



ASSESSMENT FOR RIVER BARROW / NORE SAC

An examination of the Nore River with particular emphasis on the Nore Freshwater Pearl Mussel.

Client: Laois County Council

SUMMARY:

Value: €15,000
Population Served: 20,000 p.e.
Status: Complete

Services Provided:
 Preliminary Design
 Project Management

Laois County Council are upgrading the collection networks and wastewater treatment plants in the following towns in County Laois: Abbeylax, Clonaslee, Durrow, Mountrath, Stradbally

In addition, the Council are planning to upgrade wastewater treatment plants in five smaller villages

Some of these wastewater treatment plants discharge into the River barrow and River Nore SAC, which is the only habitat of the Durrow Pearl Mussel. The mussel can live up to an age of 130 years, however, the last population of the Nore freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera durrovensis*) was surveyed each year from 1990 to 1994. The population has fallen from a flourishing colony in the 1920s to an estimated 2000 in 1990 and 420 in 1994. The species is considered at immediate risk of extinction.

The report was been prepared by the O Dwyer and Entec project team for Laois County Council (LCC). The report has also been reviewed by a specialist in freshwater pearl mussels, Dr Dai Roberts of the Queen s University of Belfast.

Several of these existing plants in the towns were constructed in the early to mid 1900s and were designed to accommodate the sewage from a smaller population than at present and they are now in poor condition and overloaded. The overall scheme includes for the upgrading and expansion of the wastewater treatment plants in the six towns in order to provide for the higher populations predicted for the towns, and to provide for a higher level of treatment by the provision of nutrient removal and the improvement of the current level of compliance with treatment standards. The Report examined the required treatment standards in order to protect the mussels and these standards were applied in the Contract Documents for the scheme.

In addition to the above scheme, Laois County Council is also progressing a scheme to install interim treatment plants to improve the effluent standards achieved at Abbeylax, Mountrath, Rathdowney and Durrow. The aim of these interim treatment plants is to expand the capacity of the existing treatment works whilst the main scheme goes through the approval process. It is envisaged that the interim plants may be re-located to the villages once the main scheme is in operation.

