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Mr Fintan Towey
Chairperson
WPAC
Custom House
Dublin 1

24th April 2026.

Re: Water Forum Policy Advice to the Water Policy Advisory Committee in relation to the implementation of the 3rd Water Action Plan.

Dear Fintan,

I am writing to you in relation to Water Forum Policy Advice to the Water Policy Advisory Committee regarding the implementation of the 3rd Water Action Plan. The Forum welcomed the briefing from the DHLGH on 10th March in relation to progress on the implementation of the 3rd Water Action Plan, and in particular the update on the Sectoral Action Work Plans. The Forum also welcomed the briefing from LAWPRO and the EPA to the Forum's Catchment Management Standing Committee on 14th April on the Sectoral Action Work Plans, the Catchment Management Work Plans, the Catchment Community Fora and the Data Dashboard being developed by the EPA. The Forum acknowledges the progress that has been made in relation to implementation of the 3rd Water Action Plan, including the publication and tracking of the Sectoral Action Work Plans.

EPA Data Dashboard

The Forum welcomes the Data Dashboard being developed by the EPA, which the Forum agrees will be an invaluable tool for capturing and visualising data from waterbody to catchment, to national scale. The Forum has provided some high-level comments to the EPA following this demonstration and is happy to trial the dashboard once it goes live. The Forum is supportive of the proposal by the EPA to go live with the dashboard even if there are gaps in sectoral data. It should however be made clear on the dashboard where there are significant data gaps, to ensure that it accurately reflects what each sector is actually doing and, importantly, not doing. It should also be made clear that the current dashboard is tracking national measures, therefore even if there is 100% compliance with national measures, more targeted action may be required in particular catchments and water bodies.

Data Sharing Obstacles

The Forum has concerns that the EPA is experiencing delays in getting some sectoral data, particularly data from DAFM and the OPW. **The Forum recommends that there be a discussion on this at the next WPAC meeting, so that members get a better understanding of the obstacles in data sharing which are impeding the implementation of the 3rd plan and the steps needed to remedy this.**

Catchment Management Work Plans

In relation to the Catchment Management Work Plans (CMWP), the Forum acknowledges the significant challenges related to the development of these plans, requiring a significant amount of data gathering and

analysis at waterbody scale. The Forum has concerns that the stated ambition of the CMWP (see below) could be diluted by rebranding the plans as Catchment Action Trackers. The Forum acknowledges that tracking all actions across sectors to assess implementation of existing policies and plans is an essential first step, without which it is difficult to identify what additional targeted measures are required in a given catchment or water body to meet the WFD objectives. While the Forum agrees that actions need to be measured and tracked through a catchment action tracker, **the Forum is of the view that the stated ambition of the CMWP should remain the same as outlined in the WAP (Box 1) and in line with the requirements of the WFD, that is for the identification and targeting of measures at waterbody scale.**

Box 1: Ambition of Catchment Management Work Plans in the 3rd Water Action Plan

Ambition of Catchment Management Work Plans in the 3rd Water Action Plan

Water Outcomes (Page 10)

The Water Action Plan includes targeted measures for all water bodies, with the objective of either protecting water bodies at good or high status or restoring water bodies to at least good status. **Where further specific measures are needed in addition to those set in this plan, integrated catchment planning approaches will be used to identify and decide on further specific measures for each water body. This will be reported in 46 Catchment Management Work Plans.** These will be used to locate measures within each catchment. The list of water bodies and their associated status, significant pressures/issues and targeted measures, which are to be included in the Catchment Management Work Plans, will include targets for the third-cycle, along with Key Performance Indicators to monitor progress and outcomes.

Action 1.1: Integrated catchment management approaches will be used to identify and decide on further specific measures for each water body, where they are required in addition to those set in this plan. These will be included in the 46 Catchment Management Work Plans, which will be used to locate measures within each catchment. The co-benefits of water-focused measures on climate and biodiversity will also be identified.

Action 1.2: The Catchment Management Work Plans will include the list of water bodies, their associated status, significant pressures/issues and targeted measures, along with outcomes based targets for the third-cycle and key performance indicators to monitor progress and outcomes. Justification for water bodies not meeting their WFD objective by 2027 should also be included in catchment management work plans, in line with Article 4 of the WFD.

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I would appreciate if you would circulate this letter to the members of WPAC in advance of the next WPAC meeting on Wednesday 6th May.

Your sincerely,

Dr Matt Crowe
Chairperson

C.c. Colin Byrne & Donal Grant

