

Natural England's standing advice for protected species

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningdevelopment/spatialplanning/standingadvice/default.aspx>

Issue date: 22 Feb 2011 under review (replaced regional standing advice 2009)

Scope and content

Our standing advice provides advice to planners on deciding if there is a 'reasonable likelihood' of protected species being present and advice on survey and mitigation requirements. It is a material consideration in the determination of applications in the same way as any individual response received from Natural England following consultation.

The standing advice replaces the individual responses we would have made in the following circumstances:

- Applications containing mitigation proposals for certain species covered by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (water vole, white-clawed crayfish, common reptiles, barn owls, other breeding birds not protected by Schedule 1).
- Advice on mitigation proposals for badgers

Validation requirements

Our standing advice represents Natural England's advice on planning applications that may affect protected species and where there are no other issues. It does not replace the local lists published by local authorities which specify the information that must accompany a planning application for it to be valid.

Centralised consultation hubs and standard letters

Applications received by centralised hubs is logged, tracked and screened. Higher risk cases come directly to operations teams (e.g. Land Use Operations Cambridge). Lower risk cases are responded to by hubs with use of standard letters. These responses include applications affecting European Protected Species, such as bats, great crested newts etc. For complex protected species cases the hub can refer to our internal protected species network for further advice or hand case over to the relevant operations team.

Internal project reviewing lower risk consultations

Currently, Kate Whitehead is reviewing all local authorities to look at patterns of consultation to Natural England focussing on those authorities which receive a high % of hub responses. To reduce numbers down to those we are currently resourced for, on average local authorities need to reduce their consultations by about 6 per year. Target is for all authorities to reduce their consultations by 1%.

For any feedback on standing advice, please contact landuse@naturalengland.org.uk. The review will be finalised in the next couple of weeks and LPAs will receive information via a mailing at the end of July.

Questions:

1. How useful is standing advice?
2. How useful are standard letters?
3. Is 1% reduction in low risk consultations realistic?