

## PRESS RELEASE

### Water Forum hosts a workshop on the need for Water Conservation in Ireland

Conserving water is not something many Irish people think about in their daily activities. The National Water Forum, a stakeholder body set up to inform water policy in Ireland, wants to change that. While Ireland is a wet country with a lot of rain and water resources, more and more, water is not always where we need it, when we need it. The latest [Hydrology Bulletin](#) from the EPA reports that 58% of river monitoring stations show average flows of below or particularly below normal for this time of year. Almost two-thirds of groundwater stations are below-normal or particularly below normal compared to long term May averages. This is a significant pressure in the south-east where rainfall has been below the long term average while it has been above the long-term average in the northwest. Moderate population projections for Ireland from the [CSO](#) suggest an increase by 27% to 2050 with the likely potential that these increases will be concentrated in the more densely populated southern part of the country. The climate is changing which means there will be more severe and longer droughts and also more severe precipitation events leading to floods particularly in coastal areas where the sea levels are also rising.

The Forum believes that now is the time to begin preparations for these eventualities. Irish Water are currently developing Regional Water Resources Plans to make sure water is available in household and industry taps when needed, over the next 25 years. These plans are built upon 3 pillars, *use less, lose less and supply smarter*. While the lose less and supply smarter pillars are mainly under Irish Water's sphere of influence the *use less* pillar is something that everyone can work towards.

The Water Forum commissioned research on what is needed to develop domestic water conservation in Ireland, a considerable challenge when there is apparently so much water available at no cost to the individual domestic consumer. Currently, the Irish Government is paying approximately €8.4 billion for the provision of water and wastewater services for the Revenue Control 3 period from 2020 to 2024 for outcomes for water quality, conservation and future proofing, so while for some water is free it is not cheap.

The [research report](#), developed by Dr Sarah Cotterill, UCD, presented a number of policy recommendations for developing domestic water conservation in Ireland. [Key recommendations](#) include the need to strengthen regulation and policy to support water conservation through water

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efficiency labelling on appliances and fittings, revising building regulations to specific targets for fittings, fixtures and total water use in new buildings and to fund retrofittable water saving kits.

To consider and progress the recommendations presented in the research, the National Water Forum is hosting a workshop with key agencies and organisations with responsibility for water supply and building regulations. Representatives from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the UK, Irish Water, Irish Green Building Council, the National Federation of Group Water Schemes and members of the Water Forum will discuss the research, identify challenges and solutions and plan the potential next steps.

Dr Sarah Cotterill from UCD, the author of the research stated: *'We are really looking forward to engaging with agencies and state bodies to share ideas and progress the initiatives further through the collective experience of those attending with the aim of identifying a national water conservation team. The workshop provides a real opportunity to take action now to safeguard our water resources to address the challenges of the future'*.

The Water Forum will share the outcomes after the event. It is hoped that a national team including academics, policy makers, regulators, third-sector organisations and the building sectors will be able to work together to deliver a consistent voice and the resources needed to ensure water conservation becomes part of everyday actions in Ireland.

End.

### Notes 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 25 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 Matt Crowe.

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