



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018 - 2021

Executive Summary

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
housing.gov.ie



WATER

essential for life
vital to our environment
central to communities
critical to our economy

Foreword

Water is of fundamental importance to life and our natural environment. Directly or indirectly, it affects all aspects of life. Good water quality is critical to our well-being, as individuals, as a society, as an economy and as a country. It follows, then, that by protecting water quality we are protecting a resource which is fundamental to Ireland as we know it. Our water bodies provide us with drinking water, but are also sources of amenity for our people and visitors to our country alike. The careful stewardship of our aquatic environment underpins our well-being and our economy. Good water quality is a key driver of economic activity in sectors such as agri-food, pharmaceuticals and tourism that rely on a safe and secure water supply. At an even more rudimentary level, our water bodies are a natural resource which was passed down to us by previous generations. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations to protect our water resources.

Over the last decade, the quality of our water has stood still. As we look to the future, we are faced with increasing demands on our water resources from a growing population and economy. It is essential that we take strong steps to protect and improve our water quality; by both making river basin management plans and implementing them. We are addressing this imperative. This *River Basin Management Plan* is a new approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water environment. We now have a much-improved evidence base to support the development of new national policies and initiatives, and to more effectively guide the deployment of supporting measures at local level.

We have reached out to people through extensive consultation at national policy and local community levels. The strong feedback received has directly shaped the new and revised policies which are contained in this Plan. We

have learned from the experiences of the first cycle of river basin management planning and given careful consideration to ensuring better on-the-ground delivery of measures. New governance and implementation structures will drive co-ordinated delivery and give people and representative groups a voice and influence on policy development and delivery.



With effective implementation, we can expect to see the Plan's ambitious suite of measures translated into tangible improvements in water quality in over 700 water bodies. The investment of €1.7 billion in waste-water infrastructure over the period of this Plan to 2021 will see over 250 projects in urban areas progressed. Over the same period, we will take decisive steps towards sustainable and efficient water use, reducing leakage from our water network by 61 billion litres per year. We will enhance the assessment of risks to water quality in our planning processes, and significantly increase the numbers of people on the ground, analysing water quality at water catchment level and working with communities to address challenges.

This *River Basin Management Plan* will build the foundations and momentum for the long-term delivery of water-quality improvement. The improved implementation and engagement structures which have guided the Plan's creation are the foundations for taking better care of our water environment for the future.

Eoghan Murphy, T.D.
**Minister for Housing, Planning
and Local Government**

Irish River Basin District

70,273km² Total area

46 Catchment Areas → **4,829** water bodies



Rivers

Compliance with
EU standards (2015)

57%



Lakes

46%



Coastal
waters

79%



Groundwater
bodies

91%

Protected Areas

Compliance with
EU standards (2015)



140 Designated bathing waters

93%



64 Shellfish waters

75%



358 Water-dependent Special
Areas of Conservation (SACs)

60%

Executive Summary: River Basin Management Plan, 2018–2021

Good water quality is vital to the well-being of our society, economy and environment. Perhaps most obviously, our rivers and lakes are the sources of our drinking water. In addition, they are not only essential parts of our natural environment but also a treasured national asset that communities and tourists want to enjoy. By protecting our water quality, we will also help to protect public health. By improving our aquatic environment, we will help to sustain jobs in water-intensive sectors, such as agri-food and tourism, sectors that collectively sustain over 400,000 jobs. By preserving these waters, we will preserve our natural heritage for future generations.

This second River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) outlines the new approach that Ireland will take as it works to protect its rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters over the next four years. Building on the lessons learned from the first river basin management planning cycle, the Government is now planning on the basis that Ireland is defined as a single River Basin District. The new Plan uses a much-improved evidence base to underpin decision-making, at both national and local levels. This Plan also benefits from a stronger and more integrated approach to public consultation and engagement. The Government is introducing new initiatives and policies to address many of our water-quality challenges. The new Plan builds on the measures implemented during the first planning cycle, but also seeks to implement supporting measures on a prioritised basis, where necessary.

With effective implementation of the Plan, Ireland can expect to see actions to improve water quality in over 700 water bodies. Changes in agricultural approaches and an increase in urban waste-water treatment should lead to reduced pollution pressures. The new structures and evidence-based approach, combined with the development of capabilities and expertise, will lay the foundations for consistent progress to be made in addressing a long-term challenge faced by many developed economies.

Consequently, the Plan has placed a major emphasis on establishing the right governance and delivery structures for an effective catchment-based approach. Clear priorities are set out in the Plan, which will ensure that all stakeholders are working together with a strong focus on delivering positive outcomes. National authorities retain responsibility for the implementation of national programmes, with regional structures driving the implementation

of prioritised supporting measures. Meaningful stakeholder and public engagement is being led by the recently-established Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce) and the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO). The former facilitates public and stakeholder engagement in water policy at national level, while the latter drives public engagement, participation and consultation with communities and stakeholders at local and regional level. This engagement is further supported by the catchments.ie and watersandcommunities.ie websites — and by a wide range of other activities aimed at facilitating and encouraging engagement.

Some of the most important measures in the Plan include planned investment by Irish Water of approximately €1.7 billion in waste-water projects, programmes and asset maintenance; the deployment of 43 local authority investigative assessment personnel, who will work in Prioritised Areas for Action; a new collaborative Sustainability and Advisory Support Programme between Government and the dairy industry, consisting of 30 Sustainability Advisors promoting agricultural best practice in 190 Areas for Action; improved controls for the management of water abstractions; the development and implementation of a “*Blue Dot Catchments Programme*” for the protection of high-status waters; the extension of the grant scheme for repairs, upgrade and replacement of domestic waste-water treatment systems, with priority given to high-status catchments; the creation of a Community Water Development Fund to support community water initiatives; and the development of a collaborative approach to protecting drinking-water sources.

This Plan’s objectives are ambitious, which is reflected both in the level of commitment to and investment in existing measures and in the expectation that supporting measures will be

implemented in approximately 700 prioritised water bodies over the period of this cycle. This will result in status improvements for approximately 150 water bodies. Combined with improved implementation and engagement structures, this should see good progress in making water-

quality improvements and in building capabilities, knowledge and expertise for the future.

This Executive Summary outlines the key aspects of the second-cycle RBMP. It provides:

- ▼ A brief introduction and background to the second-cycle RBMP
- ▼ Details of the key findings of the most recent water-quality results and of the outcomes of the risk-characterisation process in terms of the share of total water bodies found to be *At Risk* of not meeting the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD)
- ▼ Summary information on the significant pressures for *At Risk* water bodies
- ▼ Details of the environmental objectives of the WFD and of the priorities for this second planning cycle, given the scale of the challenge presented
- ▼ An outline of the key existing and supporting measures (from our full Programme of Measures) aimed at meeting our environmental objectives
- ▼ Descriptions of the Plan's implementation strategy and structures, and of the measures we are taking to improve communication and public and stakeholder engagement
- ▼ A summary of the expected outcomes, based on our proposed measures and implementation plans

Introduction & Background

The Irish River Basin District (RBD) covers an area of 70,273km², with 46 catchment management units – consisting of 583 sub-catchments, with 4,829 water bodies. With regard to protected areas within the District, there are 140 designated bathing waters, 64 shellfish waters, 47 nutrient sensitive areas and 358 special areas of conservation (SACs) with water dependency. These SACs are geographically concentrated along the western seaboard - with a significant overlap between high-status waters and SACs. The RBD has a population of around 4.76 million, with 33% of people living in cities, 29% in towns and 38% in rural areas. The requirement for water and waste-water services reflects these spatial patterns. Nationally, the economy is strongly export-focused, but the sectoral drivers of economic growth across the RBD are diverse – with the agriculture and food sectors being particularly important in rural areas.

This second-cycle RBMP aims to build on the progress made during the first cycle. Key measures during the first cycle included the licensing of urban waste-water discharges (with an associated investment in urban waste-water treatment) and the implementation of the Nitrates Action Programme (Good Agricultural Practice Regulations). The former measure has resulted in significant progress in terms both of compliance levels and of the impact of urban waste-water on water quality. The latter provides a considerable environmental baseline which all Irish farmers must achieve and has resulted in improving trends in the level of nitrates and phosphates in rivers and groundwater. It is acknowledged, however, that sufficient progress has not been made in developing and implementing supporting measures during the first cycle.

In more general terms, three key lessons have emerged from the first cycle and the public consultation processes. These lessons have been firmly integrated into the development of the second-cycle Plan. Firstly, the structure of multiple RBDs did not prove effective, either in terms of developing the plans efficiently or in terms of implementing those plans. Secondly, the governance and delivery structures in place for the first cycle were not as effective as expected. Thirdly, the targets set were too ambitious and were not grounded on a sufficiently developed evidence base.

In line with these three key lessons, we have used three guiding principles in developing this finalised RBMP. Firstly, the development and implementation of this Plan requires effective and efficient national, regional and local structures – and thorough integration of these structures to ensure effective co-ordination between scientific understanding of the problems to be addressed, policy development and on-the-ground delivery. Secondly, the targets set in the Plan must be based on sound evidence and be ambitious but achievable. Thirdly, we must continue to ensure that effective national measures are in place to address pressures throughout the entire RBD. Where such broad-based measures are not sufficient, however, the delivery of supporting measures must be prioritised, ensuring the implementation of “*the right measures in the right place*”.

Water Quality Status and Catchment Characterisation

The 2013-15 water-body status information shows that 57% of river water bodies, 46% of lakes, 31% of transitional waters and 79% of coastal waters had achieved good or high-status. For groundwater, 91% of water bodies are classified as having good status. Nationally, the number of monitored river water bodies and lakes at good or high-status appears to have declined by 4% since 2007–2009. However, this decline also masks an underlying trend of improvement and disimprovement across monitored river water bodies and lakes since 2009.

Figures from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) show that over 1,000 river water bodies and lakes have changed status over the period of the first cycle. The findings also show that high-status waters remain under continued pressure – with 10% of monitored river sites having high status in 2013–15 compared to 13% in 2007–2009.

For our protected areas, 93% of bathing waters met the required standards in 2015. For shellfish waters, the most recent information for 2015 shows 75% of sites meeting the microbiological guide value. For SACs with water dependency, approximately 60% of river water bodies and almost 70% of lakes achieved their required status. However, the situation for SACs in transitional waters was less positive – with 37% of such areas meeting their required standard by achieving good status.

The RBD characterisation process goes beyond the classification of status and assesses whether a water body is *At Risk* of not meeting its objectives (i.e. good status or high status). This assessment is made by reviewing information on such matters as current water-quality trends and catchment pressures. Expert local knowledge is important in this context. Currently 2,113 water bodies are classified as *Not at Risk* and 1,460 are classified as *At Risk*, with the remainder requiring further investigation.

Significant Pressures on *At Risk* Water Bodies

Having identified those water bodies *At Risk* of not meeting their objectives, the characterisation process then looks at the significant pressures causing this risk. Figure 1 below shows the frequency of significant pressures on *At Risk* water bodies. While agriculture is the most prevalent pressure, it is also the largest land use. The significant pressures impacting on the 1,460 water bodies that are *At Risk* of not meeting their objectives include agriculture (53%), hydromorphology (24%), urban waste-water (20%), forestry (16%), domestic waste-water (11%), urban runoff (9%), peat (8%), extractive industry (7%) and mines and quarries (6%). Turning to the *At Risk* river and lake water bodies, we find that 47% of them are subject to a single significant pressure, with the remaining 53% subject to more than one significant pressure.

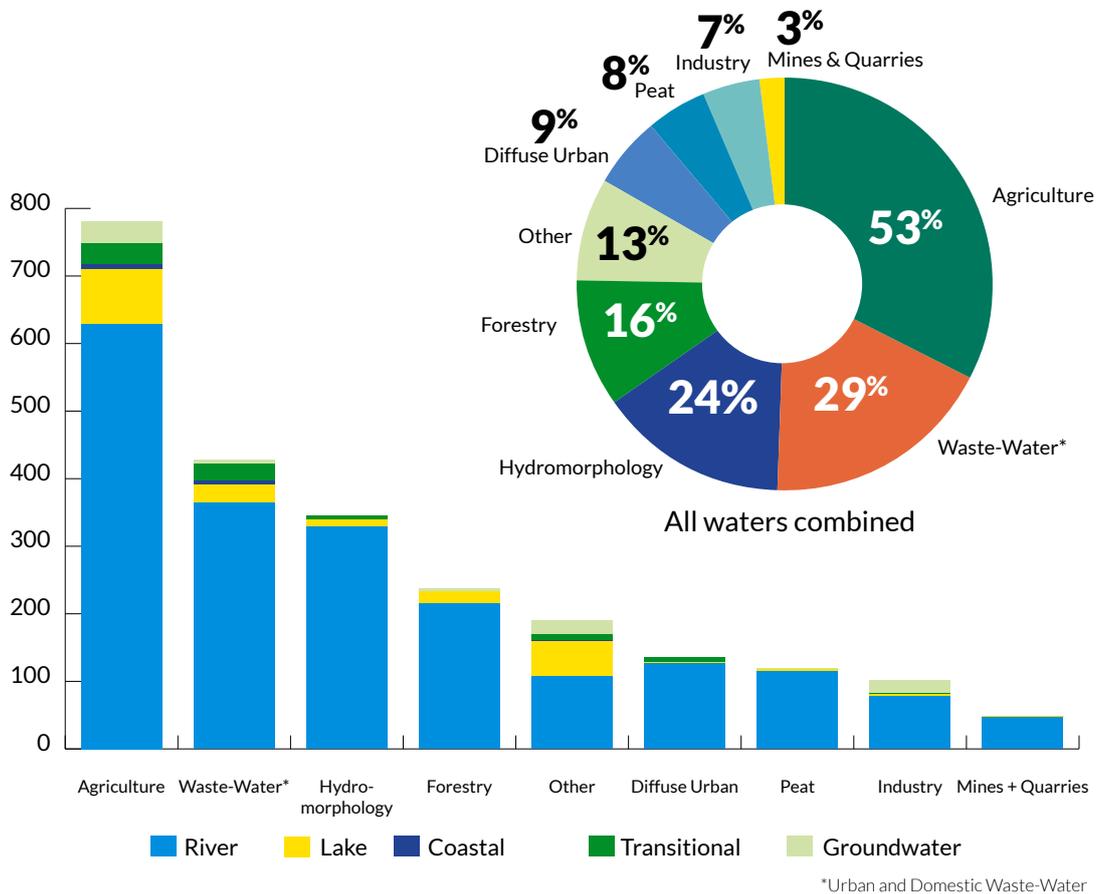


Figure 1 - Frequency of significant pressures and source of pressures on *At Risk* water bodies.

Environmental Objectives and Priorities

In broad terms, the objectives of the WFD are (1) to prevent the deterioration of water bodies and to protect, enhance and restore them with the aim of achieving at least good status and (2) to achieve compliance with the requirements for designated protected areas.

Although the objectives of the Directive clearly set out the end goals, the challenges presented in achieving these objectives are very significant. Therefore, a key purpose of this Plan is to identify priorities and ensure that implementation of the Plan is guided by these priorities. The following evidence-based priorities have been adopted for this river basin planning cycle:

- ▼ Ensure full compliance with relevant EU legislation
- ▼ Prevent deterioration
- ▼ Meet the objectives for designated protected areas
- ▼ Protect high-status waters
- ▼ Implement targeted actions and pilot schemes in focused sub-catchments aimed at (1) targeting water bodies close to meeting their objective and (2) addressing more complex issues that will build knowledge for the third cycle

Programme of Measures – Summary of Key Measures

In line with the pressures identified through the characterisation process, and the priorities set out above, the following are the key measures aimed at moving towards meeting the environmental objectives of the WFD:

- ▼ An Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme will be established. This programme will be implemented by 30 new Advisors – funded by Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG), Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the dairy co-ops – who will work under Teagasc and the dairy co-ops. The Advisors will work on a one-to-one basis with farmers to bring about behavioural change through improved agricultural practices in areas which have identified pressures on water bodies.
- ▼ Local authorities are putting in place Support and Advisory Teams to carry out scientific assessments and to drive the implementation of mitigation measures at local level.

Recruitment of investigative assessment personnel commenced in Quarter 1 2018 and provision has been made for up to 43 specialist staff to be in place by mid-2018. These resources will be assigned across the five regions.

- ▼ Agri-environment schemes will be implemented through the Rural Development Programme (RDP). This will lead to investment in manure storage and improved nutrient utilisation. In particular, the targeted approach to the Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS), which has 50,000 participants, will ensure appropriate supporting measures on farms to protect and improve water quality.
- ▼ Compliance with the Good Agriculture Practice Regulations will be improved through implementation of the enhanced Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) for 2018–2021 and of the associated inspection regime. The Programme entails new strengthened water-protection measures, focused on intercepting and breaking nutrient transport pathways and on preventing sediment and nutrient losses to waters.
- ▼ Knowledge-transfer programmes within the agriculture sector will be used to promote better nutrient management and point-source-pollution management on the farm. The approach to this will have three strands:
 - ▲ The National Dairy Sustainability Forum will aim to collaboratively address the on-farm economic and environmental sustainability challenges for the dairy industry in a broader and more strategic way than currently takes place. This Forum will build on the knowledge base that has developed over recent years. To do so it will establish a co-operative-led pilot programme to implement best practice on selected farms. It will also develop a wider promotion programme on better nutrient management and farm point source management to be implemented for dairy farmers supplying co-operatives. It is envisaged that this approach will be part of an evolution of the existing Origin Green scheme.
 - ▲ A knowledge transfer programme for farmers will be funded through the RDP to be delivered by both Teagasc and private-sector consultants. This will aim to engage with up to 20,000 farmers over the period 2017–2021.

- ▲ An on-line nutrient-management-planning system will be rolled out for use by all farmers. Use of this system will be mandatory for farmers in the GLAS scheme and for derogation farmers.
- ▼ The National Inspection Plan 2018–21 for domestic waste-water treatment systems, currently being finalised by the EPA, will use the outputs of the catchment characterisation work to further improve the risk-based approach to inspection of septic tanks. It is expected that approximately 1,000 inspections will be carried out by local authorities nationally each year.
- ▼ There is significant planned investment in urban waste-water collection and treatment infrastructure. Over the period 2017–2021, Irish Water will invest approximately €1.7 billion in waste-water projects, programmes and asset maintenance.
- ▼ Forestry regulations and policy have been re-aligned to contribute to achieving water-quality objectives, and these will be fully implemented. Forestry funding schemes and other resources will be promoted and strategically deployed to protect and improve water quality.
- ▼ For peat extraction, new legislation is to be introduced to improve the environmental regulation of large and small scale commercial peat harvesting. The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht will oversee the implementation of the Peatland Strategy. Bord na Móna will implement their Sustainability 2030 Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan, both of which address the long-term rehabilitation of cutaway bogs.
- ▼ Relevant EU regulation with regard to Invasive Alien Species (IAS) will be implemented, along with specific plans for priority IAS. Clear governance and co-ordination structures across relevant bodies will be developed, and community engagement harnessed to ensure the long-term sustainability of projects aimed at preventing and mitigating pressures from IAS.
- ▼ To work to address significant pressures arising from hydromorphology, the EPA and Inland Fisheries Ireland will improve assessment methods and knowledge in relation to the physical condition of rivers, lakes and marine coastal waters to inform and support future management measures. The Office of Public Works (OPW) will incorporate mitigation measures when undertaking channel maintenance over 2,000 kilometres per year.
- ▼ In addition, the feasibility of implementing measures to improve fish connectivity in the Lower Shannon catchment will be assessed.
- ▼ The DPHLG will establish a register of water abstractions, and will consult on a proportionate and risk-based framework for the regulation of abstractions to ensure continued sustainable use of our water resources. The EPA will continue work on assessing risk due to abstractions, making use of new information as it emerges during the second cycle.
- ▼ To protect and restore our high-status waters, we will establish a “Blue Dot Catchments Programme” and associated working group. This will ensure that high-status waters are prioritised for the implementation of supporting measures and for available funding.
- ▼ For protected areas:
 - ▲ Around 350 public drinking water source risk assessments will be completed by 2021, with the remaining assessments to be completed by 2027.
 - ▲ Urban waste-water pressures in four of the currently non-compliant bathing waters will be addressed through the aforementioned Irish Water Investment Plan.
 - ▲ Urban waste-water discharges in the vicinity of shellfish waters will continue to be assessed to determine whether they are contributing to failures in shellfish water objectives and, in turn, whether additional waste-water treatment is required.
 - ▲ Also through the Irish Water Investment Plan, and in accordance with the requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, more stringent treatment will be provided for 8 currently non-compliant urban areas discharging to designated nutrient sensitive areas.

Implementation Strategy

Our implementation strategy focuses on ensuring full implementation of the existing measures through the relevant national authorities and, where these measures are not sufficient to meet the objectives of the WFD, on implementing targeted supporting measures. The process of selecting the water bodies to be targeted for action through supporting measures was driven at regional and local level through local authority structures. The prioritisation of water bodies has taken place through 5 regional committees, each chaired by a local authority Chief Executive. This prioritisation used the EPA catchment assessments as a starting point, with the prioritisation of areas and actions agreed with relevant stakeholders based on wider considerations of impacts and feasibility.

Learning from the lessons of the first cycle, the implementation structures will ensure effective and co-ordinated delivery of measures. The Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC), established as part of the structures for the preparation of this RBMP, provides high-level policy direction and oversight of implementation. A National Co-ordination and Management Committee (NCMC) has been set up under the WPAC to ensure that the measures necessary to achieve our objectives are implemented in an efficient, effective and co-ordinated way. A National Technical Implementation Group (NTIG) co-ordinates ongoing detailed tracking of implementation and provides a forum for knowledge sharing. Finally, the regional local authority structures, with 5 regional committees, drive delivery of supporting measures at local level. This work was further supported by LAWCO. In operating within these structures, all of the bodies associated with this Plan will endeavour to adopt an ethos of actively participating and working together to deliver real action and positive outcomes.

Under the WFD, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are required to co-ordinate their efforts in relation to the two international river basin districts. During this cycle, the North South Water Framework Directive Coordination Group will continue to oversee the ongoing co-ordination between the authorities in this regard. Depending on the outcome of negotiations relating to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, under Article 50 of the Lisbon

Treaty, the co-ordinating arrangements may need to be reviewed and revised to take account of the changed circumstances.

Communication and Public & Stakeholder Engagement

A clear message emerged from the public consultation processes around the need to improve communication and public and stakeholder engagement with regard to the implementation of the RBMP and indeed the broad integrated catchment approach. The concerns centred around facilitating (1) public and stakeholder engagement with national water policy and (2) public and stakeholder engagement at the regional and local level to contribute to delivery of the Plan itself.

To address the former, the Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce) has been established to facilitate stakeholder engagement on all water issues, including issues of water quality and implementation of the WFD. The Forum determines its own work programme and the means of communicating its views and analysis. However, its views feed into the proposed implementation structures at all levels, including the work of the WPAC.

LAWCO drives public engagement, participation, and consultation with communities and stakeholders at local level, and co-ordinates these activities across all 31 local authorities. LAWCO also works to ensure that public and stakeholder engagement will result in meaningful public and stakeholder participation in the catchment management approach across the RBD.

In addition, the EPA will continue to lead on networking and knowledge sharing. The WFD app and the catchments.ie website both act as information and data repositories and as knowledge-sharing tools to allow better targeting of measures and co-ordination of implementation.

We have ensured that communication and knowledge-sharing activities of both LAWCO and the EPA are integrated with the implementation structures and feed into policy development and the implementation of this Plan.

Expected Outcomes

Based on the information set out in the Plan, it is expected to achieve the following over the period to 2021:

- ▼ Investment in urban waste-water treatment will initiate projects in 255 urban areas, achieving water quality improvements and compliance with the requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. Drainage area plans will be prepared for 44 urban areas.
- ▼ A total of 353 public drinking-water-source risk assessments will be prepared. Furthermore, 53 water supplies with pesticide exceedances will be investigated and, where necessary, follow-up action will be taken to prevent further exceedances.
- ▼ Irish Water will aim to achieve sustainable and efficient use of water by addressing (1) the high level of network leakage and unaccounted for water (45% of all water entering the supply network), and (2) the very high level of water use at the top end of the domestic usage range. Up to 2021, €73 million will be invested *per annum* to reduce water leakage by 61 million m³ per year. This will reduce the leakage rate from 45% down to 38% initially by 2021, based on 2017 figures.
- ▼ A register of water abstractions will be established in Quarter 2, 2018. A water-abstractions authorisation system will be established by early 2019.
- ▼ The new strengthened NAP will continue to provide a good environmental baseline for the agriculture sector. Up to 6,000 farm inspections *per annum* will be carried out by local authorities and the DAFM.
- ▼ The new Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme will be jointly resourced by the DAFM, the dairy cooperatives and the DHPLG. It will consist of 30 sustainability advisers: 20 based within Teagasc and 10 within the cooperatives.
- ▼ An increased focus on knowledge transfer aimed at driving behavioural change towards more sustainable farming practices will see up to 5,000 farmers receiving support from Teagasc through the new collaborative Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme. This support will focus on issues within 190 prioritised catchment Areas for Action. In addition, 18,000 dairy farmers will receive advice on sustainable farming practices under the Dairy Sustainability Initiative.
- ▼ The next National Inspection Plan for Domestic Waste-Water Treatment Systems (2018–2021) will drive improvements in the performance of systems, with over 4,000 inspections being carried out by local authorities over this period.
- ▼ Bord Na Móna is in the process of phasing out the extraction of peat for energy production by 2030. It expects to rehabilitate 9,000 ha. of cutaway bogs (covering 25 peatlands) by 2021 and will look to implement best-available mitigation measures to further reduce water-quality impacts caused by peat extraction while the phasing-out process is taking place.
- ▼ The delivery of guidance for planning authorities on physical planning and the WFD will contribute to the protection of waters from deterioration arising from inappropriate future development. Supporting technical guidance will also ensure that best environmental practice is applied where alterations to surface waters are undertaken. The OPW will continue to apply best practice when carrying out drainage maintenance works. Between 2018 and 2021, 8,000km of river channel will be maintained.
- ▼ In addition to the new LAWCO, regionally-based Local Authority Water Support and Advisory Teams will be put in place. These teams, which will consist of up to 43 personnel in total, will be involved in co-ordinating and promoting mitigation measures in the 190 Areas for Action.
- ▼ A Communities Water Development Fund will be established to support local community water initiatives with a particular focus on measures which are aligned with the priority actions in this Plan. The fund will be administered by LAWCO.
- ▼ A total of 190 Areas for Action have been prioritised nationally for particular attention during this cycle (2018–2021). These include a total of 726 water bodies. Actions will involve multidisciplinary and cross-agency approaches.
- ▼ The interaction between the new water-governance structures, consisting of the five regional committees; the NCMC; the NTIG; the Water Forum; and the WPAC will be critical to the effective implementation of this Plan.

- ▼ On the basis of the above actions, it is expected that general water-quality improvements will be achieved in the 726 water bodies prioritised for this planning cycle (2018–2021). However, given the complexities involved and the known difficulty in achieving status improvements due to time lags in natural recovery and the interaction between multiple environmental pressures on water bodies, it is conservatively estimated that the actions outlined above will likely result in some 152 additional water bodies showing improvement in status by 2021, with further improvements being made thereafter.
- ▼ The remaining *At Risk* water bodies which fall outside the 190 Areas for Action will still benefit from existing and newly introduced measures. As resources allow these will be targeted for investigative assessments and further action, where necessary, through the prioritisation processes at regional committee level.

Summary of new policy measures influenced by public consultation feedback

Theme	Policy Measure	Section
State Responses to Improve Water Management	Development of new coordinating, governance and delivery structures	10
	Establishment of enhanced forums for public engagement	11
	€73 million per year invested by Irish Water on interventions to reduce leakage, including pressure-management, leakage-control measures, water-mains renewals and continued customer-side savings	9.7
Pressures on Water Bodies & Water Quality	Irish Water to spend €1.7 billion on 255 urban waste-water projects	7.2
	43 local authority staff to carry out investigative assessments on water bodies	10
	Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme – 30 new Sustainability Advisors providing advice and support to farmers in the 190 Areas for Action and across the dairy sector	7.1
	New collaborative approach to drinking water source protection	8.1
	Expansion of grant scheme to assist with costs of septic tank remediation in high-status water areas and areas of protection	7.1
	Forestry-related regulations, policies and requirements have been realigned with national water policy	7.3
Physical Condition of Surface Waters	Inland Fisheries Ireland to assess barriers to fish movement in Water Bodies	7.6
	Publication of legislation to develop a register of abstractions and control system	7.7
	Development of water and planning guidance for Planning Authorities	7.8
	Improvement of hydromorphological assessment methods	7.6
Value of Water Bodies	LAWCO engagement at community level, including "Blue Dot Catchments Programme"	8.3 11
	Development of new Community Water Development Fund	11.3
	Establishment of The Water Forum / An Fóram Uisce	11.1
	New collaborative initiatives for the protection of drinking water sources	8.1

Expected Outcomes

255 Urban waste-water treatment projects progressed

€73m Invested to reduce water leakage by 61million m³ *per annum*. Reduce leakage from 45% - 38%

30 Sustainability advisors in place to deliver the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme

43 Technical personnel deployed to regionally-based Local Authorities Water Support and Advisory Teams

23,000 Farmers will receive sustainability advice under the Dairy Sustainability Initiative and the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme

4,000 Inspections under the National Inspection Plan for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems

3,000+ Water abstractions registered and an authorisation system implemented

Guidance for planning authorities on physical planning and the Water Framework Directive

726 Water bodies to achieve general water quality improvements

152 Water bodies to experience improved water quality status

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