

Water Supply Project – Dublin Region

Briefing Note to County Managers 9th September 2011

1. Project Background

The Water Supply Project Dublin Region is the working title of a strategic regional project that has been identified for a number of years as forming an essential element of the requirement to have a reliable and sustainable water supply for the Greater Dublin Region into the foreseeable future. This Project has been on the Department of the Environment, Community, and Local Government's three year Water Services Investment Programmes for the past number of years and remains on the current Programme as a scheme to be advanced through the Planning and Design stages.

Dublin City Council is identified in the Water Services Investment Programme as the Lead Authority given the sole responsibility to progress the scheme.

2. Progress and Consultation to date

Consultants RPS (formerly M.C O'Sullivan) were appointed by Dublin City Council in 2004 to produce a Preliminary Report which would identify a number of options and make recommendations.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations, 2004 required that any such plans or programmes would have a Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out in parallel with the development of the options.

As part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment process for this project a detailed statutory public consultation process took place from November 2008 to February 2009.

Newspaper advertisements were placed at that time stating that copies of the then Draft Plan, together with the Environmental Report and other documents, were being made available at a number of centres , as well as on the Project website.

As part of that consultation, a series of presentations were made by the Dublin City Council project team to the officials and members of the various Local Authorities, including those contiguous to the Shannon River. These presentations included extensive Q&A session and discussions with the members.

All inputs were taken into account during the period 2009 and 2010 when the draft Plan was being reviewed. This process culminated in a preferred option being selected for the project.

Over the July 2010 to January 2011 period, a series of briefings of Local Authority officials took place in relation to the project and the recommendations contained in the final Plan.

Dublin City Council formally adopted the Plan in October 2010 and the publication of this adoption is a requirement of the aforementioned Regulations – this is the background to the recent press advertisements.

The advertisement placed in the national media on 2nd and 3rd of September 2011 represents the end of the above Preliminary stage of the overall project process.

It also represents the completion of the current contract with RPS Consulting Engineers.

3. The Plan

The Plan involves the abstraction of raw water from Lough Derg (River Shannon) and pumping the abstracted water through a new pipeline to a proposed storage reservoir covering approximately 1,400 acres (567 hectares) at the Garryhinch cut-away bog in County Offaly (near Portarlinton), forming part of a proposed midlands water based eco-park. The water will be treated to drinking water standards at this location and the treated water transported in a series of pipelines to the Dublin Region Water Supply Area with provision for local supplies.

The particular Plan, selected from a large number of options, takes account of the concerns expressed by many stakeholders of the possible impact of continuous abstraction from the Shannon. By including a major raw water reservoir at Garryhinch, the Plan provides for flexibility as to the periods when water will be abstracted from the River Shannon and thus ensure that the proposed abstraction will not impact negatively on the River Shannon system and will not affect the water levels in Lough Derg.

Dublin City Council recognises the cooperation of Bord na Mona in relation to identifying a location for the proposed raw water reservoir. However, it is important to note that, in accordance with the Government's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 to 2012, Dublin City Council remains the sole Lead Authority tasked with progressing this scheme in its entirety.

4. Future of Project

It is important to note that the Planning process, which will include a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and an application for an Abstraction Licence, has yet to commence.

Dublin City Council anticipates that the project will be submitted to an Bord Pleanala for their approval under the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006.

In order to confirm that this is the correct approach, Dublin City Council has formally requested a pre-planning consultation with the Board, in accordance with Section 37(b) of the 2006 Act.

This will be followed by the Planning process proper, which will commence in the second half of 2012, following the procurement of consultants for this stage by Dublin City Council.

This will involve further and more detailed consultations with all stakeholders and interested parties prior to an application being made to an Bord Pleanala for approval.

These consultations will include all of those Local Authorities who are directly or indirectly affected by the project.

The EIA process will also include for a very detailed scientific and technical assessment of the abstraction proposals, including detailed monitoring and modelling of the Shannon River system and an assessment of the impacts of the proposed abstraction on that system.

It is anticipated that the EIA process will take a minimum of two years, culminating in the publication of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the submission of this, together with an Abstraction Licence application and any other relevant statutory applications such as Compulsory Purchase Orders, to an Bord Pleanála.

A further statutory consultation period will take place at the end of the EIA process, following public advertisement of that submission to the Board.

5. Conclusion

Dublin City Council, in partnership with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and other Local Authorities in the Greater Dublin Region, will continue to expand and develop the existing Regional Water Sources and Treatment Plant to their ultimate capacities, to continue the present high level of investment in reduction of water loss through the pipe network and to take all necessary measures to reduce water consumption.

However, even taking all of these measures into account, the Dublin Region will not be able to continue to maintain its position as a key driver of National Economic Development without the development of a new water source, particularly given the long lead in time before such a major project can be completed.

City Council looks forward to working with all Local Authorities and all stakeholders in progressing this important National and Regional Infrastructural project. While the benefits of the Project will be far wider than just the Dublin Region, it is critical to the growth and success of the entire country that the Capital City and the surrounding region can continue to grow in a sustainable manner.