

Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)

Ecology Guidance Note: 2014

What is an EcIA?

SERVICES:

- Stakeholder consultation requests and meetings
- Baseline protected species and habitat surveys
- Obtaining and reviewing existing biological data sets
- Impact assessments and significance
- EcIA chapter production

Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA) are often undertaken as part of a wider Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). They are generally required for larger scale new housing developments, wind farms, or urban regeneration projects, where they evaluate the likely impacts of the project over a range of environmental issues. These assessments do not just focus on the construction phases but will also assess the operational period and decommissioning of project sites. Impacts can be far reaching, depending on the project, including access routes and the transport and storage of materials, to the long-term safeguarding of protected species.

How is it applied?

An EcIA begins as a scoping exercise within the study area and likely zones of influence. This should involve a consultation process with a range of stakeholders, in addition to collating all existing biological data. As with an EIA process, the scoping must assess all stages of the project's lifespan. The ecological resources which may be impacted upon must be identified through field surveys, protected species assessments and biological data reviews. It is important to ensure the long-term viability of species populations, particularly if mitigation is to be proposed.

This process must be integrated into the life of the project, responding to changes in ecological best practice and working with the commitment of all parties. Many other disciplines will require advice from the appointed ecological team on how they can achieve their specific roles within the development design. It is the role of the ecologist to ensure that all possible habitat and species protection and enhancement measures are implemented.

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) has produced guidelines on EcIA – 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom (2006)' covering the requirements of the process.

