

## PRESS RELEASE ON WATER QUALITY IN IRELAND

The National Water Forum was established in April 2017 to facilitate stakeholder engagement and debate on issues relating to water as a resource, water quality, rural water concerns, issues affecting customers of Irish Water and issues associated with the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

The Forum consists of 27 representatives from a wide range of organisations with direct connections to issues relating to water quality. These include consumer, community and water sports groups, business and trade unions, environmental sector, Irish Water consumers, the group water scheme sector and a range of other sectors including education, agriculture, fisheries and forestry. The Forum is chaired by Dr. Tom Collins who has also chaired the Public Water Forum.

The National Water Forum welcomes the EPA Report on Water Quality in Ireland. The work of the EPA in analysing the quality of our waters has provided a very important scientific database, advising that 91% of groundwater bodies, 57% of rivers, 46% of lakes, 31% of transitional (estuarine) waters and 79% of coastal waters are achieving either good or high status under the Water Framework Directive. It further advises that while some water bodies have improved, others have deteriorated.

The Forum notes, with concern, this continued and long term deterioration of a number of the Country's water bodies. Of particular concern is that this deterioration occurred despite an on-going significant investment programme aimed at improving the overall quality.

The Forum concurs with the EPA's assertion that 'not enough has been done to prevent deterioration of water quality' and welcomes the fact that the EPA is currently assessing the reasons for these changes which it states will assist in identifying what actions are needed to protect and improve water quality.

The Forum has today submitted its response to the 'Public Consultation on the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018 to 2021'. In that response, the Forum refers to the multiple pressures on water quality and the diversity of their sources including, inter alia, agriculture, forestry, industry and housing. It recommends that the challenge of improvement of water quality be addressed from multiple perspectives and in a coherent manner. The Forum also emphasises the urgency of tackling the many issues that contribute to the decline in water quality and the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in attending to this work.

In its submission, the Forum has made a series of recommendations in relation to the on-going development of a robust and effective catchment management programme. This programme must be based on the scientific data contained in the EPA report and activate the various measures that are required in order to halt the deterioration in water quality and improve the quality of all waters to good status. Progress will require the commitment of significant resources at national level, the alignment of activities by all relevant state agencies and the activation of real citizen engagement.

The Forum considers its position to be pivotal in the context of encouraging and facilitating engagement on the one hand and on the other hand, challenging policies, resource allocations and actions with the single focus of the continuous improvement of water quality in Ireland.

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