

# Local Development Plans Evidence Gathering Resource Pack for Planning Authorities Part One: Overview Document

**Version 1 – November 2023**

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## 1. Purpose and scope

This resource pack has been prepared to support planning authorities with the evidence gathering stage of your local development plan process. SEPA holds a wide range of evidence that can contribute to supporting delivery of several of the policy outcomes in NPF4. This evidence is important in helping you understand what to plan for before the proposed plan starts to consider where development should take place.

The LDP resource pack includes:

**PART 1:** This overview document

**PART 2**: Two evidence tables which have been forwarded with this document:

1. SEPA evidence sources by NPF4 topic papers; and
2. SEPA evidence glossary

**PART 3**: Our updated [Guidance for planning authorities on undertaking a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/3psdfwce/sfra-guidance-for-planning-authorities.pdf)

This overview document includes:

* A summary of what our evidence can be used for
* How this evidence can be aligned with the SEA process
* How our evidence can be used in the site appraisal methodology

## 2. Using the resource pack

The resource pack enables you to access relevant evidence and understand what it can be used for within the context of NPF4. Our aim is to allow an element of ‘self-service’ in using our evidence sources in the preparation of your Evidence Report and thereby improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the evidence gathering stage.

Our evidence can also be used to inform the environmental baseline in the SEA process.

Aligning both processes as much as possible is strongly recommended.

Environmental evidence is most effective when brought together with all other evidence sources within a place context to enable connections to be made and to facilitate discussions around the opportunities and challenges for change. We are actively supporting this approach through the Key Agency Group Collaborative LDP pilots. The [suite of resources](https://www.ads.org.uk/resource/place-skills-plan-making) on place skills for plan making prepared by A&DS can support all planning authorities in taking this approach.

## 3. SEPA Evidence sources

SEPA’s current evidence as well as relevant external sources of evidence are presented in the two tables in Part 2 of the resource pack. We will review and update the tables on a regular basis to help ensure that they are kept up-to-date. The intention is to provide access to the tables from our website as soon as possible but in the meantime any updates will be circulated through the Improvement Service.

***SEPA evidence sources by NPF4 policy topics*** frames evidence sources around the policies in NPF4 Part 2 – National Planning Policy. For each policy the NPF4 policy requirements for the LDP is included followed by internal and external sources of evidence that can support delivery.

***SEPA evidence glossary*** frames the SEPA evidence sources and key external sources around our key areas of interest – flood risk, water environment, soils, zero waste and air quality. It provides information on what the evidence shows, how it can be used, which NPF4 policies it can support and where it can be found.

In the tables we explain how our evidence can be used to support delivery of a range of policy areas in NPF4. A summary of some of the key uses are outlined below.

### Addressing the climate emergency

* Our evidence is critical in planning for climate resilient places that can adapt to change. The evidence helps you understand the implications and opportunities for areas such as future flood risk, coastal change, the water environment and nature networks.
* There is a significant opportunity to use this information to underpin the spatial strategy through an infrastructure first approach to blue and green infrastructure which is designed to deliver multiple functions such as flood prevention, water management, nature restoration, protecting soil functionality and bringing vacant and derelict land back into positive use. In turn a place-based approach can be used to align this with other evidence for active travel routes and open space strategies to support delivery of other policy priorities such as 20-minute neighbourhoods and health and wellbeing.
* Evidence relating to carbon rich soils, improving air quality (there is very often a high correlation between measures to improve air quality and those that reduce greenhouse gas emissions) and zero waste can directly support a shift to net zero.
* A new spotfire tool which makes UK local authority (LA) regional GHG emissions data more interactive and allows LAs to view data at their authority scale and by sector is due to be published on the SEweb soon.

### Addressing the nature crisis

* Using our evidence to support water resilient places that are adapting to climate change helps address the nature crisis by identifying opportunities to protect, create and enhance nature networks and multifunctional blue and green infrastructure at a range of scales.
* Opportunities to improve degraded habitats caused by pressures on our water environment can be identified through nature network and blue and green infrastructure.
* Protecting and improving our soils including carbon rich soils helps to protect and improve the rich biodiversity that they support. It also maintains and improves their ability to store water which can reduce the stress on habitats and species through periods of water scarcity or flooding.

### Flood risk

* SEPA's primary objective in engaging with LDPs on the issue of flood risk is to strengthen resilience by promoting avoidance as a first principle and reducing the vulnerability of existing and future development to flooding.
* To achieve this an SFRA should be undertaken to inform the Evidence Report in line with [our updated guidance](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/3psdfwce/sfra-guidance-for-planning-authorities.pdf) to fully understand flood risk from all sources for the local authority area. The updated guidance promotes a more strategic approach to SFRA that is less resource intensive by drawing upon existing sources of information.

### Water environment

* The water environment and associated riparian zones form important elements of existing and proposed nature networks and associated blue and green infrastructure networks.
* The wetland inventory data, riparian vegetation planting layer, geomorphic risk layer, flood maps and carbon rich soils map are important sources of evidence for protecting and improving nature networks and audits/ strategies for multi-functional blue and green infrastructure.
* Data on pressures on the water environment should be used to inform opportunities to restore degraded habitats in nature networks and through blue and green infrastructure

(e.g., fish barriers layer, morphological and quality pressures River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), Water Environment Fund (WEF) layer).

* The opportunities for catchment scale consideration of water resilience should inform blue and green infrastructure and nature network mapping. This should include the protection of natural assets such as functioning riparian areas, flood plains, surface water storage locations, wetlands which provide buffering of flows and identification of restoration opportunities/ new habitats across catchments.
* Locations of potential geothermal heat (such as from minewater) can be used with

Scotland’s heat map to inform opportunities for heating and cooling in an authority area, where relevant. We would encourage you to discuss potential opportunities with SEPA and the Coal Authority.

### Soils

* The NatureScot peatland map should be used as the evidence source which provides an indication of the likely presence of carbon rich soils (classes 1, 2, 3 and 5) to inform spatial strategies.
* Carbon rich soils and peatland habitat can perform a number of important functions including supporting biodiversity, storing carbon, sustainable management of water resources and improving water quality. It is therefore important that carbon rich soils are included in the preparation of blue and green infrastructure audits and/or strategies and identifying nature networks (particularly at a landscape/ more strategic level).

### Air quality

* Protecting and enhancing blue and green networks and nature networks in urban areas can also improve local air quality if designed appropriately.
* We hold information on emissions from and the locations of regulated facilities. Careful consideration should be given to proposed development in the vicinity of these areas – especially sensitive receptors such as housing, schools and health facilities.
* A new spotfire tool will be released shortly that will enable the consideration of the implications for local air quality and associated carbon emissions from transport of different scenarios for the spatial strategy.

### Zero Waste

• We hold various sources of waste data which can be used to help assess the need for new waste management infrastructure to support the circular economy.

## 4. Alignment with SEA process

The SEA should be an integral part of the Local Development Plan process. Work on the

SEA scoping report should align with the preparation of the Evidence Report. Paragraph

122 of the Scottish Government’s LDP guidance suggests that the SEA scoping report is included as part of the evidence base material for the Evidence Report. The SEA and the Evidence Report can help ensure you fully consider the environment when making choices leading to a better plan.

Section 15 (5) of the Act requires the Evidence Report to consider the physical and environmental characteristics of the district. A summary of the environmental characteristics and any existing environmental problems in the plan area is also information to be included in the SEA. The SEA also provides an opportunity to identify potential opportunities such as natural flood management solutions.

The *SEPA evidence sources by NPF4 policy topics* table will help you identify key environmental issues and can be used to supplement the relevant sources of information identified in the Scottish Government’s LDP guidance.

The collection of baseline data will often start at the SEA scoping stage. The SEA scoping report does not need to include a detailed assessment, but it should focus on the most relevant aspects of the environment for the plan. A proportionate baseline will help focus the assessment on the most significant effects of the plan. Focussing the evidence gathering on data that is specific to the plan area and land use planning decisions rather than including too much generic information helps to streamline the SEA. The baseline data can be added to at later stages in the SEA process.

Some planning authorities have prepared state of the environment reports to inform council plans and policies. These can be a useful record of environmental data at a local level and can be referenced as a source of evidence in the SEA and Evidence Report.

Useful resources to support the SEA process include:

1. **Scottish Government Strategic Environmental Assessment guidance, August 2013**

[Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidance (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2013/08/strategic-environmental-assessment-guidance/documents/00432344-pdf/00432344-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00432344.pdf)  provides a useful overview of the SEA process.

1. **SEPA’s SEA topic guidance**

SEPA’s SEA topic guidance on [air,](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/162985/lups-sea-gu1-consideration-of-air-in-sea.pdf) [soil,](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/162986/lups-sea-gu2-consideration-of-soil-in-sea.pdf) [water,](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/162987/lups-sea-gu3-consideration-of-water-in-sea.pdf) [climatic factors,](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/344236/climatic-factors-web-version.pdf) [material assets](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/219432/lups-sea-gu4-consideration-of-material-assets-in-sea.pdf) and [human health](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/219433/lups-sea-gu5-consideration-of-human-health-in-sea.pdf) give an overview of existing environmental problems at a national level, example SEA objectives and assessment questions, details of relevant plans, programmes and strategies and sources of baseline data. The topic guidance is being updated to make sure it refers to the most up to date information included in the evidence tables (Part 2 of this resource pack).

## 5. Site appraisal methodology

The Scottish Government’s LDP guidance suggests that the Evidence Report can establish and present a site appraisal methodology and this could be linked or integrated with the approach to the SEA site assessment. The site appraisal methodology will be used to appraise sites and inform allocations for the Proposed Plan. The guidance makes it clear that where sites are to be allocated for new homes, they should be confirmed as deliverable. This means that land allocated for new homes should be free of constraints. However, where constraints exist, sites can be regarded as deliverable, providing that the Delivery Programme evidences potential to enable delivery, including how constraints will be removed and the timeframe expected for this. It is therefore important that the site appraisal methodology identifies constraints including evidence of flood risk, carbon rich soils and potential co-location issues.

The SEA consultation authorities are updating the [Local Development Plan Site](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/142478/sea-joint-site-assessment-proforma.doc)

[Assessment and SEA checklist](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/142478/sea-joint-site-assessment-proforma.doc) which can be used to check the assessment covers the key issues. It will also help to integrate the site assessment and SEA process. We will circulate this to all planning authorities by the end of 2023.

For flood risk, SEPA's primary objective in engaging with LDPs is to strengthen resilience by promoting avoidance as a first principle and reducing the vulnerability of existing and future development to flooding. Therefore, in the spirit of helping to front-load the LDP process, as well as reviewing the SFRA we also request that your Site Appraisal Methodology includes questions/criteria related to flood risk. We ask that the questions/criteria specify for every site that at the time of its assessment either (i) its flood risk is fully understood (which could be via the SFRA, for example a site is clearly shown to be within our outwith an area of flood risk) or (ii), if not, that a Flood Risk Assessment be undertaken at that stage to ensure that it is. This provides certainty at an early a stage as possible in the plan preparation process for all stakeholders and will ensure that only sites that are in accordance with NPF4 are included in the Proposed Plan.

## 6. Contacting SEPA

The resource pack should enable you to access relevant evidence and understand what it can be used for within the context of NPF4. This supports an element of ‘self-service’ in using our evidence sources in the preparation of your Evidence Report. However, should you feel you require further support or have any questions please direct them to the relevant SEPA planning regional email address:

Planning.South@sepa.org.uk

Planning.North@sepa.org.uk

The relevant email address for your local authority can be found [here.](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sepa.org.uk%2Fmedia%2F2q2e12ou%2Fplanning-service-contact-details.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

If you would like this document in an accessible format, such as large print, audio recording or braille, please contact SEPA by emailing equalities@sepa.org.uk