

**Integrated Catchment Planning**  
Water Regulation and Enforcement  
Division



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

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'

**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

Our reference: DAERA/26-78

██████████  
Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland

Integrated Catchment Planning  
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BT28 3AL

By email: ██████████

Email: [WMU.FOI@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:WMU.FOI@daera-ni.gov.uk)

3rd March 2026

Dear ██████████,

### **Environmental Information Regulations 2004**

I refer to your request for information received by the Department on 4 February 2026 that sought the following information:

Kindly provide evidence that DAERA complied with its obligations under Section 26(2) of the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 in relation to international river basin districts in the current 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle River Basin Management Plan for Northern Ireland.

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm that it holds the information you requested.

Work on preparing the 3rd cycle river basin management plan started with the timetable consultation at the end of 2018; and finished with the publication in June 2025.

The North-South Water Framework Coordination Group has met during the development of third cycle plans and international river basin districts. This is an

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important partnership which allows both administrations to share knowledge and expertise on areas of mutual interest on water quality. Membership includes colleagues from within DAERA, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Ireland's Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The group was recently renamed to North-South Water Quality Coordination Group (NSWQCG) and meetings occurred on the following dates; 09/11/21, 13/03/25, 16/05/25 and 11/02/26.

A North–South Rivers and Lakes group meets twice annually, with representatives from the EPA, NIEA, Waterways Ireland, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), Inland Fisheries, and Loughs Agency. Since June 2018, the group has met on the following dates:

06/11/18, 01/05/19, 12/11/19, 06/05/20, 11/11/20, 17/05/2022, 23/11/2022, 01/06/2023, 16/11/2023, 08/05/2024, 04/12/2024, 20/05/2025, and 25/11/2025.

Its purpose is to ensure appropriate collaboration and consistency in monitoring and classification for Ecoregion 17 cross-border water bodies under the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 and to support co-operation on freshwater quality issues. The group's Terms of Reference are provided at **Annex A**.

NIEA attends quarterly Border Regional Operational Committees (BROC). The Regional Operational Committees include operational staff from local authorities and 23 different public bodies, including NIEA, to allow for effective knowledge transfer and tracking of progress on implementation of measures. The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) provides a secretariat role. Minutes, agendas and presentations from BROC are publicly available from LAWPRO website from 2019 onwards: [Local Authority Waters Programme \(LAWPRO\) - pCloud](#).

The Land and Groundwater Team (NIEA) meet with the equivalent team in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) during periods of classification. This is to discuss and agree the classification of transboundary groundwater bodies, based on the data held by each agency on the portions of the groundwater body within their respective jurisdictions. Groundwater classifications are available on [NIEA Catchment Data Map Viewer | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#) and Environmental Protection Agency geoportal [EPA Maps](#).

There were a number of meetings and email exchanges between 2020 to 2024 to discuss the draft call document for investment area 5.3 under the PEACEPLUS Programme run by SEUPB. The final call document and information from the launch workshop is available on the webpage: [5.3 Water Quality and Catchment Management](#) and [5.3 Water Quality and Catchment Management: Pre-Application Support | SEUPB](#)

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The Department has decided not to disclose some information regarding the development of the Shared Waters report in relation to international river basin districts in the current 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle River Basin Management Plan for Northern Ireland, as it considers Regulation 12(4)(d) to be engaged. 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 A**.

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](mailto: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 block]

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