

PRESS RELEASE

THE WATER FORUM RESPONSE TO EPA REPORT ON WASTE WATER



The Water
Forum

AN
FÓRAM
UISCE

www.nationalwaterforum.ie

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BODY

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GOVERNANCE IN THE
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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The Environmental Protection Agency has released its report on Urban Waste Water Treatment for 2018.

According to the EPA, treatment at 21 of the 169 large urban areas in Ireland failed to meet EU standards. These 21 areas produce over half of Ireland's urban waste water.

In addition, raw sewage from the equivalent of 77,000 people in 36 towns and villages is being released into our water environment every day without treatment.

Ireland's River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 identifies waste water as a 'significant pressure' for 30% of Ireland's water bodies at risk of not reaching their objective under the EU Water Framework Directive. In this Plan, Ireland has committed €880 million for the completion of waste water treatment projects by 2021.

Professor Tom Collins, Chair of The Water Forum stated 'Even considering the lead in time required to deliver such major waste water treatment improvement projects, The Water Forum considers the progress made to date to be unacceptably slow.

Professor Collins continued 'Our inadequate waste water treatment is a threat to public health, degrades our water environment and threatens our wildlife and habitats. In addition, it should be said that where the State sector is so clearly non-compliant on such an important issue, it makes it more difficult to convince others to make the financial, cultural and behavioural investments needed to achieve compliance on their part.'

The quality of our bathing waters, the quality of the seafood that we harvest, eat and export, and the way in which we interact with our waters is currently not being adequately protected.

The Forum notes that according to the Central Statistics Office, Ireland's population is projected to increase by up to 1.1 million people by 2036. This population increase, together with flood risk and rising sea levels, will add additional pressures to our waste water treatment infrastructure and receiving waters.

The Forum considers that there is an immediate need to establish those factors which are preventing action to address the failings in our waste water treatment infrastructure as identified in the EPA's report in order to safeguard our society, economy and our natural environment into the future.

13 November 2019

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Continued

An Fóram Uisce|The Water Forum was established as a statutory body in June 2018 to facilitate stakeholder engagement and debate on issues relating to water as a resource, water quality, rural water concerns, issues affecting customers of Irish Water and issues associated with the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

The Forum consists of 27 representatives from a wide range of organisations with direct connections to issues relating to water quality. These include consumer, community and water sports groups, business and trade unions, environmental sector, Irish Water consumers, the group water scheme sector and a range of other sectors including education, agriculture, fisheries and forestry. The Forum is chaired by Dr Tom Collins.

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