

Science Week Profile Questions

Name (include picture if possible):

Brian Deegan



Where are you from?

Castlecomer Road, Kilkenny.

What do you do with Irish Water? (Focus on how this benefits the community, include details of any interesting projects you worked on in the local area)

I'm the Environmental and Ecological Assessment Specialist in Irish Water.

Together with my team we're responsible for assessing the potential environmental impacts associated with numerous Irish Water projects and activities, identifying ways to avoid or reduce these impacts, and working with other environmental stakeholders, to ensure that we do our part to protect the environment.

I also lead on the implementation of the Irish Water Biodiversity Policy, where we not only try to minimise the environmental impacts associated with Irish Water projects and activities, but actively try to enhance the biodiversity at our sites, where we can.

How did you get here (previous career, educational background)

Previous career:

I've always been interested in science and my primary degree was in science teaching, where I taught science in secondary school for a short while. After my Ph.D. I worked as a research fellow and lecturer at the University of Adelaide in South Australia, and had the opportunity to work in some of the most amazing and beautiful ecosystems on the planet.

When I returned to Ireland in 2008 I worked as the principal aquatic ecologist in RPS and then in 2014 I joined Irish Water.

Educational background:

PhD Freshwater Ecology, University of Adelaide, Australia (2006)

MSc Estuarine Ecology, University of Limerick (2000)

BSc (Ed) (1st Hons) Science Education, University of Limerick (1998)

Why did you choose science as a career?

I've always loved science all throughout school and it just really took off when I went onto university. There are just so many opportunities available in science.

What's your favourite thing about working as a scientist

When you come across a challenge or problem, then being able to find solutions to those challenges / problems.

Scientists are problem solvers. By increasing our understanding of how our ecosystems function and work, then we're able to address the pressures that we (humans) place on our ecosystems.

Best part of your job with Irish Water?

Firstly, I get paid to survey along some stunning rivers, lakes and scenic areas throughout Ireland looking for some amazing species and habitats, such as otters, white clawed crayfish, etc. as part of our ecological assessments. But more so, when environmental impacts are identified, coming up with solutions to address those impacts so that the environment is protected for future generation to enjoy.

Advice for anyone interested in a career in science

Go explore what's out there, ask questions.

Don't let anyone tell you that you're not good enough or smart enough, you can achieve anything that you want in life, if you're willing to work hard.

Who's your hero in the field of science and why?

David Attenborough. I first started to watch his TV series when I was in primary school. He's an amazing story teller of how the natural world works. I haven't met anyone who doesn't find him fascinating.

Outside of work, what do you enjoy doing?

Spending time with my family, going for river walks and showing them the wonders of the natural world around us, plus cooking, I love to cook on the weekends.