SPA calls for national water commissioner

mr eZfion

BY TRIONA DOHERTY

The Shannon Protection Alliance is calling for the establishment of a national water commissioner to investigate the water needs of the whole country, following confusion surrounding Dublin City Council's latest proposals to extract water from the river Shannon hear Athlone.

The members of the Shannon Protection Alliance (SPA) are awaiting a response from Dublin City Council about the plans, after being excluded from a recent meeting between Dublin City Council consultants RPS and the Shannon River Basin District Advisory Council.

"We have written to Dublin City Council looking for their recent proposals, and we have employed a marine scientist and a marine biologist to look at the plans," explained Martin McEnroe, chairman of the SPA. "We are the people showing most concern about the Shannon and are in dispute over the extraction. If there are plans or a new proposal there should be consultation with us, but we have had no contact whatsoever."

The original plans put forward by Dublin City Council proposed that water be taken from Lough Ree to tackle the projected growth in demand for water in Dublin. It is understood that one of the latest options is to extract water from both Lough Ree and Lough Derg and pump it into a reservoir on a cut-away bog near Rochfortbridge. Other options include taking water from Lough Ree only, Lough Derg only, or from the Shannon below Ardnacrusha in County Limerick.

However, Mr McEnroe believes that none of these options is desirable. "If you have a pond of water it doesn't matter if you take water from the top, middle or bottom of it, it has the same net effect," he pointed out. "The real issue is not Lough Ree or the Shannon. We need a proper plan for the use of water in the whole country. There are problems with leakage all over the country, and it is costing the taxpayers and councils a lot of money. We need to investigate where water is needed and where it can be got without any adverse effects. The solution to Dublin's water shortage is in its own hands - the amount of water that is being lost through leakages in Dublin is more than they are proposing to take out of the Shannon."

The SPA are particularly concerned about the adverse effects of the extraction of water from the Shannon on flora and fauna, and on local agriculture, tourism, leisure, and future development.

"If they do happen to take water from Lough Ree, the infrastructure that has been built around the waterways will be destroyed. People depend on the Shannon for tourism, leisure, and fishing. Towns and villages along the Shannon will be prevented from developing. We need an overall plan, and we are calling for a stop to all this," said Mr McEnroe.

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