

Looking after Ireland's  
water resources



# 2023

Annual  
Report





We are a strong independent voice on national policy pertaining to water management, water conservation and future proofing

# Contents

Foreword	02
Introduction to The Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce)	04
Vision and Mission	06
The Water Forum Membership	08
The Water Forum Plenary	09
Committees of the Water Forum	10
Policy Submissions	13
Research Reports and Policy Briefs	16
Education and Awareness	18
Communications: Press Releases and Newsletters	19
Finance and Administration	20





# Foreword

2023 was another busy year for the National Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce).

**THE YEAR STARTED** with a hectic four days at the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition in the RDS, Dublin. It was an opportunity to engage with teachers and students to promote learning about water and share the Water Forum's education resources. The Forum's Water Award for the best project focused on water was won by two students from Coláiste Treasa in Kanturk, Co. Cork for their work assessing the biodiversity found in sediment ponds on local farms. This project illustrated the multiple benefits provided by water quality measures, in this case, for beetle and plant species diversity. Forum members supported the staff on the exhibition stand and it was an uplifting experience for all.

Throughout the year we issued advice and policy positions to the Minister, Department and Uisce Éireann. The numbers of Invasive Alien Species arriving in Ireland is increasing and this can have significant negative impacts on ecosystems. Such species are very expensive to manage and eradicate particularly after they become established. Based on research commissioned by the Forum, a number of policy recommendations for the management of Invasive

... Climate change impacts, globally, are felt through either too much or too little water. Ireland too will experience periods of extended drought putting stress on water supplies regionally and at other times there will be extreme rainfall events resulting in floods ...

Alien Species have been presented to the Department. Many of the recommendations will be included in the National Strategy for Invasive Species Management that is currently being prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. In July, a representation met with Ministers O'Brien and Noonan at Leinster House to discuss the Forum's advice on water conservation which calls for the development of a Government-led strategy for water conservation with specific recommendations addressing water efficiency, building standards and awareness raising. We plan to commission research in 2024, to assess the cost-benefit-analysis of such measures to further inform our advice on water conservation.

Climate change impacts, globally, are felt through either too much or too little water. Ireland too will experience periods of extended drought putting stress on water supplies regionally and at other times there will be extreme rainfall events resulting in floods. The Water Forum has made a number of water and climate policy recommendations, and these were presented to the Climate Change Advisory Council. Recommendations for water conservation actions were submitted to the Climate Advisory Regional Offices for inclusion in county level climate action plans. The Forum members worked closely with the secretariat to develop and contribute to finding common ground on all of the Forum's policy positions and submissions.

We have continued to provide advice to the Minister, Department officials and the Water Policy Advisory Committee on the development of the third River Basin Management Plan. We also responded to public

consultations, such as those on the draft National Water Resources Plan and the draft Regional Water Management Plans being proposed by Uisce Éireann.

In the latter part of the year, the Forum held workshops to explore issues of concern for water management. We brought in experts to discuss the nitrates derogation changes and what potential actions are needed to address the increasing impact of intensive agriculture on water quality.

Our actions to address climate change, the biodiversity crises and water quality improvement will require changes in how our land and landscape is used. The Programme for Government committed to completing a Land Use Review that would assess how land is currently being used and what changes are necessary in the future to address climate mitigation and adaptation needs, prevent further biodiversity loss and improve water quality.

To explore these issues, the Forum hosted an EPA presentation on the Phase 1 findings in this review. The National Economic and Social Council presented their research on a Just Transition for Agriculture and Land Use Change. The presentations were followed by a facilitated workshop where members discussed the opportunities and challenges for future land use in Ireland. This was a very engaging exercise, and more work is proposed to explore the contribution the Forum can make to pertinent policies going forward.

The Forum is gaining strength and is finding its common voice in a range of water management areas. The recent workshops shows that members are not afraid to take on

... Our actions to address climate change, the biodiversity crises and water quality improvement will require changes in how our land and landscape is used. The Programme for Government committed to completing a Land Use Review that would assess how land is currently being used and what changes are necessary in the future ...

the more challenging and difficult topics and this illustrates maturity, expertise in policy development and the Forum's willingness and capacity to contribute to shaping Ireland's future.

As a stakeholder body representative of a wide range of organisations, the members can be proud of their achievements to date. We will endeavour to build on this shared expertise and capacity to shape the development of policies that will achieve our shared vision for clean, healthy and life enhancing waters that supports biodiversity, community wellbeing and economic sustainability.

**Dr Matt Crowe**  
Chairperson

# Introduction to the Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce)

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 water management with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Uisce Éireann, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and the Water Policy Advisory Committee.

**THE WATER FORUM** is the national statutory body representative of stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland's waters. The members of the Forum are appointed by the Minister and in order to provide a broad spectrum of input. There is representation from a wide range of organisations and sectors that includes the agriculture sector, angling, the business sector, the community and voluntary sector, customers of Uisce Éireann, education, environment sector, forestry, recreation, river trusts, the rural water sector, social housing, tourism, trade unions and youth. Approximately 50 different organisations were involved in the nomination of members.

To ensure that the Forum members make informed contributions to policy development, the Forum carries out

research and engages with a wide range of experts and stakeholders to ensure that recommendations are based on the most up to date information and science. When the latest data is shared with the members, the Forum debates and analyses issues pertaining to water quality, rural water concerns, issues affecting customers of Uisce Éireann and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland. As an independent entity, the Water Forum has discretion to determine its own Strategic Plan and work programme and means of communicating its views and analysis.

Dr Matt Crowe is Chair of the Water Forum. The Forum's work is supported by an executive team: Donal Purcell, Senior Executive

Officer; Dr Triona McGrath, Research and Policy Lead; Dr Aisling Corkery, Research and Policy Executive; Dr Gretta McCarron, Communications and Education Lead and Martina Ryan, provides administration support.

Further information on the work of the Water Forum is available at [www.thewaterforum.ie](http://www.thewaterforum.ie)

... To ensure that the Forum members make informed contributions to policy development, the Forum carries out research and engages with a wide range of experts and stakeholders ...



The Water Services Act 2017 provides the statutory basis for the Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce). The Act identifies the functions to be performed by the Forum and these include advising the Minister on Government water policy in relation to amongst other things:



Water conservation, rural water services and the interests of customers of Uisce Éireann.



Make recommendations to Uisce Éireann in relation to the performance of its functions and policy documents prepared by it.



Advise and provide observations to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities in relation to the performance of Uisce Éireann.



To advise the Water Policy Advisory Committee in relation to the River Basin Management Plan and on matters relating to the EU Water Framework Directive.



# Vision and Mission



**The Water Forum's vision is:**

Ireland's waters are clean, healthy and life enhancing, supporting biodiversity and providing a basis for community wellbeing and economic sustainability.



**The Water Forum's mission is:**

The Water Forum provides a platform for 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.



**FORUM MEMBERS** debate and analyse a range of issues with regard to water quality, rural water services, issues of concern to Uisce Éireann customers, the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland. To ensure the discussion is based on the most up-to-date data and information, we gather intelligence, science and best practice through engaging with academics, agencies and organisations who provide expert input and we commission research to fill specific knowledge gaps for policy development.

Using this approach the Forum can provide a strong independent voice on national policy pertaining to water management, water conservation and future proofing. This is achieved through policy submissions, interactions with Ministers, Government departments and the Water Policy Advisory Committee. In addition, we share policy positions and recommendations through ongoing direct engagements with relevant agencies, with member organisations

and networks and we seek opportunities to promote research findings and policy positions at events and other networking opportunities. As our input reflects a diversity of voices, we provide a common ground position on policies, governance and community solutions and we aspire to drive the transformational change required to restore all waters to good ecological status and to protect water resources through efficient use and smart management.

To innovate, we host workshops to share research, explore futures thinking, probe policy options or to socialise positions and encourage thought consideration. We survey consumers' knowledge of water to guide the development of education and awareness materials with a view to enhancing the value of water and to support the development of a water smart society. All activities aim to achieve our shared goal of clean and healthy waters for society and nature as required under the EU Water Framework Directive and the National River Basin Management Plan.

# Membership

The 25 members of the Forum reflect the, sometimes competing, demands between economic, social and environmental objectives in water management. One of the key contributions the Water Forum makes is finding and building consensus between such primary interests to achieve common ground on policy recommendations and ministerial advice.

## Membership during 2023

### Chairperson

Dr Matt Crowe

### Agriculture

Denis Drennan, ICMSA  
Derrie Dillon, Macra na Feirme  
Dominic Cronin, ICOS  
Paul O'Brien, IFA

### Angling & Water Recreation

Martin McEnroe (Angling)  
Tim Butter (Water sports)

### Business

Neil Walker, Ibec

### Community & Voluntary

Gerald Quain, Irish Rural Link  
Izzy Petrie, St. Vincent de Paul

### Domestic Water Consumers

Connie Rochford  
Keith Hyland

### Education

Dr Suzanne Linnane,  
Dundalk Institute of Technology

### Environment

Bernadette Connolly, Cork Environment Forum  
Charles Stanley Smith, Environment Pillar

Dr Elaine McGoff, An Taisce  
Ollan Herr, Zero Waste Alliance  
Sinead O'Brien, SWAN

### Forestry

Brendan Fitzsimons, Tree Council of Ireland

### Tourism

Tim Fenn, Irish Hotels Federation

### Trade Unions

Liam Berney, ICTU

### Rivers Trusts

Siobhan Ward, Moy Rivers Trust

### Rural Water

Barry Deane, NFGWS  
Jean Rosney, NFGWS

### Social Housing

David Wright (ICSH)

In 2023, women represented:

- 36% of the Plenary Committee membership
- 43% of the Water Services Standing Committee, and
- 43% of the Catchment Management Standing Committee.

## End of an Era

Some members of the Forum will have completed their membership term at the end of 2023. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our departing members: Bernadette Connolly, Brendan Fitzsimons, Denis Drennan, Derrie Dillon, Gerald Quain, Izzy Petrie, Liam Berney, Ollan Herr, Paul O'Brien, Tim Butter, Tim Fenn and Siobhan Ward for their dedication and significant contribution to the work of the Forum over the past years.



Water Forum members and staff. From back left standing: Neil Walker, Connie Rochford, Keith Hyland, Aisling Corkery, Matthew Crowe, Charles Stanley Smith, Martin McEnroe, Barry Deane, Dominic Cronin, David Wright, Donal Purcell, Gretta McCarron, Triona McGrath. Sitting from left: Suzanne Linnane, Liam Berney, Gerald Quain, Derrie Dillon, Ollan Herr, Tim Butter, Bernadette Connolly, Brendan Fitzsimons and Denis Drennan. Members missing from the picture are: Issy Petrie, Jean Rosney, Sinead O'Brien, Siobhan Ward and Tim Fenn.



# The Plenary

The full membership of the Water Forum met in Plenary session eight times in 2023 with an additional special plenary meeting on 22nd November to discuss the River Basin Management Plan. All meetings were offered as hybrid meetings to allow for attendance flexibility.

## Meetings of The Water Forum Plenary during 2023 (all hybrid)

24th January

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14th March

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25th April

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12th June

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11th July

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12th September

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24th October

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5th December

## Presentations made to the Plenary

### 13th June

#### Presentation: An Introduction to the Recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive

Water Advisory Section of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)

### 12th October

Facilitated **Workshop on the Land Use Review** with presentations from: Fiona O'Rourke, EPA; Niamh Garvey, National Economic and Social Council (NESC); and Professor Mark Scott, UCD.

### 5th December

#### Presentation: Water Services Consumer Communications and Satisfaction Survey Findings

Claire Rountree from Interactions Research

## Nitrates Workshop

### 24th October

**Nitrates Workshop with presentations** from Marie Archbold, DHLGH; Matthew Craig, EPA; Eddie Burgess, Agricultural Catchments Programme; Donal Daly; and Ted Massey, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Ireland's Nitrates Derogation was high on the news agenda throughout the year and as a knowledge building exercise some

members attended the Teagasc Open Day at the Agricultural Catchments Programme in Timoleague, Co. Cork.

The CMSC proposed a Plenary session on issues associated with the Nitrates Derogation as a preparation for the upcoming Nitrates Action Plan public consultation. The learnings from the presentations will be used to inform future Forum positions on the issue.

The Forum appreciates the ongoing engagements with, and inputs from, Department officials, the Local Authority Waters Programme, the EPA and all of the other relevant agencies that regularly contribute to Forum meetings. This knowledge sharing and expert input ensures that Forum policy positions are based on the most up-to-date data, information and science.



# Committees of the Water Forum

## Catchment Management Standing Committee

Established in 2018, the Catchment Management Standing Committee (CMSC) facilitates stakeholder engagement on catchment management issues at a national, strategic policy level with the common goal of restoring water quality and monitoring the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan to meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

The key role of the CMSC includes (but is not limited to):

- **Review and advise** on the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

- **Promote an integrated catchment management approach** for water resource management and encourage collaborative governance to achieve maximum outcomes for water quality.
- **Engage with agencies and sectors** to keep abreast of knowledge on all matters relevant to water, and to optimise potential contributions of the Forum.
- **Contribute to the Forum** as an authoritative voice on water quality by developing and sharing key policy positions and awareness and education messages on the value of water.

The Committee has responsibility to report to the Forum plenary meetings in relation to these strategic objectives.

The Standing Committee is chaired by Matt Crowe and comprises the following members: Brendan Fitzsimons, Charles Stanley Smith, Connie Rochford, Denis Drennan, Dominic Cronin, Elaine McGoff, Gerald Quain, Jean Rosney, Martin McEnroe, Paul O'Brien, Sinead O'Brien, Siobhan Ward and Suzanne Linnane.

In 2023, the Standing Committee met on three occasions and had one field trip.





CMSC members visit the Agricultural Catchment Programme in Timoleague, Co. Cork.

## Presentations made to the Catchment Management Standing Committee

**10th July**

### **Presentation: Catchment Management Plans and Community Catchment Fora.**

By: Margaret Keegan, Cormac McConigley and Bernie White from the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO).

The Catchment Management Standing Committee continued to engage with the Department on the development of the Programme of Measures for the final River Basin Management Plan during 2023 and provided additional advice to the Water Policy Advisory Committee on the issue.

- Continue to **encourage the placement of water efficiency measures** at the heart of climate mitigation and adaptation action.
- **Raise emerging concerns** in relation to rural water issues and contribute to rural water policy development.
- **Communicate and maintain effective working relationships** with Uisce Éireann and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities to confirm the interests of water users are prioritised and protected.
- **Contribute to the Forum** being an authoritative voice on water services by developing and sharing key policy positions and awareness messages on the value of water.

## Water Services Standing Committee

The Water Forum established a Water Services Standing Committee (WSCS) in 2018 to facilitate stakeholder engagement on all water services issues (including drinking water and wastewater) at a national, strategic policy level with the common goal of improving the supply and quality of drinking water and protecting and restoring our waters.

The key role of the WSCS includes (but is not limited to);

- **Develop responses to policy consultations** that are based on research, external expertise, agency input and member dialogue.
- Continue to **develop knowledge and engage with key agencies** to support the development of a National Framework for Domestic Water Conservation.

Chaired by Keith Hyland, the committee includes the following members: Barry Deane, Connie Rochford, David Wright, Denis Drennan, Keith Hyland, Neil Walker, Sinead O'Brien, Suzanne Linnane, and Tim Butter.

In 2023, the Water Services Standing Committee (WSSC) met on eight occasions, including one field trip to Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The WSSC lead on submissions for water services such as Uisce Éireann Regional Water Resources Plans and interacted with Uisce Éireann on an ongoing basis to build a partnership approach towards dealing with matters of concern to the Forum.

### Fieldtrip to Ringsend Wastewater Treatment and Resource Recovery Facility

In February, Uisce Éireann hosted the WSSC members and executive team at the Ringsend Wastewater Treatment and Resource Recovery Facility providing a tour of the facility and its new nutrient recovery system. The plant, when originally built,

had a treatment capacity for 1.6m population equivalent (p.e.) but since then, the population and catchment area has increased, and the plant is now overloaded. Ringsend currently treats 44% of Ireland's wastewater load.

The upgrade of Ringsend to increase its capacity is due to be complete in 2025. This upgrade will include new wastewater treatment technologies, such as a nutrient recovery process of Phosphorous fixation from the waste to produce struvite, a fertilizer.

The objective of the €500 million upgrade is to achieve compliance with the European Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive for treatment of effluent for 2.1 million people by the end of 2023 and 2.4 million people by the end of 2025.

... The population and catchment area has increased and the plant is now overloaded. Ringsend currently treats 44% of Ireland's wastewater load ...



WSSC members and staff visit Ringsend Wastewater Treatment and Resource Recovery Facility.

## Presentations made to the Water Services Standing Committee

### 23rd February

**Presentation: Nutrient recovery and recycling from wastewater in Ireland, with associated policy gaps and recommendations.**

Dr Matteo Giberti and Dr Recep Kaan Dereli, School of Engineering at University College Dublin, Water Forum funded research findings.

### 17th April

**Presentation: Non-Domestic Demand and Learnings from International Data and Conservation Initiatives.**

Dr Sarah Cotterill, University College Dublin, Water Forum funded research findings.

### 11th May

**Presentation: draft Uisce Éireann Capital Investment Plan 2025-2029.**

Uisce Éireann staff.

### 10th October

**Presentation: draft Water Services Policy Statement 2023-2030.**

Principal Officer, Water Policy Section, DHLGH.





# Policy Submissions

The Forum has a statutory responsibility to comment and make submissions in relation to national policies concerning water management and water quality.

**IN 2023, THE FORUM** responded to the following stakeholder or public consultations:

## Policy submissions

### February

**Uisce Éireann:** Draft Regional Water Resource Plan for the Northwest (15th Feb)

### March

**DHLGH:** The Review of the Statement of Strategy 2021-2025 (31st Mar)

### July

**Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC):** Climate Action Plan (12th Jul)

**DHLGH:** Presidency Proposal for the Recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (14th Jul)

### September

**Uisce Éireann:** Draft Capital Investment Plan 2025-2029 (5th Sept)

**Uisce Éireann:** Draft Regional Water Resource Plan for the South East (27th Sept)

### October

**DHLGH:** Water Services Policy Statement (19th Oct)

### November

**Uisce Éireann:** Water Services Strategic Plan Issues Paper (8th Nov)

## Policy positions and advice shared

### April

**Minister Darragh O'Brien:** Recommendations for Invasive Alien Species Management (13th Apr)

### May

**DHLGH:** Water Forum's Policy Position on Water Conservation (15th May)

### June

**Climate Change Advisory Council:** Water Forum's Water and Climate Recommendations (15th Jun)

**Climate Action Regional Offices:** Policy Position for Local Authority Climate Action Plans (26th Jun)

### November

**Water Policy Advisory Committee:** Statutory advice on the preparation of the Third National River Basin Management Plan (24th Nov)

## Policy presentation to the Climate Change Advisory Council Adaptation Committee

In November, the Water Forum was invited to present to members and secretariat of the Climate Change Advisory Council and the Climate Adaptation Committee to highlight the importance of including water management in climate adaptation plans.

The Climate Change Advisory Council is an independent advisory body tasked with assessing and advising on how Ireland can achieve the transition to a climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate-neutral economy. Research commissioned by the Forum on the potential impacts of climate change on both water quality and water quantity, along with commissioned research on water conservation, provides learnings for climate action and adaptation planning.

The Forum's position was presented by Dr Triona McGrath, Research and Policy Lead. Triona highlighted the challenges posed to water management as a result of climate change.

The Forum's recommendations included the need to take an **integrated catchment-based approach** to planning for climate adaptation and mitigation, where account is taken of the benefits and trade-offs for climate, water and nature.

**Governance and policy coherence** is essential to support the alignment of climate, water and biodiversity objectives for optimum environmental benefits. Drought Management Plans and Flood Management Plans should be developed at catchment level.

Uisce Éireann states that up to 66% of its water supply zones are in supply deficit in drought and dry periods.

**Water Conservation** measures could mitigate some of this stress and there is an opportunity for the public sector to lead by example in this space by making buildings more water efficient in their Climate Action Plans.

**Sectoral Adaptation Plans** need to address the future challenges posed to water resources by future climate change, such as increased incidence of cyanobacterial blooms in drinking water and recreational waters, or increased degradation of peatlands which could result in increased carcinogenic trihalomethanes in peat-fed drinking water supplies.





## Policy position: Government led strategy for water conservation

**Dr Matt Crowe, Keith Hyland and members of the executive team met with Minister Darragh O'Brien, Minister Malcolm Noonan and Department officials at Leinster House, to provide statutory advice on water conservation and to call for the development of a Government-led strategy for water conservation.**

The population is set to rise by up to 40% by 2050 yet Uisce Éireann states that 58% of water supply zones have a supply risk at current demand. In recent years, we have experienced water supply restrictions during dry periods, with national hosepipe bans in 2018 and 2020. By the first week of June 2023, there were seven counties requiring local water conservation measures.

The Minister's commitment to building 33,000 homes every year for the next 10 years provides an opportunity to create water use efficiencies, now, that will provide many future benefits. Making new homes water efficient could reduce domestic water demand by 25% per person per day and this could relieve pressure on supplies and potentially give rise to water investment savings. Developing water efficient standards for all new homes will also reduce carbon emissions associated with providing clean drinking water, it will help adaptation to the impacts of drought caused by climate change and reduce pressure on the natural environment through reduced water abstractions.

The Water Forum believes a committed Government-led strategy for water conservation in Ireland is needed. This strategy should be developed building on international examples, such as the recently published 'UK Water Efficiency Strategy to 2030'. This is in line with recommendations made by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services in 2017, who recommended that 'the Government should develop a cross-departmental strategy to increase water conservation'.

A national water conservation team with a mandate to lead the development and implementation of a government-led water conservation strategy, should be established. This water conservation team should



*In July, Water Forum members Matt Crowe and Keith Hyland, along with Donal Purcell and Triona McGrath of the executive and Dr Sarah Cotterill of UCD met with Ministers Darragh O'Brien and Malcolm Noonan in Leinster House Dublin to request the development of a National Framework for Domestic Water Conservation.*

develop an implementation plan for the update of building regulations to include mandatory water efficiency targets, water efficiency labelling for fittings and appliances, data access and transparency around future development which impact water resources.

In the absence of volumetric water charges, adoption of water conservation policy relies upon public awareness, in conjunction with standards and legislation. To address this, the Forum has recommended the development of a national awareness campaign to support a bottom-up understanding of water, from the processes that underpin treatment and supply, to the energy and resources required to produce drinking water. This would support understanding of the need to save water and encourage uptake of water conservation measures by the general public.

The Forum's policy position is supported by commissioned research on how to improve domestic water conservation in Ireland, carried out by Dr Sarah Cotterill of University College Dublin and Dr Peter Melville-Shreeve from the University of Exeter.

[Research policy brief: A Framework for Improving Domestic Water](#)

# Research Reports and Policy Briefs

The Forum's overarching research objective is to: 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.

## Research outputs in 2023

**Early Career Bursary Research Report – Nutrient recovery and recycling from wastewater in Ireland, with associated policy gaps and recommendations.** Completed by: Dr Matteo Giberti and Dr Recep Kaan Dereli of the School of Chemical and Bioprocess Engineering, University College Dublin

The research highlights that nutrient recovery from wastewater can play a role in improving the quality of Ireland's waterbodies, while reducing, (a) the dependency on fertiliser imports that are expensive and increasingly less available and, (b) the energy consumption of the wastewater treatment sector, therefore also reducing operating costs and Greenhouse gas emissions.

Two research projects were commissioned on the potential impacts of climate change on water quantity and water quality in Ireland.

**Projected climate change in Ireland and associated risk to water quantity; a review of national policies, governance and plans for future proofing Ireland's water supply** was completed by Dr Fiachra



O'Loughlin and Behzad Mozafari of the Dooge Centre for Water Resources Research, School of Civil Engineering, University College Dublin.

**Addressing Projected Climate Change Risk to Water Quality in Ireland** was carried out by Michelle McKeown, Karen Taylor, Marcel Jansen, Jean O'Dwyer, Tim Sullivan, John Weatherill, Simon Harrison and Andre Banning of University College Cork.

A summary Policy Brief **Climate Change Impacts on Ireland's Water Resources** based on the research findings and policy recommendations of the two reports was prepared by Dr Triona McGrath along with Dr McKeown and Dr O'Loughlin.



# Education and Awareness

## Workshop on opportunities for education on the need for water conservation

One of the key recommendations from Dr Sarah Cotterill of University College Dublin (UCD) and Dr Peter Melville-Shreeve from Exeter University, in their research on water conservation in Ireland, was the need to: 'Rethink Water Education – to support bottom-up understanding of water, from the processes that underpin treatment and supply, to the energy and resources required to produce drinking water, linked to the national curriculum'. To explore potential opportunities to promote education about water conservation, the Forum invited key stakeholders and organisations with expertise in

... The Forum has commissioned the development of modules for the school curriculum that covers topics such as: Global Water Use; Using digital maps to explore water resources; Water treatment and supply; Freshwater biodiversity and habitats; Water quality and pollution ...

environmental education to a workshop to share learnings and discuss approaches.

Representatives from a wide range of organisations attended the workshop. The first session contained presentations on how to promote awareness and water efficiency actions by individuals and organisations. In the second session, Dr Anne Dolan, Chair of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Development Committee for the new Leaving Certificate subject, Climate Action and Sustainable Development, highlighted that getting water education into the national curriculum can be challenging due to a myriad of demands on the curriculum but opportunities do exist, for example through Education for Sustainable Development.

The Forum has commissioned the development of modules for the school curriculum that covers topics such as: Global Water Use; Using digital maps to explore water resources; Water treatment and supply; Freshwater biodiversity and habitats; Water quality and pollution. These have been shared through education networks.



Attendees at the Water Conservation Education and Awareness workshop March 2023



From left: Dr Larry O’Connell and Niamh Garvey, National Economic and Social Council; Matthew Crowe Chairperson, Water Forum, Fiona O’Rourke, EPA and Donal Purcell, SEO Water Forum.

## Workshop on the EPA Land Use Review – future challenges and opportunities

In 2023, the Government launched Phase One of a Land Use Review consultation process, which is a commitment within the Programme for Government 2020. The purpose of Phase One of the Land Use Review was to provide an evidence base to determine the environmental, ecological and economic characteristics of land types across Ireland. Carried out by the EPA, this process involved gathering information on existing policy, data and characteristics of land use to provide an overarching assessment of current land use trends.

Phase Two of the Land Use Review is currently in preparation and will involve a consultation with stakeholders and land users to consider policies, measures and actions that might be needed to address current environmental challenges and economic needs based on the evidence outlined in the Phase One report. In preparation for Phase Two, the National Water Forum invited Quality Matters, an independent research charity, to facilitate roundtable discussions with Forum members to consider the findings from Phase One and to contemplate potential directions of travel for land use in Ireland.

A presentation on Phase One of the Land Use Review was made by Fiona O’Rourke (EPA), Niamh Garvey (NESC) gave a presentation on a Just Transition in Agriculture and

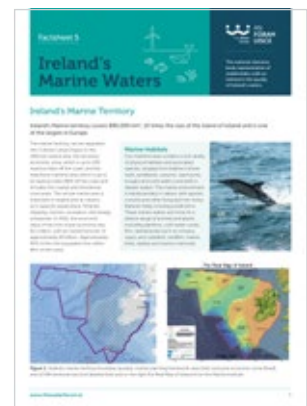
... The National Water Forum invited Quality Matters, an independent research charity, to facilitate roundtable discussions with Forum members to consider the findings from Phase One and to contemplate potential directions of travel for land use in Ireland ...

Land Use Change, and Prof. Mark Scott, University College Dublin outlined the proposed next steps for Phase 2 of the Land Use Review.

The Workshop roundtable discussions considered the potential opportunities, hopes and challenges for land use change from social, economic, environmental and governance perspectives. While facilitators guided the roundtable discussion with members, notetakers were responsible for recording key points at each table and these were presented in a final report to the Forum. The purpose of the exercise was to contemplate potential futures and to encourage open debate on this important topic.

## Water Forum Factsheets and Infographics

Factsheets on Water Services in Ireland and Ireland’s Marine Waters were also developed and disseminated.





# Communications: press releases and newsletters

The Forum communications hub is its website [www.thewaterforum.ie](http://www.thewaterforum.ie), where all of the Forum's communications are available. Research reports, policy submissions, meeting minutes, press releases, newsletters, weekly news updates and social media feeds are accessible.

## Key communications in 2023 include:

- Annual Report for 2022
- Four quarterly newsletters
- Two factsheets
- Articles in *Rural Water News* and *EOLAS* magazine
- Press releases
- Radio interviews

The Forum's Quarterly Newsletter is circulated to all members, their organisations and the Forum's stakeholder network, news media and it is

made publicly available on the website. Press releases and Twitter feeds are also available on the Water Forum website: [www.thewaterforum.ie](http://www.thewaterforum.ie)

## Other representation and presentations

- **Dr Matt Crowe** presented a paper on a Stakeholder Vision for Water at the EPA Water Conference in June.
- **Dr Triona McGrath** presented at the Environment Ireland

Conference in September and chaired a Panel discussion at the UCD Waves of Change Conference in November.

- **Dr Gretta McCarron** chaired a panel discussion at the Rural Water Conference in September.
- **Dr Matt Crowe** chaired a panel discussion on 'A Thriving Ireland – Reflections and Next Steps' at the National Economic and Social Council's, A Thriving Ireland: Foundations and Actions' Conference in November.



## Addressing our climate roadmap and sustainability issues

The Water Forum has exceeded its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2023 (owing primarily to hybrid working) and will put in place further additional measures for 2024.


# Finance and Administration

**THE EXPENSES INCURRED** by the Water Forum are provided for by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. During 2023, €645,756.54 was expended, broken down into the following categories.

Item	Expenditure to 31st December 2023 €
Meeting expenses	15,981.76
Members travel/expenses	17,032.20
Training and facilitation	10,819.37
Implementation of Strategy	130,251.41
Chair's allowance	12,029.84
Secretariat salary and travel	425,119.63
Office and IT expenses	34,522.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>645,756.54</b>

Tipperary County Council provides administrative support in the context of human resources, payroll, payments and office space.





## Acknowledgements

The Chair and Senior Executive Officer would like to thank the members for their support, enthusiasm, hard work and commitment during the year.

The Water Forum would like to thank the following organisations and individuals for their support of the work of the Forum and/or attendance at meetings of the Forum during 2023.

Agricultural Catchments  
Programme (ACP)

Agricultural Sustainability Support  
and Advisory Programme (ASSAP)

Commission for Regulation of  
Utilities (CRU)

Department of Agriculture, Food  
and the Marine

Department of Housing, Local  
Government and Heritage

Environmental Protection  
Agency (EPA)



Local Authority Waters Programme  
(LAWPRO)

Tipperary County Council

Uisce Éireann



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