

**DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE**

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[Redacted]
By email: [Redacted]

Our ref: EIR2025/19145
30 September 2025

Dear [Redacted]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Risk assessment of factors affecting water supply quality on the Isle of Wight

Thank you for your request for information of 9 September 2025 about risk assessment of factors affecting water supply quality on the Isle of Wight. We have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The EIRs apply to requests for environmental information, which is a broad category of information defined in regulation 2 of the EIRs. Public authorities are required to handle requests for environmental information under the EIRs. They give similar access rights to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your information request and our response are set out below.

I'm writing to request a copy of a risk assessment of factors affecting water supply quality on the Isle of Wight. This risk assessment was required of Southern Water Services Ltd by the Drinking Water Inspectorate on 22nd November 2023 under Regulation 28 and it's referenced in the document: DWI Southern Water Services Ltd - AMP8 PFAS Strategy (SRN-2023-00011) as risk assessment Y004.

The risk assessment is not a report as such but are actual lines of data which we include into our Risk Assessment Database. We have extracted the rows of data relating to the Isle of Wight - see attached file at **Annex C - Isle_of_Wight_PFAS_RAR_redacted.xlsx**

We have decided to withhold certain information relating to the names of sites, details of control measures, the ongoing validation process and status as this information falls under the exception in regulation 12(5)(a) of the EIRs which relates to information whose disclosure would adversely affect international relations, defence, national security or public safety. The names of sites and the details of proposed control measures could compromise the security of the water supply and thus public safety.

In applying this exception, we have had to balance the public interest in maintaining the exceptions against the public interest in disclosure.

The main public interest argument in favour of release is the general interest to customers in the actions being taken by their supplier of drinking water to protect their supplies. It is the role of the DWI to hold the companies to account by ensuring they complete the required works, as demonstrated by the publication of the details of the undertaking which was posted on the DWI website.

However, there is a stronger public interest in withholding this information. Disclosure of this information would adversely affect public safety and national security. The DWI has a duty with regard to the protection of a water treatment supply. Release of information to the public about its operation and its vulnerabilities would inform certain individuals, such as terrorists, to target such infrastructures and put public safety at risk. It is vital that security measures are in place to protect public safety and critical to the delivery of an essential service to a significant population. We have therefore concluded that in all the circumstances of the case, the information should be redacted.

In England and Wales companies adopt a water safety planning approach as recommended by WHO, in which all risks are identified from source to tap and action taken to address these risks before there is any impact on consumers. This proactive approach has resulted in some of the best drinking water quality in the world, as shown by the Yale environmental index, (<https://epi.yale.edu/measure/2024/UWD>) where the UK is one of eight countries scoring 100% for drinking water quality.

If you wish to discuss the risk assessment, please contact Southern Water as they can provide further details on their own risk assessments. They can be contacted at <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/contact-us/>

Information disclosed in response to this EIRs request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on [GOV.UK](#), together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

We attach Annex A, explaining the copyright that applies to the information being released to you, and Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

DWI FOIA and EIR team
dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk

Annex A

Copyright

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright law. Documents (except photographs or logos) can be also used in the UK without requiring permission for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder.

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Annex B

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Vanessa Drury, Head of Information Rights via email at InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk and they will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure is on our website.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure.

The ICO can be contacted using the following link:

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/official-information-concerns-report/official-information-concern/>