



**OFFICE OF
ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY**

Environmental Licensing Programme Memorandum

To:	Eimear Cotter, Director
From:	Suzanne Wylde, Inspector, Environmental Licensing Programme
Date:	9 th October 2018
RE:	Request for a Technical Amendment to Waste Water Discharge Licence Register Number, D0294-02, held by Irish Water, for the Courtmacsherry-Timoleague Agglomeration.

Introduction

A Waste Water Discharge licence (Register Number D0294-02) was first granted for the Courtmacsherry-Timoleague agglomeration by the Environmental Protection Agency on 12th April 2018¹.

Request for Technical Amendment

Irish Water requested a technical amendment to the discharge licence on 17th May 2018 under Regulation 33(1) of the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations, 2007, as amended. The request was to amend *Schedule A.1 Primary Waste Water Discharge & Monitoring*. Irish Water requested to replace the Total Oxidised Nitrogen (TON) and Ammonia emission limit values with an emission limit value for Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN). The European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations, 2009, as amended, do not set out standards for ammonia or total oxidised nitrogen for transitional water bodies.

Due to potential issues with nitrogen in the Argideen Estuary, the waste water discharge licence set emission limit values for total oxidised nitrogen and ammonia. The standard for Good status of Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN)² in coastal receiving waters is $\leq 0.25\text{mg/l}$ in accordance with European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Water) Regulations, 2009, as amended.

The Argideen Estuary is the receiving water for the discharge from the Courtmacsherry & Timoleague Agglomeration. The water body was assigned a 'Poor' status under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in 2016. The WFD status was based on high levels of macroalgae and phytoplankton in the estuary, both of which are fed by nitrogen. The WFD assessment uses winter and summer medians to assess the nitrogen levels in the estuary.

Irish Water have proposed inserting an emission limit value of 50mg/l for Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen, as an annual average. I have consulted with the Office of Evidence and Assessment (OEA) in respect of the proposed emission limit value. The OEA have concerns about allowing

¹The Agency formally acknowledged the withdrawal of Waste Water Discharge Licence applications for Courtmacsherry (D0294-01) and Timoleague (D0466-01) on 10th July 2015. The agglomerations were assessed as one agglomeration under Waste Water Discharge Licence application D0294-02 Courtmacsherry & Timoleague.

² DIN is the sum of the concentrations of nitrate, nitrite and ammonia.

for an increase in ammonia discharges to the Argideen Estuary as it is the parameter of concern in the waterbody.

The proposal to have an emission limit as an annual average for DIN is not suitable as the discharge would be required to meet winter and summer medians. Furthermore, the proposed emission limit value of 50mg/l would increase the overall nitrogen emissions to the receiving water, in particular ammonia. It should be noted that, having regard to the EPA publication *EPA Guidance for Irish Water on Requests for Alterations to a Waste Water Discharge Licence or Certificate of Authorisation*, an increase in emission limit values cannot be accommodated via technical amendment.

Recommendation

I recommend that the requested licence amendment be refused as the proposed emission limit value would cause an increase in emissions above those specified in *Schedule A: Discharges & Discharge Monitoring*.

Signed



Suzanne Wylde
Environmental Licensing Programme