



187 Council water jobs at risk

Irish Water takeover will have a devastating effect – says Inishowen Councillor

187 jobs within the Water Section of Donegal County Council are at risk as the prospect of Irish Water taking over Council functions grows closer.

KATIE BARR

Inishowen councillor, Paul Canning, has called for the protection of 187 jobs before they are asked to carry out a survey on households in the county to locate all the water meters.

The Newtown man says the workers in the Water Section are "invaluable" and he fears a takeover by Irish Water will have a "devastating affect".

Speaking during the monthly meeting of Donegal County Council in Lifford on Monday, Cllr Canning said: "The workers in the water service are invaluable, they are aware of the piping system and can be contacted any time. They are aware of the weaknesses in the area and they

know who to maintain it. "If Irish Water take over will they have a call centre in Dublin, which doesn't give the people the same service."

He added: "We fear this will have a devastating effect and I would ask the Council to guarantee there was no changes to employment before they are asked to locate all these meters."

Supporting Cllr. Canning's motion, Buncrana councillor, Rena Donaghey, agreed that the "skilled worker" were "invaluable".

She said: "It has taken time to train these people up, so now we must ensure these same people are kept and their jobs are retained."

Similarly Quigley's Point councillor, Michael Doherty, said he felt the motion was "very appropriate" at this time.

"This is one of the main issues at this time, the frontline staff at present don't know what is happening to their jobs. It is

seriously important these staff members are held on to no matter who will employ them.

"They are aware of all the valves etc, which a new team would take ten years finding. It makes a massive difference if people know where the problem is. It took it a long time to get it right but now we have an excellent staff from management down to the boy with the shovel."

Cllr Doherty said it should be a priority to repair and replace the problem pipes first, and metering should be second to all of that.

He added: "We have to try and do everything we can to from this end to ensure these people hold on to the positions they have."

Moville councillor Martin Farren also strongly supported the motion. He said the "vast majority" were married men with families and they had given a "great service" under difficult circumstances.

"The Council staff have seen a large number of staff leaving and it has made it very difficult but they have given a great service. This is a big issue and we have to ensure we get the possible deal for the Donegal County Council staff.

"We need to have some input into this to ensure they have alternatives in other sections in the Council. The staff has to be our number one priority."

Burnfoot councillor John Ryan agreed the situation needed to be clarified as they have an "excellent service" at the minute and want to maintain that.

Senior Council Engineer, Joe Peoples, said they wanted to ensure the employees were not affected by the takeover.

He said: "We have highly trained staff who are hugely experienced and we don't want to see disimprovement in the service. The Council is contractually obligated to its staff."



Cllr Mickey Doherty at the scene of a water pipe burst near Quigley's Point recently.