

Operations Note 027

November 2016

Natural England Consent for Work in Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Purpose

This Note explains how you can apply for Natural England's consent for works on or adjacent to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), at the same time as applying for a Felling Licence or woodland grant agreement from the Forestry Commission. This also applies to Licences given as part of Woodland Management Plans prepared for Forestry Commission approval.

Context

Land managers **must** always obtain consent from Natural England before undertaking any operations listed in a SSSI notification, including those non-felling operations which relate to any grant application or Felling Licence proposal on land designated as a SSSI. This requirement is over and above any consultation the Forestry Commission (FC) may undertake with Natural England (NE) on your application.

To speed up and streamline the process, we will obtain Natural England's consent for you when processing your application to us. This means that when you receive the approved woodland plan, grant agreement or Felling Licence you will also be able to receive Natural England's consent. This consent may list additional conditions. By following this process you can get the necessary permissions quicker and begin the work sooner.

To enable us to do this you must complete a [Supplementary Notice of Operations within a SSSI](#) and send this to us with your grant or licence application. **If you do not provide this form you must still obtain consent from Natural England independently at a later date and before you start any tree or forestry work.**

To help both us and Natural England process your application as quickly as possible we will usually arrange a joint pre-application or application site visit with you and your Natural England advisor.

Background

Procedures to control operations in SSSIs are set out in Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (W&C Act). This is to ensure that the work is appropriate to the site and safeguards the SSSI's special features.

All owners and occupiers of SSSI land are legally obliged to seek Natural England's prior consent for any operations listed in a SSSI notification that they may wish to undertake or permit others to undertake. Natural England's consent and any conditions listed must be provided in a separate consent (issued under section 28E of the W&C Act). Therefore, land managers have so far had to apply to both the FC and Natural England to get approval for woodland works in a SSSI.

For work on land adjacent to a SSSI, formal SSSI consent is not required but Natural England may wish to advise the land manager of precautions to consider, so that their work does not harm the SSSI's features.

Making your application

So that we can process your application as quickly as possible, by sending Natural England's consent decision with your Felling Licence or grant Agreement, it is strongly recommended you complete the Supplementary Notice of Operations within a SSSI.

This form collects the additional information Natural England need to determine their consent and any conditions that should apply. It constitutes your notice to Natural England of the operations you plan to undertake or permit which require their consent.

This form is available on the [FC website](#) and should be submitted with your application.

If you do not send this form with your application, we will still process your application, consulting with Natural England over the felling proposals as normal. However, **you will still need to apply independently to Natural England for their consent before starting work.**

If you submit the form, we will send Natural England your Supplementary Notice of Operations so they can make an informed decision on whether to give consent. This will usually mean that we will conduct a joint site visit to look at the application together with you.

Where Natural England gives their consent for the work, we will send you a letter from them confirming their decision (and any conditions identified) together with the grant agreement or Felling Licence.

Applications which may affect the SSSI:

Where the application is on land outside a SSSI, Natural England's consent is not required. However, we will consult with them and any advice they provide on preventing damage to the site's interest features will be sent to you for information when we send your grant agreement or Felling Licence. We may take account of this advice in any conditions attached to a grant agreement or Felling Licence.

Completing your Supplementary Notice of Operations on SSSIs

The Supplementary Notice of Operations comprises a series of questions related to other woodland management operations listed in the SSSI notification, which you may also need to carry out in order to fell trees. The Notice allows you to provide further information about when, where and how this work will be delivered within the SSSI area.

You must provide full and clear details about the specific nature of the proposed non-felling operations, how you propose to carry out and manage those operations and where and when within the SSSI they would take place. This information will allow Natural England to check that the work proposed will not harm the SSSI's special wildlife and to decide whether to give their consent to the operations.

It is recommended that you always contact your Natural England adviser for further advice and help on completing the form, either before or during the joint application site visit.

Sources of further advice

The [Grants and Regulations website](#) contains all the information you need to apply for grant support. Alternatively, you can request this information from your local [Forestry Commission office](#).

Versions

Version 1.0 issued May 2012.

Version 2.0 issued March 2015.

Version 3.0 issued November 2016.