



The Scottish Government
Rural Development Contracts - Rural Priorities



Scotland Rural Development Programme

Guidance for Rural Development Contract – Rural Priorities' Case Files

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Guidance for Rural Development Contract – Rural Priorities’ Case Files

Purpose

This guidance note is designed to assist staff in the application of a consistent record management approach for RDC – RP Casework across RPID, FCS and SNH. This guidance will be revised when we roll out a cross-organisation solution for electronic records management for RDC-RP Casework.

Introduction

The application process for Rural Development Contracts – Rural Priorities (RDC-RP) is predominantly electronic, with the initial Statement of Intent (Sol) and part of the Proposal able to be submitted via on-line application only. The other part of the Proposal, the Outcome Plan, although not on-line, may also be submitted electronically. Correspondence between the Case Officer and the applicant/their agent is often through the online system, or by email or by letter/phone. Internal correspondence about cases may also be electronic, paper or by phone.

In the future records management for RDC-RP case work will be electronic. However, at present, integrated electronic record management is not possible across RPID, FCS and SNH. This means that, in the interim, records management will be physical, rather than electronic, with the creation of a paper master file.

The master file

The master file must provide the audit trail. This means that the file must contain a record of any documents that were part of the decision making process leading to: the funding approval, withdrawal, or rejection of a RDC-RP Case and any decisions thereafter e.g. variations, claims, inspections.

A new master file is required for every application when it is first received either as a submitted Sol or as a submitted Proposal if the Sol has been bypassed.

It is recommended that a copy of the current Schedule of Works is kept at the front of the master file for ease of reference. An enclosure list may be kept in the front of the file which will identify key documents in the file such as the Case Officer’s Assessment and a copy of the Contract.

As the file contains personal data you must follow your organisation’s file storage requirements.

Sharing supporting documents

The processing of casework must minimise the potential for time delays caused by seeking input from colleagues who have essential specialist experience or knowledge to contribute. For this reason the sharing of electronic copies of key supporting documents will be normal practice especially when staff work from different locations. When a paper document needs to be shared the most efficient way of doing so is by scanning and emailing the document.

Case Officers may wish to store electronically, for their own convenience, documentation relating to a Case. The internal guidance for doing this will vary between RPID, FCS and SNH since alignment with existing corporate electronic records management systems is important. Please refer to the internal guidance written by RPID, FCS and SNH as to how to store electronic records in the interim (appendices 4, 5 and 6).

Remember that, for audit purposes, the definitive version of a document must be held in the master file.

Creating and maintaining a master file

1. On receiving the flysheet and Sol or the Proposal details (if the Sol has been bypassed) from the Pre-Approval Co-ordinator the Case Officer will arrange for a master (paper) file to be created using the blue pre-printed file covers with "Rural Development Contract – Rural Priorities" on the front. All documents/correspondence should be filed on the master file.
2. Up to and until the case assessment is complete and a Contract or rejection letter has been issued, it is the Case Officer's responsibility for the upkeep and storage of the paper file. After this point it becomes the responsibility of the appropriate business function/area e.g. claims processing, to ensure that the file is maintained and kept up-to-date.
3. Files must be clearly marked, in the appropriate sections, with the RPAC code, Business Reference Number (BRN) and Case Reference Number (appendix 1).
4. The Business name and the case title must be clearly written in the appropriate section using BLOCK CAPITALS.
5. The Date of Opening section must be completed.

6. All papers should be filed in chronological order using a standard A4 punch and secured with the blue plastic tags. They must be sequentially numbered in the top right hand corner e.g. ./1, ./2, ./3 etc

The content of the file should include:

- Sol (if the Sol stage has not been bypassed)
- Proposal including associated inspection/site visit, Outcome Plan and quotes
- Scoring Details
- Consultation responses
- Consents
- Contract (including amendments and variations)
- Claims and supporting documentation along with associated and payments
- Completed Inspection report forms (including checklists) for capital inspections.¹

Note¹: If the beneficiary has been selected for an annual recurrent inspection details of the inspection will be held in SIACS. If a paper inspection report form has been completed this must be filed in the case file.

Any maps must be placed in the file pouch which is an integral part of the back cover of the file.

8. To facilitate shredding in years to come plastic pockets should NOT be used, however paper file envelopes may be used instead.
9. If one file cover/part is impractical due to the volume of paperwork then the paperwork should be placed in a separate file cover attached to the 'main' file cover. This may be more relevant for an application which covers multiple items. In the section on the file cover for "Volume", files must be marked 1 of 1, 1 of 2 etc.

Please see appendix 2 about how to order additional blue case file covers.

Case file retention period

Case files will be retained for seven years from the end of the financial year during which the last payment associated with the contract has been made. Where a case has not progressed beyond a Sol or "Proposal Incomplete" status and a calendar year has elapsed since the applicant last updated the case, the Case Officer should arrange for a letter to the applicant/their agent to determine if the case should be closed. If so, the retention schedule of retaining the file for seven years after the file has been closed will be applied. See appendix 3 for further information.

When to transfer physical files to RPID

RPID are the paying agency for RDC-RPs; therefore the case files must be handed over to RPID and become their responsibility.

The paper master case file should be transferred to the local RPID Area Office for your RPAC when one or more of the following criteria apply:

- The Sol has not been progressed to a Proposal a year after the red or amber assessment has been given.
- The applicant has withdrawn their case.
- The RPAC has rejected the case and this has been confirmed by the Minister. (This will trigger the rejection decision letter to be sent out. The file can be transferred to RPID 2 months after the rejection letter has been issued.)
- The applicant has rejected the Contract and the Contract Rejection Letter has been issued.
- 2 weeks have passed since the Contract Acceptance Acknowledgement letter was sent to the applicant.

Note2:- in some cases the contract Signing Page will be returned unsigned and an amendment requested; the case file should not be sent to RPID until the amendment is dealt with and the amended contract signed and acknowledged. This is also the case for when a variation is requested when a signed contract Signing Page is returned.

- 2 weeks have passed after the acceptance acknowledgement letter/letter confirming the amendment/variation has been sent.

Note 3:- If a Proposal has not been progressed past “Proposal Incomplete” status a year after the Proposal has been started, the Case Officer must contact the applicant to determine if the case is to be progressed or withdrawn. If withdrawn, then the Case file must be sent to RPID.

Where the case involves a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Natura site, SNH Case Officers must save a copy of relevant documents to the SNH SSSI Management file for future reference by Area Officers. This should include copies of the contract itself, the contract map(s), the Outcome Plan (with any Specialist Plan and associated documents/maps), and any consents. If the Case Officer is not from SNH, the Case Officer should ensure that copies of the relevant documents are forwarded to the local SNH Area Office.

Where the case involves a forest plan FCS Case Officers must retain a copy of the Forest Plan for future reference. If the Case Officer is not from FCS, the Case Officer must ensure that copies of the relevant documents are forwarded to the local FCS Area Office.

Pre-transfer protocol

Before the master case file is transferred to RPID the Case Officer must ensure that the Case file contains all correspondence about the case, consultation responses, quotes for actual cost items, scoring details, the signed contract and contract map(s), the Outcome Plan, Consents and Checklists.

You will also need to ensure that you have saved any documentation about the case that you may require in future in the electronic file.

How to transfer files and how to deal with transferred files

The master case files should be transferred on a weekly basis to the central administration point of the RPID Area office that covers the RPAC area that the case is in. Files waiting to be transferred must be kept in a secure area. Electronic files do not require to be transferred; any important details held electronically must be printed and placed in the paper master file.

When a Case is ready to be transferred to RPID the Case Officer must record on the Case Notepad that the paper master file has been transferred to RPID [name of office] on [date].

The files must be transferred by person or a courier service to the central administration point of the RPID Area office. The RPID Administrator must be notified before the files are transferred so that the transfer goes smoothly e.g. an email along the following line:

“the following RDC-RP files have been couriered today to your office. The courier is xxxxxxxx and should be with you by xxxxx, Can you please email *name* to confirm the files have been received.”

The RPID administrator will either give or post a receipt (from the SG receipting book). This receipt must be retained by the transferring office.

A record of all the files that have been transferred to RPID must be kept by FCS and SNH and matched up with the receipt. The record must include the Case Ref, MLC, BRN, Business Name, Case Officer, Date Case Transferred Out, Date of Receipt by RPID, Name of Office File Transferred To and Comments. SNH and FCS must record information to identify files transferred to RPID on their

record management systems. This must be done on the same day that file is transferred.

The central administration point will ensure that RPID record management system registers that the file has been transferred from the FCS or SNH office. This must be done on the same day that file is received.

Case files may need to be transferred from RPID to SNH or FCS using the same process as described above.

Appendix 1 - physical file cover

RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONTRACT - RURAL PRIORITIES						
RPAC:	CASE REF:	BUSINESS NAME and CASE TITLE			RPAC:	
					BRN:	
					CASE REF:	

FILE REVIEW SECTION			VOLUME	
OPENING DATE				
CLOSING DATE				
REVIEW DATES				
DESTROY DATE				

REFERRED TO	DATE	REFERRED TO	DATE	REFERRED TO	DATE	REFERRED TO	DATE

Appendix 2 - how to order additional blue file covers

If the number of blue physical file covers are running low for your organisation in a particular RPAC you should alert

RPID	Will Quinn	William.quinn@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
FCS	Jacque Christie	jacque.christie@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
SNH	Sarah Eaton	Sarah.Eaton@snh.gov.uk

You will need to provide an estimate of how many files you need and when you need them by.

Appendix 3 – template letter

If a case which has had an Sol assessment or is at Proposal Incomplete status and has not been progressed for one year after the red or amber Sol assessment has been given, or the Proposal Incomplete status has been achieved then the Case Officer should contact the applicant/their agent using the letter template below

Rural Development Contracts - Rural Priorities

Organisation
Address
postcode



[Applicant's first name] [second name]
[business name]
«Address1»
«Address2»
«Address3»
«Address4»
«postcode»

Date:

Dear

Rural Development Contract – Rural Priorities

Case Title: <<Title>>
Case Number <<Case Number>>
Main Location Code <<farm>>
Business Reference Number: <<brn>>

We note that your application has not been progressed for over a year. If you wish to progress your case, please contact me. If I do not hear from you by [date - 4 weeks after the date on the letter] then we will treat your case as withdrawn and you will need to re-apply.

Yours sincerely

for RPAC Chair

Appendix 4: Rural Development Contracts – Records Management –Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate Internal Records Management Guidance for Casework Files

This guidance note is designed to assist RPID Case Officers in the application of a consistent record management approach for RDC – RP Casework across RPID, FCS and SNH. In the future, records management for RDC-RP case work will be electronic. However, at present, integrated electronic records management is not possible across RPID, FCS and SNH. This means that, in the interim, records management will be physical, rather than electronic, with the creation of a paper master file.

This guidance will be revised when we roll out a cross-organisation solution for electronic records management for RDC-RP Casework.

There are three processes where RPID must keep records on Rural Development Contracts. These are:

1. Where the Case Officer is an RPID staff member, a case file is required.
2. RPAC (Regional Proposal Assessment Committee) Administration and Local Meetings plus Formal Meetings & Application Assessments.
3. Where RPID is advising on a case, but is not the lead case organisation or officer.

1. Case File Creation

1.1 Case Officer and Administrator

Each Rural Development Contract case will require a file. The RDC Case Officer should request that Admin prepare a physical case file once the IMSO has approved the file request, as soon as he/she receives a Statement of Intent.

Admin should confirm that a file for the individual case does not already exist by checking the Casework: Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) Rural Development Contracts (RDC) Rural Priorities (RP) level 4 folder and that the file naming convention is correct, as described above. New files should then be requested using the standard file request form (or for a large number of file requests (10 or more) use the file upload spreadsheet tool Object ID: A232720). Guidance on how to complete the spreadsheet can be found in eRDM object ID: A789452.

The file naming convention **must** be in the following format:

RDC-RP: BRN 123456: Case 1234567: 2009-

There is a level 4 folder (all level 4 folders are yellow) set up in eRDM for Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) Rural Development Contract Rural Priorities casework and all physical case files must be recorded in this area.

*The file scope note **must** be in the following format:

Casework documents and records relating to the processing of applications and related claims under the Rural Development Contract – Rural Priorities. A separate file is created for each application. **Catalogue fields applicable: Lead Office, Case Reference Number and Main Location Code.**

The RPID Area Offices will have access to the individual office's SRDP Working Papers files (these already exist for SAF and other RPID Schemes) and any electronic copies of case documents can be stored to this, as well as printed and filed into the physical 'master' file. Files will be created by individual case and **not** Farm Code.

1.2 Information Management Support Officer (IMSO)

IMSOs must carry out the standard checks before approving the request for the casework file in eRDM.

For the physical file to be created, the IMSO must first approve the file request. eRDM Operations will then create the file, print an RDC file label and send this to the relevant RPID Area Office where the Case Admin should attach the label to the file. Additional guidance on the structure of a physical case file is provided in the Guidance for Rural Development Contract – Rural Priorities' Application and Claim Files.

1.3 Case File Maintenance

Until an e-solution is found all SRDP RDC RP casework files will be physical, although Case Officers can use the SRDP Working Papers electronic file to save information and/or draft records as is the case for other RPID Schemes.

The Case Officer is responsible for the upkeep and storage of the physical file up to and until the case assessment is complete and the Case Officer has issued the Contract (including the Acceptance Acknowledgement Letter) or rejection letter. In the interim period the physical file is the master file and must contain all records required for audit purposes and to support the decision

making trail. In addition, electronic copies of documents may be held for convenience or collaborative purposes. However, where these then form part of the audit trail, as noted above, you must print them out and place them on the physical file.

If the beneficiary has been selected for an annual recurrent inspection details of the inspection will be held in SIACS. If a paper inspection report form has been completed this must be filed in the case file. Copies of any letters sent to the beneficiary as a result of an inspection must also be included in the case file.

Inspection report forms for Rural Priorities should be held on the RDC-RP case file and not on the inspection file (a copy can be placed on the inspection file).

1.4 Document Naming Conventions

Where copies of Rural Development Contract documents are stored electronically for convenience, these must be named in accordance with the naming conventions and format agreed by the three organisations:

Case number - RDC document type - document description (free text)

The **RDC document type** would be selected from the following choices:

- Map
- Correspondence
- Plans
- Consent
- Contract
- Amendment request
- Variation request
- Claim
- Inspection
- Breach
- Other

so,

Case 456892 - Map - Statement of Intent - Farm Code 817-0011 - Received from Mr D Farmer on 26 June 2009

If a document or map is amended and resubmitted then the name of the previous document must be changed so that it contains the word “superseded” or “obsolete”

Case 456892 - Map - Statement of Intent - Farm Code 817-0011 - Received from Mr D Farmer on 26 June 2009 - Superseded

The new document or map should be saved with the same name, but with Current at the end.

Case 456892 - Map - Statement of Intent - Farm Code 817-0011 - Received from Mr D Farmer on 26 June 2009 - Current

Please note that these are convenience copies and if it forms part of the record it must be printed and filed into the physical file, until the e-solution is found.

1.5 Case File Retention

Rural Development Contract case files will be retained for seven years from the financial year in which the final payment is made. As RPID are the paying agency SNH and FCS will transfer the case files to RPID while the cases are still live. File retention is the responsibility of the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (RPID).

2. RPAC Administration Files

In addition to the RDC case files, 2 further files have been set up for each RPAC; one for RPAC Administration and Local Meetings (Obj ID qA193457) and one for RPAC Formal Meetings and Application Assessment (Obj ID qA193459).

3. Further Information

If you have any queries on Rural Development Contract records management please contact your local IMSO who can then escalate the query to the [RPID CSD Helpdesk](#).

Appendix 5: Rural Development Contracts – Records Management – Forestry Commission Scotland Internal Guidance

The information contained on this Appendix is in addition to the information contained within the main case file guidance and must not be read in isolation.

1. Shared Electronic File for RDC-RP Case Documents

An electronic file is to be set up by the Case Officer for all RDC-RP cases allocated to the Case Officer. The electronic file is in addition to the master paper file. Work is to be carried out by RPID to provide a shared area which all 3 organisations can access. Until a fully operational electronic filing system can be developed each organisation must set up their own shared area. A shared area has been set up for FCS which uses the Scottish Government Server.

2. Shared Area and Name of Folder Details

A shared area called "SRDP" on fc_scot has been set up.

All FCS users who have a Username and password for SRDP have been given access permission to the shared area.

Within the shared area a folder has been set up called (RDC-RP).

Within the RDC-RP folder there is a sub folder for each RPAC Area.

Every time a new electronic file is set up for a Case, a sub folder with the applicant's BRN along with the Case Reference and Calendar Year the Case is received, should be set up within the RPAC area folder.

e.g. **BRN 123456_Case Ref 12345678_Year 2009.**

Note: The Sub folders were previously set up by BRN only, rather than by BRN, Case Number and Year. The change to procedure takes effect from the date that this new instruction is published (August 2009).

You are not required to change previous folder names, but you are encouraged to change folder names for existing cases that are still in progress.

3. Document Naming Conventions

Within each BRN_Case Ref_Year folder any case documents should be filed. Each document must follow set naming conventions which are:- Document type (using types from list shown below) - document description (up to 100 characters free text). e.g. Plan - 1st draft of Outcome Plan received 30 July 2009. There is now no need to prefix the Document name with the Case number as it is part of the folder name.

RDC document types:-

- Map
- Correspondence
- Plans
- Consent
- Contract
- Amendment request
- Variation request
- Claim
- Inspection
- Breach
- Other

4. Electronic File Retention

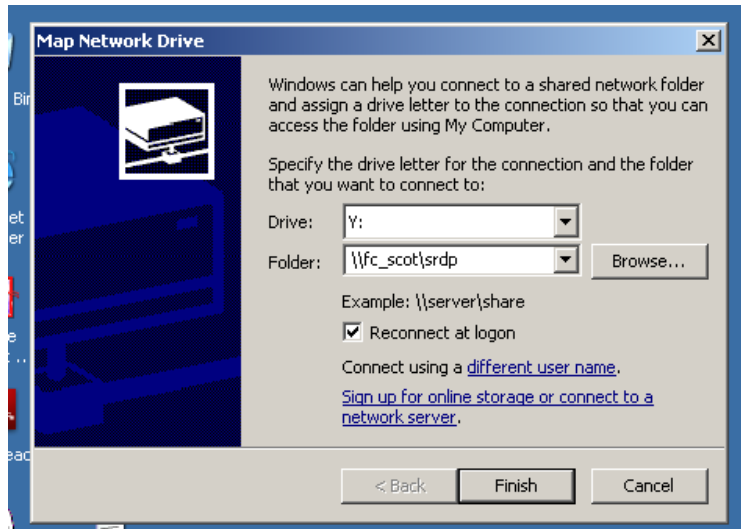
Before a case file is transferred the electronic file must have “transferred to RPID, date and Closed” recorded at the end of the filename. For example, if the file detailed above was transferred to RPID, the filename would be changed to:-

**BRN 123456_Case Ref 12345678_Year 2009_Transferred to RPID
011009_Closed**

5. How to Connect to the New Shared Drive (New users)

1. New staff members must contact Marie Lowrie or Mary Leitch at FCS National Office to request an FC account.
2. Once you have an FC account, go to the “My Computer” icon on your desktop, or via “Windows Explorer”.
3. Select the drop-down “Tools” menu, and then select “Map Network Drive”.
4. Enter an unused drive letter, e.g. Y as the Drive Letter (if you already access a shared drive under Y then please select another available drive letter) and type the path (as shown below) in the Folder field.

5. Folder details (screen shot below) will be [\\fc_scot\srdp](#). Ensure you check the "reconnect at Logon" box.
6. Click Finish and when prompted enter your username in the format firstname.lastname. You may be asked for a password and if so please contact Marie Lowrie or Mary Leitch, who will provide you with a password. Your new network share/drive will then be connected.



7. This drive (share) will re-connect each time you logon, but for some users it will prompt for the password to be entered the first time it is used after any new reboots/logons. Note, not all users are asked for a password.

6. Master Paper File

The Case Officer is responsible for the upkeep and storage of the paper file up to and until the case assessment is complete and the Case Officer has issued the Contract (including the Acceptance Acknowledgement Letter) or rejection letter. The master paper file must contain all documentation including copies of all electronic documentation/e-mails for audit purposes and to support the decision making trail. You do not need to store all documentation in the electronic file. Electronic documentation sent by e-mail can be held on the electronic file along with SOI maps.

Please read the main Record Management Guidance for more information on creating, maintaining and transferring the master file along with file retention periods.

Appendix 6: Rural Development Contracts – Records Management – Scottish Natural Heritage Internal Guidance

There are three processes where SNH must keep records on Rural Development Contracts. These are;

1. Where the Case Officer is an SNH staff member, a case file is required.
2. RPAC (Regional Proposal Assessment Committee) administration and meetings.
3. Where SNH is advising on a case, but is not the lead case organisation or officer.

1. Case File Creation

1.1 Case Officer

Each Rural Development Contract case will require a file. The RDC Case Officer should request a physical case file as soon as he/she receives a Statement of Intent. Each new case file must be recorded as a separate file on eRDMS. Files must be requested using the standard new file request object/process. The file naming convention **must** be in the format;

RPAC name: RDC-RP : BRN 123456: Case 1234567 : 2009-

for example,

Forth RPAC: RDC-RP : BRN 114762: Case 2968419 : 2009-

All physical files will be created in the RDC-RP casework folder; any electronic copies of case documents must be stored to the relevant file in eRDMS.

1.2 Records Liaison Officer

RLOs must carry out the standard checks before forwarding a request for the new casework file in eRDMS. In particular you must confirm that a file for the case does not already exist, that it is to be created in the Casework folder (fA72011) and that the file naming convention is correct.

All case files may potentially become mixed mode, i.e. there will be a physical file and also electronic content in eRDMS. To make up the physical file cover you must enter the required metadata to create and print an RDC file cover sheet.

You must then attach this to the front of the file cover or complete the file cover manually. You should also insert the Objective reference for the case file in the line above "volume". In order not to get confused with SG Objective references you will need to add the prefix SNH e.g. SNH qA166742.

1.3 Case File Maintenance

The Case Officer is responsible for the upkeep and storage of the paper file up to and until the case assessment is complete and the Case Officer has issued the Contract (including the Acceptance Acknowledgement Letter) or rejection letter. In the interim period the physical file is the master file and must contain all records required for audit purposes and to support the decision making trail. In addition, electronic copies of documents may be held for convenience or collaborative purposes. However, where these then form part of the audit trail, as noted above, you must print them out and place them on the physical file.

1.4 Document Naming Conventions

Where copies of rural development contract documents are stored electronically for convenience, these must be named in accordance with the naming conventions agreed by the three organisations and in the format;

Case number - RDC document type - document description (free text)

The RDC document type would be selected from the following choices:

- Map
- Correspondence
- Plans
- Consent
- Contract
- Amendment request
- Variation request
- Claim
- Inspection
- Breach
- Other

so,

Case 456892 - Map - Statement of Intent - Farm Code 817-0011 - Received from Mr D Farmer on 26 June 2009

If a document or map is amended and resubmitted then the name of the previous document must be changed so that it contains the word "superseded" or "obsolete"

Case 456892 - Map - Statement of Intent - Farm Code 817-0011 - Received from Mr D Farmer on 26 June 2009 - Superseded

The new document or map should be saved with the same name, but with Current at the end.

Case 456892 - Map - Statement of Intent - Farm Code 817-0011 - Received from Mr D Farmer on 26 June 2009- Current

1.5 Case File Retention

Rural Development Contract case files will be retained for seven years from the financial year in which the final payment is made. SNH will however transfer the case files to the Scottish Government while the cases are still live. File retention will be the responsibility of the Scottish Government.

Before a case file is transferred it must be marked as closed on eRDMS and the location details updated to show the file is now held by RPID. Once the case file has been transferred any electronic convenience documents relating to the case will be continue to be held in eRDMS for a period as agreed with RPID, however no new documents should be added to the file. Once the file is transferred it is the responsibility of whoever has the active file to maintain the record.

4. RPAC Administration Files

In addition to the RDC case files, additional files have been set up for each RPAC. These can be found under RPAC – Regional Project Assessment Committees fA72013.

5. RDC Case Advice

When an RPID or FCS Case Officer contacts SNH for advice on a case, we need to keep a record of our response.

One file for each RPAC has been set up to store documents and records of SNH advice on RDC cases where SNH is not the lead organisation or Case Officer and we do not have a case file. All such advice should be stored to this file (fA72011). Where a particular case generates a significant volume of correspondence then we will determine whether it is appropriate to set up an individual file for this.

If the case includes management relating to a notified feature or work on a designated site, SNH Case Officers should save a copy of relevant documents to the SNH SSSI Management file for future reference by Area Officers.

The document naming convention for Case Advice is

BRN 123456 - Case 1234567 – Case advice - RDC document type - document description (free text)

The RDC document type would be selected from the following choices:

- Map
- Correspondence
- Plans
- Consent
- Contract
- Amendment request
- Variation request
- Claim
- Inspection
- Breach
- Other

Further Information

If you have any queries on Rural Development Contract records management please contact Tracey Robinson (tracey.robinson@snh.gov.uk).