

Press Release: More urgent action is needed by Irish Water to address disruptions to water supplies particularly boil water notices

An Fóram Uisce - The Water Forum is concerned at the latest boil water notice issued by Irish Water which affects approximately 6,500 people supplied by the Whitegate Regional Water Supply in Co. Cork. The Boil Water Notice has been put in place as a precautionary measure following issues with the treatment process at the Water Treatment Plant which may have compromised the disinfection process which makes the water safe to drink.

This disruption along with other recent disruptions in Galway and Achill, amongst others, draws further attention to the fact that approximately 1.1 million people (Figure 1) continue to be served by drinking water supplies in need of improvements.

The most recent Water Advisory Body report on the performance of Irish water noted the slow progress in removing supplies from the Remedial Action List (RAL). As far back as Q3 2019, because of ongoing issues at Leixlip water treatment plant, an additional 600,000 people were added to this list and remain on the list (Figure 1 below).

The population served by drinking water supplies included on the Remedial Action List from Quarter 1 2018 to end Quarter 3 2020

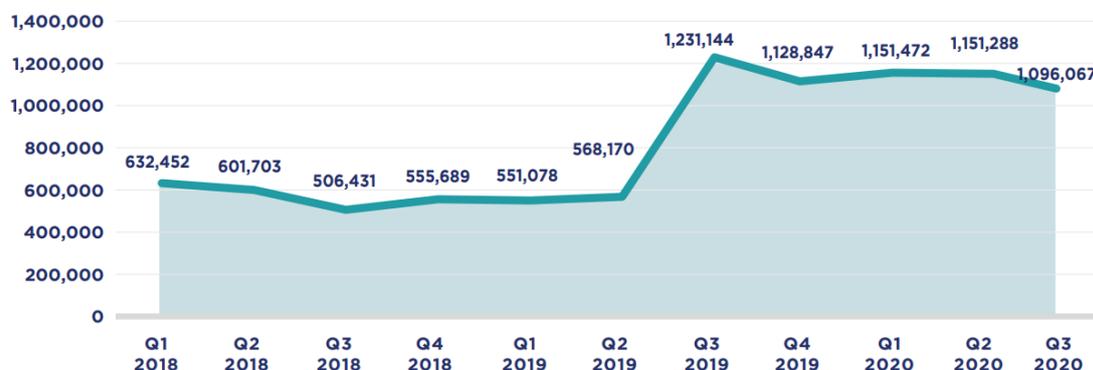


Figure 1: Source: [WAB Q3 report 2020](#)

The reasons supplies are placed on the RAL can be any of the following:

- Persistent failure to comply with the standards for priority parameters such as E.coli, trihalomethanes, aluminum, pesticides or turbidity;
- Inadequate treatment of the water supply, for example, where there is no treatment other than chlorination available for a surface water supply;
- Monitoring results or compliance checks carried out by the Environmental Protection Agency indicate a lack of operational control at the treatment plant; or
- The Health Service Executive has identified a supply where improvements are required.

The EPA updates and publishes the RAL on a quarterly basis. At the end of January 2021, 46 supplies remain on the RAL which collectively supply water to 1,006,104 consumers with 1/5 of County Cork's population (112,000 people) receiving water from RAL supplies (Figure 2 below).

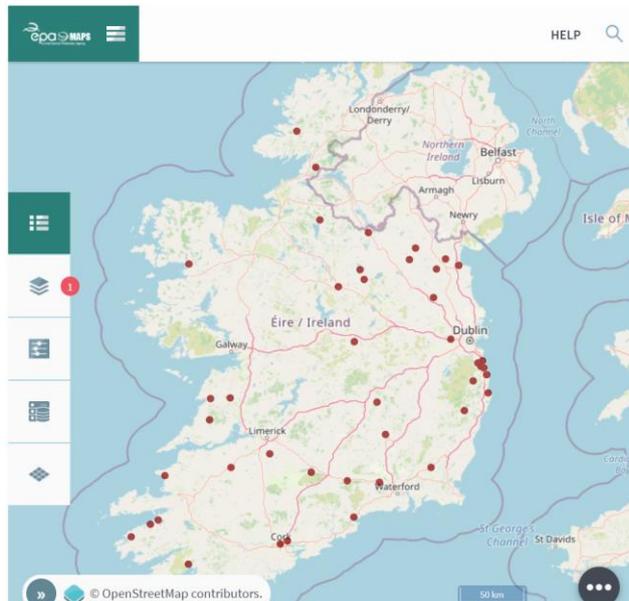


Figure 2: Water supplies (red dots) on the EPA [Remedial Action List \(RAL\) :: Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland \(epa.ie\)](https://www.epa.ie/remedial-action-list)

Delivering reliable and sustainable water supplies is essential. Irish Water operate 535 water supply zones and over 739 water treatment plants that supply water to 87% of the population for domestic and non-domestic purposes.

Irish Water's first draft National Water Resources Plan, a 25 year strategy that sets out how the utility will balance the supply and demand for public drinking water is open for consultation until March 1st. This framework aims to address the challenges and needs of Ireland's population and provides the methodology that Irish Water will use to do that. It is the first phase in the development of a Plan to manage water resources and there will be subsequent Regional Water Resource Plans developed in the coming months.

A clean and secure drinking water supply is critical for public health and to sustain Ireland's economy. With additional boil water notices being issued and more water supplies being added to the Remedial Action List it is apparent that urgent action is required. The National Water Resources Plan will define Irish Water's work over the coming years and will allow an assessment of the resources needed to provide the infrastructure and systems required to provide all Irish Water customers with a clean reliable drinking water supply.

In its recent [submission](#) to the Department of Expenditure and Reform on the *National Development Plan Review to Renew Consultation*, An Fóram Uisce recommended enhanced multi-annual investment in water services going forward. On this, World Wetland Day, it is worth recognising that investment in water services benefits the economy, the environment and public health.

The draft plan and consultation documents are available at www.water.ie and the consultation is open until March 1st.

End.

Note 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.

For further information, contact gretta@nationalwaterforum.ie www.thewaterforum.ie Twitter: [@AnForamUisce](https://twitter.com/AnForamUisce)