

Lead Local Flood Authority Advice Service

Guidance and Terms of Service

Version 1.2 August 2026



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Version Control

Version	Date	Description
1.0	December 2025	Publication version.
1.1	April 2026	Update to 'Table 4: Ordinary Watercourse Consent Advice Fees' and 'Table 5: Planning Application Advice Fees' to reflect the fees and charges for 2026/2027.
1.2	August 2026	Section 2.5 updated to reflect the new digital application process and to clarify the information and supporting evidence required for advice requests. Table 3 added. Consequential amendments made to section and table numbering throughout the document. Section 3.5 amended to require payment within 28 days rather than 30 days.



1. Introduction

1.1. About the service

Lancashire County Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, operates a charged advice service to support applicants in two key areas: preparing applications for ordinary watercourse consent and meeting national and local requirements for surface water flood risk and sustainable drainage system design for major developments with surface water drainage, where the Lead Local Flood Authority is a statutory consultee within the planning process.

Applicants can access our advice service before, during and after submitting a major planning application, and before submitting an ordinary watercourse consent application. This helps applicants demonstrate compliance with relevant policies, guidance, and standards, while reducing the risk of delays, consent refusals, and planning objections from the Lead Local Flood Authority. The service also assists with issue resolution and detailed design, where applicable.

Two advice products are available, as shown in [Table 1](#), reflecting how applicants typically engage with us.

Table 1: Overview of advice products and who they are for

Product	Who it's for
Ordinary Watercourse Consent Advice	Those applying for ordinary watercourse consent outside the planning process
Planning Application Advice (including Ordinary Watercourse Consent Advice)	Those requiring advice on surface water flood risk and sustainable drainage system design as part of a major planning application, with integrated ordinary watercourse consent support

Important: The Lead Local Flood Authority cannot provide detailed, technical advice on applying Standard 4 (Water Quality), Standard 5 (Amenity), or Standard 6 (Biodiversity) of the National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems. Applicants should seek specialist input on these aspects where required.

This document explains how to access the service and sets out the procedure and charging arrangements for each product type.

See [Section 2](#) for product details, [Section 3](#) for fees and charges, and [Section 4](#) for terms of service.



1.2. Early engagement

We strongly encourage early discussions before submitting your ordinary watercourse consent application or major planning application. Early engagement helps identify issues and improve proposals before formal submission. Typical benefits include:

- Identifying potential issues early, reducing delays and costly redesigns later in the process,
- Opportunities to explore alternative approaches to works on ordinary watercourses that are less intrusive or have lower flood risk and environmental impact,
- A clearer understanding of required documentation and standards, helping to streamline decision-making,
- Higher quality proposals that are policy-compliant and technically robust, reducing the risk of consent refusal or planning objections from the Lead Local Flood Authority.

For more details on the benefits of accessing our advice service, see [Section 2.2](#).

If advice is not sought or followed, or if proposals do not meet published policy, guidance, and standards without explanation, the following applies:

- **Ordinary watercourse consent applications** – The Lead Local Flood Authority will determine the application based on the design, justification, and supporting evidence submitted, which may result in refusal if requirements are not met.
- **Major planning applications** – The Lead Local Flood Authority will respond to the Local Planning Authority based solely on the information and evidence provided as part of the statutory consultation, which may result in objections if requirements are not met.

1.3. Other advice services

A separate pre-application advice service is available from Lancashire County Council, as the Highway Authority, for highway matters. Advice on these matters is not included in this service, and more information is available at:

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/business/business-services/pre-planning-application-advice-service/pre-planning-application-highways-advice-service>.



2. Accessing Our Advice Service

2.1. Our advice services

We offer two advice products designed to reflect how applicants typically engage with us. [Table 2](#) provides an overview of each product and its key features.

Table 2: Overview of advice products and key features

Product	Who it's for	Key features
Ordinary Watercourse Consent Advice	Applicants preparing works requiring consent under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, outside the planning process	Covers permanent and temporary structures, including culverts, mill dams, weirs, and other like obstructions to flow
Planning Application Advice (including Ordinary Watercourse Consent Advice)	Applicants preparing major planning applications where the Lead Local Flood Authority is a statutory consultee	Includes advice on surface water flood risk, sustainable drainage system design, and integrated ordinary watercourse consent support, where applicable

See [Section 3](#) for product fees, site size bands, and indicative turnaround times for both Standard and Fast Track options.

2.2. What benefits you will get

Accessing our advice service offers the following benefits:

- Clear, tailored advice on how national and local requirements apply to your proposal, including Lancashire County Council's ordinary watercourse regulation policies and guidance, the National Planning Policy Framework, the Planning Practice Guidance, and the National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems.
- Clarification on the level of supporting evidence required for ordinary watercourse consent and/or planning applications, reducing the time your professional advisors spend formulating and revising proposals.
- Early identification of potential issues that could lead to ordinary watercourse consent refusal or planning objections from the Lead Local Flood Authority, helping you avoid delays and costly redesigns later in the process.
- For ordinary watercourse works, clarity on whether proposals are likely to be consentable, the evidence required for a valid application, and how best to sequence consent with planning permissions.
- Fast Track option available for quicker turnaround where time is critical for your proposal – see [Section 3](#) for fees and indicative timescales.



Important: While early engagement can help reduce risks and delays, it does not guarantee that consent will be granted or that objections will not be raised.

2.3. How the service works

We deliver our advice through a clear, structured process. The three steps are shown in [Figure 1](#) below.

Figure 1: Overview of advice service steps

Step 1 – Validation and Payment

We will review your application promptly and confirm its validation status within 7 days, including:

- Whether the service is suitable for your proposal
- Whether your request is valid and all required evidence has been provided
- If not valid, what additional information is needed

Once validated, we will issue an invoice for the Base Fee (unless the service is not suitable).

Step 2 – Technical Meeting

After validation and payment, we will arrange a technical meeting to discuss your proposal in detail.

Meeting details:

- **Timing:** Within 14 or 28 calendar days depending on if fast track has been selected, as outlined within [Section 3](#)
- **Duration:** Up to 1 hour for Ordinary Watercourse Consent Advice; up to 2 hours for Planning Application Advice
- **Format:** Online via Microsoft Teams or in person at a Lancashire County Council venue or on site (confirmed after payment)

Step 3 – Written Advice

Following the meeting, we will provide written advice summarising key discussion points and recommendations. This will be:

- Issued within 7 calendar days of the meeting, as outlined within [Section 3](#)
- Valid for 12 months from the date of issue

If issues are complex or the indicative timescale cannot be met, we will contact you to agree a revised timeframe.



2.4. Additional engagement

Further engagement can be arranged if your project requires more time or additional meetings beyond the standard service offer. Where requested, this will be:

- Subject to an additional fee (see [Section 3](#) for details of hourly rates and meeting charges),
- Only provided if all previously agreed actions have been addressed to the satisfaction of the Lead Local Flood Authority.

For larger or complex schemes, multiple stages may be required. In such cases, an approach will be agreed with all parties, and additional fees may apply at each stage.

2.5. What we need from you

To help us provide meaningful and timely advice, you should:

- Complete the Lead Local Flood Authority Advice Service Application Form, ensuring you provide the minimum information required to validate your request. Whilst we understand that some details may not be available upfront, a basic level of information is needed to understand your proposal and the advice you are seeking. Without this information, we may be unable to provide advice.
- Submit any relevant plans, drawings, calculations, assessments and supporting documents that will help us understand your proposal. These can be either preliminary or detailed, depending on the stage of your project. The information normally required or recommended for each type of advice request is shown in [Table 3](#) below.

Table 3: Information and supporting evidence requirements

	✓ Required	⚠ Recommended	✗ Not required
Evidence Type	Ordinary Watercourse Consent Advice Only	Planning Application Advice	
Location plan	✓	✓	
Existing site plan	✓	✓	
Proposed site plan	✓	✓	
Drawings, plans and sections	⚠	⚠	
Hydrological calculations	⚠	⚠	
Hydraulic calculations	⚠	⚠	
Flood Risk Assessment	✗	⚠	
Surface water drainage strategy	✗	⚠	
Drainage calculations	✗	⚠	
Catchment plan	⚠	⚠	

- Be familiar with relevant policies, guidance, and standards, as shown in [Table 4](#).

Table 4: Policies, guidance, and standards applicable to each product

Policy / Guidance / Standards	Ordinary Watercourse Consent	Planning Application
Lancashire County Council Ordinary Watercourse Regulation Policies	✓	✓
Lancashire County Council Ordinary Watercourse Regulation Guidance	✓	✓
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	-	✓
National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)	-	✓
National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems	-	✓
Relevant Local Planning Policies (refer to the Local Planning Authority website)	-	✓

- Ensure proposals are developed in line with national and local requirements to avoid delays and costly redesigns later in the process.
- Highlight and explain any deviations from current policy, guidance, or standards.

3. Our Fees and Charges

3.1. How we calculate your fees

The total fee for accessing our advice service comprises:

Fee type	Description	When it applies
Base Fee	Main fee for the accessing this advice service. Includes product options, turnaround times and fees (see Table 4 and Table 5)	Always applies once your request is validated.
Additional Fees	Charged if extra hours or meetings are needed for complex projects or revised proposals. We will notify you before applying these fees	Only if extra engagement is requested or required.

Note:

- All fees and charges are reviewed and amended annually.
- Charges for this service are separate from statutory planning and consent fees. These statutory fees do not cover the cost of providing this advice. The council only recovers costs associated with delivering this service to ensure best value and protect the council taxpayer.

3.2. Our charging structure

Your Base Fee will be either the Standard fee or Fast Track fee shown in [Table 5](#) or [Table 6](#) below.

- All fees are exclusive of VAT, which will be added at the standard rate
- Fees depend on:
 - The product option you choose,
 - The size of your site,
 - Whether you select the Standard service or the Fast Track option (Fast track is an 20% uplift of the Standard service fee).
- Indicative turnaround times for technical meetings and written advice are shown in the tables. For complex sites, different timescales may need to be agreed.

If you are unsure which product or band your project falls into, please contact us for advice via email: SuDS@lancashire.gov.uk before submitting your application.



Table 5: Ordinary Watercourse Consent Advice Fees

Site Area hectare (ha)	Standard Fee	Fast Track Fee
Small Site: Up to and including 1 ha	£440.00	£528.00
Medium Site: 1.01 ha to 2 ha	£580.00	£696.00
Large Site: 2.01 ha to 10 ha	£850.00	£1,020.00
Strategic Site: More than 10.01 ha	£1,260.00	£1,512.00
Indicative Timescales	Standard Service	Fast Track Option
Technical meeting duration	Up to 1 hour	Up to 1 hour
Meeting held within	28 days of payment	14 days of payment
Written advice issued within	7 days of meeting	7 days of meeting

Table 6: Planning Application Advice Fees

Site Area hectare (ha)	Standard Fee	Fast Track Fee
Small Site: Up to and including 1 ha	£1,180.00	£1,416.00
Medium Site: 1.01 ha to 2 ha	£1,540.00	£1,848.00
Large Site: 2.01 ha to 10 ha	£2,280.00	£2,736.00
Strategic Site: More than 10.01 ha	£3,370.00	£4,044.00
Indicative Timescales	Standard Service	Fast Track Option
Technical meeting duration	Up to 2 hours	Up to 2 hours
Meeting held within	28 days of payment	14 days of payment
Written advice issued within	7 days of meeting	7 days of meeting

How to calculate your site area:

- **For Ordinary Watercourse Consent Advice:** Include the combined total area of all proposed structures within the watercourse (both permanent and temporary). If there are multiple structures, add up all work areas for each structure.
- **For Planning Application Advice:** Include the total site area within the planning red-edge boundary, plus any off-site consentable works as described above.



3.3. Additional fees

If extra hours and/or additional meetings are requested or required, these will be charged at the rates outlined in [Table 7](#).

- All fees are exclusive of VAT, which will be added at the standard rate.
- Fees depend on:
 - The product option you choose,
 - The size of your site,
 - The additional time needed to assess proposals prior to the technical meeting (for example, where advice is requested on amended proposals),
 - Whether you select the Standard service or the Fast Track option (Fast track is an 20% uplift of the Standard service fee).
- Charges will be agreed with you in advance before any additional work is carried out and invoiced in arrears in line with [Section 3.5](#).

Important: The same indicative timescales for technical meetings and written advice shown in [Table 5](#) and [Table 6](#) will apply to additional engagement unless otherwise agreed.

Table 7: Additional fees for extra hours and meetings

Category	Description	Standard Fee (person per hour)	Fast Track Fee (person per hour)
Extra hourly rates	Technical Support Officer	£23.00 p/hr	
	Flood Risk Officer	£33.00 p/hr	
	Senior Flood Risk Officer	£38.00 p/hr	
	Principal Flood Risk Officer	£46.00 p/hr	
Extra meetings for Ordinary Watercourse Consent Advice	Small Site: Up to and including 1ha	£108.00 p/hr	£129.60 p/hr
	Medium Site: 1.01 ha to 2 ha	£116.00 p/hr	£139.20 p/hr
	Large Site: 2.01 ha to 10 ha	£132.00 p/hr	£158.40 p/hr
	Strategic Site: More than 10.01 ha	£157.00 p/hr	£188.40 p/hr
Extra meetings for Planning Application Advice	Small Site: Up to and including 1ha	£141.00 p/hr	£169.20 p/hr
	Medium Site: 1.01 ha to 2 ha	£149.00 p/hr	£178.80 p/hr
	Large Site: 2.01 ha to 10 ha	£165.00 p/hr	£198.00 p/hr
	Strategic Site: More than 10.01 ha	£190.00 p/hr	£228.00 p/hr

3.4. Fee exemptions

Advice to District and Borough Councils on the following policy work will continue to be provided free of charge:

- Advice on preparation of Local Plans and related documents,
- Advice on policy preparation for Strategic Sites.

3.5. How to pay

The Base Fee will be invoiced once your request is validated and all required information has been received. Details of relevant payment methods will be included on the invoice.

- We cannot accept payment before an invoice has been issued,
- Your application will only proceed once cleared funds for the Base Fee have been received,
- Additional Fees will be invoiced monthly in arrears and must be paid within 28 days. If invoices are not paid on time, the county council may suspend work on your application.



4. Terms of Service

4.1. Terms of service

- 4.1.1. By making an application, the applicant agrees that Lancashire County Council will have no liability in relation to the advice provided, which is given in good faith and based on the information available at the time of the application.

Requesting advice from the Lead Local Flood Authority is not mandatory. We will not enter into discussions over the scope or content of any specialist surface water sustainable drainage proposals outside of this service prior to the examination of a formal planning consultation or ordinary watercourse consent application.

- 4.1.2. Details, including personal information, contained within the application and/or written response may be shared with the relevant Local Planning Authority, other Lancashire County Council teams, and flood risk management authorities.
- 4.1.3. Advice provided by Lancashire County Council may include no comment, confirmation that we are satisfied with the proposed development, reference to current standing advice, general advice, and justification for our views. No advice will be valid or effective unless confirmed in writing by Lancashire County Council.
- 4.1.4. Advice does not constitute a formal decision or response. However, it will generally inform the assessment of an ordinary watercourse consent application and may form part of the Lead Local Flood Authority's formal response to the Local Planning Authority when consulted as a statutory consultee.
- 4.1.5. Any additional engagement requests regarding our written advice must be made within 12 months of the date of its issue and will be subject to the appropriate additional fee. After this period, the Lead Local Flood Authority Advice Service application will be considered closed. Any further engagement beyond this timeframe will require a new advice service application and will be subject to the full applicable charge.
- 4.1.6. Advice is given in good faith, based on the information available at the time of the application, and without prejudice to the formal consideration of any ordinary watercourse consent or planning application. Planning applications will be subject to public consultation and ultimately determined by the Local Planning Authority. No advice given can prejudge or guarantee how the Local Planning Authority may decide any particular case.
- 4.1.7. Advice is current on the date it is given and will expire 12 months after that date. Whilst we aim to identify reasonably foreseeable future influences, we cannot guarantee that advice account for changes in planning policy or planning precedent. Advice relating to planning history, constraints, or statutory designations does not constitute a formal response under the provisions of the Local Land Charges Act 1975.



- 4.1.8. All timescales for delivery of the service are indicative and cannot be guaranteed.
- 4.1.9. Lancashire County Council reserves the right to review the fees chargeable at its discretion for any reason whatsoever. In any event, fees will be subject to yearly Retail Price Index uplifts.

4.2. Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004

- 4.2.1. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 place legal obligations upon Lancashire County Council to provide public access to information that it holds, whereby public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities and members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities. This may include information provided to us by third parties who have a contractual relationship with the county council, subject to exemptions being appropriately engaged.
- 4.2.2. Lead Local Flood Authority Advice Service requests, together with any response made by Lancashire County Council, will not automatically be made available for public inspection and applicants may confirm in writing to us that information provided is commercially sensitive.
- 4.2.3. However, if Lancashire County Council receives a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations 2004 to disclose information relating to Lead Local Flood Authority Advice Service requests, we are obliged to do so unless the information is deemed exempt under the Act.
- 4.2.4. Information can only be withheld under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations 2004 if the information falls under one of the exceptions (Environmental Information Regulations) or exemptions (Freedom of Information) set out in legislation.
- 4.2.5. For certain Lead Local Flood Authority Advice Service issues, the applicant is required to complete the commercially sensitive checklist that should set out the reasons why, and for how long, they feel any information relating to the application needs to remain confidential. Failure to declare commercial sensitivity may result in information being made available under Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations requests.
- 4.2.6. We will consult with the applicants should we receive a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations 2004 before reaching a final decision on the request. However, whilst we will take account of these views, the final decision on whether the information should be provided or withheld rests with the county council.

4.3. Commercially sensitive applications

- 4.3.1. If any information within your application is commercially sensitive, you must complete declare this in your application and the reason(s) why.
- 4.3.2. The advice we provide is based on the information provided by the applicant, the current extent of the knowledge of the Lead Local Flood Authority and an officer's professional judgement which is overseen by a senior officer.
- 4.3.3. Giving our advice does not mean we agree to or have decided our view on the proposal ahead of an ordinary watercourse consent or planning application being made. All ordinary watercourse consent applications will undergo a full technical assessment prior to determination by the Lead Local Flood Authority, and all planning applications will go through the full process of assessment in our role as a statutory consultee for major development with surface water drainage.

5. Contact Details

Telephone: 0300 123 6780

E-mail: suds@lancashire.gov.uk

Please include 'LLFA Advice Service' in the title of your email.

