

## PRESS RELEASE

### **The Water Forum identifies the need for a National Framework for Water Conservation**

In June 2018, July 2020 and now in August 2022, water shortages are being discussed in national media. In 2018 and 2020 Water Conservation Orders (hosepipe bans) were in place and it is possible there could be another one this year. Our public water supplies are under pressure due to leakage, aging infrastructure, population increase and during heat waves, increased demand. A resilient drinking water supply is essential for everyone, it is important to members of the Water Forum for different reasons; adequate water supply for industry, agriculture and tourism but also minimising the impact of abstractions on the environment to maintain water quality in rivers and lakes. In addition, the Water Forum has a statutory role to advise the Minister on water policy relating to the water quality, water conservation and future proofing, so it is an important part of our current Strategic Plan.

Climate change is likely to increase the pressure on our water resources with dry spells and the risk of drought in the summer. The Water Forum believe that water conservation is an obvious solution towards reducing the pressure on our water supplies; reducing volumes of abstracted water, reduced need for water treatment and pumping (hence reduction in associated emissions) and reducing volumes of wastewater generated (hence reducing pressures on wastewater services and water quality).

To gather the most recent data to inform our position we commissioned research on domestic water conservation that was completed by Dr Sarah Cotterill from UCD and Dr Peter Melville-Shreeve from Exeter University. Their research states that stronger measures are needed for effective water conservation such as revised building regulations with minimum fitting standards and a water labelling scheme linked to energy efficiency, as these measures have been proven effective in other jurisdictions. Nearly 1/5th of energy used in homes is to heat water thereby adding to greenhouse gas emissions and they recommended that water use be included in the Building Energy Regulation (BER) Certificate to align water and energy efficiency at building scale.

The research pointed to a lack of information on personal water use along with insufficient information on water scarcity and stated that the delivery of an education campaign that is supported by incentives such as easy access to water saving technologies could lead to longer and deeper water saving behaviours. To bring these recommendations to action, the Water Forum is currently working with key stakeholders to develop a National Framework for Water Conservation. We are planning to host a workshop later in the year to progress this piece of work.

Dr Matt Crowe, Chair of the National Water Forum stated *'this most recent dry spell once again highlights the vulnerability of our drinking water supplies in a country traditionally considered to have*

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*large and replenishable freshwater sources. We need a much greater and more urgent focus on conserving water if we want to have a climate change resilient water services system capable of supplying year round good quality drinking water to a growing population’.*

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[Research Report: A Framework for Improving Domestic Water Conservation in Ireland](#)  
[Policy Brief](#)

*Note to the Editor*

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 the environmental sector, the rural and agricultural sector, consumers including customers of Irish Water, the rural water sector, rivers trusts, angling, business sector, trade unions, the community and voluntary sector, fisheries, forestry, education, social housing and tourism.

The Forum is chaired by Dr Matt Crowe.

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