



## **Fintan Ruddy**

### **Water and Wastewater Engineer**

For those who know Fintan Ruddy, the Cill Chomáin native now living in Sligo, it is no surprise to hear him talk about the importance of building relationships and working together. In association with STEPS Engineers Week, we learn more about Fintan's journey in engineering from his Gaelscoil beginnings in North West Mayo.

Fintan always had a keen interest in the outdoors, working alongside his father on the family farm. As a teenager he enjoyed working on building sites during the summer months, which sparked his initial interest in engineering and construction. But it was while playing at the local Gaelic football pitch that his interest was cemented, as the build of a new clubhouse was mooted. Fintan, a keen Gaelic footballer got involved in its design and got his first real taste of the iterative process between client, architect and engineer. This experience was the reason Fintan went on to take a degree in Construction Management in Limerick Institute of Technology and he hasn't looked back.

Reminiscing about his early days as a graduate engineer Fintan said: "I was lucky that my first job offered me the opportunity to develop key skills and knowledge in all aspects of engineering and management within the utilities industry. Upon graduating I gained employment with a contractor that specialised in public sector projects. I filled the role of construction manager / site engineer for various housing developments with Mayo County Council and the Department of Education, until the

downturn in construction in 2009. It was then I decided to relocate to Perth, Western Australia (WA) in 2010, an unknown yet exciting adventure.”

On moving to the other side of the world, Fintan explained: “I soon met up old friends from my sporting life back in Ireland who helped me settle into a new way of life and work in Perth. I immediately realised the huge opportunity for young engineers in Australia. I secured the position of project engineer on a \$350 million upgrade of The Great Eastern Highway, followed by the \$1 billion development of The Gateway, the largest infrastructure project ever undertaken by Main Roads WA, upgrading the road network around Perth Airport.”

Chatting about his work with Irish Water, Fintan added: “On leaving Perth I was delighted to join Irish Water in January 2015 as a field engineer on the Domestic Metering Programme. In 2016, I moved to the Leakage Reduction Programme, where I project managed the First Fix Free scheme. In 2018 I was delighted to move to the North West Region as a water and wastewater engineer based in the Cavan office.”

Speaking about his role as an engineer with Irish Water and the size and scale of the challenges it brings, Fintan explains: “ensuring water and wastewater infrastructure is operating effectively and efficiently, while achieving parameters set out by the governing bodies is complex. An issue at a treatment plant or on the network could affect thousands of people and rectifying the issue can bring all sorts of challenges.”

However, it is the ability to work through these challenges that Fintan draws strength from his years playing sports and the positive impact it has had on him personally and professionally. Fintan continued: “Sports and Gaelic football has always been a constant in my life. Football has helped me build friendships, which have stood the test of time. It has helped me professionally also, when working with people to resolve challenges between various stakeholders.”

And it was those friendships and the love of football that helped Fintan even in Australia. Fintan explained: “While I lived in Perth, I was drawn back to Gaelic football and the friendships I made. I was heavily involved with Southern Districts Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) club in Perth. In 2013 I suggested we play an exhibition game in the coastal town of Mandurah, one hour south of Perth. I arranged the overnight trip for 40 players, as a team building event, as well as an opportunity to promote our club and the GAA. I was fortunate, as not only was it a fun filled sports weekend, but I also met Pamela there. We later married in December 2017 and we now have a wonderful 9-month-old daughter, Meabh.”

2020/21 has brought lots of change for Fintan, not only as a first-time father, but also navigating the challenges of living and working from home that COVID-19 has brought. Fintan said: “It has been difficult year, in that I haven’t been able to see much of my family, with the numerous lockdowns. We welcomed baby Meabh into the world in June, so working from home has some positives, as my daily commute is now replaced with spending time with Meabh, Pamela and exercising.

As a winner of a Connaught Senior Football Championship medal in 2004, the appeal of football is never too far away. Fintan is now coaching the U20 Sligo team

where the emphasis is not only on improving fitness and skills but also building relationships. Fintan noted: "Keeping active has definitely helped me throughout my career and even more so during COVID-19, when travel is restricted. I have a great appreciation for the proximity of beautiful walks on my doorstep, like Union Wood, Slishwood and around Castle Dargan. Coastal locations like Strandhill and Rosses point are just a short drive away too."

Fintan's advice for any anyone contemplating a career in Engineering: "I would highly recommend a career in Engineering. I would recommend gaining experience in all aspects of engineering, continue to learn as much as you can but most importantly develop good working relationships along the way."