

An Fóram Uisce- The Water Forum

Communications Strategy 2023-2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An 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. The Forum has advisory roles in relation to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Uisce Eireann, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and the Water Policy Advisory Committee.

The Forum consists of 25 members representative of a wide range of organisations and sectors with interests in water issues including the environmental sector, the rural and agriculture sectors, 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. As the national statutory body representative of stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland's water bodies, a primary function is to facilitate stakeholder input to water policy development in Ireland and to disseminate its work to responsible agencies and the wider public.

1.2 The Role of the Water Forum

In accordance with the provisions of the Water Services Act 2017, the Water Forum is required to advise the Minister in relation to Government water policy having regard to: (i) water conservation; (ii) rural water services; (iii) the interests of the customers of Irish Water and the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan.

The Water Policy Statement 2018-2025 noted that: 'the National Water Forum was established in 2017 with a view to providing a platform for public engagement in the drafting and implementation of the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland (2018 – 2021) and on matters relating to water as an environmental, social and economic resource, as an input into water policy. The Forum is intended to provide a strong, independent voice on water quality, conservation and future proofing and has discretion to determine its own work programme and means of communicating its views and analysis'.

The Forum aims to provide a link between the science community, stakeholders, policy and the public by advancing communication and understanding of the value of our water resources. The Forum's Communication Strategy aims to support the delivery of its [Strategic Plan 2022-2027](#) the goals of which are provided below.

1.3 Water Forum Vision, Mission & Strategic Goals

1.3.1 Vision

The vision of the Water Forum is that *'Ireland's waters are clean, healthy and life enhancing, supporting biodiversity and providing the basis for community wellbeing and economic sustainability'*.

1.3.3 Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027

The Water Forum adopted its Strategic Plan for 2022-2027, setting out five strategic themes as the basis for its activities:

1. Provide a unique and robust platform for stakeholder engagement and agreement on key issues concerning Ireland’s waters.
2. Be a proactive and authoritative national statutory body, leading on water policy, management and governance.
3. Bring scientific recommendations to policy through analysis, dialogue and sense making.
4. Lead on innovation in experimental Governance and futures thinking.
5. Advocate for the need for and benefits of meaningful public engagement and education in water resource management.

1.3.4 Linkages with other Water Forum Strategies

The Communications Strategy, as the central component of the work of the Forum (Figure 1), provides the vehicle for disseminating the actions and outputs of the Strategic Plan, Research and Education Strategies.

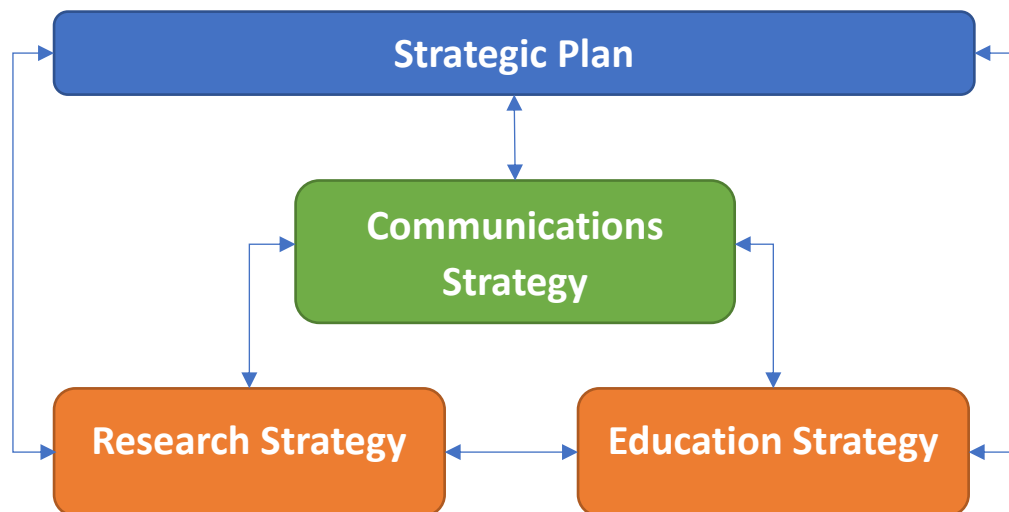


Figure 1: Linkages between the Communications Strategy, the Strategic Plan and the Research and Education Strategies

Research

The Research Strategy 2023-2025 aims to ensure all guidance concerning water quality and the management of water resources in Ireland, provided by the Forum is supported by the best available science; and where knowledge gaps exist, to carry out or commission research to support the delivery of the Strategic Plan.

Education & Awareness

The Forum’s Education Strategy 2023-2025 aims to lead on initiatives to enhance education and awareness of the value of and threats to water by developing and sharing resources, promoting learning about water and encouraging capacity building for water protection outcomes.

2.COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

2.1 Key communications objectives are to:

- Ensure the Forum policy positions and advice regarding our water environment and water services is made available to the relevant stakeholders and organisations, government departments and the general public.
- Establish the Forum’s profile as the proactive and authoritative national stakeholder body informing on water policy, management and governance.
- Support the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2027 and the Research & Education Strategies.
- Develop opportunities for dissemination, dialogue and engagement around scientific research and policy recommendations to inform and influence actions and outcomes for the protection of Ireland’s water resources.
- Generate greater awareness and understanding of the value of water and advocate for capacity building to encourage water protection, conservation and future proofing.

2.2 Communication Stakeholders & Audiences

The Forum’s audience can be segmented into four primary groups as demonstrated below:

Citizens & Communities	Media	Members & their organisations	Stakeholders & Agencies
Citizen Science initiatives	Conferences & Webinars	Angling & Aquaculture	Agencies (ASSAP, OPW, IFI, NPWS etc)
Community networks (Rivers Trusts, PPNs, Tidy towns)	Journal articles	Business & Enterprise	Commission for Regulation of Utilities
Education & Curriculum Authorities	National print, TV, Radio	Education & Research Institutions	Environment Protection Agency
General public	Online & Social Media	Environmental NGOs	Gov. Ministers & Department personnel
Non-formal education networks	Regional News and Local papers	Farming organisations	Local Authorities & LAWPRO
Schools & BTYSTE	Research Journals	Rural Water & Communities	Uisce Éireann
		Recreation & Tourism	
		Uisce Eireann customers	

Table 1: The Water Forum’s stakeholders and audiences

2.2.1 Role of communications in the context of each audience

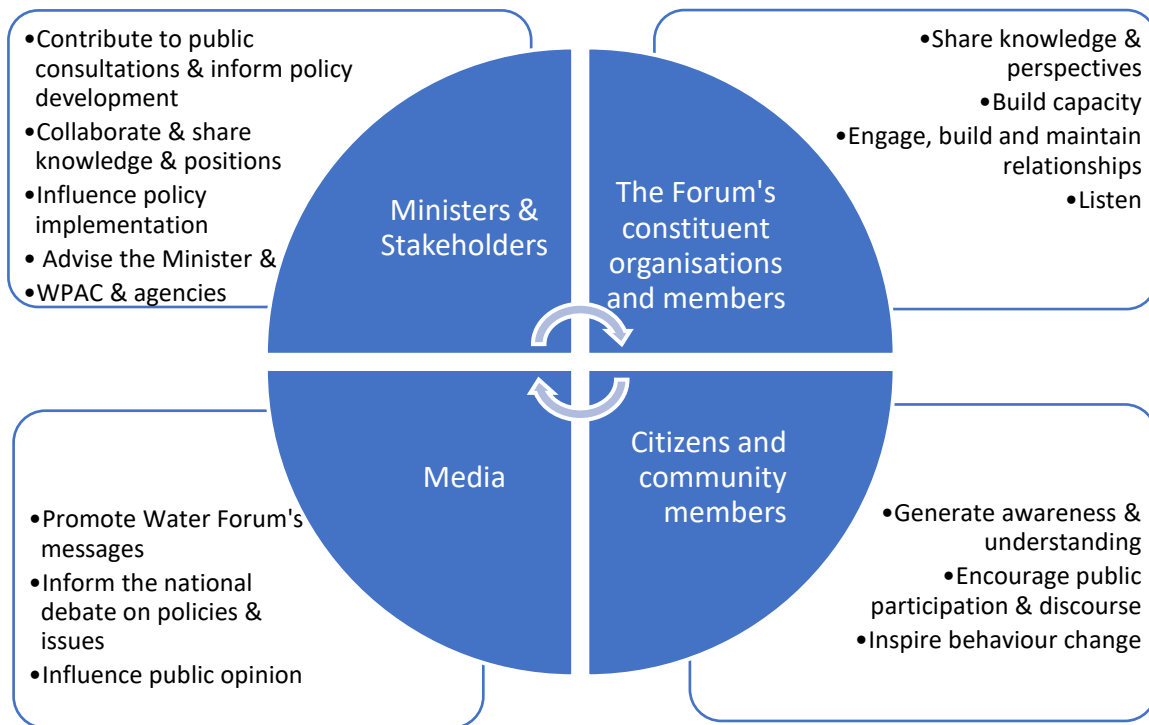


Figure 2: Communications' role in reaching stakeholders & audiences

2.3 Messaging

2.3.1 Key messages on what we do

- We provide a strong, independent voice on water quality, conservation and future proofing.
- We act as a governance component in the management of Ireland's water resources.
- We advocate for innovative engagement between policy makers, stakeholders and the public.
- We review, reflect and comment on the development of national policy and the effectiveness of and the impediments to the implementation of policy.

2.3.2 Key messages from policy positions

- Effective stakeholder engagement is necessary for policy development and implementation.
- An integrated catchment-based approach supporting co-ordinated implementation of policy is needed to deliver optimal outcomes for water, biodiversity and climate (FILLM).
- A whole of Government approach is necessary for effective water and environmental outcomes.

- Secure drinking water and wastewater services are essential to support economic, environment and social needs.
- Water conservation is necessary to increase resilience of supply and environmental protection.
- We need effective public participation in integrated catchment management for water quality outcomes.
- Education on the value of and threats to water needs to be improved in schools and within the general public.

3.DELIVERING COMMUNICATIONS

The primary methods that the Forum will utilise to deliver its communications strategy are:



Figure 3: Primary communications tactics to be employed with the different bodies

3.1 Submissions and reports to statutory bodies

3.1 Minister, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

The Forum will continue to engage proactively with the Minister, WPAC and statutory stakeholders through in person meetings, online via zoom, at workshops, webinars and conferences and by sharing reports and policy positions. These engagements will occur at both policy development and implementation stages.

3.2 Engagements with Members & Stakeholders

3.2.1 Events

The Water Forum will host conferences, webinars and workshops to disseminate its policy positions and research findings to agencies and stakeholders to help inform thinking and

acceptance of the Forum's policy positions. The Forum will seek to present and contribute at stakeholder events (panel participants, speakers or stands).

A number of relevant conferences and events will be attended by the Forum staff and plenary members as appropriate.

3.3 Website & Communications for Citizens and Communities

The website aims to provide key information about who the Forum is, what the Forum does and its outputs in policy, research, education and awareness areas. There is a weekly news article so that the public are aware that the website is up to date and live, this blog is tweeted on a weekly basis. The Quarterly Newsletter is disseminated to a widespread mailing list of agencies, Department officials and citizens.

3.4 Communications with media

The Media database includes national radio, press and TV; online news sites; trade magazines; and local press and radio. Press releases are issued to all of the members of this database and records of all media interactions and communications are kept. Regular articles are issued to other newsletters such as catchments.ie and NFGWS.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Communications and Education Lead has primary responsibility for delivering day-to-day proactive and reactive communications activities on behalf of the Forum. The following Figure 4. illustrates the roles and responsibilities for communications and engagement within the Forum.

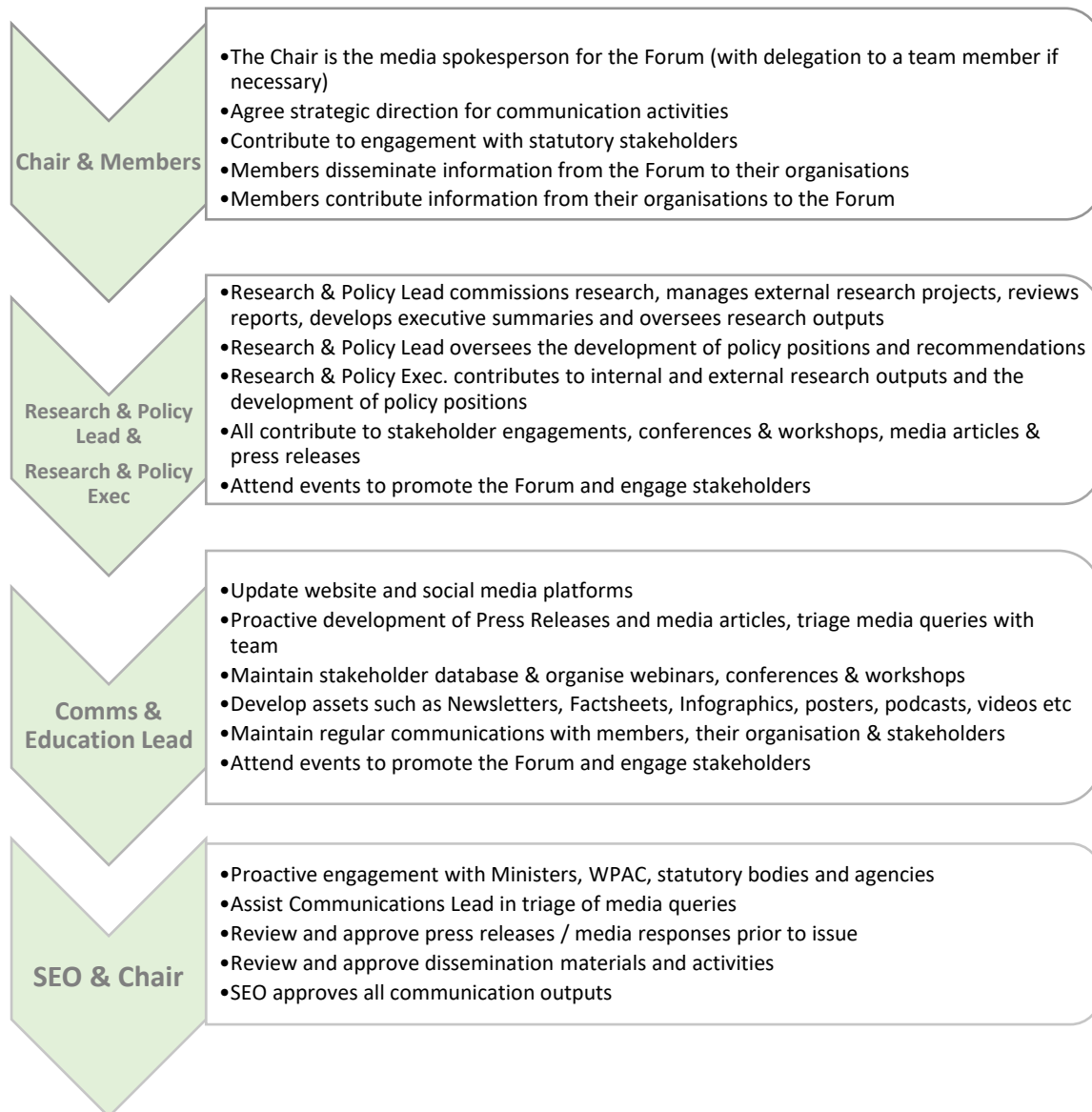


Figure 4: Chair and team responsibilities for delivering the Water Forum’s communications Strategy

Implementation of Communications Strategy

Year	Action	Estimated Delivery
Communications Strategy Actions 2023-2025		
2023	Website upgrade	Q1 2023
	Update Stakeholders database (Agencies, Depts., Members, Research & Education networks & National & Local Media)	Q1 2023
	Policy Actions (Ministers & Agencies)	Q1 2023
	IAS Meeting with Dept personnel	Q1 2023
	Water Conservation Workshop	Q2 2023
	Policy Position on Water Conservation	
	Research (Ministers, Agencies & Members)	
	Water & Climate Reports to Minister	Q2 2023
	Webinar/workshop	Q3 2023
	ED& Awareness (Members & Citizens)	
	Newsletters & Factsheets	
	BTYSTE	Q1 2023
	TY Module	Q2 2023
Water Conservation Awareness		
Science week podcast climate impacts on water resources	Q4 2022	
MEDIA (Members & Citizens)		
PR ON BTYSTE	Q1 2023	
PR on RBMP	Q3 2023	
PR on Policy Position on Water conservation	Q2 2023	
2024	Update Stakeholders database (Agencies, Depts., Members, Research & Education networks & National & Local Media)	
	Policy Actions	
	Research	
	Water & Climate Reports to Minister	
	Webinar	
ED& Awareness		

	<p>BTYSTE Learn about water resource for teachers TY Module and LC Climate & Sustainability (links) Water Conservation in the curriculum? Water Conservation Pilots? Science week podcast climate impacts on water resources</p> <p>MEDIA PR Water Conservation</p>	
<p>2025</p>	<p>Update Stakeholders database (Agencies, Depts., Members, Research & Education networks & National & Local Media)</p> <p>Policy Actions</p> <p>Research</p> <p>ED& Awareness BTYSTE Learn about water resource for teachers Science week podcast climate impacts on water resources</p> <p>MEDIA PR ON ??</p>	