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Structured, formal engagement of stakeholders in public policy – The case of An Fóram Uisce (The Water Forum)

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Abstract

This paper examines the operation of An Fóram Uisce (The Water Forum) and its role as a statutory body in formally engaging stakeholders in policy deliberation at the national level. An Fóram Uisce was established in 2018 and consists of twenty-six members, including stakeholders from agriculture, fisheries, business, trade unions and environmental organisations. The research finds a number of benefits of An Fóram as a means of stakeholder engagement. An Fóram is gradually evolving a role for itself in highlighting or

putting an issue on the political and public agenda, and helping determine ways in which problems are addressed. It also provides members with a means of developing a shared understanding of the issues and agreeing potential solutions. Limitations exist, however. Notably, there is limited evidence to date of the impact of An Fóram on policy development in practice.

Keywords: Stakeholder engagement, policy development, collaborative governance, water governance, policy forums

Introduction and background

Countries and governments are facing difficult challenges, such as climate change, water management or homelessness, the familiar name in the academic literature for which being 'wicked problems' (Head & Alford, 2015). Very often, no one has a precise answer at the beginning about how to address these important policy issues. The challenges are ones where the different units and levels of government have to coordinate with each other and with non-government actors in civil society and the private sector. They have to do this to figure out responses to problems that none of them can address alone. Often, they have to collaborate to do something that they cannot precisely define in advance.

In response to uncertainty, governments and public bodies are increasingly inclined to set up collaborative governance arrangements to explore possibilities. By governance, we mean the act of governing seen in a wide sense. The term covers public administration and the institutions, methods and instruments of governing. It further incorporates relationships between government and citizens, and the role of the state (OECD, 1995).

How to involve stakeholders to help determine and implement policy is an important element of governance (Bingham et al., 2005). In this paper we look at the operation of one policy forum, An Fóram Uisce (The Water Forum), in the policy domain of water governance, as an example of a structured form of stakeholder engagement undertaken at the national level. Stakeholder engagement is one of twelve principles for good water governance identified by the OECD (2015). The importance of stakeholder engagement for water governance is emphasised by the OECD definition of water governance as the 'range of political, institutional and administrative rules, practices and processes (formal and informal) through which decisions are taken and implemented, *stakeholders can articulate their*

interests and have their concerns considered, and decision makers are held responsible for water management' (OECD, 2015; emphasis added).

Stakeholder engagement is a subset of wider participatory initiatives that aim to involve people in decision-making regarding public policies and their implementation (Shannon & O'Leary, 2020; Wehn et al., 2017). Involving stakeholders can be particularly important when addressing wicked policy problems, where 'the definition of the problem is clear, but the solution is not ... and therefore learning and discussion are required by both the governmental managers and the stakeholders they lead' (Head & Alford, 2015, p. 717), and where there is stakeholder contestation about the nature of the problems and solutions. In these situations, as Conklin (2006, p. 5) identifies: 'You don't so much "solve" a wicked problem as you help stakeholders negotiate shared understanding and shared meaning about the problem and its possible solutions. The objective of the work is coherent action, not final solution.' Examples of wicked problems in the water governance sphere addressed by An Fóram Uisce include reducing nitrate levels in water and changing farming practices that affect water quality.

Policy forums as a means of stakeholder engagement

Fischer & Leifeld (2015, p. 1) define policy forums as 'issue-based intermediary organizations where diverse types of political and societal actors repeatedly interact. Policy forums are important elements of modern governance systems as they allow actors to learn, negotiate, or build trust'. Fischer & Leifeld go on to identify some potentially positive and some potentially negative aspects of policy forums as a means of stakeholder engagement. On the positive side, they are a means of encouraging civil society participation, and a means of facilitating balanced decisions, due to the extensive deliberation that occurs in forum settings. Policy forums can also be seen as a means of securing a higher quality of decisions 'due to the contribution of expert and stakeholder knowledge that is otherwise inaccessible to decision makers' (Fischer & Leifeld, 2015, p. 3).

Policy forums can also act as places where deliberation takes place, and views and values are developed or changed in the light of new information. Schön & Rein (1994) argue that there is a need for reflection within policy practice, particularly when dealing with intractable challenges. In particular, they promote the concept of

frame reflection. Their thesis is that real-life situations are often complex, vague, ambiguous and indeterminate. In order to make sense of such situations, people and organisations select certain features which help them create a story that explains the situation. Such frames can often be extremely partial, without an evidential base, and self-reinforcing within the group.

Frame reflection involves the stakeholders engaging to review and revise their frames of reference and, through this process, 'constructing a shared narrative that recognises multiple voices, teases out the implications of these value preferences, and seeks to resolve conflicts. This activity is partly analytical and partly discursive' (Head & Alford, 2015, p. 723). Dewulf et al. (2005) note that frame reflection involves not only looking at the extent to which the goals and metrics themselves change and evolve, but also the extent to which stakeholders' frames of reference are influenced through the process.

On the negative side, policy forums have been accused of undermining democratic legitimacy and being ineffective tools of governance. With regard to undermining democratic legitimacy, the contention is that politicians are elected to determine policies, and that forums composed of members without an electoral mandate can in effect usurp this democratic role, leading to a democratic deficit and a potential backdoor for advocacy (Ó Cinnéide, 1998). With regard to being ineffective, one contention is that deliberation in policy forums can lead to one of two extreme outcomes: one where experts dominate and bias policymaking towards technical solutions, and the other where policy forums are simply used by politicians or bureaucrats in order to legitimise their policies and give a sheen of credibility to stakeholder engagement. Another issue, raised by Wagner & Ylä-Anttila (2020), is that in practice participants tend not to obtain policy advice from those who they encounter at policy forums, but remain within their own 'echo chamber' of like-minded individuals and groups, suggesting forums are not enabling policy learning.

There is also a danger that too great an emphasis on consensus building in policy forums can lead to a sense of exclusion amongst groups who disagree with the framing of the debate. As Lyall & Tait (2019, p. 1129) note, 'in policy debates related to the life sciences there is a potential for engagement to be dominated by strong, ideologically-based opinions and in plural democracies it may not be possible or desirable to reach a consensus ... Shifting the emphasis from expert groups to advocacy groups (whose views may be based predominantly on interests and values or ideology) has the potential to lead to an

imbalance of power that has no basis in balanced evidentiary standards’.

Methodology

This paper explores one aspect of stakeholder engagement: how to formally engage stakeholders in policy deliberation and formulation at the national level. It does so using An Fóram Uisce (The Water Forum) as a case study. The role of An Fóram Uisce is highlighted here because establishing and setting out functions for a stakeholder body in legislation represents an innovative approach to the formal engagement of stakeholders in policy development at the national level. It affords An Fóram Uisce significant status and credibility.

The paper is part of a wider research programme funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) into water governance arrangements associated with the *River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018–2021* (RBMP) (Boyle et al., 2021). As part of this research, fifty-four people were interviewed over the period May to September 2020, covering the public, private and civil society realms. A list of the organisations that participated in the research is included in Appendix 1. Included among the interviews were fifteen interviews with An Fóram Uisce (twelve interviews with members, and three interviews with the executive). Relevant documentary material and academic literature were also examined. Given the nature of water governance, and the fact that the governance arrangements for the RBMP are new and evolving phenomena, a primarily qualitative approach was considered most appropriate for data gathering and analysis (Bluhm et al., 2011). Qualitative data, as Ospina et al. (2017, p. 596) note, ‘at their best, are words that emerge from observations ... interviews ... or documents ... are collected (or accessed) in a naturalistic way ... and are processed through several iterations of systematic analysis’.

An Fóram Uisce

An Fóram Uisce was established by statute in June 2018, pursuant to the Water Services Act 2017. Upon its establishment, two pre-existing stakeholder forums, the Public Water Forum and the National Rural Water Services Committee, were dissolved and their functions transferred to An Fóram.

An Fóram was set up to facilitate stakeholder engagement in water quality issues. Its place in the structure for Ireland’s water governance is set out in Figure 1. Alongside a Water Policy Advisory Committee made up of senior officials from a number of government departments and state agencies, An Fóram operates as part of the top tier of three tiers of governance, providing advice to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. At the middle tier, a layer of technical support is provided by the National Coordination and Management Committee (NCMC) and the National Technical Implementation Group (NTIG), supported by the EPA. Local authorities, supported by regional committees and a local government shared service, the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), are involved in implementation at the bottom tier.

Figure 1: Water governance arrangements for Ireland’s River Basin Management Plan 2018–2021

An Fóram consists of twenty-six members, including Irish Water consumers, rural water interests, business interests, and education, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, trade union, water sports and activities, and environmental organisations. An Fóram is intended to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to debate and analyse a range of issues with regard to water quality, including the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the RBMP. The functions of An Fóram include but are not limited to:

- advising the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in respect of water conservation, rural water services and the interests of the customers of Irish Water;
- advising the Water Policy Advisory Committee in relation to the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive in Ireland;
- making recommendations to Irish Water in relation to the performance of its functions;
- advising and providing observations to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities;
- examining such other water-related matters as the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage requests, and advising the minister accordingly.

Expenses incurred by An Fóram are provided for by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH). During 2020 the level of expenditure was just over €500,000.

In terms of the issues addressed, An Fóram debates and analyses issues related to integrated catchment management and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, including:

- water as a resource;
- issues of water quality;
- rural water issues, including oversight of the Rural Water Capital Investment Programme;
- water issues relating to climate change;
- issues affecting customers of Irish Water.

Staffing

An Fóram has a small, full-time support staff, comprising a senior executive officer, a research officer, a communications and education officer and a clerical officer. An Fóram members interviewed spoke highly of the executive support staff. The benefits from the appointment of the research officer and communications and education officer to supplement the senior executive officer post were seen as significant in helping An Fóram to advance and achieve its work agenda. The continuation of the development of closer links with third-level institutions and research centres is seen as one helpful way of supplementing existing resources.

Committee structure

The creation of the two standing committees, covering water services and catchment management, was widely seen as beneficial and indeed

essential to the effective operation of An Fóram. Interviewees noted that it was not possible to do everything in plenary sessions. The Water Services Committee has identified issues in the strategic plan relevant to its brief, and has made them the agenda for the group. The Catchment Management Committee's focus is on the RBMP.

The standing committees, being smaller and with a tighter focus, get through a lot of work quickly and efficiently, and are seen as a good way of using the expertise of members. Several interviewees noted that it is possible to get the 'heavy lifting' done in the standing committees, and then have policy positions brought to the plenary group for decision. One difficulty noted was that attendance at the standing committee meetings can be a challenge (more so than at the plenary sessions), though there was a sense that this had improved recently. The committees, while beneficial, place additional time demands on members.

Strengths of An Fóram Uisce

A number of notable strengths of An Fóram were highlighted during the course of the research. All interviewees emphasised the fact that An Fóram represents a broad range of interests, with the main sectors and stakeholders interested in water quality coming together around the table. No major stakeholder groups are excluded or have decided not to participate, as happens in some policy forums (Griffin, 2007). It has developed as an important forum for mutual learning, the sharing of information and keeping stakeholders up to date. Interviewees emphasised the willingness of members to listen to others and understand where they are coming from. Members feel more informed, that their knowledge of water issues has increased and that it has strengthened relationships with others in the group. With regard to being more informed and enhancing their knowledge base, this aspect of the work of An Fóram reflects the importance of social learning as an emerging governance mechanism to promote collaborative action among stakeholders to improve water governance (Collins & Ison, 2009).

The fact that An Fóram is a statutory body was noted as a strength by several interviewees. This was seen as giving credibility and standing to stakeholder engagement, and providing a means for departments and agencies to gain access to stakeholder views, both formally and informally. The fact that An Fóram is independent is also seen as important.

The degree of consensus in a wide range of areas was remarked on positively by most interviewees; for example, agreeing the text of a submission to the DHLGH as their response to a Public Consultation on the Significant Water Management Issues in Ireland. Given the disparate and conflicting views on many water quality issues among the stakeholder groups involved, this was seen as a significant achievement. Several interviewees commented that since its establishment, the members of An Fóram, facilitated by the chair, had built an atmosphere of trust and willingness to collaborate and work hard to reach mutual agreement where possible. By participating in forums, participants have established network contacts with other actors interested in the same issue who they may not normally have had dialogue with, and this has helped establish trust, one of the potential benefits of forums noted by Lubell (2007). One interviewee stated that An Fóram is the ‘closest we’ve got at the moment to joined-up thinking’. However, as noted below, limitations with regard to the degree of consensus building were also highlighted.

Most interviewees emphasised the positive role of the chair as one of the reasons for the successes to date of An Fóram. Having an independent chair not linked to any particular interest group was seen as an important element in the process. The fact that the chair operates in a respectful and inclusive manner, allowing diverging views to be articulated, was emphasised as a significant factor in the generation of trust among members. This reflects practice that forums with diverse membership and interests often need a facilitative leader in order to operate effectively (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

An Fóram is building a research/evidence base to support its work, and interviewees regard this as an important, positive development. Research was seen as crucial to enabling An Fóram to speak with authority on topics. Building the evidence base was also seen as vital because there are many data gaps that need to be filled. As noted by Fischer & Leifeld (2015), policy forums work best when they bring together policymakers and experts, and aim to establish a knowledge exchange between groups of actors with different types of knowledge.

Limitations of An Fóram Uisce

Most frequently mentioned by interviewees with regard to the limitations of An Fóram was the sense of a limited impact to date given all the work put in by members. Several interviewees felt that a level of fatigue could start to adversely affect members’ commitment

unless results start to be seen. Here, transaction costs such as time and resources invested could be seen to exceed the benefits of participation (Fischer & Leifeld, 2015). In this context, the potential of An Fóram to be seen as merely a talking shop and a tick-box exercise was noted as a source of frustration by some interviewees. This refers less to the performance of An Fóram than to how it is perceived by government departments and agencies, a point developed further below when discussing the impact of An Fóram on policy development.

While the emphasis on consensus building was generally seen as a positive, some interviewees noted that it could also be a limitation. It could mean that the more contentious issues were not, perhaps, addressed as thoroughly as they might be, with more of a focus on information-sharing than on problem-solving.

In a similar vein, some interviewees perceive An Fóram to be reactive rather than proactive, responding to rather than setting the agenda. However, those who made this point also felt that this situation had improved in recent times and was now less of an issue.

Several interviewees commented on limitations with regard to the make-up of membership. One interviewee referred to the preponderance of white, middle-aged men. With regard to stakeholder representation, the fact that there was only one education representative covering the whole of the education sector was mentioned as an issue by some interviewees. Other groupings mentioned who should possibly have representation included young people, aquaculture or commercial fisheries, and artisanal food suppliers. However, the need for additional representation was balanced by a view that, as An Fóram is already a large grouping, adding more members could challenge its effective operation even further. As Fischer & Leifeld (2015, p. 10) note, 'As the number of actors participating in a forum increases, the number of potential actor relations grows exponentially. This increases transaction costs.'

The other point made with regard to membership was that a couple of interviewees felt that membership could get 'stale' if the same people are retained for too long. Balancing continuity of membership and the building of trust and good working relationships with the need to inject new blood periodically was seen as a challenge.

Some interviewees noted a sense that some members are more vocal than others, and that strong voices can dominate discussions. To some extent this is inevitable in groups of this size, with disparate members and power relationships, and reflects the point made by

Lyall & Tait (2019) that strong advocacy groups can dominate the debate. The role of the chair in moderating discussions is important here in ensuring all members feel they have a voice.

The time commitment required of members, particularly those with limited resource supports or who are not working full-time in the area, was referenced by several interviewees as a limitation in terms of their participation. It was felt that this could lead to disadvantages for less-resourced stakeholders in determining the direction of work. It was recognised that the chair is conscious of this and attempts to ensure equity in this regard to the extent possible.

The wide-ranging brief of An Fóram was referenced by several interviewees as posing challenges in terms of possibly having too diverse an agenda, and hence failing to address selected issues in a thorough and comprehensive manner. Some interviewees saw the need for a tighter brief, with more focused priorities. The strategic plan was seen as being of assistance here in terms of giving a focus, providing a sense of direction and an articulation of common goals, and helping An Fóram move from being reactive to more proactive. But more work was felt to be needed here.

An Fóram's role in monitoring progress of the River Basin Management Plan

An Fóram largely engages in secondary rather than primary monitoring of the RBMP, relying on the EPA, LAWPRO and Irish Water data sources in particular. Most interviewees felt that the monitoring of actions taken with regard to the RBMP is an issue that needs to be addressed more effectively than it has been up to now. Having said that, it was widely accepted that with regard to the ultimate outcome of improved water status, it will take time to determine if progress is being made, and it is difficult to measure effectiveness in real time. EPA reports are the main information source with regard to changes in water quality, but with regard to the final outcomes of changes in water status there can be significant time lags between actions taken and results.

Interviewees expressed a view that they were monitoring the process rather than the outcomes at present. For example, several interviewees noted that LAWPRO gathers statistics on what it is doing (number of meetings organised, numbers of attendees, etc.) but not, so far, on what results are being achieved. It was also felt that feedback from LAWPRO and others tended to be quite anecdotal and largely

of a positive nature, and that there is a need to go beyond this. One interviewee expressed a wish to hear more from NCMC and NTIG as to how they propose to fill the data gaps. In terms of trying to get a more balanced picture, several interviewees noted that they get anecdotal information from their own stakeholder groups, feeding in what stakeholder groups are seeing on the ground, and that this is helpful contextual information. However, this is equally subjective and cannot be relied on to give an accurate picture.

There was a general view among interviewees that agency-reporting metrics need to be more aligned to the actions in the RBMP, with An Fóram having a formal position whereby it must be reported to regarding progress on the implementation of the RBMP.

An Fóram Uisce as promoter of public engagement

Interestingly, as a forum for stakeholder engagement, one of the tasks allocated to An Fóram is to promote public engagement on water quality issues. The general view among interviewees was that An Fóram itself is not widely known among the public, although it was recognised that recently, with the development of the communications strategy and staffing, it is getting more traction and better buy-in from the media, which is raising its profile somewhat. The media now has a greater awareness that An Fóram exists. A need to build on this was noted.

It was also felt that the education awareness strategy developed by An Fóram will help with public engagement. With regard to their educational role, a couple of interviewees felt that there was a role to be played by An Fóram as an interpreter of technical reports produced by the EPA, LAWPRO, etc., which may not be easily digestible for members of the public, by providing plain-language guides of issues raised for public consumption.

Most interviewees felt that engaging with other organisations who are out there 'on the ground' rather than undertaking public engagement exercises themselves was the best option in terms of getting community groups involved at catchment basin level. LAWPRO, for example, when attending meetings of An Fóram, should not be asked all the time who is involved in their engagement exercises, but rather who is not involved. There was also a recognition that good public engagement is far from straightforward, and requires detailed planning and the use of a range of appropriate methods of engagement.

A couple of interviewees also noted the importance of ensuring good communication between An Fóram members and the stakeholder groups they represent.

Influence of An Fóram Uisce on policy

Ultimately, the test of any policy forum is the actual effect it has on policy development and implementation. An Fóram has been active in its attempts to influence policy, having published a range of policy submissions, press releases and reports. With regard to policy submissions, An Fóram has made twenty-five submissions from its inception in June 2018 through to January 2021. These cover a wide range of issues; for example, a submission to the DHLGH on significant water management issues in Ireland, and a submission to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) on the 2019 *Nitrates Derogation Review*.

The degree of influence of An Fóram on policy was highlighted as a source of concern by most interviewees, with many stating that they do not know whether the submissions of An Fóram are having any influence. One interviewee expressed a sense of the outputs of An Fóram going into a black hole, with no way of tracking progress. Most interviewees felt that there is very little feedback from government departments other than acknowledgement that the submission has been received. Good-practice examples were cited as suggestions for departments to follow, whereby organisations asking for policy inputs from stakeholders show submissions received on their website, and in their reports reference the submissions and the subsequent decisions they made in relation to them. This has happened in some cases, but to a limited degree to date. Interviewees felt it was important that state bodies publish the results of consultation and show that the submissions have been considered. It was accepted that the outcome would not necessarily be agreement with the submissions, but it was thought to be important to show that they have been seen and heard.

On the plus side, a couple of interviewees noted that An Fóram has been in existence for only a couple of years and is still seen as a new body by many. Indeed, most interviewees felt that its influence is growing. One described it as ‘green shoots’ – not yet having major influence but now engaging more, and more effectively, with government departments and agencies. Most interviewees felt that An Fóram was engaging with the right people in departments and agencies, and is seen by them as relevant.

Several interviewees felt that there was a relatively good working relationship with the DHLGH, but that influence was less effective with other departments. This also raised the issue in interviewees' minds of inter-departmental policy coherence, with a sense of An Fóram having some influence within DHLGH but not inter-departmentally. An example was cited where An Fóram commissioned behavioural economics research on how the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) might be modified to influence farmer behaviour regarding water, and proposed to the DAFM that An Fóram be represented on the committee looking at CAP reform, but the department did not provide a place on its consultative committee.

Specifically on the issue of CAP reform, one interviewee felt that, with regard to policy influence, if An Fóram could present a shared position on CAP reform, this could be hugely persuasive and potentially act to 'de-risk' policy changes in this area for government, as it would illustrate broad support across stakeholder groups.

Conclusions

In this paper we have examined An Fóram Uisce as a specific example of national-level formal stakeholder engagement in the process of policy development and governance. There are a number of positive aspects to this engagement. As a policy forum, An Fóram would seem to provide an example of a structure well suited to giving a voice to stakeholders in national policy debate and development, especially when addressing complex, 'wicked' problems. An Fóram is not a partisan or advocacy grouping set up to promote the views of one interested party or a select group of stakeholders. Rather, it aims to develop policy solutions to challenging problems through the generation of consensus where feasible. While members of An Fóram aim to represent the views of the groupings to which they belong, there is little evidence of their primary aim being to defend their own predefined preferences. Developing a shared understanding of the issues and agreeing potential solutions are important parts of the work of An Fóram.

Consistent with Schön & Rein's (1994) elaboration of the concept of frame reflection, this development of shared understanding can be seen as an illustration of members of the forum engaging in reflection of their frames of reference regarding policy issues. Stakeholders review their own position and value preferences, and consider what weight should be given to different evidence fragments. There is

evidence of An Fóram promoting social learning among the various members, encouraging knowledge exchange among the various actors, and promoting a better understanding across members of the positions taken by the different stakeholder groups. However, this is not to say that all challenges have been resolved. Policy differences and challenges to policy coherence remain. Strong differences of opinion remain, and frame reflection only moves the debate on so far, and less so in some of the more intractable areas.

An Fóram is also gradually playing a role in agenda setting: highlighting or putting an issue on the political, state agency and public agenda, and helping determine ways in which problems are addressed (Fischer & Leifeld, 2015).

However, there is limited evidence to date of the impact of An Fóram on policy development in practice. Stakeholder engagement involves significant time commitment by members, especially challenging for those for whom it is not part of their day job, and for limited return. Linkages between An Fóram and other elements of the water governance framework remain tenuous. Means of addressing these challenges are discussed in reports produced as part of the wider study of water governance from which this paper arose (Boyle et al., 2021; O’Riordan et al., 2021). At a minimum, it would be desirable that a memorandum of understanding be established between the forum and the Water Policy Advisory Committee which within the water governance structures is specifically tasked with advising the minister on policy.

Lastly, it is important to remember that a forum such as An Fóram should be seen as complementary to, not a replacement for, wider stakeholder and public engagement initiatives. In the case of water governance, other engagement initiatives at the regional and local levels have equally important roles to play in terms of providing a stakeholder voice in the process of securing good water status (Boyle et al., 2021). An Fóram is a positive element of water governance, but only one element, and one that can be improved and developed to strengthen its role in enhancing stakeholder engagement in policy development and implementation.

Appendix 1: List of interviewee organisations

Cork County Council
Cork Environmental Forum
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
 Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
 Dublin City County Council
 Dundalk Institute of Technology
 Environmental Protection Agency
 Galway City Council
 Geological Survey Ireland
 Health Service Executive
 Inishowen Rivers Trust
 Inland Fisheries Ireland
 Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
 Irish Farmers' Association
 Irish Rural Link
 Irish Underwater Council
 Irish Water
 Kerry County Council
 Kilkenny County Council
 Local Authorities Water Programme
 Longford County Council
 Moy Rivers Trust
 National Federation of Group Water Schemes
 Office of Public Works
 Sustainable Water Network
 Teagasc
 Waterford City and County Council
 Zero Waste Alliance

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