

Water Services and Business



Comhshaol, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Heritage and Local Government

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Water?

- Clean drinking water is an increasingly scarce (and expensive) resource
- “A food” – so standards have to be high
- Central to hygiene and protection of public health
- Water also has a central role in economic activity
- Water management – we all have a role!

Strategic Policy - Overview

Department's strategic objective is to protect and improve water resources and the quality of drinking water. Achieved by:

- Providing the highest quality water and wastewater infrastructural services to support social and economic development
- Preserving and enhancing water quality standards
- Ensuring compliance with national and international requirements for drinking water supplies and wastewater treatment

Water Services – Water Resources

Water Services – “water in the pipe” (water supply and waste-water treatment services)

Water Resources – broader environmental focus, Water Framework Directive

Both are very closely inter-linked!



Water Services Act 2007

The Act:

- Consolidates legislative code into one tome
- Provides modern comprehensive enforcement powers to meet modern requirements
- Basis for strategic, co-ordinated development of water services into the future

Ultimately it is the basis for a sustained improvement in the quality of water services, compliant with current and future standards.

Key Stakeholders in Water Services

- Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government (and his Department)
- 34 Water Services Authorities (City and County Councils)
- Environmental Protection Agency – supervising the supply of drinking water
- Customers – Domestic and Non-domestic

Minister's Role

The Minister has a broad range of functions:

- Duty to facilitate provision of safe and efficient water services and related infrastructure
- Supervision of water services authorities, but EPA to supervise drinking water supplies
- Enforcement via compliance notices
- Regulations
- Guidelines and directions

Water Services Authority Role

- General powers to provide water services and to supervise the provision of water services by others
- Must take full account of specified aspects of public policy such as development plans, Regulations, policy directions from the Minister, directions and guidance from the EPA & HSE

Customers' Role

- Unauthorised connection to services is an offence
- **Water:** duty to maintain water distribution system in premises leak-free and free of health risk
- **Waste water:** duty of care to avoid nuisance, risk to human health or the environment from sewage

Water Charges

- Government policy absolutely prohibits domestic charges
- Policy requires WSA to charge for all non-domestic costs – polluter and user pays principles
- Only the marginal capital costs of new infrastructure charged to non-domestic customers

Metering

- Government policy requires the metering of all non-domestic connections
- Charges should be based on measured volumetric consumption
- Metering should give customers the incentive to minimise their water use
- Waste water – “water in, water out”

Conservation of Water

- Department is encouraging water services authorities to pro-actively engage with water users, especially larger users
- Objective is to minimise water usage and waste water discharges bringing reduced costs for the water user and for the water supplier
- Department is working with other public sector organisations (D/Education, HSE) to encourage water conservation in schools and hospitals
- Conservation will be a central element of new investment programme

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