

Minutes of Meeting

Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group

15th December, 2020 at 10.00am

Introduction

Maurice Buckley (Chair) welcomed attendees and outlined the agenda for the meeting which will focus on the issues raised in recent Dáil debates on the River Shannon Management Agency Bill, 2020 and Flood Prevention Policies, and the Seanad Debate on flooding.

Minutes of Meeting of 22nd October, 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October, 2020 were approved by the Group subject to a small change proposed by Waterways Ireland.

Communications

At the last meeting, the Group agreed to the re-establishment of the Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement.

Nominations for the Sub-committee have now been received by the OPW and it is planned to hold the first meeting in January. It was agreed that the Department of Agriculture would be invited to nominate a representative for the Sub-committee.

The Group discussed the importance of managing communications to stakeholders which should, as appropriate, clarify the possibilities and limitations of managing flood risk along the Shannon.

Dáil and Seanad Debates

A discussion took place on the recent Dáil Private Members Motions on the River Shannon Management Agency Bill, 2020 and Flood Prevention Policies, and the Seanad Debate on flooding.

- In relation to the River Shannon Management Agency Bill, 2020i the Government has decided that this Private Members Bill will be read a second time in approximately 9 months time allowing the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform time to seek to introduce his own legislation on the matter.
- The Group discussed possible options to accelerate activities under the Work Programme, Strategic Maintenance Programme and the removal of constrictions in the Callows Region.

- The Group also discussed spatial planning, land use, climate action, environmental considerations and the potential for nature based solutions to manage flood risk.
- Bord na Móna confirmed that 80% of bogs are in private ownership. Once peat harvesting stops and restoration is underway with rewetting of bogs, it is not expected that there will be any significant benefits for alleviating flood risk. The Minister asked that the reasons for this be explained and addressed through the Sub-committee on Communications.
- Irish Water informed the Group about the ‘Room for the River’ programme which was developed by the Dutch Government to address flood risk.
- The Minister asked the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to report back to the Group on local authorities’ obligations and how local authority budgets are being financed for their drainage maintenance activities.
- The County and City Managers Association (CCMA) will follow up on additional nominees, including a representative for the Lower Shannon area.

Next Meeting: TBA

Members of the Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Group in attendance

| Department/Agency | Representative |
|---|---|
| Office of Public Works | Maurice Buckley (Chairman) John Murphy |
| Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage / NPWS | Niall O'Donnchú |
| Waterways Ireland | John McDonagh |
| City and County Managers Association | Paddy Mahon, Longford Co Co |
| Irish Water | Eamon Gallen |
| Bord na Móna | Joe Lane |

Representatives in Attendance

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Minister of State | Patrick O'Donovan TD, Minister of State for the Office of Public Works. |
| Office of Public Works | John Sydenham, Ciaran Conroy, Jackie Stewart |
| Waterways Ireland | Éanna Rowe |
| ESB | Tom Browne |
| Inland Fisheries Ireland | David McInerney |
| Irish Water | Tom Leahy |
| Environmental Protection Agency | Catherine Kerins |

Apologies

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Inland Fisheries Ireland | Francis O'Donnell |
| ESB | Pat O'Doherty |
| Environmental Protection Agency | Laura Burke |
| Leitrim Co Co | Lar Power |