



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

Delivering water quality improvements – National and EU policy drivers

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Teagasc Water Quality Conference - 29th October 2025

Water Framework Directive

- Integrated and harmonised approach
- Sets out consistent management units for all natural waters:
 - River basin districts
 - Individual water bodies
 - a combined approach to water pollution
- All waters are protected
- At least 'good' status by 2027. (52% of waterbodies currently achieving at least good status)
- Nitrates Directive is a measure under WFD





River Basin

Cycle 1
2000-2015

- Multiple River Management Plans
- Local Authorities led with consultancy support
- Significant step forward in technical assessment

Cycle 2
2018-2021

- National Plan with Areas for Action
- Integrated catchment science and management
- Risk-based approach promoting targeted action
- New Governance structures developed

"The right
measure in
the right
place"

Management

Cycle 3
2022-2025

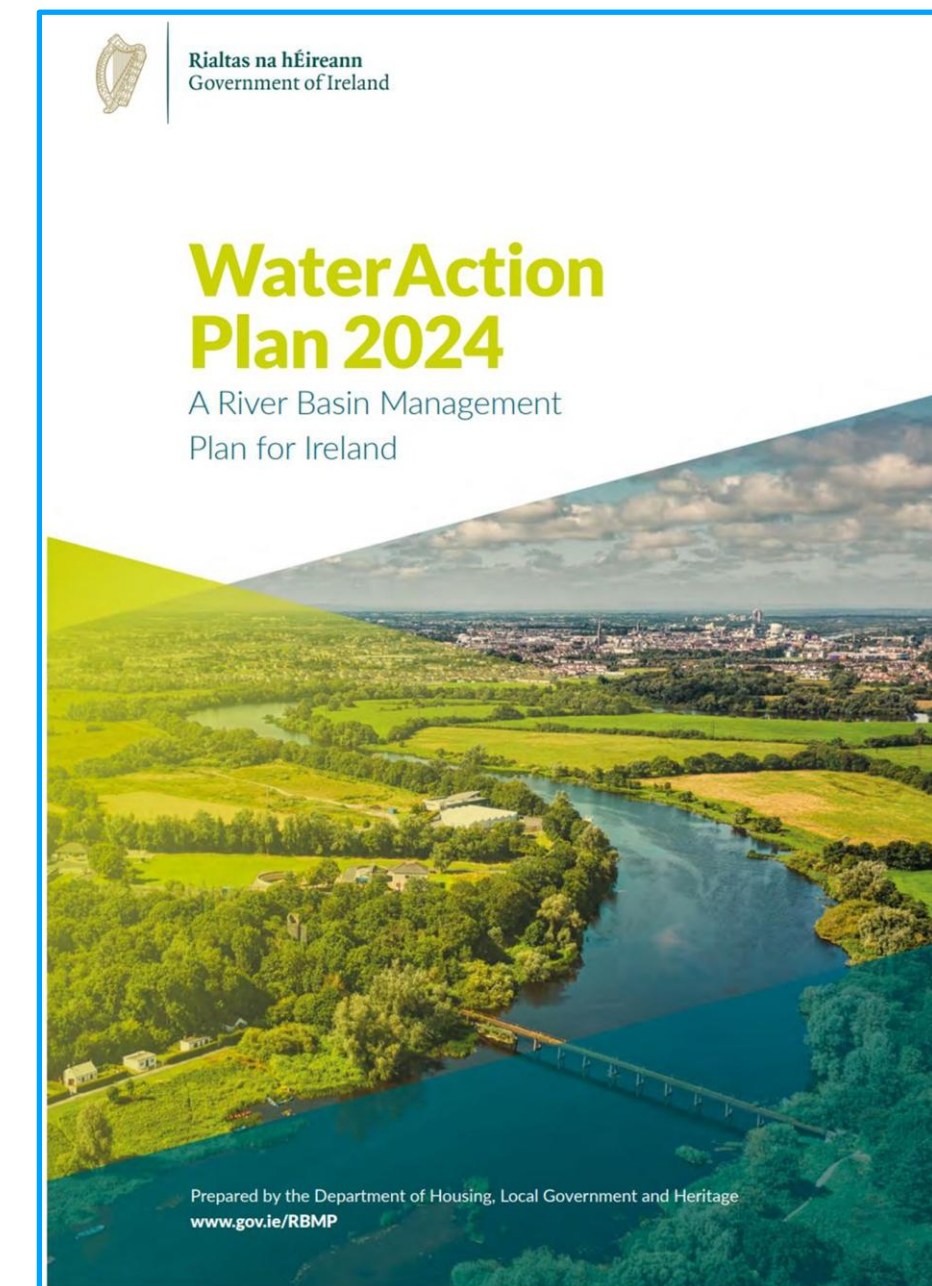
- Building on Cycle 2
- Greater evidence-based and tracking implementation
- Greater transparency on what is being done.
- A place in the plan for everyone

"No where
to hide"

Water Action Plan 2024

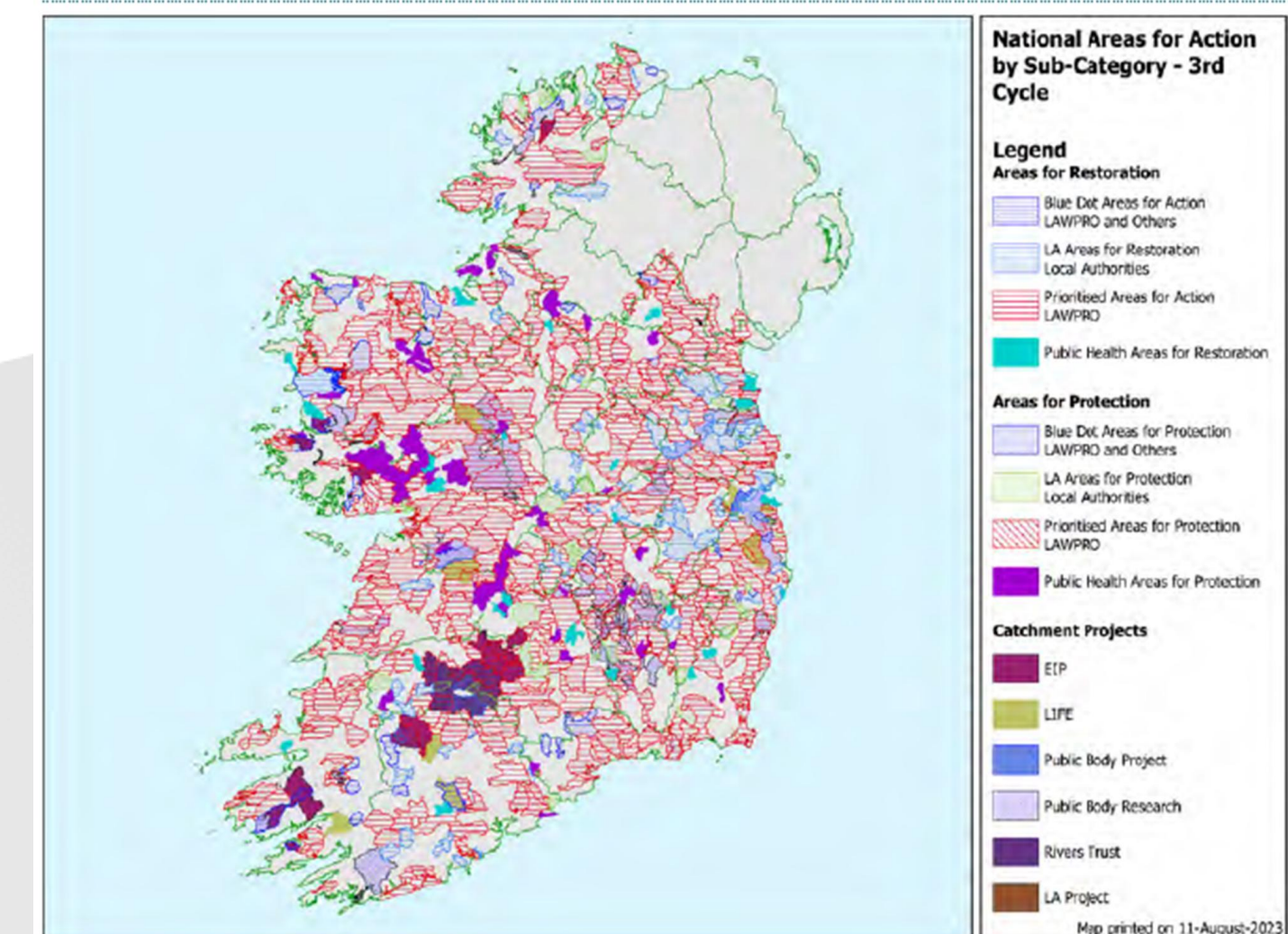
Launched September 2024

- Government commitment to protecting & restoring Ireland's natural waters by complying with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive
- Accelerate the identification and implementation of the **right measures in the right places** to both restore and protect all water bodies
- 517 Areas for Action
- Programme of Measures
 - ~150 high level actions
 - ~40 lead organisation

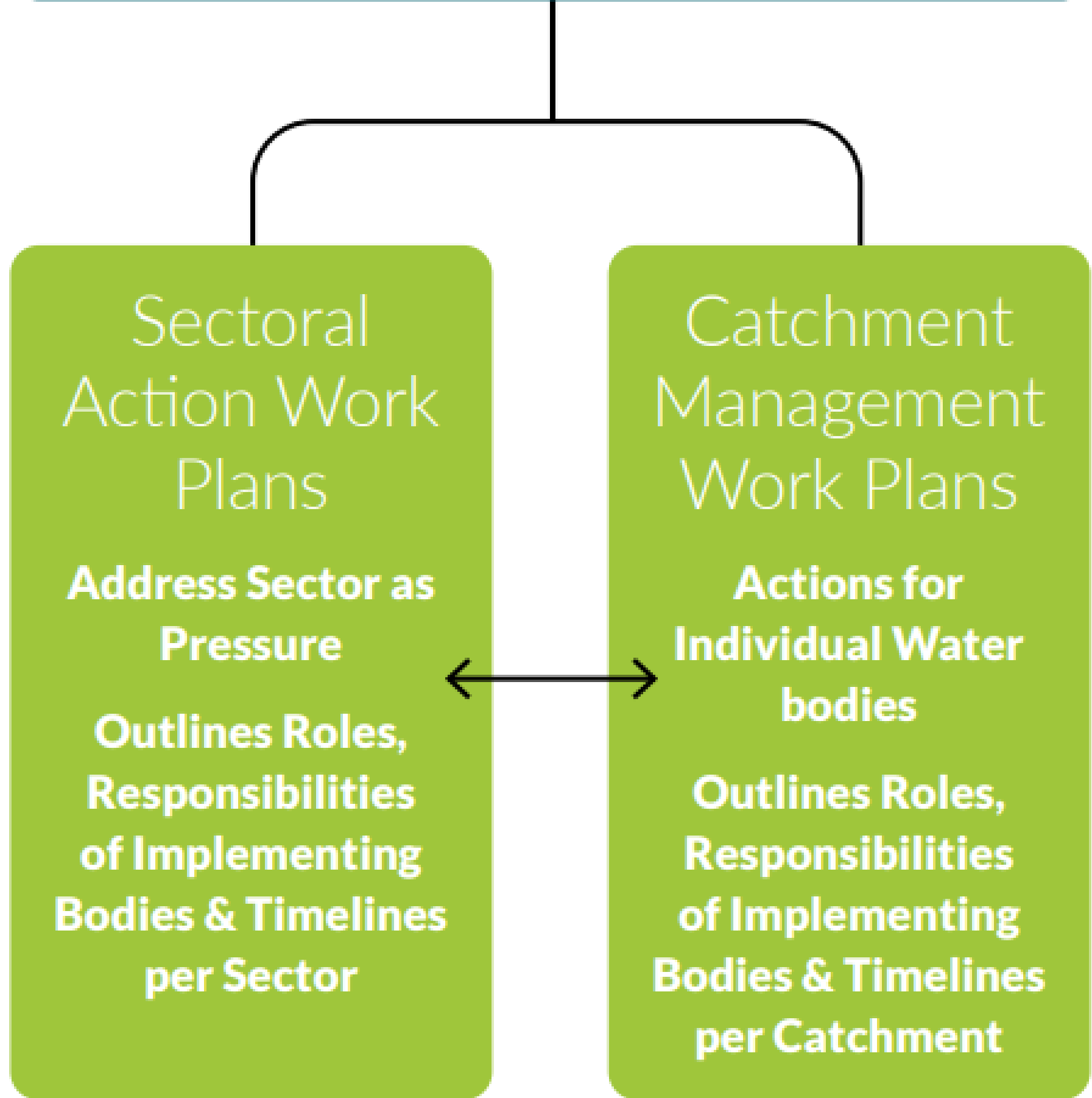


www.gov.ie/rbmp

Figure 27: Map of third-cycle Areas for Action



River Basin Management Plan
and Programme of Measures
Objective to Protect & Restore our Water Bodies
**Outlines Roles, Responsibilities &
Policies at National Scale**



Relationship between RBMP, Sectoral Action Work Plans and Catchment Management Work Plans

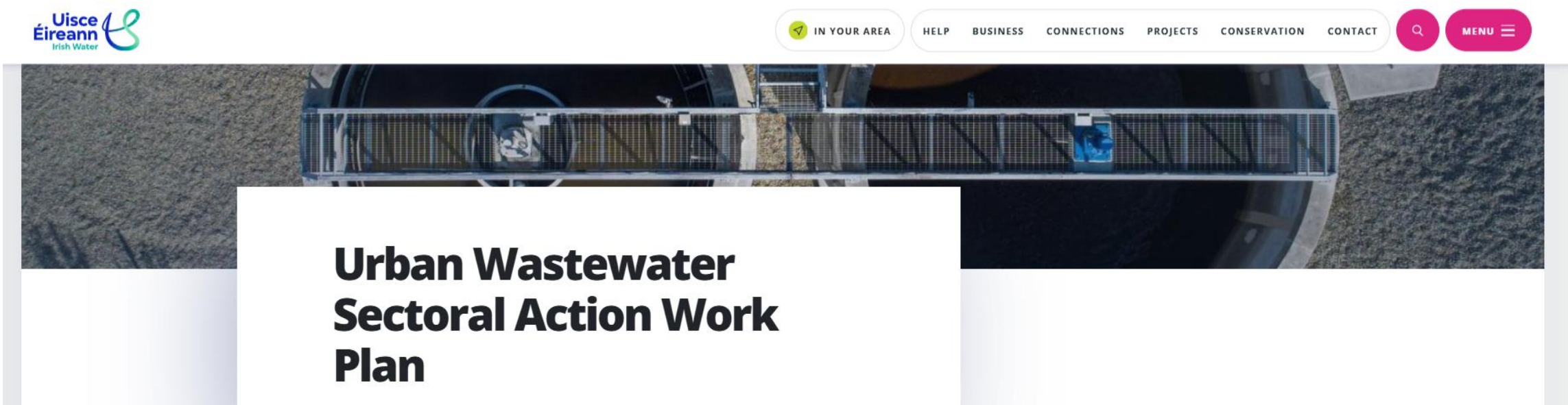


- Sectoral Action Work Plans

Uisce Éireann (UWW/Drinking Water Source Protection)	Finalised
NFGWS (Drinking Water Source Protection)	Finalised
Peat (Bord na Móna)	Finalised
DHLGH (Hydromorphology)	Finalised
IFI (Hydromorphology)	Finalised
OPW (Hydromorphology)	Finalised
Forest Service (Forestry)	Finalised
DAFM (Agriculture)	Awaiting final revisions
NPWS (Invasive Alien Species)	Development on hold
NPWS (Peat)	Awaiting final revisions

- Sectoral Action Work Plans available at www.gov.ie/RBMP
- 46 Catchment Management Work Plans

Sectoral Action Work Plan Progress



Urban wastewater actions listed in the Water Action Plan 2024

The following table lists the actions that are included in the Water Action Plan 2024 for Uisce Éireann in relation to urban wastewater, and provides a national-level summary of our progress to end 2024.

WAP Action	WAP Action Title	Timescale	Targets / Outputs	Progress
UWW 1	Uisce Éireann will continue investment in wastewater infrastructure investing over €2.3bn over the period 2020 – 2024. This includes 108 wastewater treatment plants and 77 collection networks at an estimated cost of €1.542bn and 92 national programmes at an estimated cost of €780m.	Q4 2024	Progress on waterbodies where urban wastewater is identified as a significant pressure	Works complete to address UWW pressures on 17 waterbodies Projects progressing in relation to 72 waterbodies
UWW 2	Uisce Éireann will deliver infrastructure projects as set out in the Appendices for the next RBMP third-cycle (2022-2027).	Q4 2027		Assessments complete relating to 35 waterbodies 30 waterbodies under assessment
UWW 3	Uisce Éireann will assess urban wastewater requirements for the 197 Water Bodies where Urban Wastewater has been identified as a significant pressure by 2027, including any new significant pressure water bodies identified by LAWPRO.	Q4 2022 and reviewed every 2 years		For 43 remaining waterbodies, assessments to be initiated in rolling programme



River Basin Management Plan

Ireland’s River Basin Management Plan 2022 – 2027 sets out the actions that Ireland will take to protect, improve and restore water quality in our waterbodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters) up to 2027. The plan focuses on protecting and restoring water quality by preventing and reducing pollution, by restoring natural ecosystem functions and by continuing to invest in water infrastructure. Ireland is required to produce a river basin management plan under the Water Framework Directive

The Right Measure in the Right Place: The River Basin Management Plan and Actions



[River Basin Management Plan 2022 - 2027](#)



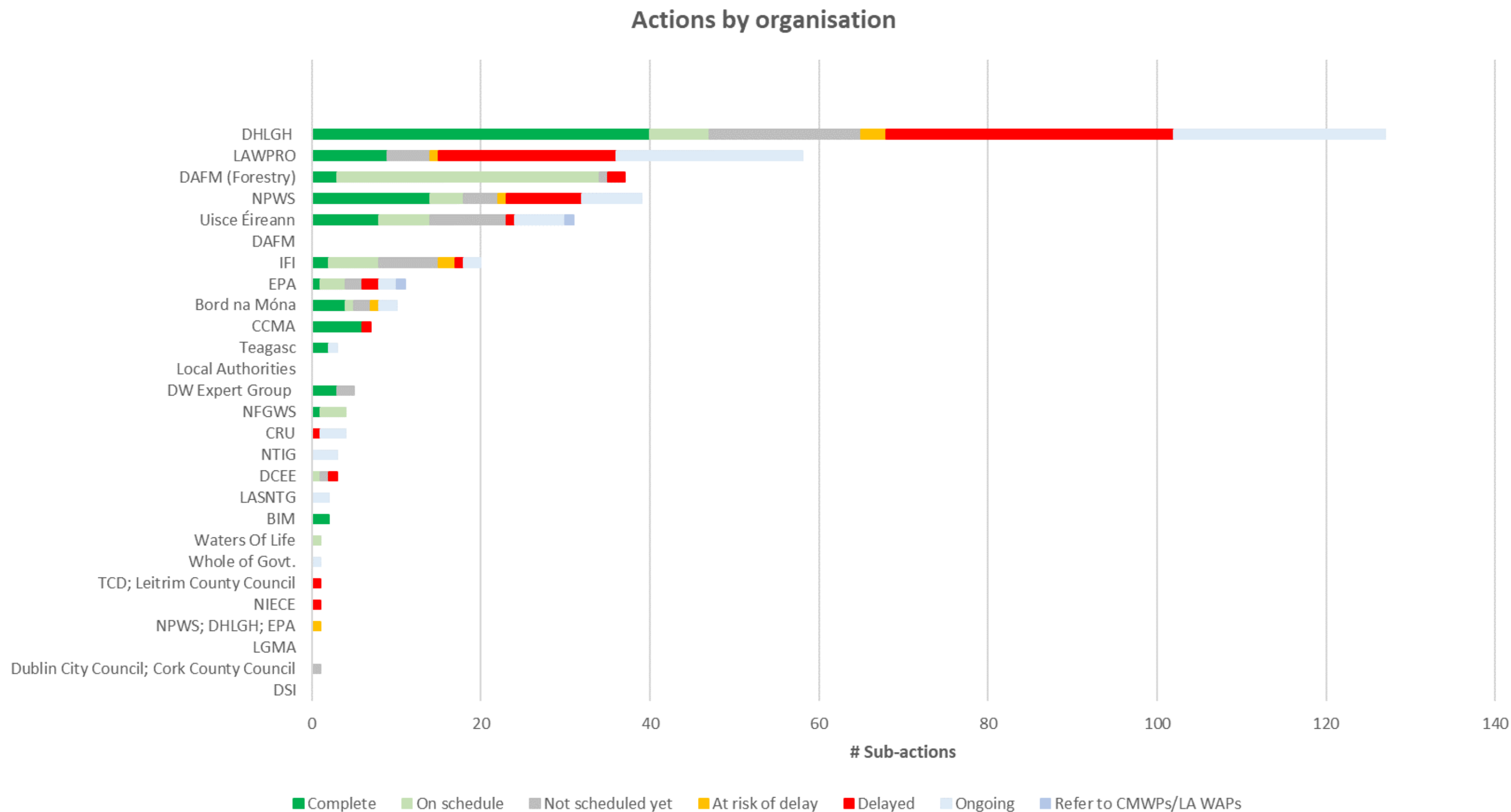
[Programme of Measures to Protect and Restore our Waters](#)



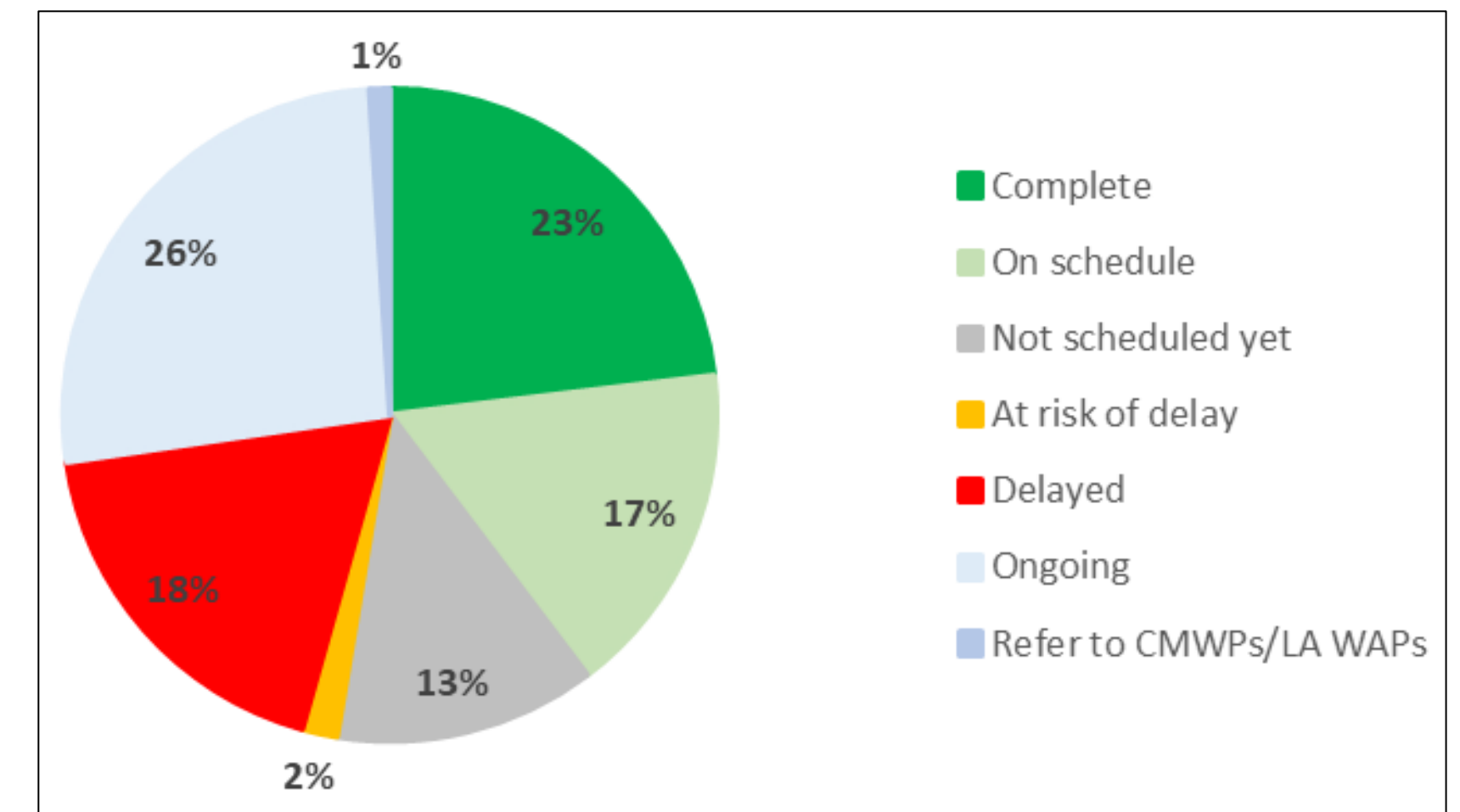
[Governance Structures](#)

Sectoral Action Work Plans available at www.gov.ie/RBMP under the Programme of Measures

Water Action Plan – tracking



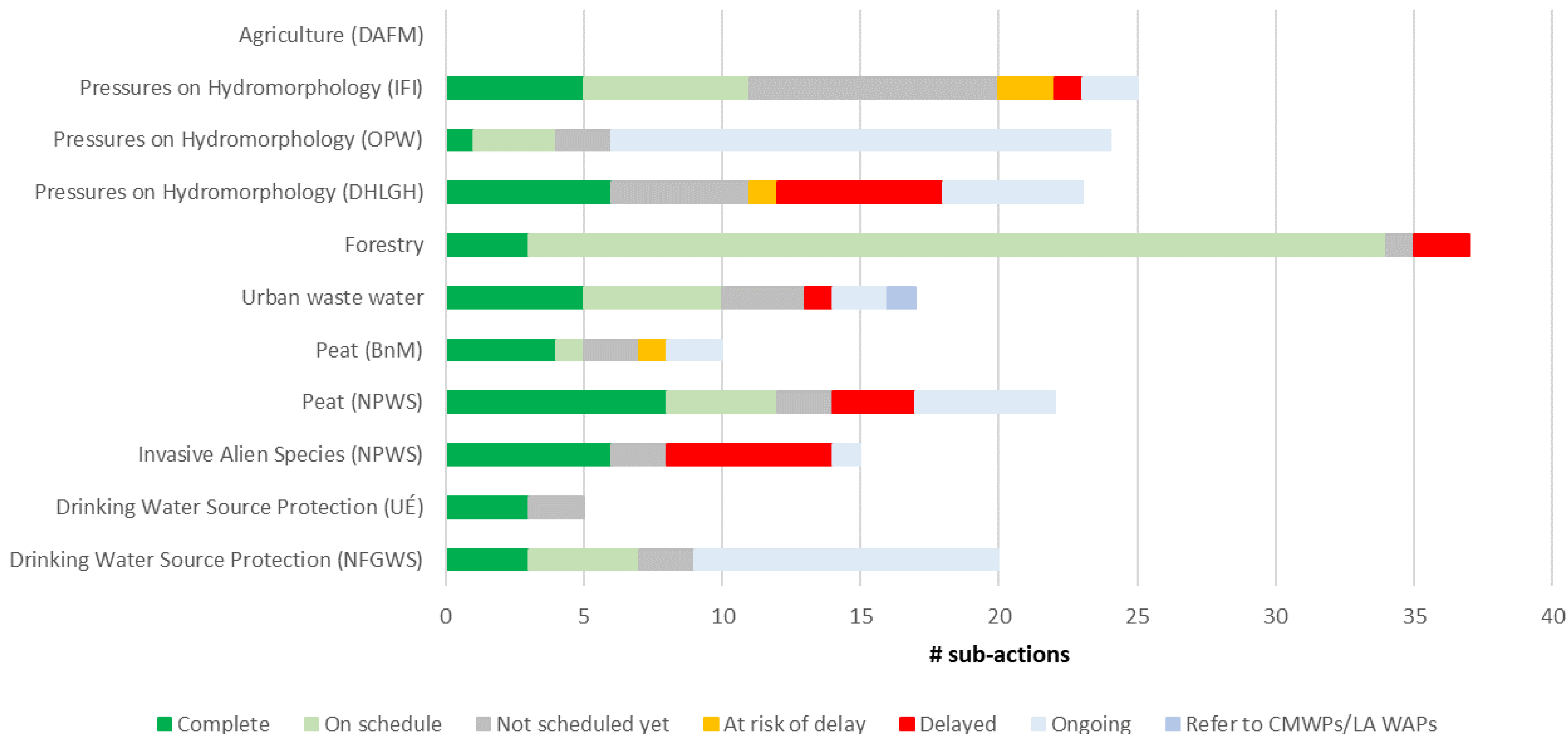
Water Action Plan actions and supplementary actions- Q2 2025 Tracking



Water Action Plan – tracking sectors



Sectoral Action Work Plan Progress: Q2 2025



Sectoral Action Work Plan for Agriculture – 12 Actions



- **Agri 1 and 2: Contributing to a stronger and more targeted Nitrates Action Programme**
 - Implementation of the stronger and more targeted Nitrates Action Programme
 - Strengthen the inspection and enforcement relating to agricultural diffuse pollution – National Agricultural Inspection Programme
- **Agri 3 - 5: Measures in Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan contributing towards water quality**
 - Eco-schemes, ACRES, Water EIP project

Sectoral Action Work Plan for Agriculture – 12 Actions



- **Agri 6-12: Additional measures**
 - Independent assessment and reviews of NAP, CAP SP, Farming for Water EIP
 - Agricultural Sectoral Action Work Programme
 - Online Farm Sustainability Planning
 - Resources – LAWPRO and ASSAP
 - Free on-farm advice - ASSAP
 - Training
 - Upskilling

Water Action Plan Interim Review



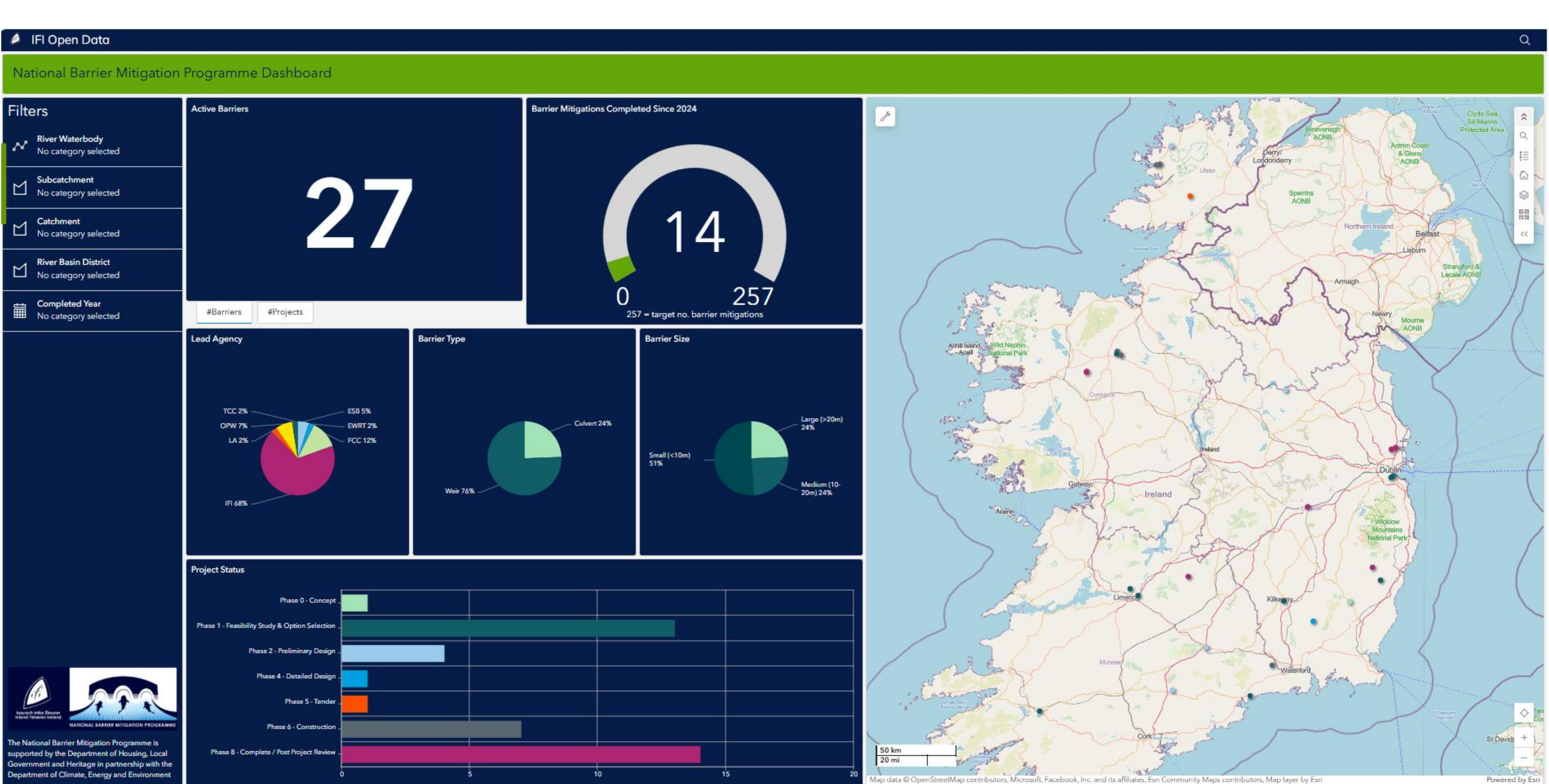
Water Action Plan Action 5.1: The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage will oversee an independent review of progress with the implementation of the Programme of Measures.

- Interim review will provide insights into implementation gaps
 - *What is working? Build on this. Scale up.*
 - *What needs to improve?*
 - *What is not working? What is the alternative?*
- Will support engagement through the river basin management planning process
- Challenges: Data to evaluate effectiveness, meeting the 2027 WFD deadline

Key Challenges: Data Sharing



- Availability and sharing of data
 - *Data sharing across sectors is key*
 - What is implemented?
 - Is it the right measure in the right place?
 - Is it working?
 - Informing policy and resource/funding requirements
 - Evidence base to support engagement with the Commission
 - *Vital component of Sectoral Action and Catchment Management Work Plans etc. but it is a significant challenge*

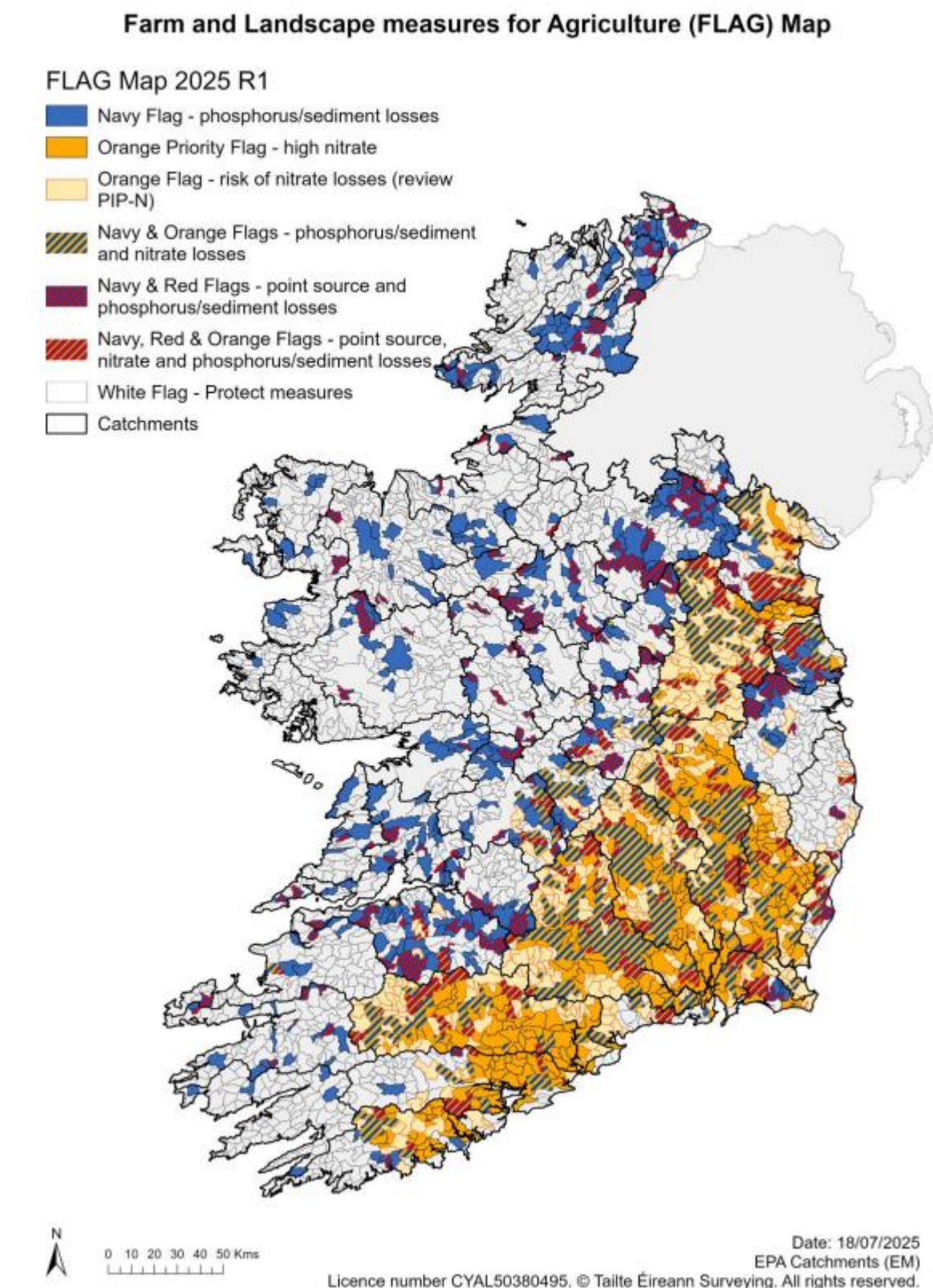


Key Challenges: Compliance



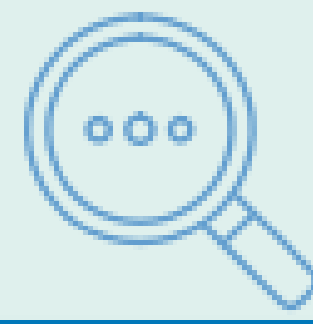
National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP)

- ‘Strengthen inspection and enforcement relating to agricultural diffuse pollution’
- EPA is responsible for oversight and co-ordinating local authority agricultural inspections
- 4500 risk based inspections to be targeted in 2025 using data and tools to determine where inspections are undertaken and what is inspected

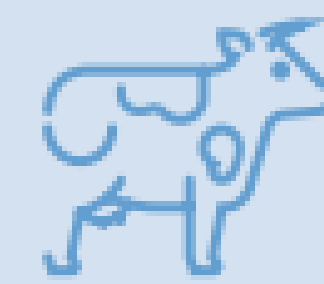


Assessment of Compliance with the Good Agricultural Practices Regulations

[NAIP-Summary-Report-2024.pdf](#)



2,598 initial farm inspections (GAP) were carried out by local authorities, more than double the number carried out in 2023. The target for 2025 is **4,500** farms to be inspected.



The increase in inspections is welcomed, however, local authorities must take stronger enforcement actions and carry out more follow-up inspections to confirm compliance.



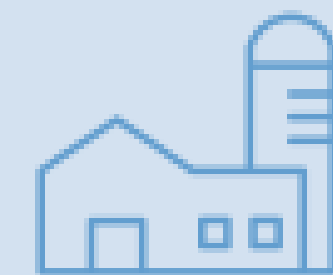
The rate of non-compliance for the initial GAP inspections was **42%**.



The top two reasons for non-compliance were the control of soiled water and management of farmyard manure.



Local authorities conducted **576** follow-up GAP inspections of which **46%** were non-compliant.



In addition, **1,666** other (non-GAP) farm inspections were carried out on foot of planning applications, incidents and complaints.



A total of **1,746** enforcement actions were taken by local authorities. However, the level of prosecutions and cross-reporting is too low.



149 farms were cross reported to DAFM for non-compliance, leading to penalties in BISS (Basic Income Support for Sustainability) payments.



DAFM carried out **621** inspections on behalf of the local authorities, **116** farms received penalties in BISS payments.

Summary



- Water Framework Directive is the mother directive for Water Quality.
- Nitrates Directive is a measure under the WFD
- Progress in tracking implementation across all sectors
- But large agricultural data gaps – spatial data is needed to demonstrate:
 - *all the effort the sector is making.*
 - *“the right measure in the right place” concept*
- Compliance issues need to be addressed urgently



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Department of Housing,
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“*Water is not a commercial product like any other but, rather, a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such*”

EU Water Framework Directive

Thank you for listening