daa publishes latest PFAS monitoring results at Dublin Airport

daa has published the latest results of the ongoing monitoring programme for PFAS compounds present on grounds of the Dublin Airport campus.

PFAS (per- and poly-fluoroalkylated substances) have been in use since the 1950s in a range of industries and products, including consumer products such as carpets, non-stick cookware, waterproof clothing, personal care products and cosmetics. They are long-lasting compounds and have been found in water and soil in almost every country in the world.

In Europe, the Forever Pollution Project led by Le Monde has identified 44,500 sites where PFAS contamination has either been detected or presumed to exist, including up to 90 sites in Ireland. Sites include landfills, pharmaceutical plants and manufacturing sites in addition to fire stations and airports. The availability of PFAS monitoring data on European waters is increasing and the European Environment Agency has recently published an interactive map showing PFOS (a type of PFAS) levels in waterbodies across Europe including some Irish sites.

The primary use of PFAS compounds at an airport was the historical use of firefighting foam that contained PFAS. The foams currently used at Dublin Airport are classified as Fluorine Free and do not contain PFAS. However, the historic use of PFAS containing foams before 2013 means legacy PFAS contamination exists in the ground, particularly at old fire training grounds and areas where there may have been incidents of fire suppression with foam.

The focus of the external review commissioned by daa and conducted by our environmental consultants was to assess and identify potential risks arising from this legacy usage at Dublin Airport. The latest report presents the results of the annual monitoring programme of surface water and groundwater. In 2024, groundwater was monitored from 27 monitoring wells across four areas on campus. The highest PFAS detections in groundwater were at known contaminant source areas on the North Runway and North Apron. Surface water was monitored at 39 locations within the airport boundary and at downstream locations. The highest levels were detected to the east of the airport in the Sluice, Kealy Stream and Cuckoo Stream. In the Mayne, Ward and Santry waterbodies, higher concentrations of PFOS were detected in downstream monitoring locations than in upstream locations closer to the airport, indicating that the potential for other sources of PFAS to these waterbodies external to the airport.

daa has continued to engage with relevant authorities, including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Fingal County Council (FCC) and the Department of Climate, Energy and Environment (DCEE). daa welcomes the support and input of regulatory authorities in working together to tackle this important issue.

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