

June 15th 2023

EPA Water Conference



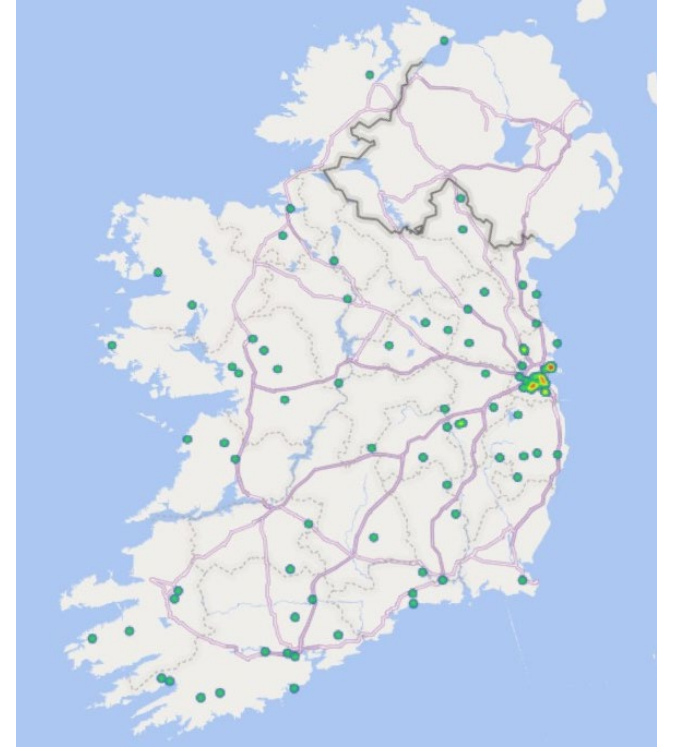
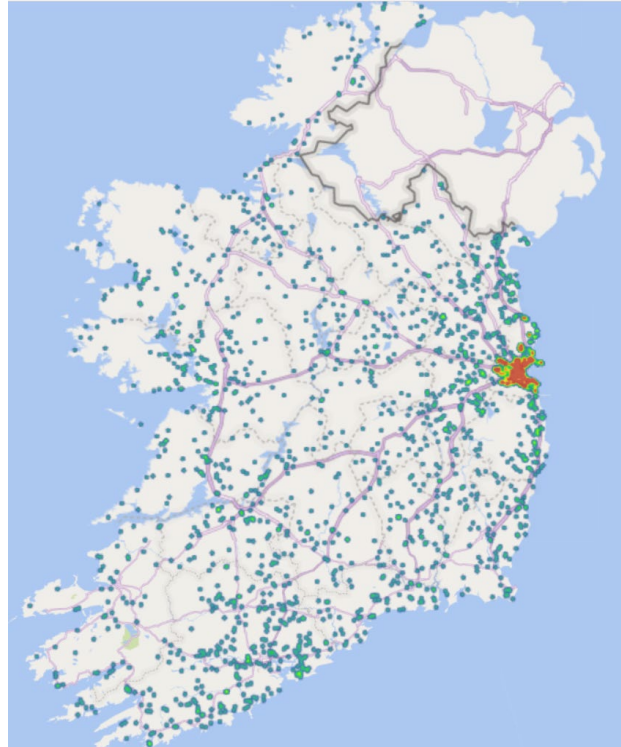
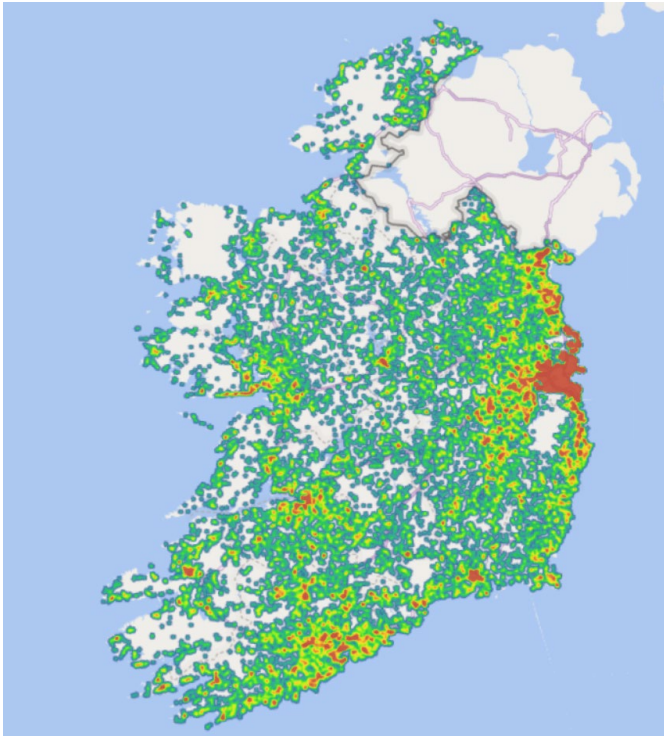
Learnings and recommendations from the
Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss



What is a
Citizens'
Assembly?



Who are the 'citizens' in this Assembly?



Example breakdown: 50/50 gender split, 23 people from Munster, 6 full-time farmers, twelve 18-24 year olds, nineteen 65+ year-olds etc.



Sectoral/Landscape Approach

- Protected Sites & Species
- Agriculture
- Forestry & Woodlands
- Peatlands
- **Freshwater**
- Marine & Coastal Environments
- Urban & Built Environments
- Environmental Rights
- Invasive Species
- Industry
- Energy Production
- Biodiversity Education



Contributions to the Citizens' Assembly

- 647 submissions from Ireland & around the world
- 87 speakers representing a wide variety of sectors and organisations

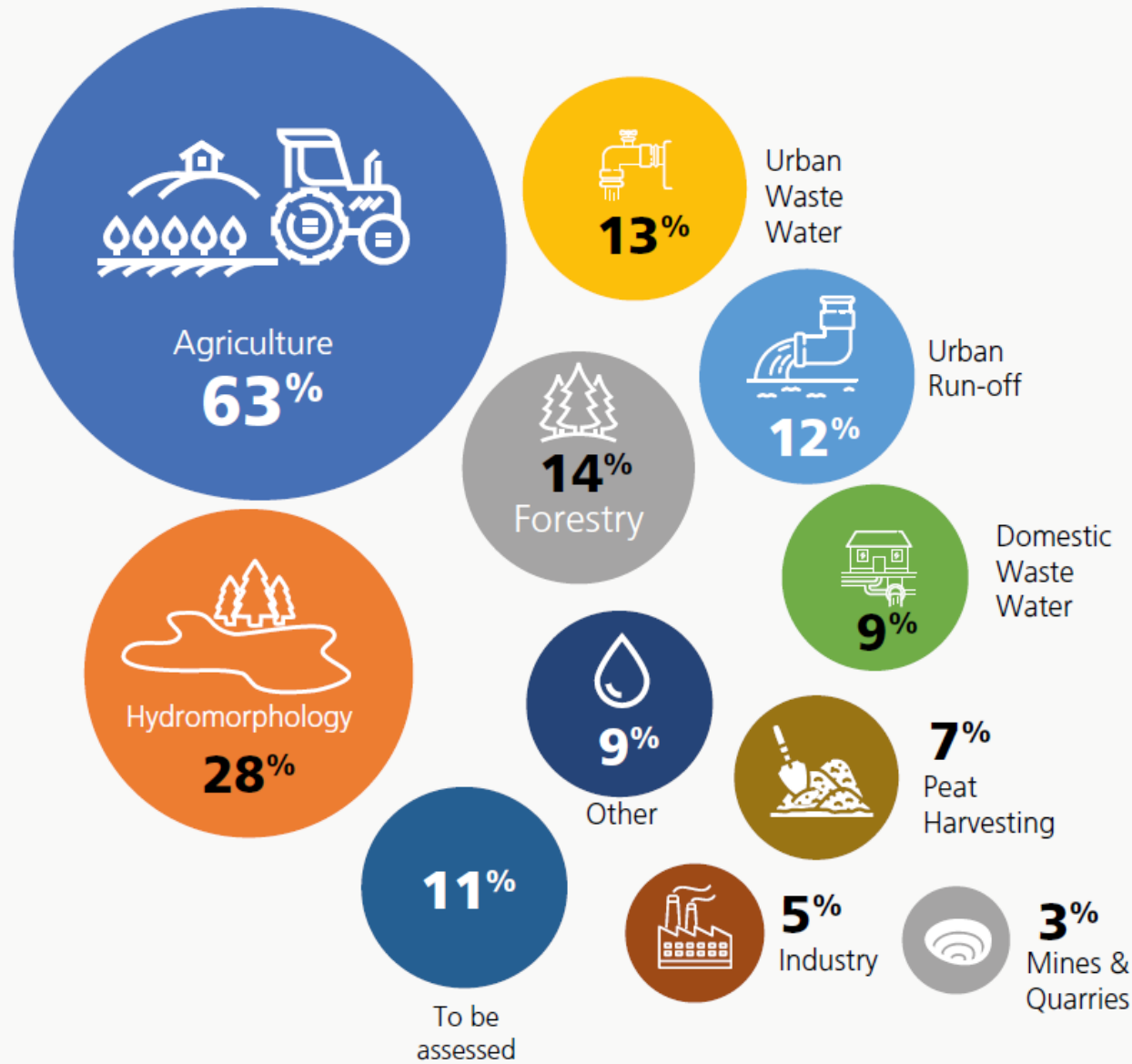


Franco Viteri Gualinga

*Leader and former president of Sarayuka.
Original people of Kawak Sacha, Living Forest*

Greetings to the people of Ireland.



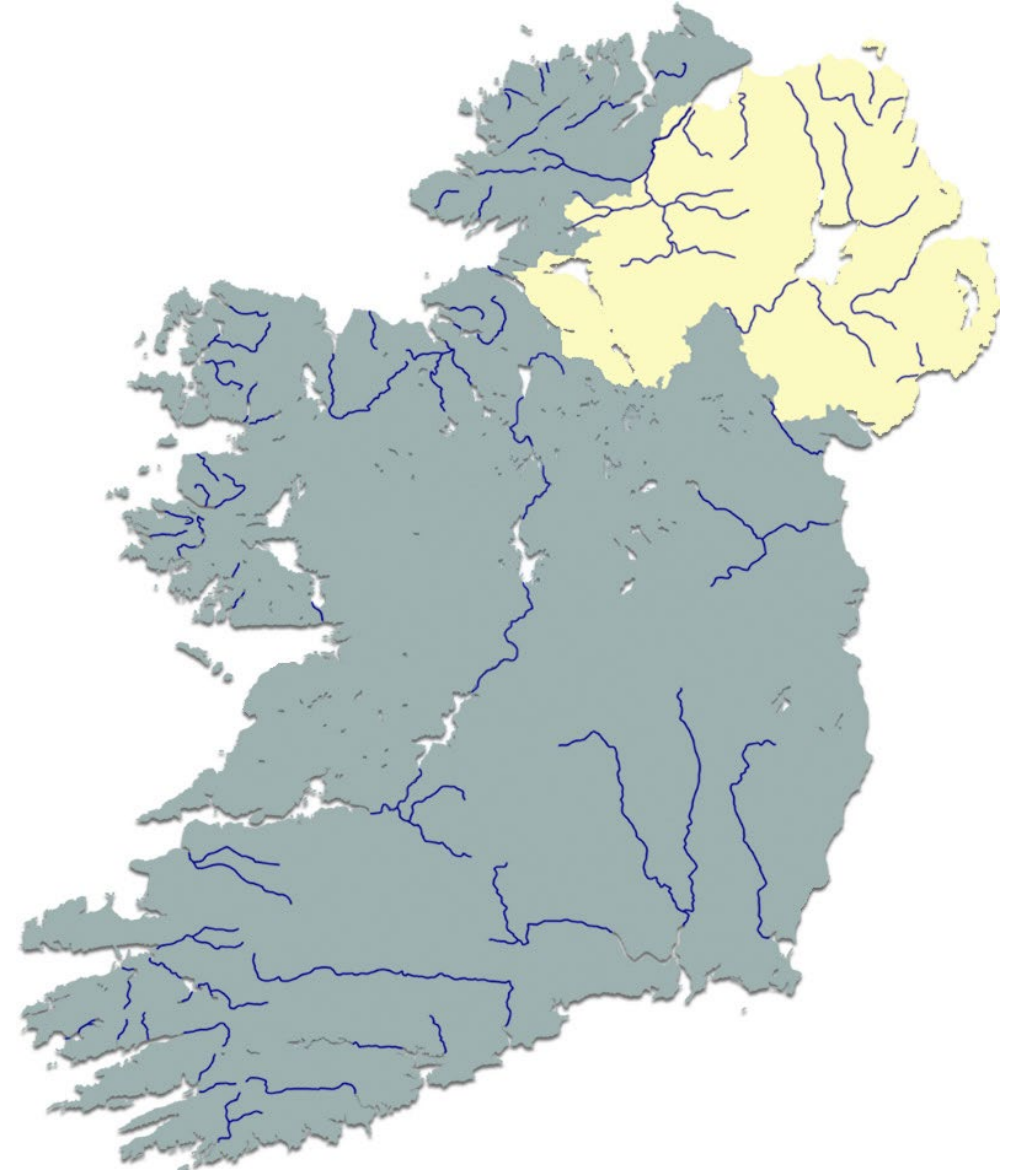


EPA Summary Report
of Water Quality in
Ireland (2016)

The percentage of impacted water bodies affected by different activities. Some water bodies are affected by more than one activity so the summed total for all activities will be greater than 100%



Prof. Mary Kelly-Quinn, UCD
Donal Daly, Catchment Scientist & Hydrologist
Dr Bernadette White, LAWPRO
Colm Gallagher, Cloghaneely Angling Association
Barry Dean, National Federation of Group Water Schemes
Trish Murphy, Inishowen Rivers Trust
Bernadette Connolly, Sustainable Water Network











Recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss

1. **The State** must take **prompt, decisive and urgent action** to address biodiversity loss and restoration and must **provide leadership** in protecting Ireland's biodiversity for future generations.
2. The Assembly believes that **the State has comprehensively failed to adequately fund, implement, and enforce existing national legislation, national policies, EU biodiversity-related laws and directives** related to biodiversity. **This must change.**



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Citizens' Assembly
Member

ID Number
BIO97

Photograph: Citizens Assembly

Recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss

3. The **ambition of the State needs to be significantly increased** to reflect the scale of Ireland's biodiversity crisis. Adequate funding must be made available to address this crisis. This is likely to require substantial and sustained increases in expenditure, which should be made available immediately and guaranteed in the long term.
4. The **responsibility for the implementation and enforcement** of biodiversity related legislation, directives and policies by all state bodies and agencies **must be made clear**, with each body/agency held publicly accountable for their performance. This should be supported by an independent review of implementation and enforcement of biodiversity related legislation, directives and policies.
5. The State must **provide, communicate and implement a plan** for the conservation and restoration of biodiversity for the benefit of its people.

10. **Ireland** needs to recognise its **global responsibility**, including through our local actions, in terms of our **consumerism, resource usage and our international biodiversity responsibilities**.

The Government should advocate for a shift in emphasis in EU and international economic policy away from GDP expansion as a goal in itself and **towards the goals of societal and ecological wellbeing**.



12. The State should renew and stand by its commitment to implement the objectives and targets of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy and **play a leading and supportive role in the adoption and implementation of a new EU Nature Restoration Regulation.**






The Constitution

31. There should be a referendum of the people to amend the Constitution with a view to protecting biodiversity.

The proposal to amend the Constitution should include:

- a. Human substantive environmental rights
 - b. Human procedural rights
 - c. Substantive rights of nature
 - d. Procedural rights of nature
- 



18. In order to **drastically reduce the use of pesticides by at least 50%** by 2030 in line with EU policy, the State should incentivise and encourage the domestic and commercial use of natural, cost-friendly alternatives, sustainable practices and biodiversity-friendly solutions.

It should also **regulate the use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers, while maintaining food security**. This should coincide with the improvement of schemes for the safe disposal of unused hazardous materials, as well as their containers.

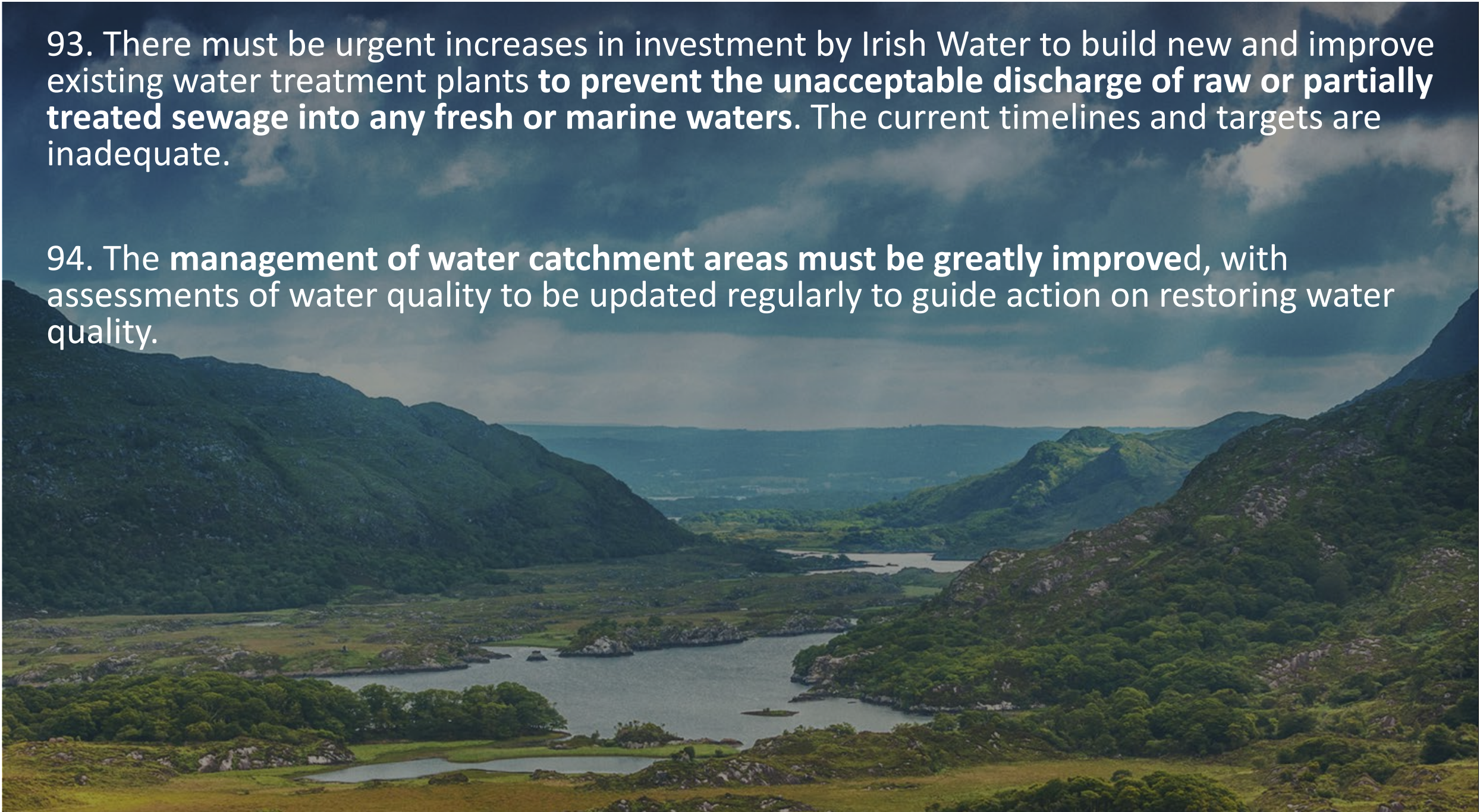


91. The **management of our freshwater systems requires immediate action**. It requires increased level of ambition, increased resources for Water Framework Directive implementation (and therefore aquatic biodiversity protection and mitigation), a focus on water quality and aquatic biodiversity outcomes, clarity on roles and responsibilities and accountability for achievement of outcomes.

92. The State must provide a **single body to oversee and coordinate the many relevant bodies** that manage, implement and enforce legislation and policies relevant to water.

93. There must be urgent increases in investment by Irish Water to build new and improve existing water treatment plants **to prevent the unacceptable discharge of raw or partially treated sewage into any fresh or marine waters.** The current timelines and targets are inadequate.

94. **The management of water catchment areas must be greatly improved,** with assessments of water quality to be updated regularly to guide action on restoring water quality.



95. **Riparian buffer zones**, related to agriculture, forestry, industry and extractive processes and urban development must be **expanded** and take into account local conditions to prevent nutrient and sediment run-off. Schemes must be put in place to incentivise landowners to protect waterways, with incremental subsidies depending on the width and quality of buffer zones.

96. **Local and other relevant authorities must be held responsible** for maintaining and improving the conditions of rivers in their areas, working with each other and with State agencies, such as the OPW, Coillte, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Inland Fisheries Ireland, industry, farmers, private landowners, community groups etc. Furthermore, local authorities and landowners must maintain the highest standards to riparian zones along the rivers in their areas.

97. It is imperative that **penalties for polluting freshwater are significantly increased** and **enforcement considerably improved**.

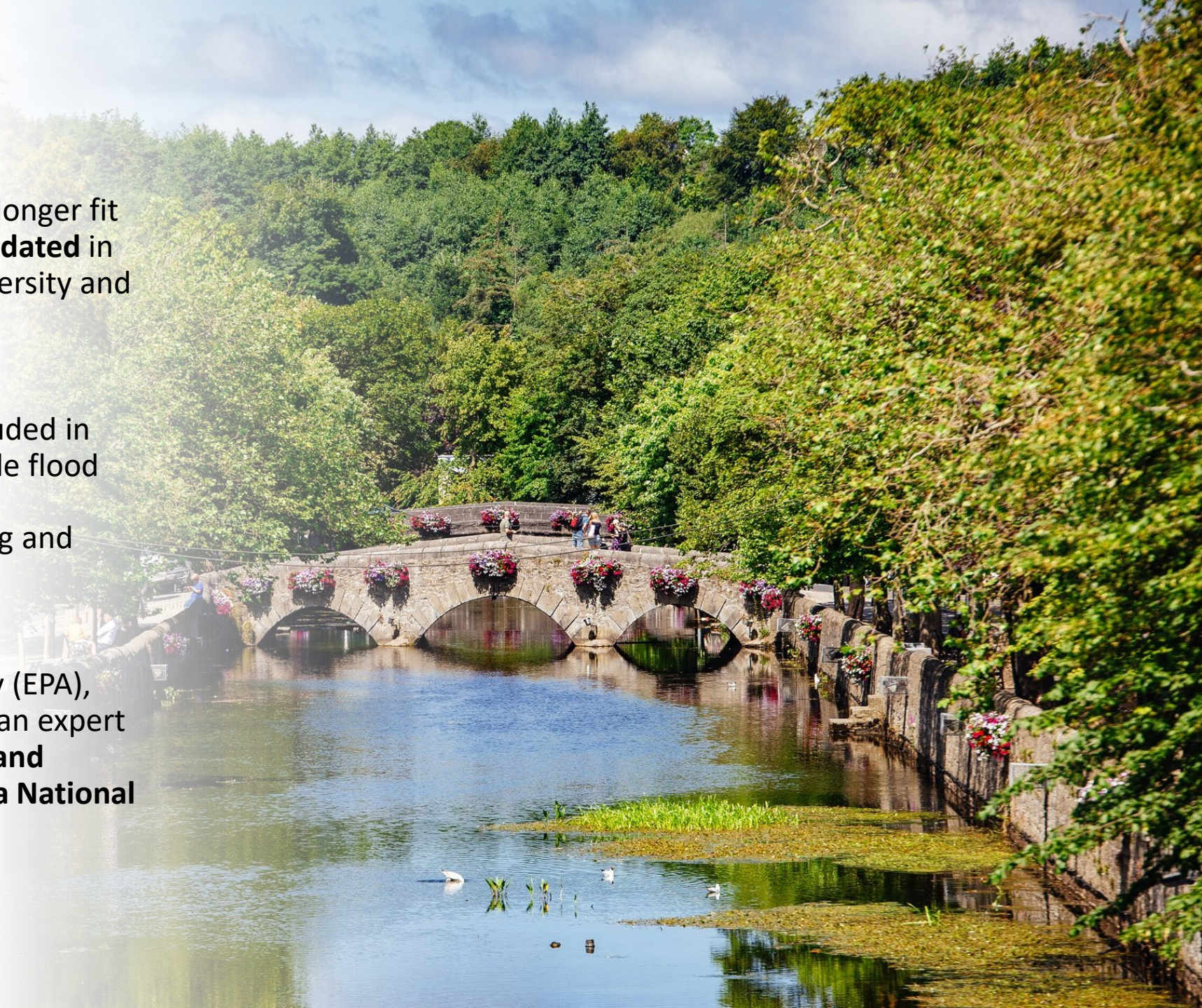
98. **Farmers** must have access to continuous **training and up to date research in actions** and land management practices that protect freshwater biodiversity.



100. The **1945 Arterial Drainage Act** is no longer fit for purpose and must be **reviewed and updated** in order to take proper account of the biodiversity and the climate crisis.

101. **Nature-based solutions** must be included in State and community programmes to tackle flood management and should include whole of catchment area hydromorphology planning and restoration.

102. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), supported by Inland Fisheries Ireland and an expert group, must conduct a complete **analysis and survey of all catchment areas to develop a National Hydromorphology Plan.**



103. Motorway attenuation pools must be more widely used and incorporate the use of biodiverse wetlands. The forestry and extractive industries must have the highest standards of attenuation pools and sediment traps applied to their drainage activities.

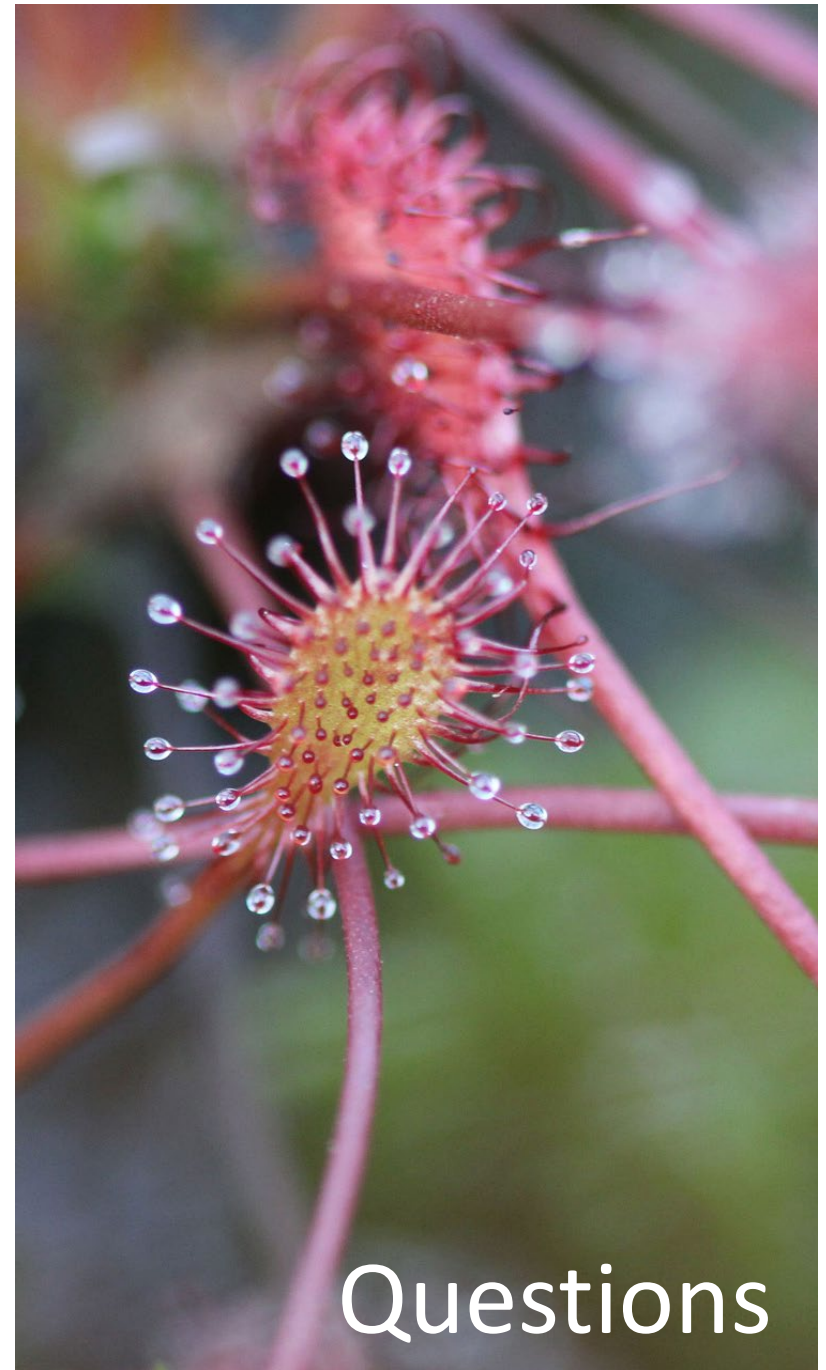
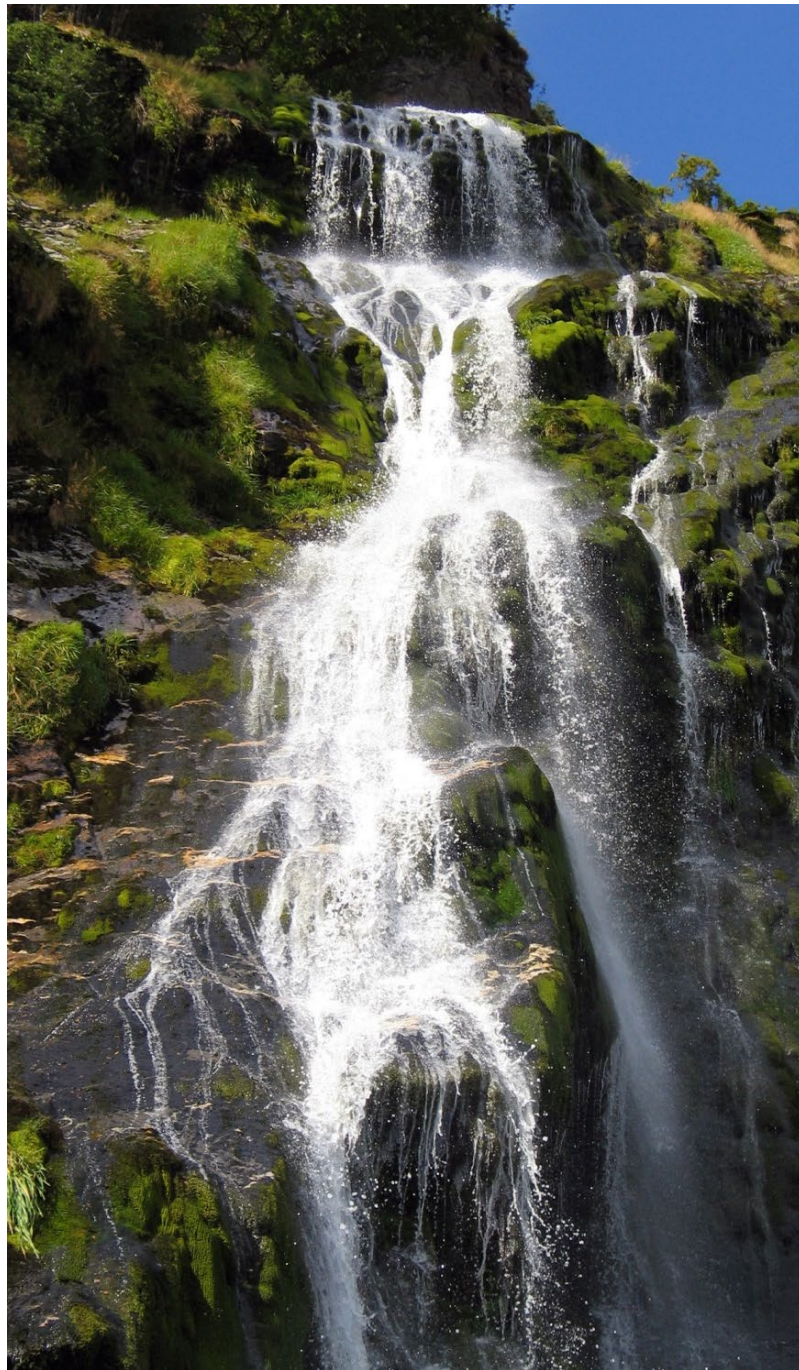
104. Soil sealing poses a growing threat to our waterways and hydromorphology through surface water run-off. New regulations must be developed to limit the permissible area of soil sealing around all new buildings and other developments that are subject to planning. All other surface finishes must be made of permeable surfaces.





To protect ourselves we must protect Nature.

Go raibh maith agaibh



Questions



21. There must be a whole of State approach to drafting and implementing a new **statutory National Biodiversity Plan, aligned with the Climate Action Plan, supported by legislation and properly funded.**

This and subsequent plans must **not be constrained by electoral cycles** and should have **clearly defined ecological targets** (e.g. the number of species on the at-risk list to be halved), with appropriate monitoring and timelines, to which all parties at national, regional and local levels are fully committed.



25. The new National Biodiversity Plan and all policies related to biodiversity action at national and local level should be developed in partnership with the people and sectors most affected by change (i.e. local communities, farmers, fishers, business, etc.) In many cases consultation has to move beyond the current status quo, with trust having to be rebuilt and relationships realigned.



76. Government departments, State and Semi-State agencies shall ensure their work is done in a way which ensures **collaborative planning, consultation in decision-making and implementation with farmers, local authorities and community groups.**

This must be underpinned by acknowledging that there is a need for local responses to local environments. Community led peer-to-peer farming initiatives must maintain their community-led ethos once they are rolled out nationwide. (The Burren Programme and the BRIDE projects provide potential templates).

78. Public incentives and payments for farmers must not restrict them in their ambition to make change for the benefit of biodiversity. All biodiversity incentives for farmers shall be results-based over the whole farm, with farmers who protect and enhance biodiversity rewarded and paid for the ecosystem services they contribute.