

## **An Fóram Uisce Response to the EPA's seventh State of the Environment Report released today**

The challenges facing Ireland's environment are starkly presented in the EPA's seventh State of the Environment Report released today. An Fóram Uisce welcomes the report and the request for action on a national environmental policy to achieve short, medium, and long-term goals for protecting and improving our cherished environment for future generations.

The EPA call for a decade of action in the 2020s and An Fóram Uisce highlights the urgency required for such action, particularly regarding protecting and improving the state of Ireland's water environment.

Recent EPA Reports<sup>1,2</sup>, identify that almost half of Ireland's rivers and lakes are failing to achieve good quality status - a legal requirement of EU legislation. The number of our pristine rivers has declined catastrophically, from over 500 rivers to the current 20. Untreated sewage is entering our waters from 35 towns across the country and many wastewater treatment plants are failing to reach the legally required standards set by the EU<sup>3</sup>. Chemical substances enter our aquatic environment daily, affecting habitats and the quality of our drinking water. Our biodiversity is in serious decline, with freshwater habitats identified as having the fastest biodiversity loss of all ecosystems<sup>4</sup>. Climate change, changes in our population and how we manage our land and landscape pose significant future threats to the quality of Ireland's environment.

Commenting on the EPA State of the Environment Report, Dr Tom Collins, Chairperson of An Fóram Uisce said "The quality of our aquatic environment acts as a barometer for much of how we, as a nation, behave towards our environment. This new report from the EPA clearly outlines the challenges that lie ahead. It is clear that Ireland's environment is in a poor state, and urgent action and change is required. Water is the lynchpin for life on this island, supporting how and where we live, our food systems, our recreation and, ultimately, our health."

"The current state of Ireland's environment reflects how we have treated and valued our natural world over the past decades. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that our local environments are essential for our individual and community well-being."

"An Fóram Uisce fully supports the EPA's call for a decade for action, and the urgency of this cannot be understated. We, together, must act and act fast to improve and preserve our aquatic environments for ourselves and our future generations."

An Fóram Uisce has developed a Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management<sup>5</sup> which provides a pathway for working together to improve Ireland's water environment. This framework can help to inform and develop the national environmental policy requested by the EPA.

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<sup>1</sup> EPA (2020). Ireland's Environment 2020 – An Assessment. [EPA - Ireland's Environment 2020](#)

<sup>2</sup> EPA (2019). Water Quality in Ireland 2013-2018.

<https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/waterqua/waterqualityinireland2013-2018.html>

<sup>3</sup> EPA (2020). Urban Waste Water Treatment in 2019

<https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/wastewater/urbanwastewatertreatmentin2019.html>

<sup>4</sup> WWF (2020). Living Planet Report 2020 – Bending the curve of biodiversity loss <https://www.wetlands.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/lpr-2020-full-report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> An Fóram Uisce (2020). Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management

<https://thewaterforum.ie/framework-for-integrated-land-and-landscape-management/>



### **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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