



Annual Work Programme (2021)

January 2021

Background

The WAB was established in 2018 as an independent State Body. The WAB has two main roles. The first role is to report on how well Irish Water (IW) is performing and the second role is to help increase public confidence in Irish Water. Detailed functions of the WAB are set out in Appendix A.

Every three months the WAB prepares a report on Irish Water for the Oireachtas. This report sets out the Body's view on how well Irish Water is performing against its Strategic Funding Plan. The WAB seeks to present the information in its reports using plain, jargon free, language, as far as practicable, for clarity and simplicity of understanding.

Since its establishment the WAB has published four reports in relation to its function of reviewing the implementation by Irish Water of its Strategic Funding Plan:

- WAB Quarterly Report no.1 of 2019;
- WAB Quarterly Reports no.1 to 3 of 2020.

These reports and future reports are available on the website www.wateradvisorybody.ie.

The WAB has issued one advice report to the Minister in conjunction with its Quarterly no. 2 of 2020 in August 2020.

The WAB met with several bodies and agencies since establishment including the Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government, Irish Water and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's Water Division.

WAB Work Programme

Core tasks (ongoing)

- Publish 4 Quarterly Performance Reports on the performance of IW in the implementation of its Strategic Funding Plan;
- Submit advice to the Minister on the measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water as required;
- Prepare and publish WAB Annual Report 2020;
- Progress Stage 1 and Stage 2 reports on IW's procurement policies and practices.

Other tasks

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Maintain a relatively small number of KPIs to track IW's performance. In 2021 work on KPIs will be prioritised in relation to two areas: -

- 'cost reduction and efficiency improvements' and
- 'responsiveness to the needs of communities and enterprise'.

Cost reduction and efficiency and infrastructure and leakage reductions

The WAB will engage with the CRU on potential areas where KPIs could be developed in relation to this area. This will draw on CRU's recent decision on Irish Water's 3rd Revenue Control (RC3) and would also be an area that would be related to infrastructure and leakage reductions.

Improvements in water quality, including the elimination of boil water notices

The WAB will continue to engage with the EPA on potential areas where KPIs could be developed in relation to this area.

Responsiveness to the needs of communities and enterprise

The WAB will conduct a consumer survey to build on input from surveys carried out by the CRU and EPA. Areas to cover may include public perceptions around IW performance and the satisfaction with IW's customer complaints process.

This would also tie in with another function of 'increasing the confidence of members of the public in Irish Water'.

Procurement, remuneration and staffing policies

The WAB will revisit in this area following completion of the review of IW's procurement policies.

Data Hub

The WAB will examine the feasibility of development of a data hub on the WAB website in 2021. The aim is to facilitate tracking of key metrics over time and to contribute to transparency and simplified reporting. This will be examined by the Secretariat in terms of capacity and the skills required.

Advising the Minister

The Body will continue to revisit and discuss the need for further advice to the Minister on the measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water for the purpose of increasing the confidence of members of the public in Irish Water.

Climate Change

Given the WAB's role and the priority of the Climate Action Plan, the WAB will review and as required develop indicators to support performance monitoring in relevant key areas.

Communications

Engagement

The WAB will continue to build its engagement with key Stakeholders including: -

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- Joint Oireachtas Committee (JOC) on Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- Irish Water;
- An Fóram Uisce (The Water Forum);
- Environment Protection Agency (EPA);
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU).

The WAB continue to seek to meet each stakeholder at least once a year and as required. Records of engagement will be maintained on the WAB Website.

Website

The WAB website includes documentation such as quarterly reports and the annual report, details of the Body, members, meetings and how to contact us.

In 2021 an update to the 'Meetings' pages is in development which will make it easier to view the minutes and presentations of meetings with key stakeholders.

The Secretariat will examine the possibility of developing an Irish language version of the WAB website in 2021.

Social Media

The WAB will carefully build its Social Media presence in 2021 either directly or indirectly (e.g. through the Department or other stakeholders) in relation to reports and activities. We will examine and develop, infographics and PR videos alongside the release of Quarterly WAB Reports. In addition the Body will both develop its social media capacity and the Secretariat will investigate other possible options that could benefit communication for the WAB.

General Working Arrangements

- Hold 8 WAB meeting during 2021.
- Maintain Performance Delivery Agreement with Department for Secretariat Services;
- Continue to strengthen relationship and contact with IW;
- Continue to strengthen relationships with stakeholders such as CRU, EPA, the Department, and An Fóram Uisce;
- Strengthen relationship (protocols) with other bodies and agencies as appropriate;
- Use of consultants/contractors as needed;

Resources / Staffing

The WAB is supported by a Secretariat staffed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Specifically, this includes 4 members of staff, including a Principal Officer (PO); Assistant Principal Officer (APO); Higher Executive Officer (HEO) and a Clerical Officer (CO). The Department also provides other supporting resources such as IT, HR, Accommodation and Statistics.

Timelines

In terms of timelines the following table sets out those for core tasks and some of the other activities such as the development of a Data Hub. Other activities are ongoing.

No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2021			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	Publish 4 Quarterly Reports on the performance of IW on the implementation of its Strategic Funding Plan.	Quarterly	Publication of Report				
2	Submit advice to the Minister on the measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water as required	As required	Submit Advice				
3	Progress Stage 1 and Stage 2 reports on IW's procurement policies and practices	End Q2, 2020	Publication of Stage 1 (stage 2 postponed)				
4	Prepare and publish WAB Annual Report 2020	End Q4, 2020 and annually thereafter	Publication of Report				
5	Development of WAB Website Data Hub	Q3 (updated as required thereafter)	Publication of Data Hub				
6	Conduct a consumer survey to build on input from surveys carried out by the CRU and EPA.	Q4	Publication of Report				

Appendix A

WAB Functions

The WAB is established under Part 7 of the Water Services Act, 2017. The WAB was formally established on 1 June 2018.

The Water Advisory Body (“WAB”) is an independent State Body. 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. In addition to this the WAB also reports to an Oireachtas Committee focusing on the performance of Irish Water on the implementation of its business plan.”

Specifically the Water Advisory Body (WAB) functions are set out in Section 43 of the Act and it shall have the following functions:

- a) to advise the Minister on the measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water for the purpose of increasing the confidence of members of the public in Irish Water;

- b) to furnish, on a quarterly basis, a report to the Committee on the performance by Irish Water in the implementation of its business plan with particular regard to the following:
 - (i) infrastructure delivery and leakage reductions;
 - (ii) cost reduction and efficiency improvements;
 - (iii) improvements in water quality, including the elimination of boil water notices;
 - (iv) procurement, remuneration and staffing policies;
 - (v) responsiveness to the needs of communities and enterprise.

Water Advisory Body (WAB)
An Comhlacht Comhairleach Uisce

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