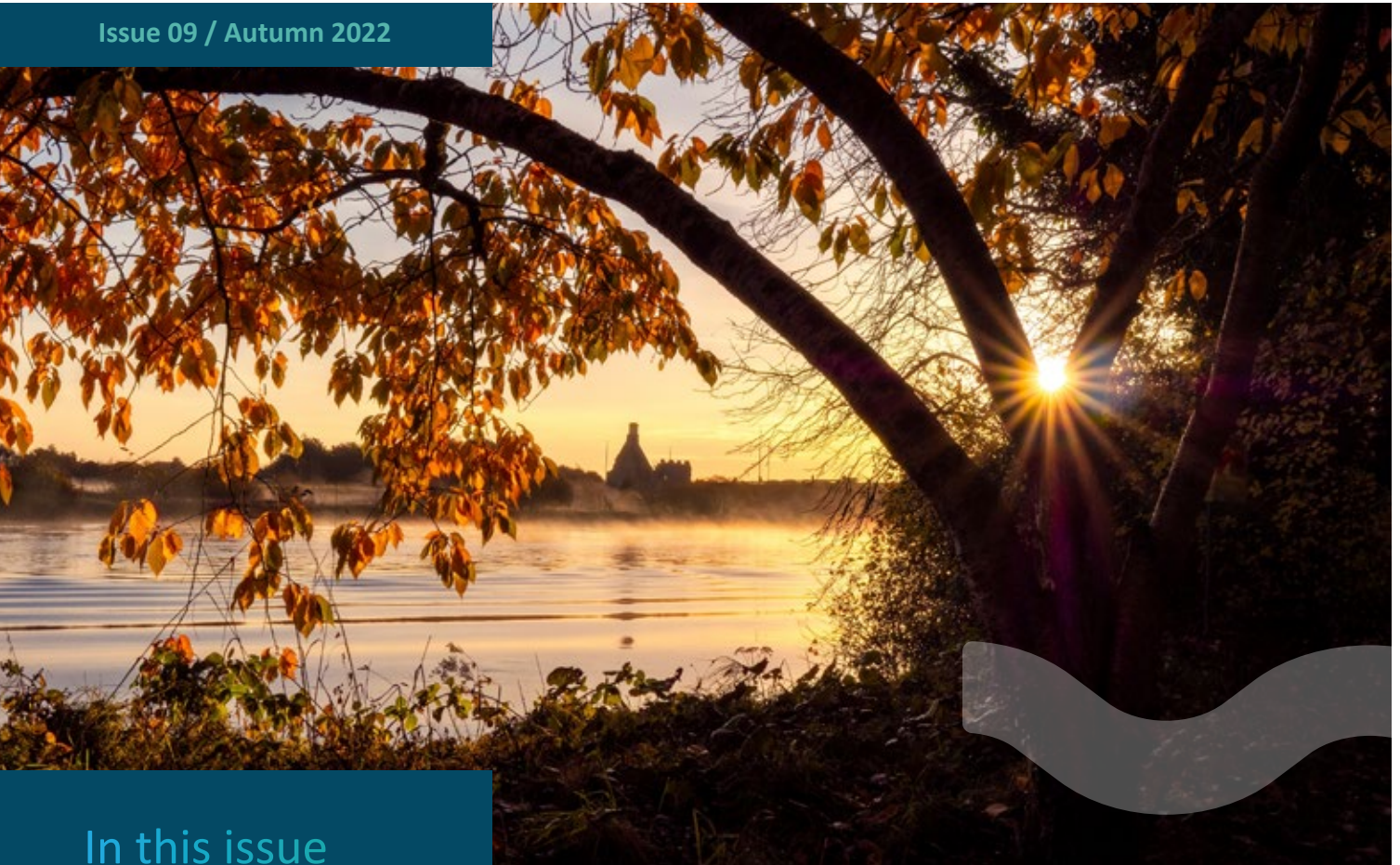


Newsletter



An Fóram Uisce – looking after Ireland’s water resources

Issue 09 / Autumn 2022



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Water Forum Strategic Plan 2022-2027

The Water Forum is the national statutory body representative of stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland’s water bodies.

The Water Forum is the national statutory body representative of stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland’s water bodies. It consists of 25 members including representatives from a wide range of organisations and sectors with interests in water issues including the environmental sector, the rural and agriculture sector, consumers including customers of Irish Water, the rural water

sector, river trusts, angling and water sports, the business sector, trade unions, the community and voluntary sector, forestry, education, social housing and tourism. Approximately 50 different organisations were involved in the nomination of members.

Set up under the Water Services Act 2017, the Forum has advisory roles in



relation to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Irish Water, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and the Water Policy Advisory Committee.

The role of the Forum is to provide a platform for stakeholder engagement and dialogue on all matters relating to water as an environmental, economic and social asset. Stakeholders debate and analyse a range of issues with regard to water quality, rural water services, issues of concern to Irish Water customers, the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland. The Forum provides a strong independent voice on policy pertaining to water quality, water conservation and future proofing.

Functions of the Water Forum conferred by the Water Services Act 2017 include:

- 1 **To advise the Minister in relation to Government water policy, having regard to the following:**
 - a. Water conservation
 - b. Rural water services
 - c. The interests of the customers of Irish Water
- 2 **Make recommendation to Irish Water**
 - a. In relation to the performance of its functions; and
 - b. When requested to in writing by Irish Water on any policy document prepared by Irish Water
- 3 **To advise and provide observation to the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU)**
 - a. In relation to the performance of Irish Water of its functions, and
 - b. When requested in writing by the CRU on any consultation document
- 4 **To advise the Water Policy Advisory Committee**
 - a. In relation to any river basin management plan and its implementation
 - b. On related matters concerning the management of the inland aquatic environment and water resources
- 5 **To examine other water related matters including carry out research to advise the Minister accordingly**

The Water Forum's Strategic Plan for 2022-2027 builds on the Forum's work since its establishment and it presents a new vision for its work: **Ireland's waters are clean, healthy and life enhancing, supporting biodiversity and providing the basis for community wellbeing and economic sustainability.**

Water Forum mission is: **The Water Forum provides a platform for the stakeholders of water quality, where the members draw on their various perspectives and expertise to address the challenges and agree governance, societal and technical policies and solutions to achieve clean and healthy waters.**



Water Forum members and staff with former Chair Dr Tom Collins and current Chair Dr Matthew Crowe.

The Strategic Goals identified include:



Goal 1

Provide a unique and robust platform for stakeholder engagement and agreement on key issues concerning Ireland's waters.

One of the key contributions the Water Forum makes is finding and building consensus between primary interests to achieve common ground on policy recommendations and ministerial advice. To do this, we use a learning mindset to develop, change and integrate perspectives. We partner with key agencies to leverage expertise, insight and knowledge to inform the debate and agreed positions.



Goal 2

Be a proactive and authoritative national statutory body, leading on water policy, management and governance.

Our input reflects a diversity of voices to form a composite view on policies,

governance and community solutions and we aspire to drive transformational change to improve water quality, water conservation and future proofing. We promote an integrated systems approach to water management and governance.



Goal 3

Bring scientific recommendations to policy through analysis, dialogue and sense making.

We gather intelligence, science and best practice through external input and commissioned research. We look at international best practice, bring science to policy and disseminate information through conferences, workshops and media.



Goal 4

Lead on innovation in experimental Governance and futures thinking.

As a stakeholder body, we develop effective relationships with Government Departments, Irish Water, Commission

for the Regulation of Utilities, Rural Water Services, member organisations and other relevant bodies to act as an integral governance component in the management of Ireland's water resources.



Goal 5

Advocate for the need for and benefit of meaningful public engagement and education in water resource management.

We promote effective public participation in integrated catchment management and provide resources for awareness and education on the value of and threats to water. We advocate for a systems-based approach where agencies, stakeholders and the public consider water as an integral part of the environmental crises along with climate and nature.

Links:

- [Water Forum Strategic Plan 2022-2027](#)
- [Water Forum Annual Report for 2021](#)

Policy

Water Forum hosted a workshop with agencies to share research on domestic water conservation and discuss how the recommendations might be progressed.

Following a presentation by Dr Sarah Cotterill on her water conservation research to the members of the Water Forum, they felt that the Forum should take a lead role in progressing the research recommendations and advocate for the development of a National Framework for Domestic Water Conservation. This action supports the Water Forum's statutory role under the Water Services Act 2017, to advise on water conservation and future proofing.

The aim of the workshop was to share the research on domestic water conservation with key national organisations and agencies and start the discussion on how to implement some of the policy recommendations.

The focus of the workshop was on three key recommendations from the research:

1. **Update Building Regulations** to specify total water use per building and maximum ratings for fittings;

2. **Implement a mandatory, Government-led water labelling scheme** linked to revised building regulations and fittings standards;
3. **Introduce smart metering** as a non-pricing strategy to raise awareness on how and where water is used.

Session one aimed to explore existing water conservation measures in Ireland and the UK with presentations from Dr Sarah Cotterill; Irish Water gave an overview of their domestic water conservation activities; The National Federation of Group Water

Schemes shared learnings from their sector; Irish Green Building Federation spoke on water efficiency measures in the Home Performance Index; and the UK Government Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs presented their work on Mandatory water labelling and the updating of building regulations in the UK.

Session two facilitated round table discussions on what action is needed in Ireland to progress the three recommendations considering, what needs to be done, how it can be achieved, who needs to be involved and when it should be delivered.

The participants felt that while changes to Building Regulations would be an important measure to achieve domestic water conservation, requirements could only be applied to new builds and that these could be best achieved through a Government-led initiative possibly linked to the Housing for All task force. Case studies from the UK could be used to as a pathway to developing a plan for building regulations changes such as maximum ratings for fittings, conservation targets and funding options.

For Mandatory Labelling the participants felt that this needed a Government-led demand management strategy to reduce water use through leakage reductions, metering, labelling and building targets possibly linked to

Drought Management Plans or Climate Change Action Plans, and ideally driven by a National Water Efficiency Leadership Group. Many mentioned the need for further research to explore regulatory and legislative requirements and cost benefit analysis of such measures. They also identified the need to develop a water saving culture through education and awareness programmes that raise awareness of increasing demand and the energy efficiency benefits of using water efficient products and behaviours.

The research shows that it is very difficult to encourage water saving behaviours if people do not know how much water they are using. Consumers need to have access to data on their water use and immediate responsive information on how they can conserve water that can only be provided through innovative technologies such as smart meters. Smart meter pilots for water conservation could be considered as part of Irish Water's Smart Network Strategy 2025/26 and the Group Water Scheme sector are interesting in exploring such options as well. Such initiatives would have to be supported by an awareness campaign to support bottom-up understanding of water supply, the processes that underpin treatment and supply, through to the energy and resources required to produce drinking water and to treat wastewater.

Following the workshop, the Water Services Standing Committee has recommended that:

- Building from international learnings, including the UK, develop a plan for a government-led strategy for water conservation in Ireland. This should include an approach to updating building regulations to include water conservation measures and the implementation of mandatory water efficiency labelling on fittings and appliances.
- Build an evidence base, including cost-benefit analysis (financial and environmental) for the need for and benefits of including water conservation measures in the Building Regulations, for water efficiency labelling and for the use of smart meters as an awareness tool for water use.
- Develop a water saving culture through the delivery of education and awareness programmes on water conservation, to raise awareness of the increasing demand for domestic water, the need for water efficiency and the financial and environmental benefits of reducing domestic water use.

Links:

- [A Framework for Domestic Water Conservation in Ireland Research Report](#)
- [Water Conservation Workshop report](#)

Research

Researchers at University College Dublin and University College Cork are currently working on two projects for the Water Forum. The researchers will explore: Projected climate change impacts on water quality/quantity; and they will review current national policies, governance and plans for future proofing. These research findings will be presented in a podcast that will be launched during Science Foundation Ireland's, National Science Week 2022, 13th to 20th November. Keep an eye on our website news section to find out more.

Education and awareness

Factsheet 3: Water Management in Ireland, see overleaf.



Water Management in Ireland

The national statutory body representative of stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland's waters.

Who is responsible for what?



◆ National level

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
The Environmental Protection Agency

◆ National/regional & local

Local Authority Waters Programme

◆ Regional & local

Local Authorities

National level

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Key responsibilities

The Department is responsible for water policy development and legislation such as:

- Implement the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) to restore good ecological status to all waterbodies
- Nitrates Action Programme to protect water resources from agricultural practice
- Shellfish Waters Directive, Bathing Water Directive, Floods Directive
- Drinking Water Directive
- Legislation for water abstraction – The General Scheme of the Water Environment (Abstractions) Bill
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Marine Protected Areas
- Manage the Water Services Investment Programme for water and sewage services
- Manage the development of the Rural Water Programme

The Environmental Protection Agency

The EPA develops monitoring programmes and reports on the Implementation of the Water Framework Directive to the European Commission. Their work includes:

- An assessment programme to monitor water quality of lakes, rivers and groundwater trends
- Surveys water quality in estuaries and coastal areas
- Assesses and reports on water quality in bathing waters and other protected areas
- Monitors and reports on drinking water quality data in public and private supplies
- Acts as the Supervisory Authority for public water services under the Drinking Water Regulations
- Operates a national hydrometric programme
- Co-ordinated environmental research and produces regular reports on water quality

National/ regional & local

Local Authority Waters Programme

- Catchment assessments through field and desk studies in the Priority Areas for Action under the RBMP and work with agencies to develop measures to improve water quality in these areas.
- Community engagement on the importance of healthy waters and support local projects and initiatives under the Community Water Development Fund to protect and improve waters.
- Support the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme to work with farmers to improve water quality.

Regional & local

The Local Authorities role in water management

- With the EPA, the Local Authorities carry out monitoring on rivers, lakes, groundwaters and bathing waters and support the national programme for the collection, analysis and distribution of surface water quantity data
- Have primary responsibility for water management and protection under the Water Pollution Acts
- Support the implementing of the Water Framework Directive
- Inspect under the National Nitrates Action Programme
- Inspect under the Domestic Waste Water Treatment National Inspections Plan
- Act as Supervisory Authority for Rural Water Services
- Administer the Multi-annual Rural Water programme
- Implement Sludge management plans

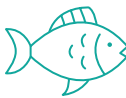


Organisations with a specialist focus



Marine

Marine Institute is responsible for Marine Research, Technology Development and Innovation (RTDI). They monitor estuaries and marine waters, assess the economic potential of Ireland's marine resource; promote the sustainable development of marine industry and safeguard our marine environment.



Fisheries

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has responsibility to advise on conservation, protection, management, development and improvement of inland fisheries and sea angling.



Groundwater

Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) is responsible for providing geological advice and information. The organisation provides maps and scientific data about groundwater quality, quantity and distribution as well as advice and expertise to support policies and regulations.



Flooding and drainage

Office of Public Works (OPW) has responsibility for the implementation of the Floods Directive and for coordinating the implementation of the Flood Risk Management Plans and works with the EPA and Local Authorities on flood defence schemes and the management of the arterial drainage schemes.



Natura sites

The **National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)** has responsibility for the protection of habitats and species through designation and management of Natural Heritage Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas and national parks.



Water services

Irish Water (IW) is the national utility responsible for public water and wastewater services. It is tasked with operating, improving and investing in water and wastewater infrastructure and systems to provide a safe, reliable and high

quality service to consumers. It sources, treats and delivers 1.7 billion litres of drinking water to 1.8 million households and 184,000 businesses and processes 1.2 billion litres of wastewater every day. It manages 755 water treatment plants and 1,062 wastewater treatment plants.



Rural water services

National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) is a representative organisation for over 400 community owned Group Water Schemes delivering rural drinking water services. While representing the sector at both National and local level the Federation also provides support services, mentoring and training to ensure water quality and consumer service standards.



Regulation

The **Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU)** regulates public water and wastewater services. It has responsibility for ensuring that water services are delivered in a safe, secure and sustainable way and that IW operates in an economic and efficient manner.



Advisory

Water Advisory Body (WAB) monitors Irish Water and reports quarterly to the Minister on progress against IW business plan and its transparency and accountability.



Public health

Health Service Executive (HSE) Environmental Health Officers Association promotes the awareness of Environmental Health issues among the public particularly in the area of drinking water quality.



Stakeholder engagement

The Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce) provides a platform for stakeholder engagement in water resource management. It has an advisory role in Government water policy, Irish Water plans, the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan and rural water services.

This factsheet presents the main organisations and their primary responsibilities for water resource management. These organisations and other bodies have further roles contributing to water resource management.