

Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC)

Bulletin

September 2017

Background

The Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC), established pursuant to S.I. 350 of 2014, provides policy advice and assistance to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and on broader water resource issues. WPAC is also responsible for providing advice on and support for the making of River Basin Management Plans, including the programmes of measures as part of those Plans. WPAC regularly invites other organisations to present to it on topics of relevance, and it has decided to publish regular bulletins to provide an overview of issues under consideration. However, as much of the Committee's discussions are confidential as part of the wider deliberative process, these bulletins are general in nature.

WPAC Membership

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Chair) (D/HPLG)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Office of Public Works (OPW)

Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI)

Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (D/AFM)

Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (D/CHG)

Department of Health (D/H)

County and City Management Association (CCMA)

Health Service Executive (HSE)

Irish Water (IW)

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)

Set out below is a summary overview of the WPAC meeting on 26 September 2017.

Water Forum

The Water Services Bill 2017 provides for the establishment of An Fóram Uisce (the Water Forum), which represents a range of stakeholders in advising the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government on water policy matters. The Senior Executive Officer with An Fóram provided a presentation setting out its advisory role in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

An Fóram raised some concerns in relation to the draft River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and, in response, D/HPLG will present a progress report on the draft RBMP to An Fóram at its forthcoming meeting in October 2017.

IFI noted the establishment of the National Advisory Committee on Inland Fisheries and suggested that it may be of assistance to An Fóram.

Draft Second-Cycle River Basin Management Plan

D/HPLG provided a presentation on finalising the second-cycle RBMP and its programmes of measures. The public consultation process closed on 31 August 2017, with 958 submissions received. Analysis of these submissions has commenced. The CCMA noted

that the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office had received approximately 1,000 submissions on foot of the extensive local consultation process it had run, which will be collated and returned to D/HPLG as a synthesised submission.

In relation to the characterisation process, EPA reported that 46 catchment assessments have been completed and regional approval is imminent on the resulting 5 regional reports that were drafted. The characterisation summary will be delivered by the end of October 2017 and the updated water quality status report for the period 2013-2015 will be published in October.

Review of Nitrates Action Programme - Update

D/HPLG noted that the 3rd Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) will expire at the end 2017 and that a revised NAP is currently being developed. The public consultation process concluded on 3 May 2017; 28 submissions were received and the final report of the Nitrates Expert Group (which is co-chaired by D/HPLG and D/AFM) was published on 8 September 2017. The key recommendations of that report were presented to the EU Nitrates Management Committee on 11 September 2017. D/HPLG gave an overview of the main categories and headline actions of the report. It is hoped that the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government will be able to sign regulations giving effect to a revised NAP before the end of 2017, once approval in principle is received from the EU Nitrates Management Committee.

Local Authority WFD Staffing Business Case - Update

Kilkenny and Tipperary County Councils have been appointed as the lead local authorities following a competitive selection process. The business case approved by the Public Sector Reform and Oversight Group provides for 53 contract staff, focusing on WFD implementation, over the four-year period of the second cycle at an estimated annual cost of €4-5 million. The recruitment will be on a phased basis, with the initial recruitment process expected to commence in November 2017 and first staff being in place by the end of Q1 2018.

Lead Mitigation Advisory Group (Orthophosphate Dosing) - Update

D/HPLG reported that the last meeting of the Advisory Group was on 30 May 2017, at which the assessments of 12 Water Treatment Plants (zones) were discussed. All 12 zones have been categorised as “green”. The next batch of assessments is due in the coming weeks, following which the next meeting will be scheduled.