



**Shannon
Chamber**
Advancing business together



Water Supply Project Eastern & Midlands Region

SHANNON CHAMBER SUBMISSION

March 2025

Introduction

While accepting that Uisce Éireann must address the deficit in supplies in the Greater Dublin Area and the wider Eastern and Midlands Region, linked to the fact that the River Liffey currently provides approximately 85% of source water to the Greater Dublin Area Water Resource Zone (GDA WRZ) and that there is almost no spare capacity in this current supply, Shannon Chamber feels it imperative to make comment on **Water Supply Project** Eastern & Midlands Region: the "Proposed Project".

We represent 330 plus member companies and their 19,500 employees who live in the Mid-West region, many in counties, Clare, Limerick and Tipperary, which will be impacted by the implementation of this project.

We submit our comments for the following reasons:

Shannon, including the wider region, is an expansive industrial base, with a diverse range of sectors operating from Shannon Free Zone, and adjoining industrial estates. A large percentage of these companies undertake manufacturing, with water a critical component of their production processes - used for cooling and temperature control, cleaning and rinsing, processing and forming. Water is also crucial for maintaining consistency and quality, particularly in the pharma and electronics sectors, for their supply chain logistics, and for managing their wastewater. It is also essential for fire suppression systems, cleaning spills etc.

Shannon Chamber launched a Mid-West Sustainability Network in 2022, with **'Water'** one of the four pillars of the network's drive to enable companies to meet their net zero emission targets. Given that water is integral to many stages of our members' manufacturing processes, access to a reliable and clean water supply is a fundamental necessity for our members and their employees, in a work and home environment, many of whom come from an agricultural background.

The Proposed Project should continue to guarantee a consistent, reliable water supply, for both residents and businesses in the greater Shannon area. It should continue to support local businesses, particularly in sectors that depend heavily on water, as outlined above. It must be beneficial to all regions and the fact that there is leakage in the greater Dublin area should not be solved to the detriment of Shannon and the region.

While community engagement is built into the Proposed Project, we would expect continued community engagement with all stakeholders, including Shannon Chamber, so that we can adequately inform our members on any issues adhering to the Project.

Communities within our catchment area should be guaranteed an uninterrupted supply of water and prior to commencing the Project, issues adversely affecting communities in Clare, Limerick or Tipperary should be fully addressed. Communities should not continue to have 'boil water' notices or inadequate water pressure.

The Project should aim to improve water quality, and address any existing water issues, such as contamination, high mineral content, or low pressure, which can affect both residents and businesses.

We call for measures to ensure the protection of local water sources, aquatic ecosystems, and surrounding habitats during construction and operation of the Project.

Shannon Chamber is consistent in its call on Government to deliver balanced regional development. The fact that the Proposed Project is being implemented to cater for a growing population, in communities and business in the greater Dublin area, goes against the ethos of balance.

While sample questions are presented in the public consultation process, this submission does not make comment on:

- The potential benefits of the project
- The key infrastructure components of the Proposed Project
- The construction process and its impact of roads
- The potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project and the measures proposed to mitigate these impacts

Our comments on taking water from the Shannon Parteen Basin to the east coast are focused in the main on the local, regional, and national implications of the Project, such as environmental, economic, and social considerations.

Environmental concerns

- We stress the importance of protecting the Shannon Parteen Basin as a critical local water source and that it should not adversely affect local ecosystems, water levels, and biodiversity in the area.
- We would expect that all necessary environmental assessments will be undertaken to ensure that the water extraction will not negatively impact the long-term sustainability of the Shannon River or Parteen Basin. Business and residents cannot be subjected to depleted water levels.
- We expect that a comprehensive environmental impact assessment will be undertaken to assess how the project might affect aquatic habitats and the fish population, especially given the importance of the Shannon River as a key waterway and a contributor to the future development of the tourism sector in the Shannon region.

Impact on our Local Water Supply

- We are concerned that the extraction of water from the Parteen Basin might affect the local water supply in the Shannon region, including disruptions to residents' access to water or potential changes in water pressure or quality.
- The extraction of water from the Shannon should not negatively impact the Shannon region, - industry or residents. This will require careful management to ensure that the local population's water needs are not compromised while serving the east coast.
- We ask: will the Project lead to water shortages or require expensive alternatives such as water treatment systems?

Economic Considerations

- We reference our concern on the potential impact the Project might have on local industries, particularly those that rely heavily on water, such as agriculture, food production, and manufacturing. Any potential reduction in water availability could affect local businesses, so it is important that Uisce Éireann provides guarantees of a reliable supply for these sectors.
- Will there be financial implications for businesses and residents in the Shannon region? Will the water extraction and redistribution process lead to higher water costs for local businesses and consumers? Transparency on this issue is crucial.

Water Security and Resilience

- It is essential that the Project aligns with long-term national water security objectives. While the east coast may face increasing water demand, ensuring the resilience and security of water supplies in the Shannon region is equally important.
- We would ask: Has Uisce Éireann explored and considered alternative sources of water for the east coast, such as desalination, water recycling, or more efficient management of existing water resources?
- We would expect that Uisce Éireann will commit to regular environmental monitoring during and after the implementation of the project. This would ensure that the impact on the Shannon Parteen Basin, its tributaries, and the surrounding areas is continually assessed.

Continued Collaboration

- In making this submission, we call for continued close cooperation between Uisce Éireann and Shannon Chamber to ensure that the water supply project meets the specific needs of the community we represent. If implemented, we would expect seamless integration with existing water infrastructure to ensure minimal disruption to our members and maximum efficiency during implementation.

Conclusion

By addressing the points raised herein, Shannon Chamber is offering a well-rounded and constructive response that reflects the interests and concerns of our local business community while promoting sustainable development and long-term benefits for the region.

We are concerned that removing water from the River Shannon to benefit the East Coast could be seen as an inequitable redistribution of resources, with those in Clare, Limerick, and Tipperary suffering for the benefit of more urbanised regions. We are concerned that the needs of rural regions like Clare, Limerick, and Tipperary would be sidelined in favour of growing urban centres on the East Coast, potentially leading to a sense of unfair treatment.

We therefore must ask - are there more sustainable ways to meet the East Coast's water demand without drawing from the River Shannon, such as investing in water conservation, desalination, or improving the infrastructure for water storage and distribution to reduce dependency on shared water sources?

Once the flow is altered, can it be reversed? If the East Coast becomes increasingly dependent on this water source, it could create a long-term imbalance in the region's water resources, making future management more difficult.

In making this submission, Shannon Chamber is offering constructive feedback that balances the need to support water supply for the east coast with the protection of the Shannon region's resources and economic interests. As a representative business organisation, we have a duty to ensure that the Project benefits all stakeholders and is implemented in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

ENDS

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