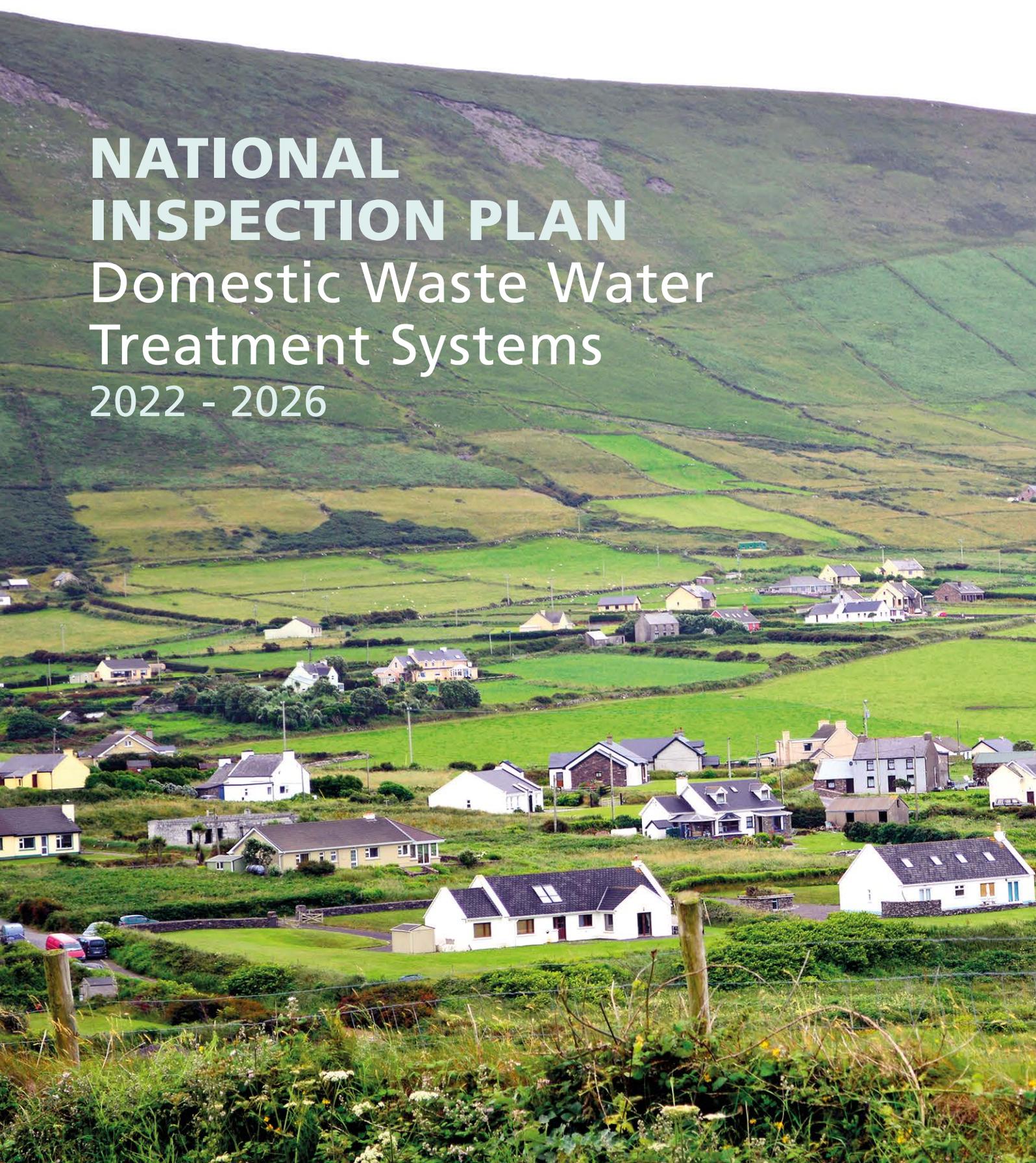


NATIONAL INSPECTION PLAN

Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems

2022 - 2026



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

The EPA is responsible for protecting and improving the environment as a valuable asset for the people of Ireland. We are committed to protecting people and the environment from the harmful effects of radiation and pollution.

The work of the EPA can be divided into three main areas:

Regulation: *Implementing regulation and environmental compliance systems to deliver good environmental outcomes and target those who don't comply.*

Knowledge: *Providing high quality, targeted and timely environmental data, information and assessment to inform decision making.*

Advocacy: *Working with others to advocate for a clean, productive and well protected environment and for sustainable environmental practices.*

Our responsibilities include:

Licensing

- Large-scale industrial, waste and petrol storage activities;
- Urban waste water discharges;
- The contained use and controlled release of Genetically Modified Organisms;
- Sources of ionising radiation;
- Greenhouse gas emissions from industry and aviation through the EU Emissions Trading Scheme.

National Environmental Enforcement

- Audit and inspection of EPA licensed facilities;
- Drive the implementation of best practice in regulated activities and facilities;
- Oversee local authority responsibilities for environmental protection;
- Regulate the quality of public drinking water and enforce urban waste water discharge authorisations;
- Assess and report on public and private drinking water quality;
- Coordinate a network of public service organisations to support action against environmental crime;
- Prosecute those who flout environmental law and damage the environment.

Waste Management and Chemicals in the Environment

- Implement and enforce waste regulations including national enforcement issues;
- Prepare and publish national waste statistics and the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan;
- Develop and implement the National Waste Prevention Programme;
- Implement and report on legislation on the control of chemicals in the environment.

Water Management

- Engage with national and regional governance and operational structures to implement the Water Framework Directive;
- Monitor, assess and report on the quality of rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters, bathing waters and groundwaters, and measurement of water levels and river flows.

Climate Science & Climate Change

- Publish Ireland's greenhouse gas emission inventories and projections;
- Provide the Secretariat to the Climate Change Advisory Council and support to the National Dialogue on Climate Action;
- Support National, EU and UN Climate Science and Policy development activities.

Environmental Monitoring & Assessment

- Design and implement national environmental monitoring systems: technology, data management, analysis and forecasting;
- Produce the State of Ireland's Environment and Indicator Reports;
- Monitor air quality and implement the EU Clean Air for Europe Directive, the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution, and the National Emissions Ceiling Directive;
- Oversee the implementation of the Environmental Noise Directive;
- Assess the impact of proposed plans and programmes on the Irish environment.
- Environmental Research and Development
- Coordinate and fund national environmental research activity to identify pressures, inform policy and provide solutions;
- Collaborate with national and EU environmental research activity.

Radiological Protection

- Monitoring radiation levels and assess public exposure to ionising radiation and electromagnetic fields;
- Assist in developing national plans for emergencies arising from nuclear accidents;
- Monitor developments abroad relating to nuclear installations and radiological safety;
- Provide, or oversee the provision of, specialist radiation protection services.

Guidance, Awareness Raising, and Accessible Information

- Provide independent evidence-based reporting, advice and guidance to Government, industry and the public on environmental and radiological protection topics;
- Promote the link between health and wellbeing, the economy and a clean environment;
- Promote environmental awareness including supporting behaviours for resource efficiency and climate transition;
- Promote radon testing in homes and workplaces and encourage remediation where necessary.

Partnership and networking

- Work with international and national agencies, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, representative bodies and government departments to deliver environmental and radiological protection, research coordination and science-based decision making.

Management and structure of the EPA

The EPA is managed by a full time Board, consisting of a Director General and five Directors. The work is carried out across five Offices:

- Office of Environmental Sustainability
- Office of Environmental Enforcement
- Office of Evidence and Assessment
- Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring
- Office of Communications and Corporate Services

The EPA is assisted by advisory committees who meet regularly to discuss issues of concern and provide advice to the Board.



National Inspection Plan for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems 2022 - 2026

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil
PO Box 3000, Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford, Ireland
Telephone: +353 53 9160600 Fax: +353 53 9160699
Email: info@epa.ie Website: www.epa.ie
Lo Call 818 335599

Published by Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland

Disclaimer

Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material contained in this publication, complete accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Neither the Environmental Protection Agency nor the authors accept any responsibility whatsoever for loss or damage occasioned or claimed to have been occasioned, in part or in full, as a consequence of any person acting, or refraining from acting, as a result of a matter contained in this publication.

All or part of this publication may be reproduced without further permission, provided the source is acknowledged.

© Environmental Protection Agency 2021

December 2021

ISBN 978-1-80009-023-1

CONTENTS

Summary	1
1 Introduction	2
2 Background	2
2.1 Requirement for making and reviewing a plan	2
2.2 Scope	3
2.3 Previous inspection plans	3
2.4 Review and revision process	4
3 Responsibilities and implementation	5
3.1 Homeowners	5
3.2 Water services authorities	5
3.3 Environmental Protection Agency	5
3.4 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	6
4 Inspections	6
4.1 Introduction	6
4.2 Number of inspections	6
4.3 Risk methodology and allocation of inspections	7
4.4 Local site selection by water services authorities	14
4.5 Inspection process	15
4.6 Enforcement of advisory notices	15
5 Engagement	17
6 Conclusion	18
APPENDIX A Enforcement flowchart	19

SUMMARY

The national inspection plan for domestic waste water treatment systems (DWWTSS) is prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and implemented by water services authorities in accordance with the Water Services Act 2007 (as amended). This document is the fourth iteration of the national inspection plan and covers the period 2022–2026. It is being issued following a review of the 2018–2021 plan.

The plan sets out requirements for:

- ▶ minimum inspection numbers;
- ▶ risk-based allocation of inspections;
- ▶ selection of sites at local level;
- ▶ enforcement of advisory notices; and
- ▶ public engagement activities.

The minimum number of inspections is set at 1,000 in 2022 and increases to 1,200 per annum in 2023–2026. Water services authorities should conduct additional inspections where there is evidence that individual DWWTSS or clusters of DWWTSS are causing particular water quality problems in an area. Water services authorities may also carry out increased numbers of inspections under the national inspection plan on their own initiative.

This plan is implemented by water services authorities with support by the EPA. The EPA will report on the implementation of the plan annually.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Water Services Act 2007 (as amended) requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to produce a national inspection plan for domestic waste water treatment systems (DWWTs), also known as septic tank systems. There are nearly half a million DWWTs in Ireland. The purpose of the plan is to protect human health and water quality from the risks posed by DWWTs. This document is the fourth plan and covers the period 2022 to 2026. It sets out the background, minimum inspection numbers, risk-based allocation of inspections, requirements for enforcement of advisory notices and for engagement to promote broader compliance. The national inspection plan is implemented by water services authorities who conduct the inspections and engagement activities, under the supervision and with the support of the EPA.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 REQUIREMENT FOR MAKING AND REVIEWING A PLAN

Section 70K.(1) of the Water Services Act 2007 (as amended) requires the EPA to:

... make a national plan ... referred to as 'the national inspection plan' ... with regard to the inspection and monitoring of domestic waste water treatment systems.

The EPA must have regard to:

- (a) relevant risks or potential risks to human health or the environment, and, in particular—
 - (i) risks to water, air or soil, or to plants and animals,
 - (ii) nuisances through noise or odours, and,
 - (iii) risks to the countryside or places of special interest,
- (b) relevant available information in relation to specific types and locations of domestic waste water treatment systems,
- (c) appropriate and specific qualitative and quantitative criteria, targets and indicators for inspections, and
- (d) any incidental or ancillary matters or such matters as may be prescribed by the Minister.

The EPA must review the national inspection plan at least every five years and make revisions if necessary.

It is the function of each water services authority to:

take necessary measures to implement ... the national inspection plan, including arranging for inspections ... to be carried out within its functional area, as provided for in the plan.

2.2 SCOPE

The national inspection plan is based on a two-strand approach (Figure 1). Strand 1 is inspections by water services authority DWWTs inspectors to determine if DWWTs are operating correctly and being adequately maintained. Where problems are identified, the water services authority issues the homeowner an advisory notice requiring remedial works. Strand 2 is engagement to ensure all homeowners with DWWTs know how to operate and maintain systems correctly, and understand the risks to human health and water quality from poorly operated and maintained systems.

There are several other interventions related to DWWTs including: grant schemes; interventions in priority areas and high-status catchments under the national river basin management plan; planning control; building control; and construction products control and related standards. These are outside the scope of the national inspection plan.



Figure 1: The building blocks of the plan

2.3 PREVIOUS INSPECTION PLANS

The EPA prepared the first national inspection plan in 2013, covering 2013–2014. The plan required water services authorities to undertake a minimum of 1,000 inspections each year across the country. The EPA developed a risk-based methodology to assist the water services authorities with the selection of locations for inspections. The methodology took into account the potential risks posed by DWWTs to human health and water quality.

The second plan was for 2015–2017. Some minor changes were made to the risk maps used for site selection as additional environmental data had become available. This resulted in a slight change to the number of inspections in some counties.

The third plan was for 2018–2021. The risk-based methodology was updated to take into account additional information gathered on water quality during the preparation of the 2018–2021 national river basin management plan. Inspections were allocated based on different risk zones.

These plans and annual implementation reports are available on the EPA website.

2.4 REVIEW AND REVISION PROCESS

The EPA met with external stakeholders during February–July 2021 to provide an overview of the review process and seek views. These organisations were:

- ▶ Health Service Executive;
- ▶ The Water Forum;
- ▶ Irish Environmental Network;
- ▶ Network for Ireland’s Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (Steering Committee and Septic Tank Inspectors Network);
- ▶ Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- ▶ Local Authority Waters Programme; and
- ▶ County and City Management Association.

The EPA gathered and analysed information on the operation of the 2018–2021 national inspection plan. The EPA prepared a review document which reports on the 2018–2021 plan and made eleven recommendations, which have informed the preparation of the 2022–2026 plan. The EPA published the draft 2022–2026 plan and 2018–2021 review for public consultation from 21/09/2021 to 02/11/2021. The EPA received thirteen submissions, from:

- ▶ The Water Forum;
- ▶ Sustainable Water Network;
- ▶ Health Service Executive;
- ▶ Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- ▶ National Federation of Group Water Schemes;
- ▶ Wicklow County Council;
- ▶ Wexford County Council;
- ▶ Longford County Council;
- ▶ Leitrim County Council;
- ▶ Kerry County Council;
- ▶ Cork County Council;
- ▶ Clare County Council; and
- ▶ a member of the public.

The submissions were taken into account in finalising the 2022–2026 plan as set out in the *Public Consultation Response Document* which is being published with the plan.

While the plan is for the five years from 2022 to 2026, it may be reviewed at any time if there is significant reason.

3 RESPONSIBILITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 HOMEOWNERS

Homeowners with DWWTSs are required by law to:

- ▶ register their DWWTS with 'Protect Our Water', which is the registration service operated on behalf of water services authorities: www.protectourwater.ie;
- ▶ ensure their DWWTS is not a risk to human health or the environment and complies with regulations;
- ▶ not impede DWWTS inspectors; and
- ▶ comply with an advisory notice if the DWWTS fails inspection.

There is further information on the inspection process on the EPA website.

3.2 WATER SERVICES AUTHORITIES

Water services authorities are responsible for the implementation of this national inspection plan at local level. This includes:

- ▶ selecting sites for inspection and completing the minimum inspection allocations in accordance with this plan;
- ▶ ensuring inspections are carried out in accordance with the legislation and guidance as set out in this plan;
- ▶ following up on advisory notices including engagement and prosecution where warranted; and
- ▶ completing public engagement activities in accordance with this plan.

Water services authorities also need to decide whether additional inspections, i.e. above the minimum limit set in this plan, are required to protect the local environment and public health.

Local authorities have several other responsibilities for DWWTSs outside of the national inspection plan, including administration of the DWWTS grant schemes, responding to complaints and planning and building control.

3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

The EPA is responsible for producing and reviewing this national inspection plan, appointing water service authority DWWTS inspectors and supervising water services authorities in relation to their functions. The EPA also:

- ▶ monitors implementation and reports annually on the national inspection plan;
- ▶ coordinates the Septic Tank Inspectors Network; and
- ▶ hosts and provides technical support for the Domestic Waste Water Application computer system used by DWWTS inspectors.

The EPA undertakes public engagement and supports public engagement by water services authorities and other stakeholders.

3.4 DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HERITAGE

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage sets national water policy and strategy and prepares environmental legislation. The Department's website provides information on the available financial assistance for remediation of DWWTSs: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6cc1e-domestic-waste-water-treatment-systems-septic-tanks/>

4 INSPECTIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of the inspection plan is to reduce the risk to human health and water quality by directly engaging with homeowners to determine if their DWWTS is being correctly operated and maintained. Inspections are targeted in areas where there is greatest risk to human health and water quality from DWWTSs. The following core principles underly the allocation of inspections:

- ▶ all areas of the country are covered and are subject to inspection;
- ▶ risks to human health (e.g. contamination of household wells or direct exposure to ponded effluent) and the environment (surface and groundwater quality) are considered;
- ▶ inspections are prioritised into areas of higher relative risk; and
- ▶ the methodology is based on the source-pathway-receptor (S-P-R) model.

4.2 NUMBER OF INSPECTIONS

The number of inspections in this plan is set at a minimum of 1,000 in 2022 and increases to 1,200 in 2023–2026.

The number of inspections outlined is the minimum number required. Water services authorities should conduct additional inspections where there is evidence that individual DWWTSs or clusters of DWWTSs are causing particular water quality problems in an area.

Water services authorities may also carry out increased numbers of inspections under the national inspection plan on their own initiative.

The minimum number of DWWTS inspections per annum does not include inspections in response to complaints, verification inspections to check DWWTSs have been fixed or DWWTS work by the Local Authority Waters Programme and in relation to grants in priority areas for action and high-status objective catchments.

4.3 RISK METHODOLOGY AND ALLOCATION OF INSPECTIONS

DWWTs installed and maintained in accordance with best practice provide adequate treatment and disposal of waste water. The risks to public health and water quality are minimised by having the correct design, suitable ground conditions and proper operation and maintenance of the system.

The main risks associated with DWWTs if not installed and maintained properly are:

- ▶ pollution of watercourses and groundwater; and
- ▶ contamination of a drinking water source (including household wells) or ponding of sewage on the ground.

Figures 2 and 3 show how a discharge from a DWWT can find its way to a river or groundwater used for drinking water. In Figure 2 the discharge moves through thin subsoil and fractures in the rock to reach a drinking water well. The soil and bedrock cannot treat the pollution and therefore it can end up in the drinking water well.

In Figure 3 the ground is not able to treat the waste water as it cannot go down into the soil. This can result in ponding of the waste water from the DWWT at the surface which can be a potential threat to human health. There is also the potential in such a situation for the waste water to move overland or in the subsoil and enter a drinking water well by flowing down the outside of the well casing if it has not been properly installed. This can cause contamination of the water supply.

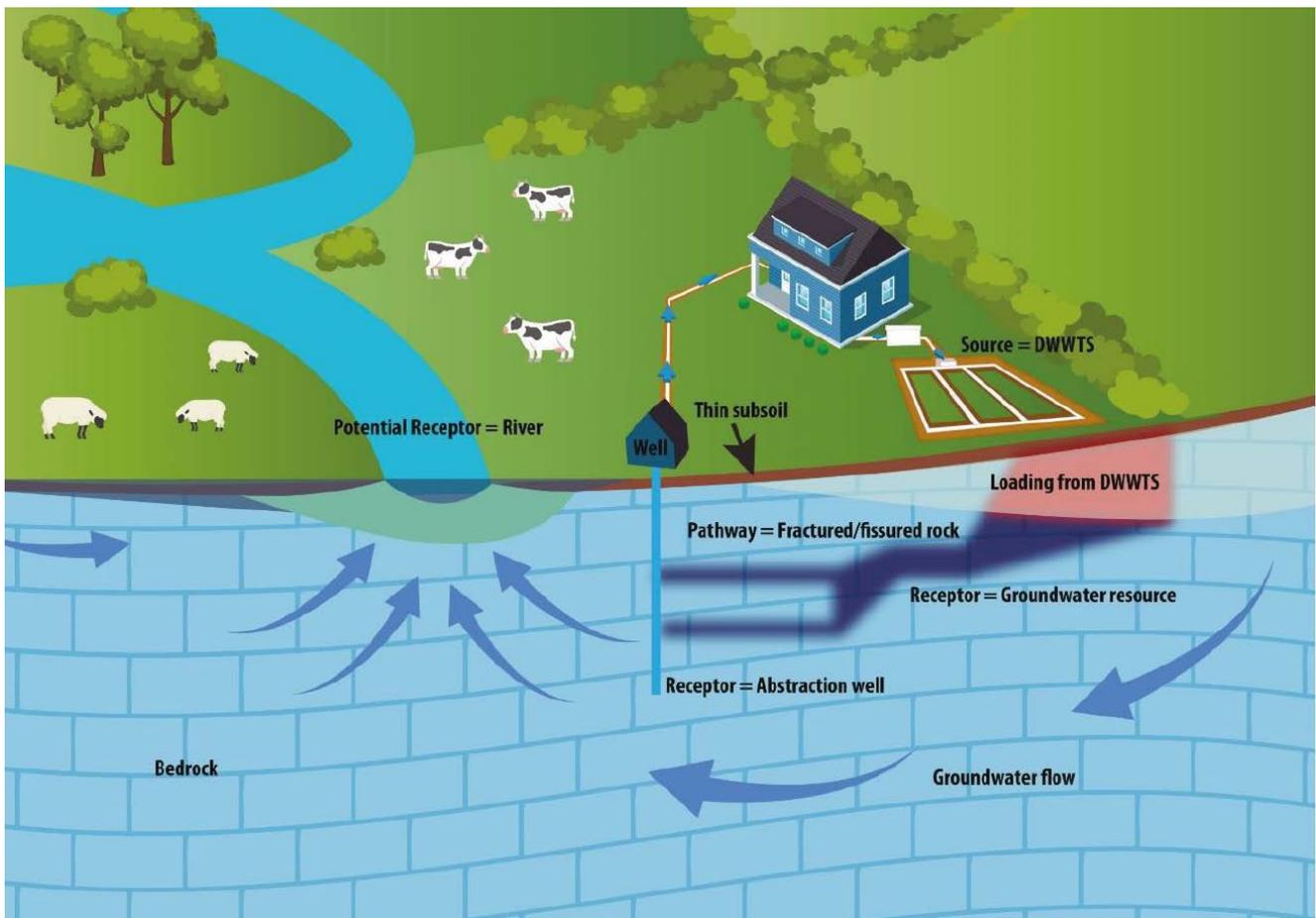


Figure 2: S-P-R model for domestic waste water treatment system with subsurface pathways

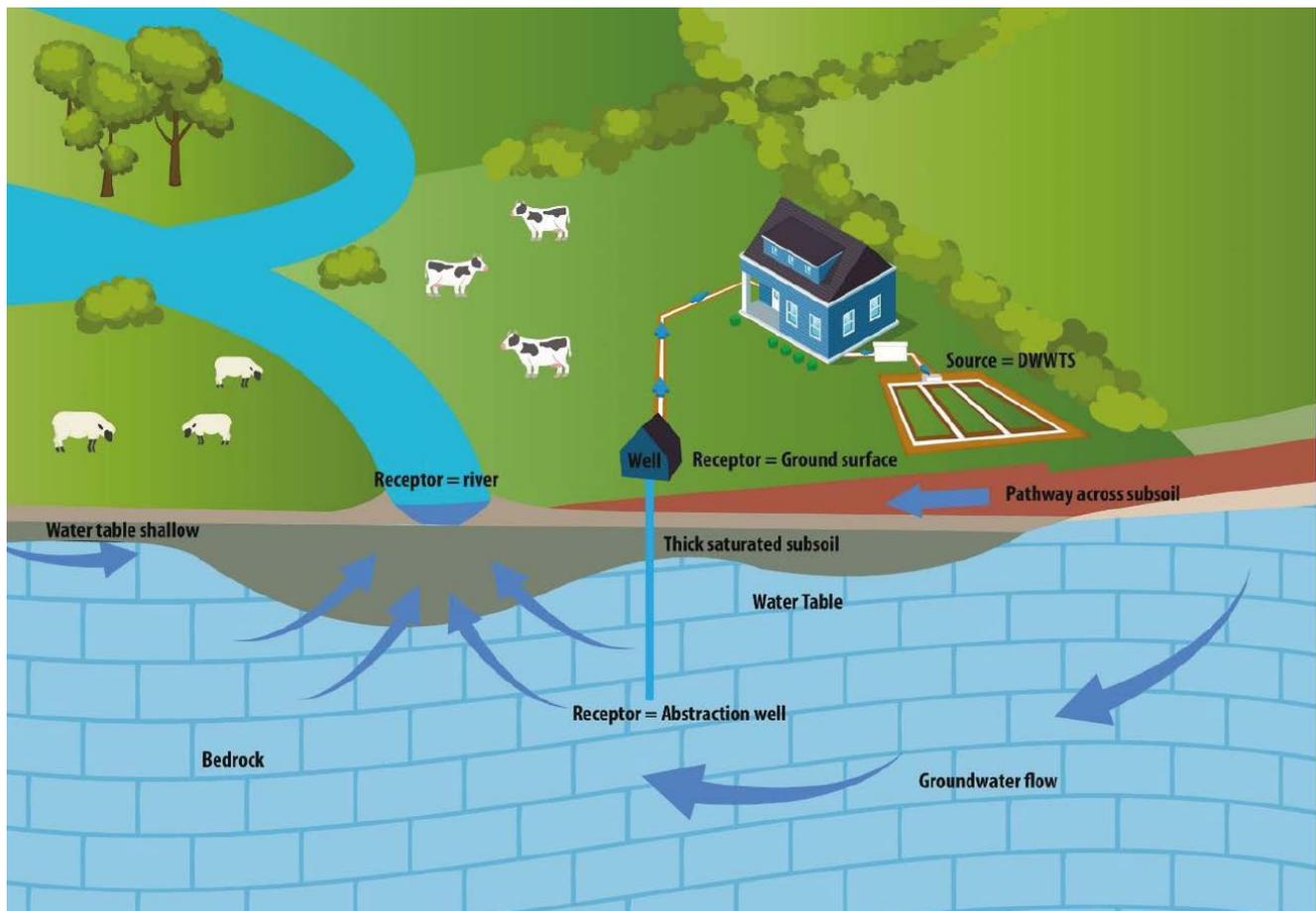


Figure 3: S-P-R model for domestic waste water treatment system with surface pathways

The EPA developed a risk-based methodology in 2013 in conjunction with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) and other experts to assist water services authorities in the selection of properties for inspection. The methodology took into account the potential risk posed by domestic waste water to both human health and the environment in a particular area. Further details on how the risk-based methodology was originally developed are outlined in the EPA publication 'A risk-based methodology to assist in the regulation of domestic waste water treatment systems' (EPA, 2013). The risk assessment method uses the source-pathway-receptor model. The model is based on the concept that for a risk to exist there must be a source of potential pollution, a receptor that may be impacted by that pollution and a pathway by which the pollution can get from the source to the receptor.

This methodology was modified slightly for the second national inspection plan and more significantly for the third plan to take account of the 2018–2021 national river basin management plan.

The national river basin management plan 2018–2021 (currently under review) includes a programme of measures aimed at achieving water quality standards required by the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). The national inspection plan is a listed measure in the national river basin management plan. Since 2015, work has been undertaken by the EPA in conjunction with local authorities, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), Irish Water and other stakeholders to assess the significant pressures on water bodies including DWWTs where relevant. As part of the characterisation assessment, the EPA used several modelling tools to help inform the process including the Source Load Apportionment Model (SLAM), Pollution Impact Potential (PIP) maps and the Sanicose model which was developed to inform the risk assessment of DWWTs on water bodies. The following information is used to assess if the DWWTs are a significant pressure for a water body:

- ▶ water quality monitoring;
- ▶ landscape drainage characteristics (based on soils, subsoils and bedrock maps) indicating percolation conditions;
- ▶ the location of houses, particularly in areas with poor drainage characteristics (this was informed by the Sanicose model); and
- ▶ information from inspections and stream walks.

The risk-based methodology in this 2022–2026 plan builds on the 2018–2021 national inspection plan and latest river basin management plan information (Figures 4 and 5). The 2022–2026 methodology provides for a minimum of 1,000 inspections in 2022 and 1,200 per annum from 2023 to 2026, giving total allocations over the five-year period of the plan as follows:

1. 2,400 inspections in areas with higher relative risk to surface waters (Zone 1 on map).
2. 2,400 inspections in areas with higher relative risk to household wells (Zone 2 on map).
3. 1,000 inspections in areas of lower relative risk; any areas outside of the two higher relative risk areas (Zone 3 on map).

Higher relative risk to surface waters (Zone 1 on map): These are areas that do not have public sewage mains and which are within 100m of water bodies where DWWTSs have been identified as a pressure on water quality under the national river basin management plan. There are approximately 6,000 residential buildings with DWWTSs in these areas. This focuses inspection resources with the aim of making significant progress in these areas as quickly as possible to contribute to the river basin management plan goals.

Higher relative risk to private wells (Zone 2 on map): Household wells tend to be at much higher risk of contamination compared to other drinking water supplies. Although DWWTSs are not the only source, DWWTS inspections should be targeted at this problem. Areas where there is higher groundwater susceptibility to percolation of waste water pathogens into groundwater are identified in Figure 5, i.e. areas with 1m or less of soil or nearby karst features over bedrock aquifers. Public sewage and water supply areas were excluded¹. There are an estimated 25,000 residential buildings with DWWTSs in these areas.

¹ There is insufficient information to exclude areas with group water mains. This is included as a local site selection criterion. This could be a further refinement of the national model if information became available.

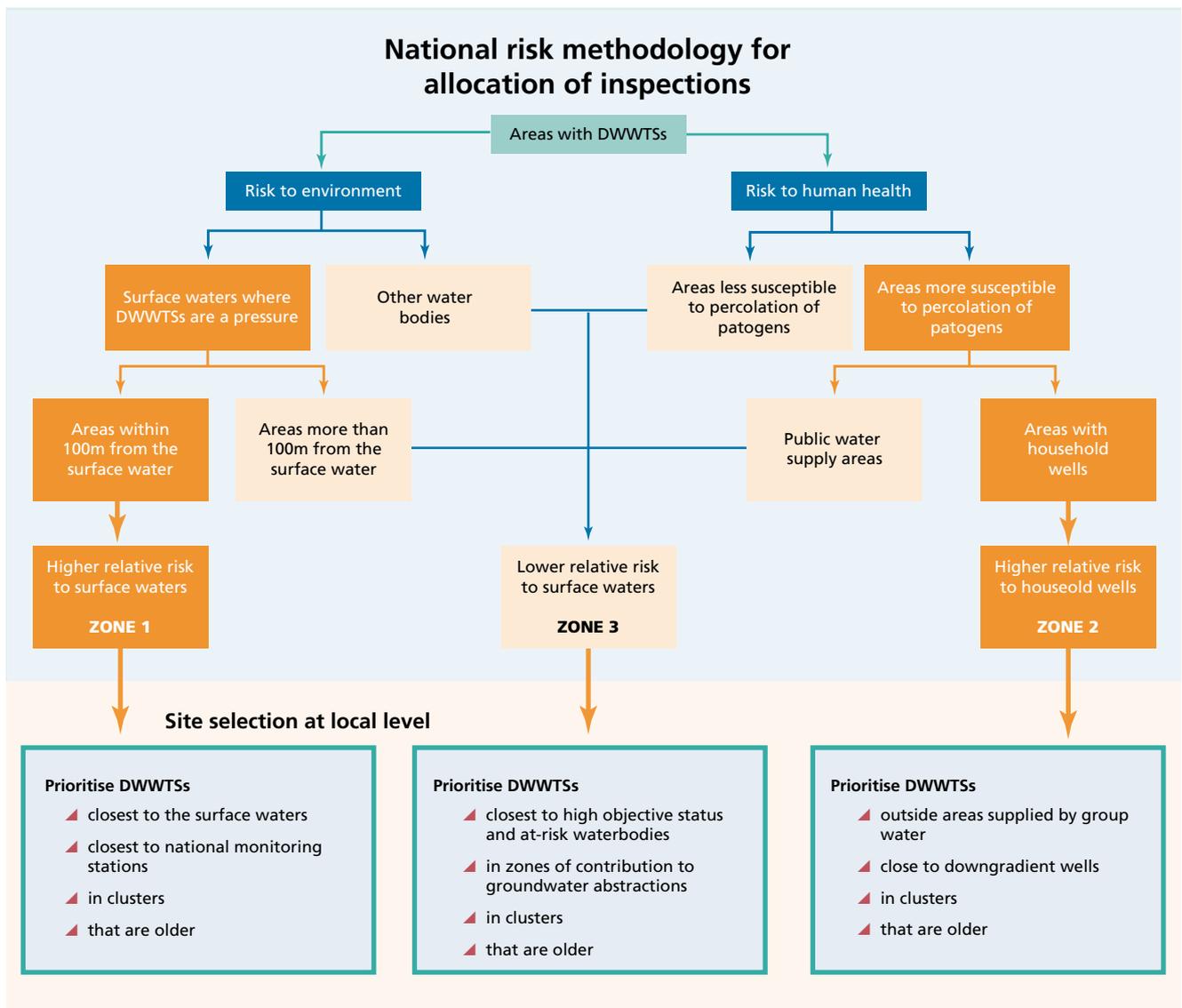


Figure 4: National risk methodology for allocation of inspections and site selection at local level

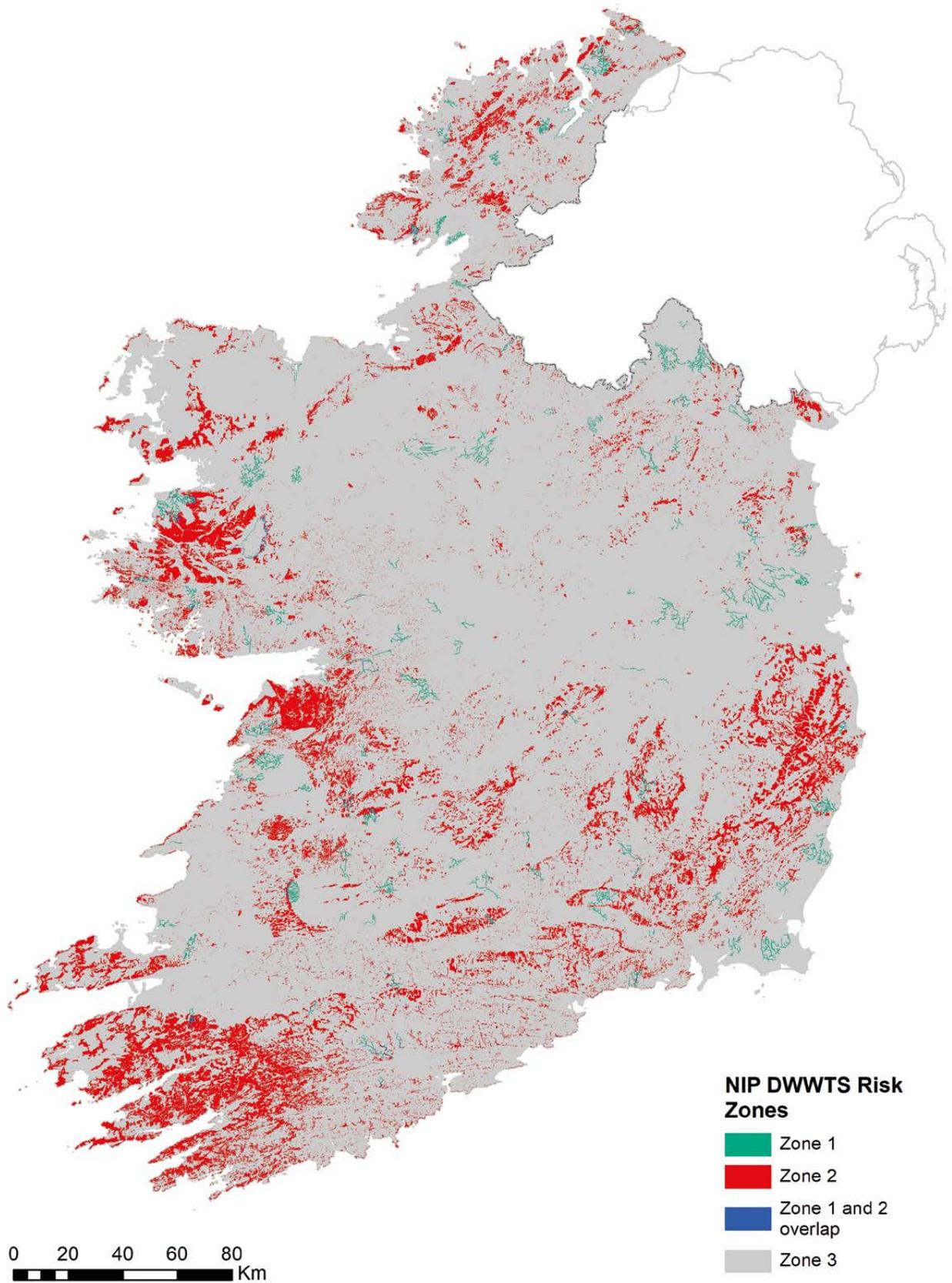


Figure 5: National distribution of risk zones

The allocation of inspections to each water services authority is presented in Table 1. This is weighted based on the estimated percentage of residential buildings in each risk zone in each water services authority area.

Water services authorities must complete their minimum annual allocations each year as prescribed in this plan.

Water services authorities must also ensure the inspections are distributed in the three zones as prescribed, but this can be achieved over the five years of the plan. Water services authorities should give greatest priority to areas where Zones 1 and 2 overlap.

These are minimum requirements and, as stated above, water services authorities should conduct additional inspections where there is evidence that individual DWWTSs or clusters of DWWTSs are causing particular water quality problems in an area.

Table 1: Allocation of inspections to each water services authority

	Inspections 2022–2026				Minimum in 2022	Minimum per annum 2023–2026
	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Total		
Carlow	0	72	15	87	15	18
Cavan	62	68	30	160	28	33
Clare	158	259	40	457	77	95
Cork City	34	9	5	48	8	10
Cork County	106	446	105	657	113	136
Donegal	379	54	85	518	90	107
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	0	9	0	9	1	2
Fingal	53	0	10	63	11	13
Galway City	0	5	0	5	1	1
Galway County	202	216	90	508	88	105
Kerry	110	115	60	285	49	59
Kildare	67	14	40	121	21	25
Kilkenny	43	178	25	246	42	51
Laois	0	29	20	49	9	10
Leitrim	19	14	15	48	8	10
Limerick	129	139	40	308	52	64
Longford	0	5	15	20	4	4
Louth	0	34	25	59	11	12
Mayo	139	58	60	257	45	53
Meath	183	77	45	305	53	63
Monaghan	149	28	20	197	33	41
Offaly	14	5	20	39	7	8
Roscommon	30	5	30	65	13	13
Sligo	5	9	20	34	6	7
South Dublin	0	15	5	20	4	4
Tipperary	87	57	50	194	34	40
Waterford	14	77	25	116	20	24
Westmeath	5	5	25	35	7	7
Wexford	350	221	55	626	106	130
Wicklow	62	177	25	264	44	55
Total	2400	2400	1000	5800	1000	1200

4.4 LOCAL SITE SELECTION BY WATER SERVICES AUTHORITIES

The link between the national risk methodology and local site selection is shown in Figure 4.

The selection of DWWTSs for inspection in areas with higher relative risk to surface waters (Zone 1) should further prioritise (where information is available) DWWTSs that are:

- ▶ closest to the surface waters;
- ▶ close to national monitoring stations;
- ▶ in clusters; and
- ▶ older.

Where these areas intersect with Priority Areas for Action², water services authorities should liaise with the Local Authority Waters Programme when making annual inspection plans to align their DWWTS work programmes. Inspections under the national inspection plan can be conducted in other areas if not appropriate in priority areas at a particular time.

The selection of DWWTSs for inspection in areas with higher relative risk to household wells (Zone 2) should further prioritise (where information is available) DWWTSs that are:

- ▶ outside areas supplied by group water schemes;
- ▶ close to downgradient wells;
- ▶ in clusters; and
- ▶ older.

The selection of DWWTSs in areas of lower relative risk (Zone 3) should prioritise (where information is available) DWWTSs that are:

- ▶ closest to high objective status and at-risk water bodies;
- ▶ in zones of contribution to groundwater abstractions;
- ▶ in clusters; and
- ▶ older.

Water services authorities may also use local knowledge such as information on known water pollution. Water services authorities should document the application of the site selection methodology and outline the justification for the selection of priority areas and individual sites.

² Areas for focused action and collaboration by local authorities, public bodies, and stakeholders as part of implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive in Ireland.

4.5 INSPECTION PROCESS

The inspection process must follow the legal requirements in the Water Services Act 2007 (as amended).

The water services authority sends the homeowner a pre-inspection letter at least 10 days in advance of an inspection taking place. Homeowners do not have to be present but many people prefer to be there so they can hear about any issues. No access to the house itself is required. The water services authority inspector must carry their certificate of appointment and identification and produce these if requested.

The water services authority inspector will check that the DWWTS is not a risk to public health or the environment and complies with the Water Services Acts 2007 and 2012 (Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems) Regulations 2012 (S.I. No. 223 of 2012). The homeowner will be notified of the findings of the inspection. The water services authority issues an advisory notice to the homeowner if their DWWTS fails inspection. The advisory notice specifies the reasons for the failure, what measures need to be taken to fix the failure and timeframe for compliance. Additional information on what to expect from an inspection, including videos and leaflets, is available on the EPA website at: <https://www.epa.ie/environment-and-you/waste-water/>

Thoroughness and consistency in inspections and enforcement are critical. DWWTS inspectors must have completed a two-day course by the Local Authority Services National Training Group and are appointed by the EPA. The EPA coordinates the Septic Tank Inspectors Network as part of the Network for Ireland's Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (NIECE). This is a platform for DWWTS inspectors to meet, exchange information and develop guidance. The following are available to DWWTS inspectors through the Septic Tank Inspectors Network:

- ▶ templates for inspection reports, advisory notices and correspondence;
- ▶ enforcement flowchart setting out actions and timelines; and
- ▶ guidance on determining risk and equipment for inspections.

Water services authorities must ensure that inspections are carried out in accordance with:

- ▶ the Water Services Act 2007 (as amended) and associated regulations;
- ▶ the training provided by the Local Authority Services National Training Group;
- ▶ the *Guidance Manual for the Inspection of Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems*;
- ▶ the guidance provided by the Septic Tank Inspectors Network; and
- ▶ this plan.

4.6 ENFORCEMENT OF ADVISORY NOTICES

National inspection plan reports have highlighted that failure to resolve older cases needs to be addressed as a priority. Water services authorities need to implement an effective enforcement system to ensure that DWWTSs that fail inspection are fixed. This is an area that requires attention and follow-up by water services authorities.

The *Guidance Manual for the Inspection of Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems* provided to DWWTS inspectors as part of the inspector training course sets out typical timeframes for remedial works ranging from 1 to 12 months depending on the seriousness of the issue and scale of works required.

An enforcement flowchart has been provided through the Septic Tank Inspectors Network which sets out the process for follow-up on advisory notices by water services authorities through engagement and enforcement to ensure they are complied with (Appendix). This provides for engagement through reminder and warning letters at specific points in the process and legal proceedings in the event of failure to comply. Failure to comply with an advisory notice is a prosecutable offence with a potential fine of up to €5,000.

Water services authorities must ensure all advisory notices are followed up, including prosecution where warranted, in accordance with the:

- ▶ Water Services Act 2007 (as amended) and associated regulations;
- ▶ *Guidance Manual for the Inspection of Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems*; and
- ▶ enforcement flowchart.

Water services authorities need to allocate appropriate resources to enforcement of advisory notices and keep records of the engagement and enforcement measures taken in each case.

5 ENGAGEMENT

An essential part of the implementation of the national inspection plan is communication and engagement with the public. Each homeowner needs to be aware of how to operate and maintain their DWWTs and the potential health implications if the system is not correctly operated and maintained. Homeowners need to be provided with information on the measures that they can take to protect their health and that of their family, neighbours and the environment.

Water services authorities are responsible for ongoing communication and engagement with the public at a local level. The EPA oversees the implementation of the engagement by the water services authorities.

Water services authorities must undertake engagement activities including:

- ▶ articles and advertisements in newspapers or other publications;
- ▶ radio interviews and advertisements;
- ▶ social media posts;
- ▶ distribution of leaflets and information packs;
- ▶ maintenance of webpages;
- ▶ school visits; and
- ▶ stakeholder/public meetings.

The following actions will be progressed through NIECE:

- ▶ set specific engagement requirements for each water services authority on a pro-rata basis (like the minimum inspection allocations in this plan); and
- ▶ collate good examples, templates and materials for articles, websites, advertisements; and
- ▶ undertake a targeted engagement initiative highlighting the risks to human health and the environment.

The EPA will undertake the following engagement activities:

- ▶ publication of a report on septic tank inspections each year;
- ▶ maintenance of the EPA webpages with information for householders and professionals;
- ▶ responding to queries relating to DWWTs;
- ▶ development and supply of information leaflets; and
- ▶ engagement with national and international stakeholders.

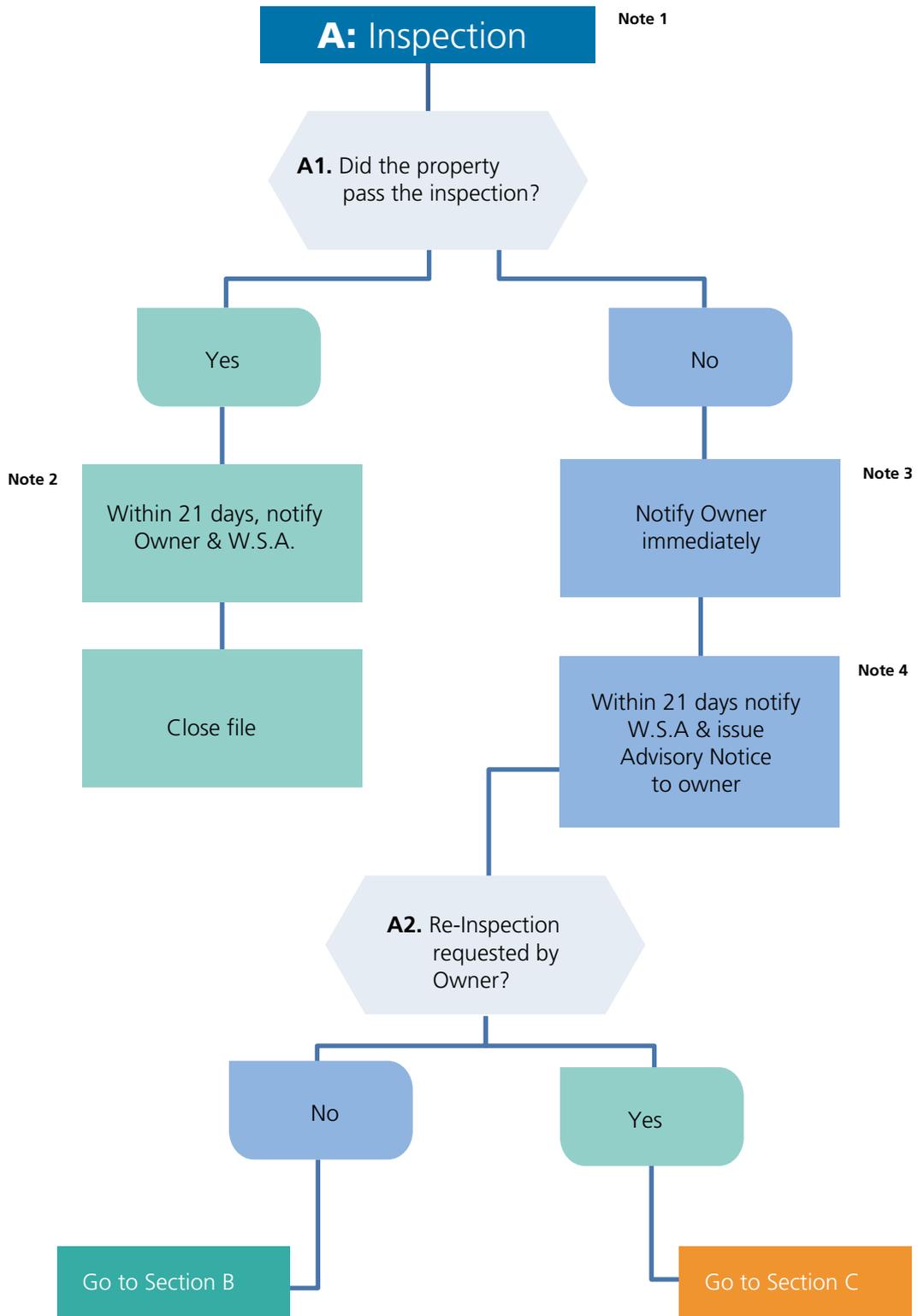
Although it is outside the scope of the national inspection plan, there is significant additional engagement in relation to DWWTs by other stakeholders including:

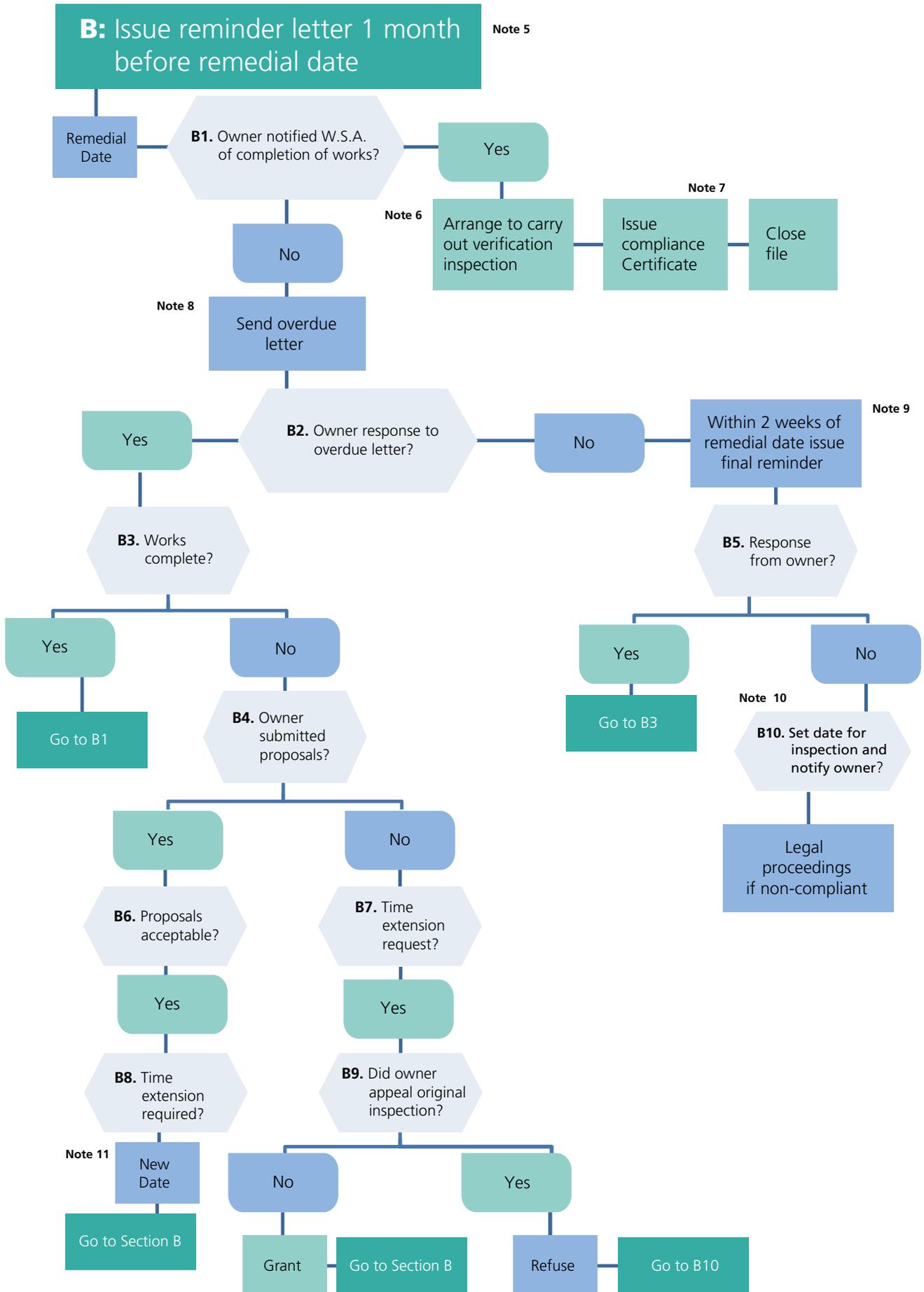
- ▶ the ongoing Local Authority Waters Programme community engagement, communications and outreach programme;
- ▶ Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government grant schemes; and
- ▶ National Federation of Group Water Schemes work in group water scheme catchment areas.

6 CONCLUSION

This document is the *National Inspection Plan for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems 2022–2026*. This plan must be implemented by water services authorities, with support and supervision by the EPA. The EPA will report on the implementation of the plan annually.

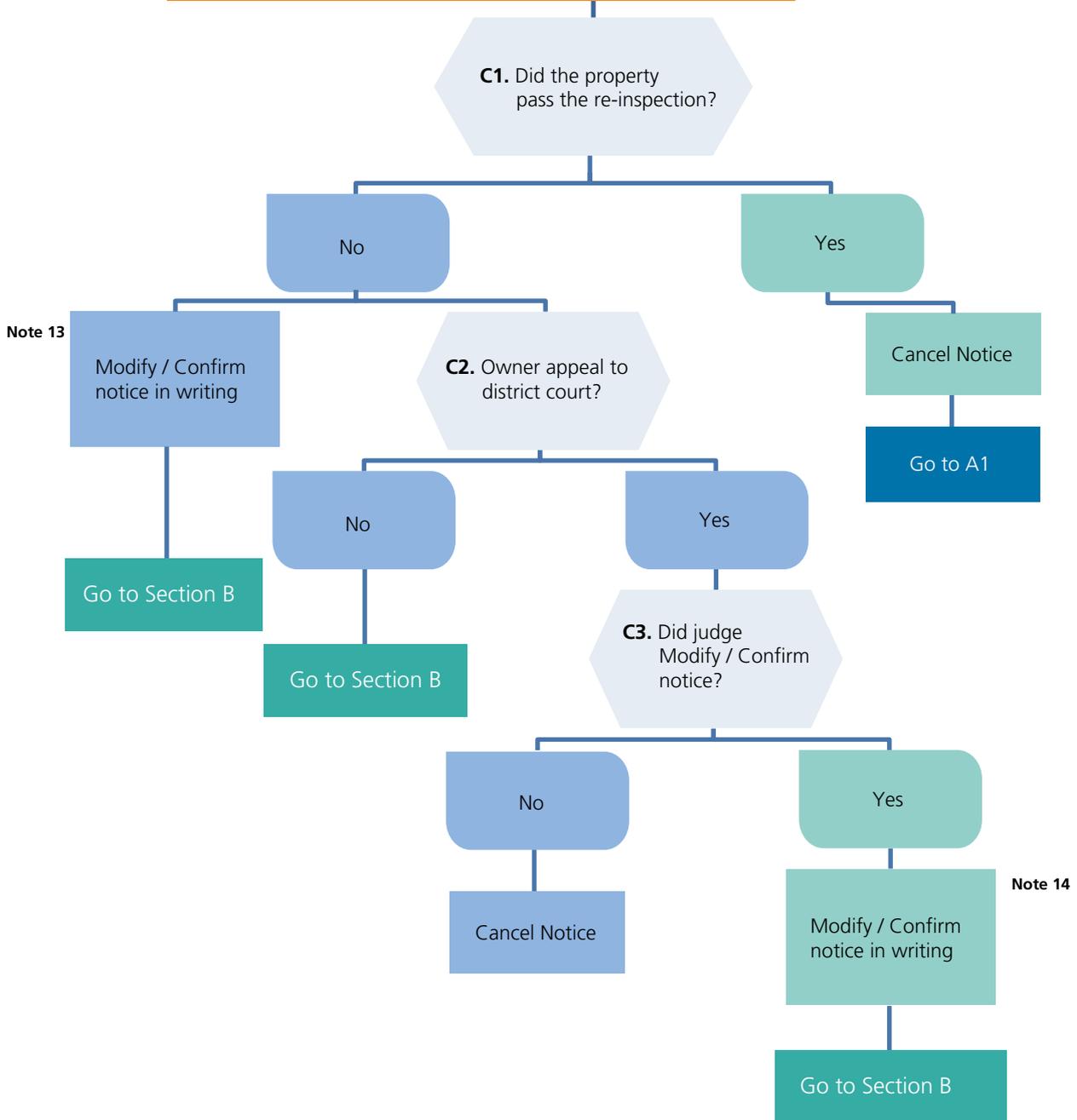
APPENDIX A ENFORCEMENT FLOWCHART





C: Water Services Authority arrange and carry out re-inspection

Note 12



- Note 1: Immediately on the day of inspection, notify the owner of the result of inspection. (Verbally, Phonecall, Postcard, Owner signature on inspection form).
- Note 2: Include compliance certificate and a cover letter informing owner that the property passed the inspection.
- Note 3: Cover letter template for immediate notification of homeowner where system has failed inspection.
- Note 4: Recommendation to serve advisory notice, Director/Managers order, email director, cover letter template for advisory notice, Inspection report, Advisory notice with 14 days for effective date, Provide information regards re-inspection, grant applications, de-sludgers list.
- Note 5: Reminder letter template, one month in advance of remedial date, include copy of advisory notice.
- Note 6: Phonecall, email, letter setting date for verification inspection.
- Note 7: Include compliance with advisory notice certificate and a cover letter.
- Note 8: Overdue letter template.
- Note 9: Final warning letter template.
- Note 10: Letter for date of inspection where there has been no response by the homeowner, include copy of advisory notice.
- Note 11: Letter with new date for completion of works.
- Note 12: Re-inspection letter template.
- Note 13: Confirmation/modification letter template following re-inspection, include copy of advisory notice.
- Note 14: Letter modifying/confirming advisory notice as per Judge decision. Include copy of court order, advisory notice, inspection report.

AN GHNÍOMHAIREACTH UM CHAOMHNÚ COMHSHAOL

Tá an GCC freagrach as an gcomhshaol a chosaint agus a fheabhsú, mar shócmhainn luachmhar do mhuintir na hÉireann. Táimid tiomanta do dhaoine agus don chomhshaol a chosaint ar thionchar díobhálach na radaíochta agus an truailithe.

Is féidir obair na Gníomhaireachta a roinnt ina trí phríomhréimse:

Rialáil: *Rialáil agus córais chomhlíonta comhshaol éifeachtacha a chur i bhfeidhm, chun dea-thorthaí comhshaol a bhaint amach agus díriú orthu siúd nach mbíonn ag cloí leo.*

Eolas: *Sonraí, eolas agus measúnú ardchaighdeán, spriocdhírthe agus tráthúil a chur ar fáil i leith an chomhshaol chun bonn eolais a chur faoin gcinnteoireacht.*

Abhcóideacht: *Ag obair le daoine eile ar son timpeallachta glaine, táirgiúla agus dea-chosanta agus ar son cleachtas inbhuanaithe i dtaobh an chomhshaol.*

I measc ár gcuid freagrachtaí tá:

Ceadúnú

- Gníomhaíochtaí tionscail, dramhaíola agus stórála peitрил ar scála mór;
- Sceitheadh fuíolluisce uirbigh;
- Úsáid shrianta agus scaoileadh rialaithe Orgánach Géimhódnaithe;
- Foinsí radaíochta ianúcháin;
- Astaíochtaí gás ceaptha teasa ó thionscal agus ón eitlíocht trí Scéim an AE um Thrádáil Astaíochtaí.

Forfheidmiú Náisiúnta i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaol

- Iniúchadh agus cigireacht ar shaoráidí a bhfuil ceadúnas acu ón GCC;
- Cur i bhfeidhm an dea-chleachtais a stiúradh i ngníomhaíochtaí agus i saoráidí rialáilte;
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar fhreagrachtaí an údaráis áitiúil as cosaint an chomhshaol;
- Caighdeán an uisce óil phoiblí a rialáil agus údaruithe um sceitheadh fuíolluisce uirbigh a fhorfheidmiú;
- Caighdeán an uisce óil phoiblí agus phríobháidigh a mheasúnú agus tuairisciú air;
- Comhordú a dhéanamh ar líonra d'eagraíochtaí seirbhíse poiblí chun tacú le gníomhú i gcoinne coireachta comhshaol;
- An dlí a chur orthu siúd a bhriseann dlí an chomhshaol agus a dhéanann dochar don chomhshaol.

Bainistíocht Dramhaíola agus Ceimiceáin sa Chomhshaol

- Rialacháin dramhaíola a chur i bhfeidhm agus a fhorfheidmiú lena n-áirítear saincheisteanna forfheidmithe náisiúnta;
- Staitisticí dramhaíola náisiúnta a ullmhú agus a fhoilsiú chomh maith leis an bPlean Náisiúnta um Bainistíocht Dramhaíola Guaisí;
- An Clár Náisiúnta um Chosc Dramhaíola a

fhorbairt agus a chur i bhfeidhm;

- Reachtaíocht ar rialú ceimiceán sa timpeallacht a chur i bhfeidhm agus tuairisciú ar an reachtaíocht sin.

Bainistíocht Uisce

- Plé le struchtúir náisiúnta agus réigiúnacha rialachais agus oibriúcháin chun an Chreat-treoir Uisce a chur i bhfeidhm;
- Monatóireacht, measúnú agus tuairisciú a dhéanamh ar chaighdeán aibhneacha, lochanna, uiscí idirchreasa agus cósta, uiscí snámha agus screamhuisce chomh maith le tomhas ar leibhéil uisce agus sreabhadh abhann.

Eolaíocht Aeráide & Athrú Aeráide

- Fardail agus réamh-mheastacháin a fhoilsiú um astaíochtaí gás ceaptha teasa na hÉireann;
- Rúnaíocht a chur ar fáil don Chomhairle Chomhairleach ar Athrú Aeráide agus tacaíocht a thabhairt don Idirphlé Náisiúnta ar Ghníomhú ar son na hAeráide;
- Tacú le gníomhaíochtaí forbartha Náisiúnta, AE agus NA um Eolaíocht agus Beartas Aeráide.

Monatóireacht & Measúnú ar an gComhshaol

- Córais náisiúnta um monatóireacht an chomhshaol a cheapadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm: teicneolaíocht, bainistíocht sonraí, anailís agus réamhaisnéisiú;
- Tuairiscí ar Staid Thimpeallacht na hÉireann agus ar Tháscairí a chur ar fáil;
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar chaighdeán an aeir agus Treoir an AE i leith Aeir Ghlain don Eoraip a chur i bhfeidhm chomh maith leis an gCoinbhinsiún ar Aerthruailliú Fadraoin Trasteorann, agus an Treoir i leith na Teorann Náisiúnta Astaíochtaí;
- Maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar chur i bhfeidhm na Treorach i leith Torainn Timpeallachta;
- Measúnú a dhéanamh ar thionchar pleananna agus clár beartaithe ar chomhshaol na hÉireann.
- Taighde agus Forbairt Comhshaol
- Comhordú a dhéanamh ar ghníomhaíochtaí taighde comhshaol agus iad a mhaoiniú chun brú a aithint, bonn eolais a chur faoin mbeartas agus réitigh a chur ar fáil;
- Comhoibriú le gníomhaíocht náisiúnta agus AE um thaighde comhshaol.

Cosaint Raideolaíoch

- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar leibhéil radaíochta agus nochtadh an phobail do radaíocht ianúcháin agus do réimsí leictreamaighnéadacha a mheas;
- Cabhrú le pleananna náisiúnta a fhorbairt le haghaidh éigeandála ag eascairt as taismí núicléacha;
- Monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar fhorbairtí thar lear a bhaineann le saoráidí núicléacha agus leis an tsábháilteacht

raideolaíochta;

- Sainseirbhísí um chosaint ar an radaíocht a sholáthar, nó maoirsiú a dhéanamh ar sholáthar na seirbhísí sin.

Treoir, Ardú Feasachta agus Faisnéis Inrochtana

- Tuairisciú, comhairle agus treoir neamhspleách, fianaise-bhunaithe a chur ar fáil don Rialtas, don tionscal agus don phobal ar ábhair maidir le cosaint comhshaol agus raideolaíoch;
- An nasc idir sláinte agus folláine, an geilleagar agus timpeallacht ghlan a chur chun cinn;
- Feasacht comhshaol a chur chun cinn lena n-áirítear tacú le hiompraíocht um éifeachtúlacht acmhainní agus aistriú aeráide;
- Tástáil radóin a chur chun cinn i dtithe agus in ionaid oibre agus feabhsúchán a mholadh áit is gá.

Comhpháirtíocht agus líonrú

- Oibriú le gníomhaireachtaí idirnáisiúnta agus náisiúnta, údaráis réigiúnacha agus áitiúla, eagraíochtaí neamhrialtais, comhlachtaí ionadaíochta agus ranna rialtais chun cosaint comhshaol agus raideolaíoch a chur ar fáil, chomh maith le taighde, comhordú agus cinnteoireacht bunaithe ar an eolaíocht.

Bainistíocht agus struchtúr na Gníomhaireachta um Chaomhnú Comhshaol

Tá an GCC á bhainistiú ag Bord lánaimseartha, ar a bhfuil Ard-Stiúrthóir agus cúigear Stiúrthóir. Déantar an obair ar fud cúig cinn d'Oifigí:

- An Oifig um Inbhuanaitheacht i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaol
- An Oifig Forfheidmithe i leith Cúrsaí Comhshaol
- An Oifig um Fhianaise agus Measúnú
- An Oifig um Chosaint ar Radaíocht agus Monatóireacht Comhshaol
- An Oifig Cumarsáide agus Seirbhísí Corparáideacha

Tugann coistí comhairleacha cabhair don Ghníomhaireacht agus tagann siad le chéile go rialta le plé a dhéanamh ar ábhair inní agus le comhairle a chur ar an mBord.



Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

Headquarters

**PO Box 3000,
Johnstown Castle Estate
County Wexford, Ireland**

T: +353 53 916 0600

F: +353 53 916 0699

E: info@epa.ie

W: www.epa.ie

LoCall: 818 335599

Regional Inspectorate

McCumiskey House,
Richview, Clonskeagh Road,
Dublin 14, Ireland

T: +353 1 268 0100

F: +353 1 268 0199

Regional Inspectorate

Inniscarra, County Cork,
Ireland

T: +353 21 487 5540

F: +353 21 487 5545

Regional Inspectorate

Seville Lodge, Callan Road,
Kilkenny, Ireland

T +353 56 779 6700

F +353 56 779 6798

Regional Inspectorate

John Moore Road, Castlebar
County Mayo, Ireland

T +353 94 904 8400

F +353 94 902 1934

Regional Inspectorate

The Glen, Monaghan, Ireland

T +353 47 77600

F +353 47 84987

Regional Offices

The Civic Centre
Church St., Athlone
Co. Westmeath, Ireland
T +353 906 475722

Room 3, Raheen Conference Centre,
Pearse House, Pearse Road
Raheen Business Park, Limerick,
Ireland

T +353 61 224764

