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Environmental Impact Assessment - Law and Practice



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Environmental Impact Assessment — Law and Practice

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A CIP Catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 0 406 95954 4

Project Management by The Partnership Publishing Solutions Ltd, www.the-pps.co.uk
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Antony Rowe Ltd, Chippenham, Wilts

Visit LexisNexis UK at www.lexisnexis.co.uk

Environmental Impact Assessment — Law and Practice

Preface

Environmental impact assessment is currently one of the fastest-expanding areas of environmental and planning law. To read the cases as they have developed is an object lesson in how environmentally-concerned private individuals can use the law to oppose powerful commercial or public interests, and in many instances win. In this respect, the UK law reflects the development of EIA jurisprudence in the US a quarter-century ago, when citizens' groups opposed to major government projects seized on the procedural requirements of EIA as a powerful weapon. The difference is that in the UK the leading cases have by and large been brought not by large citizens' groups, but by a few concerned individuals. It is furthermore remarkable to see how the courts in the UK have embraced the importance of EIA not simply as a technocratic aid to better decisions, but as a participative and democratic means of involving the public in decisions on projects.

This book seeks to provide a practical and comprehensive guide to environmental impact assessment law. It starts from the basic foundations of EC law and moves on to consider the issues of screening and procedures. It also deals with EIA outside the context of town and country planning law, and with procedures for challenging decisions on EIA grounds.

The fast-evolving nature of the case law means that by the time the book is published it will almost certainly be to some degree out of date. In general the law is stated as at 6 June 2003, the most recent decision to be covered fully being *R (PPG11 Ltd) v Dorset County Council*, though it has been possible to make some additions and changes of a more minor nature at later proof stage, including brief references to the Court of Appeal decision in *R (Prokopp) v London Underground Limited* (7 July 2003). However, the law has now sufficiently developed and settled to enable reasonably clear guidance to be provided on the pitfalls which may await those practising in this area. As to those pitfalls, it need hardly be said that challenges on EIA grounds present very real and serious threats to development schemes. It is hoped that this book will assist not only planning authorities and developers in recognising and avoiding such traps, but also those representing the public in ensuring that the law and its underlying purposes are respected. EIA should, it is suggested, be seen neither as an onerous set of hurdles nor as a charter for Nimbys, but as a positive set of procedures which will improve the quality of decisions, protect and enhance the environment, and also in the long run benefit developers and investors. I am therefore delighted that Karl Fuller of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA) has contributed a chapter dealing with good practice in EIA, which should help lawyer readers in understanding how and why the legal requirements are of such importance. Thanks are due to his colleagues Andrew Bailey and Stefanie Simmons, who assisted him in this.

Thanks are also due to the publishers for their encouragement and assistance, and to members of the planning and environment group at my chambers, 39 Essex Street, who have collectively vast practical experience of EIA law, and whose comments and insights have undoubtedly enriched the end product.

Stephen Tromans
39 Essex Street

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