

SENSITIVE

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Planning Statement

Uisce Éireann

10 April 2025

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BALLINA AND LOUGH TALT WATER SUPPLY ZONES UPGRADE

SENSITIVE

Contents

1.	Introduction.....	5
1.1	Background	5
2.	Development Context	6
2.1	Subject Sites	7
2.1.1	Wherrew Raw Water Pump Station (Co. Mayo)	7
2.1.2	Wherrew Raw Water Pump Station to Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station (both in Co. Mayo) Raw Water Rising Main	8
2.1.3	Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station (Co. Mayo)	8
2.1.4	Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station (Co. Mayo) to Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (Co. Mayo) Raw Water Rising Main	9
2.1.5	Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (Co. Mayo)	9
2.1.6	Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (Co. Mayo) to Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant (Co. Sligo) Treated Water Trunk Main	9
2.1.7	Bonniconlon (Co. Mayo) Booster Pump Station	10
2.1.8	Bonniconlon Treated Water Reservoir (Co. Mayo).....	10
2.1.9	Windy Gap Break Pressure Tank (Co. Sligo)	10
2.1.10	Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant (Co. Sligo).....	11
2.2	Proposed Works.....	12
2.3	Pre-Planning Discussions	13
3.	Assessment	14
3.1	Section 37A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure Act) 2000, as amended	14
3.2	Seventh Schedule Assessment	14
3.3	S. 37A (1) & (2) Assessment	14
4.	Preliminary Review of Planning Considerations	17
4.1	Environmental Impact Assessment.....	17
4.2	The Water Environment (Abstraction and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022	17
4.3	Appropriate Assessment.....	18
4.4	Flood Risk	18
4.5	Construction and Environmental Management.....	18
5.	Programme.....	19
6.	Conclusions	20
	Appendix A. Pre-planning Drawings	22

Tables

No table of figures entries found.



Figures

Figure 1 - Ballina Lough Talt Water Supply Scheme	7
Figure 2 - Wherrew Abstraction and Raw Water Pump Station Site Locality.....	8
Figure 3 - Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station and Water Treatment Plant Site Locality	9
Figure 4 - Bonniconlon Booster Pump Station and Reservoir Site Locality	10
Figure 5 - The Windy Gap Break Pressure Tank Site Locality	11
Figure 6 - Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant Site Locality	12

Appendices

Appendix A Pre-planning Drawings (A1 drawings issued separately)



1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This Planning Statement is submitted with the aim of assisting An Bord Pleanála in determining whether proposed upgrades to water infrastructure in the Ballina & Lough Talt Water Supply Zones¹ (WSZs), which span counties Mayo and Sligo, constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development.

The proposed development includes upgrades at existing water treatment plant sites, existing intake, new treated water storage facilities, new pumping stations and new water trunk mains.

The project is needed to provide a safe and reliable water supply to Ballina and surrounding areas, while also supporting future growth and development. The proposed upgrades will increase capacity in the supply network, allowing Uisce Éireann to extend the Ballina water network to areas currently served by the Lough Talt source, which is not sustainable long-term.

Additional storage will be built at Lisglennon to enhance the security of supply for Ballina and new storage facilities will also be provided at Lough Talt to ensure a reliable water supply for South Co. Sligo.

Large parts of Ballina Town are currently served by a critical asbestos cement trunk main, which will be replaced to improve the reliability of the water supply.

Furthermore, the rationalisation of the Lough Talt source will put an end to water abstraction from Lough Talt, restoring natural lake levels and providing significant ecological benefits to local habitats and wildlife.

A water abstraction licence has been submitted for the current operations and an amended water abstraction licence at Lough Conn will be sought separately from the EPA to facilitate any subsequent increased abstraction.

¹ A Water Supply Zone is the area supplied by an individual water supply scheme.



2. Development Context

The project footprint spans two (2) counties, Mayo and Sligo, for which a summary of the development is given below:

- Wherrew Raw Water Pump Station (Co. Mayo) – **Existing Site** - The existing intake structure and pump station are proposed to be retained, with upgrades to be completed to improve operational performance.
- Wherrew Raw Water Pump Station to Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station (both in Co. Mayo) Raw Water Rising Main– **Existing Pipeline Corridor** – This existing pipeline is part of the water supply scheme however no works are envisaged here.
- Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station (Co. Mayo) – **Existing Site** -Upgrade of the existing pumps and associated civil, structural, mechanical, electrical, control and instrumentation works required.
- Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station to Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (both in Co. Mayo) Raw Water Rising Main – **Proposed New Pipeline within an Existing Corridor** - Provision of a new one (1) kilometre pipeline between these sites as well as preservation of the existing pipeline to facilitate maintenance works on the proposed new pipeline.
- Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (Co. Mayo) – **Existing Site** - Expansion of water treatment capacity will be required at the Lisglennon WTP site, inclusive of all associated process infrastructure in addition to a new storage reservoir at the site.
- Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (Co. Mayo) to Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant (Co. Sligo) Treated Water Trunk Main – **Proposed New Pipeline on an Existing Pipeline Corridor for most of the way up to Ballina.** - An upgraded treated water trunk main network (c. 29.5 km length) will be required between the Lisglennon WTP and Lough Talt WTP sites, via Ballina town. Treated water will gravitate from Lisglennon WTP to Ballina and onwards towards Bonniconlon where it will then be pumped to Lough Talt WTP.
- Bonniconlon (Co. Mayo) Booster Pump Station – **Proposed New Site** -Proposed new booster pump station on the treated water trunk main including associated civil, structural, mechanical, electrical, control and instrumentation works.
- Bonniconlon Treated Water Reservoir (Co. Mayo) – **Existing Site** - Supplementing the existing treated water storage capacity at Bonniconlon Town with a new treated water reservoir.
- Windy Gap Break Pressure Tank (Co. Sligo) – **Proposed New Site** - Proposed new break pressure tank on the treated water trunk main between Bonniconlon Booster Pump Station and Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant including associated civil, structural, mechanical, electrical, control and instrumentation works.
- Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant (Co. Sligo) - **Existing Site** - Works will be carried out at the existing Lough Talt WTP site, which upon delivery of the proposed project, will cease abstraction from Lough Talt. Storage and chemical dosing equipment at the existing Lough Talt WTP will be retained to ensure minimal impact to the existing potable water network.

The site localities of the water supply scheme are depicted in Figure 1.



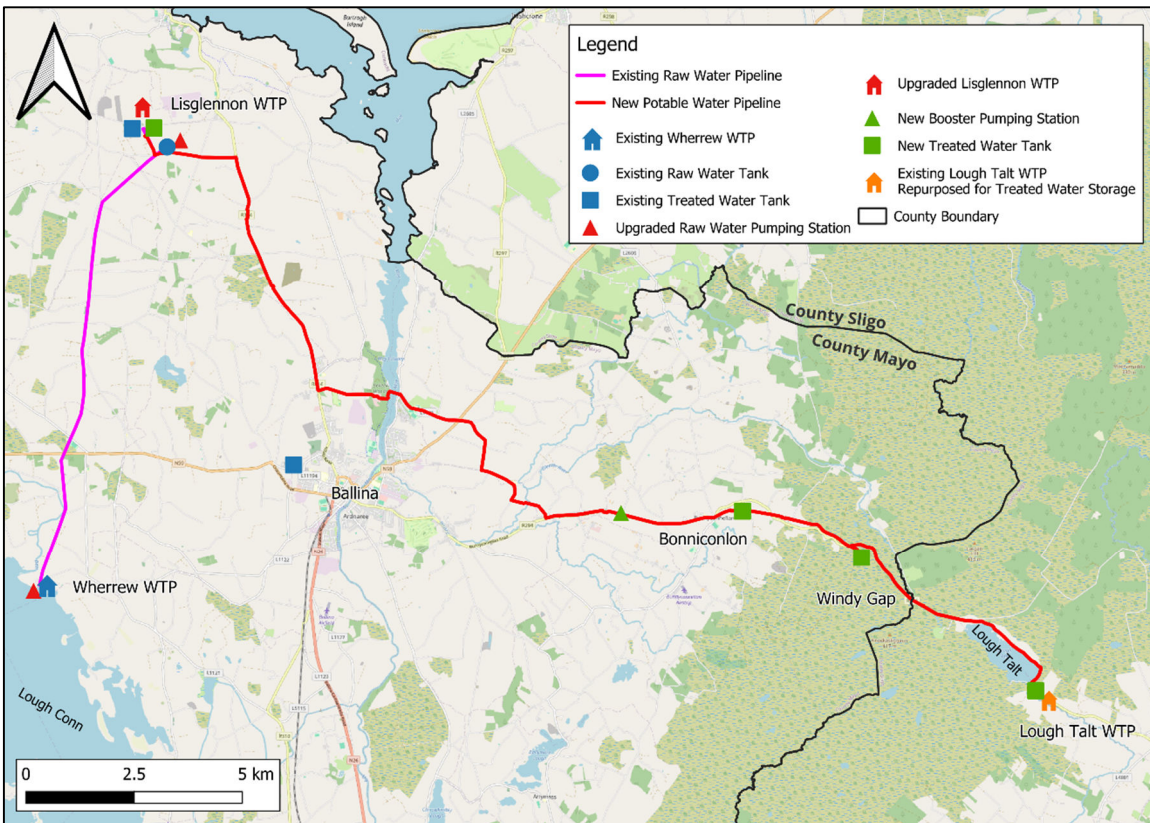


Figure 1 - Ballina Lough Talt Water Supply Scheme

2.1 Subject Sites

As previously described, the project footprint covers two counties, Mayo and Sligo, and is located on several existing and proposed new sites (as detailed in the previous section). These sites are described in detail in the subsequent sections.

2.1.1 Wherrew Raw Water Pump Station (Co. Mayo)

Wherrew Raw Water Pumping Station is located in County Mayo on the northern lakeshore of Lough Conn.

The site is currently operational and transfers raw water from Lough Conn for treatment at Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant via existing dual rising mains before it is sent into the potable water network.

The site is accessible via a secondary road from the N59 which traverses approximately 3 kilometres to the north of the site. Wherrew Water Treatment Plant (WTP) is to the immediate east of the site, which does not form part of the project. Buildings, which is predominantly the pump station itself, cover approximately 600 m² of the site, 540 m² paving and the rest is vegetated either by grass, trees or hedgerows.

Figure 2 below shows the site locality for Wherrew Abstraction and Raw Water Pump Station.





Figure 2 - Wherrew Abstraction and Raw Water Pump Station Site Locality

2.1.2 Wherrew Raw Water Pump Station to Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station (both in Co. Mayo) Raw Water Rising Main

The existing dual rising main leaves Wherrew Intake Works and traverses in a northerly direction towards Lisglennon Raw Water Storage site for approximately 11 kilometres. Along its length, there are 6 valve houses associated with the rising main. The route of the pipeline as well as the location of the valve houses are predominantly in fields. It is proposed to continue to use these dual rising mains and no works are envisaged here.

The rising main passes through a combination of fields, grasslands, and roads.

2.1.3 Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station (Co. Mayo)

The Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station is located approximately 3 kilometres south of Killala Town in County Mayo. Access to the Pump Station is off a secondary road from the R314. The Raw Water Storage and Pump Station is an operational site and conveys raw water to Lisglennon WTP, approximately 1 kilometre to the north-east of the site. The site boundary covers just over 1 hectare and accommodates a break pressure tank, raw water reservoir and pump station. These infrastructure covers just over 4,000 m² and the rest of the site is covered by grass.

Figure 3 below shows the site locality for Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station and Water Treatment Plant.



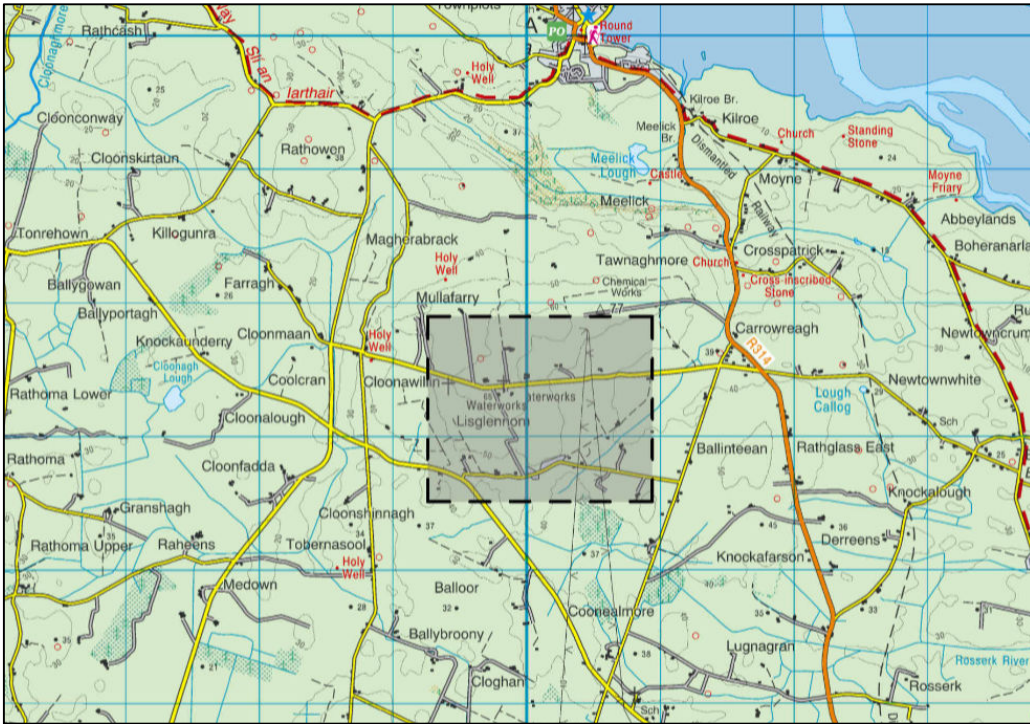


Figure 3 - Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station and Water Treatment Plant Site Locality

2.1.4 Lisglennon Raw Water Pump Station (Co. Mayo) to Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (Co. Mayo) Raw Water Rising Main

The raw water rising main connects the Lisglennon Raw Water Pumping Station to the Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant. It is proposed to upsize this rising main within an existing pipeline corridor.

2.1.5 Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (Co. Mayo)

The Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant is located approximately 3 kilometres south of Killala Town in County Mayo. Access to the Treatment Plant is off a secondary road from the R314. The plant is currently operational.

2.1.6 Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant (Co. Mayo) to Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant (Co. Sligo) Treated Water Trunk Main

The treated water main connecting the Lisglennon Water Treatment Plant in County Mayo to the Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant in County Sligo, following routes R294 and R314. Trunk main passes through fields, roads and river crossings.

The proposed route has a total length of approximately 29.5km long, of which 25.5km traverses existing roads and access tracks.



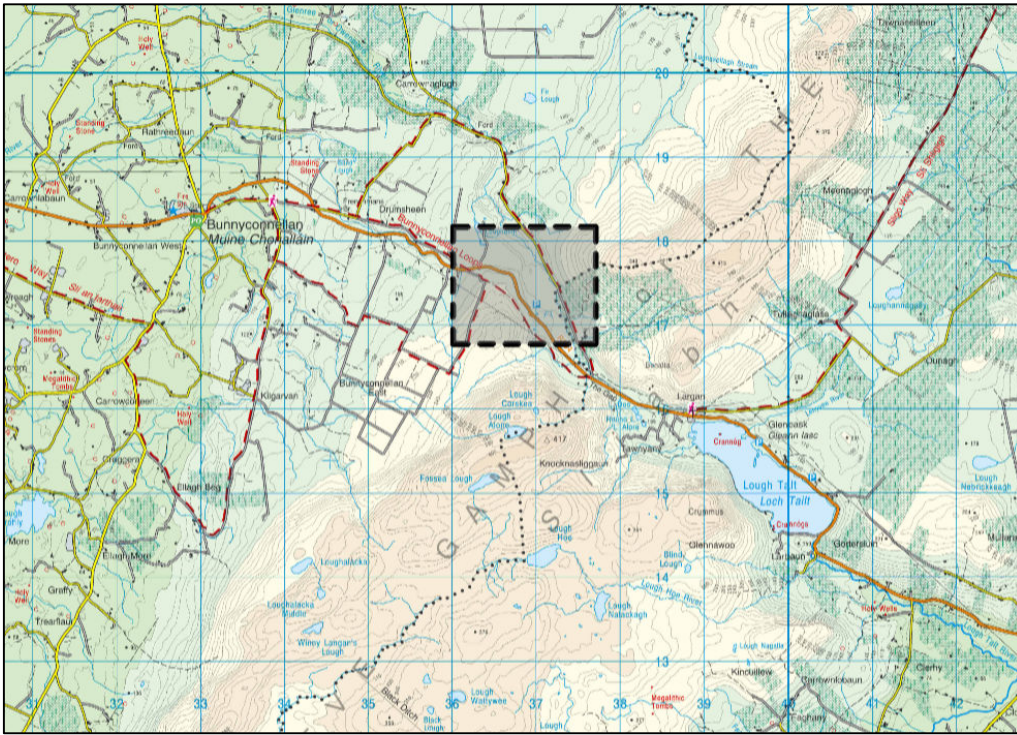


Figure 5 - The Windy Gap Break Pressure Tank Site Locality

2.1.10 Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant (Co. Sligo)

The existing Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant is located in County Sligo and can be accessed via route R294. Chemical dosing facilities, as well as some site buildings and the contact tank will be retained. The existing contact tank will be repurposed as a treated water storage tank whereas the chemical dosing equipment will be retained for its current purpose. A new treated water reservoir is proposed for this site.

Figure 6 below shows the site locality for Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant.



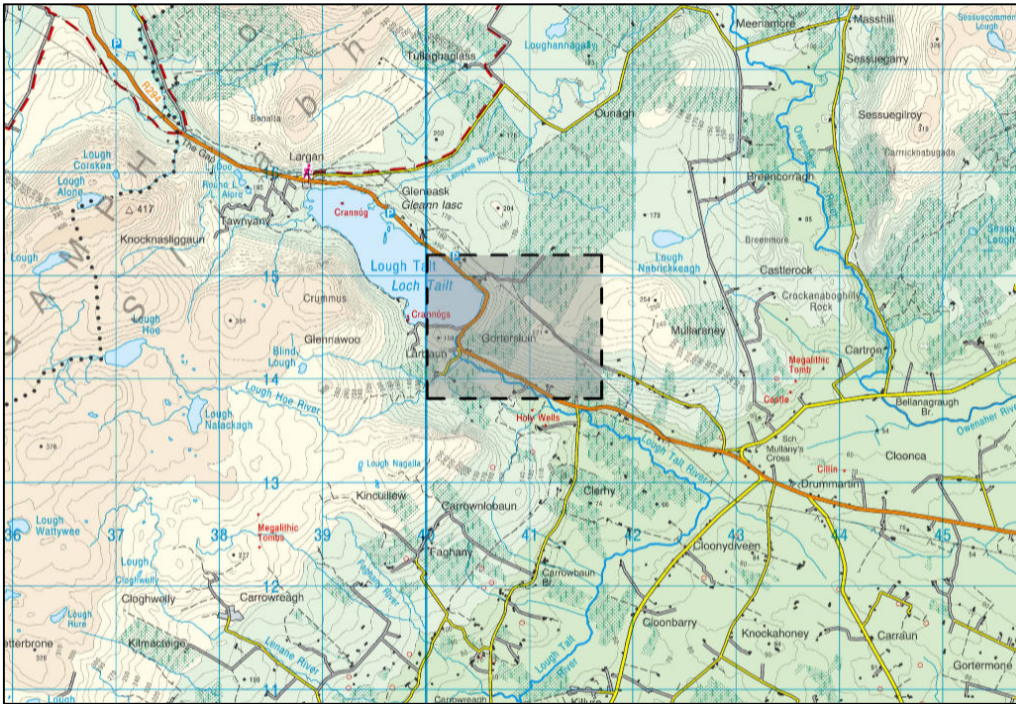


Figure 6 - Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant Site Locality

2.2 Proposed Works

A breakdown of the multiple elements of the proposed project is described below. Site localities, redline boundaries and proposed layouts for each of the sites are shown on A1 drawings attached as Appendix A.

Upgrades to Wherrew Raw Water Intake and Pumping Station

- Upgraded inlet structure with coarse, fine and fish screens and fish return systems.
- Abstraction pipeline into the lake.

Lisglennon Raw Water Storage and RWPS Site

- Preservation of an existing break-pressure structure and 16,550m³ Reinforced Concrete (RC) Raw Water tank.
- Upgrade pumping arrangement at the existing Raw Water Pumping Station (RWPS)
- Ancillary works including surge vessels, power supply upgrade, new generator.

Lisglennon RWPS to WTP Raw Water Transfer Mains

- Reinforcement of existing 1km 300mm \varnothing main between Lisglennon RWPS and Lisglennon WTP, with new 600mm \varnothing main.
- Preservation of the existing 300mm \varnothing rising main to facilitate maintenance works on the proposed new pipeline.

Lisglennon WTP & Treated Water Storage

- Upgrade of existing WTP to 22.5MLD.
- Preservation of existing intake line at the plant and upgrade of chemical dosing systems.
- Repurposing of existing flocculation tank to contact tank prior to installation of new flocculation tank.
- Provision of new rectangular clarifiers, new rapid gravity primary filters and new rapid gravity granular activated carbon filters.
- Augmentation of chemical storage, with new delivery areas.
- New sludge farm and filter backwash storage and return facilities.



- New UV treatment.
- An additional 6.8ML treated water storage tank.

Lisglennon to Bonniconlon Trunk Main

- New 8.3km trunk main (710mm diameter), replacing existing 450mmø Asbestos Cement (AC) main between Lisglennon WTP and Ballina.
- New 1.9km trunk main (560mm diameter) up to crossing point with River Moy at Belleek.
- Existing 450mmø Polyethylene (PE) pipe crossing of River Moy to be retained and repurposed as part of the proposed trunk main network.
- New 1.6km trunk main (560mm diameter) up to crossing of N59 at Creggs Road.
- New 5.4km trunk main (500mm diameter) between the N59 and a proposed booster PS near Bonniconlon.

Booster PS near Bonniconlon

- New 320kW booster pump station (PS) near Bonniconlon.
- Ancillary works including surge mitigation, power supply and standby generator.

Bonniconlon Reservoir

- Proposed New 200 m³ reservoir to supplement the existing treated water storage for Bonniconlon Town.

Booster PS to Lough Talt Trunk Main

- 7.1km trunk main (550mm diameter) from proposed booster PS to Windy Gap Break pressure tank.
- 5.0km trunk main (450mm diameter) from Windy Gap Break Pressure Tank to the existing Lough Talt WTP.
- Break pressure tank at the Windy Gap.

Existing Lough Talt WTP Site & Reservoir

- Decommissioning of the existing abstraction from Lough Talt.
- Repurpose existing contact tank.
- Retention of chemical dosing infrastructure.
- Additional 3ML treated water storage tank at the existing Lough Talt WTP.
- Decommissioning of redundant treatment facilities at Lough Talt WTP.

2.3 Pre-Planning Discussions

In advance of making this submission, meetings have been arranged with Mayo County Council and Sligo County Council in late April 2025.

The purpose of these meetings is to introduce the proposals, provide an overview of the preliminary design approach and discuss the outline programme for the project.



3. Assessment

3.1 Section 37A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure Act) 2000, as amended

Under Section 37A (1) of the Act, an application for permission for any development specified in the Seventh Schedule shall, subject to Section 37A (2), be made to An Bord Pleanála under section 37E and not to a planning authority.

3.2 Seventh Schedule Assessment

The Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, identifies applicable infrastructure developments for the purposes of Sections 37A and 37B. It is acknowledged that amendments to the SID process are contained within the Planning and Development Act 2024 and subsequent requirements at submission will be reviewed upon commencement of that Act.

The Water Environment (Abstractions and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022, which came into effect on 28th August, 2024, expands the classes of development within Part 3 (Environmental Infrastructure) of the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act, 2006, as amended, to include surface water abstractions, as follows:

“A groundwater abstraction, artificial groundwater recharge scheme or a surface water abstraction where the annual volume of water abstracted or recharged is equivalent to or exceeds 2 million cubic meters.”

The proposed development will see increased raw water abstraction from Lough Conn in County Mayo at the existing Wherrew Raw Water Intake Site. Currently, two Water Treatment Plants (WTPs) – Wherrew and Lisglennon - are supplied with raw water which is pumped from the existing intake on the northern shore of Lough Conn. The proposed project would involve increasing the current raw water abstraction from Lough Conn (c. 20,100 m³/day) to 38,100 m³ /day to serve Lough Talt RWSS along with forecast future demand in the Ballina RWSS area.

The proposed surface water abstraction at Lough Conn is in excess of 2 million cubic metres per annum. The project therefore qualifies to be considered as a Strategic Infrastructure Development for the purposes of S.37A and S37B of the Act.

3.3 S. 37A (1) & (2) Assessment

To qualify as strategic infrastructure development, the Board must come to the opinion that the proposed development would fall within one or more of the following:

- a. The development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situated.
- b. Development which would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives of the National Spatial Strategy or any regional spatial and economic strategy in force in respect of the area or areas in which the development would be situated,
- c. The development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority.

Below is Uisce Éireann’s assessment of the proposed development against the criteria set out in paragraphs a, b and c above.



- a. Whether the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the state or region?

In the National Planning Framework, published in February 2018, the provision and operation of water services is a critical element of proper planning and sustainable development.

National Strategic Outcome 9 states that investment in water services infrastructure is critical to the implementation of the National Development Plan.

The proposed development, which seeks to facilitate the provision of a clean and resilient water supply - essential for creating a healthy society and supporting a growing economy - is also aligned with **National Policy Objective 63** seeks to:

Ensure the efficient and sustainable use and development of water resources and water services infrastructure in order to manage and conserve water resources in a manner that supports a healthy society, economic development requirements and a cleaner environment.

Specifically in relation to Mayo and Sligo, Table 2.1 of the NPF sets out a target population growth of an additional 160,000-180,000 people and an additional 115,000 employees in the Northern and Western Region, of which Mayo and Sligo are part.

National Policy Objective 2b states that the regional role of Sligo in the North-West will be identified and supported in the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

National Policy Objective 7 further seeks to strengthening Ireland's overall urban structure, particularly in the Northern and Western and Midland Regions, to include the regional centre of Sligo.

The key Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032 includes:

- RPO 8.12

To ensure that adequate infrastructure is in place to meet demands from continuing growth and development of the economy and to cater to existing and increased population.

- RPO 8.15

Support investment for water and wastewater services in the first instance where existing facilities are insufficient to meet current demands and as outlined above (See: Expanding Service Provision). This includes "*the Lough Talt Water Supply Scheme*", which is identified as being necessary to deliver the growth model outlined in the RSES (Section 8.5, page 274 of the RSES).

- RPO 8.17

Provide quality water and wastewater services necessary for urban and rural economic development purposes.

- RPO 8.18

Ensure the protection and improvement of all waters – rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries (transitional waters), coastal waters and their associated habitats and species throughout the region and implement measures to achieve at least Good Status in all water surface bodies.

The inclusion of objectives relating to water services in both the NPF and the RSES, and the specific reference to "*the Lough Talt Water Supply Scheme*" in the RSES, as well as Uisce Éireann's Water Services Strategic Plans, it is considered that the proposal could be deemed to be of strategic importance to the proper planning and sustainable development of the Northern and Western region.



- b. Whether the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of national or regional spatial and economic strategy objectives?

The proposed development will specifically support Regional Policy Objective RPO 8.15 of the RSES, as it will support investment for water services in the first instance where existing facilities are insufficient to meet current demands. “*The Lough Talt Water Supply Scheme*” is identified as being necessary to deliver the growth model outlined in the RSES (Section 8.5, page 274 of the RSES).

In this respect, it is considered that the proposal could be deemed to be to contribute substantially to the fulfilment of Regional Policy Objective RPO 8.15 of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020.

- c. Whether the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority?

The proposed development is located in both Mayo and Sligo County Council areas and proposes an increase in raw water abstraction from Lough Conn in County Mayo at the existing Wherrew Raw Water Intake Site from approximately 20,100 m³/day to 38,100 m³ /day to serve the Lough Talt RWSS along with forecast future demand in the Ballina RWSS area.

In this context, given the nature, extent and area of the proposed development, including the red line boundary, there is potential for the proposal to have a significant effect on more than one planning authority area, i.e., Mayo and Sligo County Council areas.



4. Preliminary Review of Planning Considerations

This section of the report has been prepared to provide a preliminary overview of key planning considerations related to the subject site and project.

4.1 Environmental Impact Assessment

The 2011 EU EIA Directive differentiates between those projects that automatically requires an environmental impact assessment (listed as Annex 1 projects) and those for which, if a threshold is exceeded, an environmental impact assessment may be require (Annex II projects). These project types have been transposed into Irish legislation in Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended.

The Proposed Development was screened using the following criteria:

- If the Proposed Development is of a type listed in Schedule 5, Part 1 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended; and,
- If the Proposed Development is of a type listed in Schedule 5, Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended.
- The Water Environment (Abstraction and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022 was enacted in December 2022

The proposed development was screened out with respect to activities in Schedule 5, Part 1 and Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended.

4.2 The Water Environment (Abstraction and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022

The Water Environment (Abstraction and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022 was enacted in December 2022. This legislation includes the provision to expand the classes of development within the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act (2000) to include surface water abstractions, similar to the situation in Lough Conn. The Act came into operation in August 2024 under the Water Environment (Abstraction and Associated Impoundment) Regulations 2024. Following commencement of this section of the Water Abstraction Act, the expanded Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) class includes surface water abstraction:

1. 'A groundwater abstraction, artificial groundwater recharge scheme or surface water abstraction where the annual volume of water abstracted or recharged is equivalent to or exceeds 2 million cubic metres.'

Annual surface water abstraction volumes from Lough Conn are likely to exceed this threshold and therefore the Proposed Development will be classed as a SID. Under 37E(1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, an application for permission for development in respect of which a notice has been served under section 37B(4)(a) shall be made to the Board and shall be accompanied by an F384 (environmental impact assessment report) in respect of the proposed development. Therefore, an EIAR is required for this project. The EIAR will also support the abstraction licence application to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The assessment found that the commencement of the Water Environment (Abstraction and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022 has expanded the SID class to include abstractions of surface water abstractions of greater



than 2 million cubic metres per annum. The Proposed Development is now classed as an SID and having regard to S37E (1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, will require an environmental impact assessment report (EIAR) to accompany the SID application to the Board.

4.3 Appropriate Assessment

A Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment was undertaken for the project. Given location, nature and scale of the proposed project and given the multiple interactions with European sites, including works directly within the waterbody of Lough Conn and the 22no. watercourse crossings, it is considered that during the construction phase, in the absence of mitigation measures, likely significant effects to River Moy SAC, Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC, Lough Hoe Bog SAC, Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA and Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA cannot be entirely ruled out.

It is considered that mitigatory design measures are required and operational phase mitigation measures may also be required to avoid likely effects on Lough Conn and the associated qualifying interest species and habitats of River Moy SAC and Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA.

It is considered, in the absence of appropriate mitigation measures, that likely significant effects to River Moy SAC, Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC, Lough Hoe Bog SAC, Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA and Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA cannot be entirely ruled out and as such Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required.

4.4 Flood Risk

A search of the OPW (2019) identified that the Moy River is at risk of Fluvial and tidal flooding within the vicinity of the crossing point of the proposed project route north of Ballina. 1no. recurring flooding event of Lough Talt was reported within the eastern portion of the route in 2005. A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will need to be prepared, in accordance with 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DoEHLG 2009) as the project design advances.

4.5 Construction and Environmental Management

The construction phase of the project will be governed by strict environmental controls, as well as health and safety procedures. A Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will accompany any application. It will set out a detailed suite of environmental protection measures to be implemented on site during the construction phase. The CEMP will identify all the potential issues which are relevant to the project, such as construction safety; traffic management; environmental risk assessment and management; waste management; and environmental management. It will specifically outline how to address these and provide solutions which are satisfactory to all concerned. A final CEMP will be further developed by the appointed contractor and will include a detailed traffic management plan and risk assessed method statements. The document will be agreed, where relevant, with Mayo and Sligo and County Councils prior to the commencement of any development.



5. Programme

A Preliminary Programme is given below indicating when the application for the proposed project will be submitted to An Bord Pleanála. We have added context to the project in the programme to inform An Bord Pleanála of the interdependent tasks as well as our current planning conditions that makes it necessary for Uisce Éireann to stop abstracting from Lough Talt.

- Design and surveys completion June 2025
- Environmental Studies and Stakeholder Engagement completion August 2025
- Submit planning application to An Bord Pleanála completion August 2025
- An Bord Pleanála assessment and decision completion January 2026
- Tendering, governance approval and appointment of construction contractor completion January 2027
- Construction completion June 2029
- Operation of this scheme and cease abstraction from Lough Talt to commence June 2029



6. Conclusions

Based on the foregoing, it is submitted that the proposed upgrades to the Ballina & Lough Talt Water Supply Zones could constitute 'Strategic Infrastructure Development' as defined under the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006, as amended.

Having regard to the Water Environment (Abstractions and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022, which came into effect on 28th August, 2024, which expands the classes of development within Part 3 (Environmental Infrastructure) of the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, to include surface water abstractions, the scale and nature of the proposed development constitutes development that falls within the definition of Environmental Infrastructure in the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The project is necessary to deliver planned growth in the Northern and Western Region as set out in Regional Policy Objective RPO 8.15 of the RSES, as it will support investment for water where existing facilities are insufficient to meet current demands. The Lough Talt Water Supply Scheme is identified as being necessary to deliver the growth model outlined in the Northern and Western Region RSES.

It has also been demonstrated that the project is likely to have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority having regard to the fact that the project will facilitate water supply in two administrative areas.

The proposed upgrades are therefore considered to fall within Sections 37A (2) (a) (b) and (c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.



APPENDICES

Appendix A. Pre-planning Drawings

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