

FOI Disclosure Log

Below are some examples of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests of wider public interest that NI Water has released.

Subject: Flushing of dog waste

Query: Could you please let me know Northern Ireland Waters official viewpoint as to whether or not dog waste is safe to flush?

Response: Dog waste is not intrinsically any different from human waste and therefore would not have an adverse effect on either the sewerage system or the receiving Waste Water Treatment Works. However this refers to dog waste only and under no circumstances should plastic bags etc be 'flushed'. This advice applies to a householder and is not applicable to a business such as Kennels, Rescue Centres, Vets etc as such practices could be construed to be Industrial Waste and would require a Consent / Trade Effluent Charge.

Subject: Fluoride in water

Query: Could you please tell me if fluoride is added to our drinking water? Also what other chemicals are added to drinking water?

Response:

NI Water does not add Fluoride to drinking water in Northern Ireland.

As to other chemicals added, various chemical coagulants are used at Water Treatment Works (WTW) to remove colour, naturally occurring metal ions and particulate matter. Depending on location these would be Aluminium Sulphate, Ferric Aluminium Sulphate or Poly Aluminium Chloride. They are removed as part of the flocculation (combining suspended solids) and filtration treatment processes at the Water Treatment Works (WTW).

The other chemicals added at WTWs are as follows: -

- Chlorine – used as disinfectant to ensure bacteriological quality of the drinking water.
- Lime and/or Soda Ash – used as a pH stabiliser within the treatment process and to maintain pH above 7 within the distribution system.
- Sulphuric Acid - used at some WTWs to stabilise pH of the coagulation process,
- Carbon Dioxide – used at some WTWs to stabilise alkalinity of the coagulation process.
- Orthophosphoric Acid – used as an inhibitor to Lead solubilisation within the distribution system as part of Lead Reduction Strategy

agreed with (and monitored by) Drinking Water Inspectorate, Environment & Heritage Service.

- Carbon – used at some WTWs (where there have been identified problems) for the removal of Taste & Odour and/or pesticide.
- Polyelectrolytes – used at some WTWs as a coagulant aid and subsequently removed within the treatment processes.
- Ozone – used at several WTWs to aid the removal of dissolved organics.

It is important to note that all chemicals used at NI Water WTWs are Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) approved and are in common usage throughout the UK Water Industry. There are rigorous control measures in place and a routine sampling programme of the final water leaving the WTWs to ensure compliance with Regulatory Standards.

A Drinking Water Register is maintained recording detailed water quality results for each water supply zone. The Register is available for inspection, free of charge, during normal working office hours at our Customer Relations Centre (CRC). Customers can examine any record on the register and obtain a free copy of the information for the water supply zone they live in. A charge may be made for printed information on other zones. Customers, who wish to receive information about the quality of water in their water supply zone by post, can also write to the address listed below:

NI Water Customer Relations Centre,
4th Floor,
Capital House,
3 Upper Queen St,
Belfast.
BT1 6PU

Alternatively, CRC can also be contacted:-

By telephone: 0845 744 0088 (calls to this number are charged at the local rate).

By email: - waterline@niwater.com

Subject: largest water users in NI and Ireland as a whole

Query: Details of the largest water users in Northern Ireland and water usage rates.

Response

After careful consideration I am unable to disclose the names of specific companies in the context of their water usage. As this information is not “already in the public domain”, I have decided to exempt it in accordance with the exception provided for under Regulation (12) (5) (f) of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 – ‘the interests of the supplier of the information’.

This exception covers cases where the information was supplied on a voluntary basis in the expectation that it would not be disclosed to a third party and where the supplier has not consented to disclosure. In effect information which is protected by the common law duty of confidence which states that any information given or received in confidence for one purpose should not be used for another or passed to a third party without their consent.

All exceptions under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004 require the consideration of 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. There is a public interest in the information requested being released because this may inform wider debate on the issue of commercial water usage in the Province. The public interest is however also to be served by the need to preserve confidentiality and for this reason I have decided that the public interest favours the withholding of the information requested at this time.

To assist you in your study I have however provided details of the largest water consumers in Northern Ireland by their sector and net consumption. The information below refers.

The largest water users in Northern Ireland listed by their sector

Consumer	Net Consumption
A General Manufacturing Company	1,599,878 cubic metres
A Food Manufacturuing and Processing Company	781,012 cubic metres
A Technology Company	771,911 cubic metres
A Power Company	606,154 cubic metres
A Food Manufacturuing and Processing Company	549,917 cubic metres
A Hospital	382,817 cubic metres
A Ministry of Defence Property	243,263 cubic metres
A Drinks Industry Company	233,594 cubic metres
A Food Manufacturuing and Processing Company	221,954 cubic metres
A Technology Company	211,847 cubic metres

Subject: Additions to water in Bangor

Query: Details about the water supply in Bangor West following the recent demise of your goldfish.

Response:

During and after mains rehabilitation in a particular area there will be fluctuations in chlorine residuals within the distribution system. Whilst the chlorine levels may be slightly above normal for a short period, thereby

ensuring bacteriological quality is maintained, there are no associated health risks.

A member of NI Water's scientific staff has indicated that the water used in the change should be dechlorinated (de-chlorination chemicals are available in aquatic shops) and conditioned (left standing in a container for 24 hours) and that this procedure would usually ensure the well-being of the fish.

Subject: Information on Pest Control at Wastewater Treatment Works.

Query:

1. General pest control measures at Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTws).
2. Advise specifically on pest control at filter beds?
3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) issued to personnel working in these areas?

Response:

1. Under the terms and conditions of Annual Tender C191 (Pest Control and Baiting of Sewers) NIW employ a number of contractors to primarily provide rodent control. Buildings and WwTWs are baited approximately three times a year or if there is serious infestation it is specifically dealt with.
2. There are no specific controls for filters works. Insects, primarily flies, are not considered to be a pest and as such are not specifically treated. The filter fly is a natural consequence of the availability of suitable food and the presence of an environment resembling that of natural habitats. The fauna of biological filters resembles those of mud flats and decaying seaweed etc. which are natural habitats for flies.
3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) issue to Wastewater Services Operatives includes: overalls, gloves, safety shoes, goggles, disposable face masks (as required).