

Operations Note 027

15 August 2019

# Natural England consent for work in Sites of Special Scientific Interest

## Purpose

This Operations Note explains how you can apply for Natural England's consent for works on 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 felling permissions sought as part of Woodland Management Plans prepared for Forestry Commission approval.

## 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 attached, is provided in a separate consent letter (issued under section 28E of the W&C Act).

Previously, land managers have had to apply to both the Forestry Commission and Natural England to get separate approvals for woodland work in a SSSI, but by following this process you can get the necessary permissions quicker and begin the work sooner.

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

## Context

Land managers **must** always obtain consent from Natural England before undertaking any operations listed in a SSSI notification. This includes non-felling operations that relate to any grant or felling licence proposal on land designated as a SSSI. The requirement to obtain SSSI consent is over and above any consultation the Forestry Commission may undertake with Natural England on your application.

To speed up and streamline the process, the Forestry Commission 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.

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.

### Making your application

So that we can complete the processing of your application for work on a SSSI as quickly as possible, and to allow us to send 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 is available on the [Forestry Commission website](#) and should be submitted with your application.

If you do not send this form with your application then:

- We will still process your application, consulting with Natural England over the felling proposals as normal. **However, you will still need to apply separately to Natural England for their consent before starting work.**

If you do submit the form with your application then:

- We will send Natural England a copy of your Supplementary Notice of Operations so they can make an informed decision on whether to give consent.

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.

### Completing a Supplementary Notice of Operations form

The Supplementary Notice of Operations form comprises a series of questions relating to woodland management operations commonly listed in the SSSI notification, and which you may also need to carry out in order to fell trees.

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

It asks you to 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 protected features and 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.

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 outside, but 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.

### Sources of further advice

If you would like any advice about how your proposals may impact a SSSI, or on completing this Notice, please contact your local Natural England Area Team.

You can also [search online for more information about your SSSI](#).

You can also find out [what you can do on or near an SSSI, when you need consent for other activities, and how Natural England can help you manage your SSSI land](#).

Alternatively, you can seek this information from your local [Forestry Commission office](#).

### Versions

Version	Date issued	Changes made
1.0	May 2012	
2.0	Mar 2015	
3.0	Nov 2017	
4.0	Aug 2019	Significant redraft as part of wider review