

environmental impact assessment

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is the process of assessing the environmental impacts of a development scheme. The need for EIA is derived from an EU directive and the current regulations that are in force date from 1999.

EIA applies to major development schemes for which planning permission is required from local authorities under the Town & Country Planning Acts and to many development projects that fall outside of the planning system and are approved by other statutory bodies.

Major projects for which EIA may be required are listed in the Directive and the Regulations. They are divided into two schedules. Schedule 1 projects, e.g. nuclear power stations, always require EIA. Schedule 2 projects will only require EIA if **significant** environmental effects are likely to arise as a consequence of their development.

The key word in this context is significant. Government guidance suggests that there are three main criteria for judging significance:

- Scale of development;
- Environmental sensitivity of the scheme's location;
- Complex developments with potentially hazardous effects.

It is generally the scale of a Schedule 2 project that warrants EIA, e.g. employment development areas of greater than 20 hectares, commercial development schemes resulting in a floorspace of more than 10,000 square metres, or housing schemes of more than a 1000 dwellings are all likely to trigger a requirement for EIA.

The DLP Consulting Group is a corporate member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). Individual members of staff are also members of the Institute. DLP can provide expert assistance in the following:

1. Screening - the process of determining whether EIA is required;
2. Scoping

The process of determining the environmental matters to be addressed in the EIA.

The EIA is reported in an Environmental Statement (ES). Schedule 4 of the Regulations sets out the required content of an ES. This is:

- A description of the development;
- An outline of the main alternatives studied;
- A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development;
- A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment;
- A description of the measures envisaged to offset any significant effects;
- A non-technical summary of the ES;
- An indication of any difficulties encountered in compiling the ES.

DLP is well positioned to project manage the EIA process. This would encompass establishment of the expert technical consultancy team, specialist planning input and production of the ES.

