



Stakeholder Update on the Full Roll-Out of Chargeable Advisory Services for Planning and Licensing Proposals (March 2013)

Natural England is rolling out two chargeable services from the beginning of April 2013.

- The Pre-submission Screening Service (PSS) for European Protected Species mitigation licence applications.
- The Discretionary Advice Service (DAS) to provide discretionary pre-application and post-consent advice on planning/licensing proposals to developers and consultants.

Natural England implemented a limited pilot of these two services in July 2012, in order to test these in preparation for a wider roll-out in 2013. The aim of the services is to help applicants take appropriate account of environmental considerations at an early stage of plan development. For applicants, this can reduce uncertainty and the risk of delay and added cost at a later stage, whilst securing good results for the natural environment.

Having reviewed the progress, learning and feedback from the limited launch phase, we have now taken the decision to proceed with a full roll-out of these services with effect from the beginning of April 2013. The full roll-out will involve the implementation of the Discretionary Advice Service as our standard offer for all new pre-application cases, including Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and offshore work. We will also be widening the availability of the new Pre-submission Screening Service in response to customer demand.

The Discretionary Advice Service is geared towards cases with the potential for significant impact on protected sites, landscapes/seascapes and species, or those which could deliver significant environmental gain. Natural England will offer a level of initial advice, free of charge, to help identify key issues and opportunities on a development proposal. The developer/consultant would then have the option of paying for further access to Natural England's advice to help in the further development of their proposals. The Discretionary Advice Service also covers the post consent stages of marine development proposals.

The new Pre-Submission Screening Service enables potential applicants for a European Protected Species licence to find out whether their plans are likely to meet licensing requirements prior to the submission of a formal application.

During the limited launch period we have trained our staff in how to offer and deliver these new services. We have continued to take soundings from potential customers and stakeholders on the design of these services and used feedback from customers and staff to refine the offer.

Demand for our new Pre-submission Screening Service for wildlife licences has been particularly high and in February we reached maximum capacity in terms of the number of cases we were able to take on during the limited launch. The limited launch has enabled us to assess the demand for this service and we now have further resources in place to help deliver this new service.

For further information on the Discretionary Advice Service visit:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/discretionaryadvice/service.

For further information on the Pre-submission Screening Service visit:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/species/epsscreening.aspx.