

Authority:
Information Commissioner

Country/State:
United Kingdom

Case title:
Environmental Information Request: Determining “Manifestly Unreasonable” under the EIR

Official citation:
Decision Notice, United Utilities Water Limited, 2024

Date of decision:
2024

Relevant law:
Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) – “manifestly unreasonable” requests, public interest test

Decision:
The Commissioner found that, despite the request requiring approximately 125 hours of work, disclosure of tanker operations data in Lake Windermere’s catchment area from 2020–2024 was justified due to the significant public interest. The request was therefore not manifestly unreasonable.

Key words:

Right to Information, environmental information, manifestly unreasonable, public interest, sewage management, water quality

Case Summary

1. Facts

A requester asked for comprehensive data on all tanker operations in Lake Windermere’s catchment area, including substances transported from wastewater works and pumping stations, covering 2020 to January 2024.

The public authority disputed that the request concerned environmental information and argued that, if it did, it was manifestly unreasonable under the EIR.

2. Decision

The Commissioner considered the EIR guidance on “manifestly unreasonable” requests, which depends on disproportionate cost or burden, distress, or disruption. Compliance would require about 125 hours of work.

Given the serious public interest — scrutiny of public authority operations, accountability for sewage management, and local environmental concerns — the Commissioner determined that the burden was proportionate to the public benefit. Disclosure was therefore required.

Note (Optional):

This case illustrates the careful balancing of public interest against resource burdens in EIR requests, showing that even demanding requests may be justified if they serve significant environmental and accountability purposes.

Resource:

[Decision Notice – United Utilities Water Limited](#)