



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government

**Timetable and Work Programme
for the
Development of the Second Cycle
River Basin Management Plans**

Consultation Document

31 July 2014

Second Cycle River Basin Planning Consultations

The Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG) sets out below details of the planned consultations that will be an important part of the process to develop the second cycle Water Framework Directive¹ River Basin Management Plans.

What is River Basin Management Planning?

The Water Framework Directive is EU legislation that was adopted in 2000. It requires Member States to manage their water resource on an integrated basis so as to achieve at least 'good' ecological status and to avoid deterioration in the status of any waters. The means to achieve good status must be set out in River Basin Management Plans.

There are currently eight River Basin Districts (RBDs) on the island of Ireland. Four of these lie solely within Ireland: the Eastern RBD, the South Eastern RBD, the Western RBD and the South Western RBD. Three are international RBDs (IRBDs), the Shannon IRBD, the North Western IRBD and the Neagh Bann IRBD while the North Eastern RBD lies solely within Northern Ireland. In July 2010, the first cycle River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) for Ireland were published, covering the period up to 2015. The plans for the Shannon IRBD, Eastern RBD, South Eastern RBD, Western RBD and the South Western RBD were developed solely by Ireland while the North Western and Neagh Bann RBMPs were developed in conjunction with Northern Ireland.

A document entitled "Working Together"² was also published in June 2010 describing the coordination that took place between the two jurisdictions and the commitment to future coordination for the IRBDs. It focused on the status of our shared waters, their environmental objectives and the measures to achieve those objectives.

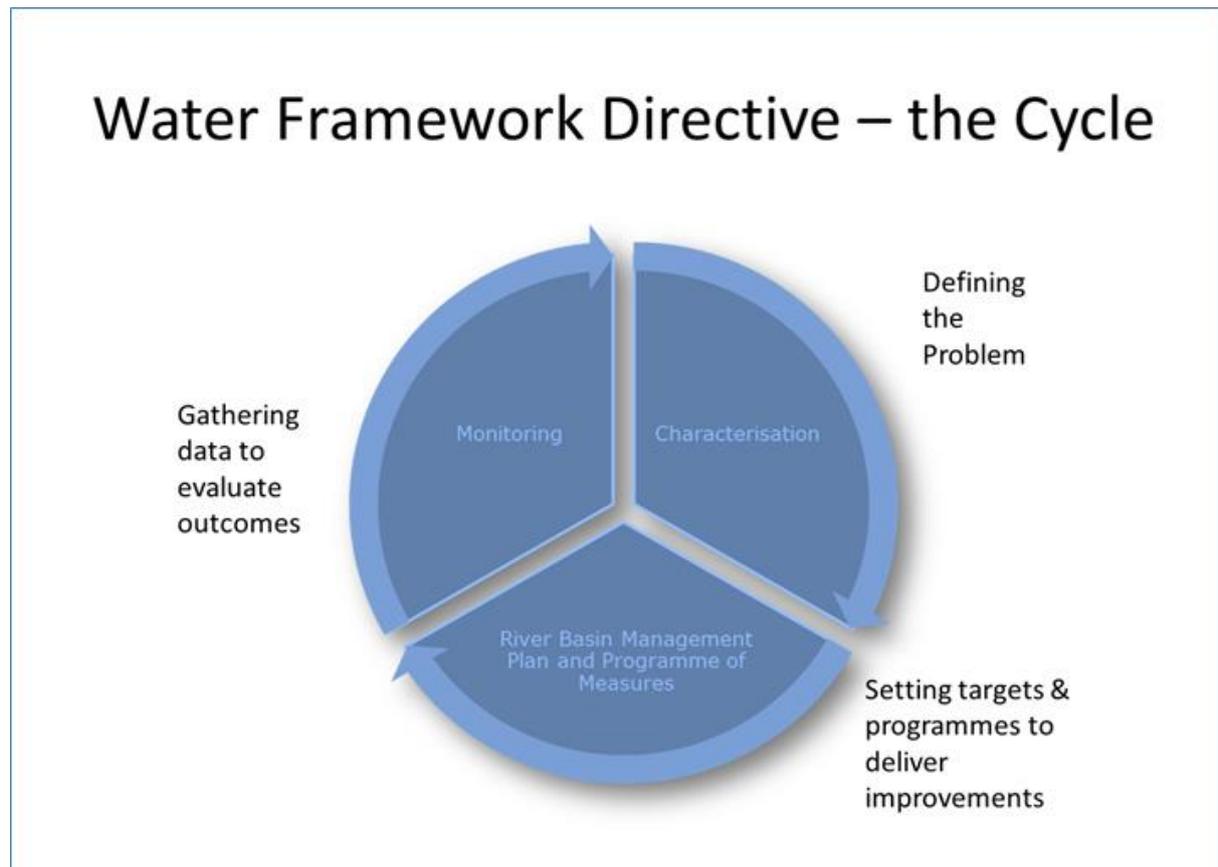
The River Basin Management Plans describe the measures planned to protect and improve Ireland's water environment covering rivers, lakes, groundwater, transitional (estuaries) and coastal waters. The River Basin Management Plans are the end result of a process that starts with identifying the waters and key water management issues within a river basin district. Thereafter, the status of those waters is assessed and classified (based on a monitoring programme), environmental objectives for the

¹ Article 14(1)(a) of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) requires the publication of a timetable and work programme for the production of river basin management plans.

²<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Water/WaterQuality/WaterFrameworkDirective/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,26908,en.pdf>

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/Environment/Water/FileDownload,26909,en.pdf>

water bodies within the district are established and a programme of measures to achieve those objectives is compiled.



River Basin Management Planning takes an integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable management of the water environment. The planning process revolves around a six year planning cycle of action and review so that every six years a revised river basin management plan is produced.

If you would like to see what a River Basin Management Plan looks like, copies of the first cycle plans are available at the following link:

http://www.wfdireland.ie/docs/1_River%20Basin%20Management%20Plans%202009%20-%202015/

How will the second cycle river basin management plans be developed?

Since 2003, implementation of the Water Framework Directive has been undertaken in Ireland under the leadership of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Under current legislation specific roles and responsibilities were assigned to various agencies of the state and local authorities. The primary responsibility for delivering the River Basin Management Plans, the central means of complying with the WFD, was assigned to local authorities and each RBD had a

designated lead local authority. The first plans were adopted by the local authorities and approved by the Minister for the Environment in 2010.

While implementation of the first cycle River Basin Management Plans is on-going, preparations are now underway to deliver updated plans. Preparation of the updated plans has been delayed due to the significant reform of the water sector currently underway and briefly described below. This delay means that the updated plans will be delivered in the second half of 2017 instead of by the stipulated target of December 2015.

The purpose of this document is to inform stakeholders of the timetable for preparing the updated plans, the milestones leading up to the final adopted plans and the revised governance arrangements for delivering plans. Towards the end of the document you are invited to provide ideas on how best to encourage the active involvement of public and other interested parties in the implementation of the Directive and in particular the preparation of the next river basin management plans.

New governance and administrative arrangements

The water sector in Ireland is undergoing fundamental change, with a move to a new water utility to bring better strategic delivery of infrastructure needs and accelerate capital investment for the delivery of water and waste water services. In parallel, the overall governance structures for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive have been reviewed following a commitment in the first cycle of river basin management plans. The review concluded that the governance arrangements were overly complex with no single body having ultimate responsibility for delivery of the Water Framework Directive.

As a result of this review, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government is now putting in place new governance structures and administrative arrangements for the implementation of the second cycle of River Basin Management Plans. These new arrangements are briefly described below.

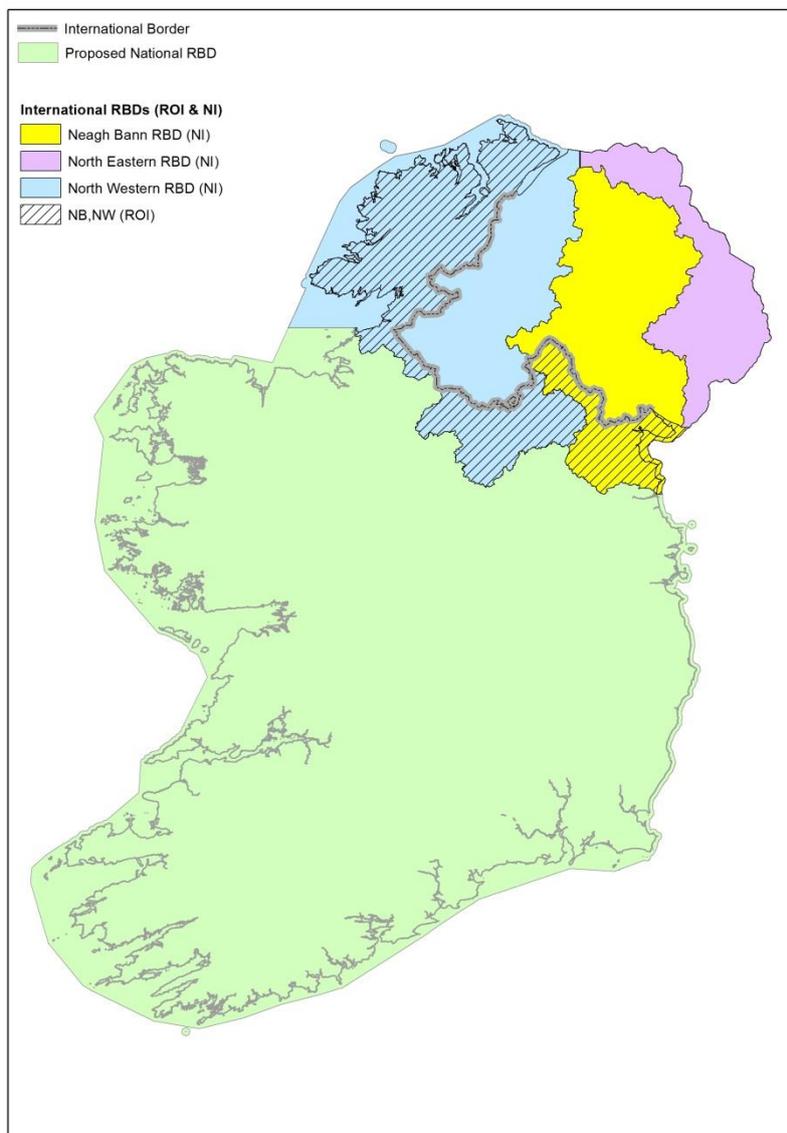
Revised River Basin Districts and administrative areas

As part of the review of governance structures, a report on the number and boundaries of the RBDs and underlying administrative areas was commissioned in 2012³ and this report is available on the Department's website. The review was prompted by, among other considerations, broader proposals to reform local government and in the interests of efficiency. The report concluded that there are compelling reasons to amend the current RBD structures. The Minister has broadly

³<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/Environment/Water/FileDownload,38698,en.pdf>

accepted the report's recommendations with some minor modifications and this is set out below:-

- There will be a single national approach for the development of river basin management plans within this jurisdiction. The technical analysis and planning tasks will be advanced on the basis of appropriate water or catchment management units to be decided by EPA, and
- Specific administrative arrangements will be put in place to coordinate requirements with Northern Ireland in relation to cross-border waters, encompassing water management units of the Neagh-Bann, the North Western and the Shannon River Basin Districts which flow into or out of Northern Ireland.



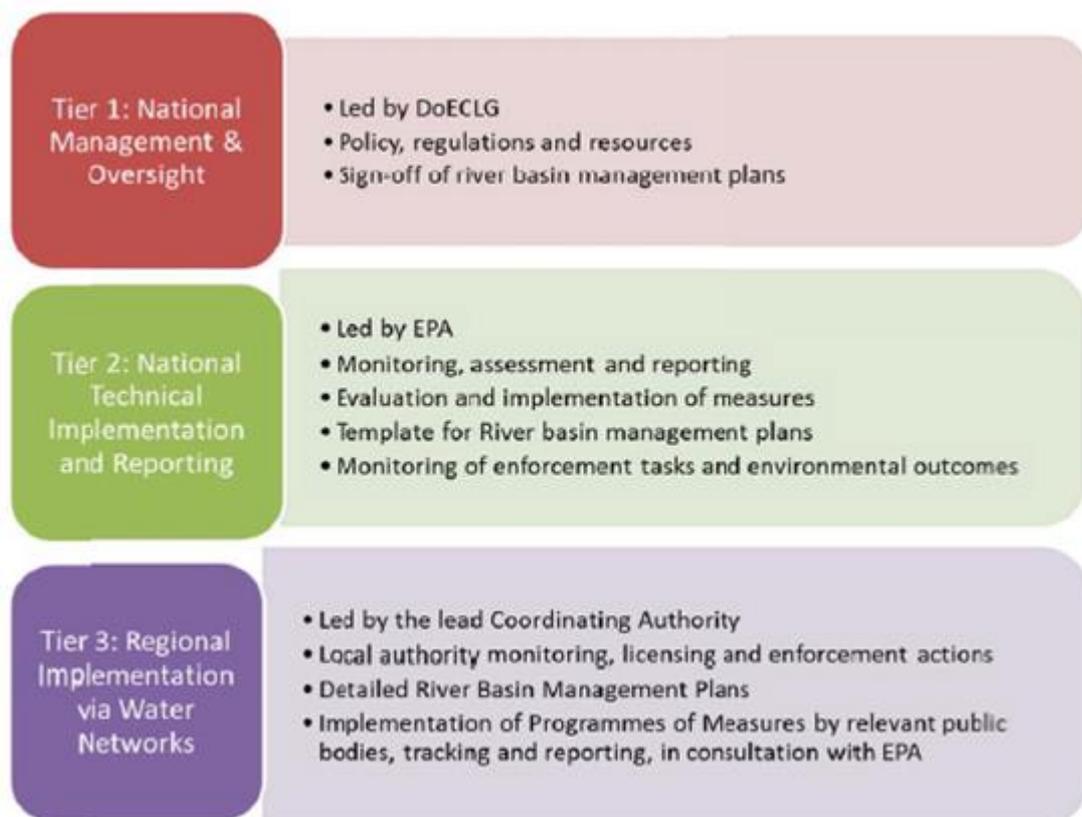
The Eastern, South Eastern, South Western, Western and Shannon River Basin Districts will be merged to form one national River Basin District. In relation to the

North Western and Neagh Bann International River Basin Districts a single administrative area will be established in the Republic of Ireland portion of these two IRBDs for the purpose of coordinating their management with authorities in Northern Ireland

While this rearrangement will lead to efficiencies in relation to matters such as assessment and reporting, regionalised administrative structures will be put in place to support implementation (e.g. river basin district characterisation, the development of programmes of measures, enforcement, public consultation and awareness activities). Arrangements will also need to be put in place to facilitate the input of communities at local catchment level.

Revised governance structures

Based on the review of governance arrangements, a new three tiered governance structure is being established. Regulations⁴ have recently been made to give effect to these new governance structures. Ultimately the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government will adopt the final river basin management plans. The new arrangements consist of 3 inter-locking levels that are proposed for effective governance and delivery. This is illustrated in the figure below.



⁴<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Water/WaterQuality/RHLegislation/FileDownload,38699,en.pdf>

Under the new arrangements, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government at Tier 1, has clear responsibility for policy, legislation and ensuring the provision of adequate resources for implementing the Directive. It is at this level also that the draft river basin management plan(s) and programme(s) of measures will be refined and finalised in consultation with key Departments and state agencies before presentation to the Minister for approval. A Water Policy Advisory Committee has been established to assist the Minister and its functions and membership are set out in the new Regulations.

Significant new responsibilities have been assigned to the EPA at Tier 2, including the crucial role of drafting environmental objectives, undertaking catchment characterisation, preparing template river basin management plan(s) and compiling common programme of measures for further development and input by local authorities at Tier 3 and finalisation and approval by the Minister.

The local authorities, operating at Tier 3 will lead implementation and enforcement of measures on the ground and have key responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Directive on public participation including consultation on draft river basin management plan(s) that are developed from the template plans prepared by the EPA. The Department is currently engaging with the County and City Management Association on the necessary structures and resources at this Tier. It is envisaged that a number of regional WFD offices will coordinate Tier 3 activities and the Department will publish details in this regard when they are finalised.

Overview of Consultations

Preparations for the second cycle of plans, covering the period up to 2021, are now underway. If you have an interest in or are concerned about the water environment and its sustainable use for future generations, then we would welcome your input into the development of the second cycle plans. Formal consultations will take place at three critical stages in the river basin planning process for the second cycle plans, as follows:

- **Draft timetable and consultation arrangements for development of the second cycle RBMPs (published July 2014) (led by the DECLG)**

This consultation presents a draft timetable and work programme for the production of the second cycle plans and also seeks views on how the process of developing and implementing the plans could be improved.

- **Significant water management issues (SWMIs) consultation for second cycle RBMPs (July 2015 to December 2015) (led by the local authorities at regional level)**

In this stage of development, an interim overview of the significant water management issues for each of the RBDs will be presented and you will be asked for your views on what you think are the most significant issues to be addressed in the River Basin Management Plan.

- **Draft second cycle River Basin Management Plan consultation (December 2016 to June 2017) (led by the local authorities at regional level)**

The draft second cycle RBMPs setting out the status of waters in the RBD; the proposed environmental objectives and the draft programme of measures to achieve those objectives by 2021, will be issued for your views and comments at this stage.

Following the consultation on the draft plan, the final second cycle River Basin Management Plans will be approved and published in the second half of 2017.

Draft timetable and Consultation arrangements for the development of the second cycle River Basin Management Plans

WFD Element	Purpose	Draft Dates and Periods
Publish draft timetable & work programme for 2015-2021 River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), including statement of the consultation measures to be taken (this consultation).	Sets out the draft timetable & work programme to produce the 2 nd cycle RBMPs. Highlights the mile stones in the RBMP cycle where consultation is required and the measures we will undertake to ensure involvement in the consultation process.	July 2014 (consultation to close 31 January 2015)
<i>Publish interim overview of the Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) in Ireland</i>	Identifies significant water management issues to be addressed in the 2 nd draft RBMPs and to facilitate public consultation	July 2015
<i>Consultation Period following publication of SWMI for receipt of comments</i>	Opportunity to comment on the significant water management issues. Consultation will be facilitated both through written consultation and online	July 2015 to December 2015
<i>Publish revised Significant Water Management Issues overview and characterisation report required under(Article 5 of the Water Framework Directive</i>	Provides technical details of the <i>characterisation of the river basin district, review of the environmental impact of human activity and economic analysis of water use</i> previously identified	December 2015
<i>Publish Draft River Basin Management Plan for 2015-2021 & provide explanation for any extended deadlines and less stringent environmental objectives proposed</i>	Sets out the objectives for the water environment and presents the strategy for meeting those objectives	December 2016
<i>Consultation Period following publication of Draft RBMP for receipt of comments</i>	Opportunity to comment on the draft plans including the objectives set and the measures proposed. Consultation will be facilitated both through written consultation and online	December 2016 to June 2017
<i>Publish updated RBMP for 2015-2021</i>	Sets out objectives for the water environment & the strategies for meeting those objectives between 2012 - 2021	by December 2017

Working together to improve the river basin planning process

We wish to encourage the active involvement of all interested parties in its implementation, especially in the production of the RBMPs. We would like to improve the capacity for meaningful public participation and your views on how this might best be accomplished would be helpful.

To facilitate consultation we will:

- Provide a dedicated page on our website with links to supporting documents.
- Inform statutory consultees of the consultation
- Advertise the consultation in print media
- Provide a list of questions to guide consultation responses
- Provide facilities to receive both electronic and paper-based responses

Questions on the consultation process

This phase of the consultation process is an opportunity to comment on the proposed approach and timetable. You might consider some of the questions below but we welcome any views you may have on the river basin management planning process.

- What river basin planning data or information would be most useful to you to facilitate your participation during the development of the plans?
- How could we improve the presentation of this information to aid your understanding and involvement in developing the next set of plans?
- Are there issues or particular catchment areas that we should treat as a priority in preparing the next cycle plans and why?
- Have you any views on the way in which river basin management plans are integrated with other plans and processes?
- Do you have ideas regarding how best to mobilise public participation in the preparation of the next river basin management plans?

How can you respond to this consultation?

You can respond by:

email to: waterq@environ.ie

or by sending a written response to:

Water Quality Section,
Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government,
Newtown Road,
Wexford.

The final date for responses in respect of this initial consultation is 31 January 2015.

Freedom of Information

Please note that, in the event of a request being made by any person under the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003, it may be necessary for the Department to disclose any or all comments received. The Department will only refuse disclosure of information in exceptional circumstances. It is likely that the Department will publish comments received in response to this consultation paper.