

Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC)

Bulletin

April 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, Community 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 programme 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, Community and Local Government (Chair) (D/HPCLG)
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Office of Public Works (OPW)
Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI)
Commission for Energy Regulation (CER)
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (D/AFM)
Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (D/AHRRGA)
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 24 April 2017.

Draft Second-Cycle River Basin Management Plan

An engagement strategy in respect of the draft River Basin Management Plan is being rolled out and some of its key features include:

- LAWCO, the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office, is convening some 120 public meetings on the draft RBMP;
- the newly established National Water Forum, which will meet for the first time on 27 April 2017, will consider the draft RBMP;
- the Department is conducting a six-month public consultation process, ending in August 2017, as well as holding various bilateral meetings and a stakeholder workshop, the latter on 15 May 2017; and
- LAWCO is holding regional workshops for local authority staff.

A commitment to establish the National Co-ordination and Management Committee (NCMC) has been made in the draft RBMP. The NCMC, comprising of representatives of D/HPCLG, local authorities and the EPA in order to oversee implementation of the RBMP, met for the first time on 4 April 2017. The NCMC will have a particular focus on translating the actions/measures in the RBMP into concrete work programmes, with clear targets and timelines.

Review of Nitrates Action Programme - Update

D/HPCLG explained that the current Nitrates Action Programme expires at the end of 2017 and the review process is jointly led by the D/HPCLG and D/AFM. Negotiations are currently ongoing with the European Commission to put in place a new Programme, with an eight-week public consultation process due to end on 28 April 2017. Submissions received will be examined in May 2017, with bilateral meetings with the European Commission to take place in June and July 2017.

Local Authority WFD Staffing Business Case

CCMA reminded the Committee that the Business Case recommends the recruitment of additional contract staff for investigative assessment and restore and protect functions, to be employed by a lead local authority. The Business Case will shortly be considered and decided upon by PSROG, the Public Sector Reform and Oversight Group. If the Business Case is approved, the key issues will then be the identification of a lead local authority and the securing of the financial resources needed to underpin this recruitment process.

Lead Mitigation Advisory Group (Orthophosphate Dosing)

A document on a proposal to establish a national group to advise on Irish Water's lead mitigation strategy was circulated and members were asked to revert to the Department with any observations. A key issue is how best to balance the public health benefits of orthophosphate dosing, to deal with lead piping, with the potential environmental risks arising.