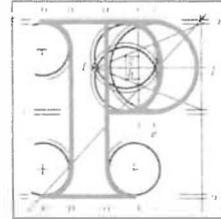


Our Case Number: ACP-323980-25

Planning Authority Reference Number:



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Melina Sharp & Michael Eversen
Kilmoon-East
Lisdoonvarna
Co. Clare
V95 X9KE

Date: 04 March 2026

Re: Proposed Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region
in the counties of Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Offaly, Kildare, and Dublin.

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.

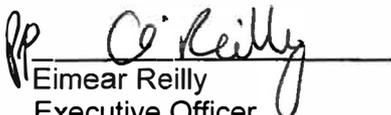
The Commission will revert to you in due course with regard to the matter.

Please be advised that copies of all submissions / observations received in relation to the application will be made available for public inspection at the offices of the local authority and at the offices of An Coimisiún Pleanála when they have been processed by the Commission.

More detailed information in relation to strategic infrastructure development can be viewed on the Commission's website: www.pleanala.ie.

If you have any queries in the meantime please contact the undersigned officer of the Commission. 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

PA04

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An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1

25th February 2026

**Re: Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region in the counties of
Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Offaly, Kildare and Dublin**
Strategic Infrastructure Development

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to make an observation/ submission for the above project.
For the following reasons, we believe that the Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region
should be refused based on the following:

Published baseline and annual usage statistics

In support of the proper planning for management of water resources we would like to see that Uisce Éireann publish annual usage statistics that would be available to assist in planning, prioritising, and conserving water.

This usage would need to be broken down regionally but also on a sector and activity basis to include industry, technology (excluding data centres), data centres, commerce, private, public service and public buildings, agriculture broken down into grain, dairy, beef, biofuels, other livestock etc.

Only when this data is available and publicly published a decision can be made if this project is needed.

Coolglass v ABP [2025] IEHC 1

The Coolglass ruling of 5 February 2026 clarified that under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, public bodies, including planning authorities, must consider climate objectives (which must include the *‘transformation of natural landscapes, such as through deforestation and urbanization, disrupts habitats and biodiversity and diminishes ecological functions like carbon sequestration and moisture recycling’*¹ & *‘alteration of freshwater cycles, including rivers and soil moisture’*²) when making decisions. The Supreme Court confirmed this obligation is legally binding. This decision provides clarity on decision-makers’ responsibilities in Ireland and its implications for development and planning.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

As of 2024, untreated sewage from the equivalent of 40,000 people in 16 villages and cities, such as Galway, was still discharged directly into rivers, lakes, and coastal waters daily due to deficits in wastewater treatment infrastructure.

The EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive sets standards and monitoring requirements for the collection and treatment of wastewater discharges from urban areas, which is pending to be fully implemented. Ireland’s failure to meet obligations of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive have been brought to the Court of Justice of the EU, as compliance on some conglomerates have been improved, others are still pending to be complied with, 33 evidencing the link with human rights protection and the obligation of States.³

¹ <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html>

² *idem*

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/statements/20260220-eom-stm-ireland-sr-right-a-en.pdf>

The latest report to the UN General Assembly by Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, Astrid Puentes Riaño, states:

*“States should abstain from excluding potentially harmful sectors or projects from impact assessment requirements based on strategic, national security, national interest or climate and biodiversity measures, including projects related with fossil fuels and their related activities, industrial activities such as fisheries, agribusiness, mining and climate-related activities”*⁴

Society has brought Earth beyond 7 of 9 planetary boundaries

In September 2023 this assessment was the first to assess all of the 9 planetary boundaries and as such is the first health check of the entire planet. They found that

*“6 of the 9 boundaries have been surpassed because of human caused pollution and destruction of the natural world. This means we are living beyond the capacity of that Earth system and it can no longer be depended on to support our needs.”*⁵

Professor Johan Rockstrom, one of the report’s authors, stated that:

*“If you want to have security, prosperity and equity for humanity on Earth, you have to come back into the safe space and we are not seeing that progress currently in the world.”*⁶

Early 2026, the Irish Times is reporting that we have now breached seven of the nine planetary boundaries *“including climate change, biosphere integrity, land-system change, freshwater quality, biogeochemical flows, and novel entities like plastic pollution.”*⁷

We question if such water extraction is appropriate during a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency? Something is much needed to bring society back safely within our planetary boundaries!

Climate Breakdown

Already 1 in 3 people globally do not have access to safe drinking water⁸, yet in Ireland we are still flushing our toilets with drinking water.

With the latest publication of the IPCC 6th Assessment Report, Climate Change 2022 it is clear that our current use of all-natural resources, especially those that are finite, needs to reduce. Uisce Éireann has a big role to play in driving this reduction in over extraction of the aquifers and the restoration of Irish waterways and bodies.

The purity of the water is deeply intertwined with the health of people and all living species, increasing public awareness that drinking water is finite, is crucial to life and must be respected and safe guarded.

Climate breakdown will bring more erratic rainfall and more flooding. Therefore, more flooding of the sewage & stormwater drains will happen and it will be more likely that contamination of fresh, potable water will occur.

Similarly, Ireland is very vulnerable to droughts, and as we have seen in recent years where hosepipe bans were put in place very quickly, which shows that more rainwater harvesting could reduce the pressure on aquifers, especially during long periods without rainfall.

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a80187-report-special-rapporteur-human-right-clean-healthy-and>

⁵ <https://thewaterforum.ie/earth-is-beyond-6-of-9-planetary-boundaries/>

⁶ *idem*

⁷ <https://www.irishtimes.com/environment/climate-crisis/2026/01/29/our-economic-system-relies-on-growth-an-obsessive-compulsion-of-neoliberal-capitalism/>

⁸ <https://www.who.int/news/item/18-06-2019-1-in-3-people-globally-do-not-have-access-to-safe-drinking-water-unicef-who>

Uisce Éireann must take a wider view than only providing fresh, potable water to the Greater Dublin Area. We would like to see that Uisce Éireann will look into water conservation and the involvement of rain, storm and waste water in a sustainable water management for the GDA and nationwide.

For a more sustainable future in water stressed areas, like the GDA, An Coimisiún Pleanála and Uisce Éireann must reject new planning applications for industry with a high fresh, potable water demand, unless extra conditions are met that will reduce the use of fresh, potable water considerably. If this is not feasible for industries with a high fresh, potable water demand, they must be relocated to other areas in the country with less water stress levels. Conditions to reduce the use of fresh, potable water must still apply, so that the area will not become a water stressed area in the foreseeable future.

Cities around the world have to deal with drought problems and are finding solutions. Think of public education campaigns by providing consumers water-saving techniques and incentives.

Rainwater harvesting

According to the Renewable Energy Hub UK, the ecological benefits of rainwater collection and recycling are potentially huge and can improve plans for a more sustainable future dramatically. Especially when you take into account that only 1% of water in the UK is drinkable and with an ever-growing population it could be that by 2030 demand will far outstrip supply.

Uisce Éireann must request rainwater harvesting in new private housing and apartment schemes, hotels, public buildings and commerce if they want to be connected to the water mains and public sewer. This simple request could already lead to a minimum of 35% water reduction (toilet flushing, washing and garden) in the average household's fresh, potable water usage according to the Renewable Energy Hub UK.

Commercial rainwater harvesting must also be requested by Uisce Éireann before allowing new planning permissions for industry, technology (including data centres) and agriculture. This surely will reduce the unnecessary waste and contamination of any future demand on fresh drinking water.

Dublin Leakage

Uisce Éireann must actively reduce the leakage in the GDA and Nationwide. Currently, the national leakage rate is standing at 37% (2022)⁹, down from 38% in 2021.

Comparable with Germany and the Netherlands, which have a leakage rate of around 6%, the Irish leakage rate is extremely high. Singapore has an even lower leakage rate of 5%. We note that these are more densely populated countries, but if we look at European cities like Frankfurt and Paris, they have a leakage rate of around 7%.

A leakage rate target of less than 10% must be achievable for Uisce Éireann in the dense urban centres, like the Greater Dublin Area, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Sligo.

According to the Appendix H, Sustainable Economic Level of Leakage Report (2021) we are surprised that Irish Water does not have the ambition at all of bringing the leakage rate down to around the 7%-10%.

Data provided by Irish Water:

- National Water supply in 2019 is: 1699 MI/d with a leakage rate of 42.8%
- Greater Dublin Area supply in 2019 in: 574 MI/d with a leakage rate of 37.1 %

According to the Sustainable Economic Leakage Level (SELL), Irish Water is allowing a minimum leakage level on the National Water supply, in the coming 25 years, of 539 MI/d and for the Greater Dublin Area 119 MI/d.

⁹ <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/homes-using-30-times-more-water-than-normal-as-uisce-eireann-struggles-with-leaks-on-private-property/a312409214.html>

If we put these numbers in percentages with the 2019 water supply we get the following results:

Minimum leakage level National water supply: $539 / 1699 * 100 = 31.7 \%$

Minimum leakage level GDA water supply: $119 / 574 * 100 = 20.7 \%$

The allowable leakage level in the Greater Dublin Area will be 20.7 %, which is a far cry from the 7% which the cities of Paris and Frankfurt are achieving.

Data Centres water demand

According to the documentation submitted for the Ennis data centre, Ennis, Co. Clare, the peak demand of water usage is up to 1,000,000 litres of water per day. This amounts to just less than half of the total domestic water demand for the entire town of Ennis (2,425,000 litres per day based on a conservative estimate of 100 litres per person per day on average).

Uisce Éireann had no objections or observations to this data centre beside the standard conditions like the signing of a connection agreement, to be in compliance with Irish Water Standards and separating distances.

In 2021, in the Greater Dublin Area, there were 70 data centres in operation with another additional 45 data centres already under construction or in planning/ post planning stage.

If Uisce Éireann had the same observations as to the above Ennis data centre (ie. no objections or restrictions), then it can be assumed that the water usage for all the data centres currently operating or with planning, have not been restricted by Uisce Éireann.

“The average data centre uses a lower estimate of 500,000 litres per day, according to figures gathered by the Sunday Business Post. This figure has the potential to rise to 5 million litres per day, although this is very rare.”

If we multiply the 500,000 litres per day by the 115 datacentres in the GDA, this will account for a minimum fresh, potable water demand of 57.5 Ml/d, which stands currently at 10% of the total water supply in the Greater Dublin Area. This daily average of fresh, potable water demand will rise exponentially when the temperature rises above 27 deg. Celsius, which coincides with the time when farmers and growers need water the most for food crops and animals and which must be prioritised above data centres and all other industry.

Climate breakdown means warmer and drier summers and therefore increased requirements for cooling. Peak use of water in data centres is currently limited to a small number of days within the calendar year, but these limited days are going to rise, which will result in exponentially more water demand.

Uisce Éireann, An Coimisiún Pleanála, Local Authorities and the Irish Government must stipulate that no fresh, potable water from the public mains shall be used for the cooling of data centres. These developments must be fully self-sufficient in harvesting, storing and reusing rainwater and ensuring that run-off does not contaminate local aquifers nor pose a risk of flooding. Data centres must be able to cope with protracted heat waves which are more likely to occur due to further Climate breakdown.

Threats to the Shannon

There are several reasons not to extract fresh water for the Greater Dublin Area from the River Shannon, other than the reasons listed above.

According to the River Shannon Protection Alliance, there are some concerns of how much water can be taken from the Parteen River Basin during the summer low flow conditions.

“The plan is to pump at the maximum rate for 10 months of the year and at a lower rate for two, not just at periods of high flow. Hydrological modelling shows that low flow conditions prevail typically for 4 months of the year. At low flow we believe that the reduced flow-rate through Lough Derg would pose risks to water quality which have not been scientifically evaluated.”¹⁰

On the basis of precautionary principle, we would assume that any large-scale extraction, such as the proposed Shannon Pipe Line, will have a detrimental effect on the ecosystems relying on the river and should be avoided.

“Such damage would prejudice natural heritage, recreation and tourism throughout the Shannon system, which can only be protected by integrated management.”¹¹

In our opinion Uisce Éireann is also responsible to protect the rivers and lakes from pollution by human activities, including agricultural, industrial and domestic contamination and the following abuses on the River Shannon:

Ecocide

According to the Independent Expert Panel for the Legal Definition of Ecocide:

‘Ecocide’ means unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.’¹²

Currently, there is a big push to amend the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which currently lists the following crimes: Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes and Crimes of Aggression, to include Ecocide as the fifth international crime.

As of 26th October 2022, The Stop Ecocide Foundation EU Crime Directive Position Paper, submitted to EU agencies, has just been vindicated by the vote of the EU’s environment (ENVI) committee on its proposals vis-a-vis the revision of the EU Directive. The committee has proposed inclusion of a standalone article in the Directive setting out an offence of ecocide to cover “severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment”.

‘While the recognition of the crime of ecocide is currently being discussed in several national parliaments around the world and in the EU, the EU should seize this issue to remain a world leader in environmental protection legislation and to ensure harmonised definition and sanctions ex ante, and not ex post.’¹³

¹⁰

<https://web.archive.org/web/20161108195819/http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/environmenttranasportcultureandthegaeltacht/8november/River-Shannon-Protection-Alliance-Position-Paper.pdf>

¹¹ *idem*

¹² <https://www.stopecocide.earth/what-is-ecocide>

¹³ https://www.stopecocide.earth/s/ECD-Compromise-Amendments_finalversion.docx

The latest development in relation to 'Ecocide' is that *'The European Union has become the first international body to criminalise wide-scale environmental damage 'comparable to ecocide''*.¹⁴

*'The revised EU law [Environmental Crime Directive] specifies which kinds of environmental activities are covered. These include water abstraction, ship recycling and pollution, the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, and ozone destruction.'*¹⁵

Rights of Nature – River Shannon

Rights of Nature is

*"the recognition that our ecosystems – including trees, oceans, animals, mountains – have rights just as human beings have rights. Rights of Nature is about balancing what is good for human beings against what is good for other species, what is good for the planet as a world. It is the holistic recognition that all life, all ecosystems on our planet are deeply intertwined. Rather than treating nature as property under the law, rights of nature acknowledges that nature in all its life forms has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles. And we – the people – have the legal authority and responsibility to enforce these rights on behalf of ecosystems. The ecosystem itself can be named as the injured party, with its own legal standing rights, in cases alleging rights violations. For indigenous cultures around the world, recognizing rights of nature is consistent with their traditions of living in harmony with nature. All life, including human life, are deeply connected. Decisions and values are based on what is good for the whole."*¹⁶

Uisce Éireann should play a huge part in elevating and celebrating the importance, not only of the River Shannon, but also of water in our lives.

Yours Sincerely,

Melina Sharp
Michael Eversen

*Kilmoon-East
Lisdoonvarna
Co. Clare
V95 X9KE*

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/nov/17/eu-criminalises-environmental-damage-comparable-toecocide>

¹⁵ *idem*

¹⁶ <https://www.garn.org/rights-of-nature/>

