



Our reference: **DAERA/24-99**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Water Management Unit
17 Antrim Road
Tonagh,
Lisburn
BT28 3AL

Email: WMU.FOI@daera-ni.gov.uk

27 March 2023

[REDACTED]

Environmental Information Regulations 2004

With regard to your request for information received by the Department on 27 February which sought the following information:

- **Raw sewage spills in the catchment area of Lough Neagh, Northern Ireland for each of the following years - 2023/2022/2021/2020/2019.**
- **For each year, please provide a breakdown of the frequency of spills and the volume of spills.**

I can advise that the Department has completed its search of its Pollution Incident database and can confirm that it holds some of the information you requested.

In relation to Point 2, Under Regulation 12(4)(a) the Department is excepted from the duty to disclose the information on the grounds that the information sought is not held.

The Lough Neagh catchment includes the following Local Management Areas (LMAs); Upper Bann, Moyola, Ballinderry, Sixmilewater, Braid and Maine, Blackwater and Lough Neagh

The information provided in Table 1 represents the number of substantiated pollution incidents involving a discharge of untreated sewage to a waterway in the Lough Neagh catchment for the years 2019-2023.

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

Table 1

| Year | Low Severity Incidents | Medium Severity Incidents |
|--------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2019 | 15 | 2 |
| 2020 | 23 | 2 |
| 2021 | 17 | 6 |
| 2022 | 11 | 1 |
| 2023 | 15 | 4 |
| Total | 81 | 15 |

All incidents are investigated to determine the underlying cause and NIEA work with the identified polluter to manage the risk of re-occurrence. Of the 96 incidents recorded, 81 were deemed to be of low severity and in line with the DAERA Enforcement Policy, formal enforcement action was not considered proportionate, with a return to compliance being the key objective.

NIEA regulates sewage related discharges to the water environment via a consenting process under the Water Order 1999. The Consents require dischargers to treat sewage to a level which can be sustained by the environment and to maintain such treatment to avoid pollution. Discharge consents issued to Northern Ireland Water Ltd are assessed and where non-compliance has been detected the NIEA act in line with the Department's Enforcement policy.

Further, the NIEA regulate Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO's) and Emergency Overflows (EO's) under Water Order Discharge Consents. It is a regulatory requirement within these consents that overflows are designed to operate in heavy rainfall conditions to prevent out of sewer flooding in properties. The location of CSOs is now available on the NIW Website at [Storm Overflows \(niwater.com\)](https://www.niwater.com/storm-overflows) . If an overflow is unable to meet its consent it will be classified by the NIEA as unsatisfactory. There are numerous unsatisfactory intermittent discharges and significant improvement is needed in the wastewater infrastructure to improve water quality.

NIEA has required NI Water to carry out Predictive drainage modelling studies to assess the frequency of spillage at each Storm Overflow. The outworking of these predictive models has enabled both the NIEA and NIW to identify the improvements needed to protect public health and the environment. NIW has now published the predicted model outputs for predicted spill frequency and predicted volume of each spill on the NIW website at [Storm Overflows \(niwater.com\)](https://www.niwater.com/storm-overflows) . The necessary improvements are then prioritised for implementation through NI Water's Price Control funding process.

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.



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 [REDACTED] or by post at The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Data Protection & Information 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 [REDACTED] who will undertake an independent review of the Department's decision.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.

