

## **GOVERNMENT MUST DO MORE TO ENSURE THE ENVIRONMENT IS CONSIDERED BY INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING COMMISSION SAYS IEMA**

**The UK's leading body for environmental professionals believes the Government's proposals for considering the environment in decisions by the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) are insufficient and likely to lead to confusion and costly delays.**

The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA<sup>1</sup>) believes the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA<sup>2</sup>) of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) must learn from over 20 years of professional EIA practice and legal challenge.

The Government's consultation launched today (Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March) on the NSIP pre-application process includes draft EIA Regulations. However, the proposals fail to consider efficiencies that would avoid delays to the decision-making process and improve the quality of the environmental information submitted to the IPC. Given the pressing need for new infrastructure, the complexity of NSIP applications and their potentially controversial nature, the IEMA believes the Government must seize the opportunity to learn lessons from EIA practice and take action now to develop an effective system for environmental protection.

IEMA's Acting Chief Executive Martin Baxter says *"If the EIA process is implemented as set out in the consultation there will be increased risks of legal challenge and the potential to generate substantial confusion and delays."*

*"The IEMA has today launched a Position Statement including recommendations that would avoid or reduce many of these risks and help ensure the environment is properly considered throughout the application process. Although our initial analysis indicates that the Government's proposals might meet the requirements of the EIA Directive, they fail to ensure the quality of environmental information submitted alongside applications. Whilst we welcome the consultation we urge the Government to reconsider its current approach and not ignore the views of EIA professionals."*

The IEMA questions whether the EIA process applied to new airports, incinerators, or nuclear power stations should only be required to meet those standards applied to a housing estate or theatre development. The Government has the opportunity to ensure the EIA process applied to NSIP applications meet a higher standard, allowing the environment to be given due consideration in the IPC's decision-making process.

The IEMA's Position Statement on *The application of EIA to NSIP consents via the IPC* was published today. It promotes an approach to NSIP EIA that would ensure quality environment information is available to the IPC and the public during all stages of the application process. The Position Statement includes recommendations that:

- All NSIP applications are required to undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment.
- The IPC is given resources allowing it to oversee the NSIP EIA process so it avoids undue environmental impacts and produces quality outputs<sup>3</sup> that aid decision-making.

The full IEMA Position Statement can be downloaded from <http://www.iema.net/news?aid=18761>.

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## Notes

1. The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) is a non-for-profit membership organisation established to promote best practice standards in environmental management, auditing and assessment. The Institute offers support to environmental professionals and aims to promote sustainability through improved environmental practice and performance. With over 14,000 individual and corporate members, the IEMA is now a leading international membership-based organisation, dedicated to the promotion of sustainable development and to the professional development of individuals involved in the environmental sectors across many industrial sectors. For more information on the IEMA, its events, services, membership, training and publications, please visit [www.iema.net](http://www.iema.net).

The IEMA and the Ireland & UK Branch of the International Association for Impact Assessment produced joint responses to the Government consultation processes that have led to the Planning Act establishing the Infrastructure Planning Commission. These included the Barker Review of Land Use Planning (2006), the Planning White Paper (2007), and the Planning Bill (2008). Our responses can be found at [www.iaia.org/modx/index.php?id=354](http://www.iaia.org/modx/index.php?id=354). Subsequently the IEMA submitted an options paper to the Communities and Local Government Department (CLG) in December 2008. The paper set out options available to the Government related to the NSIP EIA process, the options paper is available as Appendix I of IEMA's Position Statement on *The application of EIA to NISP consents via the IPC*, or can be downloaded in its original format on-line at:

[http://www.iema.net/download/consultation/IPC\\_EIA/IEMA\\_Indicative%20Options%20paper\\_The%20IPC%20and%20EIA\\_Dec08.pdf](http://www.iema.net/download/consultation/IPC_EIA/IEMA_Indicative%20Options%20paper_The%20IPC%20and%20EIA_Dec08.pdf)

2. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is an assessment required by European law, which identifies and evaluates the significant environmental effects of certain projects, providing decision-makers and the public with the environmental information needed to make development decisions that are sustainable. The legal basis for EIA lies in European Community Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directive 97/11/EC and 2003/35/EC) 'on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment'. Since the requirements of the first EIA Directive were implemented into UK law in 1988, EIA has become the most important environmental management tool for predicting and managing the environmental effects of new development. In 2005, approximately 700 Environmental Statements (the document prepared by developers to accompany their development consent applications) were prepared and submitted to accompany applications for planning permission and other development consents in the UK.

3. The output from an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is a document entitled an Environmental Statement. Environmental Statements are the first part of the EIA process that is legally required to be publicly available. The minimum content of an Environmental Statement is set out in Schedule 4 of the Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations see: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1999/99029306.htm#sch4>

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