



# STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS REVIEW

PROTECTING OUR CLIMATE  
AND IMPROVING LIVES



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Progress Report

February 2021

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## STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS REVIEW 2

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

In early 2019, Transport Scotland commenced the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) to help inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years. STPR2 will help to deliver the vision, priorities and outcomes for transport set out in the National Transport Strategy (NTS2)<sup>1</sup> and will align with other national plans such as the National Planning Framework (NPF4) and the Climate Change Plan.

STPR2 involves conducting an evidence-based review of the performance of Scotland's strategic transport network across all transport modes including active travel, bus, ferry, rail and the trunk road network. The outcomes from STPR2 will:

- Enhance accessibility across Scotland for residents, visitors and businesses;
- Create better connectivity with sustainable, smart and cleaner transport options; and
- Highlight the vital contribution that transport investment can play in enabling and sustaining Scotland's economic growth.

The review will help inform Scottish Ministers on a programme of potential transport investment opportunities for the period 2022 to 2042.

STPR2 is being progressed at both a national and regional level in order to appraise options in the context of place. A total of eleven regions have been established for STPR2. Full details of the regional structure are set out in the National Case for Change Report.<sup>2</sup>

STPR2 specifically focusses on Scotland's key strategic transport assets. In this context, a strategic transport project is defined as:

- Any transport project that plays a significant part in supporting the NTS2 priorities and related outcomes;
- Projects or groups of projects related to transport networks owned, operated and funded directly by Transport Scotland;
- Passenger and freight access to ports and airports of national significance; and
- The inter-urban bus and active travel networks and principal corridors within urban areas.

## 1.2. Phased Delivery

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the STPR2 will now take a two Phased approach, with Phase 1 reporting to the original timescales of Winter 2020/21. The final report will be published later in 2021.

This approach was confirmed in the Programme for Government published in September 2020, where it stated "*public transport demand remains impacted by the need for physical distancing and a drop in public confidence. Working from home, the move to more shopping*

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<sup>1</sup> Transport Scotland, National Transport Strategy (NTS2), 2020, [www.transport.gov.scot/media/47052/national-transport-strategy.pdf](http://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47052/national-transport-strategy.pdf)

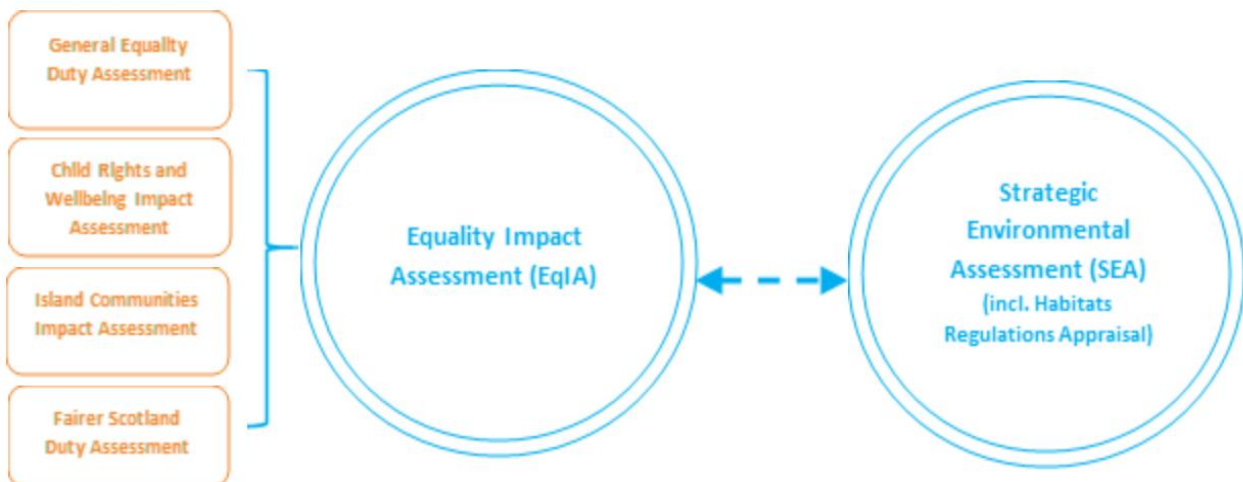
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/initial-appraisal-case-for-change-national-stpr2/>, Transport Scotland, February 2020

*online and impacts on the tourism sector have seen major reductions in demand. Given the levels of uncertainty it is only right that we consider the implications for transport and how we restart the second Strategic Transport Projects Review to ensure that this will help identify interventions that would aid or help accelerate economic recovery. We will take a Phased approach to STPR2, with Phase 1 focusing on recommendations which “lock in” the benefits and travel behaviours of individuals and provide a step change in investment which supports the priorities and outcomes of the National Transport Strategy.”*

The role of STPR2 Phase 1 is to set out the draft recommendations emerging from Phase 1. These recommendations have been determined based on an approach to assessment which identifies those investments for which there is a high degree of confidence that they can be delivered or significantly progressed within the next 2 to 3 years. In addition, they will make a significant contribution to some or all of the STPR2 objectives; support a fair and sustainable economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic and help lock in the sustainable travel behaviours observed during lockdown and help address increasing car dependence and low public transport usage.

### 1.3. Integrated Assessments

The STPR2 is accompanied by various assessments that sit alongside both phases of STPR2 and are integrated into each stage of the strategy’s development. These comprise a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as described in Section 1.4, an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), and various related assessments, outlined below in Figure 1. These impact assessments interact with each other, complement each other and ensure the STPR2 is environmentally sustainable and socially equitable. They share baseline data wherever possible.



**Figure 1 – Relationship between the EqIA and the SEA**



## 1.4. SEA Requirements

SEA is a means of systematically assessing the likely impact of a public plan on the environment. Under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, those bodies preparing qualifying Scottish plans are required to undertake a SEA of plans that are likely to have significant environmental effects, if implemented. The Act transposes the requirements of the European Community SEA Directive.<sup>3</sup>

SEA aims to offer greater protection to the environment by ensuring public bodies (in this case, Transport Scotland) and those organisations preparing plans of a 'public character' consider and address the likely significant environmental effects.

The draft STPR2 is considered to fall under Section 5(3) of the 2005 Act and, as such, a SEA is required to explore the potential for significant environmental effects, either positive or negative. As the STPR2 falls under this section of the 2005 Act, a 'screening' report did not need to be prepared, as it was clear that a SEA would be required<sup>4</sup>. The next stage after screening was the preparation of a SEA Scoping Report, which was completed and consulted on between December 2019 and February 2020.

The key remaining stages of the STPR2 SEA after scoping are:

- SEA Progress Report (this stage) – This stage is specific to STPR2, largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic impacts on programme and provides an update on STPR2 progress since the SEA Scoping Stage. The Progress Report also proposes an updated approach for the next, Phase 2 SEA stage (Environment Report);
- Draft Environmental Report (Phase 2) – This assessment stage will establish the likely significant (positive and negative) environmental effects of implementing STPR2. Any potential reasonable alternatives are considered at this stage, along with viable mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or offset adverse effects. The assessment and a summary of key findings will be included in the draft Phase 2 Environmental Report, which will be made available for consultation alongside the draft STPR2;
- Final Environmental Report - This responds to SEA consultation comments and any post-consultation updates to the STPR2; and
- Post-adoption Statement - This statement will be produced after the STPR2 has been adopted. It will outline how the assessment and consultation responses have been taken into account within the finalised STPR2. It will also include the final environmental monitoring programme for STPR2 implementation. Post-adoption statements are intended to improve the transparency of the decision-making process within plans such as STPR2.

## 1.5. Purpose of SEA Progress Report

This SEA Progress Report provides a summary of the STPR2 and SEA work undertaken to date. It also includes an update to the proposed SEA assessment methodology and signposts the next phase of assessment and opportunities for input into the final STPR2 and SEA Environmental Report.

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<sup>3</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC. Available on: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2001:197:0030:0037:EN:PDF>, accessed 18/10/2019.

<sup>4</sup> A SEA was also undertaken for STPR1.

## 2. SEA Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

### 2.1. Overview

The SEA consultation is an integral part of the plan-making process. Consultation Authorities and the public are consulted in ways and at times which give them an early and effective opportunity within appropriate timeframes to express their opinions on the draft STPR2 and SEA.

### 2.2. Feedback from Consultation Authorities

The SEA is developed to incorporate the feedback from the three statutory Consultation Authorities in Scotland:

- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA);
- NatureScot; and
- Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

The role of the Consultation Authorities within SEA is to bring their individual environmental expertise to the assessment process. This can help to ensure that the future consultation process undertaken by a Responsible Authority (in this case Transport Scotland) is more robust. This in turn means that the public can gain a better understanding of the likely effect of a plan on the environment and meaningfully contribute to the plan's preparation process by offering an informed view (Scottish Government, 2013).<sup>5</sup>

A Scoping Report was issued to the Consultation Authorities between December 2019 and February 2020 for comment. Feedback was sought on whether the baseline and policy information presented was comprehensive and the proposed methodology appropriate. The three statutory Consultation Authorities were content with the approach put forward. They also provided further detail on additional baseline and policy, which have since been updated and will be presented in the Environmental Report. Specific comments were made on the assessment objectives (hereafter referred to as SEA objectives) and these were taken on board when finalising the assessment framework. It was highlighted that any reasonable alternatives identified during the preparation of the plan should be assessed as part of the SEA process and the findings of the assessment should inform the choice of the preferred option. This will also be documented in the Environmental Report.

### 2.3. Feedback from Wider Stakeholders

During the course of SRPR2, there has been extensive stakeholder and public engagement. The core of the engagement commenced with a round of 22 regional workshops to identify problems and opportunities around the country. Feedback from all of these workshops was reviewed to identify environmental issues and opportunities which would be pertinent to the SEA. A specific environmental national level workshop was also undertaken to supplement the information gathered and identify any data gaps and understand work being undertaken by a wide range of organisations. The National Environment Workshop was attended by representatives from a range of national bodies in Scotland and organisations with different areas of expertise and perspectives on environmental issues.

These workshops were followed up with a similar number of regional sessions in late

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<sup>5</sup> Scottish Government, 2013. Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidance. August, 2013.  
Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2)  
Consultancy Support Services Contract

2019/early 2020 to explore potential options for consideration. A comprehensive school engagement programme with over 600 pupils from across Scotland also resulted in a range of options being identified. In parallel with these general sessions, a number of more targeted national workshops were held in August 2019, focusing on particular modes or sectors of the community. An online national public survey also took place in winter 2019 to identify problems and opportunities, for which in excess of 3000 responses were received.

Relevant feedback received from all these engagement activities has been incorporated into the SEA methodology through an expanded discussion of constraints and opportunities in the SEA baseline, which will be presented in the Environmental Report in Phase 2.



## 3. Phase 1: SEA Overview

### 3.1. Phase 1 Themes and Interventions

**Error! Reference source not found.** sets out the eight key themes presented in the S TPR2: Update and Phase 1 Recommendations Report, and the recommended interventions associated with each theme.

<b>Supporting smart and sustainable travel across Scotland</b>	National measures that will support active and sustainable travel choices and placemaking principles
<b>Creating smart and sustainable towns and villages</b>	Packages of sustainable transport improvements to enhance attractiveness and sustainability of our towns and villages
<b>Improving accessibility in rural and peripheral areas and for vulnerable groups</b>	Improved public transport offering where fixed timetable services do not satisfactorily cover the needs of individuals, including consideration of demand responsive travel
<b>Transforming Cities</b>	Measures that will support active and sustainable travel alongside placemaking principles in Scotland's seven cities to help transform cities and neighbourhood centres
<b>Enhancing public transport provision</b>	A range of measures to improve the accessibility and reliability of public transport and stimulate a sustainable recovery post COVID-19
<b>Supporting transition to low-carbon transport</b>	Measures that will increase the development and further transition of Scotland's transport fleet to low carbon
<b>Supporting a viable freight industry</b>	Measures to improve conditions for the freight and haulage industry to deliver a modal shift
<b>Enhancing safety and resilience on the strategic transport network</b>	Package of measures on the strategic transport network focusing on improving safety and resilience

Figure 2: STPR2 Phase 1 Themes

### 3.2. Phase 1: SEA Approach and Outcomes

A high-level review of the key STPR2 Phase 1 themes and recommended interventions has been undertaken to identify whether they each align with the NTS2 and IIP20 and identify likely compatibilities / incompatibilities with the SEA objectives.

This high-level review identified that each of the current STPR2 themes and a majority of the interventions largely align with priorities and key themes set out within NTS2 and the STPR2 SEA objectives.

A secondary scoping of each of the themes and interventions was undertaken to consider potential for significant environmental effects. This determined that a number of the interventions need further detail before they can be assessed. A small number of these interventions were highlighted at this stage as having potential for significant effects on the

achievement of the SEA objectives. These interventions will require further consideration and assessment in the SEA during Phase 2, if more detail on the interventions becomes available. Some interventions will also require Environmental Impact Assessment at the project level. It is noted that for each of these interventions, there is potential for a positive contribution to the achievement of SEA objectives for air quality, climatic factors and population and human health. However, there is uncertainty regarding the potential for some interventions to detract from SEA objectives, depending on the physical location and design of these interventions.

## 4. Proposed Phase 2 SEA Assessment Approach

### 4.1. Assessment Overview

The assessment process used for this SEA focuses on providing robust inputs to consider in the 'Environment' criterion within wider Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) appraisal. It is considered that this is the best way to ensure SEA influence throughout the development of STPR2 and it will facilitate the identification and assessment of reasonable alternatives.

It is recognised that the current environmental requirements/criteria within STAG are not fit for purpose for the requirements of the SEA. The STPR2 approach is therefore being updated and developed to meet the wider range of SEA topic/sub-topics and current best practice.

The SEA process and programme aligns with the EqIA (and related assessments, described in **Section 1.3**) and will cross reference the approach used for both the NTS2 SEA and NPF4 SEA, to ensure consistency.

### 4.2. Scope of Assessment

Following stakeholder engagement and a review of the baseline data and the relevant Plans/Policies/Strategies (PPS), it was determined that STPR2 could lead to positive and/or negative impacts on all of the SEA topics. As a result, they have all been scoped into the assessment. The SEA topics are as follows:

- Air quality;
- Climatic factors;
- Population and human health;
- Cultural heritage;
- Material assets;
- Landscape;
- Water;
- Biodiversity, flora and fauna; and
- Soil.

### 4.3. SEA Objectives and Assessment Guide Questions

The SEA uses a set of SEA objectives and assessment criteria, that cover each of the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. These are presented in the SEA Scoping Report. The SEA objectives and assessment criteria presented were developed from:

- A comprehensive review of the baseline issues and policy requirements;
- A gap analysis review of the STAG criteria; and
- Feedback received from the SEA Consultation Authorities (NatureScot, SEPA and HES) – as outlined in **Section 2.2**

In order to ensure that the STAG requirements were not only met, but enhanced, to meet SEA requirements and current best practice in environmental appraisal, the following elements have been embedded:

- A more focused consideration of the Climatic Factors SEA topic, looking at both climate change mitigation (carbon emissions) and climate change adaptation;
- Working with the Transport Scotland climate change team to ensure we are asking the right questions in light of new research;
- Bringing together assessment of resilience/adaptation across all the topics;
- Embedding Natural Capital principles into appraisal mapping requirements across topics; and
- Stronger focus within assessment guide questions on place and placemaking, aligning with NPF4 approach.

#### 4.4. Stages of Assessment

It is recognised that the environmental topics of STAG do not fully cover the full range of SEA topics and sub-topics, as described above. However, the SEA will continue to align with each STAG stage, as this ensures the SEA is able to maximise its influence in the overall assessment process.

At each stage of assessment, any potentially negative impacts identified have been discussed with the project team to consider alternatives.

**Table 1** sets out how the SEA process aligns with STAG’s four-stage assessment process, highlighting at what phase the assessment findings will be reported. This alignment with the STAG process ensures the SEA has influence at each stage of STPR2 development.

**Table 1 - SEA inputs at each stage of STAG**

STAG	SEA INPUT
Initial Appraisal: Case for Change	<p><i>Generation of Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs)</i></p> <p>While environment is not traditionally covered at this stage in any depth, the SEA team provided sufficient information on the baseline national and regional environmental constraints and environmental policy to influence the development of both national and regionally specific TPOs. This ensured that the TPOs were compatible with the SEA objectives.</p> <p>This approach was reinforced by the Scottish Government’s declared Climate Emergency in 2019, and the contribution from transport to national emissions, highlighting the importance of embedding the environment at this stage.</p> <p><i>Regional Case for Change Reports</i></p> <p>The SEA team has provided a summary of the environmental baseline that is pertinent to each of the STPR2 regions and this is included in the Regional Case for Change reports.</p> <p><i>Themes and Interventions Assessment</i></p> <p>The SEA team has undertaken a high-level compatibility check of the long list of STPR2 Phase 1 themes and interventions against the SEA objectives. An environmental commentary has been provided for each theme and intervention listed, to highlight any significant environmental constraints/opportunities and help to refine the themes and interventions to</p>

STAG	SEA INPUT
	improve the environmental outcomes.
Preliminary Appraisal	<p>The SEA provides the environmental component of the STAG assessment using an approach that focuses on the impact on the STPR2 scenarios considered.</p> <p>A matrix-based assessment of the shortlisted interventions will be undertaken using the SEA objectives/assessment questions to guide assessment, utilising a three-point scoring system, as presented in <b>Section 4.5</b>, to align with STAG criteria and SEA requirements. The commentary will justify the scoring and consider relevant likely significant effects, mitigation, assumptions and uncertainties where relevant.</p> <p>This assessment will identify and assess reasonable alternatives and recommendations/mitigation at this stage will be primarily focused on refinements to policy/ wording, intervention options, caveats and monitoring controls, based on the SEA Objectives and their underlying assessment guide questions.</p> <p><b>The findings of this stage of assessment will inform Phase 2 and will be summarised in the Environmental Report</b></p>
Detailed Appraisal	<p>The SEA will undertake the environmental component of the STAG assessment with a more detailed assessment against aligned STAG/SEA topics using SEA objectives/assessment questions to guide assessment.</p> <p>The assessment will utilise a 7-point scoring system to align with STAG criteria and SEA requirements. This is standard practice for scoring policies against SEA objectives, ranging from the policy being likely to contribute significantly to achieving an objective to it having a significant long-term negative impact on the objective. The commentary justifies the scoring and considers relevant likely significant effects, assumptions and uncertainties where relevant.</p> <p>Mitigation measures and reasonable alternatives will be identified, and the assessment will consider indirect/direct/synergistic/cumulative effects. Enhancement opportunities will be described.</p> <p><b>The findings of this stage of assessment will inform Phase 2 and will be summarised in the Environmental Report</b></p>
Post Appraisal: Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>An SEA Post Adoption Statement will be produced. This will include the finalised, detailed Monitoring Framework. It will also describe how consultation comments have been addressed, how environmental considerations were integrated into STPR2 and the reasons for choosing any themes or interventions, in light of other reasonable alternatives.</p> <p><b>This will be published following the adoption of the Phase 2 STPR2</b></p>



## 4.5. Matrix Approach

The SEA process follows a matrix-based approach, using a qualitative scoring system to identify likely significant effects on the SEA objectives. The scoring system used for the assessment of effects in the preliminary and detailed appraisal stages is described in **Tables 2 and 3**. This approach has several advantages, including the systematic recording of potential effects and their significance. Due to the high-level nature of the options (e.g., themes and interventions) included in the long list of options at the preliminary appraisal stage, a three point scale will be used (see **Table 2**) and accompanied by a narrative that provides the rationale to the scoring. At the Phase 2 detailed appraisal stage, it is expected there will be a greater level of detail in the description of the transport interventions (such as location details), hence a seven point scale will be used for a more detailed environmental assessment (see **Table 3**).

**Table 2 - SEA scoring system for the preliminary appraisal stage**

Score	Descriptions	Symbol
Positive Effect	The proposed option contributes positively to the achievement of the SEA objective.	+
Neutral Effect	The proposed option is related to but does not have any effect on the achievement of the SEA objective.	0
Negative Effect	The proposed option detracts from the achievement of the SEA objective.	-

**Table 3 - SEA scoring system for the detailed appraisal stage**

Score	Descriptions	Symbol
Significant Positive Effect	The proposed option contributes significantly to the achievement of the SEA objective.	++
Minor Positive Effect	The proposed option contributes to the achievement of the SEA objective but not significantly.	+
Neutral Effect	The proposed option is related to but does not have any effect on the achievement of the SEA objective.	0
Minor Negative Effect	The proposed option detracts from the achievement of the SEA objective but not significantly.	-
Significant Negative Effect	The proposed option detracts significantly from the achievement of the objective. Mitigation is therefore required.	--
Uncertain Effect	The proposed option has an uncertain relationship to the SEA objective or the relationship is dependent on the way in which the aspect is managed. In addition, insufficient information may be available to enable an assessment to be made.	?

Score	Descriptions	Symbol
No or negligible relationship	There is no clear relationship between the proposed option and the achievement of the SEA objective or the relationship is negligible.	~

Following the matrix assessment, any potentially negative impacts identified will be discussed with the project team to consider reasonable alternatives, effective mitigation and enhancement recommendations. Recommendations will respond not only to direct impacts but also indirect, secondary and cumulative impacts.

Cumulative impacts will be considered at both intra-plan (the impact of a combination of interventions) and the inter-plan (the impact of the plan alongside other plans and policies). The inter-plan assessment will be undertaken towards the end of the assessment, when the final draft set of options (themes and interventions) is available to consider alongside relevant national level policy/strategy, including the NPF4<sup>6</sup> and Climate Change Plan.

Following the SEA assessments, relevant findings and recommendations will be recorded in summary form for inclusion in the Environmental Report in Phase 2, with assessment matrices provided in appendices to aid transparency. The Environmental Report will be issued for consultation alongside the Draft STPR2.

#### 4.6. Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

The SEA aims to prevent, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects as far as possible, before mitigation measures are proposed. Undertaking the SEA process alongside the STPR2 development process helps ensure that modifications can be made at the strategic level, i.e. via alternatives and identifying issues which can be addressed through other relevant Plans/Policies/Strategies.

Where location-specific mitigation requirements are identified, these will be described with appropriate recommendations for implementation at a project level.

In addition to mitigation measures, recommendations for STPR2 enhancement opportunities will be provided wherever possible.

The mitigation measures and enhancement opportunities will consider:

- The environmental baseline data;
- The environmental requirements emerging from the PPS review;
- The SEA Objectives and Assessment Guide questions;
- Feedback received from the regional and national workshops, described in **Section 2**, including local context and feasibility;
- Key issues and opportunities identified during the continuing development of the STPR2, the EqIA and other supporting assessments; and
- Ongoing feedback from the SEA Consultation Authorities and any other feedback received.

<sup>6</sup> An interim NPF4 position statement was published in late 2020, and a draft NPF4 is anticipated for Autumn 2021, with a final version of NPF4 in spring 2022.

## 5. Phase 2: SEA Environmental Report

In line with the requirements set out in the Environmental Assessment Act 2005, an Environmental Report will accompany the Phase 2 STPR2 Report. This Environmental Report will include the updated environmental baseline, Plans, Policy and Strategies review and any additional updates to the background information that is identified through Phase 1 consultation.

It will include a summary of the assessment of the Phase 1 options (themes and interventions) and a description of any changes to the options presented in Phase 1 as a result of consultation feedback.

It will present the assessment findings from both the preliminary and detailed assessments of the remaining STPR2 options, including a cumulative impacts assessment and a description of the environmental mitigation and enhancement measures proposed and embedded in the final options.

At this stage a draft, high-level monitoring framework will be proposed. The monitoring framework will be finalised in the SEA Post Adoption Statement.

Finally, it will include a summary of all previous SEA consultation to date, and how consultation feedback has been responded to in the STPR2 and SEA. The Environmental Report will be supported by a Non-Technical Summary.

The draft Phase 2 STPR2 and Environmental Report will be issued for public consultation for a period of 12 weeks and the feedback for this consultation will be used to refine/finalise the options presented in Phase 2.

A summary of the comments and Transport Scotland's response to comments will be presented in the SEA Post Adoption Statement.

## 6. Next Steps

This SEA Progress Report seeks comments on the proposed approach for assessment in Phase 2.

Comments can be provided by email to: [[Paul.Junik@transport.gov.scot](mailto:Paul.Junik@transport.gov.scot)] and [[Steve.Isaac@jacobs.com](mailto:Steve.Isaac@jacobs.com)]; or by post to: [Transport Scotland, Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow, G4 0HF].

The specific dates are yet to be confirmed for Phase 2. However, the indicative timeframes for the key SEA milestones are as follows:

- Consultation on Draft Environmental Report – Autumn/Winter 2021;
- Final version of Environmental Report – Winter 2021/Spring 2022; and
- SEA Post Adoption Statement – Spring/Summer 2022.

As part of ongoing engagement, comments on the STPR2 Case for Change and Transport Options can be submitted using a comments form that can be accessed [here](#). The closing date for comments is midnight on 31 March 2021.

