

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

ASSESSMENT NOT REQUIRED DECLARATION

Policy title	Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill
Directorate: Division: team	National Records of Scotland: Statistical and Registration Services: Scotland's Census 2021 programme
Policy lead responsible for taking the decision	Amy Wilson, Director of NRS Statistical and Registration Services

Rationale for decision
<p>The principal purpose of the Bill is to make answering census questions about prescribed aspects of gender identity, and about sexual orientation, voluntary. The Bill will allow these questions to be placed on a voluntary basis by amending the penalty provisions of the Census Act 1920.</p> <p>There are no environmental impacts anticipated as a result of the Bill provisions.</p> <p>Whilst the scope of the Bill provisions is restricted to making specific question topics voluntary for inclusion in the 2021 Census, a pre-screening notification report has also been prepared covering the full scope of the programme, although not yet submitted to the SEA Gateway for publication. The report is attached for information.</p>

I confirm that the decision to not carry out a full Strategic Environmental Assessment has been authorised by:

Name and job title of Deputy Director (or equivalent)	Date authorisation given
Amy Wilson, Director of NRS Statistical and Registration Services	2 nd October 2018

SEA PRE-SCREENING DOCUMENT

Responsible Authority:

[Box 1.](#)

National Records of Scotland

Title of the plan:

[Box 2.](#)

Scotland's Census 2021 programme

What prompted the plan:

(e.g. a legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)

[Box 3.](#)

For over 200 years, Scotland has relied on the ten yearly census to underpin national and local decision making and the Census Act (1920) enshrined it as a function of the Registrar General (RG) for Scotland (NRS Chief Executive), underpinned by the Census Order and Regulations.

Plan subject:

(e.g. transport)

[Box 4.](#)

Socio-demographic statistical outputs about the number and characteristics of Scotland's population.

Brief summary of the plan:

(including the area or location to which the plan related)

[Box 5.](#)

The The 1920 Act requires the Registrar General for Scotland (RG) to determine the arrangements made for the taking of the census.

The Scotland's Census 2021 programme was established by the RG with the following objectives:-

- Produce high quality census outputs that meet user needs
- Maximise overall response
- Produce timely outputs to maximise benefits
- Protect, and be seen to protect, confidential information
- Do so in a cost effective way
- Make recommendations for the approach to future censuses in Scotland

The programme primarily has two strands. Firstly to conduct a successful census operation in 2021 which produces the statistical data on Scotland's population to the agreed levels of accuracy and secondly to explore the use of administrative data in the conduct and production of this and future censuses.

The stated purpose of National Records of Scotland is "to collect, preserve and produce information about Scotland's people and history and make it available to inform present and future

generations.” Conducting this and future censuses enables this purpose.

Summary of Operations

The 2021 operation will be predominantly online. This, combined with other design modifications, are expected to achieve substantial reductions in paper and logistical requirements compared to 2011.

Our aim is that every household in Scotland (approximately 2.5 million) will receive a letter by post containing an internet access code (IAC) which respondents will use to access the census questionnaire online. Respondents will be able to request a paper version of the questionnaire which will mostly be printed on demand.

Census Day is planned for March 2021 and the post-out period for IAC letters is anticipated to be between 3 and 1 weeks before Census Day. Paper questionnaires will be posted back by respondents to one location where data will be processed.

Field staff will directly follow-up non-responding households, using supplied mobile devices.

Brief summary of the likely environmental consequences:

(including whether it has been determined that the plan is likely to have no or minimum effects, either directly or indirectly)

Box 6.

In completing this section we have sought to address each of the criteria set out in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005: -

The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular to –

a) The degree to which the programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources

Whilst users such as local authorities have evidenced that Census data is a key component in decision-making around resource allocation for the provision of a vast array of public and commercial services, there is no direct link as the programme itself plays no part in resource-allocation processes.

b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy

c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development

d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme and

e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of EU legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)

The programme itself carries no influence over other plans/programmes, although the statistical data outputs from the census will in many cases influence the location, size and nature of initiatives.

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to –

(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects

(b) the cumulative nature of the effects

(c) the transboundary nature of the effects

(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)

(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)

(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to

(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;

(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;

or

(iii) intensive land-use; and

(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Operations, which are ten-yearly, are designed to reach the whole of Scotland's population, centering around Census Day 2021 with no scope to repeat the process or parts of it in the event of issues with delivery.

With reference to the criteria specified within Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 we conclude that the effects of the programme's operational aspects on all of the above are anticipated to be minimal.

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Date of opinion:

30 July 2018

When completed send to: SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or to SEA Gateway, Scottish Government, Area 2H (South), Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ