



Mr. Darragh O'Brien T.D.
Minister for Housing Planning and Local Government
Housing, Planning and Local Government
Custom House,
Dublin 1, D01 W6X0.

23 July 2020

RE: - Water Advisory Body Quarterly Report No. 2 of 2021

Dear Minister,

Please find the above attached which will be published on the Water Advisory Body (WAB) website Tuesday 27 July 2021, and has been produced in accordance with Section 44 (1) (b) of the Water Services Act, 2017.

In submitting the report, the following are of note: -

- The report seeks to address in so far as possible the performance of Irish Water in the implementation of its Strategic Funding Plan 2019-2024;
- It is based on information that has been published; and
- It seeks to present the information using plain, jargon free, language, as far as practicable.

I set out below some points of note in this report.

On the First Fix Free Scheme, while this report shows a small increase in the number of leak repairs completed since Quarter 4 2019, we note a continued and disappointing drop-off in the total number of leak repairs completed under the scheme since mid-2016. The WAB anticipates that the introduction of the Household Water Conservation (Excess Use Charges) Policy in 2021 (with first bills expected to issue in late 2022 or 2023) and the expansion of the First Fix Free Scheme to unmetered households will encourage customers to avail of the First Fix Free Scheme and that higher numbers of leak repairs will be achieved in the future.

The report notes that the number of supplies on the remedial action list increased by two at the end of Quarter 1 2021. The WAB also notes the Environmental Protection Agency's concern that the progress made during 2020 was reversed during the last Quarter, and that there are now 48 supplies on the Remedial Action List serving 1,010,117 consumers. This represents an increase of 5,120 consumers being served by the most "at risk" supplies. There were eight supplies on the Remedial Action List at the end of Quarter 1 2021 for which Irish Water has not submitted a completion date.

The WAB reports that while there was a net reduction of 16 in the number of Priority Urban Areas in the past year, it also notes the Environmental Protection Agency's concern that further delays in providing treatment mean that 12 towns and villages will continue discharging raw sewage after 2024 because they will still not be connected to a waste water treatment plant.

The WAB notes that Irish Water exceeded their target for 2020 with regard to replacement of lead connections. However, Irish Water's target to replace an additional 7% of remaining public side lead connections up to the end of 2024 means it is highly unlikely that Irish Water will be able meet the targets to replace all lead services by 2026.

The WAB notes the decline in the number of consumers on a boil water notice at the end of Quarter 1 2021. However, the WAB notes the Environmental Protection Agency's concerns that all of the 17 notices in place at the end of Quarter 1 2021 were in "long term" boil water notices, which means the notice was in place for more than 30 days.

The report notes that while the percentage of the population served by Urban Waste Water Treatment plants that are not compliant has increased from 25% to 28%, however, compliance remains very low and the percentage of urban areas meeting their licence standards has decreased slightly.

The WAB welcomes the decision from the Commission for Regulation of Utilities, published in April, to expand the eligibility criteria for the First Fix Scheme. This allows thousands of previously ineligible domestic water customers to avail of a free leak investigation and repair. The WAB is of the view that the First Fix Scheme has been successful in reducing customer-side leakage.

The WAB welcomes the publication of the Water Sector Transformation Policy Paper in February 2021 and considers it an important step towards ensuring Irish Water can be held accountable to its customers and Irish society, in a transparent manner.

The WAB completed stage one of a review of Irish Waters procurement policies and procedures. The review is reported on in length in Section 3 of this report and is published on the WAB website

www.wateradvisorybody.ie. The auditors (Ernst & Young) advised that at a high level conclusion, Irish Water is compliant with procurement policies and procedures.

Finally, the WAB welcomes the development of the National Water Resources Plan and looks forward to its timely conclusion in 2022. The Plan will play a key role in identifying the investments required to deliver the capacity and quality of water on a sustainable, national basis.

Further to the above, the report contains eleven metrics which measure the performance of Irish Water. The report, along with other information about the Water Advisory Body, can be found on the website, www.wateradvisorybody.ie.

The WAB welcomes the opportunity to meet you and update you on its work and is available to do so at your convenience. We will also send a copy of the report to the Joint Oireachtas Committee and will seek to engage with them on our work and the content of the report.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul McGowan", written over a horizontal line.

Paul McGowan,
Chair, Water Advisory Body.