

# Integrating Cumulative Effects in Water and Spatial Planning

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## CEA Origins in the UK

Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in the United Kingdom (UK).

- SEA is required for certain plans in the UK, including spatial (land use) planning and water management planning) as a result of European Directive 2001/42/EC.
- Cumulative effects are specifically identified in the Directive:
  - In Screening = Annex II (2) – when considering the likely effects of a plan consider “*The cumulative nature of effects*”; and
  - In Assessment = Annex I (f) – information should be included in the Environmental Report on significant environmental effects, including secondary, cumulative, and synergistic effects.

## CEA practice in the UK

How well are cumulative effects on the water environment currently considered in SEA?

- Central Government SEA guidance has only 6 pages of advice on CEA as a whole.
- CEA practice is rather basic – tick box approach, often stopping at a plans boundaries.
- A lack of integrated water policy has led to other policy areas dominating (e.g. spatial planners have embraced an over-arching consideration of Energy and Climate Change).
- Cumulative effects to the water environment are rarely considered, and when they are flood risk management issues tend to dominate.

## The Water Framework Directive

Managing water in an integrated manner and improving the consideration of cumulative effects on water.

- European Directive 2000/60/EC, designed to protect & improve all waters through a set of environmental objectives and by introducing River Basin Management Plans (RBMP).
- River basin planning will lead to 3 important developments for water related CEA:
  - Significant improvement in baseline info, related to the water environment;
  - Water related environmental limits will be established;
  - River basin planning is CEA - it investigates and identifies the cause of complex impacts, in the water environment, and defines actions for improvement.

## River Basin Management Plans

A single document for managing water indicating: where we are, current problems, and how to improve it.

- RBMP identify the current status of the water environment, targets to improve it, and actions needed to generate these improvements.
- These actions will be carried out by different sectors (agriculture, transport, spatial planners) and could lead cumulative environmental effects. Therefore SEA was carried out during the production of a RBMP.

- The SEA identified 2 broad types of cumulative effects:
  1. Effects between the actions in the RBMP (Intra-Plan effects); and
  2. Effects between the RBMP and wider plans (Inter-Plan Effects).
- Inter-Plan focussed on four (4) key plans: Spatial, Economic, Flooding, and Water Resources.

## Linking the water environment and spatial planning via CEA

- The likely cumulative effects of the RBMP (identified by the SEA) were reviewed and discussed with a steering group of key interested parties.
- This has helped to raise the profile of water as a policy issue, particularly:
  - Water resources and growth / housing targets, especially in water scarce areas,
  - Identify areas where partnership working is needed between sectors to reduce impacts on the water environment.
- Opportunities for improvement exist:
  - Consultation on the draft RBMP will raise the profile of the cumulative effects in the water environment with spatial planners,
  - The RBMP will provide significantly more information on the water environment and impacts upon it – improving the baseline for both SEA of spatial plans and EIA of developments.
- However, challenges also need to be overcome:
  - The timing of the RBMP is not synchronised with spatial plans,
  - Spatial planners will need further guidance and training to realise the opportunities presented by the information included in the RBMP.

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