

A dynamic splash of clear water with bubbles and droplets, set against a light blue background. The splash is horizontal and spans the width of the page.

WAB

Water Advisory Body

ANNUAL REPORT

2022



Contents

Statement from the Chairperson	4
Executive Summary	5
Membership of the WAB	6
Member Biographies	7
Fees	9
Activities	10
Other Activities	15
Resources & Expenditure	19
Terms of Reference	20



Statement from the Chairperson

This is the fourth annual report of the Water Advisory Body (the WAB), covering the period from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.

▼
Paul McGowan *Chairperson*

The Water Advisory Body (WAB) was established in 2018 as an independent State Body with two main roles. The first role is to report on how well Uisce Éireann (Irish Water)* is performing and the second role is to help increase public confidence in Uisce Éireann. New accountability arrangements for Uisce Éireann were set out in the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2022 (No. 39 of 2022), which was signed into law on 7 December 2022. As a result, the WAB will cease to have advisory and reporting functions and the dissolution of the WAB will take effect from 28 April 2023. Therefore, this is the fourth and final Annual Report from the WAB.

For the last five years the WAB has always strived to provide objective, transparent reporting on the performance of Uisce Éireann, with a view to increasing public confidence in Uisce Éireann. As far as practicable, the WAB presented the information in its reports using plain, jargon free language, for clarity and simplicity of understanding. We have focused on infrastructure delivery, cost reduction and efficiency, improvements in water quality, procurement policy and responsiveness to the needs of communities. We have used a series of Key Performance Indicators which were chosen to provide a meaningful and evidence-based snapshot of Uisce Éireann's performance. The WAB also carried out analysis of publicly available reports, alongside customised audit and consumer surveys.

It is and it will continue to be important for the Public Accounts Committee, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and An Fóram Uisce to scrutinise and continually challenge Uisce Éireann to deliver high quality water and wastewater services, environment compliance and efficient, consumer focused outcomes.

During 2022 the WAB published the five reports listed below:

- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report No. 1 of 2022
- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report No. 2 of 2022
- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report No. 3 of 2022
- ▶ WAB Annual Report 2021
- ▶ Survey of Irish Water Customers

For my part, I wish to express my deep personal gratitude to the other board members for their dedication and commitment since 2018 and to the WAB Secretariat for their unfailing professionalism and commitment.

On the members' part, we wish to thank all stakeholders, including Uisce Éireann, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities, An Fóram Uisce and the Environmental Protection Agency for complying with the various requests for information made by the WAB and to the other bodies, agencies and Departments that supported the WAB in its work over the period.

Please note that the WAB Quarterly Report No. 4 of 2022 was published on 2 March 2023 and is therefore not included as part of this Report.

This report was approved by the members of the WAB on 20 April 2023.

Paul McGowan
Chairperson

20 April 2023

***Note:** With effect from 1 January 2023, Irish Water is now called Uisce Éireann, as provided for in the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2022. This report uses the terms Irish Water and Uisce Éireann as the context requires.

Executive Summary

The WAB was established on 1 June 2018.

New accountability arrangements for Uisce Éireann were set out in the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2022 (No. 39 of 2022), which was signed into law on 7 December 2022. As a result, the WAB will cease to have advisory and reporting functions and the dissolution of the WAB will take effect from 28 April 2023. Therefore, this is the fourth and final Annual Report from the WAB.

The purpose of the WAB is to advise the Minister on measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Uisce Éireann; and to report, on a quarterly basis, to an Oireachtas Committee on the performance by Irish Water in the implementation of its Strategic Funding Plan.

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

The WAB's functions are set out in Part Seven of the Water Services Act 2017 which can be viewed on the Irish Statute Book website:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie>

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

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

Membership of the WAB

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

The appointed members bring a variety of expertise to their work on the WAB including regulation, legal, consumer, audit and environmental. At the end of 2022, there were four board members on the WAB, with an interim member for the EPA.

The current members and their appointment dates are as follows:

		Appointed	End of Term
Chairperson	Paul McGowan	01/06/2018	28/04/2023
Members	Miriam McDonald	14/12/2018	28/04/2023
	Martin Sisk	14/12/2018	28/04/2023
	Michelle Minihan	28/11/2019	11/11/2022
	Dónal Purcell	06/11/2020	28/04/2023
Interim member	Noel Byrne	14/11/2022	28/04/2023

Attendance at meetings during 2022

Member	20/01	17/02	10/03	14/04	18/05	08/06	13/07	02/09	13/09	18/10	10/11	14/12	Totals
Paul McGowan	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	12
Miriam McDonald	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	11
Martin Sisk	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	12
Michelle Minihan	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	N/A	11
Dónal Purcell	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	12
Noel Byrne <i>(interim EPA member)</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	YES	1

Member Biographies



▼
Paul McGowan *Chairperson*

Paul McGowan, Chairperson

Term Dates: *1 June 2018 – 28 April 2023*

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

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

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



▼
Miriam McDonald

Miriam McDonald

Term Dates: *14 December 2018 – 28 April 2023*

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



▼
Martin Sisk

Martin Sisk

Term Dates: *14 December 2018 – 28 April 2023*

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

Member Biographies (continued)



▼
Michelle Minihan

Michelle Minihan

Term Dates: 28 November 2019 – 11 November 2022

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

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

After completing her PhD in Chemistry at the University of Limerick, Dr. Minihan has worked in the private and public sectors before joining the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), where she worked for over 10 years in a variety of roles. Dr. Minihan took up the position of Director of Audit, Incidents and Investigations with the FSAI in November 2022.



▼
Dónal Purcell

Dónal Purcell

Term Dates: 6 November 2020 – 28 April 2023

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

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



▼
Noel Byrne

Noel Byrne - Interim EPA member

Term Dates: 14 November 2022 – 28 April 2023

Noel has a Degree in Agricultural Science and has a Masters in Business Administration. Noel joined the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2001 and has primarily worked in the Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE), overseeing the regulation of many sectors. Noel has progressed through the EPA and is now the programme manager for the Radiological Protection, Drinking water and Waste water enforcement team in the OEE.

This programme has responsibility for enforcing the Radiological Protection Act 1991 (Authorisation Application and Fees) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 34 of 2019), Drinking Water Regulations 2014 and urban waste water treatment authorisations.

Fees

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

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

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

Travel and subsistence expenses incurred are paid at standard civil service rates. The rates applicable in 2022 are available at www.revenue.ie/en/employing-people/employee-expenses/travel-and-subsistence/index.aspx

Activities

The WAB held 12 board meetings in 2022.

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

The WAB met with several bodies and agencies in 2022 including Uisce Éireann and officials from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities, the Environmental Protection Agency and An Fóram Uisce.

In 2022, the WAB published three reports in relation to its function of reviewing the implementation of its Strategic Funding Plan by Uisce Éireann:

- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 1 of 2022
- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 2 of 2022
- ▶ WAB Quarterly Report 3 of 2022

The WAB Quarterly Report No. 4 of 2022 was published in March 2023.

On 5 May 2022, the WAB published a Report of a Survey of Irish Water Customers.

On 15 December 2022, the WAB furnished Advice to the Minister on the Irish Water Regulatory Framework, in accordance with its statutory function under section 44(1)(a) of the Water Services Act 2017.



WAB Quarterly Report 1 of 2022

This was the ninth quarterly report published by the WAB, and the first report of 2022 in relation to its function of reviewing the implementation by Irish Water of its Strategic Funding Plan.

The purpose of the WAB is to advise the Minister on measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water, and to report on a quarterly basis to an Oireachtas Committee on the performance by Irish Water in the implementation of its Strategic Funding Plan. For this purpose, a set of performance indicators was selected to represent the activity of Irish Water in relation to the performance of its functions.

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

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

In this Report, changes were highlighted to five Performance Indicators and three new Performance Indicators were included for the first time, as follows;

Performance Indicator 6 – Unplanned Interruptions to Water Supply

This metric monitors Irish Water’s performance in delivering a continuous supply of clean drinking water to its domestic and non-domestic customers. Unplanned interruptions to supply are mainly caused by burst water mains pipes or blockages on the network.

Performance Indicator 10 – Agglomerations with Wastewater Treatment

This metric captures Irish Water’s performance in reducing the number of agglomerations which discharge untreated wastewater into the environment, to assist in ensuring that Irish Water uses the revenue it receives to deliver improvements in service to its customers and to increase compliance with Irish and European law.

Performance Indicator 13 – Energy Consumption Targets

This metric monitors Irish Water’s Total Primary Energy Requirement in Gigawatt hours (GWh). Irish Water is the largest consumer of electricity in the public sector in Ireland and energy efficiency targets encourage the development and implementations of efficiency strategies and targets and will assist Irish Water in improving its energy efficiency target, in line with the Climate Action Plan 2021.

Some of the findings from the report are as follows:

Leakage

The Leakage metric separately measures the annual average volume of water lost per day on the public network pipes and on external customer supply pipes. Irish Water put a new Leakage Management System in place to better estimate, monitor and identify leaks across the network. The WAB uses this metric to measure the performance of Irish Water to ensure as little water as possible is lost through its distribution network.

First Fix Scheme

Irish Water has been working to contact customers to avail of the First Fix Scheme and engaged in issuing Constant Flow Alarm (CFA) notification letters to properties.

As a result, it has seen an increase in the number of leak repairs completed since H1 2020. Overall, however, there has been a general decline in the number of leak repairs completed under the scheme since mid-2016.

Remedial Action List (Water)

Irish Water is required to have an action plan in place to remediate the drinking water supplies that are on the Remedial Action List (RAL). The WAB monitors Irish Water’s progress in meeting the targets they have set to rectify those water supplies on the RAL, the number of which decreased by three at the end of Q4 2021, compared to Q3 2021.

Lead Service Connections replaced

In Q4 2021, Irish Water replaced 3,152 lead service connections and overall in 2021, 5,900 connections were replaced, which was ahead of the target of 1,500 set for the year. Notwithstanding this, progress has slowed significantly overall when compared to the progress made in 2019. Irish Water expects to have additional funding available for lead service connections replacements in 2022 and to make further progress in this area.

Boil Water Notices

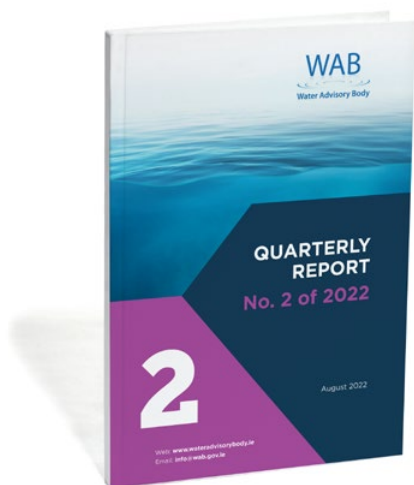
At the end of Q4 2021, 16,069 people were on boil water notices, which was an increase on the end of the previous quarter, when the figure stood at 7,029 people. This increase was concerning and it is crucial that Irish Water continues to work to reduce the number of people affected by boil water notices.

Other developments in the report included:

Drinking Water Quality in Public Supplies Report 2020

The EPA published this Report on 10 December 2021, which provided an assessment of the drinking water quality provided by Irish Water in public supplies. Compliance with microbiological and chemical standards for drinking water remains high at greater than 99.5%, which means that the water in public water supplies is safe to drink. A summary of the key actions for Irish Water in this area to ensure the supply is resilient and safe into the future are listed in the Report.

All Quarterly Reports of the WAB are available at www.wateradvisorybody.ie



WAB Quarterly Report 2 of 2022

This was the tenth Quarterly report published by the WAB, and the second report of 2022. As with all the quarterly reports, it reflects on key themes emerging around Irish Water’s performance and considers recommendations to both the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage and the Oireachtas, in line with statutory functions.

The Report highlighted changes to 7 of 13 Performance Indicators and the following findings are of note:

Priority Urban Area List (Wastewater)

The number of priority areas reduced from 148 in 2017 to 92 in 2022. Nine areas were removed from the list in the update, which took place in Q2 2022, and four were added to it.

Lead Service Connections replaced

Irish Water’s target for 2022 is greater than 10,000 replacements and in Q1 2022, the replacement of 1,607 lead service connections were completed. While progress in this area has slowed significantly when compared to 2019, Irish Water will work to the 10,000 2022 target, and the scheme will benefit from an increased budget for the year.

Unplanned Interruptions to Water Supply

In 2020, Irish Water estimated that 20.4% of all properties connected to its network experienced an unplanned interruption of more than 12 hours in duration. Irish Water has been set a target of less than 12% of connected properties to be impacted by the end of 2024 and it is currently on track to meet this target.

With regard to disruptions greater than 24 hours, Irish Water has been set a target of less than 3.6% of connected properties to be impacted by the end of 2024. As the percentage of 7.6% in 2020 was higher than the baseline of 7.19%, Irish Water is not currently on track to meet this target.

Boil Water Notices

At the end of Q1 2022, 13,579 people were on boil water notices, which is a decrease on the previous quarter (16,069 people). However, 20 of the 21 notices at the end of Q1 2022 were long-term (in excess of 30 days) and this was of concern to the WAB.

Agglomerations with no Wastewater Treatment

Irish Water completed work at 15 sites between 2014 and 2019, to reduce the number of agglomerations discharging untreated wastewater into the environment from a starting point of 50 in 2013 to 35 sites. Irish Water has now been set a target to reduce this number to zero by 2024 and there are concerns about whether this target will be met within the timeframe.

Ease of Contact

Irish Water exceeded its call abandonment target rate of 4% with a low call abandonment rate of 3% and answered 82% of calls in the queue within 20 seconds in 2020, both of which were consistent with its 2019 performance. The target for call answering was 85% however and Irish Water needs to address this so it can meet and sustain the 85% target for the coming years up to 2024.

Irish Water Customer Complaints management

While Irish Water achieved a customer satisfaction score of 77% in 2020 (an increase of 4% on its score in 2019), its performance declined in almost all the ‘Customer Complaints management’ metrics in 2020 and was at its lowest since it first reported on this in 2018. As customer service is at the core of utility delivery and timely, effective complaints management is an important element of customer service, this result is disappointing, as it would be reasonable to expect improvement year-on-year, as Irish Water beds in its customer complaints processes.

Other developments in the report included:

Survey of Irish Water Customers

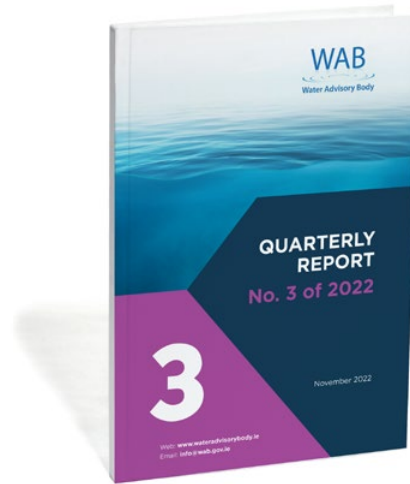
The WAB published the results of a survey of Irish Water customers on 5 May 2022. The survey targeted Irish Water customers in areas which had encountered recent issues with their water supply and looked at communication by Irish Water, in terms of clarity, timeliness, efficiency, professionalism and overall experience. It also attempted to gauge how the customers surveyed would like to be communicated with in the future.

Further information on the results of the survey can be found on page 16 of this report.

EPA Bathing Water Quality Report 2021

In May 2022, the EPA published the Bathing Water Quality Report for 2021 and overall bathing water quality continued to improve in 2021. 144 (97%) of the 148 identified bathing waters assessed met or exceeded the minimum required standard of “Sufficient”. Two bathing waters were classified as “Poor”, which is two fewer than in 2020, and the relevant local authorities have management plans in place to address the issues.

The Quarterly Report also contained updates on Irish Water’s Performance Assessment Framework Annual Report 2020, the CRU’s Capital Investment Plan 2020 to 2024 Monitoring Report No. 1 and Irish Water’s Disconnection and Reconnection Policy.



WAB Quarterly Report 3 of 2022

The WAB’s eleventh Quarterly Report and the third and final report in 2022 was published in November 2022. In this short report, changes to 3 of 13 Performance Indicators were highlighted.

The changes to the accountability arrangements for Irish Water outlined in the forthcoming Water Services (Amendment) Bill 2022 were noted. As part of these changes, the WAB will cease to have advisory and reporting functions and the dissolution of the WAB will take effect.

The Quarterly Report No. 4 of 2022, which will be published in early 2023, and the WAB Annual Report 2022 will be the final reports of the WAB.

The following findings from the report are of note:

First Fix Free Scheme

The number of leak repairs completed in the first half of 2021 decreased, compared to the previous six month period, and there was a decrease in the total savings estimated by Irish Water, as a result of both leak repairs carried out by the utility and those carried out by customers themselves. There has been a general decline in the number of leak repairs carried out under the scheme since mid-2016, when domestic water charges were suspended and subsequently abolished. In 2021, operation of the scheme was impacted by Covid-19 restrictions.

Lead Service Connections replaced

By the end of Q2 2022, 46,116 lead connections had been replaced, 11,411 of which are shared or back yard services and 34,705 are individual public side services. Irish Water has encountered difficulties in accessing some shared and back yard service replacements, due to reluctance on the part of some homeowners to provide consent for the works to be carried out. Irish Water continues to engage with these homeowners, to ensure that the works can take place, in the interests of public health.

The budget under the scheme increased in 2022 and Irish Water expects to increase the number of replacements to more than 10,000 by the end of the year.

Boil Water Notices

The target set by Irish Water to eliminate all boil water notices that were in place when it was established in 2014 was achieved. The WAB's main concern now is that current and future boil water notices are limited in frequency and short in duration.

The WAB noted with concern that there was a significant increase in the number of people on boil water notices at the end of Quarter 2 2022 (31,192), when compared to the previous quarter (13,579).

Other Activities

Meetings

The WAB held a number of meetings other than board meetings in 2022. The details are recorded on the website and are as follows;

10 March 2022

Meeting with the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and the Environmental Protection Agency.

2 September 2022

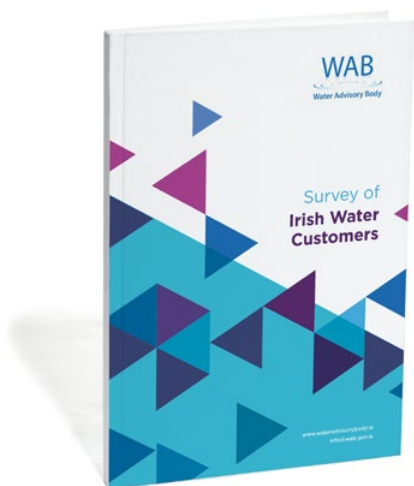
Meeting with Irish Water.

13 September 2022

Meeting with An Fóram Uisce.

18 October 2022

Meeting with the Assistant Secretary of Water Division, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage.



Survey of Irish Water Customers

The WAB completed targeted research of Irish Water customers and the report was published on 5 May 2022.

The purpose of the survey was to:

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

The survey was carried out by Core Research on behalf of the WAB. This was a targeted survey of 628 residential and 400 business customers in areas where Irish Water had recently carried out maintenance or remedial work. The survey was carried out between 26 October and 7 December 2021.

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

Key Findings from WAB’s Customer Survey

The WAB reviewed the results of the Customer Survey and the main findings are set out below;

Confused Lines of Communication

	Residential	Business
Who do you contact when a problem occurs?	Local Authority - 53%	Local Authority - 45%
	Irish Water - 35%	Irish Water - 40%
Who is responsible?	Local Authority - 51%	Local Authority - 57%
	Irish Water - 50%	Irish Water - 51%

(multiple responses were allowed).

- ▶ Communications confusion is understandable given the historical relationship between Irish Water, local authorities and customers. It is also understandable in unplanned disruptions, where the focus may be on rectifying the problem.
- ▶ Effective communications are important in terms of customer satisfaction. Confused lines of communication will, unfortunately, result in less than optimum communications. It is important that this confusion is addressed. Dedicated phone lines for residential and business customers should be advertised and promoted.

Contact Experience

- ▶ Professionalism of staff acknowledged (51% residential; 61% business).
- ▶ Poor response and follow up (35% residential; 60% business).
- ▶ Dissatisfaction with ease of dealing with the organisation (60% residential; 58% business).
- ▶ Dissatisfaction with clarity of information (62% residential; 69% business) and response provided (62% residential; 92% business).
- ▶ Business customers are the only customers who currently pay for water. This may explain their higher levels of dissatisfaction than residential customers.

- ▶ Overall, however, the majority of customers were dissatisfied with their contact, the response provided and how their contact/complaint was resolved. Clear communication lines and a good flow of information between operations and customer service are essential for meeting the needs of customers.

Accessing information

In many cases customers appear to find out for themselves that there was an issue and that the issue had been resolved.

- ▶ 79% residential; 83% business were not aware there was going to be disruption.
- ▶ 45% residential; 72% businesses found out for themselves that the issue was resolved.
- ▶ Where possible it is best practice to advise the customer in advance of a disruption to their supply. If this is not possible an estimated timeline for completion should be provided and communicated widely.
- ▶ It is recognised that this may pose challenges, particularly where disruption is unanticipated. In these situations, closing the communications loop by appropriately advising the customer the issue is resolved, is important in terms of customer satisfaction.

Communications Reach

Customers receive information from Irish Water through a variety of media – TV, radio, newspaper and social media (*Social media: 26% residential; 31% business; Flyers/Leaflets: 26% residential; 28% business*).

Most would prefer to be kept updated through text or flyer/notice (*Text: 52% residential; 67% business; Email: 60% business; Flyer/Leaflet: 34% residential; 30% business*).

- ▶ Notwithstanding operational issues, it appears an “opt in” text messaging service may offer a rapid method of initial communication, allowing updates and closing the communications loop when disruption occurs.

Communications: Timeliness & Frequency

While it is recognised that not all disruptions to supply are planned or can be notified in advance (for example, boil water notices or water discoloration issues), there is a strong preference from customers for advance notice and to be kept updated where possible.

Preferred Notice of Disruption	Residential	Business
	73% few days	85% a week
		53% few days

Where notice of disruption is being provided, a few days’ notice is favoured by residential customers, increasing to a week’s notice for businesses. It is important to note that notice of disruption requires repetition across multiple channels and at multiple times in order to reach a wide audience.

Advice to Minister

The WAB furnished Advice to the Minister on the Economic and Environmental Regulatory Framework for Irish Water on 15 December 2022. This Advice was provided in accordance with the WAB’s statutory function under Section 44(1) (a) of the Water Services Act 2017, to advise the Minister on the measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water for the purpose of increasing the confidence of members of the public in Irish Water.

Based on the observations of the WAB and following discussions with the EPA, the CRU, and An Fóram Uisce (AFU), the WAB made three recommendations;

1. Closer alignment on capital investment planning across the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, the CRU, the EPA and Irish Water.
2. Provision for the licensing of Irish Water by the CRU.
3. Enhanced powers of direction and sanction for both the EPA and the CRU.

The WAB consider these important in the context of the transparency but also, critically, the accountability of Irish Water.

WAB Annual Report

The WAB published its first Annual Report in May 2020, covering the period since its establishment on 1 June 2018 to December 2019. Annual Reports in respect of 2020 and 2021 were published in April 2021 and April 2022 respectively. This fourth and final Annual Report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2022.

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

Website

The WAB website contains all relevant documentation, such as quarterly reports and the annual report and is publicly accessible. Details of the Body, members, meetings and how to contact the WAB are also featured on the website. The website is the primary source of information on the WAB.

National Media

The WAB worked to increase the awareness of the public about the work and goals of the Body. In 2022, press releases were issued when the No. 1 and No. 2 Quarterly Reports and when the Survey of Irish Water Customers were published. The WAB promoted these reports nationally with the assistance of a public relations partner. The quarterly reports and their key messages featured in national and local press and radio on several occasions.

Resources

The Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage provides the secretariat staff who support the WAB in all its work. The WAB's budget in 2022 was €320,000.

Expenditure 2022

The WAB expenditure from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022 was €46,674.88.

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

Expenditure	Amount
Member Fees (including PRSI)	€13,292.68
Website Maintenance	€774.90
Desktop Publishing/Press Releases	€8,394.75
Customer Survey	€23,818.95
Other	€393.60
Total	€46,674.88

Terms of Reference

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

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

1. Membership

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

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

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

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

2. The WAB Secretariat

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

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

3. Statutory Functions of the WAB

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

- a) To advise the Minister on the measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water for the purpose of increasing the confidence of members of the public in Irish Water;
- b) To furnish, on a quarterly basis, a report to the Committee on the performance by Irish Water in the implementation of its business plan with particular regard to the following:
 - a. Infrastructure delivery and leakage reductions;
 - b. Cost reduction and efficiency improvements;
 - c. Improvements in water quality, including the elimination of boil water notices;
 - d. Procurement, remuneration and staffing policies; and
 - e. Responsiveness to the needs of communities and enterprise.

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

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

4. Reporting Responsibilities

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

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

5. Other Functions of the WAB

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

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

6. Performance of Functions

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

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

7. Quorum

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

8. Authority

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

