

RAGE IN THE RAIN



A masked protestor whose placard captures the mood of many in Waterford during last Saturday's Right2Water demonstration. See News 2, 20 and 21 for more. | Photo: Noel Browne

Estimated 5,000 city protestors voice opposition to Water Charge

AN ESTIMATED 5,000 protesters took to the streets of Waterford City on a rain-soaked Saturday afternoon to voice their opposition to water charges.

Despite the inclement weather conditions, the young and old of the Déise and its environs turned out en masse for the Right2Water demonstration.

"Can't Pay, Won't Pay" was one of the many chants which echoed through the streets of Waterford with protesters also carrying many banners and flags.

The protest, which began in Ballybricken, made its way along The Quay, through the city centre and onto The Mall where a number of speakers addressed the large turnout.

Speakers included Independent TD John Halligan, Sinn Fein Senator David Cullinane, Veronica D'Ambra of the Larchville/Lisduggan Residents Association and Jimmy Kelly of Unite.

Many protesters had walked into the city centre in large groups from their respective neighbourhoods.

Joan Quirke, organiser with Right2Water and a member of People Before Profit, said she was delighted with the turnout.

"It was a fantastic day. Our next step is to surround the Dáil on December 10th. We want up to 300,000 people outside the Dáil to drive the government out and get rid of Irish Water," she said.

Some confusion existed amongst those present as to why the protest departed from Ballybricken earlier than scheduled.

Ms Quirke explained that Saturday's event began earlier than anticipated as a small number of people attempted to disrupt the protest before it began.

"A tiny minority tried to cause division," she said.

"We need to stand together - political parties, trade unions, residents groups, community groups, individuals. This is a campaign about the right to water and involves anyone who is against water charges. We shouldn't be divided on this.

Sinn Féin Councillor John Hearne said that the group in question, comprised of around 12 individuals, had previously attempted to cause trouble at anti-water charge meetings in the area.

"They have been attacking us on social media and they wanted to hijack the whole parade. Every now and then they tried to come up to the front of the parade and hold it up," he said.

The group in question jeered and heckled a number of speakers on The Mall.

"It was disgraceful behaviour that they wouldn't let people speak," said Cllr Hearne.

He explained that the protest departed from Ballybricken earlier than planned under the advice of An Garda Síochána.

John Hearne added that there was a fantastic turnout of people considering the inclement weather conditions.

“It shows the determination of people,” he said. “This is a campaign that will gather more and more strength.”
Between 200 and 300 people were present at the Right2Water protest in Portlaw.
Meanwhile, more than 500 protesters attended a demonstration in Dungarvan which was organised by ‘Dungarvan Says No’, with several hundred also taking to the streets of Carrick-on-Suir.