life. Ammonia can also have direct toxic effects on vegetation when present at high concentrations in the atmosphere.

**Aquifer:** See **Groundwater**.

**Bioaccumulation:** The accumulation of pollutants in living organisms by direct adsorption or through food chains.

**Biodiversity** (a contraction of biological diversity): The variability among living organisms from all sources including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

**Catchment:** The area from which water drains to a specified point (e.g. to a reservoir, river, lake/loch, borehole).

**Consultation:** A process of formal or informal dialogue to identify issues of concern.

**Consultation Bodies/ Authorities** (authorities is the term used in Scottish SEA regulations): Organisations identified in the relevant **SEA** legislation which because of their environmental responsibilities are likely to be concerned by the effects of implementing a **Plan** and must be consulted during specific stages of **SEA**. **Consultation Bodies/ Authorities** designated for Scotland and Northern Ireland include; the Department of the Environment of Northern Ireland lead by Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

**Cumulative Effects: Effects** that result from incremental changes to the environment caused by the **Plan** together with past, present and future actions. These **effects** can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. In relation to **SEA**, the significance of a single effect can be increased when combined with other effects. Several actions may each have insignificant **effects** but together have a **significant effect** or, several individual **effects** of the **Plan** may have a combined **effect**.

**Diffuse source:** Pollution which arises from various activities with no one discrete source. In the case of **water pollution**, they are primarily associated with run-off and other discharges related to different land uses such as agriculture and forestry, from septic tanks associated with rural dwellings and from the land spreading of industrial, municipal and agricultural wastes.

**Drainage:** Drainage is the natural or artificial removal of surface and sub-surface water from a given area (e.g. by gravity or pumping).

**Ecosystem:** Refers to a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.

**Effluent:** A discharge of pollutants into the environment, partially or completely treated or in its natural state. Generally used in regard to discharges into waters.

**Emission:** The amount of a (polluting) substance emitted in a certain amount of time, typically expressed as a mass of pollutant per unit time (e.g. grams per second, or tonnes per year for a single source). Generally used in regard to discharges into air.

**Engagement (or Involvement):** Is an activity or process to encourage and facilitate stakeholder input to the **assessment**, through the provision of information, identification of issues of concern and/ or influencing or contributing to proposals or decisions.

**Environmental Report:** A report required by the **SEA Directive** (as specified in Article 5 and Annex I to that Directive) which forms part of the **environmental assessment** and identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant **effects** on the environment of implementing a **Plan**.

**Eutrophication:** The enrichment of water or soil by nutrients, especially compounds of nitrogen and/or phosphorous, causing accelerated growth of algae and higher forms of plant life to produce an undesirable disturbance to the balance of organisms present in the water or in land habitats and to the quality of water or soil concerned.

**Fertiliser:** In this guidance this term refers to any substance containing nitrogen or phosphorus compounds that is used on land to enhance growth of vegetation e.g. livestock manure, sewage sludge or other organic material.

**Flood plain:** Any normally dry land area that is susceptible to being inundated by water from any natural source. This area is usually low land (locally) adjacent to a stream or lake.

**Flooding:** A temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of normally dry land areas from the overflow of inland and/or tidal waters, and/or the unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters from any source.

**Groundwater:** Refers to all water which is below the surface of the ground in the saturated zone and which is in direct contact with the ground or subsoil. This zone is commonly referred to as an aquifer which is a subsurface layer or layers of rock or other geological strata of sufficient porosity and permeability to allow a significant flow of groundwater or the abstraction of significant quantities of groundwater.

**Hydromorphology:** The physical characteristics of the shape, the boundaries and the content of a water body.

**Indicator:** A measure of variables over time often used to measure achievement of **objectives**.

**Indirect effects:** Effects, which are not a direct result of the **Plan**, often occurring away from the action (e.g. quarrying aggregates for road building) or as a result of a complex pathway.

**Involvement:** See **Engagement**.

**Material Assets:** Natural resources such as minerals, aggregates, oil and gas or man-made assets, such as existing utilities, infrastructure, transport networks, housing, industry, etc. Material assets are generally finite and their availability should be considered for future generations as well as the present. Under the **SEA** legislation, **environmental effects**, including those on material assets, need to be taken into account in an **Environmental Report**.

**Mitigation:** Procedure or action undertaken to avoid, reduce or offset the potential significant negative **effects** that a **Plan** may have on the environment. Within an **SEA**, mitigation should be considered alongside **enhancement** measures which seek to maximise the positive **effects** of implementing a **Plan**.

**Monitoring:** A continuing assessment of conditions relating to the implementation of a **Plan** which ensures that effects occur as predicted in the **SEA**. Any unforeseen **environmental effects** arising from its implementation will be identified and so allowing for appropriate remedial action to be taken.

**Objectives:** A statement of what is intended, specifying the desired direction of change in trends or course of action.

- Plan objectives are the overall objectives of the **Plan**. The **Plan** objectives may cover a wide range of issues depending on the nature and purpose of the **Plan**.
- SEA objectives set out the desired direction of change for the environment, thereby forming a clear set of environmental aspirations against which the performance of elements of the **Plan** can be assessed. SEA objectives can be divided into sub-objectives to refine the approach to testing the performance of a **Plan** or elements of it.
- Environmental protection objectives are those objectives, established within legislation, regulation or policy at international, European Union or national level, which are relevant to the **Plan** and which **Responsible Authorities** need to consider in developing the **Plan** and undertaking the **SEA**.

**Pesticides:** Any substance, preparation or organism prepared or used (among other uses) to: protect plants or wood or other plant products from harmful organisms; regulate the growth of plants; give protection against harmful creatures; or render such creatures harmless.

**Plan:** The term has been used throughout the guidance, meaning Plans, Programmes and Strategies for Scotland (PPS) and Plans and Programmes (PP) for Northern Ireland.

**Point Source:** Pollution arising from a discrete source e.g. the discharge from a sewage treatment works.

**Policy:** The inspiration and/ or guidance for action at a broad or strategic level. A series of policies can be included within a broader **plan** or **strategy**.

**Post-Adoption SEA Statement:** Information provided to the public and **Consultation Bodies/ Authorities** as part of the **SEA** following adoption of the **Plan** to meet the requirements of the relevant SEA legislation. It provides a variety of information including how consultation comments were taken into account and the measures that are to be taken to **monitor** the significant **environmental effects** of the **Plan**.

**Problems (environmental):** Synonymous with a situation or condition of the environment which is difficult to deal with or control.

**Project:** A capital undertaking typically involving the planning, design, construction and subsequent operation of a site specific development.

**Qualitative information:** Information relating to or involving comparisons based on descriptions or words which cannot easily be expressed using numbers and statistics.

**Quantitative information:** Information that can be measured and expressed using numbers and statistics.

**Responsible Authority:** Any person, body or office holder exercising functions of a public character. If such an authority prepares a **Plan** which requires an **SEA** then that authority is responsible for the SEA. Where more than one authority is responsible for a **Plan** they should reach an agreement as to who is responsible for the SEA.

**Reasonable alternatives:** Acceptable alternatives of meeting the **objectives** of the proposed **Plan**.

**Scoping:** The process of deciding the scope and level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report.

**Scoping report:** A report produced by the **Responsible Authority** describing the initial stage of the **SEA** process setting out the scope and level of detail proposed for the **Environmental Report** and used to consult the **Consultation Bodies/ Authorities** on the likely significant effects of a **Plan**.

**Screening:** The process of deciding whether a **Plan** is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

**Screening Report:** Report produced to assist the **Responsible Authority** to determine, in consultation with the **Consultation Bodies/ Authorities**, whether a **Plan** is likely to have **significant environmental effects**.

**Secondary (and tertiary effects): Effects** that are consequential from direct or primary **effects** of the action, but occur away from the original **effect** or as a result of a complex pathway. The term **cumulative effect** is taken to include secondary effects.

**Service (ecological service):** In this guidance, this term refers to the benefits arising from the ecological functions of healthy ecosystems. Such benefits accrue to all living organisms, including animals and plants, rather than to humans alone.

**Stakeholders:** Any person or organisation which has, or perceives that they have, a stake in the **Plan** and/ or **SEA** process or its outcomes. Includes statutory bodies, academics, individual members of the public and representatives of organisations and groups whether from the public, private, voluntary or community sectors.

**State of the environment:** Information relating to the current state of the environment. For **SEA**, establishing the state of the environment can serve to act as a baseline from which **environmental effects** can be predicted or measured.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):** A form of **assessment** intended to identify and assess the likely **significant effects** of a **Plan** on the environment, the results of which are taken into account in the decision making process. In the guidance documents **SEA** refers to the type of **environmental assessment** required under the **SEA Directive**.

**SEA Directive:** European Directive 2001/42/EC “on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment”.

**SEA Regulations:** The Regulations transposing the **SEA Directive** into UK law. In Scotland this is the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and in Northern Ireland this is the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

**SEA topic:** Aspect of the environment which the **SEA** should address; e.g. Annex I of the **SEA Directive** suggests a number of environmental topics, such as biodiversity, climate factors, water, etc.

**Sensitive areas:** Aspects of the environment which are scarce, fragile or vulnerable to change.

**Surface water:** Inland waters, except **groundwater**, which are on the land surface (such as reservoirs, lakes, rivers, transitional waters, coastal waters and, under some circumstances, territorial waters) which occur within a river basin.

**Sustainable development:** Development that ensures that the use of resources and the environment today does not restrict their use by future generations.

**Synergistic effects:** A type of **cumulative effect** that results when the interaction of a number of **effects** is greater than or different from the sum of the individual **effects**.

**Transboundary effects:** Significant **environmental effects** on another EU Member State.

**Water body:** Refers to a discrete and significant element of **surface water** such as a river, lake or reservoir, or a distinct volume of **groundwater** within an **aquifer**.

**Watercourse:** A **surface water body** such as a stream, river or canal; the channel, bed or route along which water flows.

**Water quality:** In this guidance, this term refers to the chemical and physical characteristics of water and reflects the graded value of the components (organic and inorganic, chemical or physical) which comprise the nature of water, especially how they relate to the suitability of that water for a particular service/use.

**Water pollution:** In this guidance, this term refers to different anthropogenic pollution sources which could lead to an alteration of the chemical, physical and biological and integrity of water.

**Water resources:** In this guidance, this term refers to the quantity (and use) of water found in **water bodies**, including both temporal and spatial distribution.