

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is STAG?

- 1.1.1 Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) is a document to aid transport planners and decision-makers in the development of transport policies, plans, programmes and projects. The structure and breadth of the Guidance make it suitable for application across a wide spectrum of transport planning areas.
- 1.1.2 STAG is not a substitute for any assessment required for administrative, financial, technical or statutory reasons. This includes Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). However, as STAG takes account of existing appraisal techniques and processes, users will find the guidance complementary to existing assessment requirements with many of the outputs from the appraisal process being complementary to those required for statutory reasons.
- 1.1.3 STAG is also complementary to, and not mutually exclusive from, other guidance available to transport planners. To be clear about which guidance applies, it is important to consider what is being appraised. For the appraisal of transport projects, policies, studies or schemes, STAG is to be regarded as the key reference document.
- 1.1.4 STAG is written in the belief that good planning and appraisal result in good transport policy and investment. It is intended that planners will find the document useful and its recommendations intuitively sound. It is also intended that the application of STAG will result in the development and implementation of proposals to the satisfaction of all stakeholders, most importantly the public. It is therefore hoped that STAG will be used by all transport practitioners when undertaking a transport planning exercise in Scotland.

1.2 Where Should STAG be Used?

- 1.2.1 It is a requirement that all transport proposals for which Scottish Executive support or approval is required, shall be appraised in accordance with this guidance.
- 1.2.2 For development projects impacting on the transport network, the *Guide to Transport Assessment* is recommended to developers and their transport advisers. This gives specific guidance on the application of the STAG philosophy in the appraisal of transport interventions that may be necessary to support major developments. The Scottish Executive requires TAs submitted for developments affecting the motorway and trunk road network to have been prepared in accordance with the *Guide to Transport Assessment*.
- 1.2.3 For small road based schemes where a multi-modal solution is evidently and demonstrably not appropriate, then a STAG Appraisal by way of a more simplified approach may be considered as described in Appendix D section 7. Where such an approach is being considered this should be discussed and agreed with the Scottish Executive.

- 1.2.4 A STAG appraisal is not required for transport network maintenance schemes which replace the layout of existing infrastructure broadly like for like and do not directly affect the future operation of the transport network.
- 1.2.5 Guidance on the application of STAG to specific modes of transport can be found in Appendix D.
- 1.2.6 Transport plans and programmes may require SEA as well as STAG. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations) applies to plans and programmes, and modifications to them, whose formal preparation begins after 21 July 2004. It also applies to plans and programmes whose formal preparation began before that date, if they have not been adopted (or submitted to a legislative procedure leading to adoption) by 21 July 2006. With regards to transport it applies to those plans and programmes that either set a framework for future development consent for projects or have been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive).
- 1.2.7 Transport projects requiring Scottish Executive support or approval may require EIA as well as STAG, within the terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999.
- 1.2.8 Chapter 6 provides further explanation of the relationship between STAG, SEA and EIA.

1.3 The Background to STAG

- 1.3.1 The July 1998 transport White Paper, *Travel Choices for Scotland*, established a new policy framework for transport in Scotland. It heralded important developments in policy with a clear focus on three key aims:
- a strong economy;
 - a clean environment; and
 - an inclusive society.
- 1.3.2 These aims were supported by five appraisal objectives (environment, safety, economy, integration and accessibility) which were to be used to gauge the potential value of proposals to improve transport at a local or national level.
- 1.3.3 The *New Appraisal Methodology* developed through public consultation for the Strategic Roads Review of 1999 used the five objectives. In developing STAG, the task has been to build on this work 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.

1.3.4 Version 1.0 of STAG (September 2003) follows its use as a draft consultation document since its issue in July 2001. The draft guidance was used successfully in a wide variety of contexts, including the Central Scotland Transport Corridor Studies, the City of Edinburgh's New Transport Initiative, the Modern Transport System in Aberdeen and the 2002 round of bids for the Public Transport Fund.

1.4 The Philosophy of STAG

1.4.1 There are certain recurring themes in this 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 possible projects or policies 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 got from objectives to their final conclusion; and
- **Inclusive** – effective involvement of stakeholders is not presented as a chore but as a crucial required input to arriving at a final proposal which meets expectations and which can be delivered.

1.5 Using STAG: The Structure of the Document

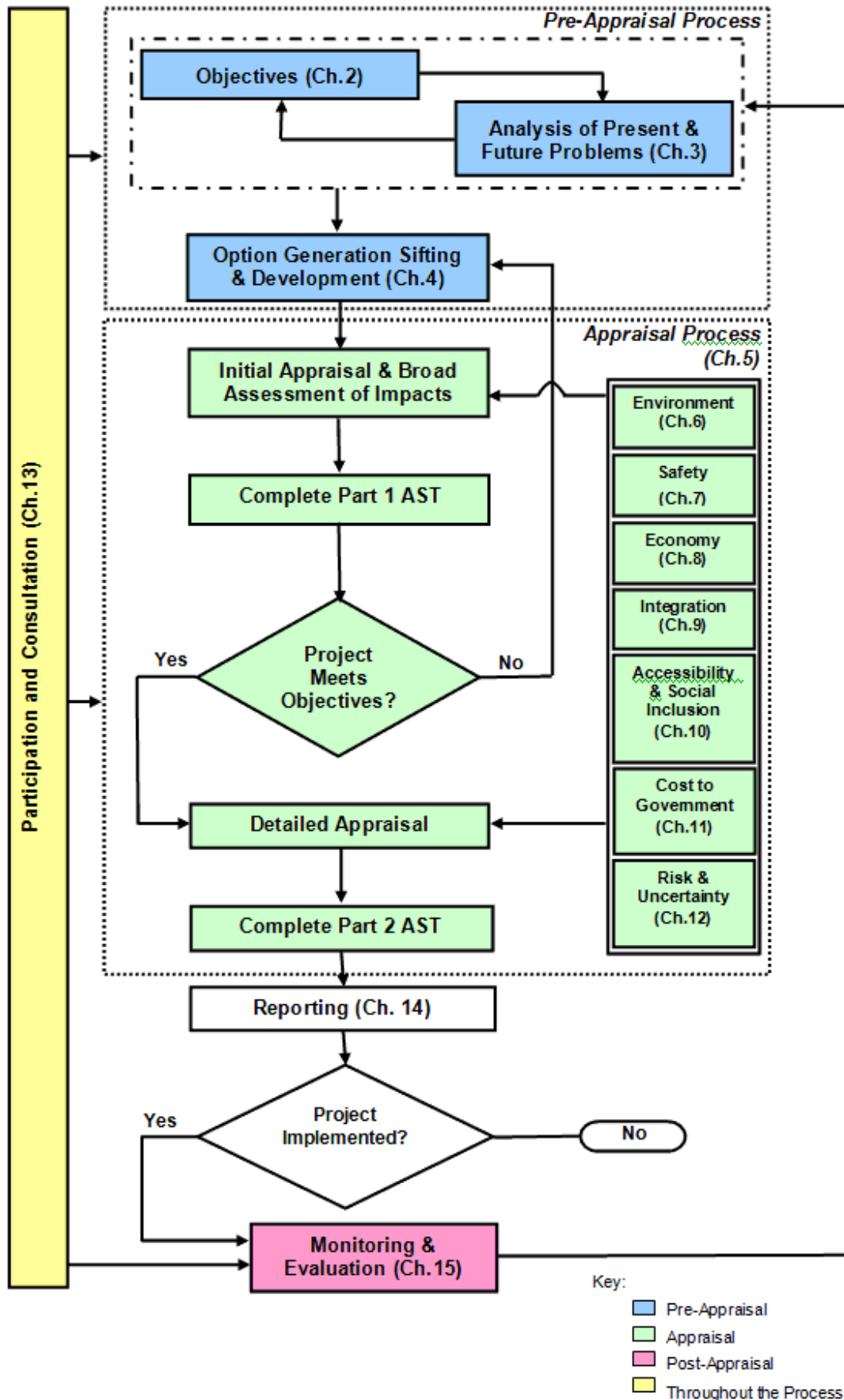
1.5.1 Rather than attempting to provide a planning blueprint, STAG is designed to be sufficiently adaptable to respond to the quite different requirements of its wide-ranging applications and users. It defines in detail the principles of planning and appraisal, citing sources throughout of more specific information on applying those principles. Hence, a reader should develop a clear understanding of what they should aim to achieve but is given a degree of flexibility in how to go about it.

1.5.2 Each chapter in the main body of the document begins with a summary of its contents, printed on the chapter interleaf. This will help planners to establish whether it is necessary to read the chapter in full.

1.5.3 The document is structured to reflect the tasks involved in carrying out a planning exercise from scratch - the exception to this rule is Chapter 13, *Participation and Consultation*, the contents of which apply to every other aspect of planning exercises. And, clearly, it will be necessary to look ahead to subsequent tasks in going through the early stages. It may therefore be helpful to start by reading all the Chapter summaries in turn before more detailed reading. The structure of the document and the inter-relationship between chapters is shown in Figure 1.1.

- 1.5.4 In Chapters 2, 3 and 4 the essential components of the groundwork of any transport planning exercise are described: *setting objectives, analysis of existing and potential problems* and *option generation, sifting and development*. It is fundamental to the success the STAG process that these tasks are undertaken without the prejudice of a pre-conceived solution in mind.
- 1.5.5 An overview of the *appraisal process* is provided in Chapter 5, which also introduces the Appraisal Summary Tables (ASTs) on which a summary of the principal results of appraisal are to be recorded. The chapter explains the two-part approach to be applied. In the first, the focus is on the arguments for and the implementability of a proposal. The second part looks in detail at a proposal's impacts under the five Government objectives. Each of the appraisal objectives is introduced in turn and its interpretation in STAG discussed.
- 1.5.6 In Chapters 6 to 10 inclusive, detailed guidance is provided on appraisal against each of the five objectives:
- Environment;
 - Safety;
 - Economy;
 - Integration; and
 - Accessibility and Social Inclusion.

Figure 1.1: Planning and Appraisal Process



- 1.5.7 It is important that the net cost of a proposal from the public sector's point of view is assessed and Chapter 11 provides guidance on calculating the *Cost to Government*. This cost can then be compared with the total benefits of the proposal in terms of the environment, safety, economy, integration, and accessibility and social inclusion in order to assess overall value for money.
- 1.5.8 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 and guidance on this is contained in Chapter 12.
- 1.5.9 Guidance and examples of good practice for involving stakeholders effectively through participation and consultation during the planning process are provided in Chapter 13.
- 1.5.10 Chapter 14 provides guidance on reporting the appraisal process. Whilst the precise content and detail contained in any submission would be dependent upon the complexity of the planning exercise and type of study being undertaken guidelines are provided on the details the Executive would expect to see included with any submission to demonstrate that the principles of STAG have been followed.
- 1.5.11 In Chapter 15, the work necessary during and after implementation is described: *monitoring* the project as it unfolds and *evaluating* it at a subsequent point to see how effective it has been in achieving the established objectives. Chapter 16 provides a set of *references* to documents which may be useful in carrying out a planning appraisal.
- 1.5.12 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.
- 1.5.13 There is also an accompanying *Executive Summary* which presents a synopsis of STAG.

1.6 The Future of STAG

- 1.6.1 Transport planning techniques and appraisal methodologies are continuously being developed. The expectation is that STAG will be updated from time to time to reflect new legislation and other developments in appraisal techniques. 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.
- 1.6.2 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.
- 1.6.3 Comments and suggestions for improvements in STAG should be sent to:

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