

EPA Water Conference 2023

14 & 15 June

**Galway Bay Hotel, Salthill, Galway
and Online
#epawater2023**





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Wednesday / 14 June 2023 10:15 – 16:00

Water Quality and Policy

Session Chair: David Flynn
*Principal Advisor – Water, Department of
Housing, Local Government and Heritage*

09:15

In person registration and online log-in

10:15

Welcome and opening address

Dr Eimear Cotter
*Director, Office of Evidence and
Assessment, EPA*

10:20

Ministerial address

Malcolm Noonan T.D.
*Minister of State for the Department of
Housing, Local Government and Heritage*

10:35

Q&A

10:45

**Water quality indicators and the
evidence base**

Mary Gurrie
*Programme Manager, Office of
Evidence and Assessment, EPA*

11:05

Q&A

11:15

Coffee break

11:45

A stakeholder vision for water

Dr Matt Crowe
Chairperson, An Fóram Uisce

12:05

**Development of catchment
management plan templates**

Dr Bernie White
*Regional Coordinator, Local Authority
Waters Programme*

12:25

**Local authority climate action plans:
Our water future**

Kevin Motherway
*Regional Coordinator for the Atlantic
Seaboard South Climate Action Regional
Office led by Cork County Council*

12:45

Q&A

13:00

Lunch

Agriculture

Session Chair: Philip Boucher Hayes
Journalist, RTÉ

14:15

Policy landscape for Irish agriculture

Bill Callanan
*Chief Inspector, Department Agriculture,
Food and Marine*

14:35

**Visioning sustainable & resilient
agriculture: known pieces of the
confounding puzzle**

Dr David Styles
*Associate Professor in Agricultural
Sustainability, University of Galway*

Register: ti.to/waterconference/2023

14:55

— **Farmers perspective**

Paul O'Brien

*Chair, Environment and Rural Affairs
Committee, Irish Farmers Association*

— **Farming stakeholder engagement
perspective**

Noel Meehan

*Programme Manager, Agricultural
Sustainability Support and Advisory
Programme, Teagasc*

— **Environmental perspective**

Dr Elaine McGoff

Natural Environment Officer, An Taisce

15:20

Moderated discussion and Q&A

16:00

Day 1 Close

Thursday / 15 June 2023
09:30 — 13:00

Health, Water and Emerging Issues

Session Chair: Patrick Byrne

*Programme Manager, Office of Radiation
Protection and Environmental Monitoring,
EPA*

09:00

In person registration and online log-in

09:30

National septic tank inspection report

Stephen McCarthy

*Inspector, Office of Environmental
Enforcement, EPA*

09:45

VTEC in private wells

Dr Liam Burke

*Assistant Professor in Bacteriology,
University of Galway*

10:05

**Microplastics: From source to sink
in freshwater ecosystems**

Dr Róisín Nash

Senior Lecturer and Researcher, ATU

10:25

Chemicals in water

Alan Stephens

*Senior Manager, Office of Radiation
Protection and Environmental Monitoring,
EPA*

10:40

Q&A

11:00

Coffee Break

The Future of Water

Session Chair: Dr Jenny Deakin

*Senior Manager, Office of Evidence
and Assessment, EPA*

11:30

**Ireland's oceans and the impact
of climate change on ecosystems**

Dr Caroline Cusack

*Ocean Observation Team Leader,
Marine Institute*

11:50

**Investing for the future in a changing
climate**

Maria O'Dwyer

Head of Asset Management, Uisce Éireann

12:10

**Learnings and recommendations from the
Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss**

Dr Aoibhinn Ní Shuilleabháin

*Chairperson, Citizens' Assembly
on Biodiversity Loss*

12:30

Q&A

12:50

Conference closing address

Dr Eimear Cotter

13:00

Lunch and conference close

Speakers

David Flynn

David Flynn is Principal Adviser and leads the Water Advisory Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Advisory Unit provides policy advice on: water and waste water services; Ireland's Water Framework Directive planning process; implementing the EU's water directives in Ireland; and climate adaptation for water quality and water services infrastructure. Prior to joining the Department, David worked with the Environmental Protection Agency.



Dr Eimear Cotter

Director, Office of Evidence and Assessment Environmental Protection Agency. Eimear was appointed an EPA Director in 2017. She currently has responsibility for leading EPA's Climate, Water and Evidence Programmes. She holds a BA (Mod) in chemistry from Trinity College Dublin, a PhD in atmospheric chemistry from Oxford University and an MBA from UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School. She is a 2019 Eisenhower Fellow.



Malcolm Noonan T.D.

Malcolm Noonan is a TD representing the Carlow Kilkenny Constituency and was appointed Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform in July 2020. First elected to Kilkenny Borough Council and Kilkenny County Council in 2004, he has served sixteen years in local government and was Mayor of Kilkenny in 2009; the first Green Party Mayor in the City's long history. He served for a short time as Irish Delegate on the EU Committee of the Regions and Co-Chair of the All Island Nuclear Free Local Authorities Forum.

Malcolm's background prior to entering electoral politics was in environmental and community activism, as a director and national coordinator with Friends of the Earth Ireland and involvement in community-based activism; biodiversity, climate action, mobility, disability advocacy, integration, Traveller development and mental health. His professional work has spanned landscape gardening, suicide prevention and graphic design. He holds qualifications in industrial design and a BA(Hons) in Rural Development.



Mary Gurrie

Mary Gurrie is Programme Manager of the EPA's Water Programme in the Office of Evidence and Assessment which includes the hydrometrics and groundwater, ecological monitoring, and catchments teams. Mary has worked in the EPA for almost 24 years.



Dr Matt Crowe

Matt is currently chair of An Fóram Uisce – the National Water Forum. He retired in 2020 from the EPA having served for 10 years as a Director and 15 years as a member of staff. Prior to joining the EPA, Matt spent five years working in Vancouver doing contract research. Matt holds a BSc and PhD in biochemistry from UCD.



Speakers

Dr Bernie White

Bernie has worked with the Local Authority Waters Programme since 2018, previously in the role of Catchment Manager covering the Western Region, and since February 2022, as Regional Coordinator for the Border and Western Regions. LAWPRO is a national shared service working on behalf of all 31 Local Authorities in Ireland and supports the coordination of implementation of the Water Framework Directive in collaboration with Government Departments, implementing bodies, and with community groups and catchment associations. She also coordinates the Blue Dot Catchments Programme which is a collaborative programme being delivered by a range of implementing bodies as a means of focusing attention and resources towards the protection and restoration of our high status or blue dot network in Ireland.



Bernie graduated with a Bachelor of Science (in Education) from University of Limerick in 1998, followed by a PhD in Environmental Science in 2002. She completed an EPA funded Post doctoral research fellowship in 2004 which investigated reference conditions for Irish Rivers for the Water Framework Directive. She worked in an Engineering and Environmental Consultancy for 14 years before joining LAWPRO, covering a wide range of areas including the Water Framework Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and development environmental impact assessments for roads, windfarms, flood relief schemes, drainage projects, lead mitigation etc.

Kevin Motherway

Kevin Motherway is a Hydrogeologist by training and is currently Regional Coordinator for the Atlantic Seaboard South Climate Action Regional Office led by Cork County Council. His current role involves assisting and coordinating Local Authorities in the southwest in the drafting and implementation of their Climate Action plans.



Kevin has previously worked as a Water Quality Laboratory Manager in Cork County Council tasked with implementing water Framework Directive sampling programme, and sampling and analysis of drinking and bathing waters across County Cork. He worked in the EPA both as a licensing and enforcement Inspector and was Project Manager for the characterisation, design and consent stage of the Kerdiffstown Landfill Remediation for over 7 years, including a secondment to Kildare County Council. The 30 hectare Kerdiffstown Park and sports facility will open late in 2023 after a DECC-funded €70 Million clean-up, representing the largest environmental clean-up in the history of the state. During his time in Kildare Co Co, he led Kildare's 2017 bid to become the Climate Action Regional Office for the Eastern and Midlands region.

He has also worked in water supply, water protection and contaminated land roles in Consultancy, and groundwater protection in the Geological Survey of Ireland and with the European Commission's mission to support the development of environmental regulation in North Cyprus. He also teaches on several environmental and earth science course in UCC.

Philip Boucher Hayes

Philip Boucher-Hayes is the presenter of RTE Radio 1's farming and rural affairs programme Countrywide. On television he has presented several documentaries on Climate Change and biodiversity loss. In 2008 he was one of the first journalists to identify problems with Ireland's water infrastructure and loss of water quality in a Future Shock television documentary "The Last Drop". He is currently filming a documentary series on climate action and adaptation also for RTE television.



Speakers

Bill Callanan

Bill Callanan is Chief Inspector at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). He is responsible for the provision of advice on the practice of Agriculture and on Science and technology related to the agrifood sector within DAFM. Heading up the Agricultural Inspectorate, with over 250 graduates across the Department, he has direct responsibility for DAFM's research, feed and fertiliser, pesticides, crops, animal breeding, horticulture/plant health and is environment policy lead on climate, water and biodiversity.



Dr David Styles

Dr David Styles (University of Galway) is associate professor in agricultural sustainability. He specialises in environmental foot-printing and techno-economic assessment of product systems, and has over 18 years of experience in life cycle assessment (LCA) at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, Bangor University, and Universities of Limerick and Galway. His research group applies advanced LCA to investigate the sustainability of circular and bio-based value chains, with a particular emphasis on understanding inter-system effects and cascading flows of materials and energy. David is a member of the International Energy Agency Task 45 concerning the sustainability of bioenergy, the national carbon budget working group coordinated by Ireland's Climate Change Advisory Council and the expert advisory board of Ireland's National Bioeconomy Forum. He is currently project coordinator or work package leader across 10 national and European research projects, including LandingZoNES and FORESIGHT (exploring land use combinations that could deliver climate neutrality alongside improved water quality, lower ammonia emissions and broader ecosystem services).



Paul O'Brien

Paul O'Brien was elected Chair of the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) Environment and Rural Affairs committee in 2020. He is from Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny where he runs a sheep and tillage enterprise. He is married to Carol and has three children Conor, Daire, and Aine. Paul has been involved in the Irish Farmers' Association over the past 20 years holding various positions.



— Current Positions Held:

- Vice Chair Copa-Cogeca Working Party on Environment.
- Chair of Taskforce on Biodiversity, Soil and Water.
- Chair IFA Environment and Rural Affairs committee
- IFA Smart Farming Programme Leader
- Member of An Forum Uisce (The Water Forum)
- Member of the National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group (NPDWAG)
- Farmer Representative on the Fertiliser Association of Ireland (FAI) council
- Member of the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP) committee
- Member of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) stakeholder group
- IFA Bord na Mona Working group member
- Member of Greenway stakeholder group

— Former Positions Held:

- Vice Chair Kilkenny IFA
 - Branch Secretary Kilkenny IFA
 - Chair Graiguenamanagh IFA
 - Branch Secretary Graiguenamanagh IFA
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Speakers

Noel Meehan

Noel is currently the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP) Manager for Teagasc. He has worked with Teagasc since 2007, initially as a REPS advisor. He then joined the Agricultural Catchments Programme (ACP) as an advisor in the Cregduff catchment in 2009. Following on from this he took up a role as a B&T Drystock Advisor in Ballinasloe until his appointment as ASSAP manager. Previous to his roles in Teagasc, Noel worked in both Offaly and Galway local authorities in the Environment section covering both water quality and waste management.



Dr Elaine McGoff

Dr Elaine McGoff works as Natural Environment Officer with An Taisce, which is a statutory consultee under the planning regulations. As Natural Environment Officer she works on a broad range of topics from forestry and aquaculture, to agriculture and water quality. Elaine reviews ecologically sensitive licensing and planning applications across a range of sectors, with a view to ensuring compliance with EU and National environmental law. She also advocates widely for environmental protection throughout Government policy. Elaine has a PhD in Freshwater Ecology from Trinity College Dublin, and an Advanced Diploma in Planning and Environmental Law from Kings Inns.

Elaine is Vice Chair of the Sustainable Water Network (SWAN), Steering Committee member of the Environmental Pillar and a member of the Water Forum.



Patrick Byrne

Patrick Byrne is a Programme Manager in the Environmental Protection Agency with responsibility for Environmental Monitoring and Surveillance. The scope of environmental monitoring includes water analysis of rivers, lakes, estuaries, groundwater and effluents, ambient air quality monitoring and reporting from over 110 stations, measuring and assessing air pollutant impacts on ecosystems, and radioactivity monitoring of air, food, drinking water and the marine. In addition, the team has regulatory and reporting roles associated with persistent organic pollutants, chemicals under REACH, mercury, market surveillance and noise. Patrick has previously worked in the EPA's Office of Environmental Enforcement and Office of Environmental Sustainability (Licensing).



Stephen McCarthy

Stephen McCarthy works in the Office of Environmental Enforcement in the EPA. He works in the area of wastewater enforcement and is the EPA lead on the National Inspection Plan and Code of Practice for septic tanks. Stephen is a graduate of Queen's University Belfast (M.Sc. Environmental Engineering) and University College Cork (BSc. Geology).



Speakers

Dr Liam Burke

Liam Burke PhD, is Assistant Professor in Bacteriology at the School of Medicine, University of Galway. He received his PhD in 2013 from the Clinical Microbiology Department at Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, under the supervision of Prof Hilary Humphreys and Dr Deirdre Fitzgerald-Hughes. He is a Principal Investigator in the Antimicrobial Resistance and Microbial Ecology (ARME) Research Group and the Centre for One Health, with primary research interests in antimicrobial resistant (AMR) Enterobacterales and Verotoxigenic E. coli (VTEC).

Liam's research focuses on studying the transmission of VTEC and AMR bacteria from a One Health perspective. His goal is to detect, characterise and understand their transmission in order to inform public health and policy-based interventions. His team consists of 6 researchers working across 4 different projects including PIER "Public Health Impact of Exposure to antibiotic Resistance in recreational water" and DERIVE "Detection and Risk management of Verotoxigenic E. coli (VTEC) in the water environment".

Liam is Principal Investigator of the DERIVE project, which is focused on developing (i) an on-site test to detect VTEC contamination of private drinking water supplies and (ii) an online tool to predict when wells are more at risk of contamination with VTEC.



Dr Róisín Nash

Dr Róisín Nash trained as a marine ecologist and is now a Senior Lecturer and Researcher at the Marine and Freshwater Research Centre (MFRC) in ATU, Galway. She has an interest in marine biodiversity and benthic community ecology within both soft sediments and reefs. This includes characterising marine communities within natural and artificial habitats and exploring potential anthropogenic impacts, including more recently microplastic pollution. She earned a BSc. and PhD from the University of Galway and subsequently worked as an ecological consultant based in Dublin for 10 years. Together with her research team she has worked on a wide range of taxa from invertebrates to algae and explored habitats from the Galway shorelines to the deep-sea sediments surrounding the Porcupine Bank. All of our work aims to provide evidence-based research to inform policy and build on existing knowledge. As an advocate for science communication, dissemination and outreach play a central role within all her research projects.



Alan Stephens

Alan Stephens, Senior Scientist and Regional Manager EPA Castlebar, Alan is an Analytical Chemist by training and has worked for the EPA for almost 25 years. He has worked in industrial, waste, wastewater and drinking water regulation but mostly in water quality analysis, assessment and reporting. Alan is based at the EPA Regional Inspectorate in Castlebar, Co Mayo. Among other roles Alan manages the priority substances sub-section of the EPA's national Water Framework Directive monitoring programme. Alan is a native of Salthill and is always happy to be back.



Speakers

Dr Jenny Deakin

Jenny Deakin, Manager of the Catchments Unit, Water Programme, EPA
Jenny is a catchment scientist with 30 years experience working in Ireland and Tasmania. She holds an honours degree in Geology from UCG, a research masters in Environmental Hydrogeology from Trinity, and a PhD in Catchment Science, also from Trinity. Jenny has worked throughout her career in a variety of roles in the public, private and academic sectors. Her expertise centres around the development of the scientific evidence base to inform water management policy, both water quality and water quantity, within an integrated catchment management framework. This is a good fit for her current role as the Manager of the Catchments Unit in the EPA's Water Programme. The team's role is to assess and report on the pressures impacting on waters.



Dr Caroline Cusack

Dr Caroline Cusack is an Oceanography and Ocean Climate team leader in the Oceanographic and Climate Services group at the Marine Institute, Ireland. She is involved in a number of activities related to ocean observing (e.g. ICES, GO-SHIP, EuroGOOS, GOOS) and works with colleagues to develop downstream services (e.g. harmful algal bloom alerts, extreme marine events warning system). More recently, she is involved in European research projects focused on improving and integrating the European Ocean Observing and Forecasting System (the H2020 funded EuroSea project), addressing new requirements for ship-based measurements within the context of the European Research Infrastructure landscape (the Horizon Europe EuroGO-SHIP project) and has carried out research related to developing marine ecosystem climate services in the JPI Climate ERA4CS funded project, CoCliME.



Maria O'Dwyer

Maria, a Chartered Engineer is Head of Asset Management with Uisce Éireann and has over 20 years' experience in the engineering and utility sector. In her career to date Maria has held a number of senior management roles in both Gas Networks Ireland and Irish Water where she had responsibility for delivering large multifaceted programmes and national transformations. Maria has a Bachelor's Degree in Electronic Engineering and a Masters in Engineering Science (University College Dublin). Maria also holds Postgraduate Diplomas in Supply Chain Management (University College Cork), Business and Executive Coaching (Smurfit Business School) and a Diploma in Company Direction (Institute of Directors). Maria is also a Non-Executive Director on the Board of the SEAI and previously served as a Director on the Board of Irish Water (now Uisce Éireann).



Dr Aoibhinn Ní Shuilleabháin

Dr Aoibhinn Ní Shuilleabháin is Chair of Ireland's Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss, whose report and recommendations were published in March 2023. In April 2023 she was invited to present on the work of the Assembly at the UN General Assembly in New York, in celebration of Mother Earth Day. A renowned science communicator, Aoibhinn has brought scientific research findings to life through her work on TV, radio and in print. Having taught in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area of Dublin, she is committed to making the subjects of mathematics and science more accessible to those who have historically been left out, whether because they are from an economically underprivileged or minority community, or because they are female. As Associate Professor in the UCD School of Mathematics & Statistics, she is programme director of the undergraduate initial teacher education programme in mathematics and science. She is also a member of the UCD Earth Institute interdisciplinary research group, who work to improve fundamental understandings of our rapidly changing environment and find solutions for a sustainable future.





SLIDO

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