



Cathal Divilly – Plant caretaker

As sure as the sun rises over Glenamaddy Cathal Divilly does his rounds of the Galway town every morning.

But it's not milk or letters he's delivering, the Kilkerrin native is ensuring the people of the area have safe drinking water.

Cathal has been the caretaker of both Glenamaddy's water and wastewater treatment plants since 2015 and in those short few years he has become a figurehead in the community.

Always on call, there isn't a day when locals won't see Cathal Divilly's white pickup travelling between plants as he ensures the area's drinking water is pristine and leaks are non-existent.

"I have certain jobs that have to be carried out every morning. I always go to the water plant first and ensure all is well there."

The town's water plant was upgraded in 2011 and just last year Ward and Burke handed over the running of the town's new wastewater treatment plant to its new caretaker.

The responsibility of ensuring that the water is safe to drink and the wastewater is safe leaving the plant is not lost on him. Cathal's knowledge of the plant workings is second to none and his passion for his work is infectious.

"I undertook a lot of training before taking over the care of the new plant. I'm learning every day and there's always more to learn. Galway County Council and Irish Water allocate a strong value to continuous development and upskilling of staff and as a result I have been fortunate to do a lot of training courses in relation to plant operations."

His position means he must couple elements of engineering and science daily, meticulously dividing his work into four categories – to monitor, inspect, record and test.

“Standards change and we support changes and try to adapt our roles to new ways of working. New technology is always in the interest of efficiency,” he explains as he gives a tour of an impressive control room.

Cathal’s experience in the civil engineering industry, working for Coffey Construction on large scale infrastructural projects across the country, made him the right choice for the role.

“I worked on projects for local authorities, Bord Gáis and Irish Water and I feel like all those skills I developed when we were laying networks, completing tie ins and testing pipes transferred to the role I’m in today.”

The magnetic pull of home was also a factor when he applied for the role as caretaker.

“I was 14 years on the road but now I’m married, and I have a four-year-old son so it’s nice to be at home and working in the community that you are familiar with.”

Being back at base has also given him a chance to work on the family farm and he’s particularly proud of local farmers’ efforts to conserve water and protect water sources.

“Water is essential in farming to grow fresh produce and sustain livestock, but I feel there’s a positive trend among the farming community when it comes to reasonable water use.

Then with the help of Government schemes we’re starting to fence off our rivers and create buffer zones to protect our waters, farmers are carrying out soil tests and checking on weather conditions before the application of slurry. Training in pesticide application is also a positive addition in helping protect our water sources.”

Sustainability and biodiversity are also high on his list of priorities - he’s working on reducing power consumption at the plants and wildflowers are sown on the grounds to provide a source of food for pollinators.

“Managing the plants is an exciting role to be in with continuous improvements and developments. I’d encourage anyone with an interest in engineering and science to consider a job in water services. It’s a great mix.”

And with that he’s off to take a water sample for testing and to check on a potential water leak.