

New Waterford Regional Office gets to work....

Welcome on board, Waterford, the new hosts of the TO Regional office! Located in Waterford City Council offices, the second Transition Office will draw in 12 staff from Waterford, Kilkenny, Carlow and Wexford. The Dublin and Waterford teams, together, will have responsibility for the overall transition process including 13 DECLG workstreams; stakeholder communications; Service Level Agreements (SLAs), and crucially, development of a Legacy Plan to ensure the sustainability of local government functions post-Irish Water. The Waterford Office is led by Colette Byrne and Michael Quinn, Directors of Service-Water Services, in Waterford City and County Councils respectively, who report to WSTO Senior Responsible Officer Ray O'Dwyer. Waterford was selected after an open call issued to all County & City Managers in November 2012. The team is pictured below at a full-day planning workshop hosted by the Dublin Transition Office



New head of Irish Water announced

Dublin City Council Manager, John Tierney, was recently confirmed to the role of Managing Director of Irish Water, the new public water utility which is being established within Bord Gáis. He will take up the role in late April, for an initial period of three years. Mr. Tierney brings 35 years of experience in the local government sector to the new post, and

in his own words, "I now look forward to working with local authorities, experts from the utility sector within Bord Gáis, and experts from the water sector, to bring together our collective strengths, expertise and experience to create a world class water authority that provides an excellent service to our communities for the future."

Transition Office and BGE recruitment update

Shortlisting for the technical and administrative positions advertised by the TO in December 2012 has recently been completed, and interviews are taking place currently to fill the remaining positions.

Irish Water has also circulated details of 75, mainly technical, secondments available within the new organisation, with indicative posts at the levels of: Senior Engineers, Senior Executive Engineers, Executive Engineers, Staff Officer, Director of Service, and SEO, based in either Cork or Dublin depending on the role. Details were circulated by the HR Departments within individual local authorities, and the closing date for applications was February 15th.

Workforce Audit kicks off this month

A workforce audit will be carried out and concluded by the WSTO in March 2013 and will be based on the CCMA's 2011 questionnaire. The results of the audit will inform the development of the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) that will be negotiated with Irish Water in 2013. The SLAs will determine the operation of Water Services by Local Authorities as agents for Irish Water during the transition period of 2014-2017.

The results of the survey will enable the WSTO to carry out a workforce plan for the Water Services staff during and after the transition period.

Fact-finding exercise

In the coming weeks the Transition Office will commence the fact finding exercise in order to develop a detailed picture of the national Water Services Sector. This will inform the work of both Irish Water and the Commission for Energy Regulation, which will have a role in setting tariffs once metering and charging commences.

More importantly, the Local Authority Sector will need this information to inform its strategy on Service Level Agreements, including their implementation and management. Work is also required to determine the critical issues which will ensure that the changed funding mechanism supports both a properly functioning and adequately funded local Government Sector in the long term.

It is therefore essential that each local authority has a staff member in place to champion and drive the data gathering exercises.

All Local Authorities should now have an internal team in place (as well as designated liaison officer) to facilitate the fact finding exercise. Teams of a minimum of 1 SEE/1 AO should be in place on a full time basis for the next six months to commence putting all Water Services and related information together. The initial round of questionnaires will focus on: Assets, HSQE, Finance, Legal/Commercial and Contracts, Governance/Policies & Procedures, Operating Model, Customer & Billing, HR and People, Facilities, and IT & Systems.

A workshop will take place on March 7th in the Tullamore Court Hotel for those staff designated by their Local Authority to work on this fact finding exercise. The workshop will offer participants an overview of the transition process to date and will outline what is required from the fact finding exercise. A review of each questionnaire will be completed during the workshop, and the questionnaires will be issued in advance of this workshop to allow participants to review them. The workshop will be interactive and will give staff an opportunity to develop a full understanding of what is required within the deadlines. Full details of the workshop will be forwarded directly to the staff concerned.

Staff contact details...

The WSTO recruitment process is nearing completion (see article page 1), and in the April edition of Water:Source, we will provide you with a full list of all WSTO staff based in Dublin and Waterford, for your future reference. In the meantime, you can contact us via details below.

Communications corner

We are aware that many staff involved in the transition process are receiving information from many different sources. Going forward, the Water Services Transition Office will handle all communications between local authority stakeholders in the transition process. Consistency of approach and message will be very important in keeping staff and other stakeholders fully informed. One of our key communications tool will be this eZine, which we will publish on the first of each month. If you missed Edition 1 of Water:Source, or if you have any suggestions for subjects you'd like to see covered in future editions, you can contact our office by phone on 01 870 4414 or by email on wsto@lgma.ie. You may also communicate directly with your local authority's WSTO Liaison Officer.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Irish Water goes on the road to deliver information briefings

A team from Irish Water is finalising plans to brief senior staff and Councillors over the coming months. It is expected that briefings will start in early March, and will take place on a regional basis. The sessions will be interactive, and involve a presentation, a detailed FAQ document, a video presentation, and Q&A session. The focus of the briefings will be on recruitment and staffing information, including secondments; terms and conditions of employment; rationale behind the creation of Irish Water and the approach of the Water Reform Programme; and the timeline and key milestones including Metering, Billing, and Asset transfer.

Another element of this information campaign is a customer brochure (pictured below), which is currently being delivered to all households in Ireland.

