



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref ATISN 15925

26 January 2022

Dear

Request for Information – ATISN 15925

Information requested

Thank you for your request which I received on January 2022.

You have asked for the following information in relation to pollution which may result from a wind farm development:

1. When and, specifically, how microplastic pollution issues will be addressed by the Welsh Government. In particular, on leading edge erosion aspects, assessments of Bisphenol A (BPA) and other pollutants found in water and water sources near Industrial Wind Turbines in Wales.
2. Copies of plans to measure the pollution levels of BPA and microplastics in the ground water and water sources around Welsh wind power installations.
3. If no such requirement is to be imposed upon developers or planning authorities, please provide reasons, and any legal advice given, which absolves the government from taking such action.

Our response

Following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information you require in relation to wind farms in Wales is not held by the Welsh Government.

There is no statutory requirement to monitor microplastics in water courses at present. In relation to freshwater, the UK Water Industry Research (UKWIR) leads research on microplastics as part of the wider Chemical Investigation Programme (CIP). The final report of this research is expected to be made public in March 2022. I have attached the summary of the project for your information.

The recently published report on river water quality by the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee also contains useful data on microplastics pollution, although acknowledges that research on the harm from microplastics is still in its infancy:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8460/documents/85659/default/>.

The report focuses on river water quality in England but its findings are relatable to Wales. It states that the overwhelming majority of primary microplastics in water (98%) are generated from land-based activities with the largest proportion of these particles originating from the laundering of synthetic textiles and from the abrasion of tyres while driving. The report makes no specific reference to any risk posed by windfarms.

Regarding BPA, there is no statutory requirement at present to monitor BPA in groundwater, surface water or drinking water in Wales. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) monitors chemical substances in surface water through their passive monitoring programme which is designed to identify emerging threats to water quality. NRW surveyed 12 sites in 2019 and six of those in 2020. There was only one detection of BPA in these samples and this was considerably lower than the predicted no-effect concentration (PNEC), suggesting a low risk.

The Welsh Government is currently exploring policy proposals for the adoption of Directive (EU) 2020/2184 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the quality of water intended for human consumption (recast Drinking Water Directive) in Wales. The Directive proposes the addition to BPA to a watch list of substances due to the risk it poses to human health. The Drinking Water Inspectorate published a report on endocrine disruptors in January 2021 which can be accessed at <https://cdn.dwi.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/07110203/DWI70-2-328.pdf>.

The DWI report concluded that BPA presents the highest likelihood of exceeding the original proposed value in drinking water supplies in England and Wales. The highest risk areas were identified for groundwater, which indicates BPA presents a lower risk in Wales as the country relies primarily on surface water for drinking water supply. There is currently no decision on whether the parametric values of Directive 2020/2184 will be adopted in Wales.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at: Information Rights Unit, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely