

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002737/24
to the Commission
Ciaran Mullooly (Renew)
(3 December 2024)**

Subject: Ongoing pollution of Newport Bay

Newport in County Mayo, Ireland, has seen the continuous discharge of raw sewage into its bay; this issue has been ongoing for decades and must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Moreover, some of the wastewater is discharged into Clew Bay, which is a special area of conservation and a designated shellfish area.

This pollution poses significant environmental and public health risks. Although the Habitats Directive⁽¹⁾ requires the protection of these sensitive areas, the upgrade of the Newport Wastewater Treatment Plant will not be completed until 2030. Uisce Éireann has reported that the delay is due to legal challenges and planning.

In light of this:

1. How will the Commission oversee Ireland's compliance with the Habitats Directive in protecting both Newport Bay and Clew Bay from sewage pollution?
2. Does the Commission envisage contacting Irish authorities regarding the prolonged timeline for upgrading the wastewater treatment plant and compliance with the Water Framework Directive⁽²⁾?
3. What support or funding can the Commission provide to address the delays caused in addressing these urgent environmental issues?

Submitted: 3.12.2024

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(27 February 2025)**

The Commission has been made aware of concerns about pollution of Newport Bay/Clew Bay through Written Question E-000547/2024.

1. The Commission is following up on the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union in Case C-444/21⁽¹⁾ in which Ireland was found to have failed to legally designate several Special Areas of Conservation and to adopt conservation objectives and measures for numerous sites, in breach of the Habitats Directive⁽²⁾. This judgment covers the Clew Bay, for which conservation measures are yet awaited. Once communicated, their conformity with EU law will be duly assessed.
2. For agglomerations below 1 000 population equivalents (p.e.) like Newport (815)⁽³⁾, limited obligations apply from end 2027 under Article 18 of the revised Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive⁽⁴⁾, notably where a risk is identified for the environment or public health. Ireland has submitted with considerable delay its third River Basin Management Plans under the Water Framework Directive⁽⁵⁾; the Commission will raise any implementation issues with the Irish authorities once it will have completed its ongoing assessment.
3. The Irish European Regional Development Fund⁽⁶⁾ programmes do not include any funding for the specific objective 'promoting access to water and sustainable water management'. The Irish Recovery and Resilience Plan⁽⁷⁾ supports the upgrade of ten small treatment plants, but the Newport plant was not selected by Uisce Éireann for funding.

¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1992/43/oj>.

² Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2000/60/oj>.

⁽¹⁾ Commission v Ireland (Protection des zones spéciales de conservation) Case C-444/21 of 29 June 2023: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:62021CJ0444>

⁽²⁾ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

⁽³⁾ https://www.citypopulation.de/en/ireland/towns/mayo/29332__newport/

⁽⁴⁾ Directive (EU) 2024/3019 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2024 concerning urban wastewater treatment (recast), OJ L, 2024/3019, 12.12.2024.

⁽⁵⁾ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1-73.

⁽⁶⁾ The objectives and scope of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) are laid down in Regulation (EU) No 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund, OJ L 231, 30.6.2021.

⁽⁷⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/irelands-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en