

Regulation Unit
Resource Efficiency Division



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department of

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Your reference:

Our reference: DAERA 24-104

██████████
████████████████████

NIEA Lisburn
17 Antrim Road
Tonagh
Lisburn
Co. Antrim
BT28 3AL

Email:
waterregulationcorrespondence@daera-ni.gov.uk
04 June 2024

Dear ██████████

Environmental Information Regulations 2004

With regard to your request for information received by the Department on 7th March 2024 which sought the following information:

1. Does NIE inform NI Water when it is Sewage Plants are being sampled? If not, what proportion of tests on an annual basis is from random unannounced samples?
2. Does the samples carried out by NI Water include flow sampling? If so what percentage of Sewage Plant sampling include flow samples?
3. Please provide a copy of the Waste Water Reform Programme, a scope of what the Programme covers and any progress reports against target over the last 5 years.
4. Please supply any reports from the NI Audit Office held by NIEA in relation to the Waste Water Reform programme in the last 5 years and any direct correspondence with NIAO in last three months relating to the programme

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I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm that it holds some of the information you requested which is below. I will take each question separately:

1. Does NIE inform NI Water when it is Sewage Plants are being sampled? If not, what proportion of tests on an annual basis is from random unannounced samples?

NIEA assess compliance of the treated effluent discharged through an operator self-monitoring programme. NI Water agrees the sampling schedule with NIEA annually. NI Water have a third party contract in place to collect the regulatory samples from the Wastewater Treatment Works. NI Water carry out the analysis of the collected samples at their UKAS accredited lab. The sample analysis data is then submitted to NIEA for compliance assessment.

There are no random unannounced samples used to assess compliance.

2. Does the samples carried out by NI Water include flow sampling? If so what percentage of Sewage Plant sampling include flow samples?

The operator self-monitoring programme does not include flow testing currently.

3. Please provide a copy of the Waste Water Reform Programme, a scope of what the Programme covers and any progress reports against target over the last 5 years.

The Wastewater Reform Programme is delivered by NI Water. See attached in Annex 2 the NI Water Wastewater Regulatory Principles Document which sets out the scope of the reform. This document provides a high-level outline of what is being taken forward to reform the assessment of NI Water Compliance.

In summary the programme includes the following elements:

- Moving from Announced sampling programme to unannounced sampling programme.
- Assessment of Flow Compliance
- Assessment of Priority Substances Compliance
- Installation of Event and Duration Monitors
- Development of Ecosystem Modelling.

Some redactions have been made as some information relates to unfinished work and trials therefore Exemption 12 4 (d) has been engaged. A Public Interest Test has been completed and is attached in Annex 2.

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4. Please supply any reports from the NI Audit Office held by NIEA in relation to the Waste Water Reform programme in the last 5 years and any direct correspondence with NIAO in last three months relating to the programme

There have been no reports from the NI Audit Office relating to the wastewater reform programme. NIAO published a report on 25 March 2024 - "Water Quality in Northern Ireland's Rivers and Lakes" [00311423 - NIA9797 - Water Quality Report \(WEB\) V2.pdf \(niauditoffice.gov.uk\)](#) which makes reference to the wastewater reform work. There was no direct communication with the NIAO relating to the programme.

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If you require any clarification, believe that any part of your request has been overlooked, misunderstood or misinterpreted, please contact me in the first instance to see if it is a matter that can be resolved.

If you are unhappy with the manner in which your request for information has been handled or the decision to release/withhold information, you have the right to request a formal review by the Department.

If you wish to do so, please contact The Review Section either by e-mailing daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk or by post at The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Data Protection & Information

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Management Branch, Floor 2, Jubilee House, 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady BT49 9HP, within two months from the date of this letter.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE, SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review of the Department's decision.

Yours sincerely,

Water Regulation

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