



**Irish Water
via website**

Date: 23rd March 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Eastern and Midlands Strategic Plan

1.0 INTRODUCTION

County Kildare Chamber is the business organisation in Kildare, proactively working to identify and progress developments that are facilitative of economic and sustainable growth. Representing an employer base of 400 businesses and over 38,000 employees across the county, County Kildare Chamber is the largest business organisation in the mid-east region of Ireland.

Given the significant breadth and depth of our membership, and our representation on various bodies at local and national level, County Kildare Chamber constitutes the representative voice for business in Kildare, a particularly important role given the current economic circumstances in the county and the state.

2.0 SUBMISSION

Irish Water has recently begun a three month public consultation on the country's water supply. Under the plan, Ireland has been broken into 4 different regions, with Kildare based in the East and Midlands Strategic Plan. County Kildare Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation.

A new framework for the delivery of our county and regions water supply is now more than ever of vital importance. County Kildare Chamber agrees with Irish Water, that a more secure, resilient and sustainable delivery system is need urgently over the next two decades.

In March 2020, County Kildare Chamber, Chambers Ireland announced that we had signed up to a new charter supporting the UN Sustainability Goals (SDGs). The issue of sustainable water supply is particularly important to our Chamber as it is a critical element to our Climate Action responsibility.



County Kildare is highlighted in detail in Irish Water's Study Area 9, which takes in Kildare, Wicklow and the Greater Dublin Region. This report focuses on the water supply which is currently servicing the largest and most heavy populated area in the Country. Within the report numerous references are made to the current concentrations of service and how many at present do not meet the required levels of reserve capacity.

There are the immediate interests of Kildare businesses which are dependent on the essential and continuous supply of water to keep their operations open, but there is also the long run interests in Kildare of becoming an increasingly sustainable and environmentally sound economy.

Preparation for Climate Change needs to be central to the decision making and the risk assessment processes of Irish Water. The initial impacts of Climate Change have become obvious to us all. The increased volatility and variability of the weather over recent decades is likely to become significantly worse over the coming ones. These factors combined are likely to negatively impact the safety and capacity of our existing and potential sources of water. Particularly concerning is the idea that our supply is reliant on existing assets performing beyond their sustainable operational capacity and our dependence on treated water storage to meet short term deficits.

Increased periods of drought will likely make sourcing high quality water a greater challenge for Irish Water. County Kildare Chamber welcomes Irish Water's commitment to working with the EPA to develop and investigate systems to better understand the sustainability of our groundwater sources, a number of which are located in Kildare.

County Kildare Chamber believes the creation of a new source as set out as the preferred approach by Irish Water, is the most suitable and sustainable model. The new Shannon source will transfer 200 MLD of treated drinking water via pipeline throughout the region, working with our existing sources.



However, we are concerned about the timeline between current service levels and the operational establishment of the Shannon source. It is understood that significant interim measures will be needed within the Greater Dublin region, in the intervening years before this new supply comes onstream.

Kildare is a large and fast growing county, with a number of multinational firms. We continue to attract large amounts of FDI to our county, with our bright, well-educated workforce. For Kildare to continue to thrive, we need all of our resources and stakeholders working together. We need our housing system, our infrastructure, and our service sector performing in unison. With this in mind, County Kildare Chamber is calling for Irish Water and the Government to ensure all interim measures, which are currently subject to budgetary availability are future proofed for funding in future budgets.

County Kildare Chamber also believes greater communication is needed between all of the key stakeholders when decisions are being made regarding water supply. Noting same, County Kildare Chamber is suggesting the creation of a Regional Stakeholder Forum, between Irish Water and all of the key interested party's within the wider Kildare and Greater Dublin region. This forum would take place quarterly, where participants would be alerted to future disruptions to supply.

As a representative body for businesses in Kildare, we are acutely aware of how water disruption can have negative impacts -be it smaller retailers on a main street, with disruption to traffic flows and a knock on effect to their business, or our larger multinationals to which infections to water supply pose huge risks, or the increased demand for water and cooling systems with the planned development of new Data Centres in our region. We believe by working together we can help our businesses plan and grow sustainably into the future.



3.0 CONCLUSION

Improving the delivery and sustainability of water supply throughout our Island is vital for the continued growth of the mid-east region. We in County Kildare Chamber particularly support the improvement and upgrading of our water treatment plants in Ballymore Eustice and Leixlip which will guarantee confidence to our business industry in the water supply generation within the region.

We also believe enhanced communication between Irish Water and key stakeholders is imperative for a cohesive and joined up approach to the development of Kildare. Important policy initiatives such as the County Development Plan are taking place right now and will shape the future of Kildare into the medium and long term. With this in mind, we believe a stakeholder forum is vital for all parties to stay informed and flourish. Now more so than ever we need a modern and stable infrastructure with a capacity to meet future demands.

We trust that the contents of this submission will be taken into consideration by the Department, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries regarding same.

Yours faithfully,

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