Water Forum Recommendations on Water Conservation, building on the Water Conservation Workshop

15th July 2026

Background

The Water Forum has a statutory advisory role to the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on water conservation. Following recommendations made in the Forum's policy position on water conservation in July 2023, the DHLGH has established a national water conservation working group, who will advise the Minister on a national strategy for water conservation.

In April 2026, the DHLGH requested the support of the Water Forum to host a stakeholder workshop to explore what a national water conservation strategy should address, along with a roadmap for implementation. This workshop was held on the 4th June 2026 and included representatives from a broad range of organisations with expertise in water conservation. A workshop report has been produced which reflects the key learnings from the day, across 4 key themes: (1) education and awareness, (2) leakage, metering and data, (3) water efficient buildings, (4) non-domestic water use.

The Water Forum welcomes this workshop report and endorses the key themes and relevant actions, many of which align with Objective 2 of the EU Water Resilience Strategy (Building a Water Smart Economy). The Forum is of the view that the following actions should be prioritised **in the short term** in order to gain momentum on water efficiency in Ireland.

Governance and Resources

- The National Water Conservation Working Group should now prioritise the development of a government-led strategy for water conservation, building on learnings from the stakeholder workshop.
- The DHLGH should develop a government-led drought management plan, clearly identifying the roles and responsibilities of different bodies related to drought tracking, prioritisation of supply during drought and communications around drought events.

- The DHLGH should establish a water efficiency fund to address rising water demand and supply deficits and implement measures to increase water efficiency (aligning with water efficiency targets set out in the EU Water Resilience Strategy). Refer to UK Water Efficiency Fund of £100 million over 5 years.

Education

- An education forum should be established to coordinate action across key stakeholders, building on existing education networks.
- A national strategy should be developed to communicate the need for water conservation across generations. This will require a lead organisation, along with clear roles and responsibilities across government, utilities, state agencies and other existing networks. This should include a coordinated national messaging framework to reinforce awareness, practical actions and behaviour change.

Leakage, metering & data

- The DHLGH should lead a national effort to reframe the purpose of water metering, moving the narrative beyond charging and positioning meters as essential infrastructure for identifying leaks, improving data on water use, managing demand and supporting long-term water conservation. Achieving this will require sustained cross-party political support and consistent public messaging.

Water efficient buildings

- A Built Environment Coordination Group should be established to support progress in this area and explore how water efficiency can be linked to retrofit grants, green mortgages and insurance incentives.
- The DHLGH should engage with the European Commission to recommend mandatory EU water labelling to support water efficiency. This would align with the water efficiency targets of the EU Water Resilience Strategy and could also be connected to Article 11 of the Recast Drinking Water Directive (fittings in contact with drinking water).
- The DHLGH and Uisce Éireann should engage with the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) to strengthen the SR50-3 to increase water efficiency across design, installation and operation of water fittings in new developments.

Non-domestic water conservation

- A coordination group should be established to explore how non-domestic water stewardship can be strengthened.
- The DHLGH should engage with the EPA to develop an approach to engage with non-domestic users with private water abstractions to educate on water efficiency and alternative or fit for purpose water sources.