

A chara,

On behalf of Oriel River Catchments and Coastal Association, I would like to highlight a number of water-related issues of relevance to the draft Louth County Council Development Plan.

Good water quality is a founding benchmark for vibrant communities. Louth County Council should be striving to ensure that water quality of the County's rivers, lakes and coastal waters achieve, as a minimum, Good Ecological Status as per Ireland's commitments under the EU Water Framework Directive. Currently, Louth has no (zero) waters classified as being of high ecological status.

Improving the quality of the County's waters will have important positive effects regarding recreation, tourism, well-being, business, drinking water and engaged and prosperous communities.

Water underpins all of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Louth County Council should be striving to achieve these goals in line with national commitments, and consequently improving water quality in the County should be a priority action for the County's sustainable development.

Most of the urban wastewater treatment plants in the County are currently running over their designed capacity and most will experience further pressure given the increase in housing developments, for example currently under construction in Dundalk South, and future climate change.

We also need to realise the pressures being exerted on our rivers and streams through sluicing of surface water and untreated wastewater, e.g. through storm water overflows, which are having detrimental impacts on our national and local water quality status. We cannot underestimate the importance of the SAC/SPA protected area of Dundalk Bay and its status as a Ramsar wetland of international importance as a result of the wildlife that inhabit these sensitive waters and coastline.

Water is life, and life in County Louth depends on many ecosystem services provided by its rivers, lakes, coasts, seas and bays. Louth County Council must prioritise the protection and enhancement of our water quality and aquatic environments.

Mise le meas,
Liam Woods - Chairperson Oriel River Catchments and Coastal Association.