

Water Sector Transformation - Policy Paper

“Irish Water - Towards a National, Publicly-Owned, Regulated Water Services Utility”

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Part 1: Setting out a Vision for Public Water Services

Why publish this Policy Paper?

The Policy Paper clarifies the Government's views and expectations around the next phase of transformation in the Water Sector. This involves planning for the full integration of all activities relating to the delivery of public water services into the organisation structure of Irish Water.

The Water Sector Transformation Programme, which began in 2012, is a complex and challenging process for key stakeholders, notably the workers and their trade union representatives, the local government sector, and Ervia/Irish Water.

By setting out its views and expectations, the Government is enabling stakeholders to engage meaningfully in the change process.

Engagement will give water sector stakeholders a strong say in determining the future working arrangements for the delivery of water services.

What is the Government's vision for the water sector?

Our Shared Future, the Programme for Government, includes a commitment to

“retain Irish Water in public ownership as a national, standalone, regulated utility”.

The Programme also commits to ensuring that Irish Water is sufficiently funded to develop plans to ensure security of supply of water resources and to develop sufficient capacity in drinking and wastewater networks to allow for balanced regional development.

The objective is to ensure that modern and effective arrangements are in place for the delivery of water services that:

- meet the needs and expectations of citizens and users,
- comply with domestic and international legal obligations,
- represent good value for money,
- support the principles of social, economic and environmental sustainability, and
- are retained in public ownership and control.

What does the integration of Water Services under Irish Water mean?

Integration means that all of the operational water services activities that are currently subject to the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) will be integrated into the organisation structure of Irish Water.

The Government envisages that Irish Water will assume direct control of the operation of public water and wastewater services, for which it holds statutory responsibility since 2014. This will replace the Service Level Agreements it currently holds with the 31 local authorities. Responsibility for the management and control of public water services and accountability for service delivery will be fully aligned within a single organisation for the first time in Ireland.

This is the best way of ensuring the provision of high quality drinking water and wastewater services for customers, ensuring regulatory compliance, and supporting Ireland's social and economic development in an environmentally sustainable way.

Once water services are fully integrated under Irish Water, the Government envisages that robust governance and accountability arrangements will continue to be applied, and strengthened where necessary, to ensure that Irish Water is properly equipped and appropriately resourced to fulfil the role expected of it, and can be held to account for its performance by citizens, statutory authorities and Government.

What benefits will Irish Water as a national public water services utility deliver for the public?

Irish Water as a national public water services utility will deliver better strategic planning and accountability, enhanced efficiency and effectiveness, and enhanced staff opportunities.

In public interest terms, the national, publicly-owned, regulated water services utility will enable:

- Security of quality, drinking water supply that are vital for public health, with greater supply capacity needed due to a growing population, economic recovery and climate change.
- Increased investment in wastewater treatment thereby protecting public health and the environment by reducing wastewater pollution into lakes and coastal waters.
- Increased economic competitiveness through security of water supply for water-intensive industries such as ICT, pharma-chem and agri-food - helping to attract such industries to Ireland as more countries face water shortages.

In terms of strategic planning and accountability, the national public utility will enable

- A national strategic focus;
- More optimized decision making; and
- Clear lines of accountability, authority and responsibility.

In terms of improving efficiency and effectiveness, the national public utility will enable

- Best international practice approaches to the delivery of water services;
- Better economies of scale through centralised control of assets, revenues, and costs;
- Greater capacity to ensure security and quality of supply;
- Greater quality, consistency and transparency via the national customer service centre;
- Reduced delivery costs; and
- Better regulation with regulators (CRU and EPA) dealing with a single responsible entity.

In terms of staffing, the national public utility will have the critical mass to attract further specialist talent and enable optimum efficiencies to be achieved over time.

What benefits will the National Public Utility Model deliver for staff?

As the integrated public water services utility, Irish Water will have a specialised water services workforce, better supported career structures for water services staff, better training arrangements, including the introduction of apprenticeship and graduate programs, all with the objective of ensuring a best practice organisation that delivers world class water services.

The Service Level Agreement arrangement has been important in facilitating the transition to delivery on a national scale, as it ensured that the very considerable skills and expertise of water services staff in local authorities were retained and that service delivery continued seamlessly. However, after seven years in operation, the structural limitations of the Service Level Agreements are becoming apparent. The involvement of 32 organisations adds to the challenge of achieving the required further significant improvements in customer service, operational performance, environmental performance and efficiencies which one fully integrated water utility can deliver more effectively.

The next phase of transformation therefore necessarily involves the integration of all water services activities within an integrated organisation.

How does this impact on local authority staff?

The Government expects that Irish Water will integrate the day to day operation and delivery of water services into its own organisation structure on a phased basis.

In preparation for this, the Government is asking all parties to engage through Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) structures to identify a Framework for the future delivery of water services by July 2021. This process will seek to agree an outcome that works for Irish Water, local authority staff and local authorities and supports the creation of a world class utility which delivers for the citizen

Following collective agreement at the WRC, it is expected that Irish Water, working with local authorities and current water services workers, will then implement a phased plan for the integration of water services into Irish Water's structure, with implementation to be concluded in 2022.

The Government will bring forward amending legislation to provide that Irish Water is a publicly-owned, national, stand-alone regulated utility separated from the Ervia Group.

Further detail on the implications for staffing are set out in Part 3.

Why pursue these reforms now?

The Government has a duty to ensure that effective arrangements are in place for the delivery of water and waste water services for ourselves and for future generations.

Notwithstanding the investment made and progress achieved to date, considerable challenges remain. There are significant and ongoing infrastructure deficits to be dealt with to meet basic performance standards. There have been judgments against Ireland in the Court of Justice of the European Union because of inadequacies in our wastewater treatment network. Water leakage rates are unacceptably high. Delays in the provision of

reliable water and wastewater services can constrain the provision of housing and commercial development, which are critical national priorities.

These challenges are unlikely to be overcome unless Irish Water is given complete operational control of the public water system commensurate with the statutory responsibility for water services planning, development and delivery that it has held since 1 January 2014.

Why does transformation of the water sector need to happen now?

It will take a number of years to plan and implement the full integration and transformation of water services activity within Irish Water's organisation structure and ways of working.

While local authorities and Irish Water have worked very well together under the Service Level Agreements to operate and develop the public water system over the past 7 years, the limitations of this interim working arrangement are becoming increasingly apparent. Although Irish Water holds legal responsibility for the delivery of water services, it does not have direct control of water assets or directly manage local authority employees who make up the majority of water sector staff. This adversely impacts on service delivery and adds to the risk of service failures. Separately, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), as the economic regulator of Irish Water, has identified the Service Level Agreements as a constraint on Irish Water's ability to achieve identified potential efficiencies in the delivery of water services.

The current Service Level Agreements were originally due to conclude at the end of 2025. However, the Government is now asking the parties to work together to identify a framework for the future to replace the Service Level Agreements by July 2021, and a plan for the implementation of the agreed framework on a phased basis by end 2022.

What does public ownership mean?

Historically, Ireland's public water systems have been developed as an essential public service provided by local authorities, for the benefit of the communities they serve. Public ownership is firmly established as a core principle within water services legislation and at a practical level in terms of delivery arrangements. This is seen as reflecting the clear will of the Irish people.

Public ownership has been explicitly referenced in the Water Services Acts down the years. In recent times the Water Services Act 2013, established Irish Water as a single, national water service authority. Ownership of Irish Water is vested in Government Ministers. This is the first time that ownership of the public water system has been formally vested in Government on behalf of the State.

Public ownership was further strengthened under the Water Services Act 2014. This Act prevents the Government from transferring Irish Water out of public ownership unless such a proposal has been approved in advance by a national plebiscite. It is difficult to imagine such an eventuality given the widespread citizen attachment to public ownership, which is mirrored across the spectrum of the party political system.

Where does the Government stand on the ownership of water services?

The Government is responsible for ensuring the appropriate stewardship of the nation's water resources, and for ensuring that citizens have access to quality drinking water and wastewater services. The Government is committed to public water services, as delivered through Irish Water, remaining in public ownership.

Not all water services are provided by Irish Water. In fact, some 17% of drinking water supplies are provided through private arrangements, including Group Water Schemes and private wells. Some 34% of households rely on private arrangements for wastewater treatment services, such as septic tanks or private group wastewater treatment systems.

The Government's policy is to maintain public water services in public ownership, whilst respecting private arrangements for the provision of water services by group water schemes and by individual households, businesses, and other bodies.

Are there plans for a referendum on the ownership of the public water system?

The Government believes that the issue of the protection of water within the Constitution should be explored and progressed more fully in the context of a broader appraisal of the constitutional protection that should apply to the physical environment.

Our Shared Future, the Programme for Government, includes the following commitment:

"We will refer the issue of the environment, including water, and its place in the constitution to a relevant Joint Oireachtas Committee for consideration." (p. 135)

Consideration will be given, in consultation with the Oireachtas, as to how this commitment will be brought forward.

Why a national water utility instead of local or regional utilities?

A national authority offers the advantages of operating at scale as it can facilitate a more coherent and consistent approach to investment decisions, drive efficiency in the provision of infrastructure, and ensure the development of best operational practice.

Irish Water is already making strong progress in capturing these advantages in terms of streamlining construction and design processes; developing GIS monitoring of networks; setting standards for property developers seeking network connections; and standardising equipment and procedures for water services and workers.

The scale and ambition of the Government's current 10 year €8.5bn National Development Plan funded water services capital investment programme is such that it requires a strong and effective national utility to drive and achieve it.

A national approach also strengthens Ireland's capacity to meet our EU and UN obligations and commitments relating to the ecological status of water bodies, and the quality and availability of drinking water and sanitation services.

From a climate change perspective, national coordination will prove to be more effective in ensuring the resilience and adaptability of water services infrastructure.

Why should the water utility be standalone?

From the outset it was recognised that Irish Water, having assumed statutory responsibility for the public water system from 1 January 2014, would also assume direct control of operational activity, in place of the existing Service Level Agreement arrangements, at an appropriate time. This is seen as critical to the development of the most efficient and effective arrangements for the delivery of water services in the longer term.

Irish Water now receives in excess of 80% of its annual funding requirement from the tax payer. Closer alignment between Irish Water's statutory responsibility for water services and the degree to which it has control over such operational activities is seen as being commensurate with the increased requirement for public scrutiny and accountability that is appropriate for such investment.

The Government is also satisfied that Irish Water has sufficiently developed its own capacity as a national public utility and, in the best long-term strategic interests of water services and the country's national interests, should separate from the Ervia Group by 2023. Last October the Government confirmed its plans to proceed with the separation from the Ervia Group and legislation is now being prepared to provide for this separation.

Why is economic regulation of the water utility so important?

High network and set up costs for utilities favour a single provider in any given geographical area and prevent competition. Lack of competition can lead to inefficiencies on the part of the single provider. Pricing arrangements and service standards, for instance, may tend to suit the utility rather than the customer, or insufficient resources may be committed to network maintenance and development.

Economic regulation provides an essential counter-balancing influence to overcome the lack of competition and to ensure that service utilities are run in the best interests of the citizens and consumers they serve and in keeping with the long term strategic interests of the State.

Economic efficiency, as a principle, is vital in terms of ensuring the public water system serves the best interests of citizens and represents value for money on tax spend.

Finally, economic regulation is also necessary in terms of independently demonstrating that Ireland is in compliance with its Water Framework Directive obligations to ensure adequate recovery of water costs and to incentivise the efficient use of water resources.

How is independent regulation achieved?

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) has been tasked with the role of independent economic regulator of Irish Water. Its mandate is to ensure that Irish Water operates in an economic and efficient manner and in the best interests of customers and users, whilst ensuring that water and wastewater services are delivered in a safe, secure and sustainable manner.

Part 2: The Irish Water journey towards a National Publicly-Owned, Regulated Water Services Utility

Why was Irish Water created?

The objective then, as now, was to ensure modern and effective arrangements for the development and delivery of water services.

In 2011 an independent review by economic consultants found that water services delivery arrangements in Ireland at that time were performing significantly less well than UK arrangements based around utilities.

The review further showed that many countries were addressing fragmentation in water services provision by the creation of larger service providers, often outside of municipal control. The key trend internationally was towards the formation of regional or national Public Water Utilities which were succeeding in delivering improvements in service quality while reducing costs.

The review concluded that a public utility model offered the best opportunity to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of water services delivery, whilst also providing for improvements in strategic planning for future economic, social and environmental needs, and stronger accountability arrangements.

This led to the establishment of Irish Water within the Bord Gáis Éireann (now Eiría) Group where it would benefit from the Group's capacity to manage and operate a public utility on a national scale.

It was envisaged that Irish Water would assume responsibility for water services on a phased basis over a number of years. These phases were envisaged to include the formal establishment of Irish Water in law, the assignment of responsibility for the delivery of water services, firstly by means of Service Level Agreement with local authorities, for a transitional period, pending the full integration of operations and staff within Irish Water at a time to be determined.

What progress has been made with the Water Sector Transformation Programme?

In the seven years since it has assumed statutory responsibility for the planning, development and delivery of public water services on 1 January 2014, Irish Water has set about developing its capacity as a water services utility operating on a national scale. Key reforms now in place under the Water Services Acts 2007 to 2017, include:

- Through a series of SLAs, 31 local authorities continue to deliver water services in their functional areas on an agency basis for Irish Water, in the interests of service continuity and retention of water sector expertise.
- The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) has been designated as the economic regulator of Irish Water, which provides assurance that Irish Water is operating efficiently, based on the CRU's independent scrutiny of costs and cost recovery arrangements in keeping with the Water Framework Directive.
- A funding model, determined in line with the Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services (2017) sees water

services financed primarily from the Exchequer (approximately 80% of funding) with some additional funding from customer charges (service delivery to non-domestic customers and network connection charges).

- Enhanced arrangements for governance, accountability and stakeholder collaboration relevant to the delivery of water services are in place through:
 - Regulation in line with the Water Services Acts and the Companies Acts;
 - ongoing Oireachtas scrutiny of water-related policy and expenditure; and
 - the work of new statutory advisory bodies such as the Water Advisory Board and An Fóram Uisce/the Water Forum.

Why not continue with the SLAs under the current working arrangements?

The key objective of the Service Level Agreements as set out in a Framework Agreement agreed at the Workplace Relations Commission, was to underpin an enduring and collaborative relationship between Irish Water and local authorities to facilitate the changes necessary to transform the sector. They were intended therefore as an essential interim arrangement in the transition to the national public utility model. The Service Level Agreements have succeeded in delivering on their stated objective. They have allowed for continuity of service and retention of water sector expertise while Irish Water, working with local authorities, has clearly made significant progress in establishing its capability as a national utility.

However, the Service Level Agreements are not sustainable as a means of developing and delivery water services over the long-term. Their limitations are becoming increasingly apparent in terms of managing assets, staff, service delivery and service risks. Separately, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), as the economic regulator of Irish Water, has identified the Service Level Agreements as a constraint at this stage on Irish Water's ability to achieve identified potential efficiencies in the delivery of water services. The Government is of the view that it is now timely to plan for the next phase of transformation. This will complete the transition to the national public water utility model through the full integration of water services activities within Irish Water in place of the current SLA arrangements.

What specific limitations do the Service Level Agreements present?

The Service Level Agreement model requires significant management and administration by both Irish Water and the local authorities, and does not allow for full delivery of targets around customer service, operational performance, environmental performance and cost efficiency.

National programmes in areas such as leakage management and mains rehabilitation and replacement are critical to the development and improvement of water services. Such programmes are more challenging across so many organisations.

The involvement of multiple organisations and the division of responsibilities between them makes the management of large-scale incidents, like ones at Leixlip in 2019 that gave rise to boil water notices affecting over 600,000 people, more challenging. It is also important that Irish Water customers, whether individual households or businesses, can be confident of receiving a consistent level of service regardless of where they are in the country.

Why can further integration not wait until Irish Water has separated from Ervia?

Integration is not a new policy departure, it has been ongoing for several years. It is part and parcel of an ongoing process of water sector transformation that has been pursued by successive Governments, as outlined most recently, for instance, in the Water Services Policy Statement 2018-2025. It has been reaffirmed as a national priority under the Programme for Government and will now be advanced in tandem with the separation from Ervia.

Part 3: Implications for the Water Sector Workforce

What is the size and scale of the water sector workforce?

Local authorities currently employ approximately 3,200 water services workers who are subject to the SLAs with Irish Water. These include general operatives and related grades, technicians, crafts-persons, engineers and administrative staff. In addition, there is also an existing group of some 800 staff currently working directly for Irish Water and Ervia in the delivery of water services.

How will transformation affect the future of water sector workers?

Water sector staff can continue to look forward to secure employment and a rewarding career in the national public water services utility. Water services staff working around the country have a wealth of expertise and specialised skills and their dedication and commitment over many years has resulted in the public water system we rely on today.

The objective of creating a modern and effective water services system implicitly relies upon the continuing involvement of a well-trained, specialist workforce, with progressive career structures, who are appropriately rewarded for their contribution to the public water system, and the economy and society they serve.

The HR implications of the transformation process must be proactively and constructively considered by and between all stakeholders. This will provide a greater degree of clarity and certainty about the future than currently exist for the benefit of all stakeholders, not least the workers.

What about the public sector status of local authority staff?

The Government recognises that the approach of fully integrating staff and delivery within Irish Water raises important and valid concerns for water sector stakeholders which must be addressed in the context of a full and effective resolution. For the workers, clearly, the transformation process raises concerns regarding their status as public sector workers, pay models and terms & conditions, amongst other things.

The most appropriate forum to address the concerns of workers regarding their status as public sector workers, pay models and terms & conditions, amongst other things, is the WRC. The parties are encouraged to develop approaches to the integration of staff, operations and capacity within Irish Water, that have regard for the public service ethos that underpins the current provision of water services under the Service Level Agreements.

Assurance is given that no compulsory redundancies would arise as an outcome from the transformation process. There is a role within Irish Water for every person who currently works in water services in a local authority.

Will water sector workers still be party to the public sector pay agreements?

The engagement at the WRC is the most appropriate forum to address the concerns of workers, regarding their status as public sector workers, pay models, terms and conditions and other matters. A key component of identifying a stable operational framework for the future delivery of water services will involve the identification of the most appropriate pay model, including superannuation arrangements, for water sector workers subject to the framework to be agreed. No formal discussions on this have taken place to date.

How can workers be sure Irish Water will not simply contract out work?

Irish Water's work force plan is based on a direct labour model at national, regional and local level. This is currently and will continue to be the case. Specialist contractors are used only for works where Irish Water does not have the scale, capacity or specialist expertise to undertake the work itself.

Why should local authority staff be interested in working for Irish Water?

The Government's ambition for Irish Water is that it will become a modern and effective public water services utility where specialist water services staff are fully supported and enabled to work together to deliver excellent local water services to customers, in a manner that safeguards and conserves our water resources, protects our environment and promotes public health.

The Government welcomes Irish Water's willingness to employ all local authority water services employees who are currently subject to the SLAs, meaning that these workers can continue to do the work with which they are most familiar in the water sector as Irish Water employees.

The integration of water services activities under Irish Water will facilitate the establishment of a specialist water industry with supported career structures, increased investment in staff training and skills, development of centres of excellence and apprenticeship and graduate programmes to support first class service delivery. It will also bring certainty for workers about future working arrangements.

It is recognised that staff members will have concerns about the integration of water services under Irish Water and these must be addressed.

How are Local Authority Water Services staff protected in legislation?

The Water Services (No.2) Act 2013 provides that the water services staff in local authorities who are subject to a Service Level Agreement with Irish Water would transfer to Irish Water should the Service Level Agreement come to an end. The existing terms and conditions of these staff are protected under the Act in such circumstances.

In outlining its expectations in relation to the next phase of transformation, the Government fully respects these terms and conditions which can only be changed by collective agreement.

Given the scale and complexity of change involved, it is important that the engagement with staff and trade unions, local government management representatives and Irish Water management representatives at the Workplace Relations Commission identify and agree a Framework for the future delivery of water services.

While the outcome of any engagement process of this nature cannot be predetermined, it should be possible to reach a collective agreement which addresses the interests and concerns of all parties.

Part 4: Implications for the Local Government system

What challenges does the transformation programme bring to local authorities?

The key challenge for the Local Government sector is to ensure that it remains vibrant and sustainable, and that it is well equipped and properly resourced to deliver the key community, enterprise and environmental functions within its remit.

For local authority management it is imperative to ensure that they retain the capacity to fulfil their other local government functions and their central planning, economic, community and public service role once the transformation of the water services sector is completed.

A dedicated Water Services Transition Office and change management support network has been established under Local Government Management Agency structures to support the local government sector and individual local authorities in dealing successfully with the challenges – strategic, financial, administrative and operational - posed by water sector transformation.

Effective local government continues to be a strategic priority that is central to the Programme for Government. The Government will work with the parties to ensure that the strategic interests of the local government sector are considered and addressed as appropriate. Effective local government continues to be a strategic priority for Government.

How will Local authorities be protected from stranded costs?

Stranded costs refer to outstanding financial obligations relating to staff, assets or water infrastructure, which a local authority may face arising from prior responsibilities for public water services but for which its corresponding income stream no longer exists.

It is accepted that the transfer of responsibilities to Irish Water cannot leave local authorities with stranded costs. The matter has received detailed consideration to date by the Department and by the Local Government Management Agency on behalf of local authorities. It has been identified as an integral element to be resolved within the overall framework for the future delivery of water services to be agreed between stakeholders.

What will be the ongoing role of local authorities within the water sector?

Local authorities have important responsibilities within the water sector beyond operating the public water system on an agency basis for Irish Water under the SLAs.

Local authorities are the supervisory authorities in relation to private water supplies and they administer the Rural Water Programme at county level. They are also responsible for performing inspections of domestic wastewater treatment systems under the EPA-led National Inspection Plan. The Government aim here is to ensure that private water services would produce quality outcomes comparable to those available to customers on the public water system.

Under the European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2014, local authorities are also the competent authorities for the purposes of regional co-ordination, public consultation and the implementation of river basin management plans and programmes of measures in their functional areas.

Part 5: Workplace Relations Commission engagement

What is the role of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) in this process?

Throughout the water sector transformation process, the WRC has played a key role as the facilitator of engagement between management and worker representatives, in relation to the challenges associated with structural and organisational change within the water sector.

In September 2018, the WRC reported on a process of engagement undertaken with the parties setting out their concerns regarding the next phase of transformation. A key finding was that uncertainty about the next phase of transformation appears to be causing difficulties in recruiting and retaining water services staff. Any delay in clarifying the future structure of water services constitutes a risk to the delivery of water services.

The Government has full confidence in the WRC's independence and integrity and is grateful to the WRC for its ongoing availability to facilitate engagement between stakeholders.

What is the current engagement process about?

The Government has tasked the WRC with undertaking a further process of engagement between the parties to work towards the development of a stable structural and operational framework for the future delivery of water services that would replace the SLAs and address the following interlinked elements:

- (1) Irish Water must be provided with the necessary control of operations, accountability and capacity to manage risk and communicate and negotiate with all water services workers on the change agenda and provide a single identity for customer facing services;
- (2) Irish Water must not be left without an appropriately skilled workforce to carry out its statutory functions;
- (3) Local authorities must not be left with stranded costs, where there are expenditure commitments without a corresponding income stream, and there should be an enduring and continuing structured relationship between Irish Water and local

- authorities, in relation to local authority housing and planning functions to support economic, spatial and social development, and environmental protection; and,
- (4) The concerns of workers must be addressed, in relation to the future deployment of the current local authority water staff, whilst not requiring the invoking of Section 19¹ of the Water Services (No.2) Act 2013, other than by collective agreement.

What needs to happen next?

It is essential that the engagement process already underway now move beyond the sharing of positions and into the detailed and challenging consideration of the key concerns for all parties for which a mutually agreeable resolution must be found.

The Government is therefore asking the parties to engage so that a framework for a stable operating structure for the future delivery of Water Services can be agreed by July 2021. Implementation of the agreed Framework will then commence on a phased basis to be concluded in 2022.

Is it possible for engagement to take place at this time?

The Workplace Relations Commission has indicated that it is in a position to facilitate the recommencement of the engagement process. Covid-19 safety measures are in place.

What about those policy concerns which are outside the scope of the WRC?

There are issues which have been raised which are outside the scope of the WRC and on which detailed discussions are required. These include the question of a constitutional referendum on ownership of water, the future sustainability of local government and the governance arrangements of Irish Water.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage will continue to engage on these issues in separate strands of dialogue, with the County and City Management Association/Local Government Management Agency and with ICTU and affiliated unions, representing water services workers, and Irish Water as appropriate.

¹ (1) This Section relates to the process of designation of local authority staff for transfer to Irish Water on termination of an SLA. The understanding is that a collective agreement would be developed as an outcome of the process of engagement undertaken through the WRC.