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# Strategic environmental assessment and climate change: guidance for practitioners

## Summary

This guide suggests how **climate change** issues can be considered in the **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** of plans and programmes in England and Wales. It presents information on the causes and impacts of climate change and how they can be described and evaluated in SEA.

This guidance is primarily for plan-makers, responsible authorities and consultants preparing SEA or Sustainability Assessment (SA). However, it could be useful for anyone involved in preparing or reviewing SEAs or SAs.

SEA requires that the environmental effects of plans are identified and evaluated. As climate change is one of the key challenges facing the UK and the world today, it is important that plans fully consider climate change issues as they are formulated and implemented.

Responding to climate change requires a dual approach of mitigation and adaptation. **Mitigation measures** are actions that reduce the impact humans have on the climate system by reducing our emissions of greenhouse gases. **Adaptation measures** are actions that respond to actual or expected climate change. They have the potential to reduce the adverse impacts and enhance the benefits. .

This guidance provides advice on how these two aspects can be considered throughout the different stages of the SEA process, such as:

- Sourcing baseline information;
- Identifying significant problems, constraints and opportunities caused by climate change;
- Developing climate change objectives and indicators;
- Assessing the effects of plan alternatives;
- Integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into the final plan.

This guidance replaces the last updated version published in 2007. This guidance was originally developed by the Environment Agency in partnership with Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales, UK Climate Impacts Programme, Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants, CAG Consultants and InteREAM at the University of East Anglia. This version has been updated by the Environment Agency, with input from the above partner organisations. It reflects updated information on SEA and climate change and complements the [UK Practical Guide to the SEA Directive](#)<sup>1</sup>.

References and links to further information and reading are provided throughout and at the end of the guidance.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government, Department of the Environment (2005)  
A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

