Public Consultation on the draft Regional Water Resources Plan – South West

Questions and Answers from Public Webinars

Introduction

This document is a record of both questions raised (during or shortly afterwards), and answers given at public webinars that Irish Water held in relation to the National Water Resources Plan: Regional Water Resources Plan-South West (RWRP-SW) from the 28th of June to the 30th of June. This document is being provided in the interests of transparency, and to assist stakeholders with preparing their submissions on the draft RWRP-SW, which are due by 24 August 2022.

The questions and answers are set out in as verbatim a way as possible. We believe we have captured them accurately, although the webinars were not recorded. The answers given here are as given at the webinars and, where we have more information, we have added that in as well.

A small number of questions were determined to be out of scope of the consultation process that Irish Water (IW) is currently undertaking. If a question submitted is not on the list below, IW confirms that the question was considered to be out of scope.

In some cases, the responses will provide references to sections of the draft RWRP-SW or the Framework Plan, which can be downloaded from the following websites:

RWRP-SW and appendices - https://www.water.ie/projects/strategic-plans/national-water-resources/rwrp/south-west/

Framework Plan and appendices - https://www.water.ie/projects/strategic-plans/national-water-resources/

In relation to submissions to date, Irish Water received 83 submissions on the Framework Plan. The closing date for submissions on the draft RWRP-EM is 24 August 2022.

1. Would Irish Water ask the government for Capital Budget to replace the antiquated leaking water pipes?
2. At what percentage rate are water main pipes being replaced? 0.3 would take 300 years to replace the water pipes network.
3. Does Irish Water feel it is getting enough capital budget from the government?

Irish Water is funded by the Irish Government through the Exchequer, and by revenue from non-domestic tariffs. Under the National Development Plan the Government has included investment in public water services of €6 billion to 2026. In the Government's policy for water services in Ireland (the Water Services Policy Statement) investment is to be allocated under the themes of Quality, Future-Proofing and Conservation (Leakage Reduction). So, there is a clear commitment to investment in reducing leakage. Investment in our networks and assets is allocated through our Capital Investment Plans which are produced in advance every 5 years. These plans are submitted to the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities who undertake an independent assessment of the plans before approving.

Under our Capital Investment Plans, Irish Water (IW) has a national programme of leakage reduction and is increasing the spend on leakage reduction measures over the coming years. Our investment in this area started at €100 million per year and is currently at €120 million per year. IW plans to increase this expenditure to €150 million per year in our next investment plan. We have also applied for further funding for leakage reduction measures as part of the National Development Plan. Currently 40% of our leakage reduction investment is spent on mains replacement with the remaining budget focused on pressure management, active leakage control and 'Find and Fix' measures and this annual spend will increase as the budget increases. That rate of mains rehab will increase over time, as our funding increases and our knowledge of the areas we need to target increases. Our expenditure in terms of leakage reduction is approved by the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU).

To tackle leakage, the existing networks have to first be analysed using a combination of methods to understand the network and the causes of leakage. That is the first step in tackling leakage strategically.

More generally, wholesale mains replacement is not recommended as a stand-alone solution to reduce leakage. As set out in the European Commission's EU reference document 'Good Practices on Leakage Management (Water Framework Directive Common Implementation Strategy Working Group Programme of

Measures Case Study)', there are no records of countries or jurisdictions that use largescale watermains replacement programmes as a stand-alone method to reduce leakage (even those with low leakage levels).

4. What percentage of domestic water is leaked into the ground every day?

Every day we currently lose about 38% of our treated water through leaks before it even reaches our taps. (https://www.water.ie/projects/national-projects/leakage-reduction-programme/)

IW is committed to addressing the current level of leakage across our supplies. In 2018, the rate of leakage nationally was 46%; by the end of 2020 it was 40%. By the end of 2021, we had reduced leakage further to 38%.

As part of the preferred approach for the South West region, we are proposing to reduce leakage to 21% of total demand across supplies, with an average daily demand greater than 1.5Mega litres (Ml). This equates to a total leakage reduction of 96Ml/day across the region, which will bring average demand to 23%.

Leakage reduction will always be intrinsic to our resources planning process and will always be funded as part of each investment plan. We have a multitude of issues to address across our water supplies. We must transform our water supplies (abstractions and treatment plants), improve interconnectivity between supplies by upgrading our treated water storage and trunk main network, as well as continue leakage reduction.

5. Do data centres pay for water?

Yes, data centres are non-domestic customers and pay for water.

Water usage nationally for data centres is less than 0.2% of overall total demand and, due to the use of advanced technology in this area, we don't envisage this level of demand significantly increasing.

We have strategies in place to mitigate demand from data centres, such as limiting peak flows to the development and ensuring the developer provides adequate private storage to manage needs during periods of peak demand.

6. Is the water pipe from Limerick to Dublin going ahead?

Irish Water estimates that we will need 40% more treated water by 2044 in the Greater Dublin Area and Midlands to address current shortfalls with our supplies and to provide a sustainable and resilient water supply to support housing and commercial growth. The Water Supply Project - Eastern and Midlands Region ("WSP-EMR") is an essential project to meet the long-term water supply requirements to 2050 and beyond in a sustainable manner.

The project comprises of an abstraction of water from the lower River Shannon at Parteen Basin in County Tipperary, with a new water treatment plant nearby at Birdhill. Treated water will then be piped 170km to a termination point reservoir at Peamount in County Dublin, connecting into the Greater Dublin Area. The project will also facilitate options to reinforce supplies of treated water to communities along the route.

The project has already gone through extensive non-statutory public consultation and there will be a further opportunity to provide feedback on the project before a Strategic Infrastructure Development Planning Application is submitted to An Bord Pleanála. (https://www.water.ie/projects/national-projects/water-supply-project-east-1/)

7. In the Demand side of your Supply/Demand balance, is there a user conservation strategy. i.e., water reduction campaigns targeted at customers

"Use Less" is one of the three "pillars" that Irish Water has used to develop options to address identified need. Under the 'Use Less' pillar, conservation activities are underway at present, and Irish Water is committed to helping our customers become more efficient in their water use. Presently, Irish Water is actively promoting water conservation in schools, business and communities through activities including:

- National and Local Media Campaigns;
- Targeted Sectoral campaigns;
- Green Schools;
- Water Stewardship Scheme;
- First Fix Free Scheme; and
- Development of an online water conservation application, which will provide tips on how to conserve water in the home.

Irish Water also works with stakeholders to support policy change, such as developing water efficiency standards in Building Regulations and social housing.

8. How are water demands from possible new developments assessed within Irish Water and how does this feed into capacity for growth and development?
9. Does the strategy for drinking water take account of the County Development plans?

It is Irish Water's objective to meet future customers' needs in line with growth rates and land zoning, as set out in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), National Planning Framework (NPF) and Local Authority Development Plans.

We recognise the ongoing work between the Regional Assemblies and the Local Authorities over the course of the development of the Local Authority Development Plans. As these plans are finalised, Irish Water will incorporate the increasingly refined growth rates into our demand forecasts through the monitoring and feedback process set out in Section 8.3.8 of the Framework Plan.

When Irish Water receives an enquiry or an application for any new connection to the network, a detailed assessment is carried out to assess the available capacity in the network and, where appropriate, to identify the upgrades that may be required to service that development. In such cases, the upgrades are discussed with the applicant/developer as part of the assessment process.

10. Are there any plans to engage with stakeholders in catchment / source protection measures on an ongoing basis and in advance of major schemes for long term future?

IW is already engaging with stakeholders in catchment and source protection measures. In our Water Services Strategic Plan, IW outlines its commitment to work effectively with other stakeholders to support a catchment-based approach.

Through our interim pesticide strategy (https://www.water.ie/projects/strategic-plans/interim-pesticide-strategy/), we are collaborating with stakeholders to manage the risks of pesticides in the catchment, with collaboration occurring at

all stages of the risk management process. IW is a key stakeholder involved in the National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group (NPDWAG). This group was established to enhance collaboration between key stakeholders in this area.

IW is also working on source protection projects, such as Source to Tap (https://www.sourcetotap.eu/) and our first pilot project is being rolled out in County Cavan.

IW is also working on expanding this approach through our Drinking Water Safety Plan project and is currently planning for the requirements of the Recast Drinking Water Directive.

11. If we know of a local leak, how do we report that to you?

To report a water leak on public property e.g. footpaths, roads, communal spaces and public recreational facilities, fill in Irish Water's online form, which can be found on Irish Water's website under the heading "Report a leak on public property" (https://www.water.ie/contact/leak-on-public-property/)

Water leaks can also be reported to the Irish Water customer care helpline, which is open 24/7 on 1800 278 278. Customers can also contact us on Twitter @IWCare with any queries. For updates, please visit the Water Supply Updates section of the Irish Water website.