

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE, AND ONLINE, ON MONDAY, 23RD MARCH, 2026, AT 4.30 P.M.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:

Príomh Chomhairleoir, Councillor C. Slattery

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Moran.

Councillors Beasley, Butler, Carey, Collins (B), Collins (M), Conway, Daly, Donoghue, Doyle, Foley, Galvin, Gavan, Hartigan (S), Hartigan (T), Hickey-O'Mara, Keary, Kiely, Kilcoyne, Leddin, McSweeney, O'Donoghue, O'Donovan, O'Hanlon, O'Sullivan (O), O'Sullivan (T), Pond, Reale, Ruddle, Ryan (E), Ryan (M), Scanlan, Secas, Sheahan, Stokes, Talukder, Teefy, Teskey and Ward.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Director General (Dr. P. Daly), Deputy Director General and Director, Corporate Services, Human Resources and Organisational Development (Mr. J. Delaney), Director, Finance, Investment and Governance (Mr. M. White), Director, Planning, Heritage and Ryder Cup (Mr. S. Duclot), Meetings Administrator (Ms. C. Farrell), Administrative Officer, Corporate and Customer Services (Ms. A. Foley), Senior Staff Officer, Corporate and Customer Services (Ms. C. Sheehy), Senior Planner (Ms. N. O'Connell), Senior Executive Planner, Development Management (Mr. B. Henn), Administrative Officer, Development Management & Place-Making (Ms. M. O'Brien).

An apology for his inability to attend was received from Mr. K. Lehane, Director of Service.

1. Strategic Infrastructure Development for Proposed Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region

The Members were advised that the Council was being asked to consider the Director General's Report under Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in relation to the proposed Strategic Infrastructure Development for proposed Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region.

The Elected Members expressed very serious concerns about the Strategic Infrastructure Development proposal by Uisce Éireann to extract water from the River Shannon.

The Elected Members established consensus at the meeting that Limerick City and County Council should object to this project in line with neighbouring Local Authorities in the Mid-West Region.

It was agreed that the Elected Members individual comments would be noted. (See Appendix)

Regional Development

Members expressed concerns that the project goes against balanced regional development including the following comments:

- Limerick receives no direct benefit from this project, despite being a designated growth centre under the National Planning Framework.

- Views expressed that there is overpopulation and overconcentration of activity in Dublin; regional imbalance needs to be looked at.
- Views expressed that it is not unusual for cities to reach their natural limits and that if Dublin has reached its natural limit, then development will have to take place elsewhere in the country.
- Water demands for Limerick and in the Shannon Estuary must be met to support economic and balanced regional development.
- Clare and Tipperary County Councils have objected raising flaws with the proposal and serious planning and environmental concerns. These issues should concern everyone and neighbouring counties should be supported in their objections.
- Members queried how the project aligns with the Limerick Development Plan?

Environmental Issues

With regards to environmental issues members raised the following:

- Members raised serious concerns about the implications for the Shannon River's ecological health, for the development of the region, for compliance with European law, and for the survival of species already under severe pressure.
- Members queried whether the extraction planned aligns with the Water Framework Directive and submitted EIA; and if it should include a fully integrated catchment assessment.
- Project report does not acknowledge that Ireland is legally required under the WFD to improve, not merely maintain, ecological status.
- Concern on how the project may impact on ecological health of river.
- Risk that there will be barren ecology after the abstraction of water.
- Concerns from the fisheries community and the likely impact on existing fish stocks.
- Concerns raised on the subsequent impact on the tourism industry.
- Cumulative impact of projects on migratory fish species on the Lower River Shannon must be examined. There was a serious omission that the project does not consider the Lower Shannon Fish Passage Project; they draw from the same source and therefore must be assessed together.
- Government's own CDM Smith report states that to restore fish passage:
 - Baseflows in the old River Shannon need to rise from 10 m³/s to 17 m³/s;
 - Weekly migration-supporting spills of 21–31 m³/s are required from March to September;
 - And eel migration requires bi-weekly night-time spills of 65 m³/s in autumn.
- Concerns there is no analysis of cumulative or project-on-project impacts, including the risk that the Water Supply Project could delay or obstruct the fish passage works.
- Indicated that they are the scientifically defined conditions required if salmon, eel and lamprey—the qualifying interests of the SAC—are to survive.
- Indicated that in Uisce Éireann's application and in the Director General's analysis, there is an assumption that maintaining 10 m³/s down the Old River Shannon is sufficient which is not. Members stated that 10 m³/s figure was set almost a century ago and it is the legal minimum—not the flow required to comply with the Habitats Directive, the Water Framework Directive, the Eel Regulation, or the River Basin Management Plan.
- Indicated that Uisce Éireann presented plan as if water is just simply there for them to take, as if there is always a guaranteed 2% of annual flow.
- Concerns that cumulative or project-on-project impacts have not been properly assessed.
- Concerns about impact of potential drought and that this issue has not been examined properly. E.g. during Summer drought conditions flow in the Shannon can fall dramatically. In those conditions, the real source of water available is the stored water in Lough Derg and, at Ardnacrusha.

- No consideration of whether the abstraction licence could later be increased, whether the pipeline is being built with surplus capacity, or whether the treatment plant could be upgraded. That lack of future-proofing is a serious oversight.
- Indicated that continued abstraction during drought is not assessed; Dublin's storage capacity at the termination point is only 75 megalitres, while daily demand already exceeds 630 megalitres. This means abstraction from Parteen will be continuous (day and night) including during drought and low-flow periods, precisely when the Shannon is most ecologically vulnerable.
- Report has not addressed the potential for future expansion or increased abstraction; The project does not consider impacts/potential for future expansion or increased abstraction. The lack of future proofing is a serious oversight.
- Members queried what would happen if Limerick County is under pressure for water; Limerick demands must be addressed as part of the project.
- Members expressed concern that other villages in rural Limerick should be looked at by Uisce Éireann. There are capacity issues in across our towns and villages and this should be the priority.
- Members queried percentage of the flow during drought when demand is highest, and flow is at its lowest (as it'll be taken from old course of the river and most of the water there is at that time is diverted through Ardnacrusha and away from that old course).
- Indicted that in summer drought conditions flows in the Shannon can fall dramatically. those conditions, the real source of water available is the stored water in Lough Derg and, at Ardnacrusha.
- The 2018 drought lasted nearly two months and that gap has never been properly stress-tested in real-world conditions.
- Statement that Dublin's water difficulties are largely the result of leaks and weaknesses in the existing network. A recent report by McCarthy Hyder shows that there were 800 kilometres of 100-year-old iron pipes in Dublin that are "beyond repair to extensive corrosion", so a huge amount of treated water is lost before ever reaching homes and businesses.
- Options should be looked at rivers closer to Dublin.
- There are other options, such as the River Liffey system and the existing Poulaphuca reservoir which were originally designed to supply Dublin; the River Slaney, River Barrow and River Boyne combined carry substantial flows for most of the year.
- Queried whether desalination could be an option.
- Report of Cllr. P Bulger, Elected Representative from Tipperary County Council, should be taken into account, particularly in relation to the serious impacts on water quality in Lough Derg should be considered

Procedural Issues

Members expressed concern about the planning process and raised the following:

- That the planning application is deeply flawed.
- An Oral Hearing should be requested.
- Concerns that site notices were not erected in Limerick and Clare and the application should be deemed valid as a result. It was stated that residents had contacted An Coimisiún Pleanála enquiring where the site notices were located however no response was issued to the query.
- Queried how planning permission can be sought in the absence of an abstraction licensing framework in place.
- Indicated that the Water Resource Management Plans underpinning this project has no clear statutory basis, yet Uisce Éireann is relying on them to justify this development of national scale.

The legal authority, oversight and accountability for allocating and managing this abstraction are not clearly set out in legislation, so there are serious governance flaws with this proposal.

Community Fund

- Members expressed concerns that the Community Fund as described is not fit for purpose - it is only proposed for 5 years and the catchment area of 5km is not sufficient.
- The community impacts are much broader, for example, there no consideration to impact of tourism industries further down the river.
- A proposal for Community Fund should not be at the expense of environmental issues.

Cost

- Cost is excessive and final costs are unknown.
- Costs of national projects have been demonstrated to escalate as per other Government projects.
- Project does not make common or financial sense.

General Director General Report

- Indicated that the Director General report could have been more forceful in expressing concerns with the project.
- Indicated that there are additional issues to be resolved in addition to analysis provided in the Director General's report;
 - The fish passage project
 - The outdated 10 m³/s baseline
 - Continuous abstraction

It was proposed by Councillor O'Hanlon that a roll call vote would be taken requesting Members to vote in favour or against the proposed Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region Project, this was seconded by Councillor Donoghue.

The Príomh Chomhairleoir instructed that a roll call vote would now be taken.

For

No Member voted in favour of the proposed project.

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Against

Councillors Beasley, *Butler, Carey, Collins (B), Collins (M), Daly, Donoghue, Doyle, Foley, Galvin, Gavan, Hartigan (S), Hartigan (T), Hickey-O'Mara, Keary, Kiely, Kilcoyne, Leddin, McSweeney, Mayor Moran, O'Donoghue, O'Donovan, O'Hanlon, O'Sullivan (O), O'Sullivan (T), Pond, Reale, Ruddle, Ryan (E), Ryan (M), Scanlan, Secas, Slattery, Stokes, Talukder, Teefy, Ward.

(37)

*Due to technical difficulties, Councillor Butler contacted the Meetings Administrator by phone to indicate his vote.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed:

Príomh Chomhairleoir

Date:
