



Customer charter

Being the best we can for our customers and the environment

We are The Environment Agency. It's our job to look after your environment and make it **a better place** – for you, and for future generations.

Your environment is the air you breathe, the water you drink and the ground you walk on. Working with business, Government and society as a whole, we are making your environment cleaner and healthier.

The Environment Agency. Out there, making your environment a better place

Published by:

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Putting customer at the heart of everything we do

As the largest environmental organisation in Europe, we have a big responsibility to safeguard the environment. What we do makes a difference - so it is essential that we really know our customers so that you can help us get the environmental outcomes we all need.

You might be a business we regulate, a person who wants a rod licence or flooding advice, an enquirer who needs information from us or an internal customer. Whoever you are – it's important to us to provide you with an excellent service making sure we listen to what you say and engage with you whether you are a partner, stakeholder or a community with an environmental concern. That's why we put our customers at the heart of everything we do.

Why have a charter?

It is very important to us that, as a customer, you understand what we do and why we do it. We want to be easy to do business with and like any other customer focused organisation we need to be clear about the experience you have with us and the level of service you can expect from us, every time you contact us. This charter sets out the key standards we work to and which we measure our performance against every day.

Making us easy to do business with

We are committed to breaking down any barriers that might exist to access our services and help us communicate with you.

Should you wish to talk to our staff in a language other than English we have access to services that can help. For example:

The National Register of Public Service Interpreters for any face to face meetings with you if English is not your first language.

Language Line - a facility for customers to speak to us in their own language on the telephone.

If you have a hearing impairment then you can use the RNID recommended **Typetalk** service by dialling 18001.

The accessibility standards that we aim to reach on our website www.environment-agency.gov.uk are level Double-A of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0.

As the Environment Agency for England and Wales we provide all our public information in both **Welsh** and **English** language.

Communications is a two way thing and we know that we need to understand our customers better. So we have invested resources in a programme of independent, external market research to measure the quality and standards of how we deliver our services. We need to know where we are getting it right and where we need to improve – it's about making sure we do a good job and that you understand what we are saying about environmental issues and can therefore act on our advice.

Our ways of working

Whatever your enquiry or request we think you should expect a standard of work from us that gives you confidence in our knowledge and abilities.

That's why as an organisation we have developed a 5 point tool to evaluate our approach to service delivery. We want to make sure:

- We get the information you want from us on time
- You get the right information from us
- We are always professional in the way we do business with you
- We have a positive and respectful attitude to you
- We provide you with the result you want

The standards of service you can expect from us

This charter lists some of the most important service standards you can rely on us to deliver. Some relate to the ways we communicate with you and others to specific services you might want to use or access from us.

Answering phone calls made to the National Customer Contact Centre

We will answer 90% of calls within 15 seconds during normal working hours (8am-6pm, Monday to Friday)

Responding to enquiries made to the National Customer Contact Centre

We will acknowledge your letter or email immediately and provide a full written response within 10 working days. If we cannot do this, we will let you know when you can expect to hear from us.

If your enquiry or request is more complex we will aim to send you a full response within 20 working days as set out in the Freedom of Information Act. For requests under the Data Protection Act, we will send a full response within 40 days.

Floodline Information Service

We will answer 90% of calls to Floodline within 15 seconds (a Welsh-speaking service is also available).

We will send out 99% of Floodline information packs by the next working day.

Flood warnings

We will provide river and coastal flood warnings at least two hours before flooding happens in areas where we are able to provide a service.

Permits and licences

We receive a wide range of applications for permits and licences across our business.

As long as you have provided us with all the information we need, included the appropriate fee and there are no complicating factors such as confidentiality decisions, you can expect us to process them within the following timescales:

5 working days

- Registration of waste exemptions (except T11 repair and refurbishment of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment [WEEE])
- Recording declarations and proposed imports of radioactive substances from other EU member states under Council Regulation 1493/93 (Shipments of Radioactive Substances between EU member states).

10 working days

- Navigation licence
- Rod licence
- Hazardous waste producer notification (premises registration)
- National flood and coastal defence database enquiry.

15 working days

- Boat registration licence
- Registration of exemptions for:
 - Small discharges of sewage effluent to surface water or groundwater
 - Small discharges of substances to groundwater for scientific purposes
 - Vegetation management activities (weed cutting).

20 working days

- Consent to stock fish
- Mobile plant deployment form.
- Notification of transfer or surrender of a standalone water discharge or groundwater activity.

25 working days

- Registration of T11 waste exemptions (repair and refurbishment of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment [WEEE])
- Renewal of complex waste exemptions (paragraphs 6, 7, 9, 10, 19, 45 and 46) during the transitional period. The transitional period is when holders of these exemptions are required to re-register in the new exemptions system or get a permit (see [‘Table of transitional provisions’](#) document on our

website for information on the transitional periods: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/exemptions)

2 months

- Waste carrier or broker registration. The law gives us up to 2 months to process your registration but, in most cases, we are much quicker than this.
- Land drainage consent
- Transfer or partial transfer of an environmental permit for an installation or waste or mining waste operation
- Renewal of a paragraph 40 waste exemption (repair or refurbishment of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment [WEEE]) during the transition period. The transition period is when holders of these exemptions are required to re-register in the new exemptions system or get a permit. (see '[Table of transitional provisions](#)' document on our [website](#) for information:

30 working days

- International waste shipment notification

3 months

- Water abstraction or impoundment licence (taking and storing water from rivers, lakes and underground sources)
- Standard permit under the Environmental Permitting Regulations (except for installations)
- Minor or normal variation of an environmental permit (variation is the legal term for changing a permit or licence)
- Surrender or partial surrender of an environmental permit for an installation or waste or mining waste operation (surrender is the legal term for returning a permit or licence to us when it is not longer needed)
- Authorise export or import of radioactive waste or spent nuclear fuel under the Transfrontier Shipment of Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Regulations 2008.

4 months

- Standard permit for installations
- Bespoke permit under the Environmental Permitting Regulations
- Substantial variation to an environmental permit (with public participation).

If your application for a permit or licence is more complex because of other legislation or planning constraints, then we may need to agree a different timescale with you.

If we have to refuse your application, we will explain why.

Give us your feedback

Whatever your reason for contacting the Environment Agency we want to make sure your experience, and the quality of service you receive, is consistent throughout our organisation. So if we don't get it right then we want you to tell us what happened and how we could do things better.

What do I do if I'm not happy with the service I've received?

Firstly contact the person or service you used and tell them what went wrong.

If you are unsure who to contact then email your comment or complaint to enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

We will send you an acknowledgment immediately and, if your complaint is not complex, send you a full response within 10 working days. If we need to investigate further we will let you know when you can expect a full reply from us.

Who do I contact if you've done something well?

We always like to receive positive feedback so if you'd like to tell us that we did a good job you can email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk or write to:

National Customer Contact Centre,

PO Box 544

Rotherham

S60 1BY

**Would you like to find out more about us,
or about your environment?**

Then call us on

08708 506 506* (Mon-Fri 8-6)

email

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

or visit our website

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)

floodline 0845 988 1188

* Approximate call costs: 8p plus 6p per minute (standard landline).
Please note charges will vary across telephone providers



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