



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

Frequently asked Questions (FAQ)

Significant Water Management Issues



An Agency within the Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Gníomhaireacht de chuid na Roinne
**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

An Agency wi'in the Depairtment o
**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

FAQ – Significant Water Management Issues

No	Question and Answer
Q1	What is the Significant Water Management Issues report and consultation?
	The report aims to improve understanding of the environmental pressures and impacts affecting each of Northern Ireland's water bodies, including rivers, lakes, coastal waters and groundwater. It also provides an assessment of the current water quality status in Northern Ireland. The consultation invites input from stakeholders and the public regarding the Department's assessment of the underlying issues and pressures to develop draft measures for the fourth cycle draft River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). This Plan will cover the six-year period from 1 January 2028 to 31 December 2033.
Q2	Why is this happening?
	The publication of the SWMI Report is an essential step in the statutory river basin planning process under The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017.
Q3	When will the next River Basin Management Plan be published?
	The 4th cycle draft RBMP, including the draft Programme of Measures, will be published by the end of 2026.
Q4	How does this consultation differ from the last SWMI consultation?
	Pressures have been identified using the Driver-Pressure-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) methodology and have been assessed on a waterbody basis for the current SWMI consultation. For the purposes of the consultation, they have been presented at Local Management Area level (LMA).
Q5	How was DPSIR analysis undertaken?
	The pressures within each waterbody were identified using monitoring and regulatory datasets, including data on land use and human activities in catchments. The initial list of DPSIR categories was extracted from WISE (Water Information System for Europe) WFD Reporting Guidance 2016 and has been supplemented with additional new pressures and Key Type Measures. The methodology and preliminary findings were shared with key stakeholders at an in-person workshop on 24 October 2025 and updated following their feedback.

No	Question and Answer
	Each pressure may have more than one impact on a waterbody e.g. agriculture may have a chemical impact (pesticides) and nutrient impact (fertiliser). However, the pressure has only been counted once to create the bar charts of most frequently identified pressures in Northern Ireland and at LMA level. DPSIR is a tool to aid policy making that counts how often a pressure occurs, so that measures can be designed appropriately. It is <u>not</u> a source apportionment tool.
Q6	How were Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO) pressures identified?
	CSOs are pressures identified by NI Water and can be divided into two categories; • Unsatisfactory CSOs - unsatisfactory overflows that may directly impact water quality. These are captured in the urban wastewater category. • To be determined CSOs - CSOs that have yet to be classified as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory and require modelling by NI Water to determine status. These are captured in the “Other” category.
Q7	How are septic tanks data included in the DPSIR analysis?
	As septic tanks are not monitored for performance, they present a potential risk with an unknown impact on the water environment. In-house models have been used to take a risk-based assessment of potential septic tanks identifying properties with a postal address that are more than 30 m away from a main sewer line. Risk areas are mapped on several factors including: land class, groundwater vulnerability, flood areas, proximity to the river network and slope. Hotspot analysis of this data allowed significant clusters of potential septic tanks to be identified. These were assigned risk categories (Low, Medium, High and Very High). High and Very High categories represent clusters of potential septic tanks in high-risk areas and only these categories have been included in the pressure assessment.
Q8	Is it possible to download the GIS layers for the most recent ecological status published in the LMA quality and pressures report, or have them accessible on the catchment data web mapviewer?

No	Question and Answer
	We intend to make the 2024 classification available on the NIEA Data Catchment Viewer in the near future. Information for rivers and lakes is already available through the NIEA Water Information Request Viewer . More information can be found at Information Requests Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs or by contacting WaterInfo@daera-ni.gov.uk
Q9	Can you give an overview of how much coordination has taken place with authorities in the Republic of Ireland to develop plans for international river basin districts?
	The North-South Water Quality Coordination Group meets regularly to discuss trans-boundary issues.
Q10	Looking through the 131-page document, it references "protected areas" 12 times with a general statement applied to relevant locations "due to their ecological importance". Is there a greater breakdown within the document of the impact of water pollution to those designated protected areas included for relevant features and the intentions of how these will be addressed?
	The assessment is based on water bodies, not protected areas. The current stage is about identifying the correct problems rather than presenting draft measures (which will be the purpose of the draft River Basin Management Plan).
Q11	Is there an intention to tailor the measures to individual water bodies?
	Measures can be developed at various levels, from river basin districts to specific water bodies. Some measures can be set out at the district level, while others need to be tailored to specific problems. The flexibility allows for addressing specific issues effectively.
Q12	Regarding pressures, have you considered historic landfill leachate pathways & risks from both lawful and unlawful sites? Have these sites been identified, mapped and assessed in terms of risk?
	Landfill sites are captured in the pressure assessment. Some historic waste sites are not monitored, making it difficult to identify their impact.
Q13	Have you considered the impact of windfarm developments on blanket bogs on flooding, sediments and Potential Toxic Elements into waterbodies?
	Windfarm developments were not considered as a driver impacting water body status.



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