**Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Project**

**Summer 2018 Update**

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**Irish Water Submits Strategic Infrastructure Planning Application**

Irish Water submitted a planning application for strategic infrastructure development to An Bord Pleanála seeking permission to further progress the upgrade of the Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant (WwTP). The application sought permission for works required to facilitate the use of Aerobic Granular Sludge (AGS) technology, to omit the previously permitted long sea outfall tunnel and to upgrade the sludge treatment facilities at Ringsend, Dublin 4, and to provide for a Regional Biosolids Storage Facility in Newtown, Dublin 11.

This proposed upgrade of the Ringsend WwTP will enable future population growth and ensure the plant operates to the highest possible environmental standards.

**Background to the planning application**

AGS is an advanced nutrient removal technology that will allow for a greater amount of wastewater to be treated to a higher standard within the current Ringsend WwTP.

A previous planning application to upgrade the plant, based on the treatment technologies available at that time, received approval in 2012. This 2012 approval included the construction of a 9km long sea outfall tunnel, which would allow the discharge of the treated wastewater further out into Dublin Bay, away from the nutrient sensitive Lower Liffey Estuary.

In 2014, Irish Water took over the responsibility of providing water and wastewater services in Ireland.  The need for the Ringsend WwTP Upgrade Project was assessed and reaffirmed.  All elements of the 2012 approval were reviewed and AGS technology was identified by Irish Water as ideally suited and subsequently proven for use at the Ringsend WwTP.

Using AGS technology allows for a greater amount of wastewater to be treated to a higher standard within the current Ringsend WwTP. This means that the treated wastewater leaving the plant will be of a much higher quality than it would have been based on the original proposal in the 2012 approval. This higher quality treated wastewater will be suitable for discharge at the current outfall location, in compliance with the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, negating the need for the 9km outfall tunnel originally included in the 2012 planning approval.

**Why is this project needed?**

Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Project is one of the most important of a number of major investments in both water supply and wastewater that Irish Water will be rolling out in the region to support the economic projections for growth for the Greater Dublin Area.

Wastewater from homes and businesses needs to be collected and treated to ensure it is not a threat to public health or the environment when returned to a river or to the sea.

Wastewater from Dublin has been treated in Ringsend since 1906. The current plant is the largest wastewater treatment plant (WwTP) in Ireland and was built in 2005 to a design capacity of 1.64m population equivalent (PE).

Ringsend WwTP currently discharges treated wastewater into the Lower Liffey Estuary via an outfall located approximately 1km from the facility. Under the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, the Lower Liffey Estuary is designated as a (nutrient) sensitive waterbody.  This designation requires the WwTP to reduce nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus) to below a specified level before discharging into a nutrient sensitive waterbody.

The Ringsend WwTP is currently operating at levels in excess of its intended design capacity, with wastewater of up to 1.9m population equivalent requiring treatment. In order to treat the current wastewater load to the required standard and to allow for future growth in population and industry, the plant must be upgraded. The need for this upgrade project was highlighted in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (2005) and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (2008). Irish Water has assessed and reaffirmed the need for the Ringsend upgrade project.

Subject to An Bord Pleanála approval, this upgrade project will allow the Ringsend WwTP to treat the increasing volumes of wastewater arriving at the plant to the required standard and capacity, enabling future housing and commercial development and helping to ensure that Dublin is able to sustain continued growth. When all the proposed works are complete, the Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant will be able to treat wastewater for up to 2.4 million population equivalent while meeting the standards of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive.

Note; All wastewater from sewers in South Dublin County Council discharges via trunk sewers and pumping stations to Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant.

**What has happened so far?**

To date, Irish Water has invested €70 million in upgrading the Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant. This includes advance work to prepare the site for the upgrade, upgrades to the odour treatment facilities, trialling and proving of AGS technology and investigative works to inform the project.

In December 2017, Irish Water appointed a contractor to construct a new 400,000 population equivalent extension at the plant (as laid out in the 2012 planning approval).  Works on this capacity upgrade are progressing to schedule and it is anticipated that these will be completed in 2020.

**What is a regional biosolids storage facility?**

Biosolids contain high levels of nutrients and are sustainably reused as an organic fertiliser in agriculture, in compliance with EU and National regulations. Approximately 98% of biosolids produced in Ireland are reused on agricultural land.

Biosolids are only applied to lands during the planting seasons each Spring and Autumn. For the rest of the year biosolids need to be stored. No further treatment of the material is required and no treatment will take place at the storage facility. Under the new strategic infrastructure planning application, the Ringsend WwTP will have the capacity to serve the Greater Dublin Area, including parts of Kildare and Meath for the next 25 years.

Irish Water commenced a site selection process in February 2017 that included three stages of public consultation to identify a preferred site for a Regional Biosolids Storage Facility.

This process identified a preferred site for the facility at Newtown, Dublin 11.  A six week non-statutory consultation was held on the identified preferred site and the factors to be considered in the development of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).  The preferred site has undergone all relevant environmental studies and assessments as part of the preparation of a planning application for the project.

For more information on the regional biosolids storage facility visit [www.water.ie/biosolids](https://scanmail.trustwave.com/?c=6600&d=i_2X28T3v3EWsaKgbl78oqBCoSxQpvTPGqC8O2RiQw&s=344&u=https%3a%2f%2firishwater%2ecmail19%2ecom%2ft%2fr-l-jykkhtit-kluhirkytl-y%2f)

**Planning application and next steps**

The planning application consisted of two primary components:

* **Component 1: Ringsend WwTP, Pigeon House Road, Dublin 4:** Permission sought for the further development of the Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant comprising revisions and alterations to the 2012 approval.
* **Component 2: Regional Biosolids Facility:** Permission sought for the development of a Regional Biosolids Storage Facility at Newtown, North Road, Dublin 11.

An Environmental Impact Assessment Report and a Natura Impact Statement were prepared and accompanied the planning application.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Report for the Proposed Upgrade Project consisted of the following five volumes:

* Volume 1 – Non-Technical Summary
* Volume 2 - Project Description and Overarching Documents
* Volume 3 – Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant (WwTP)
* Volume 4 – Regional Biosolids Storage Facility (RBSF)
* Volume 5 – Drawings

 Submissions or observations were invited and could be made to An Bord Pleanála up to end July 2018.

Further information is available on the Irish Water website at:   [**www.water.ie/ringsend**](https://scanmail.trustwave.com/?c=6600&d=i_2X28T3v3EWsaKgbl78oqBCoSxQpvTPGvzqOTVgRQ&s=344&u=https%3a%2f%2firishwater%2ecmail19%2ecom%2ft%2fr-l-jykkhtit-kluhirkytl-i%2f)