

Our Reference: **DAERA/26-10**

Via Email

Water Catchment Unit
Northern Ireland Environment Agency
17 Antrim Road
Tonagh
Lisburn
BT28 3AL

18 February 2026

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

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I refer to your request for information received by the Department on 8 December 2025 that sought the following information:

- Further insight into how NIEA classifies environmental incidents.
- If the NIEA Water Pollution Incident Categories have been updated since 2011.

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and holds some of the information that you have requested.

In response to further insight into how NIEA classifies environmental incidents, an information trawl across relevant NIEA business units was carried out. Our Industrial Pollution and Radiochemical Inspectorate (IPRI) and Pollution Prevention team advised that, whilst there are classification systems for non-compliances, there is not one for specific pollution incidents under their remit. Therefore, there is no information to disclose for those business areas.

I can advise that Environmental Crime Unit (ECU) have provided their Case Categorisation Policy, attached as **Annex A**. The Department has decided not to disclose some of the information within this document as it considers the following exemptions to be engaged:

Section 30(1) – Investigations and Proceedings. Information relating to Investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities (investigation used by way of an example at one point in the report)



Sections 31(1)(a) and 31(1)(c) – Law Enforcement. Section 31(1) states that information that is not exempt information by virtue of Section 30 is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or be likely to, prejudice – (a) the prevention or detection of a crime and (c) the administration of justice. The Department views the release of this document, in full, would be prejudicial as the redacted information relates to methodology and practice in the progression of criminal investigations including naming research and development tools and case progressing software.

I can also advise that the Department holds information from the Conservation Designation and Protection Team (CDP) and the Water Pollution Response and Enforcement Team (WPRET) that is relevant to your request and has decided not to disclose the documents as it considers the following exemption to be engaged:

Section 22(1) – Information Held with a View to its Future Publication. Incident Classification systems used by both of these business areas are currently under review. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication. The Department recognises the public interest in demonstrating transparency by releasing information, but section 22(1) acknowledges that public authorities must have freedom to be able to determine their own publication timetables.

In these instances, the Department is legislatively required to consider the public interest in disclosure. An associated Public Interest Test has been conducted and is attached for your information at **Annex B**. Please bear in mind that any disclosure must be considered in terms of disclosure to the “world at large” and not just to you, the requester.

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 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,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

**Water Pollution Response and Enforcement Team
Water Catchment Unit**



An Agency within the Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

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an' Kintra Matthers**

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