



Press Statement

New Barrow Water Supply for Kildare

Kildare County Council is pleased to announce that the new Barrow water supply will come into production with effect from mid-July 2013. This project has been at planning and construction for many years, the Water Abstraction Order having been formally made back in 2005. The final out-turn costs of the abstraction plant as well as the two associated pipeline contracts are likely to be in the region of €45m. Certainly, this is a major economic boost for the south of the county particularly in terms of economic activity and associated job creation.

When fully operational, and allowing for future growth in demand, it is expected that production at the plant will be 31 million litres per day (i.e. 31 megalitres), 7 of which are earmarked for Athy to be distributed through the new Ardscoil reservoir, while the remainder will be pumped to the Old Kilcullen Reservoir in order to provide a new water supply to the central parts of County Kildare.

The new Barrow supply is indeed very timely in light of serious constraints which are now emerging in the Greater Dublin Area. Currently demand and supply is very finely balanced resulting in the risk of shortages during prolonged dry spells or in the case of production difficulties as recently experienced with the Vartry Scheme. Imminent upgrades in relation to both the Ballymore Eustace and Leixlip plants will boost regional production and this will relieve some of the pressure in the short-term. However, in light of increased demand, mainly arising from population growth, these pressures are likely to continue until a new major regional source comes on stream in 2021/22. The future needs of industry will also have to be taken into account.

Accordingly, this additional 31 megalitres to the regional supply is really to be welcomed. Indeed, the production process at the Barrow can cater for up to 38 megalitres in the case of emergencies. The new supply will also have the desired effect of reducing Kildare's dependence on Dublin City Council (Ballymore Eustace) and Fingal County Council (Leixlip) for its water supply. In future, it is envisaged that demand in Kildare will be met from the following sources:-

Source – Projected and allowing for future growth	ml/d
River Liffey (Leixlip and Ballymore Eustace)	60.5
River Barrow (Athy)	31.0
Ground Water (Rathangan and Monasterevin wellfields)	6.0
River Slaney (Carlow Co. Council)	0.5
Total	98.0

The new water source from the Barrow does, however, present a particular challenge as it is considered to be a “harder” water, particularly when compared to the Ballymore Eustace supply which is considered to be “soft”. This relates to the fact that the River Barrow flows through areas rich in limestone as opposed to, for example, the Ballymore Eustace supply which largely comes directly from mountainous areas. There is, however, also good news on this front. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has recently sanctioned approval at a cost of approximately €3.5m, for a “conditioning” system at the Barrow plant which will reduce hardness levels at source. Construction of this new system will commence very shortly and is due for completion in October/November, 2014. However, in the intervening period, this does present a challenge for the Council in relation to public perceptions of the new supply. Accordingly, in the intervening 70 week period, it is proposed to blend the Barrow supply with the softer Ballymore Eustace water at the Old Kilcullen reservoir. This will have the effect of reducing the level of hardness to more moderate levels.

Kildare County Council is also currently embarking on a communication drive aimed at providing extensive information to consumers in relation to the proposed changes. The main areas affected include Newbridge, Kildare Town, Kilcullen as well as parts of south-central and north-central Kildare. More detailed information is included on the Council’s website - www.kildarecountycouncil.ie. A series of radio and newspaper advertisements will also be placed in addition to a proposed leaflet drop. The Council will, with effect from the 1st July next, establish a dedicated telephone line (045-980555) in order to deal with any queries.

In summary, the Council is advising that there are no measures or interventions required at individual household level. It is, however, important for consumers to be aware of the slightly different characteristics. The increased hardness will likely result in deposits of limescale when the water is heated. A light film may form in heated beverages. These are natural characteristics.

The Council is also stressing that the new Barrow supply complies fully with EU drinking water standards and is perfectly safe and wholesome. Indeed, parts of Kildare (mainly around Athy, Monasterevin and Rathangan as well as parts of Kildare Town) already have the harder water and it is also prevalent in many parts of Ireland.

A detailed briefing will also be given to the elected members at the June meeting of the County Council.

24 June 2013

ENDS