

REFERENCE

2526072

RELEASE DATE

July 2025

SUBJECT

1. A full list of all the chemical substances identified in the testing of sewage sludge, which is ultimately spread on agricultural land.
2. An explanation of the testing regime in place to identify any potential contaminants in the sludge and ensure safety for the environment and/or public health.
3. Copies of any relevant reports concerning the same since 2010.

RESPONSE

NI Water does not hold records of chemical characteristics of its sewage sludge. However, its sludge disposal contractor & operator (Glen Water Ltd. & Veolia Water Outsourcing Ltd.) hold the attached records, covering calendar years 2018, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025. No records are held for the intervening or earlier years.

Regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIR apply to those elements not held by NI Water or our contractors (more information later in this reply refers). You will additionally note that the personal details of third parties have been redacted under Regulation 13 of the EIR (again, see below).

These are records of an annual assessment of the characteristics of sludge cake taken from each of the sources of wastewater sludge cake presented by NI Water for disposal throughout the calendar year; i.e., a single sample of sludge for each of the Sludge Treatment Centres across Northern Ireland. Ordinarily, all wastewater sludges are received by the contractor at Duncrue Street, Belfast, and would be incinerated at this location; although, in instances of incinerator down time, the contractor may send some or all sludge to agricultural land for commercial crop production (i.e. crops not for human consumption), at which point it would be treated with lime prior to farmland application.

It is important to note that these records are of analysis of the raw sludge received at Duncrue Street, Belfast. These are not sample results of sludge post-liming/pre-

application to land. Neither our contractor nor NI Water holds any record of analysis of sludge post-liming treatment and prior to spreading to land.

Sludge arriving at the incinerator facility is weighed at a calibrated weighbridge. The weighbridge operator collects three representative samples from a sludge trailer originating from each of the Sludge Treatment Centre sites. These samples are then stored in bags in a sample fridge and subsequently collected by an independent laboratory (McQuillan Environmental) for the analysis on the following parameters, as recorded in the attached files: -

- pH
- Oven dry matter
- Total Nitrogen
- Ammonium Nitrogen
- Total phosphorus (P)
- Total potassium (K)
- Total Magnesium (Mg)
- Total Sulphur (S)
- Total Copper (Cu)
- Total Zinc (Zn)
- Total Calcium (Ca)
- E Coli
- Total Iron (Fe)
- Total Molybdenum (Mo)
- Total Manganese (Mn)
- Total Lead (Pb)
- Total Cadmium (Cd)
- Total Mercury (Hg)
- Total Nickel (Ni)
- Total Chromium (Cr)
- Organic matter LOI
- Lime Equivalent as CaCO₃
- Fluoride [100:1 H₂SO₄ soluble]
- Total Arsenic (As)

- Total Selenium (Se)
- Total Boron (B)
- BOD
- Salmonella OPP
- N.V. as CaO equivalents

Regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIR – 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 13 of the EIR – personal data

Regulation 13 provides that: *“To the extent that the information requested includes personal data of which the applicant is not the data subject, a public authority shall not disclose the personal data”*.