

## **Minutes of Meeting**

### **Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group Meeting on 23 October 2017 11.00 AM Tipperary County Council Chambers, Nenagh**

#### **Introduction**

Maurice Buckley (Chair) welcomed the attendees and thanked Tipperary County Council for hosting the meeting in Nenagh.

Minister Moran congratulated the Group for the work done to date and thanked the staff of the OPW for their ongoing work to address flooding issues both on the Shannon and throughout the country.

#### **Minutes of Meeting of 21 March 2017**

The draft minutes of 21 March 2017 were approved.

#### **Correspondence and Matters arising**

There were no items of correspondence for the direct attention of the Group

#### **Preview of Winter 2017/2018**

The Group discussed Storm Ophelia and the nature of the response at both a national and local level. The Group discussed the exceptional response across the public service and the co-ordinated approach to providing and responding to warnings; and that national and local responses would be reviewed. While river levels were recorded as being relatively high during the storm event, there was very little flooding reported, apart from some localised issues. The Group acknowledged the successful deployment of the flood barriers in Clonmel, in accordance with the protocol for the scheme. The ESB was continuing to deal with an unprecedented level of power outages and acknowledged the great co-operation across the wider public sector to assist them in getting customers reconnected.

The OPW provided an update on the establishment of the National Flood Forecasting Service within Met Éireann over a number of phases, including establishment of structures, design, development and testing. In terms of severe weather events such as Storm Ophelia, this service when developed, would provide the technical information to further assist with early and co-ordinated communication between agencies and with the public.

## **Sub-committee on the Work Programme and Measures**

The Chairman of the sub-committee on the Work Programme and Measures presented to the Group on a review of delivery of the Work Programme 2017 and provided an update on major and minor schemes in the region being funded through the OPW. The Minister acknowledged the importance of the OPW's Minor Works Scheme to the Local Authorities to help address localised flooding risks.

The Group discussed the operation of turbines at Ardnacrusha and the discharge of water at Parteen Weir, given the high river level.

The OPW provided an update on the implementation of targeted maintenance activity. While three locations had been identified to the Group in March 2017, the sub-committee had identified further locations and environmental consent was received in September through the NPWS for works at seven locations. In accordance with the consents, silt removal at New Cut (Muckinish) had been completed by OPW staff. Storage and final treatment of the material removed would be carried out when weather permits, potentially subject to further licensing/consents and with the assistance of Bord na Móna where appropriate. Willow removal and tree cutting by OPW staff was ongoing during October at Shannon Grove Kilnaborris and it was anticipated that the proposed activities in the New Cut (Illaunacalligh) area would be carried out over the winter subject to access, resources and weather.

The OPW and NPWS had received and responded to a range of queries from both the media, individuals and environmental groups about the nature of the works carried out in September. The Group agreed that early engagement with NPWS and the EPA should commence regarding any licensing issues for the recommencement of works in 2018.

The protocol for lowering the levels on Lough Allen was discussed and the Group agreed that the protocol should be operated again this Winter, noting that reaching the targeted levels is subject to the prevailing weather conditions.

The OPW and Waterways Ireland informed the Group that they were currently exploring a new approach to addressing the issue of pinch points in the Callows area, based on improvements to the navigation channel. The matter would be discussed at the next meeting of the Group in March 2018.

Waterways Ireland informed the Group that it was engaging with IFI regarding infrastructure at Tarmonbarry and would review the operation of the sluices at Jamestown in terms of potential impact on flooding.

The Group agreed that a long-term approach to maintenance on the Shannon should commence at the lower Shannon and discussed the issues associated with the old channel, including the impact of Ardnacrusha on the conveyancing capacity, environmental constraints and the need to preserve a catchment approach. While the OPW's primary focus over the coming months is to finalise and launch the Flood Risk Management Plans, the OPW agreed to initiate a tri-lateral approach with ESB and NPWS to scope out the issues and options and a preliminary report would be prepared for the Group.

The EPA provided the Group with an update on a study of international experience in dealing with environmental assessments that would help inform the Group’s consideration of maintenance and other activities.

### **Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement**

The Secretary of the sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement informed the Group that a Shannon FAQ update was being prepared for the OPW website and provided an update on the launch of the Flood Risk Management Plans, anticipated for early 2018 following approval by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. A demonstration of a new OPW website, in development, to support the launch was provided and some potential issues arising at launch were highlighted.

### **AOB**

The OPW provided an update on the administration of the Voluntary Homeowners Relocation Scheme that was approved by Government in April 2017.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Group would be held in March 2018 in Dublin at a date to be set through the Secretariat.

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

<b>Department/Agency</b>	<b>Representative</b>
Office of Public Works	Maurice Buckley, Chairman
Waterways Ireland	Dawn Livingstone
Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Niall Ó Donnchú
Inland Fisheries Ireland	Dr. Ciarán Byrne
Environmental Protection Agency	Laura Burke
Bord na Móna	Michael Barry
ESB	Pat O’Doherty
City and County Managers Association	Joe McGrath
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	Colin Ryan

### Other People in Attendance

Minister of State	Kevin "Boxer" Moran TD
Office of Public Works	John Sydenham, John Curtin, Nicola Haran, Ciaran Conroy, John Murphy, Brian Brogan
Waterways Ireland	Éanna Rowe
ESB	Tom Browne

Apologies: Jerry Grant- Irish Water

Nicola Haran

Secretary