



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Record of Meeting

ABP-322333-25

Case Reference / Description	Ballina and Lough Talt WSZ Upgrade		
Case Type	Pre-Application Consultation		
Date	28/07/25	Start Time	11:00am
Location	Virtually	End Time	12:00pm

Representing An Coimisiún Pleanála		
Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Rachel Gleave O'Connor, Senior Planning Inspector		
Dr. Maeve Flynn - Ecologist		
Lauren Griffin, Executive Officer	Lauren.griffin@pleanala.ie	01-8737274
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Olwyn James - Uisce Éireann		
Sam Wallace - Uisce Éireann		
John McElwaine – Uisce Éireann		
Michael McErlean – Atkins Réalis		
Declan Egan – Atkins Réalis		
Aiden O'Neill – Atkins Réalis		
Rory Hanrahan – Atkins Réalis		

Introduction:

The Commission's representative welcomed the prospective applicant to the meeting and introduced those attending from the Commission.

The Commission's representative mentioned the following general procedures in relation to the pre application consultation process:

- The Commission will keep a record of this meeting and any other meetings, if held. Such records will form part of the file which will be made available publicly at the conclusion of the process. The record of the meeting will not be amended by the Commission once finalised, but the prospective applicant may submit comments on the record which will form part of the case file.
- It is not permitted to record the meeting in any way. The only record of the meeting will be the record issued by the Commission following the meeting.
- The Commission will serve notice at the conclusion of the process as to the strategic infrastructure status of the proposed development. It may form preliminary view at an early stage in the process on this matter.
- A further meeting or meetings may be held in respect of the proposed development.
- Further information may be requested by the Commission and public consultations may also be directed by the Commission.
- The Commission may hold consultations in respect of the proposed development with other bodies.
- The holding of consultations does not prejudice the Commission in any way and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or in any legal proceedings.

Presentation:

The prospective applicant introduced the attendees from Uisce Éireann and Atkins Réalis and continued with the beginning of its presentation.

It was noted by the prospective applicant that a previous application, the Lough Talt IROPI project was granted in 2018.

The prospective applicant began with a scheme overview noting the upgrades and new additions, these included: An upgrade of the raw water pumping station (RWPS) at Wherrew, a Lisglennon RWPS upgrade, a Lisglennon water treatment plant (WTP) upgrade, a new Lisglennon to Lough Talt treated water pipeline, new treated water booster pumping station, new Bonniconlon storage reservoir, a new break pressure tank and the repurposing of the Lough Talt water treatment plant for treated water storage.

The prospective applicant stated that the total supply demand to be served by the scheme would have an abstraction of 38.1 megalitres per day, including future growth demands, the water treatment plant would be extended from 9.6 megalitres per day to 22.6 megalitres per day and the trunk main would be sized to cater to 26.5 megalitres per day.

The prospective applicant continued by stating that the current configuration of the channel leading to the water intake was a 50m long by 20m wide channel and that the intake structure itself consists of four reinforced concrete channels with screens and penstocks. It noted that the key issues with the current channel was silt build up over time and fish entering the Lisglennon raw water storage site.

The prospective applicant presented insight into each element of the scheme, outlining the proposed modifications, the proposed design and network layout of each point of the pipeline.

The prospective applicant gave an update on the environmental reports and surveys undertaken. It was concluded that there would be environmental impacts arising from the project and that the preparation of an EIAR was ongoing. It was also stated that work on the preparation of an NIS was ongoing. A Hydrological Assessment and a Water Framework Directive Report regarding Lough Conn had been undertaken and it was noted; Lough Conn would not be affected by the proposed development.

The prospective applicant stated that it would enter consultation with Mayo and Sligo County Councils, members of the public and effected landowners. It was also stated that it is planned to enter consultation with the NPWS, IFI and the NMS.

The prospective applicant continued by stating it had undertaken soil samples from the SI works to determine the quality of the soil that would be excavated. The prospective applicant proposed to maximise the amount of material it would keep on site. It was also proposed that surface materials could be used by local landowners who could acquire the soil through Article 27 of the EC (Waste Directive) Regulations, 2011.

It was noted the Water Environment (Abstractions and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022 was enacted in August 2024, and that this expands the classes of development within the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act to include “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 metres.”

The prospective applicant stated that the proposed surface water abstraction at Lough Conn is in excess 2 million cubic metres per annum, therefore qualifying the project to be considered as a Strategic Infrastructure Development. It was the view of the prospective applicant that the proposed development met all 3 criteria set out under section 37A of the Act to meet SID requirements.

The prospective applicant highlighted its programme going forward, indicating it intends to lodge an application with the Commission in Q3 of 2025.

Discussion/Advice:

The following matters were discussed:

- The Commission’s representative shared that its preliminary view was that the proposed development would constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development, however the final decision sits with the Commission.
- The Commission’s representative requested further clarification on the consultations the prospective applicant had undertaken with prescribed bodies. The prospective applicant confirmed it intends to meet with the NPWS and with IFI once SI works were completed.

- The Commission's representative queried was there further review of the route of the proposed development and specifically the Lisglennon to Lough Talt treated water pipeline is proposed and whether this alignment could change. The prospective applicant confirmed that the route presented was technically and environmentally the best and was not likely to change.
- In response to a question from representatives of the Commission regarding the need for a design flexibility opinion, the prospective applicants stated that this was still under consideration and that any approach regarding flexibility should be consistent with that followed in the Greater Dublin Water Supply project which is also currently the subject of pre application consultations with the Commission.
- The Commission's representative advised when presenting the quantum of abstraction, to give an estimate of the annual figure and an uplift of what the total figure would be.
- The Commission's representative advised the prospective applicant that it would look for the effects of the proposed development in terms of the characteristics of the project and the sensitivity of the locations on the route. The prospective applicant confirmed they would be utilizing un-zoned white land for the project. The Commission representatives stated that this should be highlighted in any application.
- The Commission's representative noted that the proposed ESB substation as part of the booster pumping station could be deemed to constitute SID and advised the prospective applicant to investigate decided related applications.
- The Commission's representatives noted that the timelines set out in the 2024 Act would be adhered to when making decisions, and that it was therefore in the best interest of the prospective applicant to utilise the pre-app consultation process to prepare a comprehensive application. The greater the level of design certainty, consultations and survey work undertaken the best chance there is for the avoidance of further information and a timely decision from the Commission.

- A general discussion took place regarding sludge; the Commission's representative asked for further details on where and how the sludge might be reused. The prospective applicant stated one of the options was to reuse the sludge in the production of concrete. When asked by representatives of the Commission where this would take place, no location was confirmed, however there are potential locations within 25km of the site. The Commission's representative advised that detail on this issue, including traffic implications arising, would need to be provided with the application.
- The Commission's representative advised that robust consultation should take place with prescribed bodies in advance of the submission of an application.
- The Commission's representative advised that all surveys and reports should be as comprehensive as possible prior to submitting an application.
- With regard to biodiversity net gain, the Commission's representatives stated that this is an issue which should be presented in any application. The fact that there is no Irish methodology or guidance on the issue was noted and in such circumstances it is appropriate that direction on the methodology would be taken from UK guidance.
- Representatives from the Commission highlighted the recent publication by the NPWS of guidance on derogations and that the requirements in terms of the identification of need for derogations and the making of the required applications should be considered when preparing any application.
- The Commission's representative advised that the Water Framework Directive assessment should be a stand-alone report submitted with the application.
- The Commission's representative queried would there be a design flexibility request for this project. The prospective applicant stated it would compare this project to the Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region application (PC0124) as they are similar projects and are proposed to be submitted at the same time. It was noted that a design flexibility request was submitted for PC0124.

- The prospective applicant stated it proposes to submit the application in Q3 of this year. The prospective applicant indicated that it may require a further pre-application consultation meeting prior to the submission of an application and will revert to the Commission on this issue following receipt of the record of this meeting and further consultations with prescribed bodies.

Conclusion:

The Commission's representatives advised that the record of the instant meeting will be issued shortly, and that the prospective applicant can submit, in writing, any comments that it may have on the record, or request a further meeting.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen Kay." The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Assistant Director of Planning