



RURAL WATER NEWS

Magazine of the Group Water Scheme Sector

Spring 2018 Volume 20 Issue 1

EU Commission issues draft of new Drinking Water Directive

Several months after the introduction of significant changes to the Drinking Water Regulations (SI 464/2017), the prospect of an even more profound revision of the wider EU Drinking Water Directive has united water services stakeholders in highlighting the potential implications of the proposed new measures for Irish drinking water services.

Appearing before the Joint Oireachtas Committee (JOC) on 21 March, NFGWS Chief Executive Officer, Barry Deane, and Research & Evaluation Officer Brian MacDonald welcomed the

broad thrust of the proposed revision – especially in terms of its source-to-tap risk assessment approach – but argued that the addition of 10 new parameters and a substantial increase in the frequency of compliance monitoring will present major challenges for GWS supplies.

If the Directive was to come into force in its present form, Mr Deane revealed that the cost for a single suite of parametric analysis would amount to at least €1,850. Given that a minimum of 10 such samples will be required, the cost per annum would be approximately €18,500.

Larger schemes (over 1,000 m³ per day) will have to conduct 50 such sampling suites, at a cost of nearly €100,000 per annum.

Such costs would be totally unaffordable, the Federation submission argued.

Sampling programme

Schemes would be required to complete 3-years of such a sampling programme to demonstrate that individual parameters pose no risk, thereby justifying their removal from the mandatory sampling list.

Mr MacDonald told the JOC that compliance monitoring on some 180 GWS borehole sup-

plies since 2007 revealed virtually no exceedances for chemical parameters that will be required under the new directive, arguing that it would make perfect sense to take this historic information into account in planning future monitoring programmes, thereby avoiding unnecessary costs.

Improved catchment understanding and management on schemes is, in fact, further reducing any such risks and this also needs to be taken into account in formulating sensible and sustainable monitoring of GWS supplies.

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An ecumenical service was held in Knock, County Mayo, immediately before the Annual Delegate Conference on 8 March, to mark and to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the National Federation of Group Water Schemes on the 2nd of February 1997. Local Ministers of religion from several denominations presided over a poignant and reflective ceremony that acknowledged, in particular, the contribution of deceased GWS activists.

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Comment

Sometimes we are so busy planning the forward momentum of the GWS sector that we lose sight of how far we have come since the formation of the National Federation of Group Water Schemes in February 1997. So it was appropriate that this year's Annual Delegate Conference should recall, in a special way, the momentous event that took place in Knock, County Mayo, 21 years ago when (after several regional meetings), the NFGWS was formally established.

The rest, they say, is history ... and what a history. From a position where the GWS sector was the subject of a case taken before the European Court of Justice and water supply on schemes was being castigated in our National Parliament, the Irish rural water sector is without parallel in the world in terms of its organisation, its delivery of a quality assured drinking water supply and in terms of having a vision for a sustainable and holistic water supply service that truly addresses all risks from source catchment to tap.

Having once been regarded as Cinderella of the water services sector, we have witnessed a coming-of-age for the NFGWS over the past 12-18 months and especially through the recent subsidy review process, according to Brendan O'Mahony. His view is supported by the increasing inclusion of the Federation's input to wider national and EU policy development.

Through initiatives such as DBO bundling, rationalisation, training, infrastructural upgrades and mentoring, we have collectively built a monument to the early pioneers of the rural water sector and a solid foundation for the future.

Through the development of our tailored 'All About Water' engagement with schools, we are also building the 'water awareness' that is essential if community-owned and community-run drinking water services are to hold their own with any water supply service in the world in the time ahead. That is our aim.

The recent inclusion of the NFGWS as part of a Team Ireland delegation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee (JOC) in relation to the implications of a revised EU Drinking Water Directive was very welcome. We note that a day later, the JOC met to consider the proposed referendum legislation to enshrine in Bunreacht na hÉireann the ownership of public water infrastructure. Our concerns on this issue have been well rehearsed in terms of our fear that there may be unintended consequences for GWS infrastructure. While the recent hearing included references to GWS concerns, we remain available to meet with the JOC on this issue to further explain our position and to address any misunderstandings.

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Continued from front page
Referring to the risk assessment work undertaken within the GWS sector in recent years, Mr Deane said that having completed source catchment delineation, the natural follow-up is the completion and implementation of full source protection plans, addressing identified hazards.

He added that a number of pilot projects are already underway in this area, with the backing of the Department (DHPLG) and other stakeholders, including the EPA and LAWCO.

Discrepancy

The cost concerns of the NFGWS were echoed by Irish Water representatives, while the EPA focused on discrepancies in the parametric standards required under the revised Directive vis-a-vis World Health Organisation (WHO) standards.

The much higher standard being demanded under the Commission's proposals

would present major difficulties for water suppliers.

In particular, if the proposed standard for Chlorate (one of the new parameters) is enforced, it will mean the ending of sodium hypochlorite dosing on surface water supplies in particular.

In response to a question from a JOC member, Darragh Page of the EPA revealed that the WHO is 'at a loss' to understand the rationale for the proposed EU standards as they do not reflect its position.

Given that turbidity levels ex treatment are to be less than half the parametric value, Mr MacDonald explained that this will require increased capital investment on filtration, even on good groundwater supplies.

Not a 'done deal'

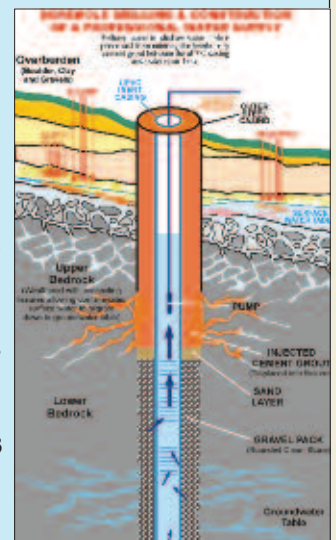
Stating that the revised Directive 'isn't a done deal', the DHPLG told the JOC that consultation and negotiations with the EU are ongoing, given the strength of concerns expressed by Member States.

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Annual Delegate Conference

O'Mahony heralds NFGWS 'coming-of-age'

Addressing delegates to the Annual Delegate Conference (ADC) on 8 March, the Chairperson of the National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS), Brendan O'Mahony said that 'what we have witnessed over the past 12-18 months has been a coming-of-age for this National Federation of Group Water Schemes'.

Speaking in the Mayo village of Knock where the Federation was founded in 1997, he added that 'a crucial factor in ensuring a positive and mercifully short negotiating period' during the recent subsidy review 'was the credit built up by this Federation over previous similar engagements', adding:

'We didn't have to jump up and down or bang the table to be heard. We simply had to present a case that was evidence-based and compelling. This is how the NFGWS always approaches negotiations, but on this

occasion the preparation was particularly impressive.'

Encouraging 'all' schemes to put in place the management systems that are needed to ensure a consistent water quality standard and a consistent professional service, he said that 'there has never been a better opportunity for schemes to introduce professional management into the running of their schemes'.

'Some may resent the fact that their domestic members won't have to pay anything at all – assuming that they stay within the generous 160 cubic metre allowance. They may want the domestic to pay even though the Exchequer is paying for their water already. I would be very concerned if the true basis for such attitudes was, in fact, a determination to cross-subsidise the cost of water to non domestic connections. Let me state clearly, as a farmer and as someone who spent most of his life advocating the rights of farmers, there can be no justification for taking money out of the pockets of your domestic members to keep down the unit cost of water for any non domestic connection, including farm use. This Federation could never attempt to stand over such a dishonest approach and we will not.'

Brendan O'Mahony

Challenges

Accepting that the subsidy agreement 'presents challenges for non DBO schemes that have traditionally relied on a standing charge', he said that the Federation will 'work with you to address those concerns'.

As to the likely difficulty 'in persuading our domestic members to pay for water if and when a future govern-

ment decides to reintroduce such charges on public supplies', he said:

'This is why it is important that schemes continue to send annual bills to their members pointing out the amount that would have been due, based on the cost per cubic metre, were the subsidy not in place. This would act as an annual reminder that the water allowance is tied to the availability of subsidy'.

Mr O'Mahony issued a strong warning against cross-subsidisation, saying that there could be no justification for 'taking money out of the pockets of your domestic members to keep down the unit cost of water for any non domestic connection, including farm use'. He warned: *'This Federation could never attempt to stand over such a dishonest approach and we will not.'*

The full text of Mr O'Mahony's address is available at www.nfgws.ie.



Motions agreed

96 delegates, representing 15 county and cross-county Federations, attended this year's conference, agreeing a total of 48 motions on a range of issues, all of which will be presented to the Department at the next scheduled meeting.

Noticeably absent this year was a specific section relating to the operational subsidy, a tacit acknowledgement that this issue has been comprehensively dealt with in the recent review.

However, arising out of particular issues that have arisen for schemes like Glenboy/Glenfarne in Leitrim, that county Federation called for a subsidy increase towards publicly sourced schemes 'where a deficit in funding is clearly identified', while Donegal Federation called for 'clear guidance ... on what exact expenditure headings are allowable under the revised subsidy arrangements'.

Capital review

There were 15 motions in relation to the capital programme, of which 8 focused on the review of rural water investment needs.

The themes of equity & fairness and guaranteeing the sustainability of the sector were common to motions from Cavan Cork, Galway and Limerick Federations.

Also addressing the theme of equity & fairness, Mayo Federation called for an increase in capital funding, as did Sligo Federation.

Offaly Federation focused on the percentage of funding allowed towards capital projects, arguing that 'in light of the restrictions on GWSs ability to charge their members' that there be an increase in the grant from the current 85% level.

For Tipperary Federation, water conservation measures require a higher rate of capital support, a view supported by Laois Federation, which



Above: l-r Seán Clerkin (Strategic Policy Advisor), Barry Deane (Chief Executive Officer), NFGWS Officers Brendan O'Mahony (Chairperson), Tony Prendiville (Secretary), Paddy Ward and Vincent Farrelly (Joint Treasurers) and Andrew Fuller of DBA Accountants (auditors to the NFGWS).

called for 100% grant aid. On a motion from Kildare & Wicklow Federation it was agreed that 'sufficient capital grant aid be made available under the Rural Water Programme for the installation of meters on all GWS in light of the new subsidy changes'.

Cavan Federation proposed the need for source protection and intake improvements to be considered in the capital review, while a motion from Kilkenny Federation suggested that rationalisation and amalgamation projects 'be prioritised for capital investment to get each scheme to the required standard'.

A 2-part motion from Carlow & Wexford Federation addressed the issue of capital replacement works in DBO plants, arguing that 100% funding towards these is 'essential to ensure treatment plants are maintained to a high standard and the water produced continues to be compliant with the regulations'.

The second part of this motion proposed that the programme be 'broadened to take account of new and improved technologies available to optimise treatment plant efficiency'.

As most County Federation meetings were held in

January, motions from Cork, Louth and Tipperary Federations calling for the early announcement of allocations were somewhat overtaken by events, as the DHPLG announced interim allocations under Measure 2 on 29 January.

Finally, under this section, Donegal Federation requested that there be 'clarity and openness from local authorities in relation to projects which are promoted by the said authorities, particularly under Measure 2 of the RWP'.

Constitution

Concerns about the potential 'negative impact' and 'unintended consequences' for the GWS sector of a proposed constitutional amendment in relation to the ownership of public water infrastructure

was the consistent theme of motions from 12 Federations. Many of these reflected the view of Mayo Federation that the NFGWS Board should do its utmost to ensure that the wording put before the people in any such referendum would not jeopardise 'the autonomy of group water schemes as they are currently constituted'.

There was unanimous support too for a motion from Monaghan Federation that the board of the NFGWS 'take every measure possible' to ensure the GWS sector is consulted and protected before any possible amendments are made to the Constitution in relation to the issue of ownership of public water and wastewater infrastructure.

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Rural Water updates

As we go to press, we note an important decision taken by Dáil Éireann on 29 March to adopt the ‘reasoned opinion’ of the Joint Oireachtas Committee in relation to the proposed revision of the EU Drinking Water Directive. This is to the effect that the EU proposal ‘does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity’. In simple terms, this principle asserts that Member States should be free to adapt particular EU measures to suit local circumstances.

In its opinion, the JOC voiced support for ‘the overarching goals of the proposal’, but added that ‘the scope for Member States to choose how to implement the proposal’s objectives at national level, and in accordance with established national systems, is constrained’.

Interestingly, the JOC ‘does not see the necessity for diverging from the recommendations of the World Health Organization in relation to the parameters for monitoring the quality of water for human consumption’ and expresses its view that the proposal ‘has the potential to have far reaching implications on well-established national arrangements in place in Ireland’.

The Committee opinion concludes that it ‘is satisfied that the above points, taken together, clearly demonstrate that the proposal does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity’.

The full NFGWS submission to the EU Commission on the proposed new Drinking Water Directive is available on the NFGWS website at www.nfgws.ie.

While the main focus is on the terms of the revised Drinking Water Directive, it is important to record that an earlier revision of the Directive (Annex II of EU 2015/1787) was transposed into Irish law last Autumn (SI 464/2017).

The categories known previously as ‘check’ and ‘audit’ sampling have been replaced by Group A and Group B. Under Group A, Colony count @ 22^o is now included, while *Clostridium perfringens* is not. Ammonium will only be included where chloramination is used in the treatment process. Depending on a risk assessment, any other parameter required for human health protection may also be included and all parameters not included in Group A must be included in Group B.

As for sampling frequency, increased monitoring will be required on public supplies providing over 4,500m³ per day, but sampling frequency remains unchanged for group water schemes in normal circumstances. However, under Part C of the revised regulations, a water supply can deviate from specified frequencies once a risk assessment has been completed that takes account of Water Framework Directive monitoring and is approved by the regulator.

In other words, a scheme clearly demonstrating that there is no risk from particular parameters may be able to have the sampling frequency reduced.

An information note prepared by the National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) for group water scheme (GWS) organisers and management in relation to their duties and responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) is currently being distributed.

From the 25th of May, all organisations, including GWSs, must demonstrate compliance with GDPR. Every scheme must now take the necessary steps through written policies and procedures, to ensure that any personal data held by your GWS is managed in compliance with the GDPR and is solely used for its intended purpose.

Comprehensive information and advice on all aspects of this legislation are available on the Data Protection Commissioner website www.dataprotection.ie or <http://gdprandyou.ie>.

33 GWSs have now been successfully taken-in-charge by Irish Water across 5 counties. These include 9 schemes in Clare, 14 in Galway, 2 in Laois, 5 in Mayo and 3 in Roscommon.

As of late February, a further 12 taking-in-charge projects were underway, as listed below:

County	Group Water Scheme
Cavan	Poles GWS
Clare	Ardeamush Knockaskeheen Poulmagun GWS Cahermurphy GWS Corbally Danganbrack GWS
Galway	Carraghy GWS Errisbeg GWS Garranfrauns GWS Glengowla Leam GWS
Kilkenny	Molassy GWS
Leitrim	Dromore GWS Lough Errill GWS
Longford	Bohermore Finneragh GWS

The DHPLG has developed a GIS-based system for local authorities (LAs) to register each private supply, which they hope to launch in the coming months. The system will contain contact details for each supply, the location and description of assets owned and details of how each supply is structured and managed. An LA workshop on this system was held in 2017 and another workshop will be held for all LAs when the system is rolled out.

At a meeting between the NFGWS and EPA Drinking Water Team on 22 February, a wider range of issues was discussed, including a review of drinking water quality in the GWS sector and the NFGWS response to reports of parametric failures in the sector. There was agreement that failures need to be communicated to the Federation without delay.

An NFGWS analysis of the implications of the proposed revised Drinking Water Directive was also discussed.

In the course of the meeting, the EPA gave a presentation on the water abstractions register. There will be a requirement for all GWSs abstracting >25m³ per day to register on the system. Schemes abstracting >250m³ per day are required to register and will also require a licence.

The system goes live in April and GWSs have three months to register. The NFGWS can assist with this process where approval is provided by a GWS to register on its behalf.

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Road opening

Following the introduction of the new Purple book and improved application process for road opening licences, this was a less vexed issue than in previous years.

Even so, Kilkenny Federation asked the Board to ensure that the charging system for road opening licences is 'not excessive', especially the deposit element which 'will put a financial strain on many GWS'.

Kilkenny Federation also proposed that charges be 'removed for openings well in on the verge and not on the road surface', while Monaghan Federation urged that a 'derogation' be secured from the Road Management Office with regard to 'the road opening costs associated with maintaining and working with meters'.

To avoid multiple road openings and associated road reinstatement costs, Tipperary Federation submitted a motion that the NFGWS liaise with the relevant authorities and stakeholders to ensure road openings and road works 'are carried out in a co-ordinated way simultaneously'.

Irish Water

A thorny issue for many publicly sourced schemes is the direct levying of charges on their non domestic members by Irish Water, a legacy of a policy introduced on several local authorities about ten years ago when private companies were contracted to meter these connections so that charges could be levied directly on them.

A motion from Clare Federation expressed annoyance at this practice and proposed that 'the NFGWS seeks to remove the standing charge of €145 which applies to non-domestic connections on publicly sourced schemes in Co. Clare that is payable to

Irish Water'. As the motion went on to explain: *'Such connections are also liable for usage on the GWS and are therefore paying twice, to two different entities for their water, which is causing extreme difficulty for GWS management.'*

Two Federations, Mayo and Sligo want it made 'abundantly clear' that public pronouncements made by Irish Water or the Energy Regulator 'apply to public schemes only' and not to group water schemes.

Mayo Federation's further call for a dedicated 'point of contact' in Irish Water to deal with issues that arise on publicly sourced schemes has now been addressed [see page 9].

Similarly, there has already been a successful follow-up to a Galway Federation motion calling for NFGWS 'help and support' for publicly sourced schemes 'in their dealings with Irish Water'.

NFGWS representatives recently met with senior personnel from Irish Water to agree greater co-operation on a range of areas affecting publicly sourced schemes and contacts will be maintained on an ongoing basis.

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Mná na hÉireann



The election of Mary Connolly of Sligo Federation (top left) as the first woman to sit on the Board of the NFGWS was a welcome development on what was International Women's Day. Indeed, a feature of the ADC was the increased inclusion of women as delegates, some of whom are pictured above. Further evidence of the emergence of mná na hÉireann to the forefront of the rural water sector is the picture below, taken at a training event for Cavan and Monaghan schemes late last year.



Final year of source catchment delineation programme

As the Department is expected to include source catchment (ZOC) delineation reports as a condition of subsidy for schemes that treat their own water supplies, 2018 is the final year of a 5-year programme that will have seen this work completed on well over 300 group water schemes.

The NFGWS is currently contacting all remaining privately sourced schemes to make them aware of the impending subsidy condition and to offer – those that are part of the NFGWS – development staff support at every stage of the process from completing application forms to the local authority to the presentation of the final reports.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), which has spearheaded the delineation work on schemes with springs and boreholes has already appointed hydrogeologists to complete this year's programme of work and site visits have already been completed on 18 schemes across Counties Clare (1), Galway (13), Offaly (2), Roscommon (1) and Tipperary (1).

Surface Water

There are 7 surface water GWSs to date on which catchment delineation work is planned this year, 5 of which are located on the two great Western lakes, Lough Mask and Lough Corrib.

A meeting to co-ordinate work on this massive catchment is to be held with representatives of these schemes on 17 April.

The Centre for Freshwater and Environment Studies at

Dundalk Institute of Technology, which has completed the vast majority of surface water source catchment reports, expects to see the start of work on Clew Bay GWS (Mayo) shortly.

Importance

According to NFGWS Senior Development Officer and co-ordinator of the programme, Joe Gallagher, 'this project was always intended to provide a relevant resource to schemes, rather than simply a report that would sit on a shelf'. He continued:

'Their importance as a first necessary step in the process of source protection planning and as a means of creating water awareness amongst GWS members cannot be underestimated.'

Urging the small minority of privately sourced schemes that have not yet signed up for catchment (ZOC) delineation 'to do so without delay, if only to ensure eligibility for subsidy payments', Mr Gallagher said that this was especially important now in light of the proposed revised Drinking Water Directive, which insists on source risk assessment as a prerequisite for compliance.

Source protection planning

For phase two of this project, it is proposed to develop full source protection plans from the data collected during phase one for all regulated privately sourced GWSs (approximately 360) commencing in Q2 2018 and completed over a 5-year period.

A plan of action to identify the work involved and associated costs is currently being completed by the NFGWS.

8 GWSs have been identified to pilot this strategy, including one large surface water catchment in Monaghan and 7 groundwater ZOCs in Roscommon.

In a recent submission to the draft River Basin Management Plan, NFGWS Chief Executive Officer, Barry Deane, said that in addition to this pilot project, GWSs located in identified 'areas for action' will be 'prioritised for completion of source protection plans initially, along with schemes outside of these areas that have particular source protection issues'.



Kieran Ryan of Bloomhill GWS in County Offaly, pictured with Karen Lee Ibbotson (hydrogeologist) and Sophie O'Connor (GSI) during a recent site visit as part of ZOC delineation work on the scheme's source. The sign on the pumphouse door shows that this scheme already has a keen awareness of the value of its water supply.

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Affiliation fees

Reiterating a proposal that came forward at the pre-Christmas Special General Meeting, Carlow/Wexford, Limerick and Monaghan Federation all moved that there an increase in the affiliation fee to the NFGWS from €5 at present to €6 per household.

Strategic Policy Advisor, Seán Clerkin, informed delegates that there has been a huge increase in the workload and in the staffing of the federation since the last affiliation fee was set in 2002.

The increase will come into effect next year.

Miscellaneous

A Clare Federation motion calling for NFGWS clarification of new data protection laws has since been addressed and an information note on this subject is issuing to schemes with this magazine.

Clare has also proposed that the Federation provide a guidance document for schemes re employment of staff (to include employment legislation and policies that will affect the GWS sector), while Kildare & Wicklow GWS wants an NFGWS guidance checklist ‘on what to look for when securing insurance’.

Adequate resourcing for local authorities ‘to meet the needs of the rural water sec-
NFGWS Chairperson, Brendan O’Mahony (below) and Secretary, Tony Prendiville (right) address-
ing delegates to the ADC.

tor’ was proposed by Laois Federation, with Donegal Federation reiterating its call for the re-establishment of functioning Rural Water Monitoring Committees in all counties with group schemes.

To address the decline in many rural communities that ‘threatens the existence of group water schemes’, Leitrim Federation proposed that the NFGWS use its influence to bring about a change in ‘restrictive planning regulations’.

Louth Federation submitted a motion that the NFGWS seek funding from the Department of Social Welfare to meet the water charges of members on social welfare who exceed their annual water allowance.

Finally, the costs involved in providing audited accounts for subsidy purposes prompted Roscommon Federation to propose that this requirement be made optional for small group water schemes.



Process agreed with Irish Water

Publicly sourced group water schemes that have experienced frustration in their dealings with Irish Water will be delighted to learn that on foot of approaches from the NFGWS, the public water utility has established a process to help resolve any communications difficulties, as follows:

1. General billing and operational issues experienced by publicly sourced GWSs should firstly be raised directly with Irish Water’s contact centre. Depending on the query, the relevant contact areas are available at <https://www.water.ie/contact-us/>. The general contact for non-domestic issues is 1850 778 778.
2. Should the above not provide a satisfactory resolution, a dedicated resource has been appointed in Irish Water to support and co-ordinate assistance to the GWS affected. In this situation, the relevant contact number is 01 8925974.

Advising that more complex queries may take longer to resolve than normal day-to-day queries, Irish Water says that it will continue to track and monitor GWS-related queries as they occur through its contact centre and dedicated support team and that it will keep the process under review ‘to ensure that it is operating efficiently’.

Any GWS experiencing difficulty using this process is urged to contact its local NFGWS development officer for assistance.

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MCPA contamination of drinking water supplies

Group water schemes are going to ‘have to do more’ to raise awareness of the danger posed by the misuse of the herbicide MCPA in source catchments, according to NFGWS Senior Development Co-ordinator, Joe Gallagher, who represents the Federation on the National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group.

According to Mr Gallagher, ‘the rate of detection of MCPA residues in drinking water supplies has actually increased in recent years’:

‘This is despite the introduction of tighter controls on the sale and use of such products, despite the provision of mandatory training for professional users and despite an awareness-raising campaign that includes the dissemination of leaflets targeting particular sectors.’

While the increased trend of detections may be partly due to more thorough monitoring, the data reflects the extensive

use of pesticides in circumstances where they can get into watercourses.

And, with even greater levels of pesticide monitoring likely to be introduced under a proposed new EU Drinking Water Directive, Mr Gallagher predicts that the rate of detection ‘will increase significantly in the years ahead unless preventative action is taken as an integral part of source protection strategies’.

Active substance

The available evidence points to use by grassland farmers as the most likely origin of MCPA contamination in drinking water catchments, as this is the active substance in a number of herbicides predominantly used to control the overgrowth of rushes that can render their land ineligible for EU payments.

Rushes thrive in poorly-drained areas (with a water table near the surface). In many locations the problem of rush infestation will have been exacerbated by the recent

sequence of wet summers. Over frequent spraying also builds up a resistance to the herbicide in the target rushes.

Given the very low level of contamination that can result in a breach of the Drinking Water Regulations, Mr Gallagher believes that ‘group schemes should take active steps to inform members that the very highest of standards need to be employed when applying MCPA products’.

Safeguard zones

In addition, GWS members should be informed that statutory ‘no-use’ zones (called safeguard zones) apply around drinking water abstraction points, ranging from 5m to 200m (this includes any dry drains that could hold water) depending on the size of the supply.

If in doubt about the safeguard zone appropriate to your raw water source, or if you want information leaflets for distribution, contact your NFGWS development officer for assistance.

Ecumenical Service

The National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) was established on 2 February 1997 in the Belmont Hotel, Knock, County Mayo and to mark its 21st anniversary, an Ecumenical Service was held in Knock on 8 March, as was the Annual Delegate Conference.

The service was jointly led by four locally-based ministers of religion; Rev. Molly Deatherage (Presbyterian Church), Rev. Canon Andrea Wills (Church of Ireland), Rev. Jeremy Nicholl (Methodist Church) and Rev. Gary Howley (Catholic Church).

Pioneers of the GWS sector were remembered and celebrated, as was the contribution of past and current GWS activists to the Federation’s growth and success.

Tokens

Tokens of the water services sector were presented by NFGWS staff members: water plants to signify the rural water sector’s recognition of the importance of clean raw water sources, a GWS minute book symbolising the voluntary commitment of GWS committees, a water meter and stopcock to symbolise the value group water schemes place on water conservation and a jug of drinking water to signify the commitment of schemes to delivering clean and safe potable water to their communities.

Concluding the event, NFGWS Chairperson, Brendan O’Mahony thanked the four celebrants and all those who attended what had been a moving ceremony of celebration and remembrance.

An Order of Service booklet produced for the occasion is available by contacting Julie Brannigan at 047-72766.

Important points to note

ONLY use pesticides if necessary and as part of an integrated pest management strategy. Consider non-chemical methods instead or in tandem with pesticides.
Consult a registered Pesticide Advisor.

ALWAYS read and follow the product label.
If a buffer zone is indicated on the label, there is a legal requirement to comply with it. This applies to all types of surface water bodies regardless of whether or not the water body is used to supply drinking water.

RESPECT statutory no-use zones (safeguard zones) around drinking water abstraction points.
These range from 5 metres to 200 metres depending on the size of the supply. Your Local Authority or The National Federation of Group Water Schemes can advise on this. Safeguard zones are mandatory around drinking water abstraction points but they are not indicated on product labels.

REMEMBER!

- A SINGLE drop of pesticide lost to a water body such as a typical small stream (1m wide, 0.1m deep), for example, can be enough to breach the legal limit for pesticides in drinking water of 0.1 part per billion along 30km of its length.
- Always read and follow the product label.
- Be aware of how near water bodies (ditches, streams, ponds, rivers, lakes and springs) are to where you are working.
- Find out if the treatment area is in the vicinity of a drinking water abstraction point or well.

For further information on related topics such as container storage, spillage, integrated Pest Management or a list of approved Pesticide Advisors visit:
www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie, www.teagasc.ie or www.usps.ie

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A SINGLE drop of herbicide can breach the drinking water limit in a small stream for 30 km

GWS workshop on potential for energy generation

The National Federation of Group Water Schemes in Ireland is collaborating with the Dwr Uisce team, and ARUP engineering consulting in organising a workshop on the potential for energy generation on water distribution networks.

The "Water and Energy in rural communities" workshop, scheduled to take place in Kilkenny (Hotel Kilkenny) on 26 April will provide an insight into the findings of a team of researchers from Trinity College Dublin and Bangor University in Wales

that has, as part of a wider research project, conducted assessments at GWS sites in south Leinster and Munster over the past year.

Observations from this project will be shared at the workshop, while the wider objectives are to:

- learn from actual case-studies in the area of energy recovery from water distribution systems and wastewater systems, using hydropower turbines, pump optimisation and leakage reduction.
- build on the research connections between GWS members and the Dwr Uisce team, legislators and technology providers.
- explore opportunities for energy recovery within the member schemes and implementation challenges.

Who should attend?

While the workshop will be of particular interest to GWS operators and managers, companies, researchers and other stakeholders interested in energy and water savings are welcome to attend also.

Register at Eventbrite:

goo.gl/L2kWqM

Visit the Dwr Uisce website:

www.dwr-uisce.eu



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The cost of colour loss from peatlands to water bodies

For group water schemes abstracting from surface water sources, colour is a familiar and expensive problem to be addressed.

In Ireland, colour typically comes from areas containing peaty soils where partially decomposed, dissolved or suspended organic matter flows into water courses.

Although most rivers and streams draining peat-covered areas naturally have some

colour, human interference in peatlands can increase colour levels dramatically.

By maintaining natural conditions in bogs and by restoring damaged bogs, water quality can be improved and money saved in treatment.

Such management strategies require an understanding of where colour comes from, when it is delivered to water courses and what pathways it follows to reach them.

Failure to answer these questions can result in expensive and inappropriate management/remediation measures that don't achieve the desired result.

Savings

Drinking water suppliers internationally recognise that treatment cost savings can be made by limiting potentially damaging activities in peatlands. But would such an approach work in Ireland?

An EPA-funded study "Towards the Quantification of Blanket Bog Ecosystem Services" aims to examine this issue in collaboration with the NFGWS.

The Queens University Belfast (QUBBES) project team will carry out pilot studies in drinking water catchments displaying problems with colour, identifying the critical source areas where disproportionately high levels of colour contribute to the total load being treated.

Identification of these areas and better understanding of hydrological processes will allow communities to target land use measures for maximum financial and environmental benefits.

Looking at this matter another way, the approach will provide a basis for communities to save money and avoid mistakes by incorrectly implementing measures in areas where benefits may be more limited.

Comparison of study results with treatment plant costs will provide an estimate of potential savings to be achieved through focused land use management, while also providing a tool for determining appropriate compensation levels for those affected (e.g turfcutters).

In this way the study aims to achieve a more sustainable approach to community-based water treatment, where the environment improves while people save money.

Information

If you would like to know more about the QUBBES project, you can check out the project webpage at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/NBE/Research/ResearchCentres/qubbes/>

You can follow the project on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/qubbes/?ref=bookmarks>

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<https://twitter.com/QUBBES>



Disturbed bogland around drinking water lake sources increases the loading of organics and colour to treatment plants, resulting in increased treatment costs. Pictured is Lough Amincheen, source for Townawilly GWS in south Donegal where the high organic release from the surrounding peatland has also contributed to THM issues.

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On the water front

by Brian MacDonald

John Fogarty, who knows a thing or two about bees, recently featured on the popular **Ear to the Ground** programme to discuss how the habitats for our pollinators are being steadily eroded, threatening the very survival of our native wild bees in particular.

An active member of Ashill GWS committee in Tipperary, John has secured a little bit of financial support from Tipperary County Council to transform his scheme’s pump-house site into a haven for pollinators. Essentially, this means encouraging wild flower growth, cutting grass less often, steering clear of herbicide spraying and generally creating a micro environment within which bees can feed and live.

Thinking about the many hundreds of pumphouse/treatment plant and reservoir sites owned by group water schemes the length and breadth of Ireland, NFGWS development officer for Munster, Adrian Smyth, feels that this is an idea that other schemes might like to adopt, especially as it involves management of the site rather than spending money.

Dr Úna Fitzpatrick of Ireland’s Biodiversity Centre has kindly supplied excellent pointers on a range of measures that schemes might consider. Adrian Smyth (adrian@nfgws.ie) – or any NFGWS staff member – would be more than happy to forward these to any interested scheme.

Anyone who expects rapid improvements to surface water quality in light of policies that support source protection and implementation of pollution prevention/remediation measures should think again. Referring to a review of catchments where measures were put in place, Professor Owen Fenton of Teagasc says that it took 1–10 years for policies to have a measurable effect on water quality, while positive mitigation effects on surface water quality took 4–20 years to measure. He tweeted recently that such time lags explain why positive effects aren’t always evident within governance cycles. Food for thought as we enter the 2nd Cycle of River Basin Management Plans.

Mind boggling reports of vast rafts of plastic floating in oceans and microplastics being absorbed by aquatic animals in the depths of oceans gives added urgency to addressing the environmental menace that plastic has become..

With countries in the developing world introducing outright bans on plastic bags, it is surely only a matter of time before the plastics industry will be required by the pressure of public opinion (if not by governments) to come up with solutions, not least in relation to the microplastics that enter our aquatic environment.

As the impacts of such microplastics on human health have yet to be established, they are not included as a parameter under the EU’s revised Drinking Water Directive. However, monitoring for microplastics will be required. With the prevalence of body washes to remove fake tan etc. and clothing that loses a thousand miniscule polyester strands in every wash, count it as a blessing if your lake, spring and borehole source **hasn’t** been contaminated by microplastics through effluent discharge from septic tanks.

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NFGWS submission on draft DWWTS National Inspection Plan 2018-21



While the final report of the GWS-led community domestic waste water treatment system (DWWTS) education and desludging initiative is due to be released shortly, NFGWS Senior Development Co-ordinator, Jean Rosney, said that the EPA's publication in January of the draft National Inspection Plan 2018-21 prompted the Federation to submit a response included here. It is based on several findings and recommendations that arose from the GWS study.

1. Engagement Strategy

(a) Many people are not aware that there is a legal obligation on them to maintain their DWWTS on a regular basis. This information needs to be more readily available for every householder. Information leaflets produced by the NIECE working group would greatly increase understanding on this key issue.

This should be undertaken as part of a wider awareness raising strategy focusing on the importance of desludging to detect poorly performing systems and to incentivise people to upgrade systems.

(b) For those interested in desludging their DWWTS, the accessibility of registered contractors' information poses a serious impediment. Local Authorities have an important role to play in providing individuals and communities with a condensed list of registered competent desludging con-

tractors in their area of responsibility. All local authorities should provide a portal to relevant information.

(c) Serious consideration should also be given to providing a grant scheme or other financial incentive from Exchequer funding towards DWWTS desludging, taking account of the State support for wastewater treatment for public/Irish Water domestic customers.

2. Inspections

(a) The Inspection Scheme should allow for householders to request an inspection if they are concerned that their system might not be operating properly.

(b) Grant aid should be available towards the remediation/replacement of any poorly functioning system, rather than being limited to systems that fail inspections, as this

would encourage people to carry out the necessary works.

A fast-tracked inspection should be provided to allow them avail of the grant, other than where poor management/lack of desludging is found to be the issue.

(c) Although the focus currently is on DWWTS that pose a threat to water bodies generally, particular consideration should be given to DWWTS that may pose a threat to drinking water supplies.

3. Other Areas

(a) The cost of sludge collection and disposal varies significantly from county to county according to the rate per tonne applied at various WWTPs and the distance to the nearest WWTP facility. The latter factor can only be influenced by addressing the shortfall of WWTP facilities across local authorities so that travel distances are reduced.

(b) The development of composting facilities to deal with solid sludge from DWWTS will further reduce costs to contractors and householders alike.

(c) Low-cost emptying of DWWTS by agricultural contractors/farmers should be monitored by the relevant statutory agencies to ensure that sludge is being properly disposed of. Greater awareness in this area would help and the responsibility should be on the householder to ensure that their sludge is disposed of properly.

(d) Companies/State agencies requiring farmers to implement Bord Bia Quality Assurance (QA) schemes need to highlight the fact that they do not permit the spreading of DWWTS sludge on lands being used for food production and/or in areas where it might contaminate water bodies.

These companies/State agencies and farming organisations, including dairy co-operatives, need to be made aware of the information note on this issue produced through the NIECE working group.

Farmers participating in these QA schemes should have to produce desludging receipts to show that they have disposed of the contents of their DWWTS properly.

Conclusion

The NFGWS recommends that the above points along with the final recommendations on 'GWS-led community DWWTS education and desludging initiative' be considered as part of the final NIP 2018-2021.



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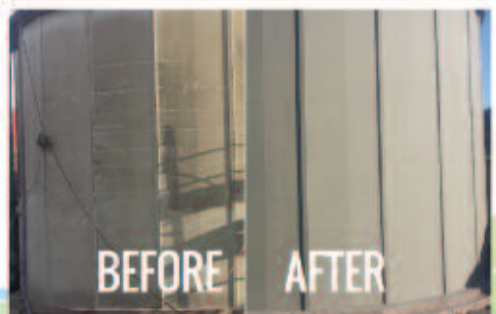
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Early announcement of RWP ‘block grant’ allocations

There has been an early announcement by Minister Eoghan Murphy, TD, of interim block grant allocations under Measure 2 of the Rural Water Programme (RWP) and confirmation also that an increased capital investment fund is to be made available for 2018.

A Department circular L1/18 issued on 29 January reveals that the capital budget under the multi annual RWP for this year is €20 million, a 12.4% increase on the €17.8 million provision in 2017.

In line with a commitment made to the NFGWS, an interim allocation under Measure 2 was also announced ‘to ensure programme momentum’, a development welcomed by NFGWS Chairperson, Brendan O’Mahony in his address to the Federation’s Annual Delegate Conference.

This interim allocation, totalling almost €4 million is provided as a block grant for use in ‘GWS enhancement’. While local authorities are given flexibility in its disbursement, the Department points out that ‘water conservation and specific source protection works should be prioritised’.

Basis of allocations

The county-by-county interim allocations under Measure 2 mirror the amounts announced in June 2017 (Circular L4/17). These were based on 75% of:

- the Department’s payments made to each authority in 2016 under this measure or
- the local authority’s recent bid under the measure ‘whichever is the lesser’.



The upgraded DBO water treatment plant at Brackloon/Spaddagh GWS, one of many projects completed under the Rural Water Programme capital investment programme in 2017.

Accepting that group water schemes in some counties will be sorely disappointed at the level of available funding under this Measure, NFGWS Chief Executive Officer, Barry Deane said that ‘the knock-on impact on counties that had relatively low expenditure in 2016 or low bids in 2017 is evident’.

Encouraging schemes to submit upgrade proposals, ‘regardless of the level of funding currently available’,

he urged local authorities that haven’t already done so to organise meetings of their Rural Water Monitoring Committees so that there is ‘sufficient time to complete project planning, tendering and construction in the current calendar year’.

Other Measures

Department Circular L1/18 also reveals that the Department is currently reviewing progress on the scheme/project approvals that

were allocated funding in 2016/2017 under Measures 1, 3, 4 and 5 of the multi-annual RWP, as ‘this will determine the level of funding required for existing approvals and the extent of resources available to invite new scheme/project based bids in 2018’.

Local authorities are being asked to provide ‘a perspective on funding needs for approved schemes for 2018’, as this ‘will allow the Department to assign within budget as well as to decide on the extent of bids, if necessary, for suitable projects for 2018’.

As ‘priority of funding in 2018 will be given to the completion of projects already approved under these measures’, local authorities are asked to ensure that any such schemes/projects approved and allocated funding in 2017:

- continue to completion if commenced but not completed in 2017; and
- commence as quickly as possible, if not already commenced in 2017, and continue to completion in 2018.

Go-ahead

Adding that ‘funding allocations for these measures will be notified in early 2018’, local authorities were given the go-ahead to plan activity and progress projects ‘on the assumption that they will receive a similar level of funding under these measures as in 2017’.

The Circular adds that capital replacement (DBO schemes) funding, should it arise, is demand-led and is additional to the allocations under Measure 2.

2018 Block Grant Allocations by Local Authority for Measure 2 under the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2016–2018

County	€	County	€
Carlow	75,000	Louth	150,000
Cavan	290,000	Mayo	375,000
Clare	325,000	Meath	180,000
Cork	150,000	Monaghan	340,000
Donegal	40,000	Offaly	100,000
Galway	260,000	Roscommon	240,000
Kerry	10,000	Sligo	10,000
Kildare	50,000	Tipperary	300,000
Kilkenny	140,000	Waterford	70,000
Laois	170,000	Westmeath	50,660
Leitrim	90,000	Wexford	150,000
Limerick	140,000	Wicklow	13,585
Longford	60,000	Total	3,779,245



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Besides disrupting water supply to consumers further along that watermain, even more serious problems could arise when the repair was completed and the line repressurised.

It would be normal to find that fluctuations in pressure and water hammer effect on worn 'o' rings in other collars would result in further leaks downstream of the one that had just been fixed!

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Regional Reports

Connacht Region

*by Karen Carney,
Paul Connolly and Joe Gallagher*

Galway
There have been delays to the commencement of several upgrade projects in Galway. ***

Although the contract has been signed for construction of a 4.7km pipeline that will link Ballinakill GWS to homes in the Letterfrack area, poor weather conditions have prevented construction to date. It is, however, expected that work will commence shortly. ***

Knockmaskehill GWS is also awaiting the commencement of construction of valves and

bulk meters on its distribution network. ***

The extension of Kilchreest GWS network to supply 3 houses has also been delayed, while tendering has yet to be completed on approved upgrade projects on Coole GWS and Looscaun GWS. ***

A tender recommendation for a 1km critical mains replacement project on Brockagh/Lisduff GWS is to be submitted to Galway County Council. ***

Construction is ongoing on Boyounagh/Ballyedmond GWS of 41 new valves (including sluice valves, air valves, scour valves, hydrants) and also the repair/rebuild of any existing damaged or broken valve chambers. This contract, which began late in 2017, includes the supply and installation of 81 new marker posts.

75% of the works are now completed. ***

Installation of 2 pressure reducing valves on Cappataggle District GWS has been completed. This contract also began late in 2017. ***

A contractor has been appointed to install 5 magmeters on

Kilcoona/Caherlistrane GWS. ***

Abbey Kylemore GWS has applied for RWP funding to replace 1 mile of pipework. ***

Funding is being sought by Kiltiernan GWS to develop a back-up borehole and to lay a pipe from this borehole to their treatment plant.



A recent source ZOC delineation site visit at Belmont GWS.

Galway Federation AGM took place on 23 January, with 74 attendees. National Federation CEO, Barry Deane addressed the meeting while Galway development officer Karen Carney gave a presentation on the outcomes from the GWS operational subsidy review.

A draft notice of a Special General Meeting and a newsletter published by the NFGWS for GWS members (explaining the implications of the subsidy changes) was distributed to attendees.

A workshop was arranged prior to the AGM for schemes wishing to avail of the NFGWS budgeting spreadsheet. This proved to be a worthwhile exercise.

Galway DBO 2 LMC met on 25 January, while DBO bundle 2 LMC met on 6 March. Both meetings generated good discussion on the revised operational subsidy, data protection, annual bills and the issue of THMs.



Cappataggle GWS and Kilcooley/Gurty Madden GWS committee members discuss a proposed amalgamation.

20 delegates from Galway attended the NFGWS Annual Delegate Conference.

Monika Kabza from Tobin Consulting Engineers recently presented ZOC reports to Tierneevin GWS, Roo GWS, Ardahan GWS and Lydacan GWS.

A camera survey of Lydacan

GWS borehole has shown that a build-up of deposits on the well liner (rather than a fundamental failure of the well, as was feared) explains restricted water flow from the source.

Jet cleaning of the well using specialist equipment will be used to remove the deposits in question.

Discussions are underway in

relation to the proposed amalgamation of Cappataggle GWS with Kilcooley/Gurty Madden GWS (a small scheme that has compliance issues).

Members of the two committees met on 28 March to discuss the proposal and to assess what exactly will be involved. Cappataggle is holding an EGM on 10 April to decide on the proposed extension.



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Leitrim

A Special General Meeting of Glenboy Glenfarne Group Water Scheme was held recently to consider a motion seeking the approval of the members to apply to Irish Water for taking in charge.

Scheme secretary Jimmy McMorrow explained that the board of directors had considered the financial implications of the operational subsidy changes payable to publicly sourced group water schemes. Although the domestic subsidy increased from €70 to €115, the fact that domestic consumers are entitled to 160m³ of water before any charge can be levied has left the scheme unsustainable.

This is largely due to the costs involved in pumping water to several reservoirs that supply homes and farms across an extensive network. Pointing out that doing nothing 'is simply not an option', Mr McMorrow urged those present to support the motion. An overwhelming majority of those present did so, clearing the way for a takeover application to be submitted to Irish Water.

The scheme will require additional financial support in order to continue to operate in the period until the takeover is implemented.

Speaking on behalf of the NFGWS, Seán Clerkin said that it was a matter of concern that the largest publicly sourced scheme in Leitrim is no longer sustainable but, unfortunately, in the unique position which Glenboy Glenfarne GWS finds itself 'there is no other option'.

Commending the board of directors for their efforts over the years in keeping the scheme going and ensuring a dependable supply of water for the area, tributes were also paid to the founding members of the original schemes that amalgamated as Glenboy Glenfarne GWS in 2006.



A section of the large attendance at the Special General Meeting of Glenboy/Glenfarne GWS where members supported a committee recommendation that the scheme apply to be taken-in-charge by Irish Water.

Mayo

Brackloon/Spaddagh GWS and Kilmovee/Urlaur GWS committee members recently visited their newly upgraded representatives of Glan Agua, (the DBO service provider) demonstrated the DAF treatment processes that have been installed.

There has been a noticeable improvement in the water quality and chlorine residuals on both schemes since these upgrades.

Lough Carra GWS treatment plant has just completed the process proving period and is about to enter the operations and maintenance phase of its DBO contract with Glan Agua.

This means that 12 of the 13 plants in the Mayo DBO 1A bundle are now fully operational. Work at Belderrig water treatment plant will be completed in September due to structural issues with the original plant, which have necessitated a complete refurbishment of the structure.

An evaluation of all the water treatment plants in Mayo DBO bundle 2 is currently under way to ensure that they are producing water that meets the drinking water standards.

Installation of additional scour valves has commenced on Fahy GWS to ensure effective flushing of the mains going forward.

Mayo County Council is focusing on 33 group water schemes included in the current Remedial Action List. Meetings have been held with the Robeen, Cloonmore-Cloonlavish, Barnacarroll, Loughanammon-Ballinasmalla group water schemes committees with a view to agreeing solutions that will ensure water quality standards are complied with going forward. Further meetings are planned with the remaining schemes on that list

in the coming weeks.

Proposed upgrade works on Meelickmore GWS and Knockatubber GWS have gone to tender.

A contractor has been appointed to carry out the works on the Tonacrick-Cunilakillew Group Water Scheme which, when complete, will connect to the Nephin Valley network. Work on this scheme is to commence in early April.

A very well attended AGM of the Mayo GWS Federation was addressed by Barry Deane CEO and Brendan O'Mahony, Chairperson of the NFGWS.



GWS activists on a site visit to the upgraded Brackloon/Spaddagh wtw.

Roscommon

An interim allocation of €240,000 was made to Roscommon under Measure 2 of the Rural Water Programme.

The bid from Roscommon County Council has already been submitted to the DHPLG, with a proposal for further upgrades on a number of GWSs under Measure 2.

Enhancement works were completed under this measure in 2017 on Brusna, Castlestrange, Corracreigh, Gortaganny, Mid Roscommon, Oran Ballintubber, Peake Mantua, Toberaddy and Ballagh/Ballybeg GWSs.

Works were also completed last year on Toberaddy GWS under Measure 1, with the installation of a validated UV unit and water softener.

The bid for 2018 also includes capital replacement costs on the Roscommon DBO bundle

and a proposal to amalgamate Carane and Carroward GWS with Mid Roscommon GWS. Under Measure 3, it is proposed to establish Crosshill GWS where a group of households in the Arigna area wish to form a scheme for connection to the public mains.

Under Measure 4, the bid includes the proposed installation of bulk meters and valves to bring Ballagh/Ballybeg GWS and Dysart GWS up to the required standard for taking-in-charge by Irish Water.

Sligo

The most recent Liaison Monitoring Committee meetings for the two Sligo DBO bundles heard that all treatment plants are performing well, with potable water meeting the regulatory drinking water standards.

Progress on the Capital Replacement programme on the two bundles has been slow

and it is hoped to have all works completed before the end of next quarter.

Benbulbin GWS is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, having been originally established in 1968.

Current chairperson, Michael McTigue spoke about the founding members of the scheme at the recent AGM. He is in possession of some of the original documentation and correspondence for that period.

He remembered the founding members: Capt. Reginald Alvey (Chairperson), Jack Crystal, Des Tighe and Peter McHugh, all of whom are deceased.

The scheme consisted of 12 houses only. That was until 1980 when a further 30 houses were in a position to be supplied following construction of a reservoir.

Two of the current committee, Kieran Tiernan and Michael

McTigue have been active in the scheme since 1971.

In the years since, they have overseen the introduction of domestic metering and the construction of their DBO plant in 2006.

The Benbulbin scheme is about to embark on an ambitious plan to replace a 2.1km section of pipeline northwards from the village of Drumcliffe in the direction of Bundoran, along the national primary route.

This section of pipework is laid in lengths and when collars blow from time to time, repairs are extremely difficult given the busy road.

The scheme currently has a UFW rate of less than 5% and is anxious to keep this figure as low as possible because in times of drought the spring source flow is very low.

The good work still continues on Benbulbin GWS 50 years on as “horsemen pass by”!

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Leinster Region

by Róisín Dowd Smith & Joe Gallagher

Carlow

GWSs planning upgrade works are urged to get their submissions into the county council as soon as possible. A €75,000 allocation has been made to Carlow under the Measure 2 block grant (towards GWS enhancement).

Early this year, Ballinabranna GWS completed a 900 metre pipework replacement contract that began in late 2017. The GWS is currently in the process of replacing 140 manual meters with drive-by meters to allow for easier reading.

Ballinabranna held a very well attended AGM at the start of March. The AGM was immediately followed with an SGM at which members unanimously adopted the new charging structure on the GWS, as well as adopting new co-op rules.

Carlow/Wexford GWS Federation met in January, 4 out of the 6 Wexford schemes and 2 of the 4 Carlow schemes were represented.

Kildare

A preliminary Rural Water Programme allocation of €50,000 has been made to Kildare under the block grant.

Ballyroe/Leinster Lodge GWS is awaiting the commencement of a pumphouse upgrade. The GWS received funding for these works in 2017, but is still waiting for the works to be put out to tender.

Ballindoolin GWS was also allocated funding in 2017 towards a treatment upgrade. It is hoped works will commence early this year.



ZOC reports being presented to several Kilkenny group water schemes – including Maddoxtown GWS, Dunbell No. 2 GWS, Tullaroan GWS and Castleinch GWS – by Bruno Teillard (hydrogeologist) who completed the reports.

Kildare/Wicklow GWS Federation met in January. Four of the five Kildare GWSs and six out of the eight Wicklow GWSs were represented on the night.

Kilkenny

A €140,000 block grant allocation under the RWP has been made to Kilkenny.

Castlewarren GWS was allocated funding in 2017 towards upgrade and repair works to its rising main and other sections of pipework. The GWS plans to continue its programme of critical mains replacement in 2018 and is currently preparing final costings and drawings for the proposed works, which are expected to go to tender in the coming weeks.

A presentation evening was held in February for 4 group water schemes – Dunbell No. 2, Castleinch & District, Tullaroan and Maddoxtown – that had ZOC reports completed in 2017 by Bruno Teillard.

Dermot Maher recently succeeded James Brennan as Rural Water Engineer appointed to Kilkenny County Council. We wish him well in his new position.

Kilkenny GWS Federation met in January. 19 out of the 30 Kilkenny schemes were represented on the evening.

Clonmantagh/Kiloshulan held its AGM in early February, followed immediately by an SGM.

Secretary Ger Power reported on another successful year, but added that many challenges still exist for rural GWS.

Like many other schemes in Co. Kilkenny, Clomantagh/Kiloshulan hopes to receive funding this year towards the installation of meters.

Ballycallan Muintir GWS sadly saw the loss of Liam Delaney earlier this year. Liam was instrumental in setting up the GWS in the late 1970s as an initiative of Muintir na Tíre.



Liam Delaney

He and a Cork man, Mick O’Driscoll (who was involved in completing the initial drawings of the GWS), were the two main drivers in getting the GWS up and running.

Liam was involved on the GWS committee for over 30 years, until an entirely new committee got involved 4 years ago. This includes his son, Joe Delaney, who is now Chairperson of the GWS.

Rest in Peace Liam.

Highrath GWS is mourning the death of its long serving chairperson, Martin Meany, who sadly passed away in late December last.

One of the founding members of Highrath GWS in 1975, Martin was an integral part of the scheme ever since, playing a vital role in every aspect of its operation and development.

[continued on next page]



Martin Meany

Martin was elected chairperson in 1993 and has served in that role ever since. During that time, he oversaw many developments, including the installation of reservoirs in 2005, an extension to the mains network in 2006 and the drilling of new boreholes in 2013 and 2017.

He undertook various training courses and helped enormously in maintaining the scheme's quality assurance programmes.

Martin was a very popular and obliging man and he will be sadly missed. Ar dheis Dia go raibh a anam dílis.

Balief Clomantagh GWS experienced the sudden loss of Jimmy Dowling who died in a tragic farm accident on March 14th.

Jimmy gave over 55 years dedicated service to the water scheme as a committee member, officer and, above all, as a driving force in any project or task that was to be undertaken.

Jimmy will be remembered by all on the committee and by the people of the area as having an amazing temperament and as a forever gentleman. May he rest in peace.

Laois

A preliminary allocation of €170,000 has been made to Laois under the block grant.

Ballacolla GWS is to upgrade 2km of critical mains in its ongoing attempts to address water loss from leakage. This project is currently being prepared to go to tender.

After upgrading 160m of pipework in 2017, Ballypickas GWS expects to see the completion of capital replacement works in its DBO plant this year.

A smaller chlorine storage tank installed on Barrowhouse GWS last year has delivered the hoped for improvement in dosing frequency.

Laois GWS Federation met in January, with representatives from 8 out of the 13 affiliated schemes in the county in attendance.

Longford

€10,000 was recently spent on upgrade works to Derryohill GWS under Measure 1 (treatment for

small unregulated schemes.

€2,456 was drawn down under Measure 3 for the construction of a new GWS, Bohermore/Finneragh.

€7,430 was spent under Measure 4 for upgrade works on Moydow Group Water Scheme to facilitate its connection to a public main.



The Heath GWS has carried out many improvements in and around its spring source and treatment plant (above) in recent years.



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Louth

A preliminary Rural Water Programme allocation of €150,000 has been made to Louth under Measure 2 (GWS enhancement).

Grangebellew GWS received funding last year under Measure 1 to improve its water disinfection system.

Mountain Park GWS has constructed a new control house to store the salt used in its electro-chlorination system.

Drybridge/Waterunder GWS spent over €60,000 in late 2017 on the upgrade of 1km of pipework and the installation of valves and hydrants.

Louth GWS Federation met in January and all 6 schemes were represented. Siobhán Martin was elected as new secretary to the committee.

Meath

Meath Hill GWS recently experienced the sad and untimely loss of Seán Ó Súilleabháin.

A native of the West Kerry Gaeltacht, Seán had a deep love for his adopted community in North Meath and for the local GWS of which he was a proud and active member. Over the years, he spearheaded many developments, not least a major source to tap investment programme that has provided a solid foundation for the future success of his beloved scheme.

A pure gentleman, his loss is



Seán Ó Súilleabháin

felt by his family, his committee colleagues and by everyone in the Meath Hill community. Suaimhneas síoraí dá n-anam.

Offaly

Due to poor weather, disinfection upgrade works were delayed on Clonfanlough GWS, but these have now been completed.

The scheme will complete disinfection of its short network in the coming weeks.

Once completed, it is expected that water testing will confirm full compliance with the drinking water standard so that a boil water notice can be lifted.

The upgrading of Cadamstown GWS is ongoing, with installation of a validated UV disinfection unit. The GWS hopes to move the treatment process to its source and reservoir site as soon as a new reservoir has been constructed (depending on the availability of funding). Once this is constructed the GWS will be able to pump at night and gravity feed by day, thereby reducing operational costs.

Killeigh Cloneygowan GWS and Meelaghans GWS committees have agreed to amalgamate.

Meelaghans GWS will hold a meeting of its members in the coming months to approve this decision. Subject to their approval, an interconnecting pipeline will be laid between the two schemes so that Meelaghans will be gravity fed from a new reservoir in Killeigh.

Eglis, Rath & Drumcullen GWS is to construct security fencing around its sources to better protect them.

The GWS also plans to retain an engineer to consider the possibility of reducing its pumping costs via the instal-



Before and after pics of the Clonfanlough GWS upgrade.

lation of solar energy on the large GWS site.

Mount Lucas GWS's raw water monitoring programme is ongoing, to determine if some parameters are present that will require additional treatment. After replacing a leaking section of mains on a river crossing in 2017, further upgrading works are planned on 1km of pipeline.

Clareen GWS & Aghancon GWS have completed the construction of a new reservoir.

Issues that arose with the piping provided to interconnect the two schemes have been addressed and the laying of the main will recommence in the coming weeks.

This delay (compounded by poor weather conditions) has pushed out the completion date until early May.

The M&E element of the works will start close to the completion of the water mains project and water will

be pumped through the new treatment and reservoir and on to the new interconnecting pipeline to supply the Aghancon GWS.

When this is commissioned the existing Aghancon source will be taken out of supply.

35 GWS personnel representing 15 GWSs attended Offaly GWS Federation AGM (with Multyfarnham GWS from Westmeath also represented).

Niall Murphy of Bracknagh GWS was elected as Federation chairperson on the night.

There was a lively discussion on the outcome of the operational subsidy review and its implications for group water schemes given that standing charges on domestic connections are no longer permitted.

Rationalisation was also discussed at the AGM, with a number of schemes expressing interest. Meetings will be organised with these in the coming months.

Wexford

An allocation of €150,000 has been made to Wexford under the Rural Water Programme block grant.

Kilanerin GWS continues to experience elevated nitrate levels and is actively investigating methods of tackling this issue. The GWS is also in the final stages of having telemetry installed and training on this new system will be completed by the manager in the coming weeks.

Borrmount GWS committee has agreed to take on a part-time manager/caretaker. This has been under consideration for some time, but the new subsidy changes have convinced committee members that now is the right time to hire somebody.

Laurence (Larry) Sheahan of Gurrawn, Rathnure, received a presentation from Blackstairs GWS on 7 January to mark 38 years of

outstanding service as Rathnure (and subsequently Blackstairs) GWS treasurer. The award was made by the Chairperson, Pat Sinnott, who thanked Larry for his many years of excellent and diligent work. The surprise presentation was attended by Larry's wife Breda, his daughter, Stephanie, and Blackstairs GWS committee members and employees. The presentation was followed by a very enjoyable night of *craic agus comhrá*.

Wicklow

Askanagap GWS has completed works to its new well and is currently awaiting sign-off on the contract following a Wicklow Co. Co. inspection.

Cornagower GWS is carrying out remedial works to its treatment system because of recent elevated manganese levels. The current manganese treatment system is unable to cope with the changes and there are problems also with maintaining a chlorine residual.



Larry Sheahan receiving a presentation from Blackstairs GWS to mark 38 years of outstanding service to his local group water scheme.

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Munster Region

by Joe Gallagher & Barry Deane

Clare

An allocation of €325,000 has been provided to Clare under Measure 2 of the Rural Water Programme (the block grant). Schemes are strongly encouraged to get their submissions for upgrading works in to Clare County Council without delay.

Clare GWS Federation met on 30 January and was attended by 18 GWS representatives from 12 schemes.

Immediately before the meeting, consultations on budgeting were provided for individual schemes by NFGWS staff.

Further budgeting workshops will continue through April for schemes that did not get the chance to avail of a pre-AGM consultation.

Ballycullinan Lough, the source of the Dysart-Toonagh GWS has been included as a recommended area for action under the Water Framework Directive. It is hoped that this will have a positive impact on

raw water quality.

The NFGWS has met with Clare County Council to discuss its contacts with Irish Water aimed at resolving pressure issues on Castlequarter GWS, a publicly sourced scheme.

Kildysart-Coolmeen GWS Co-operative Society held its inaugural AGM on 13 March.

Cork

An allocation of €150,000 has been provided to Cork under the block grant and funding applications for upgrades should be submitted without delay to the county council for consideration.

The DWR Uisce team carried out a site visit on Ballinguiroo & Tankardstown GWS to determine the capacity to harvest energy from high pressure areas of the scheme. The researchers are currently building network models to determine what savings can be made, if any.

Kilcredan GWS and Walterstown GWS are also being assessed so see if their networks might be suitable for energy recovery.



A source zone of contribution site visit to Carrowcore GWS in County Clare. Pictured are Bruno Teillard, Caoimhe Hickey and Vincent Grady.

Rita Mullarkey has been appointed as Cork's new rural water liaison officer, replacing Valerie Hayes. We wish both women the very best.

Cork GWS Federation met on 17 January and was attended by 22 GWS repre-

sentatives from 11 Cork schemes.

After years of dedicated service to the GWS sector in the county, Des McKee recently resigned his position as Federation Secretary. NFGWS board member, Tony Sheehan was elected to the position.

The NFGWS has attended meetings with Cork County Council and the DHPLG to progress the taking-in-charge of 6 legacy schemes in the county, all of which have been waiting many years for taking-in-charge.

A budgeting workshop was held in Fermoy to assist schemes adjust to their new charging structure. Similar workshops will be held in other parts of the county over the coming months.

Walterstown GWS held its AGM on 12 March.



Representatives of Cork group water schemes pictured at the County GWS Federation meeting on 17 January.

Kerry

Four relatively large schemes – Bonane GWS, Rossdohan GWS, Tuosist GWS and Dawros GWS – are currently being prepared for taking-in-charge by Irish Water.

It is Kerry County Council’s intention that these projects will be completed in 2018.

An information evening on the new operational subsidy is being organised for Q2 2018, in light of the fact that there is no Kerry Federation in place.

Limerick

West Limerick GWS has applied for funding to connect its Croagh source to the Cappagh supply due to high nitrate levels in the source at Croagh.

Excessive nitrate has been an issue in the past, but never to the same extent or duration as at present.

If approved, the interconnection to Cappagh’s Rosemount reservoir would result in a potential network extension in the Croagh area to take in more households. Such an expansion was not possible until now, as yield from the Croagh borehole is limited.

At a recent meeting of Limerick’s Rural Water Monitoring Committee, the €140,000 allocation to the county under this year’s block grant (Measure 2) was provided to Kilfinny GWS to continue essential network upgrading works.

In light of this allocation, Kilfinny GWS has commenced the replacement of a section of problematic mains with high water loss.

The GWS committee is delighted to see this contract starting after years of waiting. As this section will also be fully metered, this will give the GWS further control over water demand.

Unfortunately, however, road restoration costs account for a large portion of the available grant aid.

To secure the lifting of a boil water notice on its supply, Glenbrohane GWS has begun the installation of validated UV disinfection units in both its pump houses.

Griston GWS is hopeful that funding will be available this year to commence the upgrading of its entire network. The GWS water mains are at present laid in private lands and are not fitted with meters.

This results in extreme difficulty when trying to control usage and comply with the conditions of subsidy.

Baggotstown GWS and Bulgaden GWS have applied for funding for a physical amalgamation. This would require the laying of 1.5km of interconnecting water mains. The GWS committees are already working closely together, so the decision to amalgamate makes sense.

Caherline Newtown GWS and Ballybricken GWS are also considering a rationalisation approach. The committees will meet in the coming weeks to discuss their options.

A number of GWSs will require funding to install meters to comply with the new conditions of subsidy. These are mainly smaller schemes such as Barnagh/Glendarragh GWS, Ballinastona GWS, Craggs Borrighone GWS, Boherard Crean GWS and Griston GWS.

Limerick GWS Federation AGM was held in January, attended by 24 GWS personnel representing 18 schemes (and with apologies from a further 2 GWSs).

There was a positive response from delegates to the outcome of the subsidy review. Jim Flynn was elected for Federation Chairperson for the coming year. As Chairperson of Bulgaden GWS, he brings a lot of experience to the role.

The outgoing Federation Chairperson, Simon Breen, was thanked for his contributions over the past few years and was wished well in the future.

Limerick Rural Water Community was saddened to hear about the recent passing of Kevin Storan of Kilfinny GWS.

Kevin’s was a familiar presence at the county’s rural



Kevin Storan

water sector meetings, regularly organising these in his local community hall (with which he was also heavily involved).

Kevin had a great sense of humour and always had the interests of his GWS at heart. He will be missed by all in the rural water sector in the county.

We extend sympathy to his family and GWS colleagues.



Top: A new borehole recently developed on Moyne GWS (Tipperary). Bottom: Tipperary GWS Federation Secretary, Michelle Bannon Brown (left) and Chairperson, Eleanor Maher (right).

Tipperary

An allocation of €300,000 was made to Tipperary under Measure 2 of the Rural Water Programme (the block grant). Schemes are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for upgrading works asap.

The impact of the new operational subsidy on group water schemes across the county was discussed by Tipperary Rural Water Monitoring Committee at a meeting on 9 January.

The meeting also heard that a study to explore the potential for rationalisation and amalgamation of schemes – carried out by Tipperary Co. Council – has shown great potential for schemes to come together, thereby ensuring their future sustainability.

Source zone of contribution (ZOC) presentations were attended recently by Lacka GWS, Abbeyville GWS, Fantane GWS, Mota-Coolbawn GWS and Killeen GWS, while a ZOC site visit was completed on Ballinderry GWS.

Tipperary GWS Federation met on 24 January. There was a record attendance of 51 GWS representatives from 31 Tipperary schemes.

The NFGWS held 2 budgeting workshops in recent months, one in Nenagh and the other in Thurles. We would like to thank Tipperary County Council for allowing us the use of council offices for this purpose. More workshops are being organised for Q2.

Ardcroney GWS held its AGM and an SGM on 21 February, while Luska GWS held its AGM and an SGM on 22 March.



Prizegiving to pupils of Kilbarron NS who recently completed water awareness projects following last year's NFGWS-led tour of the local GWS and classroom presentation supported by Tipperary County Council.

The NFGWS and Tipperary County Council are working together to make the ongoing programme of interaction with schools as interactive and memorable for the children as possible.

Pupils from Kyle Park N.S, Borrisokane, were recently brought on tours to Kilbarron GWS pumphouse which treats a borehole supply and to a nearby public treatment plant (Coolbawn) that treats water abstracted from Lough Derg. This allowed the children to compare the differing treatment systems required for surface and groundwater drinking water supplies.

The Dwr Uisce team carried out a site visit on Patrickswell GWS and Kilriffith Kilmore GWS to determine the potential for harvesting waste energy from high pressure areas of both schemes.

The researchers are currently building network models to determine if savings can be made by the schemes through solar generation.

After completing a pumphouse upgrade, Lisheenacountha GWS is preparing for universal metering.

Carrigahorrig/Milford GWS has engaged a consulting engineer to begin drawings on the next phase of critical mains replacement, including 800 metres of pipeline.

Waterford

An allocation of €70,000 is

provided for Waterford under the block grant and schemes shouldn't delay in submitting their proposed upgrading works to Waterford County Council for consideration.

Moonminane GWS held its AGM on 5 February.



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FOR ALL GWS NEEDS

Ulster Region

by Jean Rosney,
& Brian MacDonald

Cavan

An interim allocation of €290,000 under Measure 2 of the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme for 2018 was provided to Cavan. A meeting of the Rural Water Monitoring Committee is due to take place shortly to decide on GWS enhancement projects that will be grant aided.

Kildallan GWS is continuing the removal of old critical mains from forests and other inaccessible places.

The current project involves approximately 3 km of network rehabilitation, including upgrading valves, bulk meters and installation of additional telemetry.

The scheme has recently installed a new chlorination unit at its reservoir site. This communicates via telemetry with the GWS office.

Lavagh Ballyheelan GWS is continuing leak detection work. Bulk meters and telemetry installed last year are proving invaluable and the scheme is assessing the outputs and building a record of the data to direct the leak detection works.

While focusing on small network mains repairs on an ongoing basis, the committee would like to repair a section of old mains later this year if capital funding is available.

Glangevlin GWS has almost completed 1,600m of 3-inch line replacement. Pressure testing is in progress.

Crossdoney GWS hopes to carry out network rehabilitation works on 800m of critical mains if capital funding is made available this year.



NFGWS Senior Development Officer, Jean Rosney (second from left) and Erne Valley GWS Manager, Mairéad Sheridan (right) pictured with the principal and pupils of Arva National School which received a weather station (courtesy of Cavan Co. Co and the Rural Water Programme) as a thankyou for their participation in the GWS community-led domestic wastewater treatment systems (septic tank) desludging project .

Dernakesh GWS recently installed a chlorine residual monitor at its reservoir site that is linked to the scheme's telemetry system.

Having recently replaced meters as part of annual maintenance, the committee is planning to replace 1km of 6-inch mains this year.

Milltown GWS is planning several valve replacements over the coming weeks.

Mountain Lodge GWS recently replaced short sections of network following leak detection work.

Erne Valley intends replacing 1 km of 4-inch critical mains this year if capital funding is available.

Capital replacement works are due to be completed on the South West Cavan DBO bundle in 2018 for years 11 & 12 of the 20-year contract.

Weather Stations were presented to Arva and Coronea National Schools on the 22nd March as part of the septic tank awareness and desludging project ongoing with Erne Valley GWS.

Thanks is due to Cavan Co. Co. (and the Rural Water Programme) for funding the weather stations to complement this project.

Cavan Federation AGM was held on Monday 29 January, attended by 39 representatives from 18 GWSs.

A Sign, Lighting & Guarding course is taking place in Cavan from 3-5 April, with 4 participants (the maximum that can be accommodated).

Donegal

All four affiliated schemes in Donegal were represented at the Federation AGM held in Letterkenny on 31 January. The meeting was informed

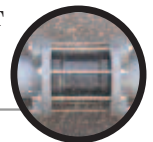
that Paul Connolly is taking over from Brian MacDonald as development officer for the county, but that Brian would continue his long-standing involvement with ongoing upgrade projects on Meenabool GWS and Toraigh GWS.

Monthly rainwater and raw water sampling is being conducted on Toraigh to help determine an action plan that will address longstanding drinking water issues for the remote island community.

Townawilly GWS has entered the procurement stage for acquiring an inline UVT meter and validated UV disinfection unit.

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Monaghan

The county Rural Water Monitoring Committee met on 14 February 2018 to agree projects that will receive funding under Measure 2 of the Rural Water Programme. Monaghan received an interim allocation of €340,000 under the block grant.

Work is ongoing (with commissioning due to begin shortly) on 3 booster stations on Glaslough/Tyholland GWS network and also installation of variable speed drives to reduce night time flows.

Magheraclone GWS completed the upgrading of the bell mounts at the treatment plant in the New Year.

The scheme is currently going to tender for 2.1km network rehabilitation works on a 6-inch line. This will link up to two previously replaced lines in an area that has experienced high UFW. Two pressure reducing valves will be installed on the 6-inch replacement pipework.

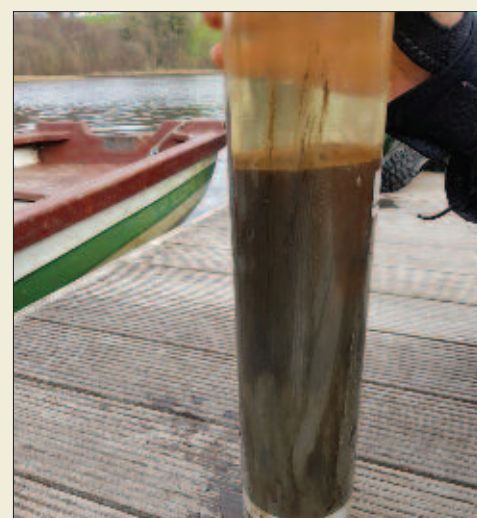
Churchill & Oram GWS is to replace pipework and valves on approximately 1km of its network.

The scheme is also planning to install a by-pass system at its Hanna's Hill reservoir.

1.4km of network rehabilitation works & associated valve replacement is to be completed on Truagh GWS, with pipework being reduced from 8-inch to 4-inch. Half this pipework is in fields.

Aughnashalvey GWS is currently assessing pressure levels in sections of its network as a first step in deciding the optimum location for new pressure reducing valves.

Drumgole GWS is replacing meters as part of annual maintenance, while also investigating the potential for



Top: The floating vegetative island on Emy Lough, drinking water source for Glaslough/Tyholland GWS. Bottom left: A sign describing the dual function of the island. Bottom right: A core sample taken the lough.

small network upgrades to be completed this year.

Work is well underway on the septic tank awareness and desludging initiative on Glaslough/Tyholland GWS. Household surveys were completed in the immediate vicinity of the source (Emy Lough) and householder identification is almost completed across the remaining extensive catchment area.

A research project is being conducted on Emy Lough through Dundalk Institute of Technology to establish a baseline of current and historical lake trophic status,

using a combination of paleolimnological techniques on the lough and water quality analysis on both the lough and inflowing streams. Sampling by a team from DkIT was conducted on the lough on 21 February.

Stranooden GWS is to lead the way in source protection planning for surface water schemes across the country. A plan to be drawn up in the coming months will form the basis of a strategy to reduce pressure from a range of contaminants, including pesticides (MCPA) on their source (White Lough).

Two Sign, Lighting & Guarding courses were held in Monaghan in February.

The 3-day course (which is confined to a maximum of 4 participants) includes practical and theoretical elements. Seven participants completed the courses in February and a further course will be arranged for Monaghan this month (April).

Monaghan Federation AGM was held on 30 January, attended by 27 representatives from 10 GWSs. Jean Rosney of the NFGWS gave a powerpoint presentation focusing on the revised subsidy outcome and on training.

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