

National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group (NPDWAG)

Backweston AgriLabs Building – 28 May 2025

Attendees

The following organisations were represented at the meeting:

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Chair)	[DAFM]
Animal and Plant Health Association	[APHA]
Association of Turfgrass Professionals Ireland	[ATPI]
Environmental Protection Agency	[EPA]
Federation of Agrochemical Retail Merchants	[FARM]
Health Service Executive	[HSE]
Irish Farmers Association	[IFA]
Local Authorities Water Programme	[LAWPRO]
Teagasc/ASSAP	[Teagasc/ASSAP]
Uisce Éireann	[UÉ]
Wicklow County Council	[WCC]

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees to the hybrid meeting of the NPDWAG. Apologies received in advance from several members were noted.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

There were no comments on the minutes of the previous meeting (4 March 2025). Attendees were asked to forward specific text to the Chair by 6 June 2025 if they had any suggested amendments. The Chair noted that the minutes would be published on DAFM's pesticides website in due course –

www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/waterprotection/nationalpesticidesanddrinkingwateractiongroup

3. Uisce Éireann updates on drinking water exceedances and Catchment Focus Group activities

Currently there are 25 EPA pesticide compliance plans open, serving a population of 244,632. This represents an increase of 38,043 since the previous meeting. In total 6 compliance files have been closed in the year to date – serving a total population of 22,511.

Twenty-five exceedances of the parametric limit for pesticides have been recorded so far in 2025 (21 MCPA, 4 glyphosate).

It was speculated that the detections of glyphosate might have been associated with increased levels of grassland reseeding, following a relatively dry spring. It was suggested that all Pesticide Advisors (PAs) should be asked to emphasise to their clients the necessity to comply with buffer zone requirements (either a minimum 3 m no-spray buffer zone, for any watercourse subject to CAP conditionality, or a larger product-specific aquatic buffer zone specified on a product label, if one has been set).

Regarding the MCPA detections, it was noted that land that was inaccessible in previous years due to adverse weather conditions might be accessible for sprayers this year and that this could be a contributing factor.

There was also a discussion on extending the drinking water sampling programme beyond the growing season to assess if there might be some pesticide use outside the growing season. It was noted that with a fixed allocation of resources for the sampling programme this would result in less intensive monitoring during the growing season and that it would also change the established monitoring baseline, making yearly comparisons of results more difficult. It was agreed that the planning meeting for the 2026 raw water catchment monitoring programme, likely to be held in December or January, would consider whether or not to extend the drinking water sampling programme beyond the growing season next year.

UÉ catchments update – Five Catchment Focus Groups (CFGs) are currently operating in the following areas*:

- Rivers Deel and Feale (Newcastle West PWS, Foynes/Shannon Estuary, Listowel, Abbeyfeale)
- Belturbet PWS (Cavan)
- Greenmount-Dee (Louth)
- Clonroche PWS (Wexford)
- Lough Forbes (Longford Central)

Regular meetings and awareness raising activities are held in all these areas.

(*Newport (Mayo) considered a success story and no longer subject to formal CFG interventions.)

During a discussion on follow-up actions, DAFM indicated that they will engage with Tidy Towns organisers. There may be an opportunity for Tidy Towns representatives to participate in some CFGs.

4. APHA catchment monitoring results and stewardship activities

Results for the APHA raw water monitoring programme for the year to date are as follows:

- Belturbet - 31 exceedances compared to 11 over the same period in 2024
- Lough Forbes - 16 exceedances compared to 4 over the same period in 2024
- Deel - 8 exceedances compared to 10 over the same period in 2024
- Feale - 0 exceedances (comparison with 2024 not possible due to sampling programme changes)
- Greenmount - 11 exceedances (comparison with 2024 not possible due to sampling programme changes)
- Foynes - 5 exceedances (comparison with 2024 not possible due to sampling programme changes)
- Hacketstown - 0 exceedances (comparison with 2024 not possible due to sampling programme changes)

5. Communications activities (Uisce Éireann and DAFM updates)

UÉ reported positive feedback from the national and local press releases issued at the end of April to launch the annual communications campaign. There was good coverage in the national and regional press and there were also interviews on RTÉ (Six One News) and local radio. Social media is being used as well. Key messages have been highlighted in the coverage.

DAFM informed the meeting that a number of guidance documents on the sustainable use of pesticides, aimed at various types of pesticide users, have been published on DAFM's pesticides website (www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/waterprotection/nationalpesticidesanddrinkingwateractiongroup). These documents include advice on measures to protect water quality.

DAFM also informed the meeting that they would engage with farmers and other stakeholders on various issues, including protecting water quality, at the Teagasc Crops and Technology Open Day due to be held on 25 June 2025 (at Teagasc Crops Research Centre, Oak Park, Carlow).

6. Other stakeholder updates

No items were noted.

7. Updates on 2025 actions

UÉ reiterated a previous request to be notified of all activities being carried out by stakeholders, and to populate the UÉ Action Tracker spreadsheet as appropriate.

8. AOB

The Chair notified attendees of a recently published article (17 May 2025) on the Teagasc website titled “Controlling Rushes – No Spraying!” which contains a lot of useful practical advice. The article can be accessed at the following location – <https://teagasc.ie/news--events/daily/controlling-rushes---no-spraying/>