

Your Reference:
Our reference:

Heads of Planning
Local Planning Authorities

19 December 2023

Dear Head of Planning

Planning Consultations for Agricultural Developments

Further to my letter dated 12 December 2023, I am writing to update you on the position the Agency will now adopt when providing advice on behalf of the Department as a statutory consultee to the planning process.

Following careful consideration of concerns raised by the Office for Environmental Protection about the Agency's decision to resume reliance on its published Ammonia Standing Advice as the basis for statutory advice on planning applications, the Department has decided that the Agency will no longer rely on the Standing Advice and will instead provide competent authorities with case and site-specific advice (on a case-by-case basis) until such times as a new ammonia strategy and updated standing advice have been agreed and are in place.

The case-by-case advice we will provide will continue to use the existing 7.5km screening distance and present key scientific facts to help inform your decisions, such as:

- Critical Levels and Loads (extracted from the Air Pollution Information System - APIS^[1]) for each designated site;

^[1] [Air Pollution Information System | Air Pollution Information System \(apis.ac.uk\)](#)

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- Current levels of ammonia and NOx concentrations (if applicable) and nitrogen deposition (extracted from APIS) for each designated site;
- Process contribution as a percentage of the Critical Level/Load;
- Predicted Environmental Concentration (background + PC) as a percentage of the Critical Level/Load Sensitivity and condition of the habitat(s) based on best available scientific information;
- Latest statistics on ammonia/NOx emissions (if applicable) extracted from the NI Environmental Statistics Report (2023)[2]. We will use a nugatory 0.08% threshold to inform the NIEA response. This is in line within the scientific findings of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's (JNCC) 'Guidance on Decision Making Thresholds for Air Pollution 2021'[3] reports.

We will be implementing this measure immediately when responding to planning consultations that have issued to us and for any future consultations received until such times as a new ammonia strategy and updated standing advice have been agreed and are in in place.

We also advise you to no longer rely on the published Ammonia Standing Advice when making determinations.

Under the circumstances, we understand that you may wish to reconsult us on specific applications, and we will be happy to provide further advice. We are also happy to discuss any of the cases with you.

Yours sincerely,



Liz Loughran

Natural Environment Division - NIEA

[2] daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/ni-environmental-statistics-report-2023.pdf

[3] [Guidance on Decision-making Thresholds for Air Pollution | JNCC Resource Hub](#)

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