

<p>Title of Report:</p> <p>Repair and Replacement of Riverside Retaining Structures – Project Update – Claudy and Sion Mills</p>	<p>Officer presenting: Director of Environment & Regeneration</p> <p>Author: Head of Capital Development & Building Control</p>
--	---

1 Purpose of Report/Recommendation

- 1.1 To update Members on progress with riverbank strengthening works at Claudy and Sion Mills.

2 Background

- 2.1 Council previously approved expenditure for a range of strengthening or replacement of existing inland retaining wall and riverbank structures. Two of these schemes were located along the River Faughan at Claudy Country Park and adjacent to the River Mourne near the intake channel to Herdman’s Mill. As these two rivers are both designated watercourses, the remedial works required at these sites were included in a separate contract from the works required to the inland retaining walls, as various environmental statutory approvals were required to allow work to be undertaken in these important fishing rivers.
- 2.2 The ITT package was issued to a shortlist of contractors on the 6th March 2020 but as a result of government imposed Covid 19 restrictions, the return date for tenders had to be extended to 29th May 2020 to enable contractors to compile their tender submissions during the province wide shut down during the spring. Similarly, the issue of the letter of appointment to the successful tenderer was delayed until July 2020 while the financial implications of the contractor having to comply with Covid19 restrictions was established and negotiated with the contractor. With a Consequently, the site start date was in August, following the mandatory tender award standstill period and the contractor’s mobilisation time.
- 2.3 Due to the designated status of the Faughan & Mourne rivers, DfI-Rivers Agency would not permit work in the river between the end of October 2020 and April 2021.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The following issues impacted adversely on the 12-week programme available to the contractor from the agreed start date of 10th August 2020.

- 3.2 The contract was tendered on the basis that works would be done in the summer months but delays due to Covid19 meant the contract period moved to the autumn where regular periods of heavy rainfall raised water levels in the Mourne River making it difficult to get the temporary works installed.
- 3.3 Approvals from both Rivers Agency and Lough Agency to allow the works to commence in the rivers could only be sought by the contractor post award of the tender, as the necessary applications had to be based on the successful contractor's own method statements. In the case of Sion Mills, Dfi Rivers Agency approval was not received until 9th September 2020.
- 3.4 The specified gabion baskets to be used to strengthen the existing river wall at Sion Mills and the riverbank at Claudy were not immediately available to the contractor to purchase from the manufacturer at the time of contract award, instead they were going to be a long lead in time for their supply. To mitigate against this long delay, an alternative type of gabion basket proposed by the contractor was approved by council's design team, but which still had a 3 week lead in time.
- 3.5 As water levels receded to a safe level to enable works to be undertaken in the water at the Claudy first, however, during construction one of the contractor's site staff tested positive for Covid 19 requiring the full squad to be isolated which delayed progress.
- 3.6 Sufficient gabions had been purchased by the contractor to undertake the extent of repairs required at both sites, but as the Claudy works were nearing completion, a further section of river bank away from the location of the tendered scheme suddenly collapsed. As a consequence, the contractor was instructed to repair this additional section of river bank before leaving this site. To expedite this additional repair work at Claudy, some of the gabions allocated for Sion Mills were used at Claudy. This meant that, due to lead in times, sufficient gabions would then not be available to complete Sion Mills before the end of October deadline for working in the river.
- 3.7 Due to the combined effect of the above delays it became apparent that if the contractor commenced works in the river in Sion Mills, there was no guarantee that he would have the works completed by the deadline of the end of October. Dfi Rivers Agency were asked if the start date of the river exclusion period could be put back but they were unable to facilitate this request.
- 3.8 Due to this, the contractor has been unable to get the work at Sion Mills completed within Rivers Agency's allowable time window and as a result, this work will recommence asap after the start of April 2021. The works at Claudy will be completed in 2020.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR and Other Implications

- 4.1 The contractor has confirmed that they will return to site as soon as the Dfi Rivers Agency river work exclusion window closes again in April 2021 and they will undertake the works for the tendered rates originally quoted so there should be no additional costs associated with this delay. In the meantime, the contractor shall ensure that the site at Sion Mills is adequately fenced off over the winter.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are asked to note this project progress update.