

REFERENCE

2627273

RELEASE DATE

14 August 2026

SUBJECT

Request for the current digital Water Supply Zone boundary dataset in its existing GIS format, including zone identifiers or codes and zone names where held.

RESPONSE

NI Water holds the requested digital spatial dataset. However, the detailed Water Supply Zone boundary data is withheld under Regulation 12(5)(a) of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 because disclosure would adversely affect public safety.

Regulation 12(5)(a) permits a public authority to refuse to disclose environmental information where disclosure would adversely affect international relations, defence, national security or public safety. NI Water relies on the public safety element of this exception.

The dataset contains precise, machine-readable boundaries for individual Water Supply Zones. Disclosure would place this information in the public domain and allow it to be analysed and combined with other information to build a more detailed picture of the areas served by essential drinking water infrastructure. Following advice from its Security and Resilience function, NI Water considers that disclosure would, on the balance of probabilities, increase the risk of deliberate interference with that infrastructure and adversely affect public safety.

NI Water has considered partial disclosure and whether the boundaries could be provided at a lower level of detail or in another format. Removing identifiers would not remove the risk arising from the boundary geometry, while removing the boundaries would not answer the request. NI Water is unable to provide the requested data in a form that would answer the request and adequately address the identified risk.

NI Water has considered the public interest test and applied the presumption in favour of disclosure. It recognises the public interest in openness, research and scrutiny of water supply arrangements. However, this is outweighed by the public interest in protecting public safety and maintaining the safety, continuity and resilience of essential drinking water supplies. The information is therefore withheld under Regulation 12(5)(a).

General Water Supply Zone and water quality information remains available through NI Water water quality results.