



ALISON OLIVER

THE BREAKOUT STAR OF WUTHERING HEIGHTS TICKET



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Critical flood defences still at design stage after eight years

Thirty-one of 54 flood projects deemed priority in 2018 not yet at planning phase
Dublin City Council queries 'timelines' of weather warnings after yesterday's floods

CAROLINE O'DOHERTY
Climate and Science Correspondent

Dozens of big flood protection works deemed critical to protect thousands of homes and properties eight years ago have yet to progress to planning.

Out of 54 large projects where some work has begun since they were prioritised for development in 2018, the majority, 31, remain at preliminary design stage.

Target completion times for many of them run well into the 2030s. Thirteen others are at planning or detailed design phase and will also take years to complete, while just 10 are under construction.

An additional 12 projects deemed necessary in 2018 are at an early stage of "consideration" and have yet to reach preliminary design.

Dozens more deemed important but less urgent are on a "future" list to be considered further down the line.

The slow progress in delivering flood schemes comes to light amid growing frustration in communities experiencing recurring flooding, with long-promised protection works nowhere in sight.

Numerous politicians have blamed planning delays, judicial reviews and environmental legislation.

Minister for Public Expenditure Jack Chambers said "paralysis" caused by a "culture of judicial reviews" was a significant issue in delivering some schemes.

However, most of the priority schemes are not yet in the planning system. And the Office of Public Works (OPW) said just three had been subject to judicial review.

Work has resumed on those three. No projects are subject to judicial review at present.

The OPW said one earlier project that predated the current priority list and is now complete was initially challenged by a judicial review. The challenge was subsequently withdrawn.

One other project, cate-

gories under a separate minor works scheme, has been halted by judicial review.

Minister of State for Heritage Christopher O'Sullivan defended environmental legislation against blame for delays, saying he was "getting sick of the finger being pointed at nature and biodiversity".

Scale and complexity

Asked for the main causes of delays with large projects, the OPW cited the scale and complexity of the works involved and high demand for specialist skills. Other factors cited were requirements for "extensive public consultation" and "extensive environmental assessments and mitigation measures".

Projects on the 2018 priority list aim to protect 23,000 properties at a cost of €1.3 billion – an average of €56,521 each.

A Voluntary Homeowners Relocation Scheme opened in 2017 has provided €7 million to 25 repeatedly flooded homeowners to relocate or rebuild – an average of €280,000 each.

Meanwhile, Dublin City Council said it was querying the "timelines" of weather warnings after the capital experienced "exceptionally heavy rainfall" on Thursday night.

Met Éireann issued a status-yellow rainfall warning at 2.36am yesterday. This was done "to increase public awareness, taking account of expected intense rainfall during the morning commuting period", said the meteorological service. It noted the rain was heavier than forecast earlier on Thursday.

In a statement yesterday, the council said that 46mm of rain had been recorded at the Mellowes Road rain gauge overnight, with 9.6mm falling in a single hour. "A full review of the event has commenced in parallel with ongoing responses, including the timeliness of weather warnings/forecasts," said the council.

➔ Residents hit hard by flooding in Dublin apartment blocks: page 2

THE PRUDENT PRESIDENT CATHERINE CONNOLLY'S FIRST 100 DAYS Page 6



Out of Office: Revolt against Microsoft spreads across EU

DEREK SCALLY
in Munich

Hanging in the air at this year's Munich Security Conference is a new Schleswig-Holstein question. The term once applied to a prolonged 19th-century tug-of-war over territory between imperial Germany and Denmark.

Today's Schleswig-Holstein question is no longer about land, but is still about sovereignty: digital sovereignty.

Put simply: if US president Donald Trump takes against an EU country, leader, judge or private person – and leans on US tech companies to block their email or web service access – is it wise for Europe to keep all its digital eggs in Microsoft Office and Amazon web server baskets?

Schleswig-Holstein, a Ger-

man state three quarters the size of Leinster, thinks not.

Last October the state government allowed its licences to lapse on Microsoft 365, the web-based office suite. More than 40,000 public servants are now using free and open-source replacements for Word, Outlook and Teams.

It has since been inundated with inquiries about the move.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz is shifting his chancellery away from Microsoft 365 to openDesk suite, advertised as "sovereign by design", and developed by a German state agency. Another prominent new adherent is David Amiel, French minister for public services and reform. Last week he promised to "reclaim digital independence" with La Suite, an open source office platform being introduced across the French

public service. Irish Government departments and the Oireachtas all use Microsoft 365 services, but a spokeswoman said that commenting on arrangements or costs "could breach contract confidentiality and undermine the security architecture of our services". But Fine Gael TD James Geoghegan said it would be "irresponsible not to ask whether our democratic institutions are adequately protected" from pressures from US tech companies.

"The terrifying vista that has come to the fore, of sanctions imposed on Europe," said Geoghegan, "means solutions are needed, and they lie within Europe."

➔ Chancellor urges Europe and US to 'revive and repair' relationship: page 11

Weather

A cold, dry and bright start. Rain will spread north-eastwards, possibly falling as sleet or snow. Highs of 2-5 degrees.

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Home News

Soccer: The forthcoming Ireland football matches against Israel should proceed, the Taoiseach has said, despite calls for them to be boycotted. Page 2

Prison: A mentally ill prisoner who died in custody while being restrained was wearing a spit hood. Page 5

World News



EU: German chancellor Friedrich Merz has urged Europe and the US to 'revive and repair' the transatlantic relationship. Page 11

Business Today

Packaging: Cork-based Zeus Packaging Group has acquired Spanish company Koex Packaging Solutions for €24m. Page 18

Rotunda: An Coimisiún Pleanála has struck down plans for a €100m extension of the hospital. Page 18

Sports Weekend

Rugby: Ireland will be hoping to bounce back after four defeats in seven matches when they face an Italy side fresh from beating Scotland today

Soccer: Derry snatched a 2-2 draw against Dundalk at the Brandywell, scoring a penalty deep into added time

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Property bidding Inside the process

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