

Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Water Management Unit



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Our reference: **DAERA/23-292**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Water Management Unit
17 Antrim Road
Tonagh
Lisburn
BT28 3AL

Email: WMU.FOI@daera-ni.gov.uk

20 September 2023

Dear [REDACTED],

Environmental Information Regulations 2004

With regard to your request for information received by the Department on 21 August 2023 which sought the following information:

Please provide a copy of the Departments risk register detailing risks associated with algae blooms occurring in inland waterways, current assessment or risk and recommended actions

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm that it holds some of the information you requested. A copy of DAERA's "Environment" risk and NIEA's Resource Efficiency Division "Water Quality" and "Freshwater Monitoring" risks are attached in **Annex A and B**. Risks associated with algae blooms are considered to be part of the overall risk to water quality and together with freshwater monitoring, are directly linked to classification of our waterways.

If you require any clarification, believe that any part of your request has been overlooked, misunderstood or misinterpreted, please contact me in the first instance to see if it is a matter that can be resolved.

If you are unhappy with the manner in which your request for information has been handled or the decision to release/withhold information, you have the right to request a formal review by the Department.

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If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.



If you wish to do so, please contact The Review Section either by e-mailing daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk or by post at The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Data Protection & Information Management Branch, Floor 2, Jubilee House, 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady BT49 9HP, within two months from the date of this letter.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE, SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review of the Department's decision.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

**Principal Scientific Officer
Water Management Unit**

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NIEA - Resource Efficiency Division - Risk Register.

Security marking: (select an option)

RISK IDENTIFICATION									RISK ASSESSMENT											
Ref ID	Key Strategic Priority(s) link	Manage or escalate	Escalation to	Risk category	Risk description	Risk cause and impact	Risk owner	Impact category	INHERENT (GROSS)			EXISTING CONTROLS / MITIGATING ACTIONS COMPLETED	CURRENT (RESIDUAL)			ACTION PLAN		INTERNAL AUDIT		CONTINGENCY
									Impact	Likelihood	Inherent rating		Impact	Likelihood	Current rating	Proximity	Mitigating actions (with action completion dates and owners)	Corresponding Internal Audit recommendations raised in this area	Progress on Internal Audit recommendations:	Contingency plans (with plan owners)
RED 8	SP1	Action - Cross Cutting	Other	Operations	There is a risk that 'Good' water quality status in 70% of water bodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters, territorial waters and ground waters) will not be achieved.	1. 2nd cycle RBMPs are not fully implemented due to lack of commitment and/or allocation of resources to all identified measures. 2. Changes in agricultural practice negatively impacting on long term trends in N and P levels. 3. Reduced frequency of updates delaying opportunities to identify and react to issues in a timely fashion. 4. Length of time required to effect positive changes in river catchments and on water quality. 5. Lack of Departmental /political will to address negative impacts of agriculture. 6. Inadequate enforcement and prosecution response to identified polluters.	The Director and Head of Water Management Unit	Operational / Reputational	VH	H	12	1. Ongoing work with NIW on prioritising work on WWTW through PC15 & PC21. 2. Phosphorus Regulations incorporated into NAP Regulations and Cross Compliance regime. Soil testing required under new NAP Regulations. Pilot soil testing in the Colebrooke and Strule catchments. 3. Interdepartmental WFD Board, chaired by RED Director. SPAR replaced by thematic focus groups. Formal Board in place for Living with Water Programme (Df). 4. Actions to improve water quality supported under EFS, Environment Fund and Interreg. Membership of CAFRE's Knowledge Advisory Service Oversight Board. 5. Inclusion of water quality target on DAERA Annual Business Plan and PFG water quality indicator.	VH	H	12	Now (0 - 1 Month)	Preparation and delivery of outcome Action Plans designed to improve high priority river bodies. Deliver the agreed work programme with KAS to include pollution referrals and priority catchment recommendations Board and focus groups are being re-constituted for co-ordinating implementation of Programme of Measures Support RDP EFS and delivery of relevant Interreg funded projects to promote included water measures. Participation in working groups investigating and identifying chemical and antibiotic pressures to determine new methods for controlling these. Implement new NAP regulations. WMU Water Policy colleagues considering the need for a water scientific advisory group to provide a coherent over view of evidence requirements to inform policy WMU Engagment with OEP and policy colleagues regarding delivery of RBMP and associated monitoring; and alignment with Environmental Improvement Plan targets ongoing			

Risk Register

Security marking:
(select an option)



RISK IDENTIFICATION										RISK ASSESSMENT							Risk						
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											Impact	Likelihood	Inherent rating		Impact	Likelihood	Current rating					Proximity	Mitigating actions (with action completion dates and owners)
RED 13	01-May-22	SP1, SP2, SP3	MANAGE	Other	Operations	The failure to effectively monitor, assess and report the status of freshwaters, to required frequency and standards under water protection legislation	1. Lack of experienced staff to undertake required levels of monitoring, assessment and analysis 2. Lack of fit for purpose databases and reporting tools 3. Reduced frequency of updates delaying opportunities to identify and react to issues in a timely fashion. 4. Gaps in data sets preventing robust statistical analysis 5. Lack of automated data handling, publishing and reporting tools preventing data being published in a timely way 6. Lack of capacity to analyse data and provide added value through specialist/expert opinion 7. Failure to deliver robust evidence base to inform policy and regulatory decisions, through provision of informed data analysis and interpretation. 8. Lack of provision of increased resources / increase to head count for expanding monitoring programmes, particularly around identification and monitoring chemicals of emerging concern and the new UK Environment Bill.	WMU G7 Budget Holders	Operational & Reputational	Minimalist	H	H	16	1. See staff resources risk 2. Water Quality Archive rebuilt; LIMS programme; ongoing work with DSD on IHUB 3. Selected annual indicators used to highlight specific problem (eg SRP PFG indicator) but only a small fraction of range of impacts observed in aquatic environment. 4. Project to address field staff resources for sampling through appointment of sampling manager 5. Actions under 2 will pave the way for better automation 6. Use of DTN to employ specialist skills to posts; work with AFBI and UK specialists in other agencies through Technical Working groups. 7. Preparation of bids and submission of business cases for required resources.	H	M	12	Forseeable (6 months-1 year)	Establish greater oversight and governance at Gd 5 level and above through science transformation Programme Monitoring and Surveillance workstream Develop CPD and recognise value of skills and expertise within specialist posts with Environmental Science discipline, including environmental data. Head of Implement a 'Road map' to deliver freshwater monitoring strategy 2022-2027. Ensure Freshwater monitoring is embedded in DAERA Evidence Plans for R&D and M&S through STP programme by March 2023. Ensure monitoring and assessment is fully considered within review of Fees and Charges for regulatory work, and posts have adequate funding and headcount to fulfil technical advice roles WMU Initiate Water End to End programme to improve data automation, accessibility and publication WMU Maintenance of externally verified quality standards, including UKAS and ISO17025. Regular audit of samplers to maintain stds.				

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					Impact	Likelihood	Inherent rating	Key Controls in place and details of any completed mitigating actions	Impact	Likelihood	Current rating	Mitigating actions	Progress Against Mitigating Actions
CRR 5	SP1	Strategic	There is a risk that we will fail to protect the Environment and deliver sustainability through Green Growth due to lack of resources and the competing priorities of agriculture and environment, resulting in failure to meet DAERA's vision, PFG and statutory targets.	2. Failure to deliver on sustainability (Green Growth Agenda), achieving the balance between protecting the environment and supporting productivity.	H	H	9	Plans to align Green Growth Strategy and Environment Strategy Environment Strategy completed March 2022. Regular engagement was maintained between GG and NEPD up until completion. Both documents shared with Office for Environmental Protection.	M	H	9	3. Consult on strategies to combat key environment risks. Ongoing	DAERA MFD risk of deteriorating water quality and link with agricultural practices nutrients in particular Phosphorous increasing in river systems. Mitigate by resourcing the continuing work on pilot catchments (Sustainable Catchment Pilots) to ensure we are effectively influencing agricultural policy. This aligns with Environment Strategy and Green Growth. Pilot schemes continue. Consultation on draft Ammonia Strategy completed 4 January to 3 March 2023 with further development of a call for Evidence regarding the operational protocol for planning and permitting.

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