

Derry City and Strabane District Council written response to Water, Sustainable Drainage & Flood Management Bill Call For Evidence November 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Thank you for consulting this Council requesting views on this emerging legislation. This summary considers the seven main provisions of the Bill and the objectives, proposals and potential consequences of the Bill.
- 1.2 The Council supports the purposes of the Bill which are summarised as follows:
 - Reduce water pollution: implement measures to decrease pollution in watercourses;
 - Strengthen flood resilience, prevention and remediation: enhance the region's ability to withstand extreme weather events, particularly flooding and drought;
 - Promote sustainable drainage: encourage the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as the preferred method for managing surface water; and
 - Improve water resource management: introduce more environmentally friendly solutions for managing water resources.
- 1.3 These matters are becoming increasingly important as the effects of climate change are felt and to reduce environmental impacts that could exacerbate it.

2 Comments

- 2.1 In July 2025 this Council adopted its LDP Plan Strategy, the first part of its Local Development Plan (LDP). It sets out the strategic Planning objectives, designations and policies which will guide developments and encourage investment, co-ordinate infrastructure for our people and protect our environment to beyond 2032.
- 2.2 Policy GDPOL 1 requires all developments to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems. Where this preferred drainage method is not feasible, this must be demonstrated. To have legislation encouraging the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as the preferred method for managing surface water will make it much easier to make this happen locally and for it to eventually become normal practice.
- 2.3 It is noted that this is enabling legislation so further legislation will be required to set out who will approve and adopt SuDS, set out design standards and to manage them. This important first legislative step is however very much welcomed. The clarification and definition of certain terms is also welcomed.
- 2.4 Clause 1 provides improved arrangements for temporary use bans at times of water shortage ('hose pipe bans'). This will apply to domestic users and we have no comment on this matter.

- 2.5 The provision in Clause 6 to enable the Department to make grants by way of a contribution to the costs of measures to protect domestic buildings against flooding in high-risk flood areas is welcomed. This will build on the existing pilot Homeowner Flood Protection Grant Scheme.
- 2.6 It is requested that consideration be given to allow homeowners the opportunity to reapply for funding if their circumstances or flood risk levels changed over time.
- 2.7 In this District, some recent flood events had a devastating impact on community sporting groups and voluntary organisations and it is requested that such organisations be considered for the Flood Protection Grant Scheme or for a similar scheme to be developed for such bodies.
- 2.8 The collaborative approach by various communities to recent flooding incidents has been an important part of the response in this District. In a July 2022 incident, local community resilience groups were mobilised across the Council area to assist with the distribution and replenishing of sand bags provided by the Department for Infrastructure. In connection to this, there have been issues in the past with the supply of sufficient sandbags to areas of greatest need in a timely manner and it would be welcomed if the Bill and grant funding could address such matters.
- 2.9 Derry City and Strabane District Council has teamed up with nursing students from Ulster University to increase awareness of the role healthcare professionals have in helping communities prepare for the impact of storms, heatwaves and flooding due to climate change. Council presented at the School of Nursing annual emergency response conference for final year nursing students outlining the risks from climate change including severe weather events and increased pests and diseases and how they can help local people in these emergency situations.
- 2.10 The provisions in Clause 8 to make regulations for Environmental Impact Assessments for drainage purposes is welcomed.
- 2.11 The provisions in Clause 10 provide for regulations for agreements made under Article 161 of the Water and Sewerage Services Order to be registered in the Statutory Charges Register and for the removal of the Article 161 Agreement from the Register once the sewers have been adopted is welcomed as well as the registration of all extant Article 161 agreements. This is a procedural improvement.
- 2.12 The provision in Clause 11 to correct certain unlawful communications with public sewers is welcomed as is Clause 12 which will provide powers for sewerage undertakers to adopt and maintain certain sections of privately-owned drainage infrastructure.

3 Conclusions / Summary

- 3.1 Further to the comments above, the proposed Bill is broadly welcomed and this Council thanks you for inviting us to comment. We look forward to further legislative improvements to meet the stated purposes of the Bill which we fully support.