

# waters & communities

Healthy Waters supporting Vibrant Communities



WORKING  
TOGETHER

## FOREWORD

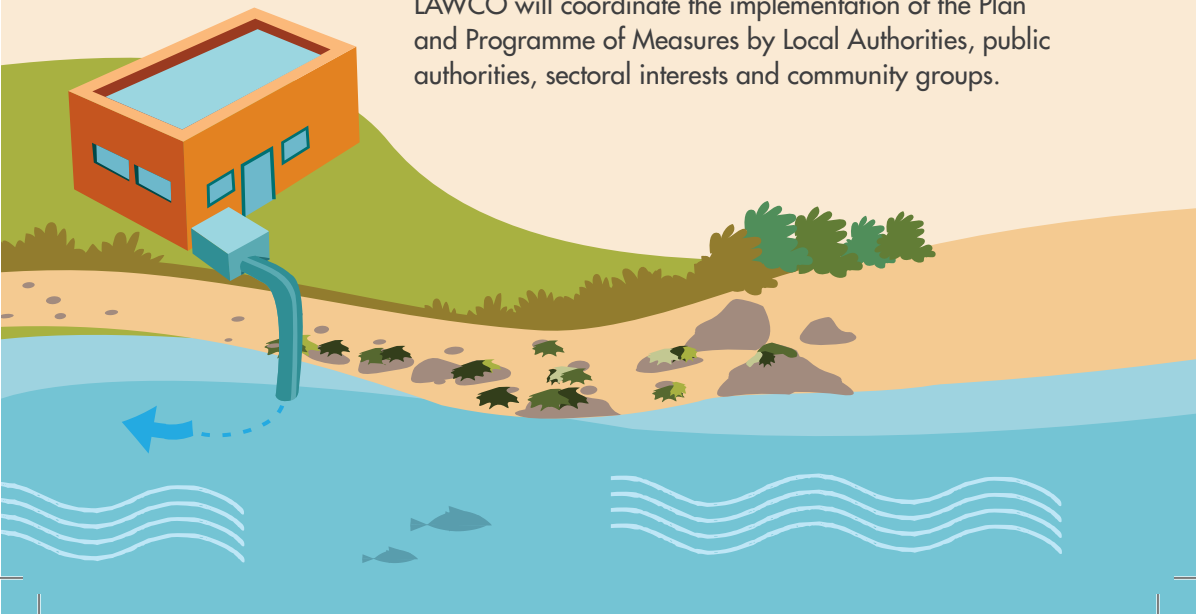
by Matt Shortt, Director



The European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2014 places new obligations on Local Authorities in coordinating the catchment management and public participation elements of the Water Framework Directive. It assigns responsibility to Local Authorities for regional coordination, public participation, and support to the Minister and the EPA in the development and implementation of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and Programme of Measures (POMs).

A participatory approach to water management in which local communities will lead to a more innovative and democratic water management process and will provide a mechanism through which real public participation can be brought to bear on the development, adoption and implementation of the River Basin Management Plan.

The Local Authority Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO) has been established by Local Authorities to promote public awareness, participation and knowledge sharing in the development of the River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures. LAWCO will coordinate the implementation of the Plan and Programme of Measures by Local Authorities, public authorities, sectoral interests and community groups.

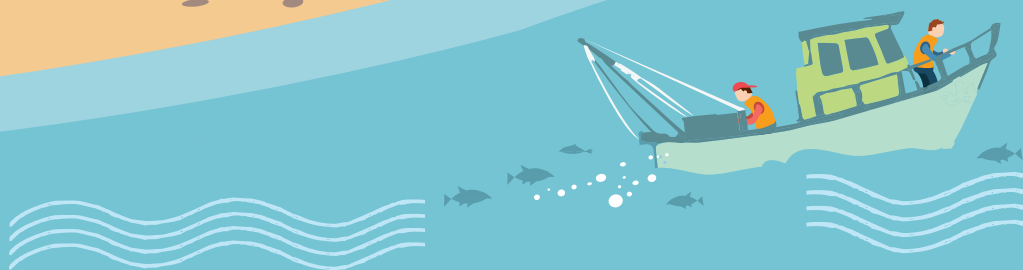


## WATER IS...

Water is essential for life. We depend on a steady supply of clean water in many aspects of our everyday lives. Recreational activities such as swimming, surfing, canoeing, fishing or boating are dependent on access to healthy waters.

Research shows that interaction with a healthy water environment can have a positive impact on our mental and physical well-being. Intuitively, we all know how good we feel after a walk along a beach or a river bank.

In addition, many industries depend on clean water, including Agriculture, Tourism and Manufacturing. If we are to grow these industries, create employment and attract greater numbers of foreign visitors, we must do it in a way that protects our water assets and the wildlife habitats they provide.



## THE WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE 2000/60/EC

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) was adopted by the European Union in 2000 to establish a framework across member states for the protection and improvement of natural water bodies which include; rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater.

Compliance with the WFD is to be achieved through River Basin Management Plans and a Programme of Measures that are reviewed every six years. We are now into the second cycle of those plans from 2016–2021.

The European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 350 of 2014) was introduced to give effect to the WFD in Irish law. These regulations established a new three tier interlocking governance structure to implement the WFD across the entire country, with clear responsibilities assigned to the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, the EPA and Local Authorities.

*'Water is not a commercial product like any other but, rather, a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such.'*

First line of **'The Water Framework Directive'**



# WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE GOVERNANCE IN IRELAND

The three tier governance structure set up to oversee the implementation of the WFD in Ireland is summarised in this table:

## Tier 1

Policy & Oversight

### Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC)

Department of the Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (CHAIR), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Public Works (OPW), Geological Survey Ireland (GSI), Commission for Energy Regulation (CER), Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine (DFAM), Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht (DAHG), Department of Health, County and City Management Association (CCMA), Health Service Executive (HSE)

- Oversight.
- Policy, regulation and resources.
- Sign off on River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures.

## Tier 2

Technical Implementation and Reporting

### Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- Leads on the scientific aspects of the Water Framework Directive.
- Monitoring, assessment and reporting.
- Preparation of River Basin Management Plan.
- Evaluation and implementation of measures.
- Monitoring of enforcement tasks and environmental outcomes.

## Tier 3

Regional Implementation and Public Participation

### Local Authorities

- The Local Authority Waters and Communities Office.
- Public engagement and participation.
- Monitoring, licencing and enforcement actions.
- Local Authorities implementing the River Basin Management Plans and Programme of Measures.



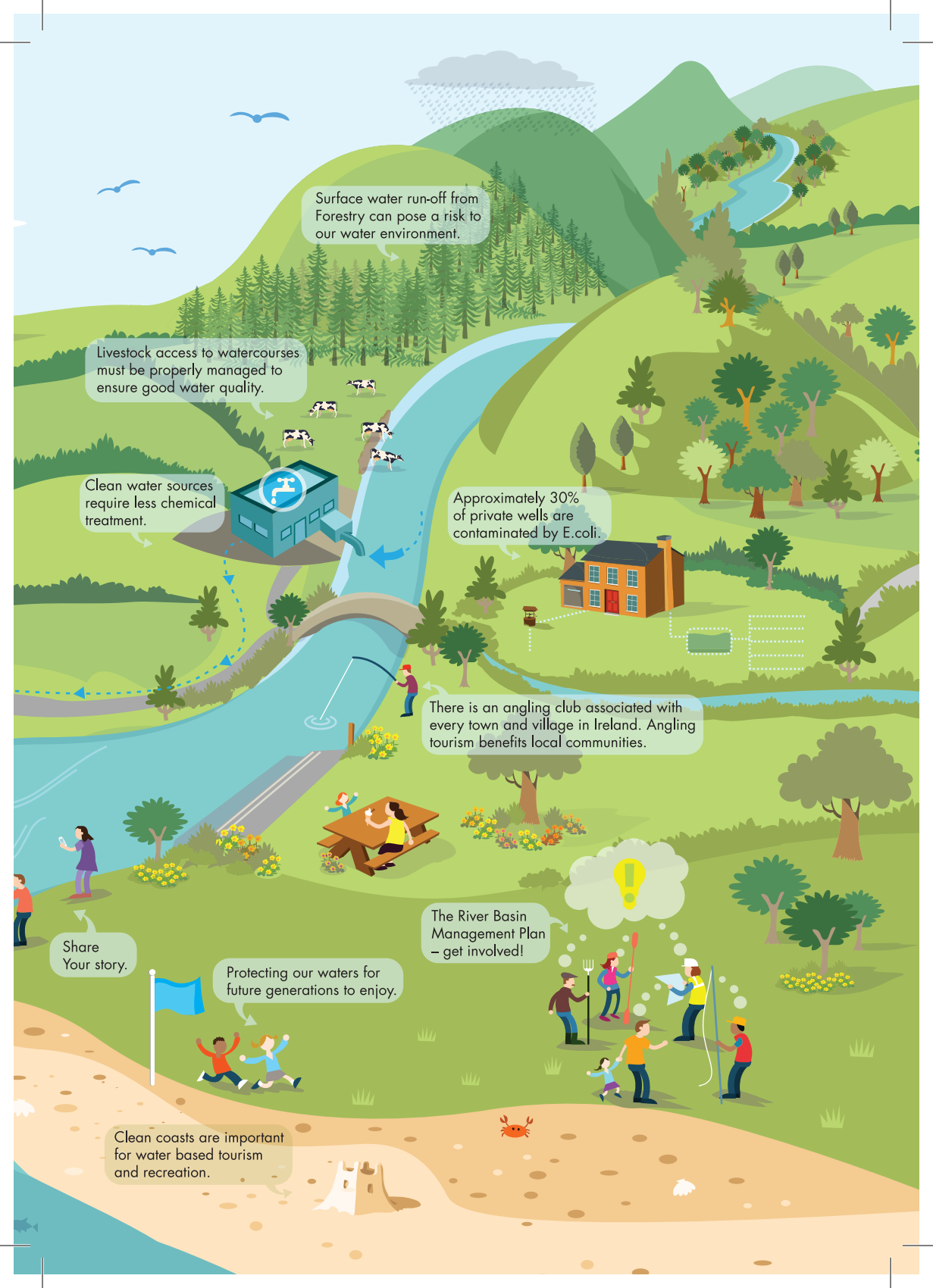
# WATER CATCHMENTS

## WHERE WE LIVE WORK AND PLAY

Properly managed slurry will pose less risk to our waters.

Properly treated Urban waste water will pose less risk to public health and the environment.

Classification for water quality includes five status classes: high, good, moderate, poor and bad.



Surface water run-off from Forestry can pose a risk to our water environment.

Livestock access to watercourses must be properly managed to ensure good water quality.

Clean water sources require less chemical treatment.

Approximately 30% of private wells are contaminated by E.coli.

There is an angling club associated with every town and village in Ireland. Angling tourism benefits local communities.

Share Your story.

Protecting our waters for future generations to enjoy.

The River Basin Management Plan – get involved!

Clean coasts are important for water based tourism and recreation.

## WATERS AND COMMUNITIES

The Local Authority Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO) is managed jointly by Kilkenny and Tipperary County Councils and operates as a shared service on behalf of all 31 local authorities. This national office is tasked with delivering two key objectives in connection with the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in Ireland:

- (i) to coordinate the activities of all Local Authorities in areas connected with the WFD.
- (ii) to promote public participation in the WFD process by engaging the public and communities in the management of their own local water environment.

LAWCO has a staff complement of 3 regional coordinators, 3 specialist support staff based in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary and 12 community waters officers operating from different centres across the entire country.

Lessons learnt from the first cycle RBMP 2009 – 2015 are being brought forward into the second cycle 2016 – 2021, most notably the need for greater public engagement and participation in the making and application of the River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures.





## INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

We all have a connection with catchments in one form or another, it may be a catchment area for a local school, club or hospital. In the case of water, a catchment is the area of land from which surface water run-off flows until it reaches a river, lake, groundwater or coast.

Access to good quality schools and hospitals is important, as these can help improve the overall quality of life for local communities. In the same way, living in a catchment area that has healthy waters can also improve the quality of life for those who live there.

Healthy waters provide so many essential ecosystem services that we sometimes take for granted, such as: high quality drinking water; supply to industries like agriculture; they support recreational activities like angling and water sports; they support wildlife habitats so that plants, animals, fish and insects can survive and flourish. Water is an essential component in building thriving communities and society.

Therefore, we must consider human activities that impact on our waters and how best we can manage these in the interest of protecting our water environment. This approach will require public bodies, local communities and all water stakeholders to work together.

### Integrated catchment management involves:

1. Gathering the best available information to understand the catchment – where the water comes from, how it flows through the landscape both overground and underground, and what activities in the catchment may be causing pollution.
2. Looking at all the uses of water – drinking, agricultural, industrial and recreational, and also the vital ecosystems that depend on water to survive.
3. Engaging local communities and involving them in decision making and management of their catchment.
4. Adopting appropriate measures to ensure that activities that represent a significant threat to water resources are effectively managed.
5. Applying the scientific and local knowledge of how the catchment operates to protect and improve water, providing a healthy, resilient, productive and valued resource that supports vibrant communities.



**Catchments.ie** is a new website that has been developed in partnership by the EPA, the DHPCLG and LAWCO. It provides public access to information and data connected to rivers, lakes and coastal waters that has been gathered by the EPA and other public bodies. Accounts of successful community initiatives with a connection to water quality management will also be made available through this site.

## FUNDING AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Public participation is a core element of the WFD and experiences to date have taught us that the success of any plans and measures will require a collaborative approach between communities, public bodies and relevant stakeholders. Good examples of what can be achieved through local collaboration is evident in the annual 'Tidy Towns' and 'Pride of Place' programmes.

A number of catchment initiatives with good community collaboration have been demonstrated through the EU LIFE Programmes such as; DuhallowLIFE, MulkearLIFE and BurrenLIFE and also throughout the country under the LEADER programme.



Looking to the experience of Rivers Trusts in the UK we can also see the effectiveness of community stewardship in water quality management. Is there capacity for a similar approach in Ireland?

Funding will be critical if communities are to take on a greater role in the management of their local water environment. The Local Authority Waters and Communities Office will provide technical advice and assistance in relation to local, regional, national and EU funding streams connected to water quality management.

*'Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand.'*

**Chinese proverb**



## RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS AND THE FUTURE

Successful river basin management planning requires an integrated approach to the protection, improvement and management of the whole water environment. This process revolves around a six-year cycle of planning, action and review. In this way a revised River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) is produced every six years. Ireland is running 2 years behind schedule to produce its 2nd cycle RBMP and therefore the next plan will run from January 2018 to December 2021.

### RBMP 2nd cycle Timetable:

#### **July 2015 – December 2015:**

Consultation on Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI).

#### **December 2016 – June 2017:**

The draft RBMP is issued for public consultation. LAWCO will coordinate and undertake this work on behalf of Local Authorities.

#### **December 2017:**

2nd cycle RBMP and Programme of Measures published.

*'We must begin thinking like a river if we are to leave a legacy of beauty and life for future generations.'*

**David Brower**

**For catchment management to be successful, all sectors of society must work together. In this way we can achieve good water status, meet our existing needs and safeguard our waters for a healthy future.**





Penhouse [www.penhouse.ie](http://www.penhouse.ie)

Designed by

**waters  
& communities**  
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