

REFERENCE

2526188

RELEASE DATE

August 2025

SUBJECT

Raising concerns regarding PFAS's in drinking water and PFAS's entering Lough Neagh and request of any testing results of concentrations within the lough.

Including queries relating to communications between NI Water & Belfast International Airport and suppliers of foam fire extinguishers. Request also for NI Waters management plan related to PFAS.

RESPONSE

NI Water replies to each of your queries in turn as follows.

I am concerned regarding PFASs in my drinking water and in PFASs entering Lough Neagh and concentrations with the Lough. Please share any results in this regard.

I would also like to be made aware of any actions NI Water has, or is taking to advise those whose activities may be, or may have been contributing to this issue, including:

- 1. Belfast International/Vinci Airports***
- 2. Suppliers of fire fighting foams containing PFASs***

Please also advise me of NI Water's management plan/strategy to address PFASs.

By way of background, per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of fluorinated compounds, the basis of which are chains of carbon and fluorine atoms. They contain at least one fully fluorinated methyl or methylene group. The carbon-fluorine bond is very strong and so these compounds do not degrade easily and therefore persist in the environment. They are resistant to grease, oil, water, and heat and so they have found a large range of uses; for example, in stain- and water-resistant fabrics and carpets, as well as in paints and firefighting foams, cookware,

and food packaging. This is not an exhaustive list and there may be many uses of these substances that are not yet widely known.

NI Water's underpinning approach to the protection of public health through clean safe drinking water is the World Health Organisation's Drinking Water Safety Plan (DWSP) approach, which seeks to understand existing and emerging risks to drinking water supplies, from raw water in the environment, through drinking water treatment systems, the drinking water network and right through to the risks posed by customer taps, and ensuring that appropriate and effective control measures are in place. PFAS is included as a risk within NI Water's DWSPs across all water supplies.

NI Water works in close collaboration with Northern Ireland Environment Agency's (NIEA) Drinking Water Protected Area team to understand the water quality risks to our raw water sources and ensure appropriate mitigations are in place. We also work closely with UK Water Industry Research (UKWIR) teams and the Water Research Centre (WRC) to collaborate on projects and innovations.

NI Water's Sustainable Catchment Area Management team works closely with key stakeholders, environmental non-governmental organisations, charitable organisations, agricultural and farming groups, etc., for the protection of drinking water catchment areas and to reduce the risk in our raw water sources.

NI Water has in place monitoring for PFAS compounds in our raw water sources used for abstraction to our drinking water treatment works (WTWs) and also in the treated drinking water supplies for all our drinking WTWs.

For more information on this please visit our website on the link below to previous requests under reference 2425057 and 2425503.

<https://www.niwater.com/about-us/publication-scheme/lists-and-registers/information-request-disclosure>

There is no specific standard for PFAS compounds listed in the drinking water regulations in Northern Ireland [Water Quality (Water Supply) Regulations (NI) 2017].

However, NI Water has undertaken monitoring for PFAS compounds at all of its drinking WTWs since 2020. The analysis undertaken by NI Water for PFAS compounds has been aligned to the requirement for PFAS analysis within the EU Recast Drinking Water Directive (EU 2020/2184) in preparation for the potential for new drinking water regulations in Northern Ireland that either transpose the Recast Directive or align to the Recast Directive to build up a dataset of results and understand the potential for compliance with new regulatory standards.

The Recast Directive introduced standards for PFAS in January 2021 for Member States, and includes 'PFAS Total' standard of 0.5 µg/l and the 'Sum of PFAS' standard of 0.1µg/l. The Sum of PFAS standard encompasses a range of 20 PFAS compounds. Member States may decide to use either one or both of the parameters 'PFAS Total' or 'Sum of PFAS'.

The DWI (England and Wales) issued updated guidance in July 2022 on PFAS monitoring in drinking water supplies. This guidance includes a PFAS Tier system for PFAS compounds in the treated final water.

Tier	Concentration of any PFAS in final water
Tier 1	Less than 0.01 µg/l
Tier 2	Less than 0.1 µg/l
Tier 3	Greater than or equal to 0.1µ/l

NI Water's PFAS analysis has not breached the regulatory limits set within the Recast Directive.

Please find attached as Annex A a copy of the monitoring results for PFAS in water abstracted from Lough Neagh for 2025. I have additionally provided as Annex B the results for your own area.