



Circular L1/22

28 April 2022

**To each: Director of Services with responsibility for Water Services
Rural Water Liaison Officer**

Re: Applications for funding under *Measure A8 - Waste Water Collection and Treatment needs for Villages and Settlements without access to Public Waste Water Services* - an advance phase of the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2022-2025.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to advise you on an advance funding measure for capital investment under Measure A8 of the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2022-2025 to support waste water collection and treatment needs of rural villages and settlements not currently serviced by Irish Water.

The purpose of this Circular is to invite your local authority to apply, on a priority basis, for funding under this new measure. The measure is being introduced to progressively provide waste water collection and treatment needs for villages and settlements not currently serviced by Irish Water.

The measure will commence with a series of demonstration projects to be considered on a needs basis. The attached Framework document (Appendix A) provides full details in relation to the new measure and includes guidance for local authorities on the completion of an Application for Funding. An essential component of the Application for Funding is a feasibility study and the Framework provides guidance on the content required.

The completed Applications for Funding should be returned as soon as possible but not later than **COB on Thursday 15 September 2022** and should be prepared based on the information and guidance set out in the Framework document and this circular. A detailed Template for the Applications for Funding is provided at Appendix B of this circular.



Background

In April 2018 the Minister established the Rural Water Working Group to conduct a wider review of investment needs and rural water services. The Working Group, which is chaired by the Department, includes representatives from the National Federation of Group Water Schemes, the local authorities through the County and City Management Association, Environmental Protection Agency, Health Service Executive and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The Minister has approved the new measure as an advance phase of the multi-annual programme for the 2022-2025 cycle, in the interests of better assisting local authorities to develop early and comprehensive bids which will enable speedier and successful outcomes for the projects.

The measure will assist in meeting the requirements of the Drinking Water Regulations in relation to rural water supplies, and support the delivery of measures identified in the Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027 to meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

Funding

Funding for Measure A8 has been committed under Project Ireland 2040 - National Development Plan 2021-2030. On this basis, the funding available from the Department under the multi-annual programme for the funding cycle 2022-2025, is set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Projected funding profile for Measure A8 for period of Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2022-2025 broken down by year				
2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
€5m	€10m	€15m	€20m	€50m

The measure will be co-funded as set out in the Framework. The Department will provide 85% funding with the local authority contributing the remaining 15% towards the overall cost.



Where land or other assets are being put forward as elements of co-funding this will need to be supported by appropriate evidence relating to the value of the land or assets concerned, such as an up-to-date valuation provided by an accredited source.

Property or land purchased using funds secured from previous projects, schemes or programmes e.g. the former Water Services Investment Programme, cannot be used as matched funding.

Funding of approved projects will be made on a phased basis, in arrears, over the course of the project. This will be on the basis of milestones being achieved by the project. Details will be included in a further circular to the local authorities with successful projects.

Value for Money

Under the Public Spending Code, all Irish public bodies are obliged to ensure that the best possible value for money is obtained when public money is being spent or invested. All proposals for projects being funded under the multi-annual programme must demonstrate detailed project costings and clear value for money.

Preparation and Submission of Bids

Taking account of the outline above and the criteria in the Framework document, your local authority is now invited to submit project proposals for Measure A8 – Waste Water Collection and Treatment needs for Villages and Settlements without access to Public Waste Water Services. A Template for Applications for Funding is provided at Appendix B.

It is of critical importance that comprehensive community consultation takes place prior to submitting an application and a proposal should set out a well-developed case for projects in line with the objectives of the new funding measure.

Local authorities are advised to make a comprehensive Application for Funding, as the applications will be prioritised by the Expert Panel based on the information provided.



Local authorities are limited to a **maximum of two applications for funding** as demonstration projects. Where more than one application is being submitted please list in order of priority.

Funding Eligibility

Applications for funding are limited to villages/settlements with a 'core area', as defined in the Framework document that have at least 150 population equivalent (PE) based on its existing residential population.

The following criteria will be applied:

1. Villages/settlements must be expressly listed in the current County Development Plan for the local authority and are a 'priority location' as detailed in the Framework document;

or

2. Villages/settlements that are not expressly listed in the County Development Plan for the local authority and where, in the opinion of the local authority, a need has been identified and is objectively evidenced. Villages/settlements in this situation will only be considered on an exceptional and objectively evidenced basis.

The qualification approaches are based on there being objective evidence of a potential risk to human health and risk to the environment (actual evidence of causing water pollution) in these areas.

Projects that require collaboration across local authority boundaries are also encouraged, provided that the above eligibility criteria and limitations are met. A single authority must take the lead in any such cases.

Synergies between Organisations

Local authorities are responsible for delivering a broad range of services that are of benefit to communities. Applications for funding for proposed projects should demonstrate synergies between the local authority functions such as roads, services and other organisations.



The purpose of this collaboration should not be exclusively to lend financial or general policy support to a project but should denote a full endorsement of the stated rationale, aims and the expected outcomes from the project i.e. making the village/settlement a better and more attractive place to live.

Some good examples of collaboration would be the local authority displaying leadership in its application for funding and on opportunities for co-ordinating the development of other projects e.g. the enhancement of areas in the public domain, undergrounding of overhead cables (electricity and/or telecom) etc. The collaborative aim should be the enhancement of the village/settlement as a vibrant community through its visual or other improvement.

However, it will be a matter for the local authority to arrange funding for these collaborations as they will not be funded under the multi-annual programme or considered part of the co-funding contribution from the local authority.

Scope of the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2022-2025

The Department would like to take the opportunity in this circular to alert local authorities on the scope of the upcoming multi-annual programme. It is anticipated that the 2022-2025 funding cycle will consist of eight measures. Most will be further broken into sub-measures. These measures reflect the key challenges currently facing the rural water sector.

It is proposed that the measures in the upcoming programme will be more expressly focused around function and the multiple barriers approach, from catchment to consumers (source – treatment - distribution). This is to prevent water contamination and ensure that drinking water is safe and meets quality parameters of the Drinking Water Regulations on a consistent long-term basis.

Workshop on Applications for Funding

To further inform local authorities on the Applications for Funding process under Measure A8 of the multi-annual programme, the Department will be holding a virtual workshop, details on which will follow separately.



Each local authority will be asked to limit attendance to two representatives that will be actively involved in the Applications for Funding and the wider multi-annual programme. Local authorities should forward the names, roles and email contact details of the intended attendees to the Department by **COB on 6 May 2022** to rural.water@housing.gov.ie.

More details, and the Agenda for the workshop, will be sent to the attendees when finalised. The format will be presentations by the Department covering the Applications for Funding process followed by a question and answers session.

Deadline for Submission of Bids

Local authorities should submit their funding requests as soon as possible and no later than **COB on Thursday 15 September 2022**. Submissions should be made to the Rural Water Unit email account at rural.water@housing.gov.ie, with the subject line of the email marked 'Local Authority Name - MARWP - Measure A8 - Waste Water Collection and Treatment'. Late Applications for Funding will not be considered.

Evaluation of Proposals

An Expert Panel will support the Department with its evaluation of Applications for Funding. The Panel brings independence, openness and transparency to the evaluation process which will be done on a national prioritised basis.

The Panel will make recommendations to the Department on the suitability of demonstration projects for funding based on objective criteria which are set out in the Framework document. A submission will then be made to the Minister for approval of funding with the recommended projects.

Enquires

Any enquiries on this circular may be directed to Kara McNulty at +353 (0) 96 24460 (kara.mcnulty@housing.gov.ie) or Enda O'Brien at +353 (0) 96 24348 (enda.obrien@housing.gov.ie).



Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Varley', is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

**Luke Varley,
Assistant Principal Officer,
Rural Water Unit,
Tel. No. +353 (0) 96 24367
Email: luke.varley@housing.gov.ie**