

## Landspreading deployment workshop

The Environment Agency held a workshop on 12 January 2018 to meet with landspreading deployment customers to listen to their feedback about our service.

We asked our customers to tell us about:

- The main challenges they experience with our current service
- Their priorities for changes in our service and processes
- Ideas on how we can work together better to improve application quality and determination times
- Their thoughts about pre-application advice for deployments

We have summarised their responses in the table 'Summary of customer feedback on permitting & priorities for change' below.

Key areas that our customers identified as significant issues and priorities for change were:

- Overall timescales
- Renewals process
- Communication during determination
- General communication and engagement about service levels and change
- Lack of technical understanding and industry awareness
- Consistency of service

Pre-application is not currently a formal part of our deployment permitting process however we discussed whether customers may have a requirement for it.

Our customers told us:

- They seek informal advice through area officers that feed into the approval process.
- They may benefit from pre-app advice on permits more than deployments.
- Liaising with area officers is sometimes difficult/not possible or they can't give the advice needed.
- Larger operators liaise with NLOs but smaller operators don't have one, or don't know who it is.

## Summary of customer feedback on permitting & priorities for change

Timeliness	Information	Professionalism	Attitude	Results
Feel we rarely meet the 25 day charter. Improving overall timescales and having clarity over how long it will take is a key priority.	We make too many requests for information, they are sometimes vague and don't appear risk-based.	Feel as though they are sometimes training our new staff – this should not be the case.	We should take a more practical and pragmatic approach to decision making.	There is a lack of consistency between NPS and area staff over local arrangements.
We need to better understand & appreciate the timelines that matter to business.	Our officers don't always understand what they are asking for & why. As a result, comments from area or specialists are copied & pasted and irrelevant, stock questions asked.	Some of our staff lack technical knowledge & our service lacks sufficient technical expertise. They would benefit from onsite training with area teams.	We should accept that mistakes sometimes happen in applications and be less challenging with customers when they occur.	The process worked better when there was a specialist group working on deployments.
You feel we only work on applications when you are chasing us up.	We sometimes refer to protected sites customers can't see due to differences in our mapping tools.	Turnover of staff is detrimental to our service.	Some of our communications around waste disposal feel like accusations.	The process for variations of deployments is not clear and not consistently handled by areas.
There is no rationale why some similar applications take longer than others.	Applications disappear into a black hole. We need to be more transparent about progress.	Customers value the ability to discuss applications directly with our staff.	Officers don't manage own time – customers often receive an out of office response when replying to ambiguous requests.	Our process is fit for purpose when it works at its best.
Our current levels of service make it very hard for customers to plan (3 to 4 months in advance is not realistic for industry).	More communication with trade bodies & tailored engagement for smaller operators whose views may not be represented by vocal trade bodies.	Customers are frustrated when there is nobody they can speak to about problems or delays during determination.		Customer experience depends very much on the individual Permitting Officer that determines the application.
The process would be faster if applications went straight to the determining officer. The first stage in the process adds no value for customers.	Regular pro-active engagement through face to face meetings as well as direct written communication, particularly around changes.	Not all operators have an area contact (NLO) for their business		Standardised templates would help customers but our service needs to be more consistent to help develop these.
We should avoid peaks and troughs of work by allowing renewal of deployments in advance and streamlining this process with a tick box and minimal assessment.	Use of Twitter & other social media to share landspreading news to supplement more formal communication.			SEPA process allows operator to assume deployment ok if not determined within 25 days. This places burden of risk on operator.
The clock should start when we receive an application.	Different application routes including online submission.			
Customers want sufficient lead-in time (~2 years) & to better understand reasons for changes within permitting.	A single interface to replace repetition in Ag Ben Statement & LPD1			