

## **Committee on Public Petitions and the Ombudsman**

**Meeting – Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**Public Petition No. P00021/22 “Kiltimagh Water Scheme”**

### **Opening Statement on behalf of Uisce Éireann**

Good afternoon An Cathaoirleach, Members of the Committee.

We thank you for the invitation to attend today’s discussion on a petition concerning the Kiltimagh Water Scheme, with our colleagues from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Mayo County Council.

I am Des Joyce, Water Treatment Asset Planning Manager at Uisce Éireann, and I am joined here today by my colleague Dermot Phelan, Connections Delivery Senior Manager.

### **Uisce Éireann is Ireland’s national publicly owned public water services utility**

The Water Services Acts 2007-2022 sets out the arrangements for the delivery and oversight of water and wastewater services by Uisce Éireann. To deliver this, we work closely with our economic regulator, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities, our environmental regulator, the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Local Authorities and other bodies.

We are responsible for providing secure, safe and sustainable public water and wastewater services across Ireland. Our remit does not include group water schemes, community water schemes or private wells.

If a household or community scheme wishes to seek a connection to existing public water infrastructure, that is facilitated through our Connections Charging Policy as approved by our regulator, the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities, and published on our website.

### **In terms of today’s discussion**

We note your request to discuss the “Kiltimagh Water Scheme” petition, which relates to a request from a rural group not currently served by a public water scheme, the Clearagh Community, to make a connection to the Kiltimagh Public Water Scheme.

By way of background, Uisce Éireann offers a free Pre-Connection Enquiry service where it will assess the feasibility of a connection and ensure the supporting infrastructure is in place to enable same.

We do not have a role in advising or funding community groups. We can only accept connection applications from Community Schemes if they meets agreed operational, technical and planning standards. We cooperate closely with the respective Local Authorities and the Rural Water Services section of the Department when there is a request from a community group for a connection to a public water scheme and we work with appointed representatives and contractors to coordinate any works required and to ensure these works are completed to the necessary standards set out under the UÉ connections policy. Once this is complete, Uisce Éireann can begin the process of assuming ownership of the water infrastructure asset and carry out the final tie in connection to its existing public network.

In the case of the Clearagh Community Connection, in April 2021 in response to a pre-connection enquiry made on behalf of the community by Mayo County Council's appointed consulting engineers for the project, Ryan Hanley, Uisce Éireann gave notice that a water connection for the proposed scheme was feasible, subject to upgrades at the Kiltimagh Water Treatment Plant.

In May 2022, Uisce Éireann prioritised the upgrade of the Kiltimagh Water Treatment Plant and commenced works to facilitate additional connections in the Kiltimagh area. Following a 10-month construction period, which included both onsite and offsite works, the upgrade was completed in July 2023. This milestone meant that Uisce Éireann was in a position to accommodate connection applications, including the application from the Clearagh Community Group.

In November 2023, Uisce Éireann received a connection application from Ryan Hanley on behalf of the Clearagh Community. We are working with Ryan Hanley and Mayo County Council to agree the design parameters for works to the non-public element of the network to facilitate and deliver the connection for the Clearagh Community, as per the regulated connections policy.

Any capital works of these scale take time, and Uisce Éireann has prioritised any necessary works within our remit. We understand that securing a connection to the Uisce Éireann mains network is of the utmost importance to residents in Clearagh.

Throughout this process Uisce Éireann has maintained close contact with the representatives of the community by phone, email and through face-to-face meetings where we have provided regular updates on our upgrade works. We have also engaged with local politicians who have advocated on behalf of the community and provided them with the information requested. We are happy to continue to provide information in relation to our supporting role in delivering same.

### **To conclude**

We would like to thank you for the invitation to meet today. We will of course take away any wider queries and respond to the Committee in follow up where requested.

Go raibh maith aghaibh.

ENDS