

Marie Finneran

Roscommon Scientist reflects on two decades of improvements



As Executive Scientist Marie Finneran passes work on the Roscommon Town Main Drainage Scheme every morning, she can't help but remark on the county's improvements in water and wastewater infrastructure.

During the past two decades working for the local authority, she has seen some "fantastic improvements".

"Working on different projects over the years and seeing schemes come off the Remedial Action List is just brilliant. Looking at the improvements that have been made to the statistics and compliance is fantastic."

As Roscommon County Council's newest recruit in 2000, Marie was tasked with optimising the performance of new wastewater plants in Roscommon Town, Monksland, Boyle and Ballaghaderreen.

"It was a huge investment at the time," but since then the improvements have continued with the latest €20m investment in Roscommon Town set to safeguard the environment and provide for future growth of the town.

"It's brilliant to see Irish Water's investment in the county and knowing all the improvements that are being made here.

After graduating with a degree in Environmental Science from Sligo IT, Marie spent the first ten years of her career working with the Central Fisheries Board (now known as Inland Fisheries Ireland).

But then came a proposal from a fellow Roscommon man and soon after she secured a job with Roscommon County Council.

It was an exciting time for the local authority with four new wastewater plants being commissioned. As the Environmental Technician, it was Marie's job to get them up and running and she revelled in the challenge.

With the plants in operation, she was tasked with the job of obtaining and analysing samples from Roscommon's 20 plus wastewater treatment plants and spent ten years travelling the length and breadth of the county.

“I loved being out on site. I got to know all the caretakers and I was called upon if there were any issues.”

But never one to rest on her laurels, Marie sought a new challenge and moved into the local authority’s environmental department. There she turned her attention to quality controls and worked on the FOG (Fats, Oils and Grease) Programme.

At the time, approximately 50 grease licences were issued in the county and Marie set about engaging with plant caretakers and calling to premises to ensure the licence rules were being adhered to.

“Initially, I looked at the sewers downstream from the licence locations and called to the licence holders to ensure they had all their paperwork in place. Then I set up a database and twice a year I called to the licence holders and took pics of the sewers in the same locations to track any grease build up.”

In 2014, she was appointed manager of the Shannon Basin District Laboratory before becoming head of the Roscommon Laboratory when the two amalgamated later that year.

It’s in that laboratory that all of Roscommon’s drinking water and wastewater analysis takes place, where river samples are tested, analysis is carried out for Leitrim, Longford and Offaly and not forgetting testing of private wells.

While she enjoyed the site visits, Marie admits that the administrative role suits her.

“I’m a methodical person. At one time I thought about studying Accountancy; I like numbers and statistics.”

Marie’s role might have changed over the years, but her end goal remains the same. She’s proud of the improvements made in Roscommon as Irish Water and the local authority work together to continuously upgrade and develop critical infrastructure to deliver public water and wastewater services to the community.

Seeing contractors carry out work on the Roscommon Town Main Drainage Scheme every morning is a reminder of that.