



Northern Ireland Environment Agency  
Gníomhaireacht Comhshaoil Thuaisceart Éireann  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency

## Natural Environment Division

Our reference: DAERA/25-254

Via [REDACTED]

Jubilee House  
111 Ballykelly Road  
Ballykelly  
Limavady  
BT49 4HP

Email: [mark.hammond@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:mark.hammond@daera-ni.gov.uk)

07 May 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

### Environmental Information Regulation 2004

Regarding your request for information received by the Department on 8 April 2026 that sought the following information:

*'Information held by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) or its parent department (DAERA) regarding ecological protection and regulatory oversight within the Sperrin Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).'*

*This request is submitted in the context of growing public concern over habitat degradation and biodiversity decline in the Sperrins, particularly regarding peatland, breeding wader populations, and designated conservation sites. I refer to the British Trust for Ornithology's Gap Analysis (May 2025), which identifies serious data gaps and regulatory failures in this area. I request the following 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.*

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*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.'*

As explained in the information sheet enclosed with the acknowledgement letter, under certain conditions, the department has the right to refuse to respond to a request for information.

Under Regulation 12(4)(c) the Department is excepted from the duty to disclose the information on the grounds that the request is formulated in too general a manner.

In accordance with regulation 9, to enable us to identify and retrieve any relevant information, the request must specify:

1) Ecological Baseline Surveys and Monitoring: Which specific designated site/s (eg, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), or Ramsar sites) within or adjacent to Sperrin AONB are you seeking copies of any habitat surveys, species monitoring reports, or ecological assessments conducted, commissioned, or held by NIEA?

2. Planning and Development Oversight: Which specific application/s (planning reference) within or bordering the Sperrin AONB are you seeking information about regarding Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs), or screening responses issued by NIEA for proposed developments and copies of NIEA's consultation responses, conditions, or internal review notes related to these developments. Note: most of this information is likely to be publicly available on the NI Public Planning Portal: [Planning Portal | nidirect](#)

3. In relation to this aspect of the request we would need to know what specific incidents and/or types of incidents you are seeking information about relating to

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decisions regarding non-intervention, under-surveying, or deferral of regulatory action. For example, does this relate to water pollution incidents or specific water features that are not being surveyed, an alleged incident impacting on the habitat or species features of a designated site or other forms of environmental incidents?

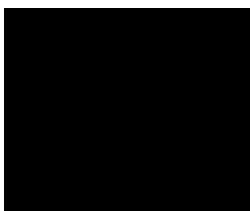
4. In relation to Policy, Strategy, or Remediation Planning are you seeking information about Northern Ireland wide documentation that may impact or be relevant to the Sperrins AONB or are you seeking documentation about Policy, Strategy, or Remediation Planning that is specific to the Sperrins AONB?

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,



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