



# POLICY REGARDING CULVERTING

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Gwynedd Council is generally opposed to the culverting of watercourses because of the adverse ecological, flood risk, human safety and aesthetic impacts. Watercourses are important linear features of the landscape and should be maintained as continuous corridors to maximise their benefits to society.

- the ecology of the watercourse is likely to be degraded by culverting;
- culverting introduces an increased risk of blockage (with consequent increase in flood risk);
- it can complicate maintenance because access into the culvert is restricted (in some cases being classified as a confined space and requiring trained operatives and specialist equipment).

A blockage in a culvert can be very difficult to remove and likely to result in a severe flood risk. For these reasons the provision of a screen at the entrance to the culvert is often considered. Such a screen reduces the risk of a blockage inside a culvert, but introduces a significant maintenance obligation (to ensure that the screen is kept clean) which far exceeds the typical maintenance requirements of an open watercourse.

#### Impacts of culverting

Ecology	<p>Culverts can be impassable to riverine fauna and can create barriers to the movement of fish.</p> <p>Culverting results in the loss of natural in-stream and bankside habitats through direct removal and loss of daylight.</p>
Pollution	In urban areas, culverted watercourses are often highly polluted due to misconnected foul sewers, overflows from blocked sewers or discharges of contaminated surface water.
Morphology	Culverted sections may create or exacerbate downstream or upstream bank and bed erosion or promote sediment deposition, as a result of altered water velocities and disruption to the natural transport of sediment
Restoration	Culverts can hinder future restoration options. This is particularly significant where urban development results in the burial of once open watercourses beneath housing or commercial centres, or where new development is placed on top of existing culverted watercourses which otherwise might be available for restoration
Landscape and amenity	<p>Culverting of urban waters leads to the loss and degradation of distinctive components of the local landscape.</p> <p>Culverting leads to the loss of green amenity space along river banks and reduced access for recreational opportunities such as angling, walking or canoeing.</p>

We will consider each application to culvert a watercourse on its own merits and in accordance with our risk-based approach to permitting. We will only approve a culvert if there is no reasonably practicable alternative, or if we think the detrimental effects would be so minor that a more costly alternative would not be justified. In all cases where it is appropriate to do so, applicants must provide adequate mitigation measures and accept sole ownership and responsibility for future maintenance.

We will normally object to proposals to build over existing culverts because of health and safety considerations, increased maintenance costs, and because this would preclude future options to restore the watercourse.

Where appropriate we will encourage the restoration of culverted watercourses to open channels.