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The Water Forum calls for more action on water conservation, particularly in the Dublin region

The ongoing Uisce Éireann campaign asking people in the greater Dublin region to conserve water has not received a lot of media attention. The Water Forum, a statutory stakeholder body set up to advise on water policy, believe this is a missed opportunity to highlight the significant weakness in Dublin's water infrastructure. 85% of Dublin's drinking water supply comes from the River Liffey, equivalent to 40% of its flow. Dublin has only a few days of water supply available at any one time. Uisce Éireann state that in the past year alone water demand has increased by the equivalent of 120,000 homes. The Government plan to build 300,000 new homes in the next 10 years, which will further increase demand. CSO forecast a population increase of between 20-30% for this region by 2040.

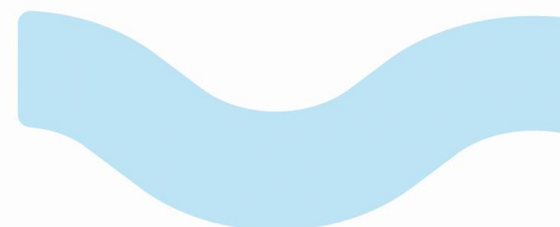
Uisce Éireann has a plan to provide a secondary supply from the River Shannon, through a 170km pipeline that is planned to be in place by 2034. However, the business case for this plan has not yet been approved by the Government, which needs to happen before the project can commence. The Water Forum is concerned that this secondary supply will not be in place to meet demand in the coming years, with additional risk from climate change which is predicted to increase drought and dry periods in this region.

The Water Forum has called for a Government Strategy for Water Conservation, which should include a revision of building regulations to make new homes more water efficient. Mandatory standards for fixtures and fittings should be introduced in new developments. Research shows that such action can reduce water use by 20% per person. In a recent national survey of over 1500 water consumers, 74% stated they support water conservation measures but do not know how much water they use, or how to conserve water.

Uisce Éireann state that previous national appeals resulted in a 20% reduction in water use. The Water Forum believes that to avert water shortages in the Dublin region in the coming years, change towards long-term water efficient behaviours is essential. This will require a commitment from government and water suppliers to pro-actively support water conservation action in homes and businesses. Communities need to be informed of the risks to supply so that they are encouraged to be more water efficient and value water more.

END

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Note to the Editor

The Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce) was established in 2018 to provide a platform for public engagement on all matters relating to water management in Ireland and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. It consists of 26 members including representatives from a wide range of organisations and sectors with an interest in water issues that includes the environmental sector, the rural and agricultural sector, water consumers, the rural water sector, rivers trusts, angling, business sector, trade unions, the community and voluntary sector, angling, forestry, recreation, education, social housing and tourism.

In accordance with the Water Services Act, 2017, the Forum has advisory roles in relation to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), Uisce Éireann (UE), the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and the Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC). The Forum is chaired by Dr Matt Crowe.

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