

An Fóram Uisce Response to the EPA's Water Quality Indicators Report 2019, released today

In their Water Quality Indicators Report 2019, the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) have today clearly presented the key challenges associated with improving the quality of Ireland's water environment. This follows on from the stark outlook presented by the EPA in the nation's seventh State of the Environment Report released three weeks ago.

The EPA state that one out of every two rivers, and one out of every four lakes are failing to meet the legal environmental quality standards for nutrients, especially nitrates and phosphorus. Worryingly, the trends for these nutrients are going in the wrong direction for our rivers, lakes, estuarine and marine environments. While some improvements have been observed, particularly in areas that have been prioritised for action, the EPA states that if the current rate of nutrient concentration increase in our waters continues, it is likely that some of these positive improvements will be reversed.

In response to the new EPA report, Dr Tom Collins, Chair of An Fóram Uisce, said: "Once again, the EPA have outlined the perilous state of Ireland's water environment. Urgent action is required across government to address the issues being clearly presented. Agriculture and urban wastewater treatment have been identified as having the greatest nutrient impact on our waters. This is not new: We have been told this many times over the years. Immediate action is now required"

"There are opportunities to introduce measures for improvements. The Nitrates Action Programme is currently under review, the Common Agricultural Policy is being reformed, Irish Water is moving forward with improving our urban wastewater treatment. But the pace of progress has been far too slow."

"It is now critical that improvements are made to the quality of our waters which provide us with drinking water, recreation, well-being and which support our food system and also public health. An Fóram Uisce calls on the Government to take urgent and unprecedented action to reverse the declining health of our waters to benefit all that live on the island of Ireland, and for the Government to ensure that all necessary resources are prioritised to achieve this. In their State of the Environment report, the EPA called for a decade of action, and An Fóram Uisce now considers it imperative that the action begins immediately."

END

Notes to Editors

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 26 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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