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## **PRESS RELEASE 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

### **Water Forum Response to the EPA Public Drinking Water Quality Report**

The Water Forum welcomes the EPA Public Drinking Water Quality Report issued today. We welcome the relatively high standard of water quality, however, more needs to be done to improve operation standards and many plants need urgent upgrades to make sure supplies are safe into the future.

The incidents in Ballymore Eustace and Gorey resulted from poor operational standards in addressing water quality problems and a delay in reporting on issues to the EPA and the HSE which put members of the public at risk. Following these incidents, Irish Water have improved operational procedures by implementing early warning systems, escalation procedures and providing training for personnel. The development of a single public utility for the delivery of water services in 2023 will hopefully prevent future breakdowns in communications and ensure more timely reporting of incidents to both the EPA and to the public.

Six additional water treatment plants have been added to the at risk, Remedial Action List, due to inadequate plant or treatment processes. Currently, over 560,000 people are being served by 57 'at risk' water supplies. Five of these do not have plans for improvements submitted to the EPA despite being on the RAL for two years. Delays in addressing deficits in supply have been highlighted in these reports for a number of years now. The Water Forum would like to see more urgent project delivery and stricter adherence to project delivery timelines.

While we welcome the reduction in supplies on the RAL for trihalomethane failures, the number of THM (trihalomethane) exceedance issues increased. Long term exposure to THMs may cause health risks, which is a concern as Ireland has one of the highest exceedances of THMs in Europe. The Water Forum would support further investigations into this problem and the identification of actions to address THM exceedances, particularly considering climate change could exacerbate the issue further.

The increase in pesticides in drinking water sources is also concerning and more should be done to raise awareness of the potential negative impacts of improper pesticide use in drinking water catchments.

End.



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### *Note to the Editor*

The Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce) was established in 2018 to provide a platform for public engagement on all matters relating to water management in Ireland and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. It consists of 25 members including representatives from a wide range of organisations and sectors with an interest in water issues that includes 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. In accordance with the Water Services Act, 2017, the Forum has advisory roles in relation to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), Irish Water (IW), the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and the Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC). The Forum is chaired by Dr Matt Crowe.

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