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Proposed Shannon water pipeline deemed a 'white elephant' and waste of tax payers' money



Gillian Mills

Irish Water has published a *Final Options Appraisal Report* that identifies the 'Preferred Scheme' for a new source of water supply for the Eastern and Midlands Region. Parteen Basin on the Lower River Shannon has been identified as the 'emerging' preferred abstraction option with a '2km wide least constrained pipeline corridor' between the basin and Peamount in south County Dublin.

A report commissioned by the River Shannon Protection Alliance however says the project is a 'white elephant' and a waste of money (see below).

While 'significant progress' has been made to water savings from leakage reductions and water conservation issues, the savings alone will not meet the long-term needs of the region that will require an additional 330 MI/d of water per day by 2050, it says.

'The maximum sustainable production of treated water from existing water sources and infrastructure within the Region do not have the capacity, resilience or connectivity to meet future demand.'

The Water Supply Project will deliver 'secure and sustainable

water' for over 40% of the country's population up to 2050.

'It will stimulate and facilitate new home developments and new job creation enabling construction and investment across the Eastern and Midlands Region.'

The project comprises 'sustainable' water extraction on the eastern shore of the Parteen Basin, Co Tipperary with water treatment at Birdhill. Treated water would then be piped 170km to a termination point reservoir at Peamount in south county Dublin.

During public consultation in late 2015, Irish Water examined options before proposing the preferred scheme, including seawater desalination from the Irish Sea at Fingal.

This proposal was rejected on the grounds that almost double the estimated costs; would require very high energy use, and have significant negative environmental impacts. In addition, desalination would not benefit towns and communities throughout the Region, states Irish Water:

Irish Water is holding a fourteen week public consultation (ends 14/02/17) for feedback and on the scope of what is being proposed for consideration in the Environmental Impact Statement.

Details:
www.watersupplyproject.ie

River Shannon Protection Alliance responds

Irish Water has signalled its intention to apply for planning permission to divert River Shannon water to Dublin for domestic, commercial and industrial consumption. It proposes to construct a 172 kilometre pipeline from the Parteen Basin to Dublin at a cost of €1.2bn, to transfer hundreds of millions of liters of water per day.

The River Shannon Protection Alliance and other organisations, stakeholders

and interested parties are pledged to strongly oppose this extravagantly priced, and needless mega scheme, and are determined to expose it as a reckless, high risk and outmoded method of providing water to consumers.

In a forensic examination of Irish Water's plan, the *Kennedy Report* found that the project *will almost certainly prove to be an unnecessary White Elephant and a huge waste of Irish people's money.*

Gerry Siney

SUMMARY OF THE KENNEDY REPORT COMPILED BY EMMA KENNEDY, SOLICITOR

[Full report at www.shannonprotectionalliance.ie](http://www.shannonprotectionalliance.ie)

For some time Irish Water has been proposing to spend up to €1.2 billion (€724 for every Irish household) on the Shannon project - an ill-conceived scheme to pump water 172km from the Shannon to Dublin. This project will almost certainly prove to be an unnecessary White Elephant and a huge waste of the Irish people's money - at which point the many errors made in this process will come into sharp focus and those individuals who (explicitly or implicitly) rubber-stamped the project will be answerable to the Irish public.

Irish Water predicts that, by 2050, Dublin will have a water deficit of 214.7MI/d (million litres per day) but the report on which this is based contained basic and fundamental errors, inappropriate methodology, and flawed assumptions. In fact, by 2050, there will almost certainly be a raw water surplus of over 100MI/d without having to increase existing raw water supplies at all.

Dublin has no shortage of raw water. Its problems (and its recent water crises) have been due to Victorian-era water infrastructure with a history of under-investment resulting in insufficient capacity to treat/deliver water.

Irish Water is finally investing in Dublin's water infrastructure - recent upgrades at two water treatment plants have drastically (and inexpensively) improved their water treatment capacity and more improvements are underway. Dublin has a total leakage rate in its water network of over 40% (comparable to Mexican cities) so for every litre of precious treated water put into Dublin's water pipes almost half of it ends up in the ground.

Leaks are now infinitely easier to

identify/fix post the introduction of meters. Water savings as a result of Irish Water's ongoing First Fix programme have far exceeded expectations, for a fraction of predicted costs.

Focus needs to remain on improving Dublin's ability to treat and deliver its plentiful supply of raw water: this scheme to source extra water from the Shannon is an unnecessary waste of money.

If, at some point in the future, Dublin does need more raw water then local groundwater is the best option. Groundwater is inexpensive, can be developed incrementally as needed (whereas the Shannon project is "all-or-nothing" - not a drop of water can be delivered until the €1.2 billion ten-year mega-project is completed), reduces contamination risk (sources are diversified, rather than all coming from one source as with the Shannon project) and drilling wells is something in which we have hundreds of years of experience.

Even the Geological Survey of Ireland (Ireland's main authority on groundwater) made a submission during consultation for this project that "the use of groundwater should not be overlooked...it has a number of advantages over the use of surface water. It is a viable and widely available resource that would be relatively inexpensive to develop at a local level" and yet during this process groundwater was dismissed as an option without a single test borehole having been drilled and Irish Water's review of the groundwater report contained basic mathematical errors that rendered its main conclusion wrong by 33%.

The Shannon project needs to be put on hold immediately and re-assessed on the basis of a correctly framed "demand" prediction taking account of improvements to Dublin's water infrastructure and thorough, accurate investigation of groundwater.

