### An Environmental Statement ‘Teardown’ – Identifying Opportunities for Leaner Environmental Statements

The ‘teardown’ is a process normally used in product design. At its most simple level, the teardown normally takes a product and breaks it down into its constituent parts, interrogating the design to find good elements, poor elements and elements that provide redesign opportunity.

The challenge of applying the teardown process to an environmental statement (ES) was first laid down at the IEMA Quality Mark Forum in September 2013, the premise being that ESs are often too long and difficult to engage with for the end user. ENVIRON accepted the challenge and set out to test the application of the teardown process as a way for identifying opportunities to create a leaner ES. A small working group was convened to critically appraise three recent examples of ESs, all prepared to meet the IEMA Quality Mark criteria. The review was designed to identify areas of good practice, poor practice and opportunities for redesign.

Here we present the steps followed in undertaking the teardown and some of the key outcomes:

#### Step 1 – Pre-teardown
The first step was to educate the EIA practitioner team and gain buy in to the notion of running a teardown.

A small working group of EIA practitioners was convened to undertake the critical review and three ESs for different types of development, all completed within the previous 12 months, were selected for review.

A date was agreed for a workshop and participants completed pre-workshop review. Participants were asked to categorise sections of text with either:

- keep;
- discard;
- redesign (e.g. rationalise text, replace with graphic, or move to appendix)

Useful tools include a worksheet to document opportunities for redesign, and the IEMA quality mark ES review criteria.

#### Step 2 – Teardown
A workshop forum was used to share ideas from the review on good and bad practice, identify common themes and to develop responses to the opportunities for redesign. The challenge set was to find efficiencies through the redesign of the ES in a way that delivers a better user experience, while still ensuring a robust and transparent ES that complies with regulatory requirements and the IEMA quality mark review criteria.

Based on our teardown, some key questions to consider are:

- does the ES follow a simple structure and form?
- is there unnecessary repetition?
- is the text essential, considering the requirements of EIA regulations and the IEMA Quality Mark review criteria?
- considering the various different end users of the ES, does the ES support the ultimate goal which is to communicate the likely significant effects associated with the development?

#### Step 3 – Post-teardown
It is critical to the success of the teardown that the results are communicated and consulted on. Ultimately the review is likely to be the easy part, with the implementation of any resulting innovations more difficult.

It has to be recognised that it is difficult to see the benefits of redesign without engaging in a detailed teardown review. You may be faced with some practitioners or clients that are more difficult to convince of the benefits. Furthermore, some clients may be nervous to adopt an innovative approach.
It became evident from the teardown review that there are a range of improvements that can be made to improve the end user experience, and to reverse the trend of longer ESs. These included:

- a rationalisation of chapters and text on EIA process, alternatives, design and description of development from 5 chapters to 3, cutting out repetition and superfluous text and approximately 15% of the text overall;
- making better use of graphics to reduce word count and communicate complex ideas;
- using effective scoping throughout the EIA process to limit the scope of the final ES to genuine likely significant effects;
- bringing more focus to technical chapters by making better use of appendices (but not at the expense of the goal to make the ES leaner overall);
- removing unnecessary text on planning policy, which is better communicated through a separate planning statement and is often of little relevance to the EIA;

Our experience suggests that the teardown process is a valuable tool for use in re-evaluating the presentation of an ES. Overall by embracing the concept we can:

- demonstrate to clients that as a practice we are seeking innovations to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the EIA process, and ultimately improve the user experience of the ES product by seeking to make it easier to engage with;
- reduce the time and cost in preparing and reviewing the ES;
- meet our Quality Mark commitments.

1 The ultimate aim is often to try and improve the sustainability of a product by considering how to ‘design for disassembly’, a concept which has gathered momentum in Europe since the burden of disposing of waste from electrical and electronic equipment was placed on manufacturers through the 2004 Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive.

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