

# Opening Statement to Oireachtas Committee on HPLG

Paul McGowan, Chairperson, Water Advisory Body

Good morning and thank you Chair and committee members for the opportunity to meet with you.

My name is Paul McGowan. I've been appointed recently by the Minister as Chair of the Water Advisory Body. I'm currently a Commissioner and Chairperson of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities.

I'm joined today by the other two members of the Advisory Body, also recently appointed by the Minister. They are:

- Darragh Page; Programme Manager with the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Enforcement; and
- Sharon Kennedy; Senior Executive Officer with An Fóram Uisce.

We have been appointed to the Advisory Body for a five year term, with an end date of May 2023.

The remaining two members of the Advisory Body will be appointed through the Public Appointments Service. The advertisement for the two Members was published on the 22 August 2018 on Stateboards.ie. The closing date for submission of Expressions of Interest is 19 September 2018.

I am hopeful that these appointments will be made in October of this year.

We look forward to the appointment of the remaining two members so that the Advisory Body can consider and submit its first report to the Oireachtas Committee.

We are conscious that the WAB has been established to provide a level of assurance to the Oireachtas and the public around the transparency, accountability and performance of Irish Water.

Specifically, the Advisory Body has a legal function to advise the Minister on measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water and to provide an annual report to the Minister on the performance of the Advisory Body's functions during the period since its establishment.

The Advisory Body will also furnish, on a quarterly basis, a report to the Committee on the performance by Irish Water in the implementation of its business plan with particular regard to the following:

- (i) infrastructure delivery and leakage reductions;
- (ii) cost reduction and efficiency improvements;
- (iii) improvements in water quality, including the elimination of boil water notices;
- (iv) procurement, remuneration and staffing policies; and
- (v) responsiveness to the needs of communities and enterprise.

I'd like to briefly outline progress to date.

- The Advisory Body has met on two occasions (13 July and 31 August, 2018).

- Early discussions have focused on a number of matters. These include:
  - Governance; Rules of Procedure; and Terms of Reference for the Advisory Body; and
  - Establishment of a website/identity to facilitate the transparency of our work
- We have also commenced discussion on the content and format of quarterly reports to this Joint Committee (on Housing, Planning and Local Government)

With specific reference to our reports; we have considered:

- The sources of information which will feed into these reports; and
- The frequency with which that information is available.

We are keen to ensure that the reports we prepare provide meaningful information about Irish Water's performance in the key areas identified in the legislation. Our aim is to focus on what's important and explain why that is the case.

We aim to identify and draw together a set of key performance metrics from various sources. These will include various CRU and EPA reports, and data and information from other sources including An Fóram Uisce and Irish Water itself. Our aim is that this set of metrics will help to demonstrate how Irish Water is performing, against these headings, over time.

Over the next few months we will continue to develop our report structures, content sources, and to identify these metrics, and how often they are updated. We will also explore how we might use each quarterly report to explore particular aspects of Irish Water's performance in more detail.

As soon as the remaining two members of the Advisory Body are appointed, the members will finalise the reporting structure and content, and prepare the first formal report for submission to this Committee.

We look forward to meeting with the Committee regularly in the future to discuss our findings.

Thank you.