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# WATER Policy, Quality, Environment and Funding

22 May 2020

# Overarching Water Policy issues



## Two interrelated themes:

1. Protecting and enhancing the quality of Ireland's water in the environment, including the marine environment
2. Ensuring the delivery of modern, robust and resilient drinking water and waste-water infrastructure.

## Key influencing factors:

- EU Directives
- Interrelationship with climate action, biodiversity and sustainable development goals
- Critical support for housing & sustainable development
- Sustained investment required (€8.5bn under National Development Plan)

# Challenges for the Water Sector



- Existing infrastructural deficits
- Compliance with quality standards
- Addressing EU infringements
- Accommodate sustainable growth & provide services for housing
- Conserving water – fixing leaks and modifying behaviour
- Make best use of existing network
- Sustainable abstractions – legislation in preparation
- Deficiencies in rural and private water supplies
- Reverse decline in surface water quality
- Adapt to climate change

# Irish Water Funding



- Irish Water Exchequer funding 2020 – for Domestic Water Service
  - Capital €596.5m
  - Current €592m
  - Total €1,188.5m
- Strategic funding plan to 2024:
  - €6.1bn infrastructure/ assets,
  - €4.9bn operating costs
  - €11bn in total
- Investment focus on three areas: Quality, Conservation and Future Proofing
- CRU approved revenue for 2020-2024 - final decision due €788m capital investment.
- COVID-19: Challenges and opportunities.

# Compliance with Directives



- Significant effort required to improve implementation of EU Directives, supported by investment.
- 5 infringement actions open against Ireland in the water area.
- Includes a judgment under the Urban Waste Water Directive.
- Opportunity for better legislation, better implementation and better community involvement in protecting our waters.
- River Basin Management Plan – implementation and updating
- Opportunity to work collaboratively with initiatives in the Climate Change and Biodiversity areas to deliver a better environmental outcomes



# Irish Water – Operating arrangements



- Current policy position - Single national water services authority.
- Separation of Irish Water from Ervia group.
- Irish Water delivers services through local authorities by way of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) – due to end in 2025
- SLAs important in establishing Irish Water – but limitations.
- Risks in the delivery of assured water and waste water supplies.
- Need for improved coordination and strategic planning
- Disconnect between Irish Water’s legal responsibility and actual delivery on the ground
- Process underway through Workplace Relations Commission to replace SLAs and integrate Irish Water’s operations.
- Outcomes sought - Effective water services authority, sustainable local government, fairness for workers

# Water Services Governance Framework



- Multi-layered arrangements for oversight and regulation
- Focus on strategy, delivery and oversight
- Water Services Act 2017 – provided for a Water Services Policy Statement and 5-year Irish Water Strategic Funding Plan.
- The Environmental Protection Agency – continued environmental regulation role
- The Commission for Regulation of Utilities – economic regulation, efficiency and protecting customer interests
- The Water Advisory Body – 5 members, advises the Minister and reports to the Oireachtas
- An Fóram Uisce / the Water Forum – 26 members representing diverse stakeholders



# Questions and further briefing