Ecological Impact Assessment

An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) is a term which is applicable to a number of separate studies and is typically the term given to the ecology chapter within an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for those developments which meet the criteria under the The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 (EIA Regulation). An EcIA can also be the term given to a document submitted as part of planning application for non-EIA developments.

The process of preparing an EcIA for an EIA is a formal process and subject to the relevant EIA Regulations, although whether for EIA or non-EIA developments, EcIA's are produced following the guidelines as set by the Chartered Instituted for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) in their 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine, September 2018 CIEEM (2018)'.

In essence an EcIA, whether for EIA or non-EIA developments is a process of identifying and quantifying and evaluating potentially significant effects of a development on sensitive ecological receptors and where significant effects are identified, proposing the key principles of avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures to reduce the significance of those effects. Typically, an EcIA will follow on from a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) or can be a standalone document which incorporates the PEA. The Ecological receptors taken through the EcIA process is determined through specific survey work and consultation with statutory consultees such as Natural England and Natural Resources Wales as well as the Local Planning Authority. For formal EIA developments, the scope of any EcIA is usually determined by the Local Planning Authority at the screening stage, based on the findings of an initial PEA and with input from the developers appointed ecologist.

The value of an EcIA both from the developers perspective and from a nature conservation value is dependent on a collaborative and iterative design approach between all disciplines involved within a scheme.