# Regional Water Resources Plan – North West

# Questions and Answers from Public Webinars

1. Why can't the existing Catchment Areas, as per the EPA, be used for the purpose of this consultation process?

The formation of the study areas and regional groups was determined based on factors, including Irish Water's Operational Regions, our local supply boundaries, Local Authority boundaries and catchment areas.

It is not always possible to categorise by catchment area. For example, a water treatment plant may be obtaining supply from one catchment and supplying customers based in another catchment.

There are 539 supplies nationally and, by using study areas, it made the information more manageable and simpler to review and discuss in more detail. Through the National Water Resources Plan (NWRP), we have developed preferred approaches for the 539 supplies nationally.

2. How do you assess High Risk Catchments?

Risk assessments are undertaken for each catchment area. We base our risk management on the World Health Organisation's Drinking Water Safety Plan (DWSP) approach.

The DWSP approach involves assessing a comprehensive range of hazardous events that could potentially occur in every single drinking water supply from its source.

Further to our risk assessment of the source, we ensure that all barriers, or mitigation measures, are in place at the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) to ensure that water entering the distribution system complies with regulatory standards. This process is overseen by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Therefore, if we are abstracting water from a high-risk catchment, for example a catchment in which there are industry, quarry/mining operations, forestry, or agricultural activities, then the treatment process at the WTP will be more complex than a WTP located in a low-risk catchment.

Source protection measures will reduce the risk in the catchment and will require collaboration with stakeholders including riparian owners, industry groups, the agricultural, forestry and environmental sector, LAWPRO and Teagasc. In recognition of the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration in managing shared natural resources, Uisce Éireann is part of an expert group chaired by the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), who make recommendations to the Minister regarding

a new approach to drinking water source protection, as part of the transposition of the recast Drinking Water Directive. The national transposing regulations (yet to be published) and guidelines will set out the responsible bodies for implementation of source protection.

3. How will the proposal to take water from the River Shannon to supply Dublin impact on water availability in North West Region?

The preferred approach for 37 supplies in the Eastern and Midlands region, including the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), is to provide supply from a proposed new abstraction from Ardnacrusha at Parteen basin. Through the NWRP process, we looked at all existing sources and any potential increases in abstraction and assess these cumulatively to determine how any proposed changes would impact other existing and planned abstractions.

In the North West, we have plans involving the interconnection of both Boyle and Carrick-on-Shannon. While this will also be supplied from the River Shannon, the abstraction is upstream of the Parteen Basin and we have confirmed through our assessments that there is no cumulative impact of this abstraction or any other proposed abstraction on water availability in the Shannon catchment. Through our work on the NWRP process, we have looked at capacity and options for long term supply to each area and determined preferred approaches. We looked at a number of options for all supplies and, in these cases, supply from the River Shannon was determined to be the best long-term supply and most resilient solution for the Carrick-on-Shannon and Boyle supplies.

4. Where can we identify our actual supply?

All supplies can be identified in the North West Study Area Map – Study Area Report, which can be found here.

5. What way does Uisce Éireann liaise with LAWPRO to ensure everyone is working collectively towards improving water quality? I believe there is urgent work needed across the country.

As mentioned in the response to Question 2 above, source protection measures will reduce the risk in the catchment and will require collaboration with stakeholders.

Uisce Éireann is actively involved in implementing innovative source protection measures, along with other stakeholders mentioned already, and through this work, is involved in pilot source protection projects in Ireland to trial catchment scale interventions and monitor whether they can reduce the risk of pesticides causing exceedances in water supplies. For example, Uisce Éireann was a project partner on the Source to Tap Project, a cross-border partnership project that focused on the River Erne and the River Derg catchments, which cross the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. More information can be found at https://www.sourcetotap.eu/.

A pilot source protection project is now also underway in the Erne Larah catchment area in County Cavan and more information can be found here.

The recast Drinking Water Directive provides specific obligations for Member States to undertake risk assessment of the catchment areas by 2027. This will further help identify the risks to the drinking water supply. The national transposing regulations and guidelines (expected soon) will identify how this will be done and by whom. Uisce Éireann will play a big part in this and will engage and collaborate with key stakeholders.

6. Can you explain the barrier; what is it?

As part of the NWRP draft Framework Plan we have assessed the capability of our current water supply assets (water treatments plants and water supply network), to deal with existing and future potential risks. This is called a Barrier Assessment.

A Barrier Assessment allows us to understand the likely quality and reliability need and assess the additional improvements and infrastructure required that will allow us to meet the standards that we have set for ourselves. It should be noted that a "quality need" identified through the Barrier Assessment is not an indicator that Irish Water has failed or is failing to comply with the Drinking Water Regulations. Rather, it is an assessment of the need to invest in areas of our asset base (human and structural), to ensure that we can address potential risks or emerging risks to our water supplies.

Barriers are further explained in more details in the Framework Plan – Appendix J, which is available here.

7. Where can we see the assessment that took place on Lough Gil abstraction and the assessment of Foxes Den Water Treatment Plant?

Please refer to Appendix 3 of the Study Area C Technical Report here.

8. How does the issue of Sewerage, or Wastewater, Treatment Plants being located upstream from an abstraction point impact on your position?

All aspects in a catchment, including upstream discharges from industry, wastewater treatment plants, private dwellings, forestry and agriculture, affect how a WTP will be designed and what barriers will be put in place. We also look at risks within the catchment, see responses to question 2 and 9 of this document.

9. How do you manage pollution in the catchment area from farming and industry?

When we are designing new water treatment plants (WTPs), we look at the entire catchment and carry out water quality sampling, before we design the plant. With existing

plants, when we are looking at upgrades, we also look at the water quality in the catchment. We look at risks in the catchment where there may not be poor water quality, but there may be a potential risk, for example, heavy agriculture, forestry or industry located in the catchment area. Sources in karst regions are typically more vulnerable to contamination as water can move very quickly from the surface into the aquifer. Where there is a thick layer of slow draining soils above an aquifer, water quality is typically much higher owing to the filtration capacity of the soils.

We would use the quality samples and the risk assessment of the catchment to determine the level of treatment required. The new drinking water regulations will set out further requirements as to how catchment management measures will be implemented and by whom. This cannot be done by Uisce Éireann alone and a collaborative approach is needed with stakeholders, such as the local authorities, EPA and LAWPRO who work in the community, as it does not have the power to influence third party activities. A joint approach is required.

Overall improvements in water quality reduce the amount of treatment processes required in the plant and frequency of shutdowns and interruptions to supply. It could take water bodies 10 to 20 years to recover from historical pollution.

In the case of a pollution event, there are a number of measures we can take, so that, if we are aware of risks in a catchment, we have alarms and triggers available to protect the public water supply against those risks. In some cases, we can include raw water storage that is designed to allow a pollution event to pass the plant and maintain water supply to customers while it does. We can then temporarily shut down our abstraction until the pollution event passes.

UÉ is actively involved in pilot source protection projects in Ireland to trial catchment-scale interventions and reduce the risk of pesticides causing exceedances in water supplies. For example, we were a project partner on the Source to Tap Project, a cross-border partnership project that focused on the River Erne and the River Derg catchments, which cross the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

10. Glaslough / Tyholland Group Water Scheme (GTGWS) has no knowledge of any contact from UÉ?

UÉ met with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) early in January 2023 as part of this consultation and discussed proposals identified under the Regional Water Resources Plan in the North West that impact on group schemes in the region.

11. Are there plans to connect and supply water to any GWS, Eg. Glaslough Tyholland GWS?

The Glaslough Tyholland Group Water Scheme (GWS) currently obtains its supply from the Emy Lough source. It is a good source, and it has enough water for its current supply. UÉ

currently obtains supply from this GWS for two of our supplies, Glaslough and Emyvale. It is not envisaged that the Glaslough Tyholland GWS would ever need to connect to the public supply. If it, or any other GWS, needed to connect into one of our schemes, that is something we would consider through our taking in charge process.

Through our work on the National Water Resources Plan, we look at demand, specific to the area and factor in any uncertainties. This will allow for additional supply, which would potentially be needed if a GWS was required to connect to the public water supply network A lot of the GWSs in the area are serviced by good sources and are operating at a high standard and UÉ is obtaining supply from them. If there is a requirement in the future for the GWSs to join nearby public water supply networks, by the provision of the allowance for uncertainty, we should have enough capacity to allow for the supplies once the preferred approach is in place.

There is a taking in charge process, whereby UÉ can take group schemes in their charge, once certain conditions have been met. More information on GWS is available on our website here.

12. Is it proposed to take a new pipe from Monaghan town through the existing GTGWS?

The exact location of any proposed new pipelines would be developed at site assessment stage, which would be part of the individual project designs identified. We might have an indicative route at present, but not the exact one until we commence the detailed design phase of the project.

13. Can you provide more specific details on proposals to rationalise Glaslough & Emyvale?

They are two public supplies in Monaghan that currently obtain water from a GWS import. We are working on proposals with the GWSs to see if it is required to move away from the group water scheme supplies. If there is potential to maintain them, we will be proposing to do so. In the NWRP, we have to consider potential growth and whether we can provide supply for that growth in the future. We need to get confirmation from the GWSs involved, to confirm that they will be able to sustain growth in the future. We have had meetings with the GWSs & NFGWS to discuss these two supplies and will continue to engage with them going forward.

14. Is water that is provided to the agriculture sector treated water - this seems to be a waste and should be rainwater instead of expensive treated water.

All water in the distribution network is treated water. We would need a separate network if we were to provide untreated water to our customers for agricultural or other non-

domestic use. Agricultural users are treated like all non-domestic users and encouraged to reduce demand. Many agricultural users would have systems in place to reduce water use such as tanks for grey water harvesting. UÉ would welcome these systems being utilised more often.

15. Is there a plan to move private wells to Uisce Éireann?

No, there are currently no plans to switch over all private wells to the public supply.

16. Thank you for a very good and informative presentation, it defines a large programme of work for the North West Region. Would you have a timeline for the proposed upgrade of Carrick On Shannon WTP whereby it will supply the Boyle area?

A significant volume of work and investment is required to implement the NWRP. Critical projects and areas of need will be prioritised in the Capital Investments Programme. Each project will have to go through statutory approvals and land acquisition, as such, there is no exact timeline for all of the projects identified under the plan at present.