

National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group (NPDWAG)

Backweston AgriLabs Building – 25 September 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]
Environmental Protection Agency	[EPA]
Federation of Agrochemical Retail Merchants	[FARM]
Health Service Executive	[HSE]
Irish Farmers Association	[IFA]
Local Authorities Water Programme	[LAWPRO]
National Federation of Group Water Schemes	[NFGWS]
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. A new NFGWS representative was welcomed to the group.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

An amendment to the draft minutes was agreed to note 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 to assess if there might be some pesticide use outside the growing season. Attendees were asked to forward specific text to the Chair by 10 October 2025 if they wished to propose any additional 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 28 EPA pesticide compliance plans open, serving a population of 320,882, an increase of 76,250 since the previous meeting. Seven compliance files have been closed in the year to date. Five new supplies have been added since the May meeting.

Sixty-one exceedances of the parametric limit for pesticides have been recorded so far in 2025 - MCPA (44), triclopyr (5), 2,4-D (4), glyphosate (4), clopyralid (1), fluroxypyr (1), and 2 exceedances of the total pesticides level. It was noted that the total of 61 exceedances for the year to date was very close to the total value of 66 exceedances recorded for the whole of 2024.

There was no increase in glyphosate detections from the four previously reported (28/05/25), possibly supporting the hypothesis previously advanced that the detections may have been associated with grassland reseeded, following a relatively dry spring.

Regarding the elevated MCPA detections for 2025, it was speculated that the good weather experienced for much of the year may have been a contributing factor, in that it may have facilitated treatments on poorly drained land that was inaccessible in previous years.

UÉ catchments update – Five Catchment Focus Groups 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.

The catchment monitoring programme for Greenmount-Dee now includes glyphosate. Raw water monitoring for glyphosate commenced here in August 2025 and there have been several detections since then.

Various actions have also been carried out in the Hacketstown Water Supply catchment area (Carlow), which is another priority area. These actions include catchment monitoring as part of the APHA programme, a targeted communications campaign by UÉ and on-the-ground engagement by local authority staff. No exceedances have been reported in this catchment to date in 2025.

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 - 66 samples with exceedances (from 143 samples) compared to 48 samples with exceedances (from 182 samples) over the same period in 2024. This represents an exceedance rate of 46% in 2025 compared to 26% in 2024.
- Lough Forbes - 23 exceeding samples compared to 14 over the same period in 2024 (representing an exceedance rate of 29% in 2025 compared to 21% in 2024)
- Deel - 14 exceeding samples compared to 16 over the same period in 2024 (representing an exceedance rate of 12% for both years)
- Foynes - 15 exceeding samples, over 12 sampling weeks, compared to 5 in 2024 over 9 sampling weeks (representing an exceedance rate of 25% in 2025 compared to 12% in 2024)
- Feale - no exceeding samples so far in 2025 compared to 2 over the same period in 2024 (representing an exceedance rate of 0% in 2025 compared to 17% in 2024)

- Greenmount - 21 exceeding samples, over 13 sampling weeks, compared to 1 in 2024 over 5 sampling weeks (representing an exceedance rate of 20% in 2025 compared to 2.5% in 2024)
- Hacketstown - 4 exceeding samples so far in 2025, representing an exceedance rate of 10% (sampling in this catchment only started in 2025)

The average exceedance rate across the monitored catchments so far in 2025 is 26% compared to 18% in 2024. (It should be borne in mind that direct yearly comparisons are not possible in some catchments due to catchment-specific changes in the monitoring programme from one year to the next.)

A product stewardship initiative to include neck collars on MCPA products, highlighting the need to take great care to protect water quality, was also noted.

5. Update of list of monitored pesticides (DAFM)

DAFM provided an update on ongoing work to revise the list of pesticides monitored in drinking water. Thirty-three substances are currently monitored but 13 of these no longer have EU-approval and consequently are not authorised for use in Ireland.

A list of 46 additional substances has been drawn up for consideration based on data about their scale of use. Work is progressing to determine the likelihood of these substances entering groundwater and surface water sources. This analysis is based on a review of scientific data on the environmental fate and behaviour of the substances, focusing on characteristics such as solubility in water, persistence in soil and mobility in soil.

Work is also ongoing to identify some pesticide metabolites for possible inclusion in the monitoring programme. These are substances that form from the breakdown/transformation of pesticide active substances by environmental processes. Criteria were outlined for the selection of metabolites where NPDWAG members would be able to implement effective mitigation actions if an issue were identified. Several practical points for the implementation of an updated monitoring programme were highlighted as well.

6. Update on enforcement activities (DAFM)

An overview of enforcement activity carried out in 2025 will be provided in Q1 of 2026, along with proposals for 2026. The 2025 enforcement plan included areas in Cavan, Limerick, Longford and Louth, based on information provided by NPDWAG members.

7. Communications activities (Uisce Éireann and DAFM updates)

UÉ reported very positive feedback from the Autumn communications campaign, which featured in regional and national press outlets, radio (RTÉ Radio 1 (CountryWide) and various local radio stations), online and social media. It is estimated that the campaign reached more than 500,000 people with a PR Value in excess of €2,000,000.

DAFM informed the meeting that a number of awareness-raising activities had been progressed since the previous meeting, including the following items:

- Highlighting sprayer technology at the Teagasc National Crops Day (June 2025)
- Formal training courses for Grassland Advisors
- Training to QQI standard (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) for professional pesticide users
- Participation in Golf Ireland's Sustainable Golf Forum to encourage golf clubs to use the Golf Ireland / ATPI (Association of Turfgrass Professionals Ireland) portal for pesticide record keeping and product usage
- Dissemination of information about the Sustainability Portal
- Engagement with TidyTowns representatives
- Facilitation of Farm Hazardous Waste Collections scheduled for November and December 2025

8. Other stakeholder updates

NFGWS informed the meeting that work is progressing to draw up source protection plans in line with regulatory requirements and timelines. Risk assessment and risk management for catchments will be carried out as part of this process.

9. Updates on 2025 actions

UÉ reminded group members to forward details of all relevant activities carried out by stakeholders in a timely manner, so that the Action Tracker spreadsheet can be kept up to date.

10. AOB

DAFM informed the meeting that the European Parliament and the European Council had recently reached a provisional agreement on draft legislation under the framework of the Water Framework Directive to review and update priority substances to be monitored in surface water and groundwater. There may be implications from this new legislation for drinking water monitoring programmes. The provisional agreement (amending the Water Framework Directive, the Groundwater Directive and the Environmental Quality Standards Directive) can be accessed at the following location –

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13706-2025-INIT/en/pdf>