

Our ref: DWI(NI)/IL//01/26

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DWI(NI) Information Letter 01/26

To: Board Level Contact of Northern Ireland Water Ltd, Engineering & Sustainability Directorate

DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE'S INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS AND TECHNICAL AUDIT PROGRAMME FOR 2026

Dear Gary

Purpose

The purpose of this letter is to inform Northern Ireland Water Ltd (NI Water) of the requirements for the provision of annual drinking water information and the scope of the inspection programme for the Drinking Water Inspectorate's (DWI's) 2026 Technical Audit Programme. Ongoing engagement between DWI and NI Water's 'Drinking Water Regulation' and 'Environmental Regulation' staff will enable the specific details of this information to be developed during the year.

2026 Technical Audit Requirements

The 2026 Technical Audit requirements fall into the following categories:

- (1) provision of summary information relating to general drinking water quality compliance data for 2025 for water supply zones, water treatment works, water supply points, and service reservoirs;
- (2) regulatory contraventions, investigations, assessments, and remedial action;
- (3) provision of information for the DWI's inspection programme which ascertains if satisfactory policies and procedures are in place, and checks that these are being implemented and meet with NI Water's regulatory requirements and UK water industry best practice;
- (4) information on events;
- (5) review of regulation 30 risk assessments and ongoing provision of updated regulation 31 risk assessment reports;

- (6) summary information on consumer complaints relating to drinking water quality;
- (7) update on background and general information for the **2026** compliance monitoring programme for water supply zones, district metered areas, water treatment works, water supply points and service reservoirs, including location maps;
- (8) key facts for the Inspectorate’s 2025 Annual Report; and
- (9) Drinking Water Quality Data return for 2025.

Key dates for the provision of information are as follows:

Key Date	Information required
31 March 2026	Paragraphs 1.1 - 1.6; 2.1 - 2.2; 5.3 and 7.1;
30 April 2026	Paragraphs 6.1; 8.1 and 9.1
30 June 2026	Paragraphs 1.7
31 July 2026	Paragraph 6.1
31 October 2026	Paragraph 6.1
31 December 2026	Paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6
31 January 2027	Paragraphs 6.1 and 7.2

‘**Regulations**’ refer to The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 (SR No. 212).

1. 2025 COMPLIANCE DATA

1.1 Water Quality

DWI requires the provision of summary information relating to drinking water quality in respect of analysis undertaken for compliance purposes for all samples taken from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. NI Water shall provide DWI with compliance data for water supply zones, water treatment works, water supply points and service reservoirs by **31 March 2026**.

For the reporting period, the compliance information should be provided in the format of Water Quality Reports currently provided by NI Water. NI Water should also provide percentage compliances by parameter, including indicator parameters, for each Water Supply Zone.

Summary information for all operational contraventions for water supply zones, water treatment works, water supply points and service reservoirs should also be provided by **31 March 2026**.

1.2 Domestic Distribution Systems

- 1.2.1 NI Water should provide details to the Inspectorate of any contraventions which it has investigated and subsequently deemed to be attributable to the



domestic distribution system in premises where water is made available to the public. The information for 2025 should be provided by **31 March 2026**.

- 1.2.2 Where the sample was taken from a public building, the information provided should include a copy of the Notice supplied to the consumer under Regulation 21(6) or 22(3).

1.3 Pesticides - Other

NI Water should provide the following information by **31 March 2026**:

- the list of individual pesticides in NI Water's 2025 pesticide monitoring programme;
- for each individual pesticide, the number of samples taken, regulatory and increased frequency.

1.4 Residual disinfectant

NI Water should provide the following information by **31 March 2026**:

- maximum, minimum, mean and median values for total and free residual disinfectant results for samples taken at each water treatment works, each service reservoir and in each water supply zone during 2025.

1.5 Drinking Water Abstraction Points

NI Water should provide the following information by **31 March 2026**:

- for each abstraction point used in 2025, all 'raw water' monitoring data required under regulation 20 for each parameter tested, and evidence that NI Water provided this information to NIEA. DWI should therefore be part of the circulation list for the e-mail that is sent from NI Water to NIEA in providing this information; and
- Details of any new, stand-by or emergency sources it has the potential to use in 2026. To include: location; potential volume; monitoring results; and an appropriate risk assessment.

NI Water should also provide the sampling schedule for each abstraction point for **2027**, including sampling frequency and parameters, by **31 December 2026**.

1.6 Standard Sampling Frequency Compliance Requirements

- NI Water should provide a summary report for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025 identifying for each water supply zone, water supply point, service reservoir, and water treatment works, by parameter, where the regulatory standard sampling frequency has not been met. This information is required by **31 March 2026**.
- NI Water should also provide its compliance sampling schedule for **2027** by **31 December 2026**.



- NI Water should also provide its operational sampling schedule for **2027**, for each water supply zone, water supply point, service reservoir, and water treatment works, by **31 December 2026**.

1.7 Provision and Publication of Information

NI Water should send to DWI, by **30 June 2026**:

- a copy of any report prepared by it for the purposes of regulation 38(1) of the Regulations.

Evidence that NI Water provided the information to district councils required under regulation 38 (3 and 4) and a copy of the information supplied should follow within 7 days of the publication of the report.

2. REGULATORY CONTRAVENTIONS, INVESTIGATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CAUSE AND REMEDIAL ACTIONS

2.1 Contravention Reporting and Investigation Requirements

2.1.1 The Inspectorate will monitor and assess occurrences where the regulatory standards have been contravened and deal with specific issues on a parameter basis. Substantive timely investigation reports, which are supported by pertinent information, are required where a regulatory standard has been contravened. It is incumbent upon NI Water to include sufficient documentary detail to support both the investigation and the appropriate identification of the cause and corrective action to be taken.

2.1.2 NI Water should provide the number of samples taken at public buildings during 2025: the number failing to meet the regulatory requirements; and the sample ID (including zone code), sample date, sample address, and the specific location of the tap within the building or buildings where each of these samples was taken (e.g. cold water tap, left hand sink, first floor kitchen, main building, etc.). This information is required by **31 March 2026**.

2.2 Regulatory Lead Compliance

2.2.1 NI Water should provide the following information by **31 March 2026**:

- For each water treatment works lead zone: the lead contraventions during the 2025 compliance sampling and lead zone sampling programme;
- the total number of operational lead samples (including customer requests) in 2025 and the number of contraventions; and
- an ArcGIS shapefile showing the location of the lead contraventions during the 2025 categorised as audit, lead zone or operational.

2.2.2 NI Water should provide the following information by **31 March 2026**:

- details of monitoring results to demonstrate optimisation of orthophosphate dosing. This should, for each water treatment works lead zone include:
 - the number of samples taken;

- the number of samples >10 µg/l lead;
 - the number of samples taken for pH and phosphate;
 - the maximum, minimum, mean and median results for pH and phosphate;
- details of the orthophosphate dose rates used during 2025 at each water treatment works (including any step changes, giving the dates when any changes were made and any periods when no dosing took place and an explanation for that) and any planned changes for 2026;
 - following optimisation of the orthophosphate dosing, where compliance with the 10 µg/l lead standard is <98% a review of the regulation 30 risk assessment should be undertaken and submitted to DWI; and
 - details of any changes to the current procedures that demonstrate the regulatory requirement to notify consumers following a failure of the lead standard.

3. INSPECTION PROGRAMME

3.1 As part of the assessment of compliance with the Regulations and UK water industry best practice, the Inspectorate carries out an inspection programme.

3.2 NI Water will be given notification where an inspection of NI Water's sites or activities is required. Details of inspection topics and information requirements will be arranged by discussion between the DWI and NI Water's day-to-day contacts.

3.3 Topics that may be covered during 2026/27 are listed below:

- vertical audit trails of randomly selected regulatory samples from the sampling programme to the Public Register;
- inspection of its laboratory facilities for sample analysis;
- inspection of one or more water treatment works;
- inspection of one or more service reservoir(s);
- inspection of sampling procedures and sample points;
- inspection of the Laboratory Information Management System;
- vertical audit of one or more Regulation 30 Risk Assessment (or part thereof);
- progress on agreed follow-up action relating to contraventions, previous inspections, and event follow-ups;
- assessment of NI Water's procedures for networks operations;
- assessment of NI Water's lead reduction strategy; and
- consumer contacts.

4. PROVISION OF EVENTS INFORMATION



- 4.1 The Inspectorate will monitor and assess information required to be provided by NI Water in accordance with regulation 37 (6 and 7) of the Regulations.
- 4.2 NI Water should provide for each event notification, a “3 Day Report” within three working days of the event being identified.
- 4.3 NI Water should also provide for each event notification, details of the relevant district council(s) notified as part of the reporting requirements and the cause and remedial action codes.
- 4.4 NI Water should also provide for each event which has been categorised by DWI as Significant, Serious, or Major a “20 Day Report” within 20 working days of the date of the event. Additional information may be required for Serious and Major events. This will be requested on a case- by-case basis. Please refer to [Information Letter 01/24 – Guidance on the notification of Events](#) for reference.

5. REGULATION 30 RISK ASSESSMENTS

- 5.2 NI Water should have a risk assessment in place for each water treatment works and its connected supply system. Through the ongoing assessment of risks, and the impact of any event, NI Water should review and update its risk assessments in line with the [Regulation 30 guidance](#).
- 5.1. Details of the review of the relevant section(s) of the risk assessments should be provided with the relevant “20 Day Report” for events, and as soon as practicable for any other identified risk.
- 5.3 Regulation 31 Risk Assessment Reports should be carried out in line with the requirements of Information Letters 03/10 and 05/16, and the [Regulation 30 guidance](#). The Risk Assessment Reports, and associated Disinfection Statements, should be provided by **31 March 2026**.

6. PROVISION OF CUSTOMER CONTACT INFORMATION

- 6.1 NI Water should provide the summary information on water quality contacts including, but not limited to phone, letter, fax, email, in person, social media message or post for example Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, website request form and message left on a helpline.
The contact information should be categorised as per the following table and NI Water should also provide the number of contacts in each water quality category for each water supply zone.

This information, for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025, should be provided by **31 March 2026**.

Additionally, NI Water should provide a report with the monthly consumer contacts received in 2026 to date per water quality zone for the categories below.

This information should be provided quarterly: **30 April 2026, 31 July 2026, 31 October 2026, and 31 January 2027**.

2025 Water Quality Contacts

Contact Category		Number of Contacts in 2025
Appearance	Colour	
	General	
	Hardness	
	Stained Washing	
	White - Air	
	White - Chalk	
Taste and Odour	Chlorinous	
	Earthy/Musty	
	Other	
	Petrol/Diesel	
	TCP	
Illness		
Particles		
Animalcules		
Boil Water		
Other	Water Quality Concern - Campaigns	
	Water Quality Concern - Incident Related	
	Water Quality Concern - Lifestyle	
	Water Quality Concern - Pets/Animals	
	Water Quality Concern - Sample	
	Water Quality Concern - Lead	
	Water Quality (No Concern) - Fluoride	
	Water Quality (No Concern) - Other Information	
	Water Quality (No Concern) - Water Hardness	
	Water Quality (No Concern) - Water Quality Report	
	Miscellaneous	
	TOTAL	

7. BACKGROUND AND GENERAL INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLIANCE MONITORING PROGRAMMES

7.1 NI Water should also provide information on:

- abstraction point details for 2026 as detailed in 7.2.1; and
- the relationship between District Metered Areas (DMAs) and water supply zones for 2026 in tabular format and as an accessible ArcGIS layer available through NI Water viewer by **31 March 2026**.

7.2 Updates of the following documentation pertaining to the 2027 compliance data, including location maps as an accessible ArcGIS layer available through NI Water viewer, should be made available by **31 January 2027**:



- 7.2.1 For each abstraction point:
- its designation, type of source (such as surface, ground or mixed), the national grid reference of its location and an estimate of the average total daily volume of water abstracted for drinking water purposes (m³).
- 7.2.2 For each water treatment works (WTWs) complete Appendix A (Treatment Processes):
- its designation and the national grid reference of its location;
 - the associated water treatment processes (including type of disinfection);
 - its maximum design capacity;
 - an estimate of the average total daily volume of water supplied from it (m³); and
 - the designation of each service reservoir it supplies.
- 7.2.3 For each service reservoir (SR):
- its designation, the national grid reference of its location, and its capacity (m³); and
 - the designation of each water supply zone that it serves.
- 7.2.4 For each break pressure tank (BPT) including those from which all water from the BPT goes straight into a SR:
- its designation, the national grid reference of its location, and its capacity (m³); and
 - the designation of each water supply zone that it serves.
- 7.2.5 For each water treatment works, service reservoir and the distribution network complete Appendix A (Treatment Chemicals):
- chemicals dosed into raw water, in-process water, and final supply water;
 - chemicals dosed into service reservoirs and at other points in the distribution network;
 - chemicals that are used for treatment and recovery of waste process water where this is returned to the water supply system (for example the head of the works); and
 - chemicals used for on-site production of sodium hypochlorite including membrane cleaning chemicals.
- 7.2.6 For each water supply zone:
- its designation;
 - an estimate of the number of properties and population and
 - the factor used to determine the populations supplied;
 - the associated water treatment works;
 - the associated DMAs;
 - the population or property count of the DMAs; and
 - the associated district council areas.
- 7.2.7 ArcGIS layers, available through NI Water viewer, relating to WTWs, SRs, BPTs, no water supply areas, abstraction points, the sewer network, and the mains network.

7.2.8 An electronic copy of the Water Propagation Zones map for 2026, showing the WTW supplying each water supply zone, should also be provided.

8. PROVISION OF INFORMATION FOR THE INSPECTORATE'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025

8.1 To assist the Inspectorate with the preparation of a 'Key Facts' table concerning water supply in 2025, NI Water is requested to complete the table below by **30 April 2026**:

NI Water Key Facts Table, 2025

NI Water Assets	
Number of water treatment works	
Number of service reservoirs	
Number of water supply zones	
Length of mains pipe (km)	
Water Supplied	
Water supplied (MI/day)	
% from surface sources (impounding reservoirs) MI/day	
% from surface sources (rivers and loughs)	
% from ground sources (boreholes)	
% Other (specify)	
% from Lough Neagh	
Population Served	
Northern Ireland population estimate	
Northern Ireland population supplied by NI Water	
% population supplied by NI Water	
Total volume of water supplied	
Properties connected to the public water supply	
Number of district councils	
Number of health authorities	
Web address for water quality information	

9. PUBLICATION OF DRINKING WATER QUALITY DATA

Following the exit from the EU, the reporting requirements, previously in place for drinking water quality (Water Information System for Europe, WISE return) have been reviewed. To fulfil our reporting requirements, NI Water is required to provide the information for 2025 in a similar format as was provided for the WISE return. A template is provided as Appendix B to this letter.

9.1 The information will include:



- data for all parameters for water supply zones where the supply of water exceeds 1000m³ per day or serves more than 5,000 persons;
- data for all parameters for small water supply zones where the supply of water is less than 1000m³ per day or serves less than 5,000 persons; and
- cause, remedial action and timeframe codes assigned to all regulatory non-compliances.

NI Water is required to complete the template provided and return it to DWI by **30 April 2026**.

10. Data Validation

10.1 The Inspectorate will check the consistency and accuracy of the compliance data returns. NI Water **must** ensure that the number of tests and contraventions reported in the weekly update spreadsheets match those reported in the monthly Water Quality Compliance tables, and that quality checks have been carried out by NI Water before finalised data is submitted to the Inspectorate. Where the data provided in the monthly summary differs from data previously reported, **it will be returned to NI Water for correction**.

10.2 Under regulation 36(1) NI Water is required to prepare and maintain appropriate records. DWI will monitor NI Water's data returns against this requirement. If DWI determines there are ongoing and persistent issues with invalid data being provided to DWI, it may take further action in relation to this matter.

11. ENQUIRIES

Any enquiries relating to this letter should be addressed to Berni Corr by e-mail to berni.corr@daera-ni.gov.uk or by telephone on 028 9056 9479.

All data returns should be sent to DWI@daera-ni.gov.uk.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter to DWI@daera-ni.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely



Berni Corr

Interim Chief Inspector of Drinking Water

cc: Richard Crowe; Gareth Greer; Dymphna Gallagher; Alison McMullan; Ciaran MacCann; Karen Smyth