

# PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSION ADVICE

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ADVICE FOR PLANNING OFFICERS AND APPLICANTS SEEKING PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSION FOR DEVELOPMENTS LIABLE TO AFFECT THE SURFACE WATER ENVIRONMENT

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## Scope of this Standing Advice guidance document

This standing advice identifies the potential impacts on the surface water environment that should be considered at the pre-application stage for various types of development. Issues such as contaminated land, badgers, bats etc. are not covered by this document.

## NIEA's Standing Advice at the pre-application stage of a development

At the pre-application stage of a development there is limited information about the circumstances, scope and nature of the projects and therefore Water Management Unit can only provide 'general' advice.

Water Management Unit would direct the attention of the applicant / agent to the supporting information required in support of any future application which is contained in the Consultation Guide - Required Environmental Information - and to the Agency's Standing Advice guidance documents.

- **Consultation Guides** are available on the NI Planning Portal under Advice / NIEA Guidance / Consultation Guides.  
[http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/advice/northern\\_ireland\\_environment\\_agency\\_guidance/consultation\\_guides.htm](http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/advice/northern_ireland_environment_agency_guidance/consultation_guides.htm)
- **Standing Advice Notes** are available on the NI Planning Portal under Advice / NIEA Guidance / Standing Advice.  
[http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/advice/northern\\_ireland\\_environment\\_agency\\_guidance/standing\\_advice.htm](http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/advice/northern_ireland_environment_agency_guidance/standing_advice.htm)

## Potential Impacts

When considering the impacts on the surface water environment it is imperative that all potential impacts are adequately identified, assessed and appropriately mitigated. Best practice and appropriate mitigation must be applied in accordance with NIEA's published pollution prevention guidance.

Potential impacts on the surface water environment can specifically be defined as:

- Impacts on Surface Water quality;
- Impacts on Hydromorphology.

More information on these potential impacts is given below, however this list should not be considered as exhaustive **or applicable to every project.** Each project should be scoped on a **case by case basis.**

### Impacts on Surface Water Quality

The following potential surface water impacts should be considered:

- The disposal of sewage from the site both during the construction and operational phases;
- The disposal of storm water from the site both during the construction and operational phases;
- Discharge of contaminated groundwater into surface waters;
- Discharge of effluent containing potentially polluting substances or at an inappropriate temperature;
- Unregulated surface water abstractions or discharges
- The mobilisation of sediments due to storm water runoff from excavated/cleared areas or soil stockpiles;
- Spillages of oils/fuels/cement/chemicals or other pollutants;
- Any works within water;
- Landslide/bog burst due to works on steep slopes;

### Impacts on Hydromorphology

The following potential hydromorphological impacts should be considered:

- The permanent or temporary diversion of watercourses;
- New, or alterations to existing, crossing structures such as culverts and bridges;
- New or altered structures impacting on a waterway .e.g. jetties, piers, outfall structures, bank reinforcements;
- Loss of river continuity;
- Dredging or any physical modifications of a waterway;

The applicant should comply with all the relevant Standing Advice Notes in order to minimise the impact of the project on the environment during for the demolition, construction and operational phases of the development.

In addition to the Standing Advice Notes a hydromorphology guidance booklet titled Surface Water Alterations Handbook can be downloaded from the following webpage which the applicant may find useful:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/surface-water-alterations-handbook>

## Pollution Prevention

Pollution Prevention should be a primary consideration throughout all phases of the proposal. A good understanding of the pollution risks from your development will help reduce:

- The risk of incidences
- Impact to the water environment
- Point source and diffuse pollution
- Waste and costs
- Bad practice

The construction phase of a proposal is one of the most high risk stages of a development during which pollution is likely to occur.

If a development is in close proximity to a watercourse additional care will need to be taken to prevent pollution. Any 'waterway' as defined by the Water (NI) Order 1999 will pose a constraint to a construction project. Consideration must be given at preliminary planning and design stages to ensure that impact on the receiving water environment during any testing, construction and operational phases are minimised.

The main risks to a waterway during the construction and operational phases are from oil, hydrocarbons, fuel, chemicals, paint, suspended solids, concrete, cement and grout.

The applicant and appointed contractor(s) must identify all the relevant published pollution prevention guidance that relates to the proposal and ensure they adhere to this. Standing Advice Note No. 4 – Pollution Prevention Guidance, will be of particular importance (please refer to the link provided earlier in this document) as will all the relevant Pollution Prevention Guidelines (PPGs). PPGs are outline in Standing Advice Note No. 4 and can also be viewed using the link below:

[http://www.netregs.org.uk/library\\_of\\_topics/pollution\\_prevention\\_guides/all\\_ppgs.aspx](http://www.netregs.org.uk/library_of_topics/pollution_prevention_guides/all_ppgs.aspx)

## Other sources of advice, guidance and information

NIEA has produced a variety of publications and reports which you may find useful. These can be viewed from the following link:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/>

Sector specific guidance notes along with Water Management Unit's guidance on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessments and assessments against the Water Framework Directives objectives are available from the following link:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/water/water-management-unit>

If the required information is not available on the website the applicant should then email the details of their specific water related information request to:

[WaterInfo@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:WaterInfo@daera-ni.gov.uk)

Environmental guidance and advice for a range business sectors can be found at the following link:

[http://www.netregs.org.uk/business\\_sectors.aspx](http://www.netregs.org.uk/business_sectors.aspx)

## Final Comments

Effective mitigation measures must be in place to protect the water environment and surrounding water bodies from any discharge into them that may damage ecological status and to ensure that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives for the water body are not compromised nor the WFD objectives in other downstream water bodies in the same and other catchments.

It is an offence under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 to discharge or deposit, whether knowingly or otherwise, any poisonous, noxious or polluting matter so that it enters a waterway or water in any underground strata. Conviction of such an offence may incur a fine of up to £20,000 and / or three months imprisonment.



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