

Northern Ireland Water

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Publication Scheme

May 2018

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1. Freedom of Information - Background

The main features of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the “Act”) are:

- A right to be told whether information is held by a public authority and a right to have that information supplied to you upon request, subject to certain discretionary and legal exemptions.
- A duty on public authorities to adopt a publication scheme for the proactive publication of information. The scheme, which must be approved by the Information Commissioner, will specify the classes of information the authority intends to publish, the manner of publication and whether the information is available to the public free of charge or on payment of a fee.

NI Water’s aim in developing this scheme is to set out:

- the classes of information we publish or intend to make available as a matter of course;
- how this information can be accessed; and
- whether the information is available free of charge or upon payment.

The NI Water website, at niwater.com, will be used to house up-to-date information as part of the Publication Scheme, as well as providing links to relevant organisations.

NI Water is committed to providing information on all aspects of its operations and will endeavour to make this information readily available to members of the public. In particular, NI Water will aim to make available information on the cost and standard of its service to customers, decisions made that affect its customers and the reasons for them.

The classes of information and the manner in which they will be published are specified in Section 15 of this Scheme.

2. Purpose of the Publication Scheme

Adopting and maintaining a Publication Scheme is a requirement of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Publication Schemes are intended to promote greater openness by all public authorities.

The purpose of this Publication Scheme is to help members of the public gain access to information held by NI Water.

3. The Information Commissioner’s Office

The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), which enforces and oversees the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the General Data Protection Regulation (UK only) has additional information available. The ICO’s contact details are:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545 745 (national rate)
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: casework@ico.org.uk
Web: www.ico.org.uk

The full Act can be viewed at the site below:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents>

4. Introduction to Northern Ireland Water

Northern Ireland Water (NI Water) was formed in April 2007 following a change of status from the Water Service (an agency within the Department for Regional Development within the Northern Ireland Civil Service to a Government-owned Company (GoCo). It now sits within the jurisdiction of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

NI Water is a publicly-owned corporation, the sole shareholder being the DfI. The creation of NI Water has enabled major improvements to be made in the services provided, in terms of both quality and cost. NI Water's focus is very much on providing high-quality water and wastewater services, safeguarding public health, the environment and enhancing customer service.

NI Water is responsible for the supply and distribution of drinking water and the provision of sewerage services to approximately 780,000 domestic, agricultural and business properties throughout Northern Ireland. NI Water supplies services to a population of over 1.8 million with over 99% of households in Northern Ireland connected to the public water supply and 83% served by the public sewerage system.

4.1. Structure of Northern Ireland Water

Northern Ireland Water was set up under the Companies Order, like other Northern Ireland companies, and is subject to all the legislation and requirements that govern any other business structured as a limited company. NI Water is 100% owned by Government with the Department for Infrastructure Minister as the sole shareholder. NI Water's Board comprises four Executive and six Non-Executive members and provides independent judgement on issues of strategy, performance, governance and executive appointments.

The Chief Executive is assisted by the Executive Committee, which is comprised of the following:

- Director of Asset Delivery
- Director of Business Services
- Director of Customer Service Delivery
- Director of Finance & Regulation
- Director of People & Learning
- General Counsel and Company Secretary

4.2. External Interfaces

NI Water has close liaison with the following bodies and regulators, which have responsibility for aspects of the water and wastewater industry.

- Northern Ireland Assembly
- Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation
- Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- Drinking Water Inspectorate.

5. Formulating the Scheme

To meet the terms of the Act, NI Water must, in adopting or reviewing its Publication Scheme, have regard to the public interest in allowing public access to information about:

- the services provided by NI Water;
- the costs of those services;
- the standard attained by those services;
- the facts forming the basis of decisions taken by NI Water that are of importance to the public; and
- the publication of reasons for decisions made by it.

6. Responsibility for the Publication Scheme

Responsibility for the Publication Scheme rests with:

Head of Corporate Information
Northern Ireland Water
IT Suite
Westland House
40 Old Westland Road
Belfast
BT14 6TE
Email: waterline@niwater.com

NI Water is committed to extending the amount of information that it makes available via its Publication Scheme. The Company will review its Publication

Scheme annually and will consider additional updates throughout the year if there are significant levels of publication requests.

7. Exemptions

The Act contains a number of exemptions to the right to obtain information held by NI Water. In deciding what information to include in this Publication Scheme, NI Water has considered the exemptions contained in the Act and, where required, whether the public interest in withholding publication outweighs the public interest in publishing the information. For example, NI Water may legitimately decide not to include information if:

- it is reasonably obtainable elsewhere;
- it is a trade secret;
- disclosure would prejudice the commercial interests of any party;
- it relates to the investigation of a crime or would prejudice security (national security and defence) or health, safety or the environment; or,
- it constitutes personal data under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) or publication would infringe one of the six data protection principles contained in the GDPR.

8. Obtaining a Copy of the Publication Scheme

You can obtain a copy of the NI Water Publication Scheme by:

- Downloading a copy from our website: <http://www.niwater.com>
- Emailing waterline@niwater.com to request an electronic copy or a single printed copy
- Telephoning Waterline on 0345 7440088 to request an electronic copy or a single printed copy
- Writing to the following address requesting a single printed copy.

Information Management Unit
Northern Ireland Water
PO Box 1026
Belfast
BT1 9DJ

Our Publication Scheme is available in large print and can be provided in alternative formats upon request.

9. Accessing Information under the Publication Scheme

The Publication Scheme has to detail the format(s) in which each item is available. Unless otherwise stated, information can be made available electronically or in paper format. You should note that, for some items available electronically, you may need to have appropriate software (such as Adobe Reader) to read it. Plans may not always be available electronically. It should be noted that only single copies of hard copy material will be provided.

Depending on the format of the item, you will be able to access information by:

- Downloading a copy from our website: <http://www.niwater.com>
- Emailing waterline@niwater.com to request an electronic copy or a single printed copy
- Inspecting it, by prior agreement, in the offices of NI Water where the item is kept. For further information or to make an appointment, contact Customer Service on 0345 7440088
- Telephoning Customer Service on 0345 7440088 to request an electronic copy or a single printed copy
- Writing to the following address requesting a single printed copy:

Information Management Unit
Northern Ireland Water
PO Box 1026
Belfast
BT1 9DJ

10. Charging Policy

NI Water aims to make the vast majority of publications available free of charge. However, where there is a charge associated with the provision of published information, this will be clearly specified in the Company's Scheme of Charges, available at the link below. If Value Added Tax (VAT) is chargeable, this will be indicated in the Scheme of Charges.

If material is subject to fees laid down by law, those fees will be levied. Some classes of information contain data to which NI Water has had to devote professional time, skill and effort in collecting, assembling and analysing, with a view to it having a commercial value. This information may not be routinely published, but is made available on payment of applicable fees.

- <https://www.niwater.com/our-charges-and-fees/>

11. Copyright

The material supplied through this Publication Scheme is provided for use by the individual requesting it.

Copyright in material accessed via the Publication Scheme may belong to NI Water or to other copyright holders. Unless otherwise stated, copyright is reserved by NI Water or to other copyright holders. Permission to reproduce it must be obtained from the copyright holder. The right to information under this Publication Scheme does not include permission to copy or reproduce that information and to do so may infringe copyright and entitle the copyright holder to take action against you.

If NI Water indicates that NI Water copyright material may be copied or distributed by you free of charge, it must be reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context or for commercial purposes. In addition, you

must identify the source of the material, the fact that it is subject to copyright and identify NI Water as owner of the copyright.

Your use of the material provided under this Publication Scheme is at your own risk. NI Water offers no warranty as to the quality or accuracy of the material or its suitability for any use.

12. Record Retention and Disposal Policy

12.1. Introduction to Policy

NI Water is undertaking a comprehensive management and retrieval policy for all official business records. A Records Retention and Disposal Policy that complies with legislative requirements is an essential part of the Company's records management regime.

12.2. Policy Statement

NI Water has a Records Retention and Disposal Policy, which will apply to all official business records. The Scheme will contain a list of generic record types and will include specific periods of authorised retention. Authorised retention periods will take into account legislative requirements as well as meeting the operational needs of the business.

12.3. Purpose of Retention Scheme

The Records Retention and Disposal Policy prescribes the period of time for which records should be kept. Once this date has been reached, records will be reviewed by the Information Asset Owner (IAO) and, in the majority of cases, an appropriate disposal route selected. When records are to be destroyed, they will be treated as confidential waste and a record of their destruction, including appropriate authorisation, will be made and kept permanently (or for an appropriate period) for audit trail purposes.

12.4. Identifying Records for Permanent Preservation

It is the Head of Corporate Information's responsibility, as NI Water Records Officer, to see that reviews are systematically carried out, so as to eliminate redundant information and reduce the bulk of records held by NI Water, while ensuring that no papers likely to be required for business continuity reasons and/or permanent preservation are destroyed.

12.5. Review of the Retention Scheme

The Retention Scheme will be revised periodically to ensure that all records are encompassed by the Scheme and to enable retention periods to be adjusted where necessary. All revisions will gain management team approval before coming into force.

13. Complaints and Right of Appeal

If you have any queries or complaints about this Publication Scheme, you should give full details to:

Head of Corporate Information
Northern Ireland Water
IT Suite
Westland House
40 Old Westland Road
Belfast
BT14 6TE
Email: waterline@niwater.com

If, after the handling of your query or complaint, you remain dissatisfied, you may ask NI Water to review the matter internally. To ensure a fair and unbiased review, this will be undertaken by an independent party not involved in the initial complaint request. NI Water is required to complete internal reviews within 20 working days.

If your query or complaint is unable to be resolved, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner, the independent body that oversees the implementation of the Act.

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545 745 (national rate)
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: casework@ico.org.uk
Web: www.ico.org.uk

14. Feedback and Suggestions

It is important that this Publication Scheme meets your information needs. NI Water would welcome your comments and suggestions about how to improve it. If you require an answer, please make that clear and be sure to include details of how NI Water can contact you. You can submit your comments and suggestions by:

- Email: waterline@niwater.com
- Writing to the Head of Corporate Information as detailed at point 13.

15. Classes of Information

The following classes of information have been established to make it easy for members of the public to find information. If you cannot find the information you are seeking, please email waterline@niwater.com or call 0345 7440088. The information has been subdivided into seven main categories:

Who we are and what we do

Information on our organisation, structure, location and contacts

What we spend and how we spend it

Financial information about our income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit

What are our priorities and how we are doing

Information on our strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews

How we make decisions

Information on our policy proposals, public consultations, senior-level meetings and internal guidelines

Our policies and procedures

Information on our policies and procedures for delivering our services and conducting our business

Lists and registers

Information on our public registers, asset registers and disclosure logs

The services we offer

Information about the services we provide, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters