



## **Night-time water restrictions in many counties underscore the need for more robust water conservation measures**

Ireland's relatively large amount of annual rainfall, over 4,800 water bodies and 84,800 kilometres of river channel<sup>1</sup> would suggest there is an ample supply of fresh water. For many parts of the country this is not the case. Currently, water conservation requests and night-time water restrictions are in place in Counties Donegal, Dublin, Laois, Kerry, Meath, Westmeath, Longford and Wexford. In June last year, we were the only country in Europe to have a Water Conservation Order in place owing to low rainfall levels in the springtime.

Ireland's water supply is by no means secure. Out of 535 water supply zones across the country, 50% suffer a supply risk in normal conditions and 75% have a supply risk in drought conditions. That level of risk is not expected to exist in the UK until 2050. Yet, in the last week in the UK, water efficiency labelling has been made mandatory on all water using products to encourage water conservation. The labels will make it easier for customers to select water efficient showers, taps, toilets, washing machines, dishwashers and garden related products. The UK Government also encourages the adoption of a minimum building standard of 110 litres per day per person in water stressed areas<sup>2</sup>.

Ireland's new [National Water Resources Plan](#) aims to ensure that a reliable supply is available across the country to meet the economic, environmental and social needs of the whole population. The difficulty is that water resource availability varies across the country and is under growing pressure from population increase, increasing demand and climate change impacts. The Plan proposes a 3-pillar approach to water management: 'lose less, use less and supply smarter', that will aim to address the issues of infrastructure deficits, delivering smarter supply technologies and improved water conservation.

While the first two are primarily the responsibility of Irish Water, everyone has a responsibility to conserve water. The good weather results in significantly increased demand, up by 20% in most areas. This puts significant strain on the water supply systems resulting in the imposed restrictions but also results in lower lake and river levels the has negative impact on biodiversity through reduced habitats and warmer waters that can impact fish populations. Less water in river channels and lakes can also concentrate pollutants.

To address some of these issues, An Fóram Uisce has recently commissioned research into the water policy interventions needed to facilitate greater water conservation measures in Ireland. The outcome of the research is expected in October, and it will inform the Forum's recommendations for water conservation measures within the next River Basin Management Plan.

During this unusually warm spell, it important to conserve water by reduced toilet flushing, shorter showers, refraining from washing cars and machinery except for boats and water equipment that must be washed for biosecurity reasons. Furthermore, homeowners should report any leaks on their

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<sup>1</sup> [The importance of the small stream network in Ireland - Catchments.ie - Catchments.ie](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

property to Irish Water or their Group Water Scheme and rapidly repair any leaks inside the house such as a leaking toilet or tap.

Small actions can make a big difference. Water is a most precious resource that provides us with innumerable services, it needs to be protected and valued.

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**Note to editors**

An Fóram Uisce - The Water Forum was established as a statutory body in June 2018 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 26 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.

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