

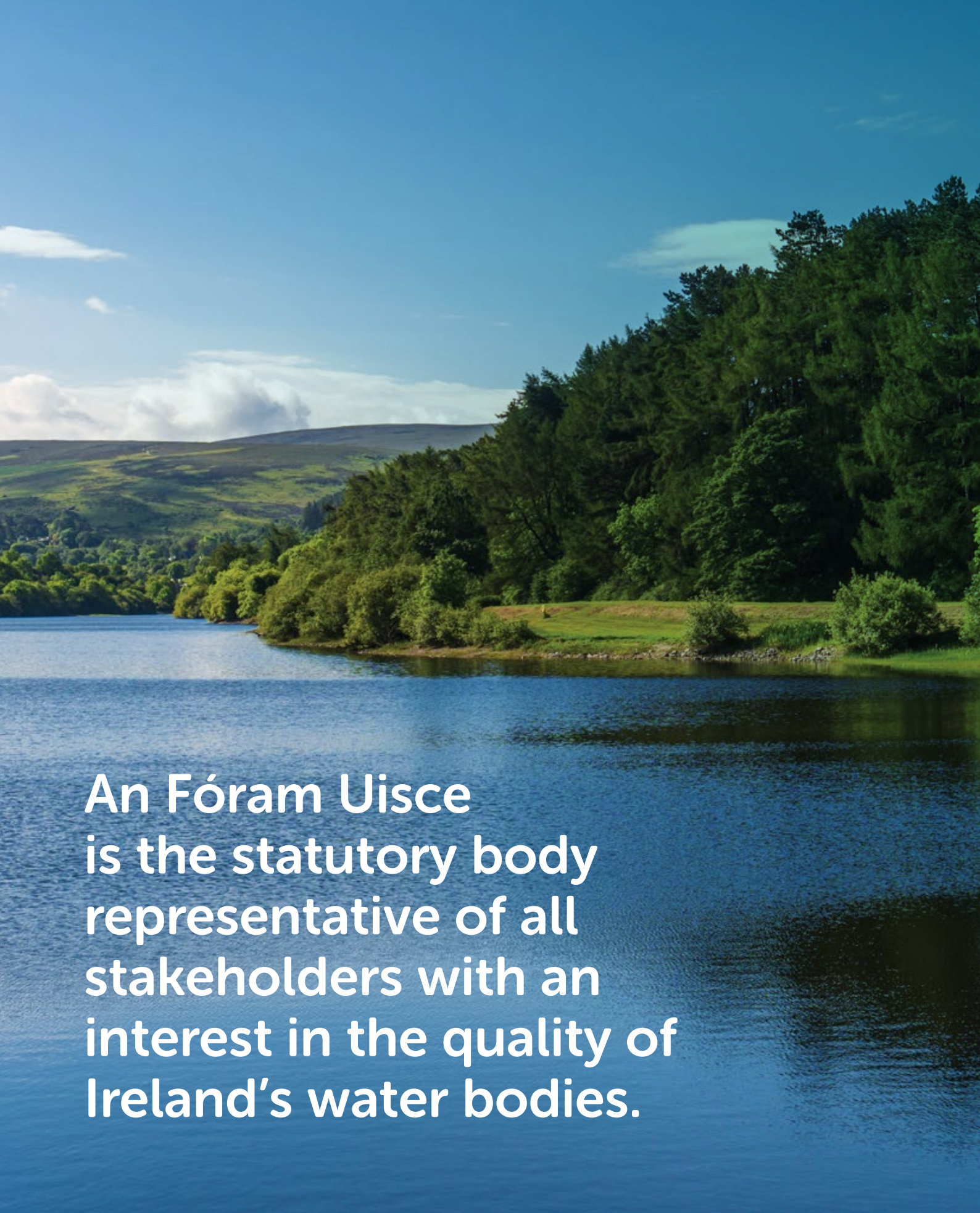
Looking after Ireland's  
water resources



# Annual Report 2019







An Fóram Uisce  
is the statutory body  
representative of all  
stakeholders with an  
interest in the quality of  
Ireland's water bodies.





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# Chairperson's statement

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**I am pleased to introduce the third Annual Report of An Fóram Uisce – the Water Forum.**

The past year has been a busy one not just for An Fóram but for the many agencies and stakeholders with whom An Fóram interacts.

Work on the implementation of the second River Basin Management Plan gathered pace through the year. There is evidence of a greatly increased momentum and energy on many fronts. The governance structure for the implementation has become embedded and activated with An Fóram participating in it and interacting with the different elements of it as required; the Local Authority Water Programme (LAWPRO) has been substantially enhanced in the appointment of more staff; the EPA testing regime continues, and a range of innovative programmes around mitigating the impact of agriculture in particular on water have been enhanced.

In this regard An Fóram notes in particular the continuous challenge of protecting our waters as illustrated in the EPA's Water Quality in Ireland 2013-2018 report, published during the year. This report draws attention to a pattern of ongoing decline in water quality, especially in rivers, and the loss of high quality river sites. It serves as a timely contribution to the development of the third cycle of the River Basin Management Plan, now soon to commence. An Fóram looks forward to making an active contribution to this process.

In the case of water services, An Fóram through its Water Services subcommittee has maintained an ongoing close interaction with both Irish Water and the CRU. With regard to Irish Water, a study was completed in the course of the year by An Fóram on the proposal by Irish Water to address the Dublin and Midlands water supply issues by abstraction from the Parteen Basin on the Shannon. Additionally, An Fóram continued to maintain close vigilance on Irish Water's waste water treatment ambitions. Likewise, it continued to respond to multiple consultation invitations, described elsewhere in this report.

In addressing its strategic objectives An Fóram also commissioned a study on public participation in water protection and water conservation initiatives. During the year it enhanced its own technical capability in appointing a Research Lead and an Education/Communications lead-both of whom will underpin and sustain the work and thinking of An Fóram in the coming years.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all members of An Fóram for their dedication, commitment and contribution to the work programme over the past year. I would like to express a particular word of thanks to those who moved on from An Fóram during the year. An Fóram is the only statutory stakeholder body with a remit for water quality and its central role in public engagement and consultation is widely acknowledged. I wish to extend my deepest thanks to the officials in the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government; the Environmental Protection Agency, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and Irish Water.

On behalf of all in An Fóram, I would like to express my deepest thanks to the staff for their unfailing commitment and technical expertise. Sharon Kennedy as SEO made a seminal contribution to the development and work of An Fóram since its establishment. During the year, she moved to a new appointment. We wish her ongoing success in her new position.

**Dr. Tom Collins**  
Chairperson



# About An Fóram Uisce

**An Fóram Uisce (the Water Forum) was established on a statutory basis by Mr. Eoghan Murphy, T.D., Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government in June 2018, in accordance with the Water Services Act 2017.**

An Fóram is the only statutory body representative of all stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland's water bodies. An Fóram consists of 26 members including representatives from a wide range of organisations with direct connection to issues relating to water quality and also public water consumers. Approximately 50 different organisations were involved in the nomination of members.

In accordance with the requirements of the Water Services Act 2017, An Fóram has advisory roles in relation to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Irish Water, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and also the Water Policy Advisory Committee.

An Fóram provides an opportunity for stakeholders to debate and analyse a

range of issues with regard to water quality, rural water concerns, issues affecting customers of Irish Water and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021.

The Water Services Act 2017 provided the statutory basis for An Fóram. The Act also provided for the dissolution of the Public Water Forum (whose remit was primarily concerned with issues pertinent to Irish Water and the Regulator) and the National Rural Water Services Committee (the committee for addressing issues regarding rural water), with their functions being incorporated into An Fóram.

An Fóram is an independent entity and has discretion to determine its

own work programme and means of communicating its views and analysis.

Dr. Tom Collins, our Chairperson, had been the Chair of the Public Water Forum and a former Chair of the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee. Congratulations and best wishes to Sharon Kennedy, who moved to a new role in November 2019, and to Donal Purcell our new Senior Executive Officer, Alec Rolston, Research Lead and Gretta McCarron, Communications and Education Lead. An Fóram office is in Nenagh, County Tipperary.

Further information with regard to An Fóram can be ascertained at [www.thewaterforum.ie](http://www.thewaterforum.ie)

**26**  
members

nominated by

**50**  
organisations





# Mission statement

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The role of An Fóram is, in the first instance, to identify a vision for our water bodies – as clean and healthy waters, supporting biodiversity and providing the basis for positive economic and cultural life.

An Fóram is charged with ensuring that all stakeholders are regularly reminded of this vision and their role in achieving and supporting same.

An Fóram will provide a **unifying platform for multiple and sometimes competing interests to work together** in a collaborative manner, and drawing on each other's expertise and experience, address the many challenges to the vision.

An Fóram also has a role in **inspiring, informing, educating and challenging all stakeholders** in matters relevant to this vision.

**All of our activities should seek to achieve at least one, if not more, of these outcomes.**

An Fóram will **support the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan and will actively monitor progress**. If and when required, An Fóram will provide positive critical analysis of progress and issues which are of concern or which could compromise achieving our vision in relation to clean and healthy waters.

Based on its understanding of the vision and having regard to its interactions with stakeholders, An Fóram is **responsible for drafting recommendations in relation to the on-going development of national policies and strategies** in relation to all water issues and working with all stakeholders and state agencies in achieving the common and shared goal as contained in the River Basin Management Plan of restoring our waters to good status.



**Clean  
Waters**



**Vibrant  
Biodiversity**



**Healthy  
Communities**



**Strong  
Economy**



# Membership of An Fóram

An Fóram has 26 members including representatives from a wide range of organisations with direct connections to issues relating to water quality and also public water consumers. Approximately 50 different organisations were involved in the nomination of members during early 2017.

## Chairperson

Dr Tom Collins

## Angling and water sports

Martin McEnroe (Angling)  
Dr. Tim Butter (Water Sports)

## Community and voluntary

Gerald Quain (Irish Rural Link)  
David Wright (Voluntary Sector)

## Agriculture

Thomas Cooney (IFA)  
Derrie Dillon (Macra)  
Denis Drennan (ICMSA)  
Dominic Cronin (ICOS)

## Business

Neil Walker (Ibec)

## Consumers

Connie Rochford (Irish Water Consumer)  
Keith Hyland (Irish Water Consumer)  
Laurie Kearon (Irish Water Consumer)





### Education

Dr. Suzanne Linnane (DKIT)

### Environment

Bernadette Connolly (Cork Env Forum)  
Ollan Herr (ZWA)  
Sinead O'Brien (SWAN)  
Charles Stanley-Smith (Env. Pillar)  
Elaine McGoff (An Taisce)

### Fisheries/aquaculture

Vacant

### Forestry

Brendan Fitzsimons (Tree Council of Ireland)

### Rivers trusts

Dr. Thomas Harrington (Maigue RT)

### Rural water

Barry Deane (NFGWS)  
Jean Rosney (NFGWS)

### Social housing

Kevin Ryan (ICSH)

### Tourism

Tim Fenn (IHF)

### Trade unions

Liam Berney (ICTU)





**An Fóram is responsible for drafting recommendations in relation to the on-going development of national policies and strategies in relation to all water issues.**





# Meetings of An Fóram 2019

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**An Fóram held the following plenary  
meetings during 2019:**

**9th February** – Ashling Hotel, Dublin

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**9th April** – Ashling Hotel, Dublin

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**28th May** – Salthill Hotel, Galway

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**16th July** – Ashling Hotel, Dublin

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**3rd September** – Ashling Hotel, Dublin

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**30th October** – Ashling Hotel, Dublin

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**3rd December** – Red Cow Hotel, Dublin

Attendance at Plenary meetings averaged at 65%.

# Committees and working groups

## Water Services Standing Committee

An Fóram Uisce, at its meeting held on the 10th April 2018, made a decision to establish a Water Services Standing Committee and in so doing, re-iterated its commitment to facilitating stakeholder engagement on all water services issues (including drinking water and waste water) 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 Standing Committee met on seven occasions (8th January, 27th March, 1st May, 19th June, 26th June, 24th September and 13th November).

The committee is required to debate and analyse issues related to drinking water and waste water, including, but not limited to:



**Objective 2**  
Water conservation



**Objective 4**  
The interests of the customers of Irish Water

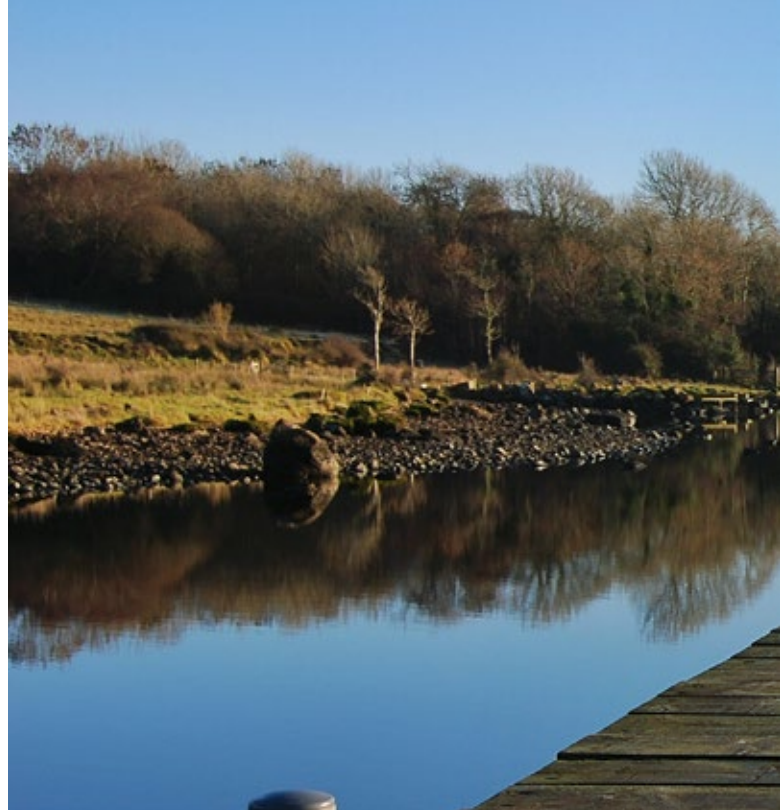


**Objective 5**  
Rural water issues

The Committee submits its reports for consideration at the plenary meetings of An Fóram. It is chaired by Barry Deane and comprises of members including Jean Rosney/Joe Gallagher, Keith Hyland, Connie Rochford, Laurie Kearon, Dr. Suzanne Linnane, Denis Drennan, Kevin Ryan and Sinead O'Brien.

## Catchment Management Standing Committee

An Fóram Uisce, at its meeting held on the 10th April 2019, made a decision to establish a Catchment Management Standing Committee and in so doing,



re-iterates its commitment to facilitating stakeholder engagement on all catchment management issues at a national, strategic policy level with the common goal of restoring our waters and also improving the supply and quality of drinking water.

The role of the Committee includes responsibility to report to An Fóram at its plenary meetings in relation to the following Strategic Objectives:



**Objective 1**  
Lead the debate on water in Ireland.



**Objective 3**  
Review and advise on policy implementation in relation to the River Basin Management Plan and the Water Framework Directive.



**Objective 6**  
Lead public awareness and education on the value of water (as same relates to catchment management and in co-operation with the WSSC committee).



**Objective 7**  
Support and promote public consultation and engagement on all matters relevant to water.





The Standing Committee will consider and make recommendations to An Fóram in relation to the goals and actions identified in the Strategic Plan in relation to these objectives, as requested by An Fóram and/or as considered appropriate by the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee is chaired by Dr. Tom Collins and comprises of members including Charles Stanley Smith, Gerald Quain, Sinead O'Brien, Brendan Fitzsimons, Thomas Cooney, Tom Harrington, Denis Drennan, Jean Rosney, Suzanne Linnane and Martin McEnroe.

The Standing Committee commenced its work in March and has met on eight occasions (20th March, 1st May, 9th May, 17th May, 19th June, 26th June, 24th September and 13th November).

### Symposium Working group

An Fóram established a working group at its meeting held on the 3rd September to organise our national Symposium to be held in early 2020. The group was chaired by Dr. Tom Collins and comprised of Sinead O'Brien, Martin McEnroe, Dennis Drennan, Elaine McGoff along with members of staff.

The group met on 5 occasions (16th September, 2nd October, 24th October, 11th November and 27th November).

The Group provided progress reports on the Symposium programme, guest speakers and logistics to the Plenary Meetings of An Fóram in order to gain input and approval.



A meeting of the Catchment Management Standing Committee.

# Strategic Plan 2018-2021

An Fóram adopted its Strategic Plan for the period 2018 to 2021 in December 2018. The strategy sets out a series of Strategic Priorities which were determined having regard to An Fóram's statutory role and also the role and functions of other organisations and agencies.

It was agreed that the focus of work will be on addressing gaps and adding value to water related policy and issues in facilitating a dynamic interplay between and within science, policy, programme delivery and stakeholders.

It is intended that this work will assist in advising on national policy in relation to our water environment and water services; in promoting public awareness on the vulnerability of the water resource and thereby supporting behavioural and attitude change.

The following are the strategic themes on which attention will be focussed during the next two years:



1. Advise the Minister and support the debate on the formulation of **national policies** relating to water.



5. Support and review the provision and development of **Rural Water Services** and issues pertaining to private supplies.



2. Promote **water conservation** and inform relevant national policy.



6. Lead a programme of **public awareness and education** on the value of water.



3. Review and advise, on an on-going basis, on the implementation of the **River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 and the Water Framework Directive**.



7. Support and promote **public consultation and engagement** on all matters relevant to water.



4. Provide recommendations on the performance of **Irish Water** with particular reference to the interests of the consumers of Irish Water.

The strategy identifies the goals and actions for each of these objectives and also the resources required in order to support same. Following discussions with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government approval was given to proceeding with the creation of a number of posts within An Fóram's secretariat during 2019.



# Submissions made by An Fóram during 2019

An Fóram has a responsibility to comment and submit in relation to national policies pertinent to water quality. During the course of the year, An Fóram submitted responses to a number of consultation processes which are summarised as follows:

## March 2019

- Submission to the Commission of the European Union to inform the fitness check of the Water Framework Directive, its associated directives (Groundwater Directive and Environmental Quality Standards Directive) and Flood Directive.

## April 2019

- Submission to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) on Irish Water proposed water conservation excess use charge.

## May 2019

- Submission to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) on Proposed Decision Paper on Irish Water's proposed non-domestic Tariff Framework.
- Submission to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in relation to the public consultation process on the 2019 Nitrates Derogation Review.

## June 2019

- Letter to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Climate Change and Bio-energy Policy Division, in relation to the Code of Good Agricultural Practice in relation to reducing ammonia emissions from Agriculture.
- Submission to the Dept. Housing Planning and Local Government on the Public Consultation Process, Timetable and Work programme of the Third Cycle of the River Basin

## Management Plan 2022-2027

- Submission to the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU) on The Review of Irish Water's proposed approach to the Water Supply Project to the Eastern and Midlands region.

## September 2019

- Submission to the Commission for the Regulation on Utilities (CRU) on Irish Water's Revenue Control 3 (2020-2024)

## Press Releases

- 5th November 2019 – Irish Water Boil Water Notice
- 13th November 2019 – EPA Waste Water Report
- 10th December 2019 – EPA Water Quality Report

## Reviews and reports

### May 2019

- Report to An Fóram on the Water Supply Project by Nelly Montblanc

## Presentations to An Fóram in 2019

Month	Organisation	Topic
February	Martin Hehir, DHPLG	Initiative regarding Fish Migration in the Lower Shannon Catchment.
April	Nelly Maublanc	Irish Water's Midland and Eastern Water Supply Project.
August	Commission for Regulation of Utilities	Irish Water Revenue Control 3: process, submissions, review and next steps.
September	David Flynn, DHPLG	Draft Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan – Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure strand.
December	John Donovan and David Lonergan, Irish Water	Report on Leixlip Boil Water notice and National Leakage Management Plan.



# Case study

## AFU submission on the proposed IW Midlands and Eastern Water Supply Project

**'It is said that Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Future generations might say the same of us when it comes to the matter of water. A multifaceted environmental crisis which includes – but is not confined to – climate change threatens everything that is life giving and nurturing in water. A resolved national drive to save and protect this most vulnerable and most essential asset is paramount'.  
Dr. Tom Collins, National Water Forum 2018.**

The National Water Forum is essentially charged with the task of coming up with an agreed national strategic approach to the most pressing issues pertaining to Ireland's water resources. It is against this background that An Fóram has approached its consideration of the proposal to supply Dublin and a corridor of Midland towns with water from the Shannon. The resilience of Dublin's water supply is an area of

immediate concern which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Dublin drives our national economy. Revenue generated from Income Tax and Corporate taxes from Dublin provides for public services throughout the country, including our schools, third level education, medical cards, hospitals and security. For this reason, An Fóram is agreed on the need for an additional water

supply for Dublin on the scale of the Midlands and Eastern Water Supply project proposed by Irish Water.

An Fóram is concerned that we rely so heavily on the Liffey as the primary source of Dublin's water supply, providing all the water both to the Poulaphuca and Leixlip water treatment plants. Accounting for 85% of Dublin's water, the Liffey is a critical artery supporting all aspects of life in the capital city. A disruption to this source could have potentially catastrophic effects on the city and the need to spread risk to at least one other major source is paramount.

Added to this concern is the fact that the main treatment plants are at, or close to, maximum capacity and so there is very little buoyancy to cope with peak demand or a situation where one of the plants is taken out of operation, something that was abundantly clear in late 2019 with a boil water notice affecting 600,000 people because of failures at Leixlip treatment plant.

Leakage reduction is important and will reduce water demand but, even at its most ambitious will not, on its own,





address the issue of water security and water resilience in Dublin.

In order to address these issues, Irish Water (IW), the national water utility, is progressing with their most significant water supply project, the Eastern and Midlands Water Supply Project. The purpose of the project is to provide a secure, sustainable water supply in the greater Dublin, Eastern and Midlands area out to 2050. The scheme is designed to abstract water from the River Shannon and pipe it across the country to supply water to communities along its pathway and ultimately to Dublin City and region. The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government had appointed the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) to carry out a review of the project, and as part of this review, the CRU is required to consult with An Fóram Uisce.

In preparation for its submission to this consultation An Fóram identified a need to avail of expert advice to address a number of issues and concerns raised by the members regarding IW's proposed project and to facilitate this An Fóram engaged the services of a water services expert

with international expertise, Ms. Nelly Montblanc. The report is available at: <https://thewaterforum.ie/app/uploads/2020/03/REPORT-to-An-Fóram-on-the-WSP-by-Nelly-Maublanc-May-2019.pdf>

### Key considerations identified include:

The key takeaway points from the review include the following:

#### The information provided to justify the need for EMWSP contains unknowns and uncertainties which reflects a lack of pedagogy and transparency.

- If this information does not exist there is potentially no solid foundation for the projections presented to justify the need for the project, at least on this scale.
- However, the lack of headroom and the almost exclusive reliance on a single source (River Liffey) for the greater Dublin area provides a critical argument to justify the need for the EMWSP and potentially sooner rather than later.

#### Finding ways to reduce demand and alternative supplies should be considered supported by impact

#### assessments and cost benefit analysis to define the most adequate combinations.

- Water demand is a component of the system that a water utility can manage. IW indicated that it intends to implement a demand management strategy however, the impact of such strategy is not evidenced in the proposed demand projections.
- Leakage targets to minimize current wastage needs to be aligned to available resources, customer preferences and best practice; Scottish Water made significant progress in a relatively short time without relying exclusively on infrastructure renewal.

#### Irish Water is a relatively new organisation inheriting a challenging situation and it takes time to improve performance (whether on leakage, demand management or operations).

- An Fóram can play a significant role in helping IW better understand the views of its customers as well as their preferences and priorities; through an ongoing engagement process. An Fóram could support IW to develop better ways to engage and communicate with customers above and beyond institutional 'consultation'.

An Fóram used the information in this report as the basis for their Submission to the CRU dated June 2019 also available on our website [www.thewaterforum.ie/publications](http://www.thewaterforum.ie/publications)

Dr. Tom Collins issued a statement on the Water Supply Project [www.thewaterforum.ie/app/uploads/2019/07/Tom-Collins-July-2019-Statement.pdf](http://www.thewaterforum.ie/app/uploads/2019/07/Tom-Collins-July-2019-Statement.pdf)

Further information is available on the Eastern and Midlands Water Supply project at: [www.watersupplyproject.ie](http://www.watersupplyproject.ie)

# Financial and administrative arrangements

The expenses incurred by An Fóram are provided for by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. During 2019, €361.840.57 in total was expended, broken down into the following categories:

Expense	Amount €
Secretariat salary and travel expenses	195,552.21
Office overheads, communications, training and IT	29,125.82
Chairpersons allowance	12,000.00
Chairpersons Project (assigned from 2017 allowance)	4,000.00
Meeting expenses	19,206.65
Travel for members	26,597.30
Training and facilitation	6,503.00
Implementation of Strategy	68,855.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>361.840.57</b>

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





## Acknowledgements


Dr. Tom Collins and Donal Purcell would like to **thank the members of An Fóram** for their support, enthusiasm, hard work and commitment during the year.

An Fóram would also like to **thank the following organisations and individuals** for their support of the work of An Fóram and/or attendance at meetings of An Fóram during 2019.

- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- Department of Agriculture, Forestry and the Marine
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Donal Daly
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- EPA
- Irish Water
- Local Authority Water Programme Office (LAWPRO)
- National Co-Ordination and Management Committee
- Office of Public Works
- Tipperary County Council



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