CONTACT US

You can keep in touch with the project through our website where we will be posting updates on progress and details of works that are ongoing. For further enquiries feel free to contact us via email or post at:

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RELEVANT LINKS

Website: https://countydonegalfrs.ie/castlefinnfrs/

COUNTY DONEGAL
FLOOD RELIEF SCHEMES

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

OPW
Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí
Office of Public Works

CASTLEFINN

Flood Relief Scheme

Newsletter No.2
February 2021

https://countydonegalfrs.ie/castlefinnfrs

WHAT STAGE IS THE PROJECT AT?

Since the last Project Newsletter was issued (Newsletter No.1, November 2020) the following activities have been completed or are underway.

A virtual / online Opening Public Consultation was held from 9th November to 21st December 2020. Its purpose was to introduce the scheme and gather valuable local knowledge whilst providing an opportunity for stakeholders and members of the public to inform scheme design by voicing any suggestions or concerns. Sixteen submissions were received (fourteen of which were from people who have experienced flooding). The project team is grateful for all submissions made and are reviewing them at present.

The opening consultation period is now closed but all project information remains available on the project website www.countydonegalfrs.ie/castlefinn including contact details for the team should you wish to get in touch. A second public consultation will be held when a preferred option has been identified so that you can see how your submissions have been accounted for.

Murphy Geospatial (www.murphygs.ie) is currently undertaking property threshold surveys as well as a detailed river and terrain survey. These surveys capture the data needed to build an up to date computer model of the River Finn, its incoming watercourses, existing defences and floodplains in the area. The model will simulate flood scenarios in detail to define predicted flood extent and depth. Model outputs will identify properties at risk from flooding and inform the design of flood protection measures.

The project team held a Hydrological Technical Workshop on the 16th December 2020, to discuss and agree the approach to Hydrology with the Steering Group. Work is now ongoing to define the critical river flows and flood scenarios that will be simulated in hydraulic models. The outputs of these models will quantify and map flood risk to the level of detail required for design of the Scheme. We have studied the physical characteristics of the catchments that influence water run-off and are analysing data from hydrometric gauges (river flow and water level) and meteorological (rainfall) stations. Full details of the analysis undertaken and the outcomes will be provided in a Hydrology Report which will be available on the Project Website when completed.

An Opening Collaborative Workshop was held (via video conference) on 19th January 2021 and was attended by various representatives of public sector agencies. The main aims of the workshop were to identify and discuss any issues, constraints and opportunities that could inform the development of the Scheme; and to identify any features that could be considered to create multiple benefits. The Workshop was well attended and was very useful in gathering input from other statutory bodies that will influence analysis and design.

RPS are completing an Environmental Constraints Study report highlighting what needs to be considered when designing an environmentally acceptable Scheme. Constraints in relation to Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna, Soils and Geology, Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage, Land Use and Material Assets, Landscape and Visual Impact, and Population and Human Health are being looked at. Walkover field surveys have also been carried out to build up an overall picture of the ecological baseline and to identify the need for more detailed baseline surveys this year. When the report is finalised it will be available to download from the project website.

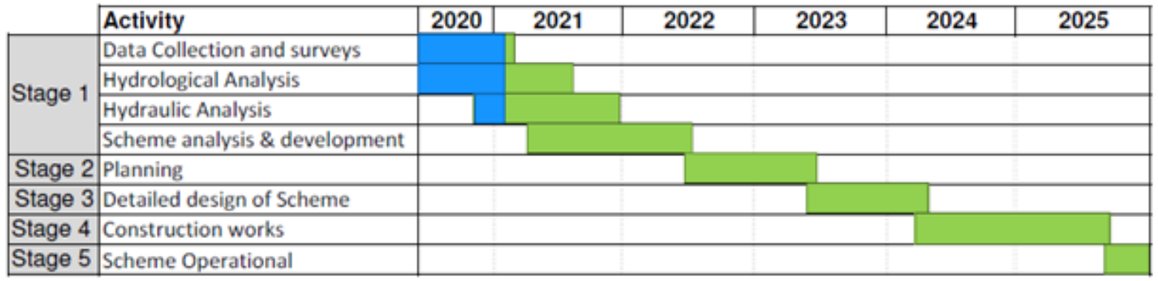
An Invasive Species Management Plan (ISMP) has been prepared by RPS in conjunction with Donegal County Council (DCC) and the OPW. This plan defines the location of various invasive non-native species in relation to Castlefinn Flood Relief Scheme (FRS). These species need to be controlled and managed to reduce the risk of interfering with design and construction of the Scheme. The Plan sets out how to manage and/or eradicate invasive species in advance of design and construction. Early treatment of Japanese Knotweed in Castlefinn was undertaken in autumn 2019 and 2020. The project team are now working with DCC to arrange further treatment of Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam on an ongoing basis.

IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The project team have worked hard to ensure that all activities on the project are in compliance with the public health guidance on the Coronavirus whilst at the same time trying to reduce negative impacts on the project programme. The opening public consultation could not take place as an in-person event in Castlefinn, however, instead an online virtual consultation took place and hard copies of the relevant documentation were also distributed to homes and businesses locally.

The FRS Steering Group (comprising of the OPW, Donegal County Council and RPS) have continued to meet regularly using video conferencing. Progressing flood relief schemes have been deemed as an essential service by local authorities, therefore, this has permitted the river, terrain and threshold surveys to continue during January and February. In addition other members of the project team have undertaken walkover surveys in the study area.

OUTLINE SCHEME PROGRAMME



Timelines provided as current best estimate, but are subject to revision.

NEXT STEPS

Data Collection: Data Collection is ongoing. The project team are interested in receiving photos, videos, sketches or any other relevant information regarding previous flood events from those who have experienced it first-hand, particularly from 2015 onwards. The information provided will help the project team to refine the river model and the design of the flood relief scheme. If you have any information which could be of use, please contact the project team.

Surveys: The river channel and terrain surveys commenced in January 2021 on the River Finn, Corcullion watercourse and several smaller tributaries, and surrounding areas. The survey is programmed to be completed soon. Defence Asset Condition (DAC) surveys of existing flood defences also commenced in February 2021.

Hydrological Analysis: The hydrological analysis, which includes analysis of historic flood data, is ongoing. The methodology for the hydrological analysis has been agreed with the Steering Group and on that basis the design flood flow and water levels for various flood scenarios are being developed. These, along with the survey data, will provide the necessary inputs to the computer model as part of the hydraulic analysis.

Hydraulic Analysis: Construction of the computer model will commence in March 2021 following receipt of the river, terrain and threshold surveys.

Environmental Assessment: Further detailed environmental surveys will be undertaken as the development of the scheme progresses, including, but not limited to, electrofishing, protected species surveys, e.g. otter and badger activity has been noted along this reach of the River Finn, archaeological and architectural surveys, noise surveys and site investigations. The environmental constraints identified will inform the appraisals of the options for the flood relief scheme and will ensure a robust assessment of the potential environmental impact of the preferred scheme.