

Edinburgh Compact Partnership – Fri27May11 – Item 6

SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK – INTRODUCTION

Context

The VSSG asked for a tool to be developed which will help decision-makers assess the likely social impacts of decisions with which they are faced, or to assess the likely differential social impacts of options before them.

Whilst there appears to be an interest in assessing the social impacts of policy decisions, in the absence of a simple and practical analytical tool planners simply rely on crude judgments about likely social impacts. The Framework attached is intended to provide some structure to these professional judgments.

The Framework is intended for use by those with an interest in and understanding of the social impacts of their decisions, analogous to Equalities Impact Assessments.

The Framework is not intended for use in gathering survey data. Nor is the Framework intended to make explicit any impacts on individuals. There are likely to be overlaps between such a Social Impact Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessments, but this tool is intended to complement EqIAs – not to replace them.

Application

Considering a proposal, a small group of informed professionals will gather to work their way through the Framework, thinking always of the likely Social Impacts (under the various prompts) of the proposal on the table. Each person scores each prompt on a five-point scale (High-Negative, Low-Negative, Neutral, Low-Positive, High-Positive.) Each section (Individual, Shared, and Community) yields a Sub-Score. Then these sub-scores are combined (elements may be differentially weighted if that's desired) to yield a Combined Total Score. This score should act as a simple and understandable 'measure' of likely social impact.

The hope, of course, is that planners, policy- and decision-makers will seek to prioritise proposals which maximise positive social impacts and to avoid proposals which yield negative social impacts.

Next Steps

This Social Impact Assessment Framework has been tested internally, and is presented for further discussion.