

REFERENCE

2526089

RELEASE DATE

July 2025

SUBJECT

Various procurement queries regarding NI Water's IT contracts including supplier name, expenditure, contract start and end date, contract duration, number of licenses and users etc.

RESPONSE

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

1. Standard Firewall (Network)

Firewall services that protect the organisation's network from unauthorised access and other internet security threats.

- ***Who is the existing supplier for this contract?***

M Group Telecom

- ***What is the annual spend for each contract?***

Lot 2 of this five-year contract, of which firewall services form a part, has total committed spend of £8,636,332.69. This cannot be sub-divided into the cost of just the firewall services.

- ***What is the description of the services provided?***

Protect the organisation's network from unauthorised access and other internet security threats.

- ***Primary brand (where applicable)***

For reasons of cybersecurity and its implications for national security and public security, this information is lawfully exempt from disclosure under Regulations 12(5)(a) (national security/public safety) – see Annex A.

- ***What is the start date of the contract?***

1 March 2024

- ***What is the expiry date of the contract?***

28 February 2029

- ***What is the total duration of the contract?***

Five years

- ***Who is the responsible contract officer?***
 - ***Please include at least their job title, and where possible, name, contact number, and direct email address***

NI Water's Head of Telemetry & Telecoms can be contacted via NI Water's central email address, waterline@niwater.com.

- ***How many licences or users are included (where applicable)?***

Circa 1,750.

2. Anti-virus Software Application

Programs designed to prevent, detect, and remove viruses, malware, trojans, adware, and related threats.

See replies to Query 1, as this is the same contract.

3. Microsoft Enterprise Agreement

A volume licensing agreement that may include:

- ***Microsoft 365 (Office, Exchange, SharePoint, Teams)***
- ***4. Microsoft Power BI***

- ***Who is the existing supplier for this contract?***

BT PLC provides licences for Microsoft 365 and PowerBI.

- ***What is the annual spend for each contract?***

The approximate annual spend on this contract is £621.5K.

- ***What is the description of the services provided?***

Large Account Reseller

- ***Primary brand (where applicable)***

Microsoft

- ***What is the start date of the contract?***

16 August 2021

- ***What is the expiry date of the contract?***

15 August 2027

- ***What is the total duration of the contract?***

Six years.

- ***Who is the responsible contract officer?***

- ***Please include at least their job title, and where possible, name, contact number, and direct email address***

NI Water's Head of ICT Service Operations can be contacted via the Company's central email, waterline@niwater.com.

- ***How many licences or users are included (where applicable)?***

Approximately 2,081 M365 licences, and 170 PowerBI licences.

- **Windows Enterprise**
- **Enterprise Mobility + Security (EMS)**

NI Water has E3 licences that are encompassed within the contract that covers Microsoft365 and Power BI as detailed above.

- **Azure services (committed or pay-as-you-go)**
- ***Who is the existing supplier for this contract?***

BT PLC.

- ***What is the annual spend for each contract?***

The estimated annual spend for this element of the contract (which includes other services) is £54K unified support, plus £12.5K committed spend.

- ***What is the description of the services provided?***

Unified Support Agreement

- ***Primary brand (where applicable)***

Microsoft

- ***What is the start date of the contract?***

1 June 2024

- ***What is the expiry date of the contract?***

31 May 2027

- ***What is the total duration of the contract?***

Three years.

- ***Who is the responsible contract officer?***
 - ***Please include at least their job title, and where possible, name, contact number, and direct email address***

NI Water's Head of ICT Service Operations can be contacted via the Company's central email, waterline@niwater.com.

- ***How many licences or users are included (where applicable)?***

Not applicable. This is based on services used, not the number of licences held.

Annex A

Regulation 12(5)(a) of the EIR – national security and public safety

Regulation 12(5)(a) of the EIR provides 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 NI Water’s IT infrastructure is the backbone of much of the Company’s critical national infrastructure. Information that relates to the security and protection of our IT systems is protected to guard against attacks against the Company from outside, which would further endanger the public safety of our customers through potential water contamination or interference with our wastewater network to catastrophic effect.

Disclosure to one person under the EIR is equal to the disclosure of that information to the public domain. This exception is qualified, meaning that NI Water must consider the public interest in disclosure of the information.

The Information Commissioner’s Office considers that information requested should be released unless the public interest weighs in favour of withholding such information.

In favour of disclosure, NI Water has considered the inherent weight in favour of the disclosure of environmental information in addition to the following.

- **Transparency and accountability:** Disclosing the brand may help the public assess whether the company is using reputable and up-to-date cybersecurity tools, especially given its role in protecting public health and the environment.
- **Public confidence:** Openness about cybersecurity measures could enhance trust in the organisation’s ability to safeguard essential services.
- **Scrutiny of procurement:** Disclosure may allow for public oversight of procurement decisions, ensuring value for money and avoidance of vendor bias.

Against these arguments, NI Water has considered the following.

- **Risk of targeted cyberattacks:** Revealing the brand would assist malicious actors in identifying potential vulnerabilities specific to that software, increasing the risk of successful attacks.
- **Threat to public safety:** A successful cyberattack on water and sewerage infrastructure would disrupt essential services, posing serious risks to public health and environmental safety.
- **National security implications:** As part of the UK's critical infrastructure, the Company's systems are a potential target for hostile actors. Disclosure would undermine broader national security efforts.
- **Cumulative risk:** Even if the brand alone seems innocuous, when combined with other publicly available information, it would contribute to a more complete picture of the organisation's digital defences.

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.

For the reasons detailed above, and in accordance with existing guidance pertaining to security considerations and public safety as it pertains to critical national infrastructure, NI Water has concluded that the public interest favours withholding brand details about firewalls and antiviruses used by the Company.