

## Water Advisory Body concerned at number of long-term boil water notices

### Second Quarterly Report of 2022 provides update on the number of areas discharging raw sewage

**Dublin, Ireland – 16 August 2022:** The Water Advisory Body (the WAB) is concerned that 20 out of the 21 boil water notices in place at the end of Q1 2022 are long-term (exceeding 30 days). This means that the solution to fix the problem with the plant could not be addressed quickly and requires significant investment by Irish Water.

Also noted in the WAB's latest report is the fall in the number of priority areas from 148 in 2017 to 92 in 2022. This includes the number of areas discharging raw sewage in Q2 2022 and the number of areas in 2021 that did not meet Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive standards. A single agglomeration, the Greater Dublin Area served by Ringsend treatment plant, accounts for approximately 2.23 million or three quarters of the total population equivalent served by priority areas.

Chairperson of The Water Advisory Body, Paul McGowan, commented on the number of long-term boil water notices: "Under normal circumstances the WAB expects that no consumer should be on a long-term boil water notice. However, 20 of the 21 boil water notices in place at the end of Q1 2022 were long-term notices which means the notice exceeded 30 days. Larger water supplies on long-term boil water notices at the end of Q1 2022 included Whitegate Regional in Co. Cork (9,482 people) and Gort in Co. Galway (2,776 people). The WAB notes this disappointing trend and will continue to monitor Irish Water's progress in this area".

Other key findings in the Q2 WAB report include:

- **Lead service connections replaced** – During Q1 2022, Irish Water replaced 1,607 lead service connections, which is low as the target for 2022 is greater than 10,000 replacements. However, Irish Water has stated that with an increased budget for 2022, it expects to significantly increase lead service connections replacements and exceed 10,000 by the end of the year.
- **Unplanned Interruptions to Water Supply** – Irish Water estimated that 7.6% of all properties connected to Irish Water's network experienced an unplanned interruption for greater than 24 hours in 2020. Irish Water has been set a target of less than 3.6% of connected properties to be impacted by end 2024 but the WAB notes that Irish Water is not currently on track to meet this target.
- **Agglomerations with no Wastewater Treatment** – Irish Water reduced the number of agglomerations with no wastewater treatment by 1 (to 34) by providing treatment to a site earlier than planned. However, the WAB has significant concerns over whether Irish Water will achieve its zero target by 2024.
- **Customer complaints management**– Irish Water's performance declined in almost all the customer complaints management metrics in 2020. Irish Water responded to 97.89% of domestic and 93.75% of non-domestic complaints within five working days, with either a resolution or an outline plan of

the proposed resolution. This is the lowest five-day response rate since Irish Water started reporting against this metric in 2018.

- **Targeted Local Survey of Irish Water Customers** - In May 2022, the WAB published a survey of Irish Water customers. The survey asked a targeted group of customers who live in areas that had recent issues with their water supply. It looked at Irish Water's communication in terms of clarity, timeliness, efficiency, professionalism, and overall experience. The survey also attempts to gauge how this group of customers (both residential and business) would like to be communicated with in the future. The survey found confused lines of communication between Irish Water and its' household and business customers.

Paul McGowan, concluded by commenting on the performance decline by Irish Water in almost all of the customer complaints management metrics and the targeted local survey of Irish Water customers. "Customer service is at the core of utility delivery, and timely, effective complaints management is an important element of customer service. The WAB is disappointed to observe this level of performance in an area it would reasonably expect to see improvement year-on-year as it beds in its customer complaints processes. It is of particular concern to see deterioration in this area while at the same time recording an improvement in customer satisfaction. The WAB also recommends that Irish Water's response time for customer complaints and issues be improved in order to avoid, households and businesses having to make follow up calls to the Company."

This is the tenth quarterly report published by the WAB, and the second report of 2022.

**ENDS**

#### **Notes for the Editor**

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#### **About the WAB**

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. Irish Water's Strategic Funding Plan is a public document and available on Irish Water's website [www.water.ie](http://www.water.ie). The WAB prepares four Quarterly Reports on Irish Water every year. This report sets out the WAB's view on how Irish Water is performing against its own Strategic Funding Plan. Each report is prepared for the Oireachtas and is published on the WAB's website. For further information on the WAB, including this and previous reports, see <https://wateradvisorybody.ie/>