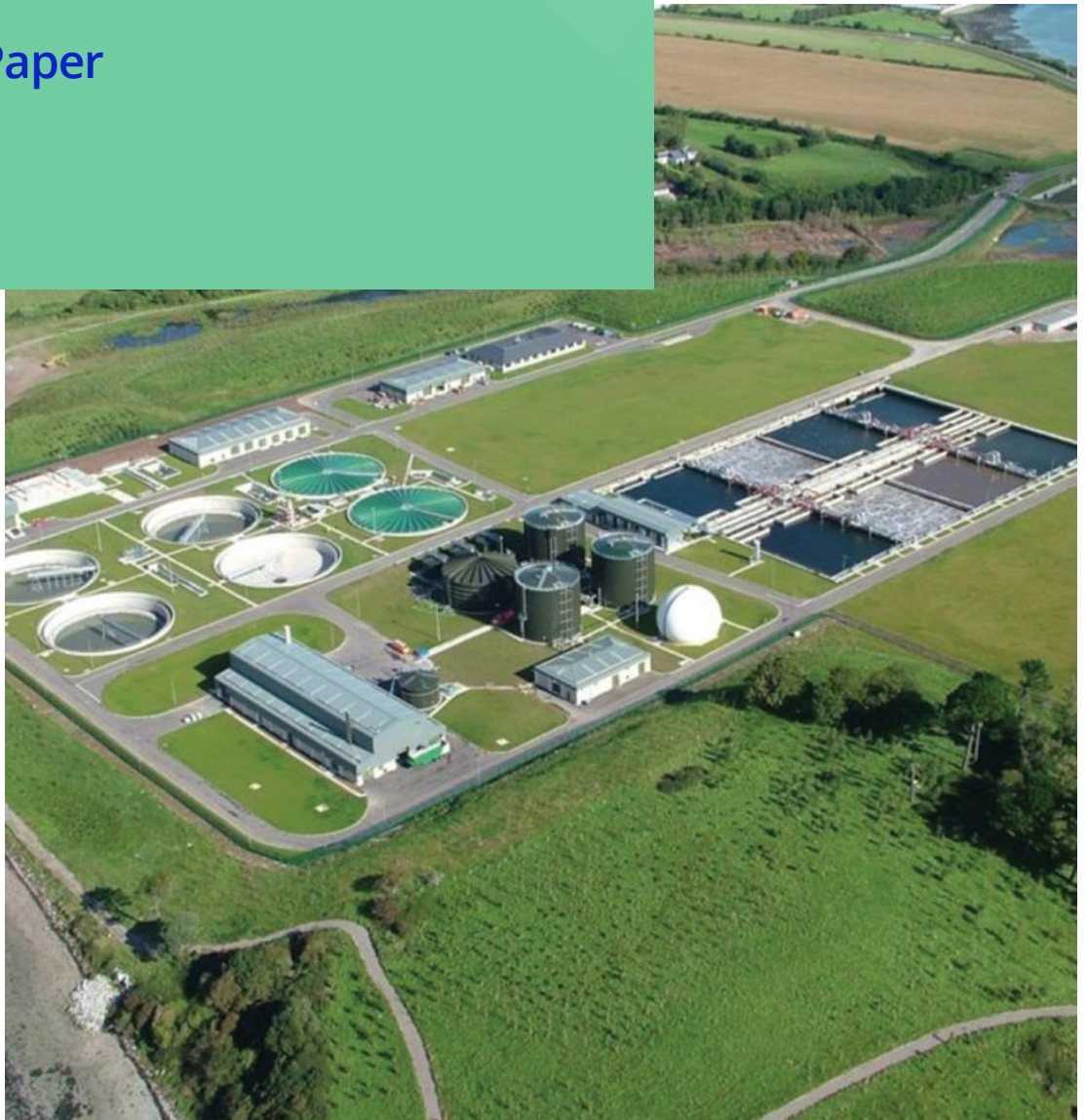


Report

Draft Cork Wastewater Strategy

Issues Paper



Safeguarding our water for our future

If you have any questions or need more information please contact us:

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1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Background

Uisce Éireann's responsibility is to ensure that all of its customers (households and businesses) receive a safe and reliable water supply and have their wastewater collected, appropriately treated and returned safely to the environment. Uisce Éireann operates a network of wastewater treatment plants across Ireland with sole responsibility for cleaning and maintaining the public sewer network. These treatment plants vary in size due to the size and population of the area they serve.

There are stringent conditions attached to wastewater discharge licences to ensure the treated effluent is of good quality and does not negatively impact on the environment. All Wastewater discharges (WWD) from areas served by Uisce Éireann sewer networks and discharging to the environment requires a wastewater discharge licence or certificate of authorisation from the Environment Protection Agency.

Uisce Éireann's investment in Ireland's wastewater infrastructure is benefiting communities around the country by supporting growth and development, enhancing water quality and protecting the environment.

1.1.2 Cork Wastewater Strategy

As our population and economy grows, so does the volume of wastewater. We must collect and treat this wastewater so that the treated water can be safely returned to the environment. The purpose of a Wastewater Strategy is to assess wastewater treatment and network infrastructure in a defined geographic area to identify what future investment will be required in the medium and long term. Having adequate wastewater infrastructure is essential to facilitate housing provision and commercial development and to support sustainable growth.

The Cork Metropolitan Area (CMA) is a major regional metropolitan area, identified as such in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). The economic success of the Cork Metropolitan Area has led to very significant growth in Cork City and surrounding areas. The recently published National Planning Framework 2040 envisages that Cork will become the fastest-growing city region in Ireland with a projected 50% to 60% increase in population in the period up to 2040. As a result of this growth, the current wastewater drainage

infrastructure is being challenged to keep pace with the increased demand for new serviced land for housing, commercial developments, and industry.

The study area comprises the Cork Metropolitan Area and the Cork Harbour and Cork Outer Harbour Water Framework Directive waterbodies.



Figure 1 Cork Wastewater Strategy Study Area

Why do we need a Cork Wastewater Strategy?

The Cork Metropolitan Area is facing several challenges in relation to wastewater collection and treatment:

- Increase in population.
- Current compliance challenges at a number of wastewater treatment plants and sewerage networks.
- Wastewater treatment and network capacity requirements to deal with current and future loads from the Cork Metropolitan Area.
- Pressures on the receiving waterbodies from wastewater discharges within the Cork Metropolitan Area.

- Climate change.

What is the aim of the Cork Wastewater Strategy?

The aim of the Cork Wastewater Strategy is to assess wastewater treatment and network infrastructure in the Cork Metropolitan Area to identify what future investment will be required in the medium and long term. The study will aim to identify sustainable wastewater management and treatment strategies and to develop a prioritised options list for the project horizon of 2030, 2055 and 2080.

The principals of the Cork Wastewater Strategy are to;

- Support the future development of the Cork Metropolitan Area by providing the necessary capacity in wastewater drainage, management and treatment systems.
- Enhance and protect the environment through effective wastewater management.
- Prioritise sustainable options for effective wastewater management that deliver multiple benefits.
- Identify key strategic options that will provide the necessary capacity in drainage, management and wastewater treatment systems up to 2080.

How will the Cork Wastewater Strategy be developed?

The Cork Wastewater Strategy will include an analysis of the existing wastewater infrastructure along with data gathering, population and economic growth assessments, strategic environmental assessment, and consultation with interested stakeholders to identify medium and long-term solutions to the wastewater needs of the region. The Cork Wastewater Strategy will deliver a sustainable drainage strategy that will address the needs of wastewater infrastructure. The study will offer achievable, strategic, and sustainable drainage, management and treatment options. Providing capacity to meet wastewater demand and support economic growth for the Cork Metropolitan Area.

The sustainable drainage, management or treatment solution will be consistent with statutory obligations and regulatory drivers designed to meet both national and international environmental objectives outlined in

the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Urban Wastewater Treatment Directives.

In 2022, the European Commission published its proposal for a revised Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD). The revised or recast UWWTD is currently scheduled for agreement later in 2024 with implementation in Ireland likely sometime from 2026. While the updated directives may not come into effect before the completion of this strategy, the project team will make informed assumptions based on the most recent draft. The final strategy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it meets Ireland's obligations under the revised directive.

1.1.3 Legislative Context

The Cork Wastewater Strategy is a regional level plan which provides the strategy for wastewater management in the Cork Metropolitan Area over the period 2025 to 2080. The Cork Wastewater Strategy will be influenced by Uisce Éireann national level plans and other relevant regional level plans including the National Wastewater Sludge Management Plan.

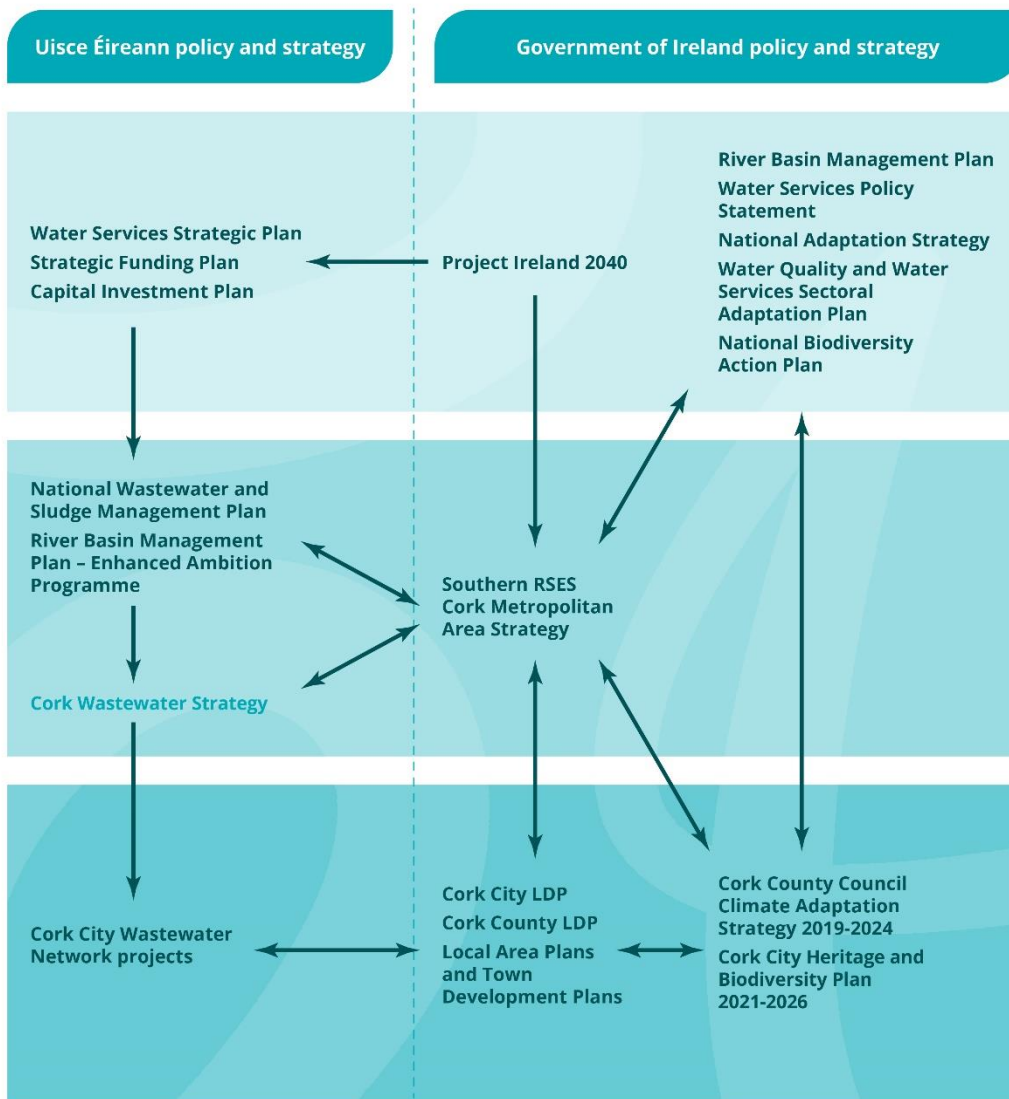


Figure 2: Uisce Éireann plans and policies.

The Cork Wastewater Strategy will identify the wastewater infrastructure required to align to the strategic objectives as set out in our Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP) 2015 – 2040. The new WSSP 2050 is currently being

updated and due to be adopted in early 2025. The Cork Wastewater Strategy will also inform future investment planning.

1.1.4 This Issues Paper

This Issues Paper has been drafted to support the development of the Cork Wastewater Strategy. It summarises the key issues influencing the Cork Metropolitan Area (CMA) and the approach taken to address the need for sustainable drainage options and wastewater infrastructure in the CMA.

In the draft Cork Wastewater Strategy, Uisce Éireann will present the strategy's long-term objectives and the broad delivery strategy for consultation. It will also outline how the strategy will be implemented and how Uisce Éireann will update the study.

The key objectives of the draft Cork Wastewater Strategy are as follows:

- Development of a sustainable drainage, management and treatment strategy for the CMA consistent with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Urban Wastewater Treatment (UWWT) Regulations.
- Outline the requirements for wastewater drainage and treatment capacity required to meet the demands of the study area in the context of current Development Plans, the National Planning Framework (NPF) the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020 and longer-term development potential of the area up to year 2080.
- Identification of alternative solutions for effective management of wastewater to protect and enhance the environment, support social and economic growth aligning with Uisce Éireann Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP 2050) and the Government of Ireland Water Services Policy Statement (WSPS).
- Evaluation of alternative solutions and identification of the optimum wastewater drainage solutions having regard to whole-life cost, sustainability and environmental performance.
- Identification of individual options for implementing the recommendations of the Cork Wastewater Strategy, together with the prioritisation of such implementation projects.
- To develop an adaptable strategy where outcomes are expected to be linked to volatile influences like climate and population change

and confirming that strategy will achieve performance indicators and outcomes at least cost.

1.1.5 What is happening now?

In preparing the Cork Wastewater Strategy, Uisce Éireann needs to prepare some key environmental reports including a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

Uisce Éireann is seeking feedback on the Issues Paper and Cork Wastewater Strategy Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report and Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report. Consultation is now underway to inform the development of these reports.

The consultation will be undertaken for eight weeks from 15 May to 9 July 2024 during which time the consultation documents can be viewed and downloaded at www.water.ie/cws

1.1.6 How to comment on this Issues Paper

To make a submission please send it to us by email or post by 9 July 2024

Email: CWS@water.ie

Post: Cork Wastewater Strategy, Uisce Éireann, PO Box 860, South City Delivery Office, Cork City

In order to assist stakeholders in making a submission as part of this consultation, we invite feedback on the following consultation questions; however, feedback is not limited to these questions.

1. Do you have any suggestions that you would like Uisce Éireann to consider in the preparation of its Cork Wastewater Strategy?
2. The Cork Wastewater Strategy study area comprises the Cork Metropolitan Area and the Cork Harbour and Cork Outer Harbour receiving waters and the Water Framework Directive waterbodies. Do you have any comments on this?
3. Do you have any comments on the approach to the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Cork Wastewater Strategy?

4. Section 2.1 in chapter 2 of the SEA Scoping Report outlines the objectives of the Cork Wastewater Strategy. Do you have any comments on these objectives?
5. Uisce Éireann has reviewed plans, policies and programmes relevant to the Cork Wastewater Strategy in chapter 4 of the SEA Scoping Report. Are there any others that should be considered?
6. Chapter 3 of the SEA Scoping Report sets out the current baseline environment conditions and future trends. The environmental issues are summarised in table 3.16. Do you have any comments on these?
7. Chapter 5 of the SEA Scoping Report sets out the environmental objectives that will be used to assess the Wastewater Strategy and its potential effects on the environment. Table 5.1 summarises these objectives. Have you any comments on these?
8. How would you like Uisce Éireann to communicate with you as the plan progresses?

All submissions made will be reviewed and relevant feedback incorporated into the environmental reports and the draft Cork Wastewater Strategy as appropriate. Submissions from individuals will be reported anonymously and feedback from organisations will be attributed to them.

1.1.7 Next Steps

Following the conclusion of this consultation, Uisce Éireann will review and consider feedback received from stakeholders. In Spring 2025, the draft Cork Wastewater Strategy will be published, and an eight-week public consultation will be undertaken.

The final Cork Wastewater Strategy will be published later in 2025. After this, Uisce Éireann will undertake periodical reviews of the Cork Wastewater Strategy. This will ensure the actions and objectives of the first Cork Wastewater Strategy are fit for purpose in the short, medium and long term and make recommendations for new or updated approaches.

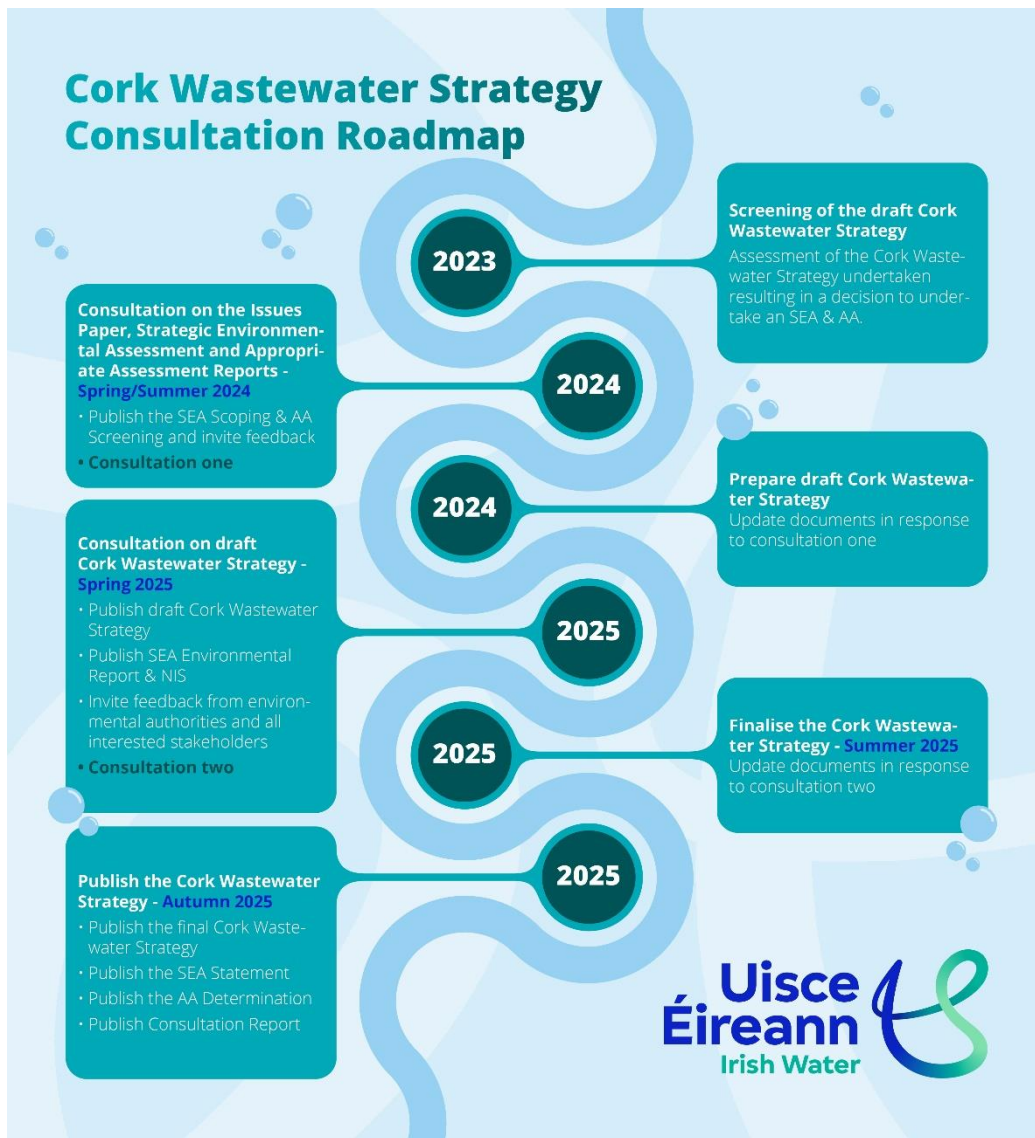


Figure 3: Cork Wastewater Strategy Consultation Roadmap