

# PORTARLINGTON FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

Public Consultation Day No.2 – Summary  
Report

**Project no. 123161**



**OPW**

Oifig na  
nOibreacha Poiblí  
Office of Public Works

Prepared for:

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AEP	Annual Exceedance Probability
BNOD	Binnies UK Limited & Nicholas O'Dwyer Limited Joint Venture
FRS	Flood Relief Scheme
LCC	Laois County Council
OCC	Offaly County Council
OPW	Office of Public Works
PCC	Portarlington Community Centre
PCD1	Public Consultation Day no. 1
PCD2	Public Consultation Day no. 2

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of Public Consultation Day No. 2 (PCD2)

Binnies UK Limited and Nicholas O'Dwyer Limited Joint Venture, referred to as BNOD in this report, were commissioned by Laois County Council (LCC), Offaly County Council (OCC) and the Office of Public Works (OPW) in August 2020 to provide engineering and environmental services for the development of a flood relief scheme in Portarlington.

The Project is currently at Stage I - Scheme Development and Design. Aligning with the Project Brief, BNOD are required to prepare, arrange, and manage Public Consultation Events. This event is the second out of the three envisaged for Stage I. The purpose of it is to:

- Present the emerging flood relief options to stakeholders and the public;
- Inform the public of the options development process;
- Present and gather feedback on the emerging options in advance of and to inform the identification and selection of a preferred scheme

The key information communicated through the event included:

- The Project background, timeline, and progress to date;
- The modelled baseline flood extents for the 10%, 1% and 0.1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) fluvial flood event ;
- Modelled flood extents following implementation of flood relief measures, along with a summary of the benefits and constraints of each option;
- Archaeological, environmental, spatial, and other constraints, as well as early landscape considerations;
- A summary of the steps followed to develop the emerging options presented.

### 1.2 Previous consultation events

The first Public Consultation event was undertaken online due to COVID-19 constraints. Leaflets and questionnaires were printed and distributed at several locations in Portarlington and the material was advertised on various platforms including the Project's Website, LCC's Consultation Portal, YouTube, Facebook, and Local Media.

The questionnaires received indicated the urgency for a solution for the flooding occurrences in Portarlington and a request from the community to be more involved in the process.

Responses received after the event highlighted key concerns from the public and stakeholders about the potential environmental and archaeological impacts of the project. Additionally, there was an interest in understanding the extent of the scheme area as well as the extents of flooding. Residents and stakeholders expressed the need for protection of areas currently experiencing flooding, such as Botley Court Field.

## 2. Management and hosting of Public Consultation Day No.2

This second public consultation was held face-to-face in Portarlington Community Centre since the COVID-19 constraints were all lifted, on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2pm to 7pm (Figure 2-1). Project team members present on the day were Fabio Spaliviero (Project Director), Pinelopi Tsira (Project Manager) and Nicole Del Tedesco (Civil Engineer). Client representatives from Laois County Council and the OPW were also present throughout the day including Paul McLoughlin (LCC - Senior Engineer & Client Project Manager ), Sandra Southern (LCC - Project Administrator), Pascal Tobin (OPW - Project Coordinator Team Lead) and Gerry Gallagher (OPW FRD Division).



Figure 2-1: Portarlington Community Centre

### 2.1 Supporting Material

BNOD in liaison with LCC, OCC and OPW prepared a set of documents (Appendix A) to advertise and support the event, including:

- an advert for the local newspaper Leinster Express;
- Posters advertising the event which were placed at agreed locations throughout the town;
- Information leaflets that were available at key locations in the town and at the Community Centre on the day of the PCD;
- a book containing key information on the options; the book consisted of individual maps which were printed in A1 and displayed on the walls of the venue (Figure 2-2);



Figure 2-2: Displaying material, Main Hall, Portarlington Community Centre

- a printed questionnaire which was provided to each attendee on arrival along with a leaflet.

## 2.2 Event advertisement and invitation to participate

### (a) Newspaper

The event was advertised on November 8<sup>th</sup> in the Leinster Express newspaper. An additional online advert was displayed on the Leinster Express' website. The online advert was published on November 9<sup>th</sup> and remained live until it reached 100,000 impressions (number of clicks).

### (b) Websites

The material was uploaded on the Project Website ahead of the event for public viewing. An online version of the questionnaire was made available after the event for the individuals to fill in. Highlighted on the Project Website was that closing date for consultations and questionnaire submissions is 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022, two weeks after the event.

(<https://www.floodinfo.ie/frs/en/portarlington/project-info/public-engagement/>)

An advertisement of the public event was posted on the Laois County Council's website. The event was advertised on LCC's, OCC's and PCC's Facebook Page.

(<https://consult.laois.ie/en/consultation/portarlington-flood-relief-scheme-second-public-consultation-day-24th-november-2022>)

### (c) Elected Members and Stakeholders

A presentation was given to the Elected Members by LCC on 17<sup>th</sup> November. Following that, B/NOD released on email on 18<sup>th</sup> November to stakeholders and local communities informing them of the PCD event taking place.



### 3. Public participation

A total 23 attendees were recorded, and 7 no. responses were received via physical questionnaires on the day of the event. Following the event, 1no. questionnaire was received by post and 1 no. online



*Figure 3-1 BNOD, LCC and OPW discussing the emerging options of the Scheme with members of the public*



### 3.1 Responses received

#### (a) Feedback gathered from discussions with the attendees

Table 2-1 below provides a summary of the comments received during the event from people who participated. **Error! Reference source not found.** depicts on a map the main observations and concerns.

*Table 2-1: Summary of comments received during the event*

Participant No.	Notes
1	<p>Landowner, French Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flooding does not impact the property, apart from February 1990 which was the worst flooding witnessed.</li> <li>- Flooding impacts the garden.</li> <li>- The flooding reported was mainly caused by seepage through an old wall due to sandy nature of soils.</li> <li>- The resident expressed preference for a concrete wall to minimise land take.</li> <li>- It was noted that the proposed widening of the existing bridge opening might not be the preferred solution for people in the area.</li> </ul>
2	<p>Landowner, Link Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requested to update the OS map used to include all the recent developments in Portarlington.</li> <li>- Requested to review the information submitted via email during PCD1 and provision of responses.</li> <li>- It was noted that the opposite to this property, and in the vicinity of the river banks, accumulates material over time, with possible impact on the floodplain and risk of pushing fluvial flooding elsewhere.</li> <li>- No fluvial flooding impacts the property, however, was reported that surface water flooding happens due to a culvert which might be plugged. The inlet is in the proximity of the house and discharges to the River Barrow.</li> <li>- It was noted that in Spa Street, where no flooding was reported for the last 10 years but confirmed that, flooding still occurs in that area.</li> <li>- It was noted that that a NRV is present on Spa Street.</li> <li>- It was noted that that a sewage overflow runs along Spa Street bridge north to south which currently discharges into the river possibly untreated.</li> <li>- It was noted that in Pine Villas, where no flooding was reported. This area was a lake approximately 50 years ago and now has been filled with material .</li> <li>- A note was made that a high number of trout used to be present in the River Barrow .</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Portarlington experienced high flooding on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2018 with more regular flooding happening in Patrick Street.</li> <li>- It was noted that a historical tunnel runs underneath the town centre from the AMR4 confluence with the Barrow (R419) towards the fire Station. The tunnel is no longer operating, currently blocked.</li> <li>- It was noted that the farm on the right bank of the Barrow floodplain, downstream of the railway, drains to the river.</li> <li>- A note was made that Marian Hill never experienced flooding and Drough Hill also never experienced flooding. However, was suggested to discuss further with the residents, the flooding due to culvert C8.2 exceeding capacity.</li> <li>- Noted was that property in the neighbouring area gets flooded when Spa Street Bridge starts getting submerged, due to potential issue of seepage, without however, any flood water bursting the banks.</li> </ul>
3	<p>Landowner outside of the flooding extent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No flooding reported at the property.</li> <li>- A note was made for consideration of an alternative alignment for the Blackstick Drain bypass along the road north of the Botley Lane industrial estate. An explanation was provided that the choice of the bypass channel in the proposed location was based on existing ground levels to follow the natural flow path of the Blackstick drain and minimise excavation.</li> <li>- A note was made that Barlow's Lane was one of the most affected areas from the Blackstick Drain and the Barrow flooding.</li> <li>- A note was made for consideration of Botley Lane road raising instead of hard defences with culvert upsize at the crossing with the Blackstick Drain. An explanation was provided that the road raising had already been considered and modelled. The model results showed that an approximately one meter road rise would be required which is not technically viable to tie in with the existing levels and maintain the existing accesses.</li> <li>- A note was made that the AMR8 used to be a spring fed watercourse and that a sewerage pumping station exists downstream of the culvert C8.2.</li> <li>- A note was made that there is a planning permission for the greenfield area upstream of culvert C8.2.</li> <li>- A note was made that AMR13 receives water from a big drain on the golf course.</li> </ul>
4	<p>Landowner outside of the flooding extent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A note was made that there is a planning permission for the greenfield area upstream of culvert C8.2.</li> <li>- A note was made on Option B and the risk that the proposed two- stage channel along river Barrow between Spa Street and the AMR8 confluence may not work since the Barrow has low water levels, particularly during summertime.</li> </ul>
5	<p>Landowner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequently flooding reported at the land within the natural Barrow floodplain.</li> <li>- No issues raised on the proposals.</li> <li>- Access to the land on the left bank of the Barrow floodplain is via a side access on Patrick's Street which would get blocked by the proposed embankment alignment for both options. The preservation of either this access (via a set off slope up and down with suitable grading) or provision of an alternative access for cattle would need to be incorporated in the design proposal.</li> </ul>

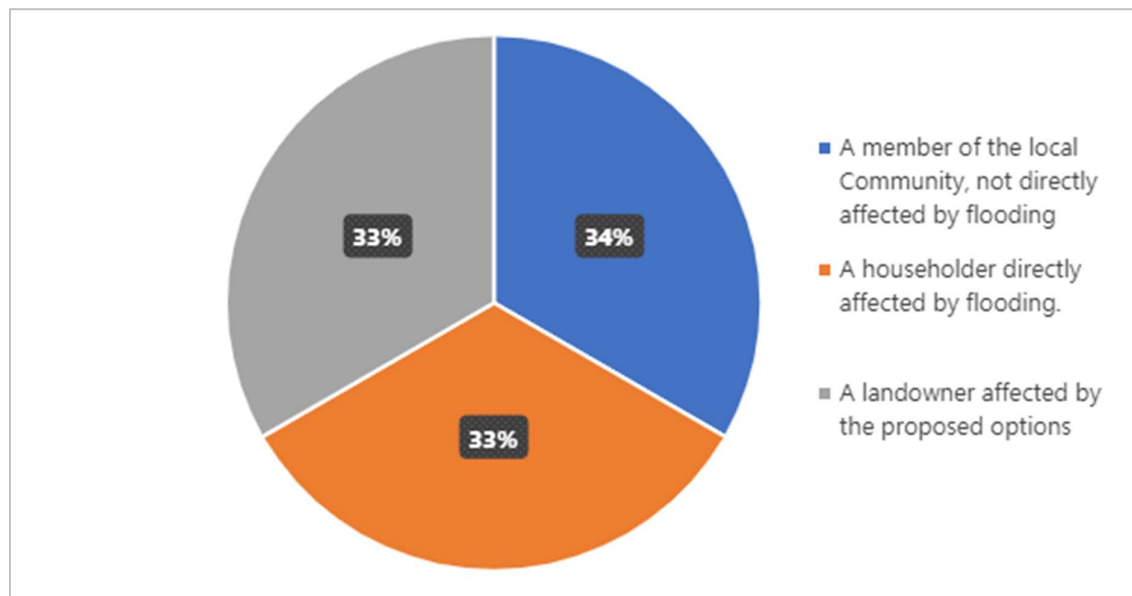
6	<p>Landowner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flooding reported in Spa Street.</li> <li>- Flooding reported at the land within the Barrow floodplain .</li> <li>- Preference for measures which would minimise land take.</li> </ul>
7	<p>Local Elected Member with interest on the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General appreciation for the work done to date including considerations from an environmental perspective.</li> </ul>
8	<p>Property Owner &amp; Angler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No flooding was experienced at the Portaloise Road immediately south of AMR2, however, a note was made of recent works on AMR2 (approximately 3 years ago) which involved digging of the existing tributary downstream of culvert C2.2 to reduce flooding locally.</li> <li>- A note was made that in the past the Council had a specific team dedicated to maintaining the Barrow and tributaries riverbanks with periodical vegetation removal which maintained channel capacity. A request was made to incorporate maintenance of the watercourses' riverbanks with both options.</li> <li>- A request was made for habitat creation within the Scheme and to consider restoration of trout spawning at the Blackstick Drain which historically used to have trout.</li> <li>- A note was made on trout spawning that had occurred along AMR13 (in the 60s), however, mentioned the potential difficulties to restore that considering the long culvert within the industrial area which would impede this activity.</li> <li>- The owner agreed to provide more detail information on required habitat restoration measures.</li> <li>- Noted was the sandy nature of soils at this location.</li> </ul>
9	<p>Property Owner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flooding reported behind shop on Patrick's St.</li> <li>- Risk of flooding reported for house on Botley Lane.</li> <li>- A request for more work done to prevent this ongoing issue.</li> <li>- It was noted that properties are impacted by flooding every year.</li> </ul>
10	<p>Owner of land within the Barrow floodplain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A concern was expressed over an increased risk of flooding on farmland due to defences upstream and downstream.</li> <li>- A note was made that proposed flood defences would split their property in half and expressed the preference for re-alignment of the proposed flood defences.</li> </ul>

### (b) Information received from Questionnaires

B/NOD received a total of 9 questionnaire responses, 7 no. responses on the day of the event, 1 no. questionnaire was received by post and 1 no. online. All respondents consented to allow LCC, OPW and their agencies to contact them in the future for information regarding the Scheme. Not all attendees returned questionnaires. Responders did not provide feedback on all questions. The following sections go into more detail on the responses received for each question.

#### Question 1: Are you:

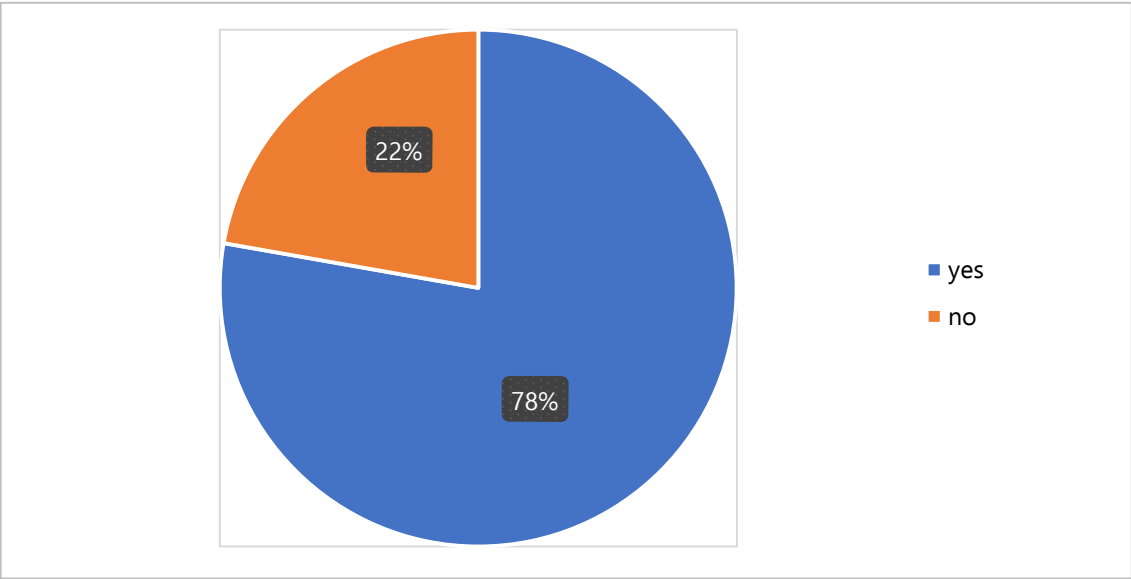
Question Options	No. Responses
A householder directly affected by flooding	3
A member of the local Community, not directly affected by flooding	3
A landowner affected by the proposed options	3
A member of a local Group	0
A member of a Statutory Consultee Group	0
Other	0



Graph 3-1: Responses to Question 1

Question 2: Have you been aware of the Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme?

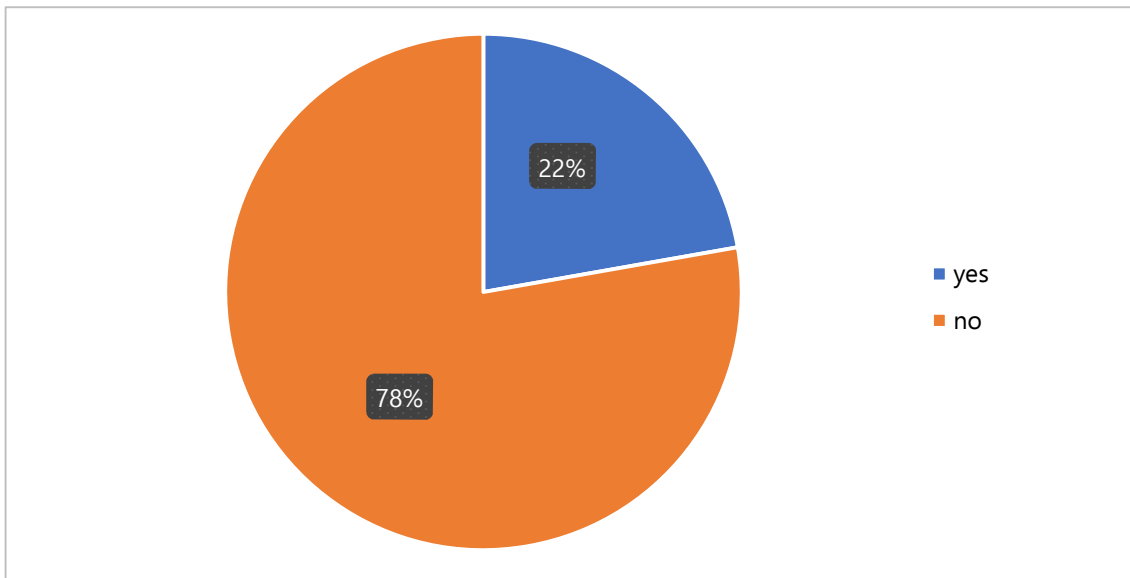
Question Options	No. Responses
Yes	7
No	2



Graph 3-2 Responses to Question 2

**Question 3: Did you attend, or engage with the public consultation held in Winter 2021?**

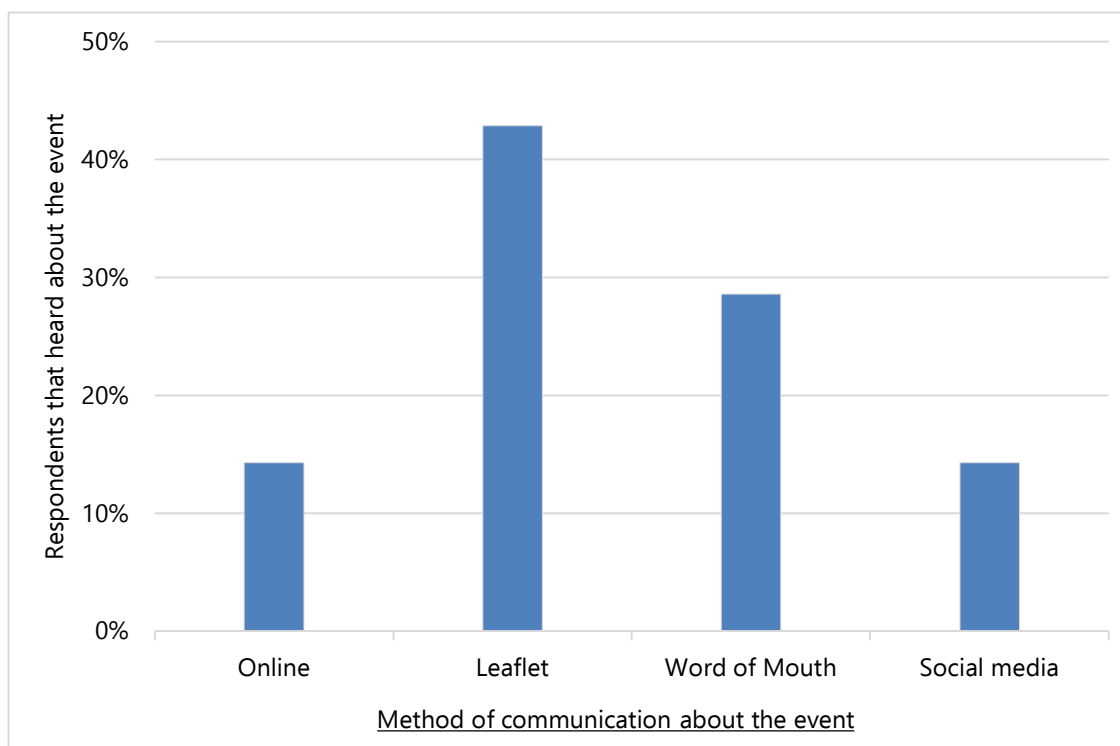
Question Options	No. Responses
Yes	2
No	7

*Graph 3-3 Responses to Question 3*



**Question 4: How did you hear about this Public Consultation Day? (Newspaper, online, other)**

Question Options	No. Responses
Online	1
Leaflet	3
Word of Mouth	2
Social Media	1

*Graph 3-4 Responses to Question 4*

**Question 5 a): Do you own rent or occupy a property within the study area?**

Question Options	No. Responses
Yes	8
No	1

**Question 5 b): If you answered yes, has this property been flooded?**

Question Options	No. Responses
Yes	6
No	2

**Question 5 c): If yes, what was the type of property flooded?**

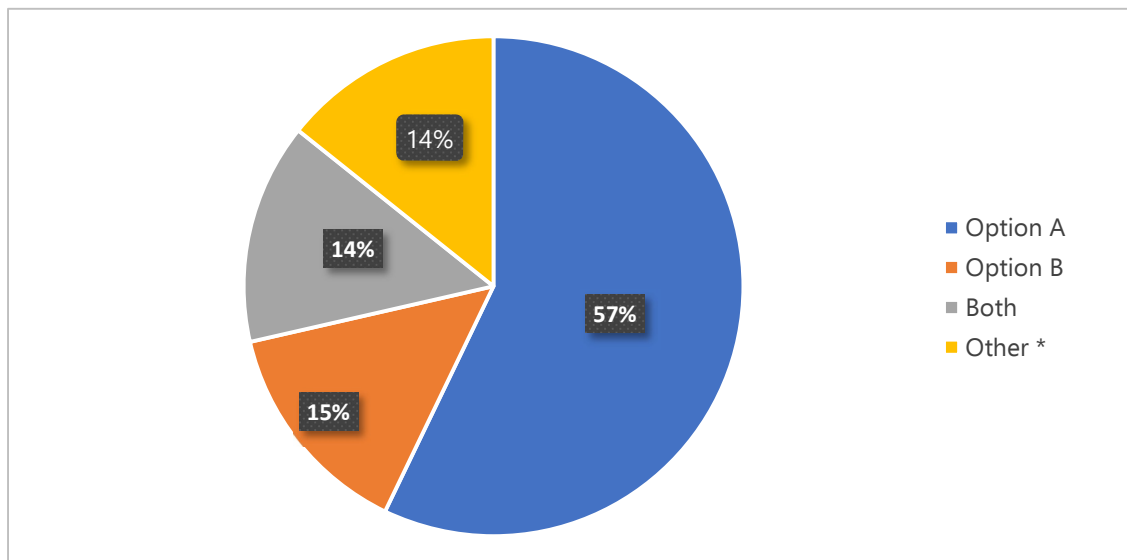
Question Options	No. Responses
Residential	2
Retail	1
Office	0
Workshop	0
Open Space	0
Other: Farmland	2

**Question 5 d): Please provide any other information, if available (how many times was the property flooded in the past, which year, what season of the year). Photos or other records you may have kept will be very useful to us.**

Response
Surrounded by water on French Church Street which is happening more frequently. Concerned that the risk of flooding is increasing all of the time.
Last big flood in 1990
Flooding occurs around the property

**Question 7 a): Of the options presented, please state your preferred option:**

Question Options	No. Responses
Option A	4
Option B	1
Both	1
Other: Preference for concrete walls irrespective of options*	1

*Graph 3-5 : Responses to Question 7a*

\* This respondent had a preference to concrete walls irrespective of options A or B.

**Question 7 b): Could you briefly explain why you prefer this option?**

Participant No.	Response
1	Of the opinion that concrete walls will provide more protection for property.
2	Not sure
9	Little less disruption to my business
10	I've no preference for either option. My land will be flooded due to defences upstream and downstream. From what I can see in the map the flood defences are to separate my property in half. I cannot see where else in the map this has happened. All other proposed defences are at the boundary of properties.

**Question 8: Do you have any concerns in relation to the environmental impact of the emerging flood relief scheme, or any thoughts on opportunities for environmental improvements?**

Response
Am respectful of the environment but have serious concerns for my property
Environment should be protected
River area protected as much as possible
The experts are going to work closely with this, not concerned
River area should be protected as much as possible

**Question 9: Please provide below any other comments or observations you wish to make about flooding or any of the information presented today**

Response
Anxious that the FRS be implemented as soon as possible.
No. The more preventive measures the better
We want this scheme; it is essential for the future of our town.
My land will be at increased risk of flooding and leave the portion behind the defences no longer of any use. Defences should be re-aligned along the boundaries of land. Concerns that measure elsewhere may displace flood water to the property.

Other feedback from questionnaires highlighted the requirement to protect the environment and properties. It was also noted that flooding is frequently occurring at many residencies and businesses. This was also mentioned in a letter from a business owner received on the day, emphasising the necessity to protect areas currently vulnerable, such as Botley Lane and Patrick's Street.

## 4. Conclusions of Public Consultation No.2

### 4.1 General Overview

The second public consultation event was successfully undertaken with many stakeholders participating at the event, providing useful background information and expressing their views on the options presented. The event was advertised on various platforms and with sufficient numbers of printed copies of the questionnaires and the leaflets distributed in the area.

The participants were informed on the project and the emerging options and were overall satisfied with the work completed to date. Many participants expressed their support for the project, also highlighting the urgency for flood relief measures. Those who attended showed an interest in protecting and restoring aspects of Portarlington's natural environment. It was also appreciated that early environmental considerations were included in the display material and presented at the event.

In total, 23 attendees participated in the event. BNOD received 9 questionnaire responses, 7 no. of responses on the day of the event, 1 no. by post and 1 no. online.

### 4.2 Conclusions and next steps

The concerns raised by the public will be considered in the following phases of the options development. The most significant feedback which will be considered in project-level assessment are the following:

- Culvert C8.2 area; a planning permission for development has been granted, potential interface between the Portarlington FRS and other projects;
- Flooding occurrences potentially due to seepage at properties in French Street and Spa Street ;
- Access arrangements to be considered to farmers lands within the River Barrow floodplain;
- Regular maintenance is required for the River Barrow and its tributaries;
- Potential for restoration of trout spawning at the Blackstick Drain and River Barrow.

In the development of the scheme there has been, and will continue to be, substantial and meaningful engagement with the public, landowners, and stakeholders. A third, Closing PCD will be held once a preferred Scheme has been identified and agreed with the Steering Group to close out the stakeholder participation events for Stage I of the Project.

## APPENDICES



## Appendix A: PCD No.2 Material

- [PCD2 Advert](#)
- [PCD2 Information Book](#)
- [PCD2 Leaflet](#)
- [PCD2 Poster](#)
- [PCD2 Printable Questionnaire](#)
- [PCD2 Online Questionnaire](#)

## Appendix B: List of Stakeholders contacted by email for PCD No.2

Stakeholder Details	
Statutory Stakeholders	Community Stakeholders
An Taisce	Arthritis Ireland Laois Branch
Birdwatch Ireland	Barrowline cruises
Bord Gais	Birdwatch Ireland Laois Branch
Chambers of Commerce (Laois)	Cloneyhurke National School, Portarlington
Chambers of Commerce (Mullingar)	Coláiste Íosagáin
Chambers of Commerce (Tullamore)	Irish Wildlife Trust
Climate Action Regional Office (Eastern & Midlands)	Laois Older Persons Forum
Coastal Marine Resources Centre	Laois Traveller Action Group
Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine	Luck-Out, LGBTI+ Youth Group
Department of Communications, Climate Action, and Environment	Meals on Wheels Portarlington
Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht	Midlands Polish Community
Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government	Offaly Historical Society
Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport	Parent & Toddler Group
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly	Parishes of Portarlington & Emo
Environmental Protection Agency	Portarlington Angling Club
ESB	Portarlington Combined Residents Association
Forest Service	Portarlington Community Centre
Felling Forest Service	Portarlington GAA Club
Gas Networks Ireland	PORTARLINGTON LIONS CLUB
Geological Survey Ireland	Portarlington Parish
Heritage Council	Portarlington Tennis Club
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Portarlington Tidy Towns
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association	Presentation Primary School
Irish Environmental Network	Sandyland National Primary School
Irish Farmers Association	St. John's National School, Killenard
Irish Water	St. Michael's Catholic Church, Portarlington
Landscape Alliance Ireland	St. Patrick's Boys National School, Portarlington
Laois County Council	SuperValu Owner
Local Authority Waters Programme	Zanshin Karate Portarlington
Offaly County Council	
Office of Public Works	
River Trust or other River Community Group	
Sustainable Water Network Ireland	
Teagasc	
The National Water Forum (An Forám Uisce)	
Transport Infrastructure Ireland	
Water Policy Advisory Committee	