

Development Plan Review
Laois County Council
Forward Planning Team
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Re: Response to Laois County Council CDP 2022-2028 - Issues Paper

Dear Sirs,

Irish Water (IW) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Issues Paper for the preparation of a new County Development Plan for Laois, 2021-2027. The following are our observations:-

Wastewater Infrastructure

The County is served by a large number of wastewater treatment plants. Available capacity at any plant varies daily. Where there are constraints, applications for developments would be on a first come, first served basis. The table below gives a snapshot of capacity of some of the larger settlements. Irish Water can work with Laois County Council when the draft core strategy is being prepared and look into these in more specific detail.

Settlement / WWTW	Census Population (2016)	Plant Design Capacity (PE*)	Capacity Remaining (Estimate)
Portlaoise	22,050	39,000	Good Capacity Available
Portarlinton	8,368	13,000	Good Capacity Available
Mountmellick	4,777	7,000	Good Capacity Available
Mountrath	1,774	4,500	Good Capacity Available
Abbeyleix	1,770	4,000	Good Capacity Available
Stradbally	1,350	3,500	Good Capacity Available
Rathdowney	1,271	3,500	Good Capacity Available
Ballylinan	1,101	2,000	Good Capacity Available
Durrow	835	3,000	Good Capacity Available
Clonaslee	566	1,200	Reasonable Capacity

Ballyroan	563	600	Constrained
Borris-in-Ossory	508	1,626	Good Capacity Available
Ballinakill	445	700	Modest Capacity
Castletown	436	500	Modest Capacity

Ballybrittas and Coolrain are also constrained.

** PE – Population Equivalent*

There are a number of constraints in the sewer network, Portlaoise in particular. A Drainage Area Plan (DAP) is being prepared for the town & Irish Water and Laois County Council are currently working together to complete growth projections.

The study is modelling the existing sewer network and future scenarios. A range of solutions will be developed to overcome the current constraints. Projects that are not part of IWs current Capital Investment Programme (2020-2024) may not be completed within the life span of this next County Development Plan and therefore, would have to be developer led. Irish Water can work with developers to form the best solution for a particular site. This would be through the Connections and Developer Services section of Irish Water’s website. <https://www.water.ie/connections/developer-services/>

Water Infrastructure

The National Water Resources Plan team are currently assessing the “optioneering” options in for the 25 year plan to address the water need for the Midlands Area to deliver secure, reliable and sustainable long-term water supplies which facilitate domestic and economic development (subject to the constraints of the Irish Water Capital Investment Programme).

Suggested Text for the draft CDP

With reference to text in the current CDP, we suggest the inclusion of the following updated text (or similar) for Chapter 6 (Infrastructure), where applicable.

Context

Irish Water is responsible for the provision of public water supply, wastewater collection and treatment services. It is an objective of Irish Water to provide both drinking water and wastewater capacity to facilitate growth in accordance with core strategies at county level, and with national and regional planning policies and objectives (subject to the constraints of the Irish Water Capital Investment Programme). The Council retains its role in facilitating the provision of adequate water services, in conjunction with Irish Water, at a local level, through Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

The National Water Resources Plan

Irish Water is preparing for the future by developing the National Water Resources Plan (NWRP). The strategic plan for water services will outline how we move towards a sustainable, secure and reliable public drinking water supply over the next 25 years, whilst safeguarding our environment. The NWRP will outline how Irish Water intends to maintain the balance between our supply from water sources around the country and demand for drinking water over the short, medium and long-term. This will allow preparation for the

future and ensure the provision of sufficient safe, clean drinking water to facilitate the social and economic growth of our country.

The Water Services Strategic Plan

In 2015 Irish Water published its Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP), which sets out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services over a 25 year period and sets a context for investment and implementation plans. This plan is reviewed every five years. Irish Water and the Council will continue to work together to identify the water services required to support planned development in line with national and regional planning policies for inclusion in the Irish Water Capital Investment Plans.

Irish Water Capital Investment Plan

The Capital Investment Programme (CIP) of Irish Water outlines the indicative priorities and investments in water services infrastructure over the plan period. This CIP aims to deliver improvements in drinking water quality, leakage, wastewater compliance, business efficiencies and customer service. The CRU review and approve Irish Water's CIP. The current investment plan covers the period from 2020 – 2024.

Suggested Policies – Water Supply & Distribution

It is the policy of the Council to work in conjunction with Irish Water to protect existing water infrastructure, to maximise the potential of existing capacity and to facilitate the timely delivery of new water services infrastructure to facilitate future growth.

Objective 1

To protect both ground and surface water resources and to work with Irish Water to develop and implement Water Safety Plans to protect sources of public water supply and their contributing catchment.

Objective 2

To ensure that adequate water services will be available to service development prior to the granting of planning permission for those developments and to require developers to consult Irish Water regarding available capacity, prior to applying for planning permission.

Objective 3

To minimise wastage of water supply by requiring new developments to incorporate water conservation measures

Objective 4

Provide guidance and advice regarding the protection of water supply to private wells with the overall responsibility remaining with the householder.

Objective 5

Promote the sustainable use of water and water conservation in existing and new development within the County and encourage demand management measures among all water users.

Suggested Policies – Wastewater Collection and Treatment

It is the policy of the Council to work in conjunction with Irish Water to protect existing wastewater infrastructure, to maximise the potential of existing capacity and to facilitate the timely delivery of new wastewater services infrastructure to facilitate future growth.

Objective 6

Liaise with and work in conjunction with Irish Water during the lifetime of the plan for the provision, extension and upgrading of waste water collection and treatment systems in all towns and villages of the County to serve existing populations and facilitate sustainable development of the County, in accordance with the requirements of the Settlement Strategy and associated Core Strategy.

Objective 7

Liaise with Irish Water to ensure the provision of wastewater treatment systems in order to ensure compliance with existing licences, *EU Water Framework Directive, River Basin Management Plans, the Urban Waste Water Directive and the EU Habitats Directive.*

Objective 8

To prohibit the discharge of additional surface water to combined sewers and promote Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) and solutions to maximise the capacity of towns with combined drainage systems.

Objective 9

To require all new development to provide a separate foul and surface water drainage system and to incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems.

Objective 10

To promote the changeover from septic tanks to collection networks in all cases where this is feasible (subject to connection agreements with Irish Water) and that all new developments utilise and connect to the public wastewater infrastructure.

Objective 11

To ensure that the Local Authority provides adequate storm water infrastructure in order to accommodate the planned levels of growth within the plan area, and to ensure that appropriate flood management measures are implemented to protect property and infrastructure

Objective 12

To refuse residential development that requires the provision of private waste water treatment facilities, other than single house systems.

Objective 13

To ensure that private wastewater treatment plants, where permitted, are operated in compliance with their wastewater discharge licence, in order to protect water quality. (*EPA's Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (PE. ≤10) (EPA 2009), as may be amended.*)

Suggested Policies – Water Quality and Groundwater Protection

The Council supports the development of Drinking Water Protection Plans in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the current and future cycles of River Basin Management Plans. In this regard, the Council supports mitigation and protection measures for all protected areas, including Drinking Water Protected Areas and associated Source Protection Plans.

Objective 14

Manage, protect and enhance surface water and groundwater quality to meet the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive.

Objective 15

Ensure, through the implementation of the River Basin Management Plan(s), and any other associated legislation, the protection and improvement of all drinking water, surface water and ground waters throughout the county.

Objective 16

The provision of individual septic tanks and treatment plants will be strongly discouraged, to minimise the risk of groundwater pollution.

Objective 17

When identifying areas for development, to ensure that full consideration is given to the level of investment that will be required in the provision of water services – particularly in environmentally sensitive areas - to ensure that the provision of water services does not negatively impact on habitat quality, species diversity or other environmental considerations.

Irish Water will be available to support the Council throughout the County Development Plan Process.

Yours Sincerely,



Niamh McDonald

Asset Strategy & Sustainability
Regional Forward Planning Specialist (East and Midlands)