

ANNEX 1

Public Interest Test – EIR

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Reference Number – DAERA/26-254

Requested Information

Information for the period 1 January 2010 to present:

1. Ecological Baseline Surveys and Monitoring

Copies of any habitat surveys, species monitoring reports, or ecological assessments conducted, commissioned, or held by NIEA relating to the Sperrin AONB, particularly: Peatland condition assessments Bird population or breeding surveys (e.g. Curlew, Golden Plover, Snipe, Lapwing) Any site-level ecological monitoring linked to Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), or Ramsar sites within or adjacent to the Sperrins.

2. Planning and Development Oversight

A list of all Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs), or screening responses issued by NIEA for proposed developments (e.g. wind farms, afforestation, peat extraction, mining) within or bordering the Sperrin AONB. Copies of NIEA's consultation responses, conditions, or internal review notes related to these developments.

3. Internal Knowledge of Data Gaps or Ecological Risk

Internal correspondence, reports, or meeting notes discussing: Ecological data limitations or monitoring challenges in the Sperrin AONB; Responses to the findings of the BTO Sperrin AONB Gap Analysis (2025) or similar documents; Decisions regarding non-intervention, under-surveying, or deferral of regulatory action

4. Policy, Strategy, or Remediation Planning

Any NIEA or DAERA strategies, action plans, or internal guidance documents concerning: Protection or restoration of peatland within the Sperrin AONB; Conservation or monitoring of priority bird species in the region; Implementation of legal duties under the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022, the Habitats Regulations, and Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 as they relate to this landscape.

Nature of Material: Documents, Correspondence, Notes, Reports

Exceptions under consideration

EIR Regulation 12(4)(c) - Requests formulated in too general a manner

Reasons why the public interest would favour disclosure:

- Public interest in transparency in the work of the Department.
- DAERA's policy to be as open and transparent as possible in relation to its functions and activities.
- Public interest in improving understanding of the process by which a decision was reached and having access to information on which decisions were made to enhance accountability.

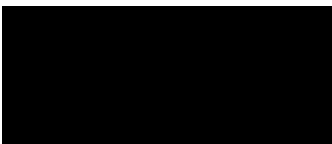
Reasons why the public interest would favour withholding:

Regulation 12(4)(c) - Requests formulated in too general a manner

The Sperrins AONB is a large spatial area which covers a wide range of environmental receptors including habitat and species. The Department may hold a wide range of environmental data associated with areas within this designation. There may also be a substantial number and range of planning applications within the AONB, including sizeable major or regional applications. The request is in such a general manner so as to make it difficult to determine what information the applicant actually wants.

Conclusion

Following consideration of the Public Interest Test, the Department has decided that, on balance, the public interest in disclosure does not outweigh the public interest maintaining the exception engaged. This will be mitigated for, in line with the requirement of Regulation 9, by attempting to assist the applicant to refine or clarify the request.



Natural Environment Division, NIEA

07/05/26

