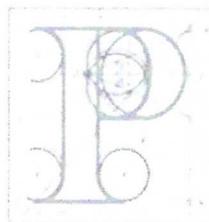


Our Case Number: ACP-323830-25

Your Reference: Feargal Rochford



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

B&J Rochford Consultant Engineers
c/o James Rochford
19 Henry St
Kenmare
Co. Kerry

Date: 21 January 2026

Re: Proposed flood relief scheme
in Mountmellick, County Laois

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Coimisiún Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above mentioned proposed development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter. Please accept this letter as a receipt for the fee of €50 that you have paid.

Please note that the proposed development shall not be carried out unless the Commission has approved it or approved it with conditions.

If you have any queries in relation to the matter please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned officer of the Commission at laps@pleanala.ie

Please quote the above mentioned An Coimisiún Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Commission.

Yours faithfully,

Eimear Reilly
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737184

JA02

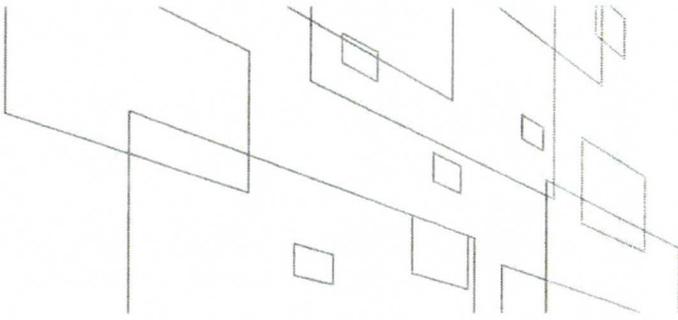
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B & J Rochford

Architectural, Engineering & Planning Consultants

Date: 12th December 2025.

To Whom It May Concern:

I wish to submit an observation to The Mountmellick Flood Relief scheme on behalf of my Uncle Feargal Rochford. Feargal like his father before him has farmed to the North of Mountmellick since 1975. He farms 2Km along the banks of the River Barrow, has land adjacent to the Midland Steel Property and has farmlands on both sides of the River Owenass north of Mountmellick. He also farms lands that are part of the River Triogue Flood plain 2Km Northeast of Mountmellick. This experience farming flood prone land has given him many insights into the nature of flooding in Mountmellick.

Feargal is in favour of the Flood Relief Works Scheme which will protect properties in Mountmellick. However, he would like me to make the following observations:

1. My client and I agree with the with the statement from the Options Report section 3.4.1.4 "All the flooding upstream and within Mountmellick is not influenced by the river Barrow, except for the Midland steel site". Therefore, the objective of any flood relief scheme should be to take the water as quickly as possible into the rivers and streams in the town and get it as quickly as possible out of the urban area and into the Barrow flood plain to the North East of the town, in the area to the east of the convergence of the Barrow and the Owenass rivers and to the West of the Garyhinche bridge. To achieve this the obstacles to the flow of the Owenass needs to be removed. It is astonishing to see that in carrying out any assessments/modelling removing all obstacles from the Pound Stream was one option considered, however removing all obstacles from the Owenass was not considered. Removing the in-channel obstacles at the Mill bridge was considered however it was considered a disadvantage as it would increase the flow towards the Convent bridge. But as there was no modelling done to remove the two intermediate peers under the Convent bridge an increased flow towards the Convent bridge was correctly considered a disadvantage. However had larger modelling been completed that removed the obstacles to the Mill bridge and the Convent bridge simultaneously I believe that this would have shown that this design approach would have a really advantageous method for the removal of water from town quickly. Yes this model would require two new bridges on two major arteries of traffic through the town, however the short-term inconvenience and the increased cost would ensure that the project would be further enhanced for the increased risk that is going to happen with the increased in intensity of storms and rainfalls due to increased climate change.
2. The modeling of dredging the Owenass downstream of the Convent bridge towards the confluence with the river Barrow was modeled. However, the modelling was flawed as the model used the flow in this section of the river Owenass without removing the two intermediate

peers under the Convent bridge. Therefore, the model achieved a result that was negligible and not worth dredging this section of river. However, if a larger model had of been used that removed the two intermediate peers and dredged this section of river simultaneously, I believe a far more advantageous outcome would have been achieved. In considering the model that discussed dredging the downstream section of the river Owenass from the Convent bridge it was ruled negligible and destructive to the riverbed from an environmental standpoint. However, page 75 of documentation states that the EU Habitats directive can be overridden in the interests of human safety. I believe that a project of this scale and this cost needs to achieve the maximum with the resources being allocated to it. Increasing the scope of the work to replace the two intermediate peers and under the Convent bridge and dredge the section downstream towards the river Barrow would enable the project to achieve greater outcomes and will increase the flow rates in the current design modelling, models that are at best crude as they have a lot of variables with regard to intensity, length of rainfall, starting from saturated or unsaturated ground, following periods of no rain or heavy rain fall. The increased cost of replacing the two intermediate peers to the Convent bridge and dredging this section river will ensure that when climate change brings increased weather events the Owenass river will be able to discharge water quickly out of town towards the Barrow and into the Barrow's floodplain. Severe flooding at the one in 100 or worse level can have fatalities, trying to mitigate these fatalities would allow Laois County Council to override the EU Habitats directive. However so as not to be accused of having a slash and burn policy to the environmental legislation one has to look to the past where the Barrow drainage board continuously and on the rotation basis dredged sections of the Barrow and today the Barrow is a Natura 2000 site with numerous flora and fauna in its environs. To this effect I would propose that only 200 metres downstream of the bridge be dredged annually until 1600 meters is completed or if the design team so decide 2000 meters is reached. This clearance of 1600/2000 meters of the Owenass river downstream of the Convent bridge would enable the rapid discharge of water from the town towards the traditional floodplains. This enhancement of the rapid discharge would allow for greater future growth of the town as all future growth will cause more water to get quicker into the various streams and rivers in town.

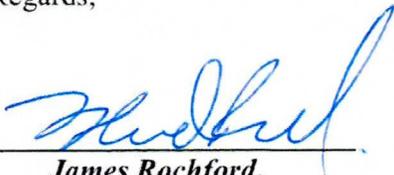
3. In summary, having studied all the documentation attached to the planning application I believe the design team have created a scheme that will bring tangible benefits to the town of Mountmellick, however the project needs to be more ambitious for the longer term greater good of the residents of Mountmellick. The inconvenience of replacing two bridges on two major traffic arteries through the town must be tackled now prior to a devastating flood event rather than after, with a new design concept following that devastating flood. The level of public resources being expended on this project is substantial, however I believe that by increasing the expenditure and increasing the scope of the works will give better and more realistic benefits to the town. The current plan relies upon the ability of the embankments to retain the water prior to the Mill bridge, in the documentation it describes the embankments as being so constructed that should they need to be increased in future years to deal with climate change they can be. This to me is a design flaw of the project, the design team are admitting that there is so many variables in trying to predict future weather events that create a flooding event that they're not sure the embankments can hold back the flooding. My proposal having considered the documentation has slightly more environmental consequences and has more impact on the commuting public on a short term basis but we'll deliver a project there with restore the river more towards its natural state without any obstacles in its channel. Having studied all the documentation and paperwork attached to this planning application, I share the opinion stated in the report that there are many and lots of variables that are hard to accurately model when

designing a flood relief scheme. Therefore, the Flood relief scheme has to be constructed so that it is more comprehensive in its initial phase than to rely upon the enhancement of embankments at a future date after a flooding disaster. Doing more work now and letting nature restore itself after the work is more advantageous than letting nature restore itself after the initial construction phase of the embankments and then demolishing those habits to enhance the embankments and clear the river channel after a flood disaster. It would be better to create, from day one, a project that can cope with all manner of flood events than to construct a project that relies upon the enhancement of the initial construction works after a flood disaster.

I'm calling on the board to only grant permission for this project to proceed subject to a condition that requires the replacement of the Mill bridge and the Convent bridge and the dredging of the Owenass river downstream of the Convent bridge.

Thank you are taking to the time to consider our observation.

Regards,



James Rochford.
BA BAI CEng MIEI.

B&J Rochford
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Co. Kerry.
064-6640841.