

# Minute of the 24th Meeting of the National Technical Implementation Group for WFD



5 December 2024



	<p><b>Location:</b> MS Teams</p> <p><b>Date:</b> 5 December 2024 <b>Time:</b> 10:30-12:30</p> <p><b>Chairperson:</b> Jenny Deakin, EPA</p>
	<p><b>Attendance:</b></p> <p>Jenny Deakin, Matthew Craig, Patrick Byrne, Ray Cullinane, Ann Marie Ryan, Caroline Murphy, Eva Mockler, Jim Johnson, Kenneth Bucke, Paddy Morris, Sinéad Barrett, Tony Kent, Eimear O’Keeffe, Averil Gannon, Anthony Coleman, Barry Deane, Bernadette White, Eoin McAleer, Gary O’Connell, Jimmy McVeigh, Margaret Keegan, Niamh Rogan, Ruth Hennessy, Richard O’Callaghan, Aine O’Connor, Andrew Kirwan, Billy O’Keeffe, Oonagh Duffy, Conor Galvin, Mark Adamson, Emmet Smyth, Evin McGovern, Fiona Kelly, Gary McCoy, Vera O'Donovan, Silke Hartmann, Katie Smart, Noeleen McDonald, Monica Lee, Niall O’Rahelly, Paula Treacy, Philip O’Dea</p> <p>Apologies: <i>Noel Meehan</i></p>
	<p><b>Agenda:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Welcome, introductions and minutes of previous meeting</li> <li>2. Standing updates: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. DHLGH</li> <li>ii. LA Waters Programme</li> <li>iii. ASSAP (<i>postponed</i>)</li> <li>iv. EPA</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Update on the recast Urban Waste Water Directive</li> <li>4. Waterline – a new map of rivers for Ireland</li> <li>5. Update on the National Agricultural Inspection Plan</li> <li>6. <i>Feedback on future NTIG agenda items and Q&amp;A</i></li> </ol>

1.	<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes were agreed for the NTIG meeting held in September 2024.</li> </ul>
2.	<b>Updates</b> <b>DHLGH</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A written summary of update is in Appendix 1.</li> </ul> <b>LA Waters Programme</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A written summary of this update is in Appendix 1.</li> </ul> <b>EPA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The four-yearly State of the Environment Report was published in October.</li> <li>Abstraction licencing preparatory work is ongoing and will be in place by early next year.</li> <li>The electronic reporting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle Water Action Plan to the EU system (WISE) has been completed.</li> <li>The Water Quality in Ireland report for 2019-2024 will be published in October 2025. .</li> </ul>
3.	<b>Update on the recast Urban Waste Water Directive (UWWD)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Gannon (DHLGH) presented on the UWWD</li> <li>This presentation is in Appendix 1</li> </ul>
4.	<b>Waterline – a new map of rivers for Ireland</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>T Kent (EPA) presented on Waterline</li> <li>This presentation is in Appendix 1</li> <li><b>ACTION:</b> NTIG to establish a sub-working group led by the EPA to examine Waterline and any implementation/policy/regulatory consequences of a new river routes network, and any potential consequent changes e.g. subcatchment boundaries, etc.</li> </ul>
5.	<b>Update on the National Agricultural Inspection Plan (NAIP)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>R Cullinane (EPA) presented on the NAIP</li> <li>This presentation is in Appendix 1</li> </ul>
6.	<b><i>Feedback on future NTIG agenda items and Q&amp;A</i></b> <b>Proposed future agenda items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nature-based solutions – establish necessity and benefits of a working group and/or hold a meeting with a ‘nature-based solutions’ focus.</li> <li>Flooding with a focus on flood risks in the future, groundwater flooding and climate adaptation.</li> <li>Governance of NTIG including discussion of ToR final draft.</li> <li>Updates from Catchment Projects e.g. Lough Cara. Sharing of learnings and results to be included. Workshop to be considered.</li> <li>Coastal and transitional waterbodies including shellfish prioritisation, LAWPRO’s work addressing challenges in catchments impacting TRAC, sanitary surveys and TRAC specific issues/factors.</li> <li>Technical aspects of water management including nature restoration integration.</li> <li>Heavily modified waterbodies including Eflows, abstraction licensing and Good Ecological Potential.</li> <li>Hydromorphological issues - DHLGH has an expert group looking at impact and regulatory options.</li> <li>Suggestion for NTIG meetings to be more interactive and collaborative with less emphasis on information updates.</li> </ul>

## **DHLGH - Water Division Update – NTIG Meeting 5th December 2024**

### **Third River Basin Management Plan**

- Establishment of the Programme Delivery Office – recruitment underway

### **Nitrates Action Programme:**

- Public Consultation on the draft NAP additional measures arising from the Interim Review for the draft measures and NIS started on 4 Nov and ended on the 4 Dec. The SEA consultation will follow for a minimum of 4-weeks
- Additional regulatory measures will then be implemented through amendments to the GAP Regulations
- Evaluation of the Nitrates Directive is ongoing by the Commission.
- The High Court Nitrates Case and the associated CJEU case is ongoing. The CJEU case is likely to last at least one more year and then any ruling will likely be referred back to the High Court.

### **UWWTD & timelines:**

- The Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive was published on the 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024.
- All member states will have 30 months to Transpose, which will be May 2027.

### **Urban Nature-Based Solutions:**

- Recent publications of LAWPRO document
  - Implementation of Urban Nature-based Solutions: Guidance Document for planners Developers and Developer Agents
- Carlow Town Rain Gardens featured on the “10 things to Know About” series 10 on RTE 1 on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec can be seen on RTE Player.

### **Infringements**

#### **River Basin Management Plan- Referred to CJEU**

- Following the publication Water Action Plan and subsequent notification to the Commission, a notice of withdrawal (dated 19 Nov 24) was received from the Commission in relation to this infringement.

## LAWPRO National Update Q4

4<sup>th</sup> December 2024

### 1. Water Action Plan 2024 - A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland

- The Water Action Plan 2024 was launched on 4<sup>th</sup> September. The Plan sets an ambition for an additional 300 waterbodies to achieve 'good' status by 2027, with targeted measures to improve over 500 more.
- Key actions in the Plan include tighter controls on the use of fertilisers that impact water quality, a greater focus on compliance and enforcement with over 60 new staff at local level, and a target of 4,500 farm inspections per year.
- Continued investment in wastewater infrastructure will see Uisce Éireann investing a multi-billion euro budget over the period 2025-2029 to reduce impacts on water quality, a new national River Barriers Mitigation Programme will ramp up efforts to remove river-blocks that impact on species like salmon and lamprey swimming upstream to spawn, and a review of arterial drainage requirements and the underpinning Arterial Drainage Act will be undertaken in the context of land use.
- The launch also included the announcement of the **Community Water Development Fund** for 2025. Administered by LAWPRO, with funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the scheme provides funding to local communities and groups to support the delivery of projects and initiatives to enhance local water bodies and benefit water quality and biodiversity.
- The Plan documents can be found here: [gov - River Basin Management Plan \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie/RBMP)

### 2. National Plenary Meeting of Regional Operational Committees & Management Committees

LAWPRO and DHLGH organised a National Plenary meeting of all Regional Operational and Regional Water and Environment Committees on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024, in the Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise, with over 220 attendees. The day focused on the recently launched Water Action Plan 2024 (WAP) [www.gov.ie/RBMP](http://www.gov.ie/RBMP) – A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland, in particular implementation of the Programme of Measures in what is now the 3rd Cycle of the Water Framework Directive. The Regional Committees have a significant role in the WFD governance and implementation structures. The operation of these committees for the 3rd Cycle were explored and discussed, how as committees, they can achieve the objectives of the WAP, while also supporting the members with issues arising.

### 3. LAWPRO Recruitment

LAWPRO recruitment is on-going to fill the 2023/2024 newly sanctioned posts and to backfill vacancies.

#### LAWPRO current staffing

	Sanctioned	Filled	Vacancies	Onboarding
Senior Management	6	6	0	
Support/Administration	12	11	0	1
Catchments	42	31	10	1
Communities	21	19	1	1

Nature Based Solutions	2	2	0	
LA Support and Coordination	4	4	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>11</b>	

#### 4. Catchment Assessment – National Update

- Desk studies for third cycle Priority Areas for Action (PAA) have begun. A new guidance document and template aimed at facilitating interpretation and communication with stakeholders is being trialled with the first tranche of third cycle PAAs. Work continues to close second cycle PAA's that are still open and those postponed.
- Local catchment assessment in third cycle PAA has begun though the bulk of work is still in second cycle PAA.
- 682 referrals have been made to ASSAP to-date, with a further 82 to other agencies including local authorities and EPA.
- The Catchment Science team are continuing to focus on completing the local catchment assessments and the issuing of significant pressure referrals to implementing bodies for 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle PAA. Progress is good but slowed by the current number of staff vacancies across the regions.
- Preparation for 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle LAWPRO assigned Priority Areas for Action work has commenced with a number of enabling actions being progressed. This includes work to prioritise PAA, a review of characterisation methodologies, desk study structure and content, referral mechanisms and processes, and communication approaches on findings and outcomes. Work has also commenced in a small number of expanded Priority Areas for Action where information supports gaps in knowledge in existing 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle PAA. Updated nitrates referrals are also being prepared.
- A strategic national assessment of waterbodies impacted by nitrogen was carried out in Q1 of 2024. In total, 12 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle PAAs were assessed, comprising 81 waterbodies and 350 site locations.
- As part of the nitrogen assessment, a new method was developed by LAWPRO to prioritise farm visits within the pollution impact potential maps.
- This approach has been replicated for diffuse P pressures and is being trialled in a catchment in the Midlands & Eastern region.

#### 5. Agricultural Activities

##### a) DAFM Agriculture Water Quality Working Group:

- i. LAWPRO is a member of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine's (DAFM) Water Quality Working Group, established by the minister to devise actions and policy recommendations for the agricultural sector to improve and protect water quality.
- ii. There have been 17 meetings to date, where LAWPRO has provided scientific contributions and made recommendations on additional water quality measures. At the most recent meeting, DAFM's document "Water and Agriculture - a collaborative approach" was discussed.
- iii. On the 16th/17th September, a delegation from the European Commission visited Ireland. Various stakeholder groups and implementing bodies met with the commission, including LAWPRO representatives.

**b) Agriculture Stakeholder Meetings**

- i. LAWPRO have been meeting with each of the dairy co-ops, at both senior management and operational level. Discussions have centred around 2<sup>nd</sup> vs. 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle workloads, Farming for Water EIP funded measures to be implemented on farms, reporting & communication.
- ii. LAWPRO met with the IFA Environment Committee in September 2024. The committee comprises 29 elected members from across the country.
- iii. Cross border collaboration – In July 2024 LAWPRO, along with other stakeholders met representatives of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Department of Environment and Rural Affairs (DEARA), Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), and CAFRE (College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise). The discussion centred around the water quality crisis in Lough Neagh. LAWPRO and ASSAP also presented to CAFRE in September.

**c) Teagasc's Better Farming for Water Campaign**

Teagasc has developed a 'Better Farming for Water' campaign to deliver a clear, simple and positive message to farmers, as well as the broader agri-food industry's understanding of the agriculture pressures on water. This is to be delivered through the adoption of 8-Actions for Change by farmers. LAWPRO is represented on Teagasc's Better Farming for Water Campaign Steering Group. LAWPRO has also supported the recruitment of a Teagasc research officer to work specifically on the project.

**d) Agricultural Practices Leading to Declining Water Quality Report**

The final report prepared by LAWPRO with input from the South-East and South-West Regional Operational Committees has been sent to the DAFM for review and comment, with particular attention to be given to the recommendations for DAFM.

**6. Catchment Science and Management Training**

- a) The Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG) are tasked with facilitating the provision of a training programme on Catchment Assessment and Integrated Catchment Management for the staff of local authorities and all implementing bodies (Water Action Plan 2024).
- b) Module 1 of the 2024 intake was delivered virtually this year and was completed via a live Q&A session with all 28 registered participants in April.
- c) Module 2 of the course was delivered in May via Roscrea Regional Training Centre and covered the traditional field and classroom elements.
- d) This year's delivery concluded with module 3 on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024 in County Monaghan, with Stranorlar RTC helping with facilitation. The Stranooden GWS kindly assisted delivery as the demonstration site for the field element on day 1, with Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan Town the venue for the classroom on day 2. 27 participants were in attendance from various Local Authorities and other implementing bodies and provided further positive feedback for the delivery of the course.
- e) Planning is already ongoing for potential 2025 delivery of CSM training. LASNTG have created an Expression of Interest form for 2025 (which can be found here - <https://forms.office.com/e/P4a2cRDB8N>). This planning also includes further scoping of virtual delivery options which may be pursued if deemed suitable to improve the learning experience, with module 1 materials the first to be considered for such.

## 7. Local Authority Support and Coordination Team update

A new LAWPRO team has been put in place comprising:

- LA Support and Coordination Manager - Senior Executive Scientist (Anthony Mannix)
- 2 No. LA Support and Coordination Leads - Executive Scientists (Peter Mitchell and Mike Nugent)
- The purpose of the team is to support and assist in local authority coordination in the delivery of their functions to achieve the objectives of the Water Action Plan.
  - Support coordination of local authority actions for efficiency and effectiveness, with an initial focus on the agriculture area and the delivery of the National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP).
  - Build capacity through supporting development and timely delivery of focussed water related training programmes.
  - Assess the needs within local authorities for additional supports to deliver the objectives of the Water Action Plan and develop approaches to address these.
  - Identify and harness opportunities for synergies with other implementing bodies.
- An introduction to the team has been issued to local authority directors, requesting a contact point be provided for future communication on agricultural and training related matters.
- The team have been meeting local authority representatives in each of the regions and will collate a report on the issues arising for action.

### National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP)

- NAIP webinars have been held for 2 regions - West (28<sup>th</sup> May); Midlands and East (28<sup>th</sup> June) with EPA supported by the Catchment Science teams. There were also updates and time for discussion between the EPA NAIP team and LAs at ROC meetings.
- The EPA NAIP workshop on 11<sup>th</sup> September will include LAWPRO input in the form of updates and a case study from the Blue Dot Programme. Further EPA training scheduled on 24<sup>th</sup> October (webinar before on-site training) and 30<sup>th</sup> October (Gurteen Agricultural College on-site training).
- The NAIP guidance document was released in August and is available on the NIECE Portal. LAWPRO contributed to the guidance development through the working group and will support the development of this guidance into training material through LASNTG.

### Co-ordination of data sharing

- The Local Authority Support and Coordination team will coordinate data sharing between DAFM and LAs. The list of GAP inspections planned by DAFM for 2024 has been distributed to LAs by LAWPRO. Processes for further data sharing will be developed.

### Local Authority Liaison

- Plan to re-instate LA Liaison meeting in conjunction with the regional meetings to discuss issues relating to the RBMP/WAP and implementation of actions by LAs.

### Training

- The team are actively working with the LASNTG in terms of a review of training needs and delivery for 2024 and 2025. A consultant is being procured by LASNTG to prepare a training

needs analysis in the water quality area, including training in enforcement methodologies and new areas where required. LAWPRO will participate in a steering group for the project to identify needs and inform prioritisation of training delivery and will support recruitment of appropriate subject experts to contribute to training material review (potentially from LAs and LAWPRO). LAWPRO have contributed to the preparation of the training budget request for 2025, which will include review of Section 4 discharge licence training.

## **8. Local Authority Natural Waters Resources Business Case**

Following the April Project Board meeting, feedback indicated that there was a need to enhance the enforcement aspects of the LA Natural Waters Resources Business case. The project team and LAWPRO with external support reviewed and revised the business case during the summer. The LA survey findings, sub-working groups, previous business case along with the EPA statutory performance reports were considered. The revised Business Case refocussed the resource requirement on coordination, planning and assessment and enforcement.

The resources required increased from 52 in April to a total of 84 LA resources and 2 for the LGMA. A few areas remain out of scope from this Business Case and will be kept under review by a CCMA Water Technical Sub-Committee and progressed separately.

The revised business case was signed off by Project Board on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September. It was endorsed by the CCMA WEEP committee on the 11<sup>th</sup> September and by the CCMA Plenary on the 19<sup>th</sup> September. It was presented to the Public Services Reform and Oversight Group (PSROG) on the 1<sup>st</sup> October, with approval received to proceed to the peer review process, with recommendations expected before year end.

3 keystones have been identified, which need to be addressed in tandem with this Business Case:

- National ICT and Data Management System for LAs, (progressed by LGMA as part of NEMIS),
- Training (progressed by Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG)).
- LAWPROs business case for additional resources (PMO 24/1) (LAWPRO)

It is essential that the water functions be included within the National Digital and ICT Strategy. A NEMIS project board specifically to address the water aspects of ICT and data management is required.

LASNTG, with LAWPRO support (as mentioned above), has commenced a review of LA training needs and has made budget submissions for 2025, taking account of projected demand for training courses such as Section 4 discharge licensing.

The LAWPRO Business Case (discussed below) was also approved for the peer review process by the Public Service Reform and Oversight Group (PSROG) at the 1<sup>st</sup> October meeting.

The LA Natural Waters Business Case is currently at Peer Review stage.

## **9. LAWPRO Business Case**

At the April Natural Waters Business Case Project Board meeting, it was proposed that the LAWPRO section of the business could be progressed separately. It was also agreed that the scope of the LAWPRO business case be expanded to include the regularisation of LAWPRO staff contracts. A Project Initiation Document (PID) was developed in May/June, submitted in early June to the Public Services Review and Oversight Group (PSROG) and approval to proceed agreed by PSROG on the 13<sup>th</sup> June. The LAWPRO project team prepared the business case, and the proposed option provides for the expansion of LAWPRO and regularisation of staff contracts. An additional 33 resources are sought with the regularisation of staff contracts.



Currently, the programme is 100% funded by the DHLGH. To mitigate any potential risk posed to the Local Authority Sector, if DHLGH funding was reduced or ceased, it is proposed that a contingency plan be agreed with all 31 local authorities, through the CCMA structures. The contingency plan would include a LA charge that would only be put in place in the unlikely situation that the DHLGH cease to fund LAWPRO.

The LAWPRO Business Case was endorsed by the CCMA WEEP committee on the 11<sup>th</sup> September and the CCMA Plenary Meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> September. It was presented to PSROG on the 1<sup>st</sup> October, with a recommendation to proceed to the peer review process with recommendations to be received before year end. These will be assessed in parallel with the LA Natural Waters Business Case and considered by the Business Case Project Board.

## **10. Communities Team Updates**

### **Catchment Community Fora**

- LAWPRO continue to roll out research into public participation aspects of WFD delivery, as referenced under the Water Action Plan.
- Workshops ascertaining public views on the establishment of Catchment Community Forum have taken place in the 5 LAWPRO regions.
- Following the completion of the workshops, further engagement on the establishment of Catchment Community Fora is taking place with interested parties.
- A summary report on each of the workshops that have taken place has been issued to the participating groups.
- An overall Catchment Community Fora summary findings report is due to issue in late Q4 2024/Q1 2025.

### **LAWPRO Catchment Support Fund**

- €501,427 of grant aid to 37 organisations under a new 'LAWPRO Catchment Support Fund' was awarded during National Biodiversity Week (17<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> May). This funding call will build the capacity of non-governmental organisations working in water quality in Ireland by providing funding toward organisational running costs and core costs.
- Under the fund, organisations were invited to apply for financial assistance to support Strand 1 organisational costs such as statutory and/or legal fees, insurance costs associated with catchment management, accountancy fees, website annual support costs, organisation promotional materials and group development activities. In cases where an organisation has company limited by guaranteed status and a proven track record with LAWPRO, organisations were also invited to apply for Strand 2 capacity costs included funding towards staff costs, rent and rates.
- The 2025 call for funding under the Catchment Support Fund launched on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024, open for applications from the 25<sup>th</sup> Nov.
- The Resilience Project Evaluation is now available on [www.lawaters.ie](http://www.lawaters.ie)

### **Community Water Development Fund**

- Review of the CWDF report is now available to download on [www.lawaters.ie](http://www.lawaters.ie)

- Supporting the launch of the Water Action Plan 2024, LAWPRO also launched the Community Water Development Fund Open Call for 2025 on 5<sup>th</sup> of September last.
  - i. The fund supports communities to deliver positive actions for water quality, protection and awareness, both locally and in the wider catchment.
  - ii. In the 2024 funding call, over €700,000 grant aid was awarded to 155 water quality projects.
  - iii. The fund is open to all community and voluntary groups. Grants will range from €5,000 to €50,000 (or higher, subject to procurement).
  - iv. Community and voluntary groups were invited to download the guidelines and complete the grant application form online by 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

### **LAWPRO Small Grants and Events Scheme**

- This is a new rolling call for smaller scale community water quality actions and awareness initiatives.
- Grants range from €100 to €5,000.
- Less onerous application and assessment process than the Community Water Development Fund.

### **Communities Caring for Water Conference – Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2024 - Radisson Blu Hotel, Athlone, Co. Westmeath**

- Malcolm Noonan TD, the Minister for Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform will opened the 2024 “Communities Caring for Water Conference: *Our water, our future: empowering communities to improve and protect.*”
- This in person event was hosted by LAWPRO in partnership with The Rivers Trust on Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> of November in the Radisson Blu Hotel in Athlone, Co. Westmeath.
- There were a series of talks by community groups, experts and water quality advocates over the course of the day covering the following themes:
  - Climate Change and working with Nature
  - Hydromorphology Pressures and Solutions
  - Capacity Building in Community Groups
  - The Importance of Public Participation

### **11. Blue Dot Catchments Programme (BDCP) & Waters of LIFE IP**

- The Blue Dot Catchments Programme Steering Committee last met on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024. The committee was hosted by the Waters of LIFE Integrated Project Team at Teagasc Offices in Castlerea, Co. Roscommon. The meeting focused on progress of the IP, and included a fieldtrip for members to the Islands catchment which focused on agricultural and hydromorphological pressures. Draft scorecards were outlined and tested in the field.
- LAWPRO are now members of all ACRES Co-operation Projects Local Steering Groups, as follows.
  - i. ACRES Donegal [Border] – Lisa McDaniel
  - ii. ACRES Breifne [Border] – Gary O’Connell
  - iii. ACRES West Connacht SG (covers 2 CP areas)[West] – Cormac McConigley

- iv.ACRES Burren Aran [South West] – Niamh Rogan
- v.ACRES Munster South Connacht - [South West & West] – Niamh Rogan
- vi.ACRES Kerry West Cork [South West] – Niamh Rogan
- vii.ACRES Leinster – [South East & Midlands/East] – Eoin McAleer
- The LAWPRO EIP team met with ACRES Breifne team to discuss synergies between the two programmes.
- The Blue Dot Team together with the Communities Team are advancing blue dot signage role out together with story maps for several blue dots including Lough Mask and Walshpool lake in Co. Mayo, and Scotstown in Co. Monaghan.
- Lough Fadda fluvial geomorphology survey report is now drafted by CBEC, and recommendations will be reviewed by the established steering committee for the project.
- The Abhainn Dá Lioloch fluvial geomorphology survey report by CBEC is drafted and pending review by the established steering group for the project, in January 2025.
- The Community Water Development Fund 2025 closing date was 20th November. A significant number of projects have been proposed in Blue Dot Catchments.
- The LAWPRO Communities Team has supported schools' engagements in 5 demonstration catchments for Waters of LIFE in September and October.
- The Blue Dot Team, Catchments Team and EIP Team reviewed WOL scorecards and provided comments.

## 12. Nature-based Solutions to Surface Water Management

- Two nature-based solutions engineers are now in place in LAWPRO – planning supports for LAs and communities. Currently bedding in and training will be developed
- Nationally there are nine nature-based solutions demonstrator projects underway in 2024 across four different Local Authorities. Additionally, LAWPRO are identifying nature-based solutions by third parties, with a view for consideration as exemplar demonstration project.
- Further funding has been sought for nature-based solutions demonstrator projects in 2025. Projects focus on developing learnings associated with building nature-based solutions such as raingardens in built up areas and also looking to develop learnings in transition zones on the outskirts of towns and villages, bring in public open green spaces and potentially in active travel walks or greenways.
- These solution can be designed with multiple public good benefits in mind – for example one of such projects supported in Carlow won the Entente Florale Europe Competition 2024, Gold Award, the President's Prize for the town's rain garden development which was supported by LAWPRO, illustrating that nature-based solutions if designed right enhance the public realm from an aesthetic perspective as well as protecting water quality and reducing flood risk. [Carlow celebrates its prize winning rain gardens \(rte.ie\)](https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2024/11/21/carlow-rain-gardens/).
- Workshop held in Engineers Ireland with project consultants, LA planners, Uisce Eireann, Southern Regional Assembly, private consultants and professional bodies on the development of a National Guidance Document for use by Local Authority Planners, Planning Engineers and Developer Agents. This document **Implementation of Urban Nature-based Solutions- Guidance Document for Planners, Developers and Developer Agents** is now complete and was launched on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 in Engineers Ireland with the other professional bodies (Irish Planning

Institute, CEEM, Irish Landscape Institute, The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland etc). The guidance contains specific examples and case studies to support planners in making informed decisions re NBS. [Publications - Local Authority Water Programme](#)

- The project is engaging with Local Authorities to understand and define nature-based solutions training needs with a view to establishing a training programme for all Local Authorities.
- Planning is underway with management (LGMA) of the Town Centres First to roll out bespoke training to TROs across the 26 settlements and separately with the CAROs and LASTNG for 2025. Professional body training planning commenced at the launch of the planning guidance document on the 21<sup>st</sup> November and will be organised with Engineers Ireland and the other professional bodies.
- Nature-based solutions integration into surface water management in planning applications can still be a challenge – LAWPRO working on providing advice to address issues raised such as “IPC licensing preventing use of NbS, relevance of NbS to a particular site, efficacy”.
- The potential for LACAP plans to support and drive NbS integration is under consideration,
- The use of NbS to address support solutions to flood risk management challenges is being examined by LAWPRO within the ResiRiver Interreg project partnership including the OPW. If successful, this could provide a model for LAs, OPW and the LACAPs.
- NbS in the rural landscape – currently under consideration within the work of the Farming for Water EIP project.
- National implementation strategy - currently the strategy is being mapped out with stakeholders identifying the key actions and deliverables including identification of NbS projects across the country as they are built.

### 13. Drinking Water Expert Group

- The Minister signed off on the Drinking Water Source Protection Guidelines in July [gov - Drinking Water Source Protection \(www.gov.ie\)](#)
- Expert Group next meeting 17<sup>th</sup> October.
- DHLGH established a Sub-Group on private wells in early July, meeting on a monthly basis. Terms of Reference signed off. LAWPRO and LAs both represented.

### 14. Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems Grant Schemes

LAWPRO propose to issue a survey to all LAs to determine the level of interest in the DWWTS grant schemes and reasons for application to help inform the regulations. which are being reviewed to take account of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle RBMP.

### 15. National Hydromorphology Programme Expert Group

The first meeting of the National Hydromorphology Expert Group was a daylong meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> July with presentations covering the themes of Legislation and Regulation; Pressures, and Nature Restoration. A draft Term of reference (TOR) was presented.

The second meeting of the group was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September in Portlaoise, the TOR was finalised and there was a presentation and discussions on a report commission by SWAN on *Physical*

*modifications of Irelands water resources and implications for meeting Water Framework Directive objectives.*

### **Farming for Water EIP**

- As of end of November, 721 applications have been received, 265 from Teagasc Advisors and 426 from Dairy Advisors.
- The total average payment is in the order of €10,129 of which €5,784 is a one-time payment with 3 yearly payments of €1,600. This figure will decrease in 2025 as the number of yearly payments will reduce to 2, 2026 and 2027.
- Each of the dairy processors has selected a target waterbody in which to focus their efforts. This will ensure a critical mass of applications increasing the potential for impact. This selection process has been supported by both the EIP and wider LAWPRO WFD team to balance processor supplier locations with areas most in need of improvement.
- Support and training of the ASSAP advisors is ongoing with a day of mandatory training planned for January 16<sup>th</sup>. Weekly support calls will move to fortnightly from January 2025.
- Following applications from 16 organisations, grant funding was offered to the following groups to appoint Community Animators:
  - i. Inishowen Rivers trust
  - ii. Corrib Beo Clg
  - iii. IRD Duhallow
  - iv. River Blackwater Catchment Trust (Ulster)
  - v. Nore River Catchment Trust

Recruitment of animators will now commence, and each organisation has been invited to training on the Water EIP and implementation of the project.

- Collaboration opportunities outside of the ASSAP programme are being explored as follows:
  - i. Giant Hogweed Project in Tipperary – Coordinated approach with Tipperary County Council, Tipperary Co-op and community groups to eradicate the presence of Giant Hogweed in the upper Mulkear catchment in the Cappawhite area. Removal of Giant Hogweed will be offered as a bespoke measure on farms during the EIP process in this area. A community meeting was held in Cappawhite Community Centre on October 24<sup>th</sup> and a briefing was given to Cappawhite IFA on November 25<sup>th</sup>.
  - ii. NFGWS – Training has been carried out with a number NFGWS personnel including some Group Water Scheme managers and their Source Protection Officer. This will allow them to make applications on behalf of farmers within their focus areas.
  - iii. OPW – Potential opportunity to work with OPW and Resiriver Interreg IV on Natural Water Retention Measures in Tipperary
  - iv. Meat Industry Ireland – A number of meat processors have put forward advisors who will recruit farmers into the EIP. Training has been carried out with representatives of KEPAK, Dawn Meats, ABP and Liffey Meats.
  - v. Non ASSAP Affiliated Co-ops – The Farming for Water EIP team are working with Strathroy Dairies, Lee Strand and Centenary Co-ops to identify and train resources to make EIP applications on behalf of their suppliers.
- Information on the project was presented at the National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) Rural Water Conference on September 12<sup>th</sup> in Athlone and at the Environmental Services Training Group (ESTG) Annual Conference in Mullingar on October 15<sup>th</sup>.

- The Farming for Water EIP was featured on the Teagasc Signpost webinar series on October 4<sup>th</sup> and was included in a panel discussion on water quality at the Irish Farmer's Journal Dairy Day event on November 21<sup>st</sup>.
- The current status of recruitment for the Farming for Water EIP team is shown below. Recruitment underway to fill vacancies.

	In Place	Offer Accepted	Vacancies	Total
Project Lead	1	0	0	1
Project Advisory Team	7	0	3	10
Admin/Finance	4	0	1	5
IS and Data & GIS Leads	2	0	0	2
Communications Lead	1	0	0	1
Community Animators <sup>1</sup>	0	5	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>

**ENDS**

---

<sup>1</sup> External hires



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage

# Recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive


Averil Gannon

5<sup>th</sup> Dec 2024

# Recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive



- Recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive proposal published by EU Commission October 2022.
- Existing Urban Wastewater Treatment legislation is over 30 years old.
- European Parliament, Commission and Council agreed a final text on 27th November 2024
- Member states have 30 Months to transpose – deadline May 2027

	
EUROPEAN UNION	
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT	THE COUNCIL
Strasbourg, 27 November 2024 (OR. en)	
2022/0345(COD) LEX 2408	PE-CONS 85/1/24 REV 1
	ENV 483 SAN 260 COMPET 505 CONSOM 178 AGRI 389 CODEC 1227
DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL CONCERNING URBAN WASTEWATER TREATMENT (RECAST)	



## Irelands Actions:



- Urban Wastewater Expert Group was established Q1 2023 for the negotiation process
- Membership include representatives from:

Uisce Éireann	CRU	NSAI	Dept. of Environment, Climate and Communications
CCMA	GSI	Dept. of Health	Dept. of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
EPA	HSE	SEAI	Dept. Of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
LAWPRO			

- Expert group will continue its work through the transposition phase
- 5 sub groups have been established:
  - Energy Neutrality
  - Health Surveillance Monitoring
  - Risk Assessment and Monitoring
  - Integrated Urban Wastewater Management Plans
  - Extended Producer Responsibility
- Stakeholder Extended Producer Responsibility Sub group to be established in Q1 2025

# Recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive – Overview



- High level of ambition – scale of facilities covered and level of treatment applied
- Extremely tight timeframes for all measures
- Widening scope of Directive to include smaller agglomerations
- Includes a provision of extended producer responsibility for specific micro-pollutants
- Requirements for energy neutrality for urban wastewater treatment plants and collections systems
- Significant policy and budgetary implications arising from the Directive.



Ringsend Wastewater Treatment plants: image by Uisce Éireann

# Recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive



## 1. Requirement to provide and connect to networks in small agglomerations

All agglomerations above 1,000 p.e. to be provided with a collection systems and their sources of domestic wastewater are connected to this collection system by December 2035. There are some derogations for this requirement.

## 2. **Septic tanks** must be used if derogating from requirement above.

Septic tanks to be:

- “designed, operated and maintained in a manner that achieves the same level of environmental and human health protection as secondary and tertiary treatment”
- registered and inspected

Justification to be provided if, **septic tanks** are used for greater than 2% of the reported national load treated in agglomerations of 2,000pe



Image of Berlaymont Building by Wikipedia

# Integrated Urban Wastewater Management Plans (IUWWMP)



- Information on the network, urban wastewater and urban runoff for agglomerations of 100,000pe and above by Dec 2033.
- Development of a list of agglomerations between 10,000pe and 100,000pe where subject modelling, climate projects etc. one or more of number of conditions apply:
  - SWO poses risk to environment or human health
  - SWO represents more than 1% of the annual collected urban wastewater load
  - SWO prevents the fulfilment of numerous Directives
- List and IUWWMPs to be reviewed every 6 years
- By 2039 IUWWMP for drainage areas on the list
- IUWWMP to prioritise green and blue infrastructure where possible

Image: LAWPRO





## Higher levels of treatment standards – Secondary and Tertiary

- Secondary treatment for agglomerations greater than 1,000pe by Dec 2035.
- Tertiary treatment will be required at all urban wastewater treatment plants with a load of 150,000pe and above – Staged requirement from Dec 2033 to Dec 2039.
- Requirement to publish a list of areas sensitive to eutrophication by Dec 2027 and update every 6 years.
- For agglomerations between 10,000 and above on the list have tertiary treatment - staged requirement from Dec 2033 to Dec 2045
- Some derogations may apply
- Stricter Nitrogen and Phosphorus limits – tertiary treatment



Image: Dunhill Integrated Constructed Wetland, Uisce Éireann

## Higher levels of treatment for larger WWTPs – Quaternary Treatment



- 4<sup>th</sup> stage of treatment (quaternary treatment) for WWTP with load over 150,000pe – staged requirement from Dec 2033 to Dec 2045
- Currently 5 WWTP with a load greater than 150,000pe in Ireland.
- List of areas with accumulations of micro pollutants, developed by Dec 2030 and reviewed in 2033 and every 6 years thereafter
- Quaternary treatment to be provided to Agglomerations of 10,000pe and above on list on a stages basis from Dec 2033 to Dec 2045



Athlone Main Drainage Scheme Main Construction Compound, Golden Island, Athlone, Co Westmeath



**Extended Polluter Responsibility (EPR)** for specific micro pollutants (pharmaceuticals and cosmetic sector) – to pay a minimum of 80% of full costs of requirements of quaternary treatment



- Producers are exempted if:
  - Quantity of substances contained in the products they place on Union Market is below 1 tonne per year.
  - Substances contained in the products they place on the market are rapidly biodegradable in wastewater or do not generate micro pollutants in wastewater at the end of their life.
- Producer Responsibility Organisations to oversee this EPR
- Commission to organise an Exchange of Views for Member States



Image: Fran Igwe LAWPRO

# Energy Neutrality



Places an obligation to achieve energy neutrality of collection systems and WW treatment plants at national level in all treatment facilities above 10,000p.e by Dec 2045.

This total annual energy from renewable sources can be generated on or off site on or on behalf of the owners or operators of the WWTP.

Inclusion of energy audits every 4 years from Dec 2028

Potential linkages with other energy Directives

Some possible derogations, where purchases can be made up to 35%



Image: Dunhill Integrated Constructed Wetland, Ulster Éireann



# Urban Wastewater Surveillance



Urban wastewater surveillance to monitor specific public health parameters

Establishes a **national urban wastewater monitoring system** to monitor relevant public health parameters in urban wastewater

**Monitoring** at inlets of UWWTPs, taking into account available recommendations by experts on SARS – CoV – 2 virus, poliovirus, influenza virus and others

**Antimicrobial resistance** monitoring for agglomeration above 100,000pe after Commission publish their Implementing Act on methodology and frequency of monitoring



Image: Castlemaine wastewater Treatment plant, Uisce Éireann

## Information to the public



....”adequate, easily accessible and up-to-date information on urban wastewater collection and treatment is available to the public online, in a user-friendly and customised way, for each agglomeration of above 1 000 p.e” ....

Information available at agglomeration level, such as:

- Compliance information in relation to collection networks, secondary, tertiary and quaternary treatment.
- Volume or estimated volume of WW collected and treated per year



# Risk Assessment and Monitoring

Inclusion of **risk assessment and risk management** in certain circumstances



The identification of risks will be reviewed every 6 years starting Dec 2033.

## Monitoring:

- Discharges from WWTP
- Sludge
- Quantities of urban ww reuse for agriculture
- GHG including carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, methane from UWWTPs above 10,000pe
- Energy used and produced by owners of urban WWTPs treating a load over 10,000pe
- Representative monitoring of storm water overflows and discharges of urban runoff from separate sewers
- PFAS – when methodology is available
- Microplastics and relevant pollutants



Image: Cahir Wastewater Treatment Plant, Uisce Éireann



# Recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive



## Summary

- The recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive has high ambition levels and tight timelines with numerous new measures.
- Requirement for collaboration required between all stakeholders to achieve targets and infrastructural planning of investments.
- Transposition by May 2027

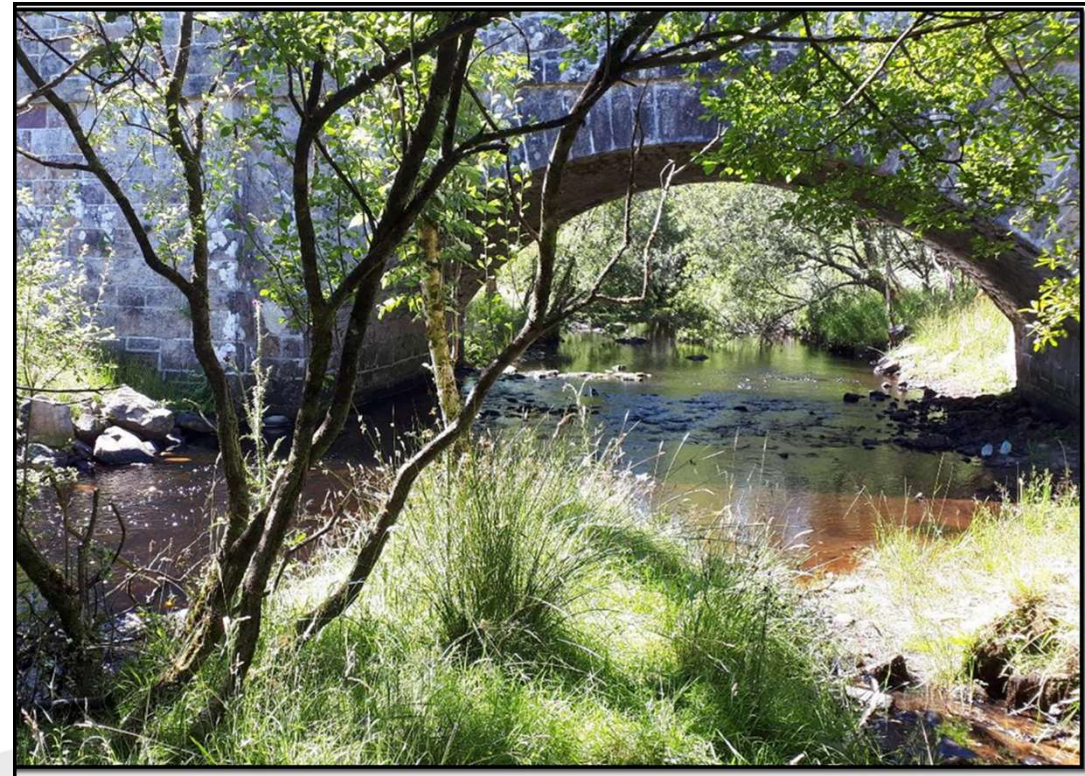


Photo: Graney River, Waters of LIFE project

Thank you

Email: [Averil.Gannon@housing.gov.ie](mailto:Averil.Gannon@housing.gov.ie)



# *Waterline Project Update*

**Tony Kent**  
**EPA Catchment Science and Management Unit**

**NTIG**  
**5<sup>th</sup> December 2024**





# What is Waterline?

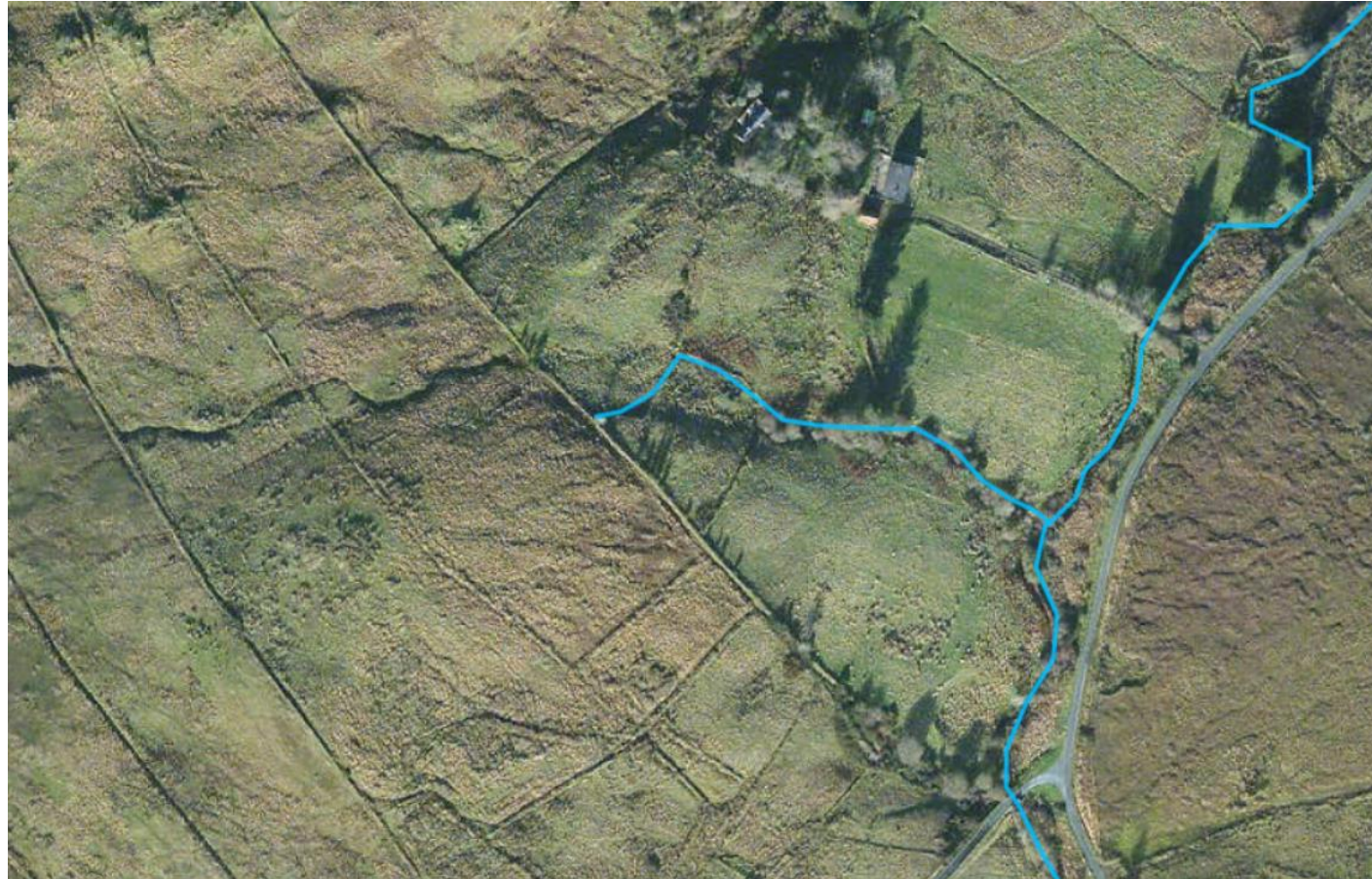
- Combination of two datasets

1. Existing EPA river network dataset

- Created in 2005 from OSi 1:50k Discovery Series maps
- Lower resolution, less detailed representation of rivers
- Fully hydrologically connected network

2. Prime2

- OSi modern data released in 2014
- Higher resolution, more detailed representation of rivers
- Not a hydrologically connected network





# What is Waterline?

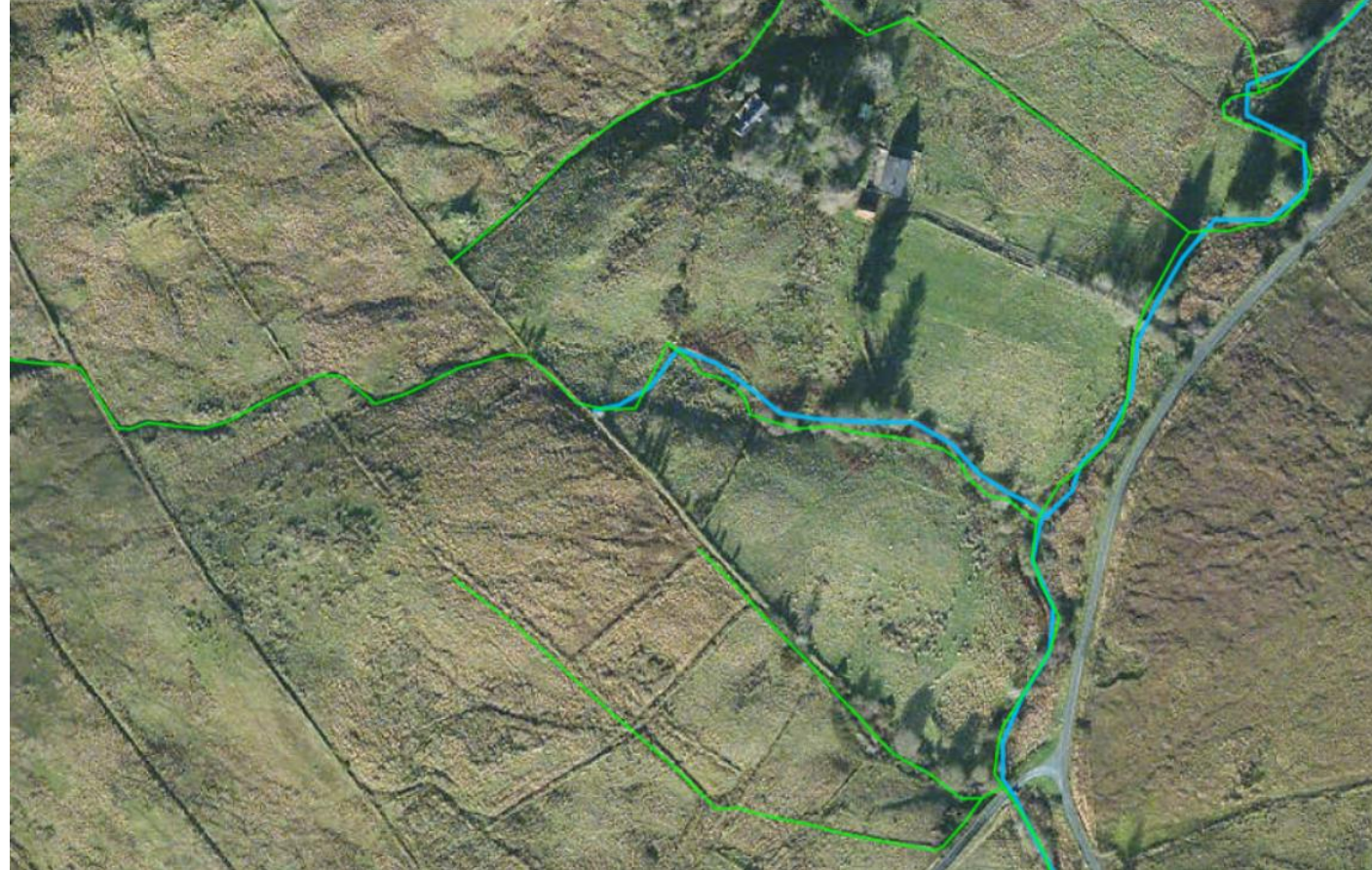
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# *“Not a hydrologically connected network”*



*“Not a  
hydrologically  
connected  
network”*



# Key problems and resolutions

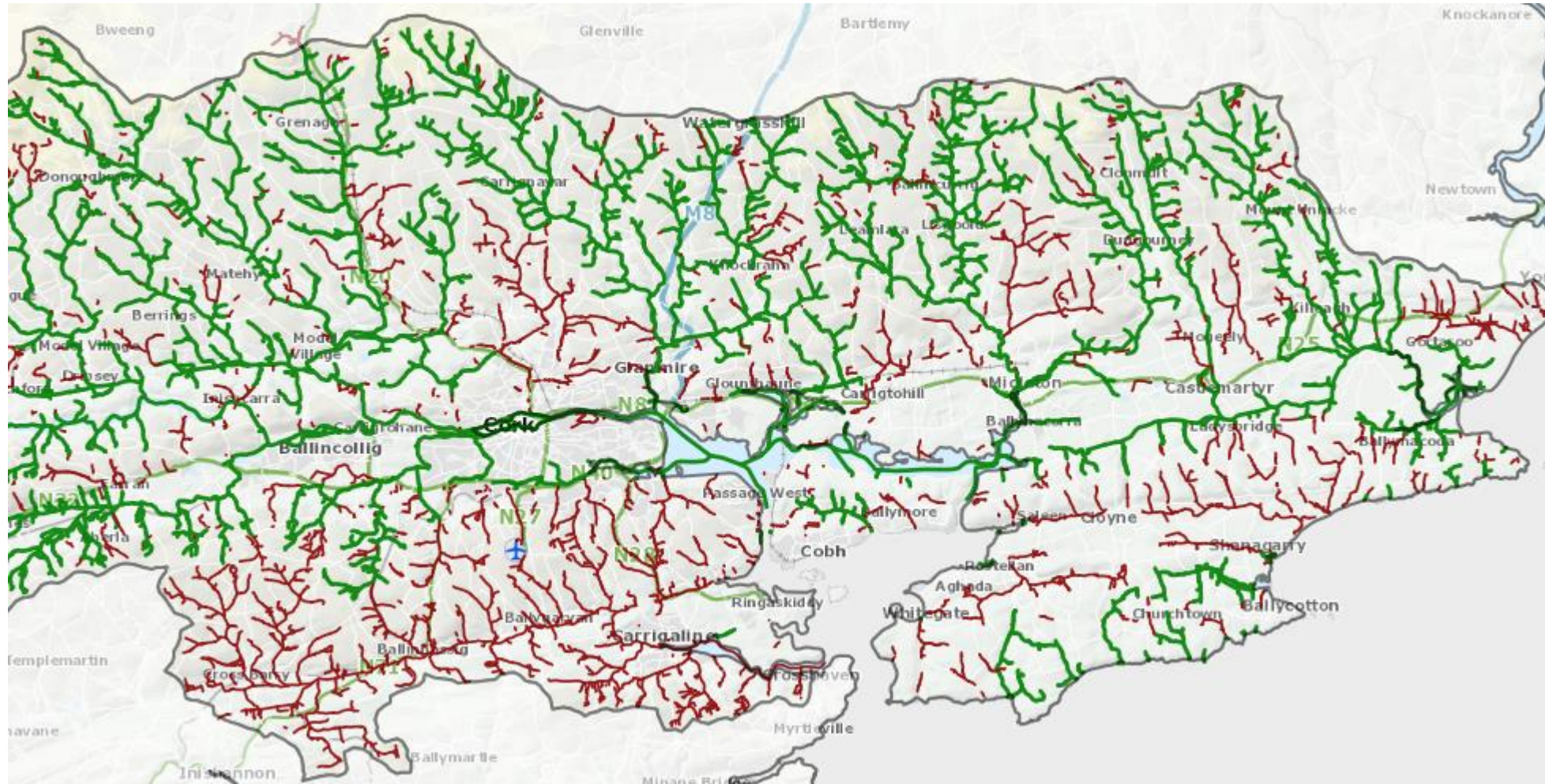
1. Connectivity of edges
2. Flow
3. Loops
4. Canals
5. Northern Ireland boundary
6. Waterbody/Catchment boundaries



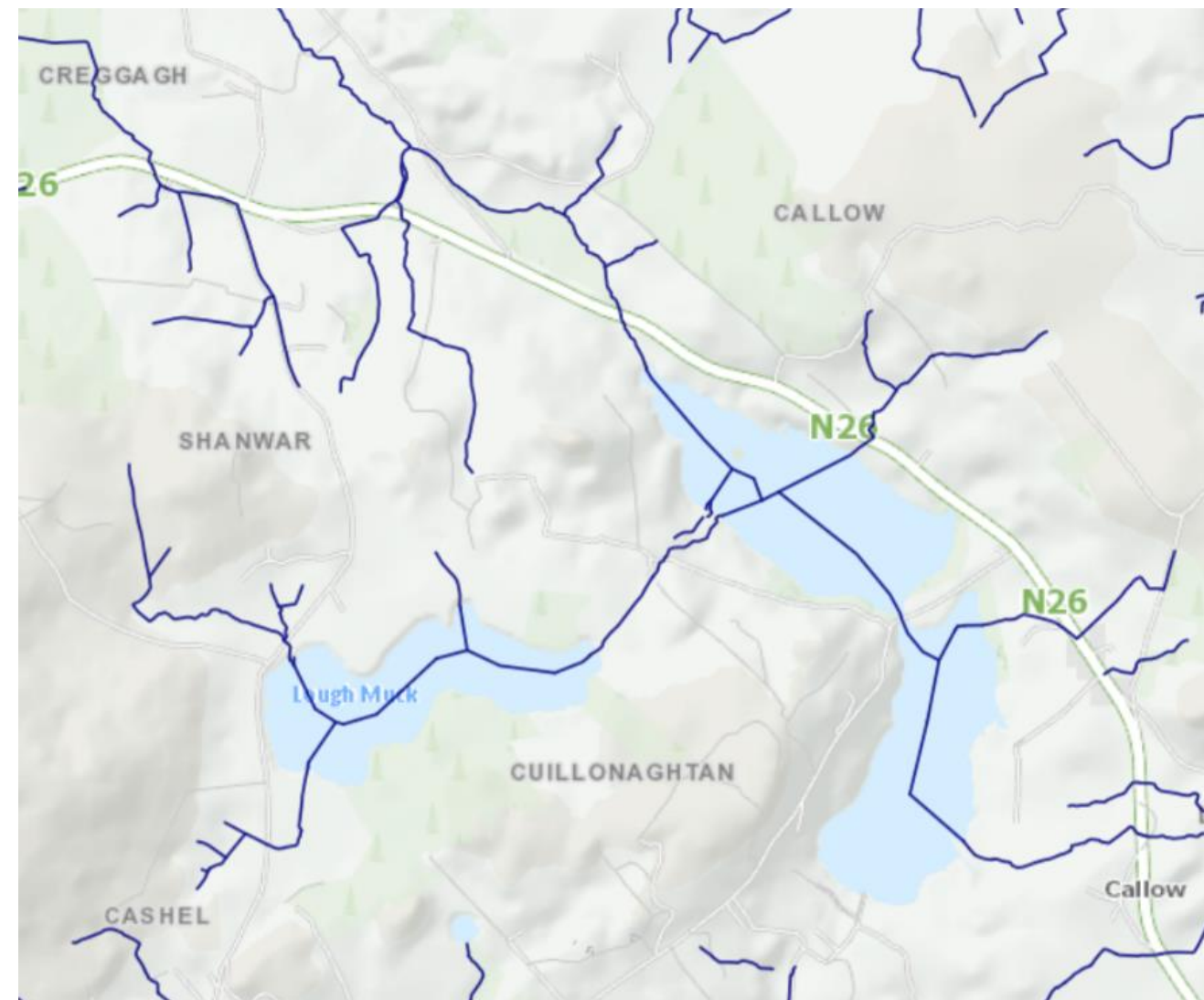
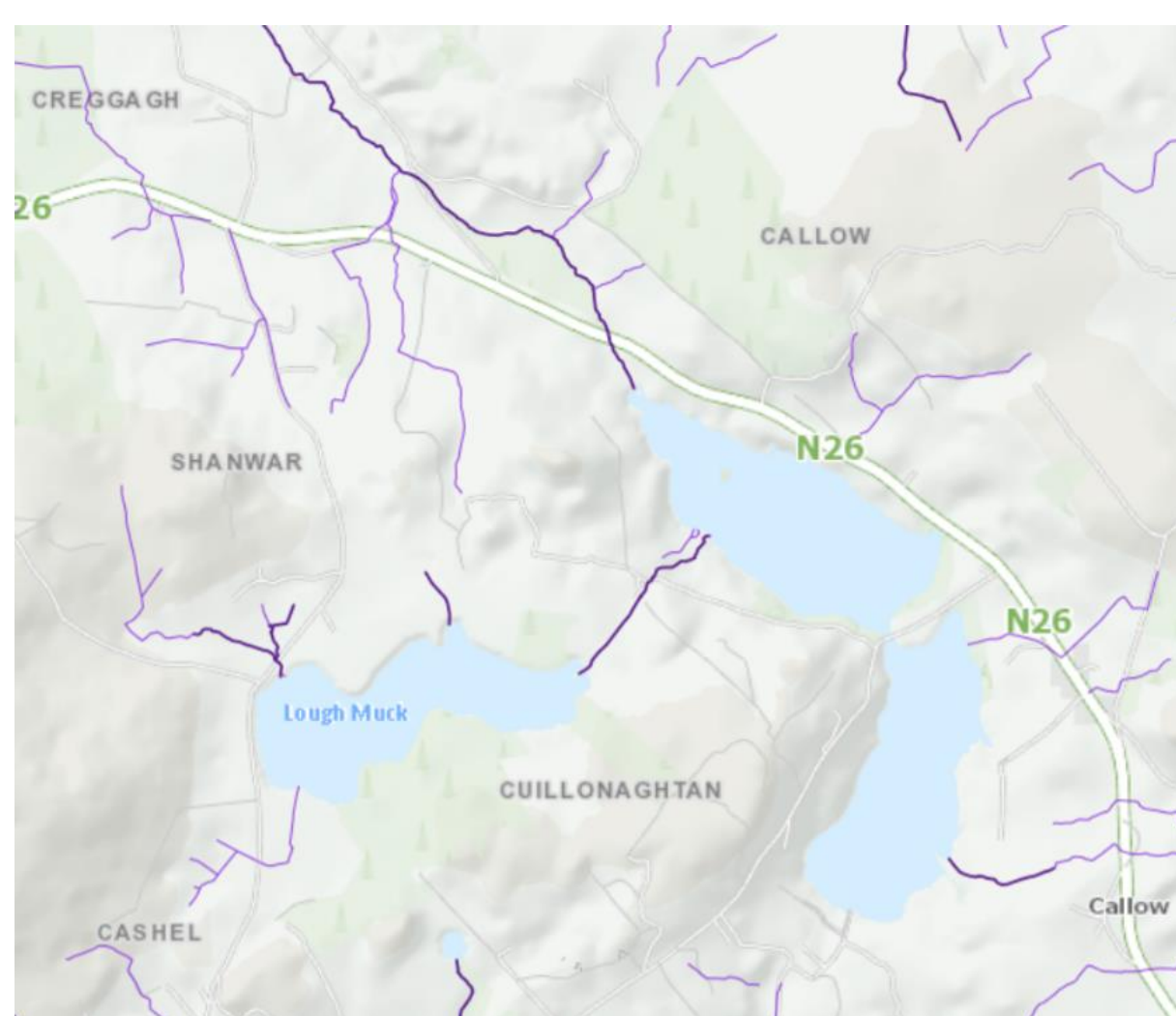


# 1. Connectivity

- Semi-automated scripts
- Manual
- Manual review (1,871 edits)
- Incorporation of existing data where possible, karst, culverted areas etc.















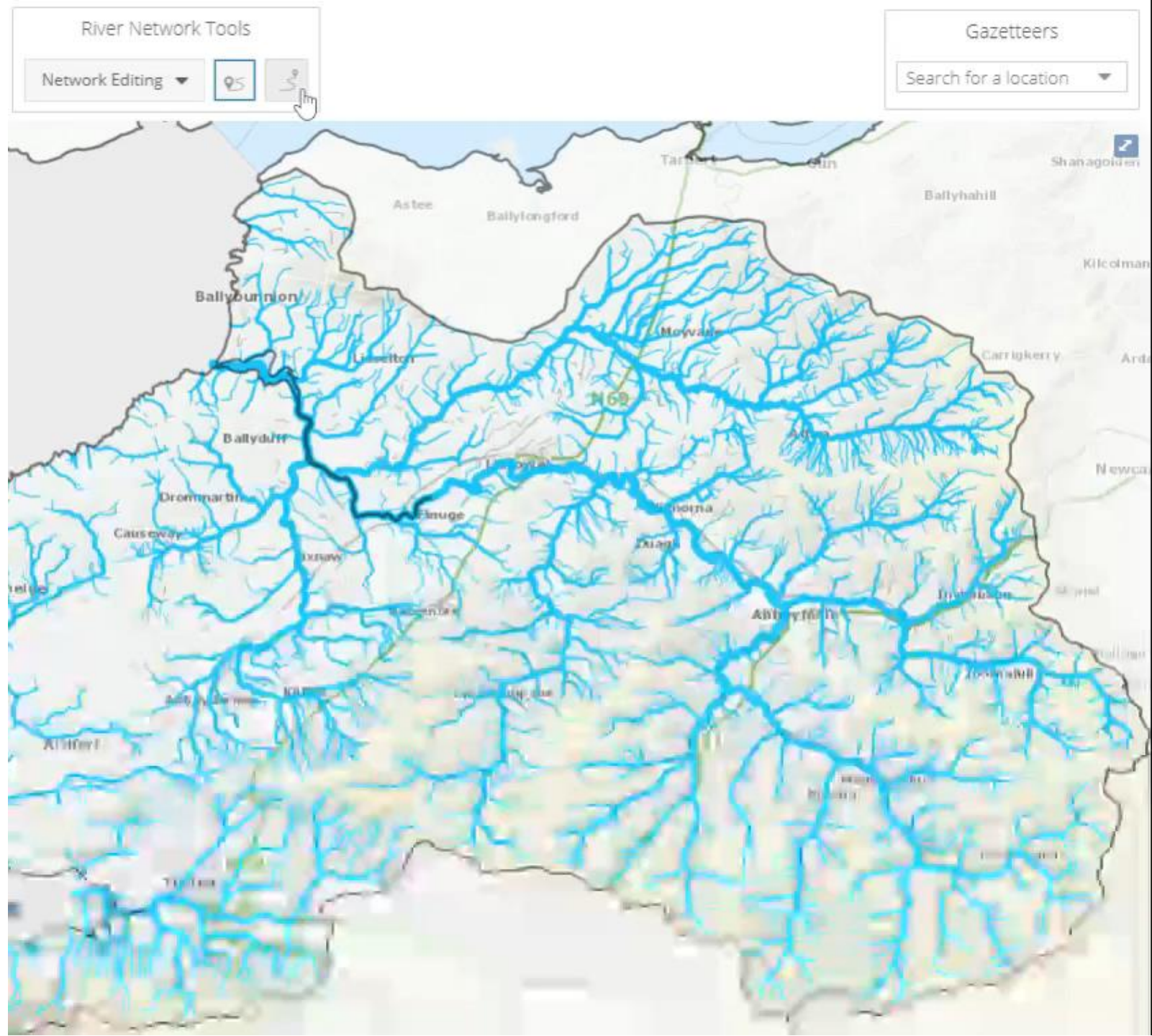
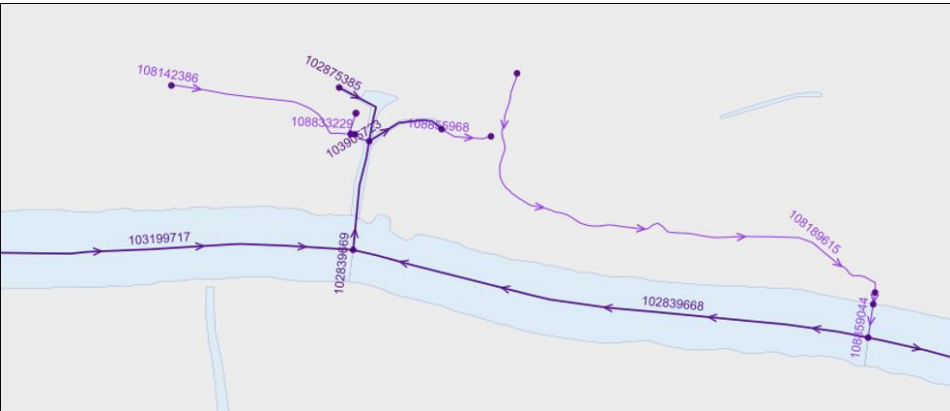






## 2. Flow

- Path solving tool created
- Upstream/downstream traces
- Manual review



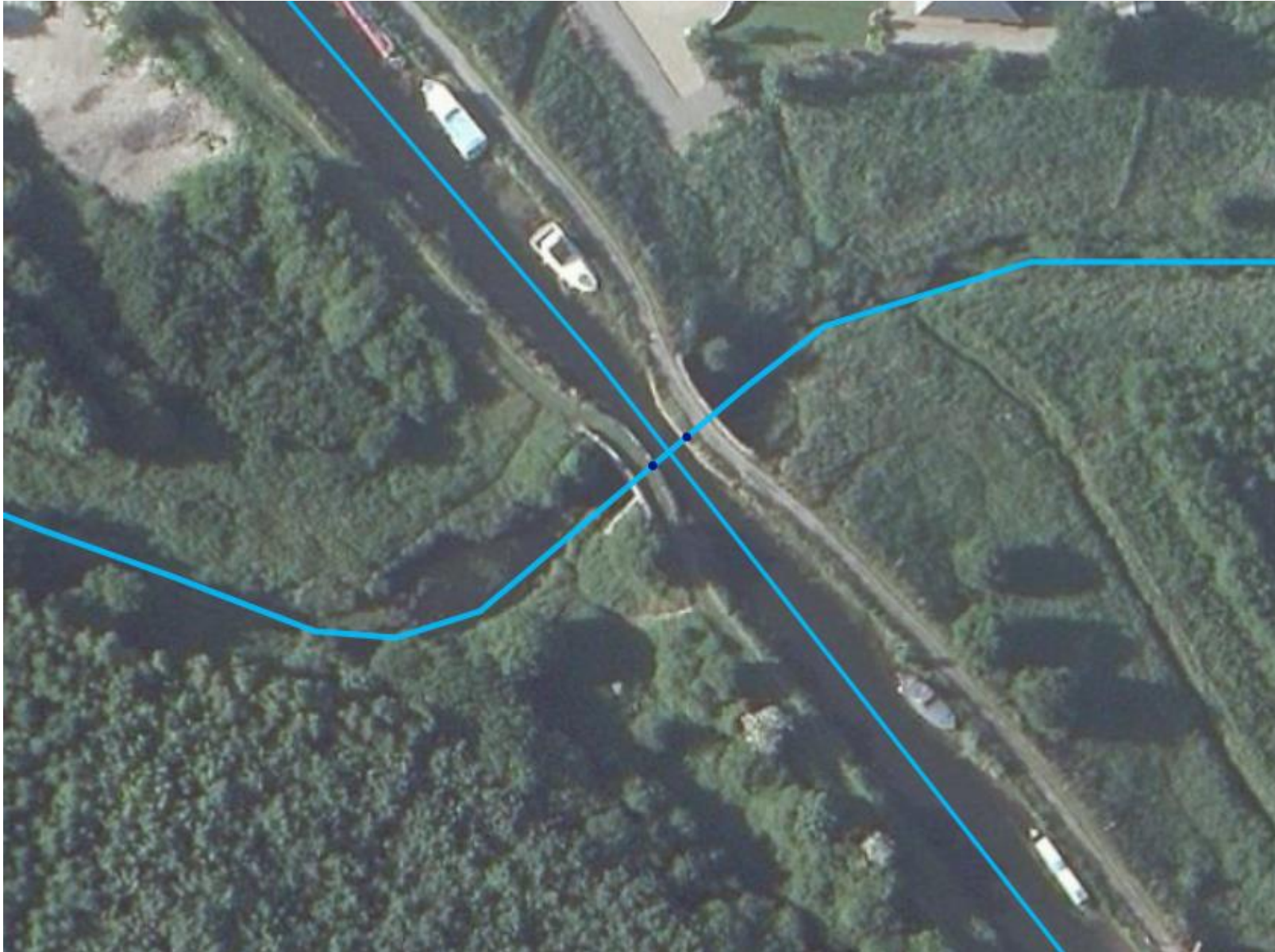
# 3. Loops

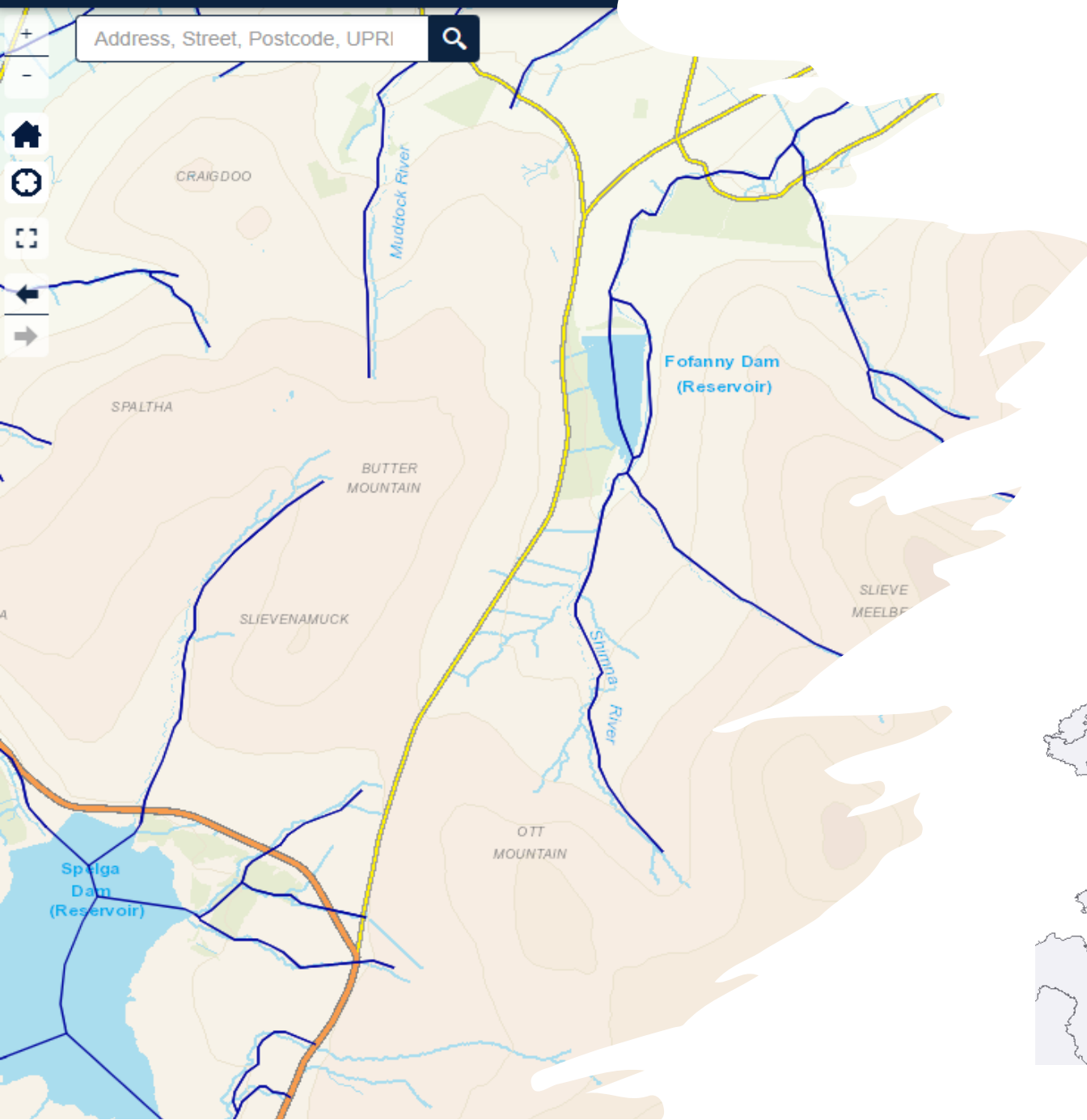
- Data errors
- Issues determining flow direction
- Issues with upstream/downstream traces
- Some loops are valid, e.g. Braided Rivers, field boundaries
- Large loops (>3km) manually fixed
  - Some stretched from coastal sink to another coastal sink
- (Semi-)Automated approach for smaller loops
  - All tweaks checked by eye
  - Manual intervention if required ( <10%)





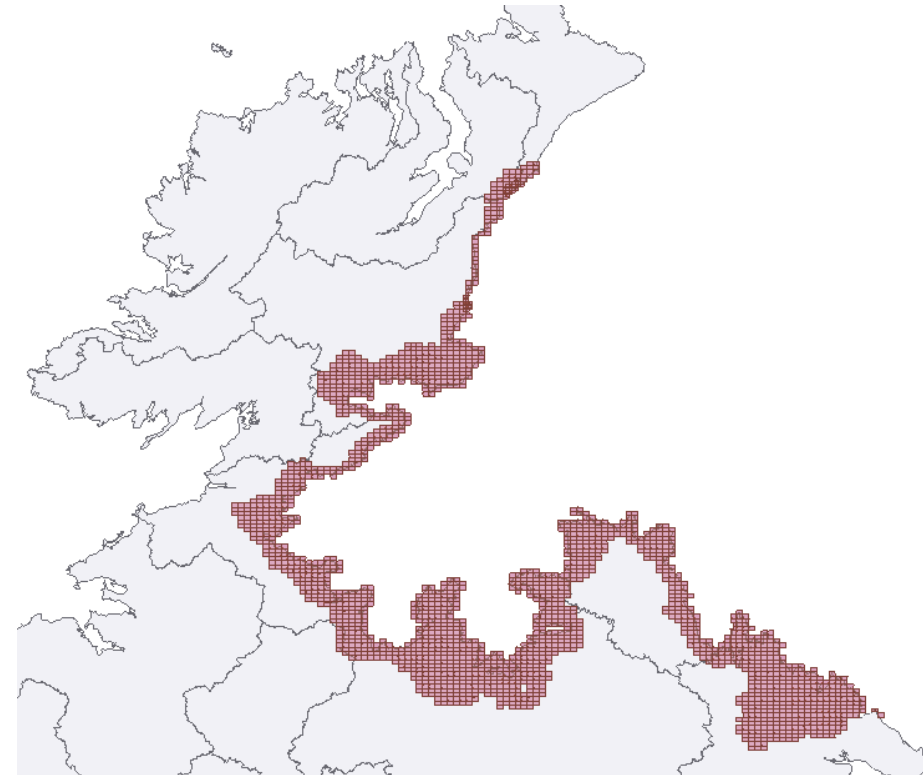
## 4. Canals





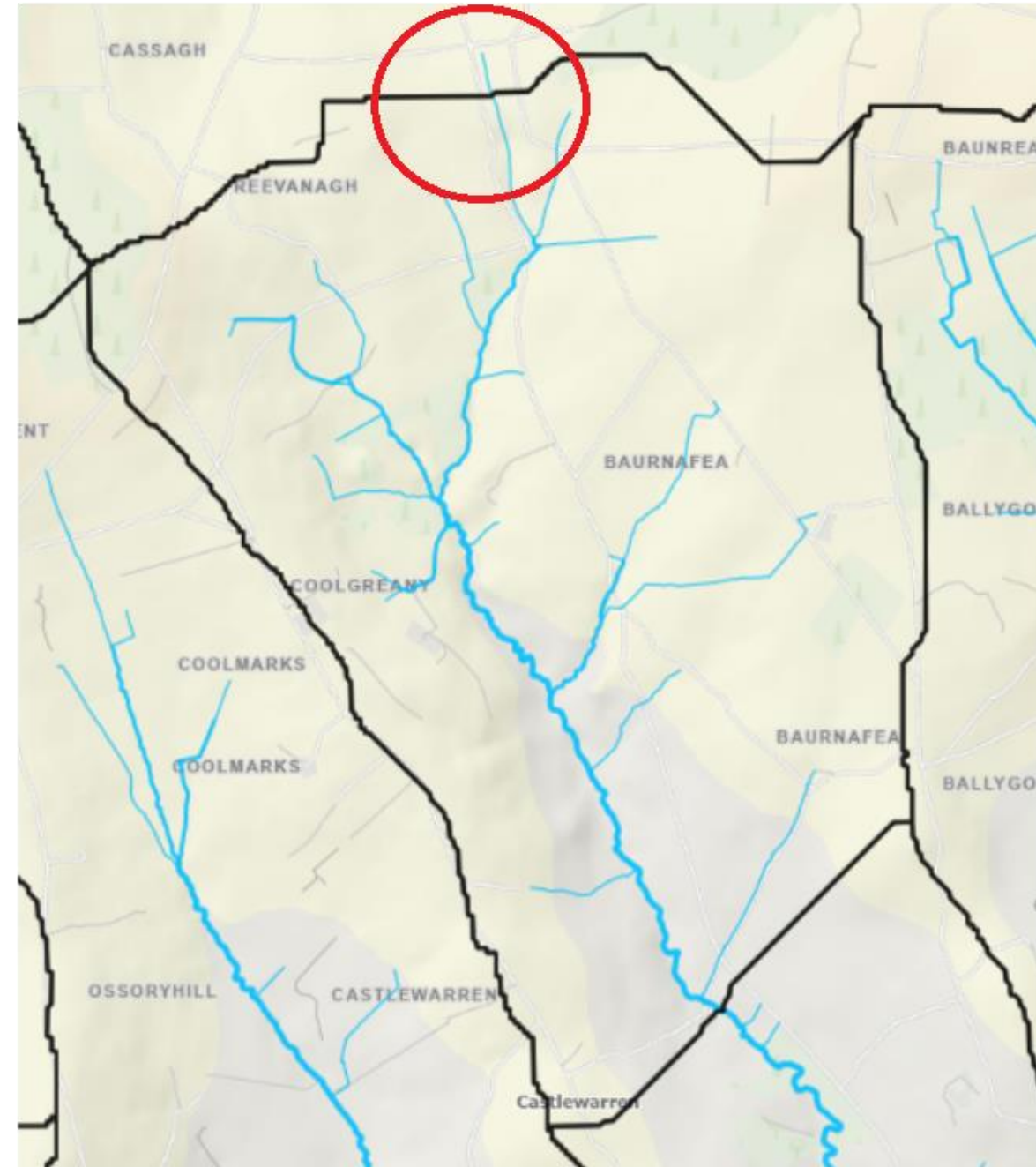
## 5. Northern Ireland data

- NI Prime2 equivalent data (€€€s)
- Utilised existing available data



## 6. Waterbody/Catchment boundaries

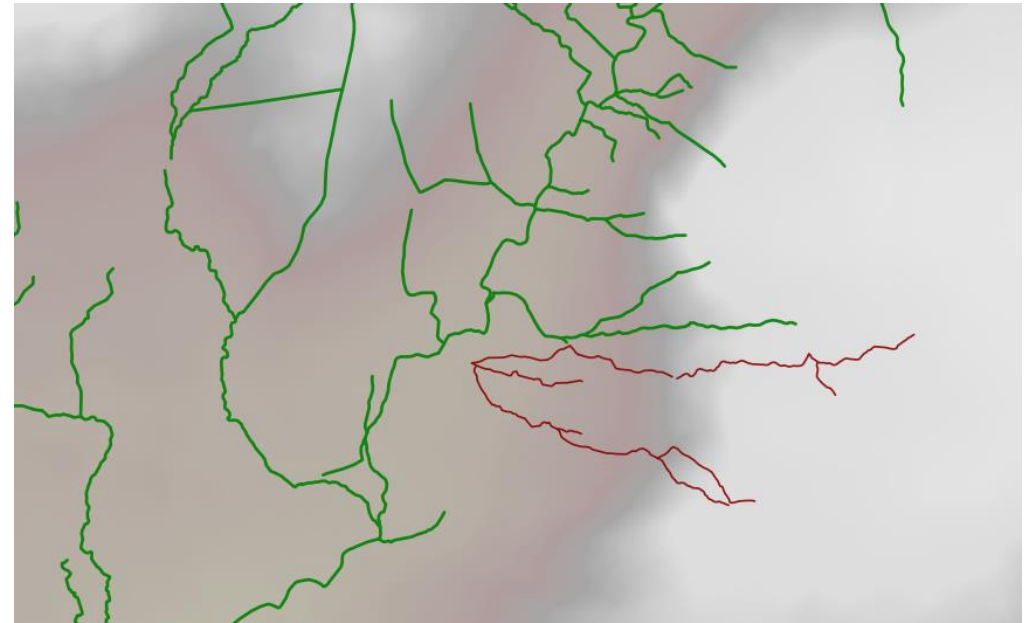
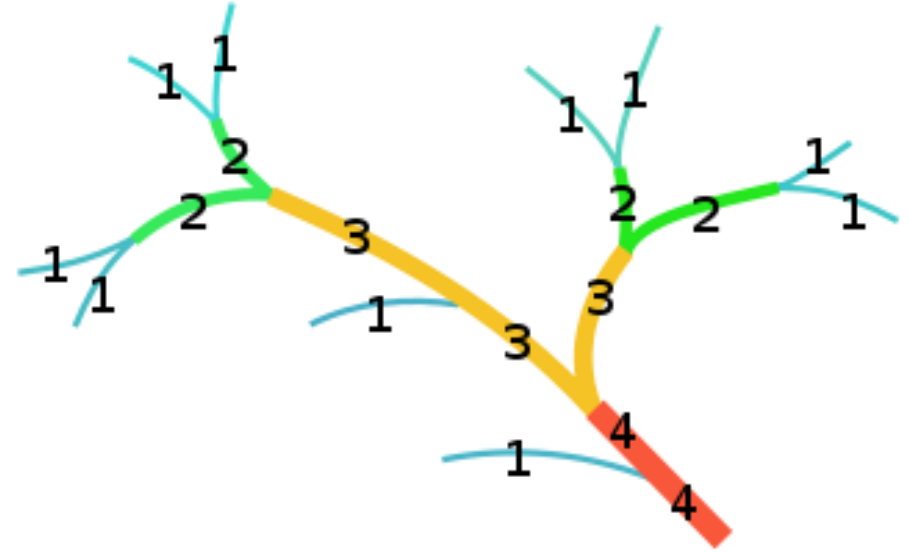
- Currently river waterbodies are entirely contained within river sub basin
- River sub basins are nested within a Catchment
- Knock-on impacts
  - Reported data
  - Monitoring sites
  - Intersection tables
  - EPA systems, maps etc





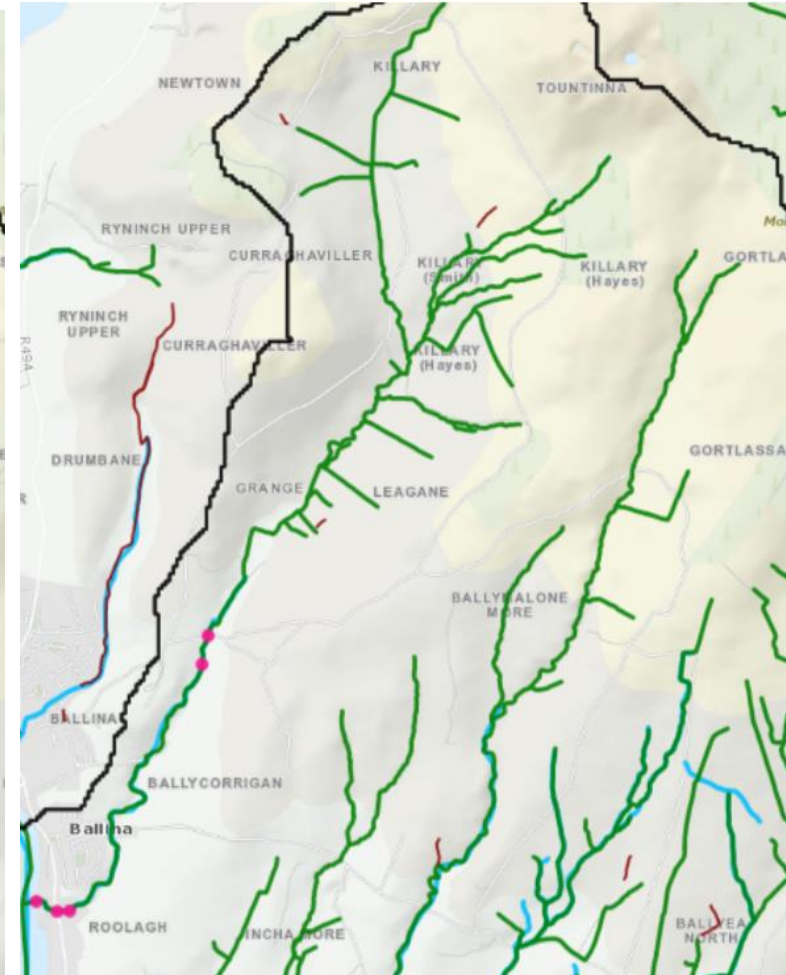
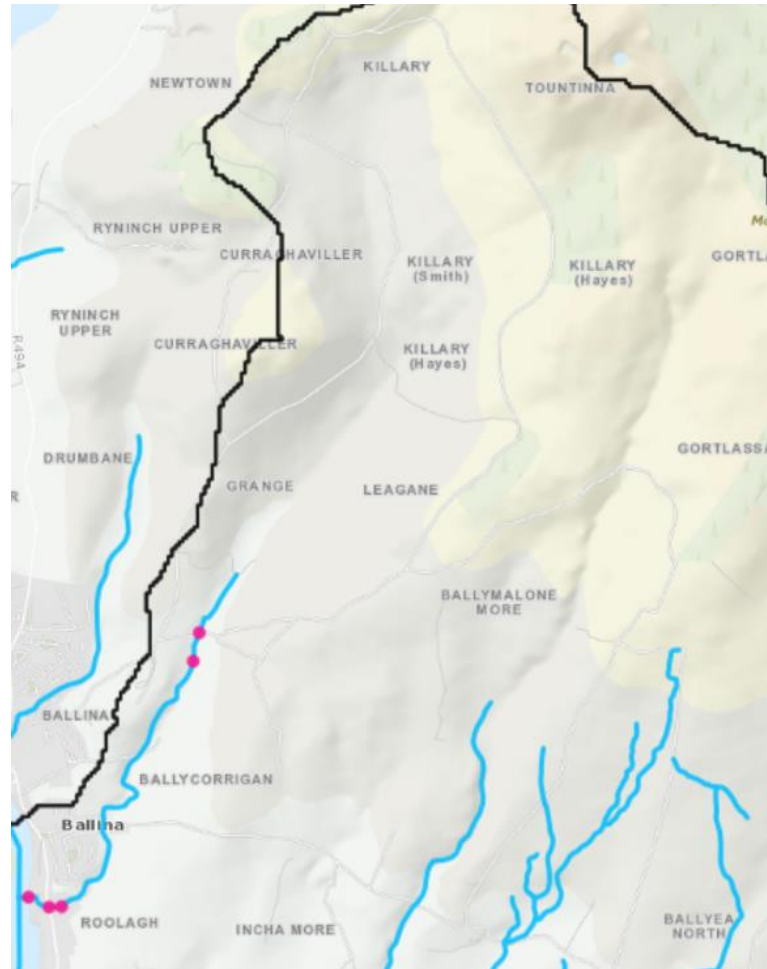
# Future Improvements

1. Northern Ireland data
2. Small streams and drainage ditch identification
3. Weirs and locks
4. Attribution
  - Sinuosity
  - Strahler order
  - Area draining to segment start nodes
5. Further refinement of disconnected edges



# Summary

- Network edges: 699,299
  - previously 116,780
- Connected length: 127,548 Km
  - previously 84,817
- Disconnected length: 6,858 Km
- Percent connected: 94.9%
  - initial requirement was 90%





# Thank You



[catchments@epa.ie](mailto:catchments@epa.ie)

All photo credits: Dr. Jenny Deakin







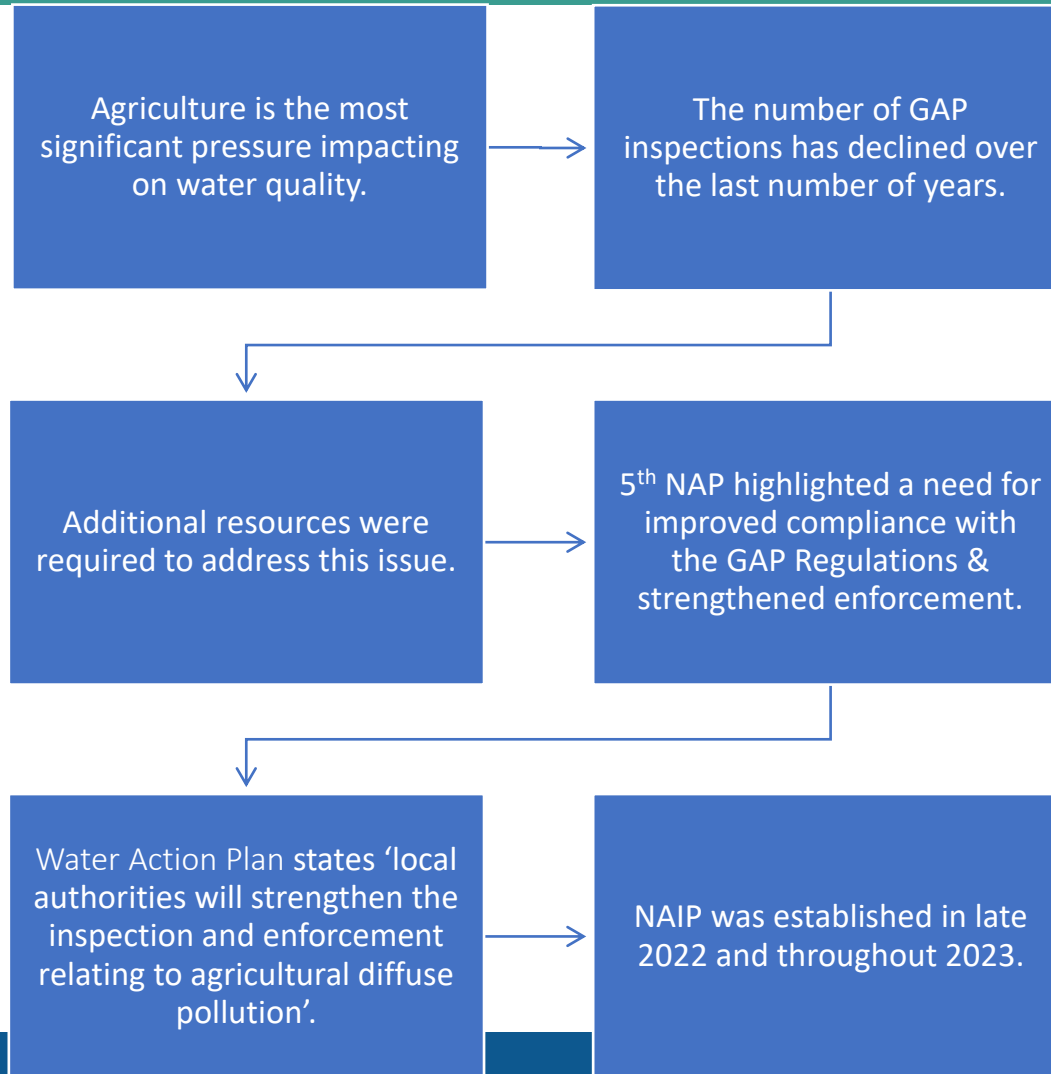
epa

Environmental Protection Agency  
*An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil*

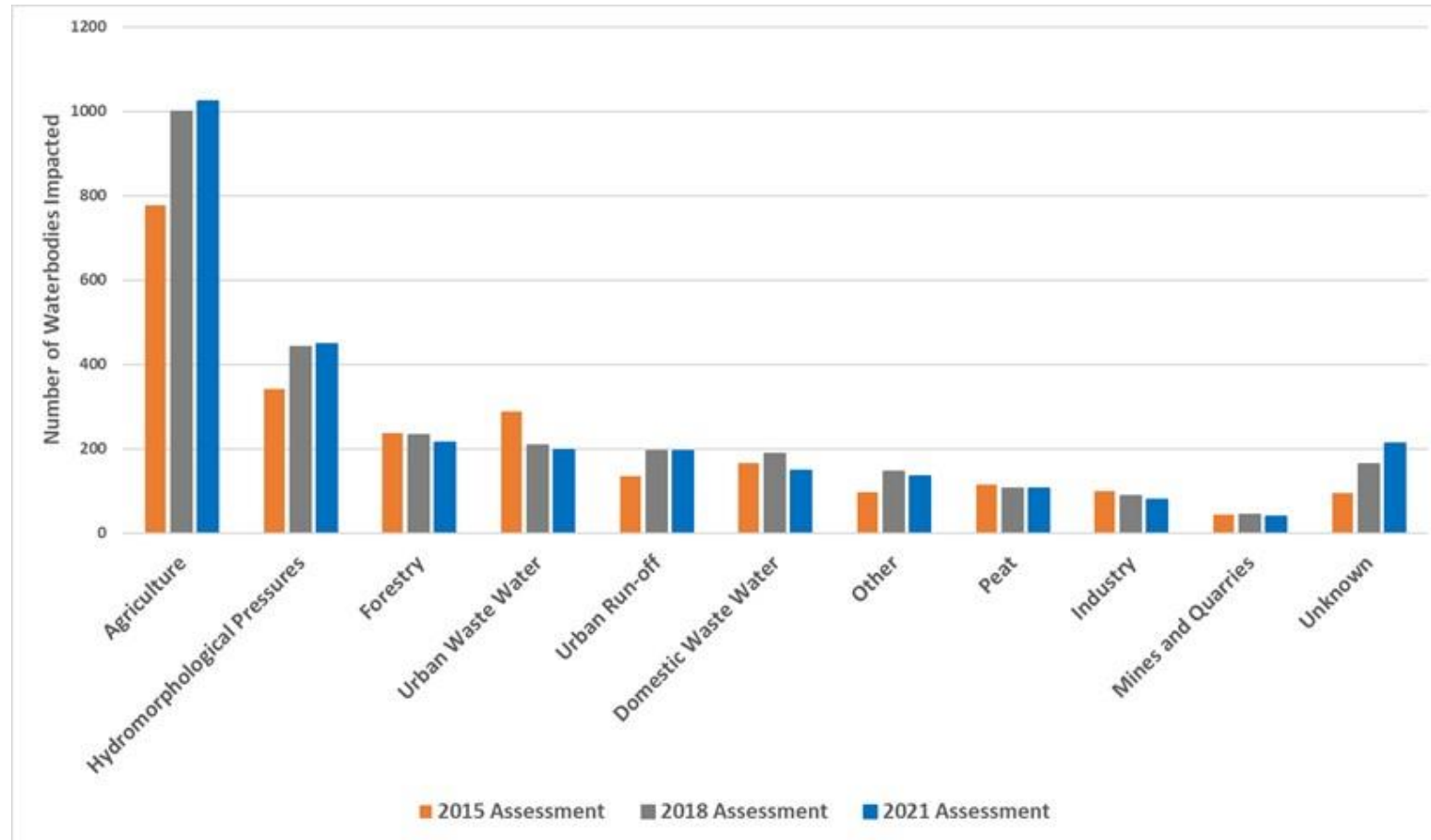
# National Agricultural Inspections Programme (NAIP)

Ray Cullinane  
Senior Manager, EPA  
NTIG Update  
05 December 2024

# Why the need for the NAIP?

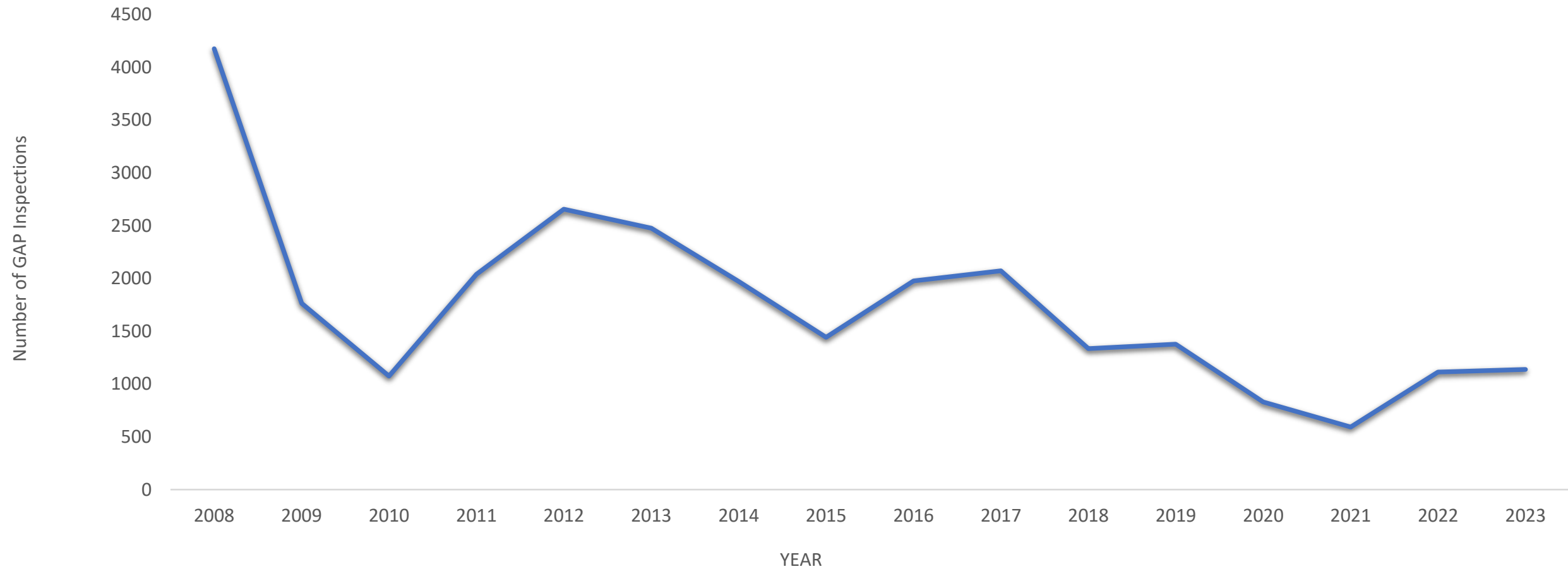


# Pressures causing impacts on water quality





# GAP Inspection Numbers 2008-2023



# NAIP Programme & EPA's Role



The programme includes the development and delivery of:

- A **risk-based** national inspection plan
- **Guidance and tools** to assist in **selecting farms** and **carrying out** inspections (e.g. maps)
- Issue **guidance and provide a training programme** for local authorities
- Establish and chair a **NAIP Working Group**
- To **direct local authorities** where they fail to meet the objectives of the NAIP
- **Make recommendations** to prevent and reduce water pollution from agriculture sources
- **Report to the Minister** every 4 years on progress (Art. 29.2)

# Risk based inspection plan



## **Water Action Plan 2024 has a target of 4,500 farms/annum to be inspected**

- Risk based inspection approach focused in areas of higher relative risk
- ~3,300 farms targeted for 2024, increasing to 4,500 in 2025
- EPA has allocated inspection numbers to each local authority for 2024 and 2025 based on the number of water bodies at risk with agriculture identified as a significant pressure
- Additional resources allocated using the same criteria
- Quality of inspections and follow up are also critical to assess compliance
- EPA Targeted Agricultural Measures + Pollution Impact Potential (PIP) Maps

Targeted number of initial GAP inspections allocated to each local authority  
in 2024 & 2025 based on the number of water bodies at risk

Local Authority	No. Waterbodies that need targeted agriculture measures	No. of Farms Inspected Initial GAP 2022	No. of Initial GAP Inspections 2023	No. of Initial GAP Inspections 2024	No. Initial GAP inspections 2025
Carlow	40	48	51	108	141
Cavan	43	51	21	119	152
Clare	52	0	0	106	139
Cork	182	317	356	453	587
Donegal	89	59	32	147	214
Dun Laoghaire	1	3	0	27	44
Fingal	11	10	87	41	74
Galway	32	16	25	38	72
Kerry	47	14	0	106	139
Kildare	46	32	37	162	196
Kilkenny	77	58	82	241	308
Laois	45	49	30	101	134
Leitrim	21	13	10	46	79
Limerick	57	115	83	161	194
Longford	18	8	7	44	77
Louth	28	0	7	59	92
Mayo	38	3	15	121	154
Meath	77	85	122	251	318
Monaghan	47	94	34	123	156
Offaly	42	3	7	107	140
Roscommon	30	20	25	41	74
Sligo	16	1	4	46	79
South Dublin	1	3	3	23	40
Tipperary	129	21	34	250	350
Waterford	47	0	0	136	170
Westmeath	27	8	0	37	70
Wexford	97	9	38	204	271
Wicklow	30	1	27	48	81
Total	1,370	1,041	1,137	3,346	4,545

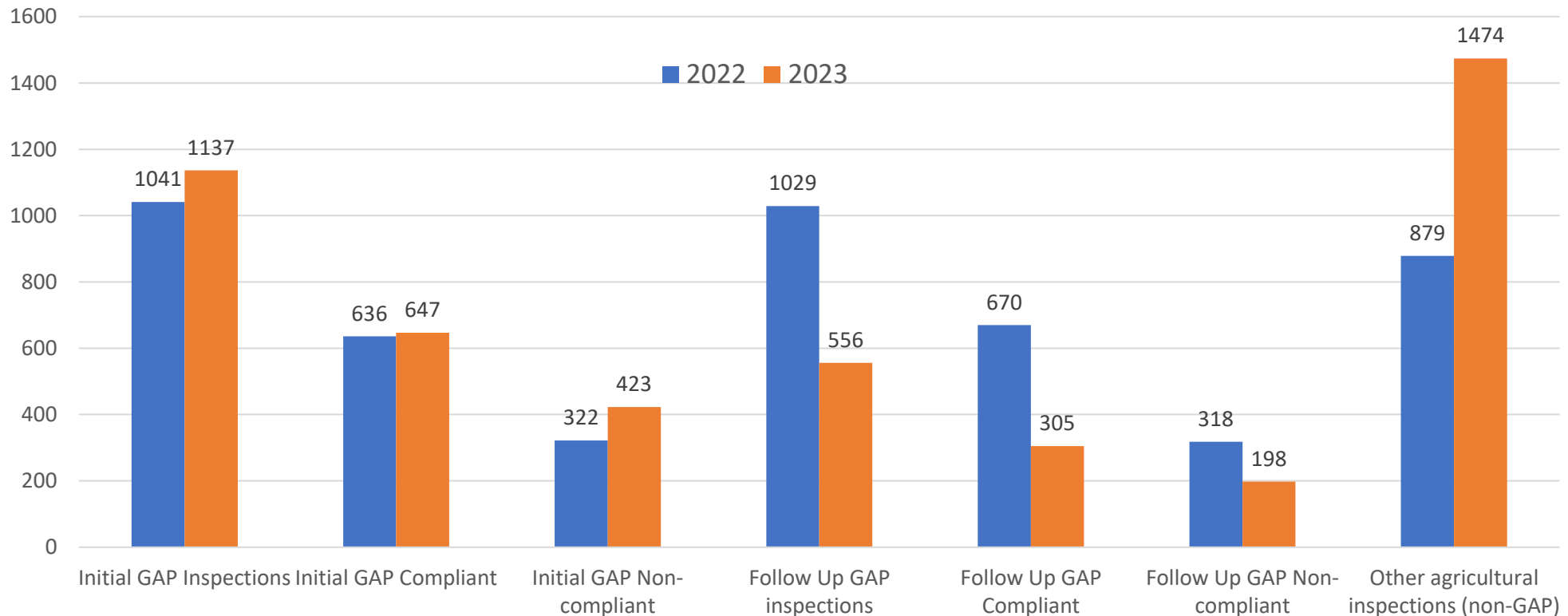


# Farm Inspection Statistics

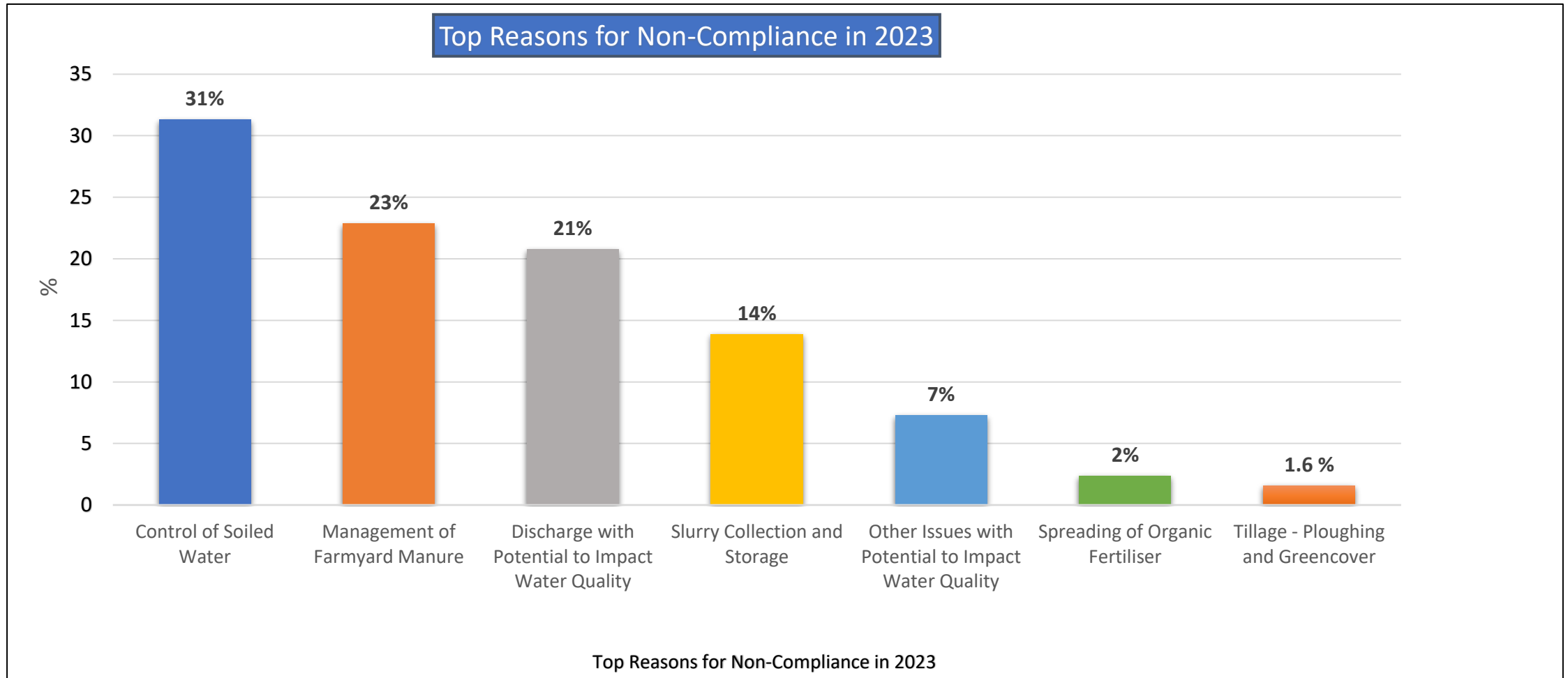
## Types of agricultural inspections undertaken by local authorities



Comparison of Agricultural Inspections undertaken in 2022 & 2023



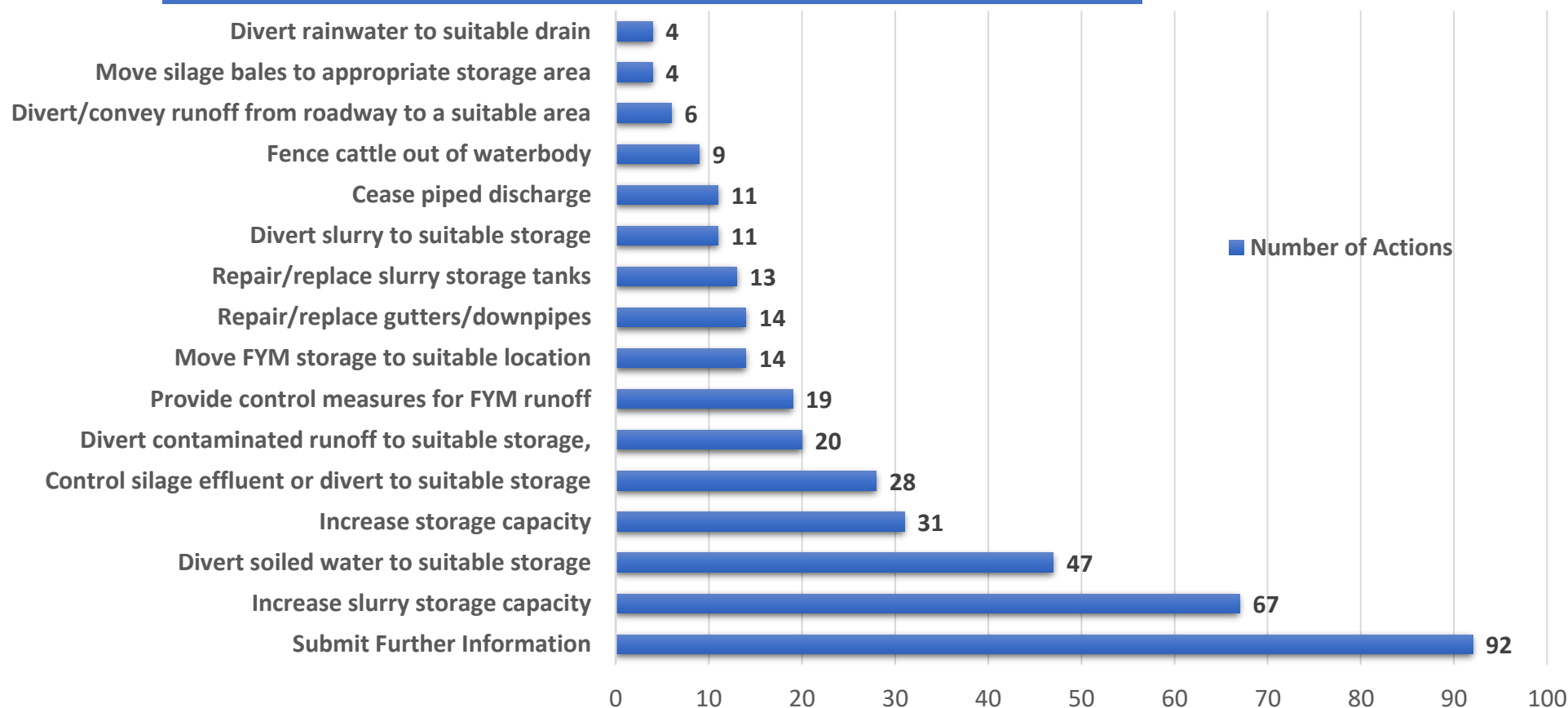
# Summary of reported non-compliance issues



# Types of Corrective Actions



## Types of corrective actions requested by local authorities to address non-compliances in 2023



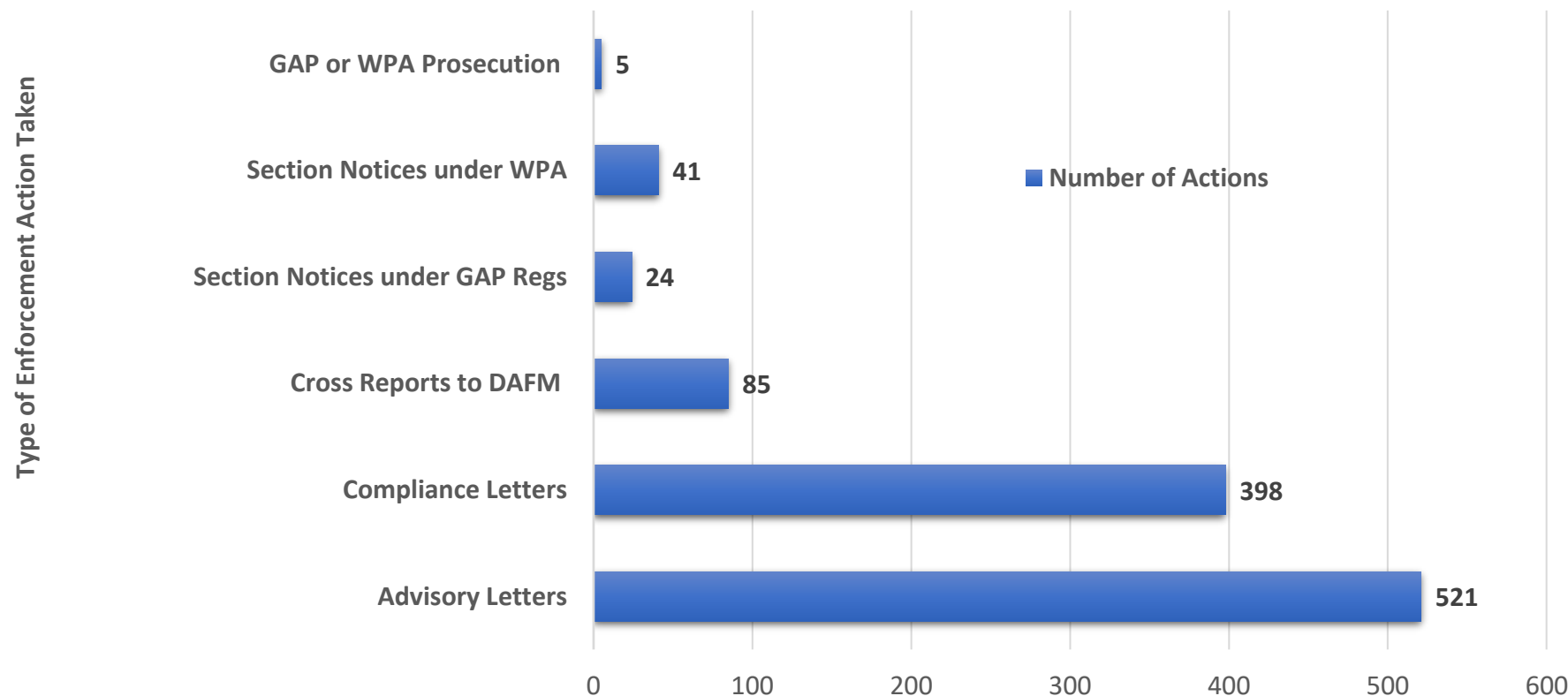


# Farm Inspection Statistics

## Types of Enforcement Actions



### Types of Enforcement Actions taken by local authorities in 2023



In 2023: Rate of non-compliance in initial and follow up inspections was approx. 35 to 37%

# Building Capacity in 2023 & 2024



- NAIP Working Group – consistency of approach
- Guidance and tools for selecting farms
- Templates and guidance for carrying out and recording farm inspections
- Methodology for follow-up and closure of issues detected
- Training Programme (on-site & webinars, case studies workshops, inspection manual)
- Additional resources – DHLGH sanctioned to recruit 57 new local authority inspectors (42 in place)

# 2024 Updates



## NAIP Training Events in 2024

- Webinars on 6th June and 24th October
- On-farm training on 18th June and 30th October
- Case Study Workshop on 11th September

## Other Updates:

- Simplified Reporting Spreadsheet
- Revised Storage Calculation Toolset
- New Planning Guidance for farm applications
- New NAIP Guidance & Training Handbook
- New NIECE Portal





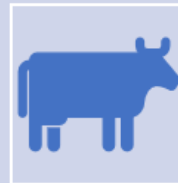
# Training Resources



## National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP) Guidance and Training Handbook October 2024



The NAIP Guidance and Training Handbook has been recently published on the NIECE Portal



Further training on farm inspections will be rolled out by the LASNTG in 2025



New Training Course will be certified. Two day classroom and one day on-farm



# Key Messages

- Increase number of farm inspections to 4,500 by 2025.
- Inspections to be risk-based and targeted (Targeted Agricultural Measures Map and PIP Maps).
- Proactively assess compliance with the GAP Regs – follow up inspections to ensure corrective actions are taken and take appropriate enforcement action where non-compliances are detected.
- Prioritise recruitment of newly sanctioned staff.
- Increase knowledge and capacity building (Guidance, training manual, LASNTG Course).
- Continued focus on improving water quality through compliance promotion and awareness.



Improvement in Water Quality

Thank you!

