

Minutes of Meeting

Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group

22nd October, 2020 at 11.00am

Introduction

Maurice Buckley (Chair) welcomed Minister O'Donovan to his first meeting of the Group and outlined the agenda for the meeting.

Opening Comments from Minister O'Donovan

Minister O'Donovan thanked the Group for its work to date and acknowledged that flooding can have a significant impact on communities along the River Shannon. The Group is a valuable forum for examining solutions to help protect communities at risk along the Shannon catchment.

Each agency summarised its role and explained where it fits with the objectives of the Group, and confirmed its commitment to the ongoing work of the Group.

Minutes of Meeting of 30th April 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30th April 2020 were approved by the Group.

The Hydro-Geomorphology study of the Lower Shannon will be published together with the agenda and the Minutes of the meeting held in April.

Correspondence and Matters arising

The Secretariat updated the Group on correspondence received since the last meeting of the Group. The format of correspondence varied between Parliamentary Questions, TDs Representations and private queries. Topics covered many of the areas on which the work of the Group is focussed and on the establishment of a single authority to manage the River Shannon. A topical debate also took place on '*Shannon River Water Levels and Associated Flooding of Callow Lands*'.

Responses were co-ordinated by OPW with input from relevant members of the Group, as appropriate.

Communications

The Chair of the Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures confirmed that the Work Programme for 2020 is published on www.opw.ie having been approved by the Group.

A discussion took place on communications and stakeholder engagement. The Group agreed on the re-establishment of the Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement.

Sub-committee on Work Programme and Measures

The Group was updated on progress on the work of the Sub-committee.

- The protocol for Lough Allen is continuing, on a temporary basis, pending the completion of a flood relief scheme for Carrick on Shannon. Work is advancing on assessments to enable monitoring to identify any impact from operating the protocol. This is being progressed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the ESB.
- A draft report on the hydro-geomorphology study of the Lower Shannon was circulated to the Group. The Chair summarised the objectives and the key findings of the study. The proposed next steps were communicated to the Group and it agreed on the next phase of work which will include a high level study to explore the various options, potential benefits and indicative costs of each option. A further, more detailed, study will be required to identify the appropriate measures.
- In 2019, the Group agreed a €7m strategic programme of maintenance for the River Shannon and for the removal of a number of 'pinch points' through the Callows region. Waterways Ireland is the implementing body for these works. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been agreed between the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and the Office of Public Works. DHPLG has established a MOU with Waterways Ireland for delivery of the works. Waterways Ireland has identified and agreed the first tranche of interventions, with implementation expected to commence in 2021. Recruitment is underway to support the delivery of these works.

Implications of Covid 19

A discussion took place on the Work Programme and the impact of Covid 19. While work is progressing, timelines have been affected. The position is expected to continue due to the current situation. It is anticipated that this will affect the delivery of the planned Work Programme. The Chair requested that manageable blockages be identified to avoid any further delays.

Update on Flood Risk Management Plans for the Shannon Region

Good progress is being made with procurement and funding for the delivery of schemes arising from the Flood Risk Management Plans. A total of 61 schemes have now been prioritised for delivery. Steering Groups have been established, with technical advice being provided by OPW.

An update was provided on the following schemes:

- **Athlone:** Construction is ongoing with an expected completion date in 2022.
- **King's Island:** Planning application submitted to An Bord Pleanála in December 2019. Construction expected to commence in 2021 with a completion date approximately two years thereafter.
- **Springfield:** Planning application currently being considered by An Bord Pleanála. Construction expected to commence 2021.

Summary Discussion

Minister O'Donovan requested regular updates on the work of the Group which should identify any blockages to the delivery of planned work.

Members of the Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Group (or their representatives) in attendance

Department/Agency	Representative
Office of Public Works	Maurice Buckley (Chairman) John Murphy
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht/NPWS	Niall O'Donnchú
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Colin Ryan
Waterways Ireland	John McDonagh
City and County Managers Association	Lar Power, Leitrim Co Co Joe MacGrath, Tipperary Co Co
Irish Water	Eamon Gallen
Bord na Móna	Joe Lane
ESB	Pat O'Doherty

Apologies

Dr Ciaran Byrne, Inland Fisheries Ireland

Others in Attendance

Minister of State	Patrick O'Donovan TD, Minister of State for the Office of Public Works.
Office of Public Works	John Sydenham, Brian Brogan, Jackie Stewart.
Waterways Ireland	Éanna Rowe
ESB	Tom Browne
Inland Fisheries Ireland	David McInerney
Irish Water	Tom Leahy
Environmental Protection Agency	Michael Lehane