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OPW Óifig na nOibreacha Poiblí
Office of Public Works



Kenmare Flood Relief Scheme

Newsletter December 2024



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Project Overview

This issue (Issue 10) of the Kenmare Flood Relief Scheme newsletter describes the progress which has been made in the development of the Kenmare Flood Relief Scheme from the beginning of October 2024 to the end of December 2024. The progress which has been made during this period includes the progression of environmental surveys and the progression of preliminary scheme options assessment.

Project Overview

Outline of the project progress since the previous issue of the newsletter

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Recent Progress

A summary of the various items of work which have been progressed recently as part of the flood relief scheme.

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What's Next?

A summary of the tasks which the project team will be prioritising over the coming months.

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Recent Progress

Engineering Works

Options Development: The design team are presently using the data which has been gathered through various engineering surveys (i.e. ground investigation, CCTV and manhole survey, topographic survey) and ecological surveys (mammal survey, Wintering bird survey, tree survey etc.) which have been completed to assess different flood defence measures which could be implemented in Kenmare to protect the town and wider flood defence scheme area from future flood events.

The measures being considered include the provision of upstream flood storage volume, construction of raised defences (flood defence walls and embankments), the provision of a flood warning system, the removal of structures which constrain flows within the river channels, the provision of diversion channels among other options.

The various measures are being assessed in relation to their technical, social, environmental and economic benefits to identify the best flood defence scheme to be implemented.

Hydraulic Modeling: In recent months, the design team have completed the initial hydraulic model simulations of the preliminary scheme options which are being considered. The different options are modelled virtually to see how effectively the different options would provide flood protection to Kenmare. The simulations included the removal of local constraints such as bridges or other obstructions in the watercourses and the provision of upstream storage. The outcome of these preliminary options will be assessed and refined to identify the best flood defence scheme which could be implemented in Kenmare.

Further, more detailed hydraulic modelling simulations will be carried out in 2025.

Natural Water Retention Measures: The design team completed their natural water retention measures assessment in November 2024.

Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM) are defined as “measures that aim to safeguard and enhance the water storage potential of landscape, soil and aquifers by restoring ecosystems, natural features and characteristics of water courses and using natural processes”. The results of the assessment will feed into the FRS options assessment.

Ground Investigations: The on-site ground investigation field works began in early 2024 and were completed in September 2024. Since the field works were completed, the ground investigation contractor has revisited each area where works were carried out to ensure that the area has been reinstated to its original condition.

Various soil samples were collected during the field works stage which have since been subjected to laboratory testing to classify the soil and rock to determine their characteristics. This information will inform the design of the flood relief scheme.

A draft factual report summarising the results of the ground investigation field work and laboratory testing was received in October 2024. The final, complete report is expected to be ready in early 2025.

Additional ground investigation works will be required in the future as the flood relief scheme progresses.

Environmental Surveys & Reports

Since the commencement of the project in 2022. Various environmental surveys have been carried out. Below is a summary of the various surveys which have been completed to date with a brief description.

Freshwater Pearl Mussel Survey: The freshwater pearl mussel survey works were completed during Summer 2024. These surveys identified freshwater pearl mussels in the local watercourses. Fresh Water Pearl Mussels are a highly threatened animal which are categorized as critically endangered in Ireland and across Europe. The survey identified a total of 76 live Freshwater Pearl Mussels in the Kenmare area.

Bird Surveys: The wintering bird survey was completed during Winter 2023/2024. The breeding bird survey was then completed Summer 2024.

The purpose of the bird surveys is to identify any bird species and habitats within the Kenmare flood relief scheme area so that the flood relief scheme is designed to avoid impacting on these species and habitats wherever possible.

Tree Survey: The tree survey was carried out in Summer 2023. The tree survey recorded and assessed the condition (species, age, height, ecological value etc.) of each tree which could potentially be impacted by the proposed flood relief scheme so that the impact can be eliminated or reduced in advance of the construction stage of the scheme.

Bat Survey: The bat survey was completed in Autumn 2023. There are eleven recorded bat species in Ireland. Five different species of bat were recorded foraging in the Kenmare area during the survey. The species recorded in Kenmare are *common pipistrelles*, *soprano pipistrelles*, *Nathusius' pipistrelle*, *Leisler's bats*, and *brown long-eared bats*.

Invasive Alien Species Survey: Invasive alien plant species (IAS) survey and treatment works have been carried out by a specialist contractor in and around Kenmare town during Spring / Summer

2023 and 2024.

Invasive species such as *Japanese Knotweed*, *Rhododendron* and *Giant Rhubarb* have been identified and treated in various locations relevant to the flood relief scheme since treatment works began in 2023. Both mechanical and herbicidal treatment methods are used to reduce the volumes of IAS within the scheme area. IAS monitoring and treatment works will continue in and around Kenmare annually until the flood relief scheme has been constructed.

Aquatic Ecology Survey: Specialist ecologists completed the aquatic ecology survey Summer 2023 in the River Finnihy and its tributaries in and around Kenmare and has issued the resulting survey report. The presence of species such as Juvenile Salmon and European Eel were recorded in the Finnihy River and its adjoining tributaries during the survey.

Mammal Survey: Environmental specialists carried out a mammal survey as part of the project during Summer 2023. The purpose of the mammal survey was to confirm the presence/absence of mammal habitats and species within the scheme area of the proposed flood relief scheme. Mammal species which are protected under the EU Habitats Directive and which are relatively common in Ireland include all bat species, otters (*Lutra lutra*), badgers (*Meles meles*), hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*), pine marten (*Martes martes*) and red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*).

The image below shows a potential Otter Holt identified during the 2023 mammal survey.



Additional Specialist Environmental Surveys:

Various additional environmental surveys will be conducted in the future including the following.

- ➔ Landscape and Visual
- ➔ Air Quality and Climate
- ➔ Noise and Vibration
- ➔ Architectural and Archaeological Survey

What’s Next

A high level project programme is shown below.

Stage	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
I										
II										
III										
IV										
V										

As indicated above, we are currently in Stage 1 of the Flood Relief Scheme, this is the Scheme Development and Preliminary Design stage. This stage commenced in June 2022 and is expected to run until late 2025. Further information on the Projects Timeline and Stages are found on the Scheme website, link provided below:

<https://www.floodinfo.ie/frs/en/kenmare/home/>

Over the next few months, the Project Team will be working on the following:

- ➔ Completion of the Ground Investigation contract
- ➔ Finalisation of the Hydraulics Report.
- ➔ Continuation of the optioneering work.
- ➔ Continuation of various environmental surveys
- ➔ Architectural surveys (Including cultural heritage).



Contact Us

If you would like to contact our Project Team about any matter relating to the Kenmare Flood Relief Scheme you can do so through the following:

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If you would like any further information on the scheme, please visit our website:

www.floodinfo.ie/frs/en/kenmare/home/