

12th July 2018

To the Mayor and Each Member of Limerick City and County Council

Chairperson's Report for the Environment Strategic Policy Committee Meeting of 25th June 2018

Item 1: Minutes of Environment SPC Meeting held on 26th February 2018

The Minutes of the meeting of the Environment SPC Meeting held on 26th February 2018 were proposed by Cllr. Collins (J), Seconded by Cllr. Hurley and unanimously adopted.

Item 2: Briefing on the Eastern & Midlands Region Water Supply Project – Mr. Pat Murphy and Ms. Angela Ryan, Irish Water

Mr. Pat Murphy and Ms. Angela Ryan delivered a briefing to the Members on the Eastern & Midlands Region Water Supply Project.

The following were the main points from the briefing;

- Mr. Murphy outlined the policy framework for the management of Irish Water's water infrastructure and services. He explained that by 2050, our population will grow by 1.2 million with a consequential increased demand for water.
- He advised that presently, Irish Water can produce a maximum of 598 MI/d from 7 sources while on an average day, 579 MI/d is consumed.
- He advised that Irish Water is delivering projects to provide up to 656 MI/day by 2021 but that is the limit of existing sources.
- He outlined that 85% of the Greater Dublin Area's (GDA's) water supply comes from the River Liffey, which is over 40% of its average flow. He advised that this is the absolute maximum that can be taken in a sustainable manner from the River Liffey and that this is at risk from Climate Change.

- Ms. Ryan advised that demand for water is growing in the Greater Dublin Area and that it has already outstripped supply. She stressed that reducing leakage alone is not sufficient.
- She advised that there is a complex network of 9,000km of pipe in the Greater Dublin area and explained that replacing 1km of pipe means that 1,000 customers will experience restrictions/outages for up to 6 weeks. She further explained that due to service congestion, hand digging of trenches may be required.
- She re-iterated that wide scale mains replacement is not an economic or effective solution to leakage. She pointed out that it took 14 years of sustained investment for Thames Water in the UK to reduce leakage from 946 MI/d to 760 MI/d.
- Ms. Ryan outlined that Irish Water has a strategic approach to tackling its serious leakage challenge through its metering programme, district metering areas, leakage management system and find and fix programme. She advised that by 2050 leakage will be reduced to 140 MI/d despite major network expansion.
- Ms. Ryan advised that Irish Water have an urgent need for a new water supply. She explained that Irish Water is facing real supply challenges across the Eastern and Midlands region with 141 MI/d urgently required by 2026 and 329 MI/d required by 2050.
- Mr. Murphy outlined that 10 strategic options were assessed and Irish Water concluded that only 4 options were viable. He advised that the Parteen Basin was identified in 2016 as the preferred option.
- He advised that public consultation has been central in identifying the preferred scheme with over 1,000 stakeholders participating in the latest consultation on the preferred scheme and environmental scoping. The views of the stakeholders are reflected in the recently published Consultation Submissions Report.

He explained that Water Supply project will deliver benefits for the wider region, including the following:

- This new water source will address the serious water supply deficit across the region.
- It will deliver social, economic and environmental benefits across the entire region.
- It will augment and diversify water supply sources and strengthen their connectivity to provide a secure and reliable water supply.
- It will have no impact on current levels and flows on the River Shannon, Lough Derg and Parteen Basin.

Mr. Murphy outlined that the next steps and overall programme on the project include:

- Ongoing engagement.
- Complete Planning Application (EIAR / Wayleaves etc.) Q1, 2019.
- Submit Planning application (incl. EIAR) to ABP and abstraction application Q2, 2019 (subject to introduction of abstraction legislation).
- Oral Hearing / Planning Decision 2019 – 2022.

- Detailed Design & Procurement 2019 – 2022.
- Mobilisation & Construction 2022 – 2025.

Members raised concerns in relation to the following issues:

Their concern that the National Planning Framework was Dublin centered with adverse development consequences for the rest of the country, and that the proposal to abstract water from the River Shannon is re-enforcing this adverse growth.

The argument that an enhanced pipe replacement programme in the Dublin region should be introduced without delay and that the delivery of such a programme of work would negate the need to abstract water from the River Shannon.

The belief that alternative options such as desalination and other groundwater options have not been fully explored and costed.

The concern that the abstraction of water, if allowed, would have significant adverse effects on the River Shannon and the amenity value of the Shannon.

Members expressed concern at the likely damage to land that would arise during the laying of any proposed pipeline and also the negative impact that the wayleave for the pipeline would have on land into the future.

Members also sought clarification as to how Irish Water proposed to deliver on improvements to the water and waste water facilities in the Limerick region. The Members stated that some facilities in Limerick county were in very poor condition and needed significant upgrading to facilitate both current and future developments.

Members sought clarification as to the accuracy and/or veracity of some of the Irish Water figures, particularly when compared to figures circulated in the Kennedy report.

Members expressed disappointment at the response of Irish Water to road resurfacing when pipe-laying works etc. had been completed and also in relation to the cost of connecting to the public watermains in the case of new housing etc.

Item 3: Briefing in relation to Plastic Waste – Mr. Mark McConnell

Mr. Mark McConnell advised the Members that a former member of this SPC had recently highlighted the concept of using recycled plastics in road building/road repair. He highlighted the fact that illegal dumping and illegal waste disposal is a significant problem on both a local and a national level at present. He referenced a recent Prime Time Investigates programme in relation to the issue.

Mr. McConnell advised the Members that waste plastic may also be used as a resource in building materials. He pointed out that there may be an opportunity for Limerick to lead the way in relation to such an initiative.

Mr. McConnell stated that he would like to make a more detailed presentation on these concepts at a future SPC Meeting.

The Members agreed that illegal dumping and illegal waste disposal is a significant problem in Ireland. They highlighted the damage that plastics are causing to the Environment and to eco-systems and pointed out that an emphasis should be placed on creating plastics that have a future use.

The Members referred to the plastic free initiative that is in place in Kilkee, Co. Clare this summer and indicated that they would like to see a similar initiative happening in Limerick.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. McConnell for the briefing and invited him to deliver a presentation in relation to this item at the next Environment SPC meeting.

This proposal was agreed by the Members.

Item 4: Update on the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018 – 2021 – Ms. Anne Goggin

Ms. Anne Goggin provided a briefing to the Members on the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021.

The main points from the briefing are as follows:

- The overall aim of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC is “to achieve good ecological status in all waters”.
- The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires River Basin Management Plans and Programmes of Measures to be developed and implemented in six year cycles.
- A new three-tier governance structure is in place for WFD implementation with greater responsibilities placed on the Minister, the EPA and Local Authorities.
- The current cycle River Basin Management Plan was developed with extensive public and stakeholder engagement and has shaped priorities up to 2021 and beyond.
- During the development of this plan, a prioritisation exercise was undertaken by the local authorities, the EPA and other stakeholders to identify the water bodies that require immediate action within this cycle River Basin Management Plan to 2021.
- Expert local knowledge and discussion took place and 190 Priority ‘Areas for Action’ were identified.

- In Limerick, the 'Areas for Action' include The White River, The River Deel, the Dromcamogue River, the Camogue River and Lough Gur.

Ms. Goggin also explained some of the aims and expected outcomes i.e. long-term improvements, regional work programmes, effective implementation, community led projects and initiatives and a better approach to water quality management both locally and nationally.

She explained that the aims and expected outcomes should have wider benefits in the context of public health, the protection of the environment and economic development.

In response to queries from the Members, Ms. Goggin clarified that there will be a focus on the improvement of the water quality of the Groody and the Mulcaire rivers. She also confirmed that the water quality of the river Deel downstream at Milford has deteriorated in recent years.

She advised that freshwater quality in the metropolitan area is generally good with some evidence of nutrient enrichment in the Shannon Estuary.

Item 5: Update on the Draft Noise Action Plan – Ms. Anne Goggin

Introducing the Noise Action Plan, Ms. Goggin explained that the World Health Organisation had identified environmental noise in 2011 as “leading to a disease burden that is second in magnitude only to that from air pollution, among environmental factors in Europe”.

She explained the background to the environmental noise directive of 2002 and the Environmental Noise Regulations of 2006 and confirmed that the final date in respect of which submissions on the draft Noise Action Plan could be received was 29th June, 2018.

She pointed out that Noise should be factored in from the outset when proposed developments are being planned. She explained that it is difficult and costly to retro-fit noise mitigation measures either subsequent to planning having being granted or subsequent to construction.

She explained that the mitigation of excessive noise is critical in terms of protecting amenities and quality of life for communities.

Members raised concerns as to the level of noise emanating from the M7 motorway and the deleterious impact that this noise is having on estates in the area.

Members also raised concerns in relation to the level of noise and dust emanating from the current construction works on the Coonagh Knocknalisheen road.

They stressed the critical need to ensure that noise levels from the proposed new road development fall within the levels acceptable to the Council and that the Council does not contribute to a re-creation of the problems currently experienced adjacent to the motorway.

Members also expressed the view that it was crucially important that builders be made fully aware of the requirements of the Noise Action Plan at the earliest possible stage.

Item 6: Discussion in relation to the Eradication of Japanese Knotweed

Ms. Goggin advised that almost 400 instances of Japanese Knotweed (JKW) have been reported across the country via the Invasive Species App.

She explained that there is one very active user of the app in County Limerick and that a significant number of reports in relation to instances of Japanese Knotweed have been submitted in respect of the West Limerick area.

Ms. Goggin explained to the Members that TII has established a framework for the eradication of Japanese Knotweed on the National Road Network.

She outlined that there are 15 approved specialist contractors on the TII framework with a total budget of €5.5million. Ms. Goggin advised that the budget allocation for Limerick is €35,000 and that work in relation to the eradication of Japanese Knotweed on national roads in Limerick is ongoing.

Ms. Goggin advised the Members that the actions needed in the control of Japanese Knotweed include; prioritising control in Special Areas of Conservation, establishing a control programme for river banks and road verges and the provision of training for hedge cutting contractors.

Ms. Goggin further explained that, subject to budgetary provision, a pilot programme on invasives control on road verges in the Newcastle West area has been provisionally agreed with the Newcastle West area office.

Members expressed concern at the effect that Invasive Species were having on amenities throughout the county. Some Members stated that consideration will have to be given to providing a specific financial resource in the 2019 budget to commence a 3-5 year programme of eradication.

Is mise le meas,

Jerome Scanlan

Chairperson of the Environment Strategic Policy Committee