

Request for Research Tender on

A review of best practice (national and international) in public participation in environmental management, with policy recommendations for the protection and restoration of water bodies

**Closing Date:
27th March 2023**

Queries to be addressed to:

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<https://thewaterforum.ie/>

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE WATER FORUM

The Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce) was established on a statutory basis in June 2018, in accordance with the Water Services Act 2017 to facilitate stakeholder input to water policy development in Ireland. The Forum is the national statutory body representative of stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland's water bodies, consisting of 25 members including representatives from a wide range of organisations with direct connection to issues relating to water quality and also public water consumers. 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 Water Forum provides an opportunity for stakeholders to debate and analyse a range of issues with regard to water quality, rural water concerns, issues affecting customers of Irish Water and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and Ireland's River Basin Management Plan. As an independent entity, the Forum has discretion to determine its own work programme and means of communicating its views and analysis. The vision of the Water Forum is for clean and healthy waters, supporting biodiversity, community wellbeing and economic sustainability.

Dr Matt Crowe is the Chairperson of the Water Forum, Mr Donal Purcell is the Senior Executive Officer, Dr Triona McGrath is the Research and Policy Lead, Dr Gretta McCarron is the Communications and Education Lead, Dr Aisling Corkery is the Research and Policy Executive and Martina Ryan is the Administrative support.

Further information on the work of the Water Forum is available at www.thewaterforum.ie

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) requires all Member States to protect and improve water quality so that all water bodies achieve at least good ecological status by 2015 or, at the latest, by 2027. The River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) sets out the measures necessary to meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) to protect and improve the quality of our waters. The third RBMP 2022-2027 is currently being finalised by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH).

The Water Framework Directive Legislation Preamble 14 states that “The success of this Directive relies on close cooperation and coherent action at Community, Member State and local level as well as on information, consultation and involvement of the public, including users”.

In addition, Preamble 46 states that, “To ensure the participation of the general public, including users of water, in the establishment and updating of river basin management plans, it is necessary to provide proper information of planned measures and to report on progress with their implementation with a view to the involvement of the general public before final decisions on the necessary measures are adopted.”

In 2003 the European Commission published a Guidance document on ‘Public participation in relation to the Water Framework Directive. Guidance document No 8 – Publications Office of the EU’¹. It defines public participation as “allowing people to influence the outcome of plans and working processes. It is a means of improving decision-making, to create awareness of environmental issues and to help increase acceptance and commitment towards intended plans.”

Although the phrase “public participation” does not appear in the Directive, three forms of public participation with an increasing level of involvement are mentioned:

- Information supply.
- Consultation.
- Active involvement.

According to the Directive, the first two are to be ensured, the latter should be *encouraged*. Although the Directive does not require active involvement, the Guidance published by the European Commission shows how active involvement can be very useful for reaching the objectives of the Directive. According to the European Commission, “A well-managed public participation process is not free of costs and demands time and energy, but it will pay off in the end. Public participation is not an end in itself but a tool to achieve the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive. Trust, transparency of process and good management of expectations will help to achieve good participation.”

The second RBMP in Ireland represents innovative and significant steps forward in water management and public participation, including the establishment of the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) to lead out on public engagement and local level consultation on draft RBMPs and the

¹ [Public participation in relation to the water framework directive. Guidance document No 8 - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

establishment of the EPA Catchments Unit with catchments.ie as an online portal providing public access to water quality data, maps, and stories. Furthermore, the National Water Forum was established to facilitate stakeholder input to policy development and implementation.

While the Water Forum plays a significant role in providing sectoral insights to inform developments in policy at a national level, it does not facilitate public or stakeholder engagement at a local level, such as within a catchment or local community. The effects of water management are experienced more directly at a local level and as a result more fruitful responses from communities and (local) stakeholders can be expected. This input can be aggregated to a higher level to capitalise on local knowledge at waterbody, sub-catchment, or catchment scale.

The draft RBMP for Ireland 2022-2027 proposes to develop and implement catchment management plans for each of the 46 hydrometric catchments, as sub-plans to the national Plan, 5 of which will be piloted in 2023/2024. LAWPRO has been given responsibility for the development of the 5 pilot catchment management plans, along with the responsibility for the establishment of Catchment Community Fora to help identify and implement measures locally.

The Water Forum, in its Strategic Plan 2022-2027, has a strategic goal to “Advocate for the need for and benefits of meaningful public engagement and education in water resource management”. In its submission on the draft RBMP, the Water Forum recommended to the DHLGH that a national approach to public participation be developed. To build learnings around the best approaches to public participation, the Forum recommended that during the development and piloting of the proposed catchment management plans, that different types of public participation should be piloted to determine their success and outcomes for waterbodies. The Forum is engaging with DHLGH officials and LAWPRO to provide advice on incorporating public participation into the 46 catchment management plans.

The objective of this research is to review national and international models for public participation in environmental protection / management, with the aim of identifying best practice approaches to increasing awareness, building capacity, and support for policy measures and actions to achieve water quality outcomes and associated benefits for biodiversity and climate.

3. PROJECT OVERVIEW

1. Provide a review of **national** approaches to public participation in water / environmental protection or restoration, to include (but not limited to):
 - a. Review of the current approaches/models by key State agencies and public bodies who have a role in facilitating public participation in water / environmental management (e.g., LAWPRO, LEADER Companies, Rivers Trusts, Catchment Associations, Group Water Schemes, Public Participation Networks, Citizen Science projects, Environmental Innovation Partnerships, CAROs etc), and detail their public participation objectives, approaches and outcomes and any resulting water quality benefits.

2. Provide a review of **international** best practice in public participation in environmental management (such as river catchment, marine protected areas), to include (but not limited to):
 - a. Summary of successful practical approaches to involving the public, communities and stakeholders in decision making processes related to their local environment. Detail their public participation objectives, approaches, and outcomes.
 - b. Include an assessment of both top-down and bottom-up supports for the different approaches to public participation at a local level.
 - c. Indicate how these learnings can be transferred to integrated catchment management for the implementation of the catchment management plans and catchment community fora proposed as part of Ireland's third River Basin Management Plan.
3. Based on the research, provide recommendations to increase and enhance public participation in the implementation of the third RBMP and to support the development of a collaborative top-down/bottom-up approach to the implementation of the 46 catchment management plans for water protection/restoration.

4. IMPACT OF RESEARCH

The proposed impact of this research is to inform thinking and policy development around meaningful public participation in water and environmental management. It is envisioned that research outputs will assist the Forum to formulate advice on the development and implementation of a national approach to meaningful public participation. Furthermore, the research should support the Water Forum's advisory role on the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan and associated catchment management plans and will help to inform the approach for establishing and supporting the Catchment Community Fora.

5. PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The following deliverables are required for **all** awarded tenders:

- Final report, encompassing all research themes listed under Section 3.
- A Policy Brief document identifying the key policy recommendations to increase and enhance public participation in the implementation of the third River Basin Management Plan
- Presentation of final research to members of the Water Forum

6. BUDGET

The currency and invoices in which all prices and rates shall be quoted, and which payments under the contract will be paid, shall be Euros (€).

The **maximum budget is €24,950**, inclusive of VAT and overheads where applicable.

6.1 Payment Schedules

An upfront payment of 50% of the total agreed budget will be made upon receipt of invoice from the contracted service provider or institution following the initiation of the project.

A final payment of the remaining 50% of the total agreed budget will be made on project completion within the timeframes stated within Section 6 and following receipt of the final report.

7. TIMELINES

It is a requirement that this draft report is **completed on or before Monday 27th March** as per the timeframe outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Timeframe for project delivery

Publication of tender	15 th February 2023
Deadline for tender submissions	27 th March 2023
Award of tender and start of project	To be confirmed with awardee
Project initiation meeting	To be confirmed with awardee
Draft report and policy brief submitted	On or before 1 st September 2023

Following review of the draft report, a completed final report is to be submitted which takes into account proposed amendments to the draft report.

8. MARKING SCHEME

All submissions will be assessed by a panel of suitably qualified persons.

Marks will be awarded (maximum 100 marks) based solely on the information provided in the submission, as follows:

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the subject matter of the brief and the requirements of the project (30 marks)
- Project management arrangements (10 marks)
- Details of budget, including compliance within the stated budget (10 marks)
- Timeline including mandatory GANTT chart outlining the timeline for project actions and deliverables (10 marks)
- Demonstrate relevant research track record of team appropriate to the subject matter, including previous/ongoing projects delivered and scientific publications (40 marks)

9. SUBMISSION OF TENDERS

Applications must be submitted no later than **5pm Monday 27th March 2023** via email to Dr Triona McGrath, Research Lead, the Water Forum: triona@nationalwaterforum.ie.

Submissions must include:

- A completed application form.
- A CV (max 4 pages) of the lead person to whom the tender will be awarded.
- A CV of any supporting researchers who will have a role in the project.

An acknowledgement of receipt of applications will be issued within 48 hours of the submission deadline.

10. AWARD OF TENDERS

One award will be made through this request for tenders.

Bodies of work may be initiated immediately from the date of award; however suitable timelines can be discussed between the awardee and the Forum's Research Lead after the award has been granted. The project will commence with an initial project meeting between the awardee and the Forum's Research Lead.

11. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- All applications must be made using the official application form.
- Applications may be received from consortiums of individuals from different institutions. Such applications must identify the **lead person** to whom the tender may be awarded. All other members of the consortium will be sub-contracted by the lead person. The maximum total budget of €24,950 (inclusive of VAT and overheads) is applicable to single service provider applications and consortium applications respectively.
- The Water Forum will disqualify incomplete applications, applications not using the application form provided and any application received after closing time/date. Compliance with the word limitation contained on the Application Form is a requirement of the application process.
- It is a necessary requirement of the application process that the successful applicant must provide a copy of their Organisation/University/Institution's current Tax Clearance Certificate, after the grant has been offered.
- Failure to address within the final report each of the items included under Section 3 and the relevant thematic area will result in the withholding of final payment until all requirements are met.
- The Water Forum will have copyright ownership of any material developed for use by the Water Forum under the terms of this tender. The service provider may have a non-exclusive licence to use such material but only for its own purposes (to be agreed with the successful service provider).
- The principles of Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019 will be applied where there is any potential for commercial exploitation of project outputs resulting from this tender.

- The Water Forum encourages an open access publication policy. Publications arising from tender awards funded by the Water Forum should, as a minimum, ensure open access via Green methods (depositing the peer-reviewed manuscript in an online repository before, at the same time, or after publication). All reports will be uploaded to, and publicly accessible via, the Water Forum's website: www.nationalwaterforum.ie.
- Any publications arising from tender awards funded by the Water Forum must acknowledge An Fóram Uisce|the Water Forum as the source of funding.
- Projects funded by the Water Forum must uphold the highest standards of research integrity and the Water Forum expects all tender awardees to abide by the guidelines outlined in the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland, and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information – When an application is received by the Water Forum, a record is created in the name of the applicant. This information will be stored by the office of the Water Forum, where relevant, in paper/electronic form. Information that is collected by the Office, including information that you give us, is added to the record. You have the right, given by the Data Protection Act of 1988 and 2003, to a copy of your information at any time. The Office is also subject to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2014.

The information we record is used for the following purposes:

- Processing and assessing of applications.
- Payment arrangements.
- Auditing requirements.
- Informing and advising the Water Forum in relation to the Project and using same as a basis for further consideration by the Water Forum including research projects and policy analysis and recommendations.
- Publication of the Project Outcomes.

12. Appendix Relevant Publications and Links to Public Participation

Aarhus Convention: UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Aarhus Convention \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

Bresnihan and Hesse (2019) Desk Study on Public Engagement in Water Governance, Prepared for An Fóram Uisce. https://thewaterforum.ie/app/uploads/2020/03/Water-Forum_Public-Participation_Bresnihan-and-Hesse_2019.pdf

Department of Rural and Community Development (2023). A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making. [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

European Commission (2012) Public participation in relation to the water framework directive. Guidance document No 8. [Public participation in relation to the water framework directive. Guidance document No 8 - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu)

EU Public Participation Directive 2003/35/EC: providing for public participation in respect of the drawing up of certain plans and programmes relating to the environment and amending with regard to public participation. [EUR-Lex - 32003L0035 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu)

Gianluca Grilli and John Curtis (2022). An evaluation of public initiatives to change behaviours that affect water quality. [An evaluation of public initiatives to change behaviours that affect water quality - Grilli - Environmental Policy and Governance - Wiley Online Library](http://www.wiley.com)

Joanna O’Riordan, Richard Boyle, John O’Neill, Fergal O’Leary and Laura Shannon (2020) Sharing Lessons Learned from Water Governance. [Research Report 406.pdf \(epa.ie\)](http://epa.ie)

Micheál O Cinnéide, Joanna O’Riordan and Richard Boyle (2021). Case Studies on Local Catchment Studies on Local Catchment Groups in Ireland 2018-2020. [Case Studies on Local Catchment Groups in Ireland, 2018-2020 \(ipa.ie\)](http://ipa.ie)

OECD (2015). Principles on Water Governance. [OECD-Principles-on-Water-Governance-en.pdf](http://www.oecd.org)

Water Forum (2022) Submission on the public consultation of the draft River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027. [https://thewaterforum.ie/app/uploads/2022/03/Water-Forum-RBMP-Submission - Final-.pdf](https://thewaterforum.ie/app/uploads/2022/03/Water-Forum-RBMP-Submission-Final-.pdf)

Water Forum (2022) Report on Webinar Discussion on Public Participation

[Webinar-Report-Public-Participation-in-Catchment-Management-March-2022.pdf \(thewaterforum.ie\)](http://thewaterforum.ie)

Water Forum Webinar presentations on Your tube:

- Session 1: [Webinar on Public Participation in Catchment Management Session 1 - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- Session 2: [Webinar Public Participation in catchment management Session 2: Public participation in practice - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

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