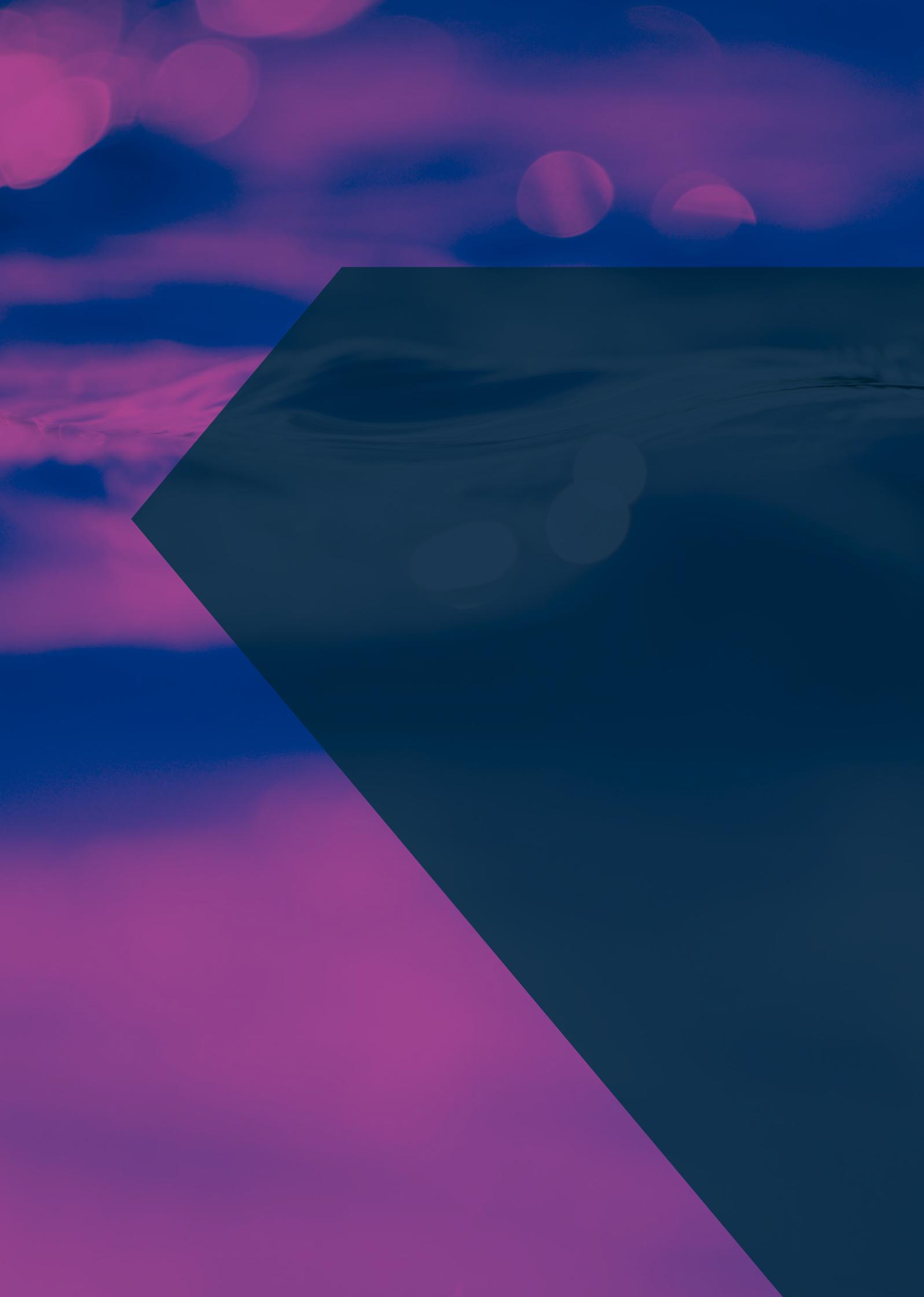
The background of the top half of the cover is a close-up photograph of water ripples. The water is a vibrant blue, and the ripples create a sense of movement and depth. The lighting is bright, creating soft, out-of-focus highlights on the water's surface.

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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▼
Paul McGowan *Chairperson*

Statement from the Chairperson

This is the WAB's third annual report and comes at a time when WAB has gained traction in its role and has published and carried out valuable work and continues with an ambitious work plan.

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 is performing and the second role is to help increase public confidence in Irish Water.

The WAB prepares statutory quarterly reports on Irish Water for the Oireachtas. These reports set 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. It continually strives to ensure that the performance indicators are meaningful and are a valuable source of information and evidence.

During 2021 the WAB published the six reports listed:

- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 1 of 2021
- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 2 of 2021
- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 3 of 2021
- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 4 of 2021
- ▶ Review of Irish Water procurement procedures
- ▶ Annual Report 2020

In 2021, apart from the quarterly reports, the WAB considered Irish Water procurement procedures and commissioned local surveys to determine views of selected Irish Water customers in relation to communications from and contact with Irish Water.

The aims of this targeted research were:

1. To establish views of customer communication and contact by Irish Water in terms of clarity, timeliness, efficiency, professionalism and overall experience.
2. To gauge how Irish Water customers (both residential and business) would like to be communicated with in the future.

The results of the survey will be published in 2022.

I wish to express my gratitude to Irish Water, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), An Fóram Uisce and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for complying with the various requests for information made by the WAB during 2021 and to the other bodies, agencies and Departments that supported the WAB in its work over the period.

As the COVID 19 restrictions continued, all of the WAB meetings had to be held virtually during the year.

I would like to thank the other board members for the valuable and extensive work that they have carried out since establishment.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the WAB Secretariat for their support and hard work on behalf of the Body.

This report was approved by the members of the WAB on 14 April 2022.

Paul McGowan
Chairperson

14 April 2022

Executive Summary

The WAB was established on 1 June 2018.

The purpose of the WAB is to advise the Minister 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 Strategic Funding Plan.

A set of performance indicators has been selected to represent the activity of Irish Water in relation to the performance of its functions. Data in respect of these indicators is collated and published as part of the quarterly reports of the WAB in order to provide information on performance. This information is relevant to Irish Water itself, to track its own performance over time, but also to further inform both the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage and the Oireachtas on the performance of Irish Water. Some refinement of these indicators took place in 2021 and so revised indicators will form part of the 2022 reports.

The WAB's functions are set out in Part Seven of the Water Services Act 2017 which can be viewed on the Irish Statute Book website: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie>

Irish Water's Strategic Funding Plan is a public document and available on Irish Water's website: www.water.ie

Each report is prepared for the Oireachtas and is published on the WAB's website: www.wateradvisorybody.ie

Membership of the WAB

Membership of the WAB is statutorily prescribed as a minimum of five.

The appointed members bring a variety of expertise to their work on the WAB including regulation, legal, consumer, audit and environmental. At the end of 2021 there were five board members on the WAB.

The current members and their appointment dates are as follows:

		Appointed	End of Term
Chairperson	Paul McGowan	01/06/2018	31/05/2023
Members	Miriam McDonald	14/12/2018	13/12/2023
	Martin Sisk	14/12/2018	13/12/2023
	Michelle Minihan	28/11/2019	31/05/2023
	Donal Purcell	06/11/2020	31/05/2023

The WAB had a 60% to 40% male to female ratio at the end of 2021. Gender balance and diversity is an integral part of the appointment process and will continue to be considered fully for all appointments made to the WAB.

Member Biographies



Paul McGowan *Chairperson*

Paul McGowan, Chairperson

Term Dates: 1 June 2018 – 31 May 2023

Dr McGowan has served as a Commissioner with the Commission for Regulation of Utilities since 2013 and served as Chairperson between February 2017 and February 2020.

His lead responsibilities within the CRU include water regulation and energy safety. Paul joined CRU in 2000 and his previous roles include Director of Safety, Director of All Island Energy Markets, Head of Gas and Senior Analyst (in Gas Regulation and in Electricity Markets).

Before joining CRU, Paul also previously worked in the offshore oil & gas, education and construction sectors. Paul is a Chartered Surveyor by profession with a PhD in the field of Construction/Engineering Management.



Miriam McDonald

Miriam McDonald

Term Dates: 14 December 2018 – 13 December 2023

Ms McDonald is a professional, experienced and highly capable Marketing Director/Customer Excellence Specialist. She has worked in a range of different industries from professional services to business to business (B2B). She has particular expertise in the area of utilities having worked as Head of Customer Management, ESB and as a Communications Specialist for Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on national energy and gas trials. In addition, she has contributed to a number of companies in the area of energy efficiency, renewables and sustainability.



Martin Sisk

Martin Sisk

Term Dates: 14 December 2018 – 13 December 2023

Mr Sisk has a Bachelor of Law degree and is a Solicitor by profession. Having previously worked for the Revenue Commissioners, he spent most of his career in Regulation both financial and otherwise as Registrar of Friendly Societies and subsequently as a senior official in the Central Bank of Ireland. He has previously served as Chairperson of Vhi Healthcare and is currently Chairperson of the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA).

Member Biographies



Michelle Minihan

Michelle Minihan

Term Dates: 28 November 2019 - 31 May 2023

Dr. Minihan joined the Environmental Protection Agency in April 2018, where she leads the drinking water team within the Office of Environmental Enforcement. Michelle has responsibility for the regulation of Irish Water, ensuring the quality of drinking water delivered through the public supply in the Republic of Ireland meets legislative requirements.

Dr. Minihan is a member of the EU Drinking Water Expert Group and has worked on the recast of the Drinking Water Directive.

After completing her PhD in Chemistry at the University of Limerick, Dr. Minihan has worked in the private and public sectors before joining the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, where she worked for over 10 years in a variety of roles.



Donal Purcell

Donal Purcell

Term Dates: 06 November 2020 - 31 May 2023

Dónal Purcell has a Bachelor of Science & Education degree. He has worked in the areas of Education, Local Development, Local Government and is currently the Executive Lead with An Fóram Uisce - The Water Forum.

The Water Forum was established as a statutory body in June 2018 to facilitate stakeholder engagement and debate on issues relating to water as a resource, water quality, issues affecting customers of Irish Water and issues associated with the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. The Forum consists of 26 representatives from a wide range of organisations with direct connections to issues relating to water quality.

Fees

Three of members of the WAB including the Chair are ex-officio, meaning they do not receive a fee.

The annual fee payable to those members of the WAB due a fee is €5,985.00.

The WAB implements the “one person one salary” principle in respect of the payment of member fees for Irish public servants.

Travel and subsistence expenses incurred are paid at standard civil service rates. The rates applicable in 2021 are available at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/employing-people/employee-expenses/travel-and-subsistence/index.aspx>

A table listing the attendance of members at meetings of the WAB in 2021 is provided in Appendix 1.

Activities

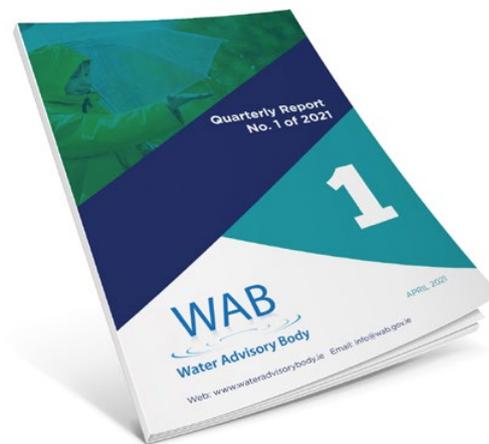
The WAB held 12 board meetings in 2021.

The minutes of the Board meetings are published at www.wateradvisorybody.ie

The WAB met with several bodies and agencies in 2021 including Irish Water and the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities.

In 2021, the WAB published four reports in relation to its function of reviewing the implementation by Irish Water of its Strategic Funding Plan:

- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 1 of 2021
- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 2 of 2021
- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 3 of 2021
- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 4 of 2021



WAB Quarterly Report 1 of 2021

This was the fifth quarterly report published by the WAB, and the first report of 2021 in relation to its function of reviewing the implementation by Irish Water of its Strategic Funding Plan.

As the purpose of the WAB is to advise the Minister 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 Strategic Funding Plan, a set of performance indicators was selected to represent the activity of Irish Water in relation to the performance of its functions.

Data in respect of these indicators is collated and published as part of the quarterly reports of the WAB in order to provide objective information on performance.

This information is relevant to Irish Water itself, to track its own performance over time, but also to further inform both the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage and the Oireachtas on the performance of Irish Water.

Some of the findings from the report are as follows:

First Fix Scheme

The Household Water Conservation (Excess Use Charges) Policy is expected to be introduced in 2021, with first bills expected to issue in late 2022 or 2023. The WAB anticipates that this will encourage customers to avail of the First Fix Free Scheme and that higher numbers of leak repairs will be achieved in the future.

Remedial Action List (Water)

The figures had been showing show a general downward trend in both the number of drinking water supplies on the list and the population that these supplies serve; however, the addition of the Leixlip supply to the Quarter 3 2019 Remedial Action List changed this. The WAB welcomes the progress that has been made in 2020 but notes there are nine supplies on the Remedial Action List at the end of Quarter 4 2020 for which Irish Water has not submitted a completion date.

Lead service connections

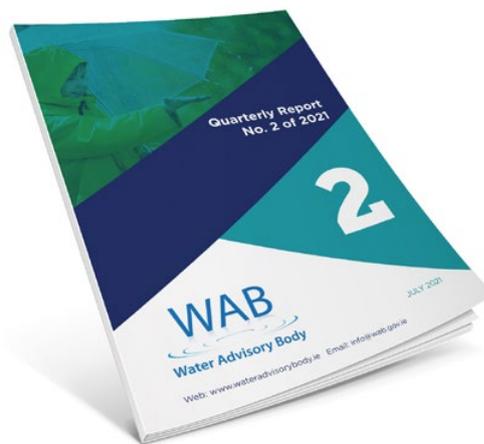
The WAB notes that Irish Water exceeded its target of 1,100 for 2020 with regard to replacement of lead connections by replacing 3,025 lead connections. Under normal circumstances the WAB expects to see the continued replacement of lead services until the completion date of 2026. However, Irish Water plans to replace only 7% of remaining public side lead connections by 2024 meaning it is unlikely to meet its target to replace all lead services by 2026.

Boil Water Notices

At the end of Quarter 4 2020, 1,335 people were on Boil Water Notices which is a significant decrease on the population on Boil Water Notices at the end of the previous quarter (14,951 people). The WAB welcomes this decrease. The reduction in the number of people on a Boil Water Notice at the end of Quarter 4 2020 is mainly due to the lifting of a long-term Boil Water Notice on the Lough Talt Public Water Supply in December 2020. At the end of Quarter 4 2020, only one of the 14 Boil Water Notices (serving 1,335 people) was in place for less than 30 days.

The WAB notes with continuing concern the trends for long term Boil Water Notices highlighted by the Environmental Protection Agency and will continue to monitor Irish Water's progress in ensuring that Boil Water Notices remain in place for as short a period of time as possible.

Full report is available at www.wateradvisorybody.ie



WAB Quarterly Report 2 of 2021

This was the sixth Quarterly report published by the WAB, and the second report of 2021. As with all the quarterly reports, it reflects on key themes emerging around Irish Water's performance and considers recommendations to both the Minister and the Oireachtas, in line with statutory functions.

The following findings from the report are of note:

First Fix Free Scheme

There has been a continued and disappointing drop-off in the total number of lead repairs completed under the scheme since mid-2016. The WAB anticipates that the introduction of the Household Water Conservation Policy (Excess Use Charges) in 2021, with first bills expected to issue in 2023, will result in higher numbers of leak repairs in the future. The WAB welcomed the CRU decision published in April 2021 to allow previously ineligible domestic customers to avail of the scheme.

Remedial Action List (Water)

Progress that was being made in 2020 was reversed during the last Quarter of 2021 with an increase of two supplies. Currently, there are 48 supplies on the Remedial Action List.

Priority Urban Area List (Wastewater)

There was a net reduction of 16 in the number of Priority Urban Areas in the past year. In 2020 waste water treatment at 12 large towns and cities did not meet European Union standards set to protect the environment. The WAB notes the Environmental Protection Agency's concern that further delays in providing treatment means 12 towns and villages will continue discharging raw sewage after 2024 because they will still not be connected to a waste water treatment plant.

Lead service connections

The WAB notes that Irish Water exceeded its target for 2020 with regard to replacement of lead connections. During Quarter 1, 2021, Irish Water replaced 592 lead service connections. The progress in Quarter 1, 2021 demonstrated that progress had slowed significantly compared with earlier progress. It was further noted that Irish Water only expects to replace 7% of remaining public side lead connections by 2024, indicating that it will fall short of its goal of replacing all lead services by 2026.

Boil Water Notices

When Irish Water took charge of water supplies in 2014 it set a target to eliminate boil water notices. 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 on "long term" boil water notices, which means the notice was in place for more than 30 days.

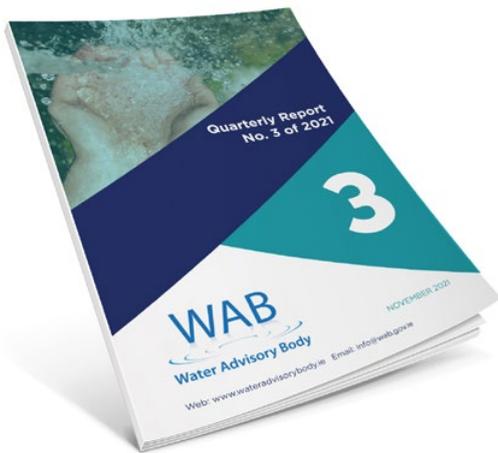
Compliance of Urban Waste Water Treatment (UWWT) - Plants with Environmental Protection Agency discharge licences

Overall, compliance with Environmental Protection Agency discharge licences remains very low and the percentage of urban areas meeting licence standards has decreased slightly. More stringent standards commenced at a number of urban areas at the beginning of 2020 which may have contributed to the decline in compliance. Notwithstanding this, the percentage of the population served by the plants that were compliant has increased from 25% to 28%. The main factor in the low rate of compliance by population equivalent remains due to the failure to treat waste water adequately at Ringsend.

Other developments in the report included:

1. Water Sector Transformation Policy Paper
2. Review of Irish Water Procurement Policies
3. National Water Resources

Full report is available at www.wateradvisorybody.ie



WAB Quarterly Report 3 of 2021

The WAB's seventh quarterly report and the third in 2021 was published in November 2021. The WAB notes with concern, two significant incidents that affected drinking water in August of 2021 in the Ballymore Eustace and Gorey drinking water treatment plants.

The following findings from the report are of note:

First Fix Free Scheme

There has been a sustained drop off in the number of leak repairs carried out by customers, with the highest number of leak repairs carried out by customers to date being completed in Quarter 3 of 2016, whilst the lowest number was completed in Quarter 2 2020. However, the WAB welcome the introduction of the Household Water Conservation Policy, anticipating this will encourage customers to avail of the First Fix Free Scheme.

Remedial Action List (Water)

The WAB also has concerns regarding the Remedial Action List, which at end of Quarter 2, 2021 contains 53 water supplies, an increase of five supplies since its last report. There was however, a welcome decrease in the population served by supplies on the Remedial Action List mainly due to the removal of Leixlip from the list.

Lead service connections

The WAB welcomes Irish Water's forecast that it will exceed its 2021 target for replacement of lead connections and the increased budget assigned for these works. However, the WAB notes it is highly unlikely Irish Water's target to replace all lead services by 2026 will be met.

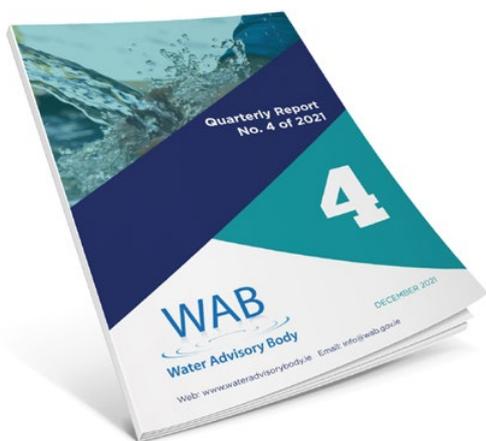
Boil Water Notices

The WAB expressed concern at the length of the boil water notices, with the last seven quarters reporting 'long-term notices' (in place for more than 30 days). The WAB would like to see boil water notices in place for as short a period as possible. The WAB notes that the number of people affected by these notices at end of Quarter 3, 2021 has increased from the last report.

Other developments in the report included:

1. **CRU's Irish Water Performance Assessment Framework 2020-2024 Decision** – The WAB welcomes the Commission for Regulation of Utilities review and update of the Irish Water Assessment Framework 2020-2024 which sets out the services areas, specific metrics and target levels of performance it will use to monitor Irish Water.
2. **EPA's Water Quality in 2020 Indicator report** – The WAB welcomes the Environmental Protection Agency's published report assessing the quality of Ireland's lakes, rivers, estuaries and groundwaters. The WAB also notes the concerns raised in the report that Ireland's water quality is under threat with nitrogen pollution from agriculture.
3. **Ballymore Eustace and Gorey Water Treatment plants** – EPA summary report of both incidences.

Full report is available at www.wateradvisorybody.ie



WAB Quarterly Report 4 of 2021

The WAB's eighth quarterly report and the fourth in 2021 was published in December 2021. This report highlighted changes to four of the Performance Indicators as well as reviewing reports produced by the EPA and the CRU.

Some of the main findings from this report are as follows:

Remedial Action List (Water)

The number of water supplies has increased on the Remedial Action List (55) by two since the last report. These 55 supplies now serve 455,097 consumers, an increase of 11,282 consumers from Quarter 2 2021.

Lead service connections

Irish Water is on track to exceed its 2021 target for replacement of lead connections. However, the WAB notes 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 of replacing all lead services by 2026.

Boil Water Notices

The WAB noted with concern the increase in number of people on boil water notices since the previous Quarter and the length of time that these notices were in place (with the majority more than 30 days in duration). The WAB would like to see boil water notices in place for as short a period as possible – this requires significant investment by Irish Water.

Water Quality

The WAB found that compliance with microbiological standards generally is high, remaining over 99% in the period 2014-2020. However, three instances in 2020 were reported that failed to meet the standards of E.coli. The WAB will continue to monitor the success of Irish Water in decreasing the number of public water supplies that do not comply with the microbiological standards.

Other developments in the report included:

1. CRU Compliance investigation into Irish Water's handling of issues arising at Bailieborough Public Water Supply Scheme
2. **Non-Domestic Tariff Framework** – The WAB welcomes the new Non-Domestic Tariff Framework introduced on the 1st of October 2021 which implements harmonised, transparent, cost reflective and equitable water charges for businesses across the country.

Full report is available at www.wateradvisorybody.ie

Other Activities

Meetings

The WAB held a number of meetings other than board meetings in 2021. The details are recorded on the website and are as follows:

22 Jan 2021 - Meeting with the CRU.

17 Feb 2021 - Meeting with Ernst and Young (EY) and Irish Water.

4 March 2021 - Meeting with the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage.

15 June 2021 - Meeting with Irish Water to provide an overall update on the Review of Irish Water procurement procedures.

13 October 2021 - Meeting with CRU to discuss the presentation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the quarterly reports.



Review of Irish Water procurement and contract procedures

A review of Irish Water's procurement policies and procedures was commenced in 2020. The Members agreed that the following three areas would form the basis of the review:

- ▶ Irish Water has in place and executes appropriate procurement policies and procedures;
- ▶ Irish Water has in place and executes appropriate procurement contracts management policies and procedures;
- ▶ Irish Water has in place and executes appropriate capital investment/procurement planning policies and procedures.

As the CRU was reviewing Irish Water's capital investment programme, the Members agreed the WAB's work would initially focus on the first two areas and that it would consider the third area once the CRU's Capital Investment review is completed.

The review focused on the methodologies Irish Water uses regarding procurement and the effectiveness and compliance of its procurement policies. Phase I of the review was conducted through an external service provider (Ernst & Young) tendered by Irish Water on behalf of, and based on Terms of Reference set by the WAB. The report "Review of Irish Water procurement and contract policies and procedures to ensure compliance against PDO2 (Procurement Policy) and PDO3 (Authorisation Levels and Contract Approvals) was discussed at a meeting with the service provider (EY) and Irish Water in March 2021 and published by the WAB on 20 April 2021.

Full details of this report can be found on www.wateradvisorybody.ie

Irish Water Customer Service Survey Report

In Quarter 3, 2021, the WAB engaged by Core Research by competitive tender to undertake a survey of Irish Water customers.

The survey was targeted research of Irish Water Customers and its purpose was to:

1. establish views of customer communication and contact by Irish Water in terms of clarity, timeliness, efficiency, professionalism and overall experience.
2. gauge how Irish Water customers (both residential and business) would like to be communicated with in the future.

This was a targeted survey of 628 residential and 400 business customers in areas where Irish Water had recently carried out maintenance or remedial work. The survey was conducted between 26th October and 7th December 2021.

The findings of the report are not intended to be nationally representative, but rather represent a snapshot of the issues impacting a number of defined areas.

The key findings and the results of the survey will be published in 2022.

WAB Annual Report

The WAB published its first annual report in March 2020 covering the period since the establishment on 1 June 2018 to December 2019. The second annual report in April 2021 covered the period 1 Jan 2021-31 Dec 2020.

The annual report is part of the WAB's statutory function. The reports are sent to the Minister of Housing, Local Government & Heritage and the Joint Oireachtas Committee.

Website

The WAB launched its website in September 2019. Documentation such as quarterly reports and the annual report are added for public access. Details of the Body, members, meetings and how to contact the WAB are featured on the website. The website continues to be the primary source of information on the WAB with 223 new users accessing the site in 2021.

Engagement with Social Media

The user numbers on the WAB website rose with the release of each WAB Quarterly Report. This was assisted by the WAB creating its own Twitter account in July 2021 to circulate news of report releases. The WAB also thanks the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage communications unit for providing assistance in relation to report releases.

National Media

The WAB worked to increase the awareness of the public about the work and goals of the Body. With each quarterly release, the WAB promoted the report nationally with the assistance of a public relations partner. Each of the quarterly reports and their key messages have been featured in national and local press and radio on several occasions.



Resources

The WAB is supported by a small secretariat team, but for a large part of 2021 has carried a full-time vacancy at a senior level. These staff provide support to the WAB as part of their work, along with other duties.

The Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage provides the secretariat staff who support the WAB in all its work. The WAB's budget in 2021 was €320,000.

Expenditure 2021

The WAB expenditure from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021 was €47,905.65.

The members consider the statement of expenditure to be a true and fair view of the WAB's spending since establishment.

Expenditure	Amount
Member Fees (including PRSI)	€13,292.68
Website Maintenance	€1,338.96
Printing and Postage	€370.96
Desktop Publishing / Press Release	€9,084.10
Customer Survey	€23,818.95
Total	€47,905.65

Appendix 1

WAB Members attendance during 2021.

Member	Paul McGowan	Miriam McDonald	Martin Sisk	Michelle Minihan	Dónal Purcell
22/01/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17/02/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
18/03/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12/04/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
18/05/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
15/06/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
14/07/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
31/08/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
21/09/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
13/10/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
09/11/2021	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
09/12/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Totals	12	11	12	12	10

Appendix 2

Terms of Reference

The Water Advisory Body (WAB) was established under the Water Services Act 2017 with effect from 1st June 2018. The WAB has adopted a corporate governance regime in accordance with best practice. In accordance with the Water Services Act 2017 the WAB is independent in the performance of its functions.

The purpose of this document is to set out the terms of reference of the WAB. These terms of reference (“TOR”) were approved by the members on 5th October 2018 and were further reviewed following the appointment of the two independent members of the Body.

1. Membership

The WAB shall consist of five members made up of an employee from the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (“CRU”), an employee from the Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”), a representative from An Fóram Uisce (“AFU”), each appointed by the Minister and two members appointed through the Public Appointments Service (“PAS”).

Only members of the WAB have the right to attend Board meetings. However, where a permanent member of the WAB is not available to attend a meeting, that member may nominate an alternate from their respective organisations to attend in their place. Where the Chair has nominated an alternate to attend in his/her place a permanent member of the WAB must chair the meeting. The staff of the Secretariat and other individuals may be invited to attend for all or part of any meeting, as and when appropriate or necessary.

Appointments to the WAB shall be for a period of up to five years, which may be extended for one further period of up to five years.

Where the office of the Chairperson becomes vacant, the Minister shall designate one of the members of the WAB to chair its meetings until the Minister appoints a Chairperson.

2. The WAB Secretariat

The WAB’s Secretariat will ensure that the members receive information and papers in a timely manner to enable full and proper consideration of the issues.

The Secretariat is also responsible for the formal induction of new WAB members and organising mentoring for members where required with the support of the ex-officio Board Members as appropriate.

3. Statutory Functions of the WAB

The statutory framework governing the WAB is set out in Part 7 of the Water Services Act 2017. In that Act, section 43(3) provides that the Advisory Body shall be independent in the performance of its functions. The substantive functions of the WAB are set out in section 44, which are:

- 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:
 - a. Infrastructure delivery and leakage reductions;
 - b. Cost reduction and efficiency improvements;
 - c. Improvements in water quality, including the elimination of boil water notices;

- d. Procurement, remuneration and staffing policies; and
- e. Responsiveness to the needs of communities and enterprise.

In carrying out the functions set out above the WAB shall rely to the greatest extent possible on the existing outputs/ reports of the EPA, AFU and CRU to compile its reports. To facilitate this the legislation provides that the WAB, as far as it is consistent with the performance of its functions, should try to secure administrative cooperation between it and the CRU, EPA, Ervia, Irish Water and An Fóram Uisce. In that context the WAB can enter into arrangements, as appropriate, from time to time with these bodies in order to –

- ▶ Facilitate cooperation in the performance of the respective functions of those bodies in so far as they relate to Irish Water;
- ▶ Avoid duplication of work by the WAB and those other bodies;
- ▶ Ensure that those other bodies cooperate with each other that best promotes the performance of the WAB of its functions; and
- ▶ Ensure consistency between decisions made by those bodies in trying
- ▶ to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water.

4. Reporting Responsibilities

On a quarterly basis, the WAB shall furnish a report to the appropriate Oireachtas Committee on the performance by Irish Water on the implementation of its business plan.

The WAB shall, no later than 30th day of April following the first complete calendar year after the establishment day, prepare and submit to the Minister an annual report of the WAB. The Annual Report shall be in relation to the performance of the WAB’s functions during the period since establishment, and on the 30th day of April in each subsequent year submit an annual report in relation to the performance of its functions during the preceding calendar year. The Minister must lay that report before each House of the Oireachtas.

5. Other Functions of the WAB

The WAB shall keep under review corporate governance developments (including ethics-related matters) that might affect the State body, with the aim of ensuring that its corporate governance policies and practices continue to be in line with best practice.

The WAB will ensure that the principles and provisions set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (and any other corporate governance codes that apply to it) are adhered to.

6. Performance of Functions

The WAB may establish such sub-groups as are necessary to assist it in the performance of its duties. They may include members who are not members of the WAB if specialist skills are required. Where a sub- group is established:

- ▶ the terms of reference shall be specified in writing and approved by the WAB and reviewed annually;
- ▶ the WAB, on the nomination of the Chairperson, shall appoint its members;
- ▶ the WAB shall receive reports from the sub-group that reflect activity undertaken by the group;
- ▶ all protocols concerning the operation of the WAB shall be applied to a sub-group; and
- ▶ notes of sub-group meetings shall be circulated to all of the WAB members.

7. Quorum

The quorum necessary for the transaction of business shall be three members. A duly convened meeting of the WAB at which a quorum is present shall be competent to exercise all or any of the authorities, powers and discretions exercisable by the WAB.

8. Authority

Subject to the Water Services Act 2017, the WAB shall have all such powers as are necessary or expedient for the performance of its functions.

