



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Public Consultation:

Timetable and Work Programme for the
Third-Cycle River Basin Management Plan
2022-2027

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
[housing.gov.ie](https://www.housing.gov.ie)

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1. PURPOSE OF THIS CONSULTATION

The purpose of this consultation document is to set out the main steps and milestones towards preparing the third River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland by December 2021 and to seek your views with respect to them. Early engagement with stakeholders allows us to undertake a more informed, collaborative, and ultimately, robust review of the current RBMP structures and measures and apply these learnings in the development of the third-cycle Plan. This engagement sets the direction for how we will work with others in the coming years to improve on our existing Plan, and help accelerate improvements in water quality during the third river basin planning cycle.

This first consultation stage, which will run for six months from January to June 2019, will allow us to:

- i. Finalise the timetable and work programme for developing the third cycle RBMP;
- ii. Explain the structures which are in place to enable stakeholder participation in the development of the Plan and to highlight the opportunities for that engagement;
- iii. Set out the approach to developing the third cycle RBMP;
- iv. Provide the opportunity for improvements to be suggested in respect of how stakeholders are engaged with; and
- v. Promote the continued implementation of RBMP measures.

2. WHAT IS RIVER BASIN PLANNING?

2.1 Introduction

Water is a fundamental aspect of all our lives and maintaining good water quality is important in promoting improvements across all elements of our society, economy and environment. By protecting our water quality, we will also help to protect public health. Our groundwater, rivers and lakes are the sources of our drinking water and the health of our water bodies is intrinsically linked to maintaining safe, clean water supplies. In addition, they are not only essential parts of our natural environment but also a national asset that our communities and tourists enjoy. By continuing to improve the quality of our water bodies, we will also help to sustain jobs in water-intensive sectors, such as agri-food and tourism, sectors that collectively sustain over 400,000 jobs.

Water quality must be protected to ensure we have sufficient quantity and satisfactory quality to ensure we comply with the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the principal water policy driver in the EU. The WFD is implemented through the river basin management planning process and river basin management plans (RBMPs) are reviewed and updated every six years in accordance with the Directive. Ireland's first River Basin Management Plans were published in 2009 covering 7 separate River Basin Districts. The second RBMP, encompassing one single national River Basin District, was published in 2018. The third RBMP is due to be published by the end of 2021 and will run for six years to 2027.

2.2 Current Plan

In developing the current RBMP, a three-tier structure across relevant authorities was adopted, following initial public consultation. At Tier 1, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government has responsibility for policy, necessary legislation and resourcing the Plan. Tier 2 is led by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is responsible for the catchment characterisation process and assisting and advising the Minister. Tier 3 consists of the local authorities, who have responsibility for co-ordinating the implementation of measures on the ground, and the local knowledge required for successful delivery of many potential measures. The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) is a shared service supporting local authorities in their role. It consists of the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO) and the Local Authority Catchment Assessment Team (LAWCAT).

The approach that guided the development of the second-cycle RBMP is set out in the Plan, and is based on the following major steps:

- The outcomes of the first planning cycle were assessed. This part of the process included public consultation on significant water management issues in Ireland.
- Characterisation of the River Basin District was undertaken. This included an assessment of the current status of our waters and the identification of water bodies currently at risk of not meeting WFD requirements.
- The significant pressures and impacts of human activities were identified and summarised.
- Environmental objectives were defined, and priorities were established, including prioritisation of waterbodies for action in the current cycle.
- A Programme of Measures based on the characterisation process, and on the pressures identified, was set out. This Programme of Measures aims to meet the environmental objectives and specific requirements of the WFD.
- The proposed implementation structures for the Plan were set out.
- The expected positive outcomes of the RBMP were identified.
- Plans for ongoing monitoring and reporting on implementation were put in place.
- A Strategic Environmental Assessment and an Appropriate Assessment of the Plan were carried out.
- A draft RBMP, which set out the proposed measures to achieve the Plan objectives, was published.
- The Programme of Measures was updated and finalised following extensive public consultation and the final Plan was published.

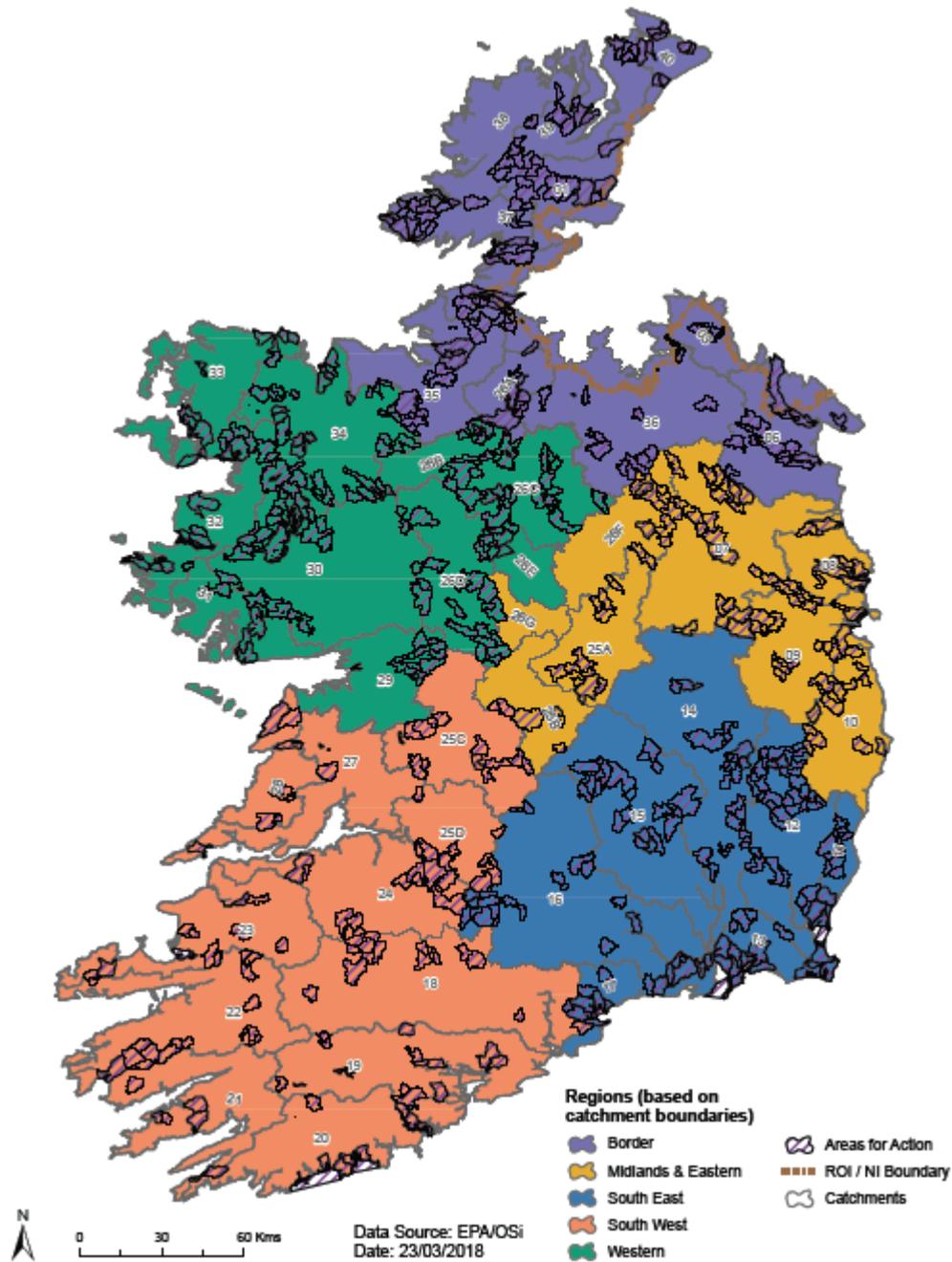
2.2.1 Prioritisation of Areas for Action to 2021

During the development of the current (second-cycle) RBMP, a prioritisation exercise to identify those water bodies that require immediate action within the second planning cycle to 2021 was led by the local authorities and supported by the EPA and other stakeholders. As part of their catchment characterisation process, the EPA identified those water bodies that were at risk of not achieving their objectives under the WFD.

Led jointly by the EPA and LAWCO, a collaborative process involving local authority personnel and all relevant stakeholders was set up to identify, at a regional level, those water bodies that should be prioritised for action during the second planning cycle. This process was based on the priorities outlined in the RBMP, the evidence from the

characterisation process, and on the data and knowledge of public authority personnel. The outcome of this prioritisation process was the selection of an initial list of 190 Areas for Action across the 5 local authority regions (Figure 1). Within these 190 areas, a total of 726 water bodies were selected for initial actions during the second RBMP cycle. This work is currently underway.

Figure 1: Areas for Action (190) in the five regions based on catchment boundaries



2.2.2 Stakeholder engagement

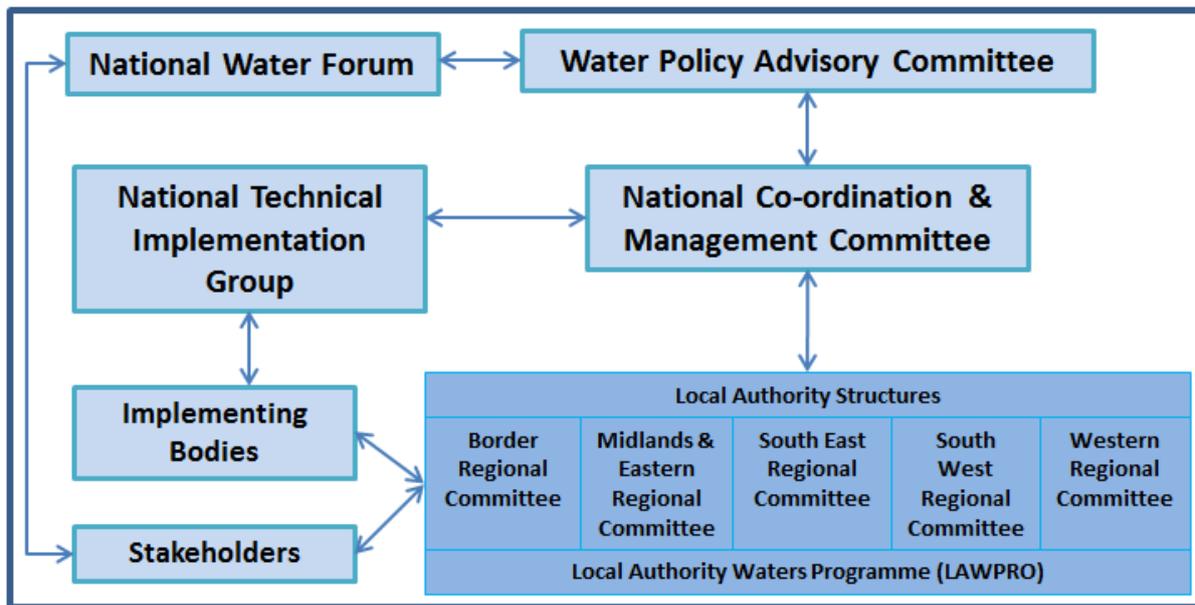
A strong focus on engagement with all sectors of society is a central objective of the planning and implementation of the current RBMP. It is clear that all stakeholders need to engage at national, regional and local levels to ensure the values we all place on our water resources are aligned and that we take meaningful and effective actions to protect and improve them. The increased emphasis on participation and engagement in the current RBMP has led to the creation of the Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce), the local authority Regional Operational Committees, and the Local Authorities Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO), which is part of the Local Authority Water Programme (LAWPRO).

The Water Forum was established to facilitate stakeholder engagement on all water issues, including issues of water quality and implementation of the WFD. The Forum determines its own work programme and the means of communicating its views and analysis. However, its views feed into the proposed implementation structures at all levels, including the work of the Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC). The Forum provides an interface between science, citizen/stakeholder engagement and water policy.

LAWPRO drives public engagement, participation and consultation with communities and stakeholders at local level. It co-ordinates these activities across all 31 local authorities. LAWPRO also works to ensure that public and stakeholder engagement will result in meaningful public and stakeholder participation in the catchment management approach across the River Basin District.

In addition, the EPA continues to lead on stakeholder networking and knowledge sharing. The catchments.ie website acts as an information and data repository and as a knowledge-sharing tool to allow better targeting of measures and co-ordination of implementation. In respect of specific initiatives, a Community Water Development Fund has been established to support local community actions which are aimed at protecting water and align with the goals of the RBMP. The catchments.ie and watersandcommunities.ie websites have been established by the EPA and LAWPRO respectively. These fora and supports bring stakeholders closer to the RBMP planning process and provide for more robust and constructive engagement at all levels of the process.

Figure 2: Implementation Structures



2.2.3 Linked Plans and Programmes

The RBMP is a plan for implementing the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, and it enables us to put improving water quality to the fore of Government policy. It is not a plan that operates in isolation, and the linkages outlined in the second cycle RBMP to other national plans and policies are critical to its success. Even since the publication of the RBMP in April 2018, a number of Government plans have been published that have direct links to the RBMP and can impact positively on our ability to implement the Programme of Measures and improve water quality across the River Basin District and Areas for Action.

The following plans, programmes and strategies are listed as particularly important areas of cross-over with the RBMP. Aligning these with the river basin management planning process enables those involved to better co-ordinate activities and therefore improve implementation of measures to improve water quality and derive maximum additional environmental gains.

Table 1: National Plans and Programmes linked to the RBMP

Flood Risk Management Plans	https://www.floodinfo.ie/
National Planning Framework	https://www.npf.ie/
Nitrates Action Programme	https://www.housing.gov.ie/water/water-quality/nitrates/nitrates-directive%20
Water Services Strategic Plan	https://www.water.ie/projects-plans/our-plans/water-services-strategic-plan/
National Biodiversity Action Plan	https://www.npws.ie/legislation/national-biodiversity-plan
National Climate Change Adaptation Framework	https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/topics/adapting-to-climate-change/national-adaptation-framework/Pages/default.aspx
Rural Development Programme	https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/ruralenvironmentandsustainability/ruraldevelopmentprogrammerdp2014-2020/
National Peatlands Strategy	https://www.npws.ie/peatlands-and-turf-cutting/peatlands-council/national-peatlands-strategy
Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems National Inspection Plan 2018-2021	http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/water/wastewater/nip2018-2021.html
National Forestry Programme 2014-2020	https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests-service/forestry-programmes/2014-2020/

3. DEVELOPING THE THIRD CYCLE RBMP

3.1 Timetable and work programme

Following on from the significant changes to the river basin management planning process in Ireland in preparation for the second cycle RBMP, the implementation of the new structures and the Programme of Measures will be fundamental to the success of the process. Key performance indicators for individual measures and metrics of success are being measured during the course of the second-cycle RBMP with a view to assessing the relative success of the Plan, and the success of the governance, engagement and implementation structures put in place to support it.

Only eight months have elapsed between the publication of the second-cycle RBMP and the commencement of this consultation process for the third cycle. As a result, there is limited scope to gauge the outcomes of measures and initiatives from the second cycle RBMP. Many of these are still being established and it is likely that only a limited number of the outputs and outcomes from the second-cycle RBMP will be reflected at catchment level during the period of preparation of the third-cycle Plan.

Development of the third-cycle RBMP is starting now and will continue right up to the end of 2021. Some of the key principles proposed to be adopted for developing the Plan include:

- Continuing to target priority Areas for Action;
- Progressing measures in respect of all environmental pressures together in Areas for Action;
- Increasing access to RBMP information for the public;
- Strengthening collaboration at all levels of the Plan development and implementation;
- Maintaining and, where necessary, developing the existing mechanisms for North-South co-operation and engagement;
- Supporting local community action; and
- Assessing the impact of the RBMP on public attitudes and behaviours with a view to improving implementation into the future.

The publication of the timetable and work programme allows us to set out measures we will take to ensure the involvement of the public and signpost anticipated changes to how we approach the third-cycle Plan. It will also ensure that we have set out agreed steps for

engagement across the work programme to ensure that people can shape the development of the Plan at every stage.

The current RBMP entailed a complete change of approach to the overall river basin management planning process compared to cycle one. The third-cycle Plan is considered as an evolution of the current RBMP. While it is too early to assess the outcomes from the current RBMP, the Plan's structures, methods, outputs and interactions can certainly be considered and adjustments made where appropriate. There are a number of considerations that we feel must be analysed in the context of any changes to how the third-cycle Plan is developed:

- The work of the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP) and the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWCO and LAWCAT) are now well underway – the views of stakeholders will be invaluable policy development aids in how these programmes are developed in the coming years;
- The effectiveness of the new governance structures should also be reviewed in the context of its operational success and the level of engagement with the public at each governance level;
- Any changes in the WFD status of catchments since the publication of the second-cycle Plan will also be considered;
- The ambition in terms of expected outcomes and the level and targeting of resources will also require consideration as the third-cycle Plan develops; and
- There is also a need to consider the outcomes of the EU fitness check of the Water Framework Directive that is ongoing.

Taking into account the time required for each stage of this process, the timetable for developing the third-cycle RBMP is as follows:

WFD Element:	Details:	Timeframe:
Publication of Timetable and Work Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set out draft timetable and work programme to produce third-cycle RBMP. - Highlight milestones in RBMP cycle where consultation is required. - Set out measures we will take to ensure public involvement in the consultation process. - Publication of timetable in December 2018, consultation to run to June 2019. 	Dec 2018 – June 2019
Publication of Interim overview of Significant Water Management Issues in Ireland (SWMI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of issues to be addressed in third draft RBMP. - Publication of overview in Dec 2019, consultation to run to June 2020. 	Dec 2019 – June 2020
Publication of draft River Basin Management Plan 2022 – 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sets out objectives for meeting our WFD obligations and presents strategies for meeting them. 	Dec 2020
Public consultation following publication of draft RBMP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to comment on draft Plan, including, prioritisation of water bodies, objectives set and measures proposed. - Consultation facilitated through written submissions and online. 	Dec 2020 – Jun 2021
Publish finalised RBMP for 2022 – 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sets out objectives for the water environment and the strategies for meeting them. 	By Dec 2021

4. OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RBMP

There are a number of different avenues, at both national and at local level, where interested parties or individuals can participate during this consultation period and in the overall development of the RBMP over the next 3 years.

National level:

1. Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government:

The Minister is responsible for publishing this consultation document and the subsequent stages of the RBMP process, as set out in the timetable and work programme. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government will lead on this work and will co-ordinate the management and analysis of the consultation responses at various stages of the process, as outlined in the timetable.

2. EPA:

The role of the EPA is to advise and support the Minister in publishing this timetable and work programme and to participate in the consultation across all stages of the third-cycle Plan development. The EPA will also continue to undertake the catchment assessments, monitoring, reporting and other technical WFD-related activities that are critical to the success of the Plan.

3. Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC):

The WPAC was established to support and advise the Minister on the development of the RBMP and brings together the key national organisations that contribute to delivery of the WFD in Ireland. The WPAC is chaired by a representative of the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, and consists of representatives from the following organisations:

- DHPLG
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- Department of Health
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- Local authorities
- EPA

- Irish Water
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Office of Public Works
- Geological Survey of Ireland.

4. Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce):

The Water Forum was formally established in 2017 under the Water Services Act 2017. It is an independent entity and has discretion to determine its own work programme and the means of communicating its views and analysis. The Forum's functions are broad and include advising the WPAC in relation to River Basin Management Plans on matters pertaining to the objectives of the WFD, and on related matters concerning the management of the inland aquatic environment and water resources.

There are currently 26 members on the Forum, representing organisations and sectors with an interest in water issues. These include consumer groups; Irish Water consumers; community groups; rivers trusts; groups that participate in aquatic activities, such as fishing and water sports; sectors with a particular interest in water issues, such as the agricultural and business sectors; the community and voluntary sector; the environmental sector and organisations representing rural Ireland and the group water scheme sector.

Regional and local levels:

5. Local Authority Waters Programme Office (LAWPRO) engagement initiatives:

LAWPRO is engaging with interested stakeholders and individuals through their ongoing public meetings across the country as part of their implementation strategy for the current Plan. They will use the established stakeholder networks and public meetings to emphasise the continuity in river basin management planning evidenced by this early opportunity to already input to the preparation of the third RBMP cycle and encourage submissions. They will also use their existing social media and communications platforms to spread the message and encourage people to respond to this consultation and submit their views on the timetable and work programme. LAWPRO will step up community engagement actions during the subsequent public consultation opportunities proposed in the timetable for third cycle preparation. Details on how you can respond to this consultation, including the short questionnaire developed for this purpose, can be found at www.watersandcommunities.ie

5. HOW YOU CAN RESPOND TO THE CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS

A short, targeted questionnaire has been developed to facilitate responses to some of the key questions we have in relation to the development of the RBMP. The responses we receive to this questionnaire will allow us to determine the public opinion on the current RBMP and the level of engagement between the implementation bodies and the stakeholders. It will also help us to shape the development of the consultation process at different stages of the Plan and will guide us in our assessment of the success of the measures we have put in place in the current RBMP to improve water quality.

The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1 of this consultation document, and can also be completed on our website at the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3Q9VMS7>

If you have any comments or suggestions outside of those topics covered in the questionnaire, you can also send them directly to us at: rbmp@housing.gov.ie

In addition, interested stakeholders can engage through the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), either at one of their public meetings, on

www.watersandcommunities.ie or through contacting the following email address:

info@lawaters.ie

Written submissions can be sent to:

RBMP Public Consultation

Water Division

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Custom House

Dublin 1

D01 W6X0

The final date for receipt of responses in respect of this consultation is 28th June 2019.

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE:

Name:	
E-mail address:	
Organisation (if applicable):	
1. Did you engage with the consultation processes during the first or second cycle RBMPs? If so, do you feel your queries or concerns were addressed in the final RBMP?	
2. Do you think the consultation timeframes and mechanisms outlined in this consultation document are sufficient? What other mechanisms would you suggest?	
3. What are your views on the implementation structures outlined in the RBMP? Have you had any experience in dealing with any of the implementing bodies in connection with the RBMP, and if so, what was your experience?	

4. What are your views on the prioritisation of Areas for Action in the RBMP?

5. Are there areas where you feel we should direct additional effort, outside of the Areas for Action and the measures identified in the RBMP?

6. Have you any additional comments on the consultation steps and timetable set out in this document?

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