

Our Reference: DAERA/26-691

Water Pollution Response &
Enforcement Team
NIEA Lisburn
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Lisburn
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07 October 2026

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Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Thank you for your request for information received by the Department on 3 September 2026 which sought the following information:

“For the purposes of this request, a “compost/digestate spreading incident” means any incident involving the illegal, unauthorised or non-compliant spreading, deposit or dumping of compost, digestate or similar processed organic material on land in Northern Ireland, which NIEA identified as warranting an active investigation by its enforcement/investigations function (i.e. a case was opened and progressed, as distinct from a complaint or report that was logged but not taken forward)”.

For each of the ten financial years from 2016/17 to 2025/26 inclusive, please provide, in table form, one figure per year:

The number of compost/digestate spreading incidents (as defined above) which NIEA both (a) actively investigated, and (b) took samples of the material from, for laboratory testing or analysis, as part of that investigation.

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm that it holds the information you requested. See **Table 1** below.



Table 1 – Total compost and digestate incidents financial years 2016/2017 to 2025/2026

Financial Year	(a) Total investigated 'compost and digestate' incidents	(b) Total 'compost and digestate investigations' where samples were taken
2016/2017	7	2
2017/2018	15	1
2018/2019	10	2
2019/2020	14	4
2020/2021	11	1
2021/2022	10	2
2022/2023	7	2
2023/2024	10	3
2024/2025	17	0
2025/2026	9	0

Please note these totals are the combined figures obtained from both the NIEA Environmental Crime Unit (ECU), which investigates illegal dumping incidents, and figures from NIEA Water Pollution Response and Enforcement Team (WPRET), which investigates water pollution incidents.

In the case of the water pollution incidents there are no distinct recording categories for 'compost and/or digestate' within NIEA's Pollution Incident Management System (PIMS), and as such the figures provided by NIEA Water Pollution Response and Enforcement Team (WPRET) represent the data returned using search terms in respect of the Incident Titles (specifically, searches were carried out for the words "compost", "AD Plant" and "digestate"). Incidents included in the search will also involve those incidents investigated in addition to just those 'spreading' related i.e. where water pollution was investigated due to spillages/losses of the material.

It is also worth noting that, in respect of water pollution investigations under the Water (NI) Order 1999, samples are usually only taken in cases where pollution has been confirmed to have caused a High or Medium Severity environmental impact. Water samples are not normally collected for Low Severity incidents.

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.

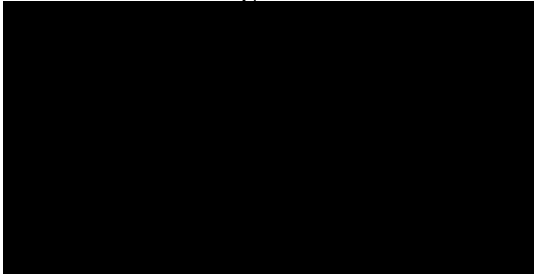
If you are unhappy with the manner in which your request for information has been handled or the decision to release/withhold information, you have the right to request a formal review by the Department. If you wish to do so, please contact The Review Section either by e-mailing daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk 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,



Water Pollution Response & Enforcement Team



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 wí'n the Depairtment o
**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

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