

**Freshwater Data Insights**  
Water Regulation and Enforcement  
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](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

Our reference: DAERA/26-108

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2 March 2026

Dear ██████████,

### **Environmental Information Regulations 2004**

With regard to your request for information received by the Department on 16 February 2026 which sought the following information:

Clarification on missing data from the response issued to DAERA/26-58

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

NIEA monitors nutrients at freshwater sites across Northern Ireland for a variety of purposes. The core Water Framework Directive (WFD) network is sampled monthly to assess status and long-term trends. Additional sampling may occur following pollution incidents, for short-term projects, or to support classification tool development. Data gaps may arise due to resource constraints, health and safety issues, or adverse weather, with priority given to the core network.

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.

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Please see responses to your specific questions below

**1. DAERA WMU previously told me you do not test for SRP in Lough Neagh - only Total Phosphorus - why then are the two tests for these types of phosphorus taken from exactly the same spot at the Lower Bann at Toome? Also, if you test for 'Total P' on this river - how is this the measurement for the lough itself?**

Both SRP and TP are monitored at this site as it is used to classify the Lower Bann river waterbody (SRP) and the Lough Neagh lake waterbody (TP). The site reflects lake water quality as it is located at the lake outflow.

**2. Why is testing in 10997 Lough Neagh Mid Deep Point (Cookstown) inconsistent and less frequent? There are no entries for 2006, 2006, 2011, 2013 and 2014. Why does testing end in 2015?**

Nutrients were sampled from 2006–2015 to support development of a profundal invertebrate classification tool. As no relationship was found, the tool was not progressed and sampling ceased in 2015.

**3. Why has 11382 Moyola Waterfoot from Shore only been tested once?**

A one-off sample may be collected as part of a pollution investigation response

**4. For stations relating to the edge of Lough Neagh (10395, 10399, 10401, 10402, 11024): Why is there a gap in test results for 2012-2015 and why does the data end in 2022?**

These were investigative sites. Data gaps from 2012–2015 reflect resource prioritisation toward the core WFD network used for classification. The sites were closed in 2022 due to further resource pressures. Several new investigative sites were opened in 2024 in response to the blue-green algae issue.

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**5. Why does the data for measuring point 10401, Lough Neagh at Washing Bay stop in 2007, and the station 11024 at Castlebay Restaurant Mountjoy start in 2007? Why are there gaps in testing for 2010, 2013 and 2014?**

Access issues at Washing Bay (10401) in 2007 led to the opening of the Castlebay site (11024). As investigative sites, both experienced data gaps due to resource prioritisation.

**6. Why is testing significantly reduced in 2015, 2016 and 2020? Are there different reasons for different years?**

Resource pressures led to temporary quarterly sampling in 2015–2016, which was reversed in 2017 due to excessive data gaps. Reduced sampling in 2020 was due to Covid-19 restrictions.

**7. For the 146 stations included by DAERA for rivers draining into Lough Neagh:**

**Why do stations have gaps in measurement for some years?**

**Why are there less data entries for soluble P and TON in 2010, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2020 compared to other years for rivers within the Lough Neagh catchment? Are there different reasons for different years?**

Occasional gaps are typically caused by adverse weather. Broader reductions in 2010, 2013–2016, and 2020 reflect resource pressures, the temporary quarterly programme (2015–2016), and Covid-19 (2020).

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.

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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]

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