

Water Advisory Body 1st Quarterly Report

The first quarterly report by the Water Advisory Body (the WAB) published today, 24 October 2019.

The WAB was established on 1 June 2018. The purpose of the WAB is to advise the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government on measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water; and to report, on a quarterly basis to an Oireachtas Committee on the performance by Irish Water in the implementation of its Business Plan.

The WAB's chairperson Paul McGowan said "we are pleased to publish our first quarterly report. We have deliberately chosen a set of performance indicators which provide a fair and balanced scorecard on Irish Water's performance. Our expectation is that Irish Water should either maintain strong performance (where it exists) or improve performance across this set of performance indicators, over time. We have tried to keep this report jargon-free and written in plain English, to ensure it is accessible to a wide audience".

The WAB has selected eleven performance indicators, each measuring the performance of Irish Water under a different heading.

Some of the key findings in the report include:

- **Leakage** - By any measure, Ireland's leakage rate is unacceptable and needs to be a focus for Irish Water in the future. The WAB will continue to monitor the level of unaccounted for water until the end of this year until Irish Water makes its leakage metric available for assessment.
- **First Fix Scheme** - Drop-off in the number of leak repairs completed under First Fix Scheme from mid-2016.
- **Remedial Action List (Water)** - Irish Water has an action plan in place to remediate the drinking water supplies that are currently included on the Remedial Action List.
- **Priority Urban Area List (Wastewater)** - The WAB notes and accepts the Environmental Protection Agency's view that Ireland is not addressing the deficiencies in its waste water treatment infrastructure at a fast enough pace.
- **Lead service connections replaced** - Irish Water aims to remove all public-side lead pipework by 2026, and has set specific targets in that context.

- **Mains replacement rate (for water mains)** - Although Irish Water's mains replacement rate of 0.33% is within a range comparable with other similar entities, the WAB agrees with the Commission for Regulation of Utilities view that Irish Water's replacement rate will need to be higher given Irish Water's infrastructure is likely to be older and in worse condition on average.
- **Overall compliance with microbiological indicators for drinking water** - In general, the WAB notes that compliance with the microbiological standards is high.
- **Boil Water Notices** - The WAB notes the significant decline in long term boil water notices in Quarter 4 2017, followed by a significant increase in early 2018 is a result of a single supply being temporarily removed from the list. A situation where the removal of a boil water notice followed by the subsequent reinstatement in a short period to time, of that notice is a cause for concern for the WAB given the impact it can have on the confidence the public have in the reported level of boil water notices.
- **Compliance of Urban Waste Water Treatment (UWWT); Plants with Environmental Protection Agency discharge licenses** - Overall, compliance for urban waste water treatment is very low.
- **Ease of Contact** - Customer Satisfaction Scores for the three years to 2017 are on an upward trend, telephone service factors showed some dis-improvement in the same time period.
- **Irish Water Customer Complaints Management** - Irish Water has yet to report to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities under these two metrics in relation to complaints management. Irish Water has stated that it will be reporting on these metrics by the end of 2019.

Paul McGowan thanked the members of the Water Advisory Body for their work in making this report possible. The Water Advisory Body members are Paul McGowan (Chairperson), Darragh Page, Sharon Kennedy, Miriam McDonald and Martin Sisk.

The full Quarterly Report 1 is available at: <https://wateradvisorybody.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Water-Advisory-Body-Quarterly-Report-1.pdf>

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Water Advisory Body (the WAB) is an independent statutory body established under Part 7 of the Water Services Act 2017. The WAB was formally established on 1 June 2018.

For further information on the WAB, including reports published to date, see www.wateradvisorybody.ie