

SCOTTISH TRANSPORT APPRAISAL GUIDANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is commended to Local Authorities and Consultants for guidance on the appraisal of newly conceived transport projects for which they have responsibility. It is a requirement of the Scottish Executive that all projects for which it provides support or approval shall be appraised in accordance with this guidance.

It is not intended that the guidance contained within this document will be used to appraise any project that had already reached an advanced stage of planning when the draft consultation guidance was issued in July 2001. Therefore, it should not be used to appraise any projects which were before Scottish Ministers for determination at that date.

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Ministerial Foreword

Every modern country needs safe, reliable, high quality transport to enable it to thrive.

In Scotland, our geography, our location and the challenges of connecting our highland, island and lowland communities, make transport especially important.

The Scottish Executive is investing more in transport than ever before. Spending is set to rise to over £1billion per year. Over 70% of that funding will be invested in public transport, to improve and expand our bus, rail and ferry links.

This Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance will play a crucial role in making certain that we use these resources wisely and effectively. Better roads and railways can create significant economic and social benefits. Planned sensitively, they can also bring real environmental benefits.

The main users of this document will be transport planners and decision makers. The main beneficiaries should be passengers right across Scotland.



Nicol Stephen
Minister for Transport

The Purpose of this Document

- 1 This Executive Summary has been written to provide a succinct and accessible introduction to the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance for all readers.
- 2 In addition, it is designed to provide an overview of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance for those who, whilst not needing to use the Guidance directly in their work, will wish to understand submissions based on its use. To that end, as well as providing a synopsis of the document's structure, this summary also highlights some of the aspects of the Guidance that may be less familiar.

What is Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance?

- 3 This Guidance provides a comprehensive source of advice on all aspects of the planning process from the earliest stages of planning, through appraisal and implementation to ex-post evaluation. It should be used by all organisations developing transport projects or policies for all types and sizes of transport planning exercises from a multi-modal corridor study to, for example, the development of a rural bus scheme. Reference is made as appropriate to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the requirements of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (Scottish Statutory Instrument 204 No.258)..
- 4 The Guidance arises directly from the July 1998 White Paper, *Travel Choices for Scotland*, which established the new policy framework for transport in Scotland. The White Paper heralded important developments in policy with a clear focus on the three key aims:
 - a strong economy;
 - a clean environment; and
 - an inclusive society.
- 5 These were supported by the definition of five appraisal objectives (environment, safety, economy, integration and accessibility) which are to be used to gauge the potential value of proposals to improve transport at a local or national level.
- 6 The Strategic Roads Review used the five objectives as part of the *New Appraisal Methodology*. In developing this Guidance, the task has been to build on the good work in the Roads Review by widening the methodology to cover all modes, and to allow a greater number of types of project and levels of detail to be considered within a single framework. This development of the *New Appraisal Methodology* is introduced in Chapter 5 of the Guidance with detailed advice on its application presented in the subsequent seven chapters of the Guidance. The accessibility objective has been broadened to include specific reference to social inclusion.

When and How to Use the Guidance

- 7 The Guidance is intended for use by planners and decision-makers in the appraisal of all transport policies and projects throughout Scotland. This will include projects

covering all modes of transport, ranging from local pedestrian and cyclist improvements through bus and rail projects to road schemes.

- 8 It is important to view this Guidance as a reference source for what needs to be done to appraise and justify all transport projects and policies. Clearly the amount of effort required for the appraisal must be balanced against the magnitude of the project. Guidance on this issue is concentrated in the various annexes, while the main body of the document sets out the full details required for a comprehensive appraisal.

The Characteristics of the Guidance

- 9 The Guidance has a number of characteristics which distinguish it from much earlier planning guidance; these are summarised below.

Philosophy

- 10 Whilst the Guidance sets out *required practice* it is written on the basis of a core belief that good planning and appraisal result in good transport. It is intended that planners will find the document useful and will find its recommendations intuitively sound thereby making it the first reference point when commencing an appraisal of potential transport interventions. It is also intended that the application of the guidance contained in it will result in the development and implementation of proposals to the satisfaction of all stakeholders, most importantly the public.

- 11 There are certain recurring themes in the Guidance:

- **Objective-led** – all activities and decisions should arise from the established aims of the planning organisation with respect to transport and associated policy areas;
- **Open-minded** – the Guidance suggests working up transport proposals on the basis of defined objectives supported by a thorough understanding of the problems and opportunities in the area, rather than seeking to fit an existing proposal retrospectively to planning objectives
- **Pragmatic** – work done should reflect the relative need for accuracy, the scale and expected impacts of proposals and their costs;
- **Auditable** – it must be possible to see clearly how planners have moved from objectives to their final conclusion;
- **Inclusive** – effective involvement of stakeholders is not presented as a chore but as a crucial input to arriving at a final proposal which meets expectations and which can be delivered.

Practicalities

- 12 The Guidance is not intended as a blueprint. Instead it defines in detail the principles of planning and appraisal, citing sources throughout of more specific information on applying those principles. Hence a reader should develop a clear understanding of what they should aim to achieve but is afforded a degree of flexibility in how to go about it.

- 13 This latitude should allow for the wide range of planning exercises that the Guidance is designed to cover. For example, a small change to railway service patterns is unlikely to have a dramatic impact on the surrounding economy and it is therefore not expected that planners will carry out exhaustive tests in this area. A major road scheme in a congested city, on the other hand, may well do, so the Guidance provides the necessary tools to investigate this where appropriate. Indeed, no two planning exercises will be conducted identically and it is therefore necessary to allow planners to use their knowledge, experience and judgement as to the detail with which measurement is carried out, provided a clear justification for all such conclusions and recommendations is provided.

Novel Aspects of Appraisal

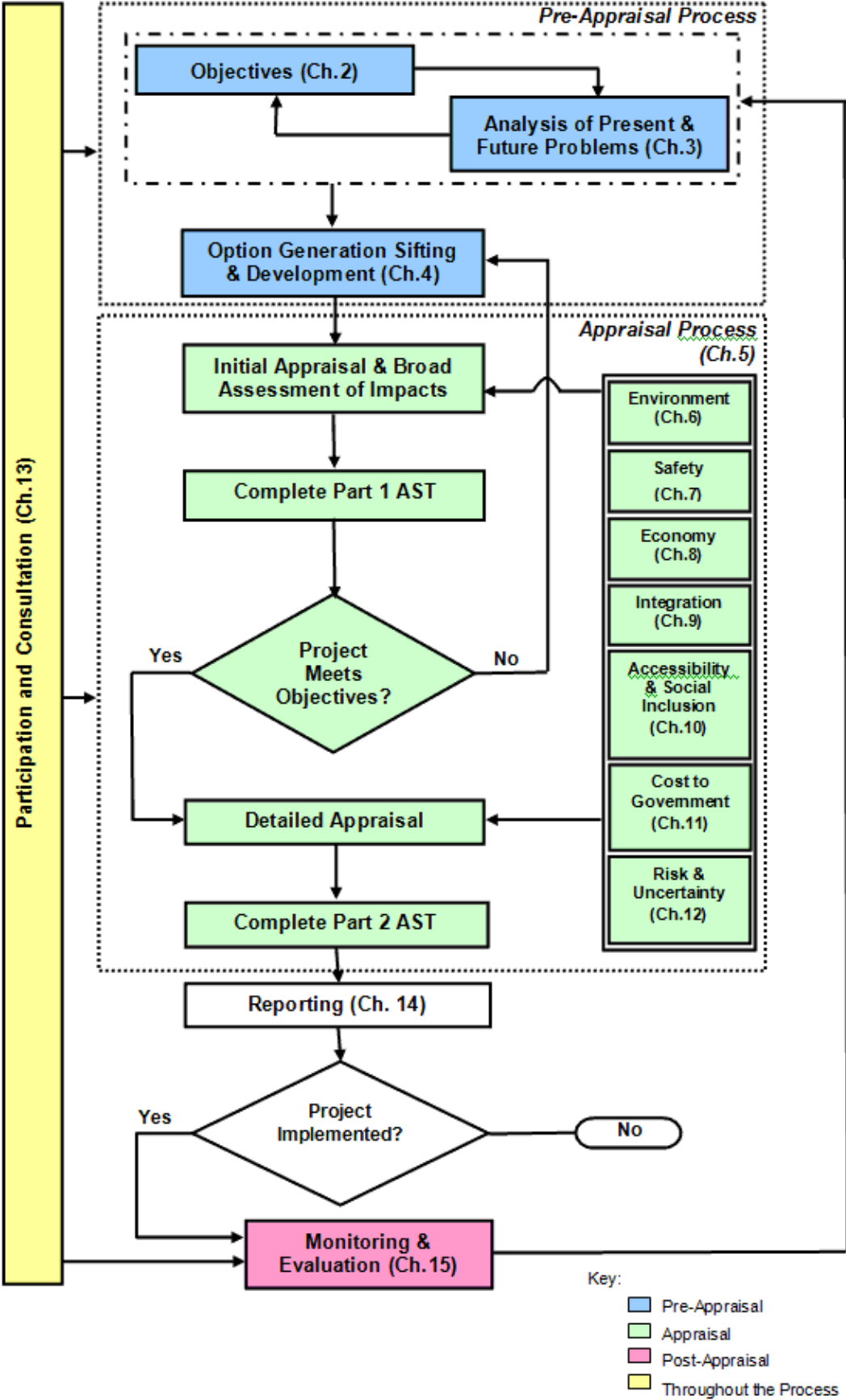
- 14 The most striking aspect of the appraisal approach is that there are two parts. A simple and quick Part 1 appraisal is recommended in advance of a more comprehensive assessment of impacts to prevent valuable resources being pointlessly devoted to a proposal which does not meet its objectives. This also allows for refinement of a proposal early on if there are notable shortfalls in its performance which can be overcome. Once all parties are satisfied with those proposals which appear promising, a more detailed Part 2 appraisal is carried out into the extent of the likely impacts of the proposals.
- 15 Rather than making the distribution of impacts a secondary consideration in the appraisal, the effects of a proposal on key groups within the population is brought out throughout the appraisal and should be presented alongside the aggregate figures. Thus, if a planning organisation has prioritised the needs of elderly people within its planning objectives, the summary of the full appraisal will set out how they fare under the proposal in question, allowing direct comparison with the generality of impacts.
- 16 The interpretation of the Government's five objectives departs in a number of key ways from that used in the earlier version of the New Appraisal Methodology. Under the economy objective, the concept of Economic Activity and Location Impacts (EALIs) is introduced to describe the impacts on employment and income which can result from certain types of transport scheme. These impacts arise primarily from changes in accessibility, but decision makers are frequently interested in whether a transport project will in fact have impacts on aspects of economy and especially on employment. Much of the time, only very limited investigation is required to satisfy the appraisal requirements under this topic. Where projects are thought likely to bring major impacts or where it is argued that they will support regeneration of deprived areas, more searching analysis is required.
- 17 Under the accessibility and social inclusion objective, the concept of comparative accessibility is introduced to make explicit the effects of the proposal against the background of the wider transport picture in an area. Hence, where two projects may appear to bring similar costs and benefits, analysis of the underlying levels of transport provision or actual mobility may demonstrate that one project would have a dramatic effect on a community, in which those without a car are isolated, as

compared to the other, which would bring a marginal increase to the accessibility and social inclusion of an already well-connected community.

The Guidance

- 18 A flowchart showing the expected sequence of events in a planning exercise conducted according to the Guidance is shown in Figure 1. Chapter numbers of the Guidance are given against tasks to indicate the location of the relevant text.
- 19 It is helpful to see the Guidance as having four sections:
- Chapters 2, 3 and 4 describe the pre-appraisal processes by which candidate proposals will be developed;
 - Chapters 5 to 12 describe in outline and then in more detail the appraisal process itself;
 - Chapter 14 outlines the development of a STAG report which will demonstrate to the decision maker how the appraisal has been undertaken in accordance with the STAG philosophy;
 - Chapter 15 describes the important aspect of monitoring and evaluation, which should be given detailed consideration prior to implementation of a project and undertaken once a project has begun.
- 20 In addition, the subject of participation and consultation is dealt with in Chapter 13, the intention being that its recommendations should be applied throughout the planning process.
- 21 Finally Chapter 16 provides a set of references to documents which may be useful in carrying out a planning appraisal. In addition a number of Appendices are also included which provide a review of national data sources, a summary of the major tools available for modelling and software; environmental worksheets and useful contacts; and guidance on specific applications for a range of different planning exercises.

Figure 1: Planning and Appraisal Process



Pre-Appraisal Process

Objectives

- 22 Much emphasis is placed in the Guidance on the careful and inclusive development of *planning objectives*¹ on the basis of a sound and unbiased approach to understanding existing and potential conditions in transport and related fields. Three important aspects when setting these objectives must be considered in particular:
- Objectives should be established without any prejudice to a preconceived solution;
 - Established objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timed) to ensure accountability and transparency and to promote a focus on the job to be done;
 - Objectives should relate to desired outcomes, rather than the processes or outputs which might proceed them – for example, if what is desired is a reduction in congestion, the objective should focus on the best means of achieving this rather than the provision of public transport or additional road space as a means to promote it.
- 23 The identification of *problems* should be accompanied by a proper analysis of the *opportunities* available and supported by an understanding of the constraints and uncertainties which are likely to affect the chances of any transport proposal bearing fruit.
- 24 The view that there are problems with the transport system is the root of any transport proposal. In the Guidance, a *problem* is something that results in a shortfall in meeting objectives. The definition of objectives and the identification of problems are naturally iterative exercises, one informed by the other.
- 25 In addition to measurable problems (such as air pollution), planners should not ignore the important factor of perceived problems (for example in terms of personal security) which, though hard to measure, can have a significant effect on travel behaviour. Connected with this is the need to be aware of any assumptions implicit in models used to understand conditions on the transport network. There is also a requirement to identify the root causes of problems rather than their immediate manifestations – for example is congestion, be it on the road or on public transport, caused by too much demand or too little provision?

¹ “Planning objectives” are those which relate specifically to the planning exercise being carried out and should be developed specially for the exercise. The term “external objectives” describes those which have a bearing on the planning exercise (including Government’s five objectives). Advice is given in Chapter 2 on developing and managing these sets of objectives in the planning process.

Option Development

- 26 Developing proposals is not a linear exercise that leads from the formulation of objectives, through the gathering of data to the selection of options. Instead, objectives are likely to be informed by the gathering of data on problems and opportunities and the types of options worked up may well lead to further data collection. The process should be seen as iterative but with a very strong emphasis on objectives. It is of utmost importance that any proposal should be seen to lead on from objectives and that these objectives are demonstrably independent from any “pet schemes” which may be preferred by some stakeholders.
- 27 *The generation of options* either for appraisal or subsequent refinement should be based on the widest possible set of potential proposals and policies and should lead visibly on from the planning objectives set. For example, if one objective is the reduction of road accident casualties, it will be necessary to consider the scale of the problem before considering the ways in which this could be achieved which may include reducing vehicle speeds, influencing behaviour, segregating users, altering infrastructure and building new infrastructure. An important part of the pre-appraisal process is to demonstrate that the options being appraised are relevant and have been arrived at after considering all realistic alternatives.
- 28 To facilitate appraisal, it is necessary to develop a “do-minimum” scenario which accurately reflects the changes which are committed to occur irrespective of the conclusions of the planning exercise.
- 29 Where the full set of potential proposals is unmanageably large, a transparent mechanism must be used to narrow the choice down to a selection that can be more thoroughly analysed. This will require a structured and transparent process that is documented and auditable. When assessing options, planners may find it helpful to develop a “reference case”, which includes other non-controversial but uncommitted schemes, that can be used as a baseline for option assessment. The adoption of a reference case, however, does not obviate the need for the recommended measures to be appraised against the do-minimum.

The Appraisal Process

- 30 The aim of the option development process is to develop a reasonable number of broadly defined alternative proposals that can be subjected to analysis and appraisal. The process of appraisal can be seen to have three key purposes:
- It will demonstrate whether a proposal is socially, environmentally and economically deliverable and is technically and financially feasible and acceptable to stakeholders;
 - It will reveal to planners the extent to which a proposal fulfils the planning objectives set;
 - It will demonstrate to decision makers the full set of likely impacts of the proposal against the Government’s five objectives of *environment, safety, economy, integration* and *accessibility*. It should also demonstrate the distribution of these impacts across social and spatial groups.

31 The two-part appraisal process is intended to minimise wasted effort by testing early on whether a proposal meets certain key objectives before detailed analysis of its impacts is commenced. The rule of thumb is that a proposal which fails to meet the Part 1 appraisal test will either be rejected at this point, with reasons documented, or refined to form a revised proposal capable of meeting the Part 1 Appraisal test. Planners should also be aware that when they are seeking funding from the Scottish Executive, the Scottish Executive’s five objectives are central to the appraisal. This arises as the Scottish Executive has a national role and must balance the competing needs of different areas and communities and assess the extent to which transport proposals represent value for money in allocating available funds.

32 **The Part 1 appraisal** concentrates on the following areas:

- The proposal’s likely impact against the planning objectives (as opposed to Government’s five objectives);
- An initial check of the proposal’s fit with relevant established transport, land-use planning and other policies;
- An investigation of the proposal’s feasibility, affordability and likely public acceptability (its “implementability”).

33 In addition, an initial view of the impacts of the proposal against the Government’s five objectives set out in the Part 2 appraisal is required.

34 All proposals which “pass” the Part 1 appraisal should then be subjected to the more detailed scrutiny required in the Part 2 appraisal. Planners should not attempt to rank proposals at this stage with the intention of only proceeding with a single or very limited number of proposals for the full Part 2 appraisal. Nevertheless, as the Part 2 Appraisal process proceeds it is possible that certain aspects of the appraisal will identify ‘showstoppers’ which justify ceasing further consideration of a particular option. It is important that such ‘showstoppers’ are well documented to provide an audit trail.

35 **The Part 2 appraisal** centres on the five objectives arising from the transport White Paper: *environment, safety, economy, integration* and *accessibility*. In this guidance accessibility has been extended to make particular reference to social inclusion issues. There is also a requirement to revisit the elements of the Part 1 appraisal at the point of submitting Part 2 to ensure that the proposal still meets the objectives enshrined in Part 1.

36 The Part 2 appraisal goes on to deal with the Government’s five objectives in detail.

Environment

37 The environmental aspects of a proposal are to be appraised in terms of:

- Noise and vibration;
- Air quality – (CO₂, PM₁₀, NO₂);
- Water quality, drainage and flood defence;

- Geology;
- Biodiversity;
- Visual amenity;
- Agriculture and soils;
- Cultural heritage; and
- Landscape.

38 It is expected that the appraisal process will follow the steps below:

- Scoping;
- Collection of baseline information;
- Assessment of impacts followed by appraisal of their magnitude and significance.

39 When considering the environmental consequences of a particular proposal, the impact of mitigation measures which will form an integral part of the proposal should also be considered.

Safety

40 The safety objective is defined as having two parts:

- Accidents; and
- Security.

41 The appraisal of accidents builds on established practice, but analysis of severity is required as is the representation of impacts in terms of annual rates so as to aid understanding. Disaggregation of accident impacts by group also shows whether specific social or geographic sectors of the population either benefit or suffer disproportionately.

42 Security is likely to be appraised in qualitative terms and must take into account the perceived safety of all transport users as well as their vehicles, where appropriate. The appraisal should consider the impact on particularly vulnerable segments of the community such as children, the elderly or women travelling alone.

Economy

43 Appraisal of economic impacts of a proposal is divided into two sections:

- Transport Economic Efficiency (TEE); and
- Economic Activity and Location Impacts (EALIs).

44 The tasks under the TEE heading resemble those carried out in established cost-benefit analysis with the important proviso that the distribution of impacts is made

explicit. There is an additional requirement to appraise the impacts of a proposal on *reliability* of the transport system as experienced by its users.

- 45 The aim in the Economic Activity and Location Impact (EALI) analysis is to describe the impacts of the transport project on the economy, using the “measuring rods” of income and employment which are used in the formulation and evaluation of macro, regional and micro economic policy. This reflects both an interest by decision makers in how and under what circumstances transport projects might have impacts on economic performance, and findings from economic research that the standard TEE approach may, in certain circumstances, fail to capture all of the impacts in the appraisal of a proposal. Bold claims are often made for the wider economic benefits of a proposal, and these are typically hard to measure. A pragmatic approach is therefore defined for first understanding how a proposal is likely to deliver EALIs and second attempting to measure these, looking at each market sector in turn.
- 46 The measures used for quantification are jobs created or effects on GDP, in each case assessed at the Scotland level but also disaggregated to show the gainers and losers from the project. This will include any displacement effects, while also making explicit the expected effects upon particular geographic areas and social groups of interest from a policy perspective. This approach is intended *inter alia* to identify potential social inclusion effects.

Integration

- 47 Integration has three elements in this Guidance:
- Transport integration;
 - Transport land-use integration;
 - Policy integration.
- 48 The concept of seamlessness is introduced for the appraisal of transport integration. A proposal which will deliver genuinely integrated public transport (in terms of providing choice, service co-ordination, quality of interchange, information provision and ticketing) merits the title “seamless public transport network” whilst one which delivers integration in the area of ticketing alone is called “seamless ticketing”.
- 49 Transport land-use integration requires basic checks of established land-use policy relevant to a proposal during the Part 1 appraisal. For the Part 2 appraisal a more detailed exercise equivalent to a *transport impact assessment* can be required (as carried out when a significant land-use development is proposed) for proposals of a sufficient scale.
- 50 Policy integration requires a series of simple tests of fit between the proposal and wider policy aims in Scotland, e.g. in areas of disability, health and rural affairs.

Accessibility and Social Inclusion

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- 51 Two items are tested under this objective:
- Community accessibility; and
 - Comparative accessibility.
- 52 Community accessibility includes two elements: public transport network coverage and access to local services.
- 53 Public transport network coverage appraisal considers the impacts that transport proposals have for each group in society for a range of trip purposes relevant to local planning objectives. Access to local services measures opportunities to walk or cycle to services and facilities and includes problems of severance from planned changes.
- 54 Comparative accessibility considers the distribution of accessibility impacts by people group and by location.
- 55 For people groups particular attention is paid to the needs of socially excluded groups with age, gender, mobility impairment, income group and car ownership often being relevant factors. The distribution of impacts by location considers locations relevant to local planning objectives, such as: social inclusion partnership areas, regeneration areas, and rural areas, comparing the impacts on these locations with other areas.

Cost to Government

- 56 It is essential that the likely net cost of a proposal from the public sector's point of view is identified within the appraisal to enable a comparison with the total benefits of the project in order to assess the overall value for money of the proposal. In STAG the Cost to Government has been separated out from the TEE appraisal.
- 57 Cost to Government refers to all costs incurred by the public sector as a whole, net of any revenues. The total net cost consists of investment costs, operating and maintenance costs, grant/subsidy payments, revenues, and taxation impacts.

Risk and Uncertainty

- 58 All risks and uncertainties associated with a proposal need to be fully taken into account within the appraisal process. Only after this has been done will planners be able to obtain robust estimates of the costs and benefits of each option.
- 59 Evidence from past transport projects illustrates that there is a systematic tendency for project appraisers to be overly optimistic when estimating costs and benefits. To redress this tendency, planners are required to make explicit adjustments to reduce the level of optimism bias.
- 60 In general even with a well developed project there will remain some risks which cannot be foreseen and so it is expected that a contingency figure should be added in order to take account of possible unanticipated risks.

- 61 No matter how well risks are identified and analysed, the future is inherently uncertain. Therefore a fundamental part of the appraisal process is to carry out sensitivity analysis to test the vulnerability of options to future uncertainties. Through analysing the range of values that key variables may take, planners can examine how this may alter the preferred option.

Reporting

- 62 All STAG appraisal submissions to the Scottish Executive should be incorporated in a STAG report which should provide a concise summary of the work undertaken to demonstrate that the principles of planning and appraisal described in the Guidance have been followed. This chapter provides guidance on the content and structure of a STAG report.

Participation and Consultation

- 63 As stated at paragraph 20, the recommendations of Chapter 13 are intended to be applied throughout the planning process, from the earliest stages through to post-project evaluation. The most important point to note is that participation and consultation should be central to any planning exercise undertaken according to this guidance, for the simple reason that the results will be better for it.

- 64 The Guidance offers a number of possible techniques for involving stakeholders effectively and provides some rules of thumb to maximise the value of work done and to avoid pitfalls. In general:

- Stakeholders should be aware of the involvement process and their role in it;
- Feedback should be provided so that contributors know how their views have been taken into account;
- Maximum effort should be made towards targeting and involving “hard to reach” sections of the community so as to ensure a balanced response.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- 65 These two processes between them serve the following purposes:

- They allow projects to be fine-tuned to achieve what was hoped for them;
- They allow the communication to all stakeholders of feedback on the effects of initiatives which they had a part in selecting;
- They provide a vital input to the revision and development of objectives, understanding of problems and opportunities and option selection for future planning exercises.

- 66 *Monitoring* is a continuing or on-going process, involving information gathering and interpretation, to ensure that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), developed to measure progress towards a set of agreed targets, are being met. The term *evaluation* is used to describe a specific one-off activity designed to investigate

performance and its causes in depth. Evaluation also uses performance indicators and measures.

67 The nature of the KPIs and targets is determined by the overall objectives of the organisation implementing the project and the degree to which they believe change can be effected. Targets should be clearly linked to objectives, KPIs and proposals; relate to other regional and national policies; and be achievable yet challenging.

68 Two forms of *evaluation* are described:

- *Process evaluation* is carried out early in the life of a project, before its full effects are known and concentrating on whether input (activity) and output objectives are being/have been met;
- *Outcome evaluation* is carried out once sufficient time has elapsed for the project to have delivered its principal outcomes, and assesses whether the outcome objectives have been achieved, and whether this has been done effectively and efficiently.

69 Outcome evaluation depends on there being clear outcome objectives for the project, together with a reliable picture of what would have happened without the project (do-minimum).

The Guidance – Appendices

70 There are four appendices to the document:

- Appendix A presents a review of major *national data sources* available to planners to support proposal development and appraisal – the nature of the data and its quality are discussed;
- Appendix B contains a summary of the major tools available for *modelling and assessment software* to support economic, environmental and accessibility appraisal of proposals;
- Appendix C contains *environmental worksheets and useful contacts* with which planners may wish to consult when addressing environmental aspects of the appraisal;
- Appendix D contains guidance on *specific applications of STAG* which sets out how the Guidance should be applied in a range of different planning exercises.

The Future of STAG

71 Transport planning and appraisal techniques will continue to develop over time. The expectation is that STAG will be updated periodically to reflect new legislation and as appraisal techniques improve in their measurement of the range of impacts. Many ongoing pieces of work are referred to on the basis that their outputs will influence planning and appraisal techniques in general. Planners should, however, take the initiative in applying new approaches which improve on standard practice as and when they become available.

72 It is a requirement of the Scottish Executive that all projects for which it provides support or approval shall be appraised in accordance with this guidance. It is

commended to Local Authorities and Consultants that this guidance be used for the appraisal of transport projects, both large and small scale, for which they have responsibility. During such use it is anticipated that Local Authorities and Consultants may identify potential improvements or additional advice which would enhance the guidance and the Scottish Executive will always welcome constructive feedback for incorporation into future updates.

- 73 STAG is available in both paper and digital (unregistered) format and updates will be issued to registered copyholders as and when these are produced. Users of STAG can register their interest in the guidance for free by joining the STAG User Group via the STAG website: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stag>. Updates to the guidance and supplementary advice are posted on the website and mailed to the User Group as and when these become available.

Next Steps

- 74 Comments on this Guidance and the transport appraisal process itself should be sent to:

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