

REFERENCE

2526257

RELEASE DATE

September 2025

SUBJECT

Various queries related to testing for phosphorus before it is distributed to homes and any results, including any incidents where they reach between 5mg/l and 49 mg/l, and the total number of such incidents for each year from 2012 to 2024 please?

RESPONSE

Please could you send me the results of all drinking water sources and supplies that has taken place in Northern Ireland since and including January 2024.

All regulatory drinking water results are available on the OpenDataNI website at the link below.

<https://www.opendatani.gov.uk/dataset/ni-water-customer-tap-authorised-supply-point-results>

In a spreadsheet please include results for source water (untreated) and tap (treated) water, substance tested for (please include all chemicals, metals, microplastics, pesticides, nutrients, bacteria and AMR), when the sampling took place, where it took place (lat long or grid ref), the concentrations found, LODs, unit of measurement.

Please find this attached as Annex A. Please note that the locations of water samples are not to be disclosed to the public for reasons of national security and public safety. As such, Regulation 12(5)(a) of the EIR applies.

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 international relations, defence, national security or public safety.”

The exception is engaged as release of the requested information would adversely affect national security and public safety. This exception is subject to the consideration of the public interest.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) 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, detailed information about water sampling sites are considered highly sensitive as they relate to the supply of wholesome 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.

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.