



# BALLINA FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

## Environmental Impact Assessment Report Chapter 3: Consultation

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## Chapter 3: Consultation

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### Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
CFRAM	Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
FRS	Flood Relief Scheme
IFI	Inland Fisheries Ireland
MARA	Maritime Area Regulatory Authority
MCC	Mayo County Council
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OPW	Office of Public Works
PCD	Public Consultation Day
Zol	Zone of Influence

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## 3 CONSULTATION

### 3.1 Introduction

Consultation is an essential part the decision-making process for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This includes statutory consultation, early involvement of the public and other stakeholders to ensure that the views of the interested parties are taken into consideration throughout the preparation of this Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). Stakeholder consultation has been a key feature to inform the design of the Proposed Scheme.

The overall aim of the consultation processes to date has been to:

- Engage stakeholders and members of public as early as possible at each stage of the Proposed Scheme and encourage feedback.
- Provide a process for members of the public to participate in the Proposed Scheme.
- Seek input from the public and from relevant stakeholders with respect to the Proposed Scheme layout options.
- Provide opportunities for the public and stakeholders to provide their knowledge of the local area.
- Keep the public informed of the Proposed Scheme as it progresses throughout the different stages.

Consultation is an on-going component of the EIAR process and is implemented from the screening stage onward. There are two required elements of consultation prior to the submission of an EIAR. The first avenue for consultation is to seek opinions and input from statutory bodies that have an interest or those affected by parts of the Proposed Scheme, including government and regulatory bodies. Non-governmental organisations and other relevant organisations were also contacted as part of this consultation process. These consultees were identified in the scoping stage of the EIAR and were contacted as specified. The second avenue is to consult with residents and business owners who may be impacted by the Proposed Scheme or any member of the public who has an interest in the Proposed Scheme.

### 3.2 Project Website

Access to up-to-date, accurate and reliable information about the Proposed Scheme is considered essential to ensuring good consultation can occur. To aid the consultation process a stand-alone website was set up at <https://www.floodinfo.ie/frs/en/ballina/home/>. This website has allowed the public to access up-to-date information on the consultation process, the Proposed Scheme design and the overall project programme. It has maintained a resource allowing submissions to be made online as well as providing a postal address for anybody who wishes to submit a hard copy at any time.

### 3.3 Project Newsletters

Project newsletters providing updates on the progress of the Proposed Scheme are provided on the website on a quarterly basis.

### 3.4 Public Consultation Days

#### 3.4.1 First Public Consultation Day

The first Public Consultation Day (PCD) event was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 from 4 pm-8 pm in the Kennedy Glasgow House, Quignamanger, Ballina, Co. Mayo. The purpose of the PCD was to introduce the Proposed Scheme and gather feedback.

The event was advertised in the 'Western People', (the main paper for the locality) in the week leading up to the consultation (14<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020). The format of the event was centred around the presentation of numerous information boards illustrating the scheme area boundaries, watercourses, designated sites within the Zone of Influence (Zol) and preferred options. Details of the public consultation were also posted

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on the Ballina Flood Relief Scheme (FRS) Website ([www.ballinafrs.ie](http://www.ballinafrs.ie)) with the opportunity for members of the public to submit comments online and a virtual PCD was held. The virtual room was accessible for the public information consultation event between the 23<sup>rd</sup> September until mid-November 2020, approximately.

Attendees of both the in-person and virtual PCD were encouraged to fill out a comments sheet setting out their views and concerns regarding the Proposed Scheme and those attending the in-person PCD were requested to fill out an attendance log. A Covid-19 log of attendees and contact information was also taken to ensure contact tracing details were available, if required.

A total of 16 people attended the in-person PCD, and four comment forms were received via the website and one via a phone call. A summary of the comments received from the event are as follows:

- There is a need to ensure the project is adapted to climate change and ensure there is no impact on the local salmon population and their food sources.
- Consider reuse of the existing stone wall as cladding on any new wall.
- The project team should make sure to use the information that locals have provided in the past.
- Concerns were expressed over the timeline of the project being too long and asking for remediation works to be completed on the existing wall along Bachelors Walk in the meantime as water is coming through the wall during high tides.
- It was noted that the pier at Ballina house is an obstruction to water flow, around the headland (across from the Bunree Stream inlet) there is a dock that also causes restriction to the flow of water, bushes along both banks of the river need to be cut back between the town and the Bunree Stream inlet.

Overall comments were positive about the Proposed Scheme moving forward and the main area of concern is the timeline of the project being too lengthy and the lack of new information.

### 3.4.2 Second Public Consultation Day

The second PCD event was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023 from 4 pm-8 pm in the Newman Institute, Cathedral Close, Ballina, Co. Mayo. The purpose of the PCD was to introduce the emerging preferred option for the project and gather feedback.

The event was advertised in the Western People (the principal paper for the locality) in the week leading up to the consultation, edition published on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023. A virtual PCD was held between the 30<sup>th</sup> March until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023, approximately. Details of the public consultation were also posted on the Ballina FRS website ([www.ballinafrs.ie](http://www.ballinafrs.ie)). Attendees of the in person PCD were requested to fill out an attendance log, meanwhile, attendees of both the in-person and virtual PCD were invited to fill out a comments sheet, setting out their views and concerns regarding the Proposed Scheme. A total of 39 members of the public attended this in-person PCD and ten comment sheets have been received via the website and/or provided at the consultation event. A summary of the comments received are as follows:

- Consider reuse of the existing stone when rebuilding walls at Bachelors Walk.
- Concern about flooding on Cregg's Road directly outside homeowner's property. Homeowner notes that he has sent photographs into the council. A solution where the footpath is extended past the homeowner's property is requested.
- Attendee expressed desire for the progression of the Proposed Scheme due to loss in flood insurance.
- Boat club does not want to have to vacate for the duration of the works and notes that a lot of the trailers are not suitable to be moved offsite.
- Aligned with the proposal in principle. Attendee has considerations regarding aesthetics, heritage and recreational perspective of the following nature:
  - Reuse of original stone as much as possible on Bachelors Walk. Mix new stone with old where necessary.
  - Recreational access to the river from Bachelors Walk to preferably be preserved for water sports.
  - Consider potential future installation of a pontoon for the rowing and kayaking clubs use at Ballina Quay when considering height of the defences at the quay.

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- Consideration to be given to environment and ecosystems – minimise impacts to Salmon, Seals and Otter.
- Suggestion that the level above existing wall height shall be “see through”/glazed. Also notes that there should be maintenance of the gullies.
- Protection in the interim to be implemented by defence force or flood defence with large sandbags to be laid out and plastic sheeting set between the bags. Seeks better notification in relation to flood and weather warnings which may lead to flood events.
- Request for a call from team to discuss the culvert potential for flooding at a property on Abbey Street and the impact that the proposed works will have long term on flood risk.
- Query noting if there are any restrictions in place for residents on Emmet Street regarding planning applications. Details of any such restrictions were requested to be provided.
- One of the plans uses McAndrew’s Lane for a new culvert. Business property adjoins this lane for a large portion. Attendee had queries relating to protection of the building and impacts on trade and parking. Reservations are noted in relation to the best route to the River Moy. Also notes reservations regarding the disruption of traffic flow through town at Humbert Street.
- Comments call for the improvement of heritage and connections for pedestrians and cyclists in the town:
  - Improve heritage style features on the new flood walls.
  - Reopen the stream from Killala Road to River Moy.
  - Improve green space and reduce hardscape space where possible.
  - Improve pedestrian and cycle flows around rivers.
  - Connect Barrett Street car-park to Ham Bridge.

### 3.5 Stakeholder Consultation

Four stakeholder consultations were completed between July 2020 and February 2023. Stakeholders of the Proposed Scheme were contacted in writing or via email.

These consultations were as follows:

- **08-July-2020:** Introduce the Proposed Scheme (Stage 1 Programme) and request feedback on Stage 1, Constraints Study and Screening for Appropriate Assessment.
- **18-September-2020:** Request input on the existing environmental constraints identified and inform stakeholders of the Virtual and PCD 1.
- **21-December-2022:** Provide summary of options considered and introduced preferred option.
- **28-February-2023:** Provide scoping report for review and inform stakeholders of the upcoming Virtual and PCD 2.

Additional meetings were held with some of the stakeholders to discuss specific aspects of the Proposed Scheme. Further information regarding these meetings are available in the relevant EIAR **Chapters 6-21**.

A summary of the comments received from stakeholders are as follows:

- Requested the Proposed Scheme consider ongoing projects or sites that may be impacted by the FRS.
- Emphasised nature conservation, protection of designated sites and consideration for nature-based flood relief solutions where possible.
- Protection of key species in the area were highlighted, including Salmon, Sea Lamprey, Brook Lamprey and Otter.
- Recommended a project archaeologist is onsite to engage and oversee works to ensure both terrestrial and underwater archaeology sites are protected.
- Provided databases and recommendations on guidance relevant to the Proposed Scheme.

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- Requested the Proposed Scheme consider impacts to tourism and tourism amenities, especially in relation to heritage values and fisheries tourism.
- Utilities provided mapping to clarify where utilities conflicts may occur.
- Input into the construction phase including restrictions on the timing of instream works to minimise impacts to River Moy fishery and fisheries habitat.
- Need to consider the government plans and policies such as the Climate Action Plan 2023 and draft National Biodiversity Action Plan in scheme design.

A detailed summary of stakeholder's observations and comments on environmental elements of the Proposed Scheme are provided in **Appendix 3.1**.

### 3.5.1 Stakeholder Meetings

#### 3.5.1.1 Heritage Council

A meeting was held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 via Microsoft Teams with representatives from the Heritage Council, MCC and RPS. The Proposed Scheme was presented and the potential interactions with existing walls, railings along Emmet St, Barrett St and proposed defences at Cathedral St were discussed. Improvement measures to the existing public realm and catchment management were also discussed.

#### 3.5.1.2 Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)

A meeting was held with the IFI on site and via Microsoft Teams over the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2023. Representatives from the IFI, were present as well as Fresh Water Ecologist Lauren Williams (via teams on the 8<sup>th</sup>) and members of RPS and MCC. Construction programming was discussed in relation to angling season on the Moy and limitations to instream works during this period Possibilities to enhance disability access to angling sites and biodiversity gain were also discussed.

A second meeting was held via Microsoft Teams with representatives from IFI, Fresh Water Ecologist Lauren Williams, MCC and RPS on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Updates to the design were presented, access to watercourses during the construction phase and general construction programming were discussed.

An onsite meeting was held with representatives from IFI, RPS and MCC on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024 to discuss the final proposed design and construction programme. Requests were provided to amend the programme and make design updates to Ridgpool access.

#### 3.5.1.3 National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)

A Microsoft Teams meeting was held with Divisional Ecologist at the NPWS, Fresh Water Ecologist Lauren Williams, MCC and RPS on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023. The Proposed Scheme was introduced, and a discussion on aquatic and terrestrial surveys undertaken to date and ongoing assessment. Issues pertaining to salmon and lamprey spawning were discussed and the NPWS recommended comprehensive mitigation measures to ensure no adverse effects on water quality.

A second meeting via Microsoft Teams was held with Divisional Ecologist at the NPWS, Fresh Water Ecologist Lauren Williams, MCC and RPS on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023. Design updates were presented including the proposed causeway design.

A third meeting via Microsoft Teams was held with Divisional Ecologist at the NPWS, Fresh Water Ecologist Lauren Williams, MCC and RPS on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023 to provide feedback on aquatic surveys undertaken across the Scheme Area. A smaller proposed causeway design was also presented. Confirmation was provided that the presence of a Tufa Spring on the Quignamanger would not be impacted by the Proposed Scheme. A discussion was had regarding instream works on the Brusna. The NPWS recommended that mitigation measures are clearly defined throughout the EIAR.

A fourth and final meeting was held via Microsoft Teams with Divisional Ecologist at the NPWS, Fresh Water Ecologist Lauren Williams, MCC and RPS on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 to present the final design. Survey results, assessment conclusions particularly in relation to lamprey, and any design changes since the previous meeting were discussed.



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### 3.5.1.4 Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA)

A meeting was held via Teams on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023 with representatives from MARA, OPW, RPS and MCC. The meeting was established to discuss the Proposed Scheme and the Marine Area Consent (MAC) application process which is required when a proposed development encroaches upon the maritime area and timing of such application consents.

## 3.6 Landowner Liaison

A search of the Property Registration Authority of Ireland website was undertaken to determine the degree of private landownership encroachment on a temporary basis e.g. construction phase or permanent basis i.e. through the implementation of flood defence infrastructure.

Following confirmation of land take requirements, letters of engagement were issued in July 2024 to all private landowners whose property interacts with the Proposed Scheme. The letters included details of the type and location of proposed infrastructure/access requirements that may be located on their folios. The letter provides contact details to facilitate further engagement. Landowner liaison is ongoing. Refer to **Appendix 3-2** for a copy of the letter template issued to all landowners involved.