

The team has developed an innovative and proactive approach to engaging developers early.

First, we wrote a simple, customer-friendly paragraph to advertise the benefits of DAS, such as having a dedicated adviser, agreed advice delivery timescales and having access to continued advice around statutory conservation issues. We inserted this paragraph into Natural England's standard letter responses for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening, scoping, and Local Planning Authority pre-application requests where chargeable services may be applicable. This includes those with implications for landscape, designated sites, green infrastructure enhancement and a reminder of the Pre-Submission Screening service (PSS).

Second, we developed a standard follow up letter as a customer prompt and reminder for the DAS service.

Finally, we'll take this one step further by way of follow-up phone calls to customers to complete the process.

## In practice

**REDACTED** in the Thames Valley team recently got in touch with a developer at the scoping stage of their project, following the proactive steps outlined above. The proposed development is potentially complex as it is for a large number of homes (up to 1800) and is close to sensitive areas such as the Surrey Hills AONB and Chiddingfold Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), notified for woodland, invertebrates, and breeding birds.

**REDACTED** says "After explaining how DAS could be useful to the developer, the ecologist working for the development company got in touch, and I arranged a site visit in less than a week. We talked about how we could mitigate recreational impact on the SSSI by creating a large area of greenspace within the development. We also discussed the landscape too, and this might lead to another DAS to assess impact on the landscape before the developers submit their plans."

## Next steps

**REDACTED** says "Before launching we talked to colleagues and stakeholders, who told us that they liked our approach. It's a bit early to tell the impact of this new pro-active promotion, but so far 30% of customers have come back to us to ask about taking up DAS."

We hope that the process will increase commercial income generation, improve customer relations, reduce the number of Sustainable Development objections, and result in biodiversity gains. There are also imminent changes planned to the national Casework Tracker so that all Area Teams will be able to record potential DAS cases and build proactive pipelines of future cases and income prediction.

We plan to make the standard paragraph and follow-up letter available very soon through the DAS pages and LU Toolkit letter pages.

For more information please contact your local DAS representative or **REDACTED** in Thames Valley Team.

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## Charging forward

