

## **DRAFT**

**Commissioners of Public Works,**

**\*\*\*\***

**Trim,**

**Co. Meath.**

October, 2016

### **Re: Shannon Flood Risk Management Plan**

Dear \*\*\*\*\*,

Further to the above, this document is a formal submission to you regarding the above plan and is submitted for your consideration.

We the Members of Westmeath County Council have considered the above Flood Risk Management Plan at our monthly meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016 and at our Municipal District Meetings in Mullingar and Athlone in October 2016. The purpose of this submission is to make you aware of the issues and concerns raised by the Members at those meetings and to put these directly to you for your consideration.

These issues can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Westmeath County Council does not accept that dredging of the main channel of the River Shannon is not a feasible option. From our perspective, there is no engineering, financial or environmental reason why dredging cannot be carried out to improve the carrying capacity of the river thereby reducing the risk of flooding, both during winter floods and summer floods. It is our contention that this would have significant impact on the risk and damage due to flooding all along the River Shannon.
- 2) Westmeath County Council considers that there is a need to put people first in terms of the management of the River Shannon. While we respect the environmental designations that apply to the river, we feel that more emphasis needs to be placed on the impact of flooding on the people that live and farm along its course. It would

appear to us that environmental issues are being raised in this country that do not seem to be significant in mainland Europe.

- 3) Summer flooding continues to be a significant issue despite expenditure to date on the protection of habitats for species such as the corncrake. Despite everyone's best efforts, it would appear that the birds were significantly impacted in recent years by summer floods. In this regard and in the interests of the farmers of the Callows, there is a need for more to be done to prevent summer flooding along the River Shannon.
- 4) While it is acknowledged that the OPW manage some rivers within County Westmeath, primarily the Shannon, the Brosna and the Inny, it would appear to us that these rivers are not sufficiently maintained from a channel management perspective and there is also a need for the OPW to take responsibility for the maintenance of other rivers. We regret the demise of the joint drainage boards and the fact that no effective structure has been established in their place. While Westmeath County Council carry out some maintenance works on smaller river channels such as the River AI in Athlone, the Council's capacity to take on additional such maintenance is very limited. In this regard, we would request the OPW to take a more active role in the maintenance of river channels across the county not just the main arterial rivers listed above.
- 5) We welcome the priority that is being given to the Athlone Flood Relief Scheme and would appeal to OPW to maintain its support for this scheme due to its importance and the number of properties that are at risk of flooding in the town and the hugely negative impact of flooding on the town at large from a human and business perspective.
- 6) We feel that there is an urgent need to put a scheme in place for those people whose property is at risk of flooding and who live outside of the urban area of Athlone, particularly to the south of the town in Carrick-O-Brien and Golden Island and those to the north of the town in Muckanagh. The scheme should consist of a grant towards the cost of putting flood defences in place for individual houses and farmyards or a relocation scheme to assist those who wish to move from a location in which there is substantial risk of flooding. Such a scheme is urgently required.
- 7) There is a need for some certainty regarding the issue of flood insurance for people whose homes are at risk of flooding. In our view, insurance companies must be compelled to provide flood insurance at a reasonable cost to those whose houses are

protected by state supported and managed flood defences. There is also a need to address the issue of flood insurance for those who live in rural areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Flood Risk Management Plan for the Shannon catchment and we hope that you will consider all of the above points.

In summary, our primary concerns are that;

- a) Athlone would be defended against floods as soon as possible.
- b) That a scheme would be put in place to assist to those who live in the rural areas and whose houses are at risk of flooding.
- c) That the OPW would increase its activities in terms of channel maintenance both on the River Shannon and on the other rivers within the catchment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

---

**Cllr. Frank McDermott**  
**Cathaoirleach**

*Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act*