

IMPACT ASSESSMENT UPDATE IRELAND-UK BRANCH OF IAIA:

2012 - 1

Dear Ireland-UK branch members

This is our first branch newsletter for quite some time. We hope we'll be able to get back to having two to four issues a year. – In order to make this possible and also to make this newsletter as interesting and valuable as possible, we need your input! Please send any items you wish to see included to fischer@liverpool.ac.uk. Enjoy!

Thomas Fischer (chair IAIA Ireland-UK branch)

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The power of EIA (by Doug Cross)

The British government's plan to build three new nuclear power stations along the coast of Cumbria, next to the English Lake District National Park, recently came under the scrutiny of veteran IAIA member Doug Cross. Alarmed at the Department for Energy and Climate Change's (DECC) plan to concentrate nuclear generation along 'Britain's Energy Coast', Doug analysed the coastal currents into which the cooling water from the planned series of reactors would be discharged.

He found that this sterilised water would seriously disrupt recruitment of marine stocks of fish and invertebrates in the estuary of the Duddon River, at the southern tip of Cumbria. This is an internationally protected Ramsar site, and a Special Protected Area. He invoked the Habitats Directive in a formal challenge to DECC's plan, and the government was forced to hastily abandon two of the three planned sites, retaining a proposal for only a single nuclear power station at the Sellafield nuclear complex further up the coast and well away from the Duddon Estuary.

Doug also invoked the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive of the EC to challenge DECC's proposal to build a new geological nuclear waste disposal facility (GDF) for the entire British nuclear energy sector, again in Cumbria. The geology of the region is completely unsuitable for a GDF, but the plan had strong political motivation, so Doug provided Local Authorities with an EIA-style Compliance Analysis.

This exposed the failure of DECC's strategy in developing its nuclear programme to comply with the procedures set out for major plans in the nuclear sector under the SEA Directive. Proposers must be able to demonstrate a complete suite of 'cradle to grave' technological solutions - and in the nuclear sector, proven disposal technology is significantly absent. The government is putting on a brave show of apparent indifference, but is now reported to be looking elsewhere for an alternative site for the GDF at the other end of the country, well away from Doug's home ground!

July 2012 (Issue 128) – Environmental Assessment News – from Josh Fothergill, IEMA

Future of the EIA Directive

The EC has indicated it plans to launch its proposals for a new EIA Directive in September. Whilst the focus will be on making the EIA process more efficient and harmonised between member states, IEMA understands that serious consideration is being given to including provisions that would require monitoring the environmental effects of a development, post-consent, and discussions are on-going as to whether to introduce a mandatory scoping process.

IEMA ran a series of five EIA workshops in early July to develop criteria to assess the new EIA Directive's likely influence on UK EIA practice. Presentations from these events can be found @ <http://www.iema.net/event-reports>

Should power lines be part of a wind farm EIA?

The European Commission has recently set out its view on how far the EIA of a main development should go in relation to ancillary and associated developments. The short advisory note details the EC position on two key elements related to associated / ancillary development. Firstly, when associated development should not be consented prior to the main development's EIA having been completed and consulted upon; where the advice suggests the use of what it terms a gravity test. Secondly, the Commission indicate their view that all likely significant effects of ancillary / associated development should be considered and included within the main development's EIA process and reported in its Environmental Statement. The Commission's interest in this area was initiated by concerns raised in relation to the EIA of the Nord Stream project – a natural gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea - but the short 3-side note could have practical implications for UK EIA!

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/home.htm>

Can EIA handle ecosystem services?

Following the publication of IEMA's e-brief on considering ecosystem service in EIA in January this year. IEMA member Ben Miller was inspired to conduct further research in this area. Ben is a senior minerals planner officer at Somerset County Council and will be conducting a study into the application of ecosystem services in EIA in England over the next year. If you are interested in taking part in the study, he will be launching a survey in the autumn, if you cannot wait for that please contact Ben @ benjaminmiller@connect.glos.ac.uk

EIA guidance updates:

- European Commission guides on integrating climate change (adaptation) and biodiversity into both EIA and SEA are expected to launch in August, with IEMA already making plan to run a member webinar with a DG Environment speaker.

- The Scottish Government is continuing to re-develop PAN58 and is interested in case studies of proportionate and efficient EIA practice from Scotland, submit them to cara.davidson@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
- DCLG EIA guidance for England, planned to accompany the August 2011 Regulations (SI 1824, 2011), has been further delayed and there is still no provisional date for its launch.
- IEMA and the Landscape Institute are currently putting the final touches to the text and graphics 3rd edition of the Guidelines on landscape and visual impact assessment. It should be published in early 2013.
- A consortium of WSP Environment & Energy, ABPmer, Oxford Brookes Impact Assessment Group, ERI and Levett Therivel has been commissioned by RenewableUK to develop guidelines for cumulative impact assessments for offshore wind farms.

Forthcoming IEMA EIA Quality Mark Webinars:

- 30th August: Integrating Health into EIA practice
- 27th September: Effective scoping for proportionate EIA
- 25th October: Effective approaches to ES presentation & communicating EIA findings

Irish Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment Guidance Published (by Ainhua Gonzalez)

The EPA-funded research for developing a methodology for Integrated Biodiversity Impact Assessment (IBIA) was carried out by IAIA Ireland-UK committee members Dr Ainhua González and Dr. John Fry, in collaboration with other colleagues from Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and ecological consultants Scott Cawley Ltd. The IBIA Guidance presents a methodological approach for integrating key Appropriate Assessment (AA), SEA and EIA stages. It seeks to ensure that relevant processes required under different EU Directives and Irish national law connect effectively and efficiently, to provide an integrated and holistic approach to biodiversity impact assessment, optimise time and resource efficiencies, and avoid unnecessary duplication. Particular emphasis is given to the fulfillment of legal obligations, effective integration and communication of scientific knowledge; spatial assessment and biodiversity data considerations; and integration of biodiversity aspects with a variety of other environmental concerns during the planning process.

The Guidance is available for download from the following EPA links:

Final Report: <http://www.epa.ie/downloads/pubs/research/biodiversity/name,33395,en.html>

Executive Summary:

<http://www.epa.ie/downloads/pubs/research/biodiversity/name,33396,en.html>

More information is also available in the following Website: www.tcd.ie/ibia

ESPON project on Territorial Impact Assessment (By Thomas Fischer)

An ESPON project has just been completed on the assessment of impacts of European directives on member states, their regions and localities (called 'territorial impact assessment' - TIA). Main stakeholders were the UK, Portugal and Slovenia. The final report together with the associated guidance can be downloaded at

http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_TargetedAnalyses/EATIA.html.

An indicator for possible future SEA development in Ireland? (By John Fry)

The EPA is the primary Statutory Authority involved in coordinating the Irish SEA process. On June 6th the EPA issued its *Research Call 2012: Sustainable Environment*. The *Soils and Land-Use* category of this included two proposals that have direct relevance to impact assessment and SEA in particular - being issues thrown up by the EPA's recently completed SEA Effectiveness Review. This note is mainly of academic interest since the deadline for the research call has passed (although several IAIA members are known to have been involved in bids), but those project calls give some indication of official thinking on the future development of Irish SEA.

Project 13 was a call for a 24-month research fellowship on the development and testing of *Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)* for the evaluation of SEA effectiveness. The rationale for the call was that application of a national set of SEA KPIs would 'assist in the identification of aspects of SEA that are performing particularly well along with those that are in need of improvement'. The suggested potential scope of application of the KPIs that would be identified by this research was broad, and they could *inter alia*:

- be adapted to form a KPI Checklist for practitioners to submit to the statutory authorities with their completed SEA Statement
- form the basis of three or five year reviews of a sample of SEAs/SEA Statements by the proposed National SEA Technical Forum/Advisory Group - possible as a mechanism to monitor overall progress on SEA topic areas.

Project 14 called for a 6/12-month desk study for the development of a methodology/ framework for generating and evaluating alternative scenarios for sector plans to inform and guide sustainable development in Irish spatial planning. Identification of an appropriate range of alternatives is a standard problem in impact assessment worldwide, but the stalling of the Celtic Tiger infrastructural boom in the current economic downturn is seen as the necessity (and possibly an unforeseen opportunity) to reappraise existing land-use zoning and implement Core Strategies firmly set in the context of the SEA, Floods and Habitats Directives.

Recent publication with an Ireland UK focus from the three main EA journals (EIA Review; Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal; Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management)

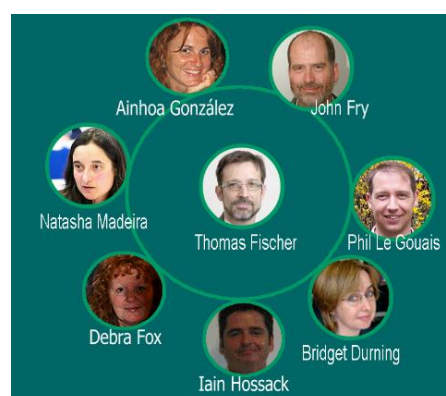
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Your Branch Committee!

Please note: The Ireland UK branch is now on linkedin; please sign up to it!!!