



## Funding for Water Supplies on EPA Remedial List

Over € 10 million euro in funding is being made available to water service authorities for water schemes with potential issues regarding the safety and security of water supplies. In departmental press release issued on 19 October 2010 Michael Finneran, Minister for Housing and Water Service, stated the works approved for funding under the scheme include upgrading of disinfection facilities, connections to alternative water sources, provision of chlorine and turbidity monitors and dial-out alarms to warn of treatment plant malfunctions. The works all relate to water supplies identified in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) remedial action list – a list of public water supplies where remedial action is required to ensure compliance with the water quality regulations. The current remedial action list, which is updated annually, identifies 291 water supplies in need of urgent upgrading. The list is available on the EPA's website [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie).



## Domestic Water Charges

Domestic water use per capita in Ireland is among the highest in Europe. Under Article 9 of the Water Framework Directive member states are required to take account of the principle of cost recovery for water services. The Directive envisages that water users should pay for their water supplies. However, Article 9 of the Directive, known as the 'Irish Clause', provides a carve out for member states, by providing they do not need to recover the cost of water services from different water users. This effectively allows Ireland to charge non-domestic water users but not to impose water charges on households.

The Commission on Taxation Report 2009 concluded that the current method of funding domestic water services from the funds allocated to Local Authorities is becoming unsustainable and recommended a system of metered domestic water charges be introduced. The renewed Programme for Government contains a commitment to introduce domestic water charges. However, it estimated that no domestic water charges will be introduced in this December's budget but that charges will be introduced as soon as the process of installing water meters is completed.

At present, Section 105 of the Water Service Act, 2007 prohibits charging for water supplied to households. However, this section of the Act has never been commenced. The introduction of domestic water charges will therefore require significant legislative amendment/the introduction of new legislation. Under the Water Framework Directive, member states are prohibited from allocating the cost of water supplies in a disproportionate manner between different types of user. This means no subsidisation between the non-domestic and domestic sectors is permissible. It is likely however, that a waiver system for low income households will be introduced which will take account of ability-to-pay criteria similar to the application of free units of electricity for those on income is below a certain threshold. In 2009 the Minister for the Environment John Gormley indicated roll out of water meters to 1.2 million domestic households was expected to cost €600 million and to take up to two years to complete. The Minister stated the provision of water meters would be financed by local authorities and that public-private procurement process will not be used for this scheme.

## The Water Framework Directive Management Plans Published

The Water Framework Directive, which came into force in 2000, provides for the protection of rivers, lakes, groundwater and transitional (estuarine) and coastal waters. The Directive requires member states to maintain the high status of waters where it exists, to prevent deterioration in existing water status, and to archive at least good status by all water bodies by 2015. There a limited number of exemptions under the Directive for certain water bodies. Member states are required to elaborate the environmental objectives for their water bodies in river basin management plans. These plans provide an assessment of the current status of water bodies, they set out the environmental objectives to be achieved and the measures required in order to achieve these objectives.

There are eight river basin districts (RBDs) covering the island of Ireland: four wholly within Ireland, one in Northern Ireland and three cross border. Under the Directive Member States were required to consult the public and other interested parties on the plans and publish draft copies to enable stakeholders to submit their comments. Draft river basin management plans for each river basin districts were published on 22 December 2008 and were open for public consultation until 22 June 2009. The final plans covering the period 2009–2015 were published in July 2010 and are now available on [www.wfdireland.ie](http://www.wfdireland.ie)

## New Guidance on the Implementation of the Drinking Water Regulations

In July 2010 the EPA issued two new guidance hand books for water services authorities on the implementation of the Drinking Water Regulations in respect of public and private water supplies. The new handbooks, which replaces the pervious 2004 handbook and guidance booklets 1-4, provides guidance on statutory duties of water services authorities under European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations 2007 and good practice guidelines. Circular DW 1/10 requires water services authorities to take the new guidelines into account when fulfilling their obligations under the Drinking Water Regulations.

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