



National
Operational
Guidance

Section

Environmental responsibilities



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

Developed and maintained by the NFCC



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Environmental responsibilities

Responsibility for protecting the environment in the UK rests with a number of different organisations at central and local government levels.

The most significant of these are the four UK environment agencies: the [Environment Agency](#) in England, [Natural Resources Wales](#), the [Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#) and the [Northern Ireland Environment Agency](#). Each has similar duties and powers to protect and improve the environment, although there are some differences in responsibilities between them, for example in flood risk management, fisheries, and controlling industrial discharges and emissions. The term 'environment agencies' is used in this guidance to refer to these four organisations.

Nature conservation bodies are the enforcing authority for open land such as sites of special scientific interest (SSSI), specific areas of conservation and special protection areas. These bodies include [Natural England](#), [Scottish Natural Heritage](#), [Natural Resources Wales](#) and the [Northern Ireland Environment Agency](#).

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency is responsible for pollution from shipping and offshore installations such as oil rigs. The Secretary of State has a power to extend marine responsibilities when it is considered to be in the national interest. See Section 1.8.2, [Environmental Protection Handbook](#).

Local authorities have environmental responsibilities including the impact of smoke from a fire and from vehicle emissions. They deal with complaints related to noise, litter and odour for sites not regulated by environmental agencies and most fly tipping incidents. See Section 1.3.5, [Environmental Protection Handbook](#).