

Agricultural Fines for Pollution

“This Council notes the ongoing issues with deteriorating water quality in our rivers and waterways across Northern Ireland as highlighted in the recent New State of Our Rivers Report by the Rivers Trust.

Of the 450 river stretches looked at in Northern Ireland, 0% achieved good overall status, and 12% were given either poor or bad overall status. Only 31% achieved good ecological status, and just 2 stretches achieved high ecological status, and almost 70% failed to meet the requirements for good ecological status. This has impacted on the overall quality of Lough Neagh, which supplies over half the drinking water to Belfast, due to excess run-off from industrial agricultural processes.

This Council recognises that we are in the midst of a freshwater crisis in Northern Ireland and are concerned that the capping of agriculture penalties for repeated negligent breaches at 15% in October 2022 is not a sufficient deterrent.

As such, this Council calls on the DAERA Minister to reinstate the previous more stringent penalties to more accurately reflect the environmental harm caused.”

Proposer: Councillor Smyth

Seconder: Councillor Groogan