

Typical significance criteria for assessing effects on water

Significance of effects	SEA sub-objective					Comments/ additional criteria
	To improve water quality	To reduce levels of water pollution	To ensure sustainable use of water resources	To improve the morphological status of water bodies	To reduce the risk of flooding	
Major Positive (++)	An action very likely to lead to an overall large improvement, or a series of smaller improvements, to water quality. <i>E.g. Water Framework Directive targets will be met or exceeded on a large scale in the Plan area.</i>	An action very likely to lead to an overall large reduction, or a series of smaller reductions, in water pollution levels. <i>E.g. Major sources of water contamination will be removed on a large scale in the Plan area (e.g. removal of Phosphorus from sewage treatment discharges by the introduction of secondary waste water treatment).</i>	An action very likely to lead to an overall large improvement, or a series of smaller improvements, in the sustainable use of water resources. <i>E.g. An important number of water resource issues in the Plan area will be resolved and/ or an increase in resource capacity/ availability or pressure in existing resources alleviated.</i>	An action very likely to lead to an overall large improvement, or a series of smaller improvements, in the morphological status of water bodies. <i>E.g. An important number of culverts will be removed and/ or water bodies restored to a more natural state in the Plan area. Large scale reduction in adverse erosion or sedimentation rates in water bodies.</i>	An action very likely to lead to an overall large reduction, or a series of smaller reductions, to flood risk, and which improves resilience to flooding and the consequences of flooding. <i>E.g. Increase of flood storage resulting in reduced risk to a significant number of homes and/ or value of assets.</i>	Effects may be: short, medium, or long-term; or small, medium or large scale; or a combination of the above. Any Plan that will have positive effects on a internationally or nationally designated water body (inc. Special Protection Area-SPA, Special Areas of Conservation -SAC, Ramsar sites).

Typical significance criteria for assessing effects on water

Significance of effects	SEA sub-objective					Comments/ additional criteria
	To improve water quality	To reduce levels of water pollution	To ensure sustainable use of water resources	To improve the morphological status of water bodies	To reduce the risk of flooding	
Minor Positive (+)	An action very likely to lead to a moderate improvement, or a series of smaller improvements, to water quality. <i>E.g. WFD targets will be met or exceeded on a small scale in the Plan area or for individual water bodies/ river stretches.</i>	An action very likely to lead to a moderate reduction, or a series of smaller reductions, in water pollution levels. <i>E.g. Moderate or minor sources of water contamination will be removed on a large scale in the Plan area (e.g. removal of a medium energy generation plant producing gaseous emissions leading to acidification of water).</i>	An action very likely to lead to a moderate improvement, or a series of smaller improvements, in the sustainable use of water resources. <i>E.g. A limited number of water resource issues in the Plan area will be resolved, availability improved or pressure on existing resources alleviated.</i>	An action very likely to lead to a moderate improvement, or a series of smaller improvements, in the morphological status of water bodies. <i>E.g. Some culverts will be removed and/ or water bodies restored to a more natural state in the Plan area. Small scale reduction in adverse erosion or sedimentation rates in water bodies.</i>	An action very likely to lead to a moderate reduction, or a series of smaller reductions, to flood risk, and which improves resilience to flooding and the consequences of flooding. <i>E.g. Increase of flood storage resulting in reduced risk to a number of homes and/ or value of assets.</i>	Effects may be short, medium, or long-term; or small, medium or large scale; or a combination of the above. Any Plan that will have positive effects on a internationally or nationally designated water body (inc. SSSI/ ASSI, National Nature Reserves -NNR, Local Nature Reserves - LNR).
Neutral (0)	An action not likely to affect water quality.	An action not likely to affect water pollution.	An action not likely to affect water resources.	An action not likely to affect hydromorphology.	An action not likely to affect the risk of flooding.	

Typical significance criteria for assessing effects on water

Significance of effects	SEA sub-objective					Comments/ additional criteria
	To improve water quality	To reduce levels of water pollution	To ensure sustainable use of water resources	To improve the morphological status of water bodies	To reduce the risk of flooding	
Minor Negative (-)	An action very likely to lead to moderate reduction, or a series of minor reductions, in water quality. <i>E.g. WFD objectives will be derogated on a small scale in the Plan area or for individual water bodies/ river stretches.</i>	An action very likely to lead to moderate increase, or a series of minor increases, in water pollution. <i>E.g. Contaminants present in water will increase on a small scale in the Plan area (e.g. additional loading on sewage treatment works by increase in housing).</i>	An action very likely to lead to moderate reduction, or a series of minor reductions, in sustainable use of water resources. <i>E.g. A limited number of water resource issues in the Plan area will be exacerbated, availability will decrease temporarily or pressure on existing resources be increased.</i>	An action very likely to lead to moderate reduction, or a series of minor reductions, in the morphological status of water bodies. <i>E.g. Culverting of small or localised stretches of watercourse or modification of natural water bodies; small scale increase in adverse erosion or sedimentation rates in water bodies.</i>	An action very likely to lead to a moderate increase, or a series of smaller increases, to flood risk, and which decreases resilience to flooding and the consequences of flooding. <i>E.g. Decrease in flood storage resulting in increased risk to a number of homes and/ or value of assets.</i>	Effects may be short, medium, or long-term; or small, medium or large scale; temporary or permanent; reversible or irreversible; or a combination of the above. Any Plan that will have negative effects on a nationally or locally designated water body (inc. SSSI/ ASSI, NNR, LNR).

Typical significance criteria for assessing effects on water						
Significance of effects	SEA sub-objective					Comments/ additional criteria
	To improve water quality	To reduce levels of water pollution	To ensure sustainable use of water resources	To improve the morphological status of water bodies	To reduce the risk of flooding	
Major Negative (--)	An action very likely to lead to severe reduction, or a series of lesser reductions, in water quality. <i>E.g. WFD objectives will be derogated on a large scale in the Plan area.</i>	An action very likely to lead to severe increase, or a series of lesser increases, in water pollution. <i>E.g. Significant increase in marine waste disposal areas on a large scale in the Plan area.</i>	An action very likely to lead to severe reduction, or a series of lesser reductions, in sustainable use of water resources. <i>E.g. An important number of water resource issues in the Plan area will be exacerbated, availability will decrease permanently.</i>	An action very likely to lead to severe reduction, or a series of lesser reductions, in the morphological status of water bodies. <i>E.g. Large scale increase in adverse erosion or sedimentation rates on a large scale in the Plan area.</i>	An action very likely to lead to a severe increase, or a series of lesser increases, to flood risk, and which decreases resilience to flooding and the consequences of flooding. <i>E.g. Decrease in flood storage resulting in increased risk to a number of homes and/ or value of assets.</i>	Effects may be short, medium, or long-term; or small, medium or large scale; temporary or permanent; reversible or irreversible; or a combination of the above. Any Plan that will have negative effects on a internationally or nationally designated water body (inc. SPA, SAC, RAMSAR).
Mixed (e.g. ++/-, +/- etc.)	The effect on water quality/ water pollution/ water resource/ hydromorphology/ flood risk is likely to be a combination of positive and negative effects, particularly where effects are considered on sub-issues, areas or criterion.					Such mixed effects should be relatively straight forward to predict, as long as the cumulative or synergistic impacts of the Plan are considered.

Typical significance criteria for assessing effects on water						
Significance of effects	SEA sub-objective					Comments/ additional criteria
	To improve water quality	To reduce levels of water pollution	To ensure sustainable use of water resources	To improve the morphological status of water bodies	To reduce the risk of flooding	
Uncertain (?)	The effect of an action on water quality is not known, or is too unpredictable to assign a conclusive score.					Uncertainty may arise where an action covers a range of issues, or where the manner in which the action is implemented is a material factor in the nature of the effects it may have.

Note: This table provides a framework to illustrate how this guidance could be used.