

# [Detailed guide: Developers: get environmental advice on your planning proposals](#)

*Updated:* Included guidance on getting advice for planning in principle and technical details consent.

This guide applies to construction and transport developers.

You can get environmental advice about your development proposal early in the planning process. Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation can tell you about environmental issues and help you to deal with them.

## **When to consult**

You must consult the relevant environmental agency before you apply for planning permission (the 'pre-application stage') on:

- nationally significant infrastructure projects like motorways, power stations or offshore wind turbines
- drilling monitoring boreholes for oil exploration (Environment Agency only)

You can get advice at the pre-application stage on all other development from the relevant agency. This is optional, but it will help you make sure that:

- risk assessment information such as flood risk assessments is correct
- you consider all environmental risks
- you include environmental opportunities

You'll need to provide enough information for the agencies to respond, such as landscape and visual impact assessments or flood risk assessments. You'll get a response within 21 days or by an agreed deadline. The agency may request extra information such as relevant survey data or research. You'll need to pay for some advice.

## **Consult Natural England**

Get advice from Natural England if your development proposal:

- is likely to affect [protected sites and areas](#) – this guidance helps you locate protected sites and areas on the [Magic map](#) and tells you how to avoid harming them during development work
- is likely to affect [protected species](#) – this guidance tells you how to avoid harming protected species during development work and whether you

need a wildlife licence to carry out your proposal

- affects the [best and most versatile agricultural land](#) (classified as 1 – excellent, 2 – very good or 3a – good) – you can find the agricultural land classifications on the [Magic map](#) and zoom in on the map
- affects [ancient woodland](#)
- includes [restoring land](#) previously used for mining or waste management to agricultural use
- includes environmental opportunities that could be achieved such as [‘green infrastructure’](#) and biodiversity improvements of the site and surrounding area

Read Natural England’s guidance on [how your local planning authority will review your application](#) if there are protected species on the proposed development site. This is known as Natural England’s ‘standing advice’.

Check the [impact risk zone \(IRZ\) around a protected site](#) to help you assess potential impacts that the development proposal may have on the site. You can download the IRZ data and use it on the government’s [Magic website](#).

See the [Magic map to show the location of protected areas](#) such as national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Natural England can tell you:

- if your proposal will significantly affect a protected site or area or protected species
- if your proposal will affect the best and most versatile agricultural land
- what you should include with your planning application
- how you can avoid or reduce harming the natural environment

## **EU funding for transport projects**

Find out how to get Natural England’s approval for applications for EU transport funding in the [Connecting Europe Facility transport guidance](#). Successful applications will need to show that transport proposals are not likely to have significant effects on a [Natura 2000](#) site.

## **Consult the Environment Agency**

Read the Environment Agency’s [flood risk standing advice](#) before you consult them about flood risk.

You can get advice from the Environment Agency if your development includes:

- land in [flood zones 2 or 3](#)
- land in [flood zone 1](#) with critical drainage problems – your LPA will know if this is the case
- is for development that will be used to handle, produce, use or store hazardous substances and is within the area at risk if a major accident happens nearby (see the Health and Safety Executive guidance on

[development near hazardous sites](#))

- mining and mining exploration
- storing oil and fuel and their by-products, such as petrol stations
- a major development that does not use existing sewerage infrastructure for sewage treatment
- land in or within 20m of the top of the bank of a [main river](#)
- waterbodies identified in [river basin management plans](#)
- a cemetery or cemetery extension
- land affected by [contamination](#) from a previous use such as disused railways, or your proposal could cause contamination
- land used for the storage, transfer or treatment of waste products or refuse
- intensive pig, poultry or dairy units

You can get advice even if your proposal does not need a planning application, such as when [prior approval](#) is needed for permitted development.

Check the Environment Agency's [maps and data](#) to find out if there's environmental information that could be relevant to your development proposal.

The Environment Agency can provide free preliminary advice to tell you:

- about environmental constraints on your development
- if your development will affect the environment
- the kind of information it wants you to include with your planning application
- if you [need an environmental licence or permit](#) and if there are likely to be problems with granting it

[Complete the preliminary opinion enquiry form.](#)

The Environment Agency aims to respond to preliminary opinion requests within 21 days.

## **Consult the Marine Management Organisation**

You can get advice from the [Marine Management Organisation](#) (MMO) if your development proposal is on the coast and includes slipways, jetties or dredging.

You must consult the MMO on nationally significant infrastructure projects such as offshore wind turbines.

Find out what [permits, consents and licences you might need for coastal developments](#) you might need for coastal developments.

## **If you need an environmental permit**

If you need an [environmental permit](#) for activities at your new site before you submit your permit or planning applications you can get Environment Agency advice.

The Environment Agency can provide a limited amount of pre-application advice to help you complete your application. The cost of this advice is included in the application charge.

The Environment Agency charges £100 an hour plus VAT for its enhanced pre-application advice service. This is an optional service which you can request if you want more help with your application.

Find out about [basic and enhanced pre-application advice for environmental permits](#).

You do not need planning permission before you apply for an environmental permit, but you can still get advice about environmental permits after you've submitted your planning application.

## **If you need planning and environmental consents**

If your development needs both [planning permission and an environmental permit](#) you can submit your environmental permit application at the same time as your planning application. This is known as 'twin-tracking' and means you'll get fewer information requests.

You should twin-track if:

- your activity is large or complicated
- there are protected habitats or species near the place you want to develop and the Environment Agency's assessment shows your activity could have a significant effect on them

## **Nationally significant infrastructure projects**

If your activity is part of a nationally significant infrastructure project, you can twin-track your applications or apply for your environmental permit before you submit a development consent application.

The Planning Inspectorate will consider your permit requirements when assessing your application.

## **If you need an environmental impact assessment**

You can ask [your LPA](#) whether your proposal needs to include an [environmental impact assessment](#) (EIA).

If your proposal needs an EIA, you'll need to prepare an [environmental statement](#). Your LPA must consult with the environmental agencies before they can tell you what information needs to be included.

You can get help from Natural England or the Environment Agency with your environmental statement, but you'll need to pay for advice.

## Preparing an environmental statement

Your statement should only focus on the significant effects that your proposal will have on the environment. You should include relevant documents to support this, for example:

- a water cycle study if the proposal affects water supply, water quality or flooding
- a landscape assessment or visual impact assessment on a protected landscape

## When you can pay for agency advice

You can get help from Natural England or the Environment Agency on how to:

- reduce harm to the environment
- maximise opportunities to enhance the environment

They'll also look at your environmental statement and respond within an agreed timescale.

## Natural England's advice services

Natural England offers 2 kinds of paid-for advice:

- a [pre-submission screening service](#) to find out if a development proposal affects a protected species and needs a wildlife licence
- a discretionary advice service (DAS) which is extra advice for more complex development proposals that affect the environment

You can use the discretionary advice service to:

- review your draft environmental statement
- review your survey results and assessments
- advise on your mitigation strategies to reduce damage to the environment

You'll normally get this advice before you submit your application for:

- planning permission
- permission in principle
- technical details consent
- a marine licence

In some cases, you can get advice during and after getting consent.

How much you'll have to pay depends on:

- the work you need to do, such as multiple mitigation strategies or several surveys
- whether or not a Natural England adviser needs to visit your site

You'll pay:

- £500 per adviser for a 90 minute meeting (either by conference call or a face-to-face meeting at an office or on the development site)
- £110 per hour per adviser for each additional hour

If an adviser needs to travel to your office or development site you'll pay their:

- travel costs at 45p per mile
- additional public transport, tolls and travel expenses
- travel time as part of the hourly rate

You'll pay £110 per hour if your request is more complicated. This includes:

- reviewing a draft environmental statement
- providing advice to reduce damage to protected sites and species
- providing advice on your landscape and visual impact assessment

Complete the [charged service request form](#) and send to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk)

Natural England will respond within 15 working days to:

- confirm if the request is eligible
- agree the scope of the works
- provide a written quotation
- agree a timetable

Read

[Natural England's terms and conditions for paid-for services](#)

(PDF, 140KB, 16 pages)

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## **Environment Agency's advice services**

The Environment Agency offers a charged-for discretionary advice service.

You can use the discretionary advice service to:

- review and provide advice on your draft environmental statement
- review and provide advice on your technical reports and assessments
- seek advice on your mitigation strategies to reduce damage to the environment
- seek advice on non-statutory strategic engagement activities such as planning policies and evidence base documents

You'll normally get this advice before you submit your application for:

- planning permission
- permission in principle
- technical details consent
- a marine licence

In some cases, you can get advice during and after getting consent.

How much you'll have to pay depends on:

- how complex your proposal is
- the number of staff needed to provide the relevant advice

You'll pay:

- £100 an hour plus VAT per staff member – this includes travel time
- any other reasonable costs, for example costs of advice from external consultants if needed

To request charged-for discretionary advice email the Environment Agency at [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk). Your enquiry will go to your local sustainable places team. You need to provide:

- your name and contact details, and who you're acting on behalf of
- the postcode or grid reference of the site and a location plan showing the boundary of the proposed development
- a project description, including what you're planning to build and the type of consent you need
- the type of advice you want, for example a face-to-face meeting or document review

The Environment Agency will respond within 15 working days to:

- confirm if the request is eligible
- agree the scope of the works
- provide a written quotation
- agree a timetable

Read the [Environment Agency's terms and conditions for planning and marine licence advice](#).

## Contact the agencies

Natural England

Email [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk)

Natural England consultation service

Hornbeam House

Electra Way

Crewe Business Park

Crewe

Cheshire

CW1 6GJ

Environment Agency

Email [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Environment Agency

P0 Box 544

Rotherham

Yorkshire

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