

CULVERTING

ADVICE FOR PLANNING OFFICERS AND APPLICANTS SEEKING PLANNING PERMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENTS WHICH INCLUDE THE CULVERTING OF A WATERWAY

ISSUE 01 SEPTEMBER 2015

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Water Management Unit (WMU) has responsibility for the protection of the water environment. WMU is empowered to protect the water environment by a number of pieces of legislation, most notably the Water Framework Directive.

Culverts can have a range of harmful localised and catchment wide impacts on the water environment. WMU therefore have a statutory duty to ensure that such impacts are avoided, reduced or remedied.

WMU Position on Culverts

WMU is opposed to any culverting operation that may result in the deterioration of the ecological status of a waterbody, or will prevent a waterbody meeting its water quality objectives under the Water Framework Directive.

Where culverting is proposed it must comply with Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning and Flood Risk Policy FLD 4.

Justification

Badly designed, installed or sited culverts can significantly impact upon the water environment, for example:

- Disruption to river continuity;
- Acts as a barrier to fish and mammal passage;
- Loss of bed and bankside habitat;
- Impacts on hydromorphology;
- Exacerbate pollution issues;
- Are obstacles to future restoration;

Whereas a single culvert can significantly impact upon a waterway the cumulative impact of piecemeal culverting can also have significant implications for the future status of a waterbody.

The construction of new culverts in a waterway should therefore be avoided unless no practicable alternative exists. A waterway, as defined under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, includes the channel or bed of a waterway which is dry for periods throughout the year.

Where there is the intention to culvert a watercourse then the Planning Authority should consult with the Rivers Agency and DCAL Inland Fisheries or Loughs Agency. Where a designated site may be impacted this should be highlighted to NIEA.

Recommended Conditions and Informatives

Conditions

Condition: For works in or near a waterway, as defined by the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, e.g. culverts, diversions and crossings whether temporary or permanent, Method of Works Statements must be submitted to the Department, for consultation with NIEA Water Management Unit, at least 8 weeks prior to the commencement of the works or phase of works.

Reason: To ensure effective avoidance and mitigation measures have been planned for the protection of the water environment.

Informatives

1. Details of mitigating measures to address the environmental impacts of the construction and operation of any culvert on the aquatic environment should be presented in a method of works statement. The Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) have published a document titled 'Culvert Design and Operation Guidance C689'.
2. Provision of Method of Works Statements, for works in, near or liable to affect any waterway, must demonstrate that best practice and appropriate mitigation will be applied during the construction of the culvert.
3. For advice on method of works statements the applicant should consult DOE Standing Advice Note No. 4 – Pollution Prevention Guidance (April 2015).
4. A hydromorphology guidance booklet can be downloaded from the following webpage:
http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/protect_the_environment/water/hydromorphology_surface_water_alterations.htm



**Creating prosperity and well being
through environment and heritage
excellence**

NIEA Planning Response Team
Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Malone Lower
Belfast
BT7 2JA
T: (028) 9056 9604
E: PlanningResponse.Team@doeni.gov.uk