

REFERENCE

2425414

RELEASE DATE

December 2024

SUBJECT

Quantity of orthophosphate used in NI Water Water Treatment Works between 2003-2024

RESPONSE

Please see Annex A for NI Water's return in relation to your query, to be read in conjunction with the following caveats as to the limitations of the data.

Data 2003-2007

Northern Ireland Water (NI Water) is a Government Owned Company, set up in April 2007 to provide the water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland, so any data supplied is from that date forward. Figures between 2003-2007 are not held and Regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIR therefore applies to your request for the information for the period requested.

Data 2007-2009

For the period 2007 to 2009, the data is considered incomplete due to a lack of conventions in relation to references placed on the procurement system for the materials; i.e., it would depend on who was ordering the product as to how it was referenced on the system, and not all records may have been found. As such, for the period 2006 to 2009, the data cannot be verified as wholly accurate and as such. NI Water consider that data for this period to be exempt from disclosure to the wider public domain under Regulation 12(4)(d) - incomplete data (below refers).

Data 2009-date

There was a change to the procurement of this material from 2009 and the information from that date forward is considered reliable to disclose. Annex A refers.

Regulation 12(4)(a) – information not held

Regulation 12(4)(a) (Information not held) provides that “*a public authority may refuse to disclose information to the extent that it does not hold that information when an applicant’s request is received*”.

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

Regulation 12(4)(d) – incomplete data

There is a public interest in the information requested being released because this would demonstrate NI Water’s willingness to be open and transparent about its procurement practices.

Against this, Regulation 12(4)(d) of the EIR states: “*a public authority may refuse to disclose information to the extent that the request relates to material which is still in the course of completion, to unfinished documents or to incomplete data.*”

Regulation 5(4) requires that where information made available in response to EIR requests “*is compiled by or on behalf of the public authority it shall be up to date, accurate and comparable, so far as the public authority reasonably believes*”.

NI Water is conscious that it should, as much as possible, only place factual and accurate environmental information into the public domain, and that the publication of unconfirmed, unsubstantiated data, that cannot be considered wholly factual or accurate, would be open to misinterpretation and misuse, would not be in the wider public interest and would not comply with Part 2, Regulation 5(4) of the legislation.

Releasing incomplete or unfinished data into the public domain would distract public debate away from the substantive environmental issues that the information relates to. Instead, debate could focus on secondary issues, such as any deficiencies in the information.

NI Water & NI Water Alpha Orthophosphoric Acid Tonnages

Year	Total Tonnes
2009	790.18
2010	906.45
2011	1,087.74
2012	921.77
2013	1,063.3
2014	1,250.77
2015	1,193.67
2016	1,301.85
2017	1,497.37
2018	1,526.57
2019	1,527.79
2020	1,827.90
2021	1,731.09
2022	1,514.15
2023	1,693.02
2024	1,533.11