

PRESS RELEASE 15th November 2022

Water Forum RESPONSE TO THE EPA ASSESSMENT OF LA ENFORCEMENT FOR 2021

The Local Authority Environmental Enforcement- Performance Report 2021 published by the EPA today shows that while there is a lot of activity in environmental enforcement the consequent environmental improvements are severely lacking. The revised Performance Assessment Framework provides greater transparency in service delivery and this approach is welcome as it also provides a pathway that all local authorities can take to improve performance to the required standard across the 20 national enforcement priorities by the end of the three-year cycle (2022 – 2024).

For the Water Forum it is particularly concerned that 70% of the enforcement activity in 2021 related to waste management, only 20% of activity related to water, whilst 50% of our surface waterbodies are polluted and suffer increasing deteriorations. With agricultural activity the main pressure on 1000 waterbodies a targeted risk-based focus is essential for farm inspections.

The Forum fully supports the EPA proposal to develop new targeted farm inspections regime for water quality using evidence-based catchment science and recommends that this should be initiated as soon as possible. The Forum recommends a four-step approach to inspections:

1. A desk-based assessment undertaken in advance of inspections in the relevant sub-catchment to understand the local conditions and significant issues, thereby enabling inspections to be focused on the possible measures that are suitable to implement the right measures in the right places.
2. An initial visit to the farm should focus on awareness and advice on water quality protection/restoration.
3. Any technical assistance where possible to support the implementation of the required mitigation measures.
4. A follow up inspection for compliance monitoring, with enforcement and potential sanctions, if required.

The Forum believes that this approach is essential to halt water quality deterioration.

A similar risk-based approach needs to be taken with septic tank inspections targeted within at-risk catchments and the Forum supports the EPA recommendations of increased awareness on septic tank maintenance.

Civic Offices, Limerick Road
Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

e: info@nationalwaterforum.ie

w: www.thewaterforum.ie



Small Private Supplies similarly need more adequate monitoring and greater awareness needs to be provided to well owners on the need to test supply and maintain the well to prevent pollution. This is essential considering that small private supplies continue to have the poorest drinking water quality.

The report is welcome in that it highlights where the weaknesses are in environmental enforcement nationally and now it is up to every local authority to manage its activities to achieve better outcomes in the protection and restoration of the environment for the health and well-being of society and the economy.

END

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.

Contact: gretta@nationalwaterforum.ie

www.thewaterforum.ie

Twitter: @anforamuisce

