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Draft River Basin Management Plan consultation is ongoing

Every 6 years, Ireland prepares a River Basin Management Plan that sets out targets to address water quality issues including the protection, improvement and sustainable management of Ireland’s water environment.

The aim of this 3rd River Basin Management Plan is to ensure that our natural waters are sustainably managed, that freshwater resources are protected so that there is no further deterioration; and where required, Ireland’s rivers, lakes and coastal water bodies are restored to good ecological status.

The draft plan sets out the protection measures that will be put in place for the 1,983 water bodies that are currently meeting good ecological status so that no deteriorations occur to these water bodies. Restoration measures to address those 1,603 water bodies that are at risk of not meeting

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their environmental objectives are specified. Actions will also be taken in the 1, 256 water bodies that are currently in review to decide if they need additional measures to meet their objectives.

Using the working principle of 'implementing of the right measure in the right place' the plan aims to raise the level of ambition by providing clear strategies to protect good and high-status water bodies and improve water bodies at less than good status and it appears that there are three thematic areas.

Thematic area 1: Integrated Catchment Planning

Catchment management plans will be put in place for the 46 hydrometric catchments as sub plans to the national plan. Templates for these plans that will build, over time, to fully integrated catchment management plans will be developed by LAWPRO in consultation with stakeholders. Part of this process will include the development of county level implementation plans to give action to the objectives of the national and catchment plans. These actions and objectives will facilitate annual monitoring of progress.

Thematic area 2: Multiple benefits

The catchment-based planning facilitated by integrated catchment management will enable the identification of multiple benefits for water, biodiversity, air quality and climate mitigation.

Thematic area 3: Role clarity and collaborative implementation

Increased collaboration and coordination by all implementing bodies at national, regional and catchment level will be required in the 3rd cycle. Local Government will have a key leadership role in stewardship of water catchments and need to put in place the necessary

resources to deliver on objectives for protection and restoration.

Public participation and stakeholder engagement is an integral part of the River Basin Management Planning process. Everyone has an opportunity to comment and influence the outcome of the planning process. While this is important for the National plan, the Water Forum considers it is also essential in the development of the 46 catchment and sub-catchment plans. The Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management (FILLM) policy recommendation that the development of catchment plans should begin with a community vision for local catchments is based on public participation research commissioned by the Water Forum¹. Such early engagement will facilitate the development of co-created action that allow citizens to contribute to the plans and take ownership of the actions required to achieve targeted objectives at local level. To deliver on such an approach, collaboration and coordination by all implementing bodies (Local Authorities,

LAWPRO, IFI, NPWS, CARO) would be essential at national, regional and catchment levels. Such collaborative action has the potential to facilitate the identification, prioritisation and implementation of actions to achieve multiple benefits for water, nature, climate and cultural ecosystem services.

The Water Forum is hosting a webinar on public participation in catchment management on 3rd February 2022 at 10am. Researchers will present best practice in public participation and participatory democracy and organisations working with communities will present their learnings from the 2nd River Basin Management Plan cycle. Further Information is available at:

[Register here](#)

The 6 month public consultation on the draft plan until March 31, 2022. Further information is available at:

www.gov.ie
[Consultation](#)

An Fóram Uisce | The Water Forum
Looking after Ireland's water resources

WEBINAR – 3rd February 2022 – 10:00-12:30

A discussion on: *Public Participation in catchment management and community action to protect biodiversity, water quality and climate mitigation*

The webinar will provide an opportunity to discuss the need for public participation to deliver environmental objectives; introduce tools for participative and deliberative democracy and learnings from community engagement in the 2nd cycle.

Time	Item
10:00	Welcome and introduction to the day
Session 1: Public participation for water quality, climate change mitigation and biodiversity	
10:05	<i>The Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management FILLM</i> ; Gretta McCarron
10:15	<i>An introduction to best practice in public participation</i> ; Dr Patrick Bresnihan, Maynooth University
10:30	<i>Participatory and deliberative approaches to climate mitigation - Imagining 2050 project</i> ; Dr Clodagh Harris, UCC
10:45	<i>Deliberative democracy tools - Imagining 2050 project</i> ; Dr Alexandra Reves, UCC
11:00	Panel discussion and Q&A
11:25	Break and POLL
Session 2: Public participation in practice	
11:30	<i>Learnings from Ballinderry & Oriel Rivers and Coastal Catchment Association</i> ; Mark Horton, Rivers Trust Ireland
11:40	<i>Roles of Catchment communities in protecting water, nature and heritage</i> ; Micheál O'Cinneide, Corrib Beo
11:50	<i>Using biodiversity to engage communities on catchment actions</i> ; Sean Corrigan, National Federation of Group Water Schemes
12:00	<i>Enabling community engagement and participation, learnings from the second cycle</i> ; Fran Igoe, LAWPRO
12:10	Panel discussion and Q&A POLL Results

1 Bresnihan & Hesse [Water-Forum_Public-Participation_Bresnihan-and-Hesse_2019.pdf \(thewaterforum.ie\)](#)

Policy submissions

In its submission to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine on the draft CAP Strategy 2023-2027, the Water Forum welcomed the 'Green Architecture' outlined in the new CAP, that proposes to address the climate, biodiversity and environmental crises through enhanced conditionality, the Eco Scheme Intervention of Pillar 1 and the range of climate/environment interventions of Pillar 2.

The members of the Forum held a number of meetings to discuss the content and how the CAP Strategic Plan could better address Ireland's water quality; expertise and perspectives from a range of organisations and experts were shared and used in the development of the recommendations outlined in the Forum's submission.

The Forum welcomes the proposal that "the underpinning principle for the (Pillar 2 AECM) scheme will be '*right action in the right place*' in order to ensure effective targeting of measures to deliver biodiversity, water and climate action in an integrated manner on farms". The Forum supports this

proposal for targeted measures for optimum environmental outcomes, which is a significant improvement relative to previous AECM schemes of CAP.

The view of the Water Forum is that the national CAP Strategy would similarly benefit from the conceptual framework provided by the Forum's Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management (FILLM), as a means of optimising efficiency and effectiveness in achieving environmental outcomes for climate, biodiversity, water quality and soil enhancement. The Forum believes that while designing actions/measures to be included in the new CAP Strategy or assessing applications for various CAP interventions, that priority for the AECM scheme should be for water bodies identified as being at risk from agriculture, with additional emphasis on those with a range of co-benefits for water, climate, soil and biodiversity to maximise capacity and resource efficiencies (see Table 1, Page 20, [FILLM](#) report). The implementation of the new CAP will require cross-component planning where disciplines

and organisations from multiple Government departments and agencies should work together in a co-ordinated manner to achieve climate and environmental targets.

A total of 27 recommendations were made in the submission across Pillar I and Pillar II interventions.

Recommendations for Prioritisation within Pillar II AECM schemes:

1. PAAs, where agriculture has been identified as a significant pressure, should be ranked highest within Tier 1 for priority access to Pillar 2 AECM scheme.
2. The definition of 'vulnerable water area' currently proposed for Tier 2, should be "any water body where agriculture has been identified as a significant pressure".
3. The proposed 'vulnerable water area' eligibility criterion currently proposed for Tier 2, should be included within Tier 1 to allow farmers in these areas to get priority access to the AECM scheme, with additional priority given to those identified as having a critical source area (supported by EPA PIP maps).
4. In addition to PAAs and vulnerable water areas, applications for AECM payments which propose measures with multiple co-benefits for water, soil, climate and biodiversity, should be prioritised for eligibility for the scheme.

Recommendation for Conditionality:

The Forum recommends there is greater emphasis on targeted measures within Pillar 1, such as consideration of spatially targeted buffer zones in poorly draining soils under GAEC 4.

The full submission is available at:

[Water-Forum-Submission-on-CAP-Public-Consultation.pdf](#)
(thewaterforum.ie)





Floating Pennywort

Research update

Invasive Alien Species (IAS) provide a threat globally to the environment, to native biodiversity, biosecurity, the economy, animal, plant and human health. Recognising these threats, the Water Forum commissioned a **scoping study to provide strategic guidance** on the management of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in Ireland. The research aimed to provide insight into how IAS establishment and spread might be restricted and what actions are required to improve the management of established IAS.

The **research** states that many of the most problematic IAS have been introduced to Ireland in the past 20 years and that a significant number of high impact IAS are predicted to arrive in Ireland in the next 10 years resulting in devastating environmental consequences. The authors highlight the changes in governance and policy that are needed to improve IAS management on the island of Ireland and to

significantly reduce future invasions and potential economic costs.

One example of IAS causing ecological and economic damage in Ireland is the Curly waterweed (*Lagarosiphon major*), a submerged perennial macrophyte that grows vigorously in suitable habitats. It spreads within and between watercourses via fragmentation i.e. small plant fragments. It forms dense growths and impedes navigation, fishing, water movement and blocks out light impacting on native species. Since 2013, Inland Fisheries Ireland have undertaken a number of control procedures including hand pulling in shallow water, mechanical cutting with v-blades, harvesting and covering with jute to occlude light. These control measures have reduced the impact so that water-based activities can continue, and the risk posed to native macrophytes, macroinvertebrates and salmonid fishes is minimised. The annual management cost is around

€300,000 and approximately €4 million has been spent to date on control measures.

The research included an analysis of economic cost of not implementing successful interventions on IAS and has estimated an annual cost of €26.5 billion per year by 2030 for all IAS, with aquatic and semi-aquatic species alone costing €3.8 billion. Increased international trade, including online trade and travel across the world has led to an exponential increase in IAS globally in recent years.

The report states that the management of aquatic IAS is particularly complex as they can be difficult to detect in the first place and, for some species, virtually impossible to eradicate once they have become established. For difficult infestations sustained efforts over many years is required such as the interventions for the Curly waterweed in the Corrib and the Asian clam in

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the River Barrow. To combat this, the authors highlight the importance of priority action to prevent incursions into Ireland in the first place.

Major pathways for the introduction and spread of IAS in Ireland include deliberate release, escapees, transport stowaways and contaminants. Pathways that require urgent attention include border crossings, illegal imports (via the internet) deliberate releases by anglers and aquarists, sales from garden centres and pet shops. Adopting good biosecurity protocols and practice at ports and potential invasion hubs will reduce the level of new incursions and the spread of IAS on the island.

The authors state that the planned national IAS legislation coming into force in 2021, must be implemented, enforced and resourced, preferably by one responsible agency. A key challenge to IAS management is fragmented and uncoordinated action. The research recommends the establishment of a single lead division with overall responsibility for IAS management who would oversee an All-island Strategy for IAS Management and a National Biosecurity Programme.

There is also a need to develop education and awareness programmes with key messages relating to IAS management and the implementation of good biosecurity practice. A range of training courses dedicated to specific stakeholders (Gov. agencies, garden centres, pet shops, retailers) should be delivered.

The policy brief outlining 10 key recommendations, along with the full report are available at www.thewaterforum.ie

Report: **Invasive Alien Species in the Republic of Ireland; Policy Recommendations for their Management**

Education and awareness

For National Science Week 2021, the Water Forum prepared a short video introduction to the draft River Basin Management Plan.



Introduction to the draft River Basin Management Plan – YouTube



Dr Triona McGrath gives a short introduction to the Water Forum – YouTube

Factsheets

The Forum is preparing a series of introductory Factsheets to the Water Framework Directive, such as the WFD and the RBMP, with more forthcoming in 2022. Please circulate these to your networks.

The Introduction to the River Basin Management Plan Factsheet is available [here](#).

