

WFD National Technical Implementation Group (NTIG) Terms of Reference (January 2026)

Description of the intended purpose of the National Technical Implementation Group, as set out in the Water Action Plan 2024 (Chapter 6: Implementation & Governance)

“A National Technical Implementation Group (NTIG) provides a forum for all relevant State actors to coordinate, share knowledge on, and resolve technical issues arising with the implementation of measures under the Plan. It also addresses any operational barriers to implementation that may arise. Chaired by the EPA, the membership includes all the relevant implementation bodies for the WFD. Updates on the implementation and effectiveness of measures, or issues arising are provided to the NCMC and WPAC as necessary. The NTIG group will continue to have the structures and resources of NIECE (Network for Ireland’s Environment Compliance and Enforcement) available to it.”

Purpose of the National Technical Implementation Group

The National Technical Implementation Group (NTIG) was established in 2015 to provide a forum for all relevant State actors to coordinate, share knowledge on, and resolve technical issues or gaps arising with, the implementation of measures set out in the State’s River Basin Management Plans.

The NTIG is chaired by the EPA and is part of Tier 2 of the high level WFD governance structures (Figure 2), linking with both high-level policy and oversight, and regional implementation and action. Together with the other elements of the WFD governance structures (Appendix 1), the NTIG supports the collaborative, effective delivery of the Programme of Measures and the achievement of the water quality objectives set out in the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Tier 1 National Management and Oversight	Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Policy, necessary legislation and ensuring appropriate resourcing of the Plan across Government Departments. Supported by the cross-government Water Policy Advisory Committee established to advise the Minister.
Tier 2 Technical implementation and reporting	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	The catchment characterisation process, overseeing the national monitoring programme, chairing the National Technical Implementation Group and assisting and advising the Minister.
Tier 3 Regional Implementation	Local authorities	Each local authority with the support of the LAWPRO shared service is responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of measures within its functional area. This includes the direction of implementing bodies.

Figure 1. High level WFD implementation structures (Water Action Plan 2024, page 75)

Roles and responsibilities of NTIG

In general terms, the role of the NTIG is to:

- share information and knowledge on technical water management issues amongst the WFD implementing bodies;
- work collaboratively to identify and resolve technical and scientific issues arising with the implementation of the Programme of Measures; and
- report findings to, and seek feedback from, the other parts of the governance structures, as well as their respective organisations.

Specifically, the NTIG will:

- Facilitate collaboration, engagement, and exchange of scientific and technical knowledge and information between the implementing bodies on technical water management issues.
- Provide a forum for discussing and ensuring co-ordinated actions amongst all relevant State actors who are collaborating on specific actions in the Programme of Measures.
- Provide a mechanism for collaboration with the relevant competent authorities for other related directives, including the Floods Directive, Habitats Directive, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and others as required.
- Provide input to technical and scientific implementation aspects of the Directive and ensure they are undertaken across the State in an efficient and effective manner. Recommend and support research as appropriate.
- Promote consistency in regional and national implementation of measures.
- Provide an overarching coordination role for dealing with cross-cutting technical and scientific issues that may arise from time to time.
- Assess gaps or barriers to technical and scientific implementation of the Programme of Measures and/or achievement of water quality outcomes, and develop recommendations on how those gaps may be closed.
- Establish sub-working groups as necessary to support the work of group.
- Engage with, and report back to, the other parts of the WFD governance structures, in particular the National Coordination and Management Committee (NCMC) and the Regional Operational and Management Committees.
- Refer issues to other relevant parts of the governance structures and other implementing bodies as appropriate.
- Promote coordination with implementation of other plans and programmes with an effect on water including for example, Flood Risk Management Plans, Nature Restoration Plans, Development Plans, and Climate Plans. Support delivery of multiple environmental benefits where possible, across other water related policy and legislation.
- Review these terms of reference at least once in each river basin management planning cycle, or as necessary.

The NTIG recognises its core focus is on the technical and scientific aspects of the implementation of measures and the achievement of water quality outcomes. This complements, rather than overlaps with the role of the NCMC which is to oversee the implementation of the Water Action Plan actions at the national level, including tracking progress, and addressing barriers to implementation. Matters pertaining to policy implementation fall within the remit of WPAC. Matters arising regarding enforcement of regulations may be more appropriately referred to, and dealt with by the Network for Ireland's Environment Compliance and Enforcement (NIECE network).

Membership of NTIG

The membership of the NTIG includes representatives of State bodies that have a role in implementing, or supporting implementation of, the measures outlined in the river basin management plans. The membership list is provided in Appendix 2.

Members may apply to gain access to the Water Framework Directive Application (the WFD App). The WFD App has been developed by the EPA to facilitate the sharing and reporting of environmental data between WFD Implementing Bodies and to enable technical activities and collaboration. Access will be granted in accordance with the EPA's WFD App Access Policy. A public facing version of the WFD App is also available on www.catchments.ie.

Meetings of NTIG

Meetings of the NTIG will take place at least two times per year, and up to 4 times per year, and will be Chaired by the Programme Manager of the Water Programme of the EPA. At least one meeting per year will be in person, and the remainder will be held online.

The EPA Water Programme will provide the secretariat for the Group. Draft minutes of each meeting will be circulated within two weeks of the meeting. The minutes will include a progress update on live NTIG issues under consideration. These progress updates will be provided to the Secretariats of the other parts of the governance structures for the purposes of providing NTIG updates, and/or may be presented by EPA representatives on other committees and groups. This is to ensure that NTIG information is being provided back through the governance structures in a structured and coherent way.

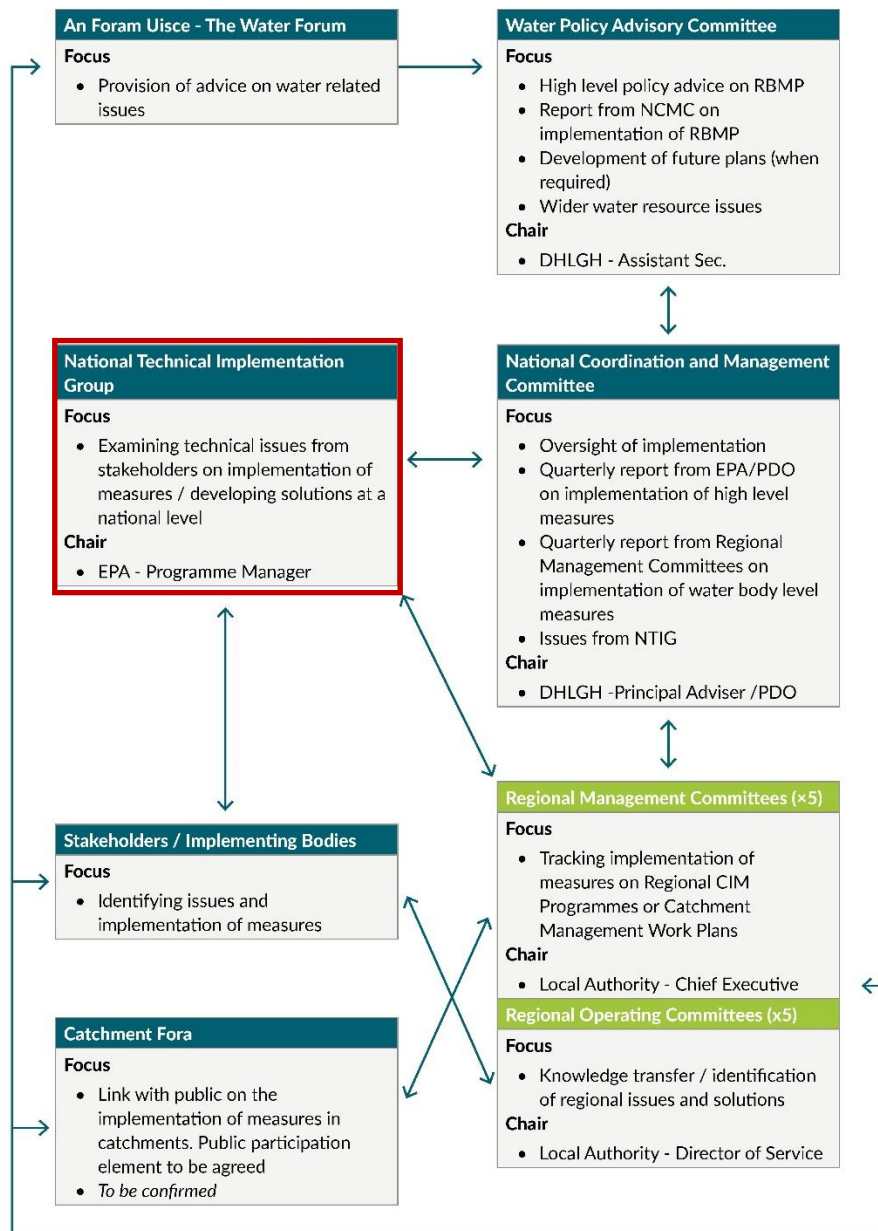
Members may identify technical or scientific issues resulting in an implementation gap and raise them at any meeting as part of a verbal update. An Issue Paper must be submitted for any issue that is to be progressed further by the Group - see *Appendix Three: NTIG Issues Paper*. Issues will be considered by the NTIG to determine whether they fall within its remit. Issues may be referred on to other bodies as necessary. Issues will remain on the NTIG agenda for ongoing updates until they are resolved or referred.

Sub-groups may be formed from time to time to deal with specific issues that arise, and these sub-groups will report back to the Group.

The NTIG Secretariat can be contacted by emailing catchments@epa.ie. All minutes, presentations and written updates submitted to the Secretariat, from all NTIG meetings, will be published publicly on www.catchments.ie after the minutes are agreed at the subsequent meeting – see <https://www.catchments.ie/download/wfd-national-technical-implementation-group/>

Appendix One: WFD governance structures and interlinkages

The Water Action Plan 2024 sets out the overall WFD governance structures and shows the linkages between the different committees and groups, including the NTIG (highlighted in the red box). These structures have been reviewed and revised to support the third river basin management planning cycle.



Appendix Two: NTIG Members

The National Technical Implementation Group is chaired by the Environmental Protection Agency's Water Programme Manager.

Membership of the Group consists of representatives from relevant public body stakeholders, including, but not limited to the following:

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of the Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Local Authority Waters Programme
- Teagasc
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Marine Institute
- Coillte
- Geological Survey of Ireland
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Sea Fisheries Protection Authority
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara
- County and City Management Association
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Waterways Ireland
- Office of Public Works
- Uisce Eireann
- An Coimisiún Pleanála
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- Department of Health / HSE
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs; Northern Ireland
- Loughs Agency
- Maritime Area Regulatory Authority
- National Federation of Group Water Schemes
- *Any other organisation or body as the EPA may determine necessary*

Appendix Three: NTIG Issues Paper template

The following issues paper template should be used to refer an issue to NTIG for consideration.

WFD National Technical Implementation Group – Issues Paper		
Issue name	Date raised	Proposer
Summary of the issue and its implications for achieving WFD objectives		
Extent of the issue in the national context		
Knowledge gap	Implementation gap	Policy gap
Suggested solution(s)		Suggested actors
1.		
2.		
3.		
Suggested champion	Dependencies	Priority
Additional comments		
Agreed at the NTIG meeting		
Next steps		
Champion	Date discussed	Expected completion date
Progress review - tbd		