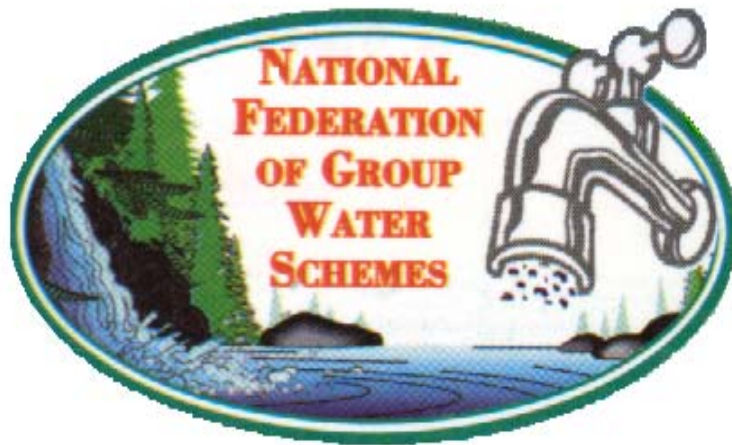


# *National Federation Of Group Water Schemes*

*Co-op Society Limited*



*Annual Report*  
**2001**



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## Foreword

In introducing this annual report of our activities in 2001, might I begin by thanking my predecessor, Dr Jerry Cowley, TD, outgoing Chairman of the Federation, for his efforts on behalf of the Federation over several years. Dr Jerry was one of the key founders of the Federation back in 1997 and since then has worked tirelessly in the interests of the many rural group water schemes around the country. On behalf of all such schemes I wish Dr Jerry every success in his new career in Dáil Éireann.

In 2001, rural Ireland successfully faced up to the challenge posed by the Foot & Mouth crisis. For several months, this potentially cataclysmic battle impacted on virtually all aspects of human engagement. Apart from its direct social and economic impact on the farming community, the crisis forced the cancellation of meetings and field studies and, at times, it appeared that all activity had ground to a halt. It was something of a surprise then, on reading this report of our activities during 2001, to discover this proved to be the ‘year of action’ promised by Dr Cowley and to learn how much had actually been accomplished in such a difficult period.

Many of the most important actions taken were an investment in the future, rather than being directed at short-term gain. Take, for example, our endorsement and implementation of the recommendations contained within the ICOS Consultant’s report; this has provided the structural basis for our development as a competent organisation. Our capacity to deliver on our commitments to our members and to our partners in the years ahead has, as a result, been greatly enhanced.

‘Capacity-building’ is, of course, crucially important in the context of community-based business, particularly in an age of transparency when the burden of management has created new headaches for the voluntary sector. Our objective is to ensure that group schemes the length and breadth of the country are equipped to deal with the ‘brave new world’ that is emerging in the water services industry. Education and training are increasingly important in this regard.

I am, therefore, pleased that the relationship developed with the Water Services National Training Group (WSNTG) in providing practical operational courses for group schemes is bearing fruit and fully expect that the demand for such training will increase substantially in the years ahead. I am pleased, too, that in 2001 the WSNTG began the process of designing a management-training course and expect that this will be launched in 2002.

As we moved ever-nearer the 31 December 2003 deadline for compliance with EU water quality legislation, the scale of the task at hand was not matched by the rate of construction on headworks and treatment facilities. A realistic strategy, capable of delivering change quickly, was required and in 2001 the concept of ‘bundling’ emerged following a fact-finding visit to Brittany. The argument was simple; by agreeing to come together in ‘bundles’, individual group schemes would benefit from collective bargaining power with potential contractors. Together with the benefits of DBO and, with the active support of local authorities, ‘bundling’ was seen to offer the required ‘fast-track’ strategy to water quality. For this reason (and while acknowledging the right of individual groups to opt out, if they so wish), the Board of the NFGWS adopted a positive approach to the strategy.

The launch of a ‘bundling’ pilot in County Monaghan in December saw the first practical working out of this strategy and, indeed, it helped to clarify some of the difficulties which are bound to arise. It is my belief - and it is the considered view of the Board - that the example shown by County Monaghan in 2001 should be positively considered by each County Federation. Whatever reservations people may have, the fact is that this strategy now enjoys the unequivocal support of the Department of the Environment & Local Government and the local authorities and it is, therefore, reasonable to assume that grants paid under the Rural Water Programme towards capital works will be directed in the first instance to ‘bundled’ schemes, in whatever county or region.

Amongst the policy issues addressed in this report, both the preparation of a Charter of Rights and of a Quality Assurance Scheme were discussed at last year's conference. Our chairman expressed his hope that these would be finalised in 2001 and I am delighted to report that this has been accomplished. The Charter underpins our commitment to fair play for both water providers and consumers and to ensuring that the water industry operates on principles of openness and transparency. For its part, the Quality Assurance Scheme is recognised as a ground-breaking initiative to ensure that quality controls are in place, capable of evaluating each stage of the delivery of potable water to Irish homes. The Charter is published as part of this report.

Even before water treatment works are widely in place, source protection is emerging as an issue which will be crucially important in the years to come. In 2001, your board approved the launch of a pilot scheme in relation to this and I strongly suspect that other source-protection pilots, on varying land-types, will be required in the years ahead. I am personally committed to ensuring that farmers and the wider rural community are convinced of the need for measures to protect drinking water sources and that they are party to the discussions which will determine the nature and scope of those measures.

During 2001, the outline of a Water Services Bill was published by government. The NFGWS responded positively to this legislation and proposed several amendments for the Minister's consideration. In advance of the recent general election, we called on the incoming administration 'of whatever political hue' to ensure the speedy enactment of the legislation incorporating the amendments proposed by the NFGWS. In terms of our organisational objectives for the coming year, the successful progression of the Water Services Bill will be a priority.

Given the increasing complexity of the water industry, it is important that an appropriate performance management system is put into place, which will ensure that everybody along the chain of water delivery is fulfilling their respective obligations. It is proposed that a Liaison Monitoring Committee be formed, with representatives from the public sector and the group schemes, to oversee the application of operate and maintenance

contracts. A centralised monitoring system will ensure that a daily log is maintained of water quality and infrastructural operation from source to tap. This will provide precise information to the liaison committee and, if and when problems arise, they will be able to inform consumers of the source of the problem and the steps taken to remedy them. This is an exciting development and it re-emphasises the benefit to groups of coming together in bundles to ensure that their scheme avails of ongoing performance management. Again, I must compliment the Water Services National Training Group for engaging consultants to prepare a comprehensive Performance Management System (PMS) to cover the entire water and waste water areas.

Such developments, and the introduction of strict Health & Safety guidelines, underline the need for the comprehensive training programme in the future management of schemes referred to above. ICOS consultants are finalising a course suited to our requirements. This incorporates eight training modules which will clarify (amongst other things) the roles of GWS officers, the development of business plans, management of accounts, administration and planning. I am confident that individual group schemes will recognise the importance of availing of such training.

There is no shortage of work to be done. We must move forward on the basis of our accumulated experience through years of co-operative endeavour and with our eyes open to the monumental task before us. But move forward we must. There can be no excuse for failing to introduce the changes that are required, especially at a time when the Rural Water Programme guarantees us the necessary financial resources to put the business of water delivery on a sound basis for the years ahead. Consumers are entitled to quality water, legislation requires that we deliver no less. With this in mind, the group water sector must show that it is willing and able to do the job.

Brendan O'Mahony  
Chairperson

## **Introduction**

2001 was a year of transition for the NFGWS in terms of internal reorganisation; completion of the ICOS Consultant's Report and the decision to implement its sixty-six recommendations provided a blueprint for increased professionalism in our internal management structures and in our dealings with others. Arising out of the report, the Federation finalised new rules and established the positions of National Co-ordinator, Senior Development Co-ordinator and Quality Assurance Manager. The Federation's sometimes precarious financial position did, however, act as a brake on some aspects of the reorganisation.

With the active assistance of local monitoring committees, Draft Rural Water Strategic Plans were completed and agreed during 2001 in virtually every county. Several counties succeeded in agreeing final reports during the same period.

The year 2001 saw the emergence of the 'bundling' option for those wishing to secure cost-effective DBO contracts when installing new treatment works. Through autumn and winter, information meetings on this issue were organised by various local authorities in partnership with the NFGWS. A National Pilot Project in relation to bundling was launched in County Monaghan by the then Minister, Noel Dempsey, TD.

Other pilot projects continued during the year, providing valuable guidance in determining best practice for the years and decades ahead. While most pilots concentrated on treatment systems, two ground-breaking initiatives were approved by the Board (for launch in 2002); a pilot focusing on the Quality Assurance Scheme (developed by the Federation) was scheduled to be undertaken by three group water schemes in County Galway, while a County Monaghan scheme was selected as the location for the launch of a source protection pilot.

In 2001, a Charter of Rights was completed and the finishing touches were put to the Quality Assurance Scheme. These initiatives were far from cosmetic exercises. The



Charter is an affirmation of an individual's rights and responsibilities, while quality assurance is of fundamental importance to consumers and is a vital issue in the context of EU regulations and forthcoming legislation.

Following the intensive training programmes initiated in 2000, the year 2001 saw a move away from the direct involvement by NFGWS personnel in the administration and delivery of practical courses and a move towards partnership with the regional training centres as course providers. The threat posed by the Foot & Mouth crisis acted as a brake on meetings and training for much of the year, but from September onwards successful courses were organised under the auspices of the National Water Services Training Group. The Federation, meanwhile, continued to focus its attention on the formulation of a management training course, due for roll-out in 2002.

## 2001 Review

Addressing a meeting of the NFGWS Board in December 2000, the chairman, Dr. Jerry Cowley stressed that the Federation needed to progress ‘quickly and diligently with the important business facing the GWS sector’. His clarion call for a ‘year of action’ was timely, coinciding as it did with the adoption of the European Community’s (Drinking Water) Regulation which set 31 December 2003 as the deadline for the attainment of quality water in Ireland. It coincided also with the adoption by the Board of several key recommendations from the consultants’ (ICOS) interim report, designed to make the NFGWS more efficient and better able to deliver.

Those decisions, taken in December 2000, presented both a challenge and an opportunity to a young organisation such as the NFGWS. In the course of the few short years of its existence, the Federation has established close working relationships with other key players in the delivery of water to rural Ireland. From the Department of Environment and Local Government (DoELG) to county councils, from elected representatives to liaison officers, from the NRWMC to County Monitoring Committees, a remarkable spirit of partnership had developed. Throughout 2001 those partnerships continued to present the best (and arguably the only) means by which we could make progress in respect of our responsibilities under EU legislation.

And there was growing evidence of a similar spirit of partnership at local level. The Federation applauds the initiative taken by individual group water schemes to co-operate with one another in the interests of progress, not least to those schemes which have amalgamated and those which have ‘bundled’ to secure improved treatment facilities and other vital services for their members.

We hardly need to be reminded that 2001 was a very difficult year for rural Ireland. Foot & Mouth had implications for many sectors, particularly in the critical period of late spring when both urban and rural dwellers rallied to prevent the spread of the contagion.

Throughout that period, field work and testing were put on hold, while training initiatives and meetings of the NFGWS were postponed.

Despite such setbacks, our ‘year of action’ proved to be exactly that and 2001 was a year of transition for the NFGWS in terms of internal reorganisation; completion of the ICOS Consultant’s Report and the decision to implement its recommendations provided a blueprint for increased professionalism in relation to internal management structures and also in relation to wider networks. Arising out of that report and as a follow-on to the work of the Federation since its foundation, the Board set specific objectives for 2001:

***To complete, adopt and implement the ICOS Consultant’s Report on the structures, systems and financial arrangements of the NFGWS Co-op Society itself.***

***To further develop suitably adapted training programmes for the Group Water Scheme sector.***

***To actively pursue the bundling of suitable groups in as many counties as possible in order to expedite implementation of the CMC ‘action programmes’.***

***To recruit a full-time Quality Assurance Manager/Director who will spearhead and promote the widespread participation by group schemes in the Quality Assurance Scheme.***

***To finalise an appropriate Quality Assurance Scheme for the private group water sector and to ensure roll-out on a pilot basis.***

***To devise and support a public awareness campaign of the Quality Assurance Scheme.***

***To negotiate the introduction of a new Memorandum in relation to the revised subsidy scheme towards the operational costs of GWS services.***

*To finalise a Charter of Rights.*

*To support in every way possible the completion and adoption of Rural Water Strategic Plans still outstanding in many counties at the end of 2000 and to agree action programmes at county level for the elimination of deficient water quality supplies on the privately sourced group schemes. Such programmes to be prepared and adopted by County Monitoring Committees (CMC).*

*To successfully negotiate an acceptable 3-year funding package for the NFGWS from the Department of Environment & Local Government.*

*To seek the agreement of our partners on the NRWMC for the ringfencing of maximum capital funding for the installation of treatment facilities on the deficient privately sourced schemes.*

*To recruit additional full-time and/or part-time development officers.*

*To actively seek the introduction of an agreed National Water Pricing Policy between the public and private group scheme sector.*

*To recruit the maximum number of group water schemes possible to the Federation.*

*To extend the piloting and innovative initiatives to western and southern counties.*

*To seek the widest possible consultation and input of the group scheme sector to the proposed new Water Services Bill.*

*To develop and implement a Source Protection Pilot Project.*

# ICOS Report

Objective: *To complete, adopt and implement the ICOS Consultant's Report on the structures, systems and financial arrangements of the NFGWS Co-op Society itself.*

Key elements of the report were adopted at its interim stage in December 2000 and where specific actions were called for, these were implemented from January 2001 onwards. On 3 April 2001 the final report, containing a total of sixty-six recommendations, was presented to the Board at its meeting in Castlebar. Its findings were given unanimous support and well-earned praise from those present, with Board members uniting in their determination to see all of the suggested changes in place as speedily as possible.

Thirty-five of the ICOS recommendations pertained to NFGWS structures, systems and financial arrangements. Of these, twenty-eight had been implemented by 31 December 2001, while the other seven were in the process of being addressed. Those implemented and/or adopted as policy (numbered as in the original list of recommendations published in the 2000 Annual Report) were as follows:

*4. That the accounting and book keeping procedures and systems specified in appendix I are adopted, implemented and operated by an outside firm of accountants. This firm also to provide training to relevant staff on the necessary procedures and systems. Now*

**Implemented**

*6. That the Federation submit a mid-year 6 month interim report of performance against budget, including draft management accounts and a final report including fully audited accounts no later than four months after the conclusion of the accounting year.*

**Implemented**

*7. That the current formula of each group scheme contributing an amount based on a levy per individual member of the scheme is equitable and should be continued.*

**Implemented**

*11. That the Board, having reviewed their cost base against projected income, determine appropriate staff numbers and roles and provide staff with written job specifications which confirm reporting relationships and lines of authority within the staff.*

**Implemented**

*12. That the Board appoint one person as the overall Chief Executive of the Federation to ensure clear lines of accountability, authority and reporting at operational level and that person to report to and be accountable for his/her actions and performance and those of his/her staff to the Board of Directors.* **Implemented**

*13. That the National Co-ordinator consults with development officers before deciding on performance targets and lines of communication and authority.* **Implemented**

*14. That when feasible, monthly staff meetings be organised with development staff, to include other Federation staff as appropriate.* **Implementation ongoing**

*16. That the number of development officers employed by the Federation be increased to five.* **Implementation ongoing**

*17. That the office location and geographic areas worked by development officers be reviewed in the context of minimising cost and maximising their effectiveness to the Federation.* **Implemented**

*18. That one of the development workers be appointed as a Senior Development Co-ordinator, with authority and responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the development function and with special responsibility for developing and overseeing the implementation of policy issues of importance to the success of the Federation.*

**Implemented**

*19. That the post of National Administrator be abolished and that overall administrative responsibilities be assigned to the National Co-ordinator.* **Implemented**

20. That management and administrative functions be managed organised and controlled from one office. **Implemented**

21. That secretarial staff report to and be accountable to the National Co-ordinator except where non-secretarial special duties approved by the National Co-ordinator require separate reporting procedures. **Implemented**

22. That a standard recruitment/promotion protocol should apply to all staff recruited. **Implemented**

23. That the Federation maintain its current policy on recruitment until the Board are satisfied as to the longer term viability of the Federation, including the availability of adequate assurances in regard to long-term financing. **Implementation ongoing**

24. That all staff performances be reviewed on a yearly basis and more frequently if the National Co-ordinator feels necessary. **Implementation ongoing**

25. That the Board conduct a review of the job specifications of Federation staff to include contracts of employment and remuneration policy including the introduction of incentive policies consistent with the budgets of the Federation. **Implementation ongoing**

26. That the Board institute a formal procedure to deal with staff disputes, grievances and disciplinary issues using the “Code of Practice in Dispute Procedures” as the model for drafting such procedures. **Implemented**

29. That the Board of the Federation centralise their management and administrative functions into one office location and that the Board review as a matter of priority the issue of the number and location of Federation office(s). **Implemented**

31. *That all group water schemes be encouraged to adopt a corporate form, preferably that of a co-operative.* **Implementation ongoing**

32. *That the Board of the Federation commissions a dedicated set of model rules for local group water schemes.* **Implemented**

33. *That the National Federation make provisions in its rules and bylaws for a standard set of standing orders governing the organisation and running of the business of each County Federation.* **Implemented**

34. *That the Executive Committee proceed with the implementation of a full review of the rule book, with a view to putting a complete amendment of rules to a series of regional meetings and ultimately to a special general meeting for consideration and adoption if thought fit.* **Implemented**

35. *That control of the County and National Federation be exercised by individual group schemes nominating voting delegates to attend general meetings using a system of weighted capped voting to be outlined in the proposed complete amendment of rules.*  
**Implemented**

36. *That control exercised on the basis of one-person one vote be retained within individual group water schemes.* **Implemented**

37. *That the governing body of the Federation be known by the title Board of Directors.*  
**Implemented**

38. *That a code of ethics for Directors and the schedule of Directors Responsibilities be agreed and adopted by the Board.* **Implemented**

39. *That Board officers establish and agree guidelines as to their role and responsibility.*  
**Implemented**



Other internal structural recommendations to be implemented in 2002 or at a future date, include the following:

*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 Federations 5 year business plan.*

*2. That a medium term business plan for the organisation be drafted using the parameters outlined in chapter II.*

*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.*

*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.*

*15. That weekly activity sheets be compiled by each development officer.*

*28. That staff be provided with appropriate training programmes.*

*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.*

*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. It is more likely that an outreach type*

*programme rather than one based in a regional centre would best suit the needs of board members.*

# TRAINING

Objective: *The further development of suitably adapted training programmes for the Group Water Scheme sector.*

## Operational training

Following the intensive training programmes initiated in 2000, the year 2001 saw a move away from the direct involvement of NFGWS personnel in the administration and delivery of courses and a move towards partnership with regional training centres as course providers, under the auspices of the Water Services National Training Group (WSNTG). Apart from direct savings to the Federation in terms of the personnel and finances required to administer courses, the move towards regional training centres has meant that water providers from both the private and public sectors are catered for together, thereby further strengthening a spirit of partnership within the entire sector. The NFGWS is indebted to the Water Services National Training Group for the valuable role which it has played in this regard.

While the Foot & Mouth outbreak had a significant impact on the extent of courses on offer throughout the year, nonetheless in February and again in June, a 'Hands On Chlorine' course was provided at Roscrea training centre, with 21 representatives from twelve group water schemes in attendance. Courses in 'Leak detection and location' took place at Ballincollig and Castlebar training centres in October and November respectively, attended by 17 GWS representatives in total. A 'Water Quality' course, held in Castlebar in June and again in August, proved successful, with 32 in attendance. Castlebar was also the venue for an 'Operation and Maintenance' course which took place in December, with 10 GWS participants.

The necessity for such 'practical' training has become ever more apparent, particularly in the context of the huge investment that is being made in providing state-of-the-art treatment works to group water schemes. Through its regional development workers, the Federation continued to impress on individual schemes the critical importance of taking

advantage of the training that is on offer so that they are equipped to properly operate all aspects of their treatment and distribution systems.

#### Management training

Because the provision of operational training passed to the regional training centres, the National Federation of Group Water Schemes was able to focus its attention on the area of management training for group water schemes and performance management generally. Again, the lead role played in this by the Water Services National Training Group has been invaluable; in September 2001 a WSNTG sub-committee drew up the brief for the employment of consultants.

On foot of this brief, four tenders were received by the closing date (12 October) and the tender from ICOS Consultants was successful. Their proposal was to develop a training programme along specific and targeted modular lines. Fás responded positively to the proposed training initiative by providing funding towards the development and delivery of the programme. In November 2001 a steering group comprising representatives of the NFGWS, WSNTG and Fás was appointed to oversee the work of the Consultants and to ensure roll-out of the training programme in 2002.

# BUNDLING OF GROUP SCHEMES FOR SINGLE DBO CONTRACT

Objective: *To expedite implementation of the CMC ‘action programmes’, the bundling of suitable groups to be actively pursued in as many counties as possible.*

‘Bundling’ and the expansion of the design, build and operate (DBO) approach, became key strategic issues during 2001. This should have come as no surprise; in the first issue of *GWS News* in 2001, the chairman of the NFGWS expressed his conviction that the DBO approach to securing water treatment facilities ‘provides the mechanism to fast-track’ solutions to poor water quality ‘on a national scale’. Pointing to the experience of the Roscommon pilot project, in which NFGWS had become ‘agent’ for no less than twenty-one group schemes which were ‘bundled’ for tendering purposes, he stated that he saw no reason why this particular approach could not be adopted in other counties, adding that he would be ‘encouraging the Board in this direction over the coming year’.

True to his word, the chairman led the way in encouraging constructive debate within the Board on these issues and the Board, in turn, has attempted to ensure that the grassroots membership were involved in that debate from an early stage. In some areas that debate was already at an advanced stage, particularly in Monaghan where the concept was incorporated in the Strategic Water Rural Plan for the county. Indeed, Monaghan emerged as a National Pilot Project in relation to ‘bundling’ and a remarkable alliance of private and small public schemes was sanctioned by the county Federation on 20 November.

This project was officially launched by the Minister, Noel Dempsey TD, on 19 December 2001 when he described the Monaghan pilot as a ‘fantastic example to the rest of the country’. The Minister welcomed the development of DBO and ‘bundling’ as the most cost-effective and efficient means of achieving quality water throughout rural Ireland within the short timescale remaining until December 2003.

A series of Federation/Regional meetings in relation to both strategic plans and the DBO approach was sanctioned by the Board on 3 April 2001. In the context of its agreement in July 2001 to prioritise the installation of appropriate treatment facilities on all group water schemes, the Board meeting in December formally endorsed the DBO and 'bundling' routes to achieving quality water.

Although the timescale for holding meetings on the issues of DBO/'bundling' (as adopted by the Board in April) was delayed by several months due to the Foot & Mouth crisis, a series of information meetings did begin in the autumn. In the period to 31 December 2001, information evenings (generally hosted by local authorities, in conjunction with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes) were held in all regions. These generally featured presentations by Consulting Engineer and Technical Advisor to the NFGWS, Maurice O'Connell.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEME

Objective: *To recruit a full-time Quality Assurance Manager/Director who will spearhead and promote the widespread participation by group schemes in the Quality Assurance Scheme.*

Having been employed in a temporary capacity from the beginning of 2001, Deirdre Byrne was recruited as full-time Quality Assurance Scheme Manager on completion of her B.Sc. in Environmental Health in June.

Objective: *To finalise an appropriate Quality Assurance Scheme for the private group water sector and to ensure roll-out on a pilot basis.*

The development of a Quality Assurance Scheme constitutes one of the crowning successes of the NFGWS since its foundation. Through the efforts of Deirdre Byrne (working closely with Damien Woods), a draft of the proposed scheme was presented to the Annual Delegate Conference in February 2001, while a fuller outline was available by early April. At its May meeting, the Board agreed that the systems and procedures involved should be tested on a pilot basis by several schemes in County Galway. In seeking the approval of the Board, NFGWS National Co-ordinator, Seán Clerkin, stressed that the proposed pilot project was ‘vital’ if the Federation was to ‘clearly demonstrate its willingness, competence and determination to eradicate deficient quality water supplies on group schemes’. He added that the pilot would ‘be closely scrutinised and evaluated by many parties, not least the DoELG’.

In light of the Board’s approval, Damien Woods and Caitriona Greaney attended a meeting of the Galway Federation and secured agreement that the pilot should go ahead in the county. The aims of the pilot programme were threefold:

- To fully integrate the draft documentation with the current record keeping procedures of the Group Water Scheme
- To receive feedback from the operators/representative on the content of the documentation, the practical use of the SOPs, the control measures and the feasibility of the scheme.

- To revise and review the QA scheme documentation through monitoring the GWS record keeping procedures and opinions received.

Three group water schemes, Barnaderg, Cahermorris/Glenreevagh and Caherlistrane, were identified as being particularly suitable for the pilot on the basis that they had a record of positive co-operation, both internally and in relation to county and national structures, and also because they were in a position to select a representative who would act on their behalf throughout the pilot. It was accepted that these attributes would be important in terms of the successful implementation of a QA scheme.

Following initial contacts in August, site visits and further meetings with the three GWS were held on 6 and 7 September. On the basis of these contacts, they agreed to participate in the pilot, with each providing three nominees to complete QA documentation. The New Year was agreed as a start-up date for the pilot.

Objective: *To devise and support a public awareness campaign of the Quality Assurance Scheme.*

Information meetings on the Quality Assurance Scheme were held in conjunction with meetings on DBO at several venues in the final months of 2001. On 2 October a meeting of Kildare GWS and many individuals relying on private water sources took place in Kilkea Castle. Groups from Counties Wicklow, Kilkenny, Carlow and Laois met in the Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise on the 24 October and a week later, on 31 October, Hotel Kilkenny hosted a meeting of groups. The focus shifted westwards in November, with meetings in Tuam (12<sup>th</sup>), Maam Cross (14<sup>th</sup>), and Loughrea (15<sup>th</sup>), all in County Galway. An approximate total of 126 group water schemes attended the above meetings and further information nights were planned for other counties in 2002.

Beyond the group water sector, a major feature on the Quality Assurance Scheme in the *Sunday Tribune* in July was a highlight of national media coverage and this was complemented by substantial coverage in the local media also.

The perceived need to generate media publicity around the Quality Assurance Scheme (as a means of generating interest) was overtaken by events, in particular the decision taken



at Departmental level to make compliance with quality assurance a prerequisite for the drawing down of subsidies by group water schemes. While it was gratifying to note that the idea for a quality mark, first mooted by the chairman of the NFGWS such a short time ago, had become a cornerstone of the national strategy to eradicate deficient water supplies, the onus was now on the Federation to ensure that members should become fully *au fait* with what would be required of them. To this end, a module focusing exclusively on the issue of quality was incorporated into the GWS management training programme being drawn up by ICOS Consultants on behalf of the Water Services National Training Group.

## SUBSIDY MEMORANDUM

Objective: *To negotiate the introduction of a new Memorandum in relation to the revised subsidy scheme towards the operational costs of GWS services.*

Following successful discussions, a new Memorandum was issued from the Department to County Liaison Officers in October 2001. This establishes both the Quality Assurance Scheme and Charter of Rights developed by our Federation as key requirements for receipt of subsidy payments on domestic water.

The subsidy covers virtually the entire raft of operational costs of a GWS, from maintenance and repair of buildings to payment of NFGWS affiliation fees. The scale of subsidy rises substantially in the case of those schemes which adopt the DBO route to achieving quality water.

## FURTHER TARGETS SET IN 2001:

**Objective: *To support in every way possible the completion and adoption of Rural Water Strategic Plans still outstanding in many counties at the end of 2000 and to agree action programmes at county level for the elimination of deficient water quality supplies on the privately sourced group schemes. Such programmes to be prepared and adopted by County Monitoring Committees (CMC).***

First stage plans were to be agreed in all counties not later than 31 March 2001, but as in 2000, progress was uneven, particularly in those counties where the principle of consultation was not always adhered to. The Board of the NFGWS continued to insist that consultation and agreement with County Monitoring Committees and with individual group water schemes were essential if the plans were to succeed. Details of the stage reached in each county in 2001 are included under Regional Reports.

In many of those counties where agreement on objectives and expenditure was reached in 2001, discussions continued on the best tactical approach to adopt in achieving those objectives. Even in counties where no final action plan was agreed, steps have been taken to implement the recommendations of outline or first-stage strategic plans. Moreover, the emergence of Design, Build and Operate (DBO) and ‘bundling’ as fast-track approaches to achieving quality water have provided a focus for these counties in determining their action programmes.

**Objective: *To successfully negotiate an acceptable 3-year funding package for the NFGWS from the Department of Environment & Local Government.***

As the work of the Federation has increased, so too have the costs (see financial report). While membership fees remain vital to the day-to-day running of the organisation, the shortfall between income and expenditure has been an ongoing cause of concern to the Board. The ability of the NFGWS to effectively carry out its remit was dependant on a sustained and guaranteed level of income and we are delighted that this point has been accepted by the DoELG. Following negotiations throughout the latter half of 2001, the

Department has allocated Ir£400,000 (approx 500,000 Euros) per annum over the next three years. The NFGWS would wish to record its thanks in this regard.

Objective: ***To seek the agreement of our partners on the NRWMC for the ringfencing of maximum capital funding for the installation of treatment facilities on the deficient privately sourced schemes.***

This objective made practical sense in the context of the December 2003 deadline for achieving quality drinking water. The Board of the NFGWS felt that rather than allocating much needed funds to other areas of infrastructural development (however necessary), the core objective had to be in achieving the standard required by EU legislation. Our concern in this regard was prompted by the fact that, over the previous three years, the installation of treatment facilities on head works had been virtually non-existent, although individual projects such as that launched at Clifferna, County Cavan, in February 2001 had shown what could be achieved if resources were properly focused. In light of this, the Board decided in May to advise Minister Dempsey to ‘ringfence’ all capital allocations for 2002 and 2003 for treatment facilities (new head-works) on the privately sourced schemes only. Notice of this resolution was forwarded to the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee (NRWMC) which gave its unanimous backing to the motion. The Federation is delighted to confirm that the Minister and his Department endorsed the proposal.

Objective: ***To recruit additional full-time and/or part-time development officers.***

As the achievement of this objective was determined by the financial resources at the disposal of the Board and by the steps towards reorganisation outlined in the ICOS Reports, 2001 actually saw some contraction in staffing levels. Besides Deirdre Byrne, whose recruitment is referred to above, Sinéad Higgins was recruited as a development worker for Sligo, Leitrim and Mayo. Catríona Greaney returned in July, with responsibility for Galway and Clare following a short period in Tipperary, Offaly and Laois. Offsetting this, was the departure of two development workers, Niall Timothy and Clare Cashman.

Objective: ***To actively seek the introduction of an agreed National Water Pricing Policy between the public and private group scheme sector.***

The adoption of operational and maintenance contracts, as part of the DBO route, has largely superseded the requirement for such a pricing policy. Contracts, lasting for up to twenty years, include a pricing agreement which is agreed by individual GWS and by groups participating in 'bundles'. Public schemes are also moving in this direction.

Objective: ***To recruit the maximum number of group water schemes possible to the Federation.***

The advantages to group water schemes of belonging to the National Federation became increasingly apparent in 2001. Besides its role as the acknowledged negotiating body on behalf of the private group water sector, the Federation continued to provide practical supports to its members. Work remains to be done in extending that membership base in the months and years ahead. Beyond this, there is a continued need to formalise the legal structures of groups and to ensure that they are in a position to avail of the subsidies and capital grants currently available.

Objective: ***To extend the piloting and innovative initiatives to western and southern counties.***

At the end of 2001, pilot projects were underway or were about to begin, in several western locations. In addition to the ongoing Roscommon water monitoring and treatment projects, pilot schemes around membrane technology as an approach to treatment were commissioned at Bohola and Belderrig in Mayo. In the course of 2001, plans were made for a Galway-based pilot around the Quality Assurance Scheme. Towards the close of 2001, plans were advanced for the extension of the successful bundle/DBO pilot project to Clare, Limerick, North Tipperary, Sligo and Mayo.

Objective: ***To seek the widest possible consultation and input of the group scheme sector to the proposed new Water Services Bill.***

The National Federation of Group Water Schemes gave a broad welcome to the proposed Water Services Bill announced in September by the Minister for the Environment &

Local Government, Noel Dempsey TD. The updating of legislation in the area of water provision, the creation of a National Water Services Authority, the placing on a statutory footing of the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee and the overall recognition of the contribution made by the private group schemes, certainly go a long way towards addressing what is required in this sector. This is not to say that the measure cannot be strengthened and in his response to the proposed measure, the chairman of the NFGWS, Dr Jerry Cowley, proposed that the NWSA be given the role of arbitrator, resolving disputes and hearing appeals from groups refused the required water-provision license. Calling for a change in the Bill's definition of a private group water scheme in the legislation to 'Community Group Water Services Scheme', he hoped that 'the very successful partnership arrangements already in place by way of the Rural Water Programme' would 'be further enhanced and underpinned by the thrust of the proposed new legislation'.

Objective: ***To develop and implement a Source Protection Pilot Project.***

A source protection pilot project was planned for Churchill/Oram GWS in County Monaghan and it is hoped that similar pilots will be possible in other counties with varying topography. This project is being spearheaded by the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee.

### Insurance cover for group schemes

In addition to the above objectives, all of which have been addressed by the Federation in its work throughout 2001, several other issues arose in the course of the year, not least efforts by the NFGWS to secure insurance cover for group schemes. Of nineteen firms circulated with a detailed request seeking quotations that would cover the spectrum of GWS activity, only three replied and it was very difficult to compare their quotes or to recommend one above the other. When the NFGWS queried the lack of interest, it became apparent that global events in the past year might prove problematic in terms of providing cover for utilities, and this would include reservoirs, treatment plants etc. They suggested, too, that the poor image of drinking water in group schemes was a deterrent to providing cover.

Groups were invited to contact local development officers for details of the three companies prepared to offer cover. Alternatively, they might prefer to secure quotations through their local brokers.

# **OBJECTIVES FOR 2002**

**In relation to the target date of December 2003 to achieve E.U. and National Quality Drinking Water Standards, the Federation will:**

- 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.
- Lobby government in relation to the speedy enactment of the Water Services Bill and to the inclusion of those amendments proposed by the NFGWS.
- Produce a 3-year business plan.
- Implement and administer a pilot project in relation to the Quality Assurance Scheme.
- Pursue organisational expansion, through the active involvement of additional group schemes in the federation.
- Establish a website for the federation.
- Secure final agreement and begin implementation on a pilot basis of the management training course designed for the GWS sector by ICOS Services.
- Recruit further staff, if deemed necessary in the context of our need to fulfil the remit of the NFGWS.
- Continue internal reorganisation, as recommended in the ICOS Consultants’ Report.
- Finalise the analysis of the National Source Monitoring Programme (by technical consultant, Maurice O’Connell), and to disseminate the findings to relevant statutory agencies, to County Monitoring Committees and to individual schemes.
- Progress the detailed implementation of the source protection pilot project at Churchill/Oram GWS.



- 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.
- Assist in the formulation of a guidance document for DBO procurement, planned under the aegis of the NRWMC.
- Give practical effect to the O&M element of DBO, the NFGWS will co-operate with the Water Services National Training Group, in their efforts to produce a guidance document in performance management specifically aimed at rural water providers.

# REGIONAL REPORTS

## Northern Region

### Cavan

In 2001, Cavan secured the highest per capita allocation towards capital works of any county and implementation of the Rural Water Programme progressed satisfactorily. A draft strategic plan was formally adopted in January and the final plan was agreed by September. Partnership between the statutory authorities and group water schemes proved a key factor in ensuring such rapid progress. The secondment of a Senior Executive Engineer to assist the work of the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee, was evidence of Cavan County Council's positive approach to tackling defective drinking water. Similar commitment was demonstrated by the County Monitoring Committee which met every two months to agree on a common strategy. The official opening of Cliffernagh treatment works in February 2001 and the commissioning of works at Dernakesh and Annagh provided practical examples of what could be achieved in a relatively short time.

Several amalgamations, recommended in the strategic plan, were given the go-ahead by group schemes. These included an amalgamation between Vale GWS and Knockbride GWS (now Drumkeery GWS); Turfad GWS, Tullyunshin GWS and Tonyduff/Seeoran GWS (now Mountain Lodge GWS); Butlersbridge GWS and Redhills GWS (Annagh GWS). An amalgamation between Garty Lough GWS, Bruskey GWS and Killydoon GWS was also agreed, pending positive identification of a reliable water source.

Towards the end of 2001, group schemes in west Cavan decided to form a 'bundle' for the purpose of upgrading treatment facilities for nine GWS. Groups in east Cavan were considering forming of a similar 'bundle', thereby ensuring that County Cavan as a whole would meet the target date for achieving a quality water standard.

## Donegal

Donegal County Council has administered capital grants for group water schemes since the early 1970s. Since 1997, its policy has been to take over (with agreement) some 350 schemes over a five-year period. The pace of takeover has, however, been somewhat slower and at the end of 2001, there were 28 private and 274 part-private group schemes in the county serving more than fifty persons each. Approximately 6,500 people (some 5% of the overall population) obtain drinking water through group water schemes.

The draft strategic plan was agreed in September 2000 and the 2001 allocation towards capital works for group schemes totalled IR£2 million in 2001, while IR£500,000 was allocated for the takeover of schemes.

Four of the larger private GWS were in the process of becoming part private. These include Meenacahan/Meentinadea GWS, Tullintain GWS, Carrowmeena GWS and Desertegney GWS.

## Louth

Most group water schemes in the county have been taken over by the County Council and today some 4,000 people (approximately 9% of the rural population\*) are served through eighteen schemes, eleven private and four part-private. These include

Killanny/Reaghstown GWS which is supplied from a lake in neighbouring County Monaghan and is included under the strategic plan for that county.

The 2001 allocation towards capital works in the GWS sector totalled IR£.52 million, with a further IR£100,000 allocated for takeover of schemes. At the end of 2001 plans were underway for the takeover of Jenkinstown GWS in the north of the county.

A pilot scheme examining the use of Sanolin as a substitute for Chlorine was launched by Tullyallen GWS in 2000.

\*Excludes populations of Dundalk & Drogheda

### Meath

There are fifteen GWS in the county, only six of which serve more than fifty people. Of these, two (Meath Hill and Kiltale) are private GWS, while four (Ballinaclose, Kilskyre, Newcastle/Oldcastle and Ongenstown) are part-private. Group schemes provide water to 3,500 people in totle or 3% of the population. The county's allocation in 2001 totalled IR£.235 million for capital works on GWS, while IR£140,000 was set aside for the takeover of schemes. The draft strategic plan for the county was adopted in October 2000.

### Monaghan

The strategic plan, launched on 5 February 2001, included a recommendation that a 'bundle' be formed as a means of providing upgraded treatment works for the county's group water schemes and several smaller public schemes. Discussion around this recommendation dominated activity in the county throughout 2001, especially when Monaghan was chosen as a national pilot project in respect of 'bundling'. Following several information meetings throughout the autumn, on 20 November the recommendation received the go-ahead from GWS in the county. A formal launch of the project was held on 19 December when the Minister, Noel Dempsey, TD, described the Monaghan initiative as a 'fantastic example to the rest of the country', 'a huge step forward'. The contract was awarded to the Kilkenny-based firm Bowen/Vivendi Water. Four GWS opted not to participate in the 'bundle' which now includes seven GWS and three small public schemes. Almost 19,000 people (representing 36.5% of the population) receive their water supplies from thirteen GWS and the final rural water strategic plan in respect of these was adopted in September 2001.

## Connacht Region

### Galway

With a total of 662 group schemes, supplying some 51,600 people (39% of the population of the county), the GWS sector is very strong in Galway. Early difficulties in regard to the partnership arrangements for delivering the rural water programme were largely overcome in 2001 and there is an acceptance now that GWS must be party to any decisions made that might impact on their future.

Upgrading took place at Clarren and Glinsk group water schemes.

Preliminary work began in amalgamating four schemes in the vicinity of Tuam (Milltown, Milltown North East, Milltown, Belmont and Kilaphrasogue). Here, as in other parts of the county, efforts were directed towards the DBO route as the best means of upgrading facilities.

Plans were also laid for the launch of a national pilot scheme focusing on the Quality Assurance Scheme. Barnaderg GWS, Cahermorris/Glenreevagh GWS and Caherlistrane GWS agreed to participate in this critical pilot which would determine how private schemes might cope with implementing ongoing measures to ensure quality water.

### Leitrim

The strategic rural water plan for Leitrim was adopted in June 2001 and preparations have been ongoing to upgrade the fifteen GWS throughout the county that serve more than 50 persons. Upgrading work commenced at six group schemes; Keelagh/Bornacoola GWS, Gortinty GWS, Cloonsarn GWS, Rossinver/Dooard GWs, Eden/Coragowna GWS and Cooladoonnel GWS. A further seven schemes were preparing to tender for upgrading works. A proposal that schemes with water quality problems connect to the North Leitrim Regional Supply was being considered. The capital works allocation to the county for the year was IR£1.3 million, with a further IR£175,000 set aside for takeover. GWS as a whole provide water to some 16,000 people or 64% of the population of Leitrim.

## Mayo

There are more than 300 GWS in Mayo, 102 of which are private schemes serving more than 50 people. Almost 61,000 people, 54.5% of the population, receive water through the GWS sector. The final rural water strategic plan for the county was adopted in December 2001. With an allocation of IR£1.5 million for capital works, construction was completed on nineteen schemes in the county during 2001, with upgrading continuing on a further seven schemes. The completed GWS include Funshona/Cross, Ballykinava, Attawala/Lakeshore, Kiltane, Cornboy, Rosserk/Lecarrow, Derryquay, Barnagh/Lurgacloy, Gardenfield/Caher, Glencullen/Glenturk, Bohola Stage II, Killaturley Stage II, Cashel/Shanwar, Bollinglanna, Rathfran, Cloontakilla, Raheenbar Ext., Laveymore and Kilmore. A further IR£750,000 was allocated for takeover of group schemes by the local authority.

The pilot membrane treatment plants located in Belderrig and Bohola began providing water in compliance with the drinking water regulations.

The first leak detection and location course directed at group water schemes took place in November in the Regional Centre, Castlebar. There is a great demand for such training and further courses were planned for 2002.

## Roscommon

Although there are 185 recorded GWS in the county, many of these are no longer functional, a situation that pertains to other counties also. There are, however, 33 private GWS in Roscommon serving more than fifty persons. These and a further 23 smaller private schemes provide water to almost 7,300 people in total. With a capital works allocation of IR£.4 million and IR£175,000 towards takeover of schemes, work continued on the Pollacat and Cavetown treatment works, with water being monitored for quality. Disinfection facilities were installed and are working on nineteen of the twenty-one schemes which formed part of a DBO bundle. These include the following GWS; Annaghmore/Corraslira, Ardkenagh, Ballinderry/Rathmore/Castlemine, Ballymacurley/Killultague, Carnalasson/Caggle, Carrowcrim/Holywell, Clooncullane/Clooncunny, Cloneygrasson, Clooneyquinn, Derrane/Coolteigue,

Derrincartha/Cloonlumney, Derryphatten, Donamon, Grange lower, Grange/Four Mile House, Ogulla/Tulsk, Peake/Mantua, Rathcarren and Rathcroghan/Tulsk. Legal difficulties have held up work on the remaining two GWS, Carane/Ballintubber and Corristoona. Attention focused on the remaining larger group schemes throughout the county. Some were extended and upgraded, including work on distribution systems.

### Sligo

With the adoption of the draft rural water strategic plan in August 2001, all fifteen private schemes serving more than fifty persons submitted plans to the county council in respect of proposed treatment works. The annual allocation for capital works totalled IR£.8 million, while IR£190,000 was allocated for takeover. Ballinafad GWS was upgraded during the year, doubling its delivery capacity, while several schemes with deficient supplies were connected to the public mains. Seven new schemes were organised. Discussions took place between the GWS and the County Council with regard to the formation of a 'bundle' which would include twelve GWS.

The group sector in Sligo supplies water to approximately 10,000 people, representing some 18% of the overall population of the county.

## Midland Region

### Kildare

There was an excellent attendance at an information meeting for group schemes in the county, held in Kilkea Castle on 2 October. In addition to Deirdre Byrne and Damien Woods, representing the Federation, there were speakers from Kildare County Council and the Eastern Regional Health authority.

The County monitoring committee met in June and again in October when they approved the Draft Rural Water Strategic Plan for the county. Eleven schemes have been prioritised in the plan, amongst these the seven private GWS serving more than 50 persons. A total of 2,660 Kildare people receive water from the group water sector.

With an allocation of IR£1.2 million for capital works in 2001, work continued on the treatment works and distribution network of Rathcoffey GWS, with 22 miles of piping being laid to serve 400 households. Rathcoffey GWS was scheduled for takeover in 2002.

### Longford

Major infrastructural works commenced in the upgrading of Moydow GWS, the largest private scheme in the county. The allocation for GWS capital works throughout the county totalled IR£.4 million.

Work continued in relation to the Rural Water Strategic Plan, and information meetings co-hosted by the County Council and the Federation being well attended by representatives of local GWS.

### Offaly

There are some 17 GWS serving more than 50 people. With a capital allocation grant of IR£.89 in 2001, upgrading was completed at several GWS: Ballyclare, Clareen, Cloonfinlough and Knocknamase.

In addition, several new schemes were planned, including one at Ballycommon (near Tullamore) and Rath (between Birr & Kilcorran).



## Westmeath

With only two GWS (Mount Temple and Multyfarnham) serving more than 50 people, the sector is weak in Westmeath. Nonetheless, a large part-private scheme was completed in the North of the county in 2001 and work was continuing on the rural water strategic plan. Westmeath had a IR£1.6 million allocation towards capital works, with a further IR£100,000 set aside for takeover of GWS.

## Southeast Region

### Carlow

Only IR£63,000 was allocated for capital works in the group water sector throughout the county in 2001. There are 23 GWS in the county, nine of which are private schemes providing water to more than 50 people. The total population served by the group water sector in the county stands at just under 3,000.

### Kilkenny

After years of planning, tenders were received for the construction of a new GWS at Castlewarren and it was expected that work would begin in 2002. This scheme has been several years in planning.

Upgrading work was completed on Tullaroan/Bawnmore GWS.

There are more than 200 GWS in Kilkenny, with 22 private schemes serving more than 50 people. The First stage Rural Water Strategic Plan was adopted in July 2001 and the capital works allocation for the year was IR£.75 million, with a further IR£25,000 provided for takeover.

### Laois

The major news in Laois in the course of 2001 was the completion of work at two GWS, Errill and The Heath. Several part-private schemes were taken over by Laois County Council. The capital works allocation for the year was IR£.38 million, while IR£125,000 was set aside for takeover.

Of the total of 78 GWS in the county, half are private schemes and of these, 14 schemes supply more than 50 people.

### Wexford

The Rural Water Strategic Plan, adopted by the County monitoring Committee in December 2000, was ratified by the County council in June 2001.

With a capital works allocation of IR£.32 million and a further IR£75,000 set aside for takeover, work undertaken during the year included the establishment of several small part-private GWS. Planning underway in relation to the upgrading of several private GWS; Blackstairs, Temple Udigan and Kilernin.

Wexford has an estimated total of 133 GWS, only nine of which are private schemes serving more than 50 people. Some 5,600 people receive their water supplies via the group water sector in the county.

### Wicklow

Just over 2,000 Wicklow people (representing 2% of the overall population of the county) are served by group water schemes. Six of these schemes provide water to more than 50 persons, and each of these received allocations towards capital works in 2001, as did a further four smaller schemes. The Department allocated IR£190,000 for capital works on group schemes in the county, with IR£8,000 set aside for takeover. The actual allocation by the County Council to 31 December 2001 was slightly in excess of €600,000, of which €450,000 was paid to six schemes, between them serving 179 households. These included Rosbawn/Tinahely, Barnasliggan/Enniskerry, Ballinagate/Carnew, Gormanstown/Cryhelp, Ballygannon/Kilcoole and Manor Kilbride.

Meetings of the County Monitoring Committee were held in July and in September, when the draft rural water strategic plan was approved. This draft was somewhat unsatisfactory in terms of detail and it is expected that the final plan will address this shortcoming.

## Southern Region

### Clare

Ir£2 million was allocated towards capital works in 2001, with a further IR£450,000 set aside for takeover of schemes by the County Council. Although there are more than 250 GWS in Clare, only 12 cater for more than 50 people.

Work in the county in 2001 focused on securing the agreement of four group schemes to form a bundle for the purpose of securing tenders under DBO. Following initial agreement to the proposal in May, the October meeting of the Rural Water Monitoring Committee confirmed that four schemes – Kilmaley/Inagh, Dysart/Toonagh, Lissycasey and Killone – would progress as a bundle. Between them, these schemes serve more than 2,500 homes in the mid-Clare region.

### Cork

County Cork is divided into three areas for the purposes of administration by the county council, each with its own Rural Water Monitoring Committee; these are Cork North, Cork South and Cork West. In total, there are some 300 GWS throughout the county, of which 40 serve more than 50 people each.

With 16 private GWS serving more than 50 people, out of a total of 203 Cork North had a relatively low allocation in 2001, with capital works expenditure of just IR£.1 million and nothing at all towards takeover of schemes by the council. Three new private schemes were established in North Cork at Gragie, Coolagowan and Lisnabue. A further three part-private schemes were established in Carker, Omerrabue and Cuillawillin.

A capital works allocation of IR£.4 million was secured by Cork South in 2001, with a further IR£500,000 made available for takeover of schemes. Several GWS completed upgrading in 2001, amongst these Cappagh (Kinsale), Kilmacsimon, Tulligmore and Lower Killeens.

With only eight GWS serving more than 50 people, Cork West secured capital works funding totalling IR£.85 million.

## Kerry

Some 60 group schemes availed of grants under the 2001 capital works allocation, which amounted to IR£.75 million. Two private GWS (Coolnagreagh & Kilmurray/Cordal) agreed to be taken over by the County Council as a means of addressing poor water quality. Three private schemes (Cappanalea, Dawros, Lyreanes) completed upgrading work.

Amongst the part-private schemes which began construction in 2001 was the ambitious Brosna/Knocknagoshel GWS, aiming to supply some 350 households. Although part-private, the initiative for this scheme came from within the community which pushed hard to make their dream a reality. The local contribution towards capital works was between IR£500-IR£600 per house, excellent value for money. Both the people of Brosna/Knocknagoshel and Kerry County Council deserve congratulations.

The private GWS sector in Kerry is relatively small, with only 15 schemes serving more than 50 people. An overall total of 115 GWS (private and part private) provide water to nearly 13,000 people.

## Limerick

Several new part private schemes were constructed in the county in 2001, drawing down a portion of the IR£.4 million allocation for capital works. The new schemes include those at Castlematrix, Glascurran, Honeypot, Ballinruane and Tankardstown, while a small private scheme was established at Shrove.

Existing private schemes that drew down money from the allocation towards upgrading work included Borrhigone/Craggs, Meenoline, Athlacca, Ballyduff, Ballinamona, Barna/Glendarragh, Kilfinny and Ballyshonick.

With an allocation of IR£250,000 towards takeover, five small GWS were brought under the control of the County Council. These were: Breska, Corcamore, Trevoe, Newbridge/Cooltomin and Plouncagh.

Some 25,000 people in County Limerick receive water from more than 300 GWS, 60 of which are private schemes serving more than 50 people.

### Tipperary North

About 40 group schemes drew down finance in the course of 2001. With a total allocation of IR£.9 million for capital works, several groups completed upgrades. These included Abbeyville, The Frolic, Fantane, Graniera, Cloneybrien No. 3, Tinvoher, Castlecranna and Rathsalla. Schemes involved in ongoing upgrading work include Ashill, Tonatha, Gurteenakilla, Graigue, Shevry and Bawn/Kilgriffith/Kilmore. There are an estimated total of 267 group water schemes (private and part private) in Tipperary North, supplying water to almost 12,000 people.

### Waterford

There are only four GWS in Waterford serving more than 50 people. The total population served by GWS in the county is 1,600. Capital works allocations in 2001 totalled IR£.35 million, while IR£50,000 was set aside for takeover of schemes by the County Council.

## PILOT SCHEMES

As previously reported, many of the pilot projects have been installed and are operational for the past few years. All the sites have been variously monitored during 2002 to a greater or lesser extent. However, it is the intention of the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee (NRWMC) to initiate a full formal monitoring programme on all of the pilot projects early in 2002, including a detailed sampling and analysis regime. After a period of approx 6-12 months, a full technical report will be prepared by the NRWMC on each pilot site.

### **Brief summary/history of various pilot projects:**

#### **Roscommon**

- “Bundle” of 20 *approx schemes for disinfection*:

Most of the installations for this project had taken place by the end of 2001. Delays were encountered where there no proper access roads in place. Also where there was insufficient title to pump-house sites, etc. However, while some problems did persist and are still ongoing many others were successfully resolved. In the light of the most recent additional legislative instrument (S.I. 439/2000) and the proposed Water Services Bill, this particular pilot project may have to be revisited as ‘disinfection’ facilities alone may not provide a drinking water in compliance with the E.U. Drinking Water Directive. With the expected success of the DBO route to achieve compliance in this regard, a good case could now be made to extend the pilot process to include full treatment (filtration as appropriate). The federation will be pursuing this option during 2002.

- *Undersink/Wholehouse Units*:

Some 30 plus units have been installed by a number of suppliers to meet the drinking and domestic requirements on householders across 3 small schemes. An interim report was prepared by Roscommon County Council for the steering group involved with this pilot project towards the end of 2001. It was envisaged that the steering

group would meet early in 2002 to review available results and trends and set a deadline for the completion of the detailed monitoring which has been ongoing in a very efficient and professional manner by Roscommon Co. Co. for the past 12 months approx. A final report is expected before the end of 2002.

- *Pollacat Springs & Cavetown Lake*

Both of these pilots were full DBO projects. Planning and other issues, including tendering etc have all been largely successfully dealt with during 2001 and construction should commence at both sites in early 2002, with a completion target date set for mid 2002. The contractor selected for Cavetown Lake pilot is Fay Environmental Ltd., while the Pollacat Springs contract was awarded to Vivendi Water. Monitoring on both sites will commence as soon as successful commissioning of the treatment works have taken place.

## **Mayo**

- *Belderrig:*

The membrane technology used in the treatment process on this 60 house scheme appears to be operating very successfully, following some brief “teething” problems. The raw water source – mountain lake/stream – can often be problematic with sometimes high colour and turbidity. The plant will be the subject of a more detailed monitoring programme through the NRWMC in 2002 with a final report expected towards the end of the year.

- *Bohola*

This group water scheme has a much higher daily demand throughput as it is serving the needs of upwards of 400 Houses plus farming requirements. The treatment process again incorporates membrane technology. Some serious initial problems were encountered – involving damage to the membrane bank from the backwashing process – but full replacement of membrane bank etc were put in place at the Contractors expense at all times. Towards the latter part of 2001, the pilot plant appeared to be operating very effectively and efficiently. Again, the NRWMC will arrange for a



detailed monitoring programme on the plant for early 2002, with a final report expected towards the end of the year.

## **Monaghan**

- *Lough Emy Pilot Project:*

This was one of the first pilot schemes initiated by the Federation back in late 1998/early 1999. Construction work began in the late spring of 1999 and all works, including the installation of the actual treatment facilities (Ozone/Carbon process) were completed early in 2002. The formal official opening ceremony was preformed by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2000. This plant was tendered on a design/build (DB) basis as it predated the wider DBO concept. The local GWS, Glaslough/Tyholland are currently endeavouring to secure an appropriate and acceptable “O&M” contract for the next 10 to 20 years and have engaged specialist consultants in this area to assist them with the detailed requirements of such a contract. However, it is somewhat disappointing to report that despite the long period of time that has elapsed since the plant was officially opened, the Consultant Engineer employed by the group scheme has to-date been unable to produce a Certificate of Completion of the works. Such a Certificate is necessary before an “O&M” Contract is put in place.

Again, through the NRWMC, a detailed monitoring regime will be put in place early in 2002 and a full report is expected later in the year.

- *Monaghan DBO “Bundle” Pilot Project:*

The planning phase, including public tendering of the Monaghan DBO “Bundling” National Pilot Project was successfully completed during 2001. Five water utility consortia were shortlisted in early January 2001 and the more detailed tendering got underway after Easter. Some inevitable delay occurred due to the foot and mouth outbreak in February/March 2001. All aspects of the evolving pilot project were

examined and discussed at several meetings of the Project Steering Group and also at the monthly County Monitoring Committee meetings.

The final closing date for receipt of tenders in Monaghan County Council was fixed as 25<sup>th</sup> September 2001. Four completed tenders were received and opened in the County Council offices on the evening of the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2001. After the standard recording procedures, the tender documents were handed over to T. J. O'Connor & Associates, the Clients Representatives for the project. Steering group meetings were held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2001 and 30<sup>th</sup> October 2001. Details of the emerging winning bid were disclosed at the latter meeting. Arrangements were then made to meet with the eleven group schemes on 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November 2001 to inform them of the outcome of the tendering process. At the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2001, seven group schemes agreed to participate in the "Bundle" contract along with 3 smaller local authority schemes. Four of the eleven group schemes decided against joining the "bundle".

Monaghan County Council Management then endorsed the "10 scheme bundle" contract and submitted all documentation, including the Report on Tenders, to the DOELG at the end of November 2001. The DOELG, following detailed technical and economic evaluation, gave its approval in mid December 2001. Full Ministerial approval followed swiftly with the formal launch of the project by Minister Noel Dempsey T.D. at a ceremony in the Nuremore Hotel, Carrickmacross on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2001. Construction work on the project is due to get underway in the summer 2002.

The NFGWS would like to record its thanks and appreciation to all concerned with this unique and exciting National Pilot Project. In particular, we would like to thank the senior officials in the DOELG and Monaghan Co. Co., whose expertise and support was of vital importance in bringing the Pilot Project to full fruition. Finally, a special mention must be given to the seven group scheme management committees which, having given very careful consideration to all issues and aspects arising from

the pilot, decided to participate in the project. This management decision will have far reaching consequences not only for their own schemes but for all schemes around the country.

As a direct result of the success of the Monaghan DBO “Bundle” Project, the “bundle” approach to solving quality deficient supplies on group schemes has now been adopted as official policy of the NRWMC and the DOELG. The “bundle” concept is now being replicated in many counties and concrete proposals in this regard are expected to emerge in these counties during 2002. For the record, the seven group schemes which decided to participate in and facilitate the pilot project are as follows:-

Churchill/Oram,  
Doohamlet,  
Farmoyle/Baraghy,  
Drumgole,  
Stranooden,  
Tydavnet  
Truagh.

### **Conclusion:**

On a final note, sincere thanks are due to the Board members and staff of the NFGWS for their efforts in 2001. Thanks is also due to our partners; County Councils, Liaison Officers, County Monitoring Committees, the Water Services National Training Group, the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee, Department officials and the Minister, Mr Noel Dempsey, TD. The NFGWS looks forward to continued co-operation, consultation and progress in the year ahead.