



Subject:	<b>Department for Infrastructure consultation on proposals for Grant support for initial supervision and inspection requirements of the Reservoirs Act</b>
Date:	09 September 2025
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Director Resources, Fleet and Open Spaces & Streetscene
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### Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Some time in the future

Never

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### Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The Department for Infrastructure opened consultations on 23 June 2025 on proposals for a grant scheme to support reservoir managers with the initial supervision and inspection requirements of the Reservoirs Act (NI) 2015. The consultation closes on 16 September 2025.
1.2	This paper provides background information and includes a draft response, for Members' approval.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to agree the proposed consultation response attached in Appendix 1 and to agree to officers forwarding the response to the Department by the closing date of 16th September 2025 and advising it remains draft and subject to full Council ratification on 01 October 2025.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is seeking views on a proposal for a grant scheme to support reservoir managers with the initial supervision and inspection requirements of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.
3.2	<p>The Reservoirs Act (NI) 2015 (“the Act”) provides a regulatory framework for reservoir safety that will mitigate against potential harm that may arise in the event of an uncontrolled release of water or flooding as a result of reservoir failure. It aims to mitigate the flood risk from reservoirs capable of holding 10,000 cubic metres of water above the natural level of any part of the surrounding land. These reservoirs are known as “controlled reservoirs”, Council currently manage five at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Springfield Dam</li> <li>• Half Moon Lake</li> <li>• Waterworks Park (Upper)</li> <li>• Waterworks Park (Lower)</li> <li>• Alexandra Park</li> </ul> <p>All are registered with the Department, and each holds more than 10,000 cubic metres of water.</p>
3.3	The Act sets out the fundamental components of the Assembly’s reservoir safety policy, which is based on industry best practice, for the safety of reservoirs. The implementation of the Act will mean that those reservoirs within the scope of the Act, are subject to a regulated system, which in turn will provide assurance in terms of the protection of people, property, the environment and economic activity.
3.4	In advance of the further commencement of the Act, which is expected following passage through the NI Assembly in 2025, the consultation provides information on how the Department seeks to support those reservoir managers who are deemed to need financial support, to comply with the initial supervision and inspection requirements of the Act.
3.5	Members should note that since 2015, Council have been managing our reservoirs by adhering to best practice recommendations set out in the Act. This includes daily inspections of three of the dams (undertaken by Council officers), and the appointment of AECOM as Supervising Engineers who undertake monthly / annual safety inspections and prepare on-site emergency plans at all five reservoirs. More detailed inspections, by a UK All Reservoirs Panel Engineer are also required every 10 years.
3.6	Members should also note that the Council has planned major capital investment to enhance reservoir safety at Waterworks Park and Alexandra Park in the coming years.

3.7	In advance of the further commencement of the Act, in order to ensure those eligible reservoir managers may be able to obtain financial support for initial safety inspections required under the Act, DfI have proposed a number of criteria as follows:
3.8	<p><u>Criterion 1 – The reservoir must be registered with the Department</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only reservoirs capable of holding 10,000 cubic metres or more of water and registered with the Department will be eligible for the grant.</li> </ul> <p><u>Criterion 2 – The reservoir is not managed by a public sector organisation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department is not proposing grant support for reservoirs managed by the public sector such as Government Departments, Local Authorities and NI Water, as these public sector organisations have established mechanisms for securing budget to maintain their assets.</li> </ul> <p><u>Criterion 3 – The reservoir must be designated as ‘High’ or ‘Medium’ consequence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A ‘High’ consequence reservoir is when a reservoir failure could result in a loss of 1 or more lives, or the significant impact on economic activity.</li> </ul> <p><u>Criterion 4 – Reservoir Manager must demonstrate a clear financial need for grant support for initial inspection costs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department is proposing that grant funding will only be provided to those reservoir managers who are deemed to need it to pay the initial costs of supervision and inspection. It should be noted that the grant will only be provided to cover the costs of appointing a supervising engineer and an inspecting engineer, to provide an initial inspection.</li> </ul>
3.9	The Department have asked consultees to respond to eight questions, the full draft response for Council is included in Appendix 1.
3.10	Members should note that while the Council’s five reservoirs would be suitable for funding under Criteria 1 and 3, Criterion 2 excludes grant support to local authorities, and Criterion 4 details that grants will only be made for initial supervision and inspections.
3.11	<p>Our response confirms we would welcome financial assistance. However, given the risk associated with Council’s five ‘high consequence’ reservoirs and ongoing revenue costs in the region of £20k per annum for the established cycle of safety inspections, we further recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consideration is given to widening the eligibility of reservoir owners who could apply to a grant scheme</li> <li>the scope of the grant scheme is widened to help support all reservoir managers with ongoing costs associated with safety inspections</li> </ul>
3.12	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The cost of independent safety inspections / reports at all five council reservoirs is circa £20k per annum and is included in existing revenue budgets.</p>

3.13	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>  There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications associated with this report.
4.0	<b>Appendices</b>
	Draft responses to Department for Infrastructure consultation on proposals for Grant support for initial supervision and inspection requirements of the Reservoirs Act