

National Federation of Group Water Schemes Co-op Society Limited

Annual Report 2002

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Foreword

Tremendous progress was recorded within the group water sector in 2002, the nature and pace of that progress being determined both by internal and external factors. On the one hand, increasing organisation and professionalism within the National Federation of Group Water Schemes has confirmed its role as a key participant in the delivery of the RWP, with group schemes themselves maintaining the pressure for a sustained programme of investment in infrastructure. On the other, the urgent task of meeting EU and national standards for drinking water quality was underlined by the progress and outcome of a case taken against Ireland in the European Court.

The drive towards quality water and compliance with European and national directives has tended to focus the investment of public monies in the area of water treatment and, in particular, in the DBO/'bundling' strategy. This is generally accepted to be the quickest and most cost-effective means of reaching our shared priority objective. It is with particular satisfaction, therefore, that in 2002 more and more group schemes seized the opportunity provided to form bundles and begin the DBO process.

Currently agreed 'bundles' will deliver safe water to more than 21,000 households on privately-sourced schemes. A further 10,500 householders live on similar schemes which are at the early

planning stage for DBO/'bundles'. Together, these will resolve drinking water quality problems for the vast majority of people depending on privately-sourced schemes, while amalgamation, take-over and minor upgrades – agreed in various county rural water strategic plans – will account for the remainder.

Since publication in February this year of the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee's 'Action Plan 2003-2006', we have a definite time-frame for the resolution of the water quality problems highlighted therein. The recent appointment of a national local authorities Project Manager of DBO projects (as recommended in the plan) means that efforts towards resolving the water quality issue will now be co-ordinated as never before. With all partners to the Rural Water Programme pulling together, there is little doubt that we can and will succeed in reaching the ambitious targets laid down for us. It is vital, also, that the financial and personnel resources provided to the outworking of the RWP are applied exclusively to that end.

While our primary focus will be on implementing the DBO/'bundling' strategy, the National Federation of Group Water Schemes is acutely aware of the need for source protection and water conservation measures. In relation to the first, we were disappointed in 2002 at the EPA decision not to facilitate us in a proposed Source Protection National Pilot at Churchill/Oram GWS. Since then, NRWMC Chairperson, Tom Collins, has used his good offices as Director of Dundalk Institute of Technology to put this important issue back on the agenda for the coming year. Dundalk Institute will now lead the project, in association with the NFGWS and Monaghan County Council.

The implications of source protection and of the EC Water Framework Directive undoubtedly raises some concern amongst those farmers living in the vicinity of drinking water sources, who may indeed have provided the local scheme with access to that source many years ago. While we fully accept that source protection is essential, the NFGWS believes that any curtailment of farming activity as a result of measures proposed must be based on agreement and on the spirit of partnership which has been the crowning success of the RWP.

As the problems associated with water quality at tap are successfully overcome, water conservation will undoubtedly emerge as the key area for capital investment and the primary focus will be on upgrading networks. The metering of connections will go a long way to identifying where problems of water wastage lie and should be incorporated as an essential element of such upgrades. It would be a pointless exercise if vast sums were to be spent on water treatment systems, without looking closely at means whereby we can stop wastage and otherwise conserve supplies. We welcome the commitment in the NRWMC action plan to bring forward practical proposals for the collection of rainwater as a means of conserving water.

The successful outworking of the Rural Water Programme is predicated on continued high levels of investment by government and on the commitment of the responsible Minister to seeing the strategy through. Minister Martin Cullen, TD, has provided commendable leadership in this regard to date. His determination to wage an 'all-out assault' on deficient drinking water has, in part, been influenced by the unity of purpose demonstrated by the partners to the RWP, including officials from his own Department. A further positive outcome of that unity of purpose was the decision to engage with the group water sector and rural organisations generally in a series of public consultations around the upcoming Water Services Bill.

For the coming year, we will seek to ensure that guarantees are provided for the continuation of operational subsidy payments, which underpin the long-term O&M contracts being negotiated under DBO. The suggested reintroduction of water service charges on public schemes cannot be used as a means of jeopardising agreed subsidy arrangements in this regard and we will insist that these be ringfenced for the duration of O&M contracts.

Our principle focus will be in moving forward positively and preparing group schemes to face the challenge of change. In this regard, training is certain to become a key area of our activity in the coming years. A programme of management training, designed under the auspices of the

NFGWS, with the expert support of ICOS Training Services and with financial support from FÁS, is now being provided to group schemes in several counties.

The efforts of the Federation in encouraging group schemes to adopt co-operative status have met with great success in 2002 (see appendix). These efforts will continue this year and in the years ahead, as it is absolutely vital that the legal status of group schemes be rationalised in order to provide protection for group scheme boards of management and members.

From all of the above, and despite the often negative media image of the group sector, we have cause for optimism. We know that with the scale of investment that is now available for infrastructural work, group schemes can and will match public schemes in terms of delivering a quality drinking water to consumers. And beyond the water quality issue, we know that a community-owned co-operative is second to none in terms of meeting the needs and the concerns of the people it represents. This is the real strength of the group water sector. Let us build on it!

Brendan O'Mahony
Chairperson

Introduction

As the deadline for eradicating deficient water quality drew ever closer, 2002 saw a conclusion to the debate on how the group sector would meet this objective. With the outworking of the National DBO/'bundling' pilot in County Monaghan, the practical and financial benefits of the strategy agreed by the partners to the Rural Water Programme were clarified.

Regional meetings on the issue in the early months of the year, were followed in September by the pivotal Carrickmacross conference on a new Performance Management System for DBO water treatment plants. In addition to providing groups entering into DBO projects with a blueprint for the long-term management of their treatment works, the conference allowed for a detailed presentation of the DBO/'bundling' strategy and for full and frank discussion of the issues involved.

In early November, the publication by the Water Services National Training Group of a Procurement Guidance Document for water treatment works confirmed that the huge financial investment in water treatment infrastructure and O&M contracts would be governed by strict procedures guaranteeing openness and accountability.

These developments, along with the underlying pressures being exerted by unfavourable water quality monitoring reports and the ongoing action being taken against Ireland in the European Court, meant that as the year progressed, more and more schemes opted to enter 'bundles'. By late December a beginning had been made to design, build and operate projects in almost all western and border counties.

Preparation of a training programme for the boards of management of group schemes had been identified as a priority for the NFGWS if groups were to be adequately equipped to cope with the emerging operational and legislative environment. The year 2002 saw completion of an eight-module programme and its initial delivery on a pilot basis to several group schemes in Mayo and Cavan.

The Quality Assurance Scheme, developed by the Federation in 2001, was rolled out a pilot basis to three group schemes in County Galway in 2002. A module within the board of management training programme is specifically devoted to this subject, while it is planned to introduce the scheme to groups in the western region in 2003.

2002 Review

Throughout 2002, a sustained programme of work was undertaken by the Board of the NFGWS, with regular meetings to review progress across a range of issues. In the course of the year we lost the services of our esteemed chairperson, Dr Jerry Cowley, whose departure to the corridors of political power left a vacuum at the head of the Federation. We were very fortunate to have had someone of the calibre of Brendan O'Mahony to assume that leadership role.

The issue of water quality dominated Federation activity in 2002, while the principle focus for that activity was decided by the Board (at its December 2001 meeting), with the endorsement of the DBO/'bundling' strategy as the speediest and most cost-effective means of bringing schemes into compliance with EU and national regulations.

There was, however, an acknowledgement amongst Board members that an information deficit existed around the DBO/'bundling' strategy and that this was generating unease in many group schemes. A priority, then, was to ensure that full information on the issue be made available to members as a necessary means of allaying concerns at the implications of such a key strategy. This was achieved through published material (including the DBO procurement document released in November) and public meetings at local and national level.

The revelation that in excess of 500 schemes are in breach of the water quality standard clarified the scale of the task at hand. Moreover, the evidence presented from the Monaghan pilot DBO/'bundling' project demonstrated the economic sense of the strategy. Finally, in this regard, the verdict of the European Court, announced in November, removed any uncertainty about the seriousness with which continued breaches of the quality standard would be viewed. By year's end, it was abundantly clear that there could be and would be no alternative strategy to the DBO/'bundling' approach agreed by all partners to the RWP, including this Federation.

In 2002, the fruits of a partnership approach to rural water issues became apparent. In addition to securing a commitment to funding from the Department of the Environment over several years, the Federation is centrally involved as an equal partner in all aspects of the delivery of the rural water programme. Furthermore, the internal reorganisation of recent years has allowed the Board and its staff to focus on the delivery of increasingly professional services to NFGWS members.

Throughout the year, regular contacts have been maintained between the NFGWS and the partners to the Rural Water Programme, including the Department of the Environment. Following last year's ADC, the NFGWS Board brought the points raised by delegates before formal and informal meetings and lobbied on all issues of concern to Federation members. In particular, as it became clear, in the latter months of the year, that there would be a paring back of exchequer expenditure across all Departments, the Board articulated its concern that there should be no shortfall in the level of financial commitment to full implementation of the RWP. This point and the need to ring-fence subsidy payments were stressed by Board members in their final meeting with Department officials in December. Again, the Board was happy that NFGWS concerns were taken on board.

In terms of evaluating progress during the year, this report will deal individually with each of the objectives set for 2002. These were:

1. To actively pursue the formation of 'bundles' of group schemes as the quickest and most effective means of achieving water quality, where treatment facilities need to be installed.
2. To lobby government in relation to the speedy enactment of the Water Services Bill and to the inclusion of those amendments proposed by the NFGWS.
3. To produce a 3-year business plan.
4. To implement and administer a pilot project in relation to the Quality Assurance Scheme.

5. To pursue organisational expansion through the active involvement of additional group schemes in the Federation.
6. To establish a website for the Federation.
7. To secure final agreement and begin implementation on a pilot basis of the management training course designed for the GWS sector by ICOS Services.
8. To recruit further staff, if deemed necessary, in the context of our need to fulfil the remit of the NFGWS.
9. To continue internal reorganisation, as recommended in the ICOS Consultant's Report.
10. To finalise the analysis of the National Source Monitoring Programme and to disseminate the finding to relevant statutory agencies, to County Monitoring Committees and to individual schemes.
11. To progress the detailed implementation of the source protection pilot project at Churchill/Oram GWS.
12. To organise, in association with the NRWMC, an appropriate public seminar and widespread consultation in relation to source protection, with a view to achieving agreement amongst the relevant agencies and stakeholders on the best way forward.
13. To assist in the formulation of a guidance document for DBO procurement, planned under the aegis of the NRWMC.
14. To give practical effect to the O&M element of DBO by co-operating with the Water Services National Training Group in their efforts to produce a guidance document in performance management specifically aimed at rural water providers.

DBO 'bundles'

Objective: ***To actively pursue the formation of 'bundles' of group schemes as the quickest and most effective means of achieving water quality, where treatment facilities need to be installed.***

There was considerable debate within the group sector in respect of the DBO/'bundling' route to putting treatment facilities and O&M contracts in place, with some concern at the implications of that strategy for schemes. Throughout 2002, practical measures were taken to address those concerns as a first step in encouraging the formation of DBO 'bundles'.

Public meetings across all regions were addressed by, amongst others, NFGWS Technical Consultant, Maurice O'Connell, an acknowledged expert in the area of DBO and 'bundling'. He discussed the strategy with group schemes in Wexford (20 February), Sligo (11 & 12 March), Galway (March and 26 September), Mayo (26 & 27 March), Cavan (9 April), Kilkenny (25 April & 10 October), Carlow (May), Limerick (2 May & 20 June), Leitrim (23 July). Further meetings, involving NFGWS development workers, were held with individual schemes in all areas.

A question & answer leaflet was produced on issues pertaining to DBO and 'bundling' and the matter was extensively covered in the June and October editions of GWS News. As a highlight to discussion on the issue during the year, the Carrickmacross PMS conference in September provided an unprecedented forum for group schemes to engage directly with architects of the strategy, including the Department of the Environment & Local Government.

By year's end, a raft of 'bundles' had been formed in Cavan, Sligo, Mayo, Galway, Clare and Limerick. Each of the above 'bundling' arrangements was preceded by an extensive and detailed process of consultation with the groups involved. Bundles agreed in 2002 will ensure that drinking water which complies with EU and national standards will be provided to more than 21,000

households, a large proportion of the total connections on privately-sourced group schemes. The groups involved and the numbers of domestic connections supplied are as follows:

County Cavan: 3 DBO bundles

West-Cavan bundle:

Milltown GWS (103), Doobally GWS (65), Gowlan GWS (153), Glangevlin GWS (134), Kildallan GWS (210), Ballymagovern GWS (58), Corran GWS (49) & Corlough GWS (250). The bundle has 1,022 domestic connections. Sub total: 1,022

East-Cavan bundle:

Drumkeery GWS (350), Mountainlodge GWS (330), Dhuish GWS (180), Billis/Lavey GWS (400), Bunroe GWS (150), Kill GWS (89), Crosserlough GWS (200) and Clifferna GWS (440). This bundle encompasses a total of 2,139 domestic connections.

[Prior to completion of this report, this bundle was joined by Dernakesh GWS (197) and by Glaslough-Tyholland GWS (530), adding a further 727 domestic connections]. Sub total: 2,866

South-West Cavan bundle:

This bundle consists of Bruskey/Killadoon GWS (326) and Gartylough GWS (760), between them supplying 1,086 domestic connections.

[Prior to completion of this report Lavagh-Ballyheelin (Ballymachugh) GWS, with 256 domestic connections, joined this bundle]. Sub total: 1,342

County Clare: 1 DBO bundle

Kilmaley-Inagh GWS (1,500), Lissycasey GWS (745), Killone GWS (173) and Toonagh-Dysart GWS (300), supplying between them a total of approximately 2,718 domestic connections. Sub total: 2,718

County Galway: 1 DBO bundle

Ballyglass/Fiddane GWS (39), Brierfield No.1 GWS (49), Cloonatleva GWS (65), Cloonluane GWS (76), Barnarusheen GWS (47), Kiltcvna (Dunmore) GWS (39), Lettergesh/Mullaghgloss GWS (34), New Inn No. 2 GWS (365), Emlough GWS (43), Lowville No. 1 GWS (46), Inis Meáin GWS (115), Rhyinn GWS (67), Ardrahan GWS (90) and Ballyaneen GWS (21) supplying in all 1,096 domestic connections.

Sub total: 1,096

County Limerick: 1 DBO bundle

Asroe GWS (35), Glenbrohane GWS (106), Kileedy GWS (199), Granagh GWS (136), Ballinvreena GWS (64), Glenroe GWS (32), Glenstal GWS (102), Baggotstown GWS (45), Bulgaden GWS (102), Lough Gur GWS (470), Kilcornan GWS (29), Ballyshonick GWS (22), Coshna GWS (86), Kilfinny GWS (205), Ballyduff GWS (25), Croagh GWS (21), Ballybricken GWS (198), Carnane GWS (310), Craggs/Borragone GWS (53), Farradonnelly GWS (14), Cappagh GWS (154), Ballyorgan GWS (42), Greenane GWS (79), Griston GWS (50), Newton/Caherline GWS (205), supplying in total 2,784 domestic connections. Sub total: 2,784

County Mayo: 1 DBO bundle

Ballycroy GWS (322), Brackloon Spaddagh GWS (152), Glencorrib GWS (362), Kilmovee Urlaur GWS (478), Lough Mask/Creevagh GWS (280), Ballyglass Carnacon GWS (504), Kilmeena GWS (298), Glenhest GWS (138), Killeen GWS (201), Drummin GWS (48), Laughta GWS (80), Belderrig GWS (55), Bohola (524), which between them supply 3,442 domestic connections. Sub total: 3,442

County Monaghan: 1 DBO bundle

Truagh GWS (550), Tydavnet GWS (550), Drumgole GWS (324), Doohamlet GWS (212), Farmoyle-Baraghy GWS (300), Churchill-Oram GWS (309), and Stranooden GWS (730), supplying in total 2,975 domestic dwellings.

[Prior to completion of this report, Aughnashalvey GWS (473), Corduff/Corrachara GWS (325) and Killanny/Reaghstown GWS (657) rejoined this bundle, adding a further 1,455 domestic connections.] Sub total: 4,430

County Sligo: 2 DBO bundles

South east bundle:

Geevagh/Highwood GWS (365), Castlebaldwin GWS (252), Keash GWS (125), Cullfadda GWS (162), Carrowdargney GWS (25) and Corrick GWS (90). This will solve water quality problems on 1,071 domestic connections. Sub total: 1,071

North west bundle

Drum East GWS, Ben Bulben GWS, Ballintrillick GWS, Castletown GWS, Kellaghoboy GWS, Beltra GWS, between them supplying 646 houses. Sub total: 646

Domestic connections for all DBO/'bundles', including 99 GWS: 21,417

Water Services Bill

Objective: ***To lobby government in relation to the speedy enactment of the Water Services Bill and to the inclusion of those amendments proposed by the NFGWS.***

Consultation has been a major element in the evolution of the proposed Water Services Bill. In his final address as NFGWS chairperson, Dr Jerry Cowley called at the ADC in March 2002 for the incoming government to push forward with the introduction of legislation that would 'take the water industry well into the 21st century', adding the 'broad support' of the NFGWS for the proposed measure.

As a follow-up, the Board decided that the new government should be lobbied to ensure that the promised legislation would be delivered on and that it should take account of the views expressed by the Federation in statements released after publication of the heads of the measure in September 2001.

Following the general election, Brendan O'Mahony succeeded Dr Jerry Cowley as NFGWS chairperson and lobbying of the new government continued. By late autumn, the Department of the Environment & Local government had agreed to facilitate a process of public consultation on the issue. The scale of this consultation and the fact that it was taking place prior to the proposed measure being finalised was widely acknowledged as unprecedented.

Meetings attended by the Department personnel drawing up the legislation were held in Monaghan, Thurles, Knock and Cavan and all were very well attended. Three officials, Michael Layde and Pat Keane of the Water Services Policy Unit and Jim Ganley, Assistant Principal Officer at the Department, presented papers on the likely direction of the legislation and on the rationale for the measures being proposed. They informed those attending that 'where appropriate and feasible', submissions and comments would be 'incorporated into the final measure'.

It is anticipated that the legislation will be published by summer 2003 and will be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas later in the year.

Strategic Plan

Objective: ***To produce a 3-year business plan.***

The NFGWS Strategic Plan 2003-2005 was completed during summer 2002 and was ready for presentation to Environment Minister, Martin Cullen, TD, at the launch of Bohola treatment works on 13 September. A copy of the plan was distributed to all affiliated group water schemes and was subsequently posted on the Federation website. Completion of the plan fulfils one of the recommendations of the ICOS Services Report and also fulfils a condition of funding from the DoELG.

The plan addresses equally the internal and external objectives to be pursued by the Federation in the coming years, the first: 'To provide responsive, effective and representative leadership to the members of the NFGWS', and second 'To ensure that the Federation successfully fulfils its remit under the Rural Water Programme'. A series of targets were established from these objectives. In terms of internal structures, these are:

- * To further improve the professionalism of internal management structures and the capacity of staff to deal with the day-to-day concerns and needs of members.
- * To enhance the means by which the membership is kept informed of developments on an ongoing and regular basis.
- * To expand services and organisation, based on a comprehensive assessment of the sector.
- * To provide, in each development office, the resources necessary for effective information, advisory and management training services.
- * To articulate NFGWS policy positions and to highlight the work of individual group schemes and of the Federation.
- * To build on existing partnership arrangements, acting as an intermediary between the membership and statutory agencies in relation to subsidies, licensing and such other issues as may be decided upon at ADC and Board meetings and to represent and influence the drafting of future national and EU legislation as it pertains to drinking water and, thereafter, to assist group schemes in the interpretation and implementation of such legislation.

In relation to its external objectives, the targets are:

- * To pro-actively inform, encourage and assist groups in implementing strategies agreed at county level, in particular promoting the adoption of the DBO and 'bundling' routes as the best means of achieving and maintaining water quality on group schemes.
- * To generate awareness within the sector and amongst the wider public in relation to water quality issues and what is required of water producers in terms of current and upcoming legislation.
- * To deliver comprehensive management training to members and to further develop, through the Water Services National Training Group, operational courses suited to the GWS sector.
- * To continue the search for best practice, with particular reference to source-protection strategies that may be generally adopted.

Under these targets, a series of actions are set out for each year of the plan. The measure of its success will be in determining how effectively these actions are being applied. Members will be able to evaluate such progress for themselves as reviews of performance will be published in annual reports.

Quality Assurance

Objective: ***To implement and administer a pilot project in relation to the Quality Assurance Scheme.***

The Quality Assurance Scheme National Pilot ran between February and May 2002. Three County Galway group schemes – Barnaderg, Caherlistrane and Cahermorris/Glenreevaugh – were included in the pilot, assessing performance across a range of key areas and completing, on a daily basis, documentation drawn up by NFGWS Quality Assurance Manager, Deirdre Byrne. Deirdre was assisted throughout the pilot by Catriona Greaney, NFGWS development officer for Galway and Clare.

The pilot highlighted both strengths and weaknesses in the application of quality assurance measures, in particular the difficulties associated with voluntary organisations undertaking the necessarily tedious and repetitive procedures involved. On the basis of the pilot, documentation was revised and amended throughout 2002, again with the co-operation of the three schemes, all of which agreed to a request from the NFGWS to continue implementing the quality assurance system following completion of the pilot.

As part of the control procedures, sampling for bacteriological contamination must be carried out on monthly basis. To this end, a Colilert system was made available to the schemes to have their drinking water tested for the bacteria Escherichia coli. Based in the new office in the N7teen Business Park in Tuam, the system provides for additional monitoring of water quality.

The growing importance of the Quality Assurance Scheme for the GWS sector was underlined in 2002 by the Department of the Environment & Local Government's decision to link increased operator subsidies and receipt of grant aid to its adoption. Moreover, it is anticipated that under the forthcoming Water Services legislation, licensing of water providers will be tied to implementation of the Quality Assurance Scheme.

As part of the Management Training Programme that has been devised for the boards of management of group water schemes, Module 8 deals specifically with Quality Assurance. It is envisaged that prior to any group implementing the QA, an induction course will be provided.

Sadly, in October 2002 the Federation lost the full-time services of Quality Assurance Manager, Deirdre Byrne (although she is involved in delivering the QA module as part of the training programme). Sinéad Higgins has since been appointed Quality Assurance Manager and is planning to introduce the scheme to groups in the Western region in 2003.

Organisation

Objective: ***To pursue organisational expansion through the active involvement of additional group schemes in the Federation.***

The National Federation of Group Water Schemes represents the interests of all group water schemes, which account in total for the supply of drinking water to some 150,000 Irish rural households. A large proportion of schemes are small, supplying just a few homes and/or are publicly-sourced. Affiliation to the Federation is weakest in these sectors, with just 48 Federated schemes having 15 domestic connections or less.

Active membership of the Federation is concentrated within the privately-sourced group scheme sector and is strongest (and growing) amongst schemes serving more than 50 persons, of which there are more than 700, supplying drinking water to an estimated 50,000 domestic connections. Of these, there are 314 affiliated schemes. While this accounts for only 50% in terms of numbers of schemes, nonetheless affiliated schemes include at least 45,000 or 90% of the estimated 50,000 domestic connections attached to privately-sourced group water schemes.

It must be said, however, that information relating to the strength of the sector is incomplete. A more complete picture will emerge from a baseline research project to be carried out in 2003 and following completion of the series of amalgamations and takeovers recommended in various local authority rural water strategic plans.

In terms of the stated objective, there was an overall increase in the rate of affiliation to the Federation in 2002, with a marked improvement in western counties in particular, with affiliation at virtually 100% in several border counties. A decline in affiliations in other counties may be attributed directly to amalgamations or takeover by local authorities.

Website

Objective: ***To establish a website for the Federation.***

The Federation website was 'up' by late October 2002, having been designed by Aperture, a County Down-based IT company. In all, more than 50 companies tendered for the work and the ten lowest tenders were shortlisted for interview. The successful tender began work in August.

Material for the site, including text and graphics, was provided by the Federation. Amongst the topics included are pages dealing with the background and work of the NFGWS and detailed information on a range of relevant issues from DBO to legislation to subsidy payments. The

Performance Management System document released last September is also available in a searchable format, as are other crucial documents for group scheme activists, journalists and students alike.

The site incorporates an informative children's section, as well as practical papers on the operation of group schemes, contacts for local authority liaison officers and a host of other information. Also included are news stories. As new information comes on stream, the site is updated.

There are plans to ensure that the contents of GWS News will be available on-line in 2003. Suggestions for further improvements would be very welcome and should be sent to Brian MacDonald c/o NFGWS, 13/14 Market Street, Monaghan. The site can be located at www.nfgws.ie

Training

Objective: ***To secure final agreement and begin implementation on a pilot basis of the management training course designed for the GWS sector by ICOS Services.***

During 2002, a comprehensive Management Development Programme for the boards of directors of group water schemes was developed by the National Federation of Group Water Schemes. Roll-out of the programme on a pilot basis took place between September and November. The overall objective of the training programme is to provide group scheme personnel with the capacity to deal with a rapidly evolving industry, particularly in terms of regulatory and legislative changes in water services provision.

Course development was spearheaded by a Management Training Programme Steering Committee. Chaired by NFGWS Senior Development Co-ordinator, Damien Woods, this included NFGWS Quality Assurance Manager, Deirdre Byrne (secretary), NFGWS National Co-ordinator, Seán Clerkin, Robert Byrne (FÁS), Jim Ganley (DoELG), Kevin Reilly (Cavan County Council) and the late Frank Keelaghan (formerly Monaghan County Council).

Acting on a brief prepared by the steering committee, ICOS Services were retained as consultants in preparing eight programme modules, while the National training agency, FÁS, came on board at an early stage with welcome financial support. Besides assisting with programme development, the support of FÁS allowed the Federation to recruit a National Director of Training to liaise with ICOS in relation to module content and to co-ordinate the delivery of training in all areas.

Two key tasks were identified in the formulation of course content; first, the training and development of boards of directors and operators in the in the management of group water schemes and, second, satisfying consumer and statutory demands for quality assured drinking water.

As the course was to be delivered, in the first instance, by NFGWS staff and two 'outside' trainers, it was decided to test-run the programme via the trainers themselves. 'Training the trainers' seminars were held in Castlebar Training Centre in July and September, at which delivery of various modules was monitored, with a view to fine-tuning them. Both ICOS and FÁS were represented at these training days and the views of the trainers themselves were recorded.

The final stage of development took place between September and October, when all eight modules were pilot tested with the co-operation of Annagh GWS in County Cavan and several group schemes in Mayo including Glenhest, Midfield, Derryvohey, Burrishrule, Cuilmore, Shraheens-Aughagower, Facefield-Kilcolman and Bannogues-Ballintubber.

Both the format and content of the programme were finally agreed in December 2002 and it was anticipated that delivery to group schemes in selected counties would begin in February 2003.

The NFGWS Board agreed a fixed charge of €1,500 for delivery of the course and it was agreed with the Department of Environment and Local Government that this would be fully recoverable under the terms and conditions of the subsidy scheme.

The specific aims of this training programme are to:

- * Identify and communicate the key essentials for running a successful group water scheme.
- * Enhance customer services skills in the GWS sector.
- * Clarify and have participants understand the role of boards, officers, management and staff.
- * Familiarise participants with basic financial and business planning.
- * Review and improve participants' understanding of the key business functions.
- * Make participants aware of their legal responsibilities, including recent legislative changes.
- * Ensure compliance with the legal requirements pertaining to the GWS sector.
- * Identify and highlight issues in the business environment that will impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of group schemes.
- * Highlight the possibilities and mechanisms for joint action with other schemes.
- * Improve the level of awareness of quality water.
- * Establish an understanding of the importance of quality assurance, in particular in relation to the Quality Assurance (HACCP) Scheme developed by the NFGWS, the adoption of which will be incorporated as an essential requirement in the licensing of water service providers.
- * Develop the skills necessary to implement the QA scheme.

Recruitment

Objective: ***To recruit further staff, if deemed necessary, in the context of our need to fulfil the remit of the NFGWS.***

In implementing the decisions of the Board and of the annual delegate conference, the Federation relies on the efforts of a full-time staff, under the capable leadership of Seán Clerkin and Damien Woods. At the start of 2002, four other development workers were employed; David Murphy (based in Cork), Catriona Greaney (based in Galway), Sinéad Higgins (based in Mayo) and Deirdre Byrne (based in Tullamore). Clerical staff included Julie Brannigan (based in Monaghan) and Shirley O'Grady (based in Galway).

Two new staff members were employed in 2002, Brian MacDonald as Research & Evaluation Officer, with a special brief for publicity, and Colm Brady as Director of Training. Quality Assurance Manager, Deirdre Byrne, took up another position, but agreed to continue on a part-time basis as an NFGWS trainer, delivering the Quality Assurance module of the boards of management training programme.

In addition to the above, the roll-out of the training programme for the boards of management of group schemes has necessitated the recruitment of two 'outside' trainers. Gearóid de Faoite of Galway, a well-known group scheme activist, has joined the training team in the West, while Paudge McKenna, a former senior official with Monaghan County Council, is a trainer in the border region.

Reorganisation

Objective: ***To continue internal reorganisation, as recommended in the ICOS Consultant's Report.***

Several internal structural recommendations from the ICOS Report agreed in 2001 remained to be implemented in 2002. These were as follows:

1. That the Board of the Federation establishes, in collaboration with management, a series of quantifiable objectives and target dates to be incorporated into the Federation's 3-year business plan. Implemented. See above.
2. That a medium term business plan for the organisation be drafted. Implemented. See above.
3. That the Federation develop an 'expert systems' data base that will permit Federation staff to offer advice to group schemes on the most frequently recurring problems and issues encountered by group schemes. That such an expert system would, in time, be integrated into a Federation web site. Being implemented. Expert information is now available through individual Federation officers and via the Federation website.
10. That the Federation evaluates the viability of the additional service proposals outlined to determine if their organisation and delivery can be effected in a viable manner. In the context of the rapidly evolving rural water programme and the need for additional research into such a proposal, this matter has been deferred.
15. That weekly activity sheets be compiled by each development officer. Being implemented.
28. That staff be provided with appropriate training programmes. In 2002, two training days were held in Castlebar in relation to the upcoming course for boards of management of group schemes. Development staff have, in addition, participated in operational training courses in the regional centres.
65. That a comprehensive programme of management training and development be designed and delivered to the Boards of Directors/Committees of Management charged with the running of these schemes. Implemented. See above.
66. That because of the voluntary and part-time nature of their commitment, the design and delivery of such programmes for board members should be tailored to suit board members' availability and requirements. Implemented. All courses are being delivered within or close to the areas of the individual group schemes requesting training.

As part of internal reorganisation and improvement of services, an office was opened in Tullamore, County Offaly, under the direction of Damien Woods, while our Tuam-based staff moved to new premises at the N17 Business Park on the outskirts of the County Galway town.

Source Monitoring & Protection

Objective: ***To finalise the analysis of the National Source Monitoring Programme and to disseminate the findings to relevant statutory agencies, to County Monitoring Committees and to individual schemes.***

This work was carried out on behalf of the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee by NFGWS Technical Consultant, Maurice O'Connell and we understand that the results have been distributed, with an explanatory leaflet attached.

As a follow-on, a drinking water monitoring project was initiated by the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee. This began in November 2002 and reports distinguishing between privately-sourced and publicly-sourced schemes will be issued on a three-monthly basis. It is envisaged that schemes not in compliance with the required standard will be notified as such by their local authority.

Objective: ***To progress the detailed implementation of the source protection pilot project at Churchill/Oram GWS.***

The proposed Source Protection pilot received a setback in 2001 when the EPA indicated that it would not be in a position to support the initiative. Since then, however, the National Rural Water

Monitoring Committee has taken an active interest in the proposal and in 2002 a partnership was established between the Federation, Monaghan County Council and Dundalk Institute of Technology to see the project through. This partnership is largely attributable to NRWMC chairperson and Director of the Dundalk Institute, Dr Tom Collins. A proposal in respect of Churchill/Oram was included in the recommendations of the NRWMC presented to Minister Cullen and a start-up date is expected by autumn 2003.

Objective: To organise, in association with the NRWMC, an appropriate public seminar and widespread consultation in relation to source protection, with a view to achieving agreement amongst the relevant agencies and stakeholders on the best way forward.

Because of the pressure being exerted to deal with deficient drinking water supplies, the provision of treatment has been given priority. When this is successfully addressed, the NRWMC anticipates that water conservation and source protection will emerge as the key sectoral issues. These are addressed in the NRWMC Action Plan 2003-2006, with some specific proposals. In all probability, it will be 2004 before public seminars and widespread consultation begin on the issue of source protection, as proposed.

DBO Procurement

Objective: ***To assist in the formulation of a guidance document for DBO procurement, planned under the aegis of the NRWMC.***

In October 2002, the Water Services National Training Group (WSNTG) Steering Group, which includes a representative from the NFGWS, published a guidance document for the procurement of rural water projects. Titled 'Design, Build and Operate contracts for rural water treatment plants', this document was designed in consultation with the NFGWS as a blueprint for progressing DBO 'bundling' projects.

The document includes ten chapters, each dealing with a specific but integral part of the procurement procedure. Use is made of flowcharts and diagrams to outline key procedures. The Appendix contains outline/draft public notices, information notes, briefs for the appointment of technical advisers, pre-qualification questionnaire etc., to assist those responsible for the planning and implementation of projects (consultants, local authority personnel and the group water sector).

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of a guidance document to assist in planning and progressing a DBO project, with the objective of increasing the level of compliance with the standards for drinking water.

Chapter 2 outlines national policy with regard to DBO procurement, coupled with the bundling of schemes under a single contract, to achieve value for money (VFM) in terms of both capital and operational costs and to meet tight deadlines for the provision of up to 500 water treatment plants.

Chapter 3 deals with critical issues such as site ownership and wayleaves, planning and EIS. A highly important factor is the applicability of Part VIII planning to bundled DBO group projects progressed by a local authority in partnership with a number of group schemes.

Chapter 4 is probably the most critical part of the document. This sets out the procedures for the selection and appointment of Technical Advisers. All such appointments must follow public procurement procedures.

Chapter 5, Selection of tenders, describes the two-stage tendering process to be followed for all DBO projects. The first stage is pre-qualification based on Economic/Financial criteria and Technical Capability leading to the shortlisting of contractors (minimum of 5) who, in turn, will be invited to tender for the project. A model pre-qualification questionnaire is included.

Chapter 6 details the scope and structure of the tender documents. It sets out the scope of the project, the performance and standards expected, how tenders will be assessed and the employer's requirements over the service phase of the contract.

Chapter 7 outlines the procedures to be followed in the second stage tendering process. A clear, step by step approach is shown on a flow chart. Precise guidance is provided on tendering procedures from the completion of shortlisting and the receipt of tenders.

Chapter 8 is titled Tendering Evaluation & Contract Award. This is critically important in ensuring that the right bidder gets the job. After checking tender compliance, tenders must be evaluated on strict financial and technical criteria. Assessing Whole Life Cost and the Net Present Value of the O&M costs is a difficult task. This procedure is clearly outlined in a flowchart.

Chapter 9 focuses on the Design/Build phase of the project, concentrating on items such as the appointment of staff, monitoring the construction works, publicity measures and the completion of the work.

Chapter 10 sets out how the Performance Management System will be implemented over the service phase of the contract.

Objective: *To give practical effect to the O&M element of DBO by co-operating with the Water Services National Training Group in their efforts to produce a guidance document in performance management specifically aimed at rural water providers.*

September's conference in Hotel Nuremore, Carrickmacross, saw the launch of the Performance Management System, a guidance document specifically aimed at rural water providers. Major credit is due to the members of the Water Services National Training Group (WSNTG) for producing a crucial document that sets down a template for the relationships that will evolve between group water schemes and those involved in providing operational and maintenance contracts. The NFGWS is represented on the board of the WSNTG by National Co-ordinator, Seán Clerkin.

Delegates at Carrickmacross heard presentations on the document as it applies to group schemes from representatives of the consortium of three companies involved in the project – Jones Environmental (Irl.), White Young, Green (Irl.) and J. B. Barry & Partners Ltd.

The 137-page document is available on the NFGWS website, at www.nfgws.ie

Objectives, targets and actions for 2003

Objective I: *To provide responsive, effective and representative leadership to the membership of the NFGWS.*

- Target: To further improve the professionalism of internal management structures and the capacity of staff to deal with the day-to-day concerns and needs of members.
- Action 1: Implement the remaining internal restructuring recommendations of the ICOS Report, with particular reference to staff reporting procedures.
- Action 2: Provide (as part of a website) a dedicated online noticeboard for staff members, including all relevant information and references.

Target: To enhance the means by which the membership is kept informed of developments on an ongoing and regular basis.

- Action 1: Produce and distribute GWS News on a quarterly basis.
- Action 2: Launch a dedicated website.

Target: To expand services and organisation, based on a comprehensive assessment of the sector.

- Action 1: Complete (within a year) a base report of the GWS sector.

Target: To provide in each development office the resources necessary for effective information, advisory and management training services.

- Action 1: Install adequate computer technology in all regional offices, building a network and staff training in database systems and website.

Target: To voice privately and publicly NFGWS policy positions and to highlight the work of individual group schemes and of the Federation.

- Action 1: Provide GWS News to all media outlets, with accompanying press release, highlighting the major story in the GWS sector.
- Action 2: GWS News to be posted on website in PDF format (i.e. it will be downloadable).
- Action 3: Build up a comprehensive list of contacts in national and local media, identifying within the broadcasting sector, presenters and programmes, other than news departments, potentially receptive to news/events from the group water sector.
- Action 4: Inform media on ongoing capital works programmes on individual schemes or on groups of schemes.
- Target: To build on existing partnership arrangements, acting as an intermediary between the membership and statutory agencies in relation to subsidies, licensing and such other issues as may be decided upon at ADC and board meetings and to represent and influence the drafting of future national and EU legislation as it pertains to drinking water and, thereafter, to assist group schemes in the interpretation and implementation of such legislation.
- Action 1: Lobby the DoELG in relation to the Water Services Bill and the wider aims, objectives and work of the group sector.
- Action 2: Establish structured contacts (outside of committee work or informal meetings) with all county liaison officers on a monthly basis.
- Action 3: Sustain and, where possible, increase NFGWS participation on County Rural Water Monitoring Committees, ensuring speedy agreement and implementation of Final Stage Strategic Plans.
- Objective II: ***To ensure that the Federation successfully fulfils its remit under the Rural Water Programme and consolidates the partnerships that have been established.***
- Target: To pro-actively encourage and assist groups in implementing strategies agreed at county level, in particular promoting the adoption of the DBO and 'bundling' routes as the best means of achieving and maintaining water quality on group schemes.
- Action 1: Push for monthly meetings (at least) of Monitoring Committees in those counties awaiting adoption and ratification of final stage strategic plans, consulting with county liaison officers in formulating the agenda for such meetings.
- Action 2: Focus Federation resources (and in particular staff time) in working on a priority basis with those schemes most in need of NFGWS support, by:
 (a) Pro-actively approaching schemes identified as falling short of the quality standard and convincing them of the urgent need to become part of DBO 'bundles'.
 (b) Identifying and pro-actively approaching private schemes suitable for amalgamation and/or takeover, addressing the concerns that such groups may have in adapting to structural and legislative change.
- Action 3: Develop, with a view to piloting, a centralised monitoring system for those group schemes which have completed upgrading.
- Target: To generate awareness within the sector and amongst the wider public in relation to water quality issues and what is required of water providers in terms of current and upcoming legislation.
- Action 1: Launch website, including a dedicated environmental-awareness section and links to related sites.
- Action 2: Urge adoption by all NFGWS-affiliated groups of the Quality Assurance Scheme.
- Action 3: Ensure that all affiliated group water schemes adopt and implement the Charter of Rights.
- Action 4: Implement a pro-active media campaign in relation to water-quality issues and respond to negative media commentary.
- Action 5: Encourage adoption of best practice, highlighting within GWS News and the wider media, as well as at information meetings/seminars, those schemes that might be considered as models.

Target: To deliver comprehensive management training to members and to further develop, through the Water Services National Training Group, operational courses suited to the GWS sector.

Action 1: Prioritising schemes which have completed upgrading (including treatment works, reasonable distribution systems and individual metering), provide the management training course (devised by ICOS) to at least fifty group schemes across all regions.

Action 2: Launch a co-ordinated and focused publicity campaign directed at group schemes, stressing the absolute necessity of operational and management training for their schemes, both in terms of their own immediate interest in providing quality water for their communities, their prospects of receiving financial supports and, indeed, the long-term viability of their schemes as licensed providers of drinking water.

Target: To continue the search for best practice, with particular reference to source-protection strategies that may be generally adopted.

Action 1: Collate (and, where necessary, commission) reports on all ongoing pilot schemes, addressing both the strengths and weaknesses that have been identified. In advance of wider circulation to relevant agencies, including group schemes, each report will be sent to the relevant contractors and statutory agencies, requesting their input to the final document.

Action 2: To prioritise implementation of the Churchill/Oram source protection pilot and the identification of at least three other locations, of varying soil/bedrock types, in which source protection pilots may be initiated in 2004.

Action 3: Devise, in consultation with group schemes and farmer organisations, a set of principles in relation to such legislative/statutory instruments as may be introduced/invoked to protect drinking water sources, with particular reference to issues effecting the existing rights of land owners/occupiers.

Regional Reports

Northern Region: Cavan

In 2002, there was remarkable progress in implementing the recommendations of the County Cavan Strategic Rural Water Plan with the formation of three DBO 'bundles' incorporating virtually every group water scheme in the county participating (see above).

In the first few months of the year, 'bundles' were formed and approved in west Cavan and in the east of the county. An information meeting on the DBO issue took place in Hotel Kilmore on 9 April. Technical Consultant, Maurice O'Connell, Rural Water Liaison Officer for Cavan, Kevin Reilly, and NFGWS National Co-ordinator, Seán Clerkin, gave comprehensive presentations and responded to questions and answers from the large attendance.

A third bundle in the south of the county was subsequently formed, while the original bundles grew with the inclusion of several more schemes.

As recommended in the County Rural Water Strategic Plan, there were a number of amalgamations, including Redhills and Butlersbridge (Annagh GWS), Vale and Knockbride (Drumkeery GWS), Turfad, Tullyunshin, Tonyduff/Seeoran (Mountain Lodge GWS).

A major DBO water treatment works was constructed at Annagh during the year, while contracts were signed by the same scheme for the laying of new rising mains and the construction of three reservoirs.

Organisation of new group schemes began in the Killinkere and Mounthugent areas in the course of the year.

In addition to his appointment as NFGWS Director of Training in July, Colm Brady was designated development officer in his native Cavan. Since his appointment, the three 'bundles'

were finalised and the new board of management training programme was pilot-tested at Annagh GWS.

County Cavan hosted the fourth of the public consultations on the forthcoming Water Services Bill.

Monaghan

Following its launch by former Environment Minister, Noel Dempsey, TD, in December 2001, funding for the Monaghan DBO/'bundling' pilot project was allocated in March 2002 and the construction programme began in June on the treatment works for Truagh GWS on the Monaghan-Tyrone border. Construction on three further treatment works – Drumgole, Doohamlet and Churchill/Oram – commenced before the end of 2002, and although there were inevitable delays the contractor remained confident that the programme of work would be completed in September 2003.

Four groups opted out of the 'bundle' following the tendering process, but agreement was reached with the successful contractor – Bowen/Vivendi – that the door would be left open to their readmission at a later date, if they so decided.

The County Rural Water Monitoring Committee met on a regular monthly basis throughout the year, with several additional 'special' meetings to address specific issues as they arose. Rural water developments also featured in discussions at several county council meetings and the sector received a high level of publicity in the local media.

The County Federation in conjunction with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes were delighted to host September's WSNTG conference on the Performance Management System which took place in Hotel Nuremore, Carrickmacross. Similarly, the first of four national public consultations on the Water Services Bill, held in the same venue in November, was the initiative of County Federation chairperson, Joe Martin.

Louth

A new rising main, pumps and bulk meters was installed at Ballymakenny GWS as part of a major upgrading programme. When completed, works on the scheme will cost €465,000. At Mountain Lodge GWS, a new source was fully commissioned and a new reservoir and control house constructed. A disinfection system has been put in place on the scheme. Minor upgrading works were completed on two further schemes, Drybridge & Waterunder GWS, where a simple disinfection system has been installed, and Grangebellew GWS where source protection works have been completed.

Almost 200,000 was expended in the refurbishment of Jenkinstown GWS which was taken over by Louth County Council in 2001. Works included the replacement of the existing unsatisfactory source, upgrading of the distribution network and installation of meters, where appropriate.

Donegal

The block grant drawn from the DOELG during the year 2002 totalled €4,403,368.

Grants to a value of €3,303,368 were expended on new group water supply schemes and upgrading of existing schemes. The beneficiary schemes were Owenteskna, Calhame, Magheraghane/Shannagh, Doonin/Curris, Corraine No. 2, Castlequarter, Lurgan, Meenacahan/Meentinadea, Gortnavern No. 2, Drumlatafin, Drumhalla, Upper Stranalough, Ballymacarthur, Cleengort, Stragar/Meenakillew, Meenderry, Cronlaghy, Crislamore/Crislakeel, Kinnego, Glencoagh No. 2, Strand Road and Upper Behy.

Progress was made towards upgrading and takeover of 62 existing group water supply schemes in the county during 2002. Grants to the value of €600,000 were expended. The takeover process was completed for one of these schemes, Mullins/Ballyloskey.

Preliminary plans were laid for the formation of a DBO 'bundle' in the south west of the county.

Meath

Meath county council's Capital Grant Allocation for 2002 was €650,000, which enabled the Council to meet commitments on existing group water schemes and to construct 16 publicly-sourced schemes, including Gillstown/Kilkeelan, Kilsyre, Beamore (Drogheda), Follistown (Navan), Moylough and Longwood Road, Trim. €100,000 was grant-aided in respect of takeover of schemes. Since the devolution of the administration of group schemes to local authorities in 1997, the council has expended more than €1 million in respect of capital grants and €605,000 in respect of takeovers.

Currently, there are two privately-sourced group water schemes in the county – Meath Hill and Kiltale – that supply more than 50 persons. Meath Hill is upgrading under the traditional route and contract documents are being prepared. The agreed solution includes improvements to the borehole site, pumphouse, access road and reservoir.

Kiltale will proceed under the DBO route as a stand-alone scheme. The council received contract documents from the group in August 2002, which were submitted to the Department for approval. The agreed solution includes a performance specification for water treatment and an operate contract for 20 years.

A number of schemes were at planning/design stage in 2002. These included Kilcloon, Curraghtown (near Navan), Rathmoylan and Parke (near Kinnegad).

North Connacht Region: Leitrim

The 2001 EPA Report highlighted the poor quality on many group water schemes in the county, with only 33% of samples free from faecal coliforms. The County Strategic Plan envisages that poor quality on the majority of schemes serving 50 persons or more will be resolved by connecting to the regional supplies.

There were 27 such schemes with quality problems monitored in the source water-monitoring programme in 2001. The position in relation to these at the end of 2002 was as follows (with the domestic connections on each scheme given in brackets):

Four schemes, Cloonsarn (80), Aughwillan (102), Correeleehan (175) and Clooncarne (81), were connected to the public supply. On a further six schemes – Cloonadonnell (18), Aughavas (25), Lavareen (17), Corrawallen (64), Creevelea/Killargue (450) and Kilavoggy/Ardvoly (41) – connection to a public supply is planned and a contractor was appointed, with construction starting on the Aughavas works prior to year's end. Tenders were received in respect of a further scheme – Killooman (75) – which is connecting to Drumkeerin supply.

It will take an estimated €1.9 million to connect five schemes to the recently constructed North Leitrim Regional Supply. The schemes involved are Glenfarne (102), Glenboy (145), Ardmoneen/Loughross (28), Lisnagroagh (15) and Tawneyfeakle (38). All of the above, with the exception of Tawneyfeakle, were in the process of amalgamating. Work was at the design stage and additional funding was being requested from the Department. Another six schemes were scheduled for inclusion in a Leitrim DBO/'bundle'. These were Leckaun (70), Ballinagleragh (193), Aughnasheelin (112) – to supply Mullaghgarve/Aughacashel (15) – Carrigallen (250) and Mohercregg (67).

Finally, it is proposed to connect the remaining five non-compliant schemes – Cornashamsogue (34), Aughamore (18), Newtowngore (21), Brackary Mor (15) and Brackary Beg (28) – to a public supply.

Under the Rural Water Programme, €2.45 million was allocated to County Leitrim in 2002. Work progressed on construction/upgrading of the following GWS: Tarmon, Glencar, Carrigallen, Keelagh/Bornacoola, Aghavas, Kinkeen, Corderry Peyton, Tomans/Gortnagullion, Fohera No 2, Correscoffy, Tully No 2, Rossinver, Drumkeilvy, Aughagrania Upper and Cooladonnell.

In early 2002 a series of information meetings were held in Manorhamilton, Carrick-on-Shannon and Ballinamore, attended by representatives of approximately 50 schemes. These information nights were addressed by representatives of the NFGWS and Leitrim County Council. A DBO information night was held in July, with a presentation by Maurice O'Connell. At the end of 2002, agreement had not yet been reached with schemes to proceed with the procurement of DBO treatment plants. However, it was expected that a bundle would be finalised early in 2003.

Leitrim Rural Water Monitoring Committee was active during 2002, meeting on five occasions. Stanley Trotter succeeded Des Joyce as chairperson.

Mayo

The second stage of the Strategic Rural Water Plan was agreed by the Water Supply and Sewerage Strategic Policy Committee and by Mayo County Council in January.

Over 250 GWS availed of a series of information meetings held through January in Ballinrobe, Kiltimagh, Bangor Erris and Castlebar. These were organised by the NFGWS in conjunction with Mayo County Council. The meetings provided an excellent opportunity to update GWS on new developments within the sector and the impending deadline for the introduction of drinking water regulations.

Representatives from more than fifty privately-sourced group schemes attended information nights on 'DBO', presented in March by Maurice O'Connell. Arising out of this and other meetings, 13 GWS agreed to participate in the county's first bundle. Ryan Hanley & Co, Galway were appointed Clients' Representatives for a programme of work that will result in the provision of quality water to over 3,500 households. By the end of 2002, work was progressing well on finalising a second bundle of DBO schemes in Mayo.

Martin Costello, Ballycroy GWS succeeded Brendan O'Mahony as Chairperson of Mayo Federation of GWS at the AGM in October. Mr O'Mahony became National Chairperson earlier in the year, following the resignation of Dr Jerry Cowley, on his election to Dáil Éireann. John Gavin, Midfield GWS replaced Dr Jerry Cowley as a representative on Mayo Rural Water Monitoring Committee. The RWMC met on two occasions during 2002.

In autumn, over 20 committee members from eight GWS throughout Mayo participated in the management training course being piloted by NFGWS.

A seminar on the Water Services Bill was held in Knock in December, with over 100 people from the Connacht region in attendance.

Work has commenced on upgrading Bekan GWS (153 houses) and Gurteen Carrowkeel GWS (117). Both these schemes will be connected to the Lough Mask Regional Supply, thereby resolving their water quality problems. Construction was completed of four new GWS – Rathkip, Crimlin/Ross, Cultrasna and Coloonalaghan. The upgrading of Ballyglass/Carnacon GWS was completed, while the upgrading of Tooreen/Aughamore GWS, Glencorrib GWS, Castlenageeha GWS and Hollymount/Kilrush GWS was in progress. Work started in October 2002 on the upgrading of Knockmore GWS (which has been taken over by the County Council. This project involves the laying of a new trunk main with booster pumping station and the construction of a

new reservoir. Bohola GWS, Lakehill GWs and Ballindrehid GWS were at the tender stage for network upgrading. Designs were approved for upgrading Manulla GWS, Belcarra GWS, Rathnacreevagh GWS, Logboy GWS, Carras GWS, Tiernaur GWS, Tavneena GWS, Behy GWS, Cuilleen GWS, Lettertrask GWS and Cloonmore Rooskey GWS.

Sligo

The 2002 allocation for Sligo under the Rural Water Programme was €2.65 million, including €400,000 for small public water and sewerage schemes, €1.5 million for group scheme capital projects, €.5 million for a DBO treatment project and €250,000 towards takeover of schemes by the local authority.

Upgrading works were completed at Corick GWS and Carrowmoran GWS, while works commenced at Castletown GWS in May and at Ballygawley before the end of 2002. Tenders were received in respect of works on Carrickbanagher GWS and Lackagh GWS.

The Rural Water Monitoring Committee met twice during 2002.

The priority for 2002 was the formation of two bundles which will result in the provision of quality water to approximately 1,700 households throughout the county. Jennings O'Donovan, Sligo were appointed client's representatives for the bundle covering the south east of the county, while T. G. O'Connor & Associates, Dublin were appointed to a north west bundle. A number of meetings on the issue were held in 2002 in conjunction with Sligo County Council.

Western Region: Clare

The development of the four-scheme bundle has dominated group scheme activity in Clare in 2002. Between them, these schemes supply water to some 50% of the domestic connections supplied by the group sector in the county.

Over the past number of years, schemes in west Clare have been linked into a public regional supply scheme and this trend continued in 2002.

Plans were developed for a new publicly-sourced group scheme in Cahermurphy (in the Kilmihil area). This is a sparsely populated district and it will be one of several districts within the Clár area to avail of this source of funding.

Clare Federation met four times in the course of 2002.

Galway

The formation of the first of the Galway DBO 'bundles' was agreed in the course of 2002, with 14 schemes representing 1,096 households. Approaches were made to in the region of 50 further schemes in relation to the formation of a second bundle. A continuous public information programme began in the early part of the year and continued throughout, with major public seminars in Lough George (near Claregalway) and in Oranmore. These were addressed by Maurice O'Connell, officials from Galway County Council and representatives of the National Federation of Group Water Schemes.

Galway was the location for an important national pilot project in respect of the Quality Assurance Scheme devised by the Federation in 2001. Three group schemes – Barnaderg, Caherlistrane and Cahermorris/Glenrevaugh – participated. The pilot was completed in May and the experiences of implementing the programme were subsequently incorporated in revised documentation. Formal contacts continued with all three schemes, following their agreement to continue implementation of the QA scheme.

The amalgamation of four schemes – Milltown, Milltown North East, Belmont and Killaphrasogue – was completed and they now form the new Milltown Community GWS incorporating approximately 450 domestic connections. Tender documents for a new DBO treatment works for the scheme were drawn up by Jennings O'Donovan and at the need of 2002, approval was awaited from the Department.

Glinsk GWS were similarly awaiting approval from the Department, following completion of documentation in respect of new treatment works for their DBO project.

Upgrading of Claran GWS was nearing completion at the end of 2002. This involves improvement of parts of the distribution network and a new treatment works. The supply for the scheme at Lough Corrib is being developed.

The County Monitoring Committee met six times in the course of the year, while Galway Federation met seven times.

Roscommon

A total of €1,725,000 was allocated in respect of expenditure on the Rural Water Programme in 2002. Of this sum, €175,000 was to take in charge group water schemes. Works were completed on the Deerpark GWS, while work commenced on the taking in charge of Croghan GWS and Carrowkeel GWS.

Substantial works have been carried out by Roscommon County Council over the past number of years and funding new schemes. €850,000 was allocated by the DOELG to on upgrading existing substandard water schemes. The following schemes received grant assistance towards upgrades:

Ardkeenagh Tusk, Ogulla Tusk, Clooneyquinn, Donamon, Rathcroghan Tusk, Woodbrook, Carnakitt, Derrane Coolteigue, Clooneen Carrowreigh, Camlin, Araghty Grange, Carrowcrim. New Schemes Completed – Derrinturk/Derrincarbry, Gorrynagowna, Knock No 2, Treenagry, Martry Runnabol, Turloughmore.

New schemes commenced and completed in 2002: Ballytoohey, Garrow, Legan, Feeragh, Cappalisheen.

New schemes commenced in 2002: Crannaghmore, Kilmacroy, Rusheen, Tallaghan.

In terms of subsidy, a total of €106,587.52 to thirty five group water schemes was paid by Roscommon County Council in 2002.

Southern Region: Cork North

Work throughout 2002 consisted mainly of group water scheme extensions taking their supply from the public water mains. Schemes concluded were Grange and Farran. Similar work is in progress at Lisnaboy and Glencollins. The completion of Coolagown private group water scheme at Fermoy realises a long-held desire for the local area. Coolagown is complete with its state-of-the-art metering system. Another scheme that is being developed is Bellevue and it should be completed in 2003.

Cork South

Work is ongoing on two new group water schemes at Lehenaghmore and Tay Road, due to be completed in early 2003. Three other schemes Annmount and Cappagh and Farmers Cross completed work during 2002. Design work was undertaken at Carrignadowra. Much was also done on the planning and tendering of Walterstown scheme in Cobh, including developing a new source.

Cork West

Though group schemes are not a large part of the piped supply in West Cork, they offer a key solution for some areas. Rock Island is finally completed and Lyre private, which has been approved, will provide a potable supply to six houses. Plans are being completed as to how best to improve water quality on existing privately-sourced group schemes. Discussions with Ardcluggan indicate that connection to the public supply is the most likely solution. Crosterra, while retaining its good lake source, will be expanded. Reservoir replacement and treatment has been approved for Derrycriveen and will commence shortly. Improvement works have been completed at Caheragh, while Rossmore is in the process of upgrading and installing treatment.

Kerry

The major project in Kerry was the ongoing work on phase 2 of the Brosna/Knocknagoshel scheme. This will extend piped water mains to a large section of North East Kerry. Cordal, Coolnageragh and Carker were in the process of upgrade prior to being taken in charge. Castlequin is to tender for an extension to 90 houses off the public water supply. Rossdohan is a new private scheme in South Kerry, near Sneem. It has fifty houses and is in the process of being completed. Asdee Phase 1 taking its supply from the Listowel regional scheme is the big development for the next one or two years. It is gone to tender and a contractor has been appointed. This will extend piped water to a large part of North Kerry, a development that has been awaited for many years.

Limerick

The big achievement during 2002 was the expression of interest by twenty-five schemes in a DBO 'bundle'. At year's end the appointment of a clients representative was imminent. The bundle will service the needs and provide safe water ex-works for 3,500 houses or 8,500 people. A sample of the works undertaken in 2002 include, the replacement of faulty mains in Carnane schemes to the value of €190,000. Barna/Glendarragh installed water treatment as did Glenbrohane. Ballyduff concluded major refurbishment of their scheme. Ballybricken improved their treatment works. Newbridge Clouncagh and Corcamore availed of take-over grants in 2002 to upgrade their schemes. Limerick Federation met three times over the past year.

Tipperary North

Much progress was made in the group water scheme sector in 2002. Work was completed in the major upgrade of Bawn/Kilgriffith/Kilmore. The schemes of Grallagh and Killahara were upgraded and taken in charge. Most of the focus, however, was on quality. At the end of the year, forty-three of the forty-seven schemes of over fifteen houses had installed treatment. The other four are in the process of installing treatment. The consequence of this is the rising of full compliance in water quality from 49% in the year 2000 to 73% in 2002. The trend is continuing upwards. The monitoring committee met quarterly to review this work.

The county federation met three times during the year. An analysis of the amalgamation of a number of small schemes was being looked at. Should this prove viable and desired by the schemes, this should be completed in 2003. This could prove to be a working model for small schemes in other counties.

Tipperary South

In Tipperary South the monitoring committee met three times. Public mains extensions were carried out at Clonmore South, Nine Mile House and Glenbane. Fennor group scheme applied for planning permission to build a reservoir to bring their upgrade plans to fruition. The sanitary section of the council carried out a leakage plan on public mains. They targeted short section mains replacement based on historical analysis of areas with a high incidence of leaks. Such a policy of positive action should become standard within the group scheme sector.

Midlands/South east Region

The concept of DBO 'bundling' of GWS for treatment was rolled out to the counties in this region throughout 2002. Most counties have at this stage completed at least stage one of their Rural water strategic plans and are in the process of delivering same. The NFGWS has been involved in the formation of co-ops throughout the region in an effort to organise and reinvigorate schemes to ensure that they are ready for the challenges posed by the new legislative environment. Many schemes attended the information meeting on the new water services bill in Thurles in November. Set out hereunder, are some brief comments on developments within the various counties under the RWP in 2002 and the activities of the County Federations.

Carlow

Carlow has been extremely pro-active in promoting and advising group water schemes in the process of DBO/'bundling'. Meetings with the schemes on an individual and group basis throughout the year meant that by December all relevant privately-sourced Group Water Schemes were committed to entering a DBO 'bundle'. Pat Harrington of Carlow County Council deserves mention for his efforts in this regard. The County Federation met in Leighlinbridge in August and elected Paddy Farrell and Frank Bermingham to serve on the County Monitoring Committee.

Kildare

Implementation of Stage II of the County Rural Water Strategic Plan continued in 2002, with the identification of 11 schemes for inclusion in a capital works programme, amongst these a new GWS at Ashgrove-Kildangan.

Other schemes completed in 2002 included Castledillon, Ballinafagh and Killybegs, all of which are publicly-sourced.

The construction of the largest group scheme in the county, Timahoe-Donadae GWS, was finalised at a cost of approximately €1.4 million.

In terms of meeting the water quality standards on privately-sourced schemes serving 50 persons and more, consideration was given to a partnership with neighbouring County Wicklow in forming a DBO 'bundle' and towards the latter part of the year, the potential of forming a wider bundle in south Leinster was being discussed.

Kilkenny

After many years' hard work and planning, the Castlewarren Group Water Scheme finally got clearance to move forward to construction. Credit is due to persistence and hard work of the committee in this regard. Castlewarren GWS will serve over 100 houses on completion and will ensure a reliable potable water supply to a large area in the hinterland of the village that has had considerable difficulty in respect of water supply in recent years.

The county monitoring committee met on regular basis and was pro-active in arranging information meetings and the dissemination of information to the sector.

Kilkenny Federation, chaired by Donal McDonald, also met regularly and was as always a valuable forum for schemes to raise issues relevant to them. Information meetings were held by the County Council on DBO and the County federation had a well attended meeting in October, attended by Seán Clerkin, National Co-ordinator, to clarify current policies and initiatives in the sector.

Laois

In 2002 the RWP in Laois progressed with substantial upgrading on several group water schemes, including Cullohill and Errill. Most of the work is being completed on a phased basis over several years and includes work on reservoirs, mains etc. A new scheme was completed at Balleady/Rathdowney and the takeover of the Killenard scheme was advanced.

The county Federation met during the year as did the County Rural Water Monitoring Committee.

Longford

There are six privately-sourced group water schemes in County Longford serving 15 households or more. All of the schemes have been monitored under the National Source Monitoring Programme and in the context of the forthcoming regulations and new legislation, they have the option either to connect their scheme to an existing treated supply from the nearest County Council regional supply or to provide treatment to their existing supply that will ensure compliance with the standards

In the course of 2002, each of the six GWS received the water quality test results of both the raw and drinking water, which have outlined the quality deficiencies/problems that exist. In addition to this, Brian Ross, LCC and Damien Woods, NFGWS met the trustees of each scheme. The schemes were informed of their options and were left to decide for themselves between them.

The Rural Water Strategic Plan for County Longford identified that the 'value for money' or preferred option for the six privately-sourced GWS serving 50 persons/15 or more households would be to connect to a public supply, as all six are in close proximity to treated water supplies. However two of the Schemes in question have indicated that they wish to continue using their own supplies as independent operators, while the other four schemes have expressed a willingness to connect.

A summary of the individual schemes is as follows:

Moydow is by far the largest privately-sourced GWS in the county. It serves 140 households and has a major water quality problem. It is currently in the process of connecting to the Ballymahon Regional Water Supply Scheme at an estimated cost of €572,000.

Cartronlebagh GWS initially served 15 houses. Eight of these have since broken away and formed themselves into a publicly-sourced scheme, Cartronlebagh No. 2 which secured a treated supply and was completed in October 2002. The privately-sourced scheme, which now serves seven houses, may be deemed to be outside the water quality remit, but with major water quality problems the scheme requires an investment programme. The members are totally opposed to connecting to the treated mains supply, but expressed a willingness to consider essential water filtration and disinfection treatment to their existing supply that will ensure compliance with the standards. Approximate cost of treatment regime is €30,000.

Forgney GWS serves 20 houses and has no current treatment process. The group expressed an interest in connecting to the Ballymahon Regional Water Supply Scheme as it is in close proximity to the existing network (approx. 1.5 Km). A Consultant Engineer has been engaged by the group to produce a report on the best way forward. The cost connecting the scheme to Ballymahon RWSS is approximately €150,000.

Ardagh GWS is the second largest privately-sourced GWS in the county, serving 60 houses. It has an existing treatment plant consisting of a filtration unit and UV steriliser. However it is experiencing water quality problems. The members have indicated a willingness to connect to the treated Ballymahon Regional Water Supply Scheme, which is in close proximity, via. a publicly-sourced GWS. Connecting to the mains will involve boosting the supply to the elevated areas of Ardagh. The Group has engaged a Consultant Engineer to produce a report on the best way forward. Cost of connecting the supply to the mains network is approximately €180,000.

Fosragh GWS is a highly active scheme serving 48 houses and has no existing water treatment facility. However the water produced is of a high quality, results showing very minimal incidences of contamination. The members of the scheme are totally opposed to connecting to the Regional network, preferring to hold on to their spring source. They were advised on their options and engaged a Consultant Engineer to produce a report on the best way forward. Approximate cost of treatment regime is €30,000.

Clonmore-Kilmore GWS serves 37 houses and has a serious water quality problem. The scheme members have opposed connecting to the Regional network, preferring to hold on to their water source. After being informed of the Source Monitoring Programme results, the members opted to install a UV sterilisation unit at source to alleviate problems. However they have not installed essential chlorination facilities and so are prone to bacteria re-growth in the network. Having been advised of their options the scheme members elected to engage a Consultant Engineer to produce a report on the best way forward. Approximate cost of treatment regime is €30,000.

Offaly

The County Monitoring Committee met regularly and dealt with a variety of difficulties in respect of planned upgrading and ongoing upgrading of Group Water Schemes in the county. The County Federation representatives, David Lawlor and Seamus Murphy were to the forefront in ensuring issues relevant to the Group Water Scheme sector were always top of the agenda. The County Council commenced the taking in charge of the Brosna GWS. Bracknagh and Ballykilleen GWS had plans approved for upgrading approved and have gone to tender. Other schemes planning and undertaking significant upgrade include Tubber, Clareen, Rashina/Kilnargarna and Doon. Group Water Schemes in Co Offaly, in contrast to many other counties, showed good compliance with the drinking water regulations in the EPA report for 2001, with over 90% of samples in compliance for bacteriological standards.

Westmeath

Upgrading continued on the Multyfarnham group water scheme, which is one of only two privately-sourced GWS in the county that will be subject of the new regulations. The issue of water quality and source protection was brought to the top of the national agenda in 2002 by the problems that occurred with regard to Cryptosporidium in the Mullingar Regional Supply.

Wexford

New and upgraded GWS in Wexford completed or commenced in 2002 included Kilanerin, Rochestown/Kilcormack, Forth Commons and Coolree. A number of information meetings- see reports

Wicklow

With a view to implementing its Rural Water Strategic Plan and meeting the objectives of the RWP, Wicklow county Council and the County monitoring committee investigated the most economical possibilities for bundling schemes as part of DBO projects. Preliminary discussions were held with liaison officers in neighbouring Carlow, Kildare and Wexford with a view to forming a DBO 'bundle across county boundaries.

Group Water Schemes registered as co-operatives in 2002

Carlow	St. Mullins Parish Group Water Scheme Society Ltd
Cavan	Castlerahan/Mountnugent/Munterconnacht GWS Co-op Society Ltd Killinkere Cross Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd

Cork	Ballinguyroe & Tankardstown Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Galway	Brierfield Group Water Scheme Society Ltd Carnmore No. 1 Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Carrowmoreknock Group Water Scheme Society Ltd Kylemore-Abbey (Loughrea) Group Water Co-operative Society Ltd Moyglass Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Slievefinn/Cregg, Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Kildare	Kilteel Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Kilkenny	Newtown Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Leitrim	Ardvoley-Killavoggy Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Coolcrieve/Lismoyle Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Corrawallen Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Glenboy Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Glencar Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Glenfarne Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Gortconnellan Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Gortletteragh Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Gorvagh Drumlowan Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Loughside Group Water Scheme Society Ltd Tarmon Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Louth	Mountain Park Group Water Scheme Society Ltd
Limerick	Barnagh Glendarraough Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Mayo	Comharchumann Forbatha Grúp Sceim Uisce Oiligh Coogue Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Cregganbaun Group Water Scheme Society Ltd Drummin Group Water Scheme Society Ltd Gurteen Carawkeel Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Kilmovee/Urlaur Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Knockaunakill Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Mayo-Abbey Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Meelick Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Rossport Group Water Scheme Society Ltd Shraheen/Aughagower Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Straide Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Meath	Rathmoylan Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Monaghan	Drumgole Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Roscommon	Cornalassen/Caggle Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Shadlough Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Sligo	Benbulbin Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Culfadda Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd Doongeela Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd
Tipperary	Cunnahurt/Knockalton Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd

Laha Group Water Scheme Co-operative Society Ltd

Wexford

Borrmount Group Water Co-operative Society Ltd