

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Introduction

Irish Water intends to develop the Arklow Wastewater Treatment Plant Project (refer to **Figure 1.1 in Volume 3**), hereafter referred to as the proposed development.

The proposed development will comprise a new Wastewater Treatment Plant (WwTP), associated infrastructure including the interceptor sewer network and marine outfalls as well as an upgrade to the existing coastal revetment. There are currently no wastewater treatment facilities in Arklow town. As a result, untreated wastewater is being discharged directly into the Avoca River. To rectify this problem and to facilitate future development in the town, which is currently constrained by the lack of adequate wastewater treatment, the proposed development is being advanced by Irish Water.

The proposed development exceeds the thresholds specified in legislation for which an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required. This EIA Report (EIAR) has therefore been prepared in accordance with Article 5 of Council Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU on the assessment of effects of certain public and private projects on the environment ('The EIA Directive').

## 1.2 Overview of the Proposed Development

The proposed development will comprise of the following elements:

- A new WwTP of 36,000 population equivalent (PE) and associated infrastructure for the WwTP including an inlet pumping station, a storm water storage tank, treatment, sludge thickening and dewatering facilities, a pump sump and tank to discharge excess stormwater flows as well as site administration facilities and associated landscaping (all located at the Old Wallboard site at Ferrybank);
- Interceptor sewers along River Walk, North Quay, South Quay and under the Avoca River (including associated manholes and vent stacks) that will tie in with the existing waste water collection network and bring the untreated wastewater to the WwTP;
- A stormwater overflow (SWO) and stormwater storage tank to the west of River Walk on a vacant site referred to as 'the Alps'<sup>1</sup>;
- A SWO) to discharge excess stormwater flows to the Irish Sea;

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<sup>1</sup> Note -The Alps refer to the Alps Opportunity Site as defined in the Arklow and Environs Local Area Plan 2018 – 2024. Aspects of the proposed development, i.e. the SWO and stormwater storage tank are within this site.

- A long sea outfall pipe (approximately 955m in length) to discharge the treated wastewater effluent to the Irish Sea;
- An upgrade to the existing revetment on the coastal side of the Old Wallboard site at Ferrybank; and
- All associated and ancillary development works comprising or relating to permanent and temporary construction and excavation, abandonment of short sections of existing sewers (and infilling with concrete), site boundaries and landscape reinstatement works as well as all ancillary connections to electricity, telecommunications and water supply networks and site drainage.

The proposed development is likely to be procured by means of a Design and Build type contract, with the contractor responsible for the detailed design and construction. A specimen design has been prepared for the purposes of the EIAR, which allows the reasonable worst case to be assessed.

Further information on the proposed development is included in **Chapters 4 and 5** of this report. All aspects of the proposed development will be provided within the planning boundary as illustrated in **Figure 1.1 in Volume 3**.

### 1.3 Overview of the Planning Process

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides the statutory framework in Ireland for planning consents and the control of development. The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (including by the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006) categorises development which is of strategic economic or social importance (i.e. ‘Strategic Infrastructure Development’) under its Seventh Schedule. The Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, includes the following class of development, under the heading ‘Environmental Infrastructure’.

*“A waste water treatment plant with a capacity greater than a population equivalent of 10,000 and, for the purpose of this provision, population equivalent shall be determined in accordance with Article 2, point 6, of Council Directive 91/271/EEC”.*

For development coming under the Seventh Schedule (including the proposed development), An Bord Pleanála must consider whether the development meets the criteria listed in Section 37A(2) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, and must determine, following consultations under Section 37(B) of the said Act, whether or not the proposed development is deemed to be Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID).

It was determined by An Bord Pleanála on 23 May 2018 that the proposed development is considered ‘Strategic Infrastructure Development’ in accordance with Section 37 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Section 37E(1) of the said Act states in this regard:

*“An application for permission for development in respect of which a notice has been served under section 37B(4)(a) shall be made to the Bord and shall be accompanied by an environmental impact statement in respect of the proposed development.”*

Consequently, the consent application for the proposed development will be made to An Bord Pleanála, under Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended and will be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

A number of other relevant documents and licence applications, including a Natura Impact Statement (which includes the Report for Screening for Appropriate Assessment in a single report), Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) application, application(s) for consent under the Foreshore Act, 1933 to 2014 as amended, an application for a Wastewater Discharge Authorisation (WWDA) and bat derogation license have also been prepared as described in detail in **Section 4.5 of Chapter 4**.

## 1.4 Approach to the EIA

### 1.4.1 Definition of EIA

EIA supports the decision-making process as it is integrated into consenting processes for new development projects. This helps to ensure that consent decisions are made in the knowledge of the environmental consequences of the project. Article 1(2)(g) of the 2014 EIA Directive states that:

*“environmental impact assessment” means a process consisting of:*

- (i) the preparation of an environmental impact assessment report by the developer, as referred to in Article 5(1) and (2);*
- (ii) the carrying out of consultations as referred to in Article 6 and, where relevant, Article 7;*
- (iii) the examination by the competent authority of the information presented in the environmental impact assessment report and any supplementary information provided, where necessary, by the developer in accordance with Article 5(3), and any relevant information received through the consultations under Articles 6 and 7;*
- (iv) the reasoned conclusion by the competent authority on the significant effects of the project on the environment, taking into account the results of the examination referred to in point (iii) and, where appropriate, its own supplementary examination; and*
- (v) the integration of the competent authority's reasoned conclusion into any of the decisions referred to in Article 8a.”*

For the purpose of this EIAR, Irish Water is the ‘developer’ of the proposed development and An Bord Pleanála is the ‘competent authority’ responsible for undertaking the EIA and integrating its reasoned conclusion in this regard into the consent decision for the proposed development.

## 1.4.2 Legislative Context

### 1.4.2.1 Statutory Requirement for EIA

A European Directive for EIA has been in force since 1985 since the adoption of Council Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

The EIA Directive of 1985 has been amended three times by Council Directives 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC and 2009/31/EC. It was ultimately codified and repealed by Council Directive 2011/92/EU on 13 December 2011. This Directive was further amended in 2014 by Council Directive 2014/52/EU which sets out the current requirements for member states on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

The EIA Directive, requires the competent authority to consider and take account of the EIAR for certain public and private projects that are likely to have significant effects on the environment as part of the consent decision making process. In Ireland, the requirements for EIA in relation to planning consents are specified in Part X of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended and in Part 10 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended.

The proposed development requires an EIA, under the provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended (as outlined in **Sections 1.1 and 1.3**) and this EIA will be undertaken by the competent authority for the planning consent (An Bord Pleanála).

This EIAR has adhered to the requirements of the EIA Directive and transposing European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (SI No. 296 of 2018) which came into force on 1 September 2018 as well as associated guidance as described in **Section 1.4.3**.

The European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 transpose the requirements of Directive 2014/52/EU, amending previous Directive 2011/52/EU, on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the EIA Directive) into planning law with effect from 1 September 2018. Where reference is made to the EIA Directive throughout this EIAR, it should be understood that the transposing European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 also apply.

Notwithstanding, regard has also been had to the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) as they apply now.

This EIAR therefore fully complies with all European law and EIA Directive requirements in respect of EIARs and also all Irish law and requirements under the Planning Act and Planning Regulations in respect of Environmental Impact Statements (EISs).

Throughout this document, where reference is made to EIS, it should also be understood to mean EIAR. Likewise, where reference is made to EIAR, it should be understood to mean EIS.

### 1.4.2.2 Other Relevant Legislation

#### Water Framework Directive

Council Directive 2000/60/EC (the Water Framework Directive [WFD]) on establishing a framework for community action in the field of water policy was adopted by all member states in October 2000. The WFD is the legislative framework for the protection of all waters including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater, and their dependent wildlife and habitats across Europe.

The proposed development meets the objectives of the WFD as it will eliminate in so far as possible, the discharge of untreated wastewater to the Avoca River, therefore protecting the water environment and enhancing water quality in the Avoca River.

#### Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive

Council Directive 91/271/EEC (UWWT Directive) concerning urban waste water treatment was adopted in May 1997 by all member states. The UWWT Directive is the legislative framework to protect the water environment from the adverse effects of discharges of urban waste water and from certain industries in urban agglomerations.

Article 3(1) of the UWWT Directive identifies the need for urban agglomerations to be provided with collecting systems for wastewater that satisfy those requirements outlined in Annex 1(A). Further, Article 4(1) provides that:

*“Member States shall ensure that urban wastewater entering collecting systems shall before discharge be subject to secondary treatment or an equivalent treatment.”*

Commission Decision 2014/413/EU (which replaces Decision 93/481/EEC) defines the information that member states should provide (to the European Commission) when reporting on the state of implementation of the UWWT Directive. Article 17 of the UWWT Directive aims at collecting information on planning processes for the implementation of the UWWT Directive, beyond the information on the status of compliance for agglomerations and treatment plants.

The proposed development aligns with the objectives of the UWWT Directive as it will provide appropriately designed infrastructure that prevents the discharge of untreated wastewater to the Avoca River, thereby protecting the water environment in this urban location and ensuring compliance with the objectives of the UWWT Directive.

## Habitats and Birds Directives

EU member states are required to establish a network of Natura 2000 sites under the obligations of Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC (Birds Directive), as amended and codified in Council Directive 2009/147/EC. The Natura 2000 network comprises designated sites selected to protect important biodiversity including rare and threatened habitats and species including:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs, including candidate SACs) protected under the provisions of the Habitats Directive; and
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs, including proposed SPAs) protected under the provisions of the Birds Directive.

The Habitat and Birds Directives require that the likely significant effects of any plan or project, alone, or in combination with, other plans or projects, on the Natura 2000 site network (i.e. European designated sites), should be assessed before any decision is made to allow that plan or project to proceed. This process is known as Appropriate Assessment (AA), which starts with Stage 1 AA Screening and if likely significant effects cannot be ruled out, must progress to Stage 2 AA (i.e. preparation of a Natura Impact Statement).

There are a number of steps and tests in place that should be undertaken sequentially and documented by competent authorities in order to make decisions on the approval or refusal of a plan or project that may impact on European designated sites). Part XAB of the Planning Acts, which transposes the Birds and Habitats Directive requires the following to be undertaken:

- Stage 1 – Screening for Appropriate Assessment: To assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if a development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on any European designated site.
- Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment: This is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a European designated site. The appropriate assessment must include a final determination by the competent authority as to whether or not a proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of a European designated site. In order to reach a final determination, the consenting authority must undertake examination, analysis and evaluation, followed by findings, conclusions and a final determination. The appropriate assessment must contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions, and may not have lacunae or gaps.
- Stage 3 – Assessment of alternative solutions: The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the European designated sites.

- Stage 4 - Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain: An assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain – an assessment of compensatory measures where, in light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) including the information for Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been prepared in a single report to accompany the SID application to An Bord Pleanála. This report contains the necessary information required for the competent authority to undertake the AA of the proposed development. The NIS concluded that, in the opinion of the lead ecologist (Eleanor Mayes) on the basis of objective information, the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European sites.

It is considered that further stages of AA are not necessary for the proposed development, however the competent authority, An Bord Pleanála, will make the final determination in this regard.

### 1.4.3 Guidance

This EIAR has been prepared with due regard to the following overarching guidance on EIA:

- European Commission (2017) Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report;
- Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (2013) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Government of Ireland (2018) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (August 2018);
- Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2003) Environmental Effect Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development;
- Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2017) Key Issues Consultation Paper on the Transposition of 2014 EIA Directive (2014/52/EU) in the Land Use Planning and EPA Licencing Systems; and
- Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (2017) Circular PL 1/2017 - Implementation of Directive 2014/52/EU on the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (EIA Directive): Advice on the Administrative Provisions in Advance of Transposition;

- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2018) Circular PL 05/2018 - Transposition into Planning Law of Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the EIA Directive) And Revised Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment; and
- Environmental Protection Agency (2017) Draft Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (Draft August 2017).

Additional topic-specific guidance used to undertake assessments is identified in **Chapters 7 - 19** as appropriate.

#### 1.4.4 Structure of the EIAR

This EIAR has been prepared in four volumes as follows:

- Volume 1 provides the non-technical summary. This summarises the findings of the EIAR in a clear, accessible format that uses non-technical language and supporting graphics. The non-technical summary describes the proposed development, existing environment, effects and mitigation measures and relevant aspects of the EIAR in a manner that can be easily understood by the general public;
- Volume 2 encompasses the main EIAR including introductory chapters in addition to ‘assessment’ chapters for each environmental aspect in accordance with Article IV of the EIA Directive. The front end chapters (**Chapters 1 – 6**) provide the relevant project context whilst the assessment chapters (**Chapters 7 -19**) provide a description of the relevant environmental aspects and likely significant effects with summary chapters provided thereafter (**Chapters 20 and 21**);
- Volume 3 includes the figures to support Volume 2; and
- Volume 4 provides the technical appendices that support and are cross-referenced with Volume 2. This may include other relevant drawings, modelling outputs, background reports and/or supporting documents.

#### 1.4.5 Project Team

This section provides an overview of the project team that has been appointed by Irish Water and has contributed to design development of the proposed development to date as well as the preparation of the SID consent application.

##### 1.4.5.1 Design Team

The design has been developed on behalf of Irish Water by a multi-disciplinary design team led by Arup (lead consultants) and their sub-consultants Byrne Looby & Partners (design engineers) and Clancy Moore Architects.

### 1.4.5.2 EIAR Team

This EIAR has been prepared on behalf of Irish Water by a multi-disciplinary consultancy team of competent experts led by Arup with input from specialist sub-consultants.

Arup has been awarded an EIA Quality Mark by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in recognition of its excellence in EIA activities. Further, all technical leads are deemed to be qualified and competent experts in their fields in accordance with Article 5(3) of the EIA Directive, given their academic qualifications, professional affiliations and professional experience on other EIAs for major infrastructure projects. Refer to **Appendix 1.1** for further detail on the competent experts that have prepared this EIAR.

## 1.5 Consultation undertaken

### 1.5.1 Overview

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with a range of stakeholders during the development of the EIAR and statutory consent application in order to:

- Provide information on the proposed development;
- Ascertain and understand the views of stakeholders; and
- Seek input from stakeholders on the design, construction and assessment aspects of the proposed development.

It should be noted that this section describes project-wide consultation that has been undertaken. Where appropriate, **Chapters 7 – 19** identify specific consultation that has been undertaken to support individual assessments and assessment chapters.

### 1.5.2 Statutory Consultation

#### 1.5.2.1 Pre-Application Consultation with An Bord Pleanála

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with An Bord Pleanála (the consenting authority) as part of the formal pre-application consultation process for the proposed development.

Irish Water submitted a letter to An Bord Pleanála on 24 July 2015 requesting to enter into pre-application consultation to determine if the proposed development is ‘Strategic Infrastructure Development’ in accordance with the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. An Bord Pleanála was also required, as part of the pre-application consultation process, to give advice on procedural matters involved in making an application and to advise on matters relating to proper planning and sustainable development or the environment, which may have a bearing on its determination.

An Bord Pleanála was also able to engage with and/or ask Irish Water to engage with relevant persons or organisations which may have information in relation to the proposed development.

Seven pre-application consultation meetings were subsequently held with An Bord Pleanála on the following dates:

- 27 August 2015;
- 30 November 2015;
- 11 February 2016;
- 6 May 2016;
- 9 November 2016;
- 28 September 2017; and
- 6 March 2018.

The records of each of these meetings are available on the An Bord Pleanála website<sup>2</sup>. Generally, these meetings enabled the design team to discuss and refine aspects during the iterative design development process, consult on the planning framework and review matters raised during the public consultation process.

Following these meetings, on 23 May 2018 An Bord Pleanála confirmed<sup>3</sup> that the proposed development is ‘Strategic Infrastructure Development’ in accordance with the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

## 1.5.3 Non-Statutory Consultation

### 1.5.3.1 Public Consultation

Three periods of non-statutory public consultation were undertaken by Irish Water to engage with relevant stakeholders in relation to the proposed development. These public consultation periods occurred on the following dates:

- 15 Oct 2014 – 12 Dec 2014;
- 15 May 2015 – 10 July 2015; and
- 11 Oct 2017 – 15 Nov 2017.

The purpose was to invite feedback from statutory bodies, interested parties and the general public on the proposed development. A suite of material providing up-to-date information on the proposed development was created for each consultation period and made available on the project website throughout the consultation period and thereafter.

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<sup>2</sup> An Bord Pleanála webpage (Case PC0202): Available from <http://www.pleanala.ie/casenum/PC0202.htm> [Accessed 21 June 2018]

<sup>3</sup> An Bord Pleanála (2018) Board Direction: Available from: <http://www.pleanala.ie/documents/directions/PC0/SPC0202.pdf> [Accessed 23 June 2018]

Additionally, drop-in information events were held in Arklow Town during each consultation period and press releases were also issued through the local media in order to raise awareness of the consultation process.

Summary reports were prepared following each consultation period and were published by Irish Water<sup>4</sup>. Throughout the public consultation process, the project team aimed to ensure that all engagement with stakeholders:

- Was open and transparent;
- Demonstrated the current level of understanding on the proposed development;
- Ensured the stakeholders were made aware of the issues that were open for consultation during this phase (in accordance with the relevant feedback topics); and
- Detailed how public participation would be facilitated and how stakeholder feedback would be managed and utilised during the design development.

The first period of non-statutory public consultation (October – December 2014) sought public views on the process and constraints used in identifying potential locations for the WwTP, interceptor sewers and outfalls. This period of public consultation provided the opportunity for members of the public to participate and share their knowledge of the area and local information with the project team. The 130 submissions received helped refine a number of emerging preferred sites for the WwTP as described in detail in **Section 3.3.2 of Chapter 3**.

Four key questions were posed in respect of the proposed development as detailed below, with the responses generally positive:

1. What do you think of the process and constraints used in identifying the three potential locations?
2. What do you think of the three potential locations chosen?
3. What do you think should be considered in choosing the final location?
4. How would you like to be communicated with as the project progresses?

Some issues were raised, particularly the exclusion of the Shelton Abbey/IFI site and the exclusion of the potential for an outfall to the Avoca River. These issues were considered fully (Refer to **Chapter 3** for further detail) and this consultation phase resulted in a number of changes to the Phase 1 site selection as a result of submissions received.

The second period of non-statutory public consultation (May – July 2015) sought the public's view on the emerging preferred site for the WwTP, the interceptor sewer routes and the location of the marine outfall. This period of consultation allowed members of the public to provide further information on the emerging preferred site (at the Old Wallboard site at Ferrybank) and to raise any issues or comments on the preferred site.

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<sup>4</sup> Irish Water webpage (Arklow: Public participation: Available from: <https://www.water.ie/projects-plans/arklow-wwtp/environment-planning/> [Accessed 23 June 2018]

The 27 submissions received assisted the project team with the design development as described in detail in **Section 3.3.2 of Chapter 3**.

As with the Phase 1 consultation, the Phase 2 consultation posed a number of questions on which submissions were sought, as follows:

5. What are your views on the Emerging Preferred Site at Ferrybank (Old Wallboard Site), route pipeline and outfall location?
6. What are your views on the process for selecting the Emerging Preferred Site, route pipeline and outfall location?
7. Do you have any comments on the alternative sites, route pipeline and outfall locations?

Generally, the comments were relatively positive and illustrated the local interest and understanding of the public that the proposed development is urgently needed. There was general acceptance that the emerging preferred site was a suitable site for the WwTP, however some general concerns were raised, as follows:

- Close to residents and commercial businesses
- Proper screening would be required
- Care must be taken in the design so that the treatment plant does not make noise
- Property values/land values in the local community may be affected negatively having a WwTP in the vicinity
- Negative impact of site works during the construction phase of the development
- Daily impacts of the actual operating site associated with air, odour, noise and vibration
- Potential impact of a major incident at such a plant close to a residential area
- Impact on the quality of life of residents
- Landscape and visual impacts of a WwTP in the town
- Health and safety impacts with regards to airborne pollutants and contaminants

These concerns have been addressed in the design of the proposed development and are further dealt with in the relevant sections of the EIAR.

The third period of non-statutory public consultation (October – November 2017) sought feedback on the preferred design for the proposed development and responses to the Scoping Report as detailed in **Section 1.5.3.6**. The 41 submissions received ultimately fed into the iterative design development for the proposed development as described in detail in **Sections 3.3 – 3.7 of Chapter 3**.

During the third public consultation period, the project team asked stakeholders to provide feedback based on the following statements:

1. This new plant will change how the area looks. We are currently finalising the design of the plant; and
2. We are currently developing the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

A community update brochure was also prepared for this phase of non-statutory public consultation containing information about the proposed development. Copies of the brochure were made available in Wicklow County Council offices in Arklow town throughout the period and were made available at each drop-in information event. Copies of the brochure were also distributed to approximately 6,000 homes through an insert in the Wicklow Times. A copy of the brochure was also made available on the Irish Water website<sup>5</sup>.

The majority of feedback received relates to the potential impact of the proposed development on the surrounding environment (Refer to Table 1.1). These issues have been addressed, as appropriate, in the development of the project design and in this EIAR where appropriate.

Table 1.1: Issues raised during the third phase of non-statutory public consultation

Key Aspects	
Air Quality, Odour and Climate	Raised as a primary concern by most stakeholders, particularly in relation to the potential for odours from the WwTP. This has been addressed in <b>Chapter 9</b> .
Aquatic Ecology and the Aquatic Environment	A number of stakeholders stated that there will be a positive impact on aquatic ecology and the fishing industry. Two stakeholders expressed concern that South Beach and other beaches in the area may become polluted due to marine outfall. This has been addressed in <b>Chapters 11 and 15</b> .
Community and Socio-Economic Impacts	The majority of stakeholders stated that the proposed development will benefit the local community in the long term and was 'much needed'. Suggestions were made on behalf of the Tidy Towns to provide opportunities to host local groups for educational events, which has been incorporated as described in <b>Section 4.4 of Chapter 4</b> . Some concerns were raised as to the impact of the works, particularly at construction stage, on the local community. These concerns are addressed in <b>Chapter 17</b> .
Construction	Construction related concerns primarily centred around construction timelines, disturbance to residents in terms of traffic, safety, noise and access. These are addressed in <b>Chapters 7 – 19</b> .
Consultation	The majority of stakeholders were happy with the consultation process and methods of communication. One stakeholder did state that the consultation process was 'ageist' as email was 'not a sufficient method of communication for the elderly'.
Flooding and Storm Events	Concerns were raised by several stakeholders in relation to the likelihood and impact of large volumes of rainfall, storm events and flooding, in terms of the location of the WwTP, the flooding analysis/modelling undertaken and the potential for surcharge in the sewers and the likelihood or otherwise of the Flood Relief Scheme going ahead. These issues are addressed in <b>Chapter 15</b> .

<sup>5</sup> Irish Water (2017) Arklow WWTP webpage: Public Participation. Available from: [https://www.water.ie/projects-plans/arklow-wwtp/public-participation/Arklow-Brochure -Public-Consultation-Oct-2017\\_web.pdf](https://www.water.ie/projects-plans/arklow-wwtp/public-participation/Arklow-Brochure-Public-Consultation-Oct-2017_web.pdf) [Accessed 28 June 2018]

<b>Key Aspects</b>	
Health and Safety	A number of stakeholders were concerned with health and safety throughout the construction and operation of the proposed development, with concern also raised with regard to the revetment and safety of residents during road works. This is addressed in <b>Chapters 17 and 19</b> .
Landscape and Visual Impact	Many residents understood the reason behind the proposed scale of the WwTP and were positive about the design and visual appearance. A number of stakeholders raised concerns that the WwTP may be visually obtrusive due to its proposed size. Further, suggestions were made on behalf of the Tidy Towns to provide landscaping with native planting, which has been incorporated as described in <b>Chapter 4</b> . There were also a number of submissions regarding the proposed landscaping of the site. These issues are further considered in <b>Chapter 13</b> .
Noise and Vibration	The potential for noise and vibration impacts during both construction and operation were raised by a number of stakeholders with respect to both the WwTP and the sewer network. These issues are addressed in <b>Chapter 10</b> .
Planning and Development	A number of submissions raised aspects of the planning process, including other developments planned in the vicinity and any impacts associated with this and the fact that the proposed development may support future development in the town.
Population and Human Health	Most submissions were positive with regard to population and human health aspects of the proposed development. The design of the proposed development has addressed these issues where appropriate, as detailed in <b>Chapter 17</b> .
Project Need and Benefits	The majority of stakeholders acknowledged the need for the proposed development, with a number stating it could be a very positive development for Arklow. A number of stakeholders were very positive about the proposed development overall, particularly in relation to its 'positive contribution to the urban realm' and that they can 'only see positives for Arklow from it'.
Proposed Development	Many stakeholders raised concerns regarding the size, design and capacity of the WwTP buildings, with concerns around the adequacy of treatment, the design life of materials, renewable energy potential and the boundary treatment. A number of stakeholders also raised issues regarding the location of the interceptor sewers (one suggesting that the sewers should be laid in the river). The design of the proposed development has addressed these issues where appropriate, as detailed in <b>Chapters 3 and 4</b> .
Outfall	Concerns were raised with regard to the marine outfall, particularly with regard to any potential impacts on water quality and beaches. The outfall design has taken these issues into account, as detailed in <b>Section 3.3.4 of Chapter 3 and Chapters 11 and 15</b> .
Recreation and Amenity	A number of stakeholders queried whether a public walkway or footpath could be provided through and around the site (particularly along the seafront) and whether public parking could be provided on site. <b>Section 3.5.2.3 of Chapter 3, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7</b> address these points.
Site Selection	While some stakeholders were positive about the site selected, others had queries and concerns about why the Old Wallboard site at Ferrybank was chosen and was it the most appropriate, as well as raising concerns about potential flooding on the site, the proximity of residential areas and whether all alternatives were considered. The site selection process is explained in detail in <b>Section 3.3.2 of Chapter 3</b> . A flood risk assessment has also been prepared to support <b>Chapter 15</b> and is included in <b>Appendix 15.4 and Appendix 15.6</b> .

Key Aspects	
Sludge Management	Some queries arose with regard to the management of sludge produced at the proposed development, particularly on the disposal route for this sludge and the associated traffic movements. These issues are addressed in <b>Section 4.6.2.1 of Chapter 4 and Chapter 7.</b>
Tourism and Local Business	Irish Water received submissions stating that the proposed development will have positive impacts on tourism through improved water quality in the Avoca River. A number of concerns were raised with regard to the potential impact of the proposed development on tourism and local businesses such as the sailing club, with one submission noting that the site may have been better utilised for tourism amenity. These issues are addressed in <b>Chapter 17.</b>
Traffic and Transportation	Increased traffic in the area was a concern for many stakeholders, including in particular, the Marina Village Road, North Quay/Aldi entrance, Marina Corner and South Quay. These concerns related primarily to the construction stage. These issues are addressed in <b>Chapter 7.</b>

### 1.5.3.2 Elected Members Engagement

Irish Water undertook non-statutory engagement with local TDs, Ministers, Councillors and elected representatives in the Arklow and wider Wicklow area throughout the design development. Project updates were issued to elected representatives throughout, with specific briefings provided to Elected Representatives on the following dates:

- 15 October 2014;
- 13 May 2015; and
- 17 October 2017.

Further, a meeting was held with Deputy John Brady TD on 29 May 2017 upon request, to provide an update on the proposed development.

### 1.5.3.3 Consultation Meetings with Other Interested Parties

Following on from the public consultation process outlined above, further meetings were requested by particular interested parties to discuss specific issues. The following meetings were held between members of the project team and individual parties during the design development to discuss these issues:

- Three meetings were held with the management of Marina Village apartments on 16 June 2016, 25 October 2016, 29 June 2017 as well as consultation as part of the open day on 26 October 2017 to discuss design development and provide an update on the proposed development.

### 1.5.3.4 Wicklow County Council

There was extensive consultation with Wicklow County Council as part of the overall consultation process outlined in **Section 1.5.3.1.**

Further, a number of specific meetings and discussions took place between members of the project team and Wicklow County Council to discuss specific issues during the design development. In particular, members of the design team met with Wicklow County Council Planning and Roads Departments to discuss the design development. These meetings led to high level agreements in relation to specific design elements including:

- Selection of routes for construction traffic and diversions around working areas during construction (Refer to **Section 5.7 of Chapter 5** for further information);
- Refinement of the massing and form of the WwTP buildings (Refer to **Section 3.5.1 of Chapter 3** for further information); and
- Refinement of the interceptor sewer network to accommodate local drainage and potential flood risk concerns (Refer to **Section 3.5.2 of Chapter 3** for further information).

### 1.5.3.5 Wicklow County Council and Office of Public Works

In addition to the above, meetings were held with Wicklow County Council and the Office of Public Works in relation to the proposed Arklow Flood Relief Scheme. As described in detail in **Section 2.6.7 of Chapter 2**, Wicklow County Council, funded by the Office of Public Works, proposes to develop a Flood Relief Scheme that will physically overlap with the proposed development (refer to **Section 2.6 of Chapter 2** and **Chapter 20** for further detail).

The proponents of both projects recognised at an early stage, the importance of liaising throughout the design development. Iterative consultation and numerous meetings occurred throughout 2016, 2017 and 2018 between the proponents and their design teams to optimise the design, minimise nuisance for local residents, consider any health and safety issues and where practicable, to maximise cost efficiencies associated with specific ‘plug-in’ elements to facilitate the proposed Arklow Flood Relief Scheme (such as installing sheet piling to construct the interceptor sewer that was designed to support the flood defence wall).

### 1.5.3.6 EIA Scoping Consultation

An informal EIA scoping exercise was undertaken and an EIA Scoping Report was prepared and circulated to relevant stakeholders in October 2017. The Scoping Report described the key elements of the proposed development and outlined the level of detail and information to be included in the EIAR.

The Scoping Report was published on the project website<sup>6</sup> as part of the third-round of non-statutory consultation during 11 October 2017 – 15 November 2017 and circulated to relevant stakeholders for their consideration.

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<sup>6</sup> Irish Water (2017) Arklow Wastewater Treatment Project: EIA scoping Report. Available from: [https://www.water.ie/projects-plans/arklow-wwtp/public-participation/Arklow-EIA-Scoping-Report-ISSUE\\_18.10.2017.pdf](https://www.water.ie/projects-plans/arklow-wwtp/public-participation/Arklow-EIA-Scoping-Report-ISSUE_18.10.2017.pdf) [Accessed 6 February 2018]

Feedback was sought from the following stakeholders to further inform the content and scope of the EIAR:

- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government;
- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment;
- Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport;
- Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (including the Development Applications Unit, National Parks and Wildlife Service and the National Monuments Service);
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine;
- Health and Safety Authority;
- Health and Safety Executive;
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland;
- National Transport Authority;
- Mid-East Regional Authority;
- Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon (The Arts Council);
- Fáilte Ireland;
- An Taisce;
- The Heritage Council;
- Environmental Protection Agency;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland;
- Wicklow County Council;
- Office of Public Works;
- Arklow and District Chamber of Commerce; and
- Arklow Harbour Authority / Harbour Commissioners.

Submissions were received in response to the Scoping Report from a number of stakeholders. Points raised and associated action taken by the EIA team is provided in **Appendix 1.2**.

## 1.6 Difficulties Encountered During the Assessment

The primary difficulty encountered during the preparation of the EIA was associated with the Old Wallboard site at Ferrybank (i.e. the WWTP site). The buildings on the site are in a poor state of repair (including the asbestos cement cladding which envelops the main building). This limited access to the site, from a health and safety perspective, particularly during the Site Investigation (SI).

No other difficulties were encountered during the preparation of this EIAR. The difficulties which arose are not considered to have a material impact on the baseline data collection for this EIAR.

## 1.7 References

European Commission (2017) Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

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Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2003) *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development*;

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Environmental Protection Agency (2017) *Draft Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (Draft August 2017)*;

Irish Water webpage (2018) *Arklow: Public participation*: Available from: <https://www.water.ie/projects-plans/arklow-wwtp/environment-planning/> [Accessed 23 June 2018]

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