

Please ask for: Ruta Burbaite
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 SEA Ref: 01821
 HES Ref: 300067049
 NatureScot Ref: CEA171708
 SEPA Ref: 9778
 Date: 29/11/2023

Dear SEA Gateway/Consultation Authorities,

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Screening Determination:

01821 – Highland Council – Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Delivery Plan

This letter confirms the Highland Council’s determination under Section 8(1) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 on whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and Delivery Plan.

Through the SEA process, the Highland Council submitted a Screening Report on 11 July 2023 to the Consultation Authorities:

- Historic Environment Scotland
- NatureScot
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)

Alongside consulting the above, the Highland Council was required to consider the criteria detailed in Schedule 2 of the Act, when determining whether the LHEES Strategy and Delivery Plan are likely to have significant environmental effects.

Responses were received on 8 August 2023 from the Consultation Authorities, with responses summarised below:

Consultation Authority	Comment	Likely to have significant environmental effects?

Historic Environment Scotland	In light of the information and reasoning set out within the screening report, we agree with your view that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects for the historic environment as a result of this first iteration of the Strategy.	No
NatureScot	NatureScot has considered your screening report using the criteria set out in Schedule 2 of the Act for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment. We note that this plan is high-level, and therefore on that basis in terms of our interests, we agree that the above plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects.	No
SEPA	In accordance with Section 9(3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, we have reviewed the screening report using the criteria set out in Schedule 2 of the Act. In regard to our main areas of interest (air, water, soil, human health, material assets and climatic factors) we agree with the conclusions of the screening report that the proposed plan, programme or strategy is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.	No

Having consulted with the Consultation Authorities, and considering the criteria set out in the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Highland Council has determined under Schedule 2 of the Act that the LHEES Strategy and Delivery Plan is unlikely to have any significant environmental effects, due to the following reasons:

- The LHEES Strategy aims to identify pathways to enable buildings within the Highland Council area to decarbonise their heat and improve energy efficiency of the building stock. The first iteration of the LHEES will be high-level in nature, and no specific actions will be assigned against strategic zones, with the inclusion of generic impacts of energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures already related to existing commitments in national strategies which have previously been subject to SEA.
- The LHEES Delivery Plan sets out how the Highland Council proposes to support the implementation of its Strategy. It sets out potential short-term actions streaming from the LHEES, providing a prospectus for where government funding and private

investment for heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency investment should be targeted. It will not vary from the findings of existing SEAs that were undertaken for the national plans but be set in that national context. As the Delivery Plan cannot give specifics as to exactly what area and building level actions could be delivered, it will not directly affect any changes. Therefore, it will not have a sufficient level of granularity to differentiate it from existing SEAs completed for the existing Scottish Government plans and strategies and will not have significant environmental effects, especially as these options will be subject to planning and other consenting regimes at the building level.

- LHEES will identify indicative Heat Network Zones, but the designation of Heat Network Zones falls outside the scope of LHEES, as noted in the Scottish Government's LHEES guidance. The outputs from LHEES can be used to start work on the consideration of heat networks through follow-on work for Heat Networks Zoning as required by the Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021 (the Act). Any potential requirement for SEA in respect of designating Heat Network Zones, as required under the Act, will be fully considered at the time of formal designation and review.

Therefore, it is concluded that a SEA is not required.

Yours sincerely

Ruta Burbaite

Climate Change Coordinator (LHEES), Climate Change and Energy, Depute Chief Executive