

Minutes of Meeting

Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group

Meeting on 21st March, 2017

11.00 AM Office of the Taoiseach, Dublin

Introduction by Chairman

Maurice Buckley (Chair) welcomed the attendees and informed them that Minister Canney had a separate ministerial engagement but hoped to join the meeting at the end. The Chairman noted the implementation of the decision taken at the previous meeting to implement a new structure through the establishment of two sub-committees on Work Programme and Measures and Communications and Stakeholder Engagement. Initial outputs from both sub-committees were the subject of agenda items for discussion.

The Chairman also updated the Group on some re-organisation at senior management within the OPW. John Sydenham, Commissioner, would be assuming responsibility for Flood Risk Management supported by John Curtin, Director. Vincent Campbell, Director would be moving into a broader role of Client Services and Communications for all of the OPW.

Minutes of Meeting of 2nd December 2016

The draft minutes of 2nd December 2016 were approved.

Correspondence and Matters arising

There were no items of correspondence for the direct attention of the Group however a request had been made to the Minister from a representative association regarding membership on the Group. Membership of the Group, as established by the Government, is limited to statutory bodies and it is not intended to change this.

Review of Winter 2016/2017

As part of the new structure for meetings of the Group, the March meeting included a discussion on any flooding issues during the Winter 2016/2017. Compared to the previous Winter, the rainfall level was generally low up to mid-February with corresponding low water levels on the Shannon and lakes. From mid-February, there was a rise in levels but no major flooding issues emerged.

In respect of the first year of the new protocol on Lough Allen, it was implemented in October 2017 and had now finished at the commencement of the normal navigation period. Given the dry weather conditions experienced, it was hard to judge the effectiveness. The Group agreed that the protocol would be run again for the Winter period 2017/2018 and acknowledged

that the lowering of the lake levels was not in itself a solution to address a significant flood event.

The next meeting of the Group in October would discuss readiness for the forthcoming Winter period of 2017/2018.

Shannon CFRAM Programme

The Group was provided with an update on the CFRAM process and welcomed proposal by the OPW to engage with the city and county councils again when the plans were finalised. The OPW would also be engaging on a case-by-case basis with councils regarding the implementation of the capital schemes arising from the plans.

Update from D/HPCLG on River Basin Management Plan

The Group received a presentation from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (D/HPCLG) on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the draft River Basin Management Plan that is open for consultation. D/HPCLG expressed to the members of the Group that they would welcome bilateral engagement on the draft.

The Chairman noted that the Flood Risk Management Plans and the River Basin Management Plan were both different plans but that there was a potential for confusion in the public eye. It was important that both needed clear messaging to distinguish the separate purposes.

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 the discussions and proposals developed on the Work Programme for 2017, the development of a strategic maintenance programme and addressing the issue of pinch points in the Callows.

The Group agreed to adopt the draft Work Programme 2017 which would be finalised in early April.

The Group agreed to a twin-track approach to maintenance, based on the delivery of short term targeted maintenance actions in identified locations in tandem with the development of a longer term proposal. The recent work carried out by Waterways Ireland and the OPW on Maddens Island demonstrated the benefit of targeted actions. The Group noted that NPWS had made an invaluable contribution to the methodology and approach taken by sharing their expertise and that there was good co-operation on the ground from both NPWS and IFI. The sub-committee had identified three specific locations for targeted activity this year. WI were not in a position to fund the carrying out of the actions but could assist with machinery and equipment. It was agreed that OPW would step in as lead agency and would not be found wanting with regard to funding for the three identified new activities, on a once-

off basis. The delivery would need to be cognisant of the environmental windows between August to October.

The delivery of short term actions would help inform the development of any long-term programme. A desk-based study on international practices would be carried out under the EPA research programme. It was acknowledged that the development of a programme would bring with it the need to carry out the full range of environmental and ecological surveys and assessments. NPWS and the OPW would continue discussions around the funding of a range of identified baseline surveys. As part of the early development of the programme, it would be important to leverage any existing information across the system including historic surveys, maps and cross-sections of channels. It would be important to identify what is the baseline condition of the river that is being maintained in the future.

The Chairman advised that legal opinion would also be needed to be sought on the legal remit to take forward a programme of maintenance.

The Group also noted an update on the project to assess further the potential for flood relief works in the Callows.

Sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

The Chairman of the sub-committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement presented to the Group on the discussions and proposals developed to communicate the work and benefits of the Group. Regular contact between the relevant Communications people in each member organisation was advocated along with the sharing of feedback from consultation process that might be of relevance to the Group or individual members. The role of communications in the absence of a crisis was also discussed along with the need to educate people about flooding in the context of natural flooding and exceptional flooding. The Group endorsed the planned approach to be delivered by the sub-committee, noting the launch of the Flood Risk Management Plans as a significant driver of activity.

AOB

John Sydenham indicated to the Group that he was looking forward to taking up his new role in Flood Risk Management and as part of the Group. He expressed that he found it refreshing to meet the level of co-operation being displayed by the members and acknowledged the challenges faced in communicating the role and work of the Group.

The Chairman noted that the members of the Group would be alerted in advance to any press release regarding the meeting of the Group.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group would be held in October 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

Department/Agency	Representative
Office of Public Works	Maurice Buckley, Chairman-designate
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	Andy Fanning (in place of Laura Burke)
Bord na Móna	Mike Quinn
ESB	Pat O'Doherty
Irish Water	Gerry Galvin (in place of Jerry Grant)
City and County Managers Association	Joe McGrath
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	Colin Ryan

Other People in Attendance

Office of Public Works	John Sydenham, Vincent Campbell, Nicola Haran, Barry Nagle, John Murphy, Mark Adamson
Waterways Ireland	Éanna Rowe
ESB	Tom Browne
Bord na Mona	Gerry Ryan
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	Ken Jordan

Apologies: Laura Burke EPA, Frank Curran CCMA

Nicola Haran

Secretary