



AWARDS FOR  
EXCELLENCE IN  
**PUBLIC  
RELATIONS  
2019**

# Best Public Information Campaign



*Mari O'Leary, FPRII, Chairperson, Public Relations Consultants Association; Orlaith Blaney, Chief Communications and Marketing Officer and Suzanne Collins, MPRII, Group Head of Media Relations, Ervia.*

## Campaign

129 Litres - National Water Conservation Campaign

## Description of Campaign

A disruptive public information campaign and effective channel strategy asking the Irish public to be aware of daily water usage and to take small actions to manage and reduce it. The campaign successfully raised awareness of key messages, brought about behavioural change and overall water consumption was reduced.



## Organisation

Irish Water

## Background to the Campaign

Irish Water supplies 1.7 billion litres of treated drinking water to customers every day. Most people never have to think about the task of getting safe clean treated drinking water from the environment to their tap 24 hours per day, 365 days a year. In the first half of 2018, the scale of this challenge became very real for many customers. It emerged that water supplies across Ireland were being seriously impacted by low rainfall over a period of months that developed into an extended drought lasting 7 weeks in June and July. Irish Water had to develop a national behavioural change campaign from a standing start to ask customers to reduce individual water consumption to minimize restrictions on water supplies and disruption to customers.

Due to historic issues related to public perception of Irish Water, and its associated motivation for communicating directly with the public (charges and meters being common negative associations), credibility was always going to be a challenge. The campaign also had to be developed and rolled out by a team across Irish Water already operating at capacity dealing with the operational management of national water shortages. The campaign was a nationwide call to action that had to have a high profile dramatic impact and so full integration of all available media channels (paid

and unpaid) had to reach as many customers as possible. While the budget was not small, it was relatively modest for the ambition of the campaign and a significant portion of it had to be dedicated to paid channels (TV, radio and print) booked at relatively short notice therefore minimising any opportunity for efficiency here.

This campaign; developed, led and delivered by Irish Water's Communications and Marketing team working with external partners, encouraged the Irish public to pause and reflect on their water usage and to take small actions to reduce their usage. The integrated multi-channel campaign was supported through TV, OOH, digital, radio, press and PR, as well as stakeholder engagement of business and community groups.

---

## Statement of Objectives

The clear objective of the campaign was to raise awareness of individual water consumption among consumers, to bring about behavioural change and reduce overall demand for water supplies with immediate effect over the period of weeks while the campaign was running in June, July and August 2018. Dedicated consumer research prior to the launch of campaign told us:

- There was a low understanding of water consumption amongst Irish people.
- 56% of those surveyed believed their consumption was less than 50 litres per day (actual average 129 litres).
- 40% admitted to wasting some water and 62% believed that the water shortages at the time were short lived.
- 22% of the population never thought about water conservation.

The key insight was that people generally wanted to do the right thing, but didn't realise they were doing anything wrong when it came to their water usage. We needed the public to believe that every extra small saving they made in daily water use really did matter and would make a difference to overall available supply for everyone.

Overall trust and confidence in Irish Water has been recovering steadily in recent years having been severely damaged in 2014 and 2015. So we have a greater challenge to get our message heard, regardless of the importance of that message.

Irish Water was planning to deliver a national behavioural change campaign of critical importance, where their overall understanding of individual personal water use and the need for conservation was low. Our messages would need to link strongly to the national conversation about the impact the drought was having and to use our strong team of capable technical spokespeople (MD Jerry Grant, Corporate Affairs Manager Kate Gannon, Head of Asset Operations Katherine Walshe, and all qualified engineers as well as a number of regional spokespeople) to add a human, expert, relatable voice to the campaign.

---

## Programme Planning and Strategy

**Task** – The campaign aimed to maximise reach using all available owned, earned and paid channels, amplifying the messages with staff, partners (local authorities) and stakeholders (government, industry groups, Chambers etc) through direct engagement on key campaign messages and calls to action.

**Audience** – Core targeting was based on attitudinal, behavioural and demographic segments which in turn dictated the appropriate tone, language, messages and media selection. Essentially we aimed our messages at the public who already were making 'some' effort to conserve water but who, in reality, were not 'really' doing enough (partly by their own admission and partly based on reported usage behaviour) with specific additional local emphasis on areas where individual water supplies were having restrictions applied.

Greater Dublin, Munster and households with families were our target for established and social media, The Greater Dublin Areas, the Midlands (especially Mullingar), the south including Cork, Limerick and Waterford were directly targeted with additional local press and radio advertising, press releases, briefings for journalists, broadcast interviews, digital and social content including updates for specific areas, dark posts on Facebook and video updates from Kate Gannon, the Irish Water spokesperson.

Press, radio, digital and OOH channels targeted audiences nationally and regionally. Advertising was upweighted to the urban centres, Dublin and Cork, and regionally, to Munster. Regional radio (including 98FM, Spin, 96FM,

Red FM, Tipp FM) and print media (including Limerick Leader and the Kerryman) were well represented alongside national titles. Similarly, digital content through display advertising and social media was upweighted to urban centres and Munster.

**Resources** – This campaign was developed, led and delivered during July and August 2018 by Irish Water’s Communications team using Insights, PR and Media Relations, Brand and Marketing, Digital and Internal Communications working internally with Irish Water Asset Management, Crisis Management and Senior Management Teams and externally with our agency partners (Rothco, Carat, Dept, B&A, Ruepoint Media).

**Channels** – As we were asking the public to change their behaviour when our pre-campaign insights told us they could see little wrong with what they were doing, it was important that every aspect of our campaign worked effectively together to achieve the desired shift in both attitude and positive action.

- We developed a “social experiment” to gauge and record people’s response to a free running tap on the streets of Dublin. This was used through digital and social channels to amplify the need to stop waste and conserve supply.
- A mix of media was used to create mass awareness with traditional PR, TV, radio, press, outdoor and digital.

**Insights** – The conservation campaign was firmly rooted in insights generated from the public and commercial customers over a three part quantitative survey undertaken in in April (overall attitude to water conservation), July (awareness of personal use) and September (change in awareness, change in behaviour) 2018.

**Advertising Campaign** – Key suppliers; Rothco and Dept digital agency worked on creative development and Carat managed media planning to develop a broad reach advertising campaign using national and regional established and digital media channels. Our campaign included TV, Radio, Print, Out Of Home: Billboards, dPods. Display: MPUs, Leaderboards, VOD: pre-roll, in-stream, Audio: podcasts and streaming, Social: Paid posts on Facebook and Twitter, Paid targeted posts on Instagram and Snapchat, Organic posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube: TV advert, Keith Woods’ videos, Tap experiment video, Website: New conservation landing page. The ‘Tap Experiment’ – digital amplification produced a Full length video (90”) and three teasers (20-40”) with sequential teasers on social media linking to water.ie

**PR Approach** – PR was central to achieving maximum impact from this campaign. It targeted national and local, print and broadcast media (newspaper, TV and radio) and worked with stakeholders, directly generating significant volumes of earned media coverage, carrying key campaign messages and delivering significant prime positive sentiment across all outlets. Our campaign launch included:

- **National Press Release** – focused on ‘The Facts’ – 56% of people believe daily usage is less than 50 litres.
- **Regional Press Release** – for each county mirrored the national press release with local stats, local spokespeople and local media briefings.
- **Video** – Keith Wood, former rugby international and business owner in Killaloe had previously gone on the record giving credit to Irish Water for dealing with serious leakage problem affecting his business. He agreed to take part in a video testimonial on a pro-bono basis talking about the difference leakage repair and water conservation had made to his business.
- **Photocall** – Killaloe, Co. Clare (Keith Wood & Kate Gannon, Irish Water Engineer and spokesperson).
- **Media Drop** – 4-minute shower challenge ‘Beat the timer’ to get media talking about water conservation.

Our media approach throughout the campaign optimised public interest using ‘always on’ strategic media management and PR. We focused on clear, consistent, comprehensible messaging, with well-timed staging and pacing of campaign messages and responses (this crisis lasted for months so we need to stay up the news agenda). Message discipline was key to the success of the media approach. Key briefing documents were updated on a daily basis and disseminated by the Head of Media across the media, stakeholder digital and social and customer teams to ensure that all external communication was aligned. Reactive media relations regionally and nationally amplified the positive and mitigated negative coverage. Media management challenges included the complexity of the operational issues, the constantly changing situation, external factors outside our control, the need to evolve and develop the story, intensity and pressure on key resources.

**Stakeholder Amplification** – A parallel employee communications campaign was delivered across all internal Irish Water channels (F2F, posters, leaflets, Intranet, email from MD, LCD screens, staff magazine) beginning in July to

encourage employees to think, feel and act in a way that supported our water conscious conservation message, giving them the tools and information to do so.

We ran an extensive stakeholder engagement programme through our regional communications teams and our call centre targeting businesses, farming representative organisations and community groups, providing tailored advice and support, and adapting messaging on social and digital channels.

We communicated with government and local authority stakeholders including Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government & Minister Eoghan Murphy, National Emergency Co-ordination Centre, An Foram Uisce, Environmental Protection Agency, Commission for Regulation of Utilities and Local Authorities in Greater Dublin and nationally to further reinforce and develop advocacy around this important message. We provided briefing notes that aligned with our media and stakeholder messaging, provided copies of collateral and kept them informed of media activity. This resulted in strong advocacy with businesses such as Iarnród Éireann and Dublin Bus tweeting about reducing the frequency of washing their fleets.

---

## Measurement

### Awareness And Behavioural Change (Source B&A)

- **73%** of people 'thought differently' about the amount of water they used.
- **56%** intended to reduce future daily water use.
- Active conservation behaviour increased from **17%** to **27%**.
- Understanding of Irish Water's role and responsibilities increased by **25%**.
- **22%** uplift in trust and confidence in Irish Water.

### Media Sentiment (Source Ruepoint Media)

- Campaign PR generated **16,950** articles June-August.
- Media value specifically on conservation amounted to **€8.2** million.
- Primary spokesperson Kate Gannon accounted for **42%** of the value.
- Prime Positive coverage peaked at **41%**, averaging **37%**, during that time. (Industry norm **15-20%**).
- **100%** positive sentiment for spokespeople on broadcast media.
- **60%** of coverage carried **at least one** of Irish Water's strategic key messages.

### Advertising & Digital Reach (Source Dept)

**TV:** Audience **1.2m 348** TVRs on RTÉ, Virgin Media **86%** delivered in top **20** programmes

**Radio:** Audience **947k**, **717** spots bought (National and regional)

**Print:** Audience **338k**, **18** ads in **7** publications (National and regional)

**OOH:** Audience **150k**, **133** print & digital in Cork & Dublin, **800** mailboxes nationally

**Digital:** News & Paid audience **846k**, Display, VOD, Audio, YouTube

**Tap Experiment (90" video with three teasers 20-40")** with click through to our website [www.water.ie](http://www.water.ie)

**Facebook:** **1016** reactions / **498** likes / **354** comments / **87** shares

**Twitter:** **615** likes; **118** retweets Video completion rate **28%**

**YouTube:** **82k** views Completion rate of **6%**

**Web Traffic – three-fold increase** from **381,000** visits in May to **over 1 million** in August. Conservation tips 'Call to Action' (CTA) generated the following social impressions, views and clicks

**Facebook:** **1,434,677 Impressions**, **136,954 Video Views**, **16,661 Clicks**

**Twitter:** **554,955 Impressions**, **262,775 Video Views**, **6,154 Clicks**

**Water consumption fell over the period of the campaign** – Water consumption in Greater Dublin reduced from **588 million** litres per day in June to **546 million** litres per day in August – a total reduction of **42 million litres per day**. (Source: IW Asset Management)



**KANTAR**

**rrd**

**RUEPOINT MEDIA**

