

Learning from innovative approaches to enhance public participation in SEA



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A project that aims to improve SEA public participation practice in Ireland

Project Co-funded by 



Project Partners



Levett-Therivel



Context

Legal framework

Aarhus Convention

public's right to:

access to
information

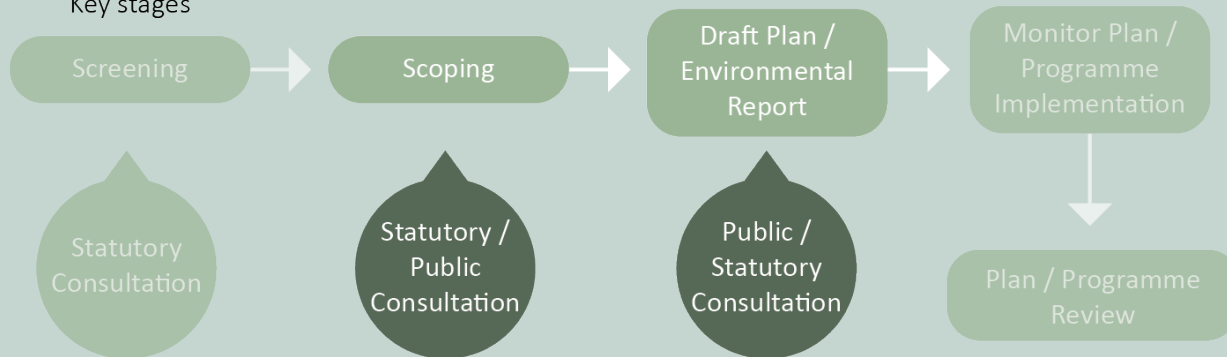
Participation
in decision-making

Justice
in environmental matters

UNECE, 1998. Available at: <https://unece.org/DAM/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf>

SEA (Directive 2001/42/EC)

Key stages



SEA Process, adapted from EPA (no date). Available at: <https://www.epa.ie/>

Well-acknowledged benefits

Wider **information** base

Amplification of the voices of **vulnerable** and **marginalised people**

Education and **awareness-raising**

A more **sustainable** and **equitable plan**

Reconciliation of **conflicting agendas**

Democratic **accountability** and increased **acceptability** of the plan

Current practice barriers to public participation

Administrative	SEA Process	Decision-makers behaviour	Public behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resource and time constraints• Increase in tasks (for public engagement) that are not role specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start too late• Delays in the plan's timelines• Interference with planning agendas• Lack of consensus on how to integrate public feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of interest in public input• Lack of consensus on the legitimacy of public input	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distrust in the process• Limited public input• Limited awareness of the benefits of participating

The ideal scenario of public participation in SEA involves the public joining other SEA and plan-making actors to have a meaningful say in SEA stages.

Public participation in SEA should be...

Meaningful

Inform decision-making, **start early** in the process, encourage **two-way communication**

Planned

Define clear **objectives, scope, engagements techniques,** and **feedback** provision

Open

Accessible to all, enable **access to information,** free **exchange of opinions**

Inclusive

Ensure **different perspectives** are considered in the decision-making; and **outcomes are in the public interest**

Collaborative

Encourage participants to **work together** on **problem-solving**

Transparent

Communicate **how public input will be used,** define mechanism for **feedback integration**

Innovative approaches

Dundalk SEA public participation case study

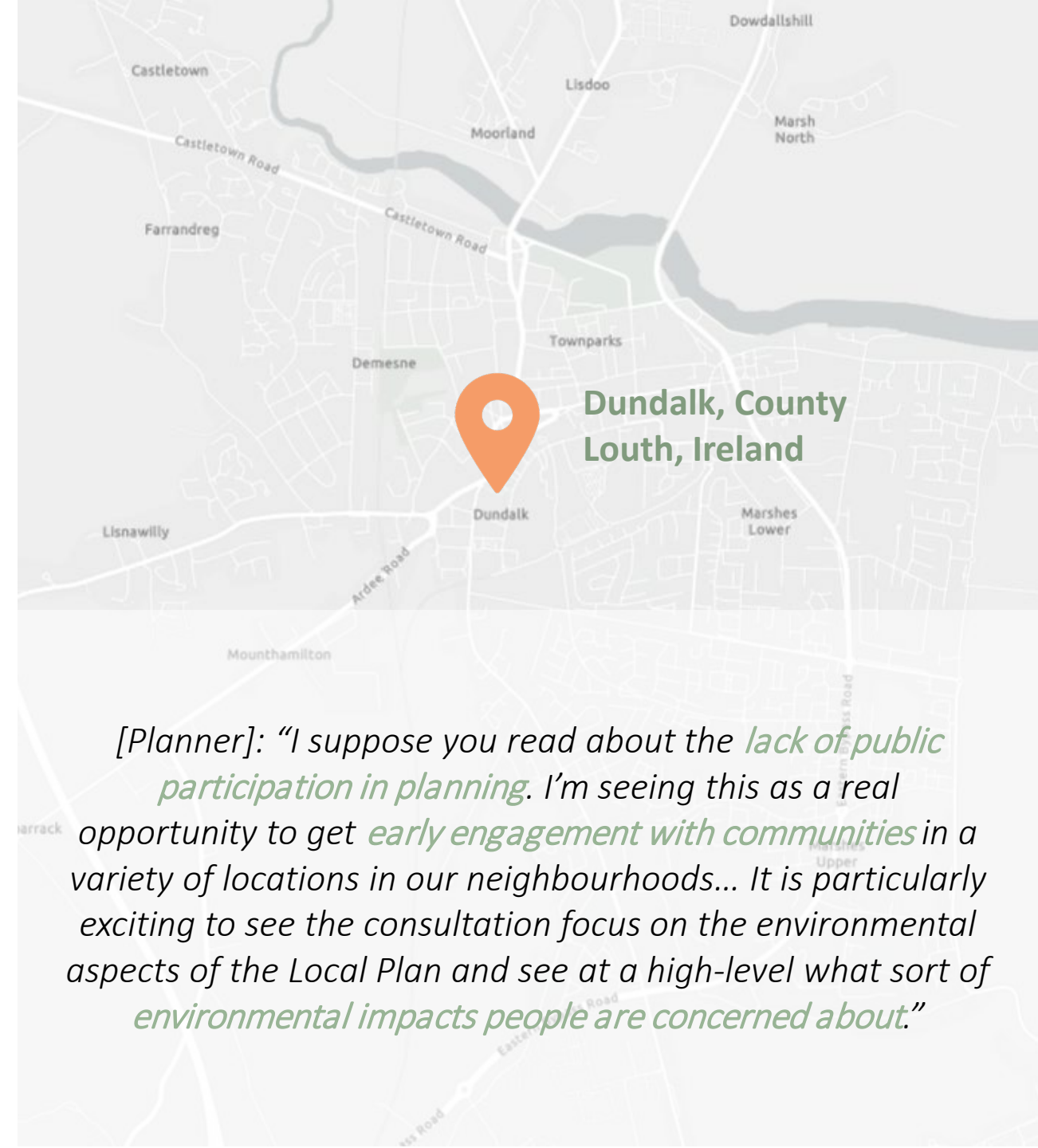
Stage: Pre-draft consultation of the plan

Focus: Environmental factors to consider in the development of the Dundalk Local Area Plan 2024-2030

Purpose: Provide means to better inform and engage the public

Consultation process: Close collaboration with Louth County Council planners

New methods of engagement: Neighbourhood walks and Community Mapping



*[Planner]: “I suppose you read about the **lack of public participation in planning**. I’m seeing this as a real opportunity to get **early engagement with communities** in a variety of locations in our neighbourhoods... It is particularly exciting to see the consultation focus on the environmental aspects of the Local Plan and see at a high-level what sort of **environmental impacts people are concerned about**.”*

Preparing for public participation

- Proactive **joint preparation** of the event

Informing the public

- Use of a variety of **communication channels**
- Distribution of user-friendly **communication material**

Engaging with the public

- Consideration of multiple **engagement activities**
- Preparation of user-friendly **consultation material**
- Involvement of SEA **practitioners and planners** in the event
- Collection of public **feedback** to improve future consultation

Integrating public feedback

- Record of public input
- Analysis of key findings
- Integration into the SEA consultation and plan

Key aspects
of the consultation process

Informing the public

1 min
informational video

To raise awareness
about SEA and invite
the public to have a say



<https://youtu.be/9nWTbZ7wdOE>

Dedicated StoryMap

To inform the public
about the SEA, planning
process and the event

Have a say!

In the environmental assessment of the Dundalk Local Area Plan

SEA Public Participation Event Date: June 13th, 2023
19 May 2023

We want you to share your knowledge of the town and get your feedback to develop Dundalk sustainably.

Dundalk SEA Public Participation event.



<https://arcg.is/11rnny>

Flyer & social media
content

To invite the public to
participate in the event

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

HAVE A SAY IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE DUNDALK LOCAL AREA PLAN

JUNE 13TH, 2023
16:30 SHARP - 17:20 | NEIGHBOURHOOD WALK
17:20 - 17:30 | MAKE WAY TO DUNDALK LIBRARY
17:30 - 17:45 | REFRESHMENTS
17:45 - 18:00 | SUMMARY OF WALKS
18:00 - 19:00 | COMMUNITY MAPPING WORKSHOP
19:00 - 19:30 | FINAL REFLECTIONS, Q&A

This public participation event aims to identify environmental considerations that should be considered in the Dundalk Local Area Plan.

We want you to share your knowledge of the town and get your feedback to develop Dundalk sustainably.

COME AND JOIN US FOR:

- 16:30 - 17:20 SHARP NEIGHBOURHOOD WALK**
- Join us at the meeting point that is of most interest and/or convenient for you.
- 18:00 - 19:00 COMMUNITY MAPPING WORKSHOP**
- Join us at the Dundalk Library to explore environmental considerations for the development of the town.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WALK MEETING POINTS

- A Riverside Crescent** (54.017057, 0.400378)
- B Castletown Motte** (54.018822, -0.400800)
- C Market Square** (54.004415, 0.402581)
- D Costa Dundalk** (54.004025, 0.397987)
- E Dundalk Library** (54.004025, 0.397987)

COMMUNITY MAPPING WORKSHOP MEETING POINT

- E Dundalk Library** (54.004025, 0.397987)

Scan the QR or go to <https://arcg.is/11rnny> to find out more about the meeting points and to discover important environmental and planning considerations of the Dundalk Local Area Plan.

Social media, web
portals, local newspaper
ads and flyer distribution

+7000 views (online)

Louth County Council @louthcoco · Jun 12

Have a Say! Dundalk #Local Area Plan

Watch video guide: youtu.be/9nWTbZ7wdOE

For workshop details, go to: storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3824cc...

To register for this event, go to: survey123.arcgis.com/share/50fe43e6...

To make a submission go to: consult.louthcoco.ie/en/consultatio...

Home > Consultations > Dundalk Local Area Plan

Dundalk Local Area Plan

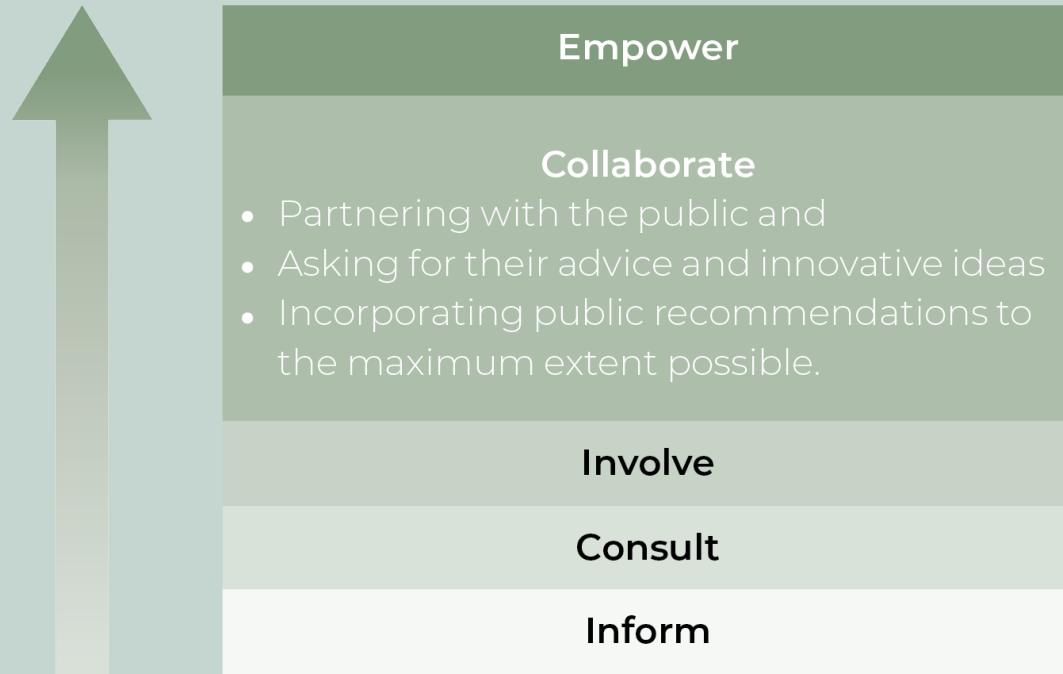
OPEN 30 May, 2023, 9:00am - 30 Jun, 2023, 4:30pm

Location	Date(s)	Time
Workshop and Neighbourhood Walk - This workshop will seek to promote public engagement in the preparation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan.	Tuesday, 13th June, 2023	4:30pm - 7:45pm

Engaging with the public

Increased impact
on decisions

Public engagement spectrum



Neighbourhood walks

It involves inviting the public to walk around your neighborhood, accompanied by a representative from the SEA/planning team, and working together to identify local strengths and weaknesses.

Community mapping

It brings people together around a map of the plan area and can be used to identify problem areas and areas that need intervention, leading to zoning suggestions and project locations.

Neighbourhood walks

About the activity

- Four neighbourhood walks. Selected based on vulnerability or development potential

Benefits

- Opportunity for informal public interaction with the planners and SEA team
- Open dialogue and in-situ data collection

Outcome

- Local knowledge about existing issues and potential solutions
- 7 participants in total (2 areas with no participation)



Community mapping

About the activity

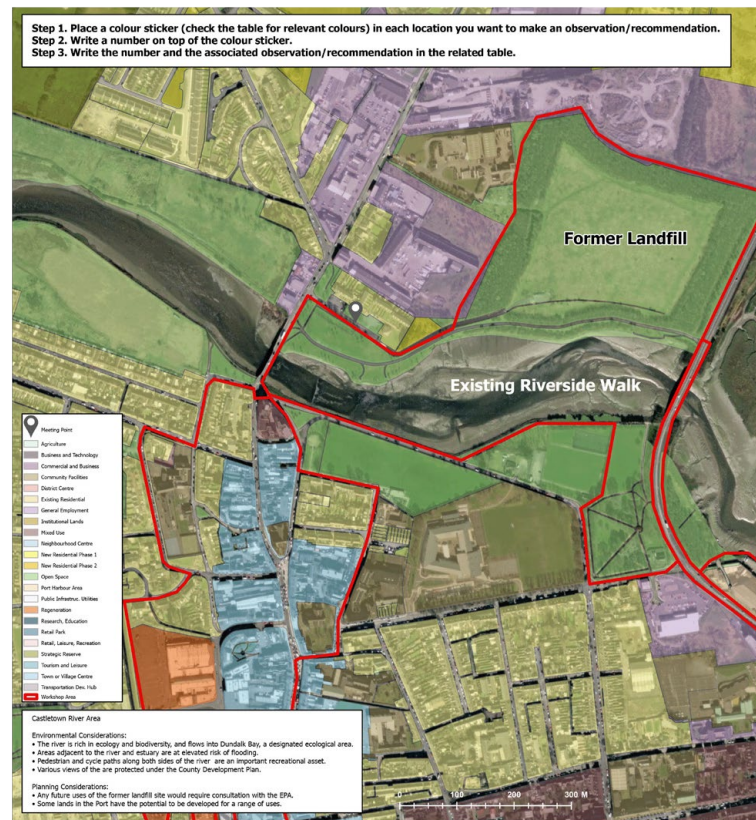
- Areas of neighbourhood walks with current land use.

Benefits

- Opportunity for the public to present their concerns, recommendations and ideas to identified problems

Outcome

- Ideas to improve and protect the environment related to SEA themes
- 4 participants in total



Visited Area:	
Strategic environmental assessment topic	How future development of the area should deal with this topic
Climate change (e.g. flood risk, energy/transport and GHG emissions)	(Potential) issues in the visited area (if any) – Record any locations with a numbered yellow dot Recommended solutions/actions to improve the area in relation to this topic – Record any locations with a yellow dot
Water provision, water quality	(Potential) issues in the visited area (if any) – Record any locations with a numbered blue dot Recommended solutions/actions to improve the area in relation to this topic – Record any locations with a blue dot
Wildlife, nature, soil and land cover	(Potential) issues in the visited area (if any) – Record any locations with a numbered white dot Recommended solutions/actions to improve the area in relation to this topic – Record any locations with a white dot
Health, transport, air quality	(Potential) issues in the visited area (if any) – Record any locations with a numbered purple dot Recommended solutions/actions to improve the area in relation to this topic – Record any locations with a purple dot
Heritage, townscape, landscape	(Potential) issues in the visited area (if any) – Record any locations with a numbered orange dot Recommended solutions/actions to improve the area in relation to this topic – Record any locations with an orange dot



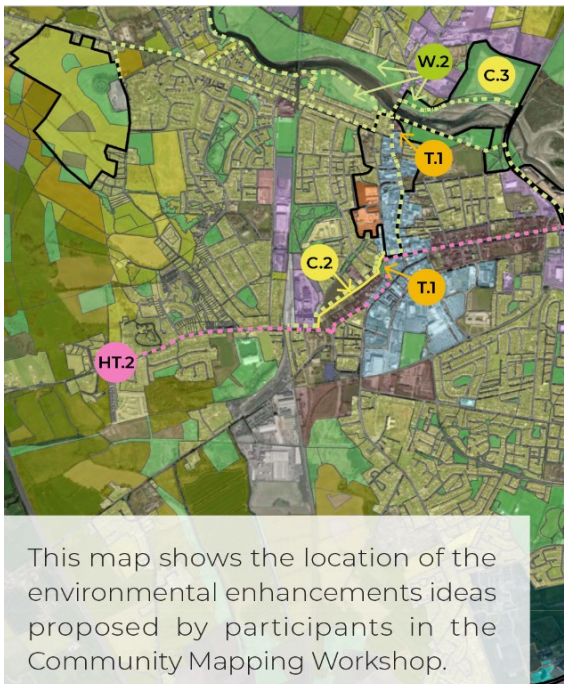
Area	Issues	Proposed solution
Clanbrassil Street	Cleanliness of the pedestrian paths.	Regular cleaning, fines for throwing gum.
	Lack of bins in Clanbrassil St. (taken away and not put back yet).	Place bins at regular intervals and ensure these have segregated rubbish options to encourage recycling.
	There are no bus stops on Clanbrassil St., and this is a street used by different age cohorts.	Make it age-friendly and provide at least a bus stop midway.
	No opportunities for cycling through Clanbrassil St., it is very narrow.	Provide cycle lanes or close the street fully to traffic.
	Connecting alleyways between Long Rd. and Clanbrassil St. are an issue deterring people from using them.	Make these more appealing/safe and put sensor lights or similar.
	There are derelict upper floors and buildings.	Propose new use (e.g. housing).
	Traffic feeling.	Extent paving across road (e.g. area in front of church).

[Participant]: “This was a very good opportunity for *brainstorming and developing joint solutions* to improve the town. It is a shame no more people have turned up.”

[Participant]: “I really liked this open approach to *highlighting good and bad things* about Dundalk and *learning from each other.*”

[Planner]: “...it was to gain the *local knowledge* and utilise that as we progressed with the *plan-making process.*”

[Planner]: “...they gave a broad *range of concerns* that they had about historic development in the area and *what should be happening in the future.* *Early on in the process* that’s definitely when it *should be taking place*”



Climate change	
C1. Flood Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance and develop Lord Limerick embankment to help against flooding. Provide good cycling and pedestrian infrastructure throughout the town including cycle lanes on main streets such as Clanbrassil Street.
C2. Active Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider informal popular cycling routes such as the one between St. Malachy's Infants' School and Market Square. Consider creating a walkway/cycleway between Dundalk and Blackrock to benefit the town.
C.3. Former landfill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pipe methane from the landfill to heat houses.
Wildlife, nature, soil and land cover	
W1. Green Parks and greenways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a park/nature reserve with pedestrian access from the existing riverwalk and residential areas off Castletown Road. Create a greenway/linear park from Point Road to Cú Chulainn's Castle. Create a greenway/linear park across the 'Fairgreen' within the pedestrian access on the road.
Water provision and water supply	
WQ1. Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and address the reason why tap water sometimes turns grey/brown in colour.
WQ2. Slipways conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide maintenance to the slipway as it is currently a safety hazard.
Heritage, townscape, and landscape	
T1. Town's revitalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a more attractive place to live by ensuring a variety of services (e.g. playgrounds). Focus on attracting people to live in the town centre rather than having ribbon development.
Health, transport, and air quality	
HT1. Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address traffic coming into town as it is heavy and getting worse, especially on Carrick Road.

This map shows the location of the environmental enhancements ideas proposed by participants in the Community Mapping Workshop.

Findings of the public participation event

What went well

- ✓ Active and early involvement of the plan-makers helped to ensure a positive approach towards public participation and integration
- ✓ Very positive feedback from those who attended
- ✓ Engagement activities were effective in encouraging proactive input
- ✓ Relevant and valuable local Information and ideas

What did not go well

- ✗ Low level of participation despite it being widely announced
- Possible reasons:
- SEA awareness levels
 - CDP adopted two years ago
 - Schedule and weather constraints (e.g. good weather, time of day...)



Going forward

How can we increase the participation rate in SEA consultations?

Preparation

Consult with **local representatives** to identify potential **barriers** to participation, the best **engagement strategies**, and the most appropriate **communication channels**.

Engagement methods

Consider using **different methods** to **engage with different groups**.

Engagement opportunities

Consider organising **multiple opportunities for engagement** (e.g. run events in the evenings/weekends, or at different times of day; *bring the consultation to the people).

Education

Create **personalised educational material** to inform the public about environmental aspects that can be considered in SEA assessment.



Guidance Note on Public Participation in Strategic Environmental Assessment

Public Participation and Performance Criteria in Strategic Environmental Assessment: The Way Forward for Advancing Practice

Environmental Protection Agency, Project Ref. No. 2021-NE-1061

March 2024

Chapter 2 | The Public Participation Process Content

The Public Participation Process

Effective public participation is based on robust preparation, clearly informing and meaningfully engaging the public, and integrating public feedback into the SEA and associated plan.

Note: Click and go to the section of interest

The ultimate goal of SEA public participation is to collect and integrate public feedback into the SEA and the associated plan.

Guidance Note on Public Participation in Strategic Environmental Assessment p. 11

Appendices | Appendix A | Effective Public Participation Checklist Content

Appendix A | Effective Public Participation Checklist

The following checklist can be used to prepare and conduct SEA public participation processes. It brings together the considerations listed and discussed in previous sections. It should be noted that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to consultation.

Preparing for public participation	
Collaborate to plan the consultation	Key stakeholders (e.g. SEA consultant, planners and other decision-makers) arrange to collaborate in the design and planning of the public consultation event(s).
Set the purpose	The purpose of the public consultation is defined and agreed on by all stakeholders, including constraints that limit decision-making and what decisions can and cannot be influenced by the public.
Include the public	A full cross-section of people, including minority groups, are identified and invited to participate.
Contact local representatives	Key local representatives are identified and contacted to discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none">potential barriers to participation;the best engagement strategies;the most appropriate and useful communication channels.
Plan the public consultation strategy	The public consultation strategy is developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including the objectives and scope of the public participation event; how and when the public will be engaged; what engagement materials will be produced; and what approaches to following up engagement will be taken.
Identify and address barriers	Barriers to participation in the process and any support needs are identified, and measures are put in place to facilitate engagement.
Define times and resources	Key dates are defined and agreed on with relevant stakeholders. Where possible, a budget for consultation is secured, including a budget for any support activities (e.g. walks, workshops) needed to carry out the consultation.
Develop the programme for public participation	An SEA public participation programme is developed, including a detailed description of how the consultation will be carried out (e.g. key dates, engagement activities with dates and times, necessary resources and facilitators).

Guidance Note on Public Participation in Strategic Environmental Assessment p. 24

- ✓ Principles of effective public participation
- ✓ Step-by-step recommendations to prepare, inform, engage and integrate
- ✓ Methods of engagement
- ✓ Checklist
- ✓ Examples

Target users: Plan-makers, Heritage Officers, and SEA consultancies

Target audience: The general public

Informational video



<https://youtu.be/9nWTbZ7wdOE>

Guidance Note on Public Participation in SEA



<https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/assessment/strategic-environmental-assessment/guidance-note-on-public-participation-in-sea.php>

Let's continue the conversation!

Post questions and comments in the IAIA24 app.



#iaia24

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