



Minister for Housing Planning and Local Government
Housing, Planning and Local Government
Custom House,
Dublin 1
D01 W6X0

09 March 2020

RE: - Water Advisory Body Quarterly Report No. 1 of 2020

Dear Minister,

Please find the above attached which will be published on the Water Advisory Body website tomorrow, 10 March 2020 and has been produced in accordance with Section 44 (1) (b) of the Water Services Act, 2017.

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

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

The report contains eleven metrics which measure the performance of Irish Water. I have included summary findings below relating to each of the metrics.

1. Leakage - By any measure, Ireland's leakage rate is unacceptable and needs to be a focus for Irish Water in the future. The WAB will continue to monitor the level of unaccounted for water until the end of this year until Irish Water makes its new leakage metric available for assessment.
2. First Fix Scheme - There is a drop-off in the number of leak repairs completed under First Fix Scheme from mid-2016. However, liability for Excess Use Charges for domestic households will be introduced in 2020 with first bills to issue in 2021. It is expected that this will encourage customers to avail of the scheme and that higher numbers of leak repairs will be achieved in the future.
3. Remedial Action List (Water) - The issues at the Leixlip Water Treatment Plant have exposed the vulnerability of Dublin's water supply, which is also replicated across the country. The WAB continues to be concerned that Irish Water invest in capacity, resilience and operational practices to deliver continuing improvement in water supply quality and security.
4. Priority Urban Area List (Wastewater) - The WAB notes and accepts the Environmental Protection Agency's view that Ireland is not addressing the deficiencies in its waste water treatment infrastructure at a fast enough pace. This view has been highlighted again, recently, by the EPA.

5. Lead service connections replaced - Irish Water aims to remove all public-side lead pipework by 2026, and has set specific targets in that context. The WAB wish to see the completion of all public side lead replacement by, at least, the target date of 2026 set out by Irish Water in its Lead in Drinking Water Mitigation Plan.
6. Mains replacement rate (for water mains) - Although Irish Water's mains replacement rate of 0.33% is within a range comparable with other similar entities, the WAB agrees with the Commission for Regulation of Utilities view that Irish Water's replacement rate will need to be higher given Irish Water's infrastructure is likely to be older and in worse condition on average.
7. Overall compliance with microbiological indicators for drinking water - In general, the WAB notes that compliance with the microbiological standards is high.
8. Boil Water Notices - When Irish Water took charge of water supplies in 2014 it set a target to eliminate all boil water notices that were in place at that time. This target was achieved and while no specific future targets have been set, Irish Water is working to continue reducing the number of people affected by boil water notices. However, the WAB notes that short term boil water notices are not always captured by examining the population remaining on a boil water notice at the end of a quarter. This is evidenced in during Q4 2019, where two short term boil water notices were imposed on the Leixlip water treatment plant. This was the single largest boil water notice imposed in Ireland, with more than 600,000 consumers affected.
9. Compliance of Urban Waste Water Treatment (UWWT); Plants with Environmental Protection Agency discharge licenses - Overall, compliance for urban waste water treatment is very low. Over half of the 75% non-compliance can be attributed to one waste water treatment plant – the plant at Ringsend, Dublin. A priority remains the 35 towns and villages releasing raw sewage into the environment.
10. Ease of Contact - Customer Satisfaction Scores for the three years to 2017 are on an upward trend, so it is disappointing to see a drop-off in Irish Water's performance in 2018. The WAB expects Irish Water to improve its performance against this indicator in the future.
11. Irish Water Customer Complaints Management - Irish Water has demonstrated good performance against this metric and it is close to Irish Water's stated aim in its "Water Services Strategic Plan" to resolve (or have outlined steps taken towards resolving) 100% of complaints within five working days.

The report, along with other information about the Water Advisory Body, can be found on the website, www.wateradvisorybody.ie.

The WAB is available to meet with you at your convenience to discuss the report and its work.

Yours sincerely



Paul McGowan,
Chair, Water Advisory Body.