River Ilen (Skibbereen) Drainage Scheme Environmental Impact Statement

During 2011 RPS completed an Environmental Constraints Study and consulted with both Statutory and Non-Statutory Stakeholders. The results of this Constraints Study formed part of the assessment criteria that identified an emerging preferred option for flood risk management in Skibbereen. This emerging preferred option was outlined at the second Public Information Day held in January 2012. Since January 2012, RPS have refined the scheme proposals and completed further environmental investigations. An Environmental Impact Assessment has now been completed in accordance with EC (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1989 to 2001 and the recommendations of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) *Draft Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements (2002)* and *Advice Notes on Current Practice (on the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements) (EPA, 1998)*. The River Ilen (Skibbereen) Drainage Scheme Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) presents the results of this assessment, identifies positive and negative potential impacts and, where relevant, specifies appropriate mitigation measures to minimise adverse impacts of the Scheme.

The EIS and Drainage Scheme drawings will be exhibited for four weeks (11th April to 10th May 2013). Copies of the EIS can be purchased from either the Office of Public Works or Cork County Council. Overall, impacts are expected to be positive, long-term and significant to the community and no significant long-term negative impacts to the environment have been identified. The following are some of the key impacts identified in the EIS:

Key Positive Impacts Identified

- Overall, impacts on Human Beings are expected to be positive, long-term and significant consistent with the reduced flood risk and associated benefits for the town of Skibbereen.
- Specifically, the proposed scheme will positively impact on both the residential population and commercial enterprises at properties within the benefiting lands for less than the 1 in 200 year flood.
- The proposed scheme has the potential to create significant long-term positive impacts for the residential population and commercial enterprises in Skibbereen.

Key Negative Environmental Impacts identified

- Short-term disruption to the local community during the construction phase due to increased traffic, dust and noise;
- Potential for impacts to the aquatic environment (water quality and ecology including fish) during the construction stage through accidental spillages, in-stream works, spread of invasive species;
- Loss of trees, hedgerows & bird & bat habitats;
- Potential impact to otters & Grey Seal;
- Visual impacts associated with walls and embankments; and
- Archaeological impacts associated with 19th century quays along the south bank of the River Ilen, unrecorded finds in the river & footprint of works.

Recommendations to Mitigate Negative Impacts

- Potential impacts will be mitigated through mitigation measures including Preparation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), liaison with local residents, work hour restrictions etc, dust minimisation plan, best practice construction methodologies to reduce noise levels from machinery & traffic management plan;
- Mitigation measures will include pre-construction invasive species survey, CEMP, supervision of in-stream works by an ecologist, silt control measures & monitoring, Surface Water Management Plan, design of walled channel in the Caol Stream to preserve and recreate natural flow and substrate conditions as much as possible;
- Potential impacts will be mitigated through erection of appropriate fencing to protect tress & hedgerows that are due to be retained, avoidance of hedgerow removal from March – August where possible, checking of mature trees & bridges for bats prior to works;
- Potential impacts will be mitigated though pre-construction otter survey & grey seal survey prior to construction works;
- Potential impacts will be mitigated though use of materials similar in colour, size and scale to existing channel walls, stone faced walls, protection of existing trees (employment of an aboriculturist to perform a tree survey of the scheme prior to works commencing) & landscape screening; and
- Potential impacts will be mitigated through archaeological survey prior to works commencing, pre-construction archaeological test trenching, archaeological supervision.

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