

PRESS RELEASE

The EPA Wastewater report published today shows no great improvement in wastewater treatment infrastructure since last year

The EPA has stated that **35** towns and villages releasing **raw sewage** into the environment. Wastewater treatment is **not meeting mandatory EU standards** in **19 large towns and cities** including Dublin and Cork. The European Court for Justice has ruled that for **seven** large urban areas, the **sewers are unable to retain all wastewater and convey it for treatment**.

Essentially in Ireland, 1% of wastewater (10 million litres) is conveyed to plants that provide only primary treatment, removal of solid waste, rags, plastics and suspended particles and 1.4% (10, 400,000 litres) is collected and discharged directly into the water environment without any treatment.

In 2019, 44% of all waste met the requirements up from 42% in 2018 but still far below the European Union average of 81%. The main factor in Ireland's poor compliance is the failure at Ringsend in Dublin, which treats almost half (44%) of the country's urban waste water. Untreated waste water from the equivalent of 78,005 people in 35 towns and villages is still released into the environment every day up from 77,000 from 37 villages and towns reported last year.

Consequences are financial, environmental and a public health issue

Putting nearly 25 million litres of inadequately treated wastewater into our rivers, lakes and coastal areas every day is simply not acceptable. These are not just statistics, untreated or poorly treated waste water can be contaminated with harmful bacteria and viruses and can pose a health risk to people who come into contact with infected water. It damages aquatic ecosystems by decreasing the level of oxygen in the water and releasing nutrients that can lead to excessive and unwanted growth of algae and aquatic plants.

In 2019 the Court of Justice of the European Union declared that Ireland has failed to fulfil its obligations under the UWWT Directive so now Ireland risks substantial fines which is not surprising considering we perform so poorly against the EU average.

While the CRU has approved capital investment of €4.5 billion for this Revenue Control Period to 2024, the Irish Water delivery of outputs and outcomes for wastewater remains at a glacial pace.

As stated last year, after a very similar report was issued by the EPA, and we are saying it again. *'Irish water is not making enough headway, and much more urgent action is needed to address these deficits in waste water infrastructure'*.

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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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