

Floods show the power of water, but we should learn how to cope with new norm



VALUABLE

Clean water is a valuable and precious resource and I know this as well as anyone having struggled with Meath well water for years. The area where I live suffers from an unstable underground rock structure and this allows black shale to enter wells and block the most sophisticated treatment systems.

For decades I would turn on a tap and perhaps once a week, the water would be inky black. To add to this, most of the groundwater in Meath appears to be polluted with coliforms as well as having very high iron and manganese levels.

My treatment plant could deal adequately with the coliforms and other unwanted mineral elements, but the black shale was beyond its capabilities.

Last year I finally decided I had to try and solve the problem and enlisted the help of Padraig Briody and his brothers, who provide well-drilling services throughout Ireland from their base in Rathangan, Co Kildare.

Padraig advised me that if I wanted a "manageable" water supply then the only option was to drill through the shale and continue down until hard rock was reached, while sealing the well along the vulnerable points.

He also advised that it would be costly and while he was optimistic given his experience of working in our locality, there was no guarantee of success.

I appreciated this honesty and we went ahead, drilling down to 310ft, with the first 190ft lined with 8in steel piping and inside that a further plastic lining which sealed out the shale. Hard stable rock was finally reached and an excellent supply of water created.

While this still contained high levels of iron, the treatment plant is easily able to handle it and for the first time ever I now have a constant supply of clean water for the house and farm.

Let no-one ever complain to me about the cost of paying for a mains water supply. Those who do don't know how lucky they are.

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