

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMC/SC

Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 29 April 2024 at 6.00pm in Downshire Chamber

In the Chair: Councillor V Harte

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor J Brennan	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor P Campbell	Councillor L Devlin
Councillor A Finnegan	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor C King	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor J Truesdale

**In attendance in Chamber:
(Officials)**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs N Stranney, Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance in Chamber:

NI Water
Mr Ronan Larkin, Director of Finance, Regulation and Commercial
Dr Steve Blockwell, Head of Investment Management, Engineering & Sustainability Directorate

SC/010/2024 APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Clarke, Enright, Feehan, Finn, Galbraith, Gibbons, Howell, Larkin, McEvoy, McMurray, S Murphy, Rice, Ruane and Taylor.

The Chairperson wished former Councillor Andy McMurray best wishes following his promotion to MLA.

SC/011/2024 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

SC/012/2024 NI WATER

The Chairperson welcomed the Mr Ronan Larkin and Dr Steve Blockwell to the meeting and invited them to make their presentation. (Copy attached to these minutes)

Following the presentation the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- With the limited budget mentioned, and significant investment outlined within the presentation, how would NI Water prioritise the planned works as outlined?
- Did NI Water have any details regarding sewage discharges into the Newry, Mourne and Down area and how much was above the regulation limit?
- Was there an overall plan for upgrading capacity issues within existing networks in the Mourne area?
- Impact Assessments were understood to be carried out by outside consultants – was this an expertise issue and did it ultimately have an impact on budget?
- There was an ongoing problem in Killeavy Road area in Newry with residents experiencing sewage backing up into houses during times of heavy rain. It was understood that remedial work had been carried out but what was the long-term plan to address this as any flooding issues such as this would have budget implications?
- With 200 new houses proposed and approved within the Newry area, where would the wastewater feed into if the system was already at capacity?
- Were the facilities in Silent Valley scheduled for upgrades or repair as the paths were not currently accessible?
- Was there an issue with the toilets at the far end of Silent Valley as it had been reported that they were regularly closed, and also a wasp's nest was reported to be located within the toilet block?
- There was an ongoing billing issue with NI Water with a local charity for several months could this be addressed?
- With a development restriction within the Dundrum area was it possible for permission be given to demolish and rebuild a building with plans to connect this to the main drainage system at a later date, once restrictions were lifted?
- With the current development constraints in the Newry area, and with this Council receiving such a high number of planning applications, could NI Water provide a list of delegated areas that currently had capacity to allow progression of planning applications?
- Was NI Water information up to date in relation to available capacity with regard to reductions as well as projected increases, such as knowledge of business closing or relocating?
- Could urgent attention be directed towards the recording of discharges into the sea, specifically at Warrenpoint Harbour?
- Would the proposed investment in Kilkeel free up capacity in the sewage system? A housing application in the area was denied due to infrastructure so the development could not proceed, with the agent having been advised to create their own wastewater treatment works which could then link in with drainage system.
- Would consideration be given to free access for local residents to Silent Valley?
- Was it possible to address the issue of sewage being released into Annalong during heavy rainfall?
- Why was Saintfield not on the PC21 list of proposed development works even though there were some development constraints?
- Would it be beneficial to split NI Water into two agencies, one for drinking water and one for sewage so there weren't any potential competing priorities within the organisation?
- Were any plans being considered to invest in areas like Derryboy or Darragh Cross, as they had almost quadrupled in size in the last number of years with no infrastructure investment?
- Concerns were raised over water quality in Strangford Lough and Killyleagh. Could NI Water monitor and make freely available the results of water quality testing so the public was aware of where to find relevant information?

- Was there a plan to address the apparent capacity issues in Saintfield as during heavy rainfall water was gushing from manhole covers.
- Following a pre-development enquiry, why were some applicants asked to then pay for an Impact Assessment, which costs a lot of money that hadn't been budgeted for?

The delegation responded as follows:

- Planned works were prioritised using a matrix in association with NI Environment Agency (NIEA) Drinking Water Inspectorate to ensure drinking water quality.
- NIEA were responsible for granting consent to discharge into the waterways of treated effluent. All discharges were sampled and tested on a regular basis. Unfortunately, there was not enough data to answer the question, but NI Water held a lot of information about discharges and about the consents and standards to which they were held.
- The PC21 schemes were listed in size order, but not necessarily priority order. There was work ongoing alongside plans to invest in the medium to long term.
- The Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) which was fed into from a flushing toilet or emptying sink. As with all parts of the UK, this was heavily combined with the storm water and drainage system, and was constantly monitored to ensure that no out of sewer flooding or property flooding occurred. During heavy rains the drainage system could overflow so some work was required to address the volumetric issue to stop this from happening.
- NI Water did have extensive data on discharges, but not as much as would prefer. With budget constraints, the decision came down to whether funding was better spent on measuring tools for accurate measuring or on the many required upgrades.
- There was a planned upgrade to Mourne and Kilkeel as outlined in PC21 slide, and when funding was secured, these planned upgrades would progress.
- Impact assessments were carried out by both internal and external teams, they were outsourced at times to help ensure the workload continued quickly and effectively.
- Killeavy Road area was noted as being in need of significant modernisation, and it was currently being addressed. Mr Larkin stated that when issues arose, NI Water responded well to get the system back to capacity and ensure any overflow had been cleared up. This was not ideal for residents, but any investment would improve this recurring issue.
- There were areas within the Newry drainage system that had their own staff and contractors, but the area needed significant modernisation. There was more volume than ever going through the system, and NI Water need to invest wisely to ensure fewer issues arose going forward.
- Mr Larkin advised that Newry was at maximum capacity and NI Water were currently working with the Department to secure investment to continue all upgrade works.
- The Silent Valley paths had been damaged by weather and a programme of repair works was underway; the paths would be opened again when this was complete.
- The Silent Valley toilet schedule would be investigated, and the wasps nest dealt with.
- With regard to the query regarding billing for a local charity, the delegation advised they would follow up with the Member directly following the meeting.
- Dundrum was outlined twice on the PC21 plans with NI Water committed to optimising funding, but without knowing any details of the case regarding connecting to the network at a later date they would not be able to comment. In respect to Dundrum, Mr Larkin advised that there had been an extra requirement placed on them by NIEA in terms of the sand dunes being designated an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and as such their proposed works were taking longer than anticipated.

- With existing capacity constraints within the Newry area, Mr Larkin advised he would look at a boundary map to see if it was possible to issue a delegated area list in relation to capacity issues and planning applications.
- NI Water did take into account closing businesses in relation to capacity as it was continuously being monitored.
- With a particular reference to Warrenpoint Harbour, Mr Larkin noted that sewage, by its nature, smells. When in a treatment works facility, there was no smell as the effluent was well mixed with water, and NI Water were therefore confident that any smells were not coming from their Warrenpoint Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW).
- There had been some remedial work completed within the Kilkeel area. In relation to the development refusal and advice given to put in the applicant's own WwTW, Mr Larkin advised that this was not recommended as too many smaller satellite WwTW facilities were harder to amalgamate and would inadvertently put a burden on the system elsewhere. He stated it would also result in increased costs for buyer, resulting in unaffordable housing.
- Charging into Silent Valley was seen as a potentially sensitive issue. Mr Larkin advised that charges were in place to meet and recover costs for assets hosted onsite and queried where to draw the boundary line for free access.
- With regard to Annalong Harbour discharges during heavy rainfall, Dr Blockwell advised he would have to review the issue and would respond to the Member directly.
- Any funding spends in Saintfield required a decision regarding the prioritisation of need within constrained capacity and the optimal use of available funds. Saintfield was noted within the PC27 plan which covered the 6-year period from 2027 – 2033. Mr Larkin advised that Saintfield would be considered in relation to available funds and optimisation of the overall drainage system.
- Dividing NI Water into two agencies would end up as two entities with competing priorities and smaller budgets. Maintaining both together allowed for maximising available funds, and a knowledge of both systems that ensured one did not negatively impact the other.
- Mr Larkin advised that NI Water would look at making information more accessible on their website for everyone. He advised people to contact NI Water direct if they had any queries in relation to water quality.
- A pre-development enquiry urged developers to discuss their plan, which enabled NI Water to offer advice on capacity availability within a certain time frame. An Impact Assessment allowed an application to progress further, to set out further detail around the scheme and how it would connect to the network. It was then modelled through any planned improvements and upgrades to help influence a decision. Each case was looked at in its own merits, and solutions to issues were often discovered during these models that hadn't been considered. With each case being looked at on its own merits, there were times when NI Water refused to accept an Impact Assessment payment as they knew that specific applications were simply not feasible at current capacity.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for their presentation and time.

Councillor Howie left the meeting during the above discussions – 7:00pm

Councillor Magennis left the meeting during the above discussions – 7:11pm

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 07.30pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3rd June 2024.

Signed: _____

Chairperson

Director

Newry & Mourne and Down District Council & NI Water 29" April 2024

Ronan Larkin Director of Finance, Regulation & Commercial

Dr Stephen Blockwell, Head of Investment Management, Engineering & Sustainability Directorate

Contacting NI Water:

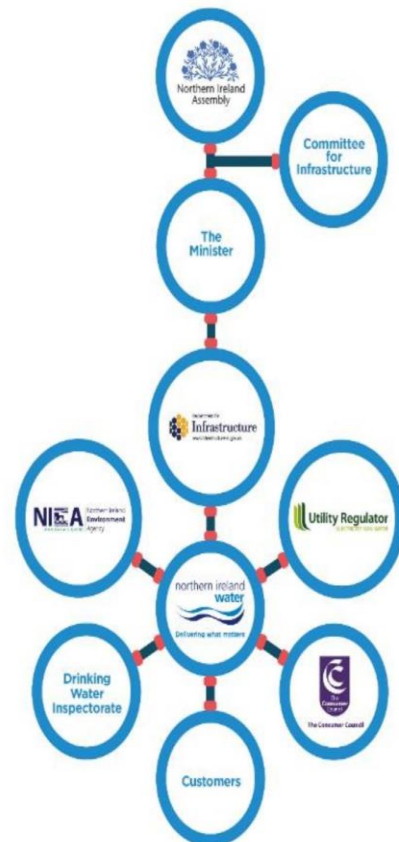
Elected Representative Direct Line - 0345 3006461

Waterline - 03457 440088 or waterline@niwater.com



NI Water was formed in 2007

- Independently regulated and bound by Companies Act 2006
- Government (DfI) is our sole shareholder
- Utility Regulator determines the funding that is necessary to deliver required business plan
- Our efficiency and performance is independently benchmarked against GB peers
- Our shareholder is our only source of capital funding
- 'PC21' Price Control period runs from 2021 -2027



NI Water: Vital Infrastructure

About NI Water

It costs around €680 m each year to deliver water services in Northern Ireland. Thousands of assets at a value of around €3bn, are operated and maintained to provide these services. This includes over 43,000km of water mains and sewers - one and a half times longer than Northern Ireland's entire road network and long enough to circle planet earth.

Households and businesses

Our customers rely on the services we provide

Water treatment works

We clean the water, making it safe to drink

Water mains length

We distribute the drinking water to our customers through water mains

Pumping stations

We use pumping stations to get the drinking water to our customers

Service reservoirs

We store the drinking water in service reservoirs



Households and businesses

We collect wastewater from our customers

Length of sewers

We collect wastewater from our customers using a network of sewers

Pumping stations

We use pumping stations to get the wastewater to our treatment works

Wastewater treatment works

We treat wastewater and return it safely to the environment

Sludge management centres

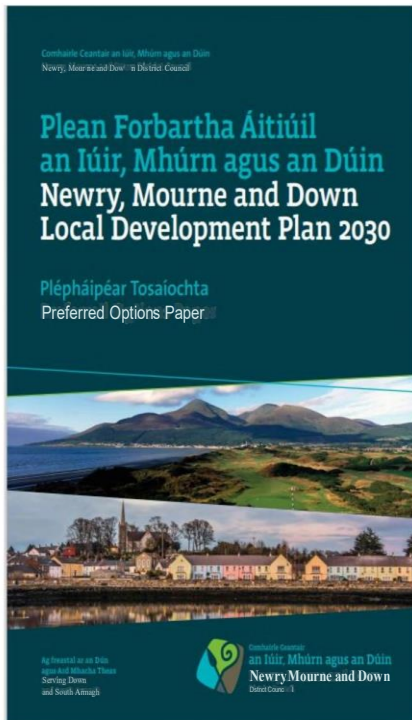
Sludge is de-watered before being incinerated

Fats, Oil and Grease (FOG) Campaign

'Stop & Think - Not in the Sink' campaign to reduce and prevent Fatbergs



Newry Mourne & Down District Council Ambitions LDP



Vision:

Newry, Mourne and Down is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high -quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs.

By 2030

- ▶ 15,000+ new homes
- > 9000+ new jobs

City and Main Town - Newry, Downpatrick

Local Towns - Newcastle, Warren point, Kil keel, Ballynahinch, Saintfield, Killyleagh, Castlewellan, Bessbrook, Crossmaglen.

Villages - 23

Small Settlements - 55



Silent Valley 100 years Celebration



100 years since cutting the first sod local schools, relatives of original workers, elected representatives and competition winners join NI Water to celebrate



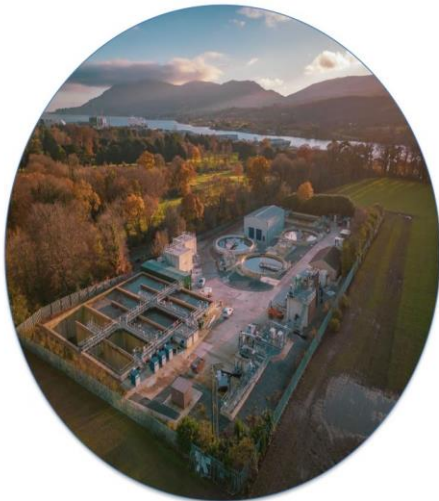
Delivered Capital Schemes - Mourne Wall



Latest Phase

- More than 300 repairs completed
- Across 15 mountains
- 900 collapses fixed
- Overall, 900 collapses fixed over 22 miles since 2017

Delivered Capital Schemes



Warrenpoint WwTW £16m 
SWELL Project



Fofanny Clear Water Basin £9m 

Key PC21 Proposed Investments: Newry Mourne & Down District Council Area

Wastewater Investment - Project Name	PC21 Planned Investment (£m)
NewryWwTW	41.6
Downpatrick WwTW	23.5
Annsborough	17.0
WwTW MeighWwTW	7.0
Drumaness WwTW	4.6
Newcastle WwTW Tertiary Treatment Appraisal	3.6
Dundrum WwTW Phase 2	2.0
Dundrum DAP, UIDs Upgrades.	6.8
Annsborough DA UID Mill Hill Castlewellan WwPS	5.2
Kilkeel DAP	3.7
Ballynahinch DAP	1.4
Newry DA Newpoint Greenbank TPS	1.1
Cranfield Catchment, Kilkeel Storm Separation	2.8

KEY:

OAP = Drainage Area Plan
 SO= Storm Overflow
 LWWP = Living With Water Programme
 UID = Unsatisfactory Intermittent Discharge
 TPS = Terminal Pumping Station
 Ww PS = Wastewater Pumping Station
 WwTW = Wastewater Treatment Works

Water Investment - Project Name	PC21 Planned Investment (£m)
Fofanny to Alt Trunk Main Phase 2	9.3
Drumaroad WTW PC21 Improvements Phase 2	4



What is NI Water doing to address the Development Constraints Problem?

- Commitment to maximising the infrastructure we have
- Investigating options for targeted interventions
- Promoting Developer led and financed solutions through our solution engineering team
- Providing robust planning responses, with conditions that are necessary to manage the impact *on the Environment*



NI Water's 3 Stage Planning Process



NI Water will support applications where:

- a valid Pre-Development Enquiry (PDE) identifies no capacity issues
- a solution has been agreed following the Impact Assessment process (this will be conditioned on delivery of solution)

NI Water will recommend refusal where:

- the PDE planning process has not been followed.
- We are happy to reconsider after PDE/ Impact Assessment has been completed

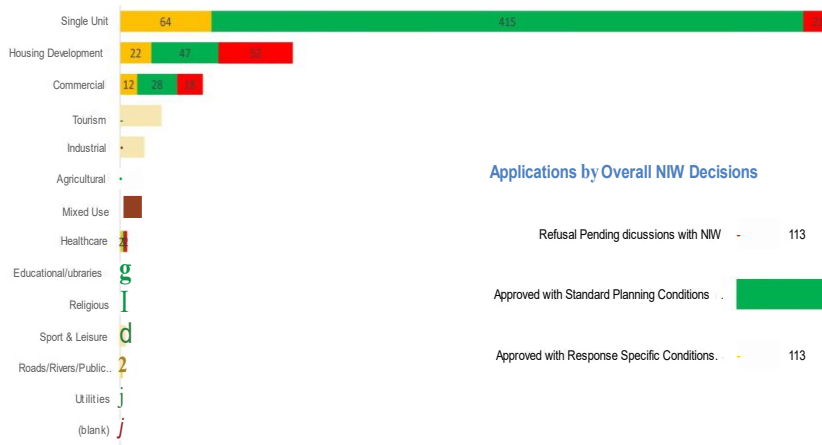
NI Water - Solutions Engineering

Wastewater Impact Assessments received by NI Water for Newry Mourne & Down District Council Area	
Solutions Engineering Reports Issued to Developers	63
Closed off: like for like development/ Developer provided WwTW / extant planning approval	22
Ww Impact Assessment being progressed	56
Total	141

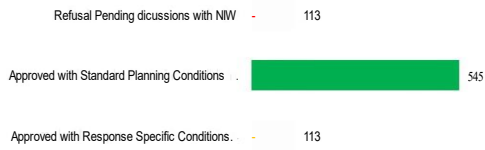
Newry Mourne & Down District Council

Apr 2023 to Mar 2023

Applications by Classification



Applications by Overall NIW Decisions



In Summary



NI Water continues to transform as a publicly owned company

Our services play a pivotal role in protecting NI's environment and growing the NI Economy

Approval of the PC21 plan gave the green light to start to reduce pollution and enable more customers to connect throughout our region

We will continue to work with DfI over the coming months to enable capital delivery



Delivering what matters

