

An Taisce advocates for sustainable farming future with EU Commissioner: nitrates derogation puts Ireland's waterways into further crisis

An Taisce met with EU Environment Commissioner [Jessika Roswall](#) to discuss the nitrates derogation today to showcase how Ireland clearly needs to urgently implement evidence-based solutions to nitrate pollution. Ireland cannot afford yet another failed version of the derogation.

An Taisce was part of a delegation to meet Environment Commissioner Jessika Roswall today (Friday 7th November) when she visited Ireland to discuss issues including the renewal of Ireland's nitrates derogation.

The Irish Government is in final negotiations with the European Commission to secure another nitrates derogation for Irish farmers.

An Taisce has long highlighted the dire state of Irish water quality, with recent EPA data demonstrating that half of Irish rivers and lakes, and two-thirds of estuaries are polluted. Agricultural nitrogen is a major source of this pollution, resulting from animal manure, slurry and fertiliser.

Farmers are being asked to jump through a number of environmental hoops, but the measures they're being instructed to put in place clearly don't work for all pollutants. While some may work well for silt and phosphorus, they're not designed to address nitrogen pollution.

The tragic example of [Lady's Island Lake](#) in Wexford should ring alarm bells. The results of successive failures to prevent nitrate pollution are key drivers in the ecological decline of this important Special Area of Conservation, and many other waterbodies along with it.

Dr. Elaine McGoff, Head of Advocacy with An Taisce said:

"Today we called on the Commissioner to put Ireland on an off-ramp, to wean us off our reliance on the nitrates derogation. We asked the Commissioner to further reduce the upper limit of nitrogen which can be spread, and to ultimately move towards removing the derogation entirely, unless Ireland can prove that it will not impact on water quality. To date Ireland has utterly failed to provide any evidence that the extra stocking density allowed for under the derogation is not driving water pollution, or to even assess that adequately.

Catchment is the new community, we depend on each other to protect it, and farmers play an absolutely key role in this. We're calling on the Commissioner to champion the science and the law in her decision on Ireland's next derogation.

Irish waters are paying the price as a result of years of agricultural intensification, and Irish people care very deeply about clean and healthy waters, and those of us that care about water quality will be looking to the Commissioner to chart a better way forward for Irish waters, and to help Irish farmers transition to a more sustainable and resilient future."
