

**REFERENCE**

2425339

**RELEASE DATE**

October 2024

**SUBJECT**

Internal Review of 2425285 i.e. data not disclosed relating to Lough Neagh

**REQUESTS & RESPONSES**

In-lough water quality data (2018-2024 if available) specific to abstraction points for NI Water WTWs on the Lough. Any of the following physico-chemical parameters: temperature, dissolved oxygen (mg/l and %), pH, orthophosphate, total phosphorus, nitrate, chlorophyll, alkalinity, suspended solids/turbidity, salinity, hardness (mg/l of CaCO<sub>3</sub>), depth, conductivity.

Annex A attached provides data for pH, total phosphorus, nitrate, chlorophyll, alkalinity, turbidity, hardness (mg/l of CaCO<sub>3</sub>) and conductivity. Ballinrees Water Treatment Works is also included, as it abstracts water from Lough Neagh, albeit downstream.

The other parameters i.e. temperature, dissolved oxygen (mg/l and %), orthophosphate, suspended solids, salinity and depth, NI Water don't hold. As such disclosure of these parameters is considered exempt under Regulation 12(4)(a) (Information not held).

All exceptions under the Regulations are qualified and so, in deciding whether or not to disclose the requested information, NI Water must consider the public interest. However, this is not possible where the information is not held.

For more information NI Water would recommend you contact the NIEA.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

17 Antrim Road

Tonagh,

Lisburn

County Antrim BT28 3AL

Email: [nieainfo@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:nieainfo@daera-ni.gov.uk) Telephone: 0300 200 7856

In-lough phytoplankton or cyanobacteria species data (2018-2024 if available) specific to abstraction points for NI Water WTWs on the Lough.

Again, Annex A attached refers. Ballinrees Water Treatment Works is also included, as it abstracts water from Lough Neagh, albeit downstream.

In-lough depth profiles (temperature/dissolved oxygen) data (2018-2024 if available) specific to abstraction points for NI Water WTWs on the Lough.

NI Water do not retain in-lake depth profiles (temperature/dissolved oxygen) specific to abstraction points for NI Water WTWs on the Lough. As such this data is considered exempt under Regulation 12(4)(a) (Information not held). For more information NI Water would recommend you contact the NIEA.

Further to your follow-up query of 18 November 2024 in which you requested the location or approximate location for the following sample points, I reply as follows.

- W1301P Moyola PPP Raw Water Inlet
- W2308P Castor Bay PPP Raw Water Inlet
- W3301P Dunore Point PPP Raw Water Inlet

The sample point is taken directly off the raw water mains and is sampled by accredited samplers on behalf of NI Water. In doing so, it tests the water that is actually at the beginning of the water treatment process rather than a random sample of Lough Neagh water.

Specific sample point locations are considered exempt from disclosure under Regulation 12(5)(a) (National Security/Public Safety) of the EIRs.

Regulation 12(5)(a) of the EIR states that: “a public authority may refuse to disclose information to the extent that its disclosure would adversely affect— (a)international relations, defence, national security or public safety.”

This exception is subject to the consideration of the public interest. The Information Commissioner's Office considers that information requested should be released unless the public interest weighs in favour of withholding such information.

The public interest in releasing the information requested is that it clarifies demonstrates NI Water's willingness to be open and transparent in its processes.

Against this, information about Water Treatment Works infrastructure and their locations is considered highly sensitive as it relates to the supply of potable water.

There is a very real, not merely hypothetical, risk that the release of the requested details to the wider public could be useful for subversive activity to those with malicious intent. Accordingly, NI Water, acting as a prudent water undertaker, cannot responsibly place this information within the public domain via the EIR.

Protection of its citizens is the first duty of a government and, therefore, the release of any information that might make that task more difficult would not be in the public interest. Even if the risk of this happening were not considered very high, the consequences of such an event, if it did occur, would be so grave that NI Water is in no doubt that the balance of the public interest in this case falls clearly in favour of maintaining the exception rather than disclosing the information.

For the reasons detailed above, and in accordance with existing guidance pertaining to security considerations and public safety as it pertains to water and sewerage services infrastructure, NI Water has concluded that the public interest favours withholding this information.