

# environment 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 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 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 generally relates to major infrastructure projects, for example nuclear power stations, always require EIA. Schedule 2 projects will only require EIA if 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 location,
- Complex developments with potentially hazardous effects.

It is generally the scale of a Schedule 2 project that warrants EIA, for example 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. In many cases, the thresholds that will trigger the request are much lower.

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:

- Screening - the process of determining whether EIA is required;
- Scoping - the process of determining the 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 which must include:

- 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.

In some cases, even where the planning authority has not requested an EIA, it may be prudent to provide one as part of the documentation supporting your application. In all cases DLP can advise on the need for EIA through the screening process and can address the scope of issues that may need to be addressed. We are well positioned to project manage the EIA process, instructing specialist sub-consultants as necessary, coordinating the results of the baseline studies and the proposed mitigation measures, and preparing the resulting ES and its non technical summary.

