



Donal Heaney **Asset Operations Lead - Wastewater**

Meath native and Irish Water Engineer, Donal Heaney, graduated from UCD with a degree in Biosystems Engineering and works as an Asset Operations Lead for Irish Water. He oversees the systems for wastewater services in counties Louth, Meath and Longford.

Speaking about his role, he said, "I joined Irish Water when it was being set up in 2013 as part of the team that was to establish the structures and processes for dealing with wastewater in the new utility. I get to collaborate with our partners in the Local Authorities and work with colleagues across the different functions in Irish Water to safely process 1.6 billion litres of wastewater every single day, transporting it from homes and businesses to wastewater plants through a vast network of pipes under the ground and to treat it so it can be safely returned to the environment. I also serve as a spokesperson for the 'Think Before You Flush' (TBYF) campaign helping to share the message about the negative consequences inappropriate flushing has on the wastewater network and on our environment."

"The TBYF campaign highlights the problems caused by flushing inappropriate items such as masks, wipes and cotton buds down the toilet has on our wastewater network and on the marine environment. Every month Irish Water clears approximately 2,000 blockages from the wastewater network. About 75 percent of blockages are caused by inappropriate items such as wipes and sanitary products being flushed down the toilet. As a result of COVID-19, people are using more wipes than ever to keep hands and surfaces clean. While it is critical that we follow the HSE guidance on hand-washing and coughing etiquette, it is important that we dispose of items like wipes correctly. A simple solution is to dispose of wipes, cotton buds and other sanitary products in the bin and to only flush the 3 P's – pee, poo and paper down the toilet."

Speaking about why he chose engineering as a career, he added, "I grew up on a dairy farm near Navan where my engineering education began laying concrete and fixing machinery as a child. I always had a very strong curiosity about how the natural and manmade worlds worked and liked

taking things apart and putting them back together. Combined with my strong aptitude for Maths, Physics and Chemistry in school, engineering seemed a logical subject to study.”

“It’s a very rewarding career if you have the interest and aptitude. It is impossible to overstate the breadth of possibilities that are open to a qualified engineer. The power of data and information in decision-making and in design has always been important, but it is increasingly so. A well-qualified engineer can bring a lot of value to this process in so many areas of life and I think the opportunities will continue to grow.”