

PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE: CEMETERIES

WATER MANAGEMENT UNIT

A Guidance Note for Planning Officers and Applicants Seeking Planning Permission for New Cemeteries and Extensions to Existing Cemeteries.

August 2011

CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. Scope	3
2. Introduction	3
3. WMUs Role in the Planning System	3
4 Responding To Planning Consultations for Cemeteries	3
5. Statutory Water Quality Requirements for Cemeteries	4
6. Pollution Prevention Advice	4
7. What Should I Include In My Planning Application?	5
8. How Do I Contact Water Management Unit?	7

1. Scope

- 1.1 This document is intended to be a quick reference guide for Planning Officers or potential planning applicants intending to make, a planning application for a new cemetery development. It also covers extensions to existing cemetery developments.
- 1.2 More detailed information on how Water Management Unit interacts with the Planning System can be found in the document titled 'Water Management Unit General Planning Guidance Note – A Guidance Note for Planning Officers and Applicants for Planning Permission'. This can be found on the NIEA website at http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/water-home/development_management.htm.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Water Management Unit (WMU) is the unit within the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) with responsibility for the protection of the water environment.

3. WMUs Role in the Planning System

- 3.1 The role of WMU in the planning system is to act as a consultee to the Department of the Environment (DOE) Planning Division.
- 3.2 Once an applicant makes a planning application, DOE Planning Division will forward consultees a copy of the application form, all relevant plans and any other supporting documents that are submitted with the planning application. The role of WMU is thus to advise DOE Planning Division of the likely or potential impacts of the proposed development on the water environment during its construction, operation and eventual decommission, if applicable.

4. Responding to Planning Consultations for Cemetery Developments

- 4.1 WMU will assess all the information submitted to it as part of the application from DOE Planning Division. WMU will then identify any potential impacts on the water environment that have not been adequately addressed in the application, and advise DOE Planning Division accordingly.
- 4.2 WMU may request further information from the applicant through DOE Planning Division. This may delay a planning decision. Section 7 of this document outlines what information should be included in the application, in relation to the proposed cemetery developments' potential impact on the water environment.

- 4.3 It is important to note that WMU only advises DOE Planning Division. It cannot make a decision on whether or not a planning application receives planning permission. DOE Planning Division is responsible for deciding whether or not planning permission will be granted.
- 4.4 WMU is committed to working with applicants, through DOE Planning Division, where a risk to the water environment has been identified.

5. Statutory Water Quality Requirements for Cemeteries

- 5.1 WMU is required under the Water Framework Directive¹ to improve or maintain the quality of all our waters, both surface and groundwater. WMU also has a duty to protect surface water and groundwater quality under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999² and the Groundwater Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009³. **It is important to note that these pieces of legislation apply to extensions to existing cemeteries as well as proposed new cemetery developments.**
- 5.2 Cemetery developments have the potential to impact upon groundwater. Once in the ground the body and coffin will begin to decay. As this happens fluids can leach out and may eventually work their way down to the groundwater underlying the site. This fluid may contain embalming fluid, pathogens/microbes and nitrogen compounds which could contaminate groundwater. In some cases it may also pose a health risk if it contaminates a groundwater or surface water fed drinking water source.
- 5.3 As groundwater can travel considerable distances underground [and with it any pollutants contained in the groundwater] it is necessary to consider the risk of groundwater contamination when planning new, or extensions to existing cemeteries.

6. Pollution Prevention Advice

- 6.1 WMU will recommend that the developer strictly follows the guidance provided by the relevant Pollution Prevention Guidelines (PPGs) during the construction and operation of cemetery developments. PPGs can be downloaded at <http://www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs/links/107968.aspx> . PPGs are targeted at a particular industrial sector or activity. They outline statutory responsibilities and provide guidance on good practice to reduce pollution risk.

¹ Water Framework Directive, Directive 2000/60/EC

² Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, SI 1999, No.662

³ Groundwater Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009, SR 2009, No.254

6.2 The most relevant PPGs for cemetery developments are:

- PPG 1 – General guide to the prevention of pollution;
- PPG 4 - Treatment and disposal of sewage where no foul sewer is available
- PPG 5 – Works and maintenance in or near water;

This list is not exhaustive; advice offered by other PPG's may be relevant to specific projects.

6.3 WMU may also offer site specific advice on a case by case basis.

7. What Should I Include In My Planning Application?

7.1 WMU has no statutory authority to require particular information to be included in a planning application. It is the duty of DOE Planning Division to inform applicants as to what information they are required to include.

7.2 However, it is in the interest of the applicant to provide enough information in their planning application to enable WMU to make an informed and timely response to DOE Planning Division.

7.3 To allow WMU to comment fully on the impacts of a proposed cemetery development, WMU will require a site investigation and risk assessment of the site, all presented in a written report. This report should contain:

- A Desktop Study;
- An Intrusive Site Investigation Report;
- A Risk Assessment; and
- A Map of the proposed site layout. (This is the final stage, as the above tasks will inform the site planning).

Further information and detail on the above requirements can be obtained from the following NIEA Guidance Note:

- ***‘Cemeteries, Burials & The Water Environment’***

Which can be downloaded at:

<http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/cemeteryguidance.pdf> (.PDF 884Kb)

- 7.4 Your application should also include a site drainage plan indicating:
- how storm water from carparks and other hardstanding areas will be disposed off, and;
 - details of how sewage and wash waters will be disposed off from any toilet blocks planned as part of the development.
- 7.5 WMU recommends the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to deal with uncontaminated site drainage. Construction of SuDS should comply with the design and construction standards as set out in the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) manual C697⁴. A separate site handbook (C698) for the construction of SuDS has also been produced by CIRIA⁵.
- 7.6 WMU recommends toilets and/or any wash water facilities should connect to a mains sewer, where available, and providing that the sewer and associated Waste Water Treatment Works can take the additional load. Northern Ireland Water can advise if this is possible.
- 7.7 If a mains sewer is not available the applicant may wish to explore the use of a package treatment plant. If the package treatment plant will discharge to a waterway or underground stratum it will require a consent to discharge issued under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. You can apply for a discharge consent online at the following address:
http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/apply_online.htm
- 7.8 Not all of the information detailed above will be appropriate for every planning application; the level of detail required will be dependent upon site specific factors. However, every effort should be made by the applicant to include all relevant information, as failure to do so may result in WMU requesting missing information. This may delay the issue of a planning decision.
- 7.9 You should contact WMU if you require any further information on WMUs requirements(see Section 8) .

⁴ Construction Industry Research and Information Association (Feb 2007), The SuDS Manual C697.

⁵ Construction Industry Research and Information Association (Feb 2007), Site Handbook for the Construction of SuDS C698.

8. How Do I Contact Water Management Unit?

8.1 In the first instance you can find a raft of useful information on our website at <http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/>.

8.2 Alternatively you can request information through our Information Management Team via email: waterinfo@doeni.gov.uk

8.3 You may wish to write to us at:

Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Water Management Unit
17 Antrim Road
Lisburn
BT28 3AL

8.4 Or you can contact us by telephone on the following number: 028 92 623 100.

